

OMBUDSMAN ASSOCIATION

Promoting independent complaint resolution

ANNUAL REPORT

2012 to 2013

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Objects of the Association

The objects of the Association are:

- to encourage, develop and safeguard the role and title of Ombudsman in both the public and private sectors
- to define, publish and keep under review criteria for the recognition of Ombudsman offices by the Association
- to accord recognition publicly to those persons or offices who satisfy the defined criteria for recognition in:
 - the United Kingdom
 - Ireland
 - the British Crown Dependencies
 - the British Overseas Territories
- to facilitate mutual learning between schemes and to provide services to members designed to develop best practice
- to work to raise the profile of Ombudsmen and understanding of their work with key influencers and the wider public in ways which add value to the promotional work of individual Ombudsman schemes

Foreword by the Chair of the Association

This report comes at the end of my first year as Chair. It has not been a year of dramatic change, but one in which we have continued to build on the developments of the previous years.

To recap: three years ago the Annual General Meeting considered a report of the future direction of the Association. Whilst there was strong support for the Association's activities – and certainly no indication that sweeping change was needed – there was a clear wish for the Association to do more as the collective voice for ombudsmen, in particular in engaging with Governments and policy makers. Peter Tyndall took a firm grasp of the baton on becoming Chair in 2010 and, in due course passed it on to me – including a commitment to finalise policy lines to be agreed by the membership and used in our external discussions and representations. After several rounds of drafting and a consultation period, the policies will be before the 2013 AGM in the form of a “Position Statement” for final approval.

As to engagement itself, one of the most encouraging developments of the year was an invitation to make submissions to Lord Leveson's Inquiry into the Culture, Practice and Ethics of the Press, initially in writing and then by appearance as a witness. The Association is greatly indebted to David Thomas, whose long experience and several past and present roles within the ombudsman world made him the ideal person to draft submissions and (when we were called to appear at a time that I was away) to give evidence to the Inquiry on our behalf. Indeed our indebtedness extends further than that: he was also heavily involved in the drafting of the Position Statement referred to above.

The evidence to the Leveson Inquiry was probably the most high profile contribution to public policy that the Association has ever been asked to make. But it was not the only one. For example, we were invited to talk to officials at the Department of Health about a possible ombudsman as

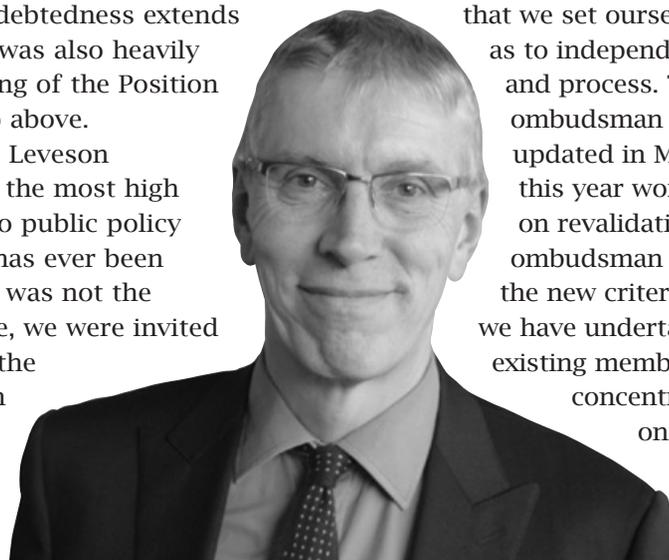
part of a review of the regulation of “cosmetic interventions” (a response to the PIP breast implant scandal). Whether anything comes of that remains to be seen. What was refreshing was that we were asked for our thoughts at an early stage in the thinking, rather than, as has happened in the past, discovering about proposals for a so-called ombudsman at the end of the policy making process.

We have also remained engaged (through discussions with the UK Department of Business Innovation and Skills) with proposals for an EU directive, now in place, concerning consumer access to alternative dispute resolution and on-line dispute resolution in relation to goods and services. The directive is due to be implemented by member states by 2015. Although the original proposals have been watered down considerably, the developments have a potential for direct impact on our private sector members, for the creation of new ombudsmen and other complaint handling schemes – and, in time, may influence expectations for complaint resolution across all sectors. Submissions about this issue were also made to the EC Directorate General for Health and Consumers (DG SANCO).

In the UK we have also made submissions to:

- the Communities and Local Government Select Committee in relation to their report on the Local Government Ombudsman
- the Justice Select Committee, concerning the abolition of the AJTC and arrangements to be made in its place

Critical to our credibility in the eyes of opinion formers and policy makers is that we set ourselves clear standards as to independence, governance and process. The criteria for ombudsman membership were updated in May 2011 and during this year work has continued on revalidating the existing ombudsman membership against the new criteria. It is the first time we have undertaken an exercise for all existing members and it has greatly concentrated our minds on how the principles should apply in



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Foreword

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practice. Thanks are due to the Validation Committee for their commitment – and in particular to the independent members, who give freely of their time. Laurence Sherman, whose sad death during the year is covered elsewhere in this report, had been a valued member of the committee, continuing even as his health failed.

“The Ombudsman” – our newsletter – continues to be valued by the membership. Thanks are due to the many contributors, the editorial committee and, in particular, to the two editors who have served during the year, Faye West and Gráinne Byrne. Without their commitment we would have no publication. Though on the subject of publication, the Executive Committee has taken the view that the cost of physically printing and circulating the newsletter is, in this technological age, no longer justified. Electronic publication will give opportunities for greater flexibility and interaction. But that will be a subject for a future annual report.

The Association is dependent on its members for resources and support. I am grateful to all those bodies who have offered facilities for meetings, and to the chairs and members of the special interest groups on whom we depend for knowledge sharing and development. This year, special gratitude must be recorded to the Financial Ombudsman Service who have given us the time of David Thomas, as referred to above, and to the Local Government Ombudsman for making available the services of Nigel Karney to support to the Association’s secretariat.

My final thanks go to the Secretary himself, Ian Pattison, who has, with unwavering efficiency and commitment, kept our affairs on track. It is remarkable that the Association has, in twenty years, only had two secretaries. Sadly, since Ian has given notice that he is minded to retire in the Spring of 2014, it is likely that we shall soon have to begin the search for our third. But that too will be a subject for a future report.

