Review of Social Work Complaints
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1. Purpose

To seek your views on how social work complaints procedures could be improved so that they meet the needs of the service users and are compliant with the principles underpinning the reform of public service complaints. As the current social work complaints procedures are specified in Directions made by Scottish Ministers, this consultation is also seeking views on any changes needed to the Directions. This consultation paper has been prepared in full discussion with ADSW, COSLA and the SPSO.

2. Current Social Work Complaints Procedures

The introduction of formalised social work complaints procedures in the early 1990s was set against the backdrop of improving public services for citizens (Citizen’s Charter) and introducing systems to aid ‘quality assurance’. Complaints were seen as a key tool in assessing the effectiveness of a service and at the time it was recognised that local authority complaint procedures, with one or two notable exceptions, were relatively undeveloped.

Section 5B of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 provides for Scottish Ministers by order to require local authorities to establish a procedure allowing a person to make representations or complaints about social work functions. Such an order was made - The Social Work (Representation Procedure) (Scotland) Order 1990 (SI 1990/2519).

Section 5 and 5B of the 1968 Act also provide Scottish Ministers with guidance and direction making powers in respect of local authority complaints procedures. Circular SWSG5/96 contains such guidance and directions and can be accessed at:

http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library/swsg/index-f/c156.htm

The Social Work (Representation Procedures) (Scotland) Directions 1996 set out the complaints procedure in respect of social work and along with the guidance in SWSG 5/1996 provides for three stages:

- an informal problem solving stage when every attempt will be made to resolve the complaint by the local authority involved;
- unresolved complaints will then be investigated by specially designated staff;
- if the complaint remains unresolved a request can be made for an independent Complaints Review Committee to consider it.

Once this process has been completed the complaint can be raised with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman.
In light of recent reviews of complaints handling in Scotland and subsequent work by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) to develop simplified and standardised complaints handling procedures for the public sector (see below), questions have been raised about whether the 1996 Directions (particularly in relation to Complaints Review Committees) remain fit-for purpose. Issues raised include:

**Independence** - The Directions set out requirements on the appointment of "independent persons" to CRCs aimed to encourage confidence in the impartiality of CRC proceedings. The role of the CRC is to objectively and independently examine the facts of a complaint. However, although the CRC can express disagreement with policies, priorities, resources and professional judgment it only has the power to make a recommendation to the appropriate local authority committee. It is the local authority committee which effectively takes the final decision on the complaint.

**Time** – A CRC has to make recommendations within 56 days from the date the complainant requested it, and the local authority then has a further 42 days from the date of the CRC decision to agree actions and notify the complainant in writing of the decision. This can substantially lengthen the complaints process for the complainant, especially when also taking into account the 28 days given to the local authority to initially investigate the complaint. It is recognised that the time involved to provide a response to an individual with a complaint about social work can conflict with the principle of keeping the journey of a complaint as short as possible.

**Membership** – Some local authorities have expressed concerns about problems in maintaining membership for CRCs, which can lead to difficulties and delays in convening the committees when they are requested. The resources required to manage the CRC process, specifically the level of administration associated with convening CRCs, has also been highlighted.

### 3. Data on Numbers and Nature of Formal Social Work Complaints

A survey of local authorities was conducted this summer and 23 local authorities completed a questionnaire providing details of the numbers and nature of social work complaints received in 2009/10 and 2010/11. A summary of the data is at **Annex A**.
4. Background to Review

A key finding of the Crerar Review of regulation, audit, inspection and complaints handling of public services in Scotland, was that complaints processes are not always accessible or easy to use, are often complex and far too variable in their content. In short, they are not fit for purpose. The Crerar Review can be accessed at: http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/09/25120506/0

In response to the Crerar Review, Scottish Ministers established a number of groups to consider the recommendations in more detail, including the Fit for Purpose Complaints System Action Group (FCSAG). The report of this group, known as the Sinclair report, was published in July 2008 providing Ministers with proposals for simplifying public service complaints handling processes, including recommendations that are specific or relevant to social work complaints. The report can be accessed here: http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Government/PublicServiceReform/IndependentReviewofReg/ActionGroups/ReporttoMinisters

The overall recommendation of FCSAG was to have a simplified/standardised complaints handling system for all public services, based on the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) guidance *Valuing Complaints*. There should be a standardised complaints handling process for each public service sector based on these principles.

