

By e-mail
D Speers



5 January 2010

Dear Ms Speers

I am writing in response to your information request, made in your e-mail of 3 December 2009. I will respond to each element of your request in turn.

1) Is any medical advice sought on a case before it goes to the Assessment Panel or is medical advice only sought on a case after the Assessment Panel have accepted it for investigation?

Clinical advice is sought on cases prior to presentation to the Assessment Panel where it is thought necessary. Clinical advice is usually sought where a complainant is challenging clinical aspects of care and treatment.

3) How many medical advisers does the PHSO employ?

At 17 December 2009 PHSO employed 33 clinical advisers, being the full time equivalent of 13.7 staff. I should explain that PHSO also obtains clinical advice from clinicians who are not employees of PHSO, but are contracted by PHSO to provide advice on particular complaints.

4) Does the medical adviser commissioned by the PHSO have specific expert knowledge of the concerns in the complaint?

Yes.

5) How can I find out if all valid cases (aka ones that have been through Local Resolution at Trust level) are put to the PHSO Assessment Panel for a yes or no to investigation?

I attach for your information the casework policy and guidance provided to PHSO staff carrying out the assessment of complaints. Section 2.2.31 explains that when further assessment results in the identification of maladministration, unremedied injustice and worthwhile outcome then the case should be referred to the Assessment Panel for



Millbank Tower
Millbank
London SW1P 4QP

Enquiries: 0345 015 4033
Fax: 0300 061 4000

Email: phso.enquiries@ombudsman.org.uk

www.ombudsman.org.uk

discussion or approval to investigate. In other circumstances, ie where it is recommended that the complaint be declined for investigation, complaints are referred for consideration by senior staff. Section 2.4 of the guidance explains types of assessment, and includes a section on local resolution.

6) Is the Assessment Process the only screening process or is there another screening process before that?

Section 2 of the casework policy and guidance, referred to above, explains the key stages of assessment.

I have now completed my response to your information request of 3 December 2009, and I hope that you find this helpful.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Liz Hannan', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Liz Hannan
Freedom of Information and Data Protection Manager