

To: Chair and Members of Standards
Committee

Date: 26 November 2015

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Dear Member of the Committee,

You are invited to attend a meeting of the **STANDARDS COMMITTEE** to be held at **10.00 am** on **FRIDAY, 4 DECEMBER 2015** in **CONFERENCE ROOM 1A, COUNTY HALL, RUTHIN.**

Yours sincerely

G. Williams
Head of Legal and Democratic Services

AGENDA

PART 1: THE PRESS AND PUBLIC ARE INVITED TO ATTEND THIS PART OF THE MEETING

1 ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR

To appoint a Vice Chair of the Standards Committee.

2 APOLOGIES

3 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Members to declare any personal or prejudicial interests in any business identified to be considered at this meeting.

4 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

Notice of items which, in the opinion of the Chair, should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency pursuant to Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972.

5 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING (Pages 5 - 16)

To receive the minutes of the Standards Committee meeting held on the 18th September, 2015 (copy enclosed).

6 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME (Pages 17 - 18)

To consider the Standards Committee Forward Work Programme (copy attached).

7 DRAFT PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN (WALES) BILL - CONSULTATION (Pages 19 - 96)

To receive a report from the Deputy Monitoring Officer (copy enclosed) which provided a copy of the draft PSOW Bill and sought comments from the Committee in order for a response to be compiled.

8 REPORT ON ALL WALES STANDARDS CONFERENCE

To receive a verbal report by the Chair on the All Wales Standards Conference.

9 ACCESSIBILITY OF INFORMATION FROM CITY, TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCILS

To receive a verbal report from Julia Hughes (Independent Member).

10 ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS

To note the attendance by members of the Standards Committee at County, Town and Community Council and to receive their reports.

11 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Standards Committee is scheduled for the 4th March, 2016.

PART 2: CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

It is recommended in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, that the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business because it is likely that exempt information (as defined in paragraphs 13 and 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Act) would be disclosed.

12 CODE OF CONDUCT - PART 3 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000 (Pages 97 - 98)

To consider a confidential report by the Monitoring Officer (copy enclosed) providing an overview of complaints against members lodged with the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

MEMBERSHIP

Independent Members:

Mr Ian Trigger (Chair), Mrs Paula White, Julia Hughes and Anne Mellor

Town/Community Council Member

Councillor David E Jones

County Councillors

Councillor Bill Cowie

Councillor Barry Mellor

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Town and Community Councils

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STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Standards Committee held in Conference Room 1a, County Hall, Ruthin on Friday, 18 September 2015 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

Independent Members Mr Ian Trigger (Chair), Councillor David E. Jones, Julia Hughes, Anne Mellor and Councillor Bill Cowie.

Councillor M.Ll. Davies attended as an observer.

ALSO PRESENT

Deputy Monitoring Officer and Solicitor (LJ) and Administrative Officer (CIW).

1 ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR TO THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

It was agreed by the Committee to defer the election of Vice-Chair to the next meeting of the Standards Committee taking place on 4 December 2015.

RESOLVED – *that the election of Vice Chair of the Standards Committee be deferred to the 4th December, 2015.*

2 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs Paula White.

3 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No Members declared any personal or prejudicial interests in any business identified to be considered at the meeting.

4 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

No items were raised which in the opinion of the Chair, should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency pursuant to Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972.

5 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The Minutes of the Standards Committee held on the 22nd May, 2015 were submitted.

The Chair commented on the high standard of minutes produced.

Accuracy:-

5. Forward Work Programme – The date of the next meeting be amended from the “16th September, 2015 to the “18th September, 2015”.

11. Training for Chairs and Vice Chairs of City, Town and Community Councils – The name “Julie” be amended to read “Julia”.

Matters arising:-

5. Forward Work Programme – In reply to a question from the Chair regarding progress with the guidance and framework template for City, Town and Community Councils (CTCC), the DMO explained the information referred to had been included in the PSOW Code of Conduct Casebook and the Committee agreed that this would be sufficient as the production of further guidance would result in a duplication of information. She confirmed that work had been undertaken on the Self Regulatory Protocol; for (CTCC) and an item had been included on the agenda for consideration.

8. PSOW – Revised Code of Conduct Guidance – In response to a question from the Chair regarding the circulation of a briefing paper to improve communication links and key messages with CTCC, the Deputy Monitoring Officer (DMO) referred to the production of an executive summary or a short briefing note on the key issues. The DMO explained that cluster meetings were held with Clerks of CTCC and the matter of improving communication links for the dissemination of information could be discussed, including the enhanced use of Information Technology methods.

The DMO highlighted the merit in circulating to CTCC’s noteworthy information and facts from the PSOW Code of Conduct Casebook. She agreed to liaise with the Communications Team on methods of disseminating information to the CTCC’s, and with the Monitoring Officer regarding the information to be circulated.

It was confirmed by the DMO that the Monitoring Officer had contacted the Ombudsman as agreed to ascertain how complaints were recorded and how long they were saved. It was explained that a paper format of complaints was retained by the PSOW for a period of two years, and an electronic format for ten years. Members were informed that previous complaints would be checked and taken into consideration when determining whether or not to investigate a new complaint.

10. Feedback from Code of Conduct Training for Clerks of the City, Town and Community Councils – The DMO confirmed that due to time constraints the next training session for CTCC Clerks would be held in January, 2016, and would be scheduled as afternoon sessions commencing at approximately 3.00 p.m.

The DMO confirmed that the training session held on the 29th June, 2015 had taken place, and a trainer with greater knowledge of Welsh guidance, legislation and issues would be sought for 2016.

Councillor M.LI. Davies informed the Committee that literature pertaining to chairing skills was available and could be utilised.

Any Other Business:- Independent Member Julia Hughes (JH) made reference to the discussion on the electronic publication of information from CTCCs, and the confirmation by the MO that it was a new requirement which was now compulsory. She highlighted the need for easy access to information and explained that she had undertaken a voluntarily audit of ten Councils in respect of this issue. JH agreed to provide further details of the work undertaken.

Standards Conference Wales 2015:- The DMO referred to the Standards Conference scheduled to be held in Cardiff on the 20th October, 2015 and requested that any Members wishing to attend contact the Personal Assistant to the Head of Legal, HR and Democratic Services before the 29th September, 2015. The Chair confirmed that he intended to attend the Conference.

RESOLVED – *that, subject to the above, the Minutes be received and approved as a correct record.*
(LJ to Action)

6 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Deputy Monitoring Officer (DMO) submitted a report (previously circulated) presenting the Forward Work Programme and Review for consideration and adoption.

Independent Member Julia Hughes (JH) provided details of the voluntarily audit undertaken of ten Councils, to be increased, to assess the accessibility of information pertaining to CTCCs. She agreed to provide a verbal report on the work undertaken to the Committee in December, 2015, with a written report being presented to the meeting in March, 2016. It was stressed that it would be important to specify the timescales involved, as information provided in the report would be subject to change following its production.

The DMO agreed to inform the Clerks of the CTCCs, in a letter from the Monitoring Officer, that the audit work was being undertaken, and to provide them with details of the findings, outcomes and feedback resulting from the exercise.

Members considered the Standards Committee Forward Work Programme for the forthcoming six month period and agreed the following additions:-

4th December, 2015:-

- (a) Report on the All Wales Standards Conference 2015.
- (b) Verbal report by Independent Member Julia Hughes, on the accessibility of information from City, Town and Community Councils.

4th March, 2016:-

- (a) Preparation of the Chair of the Standards Committee Annual Report, to be presented to County Council at the meeting following Annual Council.
- (b) Report by Independent Member Julia Hughes, on the accessibility of information from City, Town and Community Councils.

RESOLVED –that, subject to the above inclusions, the Standards Committee agree the Forward Work Programme.

(LJ to Action)

7 VISITS TO CITY, TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCILS

A copy of a report by the Monitoring Officer (MO), on visits previously undertaken by Members of the Committee to observe the proceedings of City, Town and Community Council visits, had been circulated with the papers for the meeting.

The report detailed visits previously made by Members of the Committee in order that future visits were planned in a way to avoid any duplication of Councils visited.

Members had previously discussed visits made by them to City, Town and Community Councils. The purpose of the visits being to observe the proceedings of the relevant Council, to make Councils aware of the work of the Standards Committee, to provide advice and identify potential areas for future training.

Members had agreed that it would be of assistance in planning and coordinating visits if they were made aware of the visits previously undertaken to avoid duplicating relatively recent visits, and concentrate on visiting Councils not recently visited. Appendix 1, set out the visits verbally reported to the Committee by Members since February, 2013, together with, where recorded, the date of those visits. Appendix 2 provided a list of the City, Town and Community Councils of Denbighshire sorted by way of cluster groups. Denbighshire organised cluster meetings with representatives of Community Councils to engage with and provide information to them, and these meetings were organised on an area or cluster basis.

During the ensuing discussion it was agreed that Members of the Committee focus on visiting the Councils which had not been visited recently, unless there was a specific issue of concern or a requested from the respective Clerk, and that the following Committee Members agreed to be allocated to the following cluster areas:-

Cluster 1:- Councillor W.L. Cowie and Independent Member Julia Hughes.

Cluster 2:- Chair Mr Ian Trigger and Councillor D. Jones.

Cluster 3:- Independent Member Anne Mellor.

RESOLVED – that the Standards Committee:-

(a) notes the information provided in Appendix 1, and utilises it to plan future visits to City, Town and Community Councils, and

(b) agrees that the Committee Members be allocated the cluster areas as identified above.

8 PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES ANNUAL REPORT 2014/15

A copy of a report by the Monitoring Officer (MO), on the 2014/15 Annual Report of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (OM), had been circulated previously.

The DMO explained that the OM published an annual report on the activities of the office of the OM in dealing with complaints against public bodies in Wales. The two main roles of his office included the investigation of complaints of maladministration by public bodies, and complaints relating to alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct by Elected Members of Unitary, City, Town and Community Councils. The OM's Annual Report entitled 'Making Complaints Serve Wales' had been included as Appendix 1.

Details of the workloads and statistics of the OM's office, and proposed changes to the legislation governing the powers, had been incorporated in the report. The OM categorised Code of Conduct complaints and an analysis of complaints by category had been provided. The number of cases referred to either a Standards Committee or the Adjudication Panel for Wales had risen slightly in 2013/14, but was still considerably lower than the number of cases referred in 2012/13. The DMO made specific reference to Page 43 of the report, and outlined the percentages relating to the Nature of Code of Conduct Complaints in 2014/15.

In view of the low level of complaints received from Councillors about their colleagues, the OM's office had reviewed its practice and would be taking a firmer line on such matters in future by referring them back to MO's for local resolution.

Annex C to the OM's report contained a breakdown of cases closed in 2014/15 by Local Authority. Of the 132 closed cases relating to unitary Authorities 2 related to Denbighshire County Councillors, both of which were closed after initial consideration without the need for an investigation. This represented a reduction from the 4 complaints closed in the previous year all of which had been withdrawn or closed after initial consideration. A breakdown of the 105 closed cases relating to City, Town or Community Councils, shows, in relation to Denbighshire, that there were three complaints about members of such Councils in Denbighshire. The OM had also reported on the performance of the Ombudsman's office in terms of the time taken to consider Code of Conduct complaints. Details of the two targets set by the OM in respect of timescales was provided in the report.

The OM had announced that the Code of Conduct Casebook introduced on a biannual basis would be produced on a quarterly basis in 2015/16, however, due to the low number of cases available in quarterly editions, a commentary on lessons learnt would be produced on an annual end of year basis only. The OM referred to the revised guidance issued during the year and the new public interest test, both having been previously reported to the Committee.

During the ensuing discussion the Chair highlighted the following issues:-

- He expressed his gratitude and attributed the decrease in the number of complaints recorded, which had been worthy of Standards Committee investigation, to the positive and hard work undertaken by the Monitoring Officer and the Deputy Monitoring Officer in organising training events.

- Expressed concern regarding the PSOW's limited resources and financial constraints, which had resulted in a conscious decision to not investigate low level matters. Reference was made to the stringent Public Interest Test which had been applied, the manner in which minor disputes had been resolved and the application of information ascertained from case study precedents.

Following further discussion, it was:-

RESOLVED – *that the Standards Committee receive and note the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales' Annual Report 2014/15.*

9 PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES - CODE OF CONDUCT FACTSHEETS

A copy of a report by the Monitoring Officer (MO), on two factsheets produced by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, had been circulated previously.

The DMO introduced the report which informed the Committee of the production of the factsheets, and sought the endorsement of the dissemination of the factsheets to Elected Members of both the County Council, and CTCCs in Denbighshire.

The PSOW had appointed an investigator as the Code of Conduct Complaint Lead. In addition to the role as an investigator, as Code of Conduct Lead, they would oversee matters referred to the Adjudication Panel for Wales and Standards meetings. The Code of Conduct Complaint Lead would also attend the quarterly meetings of the All Wales Monitoring Officer Group.

As part of the new role, the Code of Conduct Complaint Lead had created two new factsheets, Appendix 1 and 2, written for Members who were subject to a Code of Conduct investigation, which were intended to give some guidance as to the processes followed during an investigation and formal interview.

During the discussion the Committee endorsed the suggestion that the factsheets be sent to all Members of Denbighshire County Council, together, with a covering note. In addition an e-mail be sent to the Clerks of all CTCCs attaching the factsheets and suggesting that they bring them to the attention of all of their Members.

RESOLVED – *that the Standards Committee notes the information contained within the factsheets, Appendices 1 and 2 to the report, and endorses the dissemination of the factsheets to Elected Members of both the County Council, and City, Town and Community Councils in Denbighshire.*

(LJ to Action)

10 PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN WALES - CODE OF CONDUCT CASEBOOK

A copy of a report by the Deputy Monitoring Officer (DMO), on the Code of Conduct Casebook produced by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW), had been circulated previously.

The report informed the Committee of the most recent editions of the Ombudsman's Code of Conduct Casebook which would be produced on a quarterly basis from April 2015. The Casebook contains summaries of all of the cases in respect of which the OM had completed an investigation during the relevant period. The DMO explained that the main change to the PSOW approach had been the introduction of the Public Interest Test

The Casebook had been produced to help Members and others in considering whether circumstances that they may be experiencing amount to a breach of the Code. This being an extension of the publication of real life examples in the PSOW's Guidance on the Code. It also assisted Local Authority Standards Committees by providing access to information about the way other Standards Committees in Wales operated.

It was explained that Appendix 1 to the report contained the Casebook covering the period October, 2014 to March, 2015. Appendix 2 covered the period March, 2015 to June, 2015. Details of the complaints investigated during these periods had been outlined in the report and were summarised by the DMO. The Committee were informed that there had been no referrals to the Adjudication Panel for Wales.

RESOLVED –that the Standards Committee notes the information contained within the Code of Conduct Casebook.

11 SELF REGULATORY PROTOCOL FOR CITY, TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCILS

A copy of a report by the Monitoring Officer (MO), on the draft protocol similar to the County Council version but adjusted to take into consideration the size, composition and resources of Community Councils, had been circulated with the papers for the meeting.

The Committee had been involved in the development of a Self Regulatory Protocol (SRP) at County Council level. The PSOW had recommended that SRP's at a community level ought to be developed in due course. No specific timescale had been set and the option of adopting was one for each Town, City and Community Council.

The draft protocol had been included as Appendix 1, together with outline principles. It had not been suggested that the protocol should be much more detailed than this as the process was designed to be paper light, with the emphasis on face to face discussions, mediation and compromise of disputes or issues in a conciliatory manner.

It was explained that the Standards Committee may consider that their role should be greater, or less and a steer on this matter had been sought. The input of the MO would be minimal as the issue was one of the resolution of low level disputes which ought to be able to be dealt with locally at a community level, or with the assistance of a peer review approach with support from a neighbouring or other Community Council; a reference to the full Standards Committee shall be a last resort. The

DMO referred to Page 131 of the agenda and provided a summary of Appendix 1 the draft Member's Self Regulatory Protocol.

Councillor W.L. Cowie explained that he was pleased with the report which he felt could assist Clerks and Members of all CTCC's with the induction process. The Chair suggested that the Standards Committee might recommend that an induction process be introduced for any newly appointed Councillors. Independent Member Anne Mellor (AM) suggested that consideration be afforded to newly appointed Councillors visiting other Councils to witness proceedings.

The Chair felt that Standards Committee Members should only become involved in the process as last resort, with a view to not escalating matters. He explained that such involvement could prejudice a Member, and exclude them from adjudicating on the proceedings of a Standards Committee at a later stage in the process.

In response to suggestions made by Members of the Committee, the following amendments to the General Principles of the Member's Self Regulatory Protocol were agreed:-

- Bullet Point 1 be reworded.
- Bullet Point 2, "not for complaints" be amended to read "and is not applicable for complaints".
- Bullet Point 7, the word "will" be removed.

Independent Member Julia Hughes (JH), suggested that clarification be included in the Flowchart that the Code was applicable to City, Town and Community Councils and not just Community Councils. Councillor M.LI. Davies advocated that the word Councils be used when referring to CTCC's, and County Council be used when referring to issues pertaining only to the County Council.

During the ensuing discussion the DMO agreed that, following the inclusion of the suggested amendments, the draft Member's Self Regulatory Protocol be presented to the Clerks Cluster meeting to ascertain their views, prior to being resubmitted to the Standards Committee for consideration.

RESOLVED – *that the Standards Committee:-*

- (a) *receives the draft Member's Self Regulatory Protocol.*
- (b) *agrees that the above amendments be included, prior to submission of the draft Member's Self Regulatory Protocol to the Clerks Cluster meeting, and*
- (c) *requests that that a further report be presented to the Standards Committee.*
(LJ to Action)

12 FEEDBACK FROM NORTH WALES STANDARDS FORUM

In the absence of the Monitoring Officer, the Chair provided a verbal report on the meeting of the North Wales Standards Committees Forum (NWSCF), held on the 16th June, 2015, and the following salient points from the meeting were highlighted:-

- Consideration had been afforded to the Revised Guidance on the Members Code of Conduct which had been issued by the PSOW.
- The Monitoring Officer had provided details of the Member Training Programme in Denbighshire, particular reference having been made to training provided for Members of the Planning Committee, and Clerks of CTCC's.
- Details had been provided of the cluster meetings,
- An outline of training provided for Anglesey Community Councils.
- The Chair had expressed his disappointment that not all Clerks of CTCC had attended the training sessions provided in Denbighshire, as the quality of the training provided had been excellent.
- The benefits to be attained if at least one Member of each Standards Committee attended the training sessions to provide feedback, or Members attended training sessions provided by other Authorities to view alternative working practices.
- Problems having been experienced in North Wales, particularly at Community Council level, of Clerks not utilising the advice provided by Monitoring Officers to address problems when they occurred.
- The Forum had expressed the opinion that it was keen to encourage cross Authority training.
- A request had been made that consideration be afforded to the production of an e-learning package for training purposes. The DMO explained that she was pleased with the suggestion that e-learning module be progressed.
- Reference was made to the different processes in the operation of Standards Committees, especially relating to hearings and applications for dispensations.
- Discussion on the proposed Regional Standards Committees.
- The process adopted by the PSOW for determining the validity of complaints, and the investigation process.
- The PSOW having expressed his support for the Forum for the cross fertilisation of ideas.

