

**Note of the Senior Management Team Meeting  
held on Tuesday 19 April 2016**

---

*Present:*

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

*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 Tuesday 22 March 2016 was agreed and approved. 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, was invited to the meeting to provide the Q4 update and a review of the year for her area of the organisation. In addition to the case processing statistics, CN shared with the SMT the team's performance against their operational plan for 2015-16, highlighting that it had mostly been achieved despite the resourcing issues experienced during the year. CN outlined the major projects for the 2016-17 operational plan.

*Early Resolution Team*

Kathleen Steindl, Early Resolution Team Manager, was invited to the meeting to provide the Q4 update and a review of the year for her area of the organisation. KS shared the success of the 'head start' work from the weekend overtime initiative, which focussed on moving cases from the holding bay. Sickness absence continues to be high, leading to challenging circumstances for allocation of casework. Therefore, a clear focus for 2016-17 will be to implement initiatives in the team to assist with lessening the impact. KS shared a number of initiatives she will be implementing.

*Investigations Team*

Judy Saddler, Investigations Team Manager, was invited to the meeting to provide the Q4 update and a review of the year for her area of the organisation. JS shared that one of the team's achievements had been to ensure no case was over 260 days old at the end of the year. The team are continuing to encounter on-going issues of delay, quality and consistency with some external professional advice received, and this is closely monitored. JS updated the SMT on on-going issues with some BUJs.

### *Scottish Welfare Fund Team*

Alison Jack, SWF Team Manager, was invited to the meeting to provide an update on the implementation of this new area of business. AJ shared emerging issues and developments gathered from the initial cases, and the initiatives the team are putting in place, such as testing the logistics for Oral Hearings with other bodies.

### **3. Internal audit**

The SMT noted the 2015-16 Annual Assurance with an overall assessment of 'good', giving reasonable assurance regarding the effective and efficient achievement of objectives. The proposed activity plan for 2016-17 was approved.

### **4. Financial monitoring report**

The SMT noted the provisional outturn for 2015-16 and the year-end cash position. The timetable for the external audit was outlined, and the SMT were notified of the appointed firm for external audits 2016-2021.

### **5. 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.

### **6. Performance report**

The SMT noted the 2015-16 performance against each strategic objective and the key priorities and open risks going into 2016-17. In particular, the following was noted:

#### *SO1: Complaints and investigations*

PI-1 and PI-2 were met and there were no cases over 260 days old at year-end. Implementation of the rolling customer survey was a significant achievement for service improvement. A major activity for April will be bedding in the changes to WorkPro, the case handling application.

#### *SO2: Scottish Welfare Fund*

Due to the transitional period between the old and new schemes, only initial applications received by councils on or after 1 April would be subject to the new scheme.

#### *SO3: Simplification*

Preparation for changes to the SPSO remit to include social work complaints and GIRFEC/Named Person has begun. Additionally, the open risk for the model CHP was updated for the 2016-17 business plan.

#### *SO4: Good practice*

The success of the 'complaints surgery' as part of the Housing Complaints Handlers Network meetings was noted.

#### *SO5: Accountability and best value*

A major achievement in 2015-16 was the equal pay audit and pay review, with the realignment of pay bands implemented. It was noted that a significant amount of recruitment was

undertaken in the year, and will continue into 2016-17. The structure and resourcing of the Learning Improvement Unit will be a key activity in Q1.

*S06: Engagement, learning and improvement*

The Learning and improvement update, including the BUJ project report, was noted by the SMT. The significant activity in May will be the implementation and management of the Learning and Improvement Unit. The SMT agreed the publication of annual stats for early May.

**7. Business planning 2016-17**

The SMT reviewed and discussed the draft business plan, team operational plans and risk register. These documents will be finalised for the next meeting. The casework forecast was discussed in detail, following which targets and team projections will now be prepared based on a 0% increase.

John Stevenson, CSA Officer, was invited to the meeting to speak to the draft report prepared against Public Sector Improvement Framework. The SMT confirmed that the evidence contained in the self-assessment was accurate and complete, and the scoring of the evidence was fair. The SMT supported approaching the Improvement Service as a critical friend to provide external feedback on the report before finalising.

***The meeting closed at 13:15***