

SPSO NEWS

March 2018

In this month's e-newsletter:

- an overview of some of the casework decisions we have published this month
- resources for complaints handling
- a Complaints Standards Authority (CSA) update
- news from our Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) team.

This month we are publishing 33 reports of complaints we investigated about a range of sectors including local authorities, health, colleges and universities, housing associations and the prison service. [These are available on our website.](#)

Casework decisions

Of the 33 cases we are publishing this month:

- 13 are about the health sector
- 10 are about local authorities
- we upheld, in full or part, 13 complaints.

Recommendations

In 15 of the 33 cases we are publishing this month, we have made recommendations for redress. This month we have made:

- 11 recommendations asking organisations to apologise
- 5 recommendations to improve the way organisations handle complaints
- 22 recommendations on how organisations can put things right in the future – these are known as learning and improvement recommendations. These recommendations focus on facilitating learning and driving improvement within public services.

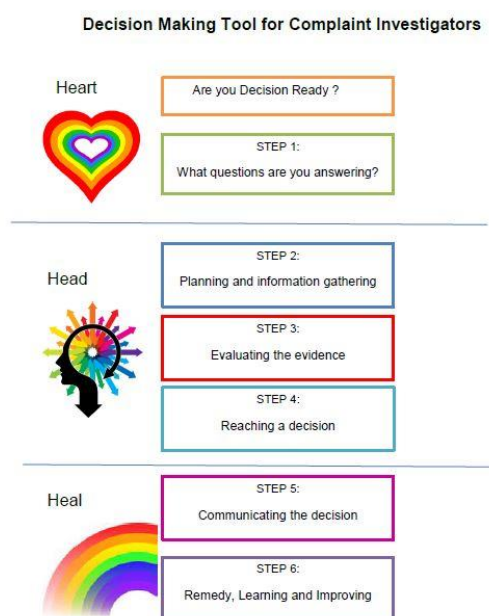
Examples of some of the learning and improvement recommendations we have made this month include:

- a health board should give consideration to informing patients as soon as possible of any inability to meet treatment time targets ([201608164](#))
- a council should liaise with NHS 24 to review their Accidents to Pupils procedure ([201702538](#))

- charts used by nursing staff to monitor patients should be completed fully ([201604406](#))
- a health board's staff should ensure that they are involving families or carers in identifying delirium in patients ([201607513](#))

Resources for complaints handling

At SPSO we have a range of resources that are available for organisations to use when handling complaints. These resources include a decision-making tool for complaint investigators, an investigation plan template, guidance on dealing with problem behaviour, a template decision letter and a selection of phrase cards useful for handling challenging phone conversations. These resources are freely available, and accessible on our [Valuing Complaints website](#). If you have any questions about any of these resources, or would like to offer any feedback on how you are using them, please [contact our CSA team](#).



Complaints Standards Authority

[The latest CSA update includes:](#)

- an update on stakeholder engagement activity
- information about our work to develop National Whistleblowing Standards for the NHS and prepare for the Independent National Whistleblowing Officer Function, which will be delivered by SPSO
- details of recent and future complaint handlers' network meetings

Scottish Welfare Fund

Communications and engagement

This month, we provided the Scottish Government with detailed feedback as part of the annual review of the SWF Statutory Guidance. We highlighted that there should be greater clarity around the support that should be provided when applicants are experiencing benefits issues or delays. We also provided feedback concerning the sections which cover decision-making, accessibility and exclusions from the fund.

Statistics and reporting

During February 2018 the SWF team:

- responded to 51 enquiries
- made decisions on 20 community care grants – we upheld 12
- made decisions on 24 crisis grants – we upheld 6.

The highest number of enquiries were made from applicants living in Glasgow, North Lanarkshire and Edinburgh. The most common reason for us disagreeing with councils' decisions was where we assessed that the available information had been interpreted incorrectly. We also provided feedback to councils on a number of cases where we considered that the decision was not explained in written communication with the applicant.

Casework outcomes

When considering community care grant applications, it can take several weeks or months to progress from the initial application stage through to SPSO independently reviewing the case. As a result of this time delay, it is not uncommon for us to observe cases where applicants have acquired the items they applied for by the time we consider the case. We have determined a number of cases like this in recent weeks, and [full information about these can be found on our Scottish Welfare Fund website.](#)

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