RESOLVED –that the Standards Committee receive and note the contents of the Chairman's report on the meeting of the North Wales Standards Committee Forum.

13 ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS

Members of the Committee were invited to feedback from the CTCC meetings that they had recently attended, and Members took the opportunity to offer a summary of how the respective Councils had operated.

Independent Member Julia Hughes (JH) attended the following meetings and the following points and issues were highlighted:-

Henllan Community Council, 7th July, 2015:-

- The Clerk had questioned the reason a Member of the Standards Committee having attended meetings of the Council on four separate occasions. JH provided an assurance that the meetings attended had been selected randomly, and that there were no specific concerns relating to the Council. She had also explained that the selection process was being reviewed.

- The Chair of the Community Council requested feedback from JH on the proceedings. She confirmed that the meeting had been well organised following a standard agenda format, the Chair had been professional and well assisted by the Clerk.
- Declarations of Interest had not been sought at the commencement of the meeting but, were offered during the proceedings.
- There had been good contributions from Members of the Council, and they had worked collectively to resolve issues.
- Consideration had been afforded to the PSOWs Report.
- A list of the portfolios of Denbighshire Lead Members was circulated at the meeting.
- Confirmation had been provided that the Welsh Government Assembly Member would be visiting the Council in November.
- Concerns had been raised regarding a lack of communication between areas of the County Council and the Community Council on some issues.
- All Members of the Council had been afforded the opportunity to speak.
- A forward work programme was in place, and an information pack had been provided for Members.

Member Code Training:-

- Some Members had been under the impression that the Code only applied to Community Councils.
- None of the Members in attendance had received a copy of the Code from their respective Clerks.
- The training provided had been interactive, positive and engaging.
- More support had been requested to develop the Self Regulatory Protocol Framework to meet the timescales.
- Guidance request in respect of social media activities, and the utilisation of Disclosure of Interest Forms.

Planning Committee, 16th September, 2015:-

- The meeting had been well conducted and Members had been respectful. Introductions had been clear and rules and regulations had been complied with.

Independent Member Anne Mellor (AM) attended a meeting of St Asaph City Council on the 10th June, 2015 and the following points were highlighted:-

- The Agenda had been well structured.
- The new Clerk had been extremely competent and supported the meeting well.
- A report had been presented by the local Police officer.
- The meeting had been conducted in a very professional manner.
- The Clerk had requested the provision of further training provision for Members of the Council.

Am reported on the training provision which she felt had been excellent, with positive feedback having been received from attendees.

RESOLVED – that the Standards Committee receive and note the feedback submitted from recent meetings attended by Members of the Committee.

14 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Members noted the time, date and venue of the next meeting of the Standards Committee, and it was:-

RESOLVED – that the next meeting of the Standards Committee be held on Friday, 4th December, 2015 in Conference Room 1a, County Hall, Ruthin.

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED – that under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting for the following item(s) of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 12 and 13 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

PART II

15 CODE OF CONDUCT - PART 3 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000

A copy of a confidential report by the Monitoring Officer (MO), which provided an overview of complaints lodged with the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, had been circulated with the papers for the meeting.

The Standards Committee had previously requested to be regularly informed of the level of complaints lodged with the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. The tables included in Appendix 1 provided an overview of complaints lodged since the 1st April, 2015.

The DMO provided a brief summary of the report with particular detail being provided in respect of Case Numbers 258 and 259.

RESOLVED – that the Standards Committee receive and note the contents of the report.

Meeting ended at 13.00 p.m.

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STANDARDS COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

| DATE OF MEETING | REPORT ITEMS / AREAS | REPORT AUTHOR |
|--------------------------|---|---|
| 4 March 2016 | Standing Item: Attendance at Meetings | N/A |
| | Standing Part 2 Item: Overview of Complaints in Denbighshire | Gary Williams (Monitoring Officer) |
| | Preparation of Standards Committee Annual Report by Chair | Chair, Lisa Jones (Deputy Monitoring Officer) |
| | Report on Accessibility of Information from City, Town and Community Councils | Julia Hughes (Independent Member) |
| | | |
| 24 June 2016 | Standing Item: Attendance at Meetings | N/A |
| | Standing Part 2 Item: Overview of Complaints in Denbighshire | Gary Williams (Monitoring Officer) |
| | | |
| 16 September 2016 | Standing Item: Attendance at Meetings | N/A |
| | Standing Part 2 Item: Overview of Complaints in Denbighshire | Gary Williams (Monitoring Officer) |
| | | |
| 2 December 2016 | Standing Item: Attendance at Meetings | N/A |
| | Standing Part 2 Item: Overview of Complaints in Denbighshire | Gary Williams (Monitoring Officer) |
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Report To: Standards Committee

Date of Meeting: 4th December 2015

Lead Member / Officer: Gary Williams, Head of Legal and Democratic Services.

Report Author: Lisa Jones – Deputy Monitoring Officer

Title: draft Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Bill

1. What is the report about?

To provide Members with a copy of the draft PSOW Bill and obtain comments from the Committee in order for a response to be compiled.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

To enable Members to consider the proposals and contribute to the formal consultation process .

3. What are the Recommendations?

There are no formal recommendations from the Monitoring Officer, rather a collective response will be sought from Standards Committee and the wider Council.

4. Report Details

At a recent Standards Committee meeting, an item was presented on the Annual PSOW report 2014/15 and within this item, reference was drawn, to the potential for extension of powers to the Ombudsman in Wales. As a reminder, the new PSOW Nick Bennett stated the following:

“Another aspect that I gave early attention to upon taking up my role as Ombudsman was to consider whether the PSOW Act required review, particularly since it is now ten years old. I took the advantage as part of my ‘induction’ as Ombudsman to ascertain what best practice looked like amongst colleague ombudsmen, particularly within the UK but also further afield. Having considered what I found, I arrived at the view that whilst the PSOW Act remained well regarded within the ombudsman community, there was a danger that Wales would be left behind as regards developments taking place in other nations and countries. Furthermore, I believe it is important to future proof the Act to enable me, and my successors, to be able to respond to the challenges we know Wales will face with the future ageing society.

Building on the work of the previous Ombudsman, Peter Tyndall, I therefore put forward a number of proposals to the National Assembly for Wales in relation to areas where I believed that the current Act could be extended and strengthened. I

was exceptionally pleased that the Assembly's Finance Committee agreed to undertake an inquiry into the possibility of extending the powers of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. I was delighted that so many stakeholder organisations took the time and trouble to provide evidence. This ranged from bodies in jurisdiction and their representative organisations, the Commissioners in Wales, as well as colleague Ombudsmen in other parts of the United Kingdom and academic experts in the field. At the time of writing, we await the Finance Committee's decision as to whether to recommend the introduction of a Bill in relation to the PSOW's powers."

Such a bill has now been introduced and this is attached as appendix 1, the consultation letter is attached as appendix 2 and for members information the Welsh Local Government Association contribution earlier in the process is also attached which may be of interest as Appendix 3.

On the 21st October 2015, the Finance Committee of the National Assembly for Wales (NAW) published a consultation seeking views of individuals and organisations on the proposals in the draft Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Bill, intended to strengthen the powers of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. Following on from recommendations it gave in a report in May 2015, the Finance Committee's proposals in the draft Bill include giving the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales powers to:

- Initiate his own investigations and accept oral complaints.
- Handle complaints across public services.
- Extend the Ombudsman's jurisdiction to include private healthcare providers (in certain circumstances).

The consultation closes on 18 January 2016.

As regards Standards Committees directly, the effect of these proposals may be that there will be even greater reliance on the Monitoring Officer and Standards Committees to enforce the Code of Conduct and less reliance on the PSOW office given the lack of or insufficient express reference to the Members Code of Conduct and the PSOW role, in the Bill. Members may wish to read Appendix 3 and the comments therein on the members code of conduct.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

The decision does not directly affect or contribute to the Council priorities however any PSOW powers and decisions can have the potential to broadly affect the delivery of services.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

There are no implications for other services as a result of this report.

7. What consultations have been carried out?

This is the first consultation within the Council, but all members will be afforded the opportunity to contribute via the Monitoring Officer in order for responses to be collated and submitted within the timeframe.

8. Chief Finance Officer Statement.

Not required; although there are no additional costs directly associated with this particular process.

9. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

There are no identified risks.

10. Power to make the decision

Local Government Act 2000.

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Draft

Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Bill

An Act of the National Assembly for Wales to make provision about the office of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales; to make provision about the functions of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales; to make provision about compensation; and for connected purposes.

Having been passed by the National Assembly for Wales and having received the assent of Her Majesty, it is enacted as follows:

PART 1

INTRODUCTION

1 Overview

- (1) Part 3 of this Act—
 - (a) sets out the Ombudsman's investigation powers,
 - (b) makes provision for the procedures that apply to investigations,
 - (c) makes provision for the procedures that apply to reports,
 - (d) makes provision for various matters relating to listed authorities.
- (2) Part 4 of this Act makes provision for investigating complaints relating to social care and palliative care.
- (3) Part 5 of this Act makes supplementary provision relating to investigations.

PART 2

THE PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES

2 The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

- (1) The office of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales or Ombudsmon Gwasanaethau Cyhoeddus Cymru (in this Act referred to as "the Ombudsman") is to continue.
- (2) Schedule 1 makes further provision about the Ombudsman.

PART 3

INVESTIGATIONS

Power of investigation

3 Power to investigate complaints

- (1) The Ombudsman may investigate a complaint under this Part in respect of a matter if—

- (a) the complaint has been duly made or referred to the Ombudsman, and
 - (b) the matter is one which the Ombudsman is entitled to investigate under sections 10 to 14.
- (2) A complaint is "duly made" to the Ombudsman if (but only if)-
- (a) it is made by a person who is entitled under section 7 to make the complaint to the Ombudsman, and
 - (b) the requirements of section 8(1) are met in respect of it.
- (3) A complaint is "duly referred" to the Ombudsman if (but only if)--
- (a) it is referred to the Ombudsman by a listed authority, and
 - (b) the requirements of section 9(1) are met in respect of it.
- (4) The Ombudsman may investigate a complaint under this Part in respect of a matter even if the requirements of section 8(1) or (as the case may be) section 9(1)(b), (c) or (d) are not met in respect of the complaint, if--
- (a) the matter is one which the Ombudsman is entitled to investigate under sections 10 to 14, and
 - (b) the Ombudsman thinks it reasonable to do so.
- (5) It is for the Ombudsman to decide whether to begin, continue or discontinue an investigation.
- (6) The Ombudsman may take any action which the Ombudsman thinks may assist in making a decision under subsection (5).
- (7) The Ombudsman may begin or continue an investigation into a complaint even if the complaint, or the referral of the complaint, has been withdrawn.
- (8) But this section is subject to section 8(5).

4 Power to investigate on own initiative

- (1) The Ombudsman may investigate a matter under this Part, in respect of which the Ombudsman is entitled to investigate under sections 10 to 14, whether a complaint has been duly made or referred to the Ombudsman or not.
- (2) It is for the Ombudsman to decide whether to begin, continue or discontinue an investigation (but the Ombudsman must consult such persons as the Ombudsman considers appropriate when making such a decision).
- (3) The Ombudsman may take any action the Ombudsman thinks may assist in making a decision under subsection (2).
- (4) The matter must relate to action taken after this Act receives Royal Assent.

5 Criteria for own initiative investigations

- (1) The Ombudsman must establish (and may from time to time amend) criteria to be used in determining whether to commence an investigation under section 4.

- (2) The criteria must include the evidential requirements to be used in determining whether to commence an investigation under section 4.
- (3) The Ombudsman must publish the criteria.

6 Alternative resolution of complaints or matters

- (1) The Ombudsman may take any action the Ombudsman thinks appropriate with a view to resolving a complaint or matter which the Ombudsman has power to investigate under this Part.
- (2) The Ombudsman may take action under this section in addition to or instead of conducting an investigation.
- (3) Any action under this section must be taken in private.

Complaints

7 Who can complain

- (1) The persons entitled to make a complaint to the Ombudsman under this Part are--
 - (a) a member of the public (in this Part referred to as "the person aggrieved") who claims or claimed to have sustained injustice or hardship in consequence of a matter which the Ombudsman is entitled to investigate under sections 10 to 14;
 - (b) a person authorised by the person aggrieved to act on his or her behalf;
 - (c) if the person aggrieved is not capable of authorising a person to act on his or her behalf (for example because the person has died), a person who appears to the Ombudsman to be appropriate to act on behalf of the person aggrieved.
- (2) "Member of the public" means any person other than—
 - (a) a listed authority acting in its capacity as such;
 - (b) a private health services provider acting in its capacity as such.
- (3) It is for the Ombudsman to determine any question of whether a person is entitled under this section to make a complaint to the Ombudsman.

8 Requirements: complaints made to the Ombudsman

- (1) The requirements mentioned in section 3(2)(b) are that the complaint must --
 - (a) be in a form specified by the Ombudsman in guidance;
 - (b) contain such information as specified by the Ombudsman in guidance;
 - (c) be made to the Ombudsman before the end of the period of one year starting on the day on which the person aggrieved first had notice of the matters alleged in the complaint.
- (2) The Ombudsman must publish the guidance referred to in subsection (1).
- (3) It is for the Ombudsman to determine any question of whether the requirements of subsection (1) are met in respect of a complaint.

- (4) If a complaint which meets the requirements of subsection (1) is made orally, the Ombudsman must—
 - (a) explain to the person aggrieved that a complaint has been duly made under this Act and the implications of making such a complaint, and
 - (b) ask the person aggrieved whether he or she wishes the complaint to continue to be treated as a complaint that has been duly made.
- (5) If the person does not wish the complaint to continue to be treated as being duly made, the Ombudsman must not use the power in section 3 to investigate the matter.
- (6) If the person wishes the complaint to continue to be treated as being duly made, the Ombudsman must ask the person whether he or she wishes the complaint to be confirmed in writing.
- (7) If the person wishes the complaint to be confirmed in writing, the Ombudsman must make such arrangements as are necessary for the complaint to be confirmed in writing.
- (8) If the person does not wish the complaint to be confirmed in writing the Ombudsman must record this in writing.
- (9) The Ombudsman must maintain a register of all oral complaints.
- (10) In this section, “in writing” includes in electronic form.

9 Requirements: complaints referred to the Ombudsman

- (1) The requirements mentioned in section 3(3)(b) are that--
 - (a) the complaint must have been made to the listed authority by a person who would have been entitled under section 7 to make the complaint to the Ombudsman;
 - (b) the complaint must have been made to the listed authority before the end of the period of one year starting on the day on which the person aggrieved first had notice of the matters alleged in the complaint;
 - (c) the complaint must be referred to the Ombudsman in a form and contain such information as specified by the Ombudsman in guidance;
 - (d) the complaint must be referred to the Ombudsman before the end of the period of one year starting on the day on which the complaint was made to the listed authority.
- (2) It is for the Ombudsman to determine any question of whether the requirements of subsection (1) are met in respect of a complaint.

Matters which may be investigated

10 Matters which may be investigated

- (1) The matters which the Ombudsman is entitled to investigate under this Part are--
 - (a) alleged maladministration by a listed authority in connection with relevant action;
 - (b) an alleged failure in a relevant service provided by a listed authority;
 - (c) an alleged failure by a listed authority to provide a relevant service;
 - (d) when subsection (2) applies, matters relating to private health services.
- (2) This subsection applies when in the Ombudsman’s opinion—
 - (a) a person has received medical treatment by way of relevant action taken by a listed authority,

- (b) the person has also received private health services, and
- (c) matters relating to the relevant action cannot be investigated effectively or completely without also investigating matters relating to the private health services.
- (3) Subsection (1) is subject to sections 11 to 14.
- (4) Relevant action is--
- (a) in the case of a listed authority which is a family health service provider in Wales or an independent provider in Wales, action taken by the authority in connection with the provision of a relevant service;
- (b) in the case of a listed authority which is a social landlord in Wales or a Welsh health service body other than the Welsh Ministers, action taken by the authority in the discharge of any of its functions;
- (c) in the case of a listed authority which is a person with functions conferred by regulations made under section 113(2) of the Health and Social Care (Community Health and Standards) Act 2003 (c 43), action taken by the authority in the discharge of any of those functions;
- (d) in the case of a listed authority which is a listed authority by virtue of an order under section 29(2) adding it to Schedule 3, action taken by the authority in the discharge of any of its specified functions;
- (e) in any other case, action taken by the authority in the discharge of any of its administrative functions.
- (5) A relevant service is--
- (a) in the case of a listed authority which is a family health service provider in Wales, any of the family health services which the authority had, at the time of the action which is the subject of the complaint, entered into a contract, undertaken, or made arrangements, to provide;
- (b) in the case of a listed authority which is an independent provider in Wales, any service which the authority had, at that time, made arrangements with a Welsh health service body or a family health service provider in Wales to provide;
- (c) in the case of a listed authority falling within subsection (3)(c), any service which it was, at that time, the authority's function to provide in the discharge of any of the functions mentioned in that paragraph;
- (d) in the case of a listed authority falling within subsection (4)(d), any service which it was, at that time, the authority's function to provide in the discharge of any of its specified functions;
- (e) in any other case, any service which it was, at that time, the authority's function to provide.
- (6) For the purposes of subsections (4)(d) and (5)(d), a listed authority's specified functions are the functions specified in relation to the authority in an order under section 29(2) as falling within the Ombudsman's remit.
- (7) An administrative function which may be discharged by a person who is a member of the administrative staff of a relevant tribunal is to be treated as an administrative function of a listed authority for the purposes of subsection (4) if--
- (a) the person was appointed by the authority, or
- (b) the person was appointed with the consent of the authority (whether as to remuneration and other terms and conditions of service or otherwise).

11 Exclusion: matters not relating to Wales

- (1) The Ombudsman may not investigate a matter arising in connection with—

- (a) the discharge by a listed authority of any of the authority's functions otherwise than in relation to Wales,
 - (b) private health services provided otherwise than in relation to Wales.
- (2) Subsection (1)(a) does not apply in relation to the Welsh Government.
- (3) To the extent that a function of a listed authority is discharged in relation to the Welsh language or any other aspect of Welsh culture, it is to be regarded for the purposes of subsection (1)(a) as discharged in relation to Wales.

12 Exclusion: other remedies

- (1) The Ombudsman may not investigate a matter under this Part if the person aggrieved (if any) has or had--
- (a) a right of appeal, reference or review to or before a tribunal constituted under an enactment or by virtue of Her Majesty's prerogative,
 - (b) a right of appeal to a Minister of the Crown, the Welsh Ministers, the First Minister for Wales or the Counsel General to the Welsh Government, or
 - (c) a remedy by way of proceedings in a court of law.
- (2) But subsection (1) does not apply if the Ombudsman is satisfied that, in the particular circumstances, it is not reasonable to expect the person to resort, or to have resorted, to the right or remedy.
- (3) The Ombudsman may investigate a matter under this Part only if the Ombudsman is satisfied that--
- (a) the matter has been brought to the attention of the listed authority or the private health services provider (as the case may be) to which the matter relates by or on behalf of the person aggrieved (if any), and
 - (b) the authority or the private health services provider has been given a reasonable opportunity to investigate and respond to it.
- (4) But subsection (3) does not prevent the Ombudsman from investigating a matter if the Ombudsman is satisfied that it is reasonable in the particular circumstances for the Ombudsman to investigate the matter despite the fact that the requirements of that subsection have not been met.

