

The Service is taking an appropriate, swift and robust approach to managing these behaviours. In general, it is now following its protocol accordingly and reinforcing its publicly available policy on tolerance. This includes no longer:

- *communicating with someone by phone or in person, only in writing.*
- *communicating with someone directly, only through a representative.*
- *continuing to look at a complaint.*

I have seen that case handlers feel empowered to address customers' behaviours and in arranging to have the relevant manager involved so matters can be escalated accordingly. The training the Service introduced for staff has ensured a consistent approach and factored in staff well-being.

It is important to note that when responding to service complaints, managers will, where necessary, address customers' challenging and inappropriate behaviours. This is because customers need to be reminded of what the Service will and will not tolerate. There are basic rules of engagement to ensure the Service can deliver the best service it can and look after the needs of all its customers and ensure the wellbeing of its staff.

Going forward, I would like to see the Service continue with the work and progress it has carried out in this area and, when necessary, roll out refresher training sessions for its staff.

Lastly, I also believe it appropriate for case handlers and Ombudsman to explain and remind customers that it is their investigation, which cannot and should not be directed by either party. Customers will, understandably, feel strongly about their case and the information the Service should consider but, ultimately, this is something that only the case handler or Ombudsman can determine.

Looking forward

In this, my final report to the board, I have focused on the key areas the Service should continue to work on. Throughout my term the Service has always been keen to learn from mistakes and to continue to improve the customer experience. I hope the spirit of learning and improvement from the work of the independent assessor continues to ensure the customer's journey with the Service is as smooth as it can possibly be.