Tony King

Ombudsman Association Chair,
UK Pensions Ombudsman
May 2013

ANNUAL MEETING 2012

The 19th Annual Meeting of the Ombudsman Association was held on 17 and 18 May 2012 in Belfast, co-hosted by the Northern Ireland Ombudsman. It consisted of three separate events, namely:

- Workshops run by the Northern Ireland Ombudsman’s office during the afternoon of Thursday, 17 May at the Assembly Buildings Conference Centre
- The Association Dinner held during the evening of 17 May in the Belfast City Hall
- The 19th Annual Meeting of the Association held during the morning of Friday, 18 May in the Baby Grand Auditorium of the Grand Opera House

With around 130 members, staff of member schemes and guests attending the event, it was a record turnout.

Workshops on 17 May 2012

Three workshops were arranged by the Northern Ireland Ombudsman’s office during the afternoon of 13 May, following a pattern set in Edinburgh at the 2008 Annual Meeting and then again in 2012 at the Annual Meeting in Cardiff. Participants selected one of the workshops to attend, which were:

- **Engaging the Media** – (led by Emily O’Reilly, Ombudsman and Information Commissioner for Ireland)
- **Performance Management** – (led by Niki Maclean, Director of Corporate Services, Scottish Public Services Ombudsman)
- **Data Protection and Information Security** – (led by Marie Anderson, Deputy Northern Ireland Ombudsman)

Association Dinner on 17 May 2012

Exactly 131 members of the Association, staff of member schemes and guests attended the Association Dinner in the very grand setting of the Banqueting Hall of the Belfast City Hall. A drinks reception before was very kindly and very generously provided by Belfast City Council.

Annual Meeting on 18 May 2012

This was held in the Baby Grand Auditorium of Belfast’s Grand Opera House, followed by a buffet lunch. The 19th Annual Meeting (the formal business of the Association) took place first, followed by three presentations.

During this first session the Association Chair, Peter Tyndall, gave the following address:

Good morning and welcome to the Annual meeting of the Ombudsman Association. I would like to open by thanking Dr Tom Frawley and his team, especially Lynne Davison, for their hospitality. There will be more opportunities to say thank you later, but the work they have put in to organising the activities yesterday afternoon, last night and today is what has made this event such a success. My thanks also to Marie Anderson, Emily O’Reilly and Niki Maclean for running the three workshops yesterday. I would now like to move on to the formal business of the day.

Before reflecting on the past year and considering some of the issues the Association will need to address in the future, it's my happy duty today to welcome some new colleagues, and some old friends in new roles. Dame Julie Mellor has been appointed UK Parliamentary Ombudsman to succeed Ann Abraham and is already demonstrating her energy and vision in driving the office forward. The support from her office has always been welcomed by the Association.

Congratulations also to Jane Martin and Ann Seex on their appointment as Chair and Deputy Chair of the Local Government Commission. Both have been with the Commission for Local Administration in England, as the English Local Government Ombudsmen are officially known, for some time but they now have the unenviable task of taking it forward in the face of substantial, and in my view unwarranted and unacceptable, cuts in its funding.

In the Republic of Ireland we are delighted to welcome the new Garda Síochána Ombudsmen, Simon O'Brien and Kieran FitzGerald and to congratulate Carmel Foley on her reappointment for a further term. While considering matters in Ireland, I would also like to thank Pat Whelan, who retired as Director General in The Ombudsman of Ireland's office for all of his assistance and support to the Association over the years. His equivalent in the UK Parliamentary Ombudsman's office, Bill Richardson, is one of the members of the Executive who will also be retiring this year, and I'm sure you will join me in offering him our best wishes. It's pleasing also to welcome a new Welsh complaint handler member. Croeso cynnes iawn i Meri Huws, the new Welsh Language Commissioner.

This Annual Meeting marks the end of my two year term as Chair and the last year has been a busy and productive one for the Association. We were set a considerable challenge by my predecessor as Chair, the Ombudsman for Ireland Emily O'Reilly and the Executive Committee at the time. The study which they commissioned into the views and requirements of the members of the Association offered reassurance about the core work, but set a testing agenda for the future.

Many aspects of the work, particularly the interest groups, were well regarded. Other areas such as this conference and the Ombudsman magazine were also considered to be of good quality.

Nonetheless, there was a call for an Association which was more engaged with the world outside the ombudsman community, that sought to be more influential on behalf of its members, and which worked actively to promote and sustain the ombudsman institution in the UK and Ireland, and in those other communities from which we draw our members, the British Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories. In the last year we have made considerable strides in delivering on these aspirations, while continuing to deliver on our core work.

The interest groups continue to be popular and

well attended. In addition to the existing groups,, new groupings have also emerged. The commitment of the ombudsman community to sharing experience and expertise, and indeed, to highlighting those initiatives that may not have gone according to plan, is at the heart of the Association's work. Once again, we held a successful seminar, this time on the issue of access to our offices by people who face considerable challenges in doing so. Work of this kind in acting as a focal point for the ombudsman community was the most highly regarded aspect of the Association, and it is good to see it continue to thrive.

The report also looked at membership criteria. Most respondents favoured the retention of criteria which secured the core values of the ombudsman institution. This was seen as being essential if we are to safeguard its integrity and reputation. Last year we agreed new membership criteria both for ombudsman members, and for the first time, for complaint handlers. The first applications for membership have been considered under the new criteria this year.

Having taken steps to secure its independence from its sector, the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education in England and Wales has now become an Ombudsman member, and Ben Elgar, the Chief Operating Officer is here with us today. We have also welcomed the Double Glazing Ombudsman into membership, a role held by the Property Ombudsman, Chris Hamer.

The Validation Committee has developed the criteria and process for the revalidation of existing members, and this exercise has now commenced. My thanks to the members of the Committee for their work, particularly to Laurence Shurman who has not been very well. I'm sure you will want to join me in conveying our best wishes to him.

Training was another valued aspect of our work and has moved from planning and testing into delivery this year. I'm pleased to be hosting the first Certificate course in Wales as we speak, and that it has been fully subscribed.