13 Other excluded matters

- (1) The Ombudsman may not investigate under this Part a matter specified in Schedule 2.
- (2) The Welsh Ministers may by order amend Schedule 2 by--
- (a) adding an entry;
 - (b) removing an entry;
 - (c) changing an entry.
- (3) Before making an order under subsection (2), the Welsh Ministers must consult the Ombudsman.
- (4) No order is to be made under subsection (2) unless a draft of the statutory instrument containing it has been laid before, and approved by a resolution of, the Assembly.

(5) Subsection (1) does not prevent the Ombudsman from investigating action of a listed authority in operating a procedure established to examine complaints or review decisions.

14 Decisions taken without maladministration

(1) The Ombudsman may not question the merits of a decision taken without maladministration by a listed authority in the exercise of a discretion.

(2) Subsection (1) does not apply to the merits of a decision to the extent that the decision was taken in consequence of the exercise of professional judgement which appears to the Ombudsman to be exercisable in connection with the provision of health or social care.

Decisions not to investigate etc

15 Decisions not to investigate or to discontinue investigation

(1) If the Ombudsman decides under section 3(5) or section 4(2)-

- (a) not to begin an investigation, or
- (b) to discontinue an investigation,

the Ombudsman must prepare a statement of the reasons for the decision.

(2) The Ombudsman must send a copy of the statement to the persons listed in subsection (3) who have been, or in the opinion of the Ombudsman would have been, involved in the investigation.

(3) The persons referred to in subsection (2) are—

- (a) any person aggrieved;
- (b) any listed authority;
- (c) any private health services provider.

(4) The Ombudsman may send a copy of the statement to any other persons the Ombudsman thinks appropriate.

(5) The Ombudsman may publish a statement under this section if, after taking account of the interests of the person aggrieved (if any) and any other persons the Ombudsman thinks appropriate, the Ombudsman considers it to be in the public interest to do so.

(6) The Ombudsman may supply a copy of a statement published under subsection (5), or any part of such a statement, to any person who requests it.

(7) The Ombudsman may charge a reasonable fee for supplying a copy of a statement, or part of a statement, under subsection (6).

(8) If a statement prepared under subsection (1)--

- (a) mentions the name of any person other than a listed authority or a private health services provider which has been, or in the opinion of the Ombudsman would have been, involved in the investigation, or
- (b) includes any particulars which, in the opinion of the Ombudsman, are likely to identify any such person and which, in the Ombudsman's opinion, can be omitted without impairing the effectiveness of the statement,

that information must not be included in a version of the statement sent to a person under subsection (2) or (4) or published under subsection (5), subject to subsection (9).

(9) Subsection (8) does not apply in relation to a version of the statement if, after taking account of the interests of the person aggrieved (if any) and any other persons the Ombudsman thinks appropriate, the Ombudsman considers it to be in the public interest to include that information in that version of the statement.

Investigation procedure and evidence

16 Investigation procedure

- (1) If the Ombudsman conducts an investigation under section 3, the Ombudsman must--
 - (a) give the listed authority or private health services provider an opportunity to comment on any allegations contained in the complaint;
 - (b) give any other person who is alleged in the complaint to have taken or authorised the action complained of an opportunity to comment on any allegations relating to that person.
- (2) If the Ombudsman conducts an investigation under section 4, the Ombudsman must—
 - (a) prepare an investigation proposal,
 - (b) submit the investigation proposal to the listed authority or private health services provider being investigated.
- (3) An investigation proposal must include—
 - (a) the reasons for the investigation, and
 - (b) how the criteria referred to in section 5 have been met.
- (4) The Ombudsman must specify and publish procedural requirements (in addition to those in subsection (2)) the Ombudsman must follow when conducting an investigation under section 4.
- (5) The requirements in subsection (4) must include procedures allowing—
 - (a) listed authorities and private health services providers opportunity to comment on the investigation proposal,
 - (b) any person identified in the investigation proposal in a negative way opportunity to comment on the investigation proposal (as far as the investigation proposal relates to that person).
- (6) An investigation must be conducted in private.
- (7) Subject to subsections (1), (2), (4), (5) and (6), the procedure for conducting an investigation is to be such as the Ombudsman thinks appropriate in the circumstances of the case.
- (8) In particular, the Ombudsman may--
 - (a) make such inquiries as the Ombudsman thinks appropriate;
 - (b) determine whether any person may be represented in the investigation by an authorised person or otherwise.

(9) In subsection (8) "authorised person" means a person who, for the purposes of the Legal Services Act 2007, is an authorised person in relation to an activity which constitutes the exercise of a right of audience or the conduct of litigation (within the meaning of that Act).

(10) The Ombudsman may pay to the person who made the complaint (if any) and to any other person who attends or supplies information for the purposes of the investigation--

- (a) such sums as the Ombudsman may determine in respect of expenses properly incurred by the person, and
- (b) such allowances as the Ombudsman may determine by way of compensation for the loss of the person's time,

subject to such conditions as the Ombudsman may determine.

(11) The conduct of an investigation in respect of a listed authority or a private health services provider does not affect--

- (a) the validity of any action taken by the listed authority or the private health services provider, or
- (b) any power or duty of the listed authority or the private health services provider to take further action with respect to any matter under investigation.

17 Information, documents, evidence and facilities

(1) This section applies in relation to investigations conducted under this Part.

(2) For the purposes of an investigation the Ombudsman may require a person the Ombudsman thinks is able to supply information or produce a document relevant to the investigation to do so.

(3) For the purposes of an investigation the Ombudsman has the same powers as the High Court in respect of--

- (a) the attendance and examination of witnesses (including the administration of oaths and affirmations and the examination of witnesses abroad), and
- (b) the production of documents.

(4) For the purposes of an investigation the Ombudsman may require a person the Ombudsman thinks is able to supply information or produce a document relevant to the investigation to provide any facility the Ombudsman may reasonably require.

(5) Subject to subsection (7), no person is to be compelled for the purposes of an investigation to give any evidence or produce any document which the person could not be compelled to give or produce in civil proceedings before the High Court.

(6) No obligation to maintain secrecy or other restriction on the disclosure of information obtained by or supplied to persons in Her Majesty's service, whether imposed by any enactment or rule of law, is to apply to the disclosure of information for the purposes of an investigation.

(7) The Crown is not entitled in relation to an investigation to any privilege in respect of the production of documents or the giving of evidence that would otherwise be allowed by law in legal proceedings.

18 Obstruction and contempt

(1) If the Ombudsman is satisfied that the condition in subsection (2) is met in relation to a person, the Ombudsman may issue a certificate to that effect to the High Court.

- (2) The condition is that the person--
- (a) without lawful excuse, has obstructed the discharge of any of the Ombudsman's functions under this Part, or
 - (b) has done an act in relation to an investigation which, if the investigation were proceedings in the High Court, would constitute contempt of court.
- (3) But the condition in subsection (2) is not met in relation to a person merely because the person has taken action such as is mentioned in section 16(9).
- (4) If the Ombudsman issues a certificate under subsection (1), the High Court may inquire into the matter.
- (5) If the High Court is satisfied that the condition in subsection (2) is met in relation to the person, it may deal with the person in any manner in which it could have if the person had committed contempt in relation to the High Court.

Reports of investigations

19 Reports of investigations

- (1) The Ombudsman must, after conducting an investigation--
- (a) prepare a report on the Ombudsman's findings, and
 - (b) send a copy of the report to the persons listed in subsection (2) who have been involved in the investigation.

This is subject to section 25.

- (2) The persons referred to in subsection (1)(b) are--
- (a) any person aggrieved;
 - (b) any listed authority;
 - (c) any private health services provider;
 - (d) any person who is alleged in any complaint to have taken or authorised the action complained of or is identified in the report in a negative way;
 - (e) if the listed authority is a family health service provider in Wales--
 - (i) any Local Health Board with whom the authority had, at the time of the action which is the subject of the investigation, entered into a contract to provide the family health services which are under investigation;
 - (ii) any person to whom the authority had, at that time, undertaken to provide those services;
 - (iii) any person with whom the authority had, at that time, made arrangements for the provision of those services;
 - (f) if the listed authority is an independent provider in Wales--
 - (i) any Welsh health service body with whom the authority had, at the time of the action which is the subject of the investigation, made arrangements for the provision of the services under investigation;
 - (ii) any family health service provider in Wales with whom the authority had, at that time, made arrangements for the provision of those services;

(g) the First Minister for Wales (unless the listed authority is itself the Welsh Government or is a local authority in Wales).

(3) The Ombudsman may send a copy of the report to any other persons the Ombudsman thinks appropriate.

(4) The Ombudsman may publish a report prepared under this section if, after taking account of the interests of the person aggrieved (if any) and any other persons the Ombudsman thinks appropriate, the Ombudsman considers it to be in the public interest to do so.

(5) The Ombudsman may supply a copy of a report published under subsection (4), or any part of such a report, to any person who requests it.

(6) The Ombudsman may charge a reasonable fee for supplying a copy of a report, or part of a report, under subsection (5).

(7) If a report prepared under this section--

(a) mentions the name of any person other than a listed authority or a private health services provider in respect of which the report was made, or

(b) includes any particulars which, in the opinion of the Ombudsman, are likely to identify any such person and which, in the Ombudsman's opinion, can be omitted without impairing the effectiveness of the report,

that information must not be included in a version of the report sent to a person under subsection (1)(b) or (3) or published under subsection (4), subject to subsection (8).

(8) Subsection (7) does not apply in relation to a version of the report if, after taking account of the interests of the person aggrieved (if any) and any other persons the Ombudsman thinks appropriate, the Ombudsman considers it to be in the public interest to include that information in that version of the report.

20 Publicising reports

(1) If a listed authority or a private health services provider (as the case may be) receives a copy of a report under section 19(1)(b), the authority or the private health services provider must make copies of that version of the report available for a period of at least three weeks--

(a) at one or more of their offices, and

(b) on their website (if any).

(2) Throughout that period of three weeks, any person may--

(a) inspect the copy of the report at the office or offices concerned at any reasonable time without payment;

(b) make a copy of the report or any part of it at any reasonable time without payment;

(c) require the listed authority or the private health services provider to supply the person with a copy of the report or any part of it, on payment of a reasonable sum if requested;

(d) view the copy of the report on the website (if any) without payment.

(3) Not later than two weeks after the copy of the report is received, the listed authority or the private health services provider must ensure that a notice is published in a newspaper circulating in the part of Wales in which the matter which is the subject of the report arose.

- (4) The notice must specify--
- (a) the date on which the period of three weeks referred to in subsection (1) will begin,
 - (b) the office or offices at which a copy of the report can be inspected, and
 - (c) the website (if any) identified in subsection (1)(b).
- (5) The Ombudsman may give directions to listed authorities and private health services providers with regard to the discharge of their functions under this section.
- (6) Directions under subsection (5) may relate--
- (a) to a particular listed authority or private health services provider in respect of a particular report, or
 - (b) generally to the discharge of functions under this section by all or any listed authorities or any private health services providers.
- (7) A person commits an offence if--
- (a) the person wilfully obstructs a person in the exercise of a right conferred by subsection (2)(a), (b) or (d), or
 - (b) the person refuses to comply with a requirement under subsection (2)(c).
- (8) A person guilty of an offence under subsection (7) is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 3 on the standard scale.
- (9) The Ombudsman may direct that subsections (1) to (4) are not to apply in relation to a particular report.
- (10) In deciding whether to give a direction under subsection (9), the Ombudsman must take into account--
- (a) the public interest,
 - (b) the interests of the person aggrieved (if any), and
 - (c) the interests of any other persons the Ombudsman thinks appropriate.

21 Publicising reports: health care providers

(1) If an investigation is conducted in respect of a listed authority which is a family health service provider in Wales, section 20 has effect with the modifications specified in subsections (2) to (4).

(2) For subsection (1) substitute--

"(1) A person who has received a copy of a report under section 19 by virtue of section 19(2)(d) must make copies of the report available for a period of at least three weeks--

- (a) at one or more of the person's offices, and
- (b) if the person has a website, on the website."

(3) The references to the listed authority are to be taken to be references to that person.

(4) The references to listed authorities, or to a particular listed authority, are to be taken to be references to persons, or a particular person, of the same description as that person.

(5) If an investigation is conducted in respect of a listed authority which is an independent provider in Wales, section 20 has effect with the modifications specified in subsections (6) to (8).

(6) For subsection (1) substitute--

"(1) A person who has received a copy of a report under section 19 by virtue of section 19(2)(e) must make copies of the report available for a period of at least three weeks--

- (a) at one or more of the person's offices, and
- (b) if the person has a website, on the website."

(7) The references to the listed authority are to be taken to be references to that person.

(8) The references to listed authorities, or to a particular listed authority, are to be taken to be references to persons, or a particular person, of the same description as that person.

22 Action following receipt of a report: investigation of a listed authority

(1) This section applies if, in a report under section 19 of an investigation in respect of a listed authority, the Ombudsman concludes that any person has sustained injustice or hardship in consequence of the matter investigated.

(2) The listed authority must consider the report and notify the Ombudsman before the end of the permitted period of--

- (a) the action it has taken or proposes to take in response to it, and
- (b) the period before the end of which it proposes to have taken that action (if it has not already done so).

(3) The permitted period is--

- (a) the period of one month beginning on the date on which the authority receives the report, or
- (b) any longer period specified by the Ombudsman in writing.

23 Action following receipt of a report: investigation of private health services

(1) This section applies if, in a report published under section 19(4) of an investigation in respect of private health services, the Ombudsman concludes that any person has sustained injustice or hardship in consequence of the private health services.

(2) The Ombudsman must give the private health services provider the opportunity to notify the Ombudsman of--

- (a) the action it has taken or proposes to take in response to it, and
- (b) the period before the end of which it proposes to have taken that action (if it has not already done so).

(3) If a listed authority is considering whether to enter into a contract for services with the private health services provider, the listed authority must have regard to the report and any action taken by the private health services provider in response to the report.

24 Non-action following receipt of a report

- (1) If the Ombudsman is satisfied that the condition in subsection (2) is met in relation to a listed authority, the Ombudsman may issue a certificate to that effect to the High Court.
- (2) The condition is that the listed authority has wilfully disregarded the Ombudsman's report without lawful excuse.

25 Reports: alternative procedure

- (1) This section applies if, after the Ombudsman has conducted an investigation--
 - (a) the Ombudsman concludes that the person aggrieved (if any) has not sustained injustice or hardship in consequence of the matter investigated, and
 - (b) the Ombudsman is satisfied that the public interest does not require sections 19 to 24 to apply.
- (2) This section also applies if, after the Ombudsman has conducted an investigation--
 - (a) the Ombudsman concludes that the person aggrieved (if any) has sustained injustice or hardship in consequence of the matter investigated,
 - (b) the listed authority or private health services provider agrees to implement, before the end of the permitted period, any recommendations the Ombudsman makes, and
 - (c) the Ombudsman is satisfied that the public interest does not require sections 19 to 24 to apply.
- (3) The permitted period is--
 - (a) a period agreed between the Ombudsman, the listed authority or the private health services provider (as the case may be) and the person who made the complaint (if any), or
 - (b) if the Ombudsman thinks that no such agreement can be reached, the period specified by the Ombudsman in writing.
- (4) The Ombudsman may decide to prepare a report on the Ombudsman's findings under this section instead of under section 19.
- (5) If the Ombudsman decides to prepare a report under this section--
 - (a) sections 19 to 24 do not apply;
 - (b) the Ombudsman must send a copy of the report to--
 - (i) the person aggrieved (if any);
 - (ii) any listed authority or private health services provider in respect of which the report was made;
 - (c) the Ombudsman may send a copy of the report to any other persons the Ombudsman thinks appropriate.
- (6) The Ombudsman may publish a report prepared under this section if, after taking account of the interests of the person aggrieved (if any) and any other persons the Ombudsman thinks appropriate, the Ombudsman considers it to be in the public interest to do so.
- (7) The Ombudsman may supply a copy of a report published under subsection (6), or any part of such a report, to any person who requests it.
- (8) The Ombudsman may charge a reasonable fee for supplying a copy of a report, or part of a report, under subsection (7).

(9) If a report prepared under this section--

- (a) mentions the name of any person other than the listed authority or the private health services provider in respect of which the report was made, or
- (b) includes any particulars which, in the opinion of the Ombudsman, are likely to identify any such person and which, in the Ombudsman's opinion, can be omitted without impairing the effectiveness of the report,

that information must not be included in a version of the report sent to a person under subsection (5) or published under subsection (6), subject to subsection (10).

(10) Subsection (9) does not apply in relation to a version of the report if, after taking account of the interests of the person aggrieved (if any) and any other persons the Ombudsman thinks appropriate, the Ombudsman considers it to be in the public interest to include that information in that version of the report.

Special reports

26 Special reports

(1) The Ombudsman may prepare a report under this section (a "special report") if subsection (2), (4) or (6) applies.

(2) This subsection applies if, in a report under section 19, the Ombudsman has concluded that any person has sustained injustice or hardship in consequence of the matter investigated and--

- (a) the Ombudsman has not received the notification required under section 22 before the end of the period permitted under that section,
- (b) the Ombudsman has received that notification but is not satisfied with--
 - (i) the action which the listed authority has taken or proposes to take, or
 - (ii) the period before the end of which it proposes to have taken that action,
- (c) the Ombudsman has received that notification but is not satisfied that the listed authority has, before the end of the permitted period, taken the action it proposed to take,
- (d) the Ombudsman has not received any notification under section 23 within a reasonable time, or
- (e) the Ombudsman has received that notification but is not satisfied with—
 - (i) the action which the private health services provider has taken or proposes to take, or
 - (ii) the period before the end of which it proposes to have taken that action.

(3) The permitted period for the purposes of subsection (2)(c) is--

- (a) the period referred to in section 22(2)(b), or
- (b) any longer period specified by the Ombudsman in writing.

(4) This subsection applies if the Ombudsman--

- (a) has prepared a report under section 25 by virtue of subsection (2) of that section, and
- (b) is not satisfied that the listed authority or the private health services provider has implemented the Ombudsman's recommendations before the end of the permitted period.

- (5) The permitted period for the purposes of subsection (4)(b) is--
- (a) the period referred to in section 25(2)(b), or
 - (b) any longer period specified by the Ombudsman in writing.
- (6) This subsection applies if--
- (a) a matter in respect of which the Ombudsman is entitled to investigate has been resolved,
 - (b) in resolving the matter, the Ombudsman has concluded that any person has sustained injustice or hardship in consequence of the matter,
 - (c) the listed authority or the private health services provider has agreed to take particular action before the end of a particular period, and
 - (d) the Ombudsman is not satisfied that the listed authority or the private health services provider has taken that action before the end of the permitted period.
- (7) The permitted period for the purposes of subsection (6)(d) is--
- (a) the period referred to in subsection (6)(c), or
 - (b) any longer period specified by the Ombudsman in writing.
- (8) A special report must--
- (a) set out the facts on the basis of which subsection (2), (4) or (6) applies, and
 - (b) make such recommendations as the Ombudsman thinks fit with respect to the action which, in the Ombudsman's opinion, should be taken--
 - (i) to remedy the injustice or hardship to the person, and
 - (ii) to prevent similar injustice or hardship being caused in the future.
- (9) The Ombudsman must send a copy of a special report--
- (a) if the special report is prepared because subsection (2) applies, to each person to whom a copy of the report under section 19 was sent under section 19(1)(b);
 - (b) if the special report is prepared because subsection (4) or (6) applies, to the person aggrieved (if any) and any listed authority or private health services provider in respect of which the report was made.
- (10) The Ombudsman may send a copy of a special report to any other persons the Ombudsman thinks appropriate.

