

Written evidence from Nicholas Wheatley (PHS 26)

Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman Scrutiny 2019-20 inquiry

Summary

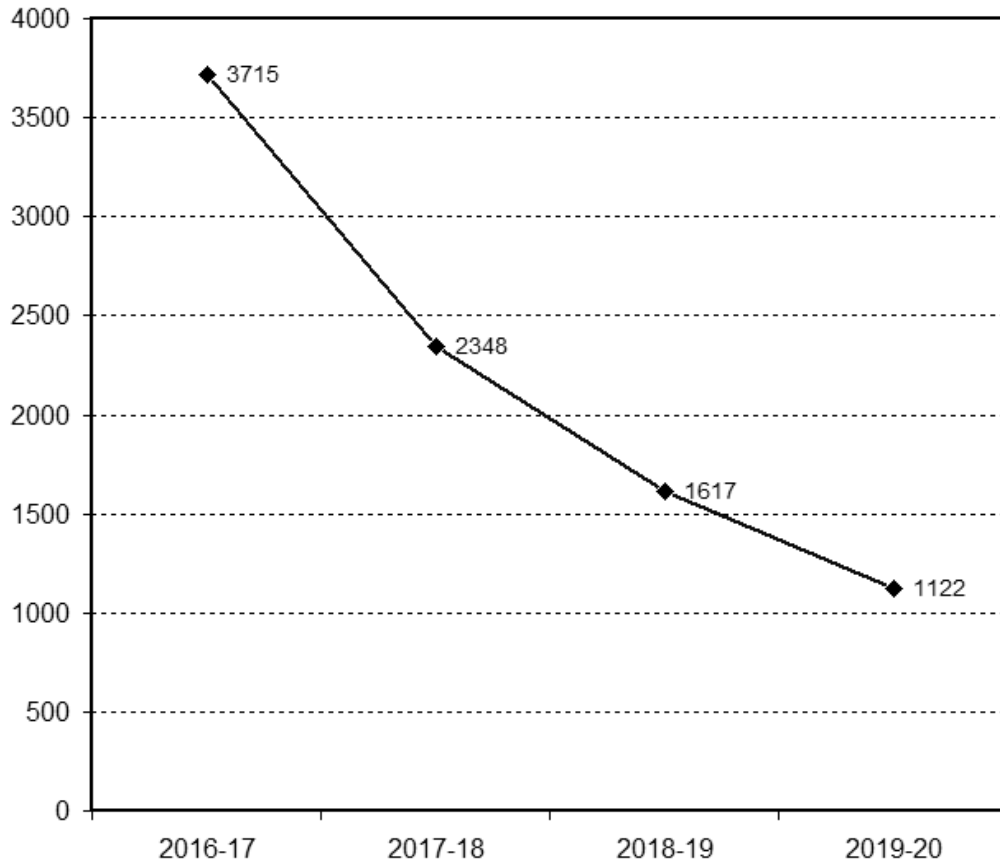
1. Decline in service provision during the current Ombudsman's tenure.
2. Decline in service provision in 2019-20
3. 24% spending reduction target not met
4. Sources for statistics used in this evidence

