

Written evidence from Helen Vernon (PHO 39)

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

Please consider this as NHS Resolution's written submission to the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee on NHS Resolution's experience of working with the PHSO.

NHS Resolution is an Arm's Length body of the Department of Health and Social Care and our primary function is the administration of indemnity schemes for clinical and non-clinical liabilities on behalf of the Secretary of State of Health and Social Care. We receive claims for compensation from patients, staff and members of the public who have been harmed as a result of NHS care or an accident on NHS premises and aim to resolve these fairly as well as to learn from what has happened for the purposes of safety improvement.

Our experience of working with the PHSO has been a very positive one with constructive engagement on shared objectives and a genuine willingness to share ideas, experience and where appropriate, resources and information for the wider benefit of NHS patients.

NHS Resolution has undertaken various pieces of collaborative work with the PHSO by virtue of our shared strategic interest in improving complaints handling within the NHS. Within the [refreshed strategic plan](#), NHS Resolution committed to contribute to a just and learning culture across the NHS and to inform and enable improvements to how incidents and complaints are managed. Our research into [why some people brought a claim](#), suggested that patients who made legal claims were unlikely to be satisfied with the way in which their complaint was handled at local level.

We have been pleased to support the PHSO in their valuable work to lead the development of [NHS Complaints Standards](#) to enable a consistent approach to handling and learning from complaints, and to support local resolution across the health service. The PHSO has worked in a collaborative and open way, to deliver practical and 'common-sense' Standards which offer the potential to transform the way in which complaints are managed in the NHS. The leadership that the PHSO has demonstrated on this issue has welcomed as have the steps taken to highlight the need to value and professionalise local trust complaints teams.

By way of a few examples of collaborative working in practice. NHS Resolution is currently undertaking research with the University of Nottingham to determine how comprehensible NHS complaint responses are for patients. In order to ensure that the recommendations arising from the research are considered and used by complaint handlers, the PHSO has supported our request to ensure the recommendations are embedded within the Complaints Standards.

NHS Resolution and the PHSO have also jointly published the document '[Information for NHS trusts on the respective roles of the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman and NHS Resolution](#)' to ensure that local complaints and claims handlers are clear about our organisations respective roles and responsibilities.

Representatives from NHS Resolution meet with representatives from the PHSO to share intelligence on themes arising from complaints and claims and to ensure a joined up approach is taken on any work which might overlap. This ongoing exchange will be of particular value to NHS Resolution in terms of visibility of issues that may arise from the pandemic and become a compensation claim.

The work of the PHSO is by definition challenging as the issues it deals with, like NHS Resolution are contentious and often the result of conflicting and strongly held views on highly sensitive issues. The professional and open way in which the PHSO operates in this challenging environment is, in our view, commendable and we look forward to continuing our joint work in the future.

October 2021