

## Note of the Senior Management Team Meeting held on Thursday 6 July 2017

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*Present:*

Rosemary Agnew	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)

*Apologies:*

Judy Saddler Investigations Team Manager

1. The meeting opened at 14:00 and it was noted that the Investigation Team Manager's update will be taken at a later meeting. The note of the meeting held on Tuesday 23 May 2017 was approved for publication with minor amendments. The actions held over from previous meetings, including AAC, internal audit and external audit, were reviewed and progress noted.

### **2. Financial Monitoring Report**

The SMT reviewed the current expenditure against budget and were updated on the progress of the external audit for 2016-17. The SMT noted the final draft of the SPSO Annual Report and Accounts will be forwarded to the auditors following the SMT final review.

### **3. Risk, Incidents and Issues Management Report**

The SMT noted that there continued to be no critical risks identified on the Risk Register that might affect the SPSO's ability to achieve its agreed Business Plan. It was also noted that no reports in relation to fraud or control failures been identified since the last meeting.

### **4. Performance report**

The SMT were updated on significant actions undertaken since the previous update. In particular, the following was noted:

#### ***SO1: Complaints and investigations***

*Advice Team manager's update:* Carol Neil, Advice Team Manager, circulated prior to the meeting an update on the teams operational plan for Q1 2017-18. She informed the SMT of the progress on two specific projects: the restructuring of the Service Improvement Group; and the progress on paper-lite working which will be taken forward with the Prison sector cases. The SMT discussed in detail the terms of reference for the SIG and plans for the restructure.

*Action 1:* The SMT requested a quarterly update on progress of SIG projects for the SMT meetings.

*Early Resolution Team manager's update:* Kathleen Steindl, Early Resolution Team Manager, and George Hunter, Assistant Team Manager, informed the meeting of the three main factors impacting on the team's performance in Q1: continuing the refinement of the Activity Levels; high level of staff changes; and high absence rates. These factors have all impacted on the ability to allocate casework within the team. To counteract this, the two weekends of overtime have proved very successful, targeting the older cases within the team. KS also shared case studies, significant outcomes, and emerging themes from recent casework. Areas of improvement include the early screening for investigation cases and the increased confidence in applying the proportionality guidance.

SMT discussed the information provided in the SO1 report, including the process for intractable recommendations.

*Action 2:* The Ombudsman requested that the managers include an update to the meeting on the progress of those cases open over 260 days at each quarterly meeting.

The SMT approved the Q1 report on customer service complaints for publication.

#### **SO2: SWF**

*SWF Team manager's update:* Alison Jack, Scottish Welfare Fund Team Manager, drew attention to the proposed changes to the case handling guidance for approval by SMT. The SMT asked that the wording in the information leaflets is aligned with the change to guidance.

#### **SO3 Simplification**

JS informed the meeting that 31 of 32 councils had provided their 2016-17 performance statistics, and the initial top level analysis is showing that 91% of complaints are being closed at stage 1.

#### **SO4: Good Practice**

JS shared with the SMT the initial analysis of BUJ complaint handling issues noted on complaints received by SPSO. Trends and issues that have been identified so far were discussed.

*Action 3:* The SMT requested additional detail be provided on on the issues raised through contacts with CSA, to assess if there are topics raised that could result in FAQs for the Valuing Complaints website.

#### **SO5: Accountability and Best Value**

The Ombudsman requested that a separate meeting be organised to discuss staff survey and IIP action plan.

***SO6: Engagement, learning and improvement***

The SMT discussed the Q3 Customer Survey report and made some minor comments on improving the recording of the recommendations. The SMT noted the project specification for the refresh of the SPSO website.

**5. AOCB**

The Ombudsman, on behalf of the SPSO, noted to the meeting her deep thanks to Emma Gray, for the contribution, dedication and commitment she has given the organisation in her 12 years of service, and wished her all good things on her next adventure.

***The meeting closed at 17:00***