27 Special reports: supplementary

- (1) The Ombudsman may--
- (a) publish a special report made under section 26;
 - (b) supply a copy of the published report or any part of it to any person who requests it.
- (2) The Ombudsman may charge a reasonable fee for supplying a copy of a report (or part of a report) under subsection (1)(b).

(3) The listed authority or the private health services provider in respect of which a special report is made must reimburse the Ombudsman for the cost of publishing a special report if requested to do so by the Ombudsman.

(4) If a special report--

(a) mentions the name of any person other than the listed authority or the private health services provider in respect of which the report was made, or

(b) includes any particulars which, in the opinion of the Ombudsman, are likely to identify any such person and which, in the Ombudsman's opinion, can be omitted without impairing the effectiveness of the report,

that information must not be included in a version of the report sent to a person under section 26(9) or (10) or published under subsection (1) of this section, subject to subsection (5).

(5) Subsection (4) does not apply in relation to a version of the special report if, after taking account of the interests of any person aggrieved and any other persons the Ombudsman thinks appropriate, the Ombudsman considers it to be in the public interest to include that information in that version of the special report.

(6) Sections 20 and 21 (publicising reports under section 19) apply in relation to a special report under section 26 as they apply in relation to a report under section 19.

(7) Subsection (8) applies if a special report in respect of a private health services provider is published under subsection (1)(a).

(8) If a local authority is considering whether to enter into a contract for services with the private health services provider, the listed authority must have regard to the special report and any action the private health services provider has taken as a result of the recommendations made by the Ombudsman in the special report.

28 Special reports relating to the Welsh Government etc

(1) This section applies if a special report is made in a case when the investigation was made in respect of the Welsh Government or the National Assembly for Wales Commission.

(2) The relevant person must lay a copy of the report before the Assembly.

(3) In subsection (2) "the relevant person" means--

(a) if the investigation was made in respect of the Welsh Government, the First Minister for Wales, and

(b) if the investigation was made in respect of the National Assembly for Wales Commission, a member of that Commission.

Listed authorities

29 Listed authorities

(1) The persons specified in Schedule 3 are listed authorities for the purposes of this Act.

(2) The Welsh Ministers may by order amend Schedule 3 by--

(a) adding a person;

(b) omitting a person;

- (c) changing the description of a person.
- (3) An order under subsection (2) adding a person to Schedule 3 may provide for this Act to apply to the person with the modifications specified in the order.
- (4) Before making an order under subsection (2), the Welsh Ministers must consult the Ombudsman and any other persons they think appropriate.
- (5) No order is to be made under subsection (2) unless a draft of the statutory instrument containing it has been laid before, and approved by a resolution of, the Assembly.
- (6) Sections 30 and 31 contain further restrictions on the power in subsection (2).

30 Restrictions on power to amend Schedule 3

- (1) An order under section 29(2) may not omit the Welsh Government or the National Assembly for Wales Commission from Schedule 3.
- (2) An order under section 29(2) may add a person to Schedule 3 only if the person has functions dischargeable in relation to Wales or a part of Wales (whether or not the functions are also dischargeable otherwise than in relation to Wales).

31 Provisions in orders adding persons to Schedule 3

If the Welsh Ministers propose to make an order under section 29(2) adding a person to Schedule 3, they must also specify in the order--

- (a) whether all or only some of the person's functions are to fall within the remit of the Ombudsman under this Part;
- (b) if only some of the person's functions are to fall within the remit of the Ombudsman under this Part, which those functions are.

32 Power to issue guidance

- (1) The Ombudsman may issue to one or more listed authorities such guidance about good administrative practice as the Ombudsman thinks appropriate.
- (2) Before issuing guidance under this section the Ombudsman must consult such listed authorities, or persons appearing to the Ombudsman to represent them, as the Ombudsman thinks appropriate.
- (3) If guidance issued under this section is applicable to a listed authority, the authority must have regard to the guidance in discharging its functions.
- (4) In conducting an investigation in respect of a listed authority, the Ombudsman may have regard to the extent to which the authority has complied with any guidance issued under this section which is applicable to the authority.
- (5) The Ombudsman may publish any guidance issued under this section in any manner that the Ombudsman thinks appropriate, including in particular by putting the guidance in an annual or extraordinary report.
- (6) Guidance issued under this section may contain different provision for different purposes.
- (7) Subject to subsection (8), guidance issued under this section must not--
 - (a) mention the name of any person other than the listed authorities to which it is applicable or a listed authority which has been investigated under this Act, or

(b) include any particulars which, in the opinion of the Ombudsman, are likely to identify any such person and which, in the Ombudsman's opinion, can be omitted without impairing the effectiveness of the guidance.

(8) Subsection (7) does not apply if, after taking account of the interests of any persons the Ombudsman thinks appropriate, the Ombudsman considers it to be in the public interest to include that information in the guidance.

Listed authorities: complaints handling procedures

33 Complaints-handling: Statement of principles

- (1) The Ombudsman must publish a statement of principles concerning complaints-handling procedures of listed authorities.
- (2) A listed authority must ensure—
 - (a) it has a complaints-handling procedure in respect of action taken by the listed authority, and
 - (b) any such procedure complies with the statement of principles.
- (3) A listed authority which is responsible, by virtue of any enactment, for a complaints-handling procedure—
 - (a) in relation to, or
 - (b) operated by,

another listed authority, must ensure the procedure complies with the statement of principles.
- (4) The first statement of principles under subsection (1) is not to be published unless a draft of the statement has been laid before, and approved by a resolution of, the Assembly.
- (5) The Assembly may not approve the draft later than 2 months after being laid.
- (6) In calculating any period of 2 months for the purposes of subsection (5), no account is to be taken of any time during which the Assembly is dissolved or is in recess for more than 4 days.
- (7) Before laying a draft statement of principles before the Assembly in accordance with subsection (4) the Ombudsman must consult—
 - (a) the Welsh Ministers, and
 - (b) such listed authorities and other persons as the Ombudsman thinks appropriate.
- (8) The Ombudsman must, in preparing the draft statement of principles to be laid before the Assembly in accordance with subsection (4), have regard to any representations made during the consultation mentioned in subsection (7).
- (9) The statement of principles comes into force when it is published by the Ombudsman.
- (10) The Ombudsman may from time to time revise and re-publish the statement of principles.
- (11) When the Ombudsman considers that any revision of the statement of principles under subsection (10) is material, subsections (4) to (8) apply to that statement of principles as they do to the first statement of principles.

(12) In this section and sections 34 to 37, “complaints-handling procedures” means procedures of listed authorities which examine complaints or review decisions in respect of action taken by a listed authority when the matter in question is one in respect of which a complaint to the Ombudsman can be made and investigated under section 3.

34 Model complaints-handling procedure

- (1) The Ombudsman may publish model complaints-handling procedures for listed authorities.
- (2) A model complaints-handling procedure (referred to in this Act as a “model CHP”) must comply with the statement of principles.
- (3) The Ombudsman may publish different model CHPs for different purposes.
- (4) Before publishing a model CHP the Ombudsman must consult such listed authorities or groups of listed authorities as the Ombudsman thinks fit.
- (5) The Ombudsman may from time to time revise and re-publish any model CHP; and in doing so subsection (4) applies.
- (6) When a model CHP is revised and re-published by virtue of subsection (5), section 35 has effect with the following modifications—
 - (a) any specification under subsection (1) of that section in relation to the model CHP continues in effect as a specification in relation to the revised and re-published model CHP,
 - (b) any other reference to a model CHP is to the model CHP as revised and re-published,
 - (c) subsection (3) of that section is omitted.
- (7) The Ombudsman may withdraw any model CHP at any time; and any specification under section 35(1) in relation to the model CHP ceases to have effect.

35 Model complaints-handling procedures: specification of listed authorities

- (1) The Ombudsman may specify any listed authority to which a model CHP is relevant; and must notify the authority accordingly.
- (2) When a model CHP is relevant to a listed authority by virtue of a specification under subsection (1), the authority must ensure there is a complaints-handling procedure which complies with the model CHP for the purposes of the specification.
- (3) When subsection (2) applies the authority must submit a description of the complaints-handling procedure, having taken account of the relevant model CHP, within 6 months of the specification mentioned in that subsection.
- (4) A listed authority may, with the consent of the Ombudsman, modify the application of the model CHP which is relevant to it but only to the extent that is necessary for the effective operation of the procedure by the authority.
- (5) The Ombudsman may revoke any specification under subsection (1) at any time.

36 Declarations of non-compliance

- (1) When a model CHP is relevant to a listed authority by virtue of a specification under section 35(1) the Ombudsman may declare that the complaints-handling procedure of the authority, a description of which was submitted by the authority under section 35(3) or otherwise, does not comply with the model CHP.
- (2) When there is no specification under section 35(1) in relation to a listed authority the Ombudsman may declare that the complaints-handling procedure of the authority, a description of which was submitted by the authority under section 37 or otherwise, does not comply with the statement of principles.
- (3) When a declaration is made under subsection (1) or (2) the Ombudsman—
 - (a) must give reasons in writing,
 - (b) may specify such modifications to the complaints-handling procedure as would result in the declaration being withdrawn.
- (4) When a declaration is made under subsection (1) or (2) the listed authority must submit a description of its complaints-handling procedure, having taken account of the reasons given under subsection (3)(a) and any modifications specified in subsection (3)(b), within 2 months of the declaration.
- (5) The Ombudsman may withdraw a declaration of non-compliance made under subsection (1) or (2) at any time if the Ombudsman thinks fit.

37 Submission of description of complaints-handling procedure: general

- (1) A listed authority must submit a description of its complaints-handling procedure if the Ombudsman so directs; and must do so within 3 months of being so directed or such other period as the Ombudsman may direct.
- (2) Sections 35(3) and 36(4) are subject to any direction given under this section.
- (3) When a listed authority has submitted a description of its complaints-handling procedure to the Ombudsman under this Act or otherwise, the authority must provide such additional information in relation to that procedure as the Ombudsman may reasonably request; and must do so within such period as the Ombudsman directs.

38 Complaints-handling procedures: application of other enactments

The duties in sections 33(2) and (3) and 35(2) do not apply to the extent that—

- (a) the listed authority lacks the necessary powers (other than by virtue of this Act) to ensure compliance with the duties, or
- (b) the duties are inconsistent with any other enactment.

39 Complaints-handling procedures: promotion of best practice etc

- (1) The Ombudsman must—
 - (a) monitor practice and identify any trends in practice as respects the way in which listed authorities handle complaints,
 - (b) promote best practice in relation to such complaints-handling,
 - (c) encourage co-operation and the sharing of best practice among listed authorities in relation to complaints-handling.

- (2) A listed authority must co-operate with the Ombudsman in the exercise of the function in subsection (1).
- (3) The duty in subsection (2) does not apply to the extent that—
- (a) the listed authority lacks the necessary powers (other than by virtue of this Act) to ensure compliance with the duty, or
 - (b) the duty is inconsistent with any other enactment.

Compensation

40 Compensation for the person aggrieved

- (1) This section applies if--
- (a) a complaint in respect of a matter is made or referred to the Ombudsman, and
 - (b) the complaint is one which the Ombudsman has power to investigate under this Part.
- (2) The listed authority in respect of which the complaint is made may make a payment to, or provide any other benefit for, the person aggrieved in respect of the matter which is the subject of the complaint.
- (3) It is immaterial for the purposes of this section that the Ombudsman has decided not to investigate the complaint, has discontinued an investigation of the complaint, has not yet completed an investigation of the complaint or has not upheld the complaint.
- (4) The power in subsection (2) does not affect any other power of the listed authority to make the payment or provide the benefit.

PART 4

INVESTIGATION OF COMPLAINTS RELATING TO OTHER PERSONS: SOCIAL CARE AND PALLIATIVE CARE

Application of this Part

41 Matters to which this Part applies

- (1) This Part applies to the following matters--
- (a) action taken by a care home provider in connection with the provision of accommodation, nursing or personal care in a care home in Wales;
 - (b) action taken by a domiciliary care provider in connection with the provision of domiciliary care in Wales;
 - (c) action taken by an independent palliative care provider in connection with the provision of a palliative care service in Wales.
- (2) But this Part does not apply to--
- (a) matters which may be investigated under Part 3, or
 - (b) matters described in Schedule 4.
- (3) The Welsh Ministers may by order amend Schedule 4 by--
- (a) adding an entry,

- (b) removing an entry, or
 - (c) changing an entry.
- (4) Before making an order under subsection (3), the Welsh Ministers must consult the Ombudsman.
- (5) No order is to be made under subsection (3) unless a draft of the statutory instrument containing it has been laid before, and approved by a resolution of, the Assembly.
- (6) For the meaning of the following terms see sections 58 to 60--
- "care home" ("*cartref gofal*");
 - "care home provider" ("*darparwr cartref gofal*");
 - "domiciliary care" ("*gofal cartref*");
 - "domiciliary care provider" ("*darparwr gofal cartref*");
 - "palliative care service" ("*gwasanaeth gofal lliniarol*");
 - "independent palliative care provider" ("*darparwr gofal lliniarol annibynnol*").

Investigation of complaints

42 Power to investigate complaints

- (1) The Ombudsman may investigate a complaint about a matter to which this Part applies if--
- (a) the complaint has been duly made or referred to the Ombudsman, and
 - (b) in the case of a complaint which relates to an independent palliative care provider, the condition in subsection (2) is met.
- (2) The condition is that the independent palliative care provider has received public funding, within the three years before the date of the action to which the complaint relates, in respect of a palliative care service that it provides in Wales.
- (3) In subsection (2) "public funding" means funding from--
- (a) the Welsh Ministers,
 - (b) a Local Health Board established under section 11 of the National Health Service (Wales) Act 2006,
 - (c) an NHS Trust, or
 - (d) a county council or county borough council in Wales.
- (4) A complaint is "duly made" to the Ombudsman if (but only if)--
- (a) it is made by a person who is entitled under section 44 to make a complaint to the Ombudsman,
 - (b) before the complaint is made--
 - (i) the matter to which it relates has been brought, by or on behalf of the person affected, to the notice of the provider to whom it relates, and
 - (ii) the provider has been given a reasonable opportunity to investigate the matter and to respond, and

- (c) the requirements of section 45 are met in respect of it.
- (5) A complaint is "duly referred" to the Ombudsman if (but only if)--
- (a) it is made by a person who is entitled under section 44 to make a complaint to the Ombudsman, and
 - (b) the requirements of section 46 are met in respect of it.
- (6) It is for the Ombudsman to determine whether the requirements of subsection (1) have been met in respect of a complaint.
- (7) When the Ombudsman determines that the requirements of subsection (1) have not been met in respect of a complaint because the requirements of subsection (4)(b), section 45 or section 46(1)(a)(ii) or (b)(ii) have not been met in respect of that complaint, the Ombudsman may nonetheless investigate the complaint if--
- (a) it relates to a matter to which this Part applies, and
 - (b) the Ombudsman thinks it reasonable to do so.
- (8) It is for the Ombudsman to decide whether to begin, continue or discontinue an investigation.
- (9) The Ombudsman may take any action which the Ombudsman thinks may assist in making a decision under subsection (8).
- (10) The Ombudsman may begin or continue an investigation into a complaint even if the complaint has been withdrawn.

43 Alternative resolution of complaints

- (1) The Ombudsman may take any action the Ombudsman considers appropriate with a view to resolving a complaint which the Ombudsman has the power to investigate under section 42.
- (2) The Ombudsman may take action under this section in addition to or instead of conducting an investigation into the complaint.
- (3) Any action under this section must be taken in private.

44 Who can complain

- (1) The persons entitled to make a complaint to the Ombudsman are--
 - (a) a member of the public (referred to in this Part as "the person aggrieved") who claims or claimed to have sustained injustice or hardship as a result of a matter to which this Part applies,
 - (b) a person authorised in writing by the person aggrieved to act on that person's behalf, or
 - (c) if the person aggrieved is not capable of authorising a person to act on his or her behalf (for example because the person has died), a person who appears to the Ombudsman to be appropriate to act on behalf of the person aggrieved.
- (2) "Member of the public" does not include a person acting in his or her capacity as--
 - (a) a care home provider,
 - (b) a domiciliary care provider,

- (c) an independent palliative care provider, or
- (d) a listed authority.

(3) It is for the Ombudsman to determine any question of whether a person is entitled under this section to make a complaint.

45 Requirements: complaints made to the Ombudsman

(1) The requirements mentioned in section 42(4)(c) are that the complaint must be made--

- (a) in writing, and
- (b) before the end of the permitted period.

(2) In subsection (1)(b) (and in section 46(1)(a)(ii)) "the permitted period" means--

- (a) when the person aggrieved has notice of the matter before the date on which section 42 comes into force, the period of 12 months beginning with the date on which that section comes into force, and
- (b) in any other case, the period of 12 months beginning with the day on which the person aggrieved first has notice of the matter.

(3) It is for the Ombudsman to determine whether the requirements of subsection (1) are met in respect of a complaint.

46 Requirements: complaints referred to the Ombudsman

(1) The requirements mentioned in section 42(5)(b) are that the complaint--

- (a) must have been made to the provider to whom it relates--
 - (i) by a person who would have been entitled under section 44 to make the complaint to the Ombudsman, and
 - (ii) before the end of the permitted period (within the meaning given by section 45(2)), and

(b) must be referred to the Ombudsman--

- (i) in writing, and
- (ii) before the end of the period of 12 months beginning with the day on which the complaint was made to the provider.

Decisions not to investigate etc

47 Decisions not to investigate complaints or to discontinue investigations

(1) If the Ombudsman decides under section 42(8) not to begin an investigation into a complaint or to discontinue an investigation, the Ombudsman must prepare a statement of the reasons for that decision.

(2) The Ombudsman must send a copy of the statement to--

- (a) the person who made the complaint, and
 - (b) the provider to whom the complaint relates.
- (3) The Ombudsman may also send a copy of the statement to any other persons the Ombudsman thinks appropriate.
- (4) The Ombudsman may publish a statement under this section if, after taking account of the interests of the person aggrieved and any other persons the Ombudsman thinks appropriate, the Ombudsman considers that it would be in the public interest to do so.
- (5) The Ombudsman may supply a copy of the published statement, or part of that statement, to any person who requests it.
- (6) The Ombudsman may charge a reasonable fee for supplying a copy of a statement, or part of a statement, under subsection (5).
- (7) The following information must not be included in a version of a statement sent to a person under subsection (2)(b) or (3) or published under subsection (4)--
- (a) the name of a person other than the provider to whom the complaint relates;
 - (b) information which, in the opinion of the Ombudsman, is likely to identify such a person and which, in the Ombudsman's opinion, can be omitted without impairing the effectiveness of the statement.
- (8) Subsection (7) does not apply if, after taking account of the interests of the person aggrieved and any other persons the Ombudsman thinks appropriate, the Ombudsman considers that it would be in the public interest to include that information in that version of the statement.

