

**11 July 2019**

## **Complaints to Ombudsman rise for third successive year**

A report released today has revealed that complaints to the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman increased by 15% in the last year. During 2018-19 the Office received 762 new complaints. This is the third successive year in which complaints to the Ombudsman have increased.

The annual Ombudsman's report shows that of the complaints received in 2018-19:

- 40% were about health and social care matters
- 19% were about government departments and agencies
- 12% were about education
- 10% were about local councils
- 10% were about housing

In common with previous years, the largest category of complaints related to health and social care issues. These included complaints about delays in care and treatment, misdiagnosis, poor communication with patients and their families, and complaints about eligibility for continuing healthcare.

In her final annual report before leaving office, Ombudsman Marie Anderson reflected on the changes in her Office since the passing of the Public Services Ombudsman Act (Northern Ireland) 2016.

These include making it easier for the public to complain to the Ombudsman, an expansion in remit to allow for the investigation of complaints across the whole of the education sector in Northern Ireland, and becoming the first UK public services Ombudsman to draw down 'own initiative' investigation powers.

"As a result of the progress made over the last three years I am proud to say that Northern Ireland is now able to boast the existence of a modern, forward thinking Ombudsman's office capable of investigating complaints about public services," said Ms Anderson.

Reflecting on the changes she has observed in relation to complaints handling, Ms Anderson noted notable improvements in this area have been achieved in bodies like the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust.

However the need for commencement of complaints handling regulatory powers to achieve wider improvements in the public sector was also noted in her report.

Commenting on the success of her Office over the last three years, she concluded, “The achievements are a testimony to the professionalism, dedication and hard work of all of my staff – attributes which I have benefitted from and which I know will be appreciated by my successor.”

The Ombudsman’s Report is available [here](#).