1. Decline in service provision during the current Ombudsman's tenure

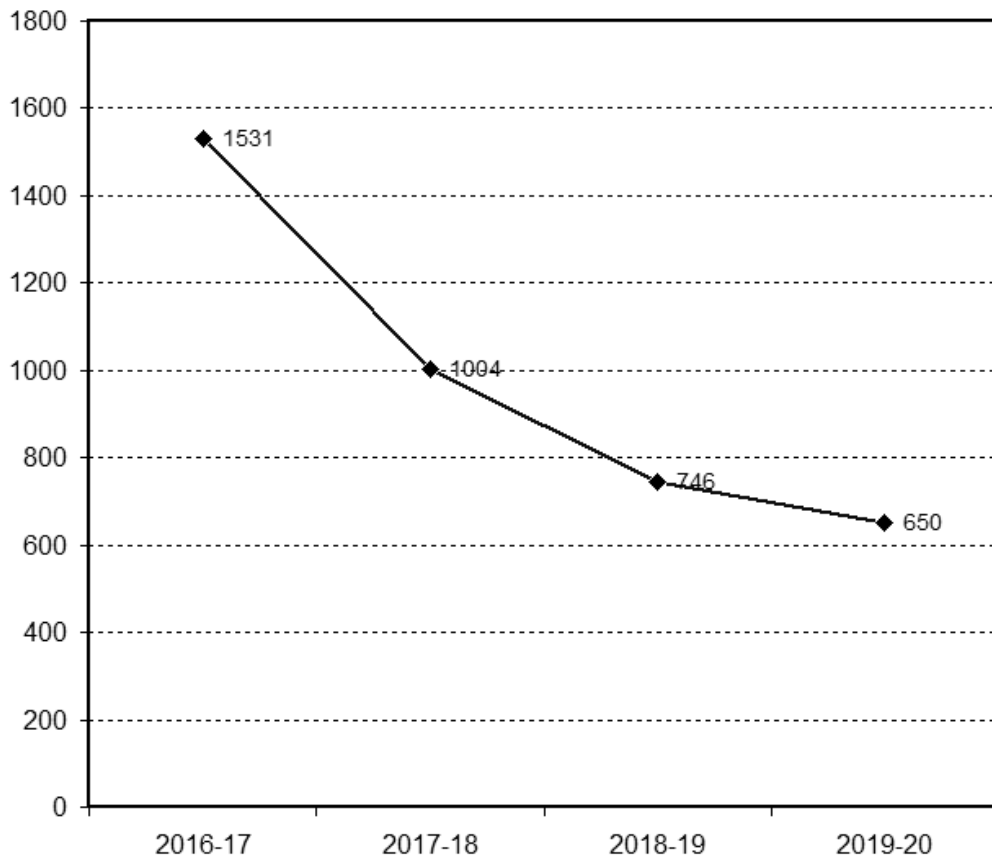
- a) Number of investigations carried out **DOWN 70%**
- b) Number of complaints upheld **DOWN 58%**
- c) Number of complaints fully upheld **DOWN 75%** from 2014-15
- d) Number of resolutions **DOWN 33%** from 2014-15*
- e) Number of assessments carried out **DOWN 36%**

** The number of resolutions has increased by 147 over the last 3 years but the number of investigations has decreased by 2,593 over the same period*