Recommendations specific to social work were:

- Priority should be given to introducing standardised complaints processes in the sectors where there is the greatest risk to consumers from service failure and from which most complaints emerge – namely across the social care sector and across services provided by local government.

- The SPSO should work with local government and the Care Commission (now the Care Inspectorate) to develop complaints systems for social care and social work services which must include clearer communication about responsibility for handling complaints and better sharing of information on complaints.

- The number of stand alone complaints handling bodies should be reduced and functions should be transferred, where appropriate, to simplify the process and landscape for consumers. Specifically, Government should consider:
  
  - Transferring the role currently performed by local authority Complaints Review Committees (CRCs) for social work to the SPSO.

This last recommendation was expanded upon in the report as follows:
“The SPSO should take on the role of social work Complaint Review Committees (CRC). The current systems are based on statutory guidance from 1996, which gave each local authority scope to interpret how it should apply the rules. This has led to several different approaches being taken, and introduced complexity for consumers, and now needs simplification and updating. Government had already been considering reviewing the standard guidance issued to local authorities for handling social work complaints. A standardised system, within the SPSO would make the link between outcomes and improvements more consistent across the country and might possibly address the potential imbalance between the experience of complainants in larger and smaller authorities.”

“[This would] … make the overall process simpler and more consistently applied across councils. There needn't be any reduction in influence by social work or education professionals: any transfer of functions would be dependent on Chief Executives still being able to call on professional advice in determining cases at the local authority level.”

Implementing this recommendation would require a legislative change to widen the remit of the SPSO in relation to professional decisions made in social work cases. Additional resources for the SPSO would also be required. Currently the SPSO can investigate social work complaints once all the other stages of the complaint process have been completed. The SPSO only considers any maladministration or service failure (for example whether relevant policies and procedures in relation to a social work assessment have been followed correctly) but it does not have a remit to investigate professional judgement.

The SPSO has a remit over clinical judgement in relation to complaints about NHS services. If legislation provided for the same remit in relation to social work cases, the SPSO would be able to investigate the merits of a decision taken by a social worker in exercise of their professional judgement.

Further information on what the SPSO does at the conclusion of an investigation is available on the SPSO website at:

http://www.spso.org.uk/our-findings

5. Role of Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman – Complaints Standards Authority

In response to the Sinclair report, the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 gave the SPSO the authority to lead the development of simplified and standardised Complaints Handling Procedures (CHPs) across the public sector. Following consultation, a Statement of Complaints Handling Principles and Guidance on Model Complaints Handling Procedures were developed by the SPSO and published at the beginning of 2011. They can be accessed at:
The SPSO has set up an internal unit, the Complaints Standards Authority (CSA), which is working in partnership with individual public sector areas to oversee the process of developing model CHPs for each sector in line with the framework of the Principles and the Guidance.

6. Standardised, Streamlined Complaints Handling Procedures

The SPSO guidance sets out the process to be followed in a model CHP and who should be accountable at each stage. The aim of the model CHP is to provide a quick, simple and streamlined process with a strong focus on local, early resolution by empowered and well trained staff. The SPSO’s recommended model is outlined below. This model, based on that recommended by the Sinclair report, provides organisations with two opportunities to deal with complaints internally: frontline resolution and investigation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FRONTLINE RESOLUTION</th>
<th>INVESTIGATION</th>
<th>INDEPENDENT EXTERNAL REVIEW (SPSO or other)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For issues that are straightforward and easily resolved, requiring little or no investigation. ‘On-the-spot’ apology, explanation, or other action to resolve the complaint quickly, in five working days or less, unless there are exceptional circumstances. Complaints addressed by any member of staff, or alternatively referred to the appropriate point for frontline resolution. Complaint details, outcome and action taken recorded and used for service improvement.</td>
<td>For issues that have not been resolved at the frontline or that are complex, serious or ‘high risk’. A definitive response provided within 20 working days following a thorough investigation of the points raised. Sensitive complaints that meet set criteria may have the opportunity for additional internal review. Responses signed off by senior management.</td>
<td>For issues that have not been resolved by the service provider. Complaints progressing to the SPSO will have been thoroughly investigated by the service provider. The SPSO will assess whether there is evidence of service failure or maladministration not identified by the service</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The SPSO guidance on model CHPs recognises, in line with the Sinclair report, that there may be a need for additional stages of review in some circumstances, particularly in relation to sensitive complaints or those involving vulnerable individuals where set criteria are met.