The Ombudsman magazine has continued to thrive under its Editor Faye West and its committed editorial panel. Thanks to Faye for her work, including the latest "Belfast" edition.

The need to have a more recognisable brand has taken huge strides forward, with the new public name of the Ombudsman Association being adopted from today and the new website is under active development.

This year, we have been far more active in promoting the views of members in the context of political environments, particularly at UK and Republic of Ireland level, which continue to be volatile. The now established meetings of the Ombudsmen in the Republic of Ireland, and the role of the Irish Executive members in advocacy with government is developing. The Irish Ombudsman, Emily O'Reilly, continues to work for the delivery of promised legislation to enshrine the role of the

Ombudsman in the Constitution and to protect the title of Ombudsman in law. I'm sure that the Association will continue to work with her in the future to secure these important objectives. Emily spoke at the conference last year about the difficulties she experienced in persuading the government and the Oireachtas to back her Lost at Sea report, but her tireless advocacy has clearly driven the agenda forward. A sound constitutional basis for the institution of the ombudsman and proper legal protection for the name should remain, in my view, a priority for the work of the Association. Our offices are dynamic and evolving, but are based on a core of independence and objectivity which need to be protected, and we must guard against proliferation and dilution of the brand.

The Northern Ireland Ombudsman, Tom Frawley, has also been working on his new legislation. We look forward to seeing it on the statute books, as it will mark a further development in the legislative underpinning for public sector schemes.

The activities on private sector issues have also moved forward during the year. I'm delighted that there is a private sector ombudsman group now in operation as the public sector group has greatly facilitated the work of the Association by ensuring that the Executive members have a regular forum in which to feed back and to seek views. Mirroring this in the private sector, as well as having the Irish grouping, will allow the Association to remain actively engaged with its membership, especially when promoting the Ombudsman Institution and advocating on its behalf.

For the first time, the Association has participated in a consultation by the European Commission on consumer redress, and this was but one of the many examples of engagement with policy makers and governments during the year. The Association has also, for example, contributed to the Leveson enquiry on press standards in the UK, calling for the creation of a Media Ombudsman, to provide free, independent redress for people who suffer where media standards are breached. The successful Press Ombudsman scheme in the Republic of Ireland shows that a proper ombudsman in this sphere could allow individuals who can't afford to pursue their complaints through the courts to have access to redress and contribute to improving standards as all existing ombudsmen schemes strive to do. I'm pleased that Lord Leveson has now asked for a further submission.

The need for the Association to have a clear and unambiguous policy about promoting the institution and extending access to independent redress has become ever more evident as we have become more engaged. The Ombudsman landscape in these islands is patchy. Most publicly provided services are covered, but some which have been privatised are not. Some private sector areas are well covered, such as financial services, but others are excluded.

The Association needs to be much more proactive in setting out its vision regarding redress, and in actively promoting this with Governments and other key influencers. We must take opportunities which arise in consultations at UK and Republic of Ireland level, but also in the devolved countries of the UK and in the EU.

In the current issue of the Ombudsman, Adam Sampson, the UK Legal Ombudsman calls for a more active approach by the Association in developing a formal policy position and in pursuing it proactively and I'm sure he will cover these issues when he addresses us later. This echoes comments I made in an article in the previous issue and highlights the need for the Association and its members to be pro-active in seeking to shape the emerging ombudsman landscape. The growing complexity of public service delivery and of the consumer landscape demands a simpler redress model so that service users and consumers know where to go with their complaints. We don't need a plethora of new ombudsman schemes, and arguably, there's a case for rationalising those which we already have. Is it time, for example, to have an English Public Services Ombudsman to mirror those in the Republic of Ireland and the devolved nations? What about utilities? Should there be comprehensive coverage by a single scheme in each jurisdiction or should we just say that public services should sit with public services ombudsmen regardless of who provides them. The outgoing Executive had already started work on just such a policy statement. I don't doubt it will be difficult to get comprehensive agreement but I'm certain that it is the way forward.

There is much also to be done in promoting the excellent practice of our members in an international context. We have led the way, for example, in extending the ombudsman institution into the field of consumer redress. However, we also need to be open in learning from others. Many East European and African countries, for example, have already enshrined their public services ombudsmen in their constitutions. We are privileged to be joined here today by two distinguished overseas guests. Mr Nikiiforos Diamandouros is the European Ombudsman, and Senyor Rafael Ribó, the *Sindic de Greuges* of Catalonia, the Catalan Ombudsman, who is the European Vice President of the International Ombudsman Institute. I will be inviting each of them to address us briefly at the close of the meeting.

Before doing so, I want to extend my thanks in particular to two individuals. Firstly, to Ian Pattison who as Secretary of BIOA has operated in such a committed and effective way. My successor as Chair will, I am sure, come to rely on him as I have done. He is formidably organised, phenomenally well connected, incredibly hard working and central to the Association's work. To do all of this while being excellent company and a thoroughly nice guy deserves recognition. Thank you Ian.

Finally, our host here today, Dr Tom Frawley, has, in his own inimitable way, put his stamp on this meeting. His hospitality, knowledge and wisdom have been highly valued by me and my predecessors as Chair. He has recently announced that he will be standing down as Ombudsman in April of next year, so this will be his final BIOA AGM. He's been busy working with the Northern Ireland Assembly on new legislation to modernise his office, but he has steered it through challenging times to be the force that it is today. On a personal note, Tom has been a guide and mentor for me as I have undertaken my role, and I owe him a deep personal debt of gratitude. I hope you will join me now in recognition of his enormous contribution to Ombudsmanry in these islands.

The new Executive Committee was then voted in, as follows:

Association Chair

Tony King UK Pensions Ombudsman

Representing Ombudsman Members:

Tom Frawley Northern Ireland Ombudsman

Christopher Hamer The Property Ombudsman

Jane Hingston Lead Ombudsman, Financial Ombudsman Service

Jane Martin Local Government Ombudsman for England

Bill Richardson Deputy Chief Executive, Parliamentary & Health Service Ombudsman (until September 2012)

Lewis Shand Smith Chief Ombudsman, Ombudsman Services

Representing Ombudsman Members in Ireland:

Paul Kenny Pensions Ombudsman for Ireland

Bill Prasifka Financial Services Ombudsman, Ireland

Representing Complaint Handler Members:

Judy Clements The Adjudicator

Elizabeth Derrington Independent Complaints Reviewer

Dame Julie Mellor Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman, was co-opted onto the Committee from September 2012 as a representative of Ombudsman Members in place of Bill Richardson

The Association Secretary, Ian Pattison, is also a permanent member of the Executive Committee.

