

Quarterly Bulletin

Winter 2020

Welcome to another edition of our Quarterly Bulletin. The Bulletin aims to provide readers with a short, easy-to-read summary of news from the Office, drawing attention to our most recent investigation reports, providing updates on new initiatives, and highlighting other aspects of our work.



Ombudsman's Report 2019-20

Our annual report shows that in 2019-20 we received 1,043 complaints, a significant increase of 37% from the previous year and an overall increase of 119% in four years. Just over a third of complaints related to the health and social care sector, involving complaints about delays in care and treatment in hospitals and care homes, misdiagnosis, and poor communication.



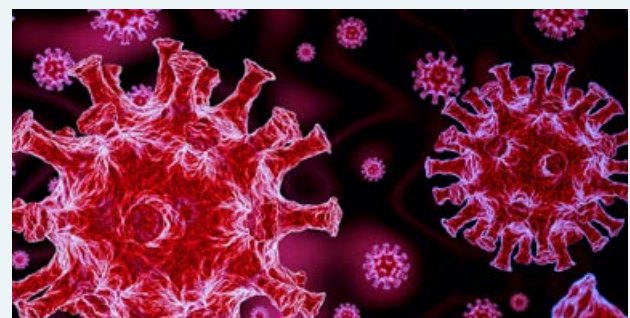
A new Ombudsman for Northern Ireland

The new Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman, Margaret Kelly, took up post on August 19. Prior to becoming Ombudsman Ms Kelly worked in the voluntary and community sector for over 30 years, gaining a range of experience in leading and managing services, developing policy and working in partnership with the public sector.



Investigation Reports

We publish the majority of our Investigation Reports on our website. If we believe that an individual (eg. a complainant or staff member of the public body) might be unfairly affected by publication we may choose not to publish the full report. We may instead produce a thematic report or case digest with anonymised case studies for the purposes of learning and improvement.



Our approach to complaints and investigations during COVID-19

Our office has been closed to visitors since March, but we have continued to help members of the public with their enquiries and complaints. Our investigations also continue, although our approach has been to continue our work without placing unreasonable demands on staff in public bodies.

Own Initiative REPORT

[Report into the administration of Personal Independence Payments](#)

Our investigation into the availability and application of further evidence in the administration of Personal Independence Payment's is now nearing completion. A draft report has been sent to the Department for Communities for comment on factual accuracy. The investigation was launched as part of the 'Own Initiative' power, which allows the Ombudsman to examine issues without receiving a complaint.



[Complaints Forum](#)

We have launched a series of Complaints Forums where representatives from our Office meet with complaints handling teams across a range of public bodies. The Forums allow participants to discuss all matters related to complaints procedures and practices, to share and learn from the experiences of others, and to give feedback to NIPSO on matters of interest.



[Making a difference](#)

"Our job is to make a difference for the many individuals who come to our office, having experienced difficulties and sometimes even trauma or grief", explained Ombudsman Margaret Kelly in a short video to mark International Ombudsman Day. Click on the link above to see the video.



[Scrutiny by the Northern Ireland Assembly](#)

Senior Ombudsman staff regularly provide evidence to the Northern Ireland Assembly's Audit Committee. The Committee scrutinises the Office's spending. It, rather than the Department of Finance, carries out this function in recognition of the independence of the Office.

[Follow us on Twitter to stay informed](#)

Our Twitter account provides regular information about our work. Follow us [@NIPSO_Comms](#) to read our investigation reports and learn more about what we do..



If you would like to subscribe to editions of this Bulletin please [Subscribe](#)

Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman,
Progressive House,
33 Wellington Place,
Belfast, BT1 6HN
Opening Hours:
9.00am - 5.00pm, Monday to Friday