

SPSO STAFF SURVEY 2017/18

All staff update

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Executive Summary

- This report sets out a summary of the findings and analysis of the SPSO's fourth consecutive annual 2017-18 survey, with the detailed results set out in the accompanying annex (Annex 1).
- The SPSO use the staff survey, alongside the Investors In People accreditation process, to maintain a continuous focus of improving our people practices to ensure effective delivery of service and staff wellbeing.
- This year's survey results continue to show strong evidence of good people practices, with results continuing to improve year on year.
- This report also highlights areas, such as resourcing challenges, that need continued focus over the coming year.

SPSO Staff Survey 2017/18

Investors in People

- Survey purpose and approach.
- Summary of findings compared to 2016/17.
- Key areas of focus and improvement.
- External benchmarking.
- 2016/17 Staff Survey and IIP Action Plan.
- What Happens Next.

Survey background and purpose

- We are committed to running a staff survey **annually** and this will be the fourth consecutive survey. This allows us to regularly monitor engagement levels, benchmark against internal and external comparators and work towards continuous improvement of our people management practices.
- The staff survey provides a regular, formal opportunity for people to **express their views anonymously**, on a range of working and HR practices over and above other established methods of feedback that are part of our everyday work such as one to ones, team meetings, performance reviews and through working groups and consultations.
- The staff survey sits alongside our commitment to maintaining **our Investors In People (IIP) status**, and the questions asked in the survey were chosen to mirror those asked through the formal IIP questionnaire process.
- Both our survey and the IIP accreditation process provide us with key information on **engagement and satisfaction** in the office and we use the feedback to drive continuous improvement and form the basis of an **action plan to target areas for improvement**.
- This presentation sets out the **findings of the 2017 survey** along with a benchmark against our last survey and publicly available surveys from other relevant organisations.

Approach and methodology

- An **on-line questionnaire approach** was used, using **the same questions** as asked previously in order to be able to benchmark response. Only one question was amended – a question about resourcing - splitting it into two questions to be able to ask in more detail and about both human and physical resources.
- The 2017/18 survey was conducted over a **three week period** in November and December 2017, during which time reminder emails were sent at weekly intervals.
- There were **10 survey sections** consisting of statements on which people are asked to rate their level of agreement (Likert scale) with open comments available under each section.
- We continued to include **six different response options** (strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree, not applicable) based upon feedback in previous years that indicated that people had selected neither agree nor disagree because there was no 'not applicable' option when staff felt a question didn't apply to their area of work.

Survey analysis

- **64 questions** were asked over a range of 10 topics. As for last year's results, the results have been analysed in terms of the percentage positive (agree/strongly agree), neutral (neither agree nor disagree), negative (disagree/strongly disagree) and not applicable.
- As for previous surveys, the nominal cut off has been applied to any **scores below 70%** positive as areas to consider for improvement. Any **scores below 50%** positive identify high priority issues. As with previous surveys, these nominal cut off points are setting a high standard for improvements.
- Again, as in previous years, **additional comments** have been analysed and summarised in order to identify key themes as well as maintain privacy and ensure that comments could not be attributed to specific individuals.
- The results have been analysed and **presented against the 2016/17 results** to identify significant shifts in scores, in particular for those categories falling below the 70% positive benchmark.
- Results have also been **externally benchmarked** against the Scottish Government People Survey 2017, that covers all SG staff and Non Departmental Government Body organisations for a Scottish comparator as well as against 2 other ombudsman surveys who have publically available survey data.