The CSA has established a working group of local authority representatives to develop and introduce one standardised model CHP for all local authorities in Scotland by March 2012. Social work complaints are not currently included in the CSA’s work as the CSA was awaiting clarity from the Scottish Government on any changes to the Scottish Minister’s Directions. The Scottish Government has been discussing options for amending or repealing the Directions with ADSW, COSLA and the CSA and jointly concluded that the new procedures for social work need to be closely aligned to the standardised model CHP for other local authority services. The Model CHP could be revised to include additional guidance or stages required for social work services. In line with the aims of the Sinclair agenda it would be in the interests of simplification to augment the standard CHP for local authority services rather than design a stand alone process for social work complaints.

7. Additional Context for the Review

Integration of Health and Social Care

The Scottish Government is currently considering ways to achieve effective integration across health and social care for older people. The working group that will be set up by to review social work complaints will take account of this work in developing procedures that are fit for purpose. There is currently no reason to delay consideration of appropriate social work complaint procedures on account of integration.

Role of Care Inspectorate

The Care Inspectorate currently looks at the numbers, nature and annual reports on social work complaints in each local authority area as part of their Initial Scrutiny Level Assessment (ISLA). ISLA is part of the new proportionate risk based methodology which is used to focus in on areas where a risk is apparent or where it is not possible to assess the risk due to lack of information. Consideration of social work complaint information therefore feeds into performance inspections and will continue to do so.

The Care Inspectorate deals with complaints about regulated care services and it is reviewing its procedures in the light of the Sinclair report recommendations. Good communication and clarity for service users on who to complain to will be key components of the new complaints procedures for both local authority social work departments and the Care Inspectorate.
8. **Next Steps**

Taking account of the responses from the consultation a working group will be set up to consider what additional provisions are needed for social work services in recognition of the importance of these services and the impact they have on people’s lives. The group will include representatives from local authorities with an expertise in all aspects of social work complaints: children and families; adult social care and criminal justice. The SPSO and representatives of service users will be included in the group. The Ministerial Directions will be amended or repealed as appropriate when the new procedures have been agreed. **The current procedures will remain in force until the new procedures are put in place and implemented.**

9. **Responding to the Consultation**

The responses to the questions in **Annex B** will help to inform the work required to develop appropriate revised social work complaint procedures and there will be further consultation once they have been drafted.

We are inviting written responses to this consultation paper by 18 March 2012.

**Please send your response with the completed Respondent Information Form at Annex B to:**

By email to: [George.Whitton@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:George.Whitton@scotland.gsi.gov.uk) or
By post to: George Whitton,
Care of Older People’s Unit
Area 3 – ER
St Andrews House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

Any enquiries about this consultation should also be directed to George Whitton by email (as above) or by phone on 0131 244 5403.

We would be grateful if you would use the consultation questionnaire provided or could clearly indicate in your response which questions or parts of the consultation paper you are responding to as this will aid our analysis of the responses received. Further information on Scottish Government consultations is at **Annex C**.

Reshaping Care and Mental Health Division
December 2011
Preliminary results of survey of local authority Social Work complaints

Introduction

In the summer of 2011, all 32 local authorities were asked to provide details of the number of formal social work complaints received in two consecutive reporting periods (01/04/09–31/03/10 and 01/04/10–31/02/11). Details on the service area, type and outcome of the complaints were also requested along with information on the formal complaints which progressed to a Complaints Review Committee (CRC).

Headline results for Scotland are presented in this paper.

Response

Responses were received from 23 local authorities. The data received in response to the survey was variable in content and completeness. It also became apparent that one local authority recorded complaints under several service areas. This will have led to an over reporting of the number of formal complaints by service area for this local authority. However, the number of complaints recorded for this local authority was small (3, 4 complaints) so the impact on the overall analysis is minimal.

