

*Webinar:*

*“Ombudsman Innovations for Advancing Open Government”*

This webinar will start at 10:00 AM Eastern Time

Please use to following link to check the local time in your country

<http://www.worldtimeserver.com/>

The microphones will be muted until 10:00 AM (EST/DC)





Open Government Partnership (OGP) Webinar Series

# *Ombudsman Innovations for Advancing Open Government*

Tuesday, March 17, 2015  
10:00-11:00 AM EST



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FIONA CREAN

# Ombudsman Innovations for Advancing Open Government

**Jim Martin**

**Scottish Public Services Ombudsman**



**OGP Webinar Series**



# Setting standards: how we got here

- reviews of the complaints and scrutiny landscape showed processes are not citizen-centred
- 2010: the Scottish Parliament asked the Ombudsman to establish a Complaints Standards Authority (CSA)
- identified a need for simple standardised complaints procedures across all public services

# What did the complaints world look like for the citizen in Scotland?

- complex and confusing
- inconsistent and lacking co-ordination
- too slow
- not 'right first time' (and sometimes not right at all)
- learning from complaints was not captured and shared
- no focus on performance or cost

# Complaints Standards Authority aims

- make complaining an easier, simpler and consistent experience for all citizens
- standardised Model Complaints Handling Procedures (**CHPs**) operating across all sectors
- standardised processes, timescales and governance in all public bodies
- develop and share best practice
- monitor trends and share learning

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# Core elements of all CHPs

- definition of what is and what is not a complaint
- a 2-stage process with standard timescales
- empower frontline employees to resolve complaints
- ensure clear roles, responsibilities and good governance
- standardise recording, reporting, and publishing of complaints
- share and report performance and lessons learned
- deal consistently and openly with unacceptable behaviours

# Quick, Simple Process

## The Model Complaints Handling Procedure



visit [www.valuingcomplaints.org.uk](http://www.valuingcomplaints.org.uk) for more details



# Catalyst for change

## Frontline staff are empowered

- staff need to understand the procedure
- 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
- organisational structures – do they support early resolution?
- are staff making right decisions?
- reviewing cases once resolved
- reviewing complaints performance (e.g. stage 1 v stage 2)
- monitoring learning and action – key issues



**Ownership  
and  
responsibility**

# Annual complaints reports standardise reporting

SPSO performance  
indicators for the  
Local Authority  
Model Complaints  
Handling Procedure



- Indicator 1: complaints received per 1000 of population
- Indicator 2: closed complaints
- Indicator 3: complaints upheld, partially 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

Overall performance is assessed and benchmarked using self-assessment frameworks, for example the Public Service Improvement Framework (used by many Scottish local authorities) which has been adapted to take account of complaints performance.

# Reporting in action: example

## Baselining Local Government performance across Scotland 2013/14

- % of complaints closed at Stage 1 (as % all complaints closed) = **85 %**
- % 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 days**

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# CSA Support and Training

## E-learning Training modules

### Frontline complaints handling

- Module 1: Understanding the Model Complaints Procedure
- Module 2: What Is A Complaint?
- Module 3: What Customers Want When They Complain
- Module 4: Getting It Right From the Start
- Module 5: Active Listening
- Module 6: Finding the Right Solution
- Module 7: Learning From Complaints
- Module 8: Managing Difficult Behaviour

For more information:

[www.valuingcomplaints.org.uk](http://www.valuingcomplaints.org.uk)

[www.spsotraining.org.uk](http://www.spsotraining.org.uk)

### Investigation skills

### Investigation and Frontline classroom-based courses

### Senior management and Board members awareness

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# Conclusions: the impact of the CHP

- early opposition from organisations has shifted to support
- the CHP is seen as a tool for improving performance and customer relations
- culture is changing towards one of valuing complaints
- better learning and monitoring from standardised reporting
- improved the reputation of the Ombudsman with organisations under jurisdiction and lawmakers

## Further information

Statistics and annual reports about all sectors under the jurisdiction of the SPSO: [www.spsso.org.uk/statistics-2013-14](http://www.spsso.org.uk/statistics-2013-14)

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# **The Impact of Ombudsman Investigations on Public Administration: A Case Study and an Evaluation Guide**





- Sponsor – International Ombudsman Institute
- Support – Advisory Group:
  - Kim Carter, Ombudsperson, Province of British Columbia
  - Nora Farrell, Ombudsperson, Ryerson University,
  - Dean Gottehrer, US- based Ombudsman Consultant
  - Howard Sapers, Correctional Investigator, Government of Canada
- Independent research study:
  - Dr. Myer Siemiatycki and Dr. Andrea M. Noack of Ryerson University



1. Why evaluate Ombudsman?
2. Toronto Study
3. Using the Tools for Evaluating Ombudsman
4. Why Take the Risk?



# Why evaluate Ombudsman?

- Ombudsman work difficult to measure
- Most offices focus on productivity – complaints, investigations
- Process of self-assessment reflects fundamental principles of ombudsmanship
- Focus on the impact of systemic investigations on public administration
- Fairness in the way public service conducts itself in serving citizens



# The Toronto Study

- Qualitative case study of the Toronto Ombudsman's impact
- Based on in-depth interviews with senior public servants representing the scope of the civic service
- Overwhelmingly positive response
- Foundation for development of the evaluation guide and tools



# Study Results

- “The [Ombudsman is] there to champion the right of the public. [Her] staff are very, very good...They’re coming with a purpose to try and make sure the taxpayer is treated fairly. It’s trying to bring harmony, so that the city is responsive to these people.”