Note: the minutes of the Annual Meeting are in the 'members' area' of the Association website. Details of Executive Committee members, including photographs, are in the public area of the Association website.

Presentations

This session was chaired by Tom Frawley, Northern Ireland Ombudsman. An introduction and welcome was given by Paulyn Marrinan Quinn, Ombudsman for the Defence Forces, Ireland.

Presentations were then given by:

- **Sir Declan Morgan** QC (Lord Chief Justice of Northern Ireland) - Relationship between the judiciary and the role of the Ombudsman
- **Professor Michael O'Flaherty** (Chief Commissioner, Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission)
- **Richard Thomas** (Chair, UK Administrative Justice and Tribunals Council) - Independent scrutiny of accessible, fair and efficient justice for citizens
- **Adam Sampson** (Legal Ombudsman for England and Wales) - An Ombudsman in changing times

SEMINAR 2012

A Seminar on the topic of 'Employee engagement in a time of change', due to be held on 10 December, was regrettably cancelled due to unforeseen operational circumstances. We expect to run it now during 2013, probably to include an additional topic as well.

ANNUAL MEETING 2013

The 20th Annual Meeting of the Association takes place at 11.30am on Thursday, 16 May 2013 at Burleigh Court Conference Centre, Loughborough University, before the start of the 2013 Biennial Conference. Formal notification of the Annual Meeting has already been sent to Members by the Secretary.

BIENNIAL CONFERENCE 2013

The 2013 Ombudsman Association Biennial Conference, the 10th such Conference of the Association, will once again be held at the Burleigh Court Conference Centre, Loughborough University, on 16 and 17 May 2013. This is the same location as for the 2011 Conference.

Opened in late 2006, Burleigh Court offers excellent conference facilities including 225 high-quality (4 star) en suite bedrooms, a 240 capacity Convention Room and leisure club and spa complex. Loughborough is in a very good central location, and well served by flights from Dublin and Edinburgh to Nottingham East Midlands Airport, by a good train service from London and by road via the M1.

Following on from the success of the last conferences which, although run in difficult times, attracted over 150 delegates, it is hoped that there will once again be a good attendance at this event despite the continuing challenging economic climate. The Association has initially committed to only 125 places, but with the option to take more places should numbers warrant it (which hopefully they will!).

The Conference will be based around the overall theme of '20/20 Vision - looking forward on the Association's 20th anniversary' and will be run in the original format of plenary sessions and workshops, with each of the six workshops being run twice, as for the last Conference.

The full Conference programme is:

Thursday, 16 May 2013

20th Annual Meeting of the Association

Chair's opening address

Tony King UK Pensions Ombudsman
(Ombudsman Association Chair)

1st Session (Plenary 1)

Appropriate dispute resolution forums and legal challenges

Chair:

Tony King UK Pensions Ombudsman
(Ombudsman Association Chair)

Speakers:

Sir Jeremy Sullivan PC (Senior President of Tribunals)
Bill Prasifka Financial Services Ombudsman,
Ireland

2nd Session (Workshops 1)

See workshops details below

3rd Session (Plenary 2)

Accessibility – a strategic approach to managing the challenges

Chair:

Peter Tyndall Public Services Ombudsman
for Wales

Speakers:

Dr Mike Biles Housing Ombudsman
Chris Kenny Chief Executive,
Legal Services Board

Friday, 17 May 2013

4th Session (Plenary 3)

Complaint Handlers and relationship with Ombudsmen

Chair:

Adam Sampson Chief Ombudsman,
Legal Ombudsman

Speakers:

Judy Clements OBE The Adjudicator
Elizabeth Derrington Independent Complaints
Reviewer

5th Session (Workshops 2)

See workshops details below

6th Session (Plenary 4)

Ombudsmen – the next 20 years

Chair:

Natalie Ceeney CBE Chief Ombudsman,
UK Financial Ombudsman Service

Speakers:

Dame Julie Mellor DBE UK Parliamentary & Health
Service Ombudsman for
England
Lewis Shand Smith Chief Ombudsman,
Ombudsman Services

Chair's closing address

Tony King UK Pensions Ombudsman
(Ombudsman Association Chair)

WORKSHOPS

Workshop 1:

Dealing with complaints about our service

Separating complaints about service from complaints about merits; internal responsibility for service complaints; process and procedures; remedies and redress for poor service; role and responsibilities of external service complaint reviewers; benefits and costs of external reviewers

Chair:

Caroline Mitchell Lead Ombudsman,
UK Financial Ombudsman Service

Presenters:

Walter Merricks CBE Service Complaints Reviewer,
Legal Ombudsman

Suzannah Beazley Head of Review Team,
Parliamentary & Health Service
Ombudsman

Workshop 2:

Human Rights

To assist schemes in developing a human rights based approach to Ombudsman schemes with reference to the practical experience of the NI Ombudsman in a joint project with NI Human Rights Commission

Chair:

Dr Tom Frawley Northern Ireland Ombudsman

Presenters:

Marie Anderson Deputy NI Ombudsman

Professor Michael O'Flaherty
Chief Commissioner,
NI Human Rights Commission

Workshop 3:

Early resolution

In line with current trends to keep disputes out of the adversarial courts system and exhaust all the opportunities that the, now established and respected, ADR processes offer, Ombudsmen can have a significant role to play in providing a rich resource by way of early intervention and resolution. Some Ombudsman schemes' legislation now includes provisions for mediation. This workshop will explore what early resolution is, the reasons for it and the challenges and benefits gained

Chair:

Paul Kenny Pensions Ombudsman, Ireland

Presenters:

Paulyn Marrinan Quinn Former Defence Forces
Ombudsman, Ireland and
Insurance Ombudsman,
Ireland

