



Northern Ireland

# Public Services Ombudsman

*'Patient Safety - Public Trust  
A decade of inquiries - what is the  
learning?'*

# RUNNING ORDER

9:15	Registration & Refreshments
9:45	Housekeeping, Patient Voice Video
10:05	<b>Opening Address</b>
10:20	<b>Margaret Kelly</b> <i>NI Public Services Ombudsman</i>
10:40	<b>Sir Robert Francis KC</b> <i>Keynote address followed by Q&amp;A</i>
11:30	Break
11:45	Breakout Groups x4

## **Breakout 1 Building an Open and Just Culture**

*Hilsborowe Room*

Prof Gabriel Scally, *Visiting Professor of Public Health at the University of Bristol*  
Peter McBride, *Independent Consultant, Being Open Framework, DoH*

## **Breakout 3 Implementing an Effective Learning Culture**

*Montgomery Room*

Prof Annette Boaz, *Director, NIHR Health and Social Care Workforce Research Unit at Kings College London*  
Sean Martin, *Deputy NI Public Services Ombudsman*

## **Breakout 2 Designing Patient Safety Centred Systems**

*William Legge Room*

Helen Hughes, *CEO Patient Safety Learning*  
Prof Lourda Geoghegan, *Deputy Chief Medical Officer, DoH*  
Kieran McAteer, *Director for Quality, Safety and Improvement Policy, DoH*

## **Breakout 4 Health Inequalities & Patient Safety**

*Harberton Room*

Graham Mockler, *Director Professional Standards Authority*  
Professor Owen Barr, *Prof of Nursing & Intellectual Disabilities at Ulster University*

**1:00** Lunch

**1:45** Patient Voice Video  
**Linda Craig**, *Regional Lead Patient Client Experience Programme, PHA*  
**Chris McCann**, *Director Healthwatch England*

**2:10** **Rosemary Agnew**  
*Scottish Public Services Ombudsman and Independent National Whistleblowing Officer for the NHS in Scotland*

**2:30** **Panel Discussion**  
*Breakouts 1 & 3*

**3:00** **Panel Discussion**  
*Breakouts 2 & 4*

**3:30** Closing Remarks & Reflections



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*'Patient Safety - Public Trust*

*A decade of inquiries - what is the learning?'*

## **The Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO)**

The Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO) was established by the Public Services Ombudsman Act (NI) 2016 (the 2016 Act). NIPSO's role, is to independently and impartially investigate alleged maladministration in public services in Northern Ireland and both maladministration and the exercise of professional judgement in health and social care services.

The Ombudsman may also undertake an Own Initiative Investigation, without a complaint, where there is a reasonable suspicion of widespread failings (systemic maladministration). In June 2023 NIPSO issued an Own Initiative report: 'Forgotten - Communication with those on health waiting lists.' This identified systemic maladministration in relation to communications and made a number of significant recommendations.

The services provided by NIPSO play an important role in providing access to justice and redress for individuals, as well as supporting improvement and learning in public services.

## **Culture change and learning from complaints**

Under the 2016 Act, NIPSO has authority to set standards for complaints handling across the public sector. This project aims to transform the complaints system by creating a simple, straightforward and compassionate complaints process for all public bodies. In April 2024 we will begin this work with Health and Social Care Trusts. A key focus will be the importance of frontline resolution, timely independent investigations, and a requirement to evidence the reporting of and learning from investigations and analysis of complaints data.

