

7 October 2025

Turning insights from complaints into action: preventing harm in care



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Understanding how we can learn from complaints to prevent future harms is key to identifying the barriers, and enablers to better regulation and registration.

This event brings together leaders in regulation, and health and care delivery to explore how regulators can build a shared understanding of best practices for resolving concerns, and how leadership and governance can support learning from concerns as well as a more preventative approach to regulation.

We will hear from experts by experience, and organisations that are leading the way on finding new ways to

improve the health and care system and wider public services. The day is split into a morning session which focuses on addressing concerns across the wider system, before they reach professional regulators, and an afternoon session, which will explore regulatory responses to concerns about care. There will be time for Q&As and panel discussions throughout.

We will be taking forward what we hear on the day to help shape our work under our 2026-29 Strategic Plan. We hope that you can come and join us in identifying opportunities to improve registration and regulation in health and care for patients and the public, and professionals.

AM	Addressing concerns across the wider system	
09:30	Arrival and registration	
10:00	Welcome	Dr Alan Clamp, PSA Chief Executive
10:15	Bridging the gap: maintaining standards on the frontline	Professor Lindsey Pope, University of Glasgow
10:45	What is good regulation?	Marcial Boo, Chair, Institute of Regulation
11:15	Break	
11:35	What needs to happen to improve handling of concerns across the system?	Melanie Venables, PSA Director of Policy and Communications Paula Sussex, Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman Donna Campbell, Assistant Ombudsman, Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman
12:30	Lunch	
PM	Regulatory responses to concerns about care	
13:15	Towards a collective understanding of harm and prioritisation of risks	Douglas Bilton, PSA Assistant Director (Intelligence and Insight) Claire Land, Policy Manager, Care Quality Commission Alyson Thomas, Chief Executive, Llais Camellia Williamson, Assistant Director Data, Research and Insight, General Medical Council
14:30	Break	
14:45	Moving forward in partnership with patients and professionals	Professor Henrietta Hughes, Patient Safety Commissioner for England Philip Pirie, Independent Suicide Prevention Campaigner Sam Rodger, Assistant Director, Policy and Strategy, NHS Race and Health Observatory Paul Whiteing, Chief Executive, Action against Medical Accidents Peter Hutchinson, Senior Policy Impact and Influence Manager, Patient & Client Council
15:50	Conclusions	Dr Alan Clamp, PSA Chief Executive

Background



We have identified six themes relating to complaints, which we will be basing discussion around on the day. Some information about why we have chosen these areas is below.

Awareness and understanding – how do I raise a complaint?

Research by the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO) in 2015 showed that only one in three people complain to a public service when they are unhappy. This means there are opportunities for learning, and for protecting the public, that are being missed. The study found that 7% of those who don't make a complaint do so because they don't know where to go.

In 2024, the PHSO and PSA hosted a joint seminar on tackling barriers to complaints in the health and care sector. Since then, the PHSO has published revised 'Good complaint handling guides' for senior leaders in the NHS that will help them reflect on their organisational culture around dealing with complaints. The aim is to help them identify the barriers and challenges

when it comes to delivering a good complaints service and identify goals and actions for the development of their complaint service, reporting and learning.

Additional further reading: Witness to Harm; Holding to Account: What Is the Importance of Information for Members of the Public Who Give Evidence and May Be Witness in a Regulatory Hearing of a Health or Care Professional? (Ryan-Blackwell, Wallace 2024)

Accessibility – what physical, digital, emotional and other barriers are making me think twice?

The PSA's *Barriers to Complaints* research report (2025) built on the PHSO's study as set out above, looking in greater detail at the barriers that can prevent both health and care professionals (HCPs) and service users from raising complaints to regulators. For service users, these include difficulty accessing online complaints systems due to age, digital literacy, or neurodiversity. Fear of impact on future care, and of re-traumatisation, can also

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be a factor for service users. For professionals, barriers include workplace culture and career percussions.

The report makes several recommendations for reducing barriers in four key areas. These are setting expectations and explaining the process, communication throughout the process, speed and response of action, and accessibility and support. The PSA plans to enhance expectations in these areas through its revised Standards for the regulators and Accredited Registers it oversees, due to be published in early 2026.

Additional further reading: [Wallace, Louise M and Greenfield, Mari, Engagement of health and social care employers in professional regulatory fitness to practise – missed regulatory and organisational opportunities? \(2025\)](#)

Trust and confidence – what will happen next?

People raising a concern or making a complaint often do it for altruistic

reasons – they want to help prevent future harm for others. It's important to recognise this – and, for those who have already been affected by harm, to guard against further harm being caused by the complaints process itself.