Jon Lenton Ombudsman,
Ombudsman Services

Workshop 4:

Learning from experience for bodies under jurisdiction

Sharing learning from our casework to help bodies do things better. What are we able to share and how can it be delivered for best effect. What barriers might we face, e.g. legislative, cultural etc, and how might we support bodies become more effective at dealing with complaints through what we learn from our casework. Trying always to keeping it real and practical

Chair:

Christopher Hamer The Property Ombudsman

Presenters:

Chris McAlpine Acting Director of
Customer Services & Assessment,
Parliamentary & Health Service
Ombudsman

Adam Sampson Chief Ombudsman,
Legal Ombudsman

Workshop 5:

Information compliance in complaint handling

Key FOI and data issues for complaints handling, including: data security, sharing of data and information with other Ombudsmen, how much does one disclose to the parties to a complaint in order to investigate fully, and what can Ombudsmen publish without breaching DPA

Chair:

Kieran FitzGerald Commissioner, Garda Síochána
Ombudsman Commission

Presenters:

Rosemary Agnew Scottish Information Commissioner

Graham Smith Deputy UK Information
Commissioner

Workshop 6:

Managing change

At a time of escalating external pressures including the need to cut costs and deliver more for less, this session will share experiences of leading and managing organisational change. Topics will include restructuring, business process redesign and culture change

Chair:

Jane Martin Local Government Ombudsman for
England

Presenters:

Tony Boorman Deputy CEO/Deputy Chief
Ombudsman, UK Financial
Ombudsman Service

Emily O'Reilly Ombudsman for Ireland

ANNUAL MEETING 2014

The 2014 Annual Meeting of the Association will be held in Manchester during May. Details will follow in due course. In line with budgetary decisions taken by the Executive Committee, if there is an Association Dinner held at that time, it will be on a payment basis rather than being fully funded by the Association as in previous years.

EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Interface with governments and other bodies
The Association's dialogue with the UK Government has been limited this year to meetings with departments, rather than with the Cabinet Office which had been a feature for several years previously. Efforts will be made in the coming year to resurrect these Cabinet Office meetings, especially now that the present Parliamentary Ombudsman is once again a member of the Executive Committee.

Leveson Inquiry

During May 2012, following an earlier written submission to the original Inquiry about the desirability of a Press Ombudsman, the Association was invited by the Leveson Inquiry to give further evidence during its Module 4 stage evidence (press regulation and redress). That was followed up by an invitation to appear before the Inquiry in July. The Association was represented by David Thomas, recently Principal Ombudsman at the UK Financial Ombudsman Service. David's appearance at the Inquiry can currently be viewed (approximately 86 minutes into the video) at: <http://www.levesoninquiry.org.uk/hearing/2012-07-12pm/>.

The Chair, Secretary and David Thomas also attended a meeting with Lord Hunt, Chairman of the Press Complaints Commission, in August about the desirability of the separating of regulation and redress.

EU ADR/ODR proposals

The Association continues to keep in contact with the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) over the European Commission's proposals for Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) and Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) which are currently before the European Parliament. These proposals broadly seek to set minimum standards of redress for all suppliers of consumer goods and services throughout the EU area.

Review of regulations on cosmetic interventions

The Department of Health set up a review last year, headed by Sir Bruce Keogh, into the regulation of cosmetic interventions. The review looked at how the consumer/patient is protected when undergoing either cosmetic surgery or non-surgical cosmetic procedures, such as dermal filler injections, Botox injections, or laser treatments

The Review Committee considered the option of creating an ombudsman for the cosmetic interventions sector, which by its nature is in the private sector. Currently the patient/consumer has to navigate the piecemeal and confusing consumer protection legislation on their own, whereas in the NHS patients have a variety of sources of support, dedicated complaints and redress schemes as well as the Health Service Ombudsman as a last resort.

The Association was consulted by the Department and has given information and recommendations about ombudsmen, although no decision has been taken yet about this.

Evidence to the House of Commons CLG Committee

In May the Association gave written evidence to the Communities and Local Government Committee (CLG) of the House of Commons in respect of its enquiry into the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO).

In July, the CLG Committee issued a critical report about the LGO after conducting a hearing. The report contained several references to the Association concerned with independence of the LGO, annual evaluations and methodology for measuring satisfaction levels.

Although the Association felt it inappropriate to respond directly to the report, primarily as it was aware that all of these points had been covered in the LGO response, it nevertheless welcomes continued consultation with the CLG Committee.

General

The Association has continued to seek to raise the profile of Ombudsmen, particularly in its responses to consultations, White Papers and calls for evidence.

Where appropriate in responding to issues and consultations, the Association encourages the establishment of 'Ombudsman Association compliant' schemes which meet the criteria for (full) Ombudsman Membership, and strongly encourages them (in line with the Cabinet Office's own guidance to Departments) to be called Ombudsman schemes, rather than other names such as Commission. Conversely, it also continues to campaign for the protection of the word 'Ombudsman' to avoid 'the risk of damaging the credibility of the Ombudsman 'brand'.

Meeting of Irish Ombudsmen

Following a series of informal meetings with the Chairman and secretary of the Association, the group of Ombudsmen based in Ireland met together in September 2012.

The meeting was attended by the Ombudsman, Emily O'Reilly; Ombudsman for Children, Emily Logan; Financial Services Ombudsman, Bill Prasifka and his deputy, Tom Comerford; Carmel Foley and Kieran Fitzgerald of the Garda Ombudsman Commission; Paul Kenny, Pensions Ombudsman; Press Ombudsman, John Horgan; An Coimisinéir Teanga (Irish Language Commissioner), Seán Ó Cuirreáin; and by recently retired Defence Forces Ombudsman, Paulyn Marrinan Quinn.

