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**Public Board Meeting, 29<sup>th</sup> November 2012**

**Parliamentary and Health Services Ombudsman's Annual Report -  
Listening and Learning**

**Presented by:** Maxine McVey, Interim Director of Nursing

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**1. Purpose**

- 1.1 This paper provides a briefing to the Board on the annual report issued on 16 November 2012 by the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO) into NHS complaint handling in England in 2011/12.

**2. Background**

- 2.1 Each year the PHSO publishes a report into complaint handling in the NHS. For her report of 2011/12 the Ombudsman has highlighted that poor communication with patient and their families is at the core of what goes wrong. In 2011/12 the PHSO received 50% more complaints from people who felt that the NHS had not acknowledged mistakes in care. More complaints than previously were also received from people who felt that they had not received a clear or adequate explanation in response to their complaint, and more people complained about inadequate remedies, including apologies.

**3. Trust Position**

- 3.1 The Trust has been named in the Ombudsman's report as the Trust with highest number of complaints investigated and reported on. This amounts to a total of 8 during 2011/12. Putting this into perspective the PHSO received a total of 64 complaints from patients (the same as in 2010/11). Of these 3 were accepted for investigation and 8 reports were issued during 2011/12. This means that, assuming all 3 that were accepted for investigation were reported on, 5 further cases related to cases in 2009/10. In 2010/11 11 cases were accepted for investigation. In 2011/12 there was, therefore, a reduction of 8 cases accepted for investigation. Of the 8 cases reported on the PHSO fully or partial upheld the complaint in 63% of the cases. This compares with 100% of cases being fully or partially up held in 2010/11.
- 3.2 Although disappointing to be identified in the report the position can be seen as one of improvement from the previous year. It is important to note that the narrative provided by the PHSO says that the volume of complaints can provide an early warning of failures in service delivery, but that a higher number of complaints does not necessarily mean poor performance. It is recognised that a high number could be a sign that organisations are

providing information to complainants about how to make a complaint. This is recognised as good practice and is something the Trust does in all of its responses to complaints.

3.2 The Trust was not identified in the top 10 in any of the following categories which are also highlighted in the report:

- Top health organisation, ranked by complaints received. The highest level was 145 (West Hertfordshire 64)
- Highest percentage increase in complaints received. The highest was 143%
- Highest percentage decrease in complaints received. The highest was 42%
- Top health organisation ranked by intervention. The highest was 9 (West Hertfordshire 0)
- Top health organisation ranked by complaints accepted for investigation. The highest was 9 (West Hertfordshire 3)

#### **4. Recommendation**

4.1 The Board is asked to note the Trust's overall position with regard to the PHSO's report and to recognise that improvements have been achieved since the 2010/11 report.

**Maxine McVey**  
Interim Director of Nursing  
November 2012