Investigation procedure and evidence

48 Investigation procedure

- (1) If the Ombudsman decides under section 42(8) to conduct an investigation into a complaint, the Ombudsman must--
- (a) give the provider to whom the complaint relates an opportunity to comment on the allegations contained in the complaint, and
 - (b) give any other person who is alleged in the complaint to have taken or authorised the action complained of an opportunity to comment on the allegations relating to that person.
- (2) An investigation must be conducted in private.
- (3) Subject to subsections (1) and (2), the procedure for conducting an investigation is that which the Ombudsman thinks appropriate in the circumstances of the case.
- (4) The Ombudsman may, among other things--
- (a) make any inquiries which the Ombudsman thinks appropriate, and
 - (b) determine whether any person may be represented in the investigation by an authorised person or another person.
- (5) In subsection (4) "authorised person" means a person who, for the purposes of the Legal Services Act 2007, is an authorised person in relation to an activity which constitutes the exercise of a right of audience or the conduct of litigation (within the meaning of that Act).

- (6) The Ombudsman may pay to the person who made the complaint and to any other person who attends or supplies information for the purposes of the investigation--
- (a) sums in respect of the expenses properly incurred by them, and
 - (b) allowances to compensate for the loss of their time.
- (7) The Ombudsman may attach conditions to those payments.

49 Information, documents, evidence and facilities

- (1) This section applies for the purposes of an investigation under this Part.
- (2) The Ombudsman may require a person the Ombudsman thinks is able to supply information or produce a document relevant to the investigation to do so.
- (3) The Ombudsman has the same powers as the High Court in relation to--
- (a) the attendance and examination of witnesses (including the administration of oaths and affirmations and the examination of witnesses abroad), and
 - (b) the production of documents.
- (4) The Ombudsman may require a person the Ombudsman thinks is able to supply information or produce a document relevant to the investigation to provide any facility the Ombudsman may reasonably require.
- (5) Subject to subsection (6), no person may be compelled to give any evidence or produce any document which the person could not be compelled to give or produce in civil proceedings before the High Court.
- (6) The Crown is not entitled to any privilege in relation to the production of documents or the giving of evidence that would otherwise be allowed by law in legal proceedings.
- (7) When an obligation to maintain secrecy or other restriction on the disclosure of information obtained by or supplied to persons in Her Majesty's service has been imposed by an enactment or rule of law, the obligation or restriction does not to apply to the disclosure of information for the purposes of the investigation.

50 Obstruction and contempt

- (1) If the Ombudsman is satisfied that the condition in subsection (2) is met in relation to a person, the Ombudsman may issue a certificate to that effect to the High Court.
- (2) The condition is that the person--
- (a) without lawful excuse, has obstructed the discharge of any of the Ombudsman's functions under this Part, or
 - (b) has done an act in relation to an investigation which, if the investigation were proceedings in the High Court, would constitute contempt of court.
- (3) If the Ombudsman issues a certificate, the High Court may inquire into the matter.
- (4) If the High Court is satisfied that the condition in subsection (2) is met in relation to the person, it may deal with that person in the same manner as it may deal with a person who has committed contempt in relation to the High Court.

Reports about investigations

51 Investigation reports

- (1) This section applies to investigations under this Part unless section 54 applies.
- (2) The Ombudsman must, after conducting an investigation into a complaint about a matter to which this Part applies--
 - (a) prepare a report on the findings of the investigation ("an investigation report"), and
 - (b) send a copy of the report to the appropriate persons.
- (3) The appropriate persons are--
 - (a) the person who made the complaint,
 - (b) the provider to whom it relates,
 - (c) any other person who is alleged in the complaint to have taken or authorised the action complained of, and
 - (d) the Welsh Ministers.
- (4) The Ombudsman may also send a copy of the report to any other persons the Ombudsman thinks appropriate.
- (5) The Ombudsman may publish the report if, after taking account of the interests of the person aggrieved and any other persons the Ombudsman thinks appropriate, the Ombudsman considers that it would be in the public interest to do so.
- (6) The Ombudsman may supply a copy of the published report, or part of that report, to any person who requests it.
- (7) The Ombudsman may charge a reasonable fee for supplying a copy of a report, or part of a report, under subsection (6).
- (8) The following information must not be included in a version of a report sent to a person under subsection (3)(b) or (c) or (4) or published under subsection (5)--
 - (a) the name of a person other than the provider to whom the complaint relates;
 - (b) information which, in the opinion of the Ombudsman, is likely to identify such a person and which, in the Ombudsman's opinion, can be omitted without impairing the effectiveness of the report.
- (9) Subsection (8) does not apply if, after taking account of the interests of the person aggrieved and any other persons the Ombudsman thinks appropriate, the Ombudsman considers that it would be in the public interest to include that information in that version of the report.

52 Further publicity for investigation reports

- (1) The Ombudsman may arrange for a notice about an investigation report to be published--
 - (a) in one or more newspapers, or
 - (b) by means of broadcast or other electronic media.

- (2) The notice may, for example--
- (a) provide a summary of the Ombudsman's findings,
 - (b) specify an address or addresses at which a copy of the published report can be inspected during ordinary office hours and from which a copy of that report (or part of that report) may be obtained, and
 - (c) specify a website address at which a copy of the published report can be viewed.
- (3) The provider to whom the report relates must, if required to do so by the Ombudsman, reimburse the Ombudsman for the reasonable costs of arranging the publication of the notice.
- (4) In deciding whether it is appropriate to make arrangements under subsection (1), the Ombudsman must take into account--
- (a) the public interest,
 - (b) the interests of the person aggrieved, and
 - (c) the interests of any other persons the Ombudsman thinks appropriate.

53 Action following receipt of investigation reports

- (1) This section applies when the Ombudsman has concluded in an investigation report that the person aggrieved has sustained injustice or hardship as a result of the matter investigated.
- (2) The provider to whom the matter relates must consider the report and notify the Ombudsman before the end of the permitted period of--
- (a) the action the provider has taken or proposes to take in response to the report, and
 - (b) the period before the end of which the provider proposes to take that action (if that action has not already been taken).
- (3) In subsection (2) "the permitted period" means--
- (a) the period of one month beginning on the date on which the authority receives the report, or
 - (b) a longer period specified by the Ombudsman in writing (if any).

54 Reports: alternative procedure

- (1) This section applies if, after the Ombudsman has conducted an investigation under this Part--
- (a) the Ombudsman concludes that the person aggrieved has not sustained injustice or hardship as a result of the matter complained of, and
 - (b) the Ombudsman is satisfied that the public interest does not require sections 51 to 53 to apply.
- (2) This section also applies if, after the Ombudsman has conducted an investigation under this Part--
- (a) the Ombudsman concludes that the person aggrieved has sustained injustice or hardship as a result of the matter complained of,
 - (b) the provider to whom the complaint relates agrees to implement, before the end of the permitted period, any recommendations that the Ombudsman makes, and
 - (c) the Ombudsman is satisfied that the public interest does not require sections 51 to 53 to apply.

- (3) In subsection (2)(b) "the permitted period" means--
- (a) a period agreed between the Ombudsman, the provider and the person who made the complaint, or
 - (b) if the Ombudsman thinks that no such agreement can be reached, a period specified by the Ombudsman in writing.
- (4) The Ombudsman may decide to prepare a report on the Ombudsman's findings under this section, rather than under section 51; and if the Ombudsman decides to do so, sections 51 to 53 do not apply.
- (5) If a report is prepared under this section, the Ombudsman--
- (a) must send a copy of the report to the person who made the complaint and the provider to whom the complaint relates, and
 - (b) may send a copy of the report to any other persons the Ombudsman thinks appropriate.
- (6) The Ombudsman may publish the report if, after taking account of the interests of the persons aggrieved and any other persons the Ombudsman thinks appropriate, the Ombudsman considers it to be in the public interest to do so.
- (7) The Ombudsman may supply a copy of a report published under subsection (6), or a part of that report, to any person who requests it.
- (8) The Ombudsman may charge a reasonable fee for supplying a copy of a report, or part of a report, under subsection (7).
- (9) The following information must not be included in a version of the report sent to a person under subsection (5) or published under subsection (6)--
- (a) the name of a person other than the provider to whom the complaint relates;
 - (b) information which, in the opinion of the Ombudsman, is likely to identify such a person and which, in the Ombudsman's opinion, can be omitted without impairing the effectiveness of the report.
- (10) Subsection (9) does not apply if, after taking account of the interests of the person aggrieved and any other persons the Ombudsman thinks appropriate, the Ombudsman considers that it would be in the public interest to include that information in that version of the report.

Special reports

55 Circumstances in which special reports may be prepared

- (1) The Ombudsman may prepare a special report under section 56 if case 1, 2 or 3 applies.
- (2) Case 1 applies if--
- (a) the Ombudsman has concluded in an investigation report that the person aggrieved has sustained injustice or hardship as a result of the matter investigated, and
 - (b) one of the circumstances in subsection (3) applies.
- (3) The circumstances are that--
- (a) the Ombudsman has not received the notification required under section 53 before the end of the period permitted under that section;
 - (b) the Ombudsman has received that notification but is not satisfied with--

- (i) the action which the provider has taken or proposes to take, or
 - (ii) the period before the end of which the provider proposes to have taken that action;
- (c) the Ombudsman has received that notification but is not satisfied that the provider has, before the end of the permitted period, taken the action that the provider proposed to take.
- (4) In subsection (3)(c) "the permitted period" means--
- (a) the period referred to in section 53(2)(b), or
 - (b) a longer period specified by the Ombudsman in writing (if any).
- (5) Case 2 applies if--
- (a) the Ombudsman has prepared a report under section 54 by virtue of subsection (2) of that section, and
 - (b) the Ombudsman is not satisfied that the provider has implemented the Ombudsman's recommendations before the end of the permitted period.
- (6) In subsection (5)(b) "the permitted period" means--
- (a) the period referred to in section 54(2)(b), or
 - (b) a longer period specified by the Ombudsman in writing (if any).
- (7) Case 3 applies if--
- (a) a complaint in respect of a provider has been resolved under section 43,
 - (b) in resolving the complaint, the Ombudsman has concluded that the person aggrieved has sustained injustice or hardship as a result of the matter complained of,
 - (c) the provider has agreed to take particular action before the end of a particular period, and
 - (d) the Ombudsman is not satisfied that the provider has taken that action before the end of the permitted period.
- (8) In subsection (7)(d) "the permitted period" means--
- (a) the period referred to in subsection (7)(c), or
 - (b) a longer period specified by the Ombudsman in writing (if any).

56 Special reports

- (1) A special report must--
- (a) set out the facts which entitle the Ombudsman to prepare the special report (that is, the facts on the basis of which case 1, 2 or 3 of section 55 applies), and
 - (b) make such recommendations as the Ombudsman thinks fit as to the action which, in the Ombudsman's opinion, should be taken--
 - (i) to remedy the injustice or hardship to the person aggrieved, and
 - (ii) to prevent similar injustice or hardship being caused in the future.

- (2) If the special report is prepared because case 1 of section 55 applies, the Ombudsman must send a copy of the report to each person to whom a copy of the section 51 report was sent under section 51(2)(b).
- (3) If the special report is prepared because case 2 or 3 of section 55 applies, the Ombudsman must send a copy of the report to the person who made the complaint and the provider to whom the complaint relates.
- (4) The Ombudsman may send a copy of a special report to any other persons thinks appropriate.
- (5) The Ombudsman may publish a special report.
- (6) The Ombudsman may supply a copy of a published special report, or a part of such a report, to any person who requests it.
- (7) The Ombudsman may charge a reasonable fee for supplying a copy of a special report, or part of such a report, under subsection (6).
- (8) The following information must not be included in a version of a special report sent to a person under subsection (2), (3) or (4) or published under subsection (5)--
- (a) the name of any person other than the provider in respect of whom the complaint was made;
 - (b) information which, in the opinion of the Ombudsman, is likely to identify any such person and which, in the Ombudsman's opinion, can be omitted without impairing the effectiveness of the special report.
- (9) Subsection (8) does not apply if, after taking account of the interests of the person aggrieved and any other persons the Ombudsman thinks appropriate, the Ombudsman considers that it would be in the public interest to include that information in that version of the special report.

57 Further publicity for special reports

- (1) The Ombudsman may arrange for a notice about a special report to be published--
- (a) in one or more newspapers, or
 - (b) by means of broadcast or other electronic media.
- (2) The notice may, for example--
- (a) provide a summary of the Ombudsman's findings,
 - (b) specify an address or addresses at which a copy of the published report can be inspected during ordinary office hours and from which a copy of that report (or part of that report) may be obtained, and
 - (c) specify a website address at which a copy of the published report can be viewed.
- (3) The provider to whom the report relates must, if required to do so by the Ombudsman, reimburse the Ombudsman for the reasonable costs of arranging the publication of the notice.
- (4) In deciding whether to make arrangements under subsection (1), the Ombudsman must take into account--
- (a) the public interest,
 - (b) the interests of the person aggrieved, and
 - (c) the interests of any other person the Ombudsman thinks appropriate.

Interpretation

58 Meaning of "care home" and "care home provider"

- (1) This section applies for the purposes of this Act.
- (2) "Care home" has the same meaning as in the Care Standards Act 2000.
- (3) "Care home provider" means a person who carries on a care home.
- (4) Action is to be treated as action taken by a care home provider if it is taken by--
 - (a) a person employed by that provider,
 - (b) a person acting on behalf of that provider, or
 - (c) a person to whom that provider has delegated any functions.
- (5) Action is also to be treated as action taken by a care home provider if--
 - (a) that provider provides, by means of an arrangement with another person, accommodation, nursing or personal care in a care home in Wales for a person falling within section 3(2) of the Care Standards Act 2000, and
 - (b) the action is taken by or on behalf of the other person in carrying out the arrangement.

59 Meaning of "domiciliary care" and "domiciliary care provider"

- (1) This section applies for the purposes of this Act.
- (2) "Domiciliary care" means personal care provided in their own homes for persons who by reason of illness, infirmity or disability are unable to provide it for themselves without assistance.
- (3) "Domiciliary care provider" means a person who carries on an activity which involves the provision of domiciliary care, but it does not include an individual who--
 - (a) carries on the activity otherwise than in partnership with others,
 - (b) is not employed by a body corporate or unincorporated association to carry it on,
 - (c) does not employ any other person to carry out the activity, and
 - (d) provides or arranges the provision of domiciliary care to fewer than four persons.
- (4) Action is to be treated as action taken by a domiciliary care provider if it is taken by--
 - (a) a person employed by that provider,
 - (b) a person acting on behalf of that provider, or
 - (c) a person to whom that provider has delegated any functions.
- (5) Action is also to be treated as action taken by a domiciliary care provider if--
 - (a) that provider provides domiciliary care by means of an arrangement with another person, and
 - (b) the action is taken by or on behalf of the other person in carrying out the arrangement.

60 Meaning of "palliative care service" and "independent palliative care provider"

- (1) This section applies for the purposes of this Act.
- (2) "Palliative care service" means a service the main purpose of which is to provide palliative care.
- (3) "Independent palliative care provider" means a person who--
 - (a) provides a palliative care service, and
 - (b) is not a Welsh health service body.
- (4) Action is to be treated as action taken by an independent palliative care provider if it is taken by--
 - (a) a person employed by that provider,
 - (b) a person acting on behalf of that provider, or
 - (c) a person to whom that provider has delegated any functions.
- (5) Action is also to be treated as action taken by an independent palliative care provider if--
 - (a) that provider provides palliative care by means of an arrangement with another person, and
 - (b) the action is taken by or on behalf of the other person in carrying out the arrangement.

PART 5

INVESTIGATIONS: SUPPLEMENTARY

Consultation and co-operation

61 Consultation and co-operation with other ombudsmen

- (1) This section applies if, in making a decision under section 3(5), 4(2) or 42(8) or conducting an investigation under Part 3 or 4, the Ombudsman forms the opinion that a matter which is the subject of the complaint or investigation could be the subject of an investigation by an ombudsman mentioned in subsection (7).
- (2) The Ombudsman must consult that ombudsman about the matter.
- (3) The Ombudsman may co-operate with that ombudsman in relation to the matter.
- (4) Consultation under subsection (2), and co-operation under subsection (3), may extend to anything relating to a matter which is the subject of the complaint or investigation, including (among other things)--
 - (a) the conduct of an investigation into the complaint, and
 - (b) the form, content and publication of a report of the investigation.
- (5) If the Ombudsman consults an ombudsman about a matter under subsection (2), the Ombudsman and that ombudsman may--
 - (a) conduct a joint investigation into the matter,
 - (b) prepare a joint report in relation to the investigation, and
 - (c) publish the joint report.

(6) Subsection (5) does not apply if the ombudsman consulted under subsection (2) is the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman.

(7) The ombudsmen referred to in subsection (1) are--

- (a) the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration;
- (b) the Health Service Commissioner for England;
- (c) a Local Commissioner;
- (d) the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman;
- (e) a housing ombudsman appointed in accordance with a scheme approved under section 51 of the Housing Act 1996.

(8) The Welsh Ministers may by order amend subsection (7) by--

- (a) adding a person,
- (b) omitting a person, or
- (c) changing the description of a person.

(9) An order under subsection (8) may add a person to subsection (7) only if the person appears to the Welsh Ministers to have functions relating to the investigation of complaints.

(10) No order is to be made under subsection (8) unless a draft of the statutory instrument containing it has been laid before and approved by a resolution of the Assembly.

62 Working jointly with other Commissioners

(1) This section applies if it appears to the Ombudsman that--

- (a) there is a matter which the Ombudsman is entitled to investigate, and
- (b) the matter is one which could also be the subject of an examination by the Commissioner for Older People in Wales, the Welsh Language Commissioner or the Children's Commissioner for Wales.

(2) If the Ombudsman considers it appropriate, the Ombudsman must--

- (a) inform the relevant Commissioner about the matter, and
- (b) consult the Commissioner in relation to it.

(3) If the Ombudsman consults a Commissioner under this section, the Ombudsman and the Commissioner may--

- (a) co-operate with each other in relation to the matter,
- (b) conduct a joint investigation into the matter, and
- (c) prepare and publish a joint report in relation to the investigation.

63 Working collaboratively with other Commissioners

- (1) This section applies if it appears to the Ombudsman that a matter could be the subject of an examination by the Commissioner for Older People in Wales, the Welsh Language Commissioner or the Children's Commissioner for Wales ("the connected matter").
- (2) If the Ombudsman considers it appropriate, the Ombudsman must inform the relevant Commissioner about the connected matter.
- (3) If the Ombudsman considers that the matter is also a matter into which the Ombudsman is entitled to conduct an investigation ("the Ombudsman matter"), the Ombudsman must also if the Ombudsman considers it appropriate--
 - (a) inform the relevant Commissioner about the Ombudsman's proposals for conducting an investigation, and
 - (b) consult the Commissioner about those proposals.
- (4) If the Ombudsman and the Commissioner consider that they are entitled to investigate, respectively, the Ombudsman matter and the connected matter, they may--
 - (a) co-operate with each other in the separate investigation of each of those matters,
 - (b) act together in the investigation of those matters, and
 - (c) prepare and publish a joint report containing their respective conclusions in relation to the matters they have each investigated.
- (5) If the Ombudsman considers--
 - (a) that the matter is not a matter into which the Ombudsman is entitled to conduct an investigation, and
 - (b) that it is appropriate to do so,

the Ombudsman must inform the person who initiated the complaint (if any) about how to secure the referral of the connected matter to the relevant Commissioner.

