

## Email correspondence from Dumfries and Galloway Council

**Subject: Local Authority Complaints Handlers Network**

**Date: 17 January 2014**

**Reference your letter dated 8 Jan 2014 emails to Mr Gavin Stevenson, Chief Executive, Dumfries and Galloway Council**

I can confirm that Dumfries and Galloway Council are members of the Complaints Handlers Network and that Ms Emma Snodgrass, Principal Officer Corporate Complaints is our representative.

Due to my maternity leave she has not yet attended a meeting but she is on the circulation list which is used regularly to share experiences and discuss queries. The next meeting of the group is 28 March in Glasgow which she will be attending. This will be the first meeting in a few months. Meantime, she will remain in contact with colleagues on any important matters that arise.

In terms of learning from complaints, this is key feature of the new Complaints Handling Procedure and actually forms one of the PI's the SPSO has circulated. Whilst we do some work in this respect at the moment, it certainly is an area we are looking to further develop. We currently record actions and learning when we respond to individual complaints including investigating officers preparing a 'practice issues' report if required when responding to a Stage 2 complaint. Whilst historically we have been pretty good at identifying and noting learning, we didn't previously have the processes in place for tracking and managing any associated actions. This therefore made it difficult for us to know if the learning had actually been applied. We do refer to learning from complaints in our annual report and detail some specific examples. We plan to extend this further to detailing learning on our website for the public (in line with the SPSO's expectations).

In a compliance memo we circulated to all DGC complaints handlers and coordinators in September it referred to our plans to introduce action plan templates and we are in the process of rolling that out. This includes updating our RESPOND system to ensure we have appropriate recording and tracking facilities for our learning (which will allow IMs Snodgrass and her team to quality monitor and follow up). We are also about to roll out a training programme for the year and these courses will include guidance to the relevant complaints staff on identifying and progressing learning. Furthermore, in support of our monthly reports to Directors, Ms Snodgrass plans to attend management team meetings to discuss complaints and associated learning for individual services. Collectively, this should all help us move beyond simply recording learning from individual cases and move towards a more complete picture and structured approach. We can then move towards analysing trends and eventually benchmarking. We would hope to be in a position to benchmark with other authorities when we produce our annual report next year. We have been unable to do so to date as we have all been using different procedures prior to the CHP being implemented.

I hope this reassures you that this is hand.

Regards,

*Martin*

Martin Ogilvie - Senior Manager - Business Management