

## August 2021

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## Our findings

### Complaints

This month we:

- published 38 decision reports available [here](#)
- upheld 22 complaints in full or part
- made 62 recommendations for learning and improvement.

### *Decision reports: Learning points*

This month we are publishing two cases which highlight the importance of involving individuals and their families in decisions relating to their care:

- [202005520](#) – we found that a GP practice failed to provide reasonable care and treatment to a patient with prostate cancer. There was no record to indicate that the practice had discussed the risk of low blood sugar with the patient or took steps to allow them to monitor their own levels. We also found that the practice did not reasonably respond to the patient's haemoglobin levels. We noted that there was a good chance that the patient's condition would deteriorate prior to a scheduled admission for a blood transfusion. We considered that the decision not to admit prior to the scheduled admission, was a doctor-led decision rather than one made in conjunction with the patient and their family's wishes.

We asked the practice to apologise and ensure that future decisions regarding treatment involve patients and their families.

- [201902069](#) – we found that a local council failed to plan and assess a young person's care needs during their transition to adult services. We considered that the council could have done more to facilitate clear communication with the young person's parent and to involve them in the care planning and assessments. We also found that the council unreasonably excluded their parent from certain aspects of the decision-making process.

We asked the council to apologise and ensure that social work staff take into account the young person's wishes about their family's involvement in the decision-making process.

## Scottish Welfare Fund reviews

### *Statistics*

During July we:

- responded to 74 enquiries
- made 60 decisions
  - 10 community care grants
  - 33 crisis grants
  - 17 self-isolation support grants
- upheld seven (70%) community care grants, ten (30%) crisis grants and seven (41%) self-isolation support grants
- signposted an additional 67 applicants to other sources of assistance. The majority of these callers (42) were contacting us instead of their local council in error.

### *Case studies*

In recent weeks we have reviewed a number of community care grants where the council have not taken into account applicants' specific circumstances when assessing the priority of items requested. The case below is a good example.

C applied to us for an independent review of a community care grant application. They had applied for a large number of items including clothing, white goods and furniture. C had been released from prison around six months previously and had been living in a temporary furnished flat.

The council awarded C the items they considered to be high priority items and refused those deemed to be low or medium priority, resulting in the applicant's request for clothing being excluded. The applicant asked for a first tier review of the decision but the original decision was not changed.

We contacted the council in order to obtain their files and spoke with the applicant for further information. C advised that a family member had passed away in the applicant's temporary furnished flat in distressing circumstances, followed by a police investigation. C abandoned the flat, leaving their clothing behind. We noted that the council appeared not to have taken this circumstance into consideration. We were able to verify the applicant's account with the homelessness casework team. Based on this information we concluded that the request for clothing should not have been

excluded and that an amount of £80.00 sufficient for two changes of low cost clothing met the necessary high priority level for an award.

We also discovered that the applicant had been awarded a bed and bedding, however, the bedding was limited to a duvet and made no provision for a cover or a pillow and pillow case. We determined that, in line with section 8.4 of the guidance, bedding should be awarded where a bed is awarded (and the applicant does not already have the necessary bedding) and that this bedding should be one complete set, inclusive of a sheet, duvet cover and pillow case. We determined that this would balance the council's budget with the applicant's need (section 8.51 of the guidance) and was in line with the general principles of dignity and respect. We recorded material findings under the headings of "guidance not followed correctly" and incorrect interpretation of information. We also recorded a non-material finding relating to the council's written communication.

Further examples can be found in the searchable directory [on our website](#) under the title '*Priority assessments not taking into account circumstances*'.

## We are hiring!

<p><b>1 x</b> <b>Improvement, Standards and Engagement Team Assistant</b></p>	<p><b>1 x</b> <b>Corporate Services Team Assistant</b></p> 
 <p><b>VACANCIES</b> <a href="http://www.spsso.org.uk/working-for-us">www.spsso.org.uk/working-for-us</a></p>	

We are recruiting for **two** Team Assistants, one for our Improvements, Standards and Engagement team and one for our Corporate Services team.

The post-holder in our Improvements, Standards and Engagement team will play a pivotal role in the effective running of our team by providing administrative support to the team with a specific focus on our Training and Standards function.

Our Corporate Services team provides a range of functions and internal and external services to a range of stakeholders. The Team Assistant's tasks will be wide-ranging and will include advising on, designing and setting up electronic surveys, supporting

the delivery of the learning and development plan, and providing administrative support of the recruitment process.

Please note that these vacancies close at **3pm on Wednesday 25 August 2021.**



Additionally, we are recruiting for **two** Complaints Reviewers.

Our Complaints Reviewers play a key role in our work, analysing and resolving complaints across a wide range of sectors including councils, NHS, housing associations, most water and sewerage providers, the Scottish Government and its agencies and departments, colleges and universities, prisons, and most Scottish public bodies.

Please note that these vacancies close shortly, at **5pm on Thursday 19 August 2021.**

If you are interested in keeping up to date with our latest news and vacancies in the future, please follow our [Twitter](#) or [LinkedIn](#) account where we post regular updates.

[Click here for further details and how to apply for these roles.](#)

### **Open course training spaces available**

We are running a **Good Complaints Handling open course** on 14 October 2021 09.30-12.00. This is aimed at staff who deal with complaints at stage 1 of the Model Complaints Handling Procedure.

For more information about our open courses or to book a place, please get in touch: [training@spsso.gov.scot](mailto:training@spsso.gov.scot)

**Please note, we have no availability for in house course bookings until 2022.**

## INWO webinars – bookings now open!

As announced last month we have two exciting webinars planned for September:

- The role of the confidential contact, Tuesday 7 September 2021, 10am
- Good practice in receiving concerns, Wednesday 29 September 2021, 12pm

### Bookings are now open!

Email us to register your interest in either of these sessions at [INWO@spsso.gov.scot](mailto:INWO@spsso.gov.scot)

The sessions will take place via a Webex link which we will send to all participants. No special software is required to use Webex; it is accessible through any standard internet browser. Each session will last an hour and will begin with a short introduction, a presentation from INWO staff and a Q and A session. Feel free to email us your question beforehand if you would prefer not to raise it during the session. The presentation will be recorded and made available afterwards on our website, in case you can't attend the session.

#### *INWO e-bulletins*

Our INWO team sends out regular updates with further information about the service. [Our August e-bulletin can be found here.](#)

If you would like to receive future e-bulletins from the INWO straight to your inbox, please [register here to sign up to the mailing list.](#)

## COVID-19 information

As lockdown restrictions are starting to be lifted, our office remains closed and our service provision is not changing.

Please read our [website for more service information](#), such as operating hours of our Freephone advice line.

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For further information contact:

#### **Communications team**

Tel: 0131 240 2990

Email: [communications@spsso.gov.scot](mailto:communications@spsso.gov.scot)

#### **SPSO Assessment and Guidance team**

Tel: 0800 377 7330

Email: [www.spsso.org.uk/contact-us](http://www.spsso.org.uk/contact-us)

Website: [www.spsso.org.uk](http://www.spsso.org.uk)