Topics discussed included the abrupt ending of the Defence Forces Ombudsman's contract (which had been the subject of a one-year extension), which had left a void whilst a new Ombudsman was recruited. It was thought at the time that the replacement might involve a part-time role now (since confirmed); this was felt to raise important issues about independence, especially as regarding short-term contacts given the quasi-judicial role of ombudsmen

The Press Ombudsman, Professor John Horgan, gave a detailed account of his appearance in July at the Leveson Inquiry in the UK. He felt that his evidence regarding the Irish experience of the interaction of the Press ombudsman and the Press Council had been very positively received

It was decided to set up a working group to produce an information website about the ombudsman community in Ireland (similar to the information produced in Northern Ireland, but not in hard-copy)

Also discussed was the on-going 'critical review' of the probable amalgamation of the Financial Services Ombudsman and Pensions Ombudsman. The advantages and disadvantages of this proposal were discussed, with particular reference made to the very different experiences of the two schemes in the Courts in the past. The review group's final Report to Cabinet has not been made available at the time of writing.

It was planned that regular meetings would continue. The Irish Language Commissioner had offered to translate the output of meetings into Irish, in accordance with national practice.

The Administrative Justice and Tribunals Council

The Association has a long history of consultation and co-operation with the Administrative Justice and Tribunals Council (AJTC), and its predecessor body, the Council on Tribunals (CoT) and therefore particularly regrets the Government's intention to abolish it (contained in the Public Bodies Bill). This will leave a significant gap in the strategic oversight of Administrative Justice, including Ombudsmen, and the Association continues to seek clarification from the Ministry of Justice of how this gap will be filled.

A new body, the Administrative Justice Advisory Group (AJAG), set up by the Ministry of Justice, has a member of the Executive Committee on it (currently Jane Martin).

The Association responded in July 2011 to the original Ministry of Justice (MoJ) consultation of the proposed abolition of the AJTC, and has responded to the House of Commons Justice Committee's call for evidence seeking views on whether:

- The proposed arrangements for independent overview of the administrative justice and tribunals system, including the role and membership of the Administrative Justice Advisory Group, are satisfactory
 - Sufficient resources and expertise will be available within the Ministry of Justice to carry out continuing functions undertaken hitherto by the AJTC
 - The Government's estimate of cost savings arising from closing the AJTC is likely to be accurate
-

CURRENT WORK PROGRAMME

Approved accredited training

Summary

During 2012/13, three Professional Certificate in Ombudsman and Complaint Handling Practice courses were run, in London, Bridgend and Dublin (46 students in total attending) by Queen Margaret University (QMU), Edinburgh. No Professional Award in Ombudsman and Complaint Handling Practice courses were run during the year. We are very grateful to those member schemes which provided accommodation and facilities for these courses, which enabled costs to be contained.

The Award course covers such topics as principles of customer service, complaint diagnosis and investigation and decision making and remedy. The Certificate course explores a variety of subjects including appropriate dispute resolution and principles of effective remedy. Feedback from participants continues to be very positive. However, the low take-up by schemes of training courses, especially the Award Course, was disappointing and the Executive Committee commissioned some research carried out by Susanna Reece into that.

Research and Report

In July 2012, the Ombudsman Association commissioned Susanna Reece to conduct a piece of research with Ombudsman Association members to find out why take up of the accredited training courses, in particular the Award, had been lower than expected.

The following extract from the research report highlights its key findings and conclusions:

- There is widespread awareness of the training offered by QMU within the Ombudsman Association. Enthusiasm for continued support and take-up is mixed and is reflective of the diverse membership of the Association as a whole.
- Take-up for the Award is affected by its availability at the point of need for new and inexperienced staff. There is some interest in using the Award to develop more junior staff.
- There is strong support for the Certificate among some schemes, with its content seen as relevant and useful, while others see it as less relevant and a luxury in this economic climate.
- There is interest in more flexibility, one-off modules and regional training offerings, including some support for one-day master classes and continuing professional development (CPD).
- Schemes continue to make pragmatic decisions about training and development of their staff depending on business need and BIOA accreditation is not of itself the main priority.

The findings indicate that core issues which it was felt the Ombudsman Association and QMU should reflect on in developing the accredited training are:

- Relevance of content: not all those surveyed found the course content as relevant as it could be and, in

our view, there is a question mark over whether the specification and learning outcomes for the courses remain up to date and, perhaps more importantly, are sufficiently broad to appeal to the whole ombudsman and complaint handling sector.

- Flexibility of delivery: the Award in particular suffers from the issue of availability at the point of need and, additionally, we get the sense that there may be an appetite in the sector for increased flexibility in relation to both content (providing more choice with regard to topics covered and the opportunity to select content which meets the needs of their organisation) and mode of delivery (potentially delivering shorter courses where accreditation could be built up over time).

The future

The Executive Committee has asked two of its members, Judy Clements and Julie Mellor, to draw up a vision and direction for a future training initiative for approval by the Executive Committee. This might result in a new Working Group being set up made up of appropriate volunteers, possibly to replace the existing Training Approval Group which, although having been set up to oversee the training, had met only once and was now thought probably not the appropriate body for that.

Re-validation of existing members

During the year, the Association commenced a rolling programme of re-validating its Ombudsman Members following a 'pilot' at the beginning of the year (in April 2012). Some minor changes have been made to the process, followed feedback from members. Just over half of the membership has been re-validated so far. In due course, it is proposed to re-validate Complaint Handler members as well.

The process begins with a self-assessment by members themselves using a check-list against the criteria for membership, followed by meeting of the Validation Committee to check the assessment and make an appropriate recommendation to the Executive Committee.

It is intended to carry out re-validation of member once every five years.

Position Statement

A strategic position statement is to be adopted that builds on the Association's present Principles (for good complaint handling and good governance) in order to describe the strategic policies that guide the Executive Committee of the Ombudsman Association in:

- responding to consultations
- dealing with governments, the European Commission and other policy-makers
- issuing public communications

These policies reflect the overall views of the Ombudsman Association, and do not necessarily reflect the views of every member on every detail.

All members were consulted at the end of 2012, and the draft position statement below will be put to the Annual Meeting in May 2013 to be formally adopted.

(The public name of the British and Irish Ombudsman Association)

Strategic position statement on ombudsmen

What ombudsmen do

Ombudsmen serve the public interest. They help to underpin public confidence in the bodies and businesses that they cover – by providing members of the public with accessible and effective redress, and by feeding back the lessons from their work in order to help improve service delivery and complaints-management for the future.

