

August 2020

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COVID-19 information

We continue to monitor and follow the latest Scottish Government and NHS Inform guidelines. As such, our office remains closed to visitors.

We are currently offering a limited phone service on 0800 377 7330 and are receiving emails, post and are taking new complaints as normal. We will provide the best service we can, but ask you to be patient with us during this challenging time.

Our Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) team is available by phone as normal on Freephone 0800 014 7299.

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

We also have detailed [information for public service organisations](#) looking for advice on complaints handling during the COVID-19 pandemic. If you are experiencing particular difficulties or issues please contact us directly on CSA@spsso.gov.scot.

Our findings

Complaints

This month we:

- published 33 decision reports available [here](#)
- upheld 21 complaints in full or part
- made 60 recommendations for learning and improvement.

Investigation reports

In addition to our decision summaries, this month we are publishing three investigation reports. These are about cases of wider public interest, and our decisions are published in full detail.

- [201707281](#) – we **found** that the Moray Council social work department unreasonably failed to gather and take into account relevant information when making decisions regarding the care and education of two children who were removed from their parent's care. Some of our findings included: a failure to include the children's views and feelings in many reports, little evidence of the Getting It Right For Every Child practice model being utilised, and failure to communicate in a reasonable and timely way with extended family in relation to kinship care.

Our **recommendations** included asking the council to apologise to those involved, ensure that there is a system in place to monitor timescales for kinship care assessments, and consider staff training needs.

- [201806286](#) – we **found** that Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS board failed to provide a patient with appropriate care and treatment after they suffered a fracture in their foot. We found that there was a number of missed opportunities to correctly diagnose the fracture which likely had a significant detrimental impact on the patient's outcome.

Our **recommendations** included asking the board to apologise to the patient and reflect on the findings of this investigation, and to give consideration to any changes to processes and guidance needed. We also acknowledged that once the patient's fracture was correctly diagnosed, the subsequent management of their care by the orthopaedic surgeon was of a high standard.

- [201901343](#) – we **found** that Highland NHS Board failed to provide a patient with reasonable care and treatment following elective knee surgery. The patient died suddenly (from causes unrelated to the knee injury) after the surgery and we considered that their symptoms prior to discharge were not appropriately acted on. Had they been, there is a possibility that other specialists could have been called in to assess and assist. We also noted that not all recognised risks of the surgery were covered sufficiently with the patient at their consultation.

Our **recommendations** included asking the board to review their consent form and ensuring there is a standard operating procedure for the management of acute kidney injury.

Scottish Welfare Fund reviews

Statistics

During July, we:

- responded to 104 enquiries
- made 72 decisions
 - 17 community care grants
 - 55 crisis grants
- upheld 9 (53%) of the community care grant decisions determined and 12 (22%) of the crisis grant decisions
- signposted an additional 70 applicants to alternative sources of assistance, which in the majority of cases, was their local council.

Case study: Reduced income during COVID-19

In one case, the applicant (C) had asked their council for a crisis grant as they had run into financial difficulties and were struggling with their mental health. Initially, the council interpreted that C was unemployed and advised they should make a claim for Universal Credit (UC). C explained that they were in full-time employment and therefore not eligible for UC. Despite this, the council upheld their original decision not to make an award, this time on the basis that C was not on a low income and therefore not eligible.

While reviewing the case, we noted that in their application to the SPSO C had mentioned recent hospitalisation. This was information that did not appear to be in C's original application to the council. C explained that they had suffered a mental health crisis during the COVID-19 lockdown, had needed to attend hospital and had missed work, resulting in a lower wage this month. We were able to confirm C's admission to hospital, and considered that on this occasion they met the eligibility criteria due to their reduced income. We therefore changed the council's decision on the basis of "new information received" and awarded the applicant £57.33 for the nine days until their next income.

Further SWF case studies can be found in the searchable directory [on our website](#).

Scottish Welfare Fund annual statistics 2019-20

We have published the 2019-20 annual statistics for our SWF review service.

In 2019-20, we received:

- 1,038 review applications – a 29% increase on the 805 in the previous year
 - 339 community care grants
 - 699 crisis grants

We determined:

- 1,035 review applications – a 29% increase on the 800 in the previous year
 - 336 community care grants
 - 699 crisis grants

Further statistics are available [on our website](#).

The Infected Blood Inquiry

The Infected Blood Inquiry was set up to examine:

- why men, women and children in the UK were given infected blood and/or infected blood products;
- the impact on their families;
- how the authorities (including government) responded;
- the nature of any support provided following infection; and
- questions of consent; and whether there was a cover-up.

The Inquiry has been in contact with SPSO and we have agreed to share some information relevant to their work. The Inquiry is keen to hear from anyone who may hold evidence or have experience relevant to their work.

More details can be found on their website: www.infectedbloodinquiry.org.uk

Tel: 0808 169 1377

Email: contact@infectedbloodinquiry.org.uk

For further information contact:

Communications team

Tel: 0131 240 2990

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SPSO Assessment and Guidance team

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