64 Working with the Auditor General for Wales

- (1) If the Ombudsman considers it appropriate, the Ombudsman must--
 - (a) inform the Auditor General for Wales about the Ombudsman's proposals for conducting an investigation, and
 - (b) consult the Auditor General with regard to the most effective way of conducting an investigation.
- (2) If the Ombudsman consults the Auditor General under this section, the Ombudsman and the Auditor General may--
 - (a) co-operate with each other in relation to the matter,
 - (b) conduct a joint investigation into the matter, and
 - (c) prepare and publish a joint report in relation to the investigation.

Disclosure

65 Disclosure of information

- (1) The information to which this section applies is--

- (a) information obtained by the Ombudsman, a member of the Ombudsman's staff or another person acting on the Ombudsman's behalf or assisting the Ombudsman in the discharge of the Ombudsman's functions--
- (i) in deciding whether to begin an investigation,
 - (ii) in the course of an investigation, or
 - (iii) in resolving a matter under section 6 or 43;
- (b) information obtained from an ombudsman mentioned in section 61(7) by virtue of any provision of section 61 or a corresponding provision in an enactment relating to any of those ombudsmen;
- (c) information obtained from the Commissioner for Older People in Wales by virtue of section 62 or 63 of this Act or section 16 or 17 of the Commissioner for Older People (Wales) Act 2006 (working with other ombudsmen);
- (d) information obtained from the Welsh Language Commissioner by virtue of section 62 or 63 of this Act or section 22 of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 (power to disclose information);
- (e) information obtained from the Children's Commissioner for Wales by virtue of section 62 or 63 of this Act or section 75ZB of the Care Standards Act 2000;
- (f) information obtained from the Auditor General for Wales by virtue of section 64 of this Act or section 29A of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2013;
- (g) information obtained from the Information Commissioner by virtue of section 76 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (disclosure between Information Commissioner and ombudsmen).
- (2) The information must not be disclosed except--
- (a) for the purposes of deciding whether to begin an investigation;
 - (b) for the purposes of an investigation;
 - (c) for the purposes of resolving a complaint under section 6 or 43;
 - (d) for the purposes of a statement or report made in relation to a complaint or investigation;
 - (e) for the purposes of any provision of section 61, 62, 63 or 64;
 - (f) for the purposes of proceedings for--
 - (i) an offence under the Official Secrets Act 1911 to 1989 alleged to have been committed by the Ombudsman, a member of the Ombudsman's staff or other person acting on the Ombudsman's behalf or assisting the Ombudsman in the discharge of any of the Ombudsman's functions;
 - (ii) an offence of perjury alleged to have been committed in the course of an investigation;
 - (g) for the purposes of an inquiry with a view to the taking of proceedings mentioned in paragraph (f);
 - (h) for the purpose of proceedings under section 18 or 50;
 - (i) in the case of information to the effect that a person is likely to constitute a threat to the health or safety of one or more persons, to any person to whom the Ombudsman thinks it should be disclosed in the public interest;
 - (j) in the case of information to which subsection (3) applies, to the Information Commissioner,
 - (k) for the purposes of an investigation and of any report to be made under section 69 of the Local Government Act 2000.
- (3) This subsection applies to information if it appears to the Ombudsman to relate to--

- (a) a matter in respect of which the Information Commissioner could exercise a power conferred by an enactment mentioned in subsection (4), or
 - (b) the commission of an offence mentioned in subsection (5).
- (4) The enactments are--
- (a) Part 5 of the Data Protection Act 1998 (enforcement);
 - (b) section 48 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (practice recommendations);
 - (c) Part 4 of that Act.
- (5) The offences are those under--
- (a) any provision of the Data Protection Act 1998 other than paragraph 12 of Schedule 9 to that Act (obstruction of execution of warrant);
 - (b) section 77 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (offence of altering etc records with intent to prevent disclosure).
- (6) No person may be called upon to give evidence in any proceedings (other than proceedings mentioned in subsection (2)) of information obtained by that person as mentioned in subsection (1)(a) or (b).

66 Disclosure prejudicial to safety of State or contrary to public interest

- (1) A Minister of the Crown may give notice to the Ombudsman with respect to--
- (a) any document or information specified in the notice, or
 - (b) any class of document or information so specified,

that, in the opinion of the Minister, the disclosure of that document or information, or of documents or information of that class, would be prejudicial to the safety of the State or otherwise contrary to the public interest.

(2) If a notice is given under subsection (1), nothing in this Act is to be construed as authorising or requiring the Ombudsman, a member of the Ombudsman's staff or another person acting on the Ombudsman's behalf or assisting the Ombudsman in the discharge of the Ombudsman's functions to disclose to any person or for any purpose any document or information, or class of document or information, specified in the notice.

67 Protection from defamation claims

- (1) For the purposes of the law of defamation, the following are absolutely privileged--
- (a) the publication of a matter, in the discharge of any of the Ombudsman's functions under this Act, by the Ombudsman, a member of the Ombudsman's staff or another person acting on the Ombudsman's behalf or assisting the Ombudsman in the discharge of any of the Ombudsman's functions;
 - (b) the publication of a matter by a person in the discharge of functions under section 17;
 - (c) the publication of a matter in connection with an investigation made or referred to the Ombudsman under this Act, in communications between--

- (i) a listed authority, a member or co-opted member of a listed authority, an officer or member of the staff of a listed authority or another person acting on behalf of a listed authority or assisting it in the discharge of any of its functions, or a private health services provider, and
 - (ii) the Ombudsman, a member of the Ombudsman's staff or another person acting on the Ombudsman's behalf or assisting the Ombudsman in the discharge of any of the Ombudsman's functions;
- (d) the publication of a matter in connection with an investigation made or referred to the Ombudsman under this Act, in communications between--
- (i) a care home provider, domiciliary care provider or independent palliative care provider, an officer or member of staff of such a provider or another person acting on behalf of such a provider or assisting it in the discharge of any of its functions, and
 - (ii) the Ombudsman, a member of the Ombudsman's staff or another person acting on the Ombudsman's behalf or assisting the Ombudsman in the discharge of any of the Ombudsman's functions;
- (e) the publication of a matter in connection with an investigation, in communications between a person and an Assembly member;
- (f) the publication of a matter in connection with an investigation, in communications between--
- (i) the person, and
 - (ii) the Ombudsman, a member of the Ombudsman's staff or another person acting on the Ombudsman's behalf or assisting the Ombudsman in the discharge of any of the Ombudsman's functions.
- (2) For the purposes of subsection (1)(d)(i) a person is an officer of a provider if the person has control or management of a provider which is not an individual or the affairs of such a provider.
- (3) In this section, reference to matters in connection with an investigation include matters in connection with the Ombudsman's decision whether to investigate or not.

PART 6

MISCELLANEOUS AND GENERAL

68 Investigations commenced before sections 3, 4 and 42 come into force

- (1) Subsection (2) applies if the Ombudsman has commenced an investigation into a matter before the date on which sections 3, 4 and 42 come into force and the investigation has not been determined by the Ombudsman or the matter has not been resolved by that date.
- (2) On and after that date, the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2005 continues to apply for the purposes of the investigation despite the other provisions of this Act.

General

69 Amendments and repeals

(1) The Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2005 is repealed.

But see section 68.

(2) Schedule 5 (consequential amendments) has effect.

70 Commencement

The preceding provisions of this Act come into force in accordance with provision made by the Welsh Ministers by order.

71 Interpretation

(1) In this Act—

"act" (*"gweithredu"*) and "action" (*"camau gweithredu"*) include a failure to act (and related expressions must be construed accordingly);

"annual report" (*"adroddiad blynyddol"*) has the meaning given in paragraph 14 of Schedule 1;

"the Assembly" (*"y Cynulliad"*) means the National Assembly for Wales;

"care home" (*"gofal cartref"*) has the meaning given by section 58(2);

"care home provider" (*"darparwr gofal cartref"*) has the meaning given by section 58(3);

"co-opted member" (*"aelod cyfetholedig"*), in relation to an authority, means a person who is not a member of the authority but who--

- (a) is a member of a committee or sub-committee of the authority, or
- (b) is a member of, and represents the authority on, a joint committee on which the authority is represented or a sub-committee of such a committee,

and who is entitled to vote on any question which falls to be decided at a meeting of the committee or sub-committee;

"domiciliary care" (*"gofal cartref"*) has the meaning given by section 59(2);

"domiciliary care provider" (*"darparwr gofal cartref"*) has the meaning given by section 59(3);

"extraordinary report" (*"adroddiad eithriadol"*) has the meaning given in paragraph 14 of Schedule 1;

"family health service provider in Wales" (*"darparwr gwasanaeth iechyd teulu yng Nghymru"*) means--

- (a) a person who, at the time of action which is the subject of a complaint under this Act, provided services under a contract entered into by that person with a Local Health Board under section 42 or section 57 of the National Health Service (Wales) Act 2006;
- (b) a person who, at that time, had undertaken to provide in Wales general ophthalmic services or pharmaceutical services under that Act;
- (c) an individual who, at that time, provided in Wales primary medical services or primary dental services in accordance with arrangements made under section 50 or 64 of that Act (except as an employee of, or otherwise on behalf of, a Welsh health service body or an independent provider in Wales);

and includes employees of persons referred to in paragraphs (a), (b) and (c) when those persons are acting in a capacity referred to in paragraphs (a), (b) and (c).

"family health services" ("*gwasanaethau iechyd teulu*") means services mentioned in any of paragraphs (a) to (c) of the definition of "family health service provider in Wales";

"financial year" ("*blwyddyn ariannol*") means the 12 months ending on 31 March;

"independent palliative care provider" ("*darparwr gofal lliniarol annibynnol*") has the meaning given by section 60(3);

"independent provider in Wales" ("*darparwr annibynnol yng Nghymru*") means a person who, at the time of action which is the subject of a complaint under this Act--

- (a) provided services of any kind in Wales under arrangements with a Welsh health service body or a family health service provider in Wales, and
- (b) was not a Welsh health service body or a family health service provider in Wales;

"investigation" ("*ymchwiliad*")--

- (a) in relation to the Ombudsman, means an investigation under section 3, 4 or 42 (and cognate expressions must be construed accordingly);
- (b) in relation to another ombudsman or commissioner, includes an examination (and cognate expressions must be construed accordingly);

"listed authority" ("*awdurdod rhestredig*") has the meaning given in section 29;

"local authority in Wales" ("*awdurdod lleol yng Nghymru*") means a county council, county borough council or community council in Wales;

"Local Commissioner" ("*Comisiynydd Lleol*") has the meaning given in section 23(3) of the Local Government Act 1974 (c 7);

"NHS trust" ("*Ymddiriedolaeth y GIG*") has the same meaning as in the National Health Service (Wales) Act 2006;

"the Ombudsman" ("*yr Ombwdsmon*") has the meaning given in section 2;

"palliative care service" ("*gwasanaeth gofal lliniarol*") has the meaning given by section 60(2);

"the person aggrieved" ("*y person a dramgwyddwyd*") in Part 3 has the meaning given in section 7(1)(a) and in Part 4 has the meaning given in section 44(1)(a);

"private health services" ("*gwasanaethau iechyd preifat*") means—

- (a) medical treatment provided by an independent hospital within the meaning of section 2 of the Care Standards Act 2000;
- (b) medical treatment provided by health professionals who, under contractual arrangements other than by virtue of national health service contracts of employment, have access to national health service staff and facilities;

"publicly-funded dwelling" ("*annedd a ariennir yn gyhoeddus*") means--

- (a) a dwelling which was provided by means of a grant under--
 - (i) section 18 of the Housing Act 1996 (c 52) (social housing grant), or
 - (ii) section 50 of the Housing Act 1988 (c 50), section 41 of the Housing Associations Act 1985 (c 69), or section 29 or 29A of the Housing Act 1974 (c 44) (housing association grant);
- (b) a dwelling which was acquired on a disposal by a public sector landlord (within the meaning of Part 1 of the Housing Act 1996);

"relevant tribunal" ("*tribiwnlys perthnasol*") means a tribunal (including a tribunal consisting of only one person) specified by order made by the Welsh Ministers;

"social landlord in Wales" ("*landlord cymdeithasol yng Nghymru*") means--

- (a) a body which was at the time of action which is the subject of a complaint under this Act registered as a social landlord in the register maintained by the Welsh Ministers under section 1 of the Housing Act 1996 (or in the register previously maintained under that section by the Assembly constituted by the Government of Wales Act 1998, the Secretary of State or Housing for Wales);
- (b) any other body which at the time of action which is the subject of a complaint under this Act was registered with Housing for Wales, the Secretary of State, the Assembly constituted by the Government of Wales Act 1998 or the Welsh Ministers and owned or managed publicly-funded dwellings;

"special report" ("*adroddiad arbennig*") in Part 3 has the meaning given in section 26 and in Part 4 has the meaning given in section 56;

"Wales" ("*Cymru*") has the meaning given in section 158(1) of the Government of Wales Act 2006 (c 32);

"Welsh health service body" ("*corff gwasanaeth iechyd yng Nghymru*") means--

- (a) the Welsh Ministers;
- (b) a Local Health Board;
- (c) an NHS trust managing a hospital or other establishment or facility in Wales;
- (d) a Special Health Authority not discharging functions only or mainly in England.

(2) For the purposes of the definition of "independent provider in Wales", arrangements with the Welsh Ministers are arrangements with a Welsh health service body only to the extent that they are made in the discharge of a function of the Welsh Ministers relating to the National Health Service.

(3) A statutory instrument containing an order under subsection (1) is subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of the Assembly.

(4) The Welsh Ministers may by order amend the definitions of "family health service provider in Wales", "independent provider in Wales" and "social landlord in Wales".

(5) Before making an order under subsection (4), the Welsh Ministers must consult such persons as they think appropriate.

(6) No order is to be made under subsection (4) unless a draft of the statutory instrument containing it has been laid before, and approved by a resolution of, the Assembly.

(7) Section 13 of the National Audit Act 1983 (c 44) (interpretation of references to the Committee of Public Accounts) applies for the purposes of this Act as it applies for the purposes of that Act.

(8) For the purposes of this Act, references to action taken by a listed authority include action taken by--

- (a) a member, co-opted member, committee or sub-committee of the authority acting in the discharge of functions of the authority;
- (b) an officer or member of staff of the authority, whether acting in the discharge of his or her own functions or the functions of the authority;
- (c) any other person acting on behalf of the authority.

72 Former health care providers, social landlords, social care providers and palliative care providers: modifications

(1) The Welsh Ministers may by regulations provide for this Act to apply with the modifications specified in the regulations to persons who are--

- (a) former family health service providers in Wales;
- (b) former independent providers in Wales;
- (c) former social landlords in Wales;
- (d) former care home providers in Wales;
- (e) former domiciliary care providers in Wales;
- (f) former independent palliative care providers in Wales.

(2) "Former family health service provider in Wales" means a person who--

- (a) at the relevant time, provided family health services of a particular description, and
- (b) subsequently ceased to provide services of that description (whether or not the person has later started to provide them again).

(3) "Former independent provider in Wales" means a person who--

- (a) at the relevant time, provided services of a particular description in Wales under arrangements with a Welsh health service body or a family health service provider in Wales,
- (b) was not a Welsh health service body or a family health service provider in Wales at that time, and
- (c) subsequently ceased to provide services of that description (whether or not the person has later started to provide them again).

(4) "Former social landlord in Wales" means a person who--

- (a) at the relevant time--
 - (i) was registered as a social landlord in the register maintained by the Welsh Ministers under section 1 of the Housing Act 1996 (c 52) (or in the register previously maintained under that section by the Assembly constituted by the Government of Wales Act 1998, the Secretary of State or Housing for Wales), or
 - (ii) was registered with Housing for Wales, the Secretary of State, the Assembly constituted by the Government of Wales Act 1998 or the Welsh Ministers and owned or managed publicly-funded dwellings, and
- (b) subsequently--
 - (i) ceased to be registered as mentioned in paragraph (a)(i) or (ii) (whether or not the person later became so registered again), or
 - (ii) ceased to own or manage publicly-funded dwellings (whether or not the person later did so again).

(5) "Former care home provider in Wales" means a person who--

- (a) at the relevant time, provided accommodation, nursing or personal care of a particular description at a care home (within the meaning given by the Care Standards Act 2000) in Wales, and
- (b) subsequently ceased to do so (whether or not the person has later started to do so again).

- (6) "Former domiciliary care provider in Wales" means a person who--
- (a) at the relevant time, provided domiciliary care services of a particular description in Wales, and
 - (b) subsequently ceased to do so (whether or not the person has later started to provide those services again).
- (7) "Former independent palliative care provider in Wales" means a person who--
- (a) at the relevant time, provided a palliative care service of a particular description in Wales, and
 - (b) subsequently ceased to do so (whether or not the person has later started to do so again).
- (8) "The relevant time" is the time of action which is the subject of a complaint under this Act.
- (9) No regulations are to be made under this section unless a draft of the statutory instrument containing them has been laid before, and approved by a resolution of, the Assembly.

73 Consequential, transitional provisions etc

- (1) The Welsh Ministers may by order make--
- (a) such consequential, incidental or supplemental provision, and
 - (b) such transitory, transitional or saving provision,

as they think necessary or expedient for the purposes of, in consequence of, or for giving full effect to, any provision of this Act.

- (2) An order under subsection (1) may in particular amend, repeal or revoke any enactment other than one contained in an Act passed in a Session after that in which this Act is passed.
- (3) The amendments that may be made by virtue of subsection (2) are in addition to those made by or under any other provision of this Act.
- (4) No order is to be made under subsection (1) unless a draft of the statutory instrument containing it has been laid before, and approved by a resolution of, the Assembly.
- (5) A reference in any enactment to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales established under the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2005 is a reference to the office of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales which continues under this Act.

74 Orders, regulations and directions

- (1) A power of the Welsh Ministers to make an order or regulations under this Act is exercisable by statutory instrument.
- (2) An order or regulations made by the Welsh Ministers under this Act may--
- (a) make different provision for different purposes;
 - (b) make consequential, incidental, supplemental, transitory, transitional or saving provision.
- (3) A direction given under this Act--
- (a) may be amended or revoked by the person who gave it;
 - (b) may make different provision for different purposes.

75 Short title

This Act may be cited as the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2016.

SCHEDULE 1

PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES: APPOINTMENT ETC

Section 2

Appointment

1

The Ombudsman is to be appointed by Her Majesty on the nomination of the Assembly.

Status

2

- (1) The Ombudsman is a corporation sole.
- (2) The Ombudsman holds office under Her Majesty and discharges his functions on behalf of the Crown.
- (3) The Ombudsman is a Crown servant for the purposes of the Official Secrets Act 1989 (c 6).
- (4) But service as the Ombudsman is not service in the civil service of the Crown.