Fundamental criteria for ombudsmen

The ombudsman members of the Association satisfy its criteria of:

- independence
- fairness
- effectiveness
- openness and transparency
- accountability

Principles for ombudsmen

The Association promotes high standards. It has adopted and published principles for good governance and good complaint handling. These cover:

- independence
- clarity of purpose
- integrity
- fairness
- openness and transparency
- accountability
- accessibility
- effectiveness
- efficiency
- flexibility
- proportionality
- quality outcomes

The Association's membership criteria and principles are consistent with the requirements of the EU Directive on alternative dispute resolution for consumer disputes which was passed by the European Parliament in March 2013 and is due to be given effect to by Member States by mid 2015.

Purpose of this document

This document does not repeat those criteria and principles, but builds on them in order to describe the strategic policies that guide the Executive Committee of the Ombudsman Association in:

- responding to consultations
- dealing with governments, the European Commission and other policy-makers

- issuing public communications

These policies reflect the overall views of the Ombudsman Association, and do not necessarily reflect the views of every member on every detail.

References to 'bodies/businesses covered' mean bodies/businesses that are within an ombudsman's jurisdiction or remit.

Public interest and access to redress

- The provision of impartial redress through ombudsmen serves the public interest and is an important part of access to justice.
- An ombudsman is likely to be an appropriate model for complaint resolution where there is an imbalance of power between members of the public and bodies/businesses.
- So the public is not misled, the name 'ombudsman' should be protected, preferably by law. It should only be used for bodies that comply with the Association's criteria referred to above.
- To make things clearer and simpler for people and for bodies/businesses, and also to promote efficiency through economies of scale, there should be:
 - clear boundaries between ombudsman bodies, avoiding gaps and overlaps;
 - increased harmonisation of powers and processes; and
 - no proliferation of ombudsman bodies.
- New ombudsman bodies should not be created where the role could be appropriately fulfilled by an existing ombudsman body, and existing ombudsman bodies should be rationalised.
- To ensure consistency of public policy, governments and the European Commission should each have a central point with responsibility for leading and coordinating on ombudsman matters.

All ombudsmen

- Ombudsmen should be: able to appoint their own staff; and free to determine the structure of their organisation.
- Ombudsmen should be provided with sufficient funding for the proper discharge of their role, but remain free-of-charge to people bringing complaints.
- Structures of ombudsman bodies should be clear about where authority lies – for example, in the case of bodies with more than one ombudsman.
- There should be clear requirements for the prompt and effective handling of complaints by bodies/businesses covered, with clear signposting to the ombudsman.
- Members of the public should have direct access to the ombudsman if the body/business covered does not resolve the complaint promptly.
- The success of the ombudsman model depends on: independence, to ensure impartiality; free access for people; informal and flexible process; active investigation; and effective redress.
- Ombudsman decisions should be final and should not be able to be overturned other than by an appeal route provided for by law.

Ombudsmen focusing on public services

- There should be comprehensive ombudsman coverage

(not limited to maladministration), including all bodies that provide public services (unless already covered by tribunals).

- Public services include services provided by, or on behalf of, national/devolved/local government and state-funded health services.
- Ombudsmen covering services provided by, or on behalf of, national/devolved/local government and state-funded health services should be appointed by, and accountable to:
 - a democratically elected body (with accountability preferably through a committee); and
 - not a minister, office-holder or official.
- Appointment (which includes reappointment where applicable) should be through an open and transparent process that is consistent with best public appointments practice.
- Ombudsmen should have power to begin investigations on their own initiative into matters within their jurisdiction.
- An ombudsman's findings of fact, and of maladministration or poor service, should be binding on the body covered.
- If the body is subject to direct/indirect democratic control, an ombudsman's findings on responsibility and redress should be respected.
- If the body is not subject to direct/indirect democratic control, an ombudsman's findings on responsibility and redress should be capable of being binding on the body.
- The ombudsman should be able to provide effective remedies including, where appropriate, providing systemic remedies and the power to follow up or monitor recommendations.
- If public-sector ombudsmen cover complaints against privatised businesses, the costs should be met by the relevant business sector (not from taxation).

Ombudsmen focusing on the private sector

- There should be comprehensive coverage by ombudsmen (established by, or under, statute) of all business sectors where there has been experience of significant consumer detriment.
- This is likely to include all sectors that are regulated, because it is unlikely they would have been regulated if there had not been experience of significant consumer detriment.
- This includes all networked services (water, energy, public transport, communications and post), if they are not covered by public-sector ombudsmen.
- In the interests of efficiency, one ombudsman body may cover a number of sectors, and there should not be more than one ombudsman body within a sector.
- An ombudsman's findings on liability and redress should be capable of being binding on the business covered.

THE OMBUDSMAN NEWSLETTER

The Ombudsman newsletter is produced three times a year under the supervision of volunteer Editor and Editorial Board and has a circulation of around 1,500 copies. Each issue contains news items, case studies, profiles of office holders and member schemes, and a number of feature articles.

The newsletter is designed by Peter Williams and the paper version is printed and distributed by Heron Dawson and Sawyer.

Faye West, Corporate Communications Manager at the Legal Ombudsman, was Editor for Issue 46 (April 2012) and Issue 47 (September 2012). She stepped down after the latter issue and Gráinne Byrne, Communications Officer at the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman very kindly took over as Editor from and including Issue 48 (January 2013). We are very grateful to Faye for her very hard work as Editor, and also of course to Gráinne for volunteering to take over the role.

As many of you will be aware, Issue 48 was the final printed edition of *The Ombudsman*. The Executive Committee, at its meeting in December 2012, took the decision to discontinue printing the newsletter on cost grounds, due to continuing and unsustainable increases in both production and postage costs. The newsletter will continue in electronic form, but may well change in style and in the frequency of its issue.