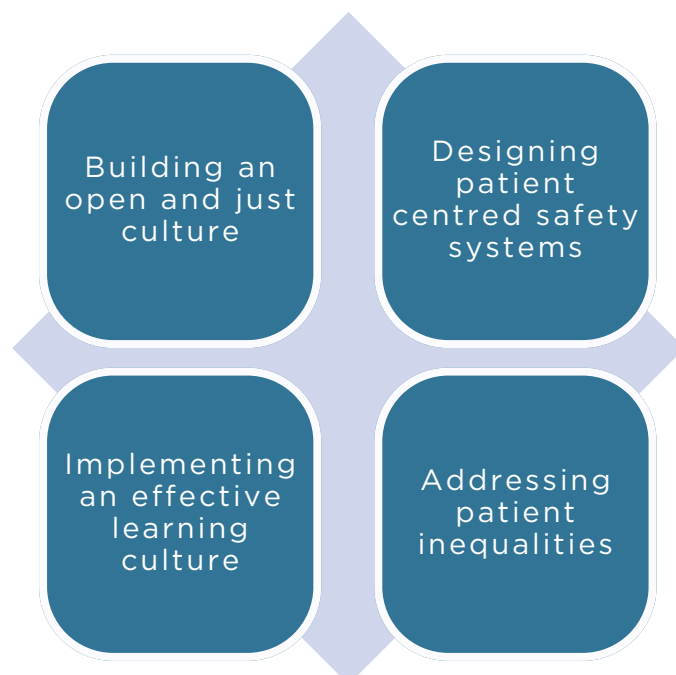
## Introduction to today's event

Complaints brought to NIPSO have doubled since the office was established in 2016. Health and social care complaints are by far the largest percentage of complaints we receive, as well as the largest percentage of complaints which require Further Investigation.

Health and social care complaints are increasingly complex, with many highlighting failures in care & treatment, a lack of communication and poor complaints handling. Members of the public report the need to be un-necessarily persistent to navigate the complaints process and obtain the answers they seek.

Mistakes and errors are unfortunately a part of life and can never be fully eradicated. However, we need to move from a culture which is sometimes defensive with a lack of openness towards a culture which values complaints and uses patient voices as an opportunity to learn and prevent future harm. A clear thread running through the findings and the recommendations of the many reports and public inquiries in recent years is the importance of good complaints handling and learning from complaints. Home Truths, CPEA (Dunmurry Manor) and the Neurology Inquiry all highlighted the fragmented nature of complaints handling and the importance of complaints data to ensure greater oversight and accountability.

Today's event aims to bring together a range of voices and expertise, to explore potential strategies and approaches to improving Patient Safety and Public Trust in our health and social care system. The conference will explore how to drive patient safety improvement in a complex health system and will focus on four key issues:





## Margaret Kelly

### Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman

The Northern Ireland Assembly nominated Margaret Kelly as the new Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman on 6 July 2020. Ms Kelly took up her post on 19 August, following appointment by Royal Warrant. Her post is for a single period of seven years.

Prior to becoming Ombudsman, Ms Kelly worked extensively in the voluntary and community sector for over 30 years and gained a range of experience in leading and managing services, developing policy and working in partnership with the public sector. She has a wealth of experience in working with children, young people and families, enabling their voices to be heard by both providers and decision makers.

She has held senior roles in many children and families organisations including Gingerbread, Barnardo's and Fostering Network NI.

From September 2015, Margaret was Director of Mencap Northern Ireland. During that time, she was responsible for developing a range of early intervention services for children with a learning disability and their families, including strategically leading early intervention across Northern Ireland, England and Wales. She also ensured that the needs of those with a learning disability had a higher priority within public services.

She graduated from Queen's University Belfast in 1986 with a BSc (Hons) in Politics and Economics and also holds an MSc from Bristol University (1988).



## Sir Robert Francis KC

Sir Robert Francis KC was called to the Bar of England and Wales in 1973. He practised as a barrister until his retirement from full-time practice in 2020, specialising in medical law, including clinical negligence, medical, patient decision-making, public inquiries, professional discipline and regulation. He remains an associate member of Serjeants Inn Chambers, London.

He has been involved in many healthcare related public inquiries, and chaired the Mid-Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust inquiries (2010, 2013) recommending reforms designed to improve values and standards in the NHS, including a legal duty of candour. He conducted the Freedom to Speak Up Review into the treatment of NHS whistleblowers (2015). In 2022 he was commissioned by the Cabinet Office to recommend a framework for compensating the victims of infected blood which was broadly accepted by the Infected Blood Inquiry. Until 2022 he chaired Healthwatch England, and was a non-executive director of the Care Quality Commission.