– Director



# Study Results

- “Sometimes we get caught in the middle, between the Auditor General and the Ombudsman office. These are two different perspectives, the Auditor General is ‘the rules and these must apply to everybody.’ Fairness and equity, the Ombudsman office looks at each item and asks, ‘is this fair?’”

– Director



# Study Results

- “If there wasn’t an Ombudsman, you’d probably have to invent one.”  
– Senior Executive



# Study Results

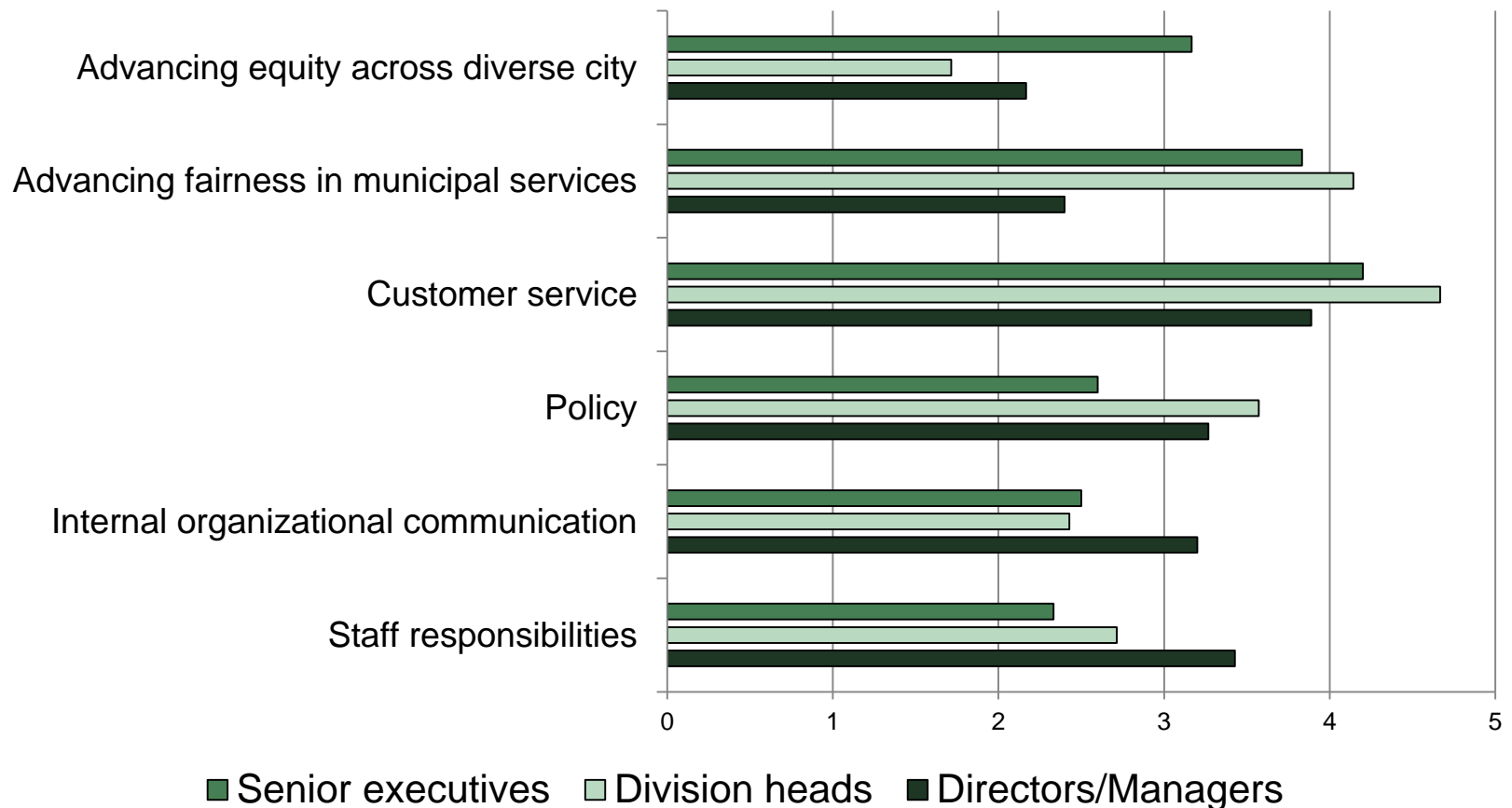
## Overall Perceived Level of Ombudsman Impact





# Study Results

## Perceived Level of Ombudsman Impact by management level



# Using the Tools for Evaluating Ombudsman

- Deciding what to collect information about and how to do it
- Tools available: interview questions, indicators, checklists, impact assessment grid and timeline planning



# Why Take the Risk?

- Learning about what works
- Making concrete improvements
- Enhancing legitimacy
- Creating platform for improved communications



