

**Written evidence from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)
(PHS32)**

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

About the Ombudsman

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) investigates complaints about councils and some other authorities and organisations, including independent adult social care providers, in England. It is a free service. Our role is to investigate complaints in a fair and impartial way – we do not take sides.

We look into the circumstances of an individual complaint and make judgements on whether the person affected has suffered injustice. We then make recommendations for improvement.

These recommendations can be at an individual level and are designed to put the person affected back into the situation they would have been, had they not suffered the injustice. We also make recommendations for overall service improvement within the organisation, and we help improve services by sharing the learning from our complaints through our thematic reports and guidance.

Working with PHSO

Since 2015 we have worked with PHSO on an innovative piece of collaborative work.

This 'Joint Working' team, made up of staff from each organisation, investigates those complaints where the issues involve both social care and health matters, and the issues are so intertwined neither LGSCO nor PHSO can investigate them in isolation.

This team has achieved significant outcomes not only for individual complainants, but also making recommendations to organisations in local government, health and social care sectors about how they should improve their own working practices to prevent similar problems happening again.

This year, LGSCO and PHSO worked together to produce guidance for mental health practitioners. It focused on a specific issue that councils and health organisations can often fail to deliver properly - the provision of services to people who have previously been an inpatient for mental health treatment or care. The innovative guidance was issued to organisations within PHSO's and LGSCO's jurisdiction to share good practice and encourage learning from complaints. This collaborative guidance supports organisations to ensure they

can avoid some of the common pitfalls the Joint Working team sees in its complaint investigations, improving the experience for service users and their families.

As well as this guidance, PHSO and LGSCO worked together to issue the first joint public interest report, highlighting how the organisations that should have helped a particularly vulnerable young woman, failed her and did so multiple times.

These joint publications reflect the high level of trust and maturity in our relationship which translates into a better service for the public.

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman take the opportunity to learn from each other through their membership on each other's Boards, and through regular operational discussions between managers from both organisations.

November 2022