AvMA and the [Harmed Patients Alliance](#) jointly launched a project in February 2021 to develop a 'Harmed Patient Pathway' for utilisation by the NHS when there has been harm caused to patients. It is based on the concept that health providers owe a moral duty of care specifically to people who have been affected by healthcare harm, be it the patient themselves or people close to them. You can read more about this here: [AvMA - Harmed patient pathway](#).

The PHSO has published Good complaint handling guides for the NHS. ([Good complaint handling guides for the NHS | Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman \(PHSO\)](#)).

Additional further reading: [Biggar, S, et al, 2022, Finding space for kindness: public protection and health professional regulation](#)

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Clarity and expectations – will it achieve what I'm looking for and will I be kept informed along the way?

The Open University (OU) and Manchester Metropolitan University, the University of Oxford, the University of Glasgow and the University of Edinburgh Witness to harm, holding to account: Improving patient, family and colleague witnesses' experiences of Fitness to Practise proceedings has been exploring the experience of witnesses involved in Fitness to Practise (FtP) proceedings in six of the UK's health and social care regulators. Amongst other aims, it seeks to find out what support witnesses expect, what they receive and what they need.

Professor Louise Wallace (OU): "We aim to find what the public expect and what they experience when they agree to give evidence... particularly when it has been alleged that the care they received caused them lasting harm." You can read more about the findings and how they have been shared to date, here: [Blog | Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies](#). The PSA's 2024 Research conference was held in collaboration with the Witness to

Harm team, and you can read more about what was discussed here: [PSA 2024 Research Conference | Witness to Harm | PSA](#).

Additional further reading: [A Novel Content and Usability Analysis of UK Professional Regulator Information About Raising a Concern by Members of the Public](#) (Ryan-Blackwell et al, 2024); [The experience of public and patient complainants through our fitness to practise procedures](#) (GMC, 2014) [Expectations of the fitness to practise complaints process](#) (HCPC, 2010); [People like us? Understanding complaints about paramedics and social workers](#) (HCPC, 2017)

Equity and inclusion – will my voice be heard, and believed?

Data on who complaints – and who doesn't – is limited (SCFA, 2022). Improving the quality of this data will help to identify underserved groups, and systemic barriers to complaining.

Our current Standards for the regulators and Accredited Registers we oversee place emphasis on understanding issues

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that adversely affect groups of patients and service users who share characteristics to inform its work.

You can find examples of good practice by the regulators in strengthening EDI in complaints, and other regulatory areas here: [Good practice guide – lessons from meeting our EDI Standard for regulators \(July 2025\).pdf](#).

Speed of response and action – will anything be done?

It's in the interests of everyone involved in a complaint to resolve it as swiftly as possible. As well as reducing unnecessary stress for individuals, this can help learning to be derived in a timely way.

Some of the regulators we oversee currently have backlogs of fitness to practise cases. Added to this, a significant proportion of the complaints received by regulators aren't matters for professional regulation and could be better addressed at a local level.

The planned [reform by the UK Government](#) of the legislation underpinning the GMC, to be followed

by the NMC and HCPC, brings opportunities for greater consistency and for dealing with more cases in a less adversarial and swifter way.

Changes to the way complaints are handled must include engagement with professionals, and patients and the public. The [Patient Safety Principles](#), developed by the Patient Safety Commissioner for England, provide a framework for decision making, planning and collaborative working with patients as partners in a just and learning culture and are for everyone working in the healthcare system.

Additional further reading: [Why do many public concerns that would be better directed to another organisation come to the GMC?](#) (GMC, 2019)

Speakers



Dr Alan Clamp

Alan has been the Chief Executive of the Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care (PSA) since 2018. The PSA promotes the health, safety and wellbeing of patients, service users and the public by raising standards of regulation and voluntary registration of people working in health and care.



Alan was previously the Chief Executive of the Security Industry Authority (SIA). The SIA is a public body established under the Private Security Act 2001 to regulate private security in the UK. Between 2011-2015 Alan held the post of Chief Executive at the Human Tissue Authority (HTA), an independent regulator sponsored by the Department of Health.

In addition to his role at the PSA, Alan is a Non-Executive Director at the Intellectual Property Regulation Board, a member of the Regulatory Board at the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants and a Trustee of the Institute of Regulation.



Speakers



Professor Lindsey Pope

Professor Lindsey Pope is a GP, Professor of Medical Education and Dean of Internationalisation (MVLS).



She is the Director of Community Based Medical Education at the Undergraduate Medical School and a member of the University of Glasgow Senate.

