

April 2019

In this month's e-newsletter:

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- Our findings this month: Complaints and Scottish Welfare Fund reviews

Provisional Decisions

In February 2019, we changed the way we issue our decisions, and we are now issuing provisional decisions on the complaints we accept for investigation, before making a final decision and closing complaints. Our provisional decisions set out our thinking and give both complainants and public bodies an opportunity to highlight any factual errors or provide new information that they think will influence the outcome of the complaint. Thank you to the public bodies and complainants who sent us feedback.

Our findings

Complaints

The number of decisions published this month is lower because of the impact of introducing provisional decisions. We expect these figures to rise again next month.

This month we:

- are publishing 17 decision reports available [here](#)
- upheld 6 complaints in full or part
- made 18 recommendations for learning and improvement.

We are also publishing one full investigation report: [201800964](#) Grampian NHS Board. We found that the Board failed to provide reasonable care and treatment to a patient following surgery. The report highlights failings in management of delirium and pressure ulcer care which led to a painful and distressing final few weeks for the patient and her family. We made 7 recommendations directly in relation to these findings, which the Board have accepted.

We also made similar findings in case [201701938](#) (published December 2018) in relation to pressure ulcer care and believe there is potential learning in this area for all health boards across Scotland.

In both cases, the assessment and management of pressure ulcer care was inconsistent and fell below a reasonable standard. We recommended that the Board review these findings with staff and identify training needs to ensure knowledge of pressure ulcer and wound management is improved. We also referred the board to the [Healthcare Improvement Scotland Standards](#) for the prevention and management of pressure ulcers.

Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) Reviews

During March we:

- responded to 90 enquiries
- made 73 decisions (22 community care grants and 51 crisis grants)

This was the highest number of decisions made in any month since SPSO started providing this service in April 2016.

We also signposted an additional 91 applicants to alternative sources of assistance, which in the majority of cases, was their local council. Most applicants were simply calling us in error. However, a number reported accessibility problems which prevented them from contacting their local council, including shorter opening hours, a lack of Freephone numbers and telephony issues.

We also recorded one example of a council insisting that a severely disabled applicant make their first tier review in writing. We assessed that this was neither in line with the guidance, nor in keeping with public services' duty to make reasonable adjustments for people with disabilities as set out in the Equality Act 2010.

In recent weeks we have upheld a number of cases where the council declined community care grants because applicants had not yet formally signed tenancy agreements. We determined that this contradicts the guidance (section 8.41) which states that councils can make awards in principle subject to the successful agreement of the tenancy. [For related case studies, please see our SWF website.](#)

For further information contact:

Communications team

Tel: 0131 240 2990

Email: communications@spsso.org.uk

SPSO Assessment and Guidance team

Tel: 0800 377 7330

Email: www.spsa.org.uk/contact-us

Website: www.spsa.org.uk