Term of office

3

- (1) A person's term of office as the Ombudsman is seven years (subject to sub-paragraphs (3) and (4) and paragraph 5).
- (2) A person appointed as the Ombudsman is not eligible for re-appointment.
- (3) Her Majesty may relieve a person of office as the Ombudsman--
 - (a) at his request, or
 - (b) on Her Majesty being satisfied that the person is incapable for medical reasons of performing the duties of the office.
- (4) Her Majesty may remove a person from office as the Ombudsman on the making of a recommendation, on the ground of the person's misbehaviour, that Her Majesty should do so.
- (5) A recommendation for the removal of a person from office as the Ombudsman may not be made unless--
 - (a) the Assembly has resolved that the recommendation should be made, and
 - (b) the resolution of the Assembly is passed on a vote in which the number of Assembly members voting in favour of it is not less than two-thirds of the total number of Assembly seats.

Acting Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

4

- (1) If the office of the Ombudsman becomes vacant, Her Majesty may, on the nomination of the Assembly, appoint a person to act as the Ombudsman.

- (2) A person appointed to act as the Ombudsman ("an acting Ombudsman") may have held office as the Ombudsman.
- (3) A person appointed as an acting Ombudsman is eligible for appointment as the Ombudsman (unless he has already held office as the Ombudsman).
- (4) The power to appoint a person as an acting Ombudsman is not exercisable after the end of the period of two years starting with the date on which the vacancy arose.
- (5) An acting Ombudsman holds office in accordance with the terms of his appointment, subject to sub-paragraph (6) (and paragraph 2, as applied by sub-paragraph (8)).
- (6) An acting Ombudsman must not hold office after--
- (a) the appointment of a person as the Ombudsman, or
 - (b) if sooner, the end of the period of two years starting with the date on which the vacancy arose.
- (7) While an acting Ombudsman holds office he is to be regarded (except for the purposes of paragraphs 1, 3, 5 to 9 and this paragraph) as the Ombudsman.

Disqualification

5

- (1) A person is disqualified from being the Ombudsman or an acting Ombudsman if any of the following applies--
- (a) the person is a member of the House of Commons;
 - (b) the person is a listed authority;
 - (c) the person is a member, co-opted member, officer or member of staff of a listed authority;
 - (d) the person is disqualified from being a member of the Assembly (other than by virtue of paragraph 6 of this Schedule or section 16(1)(d) of the Government of Wales Act 2006);
 - (e) the person is disqualified from being a member of a local authority in Wales (other than by virtue of paragraph 6 of this Schedule);
 - (f) the person is a care home provider, domiciliary care provider or independent palliative care provider;
 - (g) the person is an officer or member of staff of a provider of that kind;
 - (h) the person is a private health services provider;
 - (i) the person is an officer or member of staff of a provider of that kind.
- (2) For the purposes of sub-paragraphs (1)(g) and (i) a person is an officer of a provider if the person has control or management of a provider which is not an individual or the affairs of such a provider.
- (3) The appointment of a person as the Ombudsman or an acting Ombudsman is not valid if the person is disqualified under sub-paragraph (1).
- (4) If a person who has been appointed as the Ombudsman or an acting Ombudsman becomes disqualified under sub-paragraph (1), the person ceases to hold office on becoming so disqualified.
- (5) But the validity of anything done by a person appointed as the Ombudsman or an acting Ombudsman is not affected by the fact that the person is or becomes disqualified under sub-paragraph (1).

6

- (1) A person who holds office as the Ombudsman or an acting Ombudsman is disqualified from--
- (a) being a listed authority;
 - (b) being a member, co-opted member, officer or member of staff of a listed authority;
 - (c) holding a paid office to which appointment is by a listed authority;
 - (d) being an employee or member of, or holding a paid office with, a private health services provider.
- (2) A person is not disqualified under sub-paragraph (1) from being a member of the Assembly.

7

- (1) A person who has ceased to hold office as the Ombudsman or as an acting Ombudsman is disqualified for the relevant period from--
- (a) holding an office which is a listed authority;
 - (b) being a member, co-opted member, officer or member of staff of a listed authority;
 - (c) holding a paid office to which appointment is by a listed authority;
 - (d) being an employee or member of, or holding a paid office with, a private health services provider.
- (2) The relevant period is the period of two years starting on the date on which the person ceased to hold office as the Ombudsman or (as the case may be) as an acting Ombudsman.
- (3) But sub-paragraph (1) does not disqualify a person from--
- (a) being a member of the Assembly or the National Assembly for Wales Commission;
 - (b) holding the office of presiding officer or deputy presiding officer of the Assembly or of First Minister for Wales, Welsh Minister appointed under section 48 of the Government of Wales Act 2006, Counsel General to the Welsh Government or Deputy Welsh Minister;
 - (c) being a member or co-opted member of a local authority in Wales;
 - (d) holding the office of chairman, vice-chairman or elected mayor of a local authority in Wales.

8

The references in paragraphs 6 and 7 to a paid office include an office the holder of which is entitled only to the reimbursement of expenses.

Remuneration etc**9**

- (1) The Assembly must--
- (a) pay a person who is the Ombudsman or an acting Ombudsman such salary and allowances, and
 - (b) make such payments towards the provision of superannuation benefits for or in respect of him,

as may be provided for by or under the terms of his appointment.

- (2) The Assembly must pay to or in respect of a person who has ceased to hold office as the Ombudsman or an acting Ombudsman--

- (a) such amounts by way of pensions and gratuities, and
- (b) such amounts by way of provision for those benefits,

as may have been provided for by or under the terms of his appointment.

(3) If a person ceases to be the Ombudsman or an acting Ombudsman and it appears to the Assembly that there are special circumstances which make it right that the person should receive compensation, the Assembly may pay to that person a sum of such amount as it thinks appropriate.

(4) In Schedule 1 to the Superannuation Act 1972 (c 11) (offices etc to which section 1 of that Act applies) in the list of "Offices" at the appropriate places insert--

"Public Services Ombudsman for Wales"

"Acting Public Services Ombudsman for Wales".

(5) The Assembly must pay to the Minister for the Civil Service, at such times as he may direct, such sums as he may determine in respect of any increase attributable to sub-paragraph (4) in the sums payable out of money provided by Parliament under the Superannuation Act 1972 (c 11).

(6) Sums required for the making of payments under sub-paragraphs (1), (2) and (5) are to be charged on the Welsh Consolidated Fund.

Special financial provisions

10

(1) Any sums payable by the Ombudsman in consequence of a breach, in the performance of any of the Ombudsman's functions, of any contractual or other duty are to be charged on the Welsh Consolidated Fund.

(2) And sub-paragraph (1) applies whether the breach occurs by reason of an act or omission of--

- (a) the Ombudsman,
- (b) a member of the Ombudsman's staff, or
- (c) any other person acting on the Ombudsman's behalf or assisting the Ombudsman in the exercise of functions.

(3) The Ombudsman may retain income derived from fees charged by virtue of sections 12(6), 16(6), 21(8) and 23(2) (rather than pay it into the Welsh Consolidated Fund) for use in connection with the exercise of the functions conferred or imposed by this Act.

Staff

11

(1) The Ombudsman may appoint such staff as he thinks necessary for assisting him in the discharge of his functions, on such terms and conditions as he may determine.

(2) No member of staff of the Ombudsman is to be regarded as holding office under Her Majesty or as discharging any functions on behalf of the Crown.

(3) But each member of his staff is to be treated as being a Crown servant for the purposes of the Official Secrets Act 1989 (c 6).

(4) In Schedule 1 to the Superannuation Act 1972 (offices etc to which section 1 of that Act applies) in the list of "other bodies" at the appropriate place insert--

"Employment as a member of the staff of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales."

(5) The Ombudsman must pay to the Minister for the Civil Service, at such times as the Minister may direct, such sum as the Minister may determine in respect of any increase attributable to sub-paragraph (4) in the sums payable out of money provided by Parliament under the Superannuation Act 1972.

Advisers

12

(1) The Ombudsman may obtain advice from any person who, in the Ombudsman's opinion, is qualified to give it, to assist the Ombudsman in the discharge of his functions.

(2) The Ombudsman may pay to any person from whom the Ombudsman obtains advice under sub-paragraph (1) such fees or allowances as the Ombudsman may determine.

Delegation

13

(1) Any function of the Ombudsman may be discharged on the Ombudsman's behalf--

- (a) by any person authorised by the Ombudsman to do so, and
- (b) to the extent so authorised.

(2) Sub-paragraph (1) does not affect the responsibility of the Ombudsman for the discharge of any such function.

(3) A person authorised by the Ombudsman under sub-paragraph (1) is to be treated as being a Crown servant for the purposes of the Official Secrets Act 1989 (c 6).

(4) No arrangements may be made between the Ombudsman, on the one hand, and the Welsh Ministers (or the First Minister for Wales or the Counsel General to the Welsh Government), on the other, for--

- (a) any functions of one of them to be exercised by the other,
- (b) any functions of the Welsh Ministers (or the First Minister for Wales or the Counsel General to the Welsh Government) to be exercised by members of staff of the Ombudsman,
- (c) any functions of the Ombudsman to be exercised by members of the staff of the Welsh Government, or
- (d) the provision of administrative, professional or technical services by one of them for the other.

(5) Sub-paragraph (4) applies despite any provision that would otherwise permit such arrangements to be made.

Annual and extraordinary reports

14

(1) The Ombudsman--

- (a) must annually prepare a general report on the discharge of the Ombudsman's functions (an "annual report");
 - (b) may prepare any other report with respect to the Ombudsman's functions that the Ombudsman thinks appropriate (an "extraordinary report").
- (2) A report prepared under this paragraph may include any general recommendations which the Ombudsman may have arising from the discharge of the Ombudsman's functions.
- (3) The Ombudsman must lay a copy of each report prepared under this paragraph before the Assembly and at the same time send a copy to the Welsh Government and (if the report is an extraordinary report) must send a copy of it to any listed authorities (other than the Welsh Government) he thinks appropriate.
- (4) The Ombudsman may also send a copy of any report prepared under this paragraph to any other persons the Ombudsman thinks appropriate.
- (5) The Ombudsman must, and the Assembly may, publish any report laid before the Assembly under this paragraph.
- (6) The Ombudsman must comply with any directions given by the Assembly with respect to an annual report.
- (7) If a report prepared under this paragraph--
- (a) mentions the name of any person other than a listed authority, private health services provider, care home provider, domiciliary care provider or independent palliative care provider in respect of a matter which may be investigated by the Ombudsman under this Act, or
 - (b) includes any particulars which, in the opinion of the Ombudsman, are likely to identify any such person and which, in the Ombudsman's opinion, can be omitted without impairing the effectiveness of the report,

that information must not be included in a version of the report laid before the Assembly under sub-paragraph (3), sent to a person under sub-paragraph (3) or (4) or published by the Ombudsman under sub-paragraph (5), subject to sub-paragraph (8).

(8) Sub-paragraph (7) does not apply in relation to a version of the report if, after taking account of the interests of any persons he thinks appropriate, the Ombudsman considers it to be in the public interest to include that information in that version of the report.

Estimates

15

- (1) For each financial year other than the first financial year, the Ombudsman must prepare an estimate of the income and expenses of the Ombudsman's office.
- (2) The Ombudsman must submit the estimate at least five months before the beginning of the financial year to which it relates to the committee or committees of the Assembly specified in the standing orders of the Assembly.
- (3) The committee or committees must examine an estimate submitted in accordance with sub-paragraph (2) and must then lay the estimate before the Assembly with any modifications thought appropriate.
- (4) Before laying before the Assembly with modifications an estimate submitted in accordance with sub-paragraph (2), the committee or committees must--
 - (a) consult the Ombudsman, and

(b) take into account any representations which the Ombudsman may make.

(5) The first financial year is the financial year during which the first person to be appointed as the Ombudsman is appointed.

Accounts

16

(1) The Ombudsman must--

- (a) keep proper accounting records; and
- (b) for each financial year, prepare accounts in accordance with directions given to him by the Treasury.

(2) The directions which the Treasury may give under sub-paragraph (1)(b) include directions to prepare accounts relating to financial affairs and transactions of persons other than the Ombudsman.

(3) The directions which the Treasury may give under sub-paragraph (1)(b) include, in particular, directions as to--

- (a) the information to be contained in the accounts and the manner in which it is to be presented;
- (b) the methods and principles in accordance with which the accounts are to be prepared;
- (c) the additional information (if any) that is to accompany the accounts.

Audit

17

(1) The accounts prepared by the Ombudsman for a financial year must be submitted by the Ombudsman to the Auditor General for Wales no later than 30 November in the following financial year.

(2) The Auditor General for Wales must--

- (a) examine, certify and report on each set of accounts submitted to the Auditor General for Wales under this paragraph, and
- (b) no later than four months after the accounts are so submitted, lay before the Assembly a copy of them as certified by the Auditor General for Wales together with the Auditor General for Wales's report on them.

(3) In examining accounts submitted to the Auditor General for Wales under this paragraph the Auditor General for Wales must, in particular, satisfy himself that the expenditure to which the accounts relate has been incurred lawfully and in accordance with the authority which governs it.

Accounting officer

18

(1) The Ombudsman is the accounting officer for the office of the Ombudsman.

(2) If the Ombudsman is incapable of discharging his responsibilities as accounting officer, the Audit Committee may designate a member of his staff to be the accounting officer for as long as he is so incapable.

- (3) If the office of the Ombudsman is vacant and there is no acting Ombudsman, the Audit Committee may designate a member of the Ombudsman's staff to be the accounting officer for as long as the office of the Ombudsman is vacant and there is no acting Ombudsman.
- (4) The accounting officer has, in relation to the accounts and the finances of the Ombudsman, the responsibilities which are from time to time specified by the Audit Committee.
- (5) In this paragraph references to responsibilities include in particular--
- (a) responsibilities in relation to the signing of accounts,
 - (b) responsibilities for the propriety and regularity of the finances of the Ombudsman, and
 - (c) responsibilities for the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which the resources of the Ombudsman are used.
- (6) The responsibilities which may be specified under this paragraph include responsibilities owed to--
- (a) the Assembly, the Welsh Ministers or the Audit Committee, or
 - (b) the House of Commons or its Committee of Public Accounts.
- (7) If requested to do so by the House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts, the Audit Committee may--
- (a) on behalf of the Committee of Public Accounts take evidence from the accounting officer, and
 - (b) report to the Committee of Public Accounts and transmit to that Committee any evidence so taken.

Examinations into the use of resources

19

- (1) The Auditor General for Wales may carry out examinations into the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which the Ombudsman has used the Ombudsman's resources in discharging the Ombudsman's functions.
- (2) Sub-paragraph (1) is not to be construed as entitling the Auditor General for Wales to question the merits of the policy objectives of the Ombudsman.
- (3) In determining how to discharge the Auditor General for Wales's functions under this paragraph, the Auditor General for Wales must take into account the views of the Audit Committee as to the examinations which the Auditor General for Wales should carry out.
- (4) The Auditor General for Wales may lay before the Assembly a report of the results of any examination carried out by the Auditor General for Wales under this paragraph.

Examinations by the Comptroller and Auditor General

20

- (1) For the purposes of enabling the Comptroller and Auditor General to carry out examinations into, and report to Parliament on, the finances of the Ombudsman, the Comptroller and Auditor General--
- (a) has a right of access at all reasonable times to all such documents in the custody or under the control of the Ombudsman, or of the Auditor General for Wales, as the Comptroller and Auditor General may reasonably require for that purpose, and

(b) is entitled to require from any person holding or accountable for any of those documents any assistance, information or explanation which the Comptroller and Auditor General reasonably thinks necessary for that purpose.

(2) The Comptroller and Auditor General must--

- (a) consult the Auditor General for Wales, and
- (b) take account of any relevant work done or being done by the Auditor General for Wales,

before the Comptroller and Auditor General acts in reliance on sub-paragraph (1) or carries out an examination in respect of the Ombudsman under section 7 of the National Audit Act 1983 (c 44) (economy etc examinations).

Supplementary powers

21

The Ombudsman may do anything (including acquire or dispose of any property or rights) which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of the Ombudsman's functions.

SCHEDULE 2

EXCLUDED MATTERS: PART 3

Section 13

1

Action taken by or with the authority of the Welsh Ministers, the First Minister for Wales, the Counsel General to the Welsh Government or a police and crime commissioner for a police area in Wales for the purpose of--

- (a) the investigation or prevention of crime, or
- (b) the protection of the security of the State.

2

The commencement or conduct of proceedings before a court of competent jurisdiction.

3

Action taken by a member of the administrative staff of a relevant tribunal so far as taken at the direction, or on the authority (whether express or implied), of a person acting in his capacity as a member of the tribunal.

4

Action taken in respect of appointments, removals, pay, discipline, superannuation or other personnel matters (apart from procedures for recruitment and appointment) in relation to--

- (a) service in an office or employment under the Crown or under a listed authority;
- (b) service in an office or employment, or under a contract for services, in respect of which power to take action in personnel matters, or to determine or approve action to be taken in personnel matters, is vested in Her Majesty or a listed authority.

5

Action relating to the determination of the amount of rent.

6

(1) Action taken by an authority specified in sub-paragraph (2) and relating to--

- (a) the giving of instruction, or
- (b) conduct, curriculum, internal organisation, management or discipline,

in a school or other educational establishment maintained by a local authority in Wales.

(2) The authorities are--

- (a) a local authority in Wales;
- (b) an admission appeal panel;
- (c) the governing body of a community, foundation or voluntary school;
- (d) an exclusion appeal panel.

8

Action under--

- (a) the National Health Service Act 1977,
- (b) Part 1 of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990,
- (c) Part 1 of the Health Act 1999 (with the exception of sections 33 to 38), or
- (d) Part 1 of the Health and Social Care (Community Health and Standards) Act 2003,

when the action is or has been the subject of an inquiry under the Inquiries Act 2005.

9

Action taken by a Local Health Board in the discharge of its functions under--

- (a) the National Health Service (Service Committees and Tribunal) Regulations 1992 or any instrument replacing those regulations;
- (b) regulations made under section 38, 39, 41 or 42 of the National Health Service Act 1977 by virtue of section 17 of the Health and Medicines Act 1988 (c 49) (investigations of matters relating to services).

SCHEDULE 3

LISTED AUTHORITIES

Section 29

Government of Wales

The Welsh Government.

The National Assembly for Wales Commission.

Local government, fire and police

A local authority in Wales.

A joint board the constituent authorities of which are all local authorities in Wales.

A fire and rescue authority in Wales constituted by a scheme under section 2 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 (c 21) or a scheme to which section 4 of that Act applies.

A police and crime commissioner for a police area in Wales.

Environment

The Committee on Climate Change.

A National Park authority for a National Park in Wales.

The Natural Resources Body for Wales.

The Environment Agency.

The Forestry Commissioners.

A Regional Flood and Coastal Committee for an area wholly or partly in Wales.

An internal drainage board for an internal drainage district wholly or partly in Wales.

Health and social care

The Care Council for Wales.

The Board of Community Health Councils in Wales.

A Local Health Board.

An NHS trust managing a hospital or other establishment or facility in Wales.

A Special Health Authority not discharging functions only or mainly in England.

The Wales Centre for Health.

A Community Health Council.

An independent provider in Wales.

A family health service provider in Wales.

A person with functions conferred by regulations made under section 113(2) of the Health and Social Care (Community Health and Standards) Act 2003 (c 43).

Housing

A social landlord in Wales.

