

## Press Release

Friday 22 March 2013

### **More investigations for more people**

From 2 April 2013, the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman will be investigating more complaints and sharing more information with government organisations and the NHS, marking the first step in delivering plans to have more impact for more people.

Under the new plans, the starting point will be that once a complaint meets some basic tests, it will usually be investigated. This means the Ombudsman service will be investigating and sharing the learning from thousands more complaints each year. The changes will benefit individual complainants, public services and the wider public. For complainants, an independent organisation will have looked at their complaint and made a formal ruling on it. For the NHS and other organisations complained about - such as HM Revenue and Customs, Department for Work and Pensions, the Border Agency, the Planning Inspectorate, or any other government departments and public bodies - they will benefit from seeing, commenting on and learning from more of the cases the Ombudsman looks at. This will help them improve public services.

The Ombudsman is changing the way it works with government organisations and the NHS because it wants to help more people. The new approach is also a response to what public organisations themselves want from the Ombudsman service, which is to share more learning from the cases it looks at. This will also support the drive across public services to use complaints to identify service failure and deliver service improvement, especially in light of the recent findings by the Mid Staffordshire Public Inquiry.

Julie Mellor, the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman said:

“We’ve responded to feedback from public services, parliamentarians and our public research. That’s why we will begin investigating more complaints from the beginning of April.

We want complaints to make a difference and help improve public services for everyone. There will be more opportunities for service providers to learn from complaints which can be used to improve public services. We still want complaints to be resolved locally wherever possible. By sharing more of the learning from complaints that do come to us, we will help organisations get better at resolving the complaints themselves.”

The next steps in the process will see the Ombudsman consulting with public services and the public about further changes which will be designed to make it easier for people to find and use their service, to help public services get better and to get complaints heard.

**Ends**

**Notes to editor:**

1. The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman was set up by Parliament to help both individuals and the general public. We are independent of the government and the NHS. The Ombudsman's role is to investigate complaints that individuals have been treated unfairly or have received poor service from government departments, other public organisations and the NHS in England. The service is free to use and open to everyone.
2. If someone is unhappy about the service they have received from a government department, another public organisation or the NHS, they should first make their complaint to the department or organisation in question and give them the chance to respond. If they're not happy with how their complaint is dealt with, they should contact the Ombudsman - call 0345 015 4033 or email [phso.enquiries@ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:phso.enquiries@ombudsman.org.uk).
3. For media enquiries, contact the Ombudsman's Press Office on 0300 061 4996/4272 or email [press@ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:press@ombudsman.org.uk).