She is Director of the Scottish School of Primary Care and the Specialty Adviser for General Practice to the CMO for Scotland. She is an elected member of the Medical Schools Council ED&I Alliance Board.

She is a GMC Education Associate with involvement in regional and school reviews, new school approvals and most recently as a Team Leader for the CPSA component of the new national MLA (Medical Licensing Assessment).

She is an Examiner for the Royal College of GPs and has been appointed as the Deputy Future Module Development Lead for the MRCGP. She is an approved GP trainer and has been involved in teaching and training across the continuum of medical education. She contributes to teaching and assessment in the undergraduate medical school as well as the Health Professions Education programme.

She has a Doctorate in Health Professions Education and is a member of the Scottish Medical Education Research Consortium (SMERC) Project Board. She is a member of the Scottish Doctors' Wellbeing Study group and sits on the Editorial Board of Virtual Primary Care. She supervises Masters and Doctoral students in Medical Education.

Speakers



Marcial Boo

Marcial Boo is the founding Chair of the Institute of Regulation. He has been CEO of four regulators in four different sectors.



He led the MPs' spending watchdog IPSA for six years after the expenses scandal, and the equality regulator EHRC during what some called a 'culture war' around identity; he regulated public health workers through the Covid pandemic, and now regulates the financial services provided by insolvency professionals.

He was a director at both the National Audit Office and Audit Commission, and a former senior civil servant at the Home Office and Department of Education. For two years, he was an advisor to Tony Blair's Delivery Unit in Downing St.

He has published work on public service integrity ('The Integrity Mismatch'), on the regulation of democracy ('The Rules of Democracy'), and on public sector management ('The Public Sector Fox'). With others, he founded the Institute of Regulation in 2021.

Melanie Venables

Melanie Venables is our Director of Policy and Communications. She leads the teams responsible for internal and external engagement, and policy development.



When Mel joined the PSA in 2020 as Head of Accreditation, she led a strategic review of the Accredited Registers programme. Prior to this, she was Head of Corporate Business Planning at the General Medical Council. During this time, she completed her first degree, in Philosophy. Mel also holds a Master's in Business Administration.

Speakers



Paula Sussex

Paula Sussex is the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO). Paula, a graduate of the London Business School and a trained barrister, started the role on 1 August 2025.



She joins PHSO from the financial technology firm OneID where she has been CEO since 2023. Paula was CEO at the Student Loans Company from 2018 to 2022, and the Charity Commission, from 2014 to 2017.

She has extensive leadership experience, particularly in delivering major transformation and change programmes and services in the public, private and voluntary sectors. She was awarded a CBE in 2022 for services to higher education.

Donna Campbell

Donna Campbell has been an Assistant Ombudsman, with lead responsibility for adult social care, since joining the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman in June 2010. Her appointment was in response to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman gaining the powers to investigate complaints from self-funders about private care providers.



Donna has been a qualified social worker for over 35 years specialising in services to adults and she has held a variety of senior positions in different local authorities. She has also worked as an Independent Investigator, a Registration and Inspection Officer and a Regional General Manager for a housing association. She has been a magistrate for over 25 years.

Speakers



Douglas Bilton

Douglas Bilton has worked for PSA (including when it was the CHRE) since 2007. His work has involved policy, research, and delivering commissioned advice for organisations in other countries and sectors. He is currently leading the PSA's work on tackling sexual misconduct, organising the annual research conference and developing further resources for stakeholders to support the publication of the new version of *Right-touch regulation*. Prior to PSA he project managed the implementation of a new consultant contract at Barts and the London NHS Trust, contributed to strategic workforce development at a London SHA, and supported the negotiation of terms and conditions for consultants at the BMA.



Claire Land

Claire is a policy manager at the Care Quality Commission, working in the strategic priorities team. Claire is the policy lead for CQC's Safety through learning strategic ambition and is in the second year of the Human Factors for Patient Safety Masters at Staffordshire University. Claire has contributed to a number of national reports published by CQC, including *The State of Care in Independent Ambulance Services* and *Under Pressure: Safely Managing Increased Demand in Emergency Departments*. Prior to joining the Commission, Claire was a service manager in the women and children's directorate of an acute trust.



Speakers



Alyson Thomas

Alyson Thomas has been a public servant for over 40 years. For most of the last 20 years, her work has focused on the NHS in Wales. Alyson was an independent reviewer of the leadership and governance of NHS Trusts and Local Health Boards in Wales, a governance advisor working on the 2009 NHS reforms in Wales, and a Director at Healthcare Inspectorate Wales.



