

December 2018

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Festive greetings

As the year draws to a close, we wish everyone a very happy festive season and all the best for 2019!



We will be closed from Tuesday 25 December 2018 to Wednesday 2 January 2019 inclusive. The Scottish Welfare Fund will offer a limited service on the 27, 28 and 31 December 2018 **only**, to handle crisis grant applications. Both services will reopen as normal on Thursday 3 January 2019.

New website

Our new website is now live at www.spsso.org.uk. We believe it will improve your online experience of our site and make it easier for you to find the information you are looking for.

We are always grateful for feedback, so please send us any comments to communications@spsso.org.uk

Feedback on complaints handling procedure

We have started work on a review and update of the Model Complaints Handling Procedures (MCHPs) in all sectors except the NHS. We have kept sector complaint handling networks updated, and have sought input on some elements of the review.

The next stage is to seek direct feedback from all organisations within SPSO's jurisdiction. We are interested in their views and experiences on areas of complaints handling, particularly what works well and what could make MCHPs easier to use.

We have written to organisations in our jurisdiction. **If your organisation has not received an email**, and would like to respond to this survey, please get in touch with us: csa@spsso.org.uk.

The survey was launched on 17 December 2018 will run until 21 January 2019. We will then analyse the responses to inform the wider review of the MCHPs.

Casework decisions

This month we:

- are publishing 67 decision reports available [here](#)
 - 39 about the health sector
 - 10 about local government
 - 18 about a range of other organisations and subjects
- upheld 40 complaints in full or part
- made 127 recommendations for learning and improvement. At the same time we also observed some good practice, for instance cases [201800251](#) and [201802923](#) where the organisations had already apologised for their errors and confirmed steps they would take to improve the service.
- are publishing one full investigation report:
 - [201701938](#) Grampian NHS Board – the Board unreasonably delayed in diagnosing a woman with bowel cancer which we considered likely had a significant impact on her ability to survive the illness. There was also failings in nursing care. We made 12 recommendations directly in relation to these findings, which the Board have accepted. The case was only upheld in part, as we found other areas of care to be satisfactory.

Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) reviews

During November, we:

- responded to 76 enquiries
- made 62 decisions (19 community care grants and 43 crisis grants)
- signposted 45 people to other sources of assistance, which in most cases, was their local council. Eight of these applicants told us they were unable to get in touch with their local council as they had no credit, and there was no Freephone number.

As with last month, the most common reason for us disagreeing with the council's decision during the month was where we assessed that they had incorrectly

interpreted the available information. In several of these, it concerned the eligibility conditions for crisis grants. The most frequent suggestion for improvement continues to relate to councils' written communication with applicants. We also recorded an example of gatekeeping whereby the applicant was prevented from making a new application which is not in keeping with the guidance.

We also gave positive feedback which included structured and comprehensive case notes; and the use of a template to ensure robust decision making.

[For related case studies, please see our SWF website.](#)

Training

Our next open training course for the public sector is:

Complaint Investigation Skills

Wednesday 6 March 2019

This course is for managers, team leaders, complaints officers and any other staff involved in the investigation of complaints. The course aims to develop their awareness of what makes the experience of complaining a good one or a bad one and explores the investigation process from initial receipt to conclusion.

[For further information and to book a place, please visit our website.](#)

Goodbye Melville Street, hello Bridgeside House!



Friday 30 November saw Ombudsman Rosemary Agnew close the doors of our Melville Street offices for the final time, before we moved to our new offices at Bridgeside House, 99 McDonald Road in Edinburgh, EH7.

We're settling in well and still welcoming visitors as usual during our office opening hours (Mon and Wed-Fri 9.00am-5.00pm; Tue 10.00am-5.00pm).

All public services under our jurisdiction will have received information from us about updating communication materials signposting to us with our new address (and our new logo). If you have any queries about this, please contact communications@spsso.org.uk

For further information contact:

Communications team

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