



Valuing Complaints - Developing a Performance and Learning Culture

College Development Network
Complaints Handling Advisory Group
6 May 2015

Paul McFadden
Complaints Standards Authority
Scottish Public Services Ombudsman
www.valuingcomplaints.org.uk

SPSO - Performance

2013/14:

- Number of complaints received increased for 5th year in a row
- An 8% increase in complaints received and an 8% increase in productivity on previous year with no increase in resource
- Premature complaints fell to 24%
- Overall rate of upheld complaints was 50% (up from a previous 46%)
- 894 investigations reported to Parliament
- 1,197 recommendations for redress/improvements (a 19% increase)

SPSO – Performance

2014/15 – at half year point:

- 2,517 complaints received (a 14% increase on same time last year)
- 2,495 complaints determined (16% increase on same time last year)
- A reduction for the first time in requests for reviews = 3.4%
- Premature complaints = 37% (but 14% lower than in 2009)
- Overall rate of upheld complaints stable at 48%

Model Complaints Handling

The Scottish Higher
Education Model
Complaints Handling
Procedure

SPSO Scottish
Public
Services
Ombudsman

The Model Complaints
Handling Procedure
for Registered Social
Institutions

The Further Education
Model Complaints
Handling Procedure

SPSO Scottish
Public
Services
Ombudsman



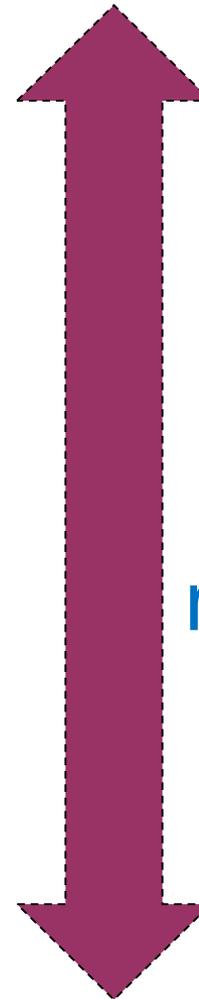
Catalyst for Culture Change

Frontline staff are empowered

- Staff need to understand the process
- Respond early to all straightforward complaints
- Telephone, face-to-face
- Know when, how and in what circumstances they can act
- Recording, monitoring and learning from frontline complaints
- **Say sorry!**

Leadership & governance

- Clear signal – empower and authorise
- Reviewing structures – do they support early resolution?
- Are staff making right decisions?
- Reviewing cases
- Reviewing complaints performance (eg stage 1 v stage 2)
- Monitoring learning and action – key issues



Ownership
and
responsibility

Complaints Performance Culture

- 2013/14 performance indicators – quarterly and annual reporting
- Focus on resolving more, more quickly at the frontline -
 - Monitor and reduce proportions resolved at frontline
 - Target phone contact / on-the-spot
 - Reduce number of escalated complaints
 - Reduce SPSO prematures
 - Average times
 - Reduce **uphelds**
 - Measure customer satisfaction
 - Measure responsiveness - what and how often have you changed as a result of complaints?
- Monitor changes over time (e.g. % Stage 1, % Uphelds, % SPSO uphelds)
- Benchmark against peers (Complaints Advisory Network)

Organisational Learning

Record, analyse and report on all complaints

- You can't manage what you don't measure
- Managers act on regular reports - identify, action and review **quarterly**
- Publicly report complaints outcomes, trends and action taken
- Customer awareness of value of CHP

What are we getting wrong and why?

- Service failures identified, actioned and reviewed quarterly
- Root cause analysis

How do we improve?

- Share with staff stories of poor service / customer journeys
- Allow staff to make quick changes to service delivery
- Processes in place to identify and respond immediately to critical or systemic service failures
- Communicate learning to staff
- Put complaints on the agenda – from the board room to team meetings

Annual Complaint Reports

- › Indicator 1 complaints received per 100 of population
- › Indicator 2 closed complaints
- › Indicator 3 complaints upheld and not upheld
- › Indicator 4 average times
- › Indicator 5 performance against timescales
- › Indicator 6 number of cases where an extension is authorised
- › Indicator 7 customer satisfaction
- › Indicator 8 learning from complaints

**SPSO performance
indicators for the
Model Complaints
Handling Procedure**

Annual Complaint Reports

Local Government performance 2013/14:

- The % of complaints closed at Stage 1 (as % all complaints closed) = **85 %**
- The % of complaints closed at Stage 2 (as % all complaints closed) = **15%**
- Complaints upheld/partially upheld at Stage 1 = **51%**
- Complaints upheld/partially upheld at Stage 2 = **52%**
- Average time to respond to complaints at Stage 1 = **5 working days**
- Average time to respond to complaints at Stage 2 = **17 working day**

Other Complaints Handlers Networks

Support

- Networking
- Sharing experiences and challenges
- CHP feedback and revisions
- Complaints handling developments and good practice resources

Benchmarking performance

- Base line of sector performance available for first time
- Compare complaints performance across 'family groups' and sector
- Benchmark for improvements

Learning from complaints

- SPSO overview – key themes from reports, sector performance
- 'Complaints Surgery'
- Ask each other – cross-sector discussion & Knowledge Hub
- Ask CSA – operational enquiries or advice on complaints improvement

Complaints Improvement Framework

- **Organisational Culture** - culture that values complaints. empowering all staff to resolve things early - apologies given freely where appropriate and action taken where things go wrong - and strong leadership and governance arrangements.
- **Process and Procedure** – simple, standard, 2-stages, clear to staff and customers
- **Access** - easy and simple access to the complaints procedure in various forms and visibility of relevant information. This includes clarity on what constitutes a complaint and signposting
- **Quality of complaints handling** – how well complaints are responded to, including whether the right decisions are made and whether verbal and written responses are clear, empathetic and non-defensive.
- **Complaints handling performance** - ensuring performance on complaints (including volumes, timescales to respond, upheld rates etc) assessed, monitored and reported regularly.
- **Learning from Complaints** – improving services on the back of service failures, with systems in place to record, analyse and report on complaints outcomes, trends and actions taken. Ensuring that processes are in place to identify and respond immediately to critical or systemic service failures or risks identified from complaints.

Benchmarking Discussion – Questions

- Do you publish your annual complaints performance against the SPSO self assessment indicators?
- What is it telling you and how do you use the info?
- Now that we have a base line of performance across the sector, how do we move towards benchmarking for improvements in FE sector?
- What is the best forum for doing this for all colleges?
- Are there any challenges to benchmarking for improvements? If so what are they?
- What are the key points to be taken from the SPSO's FE sector analysis?
- What additions / improvements might be made to the Indicators?