Summary of 2017/18 results

- This year there was a strong response rate - we received a **93% response rate** compared to an 81% response rate last year.
- Scores were **70% or over for 91% of the questions.**
- Scores were **90% or over in 23% of questions.**
- Only **6 areas scored below 70%** (compared to 11 last year).
- Only **1 area scored below 50%.**

Main findings – Your Job

- Areas scoring above 70%: **9 out of 10 questions** in this category scored over 70%, including my **work gives me a feeling of personal accomplishment which scored 100%**.
- Areas previously identified below 70% for improvement: scores relating to feeling that individual **contributions to success are valued** and **feelings of job security** both increased to above the 70% threshold.
- Area(s) for further focus: only one score fell below 70% in this area - **targets being ambitious but realistic** scored 58.3%
- Additional comments: two thirds of the comments in this section related to the setting and achievement of productivity targets. *A small number of comments related to the office move and the impact this may have on individuals.*
- *Examples: ‘confirmation of a change of productivity targets is outstanding’, ‘I am unsure if I am meeting my targets’, ‘I do not think the targets are ambitious’, ‘I discuss my targets with my manager and feel they are realistic and achievable’.*

Main findings – internal relations

- Areas scoring above 70%: **6 out of 7 questions** in this category scored over 70%.
- Areas previously identified below 70% for improvement: **being kept well informed about the organisation increased from 65.2% to 78.3%**.
- Area(s) for further focus: only one score fell below 70% last year and continued to fall below this year – **our roles are structured to enable us to work together scored 45%** (compared to 56.5% last year).
- Additional comments: there were a number of comments that reflected the increased score relating to being kept better informed. There were also four other themes in the comments, that were linked. The first related to the level of interaction, cooperation and knowledge sharing between teams, the second related to the difficulties that the physical separation of teams creates in terms of communication, the third referred to the reliance on detailed email communication in place of face to face conversations and the fourth related to ensuring information is shared in a timely fashion with all and not 'leaked out';
- *Examples: 'we are kept much better informed of what is going on in the organisation than last year', 'more opportunities to share knowledge and practice between teams would be welcome', 'lack of engagement from SMT and between teams', 'teams don't always work effectively/cooperatively', 'having a team in a different physical location makes inter-team communication significantly harder...now things have to be done by email or scheduled in more formally', 'too many emails', 'people opt for email that can be taken in the wrong way over picking up the phone', 'I am sometimes concerned about how information is shared...hearing what I would consider to be confidential information being discussed at random'.*

Main findings – external customers

- Areas scoring above 70%: **5 out of 5 questions** in this category scored over 70%
- Areas previously identified below 70% for improvement: there were no scores below 70%. Scores continued to increase in 4 out of 5 areas in particular in relation to people feeling supported when they are communicating sensitive or difficult information.
- Additional comments: the comments in this section related to two issues – managing difficult conversations and the method of communication used with complainants. There were mixed views on how difficult conversations and difficult behaviour was managed, with some comments referring to a need to act more quickly and strongly, with others feeling will supported in having such conversations. In terms of contact, there was some concern expressed that we need to listen to how complainant want to be communicated with.
- *Examples: ‘I have support from my manager and colleagues...in dealing with vulnerable and difficult customers’, ‘Support comes from immediate colleagues (including my manager), whose help and assistance is greatly valued’, ‘difficult customers are not dealt with nearly quickly enough...they should be confronted immediately, not following several warnings’, ‘difficult complainants are accommodated, particularly when they are dealt with by managers and senior managers’, ‘with the push to speak with complainants, we are sometimes failing to take their wishes into account’.*

Main findings - management

- Areas scoring above 70%: **11 out of 11 questions** in this category scored over 70%. **Three areas scored over 90% - my manager strives to support and deliver better ways of working, I set my performance with my manager and my performance is regularly reviewed.**
- Areas previously identified below 70% for improvement: **I/my team are consistently recognised when we exceed expectations.**
- Area(s) for further focus: There were no areas scoring below 70% in this area.
- Additional comments: Comments in this section related to support, performance management and recognition. Comments about receiving support were largely positive, with plenty of evidence of good manager support with only one reference to unsupportive behaviours. A number of comments were received regarding performance management, which were again largely positive but with a couple of comments that people were unsure how the performance of others was managed. With regards to recognition there was a sense people were unclear whether the contribution of all teams was recognised and understood by the wider organisation.
- *Examples: 'my manager is very hands on and supportive', 'all of the senior managers are very supportive and provide regular positive feedback', 'my manager is quite defensive at times', 'I can say with certainty that my performance is managed very well and rewarded, but I can't say whether this is true for each member of the team', 'I don't know whether performance issues are managed', 'I don't feel my team's contribution has always been recognised...I think this is improving though'.*

