

Note of the Senior Management Team Meeting held on Tuesday 16 August 2016

Present:

Jim Martin	Ombudsman (Chair)
Niki Maclean	Director
Emma Gray	Head of Communications and Engagement
John Stevenson	Head of Complaints Standards

In attendance:

Fiona Paterson	Senior Personal Assistant (Secretary)
Jamie McGrandles	Executive Casework Officer

Apologies:

None

1. The meeting opened at 10:00 with no apologies. The note of the meeting held on Wednesday 15 June 2016 was approved for publication with no amendments. The actions held over from previous meetings, including AAC, internal audit and external audit were reviewed and progress noted.

2. Team managers' updates

Advice Team

Carol Neill, Advice Team Manager, had provided a written update on progress against the Advice Team operational plan, which was noted and appreciated by the SMT. At the meeting CN expanded on the Premature Complaint Project, informing the meeting of the initial findings and what steps had been taken so far to reduce the numbers of premature complaints received, including:

- enhancing the online self-assessment questions,
- changing the initial greeting on the 0800 number, and
- making a recommendation to the Comms team on how to enhance the use of the subject-specific leaflets online.

SMT explored further with CN some of the specific details about bodies under jurisdiction.

Early Resolution Team

Kathleen Steindl, Early Resolution Team Manager, provided the SMT with an update on the previous quarter. Due to various HR requirements in the team and issues with the implementation of WorkPro productivity has not been at its usual level, but performance against the indicators continues to be very good. KS shared that she was managing allocations appropriately to ensure the team's wellbeing.

KS also updated the SMT on the heads of complaint project; which has led to an increase in transfers to investigation, but a reduction in the age of cases transferred. KS shared current issues or improvements noticed in different sectors or with specific bodies under jurisdiction.

The continuing recruitment and selection process for replacement staff, followed by induction; plus the changing team structure, have all posed additional challenges to the team.

3. Financial monitoring report

The SMT noted the outturn to end July 2016 and the known contingency fund requirements for the year, which the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body have been informed. The SMT noted the number of additional income streams expected for 2016-17 due to the additional areas of responsibility for SPSO.

4. Risk, incident and issue management summary

The SMT noted there were no fraud or whistleblowing incidents reported since last meeting, and no failure of control measures listed in the risk register.

5. Performance report

The SMT noted the performance, key priorities and open risks against each strategic objective of the 2016-17 business plan. In particular, the following was noted:

SO1: Complaints and investigations

SMT discussed the change in complaints recorded at Advice stage, and consideration will be given to the presentation and YOY comparison of complaints at this stage.

The SMT agreed to move business objective around the delivery of service to Strategic Objective 6, as it refers to service provided to all stakeholders across all service areas.

The SMT noted the Customer Survey Q1 report providing a review from the Survey Analysis Group. The recommendations were noted and accepted.

The SMT noted the Quality Assurance Q3 report, probing the robustness of the results. JMcG noted that the SPSO was producing a good product overall, which is supported by the findings from the requests for reviews of decisions. He accepted that the time issues identified in the report could not be addressed with the current resourcing issues.

SO2: Scottish Welfare Fund

Alison Jack, SWF Team Manager, was invited the meeting to present the SO2 paper. She noted to the SMT the steady increase in the number of reviews and reconsiderations coming to the SPSO. AJ confirmed that the 6-month probation period for the team has now been reached.

AJ shared casework examples that have led to recommending some changes to the case-handing guidance, training for the team and clarification of powers under the Act. The proposed guidance changes will be presented to the SMT at the next meeting. AJ also informed the SMT that at the request of stakeholders the SWF website will be expanded to include examples or summaries of the decisions.

SO3: Simplification

JS shared with SMT the meeting the Ombudsman had attended with the chief executives of the NHS boards. His impression of the meeting was that the strong messages on the

implementation of the complaint handling process given by the Ombudsman were well received by the group.

S04: Good practice

The SMT noted the activity across all sector's complaint handling networks and discussed their progress with JS.

S05: Accountability and best value

The SMT noted the update on all the areas of ICT. The SMT agreed not to update the telephone infrastructure to support call recording until we have a clear indication of accommodation decisions.

The SMT noted the costs to replace the out-of-date hardware and will consider the timeline for replacement that can be accommodated within the current budget structure.

S06: Engagement, learning and improvement

The SMT approved the proposed Annual Letter and requested it be extended to the FE/HE sector this year. It was decided to allow the body under jurisdiction to choose the appropriate signatory for the Learning and Improvement statement.

The SMT were informed the survey for bodies under jurisdiction was currently in development for issue in Q2.

The SMT approved the criteria for transferring cases with intractable recommendations to the Learning and Improvement Unit for progressing.

6. AOCB

The SMT were informed of a case with a conflict of interest for the Ombudsman. It was agreed that the Director would have final sign-off on this case.

The SMT discussed the next steps on the potential special report.

The Director informed the SMT of her recent meeting with CAS, the case-handling application provider, and the progress being made on outstanding issues.

The meeting closed at 12:45