Notes and caveats relating to the data are presented at the foot of each table and in the text and should be noted. Due to the variability in the data, caution should be exercised in extrapolating from the data presented.
All formal complaints

Figure 1: Number of formal complaints received 2009/10 and 2010/11 - Scotland

![Bar chart showing number of formal complaints received in 2009/10 and 2010/11 in Scotland.](chart1.png)

Note: Based on returns from 23 local authorities

A total of 2240 formal complaints were received by 23 local authorities in 2009/10 and slightly less, 2207, in 2010/11 (Fig 1). A small proportion of these complaints, 1.7% and 2.7%, progressed to a CRC (Fig. 2). This suggests that the majority of complaints are dealt with at the formal stage.

Figure 2: Number of formal complaints which progressed to CRC - Scotland

![Bar chart showing number of formal complaints progressed to CRC in 2009/10 and 2010/11 in Scotland.](chart2.png)

Note: Based on returns from 17 local authorities in 2009/10 and 19 in 2010/2011
The remaining 6 local authorities reported that no formal complaints were progressed to a CRC.

It is important to note that one of the reasons for the differences in rates of complaints between local authorities may be due to the way that formal complaints have been defined and recorded by local authorities.

**Formal complaints by service area**

Two thirds of formal complaints in both reporting periods (63% and 64%) were associated with adult services (Fig 5). A third of complaints (33%, 31%) related to children and families services.

**Figure 3: Number of formal complaints by service area – Scotland**

![Bar chart showing number of formal complaints by service area in Scotland.](chart)

**Note:** based on data from 21 local authorities.

**Category of formal complaint**

Over half of all formal complaints for which there is data, related to service provision (Fig 6). The proportion of complaints in this category decreased between the two reporting periods (52% in 2009/10 to 45% in 2010/11). For all other categories the number of formal complaints increased between the two reporting periods.

It is important to note that local authorities’ categorisation of complaints often differed from categories used in the data collection form. Therefore data has been adjusted either by local authority staff themselves or, in some cases, by Scottish Government staff to fit with categories used in the data collection form.
It should also be noted that 1 local authority recorded all complaints under the ‘other’ category, another recorded all formal complaints under the ‘other’ category for 2009/10 but was able to record complaints under separate categories for year 2010/11.

**Figure 4: Category of formal complaint**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2009/10</th>
<th>2010/11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Conduct</td>
<td>309</td>
<td>309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disputed assessment/Decision</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Provision</td>
<td>787</td>
<td>953</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** Based on returns from 22 local authorities
Of these, 1 recorded all complaints in ‘other’ category,
1 recorded all complaints in ‘other’ for 09/10 but under different categories in 10/11.

**Outcome of formal complaints**

Just under half (46% for both reporting periods) of all complaints for which there is outcome data were not upheld (Fig 7). Around a quarter were upheld and another fifth partially upheld.
Complaints progressed to CRC

Figure 2 (p.2), shows the number of formal complaints that progressed to CRC. The numbers progressing to this stage increased by about a half between 2009/10 and 2010/11 from 39 to 59 complaints. The overall numbers are very small so caution must be exercised in interpreting these figures.

Generally, the pattern of complaints proceeding to CRC by service area, outcome and category of complaint followed that of all formal complaints.

CRC Complaints by service area

Of the complaints which were reported to have progressed to CRC, the majority were related to adult care followed by complaints relating to children and families (Fig 8).
Figure 6: CRC complaints by service area

![Bar chart showing CRC complaints by service area for 2009/10 and 2010/11.]

**Note:** Based on 17 local authorities in 2009/10 & 19 in 2010/11

**Category of formal complaint progressed to CRC**

The number of complaints proceeding to a CRC relating to staff conduct, disputed assessment/decision and service provision all increased from 2009/10 to 2010/11 (Fig 9). Over the same period there was a slight drop in the number of complaints relating to finance.

Figure 7: Category of complaint progressed to CRC*

![Bar chart showing complaints by category for 2009/10 and 2010/11.]

