

19 October 2021

Annual Report from the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman

I am very pleased to enclose my 2020-21 Annual Report and Accounts.

In addition to the attached PDF document, there is also a web version at <https://www.spsso.org.uk/annual-report/2020-21.html> which is easy to navigate digitally.

To say 2020-21 was a challenging year for the SPSO (and all of us) is an understatement. On the one hand, SPSO's investigative capacity was affected because of our own reduced staffing resource, reduced availability of some clinical advisers and because of delays in obtaining information from public bodies who themselves were struggling to maintain services. On the other hand, we adapted and accelerated the improvement of our processes and policies. So, while lockdown presented the SPSO with significant challenges, it equally offered opportunities to develop our business and approach.

And amongst all of this, we prepared for the launch of our new Independent National Whistleblowing Officer role (which went live on 1 April 2021), including working with NHS boards on the implementation of the National Whistleblowing Standards, developing training materials and resources as well as defining our own processes.

This report features our performance across all our functions and our significant achievements during 2020-21.

Some highlights include:

- we received **3,130** public service complaints (4,226 in total when including complaints carried over from last year) and closed **3,176**
- of all investigated public service complaints we **upheld 61%**
- we made **740** recommendations to public bodies, **52%** being about learning and improvement
- we launched our new online training courses and delivered **11** complaints handling courses in just the last quarter of the year alone
- our Scottish Welfare Fund independent review service took on review applications for council decisions of the new **Self-Isolation Support Grants**, and we **met or exceeded** all of our SWF KPIs
- we successfully prepared for the launch of our new Independent National Whistleblowing Officer service on **1 April 2021**.



Detailed statistical information about public service complaints is available here:
www.spsso.org.uk/statistics

Moving into 2021-22, we continue to learn from our experience and to build on the positive learning and improvements for ourselves and public services generally. Our values remain at the heart of what we do and inform how we balance the needs of our users, with supporting colleagues, driving complaint handling improvements and being as efficient and effective as we can.

If you would like to talk to us about our work, I and my SPSO colleagues welcome feedback on this report, or on any aspect of our work.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rosemary Agnew". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Rosemary Agnew
Scottish Public Services Ombudsman

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