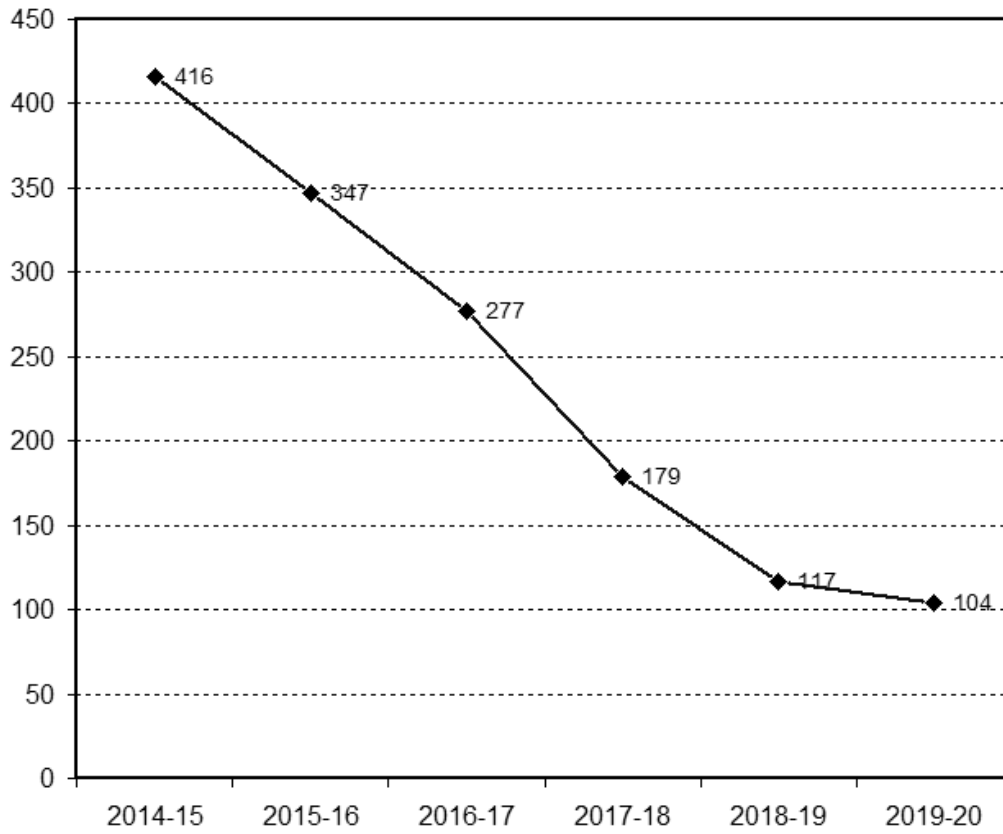
Number of Investigations Carried Out



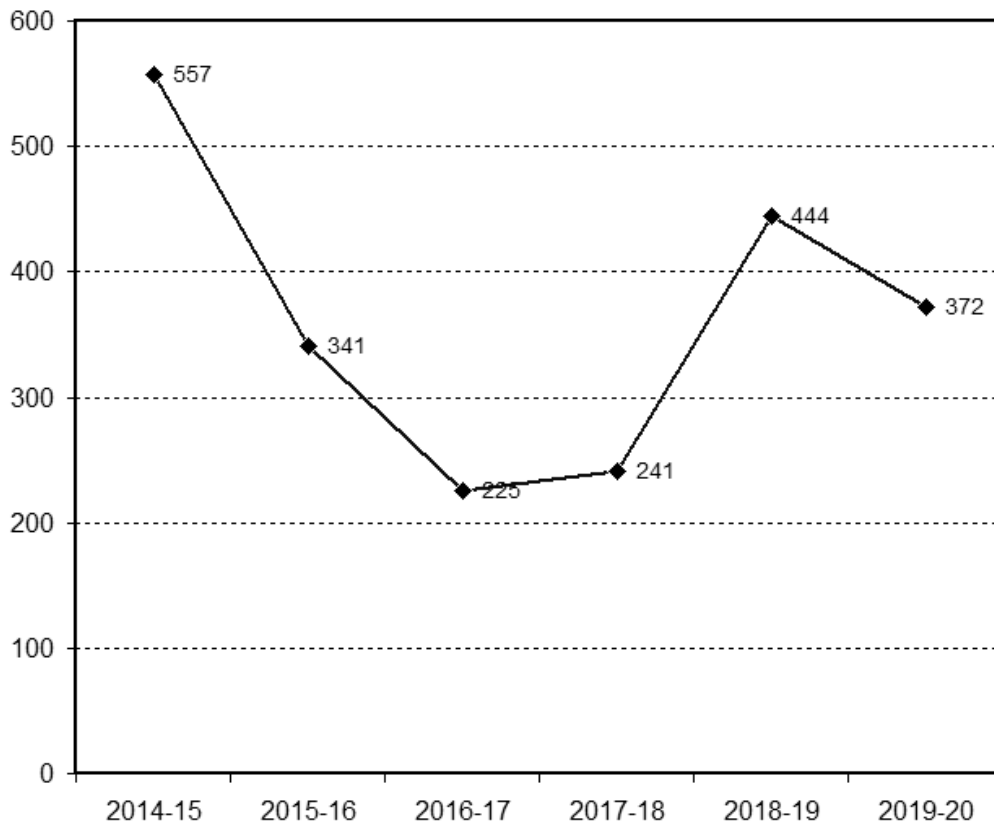
Number of Complaints Upheld



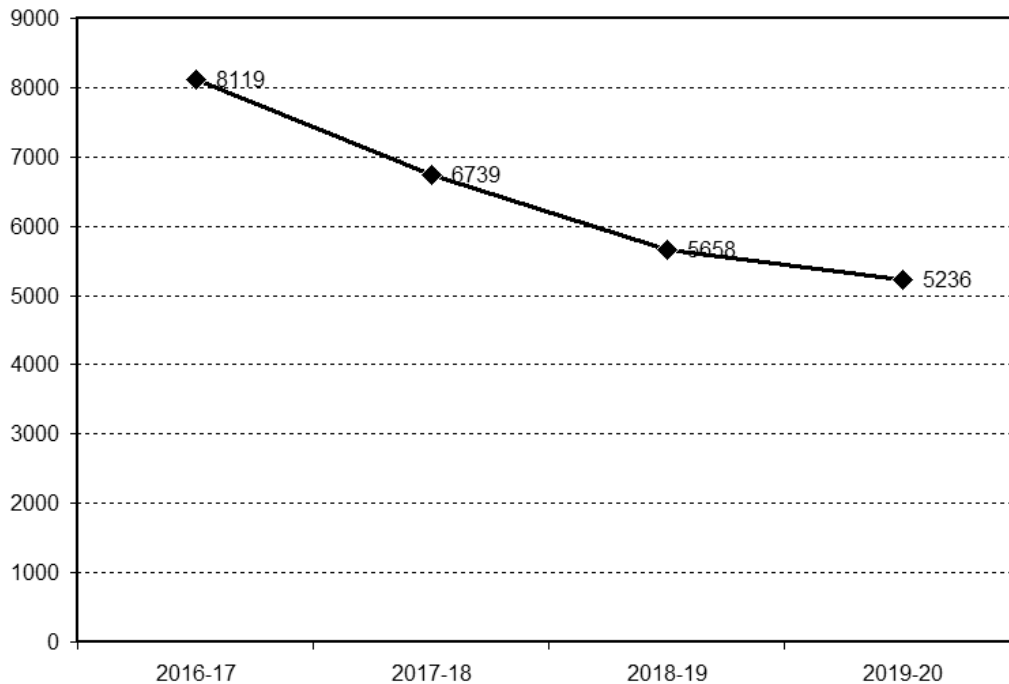
Complaints Fully Upheld



Resolutions



Number of Assessments Carried Out



2. Decline in service provision in 2019-20

- a) Number of new complaints **DOWN 4%***
- b) Number of investigations carried out **DOWN 30%**
- c) Number of resolutions **DOWN 16%**
- d) Number of assessments carried out **DOWN 8%**
- e) Number of complaints upheld **DOWN 13%**
- f) Number of complaints fully upheld **DOWN 11%**

* 2018-19 - 29,294 new complaints (page 31 of Annual Report)
2019-20 - 28,103 new complaints (page 28 of Annual Report)

During the last scrutiny meeting by PACAC on 18 May 2020, in response to Q47 by Tom Randall, the Ombudsman stated:

“The volume of cases being submitted to us has risen....by 13%”

Bruce Newsome, in an article in The Critic, questions this figure in detail.

<https://thecritic.co.uk/why-is-the-government-letting-another-quango-mislead-parliament/>

Examining the annual reports for 2018-19 and 2019-20 there is no sign of a 13% rise in the volume of cases.

There is however plenty of evidence of significant decline in other areas of the Ombudsman's service in 2019-20 as shown in the above statistics.

3. 24% spending reduction target not met

During the last scrutiny meeting by PACAC on 18 May 2020, in response to Q47, the Ombudsman stated, regarding the PHSO's budget, "...in the last period we took a hit of 24%".

