

Written evidence from The General Medical Council (PHO 27)

Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman Scrutiny 2020-21 inquiry

Our role

- 1 The General Medical Council helps to protect patients and improve medical education and practice in the UK by setting standards for students and doctors. We support them in achieving (and exceeding) those standards and take action when they are not met.

Submission

- 2 We welcome the opportunity to respond to the Committee's call for evidence on the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO) annual scrutiny 2020-21. Over recent years, we have welcomed the opportunity to work with the PHSO on streamlining complaints handling and working in partnership to improve quality and prevent harm. From our engagement, we can see the PHSO has worked to deliver on its ambitions to become more externally focused and strengthen their relationships as set out in its corporate strategy.
- 3 A specific area to mention is the PHSO's work on creating the NHS Complaint Standards. We support the PHSO's work to help organisations in providing a quicker, simpler and more streamlined complaint handling service, with a strong focus on early resolution. The framework improves the patient experience, and early resolution benefits all involved. We are grateful to the PHSO for involving us in their work.
- 4 The PHSO has been a helpful and supportive stakeholder in our work. In 2019 and 2020, the PHSO worked closely with us on our Better Signposting project, feeding in their valuable expertise and ideas. We welcomed their feedback, which was used to revise the fitness to practise information we provide on our website for patients and the public.
- 5 We also work with the PHSO as signatories to the cross-regulatory Emerging Concerns Protocol. The protocol provides a process for health and social care regulators to share information that may indicate risks to people using services, their carers, families or professionals. The protocol strengthens existing arrangements, providing a clear mechanism for raising concerns and ensuring a collaborative approach to any proposed actions. As part of this, all signatories meet on a regular basis to steer ongoing implementation of the protocol.
- 6 Going forward, we would like to continue to build our relationship with the PHSO, working with them on enhancing patient safety and the GMC's review of Good Medical Practice, the guidance that describes what it means to be a good doctor. We

also recognise the opportunities the Health and Care Bill will provide for us to work with the PHSO, The Health Service Safety Investigations Body and other bodies to continue to improve patient safety by supporting an open and just culture that is supportive, inclusive and fair for medical professionals.

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