He co-authored *Medical Treatment: Decisions and the Law* (2009), and has been chair of the Professional Negligence Bar Association, a Recorder and a deputy High Court Judge. In 2023 he was Treasurer [Chairman] of the Honourable Society of the Inner Temple, one of the four Inns of Court.

Robert is a core panel member of the Expert Advisory Panel of the Health and Social Care Select Committee which advises the Committee on the Government's performance in implementing health related policy commitments. He is a Patron of the Florence Nightingale Foundation. He has been a trustee of the Point of Care Foundation which seeks practical ways of humanising healthcare and Prostate Cancer Research which funds cutting edge research in this area.

He was knighted in 2014 for services to health and patients, and is an honorary Fellow of the Royal College of Anaesthetists, the Royal College of Surgeons (England), the Royal College of Pathologists and the Faculty of Forensic Medicine of the Royal College of Physicians, has an honorary doctorate in law from Exeter University and an honorary doctorate in medical science from St George's Medical School.

# Breakout 1

## Building an Open and Just Culture



Prof Gabriel Scally

Gabriel Scally was born in Belfast and studied medicine at Queen's University. He trained first in general practice and then in public health medicine.

He was Director of Public Health for the Eastern Health and Social Services Board until he moved to England in 1993 as a Regional Director of Public Health (RDPH). Gabriel was an RDPH in England, and a senior civil servant in the Department of Health until 2012. Along with Liam Donaldson, he developed the concept of clinical governance and co-authored the landmark publication that defined the approach.

In recent years, he assisted with the inquiry into hyponatraemia related deaths in Northern Ireland and carried out the inquiry into the Cervical Check failures in the Republic of Ireland.

A former head of the WHO Collaborating Centre on Health and the Built Environment, he is currently a Visiting Professor of Public Health at the University of Bristol.



Peter McBride

Peter McBride is an independent consultant working on behalf of the Department of Health on a regional Being Open Framework for Northern Ireland. Peter has worked in the Community and Voluntary sector for most of his career.

Up to 2019 he was the CEO of Inspire Wellbeing and in 2021 spent a year in the US as Director of The Cohen Centre in New Hampshire, USA. In 2019, Peter was appointed as the Chair of the Being Open Workstream in the Duty of Candour component of the IHRD Implementation Programme.

After COVID, Peter was appointed to support the Being Open Programme across the health system in NI. He is involved in a number of projects across the health service and the public and private sectors.



# Designing Patient Safety Centred Systems

# Breakout 2

Helen is Chief Executive of Patient Safety Learning, a charity and independent voice for system wide change. It promotes patient safety and the reduction of avoidable harm through: policy, influencing and campaigning; developing and promoting 'how to' resources including shared learning. The hub is a free shared learning platform for patient safety and organisational standards for patient safety using the evidence-based foundations in *A Blueprint for Action*.

Helen's passion for improved patient safety is informed by personal family insight into the impact of unsafe care and the ineffectiveness of organisational responses to learning and taking action to reduce avoidable harm.

Helen is an experienced leader in organisational effectiveness and transformational change. She has held Executive leadership roles in healthcare in the UK and the WHO, the National Patient Safety Agency, Equality and Human Rights Commission, Parliamentary Health Services Ombudsman and the Charity Commission. Helen has extensive experience as Chair and Trustee in social justice and health care delivery charities.

Kieran is currently Director for Quality, Safety and Improvement policy in the Department of Health in Northern Ireland. He has been in the role since January 2023, and before that was Director for COVID-19 Test & Trace policy working as part of the Department's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Kieran graduated from Queens University Belfast in 1998 with an honours degree in Politics. He joined the Northern Ireland Civil Service in 2000 and has worked in several Departments and Agencies. He joined the Department of Health in 2006 and has held a number of roles including as a qualified Internal Auditor, as policy and legislation lead for Professional Regulation and as project lead for a review of Urgent and Emergency Care services in Northern Ireland.

