

**Email Correspondence from the Head of Policy and Communications, SPSO, to the Clerk to the Local Government and Regeneration Committee in response to his email dated 18 December 2013**

**Sent: 24 January 2014**

Please find attached our responses to the questions from the public that were not asked at the oral evidence session and the follow-up questions from the Committee. Answers to the questions in your email are below.

**1. Premature complaints (col 2996):** We have carried out two pieces of research into premature complaints, a joint study with the Chartered Institute of Housing and our own study. Here are the links.

[http://www.spsso.org.uk/sites/spsso/files/communications\\_material/research/2008\\_July\\_CIH\\_SPSO\\_Seeing\\_Beyond\\_the\\_Negative.pdf](http://www.spsso.org.uk/sites/spsso/files/communications_material/research/2008_July_CIH_SPSO_Seeing_Beyond_the_Negative.pdf) and [November 2006 'premature' complaint study results](#)

The studies identified a need for staff training and awareness of complaints and for clear complaints processes that signpost to the SPSO at the right time. We have addressed these issues through the CSA's development of model CHPs, training and promotion of best practice, in the RSL, local authority and other sectors. The number of premature complaints has steadily dropped, from 51% three years ago to 45% two years ago, to 40% last year, and it is continuing to fall with significant reductions emerging so far this year in those sectors (local government and housing) that have been operating the model CHP from April 2013.

In terms of future research, there may be value in finding out why people return, and why they do not return, but given that the rate of premature complaints is falling and the model CHPs relatively recently implemented, we would not give this a high priority.

**2. Ombudsman conference on QA (col 3000):** The Conference speakers topics and attendees list are attached [at the annex below]. We are continuing to liaise with other offices represented to ensure that learning from our individual practices is shared, with a view to ensuring consistency in approach.

**3. Late compliance with recommendations (col 3006):** In 2012-13, a total of 27 recommendations about 11 local authorities were implemented late ie after the deadline we had set them. All bar one of these had been implemented by the second measure we take which is three months after the deadline (the one recommendation was subsequently implemented). Given that this is a relatively small number of recommendations and involved a wide spread of authorities, our view is that we should continue to monitor closely the timeliness of implementation. If a pattern were to emerge (eg late implementation of a particular kind of recommendation or repeat lateness by individual authorities), we would be pleased to discuss the merits of external pressure being brought to bear on a particular authority.

**Legislative change:** We are grateful to the Committee for this offer and will be in touch in due course.

**Committee's letters:** We welcome the Committee's focus on ensuring participation with the local authority complaints handlers' network. We would stress again that this is a

network run by the sector for the sector and that we are satisfied at the positive progress made so far. We would also highlight that non-membership of the network does not imply non-compliance with the model CHP or associated requirements. All local authorities have implemented the CHP and are complying with its requirements. Any questions, please do not hesitate to be in touch.

Kind regards

**Scottish Public Services Ombudsman**  
**Head of Policy and External Communications**

## **Annex**

A. Ombudsman conference – speakers, topics and attendees.

## **Annex A: Ombudsman conference – speakers, topics and attendees**

**Seminar – Thursday, 12 December 2013**

**At**

**Financial Ombudsman Service  
Exchange Tower, 1 Exchange square,  
London E14 9SG**

**‘Quality is what happens when no-one is looking!’**

*Good quality management processes help us to measure and assure the quality of our work as well as to drive and deliver improvement in our services. This seminar aims to look at how we can develop our current quality management approaches further, by sharing ideas and best practice in this area, as well as considering the wider challenge of how we can use quality processes to drive continuous improvement.*

**Chair:** **Tony King**  
*Pensions Ombudsman & Chair, Ombudsman Association*

**Speakers:** **Gemma Richardson**  
*Head of Quality & Service Improvement  
Financial Ombudsman Service*  
**Helen Megarry**  
*Deputy Ombudsman  
Housing Ombudsman Service*  
**Flavia Perotti**  
*Dispute Resolution Manager  
Housing Ombudsman Service*  
**Rachel Hall**  
*Executive Casework Officer  
Scottish Public Services Ombudsman*  
**Anne Flegg**  
*Professional Practice Co-ordinator  
Local Government Ombudsman*

Registration and coffee from 10.00am

Seminar starts at 11.00am

Lunch: 12.30pm – 1.30pm

Seminar ends at 3.00pm

### **Attendees**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Office/Scheme</b>
Allcock, Robbie	Ombudsman Services
Argyle, Samantha	Legal Ombudsman
Buckley, Jonathan	Local Government Ombudsman
Caddick, Jenny	Independent Case Examiner
Cole, Daisy	Older People’s Commissioner for Wales
Dartnell, Ian	UK Pensions Ombudsman
Davies, Paul	Independent Police Complaints Commission

Gallogly, Conor	Ombudsman for the Defence Forces, Ireland
Gehler, Carl	Public Services Ombudsman for Wales
Jackson, Diane	Independent Case Examiner
Knight, David	Independent Police Complaints Commission
Lea, Philippa	Legal Ombudsman
Lewis, Enid	Welsh Language Commissioner
Lockwood, Miles	Advertising Standards Authority
MacLaughlin, Alasdair	Lay Observer for Northern Ireland
McIlhatton, Claire	Northern Ireland Ombudsman
McKenna, Sean	Northern Ireland Ombudsman
McClean, Niki	Scottish Public Services Ombudsman
Morgan, Michael	The Dispute Service
Nutley, David	Ombudsman for Ireland
Orr, Peter	Independent Police Complaints Commission
Pattison, Ian	Ombudsman Association
Pinnell, Chris	Office of the Independent Adjudicator
Robinson, Tommy	The Adjudicator's Office
Sartin, Sarah	The Property Ombudsman
Seddon, Rob	Ombudsman Services
Smart, Megan	Independent Police Complaints Commission
Stewart, Moir	Independent Police Complaints Commission
Vickers, Matthew	Scottish Legal Complaints Commission
White, Jo	The Adjudicator's Office