Main findings - leadership

- Areas scoring above 70%: this area scored over 70% in 6 of 7 areas (compared to 3 in 2016-17).
- Areas previously identified below 70% for improvement: these included **SPSO has a clear plan for the future, the senior management team clearly communicates the vision and values, and the senior management team are open and responsive** - all of these increased to above 70%.
- An area for further focus, that also scored below 70% last year was **I feel motivated by the senior management team.**
- Additional comments: This scored below 70% last year as well and again there was a higher score than for other questions in the neither agree nor disagree scores (22%). This is higher than for any other area. This may in part be as a result of the recent change in personnel at the time of the survey with a relatively newly formed senior management team. This was supported by some of the comments. There were also comments about the availability, accessibility and inclusiveness of the SMT.
- *Examples:* 'as new Ombudsman most of questions cannot be answered', 'some feeling of uncertainty of direction during the initial year of new ombudsman', 'senior management team are remote', 'senior management team are obviously very stretched for time...sometimes this means there's a feeling that they are busy and this has a negative impact on communication', 'recently...there has been more communication, more involvement and [SMT] have been more open and transparent', 'the holding bay discussion was really constructive and felt inclusive of staff'.

Main findings – learning and development

- Areas scoring above 70%: 7 of the 7 areas in this category scored above 70%
- Areas previously identified below 70% for improvement: the area that scored below 70% last year (**I believe that the SPSO are committed to developing me**) rose to above 70%
- Area(s) for further focus: there were no new areas of focus
- Additional comments: The most comments in this section related to opportunities for learning and development. A number of people commented that there were good opportunities for learning and development but a number of others referred to the challenge of balancing workloads with being able to take up learning and development opportunities. A much smaller number of comments related to planning of training to make sure it is more evenly spread out, to more specific subject matter training, and to greater and more open access to non-casework related development opportunities
- *Examples: ‘the level of opportunity and availability for learning and development is excellent and exceeds levels I have experienced within other public bodies’, ‘due to workload pressures it has been impossible for staff to investigate and identify potential courses/shadowing opportunities’, ‘heavy workloads mean that learning and development opportunities are fewer, although in house learning and development is good’, ‘development opportunities need to be openly advertised’,*

Main findings – equalities & diversity and bullying & harassment

- Areas scoring above 70%: 5 of the 5 questions in these sections scored over 70%
- Areas previously identified below 70%. The one area that previously scored below 70% was **the feedback I receive helps to improve my performance** – this rose to 74.5%
- Additional comments: There were a very small number of comments in this section including that whilst individual differences are respected, individual working styles are too driven by processes, there is good support for any concerns about bullying and development opportunities could be made more openly available to all
- *Examples: ‘the focus is on consistency in service delivery rather than encouraging individuals to their own preferred style’, ‘I reported concerns about bullying...and was supported by my manager’, ‘some...opportunities are not always openly advertised’*

