

24 February 2015

Jocelyn Davies AM
Chair
Finance Committee
National Assembly for Wales

Dear Chair,

At the evidence session on 4 February 2015, I agreed to provide some additional information.

I enclose a brief paper providing some background on the type and range of press coverage that we receive.

I also promised to provide some statistics on complaints handling that have come directly from the new complaints handling procedures.

The complaints handling procedure developed by SPSO requires all organisations to publish publicly an annual complaints report. This report must include some key indicators as well as demonstrating how they have learned from complaints to improve services.

These reports were published in the local authority sector for the first time about 2013/14. We recently undertook a quick analysis of the data available from all the reports issued by Scotland's 32 local authorities. I share below some of the figures that have become available as a result. As I explained, I do not see it as the role of this office to act as a regulator for each sector. We undertook this work because it was the first year and we wanted to understand how the reporting requirements were working. I am extremely pleased that the network of local authority complaints handlers themselves wish to look at this in more detail and will be undertaking further analysis.

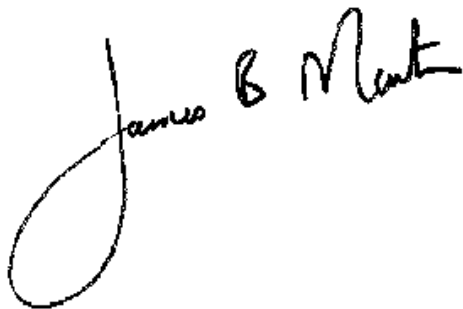
While it is great progress to have such information available for the first time, I need to explain that, because this is the first time such data has been available the numbers should be treated with some caution. First, this is a result of a quick in-house analysis by my complaints standards team and has not gone through the formal cleansing and processing of data that official statistics would undergo; secondly, we have seen some significant variations that may be explained by differences in recording and how data is presented rather than differences in complaints handling. We anticipate that, over the next few years, the work of the

network will even out this variation and mean that, for the first time, reliable benchmarking data will be available to local authorities. With those caveats in mind, the key findings from our analysis of the 2013/2014 local authority complaints reports are:

- Total number of complaints received 62,071
- Percentage closed at stage 1 (five day early resolution stage) 85%
- Percentage closed at stage 2 (20 day investigation stage) 15%
- Complaints upheld/partially upheld at stage 1 = 25,268 (51%)
- Complaints upheld/partially upheld at stage 2 = 4797 (52%)
- Average time to respond to complaints at stage 1 = 5 working days
- Average time to respond to complaints at stage 2 = 17 working days.
- Percentage of complaints at stage 1 closed within 5 working days (as a percentage of total number of stage 1 complaints) varies across Local Authorities from 53% to 95%.
- Percentage of complaints closed at stage 2 within 2 working days (as a percentage of stage 2 complaints) varies across Local Authorities from 33% to 98%.

I hope this additional information is helpful.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James B Martin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial 'J'.

Jim Martin
Ombudsman

SPSO Press Coverage

Press coverage is analysed as the press are an important facilitator of information about SPSO. The statistics below apply to the period January 2013 – December 2013 (the last full-year media evaluation available).

- There was a record volume of coverage identified in 2013 (a total of 381 items: 243 newspaper, 125 web, 13 broadcast). This compares with 206 newspaper, 64 web and no broadcast items in 2012.
- This was generated from coverage in 59 different publications, spanning local and national press; daily newspapers and specialist publications.
- The split between national and local coverage was 49% and 51%, reversing the trends observed in previous years. There was an increase in the proportion of national press items (49%, up from 42% in 2012).
- 53% of coverage was generated by the monthly compendium of investigation and decision reports. As with previous years, this was the highest generator of coverage.
- The topics that generated the highest number of items were about the NHS (204 items – 54%).

Each month, we expect to see a large proportion of press articles to be focused on cases in our monthly compendium of investigation and decision reports, but we also monitor for activity relating to the Complaints Standards Authority, external political events that impact on the work of the Ombudsman, and other mentions of the SPSO.

By way of example, here are some links to recent press cuttings, arranged by category:

Content generated from the monthly compendium of investigation and decision reports:

19 February 2015 “Trainee Aberdeen doctor failed to spot fatal tear near patient’s heart”, <https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/news/aberdeen/495718/trainee-aberdeen-doctor-failed-spot-fatal-tear-near-patients-heart/>

19 February 2015 “NHS Tayside ordered to apologise for PRI’s treatment of dementia patient” <http://www.thecourier.co.uk/news/local/perth-kinross/nhs-tayside-ordered-to-apologise-for-pri-s-treatment-of-dementia-patient-1.840930>

Content related to complaints handling / Complaints Standards Authority / Model CHP:

22 Jan 2015, “Lessons learned when it comes to school bullying”, The Southern Reporter <http://www.thesouthernreporter.co.uk/news/local-headlines/lessons-learned-when-it-comes-to-school-bullying-1-3668408>

Content not generated by monthly investigation / decision reports:

A complainant saying that they may bring a case to the SPSO:

16 February 2015, "Parents pledge to fight on for more space for school", Evening Times <http://www.eveningtimes.co.uk/news/parents-vow-to-fight-on-for-space-for-their-school-197393n.118465889>

A complainant going to the press about an issue and mentioning that they have already brought their case to the SPSO:

28 December 2014: "Your country has killed me' – final damning attack by man whose cancer was missed 32 times" <http://www.sundaypost.com/that-s-life/your-health/fighting-chance/your-country-has-killed-me-final-damning-attack-by-man-whose-cancer-was-missed-32-times-1.757488>

Relating to political events / consultations and legislation that mentions the SPSO:

31 December 2014, Holyrood Magazine, State of the Nation, Michael McMahon MSP [on legislation relating to Scottish Welfare Fund] <https://www.holyrood.com/articles/inside-track/state-nation>

Accountancy Live, 28 Jan 2015, "Revenue Scotland consults on taxpayer charter" <https://www.accountancylive.com/revenue-scotland-consults-taxpayer-charter>