

Written evidence from Paul Robert Barford (PHS26)

Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman Scrutiny 2021-22

I have been asked to submit the following evidence on behalf of Paul Barford, Richard Fuller's constituent in North East Bedfordshire. My name is Dylan Simmons, and I am Richard's Caseworker.

My name is Paul Robert Barford. I am a Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO) complainant. I would like to provide evidence of the poor casework performance of the PHSO. The general themes of the poor casework performance of the PHSO are as follows:

- The PHSO rejecting complaints without any input from the complainant.
- The PHSO conducting service reviews without any input from the complainant.
- The PHSO conducting service reviews upon themselves – a clear conflict of interests. There is no independent body to appeal about the service provided by the PHSO.
- PHSO investigative work practices requiring evidence gathering that is impossible for complainants to achieve.
- When PHSO mistakes are discovered through telephone dialogue with the complainant the PHSO made U-turns on the corrective actions agreed with the complainant.
- Telephone recording evidence, which would prove the mistakes made by the PHSO, was not retained for independent and impartial scrutiny.
- PHSO communication with complainants is poor. There is no contact with PHSO staff for months despite reminders from the complainant by email and by telephone.
- Failures by the PHSO are only acknowledged when they are brought to their attention by a Member of Parliament (MP). But the most serious and systemic failures are rejected.
- PHSO communication with my MP (Richard Fuller, North East Bedfordshire) was poor.
- The PHSO sent incorrect information to my MP.

I have kept, and sent to Mr Fuller, four dated telephone recordings. These recordings are only held by the PHSO for 30 days, and they prove the problems and difficulties I had with the PHSO. Either Mr Fuller or I can provide the recordings if requested. I also have further documentation which is more case specific which can be provided if requested by the Committee if it would help explain or expand upon my above points. I would also be happy to provide any other requested information.

I would also like to put on record that it would be wrong to conclude that this is a "one off". It is not a "one off" - it is the only one I know about - and you only know about this because:

- I had the foresight to acquire telephone recording evidence that is usually destroyed by the PHSO.

- I had the foresight to report these systemic failures to my Member of Parliament, and as a result of this, I got his continued support.
- My belief that PHSO complainants should be treated fairly, listened to, contacted properly, and contacted promptly.
- My moral and fundamental beliefs of right and wrong.

I hope this evidence will be accepted and investigated by PACAC. An independent and impartial organisation needs to investigate the PHSO to determine the scale and depth of the systemic problems prevalent within the PHSO, and the number of other poor PHSO complainants who have been similarly poorly and unfairly treated.

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