

March 2019

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New: Support and Intervention Policy

On 1 April 2019 we launch our new Support and Intervention Policy. This sets out and formalises the ways we offer support to organisations to help them improve and intervene when we consider something more formal is needed. The policy provides more clarity to public bodies regarding what to expect from us, how and when.

We have written to all organisations under our jurisdiction with further details. If your organisation has not received an email, please get in touch with us:

communications@spsso.org.uk.

The policy and a guide for organisations on what it means for them are also available [on our website](#).

Relaunch of Housing Complaints Network

We are working with HouseMark and Scotland's Housing Network to re-launch our regular complaints handling network meetings for the housing sector. The first meeting will be held on 1 May 2019 at the SPSO offices in Edinburgh. Invites will soon be sent to all registered landlords, but if you want to follow up before then, please email info@scotlandshousingnetwork.org.

Our findings

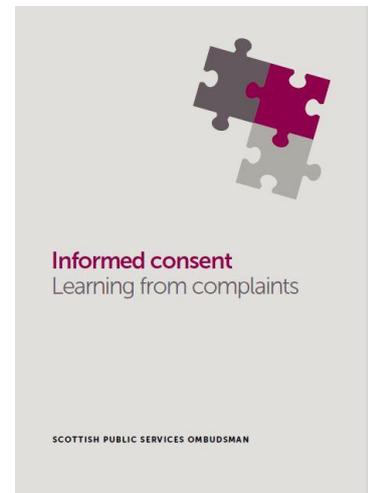
Complaints

This month we:

- are publishing 60 decision reports available [here](#)
- upheld 33 complaints in full or part
- made 88 recommendations for learning and improvement
- are publishing one full investigation report:
 - [201708494](#) Grampian NHS Board – the Board unreasonably delayed in diagnosing and treating a man with kidney cancer (both initially and

after it had returned and spread to other areas of his body). There was also failings in complaints handling. We made 10 recommendations directly in relation to these findings, which the Board have accepted.

A key theme we see in health complaints is inadequate medical consent. In cases [201707748](#) and [201706659](#) we found that the patient had not been informed of all the recognised risks of surgery. We upheld both complaints and referred the boards to the appropriate consent guidance. In case [201708994](#), we found that consent had only been taken on the day of the surgery. We considered that this should have taken place earlier in order to allow the patient time to fully understand the procedure and risks. Our thematic report, '[Informed consent: Learning from complaints](#)', includes a practical consent checklist tool which organisations can use in evaluating whether a consent process is robust enough to avoid the common failings we see.



Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) Reviews

During February we:

- responded to 69 enquiries
- made 54 decisions (17 community care grants and 37 crisis grants)
- signposted 71 applicants to other sources of assistance, which in most cases, was their local council.

We continue to receive a number of contacts each month from applicants who tell us that they are unable to get in touch with their local council. This is because the majority of councils do not have Freephone numbers, and applicants often do not have credit on their mobile phones. We have highlighted to the Scottish Government that this creates a barrier to applicants being able to access the support that they need.

In recent weeks we have upheld a number of cases where we assessed that councils have misinterpreted the qualifying conditions for community care grants. [For related case studies, please see our SWF website.](#)

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