In his current role, Kieran has oversight of a number of policy areas including the ongoing Redesign of the Serious Adverse Incident procedure and the emerging Being Open Framework.



Helen Hughes



Kieran McAteer





Lourda is currently Deputy Chief Medical Officer in the Department of Health in Northern Ireland. She commenced in this role in June 2020, and prior to that (from Mar 2020) she was temporarily seconded to the Department as a Senior Medical Adviser working on the Department's response to the emerging COVID-19 pandemic.



Prof Lourda Geoghegan

Over the past 4 years Lourda has been a core member of the Department's senior medical team responding to and mitigating the impacts of the pandemic. More recently she has been working on the Department's strategies for recovering both the health service and the health of the population, as Northern Ireland emerges from the pandemic. She also provides advice and expertise to a range of medical professional, educational and workforce related policy matters.

Lourda was previously Medical Director and Quality Improvement Lead in the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA), the health and care system regulator in Northern Ireland. She held that role from Jan 2017 to Mar 2020. Prior to that Lourda worked as a Consultant in Public Health/Health Protection in the Public Health Agency in Northern Ireland, from its establishment in 2009.

Lourda qualified from National University of Ireland, Galway in 1994. She received her Masters in Public Health (MPH) from University College Dublin in 2000. She completed her service training in Public Health in Northern Ireland between 2004 and 2009. She was awarded her PhD in Health Services Research from University College Dublin in 2009.

Lourda was Health Foundation GenerationQ Fellow from 2013 to 2015, during this time she completed her Masters in Leadership (Service Improvement) through Ashridge Executive Education, Hult International Business School, London. She is a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians in Ireland (Faculty of Public Health) and the UK Faculty of Public Health. Until recently she was Chair of the Ireland Chapter of Eisenhower Fellowships, an independent non-profit organisation supporting leadership development in the US and globally.





**Prof Annette Boaz**

Annette Boaz is Professor of Health and Social Care and Director of the UK NIHR Health and Social Care Workforce Research Unit at King's College London. She has more than 25 years of experience in supporting the use of evidence across a range of policy domains. She was part of one of the largest UK investments in the evidence use landscape, the ESRC Centre for Evidence Based Policy and Practice and was a Founding Editor of the Journal Evidence & Policy.

She has undertaken an international leadership role in promoting the use of evidence, recently publishing a new book on evidence use 'What Works Now' and co-leading Transforming Evidence with Kathryn Oliver. She is a member of the WHO European Advisory Committee on Health Research and advises WHO on a number of international projects. She has recently completed a fellowship based in the UK Government Office for Science.



**Sean Martin**

Sean graduated from the University of Ulster in 1991 with a BSc(Hons) First Class in Environmental Health and is a Chartered Environmental Health Practitioner. Sean has also completed programmes of post graduate study in the areas of Organisation and Management, Health Promotion, Occupational Safety and Health and in Investigative Practice. Prior to joining NIPSO Sean worked in a number of senior roles in the local government sector in the field of Environmental Health including roles in the legacy Larne Borough Council, The Northern Group Public Health Committee, Moyle District Council and Belfast City Council. Sean worked with colleagues in local government, central government and voluntary sector on the introduction of smoke-free legislation in Northern Ireland and bringing in control on the use of sunbeds. Sean has been part of working groups who have developed a number of regional strategies in the areas of health and safety at work, tobacco control and skin cancer prevention.

Sean was appointed as Deputy Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman in December 2022 having worked for NIPSO since 2014 as both a Director of Investigations and Acting Deputy Ombudsman. Sean also holds the role as Deputy Northern Ireland Local Government Commissioner for Standards.



