

Note of the Senior Management Team Meeting held on Tuesday 17 November 2015

Present:

Jim Martin	Ombudsman (Chair)
Niki Maclean	Director
Paul McFadden	Head of Complaints Standards
Emma Gray	Head of Policy and External Communications

In attendance:

Rachel Nicholson	Executive Casework Officer
Fiona Paterson	Senior Personal Assistant (Secretary)

1. The meeting opened at 11:00 with no apologies.
2. The note of the meeting held on 8 September 2015 was agreed and the outstanding actions list was reviewed.

3. Team Managers' Updates

Advice Team

Carol Neill, Advice Team Manager, was invited to the meeting to provide a Q2 update on her area of the organisation. CN shared with the SMT the current resourcing difficulties the team were facing due to the sudden resignation of the Advice Officer coinciding with planned leave arrangements, and the steps taken to reduce the load on the team. She went on to share three areas of improvement that had been undertaken in the quarter:

- Following QA feedback, and the high number of difficult calls experienced by the team over the summer period, the team reviewed the phrase cards by culling those no longer required and adding additional cards to support the type of calls received. The Ombudsman requested the new cards be circulated to colleagues once tested.
- In addition, the team worked with the Advocacy Service to come up with an appropriate process for responding to requests for complainants wishing to give their complaint verbally, as part of a reasonable adjustment request. The team have devised a process whereby they can offer a scribing service at an appointed time, following which the complaint form would be returned to the complainant for signing. This is being promoted to other public service bodies by the Advocacy Service as best practice.
- The online complaint form improvements were implemented and the initial findings are showing great improvement in the type of submissions being made.

The Ombudsman thanked CN for providing the update to the senior management team.

Early Resolution Team

George Hunter and Graham Pettie, Early Resolution Team Complaints Reviewers, were invited to the meeting to provide a Q2 update on their area of the organisation. GH noted that this quarter saw the team holding bay halved, with no case older than one week. It is anticipated that the holding bay will be cleared by Christmas. GP shared a new initiative ER were trialling, which was to agree Heads of Complaint within one day for those cases that were clearly for investigation, to fast-track them to the Investigations team. Additionally, GP was sifting any cases that could be closed quickly. The focus of the team remains on reducing caseloads before the office closure in December.

GH shared the on-going issue with the complaint handling by a BUJ. The Director discussed a process for collecting specific case examples that could be used with BUJs where issues are arising that requires development.

The Ombudsman thanked GH and GP for providing the update to the senior management team.

Investigations Team

Judy Saddler, Investigations Team Manager, was invited to the meeting to provide a Q2 update on her area of the organisation. JS shared the 11% productivity improvement within the team comparing the first six months of this year to last. JS noted there was a broader spread of sectors and BUJs being investigated this year compared to last year. JS informed the SMT that the individual holding bays that were operating in the team were significantly affecting the case-handling times. JS provided figures for the percentage of the caseload waiting unworked for numbers of weeks. JS expressed that stress levels for some staff remained high. JS confirmed her view that this was not a time to introduce new performance indicators.

On-going issues with the quality of advice received from PHSO, particularly in the last quarter, was noted. JS also shared great case outcomes that had been achieved and some emerging issues with some BUJs.

The Ombudsman thanked JS for providing the update to the senior management team.

4. Financial Monitoring Report

The SMT noted the year-to-date financial expenditure against the budget for 2015-16, including the unbudgeted liabilities of which the SPCB have been notified. Approval for £32k contingency funding for the additional expenditure for lift repair work and re-aligning the pay scales has been approved. Any additional contingency funds required will be requested in March.

5. Risk Register 2015-16

The SMT reviewed in detail the risk interrogation paper, which addressed stakeholder awareness. This will be tabled for the AAC.

6. Performance Report – Corporate Services

The SMT noted the report for issuing to the Audit and Advisory Committee including the Q2 business performance summary. The SMT noted the additional information on the ICT projects, recruitment and resourcing, new IPAs and 2015-16 pay award.

7. Performance Report – Casework

The SMT noted the report for issuing to the Audit and Advisory Committee including the Q2 2014-15 casework performance summary. Additionally, the SMT noted the year-to-date performance paper and discussed the workflow and projections. The SMT were updated on progress of the efficiency project actions.

8. Performance Report – Policy Group

The SMT noted the update report for issuing to the Audit and Advisory Committee; including the update on activities in the policy, external communications, CSA and training areas of the business. The SMT discussed the press analysis for this year and commended the Stakeholder Engagement Strategy.

The SMT approved the three recommendations made in the press coverage analysis 2014-15.

The SMT approved the Stakeholder Engagement Strategy for 2015-16.

Paul Smith, the SWF Project Officer, was invited to the meeting to provide an update on progress. The SMT discussed the Scottish Welfare Fund paper in detail with PS. The SMT noted that a decision on accommodation had to be made to allow the recruitment advertisements to be placed in time. The SMT noted that their preferred option for

accommodation was Glasgow, but as that option was not available and due to the urgency of the decision, they agreed to the option of 4 Melville Street. JM will take this option forward to the SHRC and PM will speak to the SPCB.

9. Performance Report – Service Improvement

The SMT noted the report for issuing to the Audit and Advisory Committee. The SMT noted the Quality Assurance Review for Q1 and the verbal update for Q2 provided by RN.

The meeting closed at 13:30