Main findings – perceptions of the SPSO

- Areas scoring above 70%: 7 of the 9 scores in this area were above 70%
- Areas previously identified below 70% for improvement included **at the SPSO we embrace change to create a sustainable future** – this score increased to 82.8% - and **at the SPSO we have the resources we need to complete our work efficiently.**
- Area(s) for further focus: This year the question relating to resourcing was split into physical and people resources. 58.6% of people felt SPSO had the physical resources to complete our work efficiently whereas only 38% felt we have the people resources we require to do so.
- Additional comments: A number of the responses in this section related to the effectiveness of our IT systems, primarily Workpro. A similar number commented on workloads. A smaller number commented on having teams in different physical locations and the issues this causes, and separately that there needs to be a continued focus on looking for improvement and efficiencies across all teams.
- *Examples: 'Workpro continues to be clunky', 'regular workpro issues, problems and inadequacies significantly impact on the efficient processing of casework', 'I have told people it is a good place to work but I have qualified it by saying that the workload is high and very demanding'. 'I believe that we are getting closer to the resources that we need', 'being in a separate office has been a significant negative change', 'we haven't fully and properly explored all ways to make us more efficient in our case handling'*

Key changes compared to 2016/17

Areas where we saw a significant increase in scores (more than 10%) matched with areas that we tried to focus on in this year's plan and were:-

- **I feel that my contribution to the success of the SPSO is valued** (increase from 65% to 83.4%).
- **I am kept well informed about what the organisation is doing** (65% to 78%).
- **SPSO has a clear plan for the future to ensure continued success** (67% to 78%).
- **The senior management team are open and responsive** (65% to 76%).

Conversely, areas where we saw a significant fall in scores were:-

- **My targets are ambitious but realistic** (74% to 58%).
- **Our roles are structured to enable us to work well together** (56% to 45%).
- **I feel motivated by my line manager** (88% to 77%).
- **Performance is managed in my team** (91% to 78% - it's worth noting here that there was one of the highest neither agree nor disagree).

Key areas of focus

Below 50%

- **People resources** (38% - increased from last year).
- **Our roles are structured to enable us to work well together** (45% - decreased from last year).

Below 70%

- **Physical resources** (increased from last year).
- **Targets** (decreased from last year).
- **Amount of work** (65% - increased from last year).
- **Senior management team motivation** (66% - increased from last year).

Staff survey/IIP Action Plan and Business Plan Objectives 2017/18

Resources and workload

- Continued improvements to operational effectiveness and efficiencies.
- Improved knowledge sharing.
- Continued promotion of health and well being.
- Efficient recruitment and resourcing to maintain full complement of staff as far as possible.

Working together

- Review and re-lay strategic plan to build shared understanding.
- Review of governance structures, including SMT meetings and outputs – transparency of decision making.
- Review of KPIs and performance measures.

Physical resources

- Office re-location.
- Continuous improvement of case management software.

Targets

- Review of KPIs and performance measures.

Senior management team motivation

- More open recognition of high performance building on values and vision work.
- Communication Charter.

External benchmarking

External benchmarking

- Scottish Government People Survey 2016
- LGO Staff Survey 2015/16
- PHSO Employee Survey 2016

33 questions where we could draw comparison

Last year, 7 areas where SPSO scores fell below the highest external score

This year only 4 questions fall below highest comparator as follows:-

- I understand the performance standards and what I am expected to do (LGO 93%)
- I feel my contribution to the success of the SPSO is valued (SG 70%)
- The flexible working arrangements in place allow me to balance my work and home life priorities (LGO 95%, SPSO 93%)
- I feel a strong sense of belonging and purpose at the SPSO (LGO 92%, SPSO 77%)
- At the SPSO we have the people resources we need (LGO 82%, SPSO 38%)

Conclusions

- Encouraging to see that our people this year continue to have high levels of engagement across all themes of our people practices.
- We have seen improvements in our survey this year, compared to 2016/17 and it is clear that the feedback from the survey is being used at all levels of the organisation to drive improvements.
- There is some feedback that we will continue to improve upon in the coming year, although it is important to note that only 2 questions scored less than 50% and we have still made an improvement on scores compared to 2016/17.

What Happens Next

- Publication of findings.
- 2017 action plan to be updated to incorporate further suggestions for improvement.
- IIP re-assessment – commencing May 2018 - to be carried out over a rolling, three year period.