Graham is Director of Regulation and Accreditation at the Professional Standards Authority. The Professional Standards Authority oversees the work of 10 regulators of health and care professionals in the UK, and sets standards for and accredits registers of non-statutorily regulated health and care professionals. It also provides policy advice and undertakes research to help improve regulation. The Professional Standards Authority's 2022 report, Safer Care for All, examined the current state of professional health and care regulation in the UK across four key themes: tackling inequalities; regulating for new risks; facing up to the workforce crisis; and accountability, fear and public safety.



**Graham Mockler**

Graham's teams within the Professional Standards Authority are responsible for assessing regulators and registers against defined standards, and reviewing regulatory fitness to practise outcomes from a public protection perspective. Graham has a background in regulatory, quality assurance and accreditation systems, having worked for organisations in the UK and Australia in areas including medical education and training, and clinical service accreditation.

Owen is a Professor of Nursing and Intellectual disabilities within the School of Nursing and Paramedic Science at Ulster University. He leads the Specialist Practice Nursing Community Nursing Learning Disabilities, and he teaches about supporting people with learning disabilities across pre-registration nursing, post registration nursing, paramedic and medical programmes.



**Prof Owen Barr**

Owen's work has focused on access to healthcare for people with learning disabilities and led the development of the HSC Hospital passport in Northern Ireland. Owen is an editor of the Oxford Handbook of Learning and Intellectual Disabilities Nursing (2019).





**Linda Craig**

Linda is the Regional Lead for Patient, Client Experience within the Public Health Agency covering a number of initiatives to ensure the voices of patients, clients, families and carers shapes the services across HSCNI. She is responsible for 10000 More Voices initiative and the online user feedback system, Care Opinion.

As a nurse Linda has always had an avid interest in quality improvement and has completed a Masters in Advancing Healthcare through Open University. In her current role (and previous role as Lead Nurse in Emergency Care) Linda has experience in leading and embedding change into the culture of HSCNI and collaborates regularly with HSC Trusts, Department of Health, Patient Client Council, Regulation Quality Improvement Authority and the Independent Sector.



**Chris McCann**

Chris joined Healthwatch England in October 2019. Healthwatch was established by the Government in 2012 as an effective, independent, statutory public champion for health and social care. Its role is to gather and champion the views of users of health and social care services, in order to improve policy development and service delivery in the Health and Social Care sector in England.

Prior to joining Healthwatch Chris worked in central government at the Cabinet Office where he worked as Head of Strategy and Policy for GOV.UK and Head of Media and Strategic Communications at the Government Digital Service.

He has also worked at the Department for Business as Deputy Head of Strategic Communications and at the Department for International Trade as Head of Media Relations.

Originally from Limavady, he has over 25 years of policy, strategy, communications and journalism experience starting out as a newspaper reporter in Belfast where he worked for The Irish News and The Belfast Telegraph before working as the Communications Manager for the Derry-Londonderry City of Culture 2013 project.



## Rosemary Agnew

### Scottish Public Services Ombudsman

Rosemary has over 20 years' experience in the Ombudsman and complaints sector in the UK. Currently she is both the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO), an office she has held since 1 May 2017; and the Independent National Whistleblowing Officer (INWO) for the NHS in Scotland, a role she has held from 1 April 2021.

Her role is varied. As SPSO it includes investigating and resolving or deciding complaints about the Scottish public sector (except Police and judiciary); the Independent Reviewer of applications to the Scottish Welfare Fund; and the Complaints Standards Authority. In her role as INWO she investigates complaints about how whistleblowing concerns about patient safety have been handled by the Scottish NHS, and claims of detriment to individuals resulting from raising whistleblowing concerns. She also sets principles and standards for the handling of whistleblowing concerns at local level. Integral to her role is promotion of good complaints handling practice and learning from complaints.

From 2012 to 2017, Rosemary was the Scottish Information Commissioner, responsible for ensuring compliance by Scottish public authorities with the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 and the Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations 2004, including promoting good practice. Prior to that she worked for the Scottish legal Complaints Commission and Local Government Ombudsman in England.

# NOTES



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Northern Ireland  
**Public Services**  
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