**Note:** Based on 17 LA's in 2009/10 & 19 LA's in 2010/11
Outcome of complaint progressed to CRC

In 2009/10 just under half (49%) of complaints referred to a CRC were not upheld (Fig 10), 41% were upheld or partly upheld. This compares to 41% of complaints not upheld and 46% upheld or partly upheld in the following year 2010/11.

Figure 8: Outcome of complaint progressed to CRC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2009/10</th>
<th>2010/11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Upheld</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partly upheld</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not upheld</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withdrawn</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In progress</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Based on 17 LA's in 2009/10 & 19 LA's in 2010/11

Final outcome of complaints after consideration by the Social Work Committee

The final table in the data sheet asked for the outcome of the complaint following the Social Work Committee’s consideration of the CRC recommendation. The data provided for 2009/10 was unreliable for several of the local authorities and so is not presented. Data for 2010/11 (Fig 11) shows that 47% were not upheld and 45% were upheld or partly upheld.

* The number of complaints for 2010/11 add up to more than 59 in this table due to one local authority recording the same complaint under 3 different categories.
Figure 9: Final outcome of formal complaint following the Social Work Committee's consideration of the CRC recommendation, 2010/11 only.

Note: A total of 6 complaints are still in progress at the CRC stage and therefore not included.

Conclusion

The data collected in this exercise from 23 local authorities shows that the overall number of formal complaints has remained steady over the two reporting periods. The number of formal social work complaints proceeding to a CRC was very small although there was an increase in the number between 2009/10 and 2010/11. However, as only 17 local authorities provided data relating to complaints proceeding to a CRC and the numbers are small this finding should be treated with caution.
REVIEW OF SOCIAL WORK COMPLAINTS

RESPONDENT INFORMATION FORM

Please Note this form must be returned with your response to ensure that we handle your response appropriately.

1. Name/Organisation

Organisation Name

Title  Mr □  Ms □  Mrs □  Miss □  Dr □  Please tick as appropriate

(double click on the relevant box to complete)

Surname

Forename

2. Postal Address

Postcode

Phone

Email

3. Permissions - I am responding as...

Individual / Group/Organisation  Please tick as appropriate

(a) Do you agree to your response being made available to the public (in Scottish Government library and/or on the Scottish Government web site)?

Please tick as appropriate □ Yes □ No

(b) Where confidentiality is not requested, we will make your responses available to the public on the following basis

Please tick ONE of the following boxes

Yes, make my response, name and address all available

Yes, make my response available, but not my name and address

Yes, make my response and name available, but not my address

(c) The name and address of your organisation will be made available to the public (in the Scottish Government library and/or on the Scottish Government web site).

Are you content for your response to be made available?

Please tick as appropriate □ Yes □ No

(d) We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

Please tick as appropriate □ Yes
Options for Revised Procedures

The final stage of current social work complaints procedures provides for complaints to be considered by a Complaints Review Committee (CRC) when all other avenues of redress have been explored. The guidance says that CRCs should aim to bring an objective and independent eye to bear on complaints to give the public additional safeguards that their wishes and needs are being fairly considered and their complaints properly investigated. The Directions specify that the CRC should have an independent chair and the expertise that members are required to have.

The Sinclair Report recommended that the SPSO should take on the CRC stage of social work complaints. Alternatives to this would be to retain CRCs but modify and improve them or align social work complaints with the standardised Model Complaints Handling Procedure currently being developed by the SPSO and local government for all local authority services.

Q.1a Please choose which of the following options you would prefer for dealing with complaints about social work services, providing reasons for your choice:

- Option 1 – Social work complaints to be dealt with in line with all other local authority complaints through the process set out in the SPSO model CHP for local government.

Yes/No

Reason
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option 2 - As with Option 1 but with additional scope for increasing the working day timescale at stage 1 or 2 for social work complaints when circumstances require this. (Details of the circumstances in which timescales can be extended could be developed by the working group if there is support for this option.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes/No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reason</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option 3 - Modified and improved CRCs operating within local authorities. CRCs would be retained but improved (e.g. faster time limits within which a committee must be convened and reach a decision). Please specify the improvements you would recommend.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes/No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reason</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| If Yes, recommended Improvements |
- **Option 4** - The SPSO expanding its remit to take on a similar role to that of the CRCs. This would provide the SPSO with a remit over social work decisions in line with its role in relation to NHS complaints. Please specify the main benefits of the SPSO taking on this expanded role.