The Annual Report states, at the bottom of page 46, regarding the most recent Comprehensive Spending Review targets:

"These targets, approved by HM Treasury, represent a real terms reduction of 24.3% in spending from 2016 to 2020. In 2019-20 we met this target..."

The target allegedly met was stated to be £25.942 million (also at the bottom of page 46).

However, on page 103 it can be seen that the Comprehensive Net Expenditure for the year was £27.121 million.

So the spending target was not met as claimed, and there was in fact an overspend of £1.179 million.

4. Sources for statistics used in this evidence

The statistics used in this evidence come from the Annual Reports published by the PHSO over the past 3 years and from Freedom of Information requests.

PHSO Annual Report 2019-20 – pages 30, 31, 46 & 103

PHSO Annual Report 2018-19 – pages 27 & 28

PHSO Annual Report 2017-18 – pages 20 & 22

Freedom of Information Requests have been used to find the number of fully upheld complaints after 2017-18 as the Ombudsman no longer reports this information in the Annual Report.

https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/complaints_upheld_in_201920_and#incoming-1632458

https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/678713/response/1632458/attach/3/Break%20down%20of%20complaints%20data%20from%20Annual%20Report%202019%2020.pdf?cookie_passthrough=1

https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/questions_on_the_201819_phso_ann#incoming-1421080

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