



Social Security Scotland
Tèarainteachd Shòisealta Alba

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Title of Policy: Social Security Scotland Complaints Handling Procedure

Summary of aims and desired outcomes of policy

To provide a standardised approach to handling complaints across Social Security Scotland, which complies with the [Scottish Public Services Ombudsman's guidance on a model complaints handling procedure](#).

This contributes to the strategic objective in our [Corporate Plan](#) where we commit to:

- Gather feedback on what people think of our service so we can make it better.

Executive Summary

Complaints give us valuable information we can use to improve client satisfaction. Our complaints handling procedure will enable us to address a client's dissatisfaction and may prevent the same problems that led to the complaint from happening again.

It is a mandatory requirement of Scottish Public Services Ombudsman that Social Security Scotland implements their recommended [Complaints Handling Procedure](#).

Background – Policy Aims

Our complaints handling procedure will enable us to address a client's dissatisfaction and may prevent the same problems that led to the complaint from happening again. For our staff, complaints provide a first-hand account of the client's views and experience, and can highlight problems we may otherwise miss. Handled well, complaints can give our clients a form of redress when things go wrong, and can help us continuously improve our services.

The complaints handling procedure will help us keep the client at the heart of the process, while enabling us to better understand how to improve our services by learning from complaints.

All of our clients will be impacted by this procedure and a clear, inclusive complaints process will ensure that we obtain feedback from our clients in order to improve our services.

Scottish Public Services Ombudsman prescribes the content and process of how we handle complaints within our Complaints Handling Procedure to us.

However, the front facing Part 5 of the [Complaints Handling Procedure](#), which is how we communicate our processes to our clients was tested and considered as part of this Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)

Who was involved in this Equality Impact Assessment?

The front facing part of our [Complaints Handling Procedure](#) has been improved because of this impact assessment with views from client experience, local delivery, corporate assurance and inclusive communications colleagues within Social Security Scotland and one external third sector organisation, Glasgow Disability Alliance.

Key Findings

All aspects of the protected characteristics were considered.

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Care experienced

The outcome of the Equality Impact Assessment process was that the procedure and policy itself did not discriminate against clients with protected characteristics.

There were improvements that could be made, however, in how we encourage clients to provide us with feedback, and how we explain the procedure.

The following improvements have been made:

- We have now built in some complaints examples of clients with protected characteristic including age, race, disability, sexual orientation and care experienced.
- Simplified the language used
- Provided a visual flow chart of the process
- Extended the information on the support available to make complaints
- Strengthened the guidance on third parties making complaints on behalf of clients
- Additional information was included within the Complaints Handling Procedure and on the guidance for staff in the Internal Knowledge Management system to highlight the awareness of what is required when dealing with clients with additional needs.

Further to this, we are looking at additional products to publicise the [Complaints Handling Procedure](#) and encourage feedback in easy read format, videos and hard copy printed posters.

The Equality Impact Assessment identified a gap in the collection of any data on users of our complaints system. Scottish Public Services Ombudsman recommend that qualitative reports be published on complaint handling satisfaction rates

No analysis has been possible to enable any work to be done on analysing who is using the complaints system or how effective it is in meeting their needs.

4. Monitoring and Review

The Complaints Handling Procedure is reviewed when Scottish Public Services Ombudsman makes any changes to their guidance for all Scottish public bodies.

The work being undertaken to put in place a system to collect data on the users of our complaints system will include the definition of a timeframe for the collection and agreed reporting structure on the results of any survey or data collected.

Two questions have now been added to the [Client Survey from 2021](#) to seek some feedback from any clients who have made a complaint to Social Security Scotland.

Given the low numbers of complaints and the return rate for surveys, we may not gain sufficient information to form any valid analysis from this exercise.

We are considering a survey of all clients who use the system at the point where their complaint is completed to gain further insight into the inclusiveness and ease of use of the [Complaints Handling Procedure](#). A review of the communication of this policy and how it is operating will be completed once this is in place.

Signed: Janet Richardson

Deputy Director