

Report No: SLAB/2021/45

 Agenda Item: **10**

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| **Report to:** | The Board |
| **Meeting Date:** | 6 December 2021 |
| **Report Title** | Quarterly Complaints Report: July 2021- September 2021 |
| **Report Category** | For Discussion |
| **Issue status:** | Business as usual |

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| **Written by:** | Stuart Drummond, Corporate Governance and Policy Officer and Andrew McIntosh, Corporate Support Manager |
| **Director responsible:** | Graeme Hill |
| **Presented by:** | Andrew McIntosh |
| **Contact details:** | McIntoshan@slab.org.uk |

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| **Link to Board or Committee Remit** |
| This paper is linked to the Board’s function of overseeing performance.  |

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| **Delivery of Strategic Objectives** |
| Select the Strategic Objective(s) relevant to the issues  | 1. We deliver a high quality user focussed service
2. We embed ways of working across the organisation that enhance the quality, consistency and transparency of our decisions and delivery
3. We engage with users and delivery partners across the legal aid and justice system to inform good design of our system and services
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| **Publication of the Paper** |
| This paper is suitable for publication. The information is not sensitive and we are obligated to publish data on complaints under the SPSO model code. |

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| **Previous Consideration** |
| **Meeting** | **Detail** |
| 15 May 2021 | Members were updated on complaints data for April 2020 to March 2021 and updated on the plans to implement the Revised Model Complaints Handling ProcedureMembers discussed and **noted** the paper. |
| 10 August 2021  | Members were provided with the first quarterly report for quarter 1 of 2021.Members noted the low volume of complaints and requested that future reports explain why deadlines for responses were missed. Members discussed and **noted** the paper.  |

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| **Report** |

**Background**

1. We reported to the Board at the last meeting on our plans to move to the quarterly publication of complaints data to bring us into full compliance with the Scottish Public Service Ombudsman’s Model Complaints Handling Procedure. This is the second of these quarterly reports covering the period of July to September 2021.
2. **Frontline complaints** are issues that are straightforward and easily resolved with little or no investigation required. These complaints have a response deadline of five working days.
3. **Investigation complaints** are those that have not been resolved at the frontline or for issues that are serious, complex or high risk. These complaints have a response deadline of 20 working days.
4. This paper covers the second quarter of 2021, 1st July 2021 to 30th September 2021. In that period we received a total of 13 complaints, three of which were frontline complaints and ten investigation complaints. This compares to three frontline complaints and eight investigation complaints in the previous quarter.

**Analysis**

**Frontline complaints received**

1. See **Table 1** appended.
2. There were three frontline complaints resolved during the reporting period. Two were with Civil Applications and one with Civil Finance
3. None of these complaints were upheld.
4. All frontline complaints were dealt with within the five day timescale.

**Investigation complaints received**

1. See **Table 2** appended.
2. Ten investigation complaints were received, of which seven were found to be ‘not upheld’. One was found to be ‘partly upheld’ and two were ‘upheld’.
3. Two complaints were classed as being ‘dissatisfaction with SLAB policy or procedure’. Of those, none were upheld.
4. Three complaints were classed as ‘poor communication or standard of service’. Of these, one was partially upheld and two were upheld.
5. The partially upheld complaint was made to Civil Finance and related to a delay in issuing a refund and the manner of a member of staff who handled the initial telephone calls. The communication aspect of the complaint was not upheld but the error in the late issue of the refund was acknowledged. An apology was issued and steps taken to ensure the error did not re-occur.
6. The two upheld complaints – one to Civil Finance and one to Civil Applications – both related to problems with the telephone system. One complaint was from a solicitor and the other from an applicant.
7. There had been some problems with the implementation of the new telephone system previously reported to the Board and these issues were at the heart of these two upheld complaints.
8. Apologies were issues to the complainers and the technical problems with the new telephone system have since been resolved with the successful introduction of “hunt groups” which allows calls to be handled more easily reducing instances of missed or misdirected calls.
9. We continue to respond to complaints in a timely manner with 100% of complaints all dealt with within the 20 day timeframe.
10. Civil Applications received most of the complaints which is consistent with previous reports and reflects what is a more complex procedure than many others, rather than the standard of service being supplied.
11. In terms of follow up and learning from complaints, there are no policy or procedural changes are required to address any of the issues raised in the complaints and the aforementioned technical problems with the telephone system have since been addressed.

**Conclusion**

1. Overall, we are comfortable that there is nothing within the subject matter or pattern of complaints that would suggest systemic failures other than the now resolved telephone issues.

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|  | **Governance Links** |
| 1 | **Finance and Resources**No issues of note. |
| 2 | **Risk** Complaints are an important way in which we can assess our service. Acting as a result of upheld complaints is a key control for several risks that we face. |
| 3 | **Legal and Compliance**Our complaints handling procedure follows a mandatory model supplied by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman.  |
| 4 | **Performance**No issues of note. |
| 5 | **Equalities Impact**An equalities impact assessment will be carried out in relation to the changes made in line with the revised MCHP. |
| 6 | **Privacy Impact and Data Protection**Nothing to note. |
| 7 | **Communications and Engagement**This paper will be published as part of our ongoing commitment to publish board papers. |

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| **Conclusion and next steps** |
| Members are asked to note and comment on the report as necessary.  |

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| **Appendices/Further Reading** |
| Appendix A: Frontline Complaints TableAppendix B: Investigation Complaints Table |

Table 1 – Frontline Complaints



Table 2 – Investigation Complaints

