

William Wragg MP
Chair, Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee

Sent by e-mail

20 July 2020

Dear William,

I am writing to share with the Committee my [Annual Report for 2019-20](#), published today. The Report highlights significant progress made towards meeting our strategic objectives during the second year of our 2018-21 Strategy.

Raising standards

We have continued to develop the skills and professionalism of staff through offering training and development opportunities to meet new quality standards for casework.

We are making increasing numbers of decisions without the need for a detailed investigation. We have developed our capacity for mediation, enabling us to facilitate conversations between complainants and bodies in jurisdiction.

In October 2019 I created an independent, external Expert Advisory Panel, which is already making an important contribution to improving service quality and increasing the impact of casework.

Increasing impact

We are publishing increasing numbers of case summaries seeking out more opportunities to engage with stakeholders and the wider public. In October 2019, we held the third Annual Open Meeting, and in February 2020 I published my first Annual Ombudsman's Casework Report, which illustrated the breadth of PHSO's casework involving Government departments and agencies and the NHS.

Earlier this week, we launched a consultation on a draft Complaint Standards Framework for the NHS, which I wrote to you about separately. This was the result of extensive engagement throughout the year with NHS staff, advocacy groups, regulators and other stakeholders.



Working internationally

PHSO continues to make an active contribution to the international Ombudsman community, making the key contribution to Guidance on Ombudsman Peer Review for the International Ombudsman Institute, welcoming a range of European Ombudsman guests on to Radio Ombudsman and supporting the development of the Venice Principles on the Protection and Promotion of the Ombudsman Institution, the new European benchmark for Ombudsman independence and effectiveness. These Principles will play a key role in the development of PHSO over the next decade.

Responding to COVID-19

As you know, to avoid placing additional burdens on the NHS at a time of national emergency, in early March, we took the decision to pause the consideration of health complaints. PHSO colleagues responded positively and professionally to the changes, continuing to work hard to resolve and progress casework where possible, and to maintain a full helpline service throughout. We resumed our health casework from 1 July.

I would be happy to discuss the findings of the report at our next meeting. In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact me should you appreciate further information. We look forward to welcoming you to our Citygate office in Manchester later this year.

Yours sincerely,

Rob Behrens

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Ombudsman and Chair
Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman



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