Education and training

The Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales or Prif Arolygydd Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru.

The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales.

An admission appeal panel constituted in accordance with regulations under section 94(5) or 95(3) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (c 31).

The governing body of any community, foundation or voluntary school so far as acting in connection with the admission of pupils to the school or otherwise discharging any of their functions under Chapter 1 of Part 3 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

An exclusion appeal panel constituted in accordance with regulations under section 52 of the Education Act 2002 (c 32).

Arts and leisure

The Arts Council of Wales.

The Sports Council for Wales.

Miscellaneous

The Building Regulations Advisory Committee for Wales.

Boards of Conservators in Wales

Comisiynydd y Gymraeg (The Welsh Language Commissioner).

The Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales.

SCHEDULE 4

EXCLUDED MATTERS: PART 4

Section 41

1

The commencement or conduct of proceedings before a court of competent jurisdiction.

2

Action taken in respect of appointments or removals, pay, discipline, superannuation or other personnel matters.

SCHEDULE 5

CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS

Section 69

Care Standards Act 2000

1 Insert new section 75ZB—

“75ZB Working with the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

(1) This section applies when it appears to the Commissioner that a case which he is—

- (a) examining in accordance with regulations made under section 74, or
- (b) considering whether to examine in accordance with such regulations,

relates to or raises a matter which could be the subject of an investigation by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (the ‘connected matter’).

(2) When the Commissioner considers it appropriate, he must inform the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales about the connected matter.

(3) When the Commissioner considers that the case also relates to or raises a matter which he is entitled to examine himself (‘the children matter’), he must also if he considers it appropriate—

- (a) inform the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales about the Commissioner's proposals for the examination of the case;
- (b) consult the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales about those proposals.

(4) When the Commissioner and the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales consider that they are entitled to examine, respectively, the children matter and the connected matter they may—

- (a) co-operate with each other in the separate examination of each of those matters;
- (b) act together in the examination of those matters; and
- (c) prepare and publish a joint report containing their respective conclusions in relation to the matters they have each examined.

(5) When the Commissioner considers—

- (a) that the case is not one which relates to or raises a matter that he is entitled to examine himself, and
- (b) that it is appropriate to do so,

he must inform the person whose case it is, or another person interested in it that he thinks fit, about how to secure the referral to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales of the connected matter.”

Public Audit (Wales) Act 2013

2 Insert new section 29A—

“(29A) Working with the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

- (1) When the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales consults the Auditor General under section 64 of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Act 2016, the Ombudsman and the Auditor General may—
- (a) co-operate with each other in relation to the matter,
 - (b) conduct a joint investigation into the matter, and
 - (c) prepare and publish a joint report in relation to the investigation.”

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21 October 2015

Dear Sir/Madam

Consultation on the draft Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Bill

The [Finance Committee](#) is calling for evidence on the **draft Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Bill**. To assist with its consideration, the Committee would welcome your views on the draft Bill.

Background

On 21 January 2015, the Finance Committee agreed to undertake an inquiry to consider extending the powers of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (“the Ombudsman”) and should the evidence support the extension of the Ombudsman’s powers the Committee would consider introducing a Committee Bill. (Full details of the Committee’s initial inquiry are available on the [Committee’s webpage](#).)

In May 2015, the Committee published its report on [Consideration of Powers: Public Services Ombudsman for Wales](#) and recommended that a Bill should be introduced into the Assembly. The Committee agreed to consult on a new draft Bill which would re-enact much of the existing [Public Services Ombudsman \(Wales\) Act 2005](#) but with new provisions recommended by the Committee in its report.

To assist with its considerations of the draft Bill, the Committee would welcome your views on the questions attached at Annex A.



Invitation to contribute to the inquiry

The Committee welcomes responses in Welsh or English from both individuals and organisations and will hold oral evidence sessions in due course.

Submissions should be no longer than five sides of A4, with numbered paragraphs, and should focus on matters set out below. Please see [guidance for those providing evidence for committees](#).

If you wish to submit evidence, please send an electronic copy (preferably a word version) of your submission to SeneddFinance@Assembly.Wales

Alternatively, you can write to:

Committee Clerk
Finance Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay, CF99 1NA.

Submissions should arrive by **18 January 2016**. It may not be possible to take into account responses received after this date.

The Committee would be grateful if you could forward a copy of this letter to any individuals or organisations that might like to contribute to the review. A copy of this letter will be placed on the National Assembly's website with an open invitation to submit views.

Disclosure of Information

The Assembly's [policy on disclosure of information](#) is available, please ensure that you have considered these details carefully before submitting information to the Committee. Alternatively a hard copy of this policy can be requested by contacting the Clerk (Leanne Hatcher 0300 200 6343).

Yours sincerely



Jocelyn Davies AC / AM

Cadeirydd / Chair



Annex A

Consultation questions

Please comment on as many of the questions as relevant to you/your organisation, providing an explanation of each answer given:

General

01. Would the draft Bill improve the effectiveness of the role of the Ombudsman?
If so how?
02. What, if any, are the potential barriers to implementing the provisions of the draft Bill? Does the draft Bill take sufficient account of them?
03. Are there any unintended consequences arising from the draft Bill?
04. At what point should the impact of this legislation be evaluated?

Power to investigate on own initiative

05. Do you have any comments on the new power in section 4?
06. Does the inclusion of this power raise any unintended consequences in the rest of the draft Bill?
07. With whom should the Ombudsman consult under section 4(2)?
08. Should the Ombudsman have the power to initiate an investigation based on action that took place prior to the draft Bill/Act receiving Royal Assent (see section 4(4))? If so, should there be a cut-off point, beyond which the Ombudsman should not carry out an own initiative investigation?
09. What kind of issues should be included in the criteria for own initiative investigations under section 5?
10. What kind of evidence should be available to the Ombudsman to justify an own initiative investigation (see section 5(2))?

Who can complain

11. Do you have any comments on the new definition of “member of the public” in section 7(2)?



Requirements for complaints made and referred to the Ombudsman

12. Do you have any comments on the new requirements for complaints made to the Ombudsman in section 8?
13. How should the proposed guidance for making a complaint to the Ombudsman be published and what formats should be available?

Matters which may be investigated

14. Do you have any comments on the new provision enabling the Ombudsman to investigate the whole complaint when a combination of treatment has been received by public and private health services providers (see sections 10(1)(d) and 10(2))?
15. Does section 10(2) adequately cover anyone who has received a combination of public and private treatment?
16. Does the broadening of the matters which may be investigated in section 10(2) raise any unintended consequences in the rest of the draft Bill?
17. Is the definition of “private health services” in section 71 broad enough to cover anyone who has received a combination of public and private treatment?
18. Should the Ombudsman have powers to recover costs incurred in investigating private health services?
19. Do you have any comments on the new definition of “family health service provider in Wales” in section 71, which is intended to capture, for example, a GP practice as a whole rather than just an individual GP?

Investigation procedure and evidence

20. Do you have any comments on the procedure set out in section 16, in so far as it relates to the procedure for conducting an own initiative investigation?
21. Should the Ombudsman’s power in relation to obtaining information, documents, evidence and facilities also apply to own initiative investigations and investigations into private health services (see section 17)?

Listed Authorities

22. Do you have any comments on the restrictions on power to amend Schedule 3 (see section 30(2) in particular), which are significantly narrower than the restrictions found in the 2005 Act?



23. Are there any other bodies that should be included in the list in Schedule 3 'Listed Authorities'?

Complaints–Handling

24. Do you have any comments on sections 33 – 39 (which mirror sections 16A to 16G of the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman Act 2002)?

25. Is section 38(b) adequate to allow listed authorities to comply with their duties under other enactments, such as Freedom of Information duties?

Part 4: Investigation of complaints relating to other persons: social care and palliative care

26. Should Part 4 remain a standalone Part? Or should such investigations be brought within the Part 3 investigations process?

27. If Part 4 should be brought within Part 3, are there any specific elements of Part 4 that should survive? Or can a blanket approach be applied?

Part 5: Investigations: supplementary

28. Do you have any comments on sections 62, 63 and 64, which provide for joint and collaborative working with specified Commissioners and the Auditor General for Wales?

29. Should sections 62 and 63 cover future Commissioners that may be created by the Assembly, including the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales?

30. Are there any further technical changes required in Part 5 of the draft Bill, to reflect the broadening of matters which may be investigated?

Appointment etc

31. The provisions of paragraphs 5 to 8 of Schedule 1 (disqualification) reflect largely the current provisions in the 2005 Act. Do these provisions require updating?

32. Paragraph 7 of Schedule 1 provides that a person who has ceased to hold office as the Ombudsman or as an acting Ombudsman is disqualified from a list of roles (listed in paragraph 7(1)) for a period of two years. Is the two year period appropriate?

33. Do you have any comments on the matters which are included within "paid office" in paragraph 8 of Schedule 1?



Financial implications

34. Do you have a view on the financial implications of the new provisions set out in the draft Bill?

Other comments

35. Do you have any other comments you wish to make about the draft Bill or any specific provision within it?



WLGA Evidence

Finance Committee Inquiry: Consideration of powers: Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

February 2015

The WLGA welcomes the opportunity to present evidence to the Committee on its inquiry into the consideration of powers for the Public Services Ombudsman.

The WLGA is aware that this inquiry could potentially lead to new legislation concerning the Ombudsman's powers being introduced, possibly by this Committee, before the end of this Assembly term. Clearly the Committee must conclude its Inquiry, which may or may not lead to proposals to introduce legislation as a result.

The WLGA notes however that a Committee Inquiry which led to the introduction of a significant new piece of legislation could mean a curtailed process around policy review and legislative scrutiny given it is our understanding that a Committee Bill would automatically bypass the Stage 1 Committee process. If this is the case, there would be reduced scope for effective consultation and engagement with the general public and public bodies affected by policy proposals and legislation.

The WLGA therefore would request that should the Committee decide to move to legislation, that a Draft Bill is published to encourage the widest opportunity for consultation before the formal introduction of the Bill.

1. What are your views on the effectiveness of the current Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2005?

The Act is generally regarded as effective. As noted by the Ombudsman's own submission to the Committee, the Law Commission commented favourably on the Act but put forward a number of proposed amendments to clarify and improve the Ombudsman's role.

Own initiative investigations

2. Currently, the Ombudsman may only investigate a matter that is the subject of a complaint made to him/her. What are your views on 'own initiative' investigations powers, which would enable the Ombudsman to initiate his/her own investigations without having first received a complaint about an issue. Please explain your answer.

3. Do you have any concerns that own-initiative investigation powers could result in the Ombudsman's responsibilities overlapping with the responsibilities of other bodies? How could this be managed?

4. Do you have a view on the likely financial costs and benefits of the Ombudsman having own-initiative powers?

The WLGA recognises the Ombudsman's frustration where his current powers prevent him from exploring suspected wider concerns within public services stemming from an investigation into an initial individual complaint. The WLGA however shares the Welsh Government's concerns over the risks of 'mission-creep' (as stated in a letter to the Communities, Equalities and Local Government Committee from Minister for Local Government and Government Business on 12th February 2014). In principle, it is of course appropriate that such concerns over wider and potentially systemic public service issues should be investigated, however there are a number of investigatory bodies whose role it is to examine matters of governance or public service concerns or improvements. There would be scope for duplication between the Ombudsman and these existing bodies, such as the Auditor General for Wales, as well as potential burden for public service bodies.

Whilst the Welsh Government notes that any such new powers should be carefully circumscribed and available in specific and exceptional circumstances, an alternative model could be that where the Ombudsman has identified wider systemic concerns following an initial investigation into a complaint, he then writes to the Auditor General for Wales (or relevant inspectorate) advising him/her to undertake a special inspection or produce a Public Interest Report into the matter.

Oral Complaints

5. At present, the Ombudsman can only accept complaints in writing. What are your views on the Ombudsman being able to accept complaints made orally? Please explain your answer.

6. What other type/form of submission should be acceptable (e.g. email, website form, text messages)

7. Do you have a view on the financial costs and benefits of this provision?

The WLGA agrees that alternative arrangements for submitting complaints should be considered to ensure that the Ombudsman is accessible to all. Oral complaints should be acceptable, but such safeguards and procedures will be need to be introduced to ensure such complaints can provide consistency in terms of detail, as well being recorded and stored securely and confidentially.

The financial costs and/or benefits of any such provision would depend on digital solutions, any necessary additional administrative support and the volume of oral complaints received.

Complaints handling across public services

8. At present there is no consistency in the way public bodies deal with complaints. Adoption of the model complaints policy issued by the Welsh government is voluntary. What are your views on the Ombudsman

preparing a model complaints policy which public bodies would be obliged to adopt. Please explain your answer.

9. Do you have a view on the financial costs and benefits of this provision?

The WLGA supported the Ombudsman in the development of the model complaints policy which was published in 2011¹. The WLGA understands that 21 of the 22 authorities have implemented the model policy and 1 is reviewing its complaints procedures in line with the model. It is likely that the anticipated mergers of local authorities would see further streamlining and consistency of complaints processes within local government.

Ombudsman's jurisdiction

10. What are your general views on the Ombudsman's current jurisdiction?

11. At present the Ombudsman can investigate private health care that has been commissioned by the NHS. The Ombudsman would like the jurisdiction to be extended to enable him/her to investigate when a patient has received private healthcare (self-funded not commissioned by the NHS) in conjunction with public healthcare. This would enable the complaints process to follow the citizen rather than the sector. What are your views on extending the Ombudsman's jurisdiction in this way?

12. How do you think the investigation of private health care complaints should be funded? (Possibilities include a levy, charging on a case by case basis or no charge.)

13. Do you have a view on the financial costs and benefits of this provision?

The WLGA does not have strong views regarding the Ombudsman's jurisdiction or powers in private healthcare, although the case put forward in the Ombudsman's paper appears compelling.

Links with the courts

14. What are your views on the removal of the statutory bar to allow the Ombudsman to consider a case which has or had the possibility of recourse to a court, tribunal or other mechanism for review? (ie this would give complainants the opportunity to decide which route is most appropriate for them.)

15. What are your views on the Ombudsman being able to refer cases to the Courts for a determination on a point of law?

16. Do you have a view on the financial costs and benefits of this provision?

¹ http://www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk/~media/Files/Documents_en/Model%20Complaints%20Policy%20Final%20PSOW.ashx

The WLGA recognises the Ombudsman's rationale for removing the statutory bar with a view to improving the public's accessibility to resolution of complaints. That said, this is the most significant legislative and jurisdictional reform that the Ombudsman proposes which would have implications for law across England and Wales and a potentially significant impact in terms of workload and resources for the Ombudsman. It is unclear what data is available or what analysis has been undertaken to assess the impact of such a reform or the Assembly's competence in this arena given the territorial jurisdiction of the courts. The WLGA also notes that in his oral evidence, the Ombudsman suggested that of his 5 proposed areas for reform, removal of the statutory bar (given the above complexity) was not the highest priority reform.

Other issues

17. Do you have any specific examples where the Ombudsman having the additional powers proposed could have been useful in securing a successful conclusion to an issue?

No.

18. Schedule 3 of the current 2005 Act, provides a list of authorities that are within the Ombudsman's jurisdiction to investigate complaints. Please provide details of any other bodies/organisations that should be included in this list?

The list in Schedule 3 appears appropriate, although it should be updated to incorporate bodies established or renamed after the 2005 Act.

19. If extended powers were given to the Ombudsman in a new Bill/Act, at what point should the impact of this legislation be evaluated?

As the Ombudsman noted in his oral evidence to the Committee, there is significant and ongoing reform of public services and the devolution settlement and there would probably not be an 'ideal time' to take stock. That said, the current timeframe of ten years for reviewing the current Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2005 is probably too long given the anticipated changes to public services and a five year review would probably be more appropriate.

20. What unintended consequences could arise as a result of these provisions becoming legislation and what steps could be taken to deal with these consequences?

As noted above, the main concern regarding unintended consequences is the potential for jurisdiction between the Ombudsman and the Auditor General for Wales around 'self-initiative' investigations. This could be mitigated by clear criteria for such investigations, agreement of protocols between inspection bodies or a process by which the Ombudsmen requests that other bodies carries out follow-up inspections or investigations after his initial work.

21. What factors should be measured to determine the cost-benefit analysis of this legislation being brought forward?

It is difficult to determine an appropriate cost-benefit analysis given limited data has been presented to date which could be used to assess the likely impact in terms of additional complaints and, subsequently, upheld complaints as a result of any legislative changes. Should this Inquiry lead to legislation, a more thorough Regulatory Impact Assessment should be completed which should assess the potential impact, particularly in terms of workload on the Ombudsman's office and public services as a result. In principle however, it is difficult to quantify the value of a regulatory or complaints regime which seeks to provide assurance and public confidence about public services, provides support and redress to individuals who have had a complaint upheld and contributes to wider service improvements.

22. Do you have any comments on the following issues:

- **jurisdiction – changes to the devolution settlement have led to new areas coming into jurisdiction over time, should consideration be given to other bodies being included in the Ombudsman's jurisdiction;**
See 18 above

- **recommendations and findings - should the recommendations of the Ombudsman to public bodies be binding. This would mean that bodies cannot decide to reject the findings;**

The current approach to Ombudsman recommendations works effectively in Wales. The relationship between the Ombudsman and public services is based on early, open and constructive dialogue, where 'quick fixes' are encouraged. The regulatory relationship would shift significantly if recommendations were made to be binding, with implications for local democratic discretion and/or challenge or appeal.

- **protecting the title - there has been a proliferation of schemes calling themselves ombudsmen, often without satisfying the key criteria of the concept such as independence from those in jurisdiction and being free to the complainant. Should anyone intending to use the title ombudsman gain approval from the Ombudsman;**

The WLGA does not have strong views on this matter.

- **code of conduct complaints – the Ombudsman would prefer to focus on the element of his work that deals with service users and service delivery, rather than local authority and town and community councils' resolutions. Whilst a local resolution procedures exists and has been adopted by 22 local authorities, variance exists in practice.**

Local resolution procedures have been developed by local authorities, the WLGA and the Ombudsman and they are increasingly effective in managing lower level complaints about the conduct of councillors. These procedures have meant a reduced burden on the Ombudsman's office, but in turn has meant a transfer of workload (but not of resources) to local authorities. The Ombudsman's latest Annual Report shows that code of conduct complaints were down 22% in 2013-14 at 228 new complaints, of which only 111 related to county or county borough councils. Of the 228 complaints, only 41 were investigated and only 6 investigation reports led to referral to either a standards committee or the Adjudication Panel for Wales.

The Ombudsman was specifically established to investigate complaints about councillors' conduct as well as complaints about public services. Although the Ombudsman's own workload and priorities have varied during recent years, his role in independently investigating complaints about councillors' conduct remains a vital back-stop role which local government would wish to retain, particularly for most serious breaches of the code of conduct.

It is not possible to meaningfully enforce a code of conduct for councillors without an independent statutorily empowered investigative and adjudicator framework. Such a reform of the Ombudsman's role and weakening of the code would be a retrograde step at a time when so much controversial reform is proposed within local government.

23. Do you have any views on any aspects of future planned or proposed public sector reforms that would impact on the role of the Ombudsman?

See preamble above.

24. Do you have any other issues or concerns about the current Act and are there any other areas that need reform or updating?

No

By virtue of paragraph(s) 12, 13 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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