

7 October 2015

Chief Executive

Dear [Chief Executive]

I am pleased to send you our annual letter with statistics about complaints to SPSO about your organisation in 2014-15. I am also writing to inform you of changes we will implement later this year, requiring full information from your organisation at the enquiry stage and, where appropriate, further detail on how SPSO recommendations have been complied with.

Finally, I would like to let you know that there will be an opportunity during this business year to feed back on our service via an electronic survey.

2014-15 complaints statistics

This letter details the enquiries and complaints we received and determined in the year ending 31 March 2015. As you will know, in line with the model complaints handling procedure, each council is required to report and publicise complaints information on a quarterly and annual basis, including annual reporting on how they perform against the agreed performance indicators. The enclosed complaints statistics are part of the detailed complaints picture that your organisation is responsible for gathering and publishing.

I am asking organisations to confirm to me that the learning from SPSO complaints has been discussed at a senior level, in particular by your audit and scrutiny / clinical governance committee, by signing and returning a learning and improvement statement. My aim is to ensure that lessons are being learned and mistakes are not repeated. The statement is at the end of this letter.

Improving efficiency and effectiveness

Later this autumn, we will be making two changes in how we interact with organisations. We are taking these measures in order to reduce delays in handling complaints, encourage real organisational learning and reduce the incidence of repeat failings. The changes are:

We will expand our enquiries to your complaints team to include asking organisations to provide an assurance that they have complied with all the requirements of the model complaints handling procedure in dealing with the original complaint. We will also be placing a much greater emphasis on organisations providing us with all the information we need to reach a conclusion 'first time'. Our aim is to reduce delays by receiving all the material we need as early as possible, and to encourage organisations to reflect on how they handled the complaint and where there may room for improvement.

Secondly, where we have issued a decision with recommendations, we will ask organisations to provide more detailed information about the evidence they give us to demonstrate that they have complied with the recommendations. This evidence should demonstrate that relevant individuals have genuinely learned from the complaint, and that, where appropriate, any systemic issues have been addressed and action taken. Our aim is to ensure that the opportunities for learning from complaints are taken and mistakes are not repeated.

Feedback survey

We will be sending out an electronic survey later in this business year. The questions will reflect our published service standards and will mirror many of the areas we ask complainants about in our customer satisfaction surveys. I look forward to hearing your views.

Yours sincerely

Jim Martin
Ombudsman

CC:

Leader of the Council / Chair of Health Board
Chair of Audit / Clinical Governance / Performance Committee
SPSO liaison contact

SPSO learning and improvement statement

[Organisation name]

It is the responsibility of Chief Executives and [Council Leaders/Chair of Board] to ensure that all SPSO recommendations scheduled for completion by the date of signing have been implemented. Where appropriate, actions should be implemented across the [organisation], and not just in the service area that was the subject of the individual complaints. These actions should be measurable, timely and deliver sustained improvement. We expect your Audit / Clinical Governance / Performance Committee to have been involved in reviewing all SPSO decisions and detailed investigation reports to identify any systemic issues and recommend appropriate actions. We also expect relevant external scrutiny and oversight bodies to have been notified, where appropriate.

By signing this document the Chief Executive and [Council Leader/Chair of Board] are agreeing the points above.

Chief Executive signature Date.....

Council Leader / Chair of Board signature Date.....

Please return by 30 October 2015 to:

Jim Martin, Ombudsman
SPSO
4 Melville Street
Edinburgh EH3 7NS