

“PHSO a No Go”
By Eileen Chubb ©

I used the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman’s (PHSO) website today and completed the complaint checker, which told me that the PHSO **could** investigate my complaint against: The Department of Health and Social Care.

I then rang the PHSO who asked me which NHS trust I was complaining about, I said my complaint was about the Department of Health, the response from the PHSO was “We don’t investigate Government Departments.” I pointed out that the Department of Health was on the complaint checker list that I had just completed, this was not accepted. I was told my complaint fell under a “parliamentary matter” to which I replied, “Why are you called the **Parliamentary** and Health Service Ombudsman then?” This got no response.

I again pointed out that I had completed their complaint checker and insisted the Health Department was listed, I was asked to hold. The call advisor came back after a moment and said the Health Department is on the list.

I thought I had the lowest expectations possible but the next few minutes certainly gave me the distinct impression that the aim of the PHSO was to deter people from lodging complaints full stop.

I was asked if I had completed the Department of Health’s complaint process and I responded that I had, after two years and one month there was no doubt that I had exhausted this. I was asked if the DH had given me permission to complain to the PHSO, I said I did not know I needed permission and how would a system where you needed permission from the body that needed to be investigated ever hold anyone to account?. To which the PHSO replied “We don’t hold people to account, we just tell them how they could improve”

Apparently, the Departments of Health’s strategy of completely ignoring complaints is quite acceptable to the PHSO.

According to the PHSO advisor, the Department of Health need to have investigated my complaints and only when I dispute the conclusions of such an investigation can, I take a case to the PHSO. In effect simply ignoring the issues pays dividends.

Whilst at the beginning of this phone call I had very low expectations, I did try to keep an open mind. A member of the public would have been deterred on being informed that they could not complain about the Department of Health.

There is no doubt what so ever that funding for Edna's Law should most justly come from the abolishment of such organisations as the PHSO who are complete waste of time and money.