  Yes/No

  Reason

**Question 1b** Are there any of the above options that you do not feel should be considered? please give reasons why.
Scottish Ministers’ Regulations and Directions

Section 5 B of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 provides that Scottish Ministers may by order require local authorities to establish a complaints procedure. Such an order is in place – The Social Work (Representations Procedure) (Scotland) Order 1990 ( SI 1990/2519). Sections 5 and 5B also provide guidance and direction making powers in respect of local authority complaints procedures. SWSG 5/96 contains such guidance and directions. Local authorities have a duty to comply with directions made under the 1968 Act.

The Regulations and Directions can be amended in line with the new social work complaints procedures, but we’d welcome your views on whether or not they are still needed.

Q. 2 Are Regulations and Directions still required in order to ensure that appropriate social work complaints procedures are adopted by all local authorities or will clear guidance be sufficient? Please tick and give reasons if you wish.

- Directions still needed

or

Clear Guidance Sufficient

Reasons
Appeals

The SPSO guidance on model Complaint Handling Procedures explains the importance of being clear about what a complaint is. This is an issue that needs to be carefully considered for social work services and it would be helpful to have views on whether or not there would be benefits in drawing a distinction between:

- complaints about policies and how they have been applied that may be more appropriately dealt with through an appeals process e.g. disagreement with the result of a financial assessments, the way eligibility criteria have been applied, or charging policies; and

- complaints about practice e.g. the way an individual has been treated by a social worker, delays in processing enquiries etc

The current guidance states that:

> People with social care needs and their carers are entitled to have some-one take a second look at assessments, service decisions and the way in which matters have been handled. It is a clear aim of Government policy, reflecting the Citizen’s Charter, to expose procedures and professional decision-making to more scrutiny than hitherto and it would be inconsistent with that policy to restrict the types of case to which complaints procedures relate. Local authorities can have alternative appeals arrangements for responding to certain types of complaints. However, complainers must have the right to refer their complaint to the formal complaints procedure at any stage, and should be made fully aware of this right.

Q 3a Should appeals procedures be established by all local authorities. (In the interests of good administrative justice – individuals would retain their right to complain at any stage.)

Yes/No

If YES

Q 3b Would it be helpful for the working group on social work complaints to develop good practice guidance on appeals procedures?
Q 4  Do you have any other comments you would like to add?

Reshaping Care and Mental Health Division
December 2011
This consultation, and all other Scottish Government consultation exercises, can be viewed online on the consultation web pages of the Scottish Government website at: http://www.scotland.gov.uk/consultations. The Scottish Government has an email alert system for consultations, http://register.scotland.gov.uk. This system allows stakeholder individuals and organisations to register and receive a weekly email containing details of all new consultations (including web links). It complements, but in no way replaces SG distribution lists, and is designed to allow stakeholders to keep up to date with all SG consultation activity, and therefore be alerted at the earliest opportunity to those of most interest. We would encourage you to register.

Handling your response

We need to know how you wish your response to be handled and, in particular, whether you are happy for your response to be made public. Please complete and return the Respondent Information Form which forms part of the consultation questionnaire at Annex B as this will ensure that we treat your response appropriately. If you ask for your response not to be published we will regard it as confidential, and we will treat it accordingly.

All respondents should be aware that the Scottish Government are subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 and would therefore have to consider any request made to it under the Act for information relating to responses made to this consultation exercise.

Next steps in the process

Following the closing date, all responses will be analysed and considered along with any other available evidence to help us reach a decision on the social work complaints process.

Where respondents have given permission for their response to be made public and after we have checked that they contain no potentially defamatory material, responses will be made available to the public in the Scottish Government Library. You can make arrangements to view responses by contacting the SG Library on 0131 244 4552. Responses can be copied and sent to you, but a charge may be made for this service.
Comments and complaints

If you have any comments about how this consultation exercise has been conducted, please send them to:

By email:  George.Whitton@scotland.gsi.gov.uk
By post to:  George Whitton,
            Care of Older People’s Unit
            Area 3 – ER
            St Andrews House
            Regent Road
            Edinburgh
            EH1 3DG