

August 2019

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SPSO Complaints Improvement Conference



We are excited to announce that our next Complaints Improvement conference will be held on **Tuesday 25 February 2020** at Tynecastle Park, Edinburgh.

Further information, including how to book, will follow in due course. In the meantime, if there is a particular aspect of complaint handling you would like us to include on the programme, please let us know at communications@sps.gov.scot.

Our findings

Complaints

This month we:

- are publishing one full investigation report available [here](#)
- are publishing 41 decision reports available [here](#)
- upheld 20 complaints in full or part
- made 61 recommendations for learning and improvement

In our full investigation report: [201706689](#) about Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP), we found that the HSCP failed to handle a complaint reasonably. The report highlights significant delays by the HSCP in providing a

response, differing accounts as to the reason for this delay, and the use of inappropriate language and tone in the complaint response. We made two recommendations directly in relation to these findings, which the HSCP have accepted. We asked the HSCP to apologise to the complainant, provide staff with supportive training about the complaints handling procedure, and carry out an audit of previous complaint responses to ensure they are being handled correctly.

Learning points

- [201804356](#) – a prisoner raised a number of complaints about the Scottish Prison Service. While we recognised the potential seriousness of the allegations, we were unable to complete our investigation because they left prison and did not provide updated contact details.

If we do not have a way to contact a complainant, we **cannot** pursue our investigation. We emphasise the importance of this point to complainers and those supporting someone who is complaining.

- [201805361](#) – a patient complained that a health board failed to provide reasonable care and treatment, after they suffered heart failure following a pacemaker being fitted.

We noted that the risk of heart failure was not outlined on the consent form for pacemaker implantation but we did not uphold the complaint. This is because it is not general national practice to routinely include this anywhere on consent forms within the NHS in Scotland. While the risk of heart failure in these circumstances is not included nationally, we consider it good practice to do so.

Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) Reviews

During July we:

- responded to 94 enquiries
- made 79 decisions
 - 35 community care grants
 - 44 crisis grants
- changed the council's decision on 15 (42.9%) community care grants and 12 (27.2%) crisis grants
- signposted an additional 78 applicants to alternative sources of assistance, which in most cases, was the SWF team at their local council

This month we determined the highest number of review decisions in any month since the start of the independent review service in April 2016. We also observed an issue with councils asking for disproportionate or unnecessary evidence. For related case studies, please see our [new directory](#).

Training

Our next open training course for the public sector is:

Complaint Investigation Skills

Tuesday 22 October 2019

Bridgeside House, Edinburgh

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](#).

Professional advisers wanted!

We are currently seeking professional advisers (consultants and senior professionals with appropriate qualifications and experience) to provide specialist advice on our casework in a number of clinical areas.

Advice required is on an ad hoc basis and flexible according to each individual's workload. The role is interesting and rewarding, and provides insight into learning and improvement from complaints which is transferable to the individual's own practice.

Please see [our website](#) for more information.

For further information contact:

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