Alyson was delighted to have been appointed as the first Chief Executive of Llais – the Citizen Voice Body for Health and Social Care in Wales. With health and social care services facing such significant challenges, it has never been more important to have a strong, independent champion encouraging and supporting the active involvement of people and communities in the design and delivery of their health and social care services – particularly those whose voices are under represented.

Camellia Williamson

Camellia is an experienced leader in Health Care Data, Research and Analysis. She has worked for over 20 years in the Public Sector - in Central Government, in an NHS Foundation Trust, Local Government, NHS England Regional and National and now at the General Medical Council.



She has been involved in a range of policy initiatives and projects including developing the 2011 Census questions on Ethnicity and Identity. Religion and Sexual Orientation, Development of the Social Justice Outcomes Framework across Whitehall, Housing Benefit Reform, Public Health programmes for vulnerable young mothers and their children, reducing Childhood Obesity in local areas, change of the National Bowel Cancer Screening method, addressing and monitoring Health Inequalities for Local populations as well as NHS Workforce and Estates modelling.

She is an active member of Women in Data and is determined to reduce inequalities in the workforce as well as in improving health outcomes for protected groups in society. She passionately supports people to use data, research and insight to make evidence-based decisions at all levels in healthcare and wants to ensure that there is a good level of data literacy - especially amongst non-technical decision makers.

Speakers



Professor Henrietta Hughes

Professor Henrietta Hughes OBE started in September 2022 as the first Patient Safety Commissioner, an independent role recommended by the report First Do No Harm.



Acting as an independent champion for patients Henrietta leads a drive to improve the safety of medicines and medical devices by ensuring that patient voices are at the heart of the design and delivery of healthcare in England.

A practising GP and Visiting Professor at the Institute of Medicine, University of Greater Manchester, Henrietta is a member of the Health Honours Committee and the guiding group of the Women's Health and Care Leaders Network. Henrietta was previously the National Guardian for the NHS and a Medical Director at NHS England. Henrietta has held executive and non-executive roles in the NHS and is Chair of Childhood First, a children's charity.

Philip Pirie

Philip Pirie is a father bereaved by the suicide of his son Tom and a suicide prevention campaigner. He was co-chair of the writing group that developed the new NHS England guidance Staying Safe from Suicide, published earlier this year, and of the implementation group that is putting it into practice.



Speakers



Sam Rodger

Sam is responsible for overseeing strategy and policy at the Race and Health Observatory, making connections across the health and care landscape, and using robust evidence to inform national policy. Before joining the team, Sam worked at NHS England and NHS Improvement as policy lead for the Workforce Race Equality Standard Implementation team, where he oversaw an action research programme into how organisational culture is experienced by black and minority ethnic staff groups in the NHS.



Sam has also worked at the General Medical Council on fitness to practice policy; at the Department of Health and Social Care on workforce strategy, with a particular focus on temporary staffing; and at Arts Council England, where he worked on making access to the arts in England more equitable.

Sam also has an MA in Humanitarianism and Conflict Response, where his research focused on global health, post-colonial international relations, and the intersection of the public and private sectors in global peacekeeping and humanitarian intervention.

Paul Whiteing

Paul has been the Chief Executive of AvMA since December 2022. Paul is an experienced senior leader and former CEO of a telecoms regulatory body. Prior to joining AvMA, Paul was a Lead ombudsman and Director of casework at FOS – the UK's financial ombudsman, where amongst other responsibilities, Paul led FOS' work on vulnerable customers and the service they received.



Paul's focus at AvMA has been on creating, and now implementing, the five-year strategy (2024-29) and at the same time ensuring that the charity has a long-term plan to ensure that it can remain financially sustainable.

Outside of work, Paul likes to spend time with his family, is an avid reader, takes a keen interest in current affairs and enjoys riding his mountain bike on the South Downs.

Speakers



Peter Hutchinson

Peter joined the PCC in July 2023, with a focus on developing the policy and impact functions of the organisation. Peter has over 15-years of experience in policy and public affairs in Northern Ireland at a regional level.



Prior to joining the PCC, Peter was the Policy and Standards Lead for the regulator of pharmacists and pharmacies in Northern Ireland, working with the organisation since 2014. Peter also has experience of working in the voluntary and community sector, with NICVA, and in the Northern Ireland Assembly, where he was an adviser to a number of political parties and an individual MLA.

Peter has a degree in Politics and Philosophy from Trinity College Dublin and a MSc in Developmental Planning from University College London.

End

Feedback

We welcome your feedback. Please scan this QR code to let us know your thoughts on this event.



Contact information

If you have questions, comments, or would like to meet with a member of our team, please email engagement@professionalstandards.org.uk.