During the year several member schemes have been featured and published articles include the following topics:

- EU proposals on Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)
- High energy publicity (novel ways of gaining media and public attention)
- Building trust – opening doors for homeless people
- Investing in staff
- Facing up to the future (consumer confusion and bringing harmony to the ombudsman world)
- 'Mystery shopping' survey
- Completing the virtuous circle
- Courting ombudsman (sharing learning from Judicial Reviews)
- Repairing reputation
- European consumer agenda
- The AJTC and beyond
- Case assessors update
- Great expectations (managing complainants' expectations with increasing awareness of ombudsmen)
- Leaning from judgements
- Relevant and resilient challenges
- Policing changes in Scotland
- Embracing social media
- Freedom of Information
- More impact for more people

There have also been obituaries of three people, important to the ombudsmen world, who sadly died during the year, namely:

Kevin Murphy former Ombudsman for Ireland

Tony Newton (Lord Newton of Braintree), former Chairman of the Administrative Justice and tribunals Council (AJTC)

Laurence Shurman former UK Banking Ombudsman and first Chairman of the Association (this obituary is reproduced on Page ?)

The Editorial Board during the year has included the following:

Faye West (Editor to September 2012)
Corporate Communications Manager, Legal Ombudsman

Gráinne Byrne (Editor from September 2012)
Communications Officer, Scottish Public Services Ombudsman

Katherine Butler Head of Media and Communications, Parliamentary & Health Service Ombudsman

Jackie Feeney (until July 2012)
Former Head of Communications, Local Government Ombudsman

Susan Fox Director of Policy and Communications, Ombudsman Services

David Glynn (until September 2012)
Former Head of Communications, Office of the Ombudsman, Ireland

Alison Hoyland Head of Chief Executive's Office, Financial Ombudsman Service

Susan Hudson Policy & Communications Manager, Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

James Miller (from January 2013)
Creative Content Writer, Financial Ombudsman Service

Tim Miller (from January 2013)
Head of Policy & Communications, Local Government Ombudsman

Caroline Mitchell Ombudsman, Financial Ombudsman Service

David Nutley (from September to December 2012)
Head of Communications & Research, Office of the Ombudsman, Ireland

Stephanie O'Connell (from January 2013)
Quality, Stakeholder Engagement & Communications Unit, Office of the Ombudsman, Ireland

Ian Pattison Secretary, Ombudsman Association

Back copies of *The Ombudsman* are available to view at or download from the Association's website (www.bioa.org.uk) or in printed form from the Secretary. Anybody who is interested in being added to the email mailing list should contact the Secretary.

THE ASSOCIATION WEBSITE

The Ombudsman Association website at www.ombudsmanassociation.org has been completely re-written and updated during the year, and was re-launched in January. It consists of four main sections, as follows:

FIND

A search facility for members of the public to look for a suitable ombudsman or complaint handler

ABOUT

Detailed description of ombudsmen, what they do and what areas they cover (including Complaint Handlers)

THE ASSOCIATION

Details of the Association, its members, publications and activities

MEMBERS

A resource area for Association members and staff of member schemes containing the notes of the various Interest and Working Groups, in addition to other items of interest, as well as dates of forthcoming Association events and activities. Also available in this area are presentations given at Conferences and Seminars. Access details for this area for members and staff of member schemes can be obtained from the Association Secretary (secretary@ombudsmanassociation.org).

At the top of each page are links to job vacancies in member schemes and details of current accredited training opportunities.

Member schemes can, and are encouraged to, put job vacancy advertisements free of charge on the Association website. These can include advertisements for Council/Board members (where applicable), the office holder and staff members. Some schemes make great use of this facility, whilst others do not. For further information, contact the Association Secretary.

Development of the new website will continue during next year, to include blogs and forums.

FINANCES

Finances 2011/12

The income for 2011/12, including the surplus from the 2011 Conference of £18,418 (€21,779), was £104,695 (€123,802). Expenditure was £90,721 (€107,285), giving a total surplus for the year of £13,974 (€16,524), thereby increasing the Association's reserves to £89,625 (€105,981).

(Note: figures shown in Euros are calculated at the exchange rate on 31 March 2012 of 1.1825 Euros to the Pound Sterling.)

Finances 2012/13

The income for 2012/13 was £86,297 (€102,047). Expenditure was £111,608 (€131,976), giving a total deficit for the year of £25,311 (€29,930), thereby reducing the Association's reserves to £64,314 (€76,015).

(Note: figures shown in Euros are calculated at the exchange rate on 31 March 201 of 1.1825 Euros to the Pound Sterling.)

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

The Association has four Interest Groups which meet usually twice a year. They facilitate communication between schemes and enable staff to share ideas and issues of concern, and disseminate good practice. Meetings are held at the offices of member schemes, and the Association is very grateful for those facilities being made readily available.

One significant change to the Interest Groups during the year was the decision by the Executive Committee to ask the Interest Groups to be self-administering, with meetings being organised by Group members themselves, and no longer the Association Secretary. This is to relieve the Secretary of administrative work to allow him to concentrate more on policy issues.

Those interested in joining any of the Interest Groups should contact either the respective Chairs (see below) or the Association Secretary (secretary@ombudsmanassociation.org).

Legal Interest Group

The Legal Interest Group brings together legal advisers and those with an interest in legal matters within member schemes, including some of the Ombudsmen themselves. It was chaired by Anne Whitehorn, Legal Advisor to the Local Government Ombudsman, at the beginning of the year, and then by Marie Anderson, Deputy Northern Ireland Ombudsman. One meetings of the Group was held during the 2012/13 year, on 12 October 2012 in Birmingham, hosted by the Legal Ombudsman. The Group also met on 8 April 2013 in Bridgend, hosted by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

Communications Interest Group

The Communications Interest Group brings together communications professionals and those with an interest in PR/Communications matters in member schemes. It was chaired during the year by Susan Hudson, Policy & Communications manager at the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. The Group met twice during the year, on 12 April 2012 in Edinburgh, hosted by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman and on 10 October 2012 in Warrington, hosted by Ombudsman Services. The Group also met on 2 May in Birmingham, hosted by the Legal Ombudsman.

HR Interest Group

The HR Interest Group brings together HR professionals and those with an interest in personnel, training and development in member schemes. It is chaired by Niki Mclean, Director of Corporate Services at the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. The Group met twice during the year, on 11 April 2012 in Edinburgh, hosted by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman and on 9 October 2012 in Warrington, hosted by Ombudsman Services. The Group also met on 24 April in London, hosted by The Adjudicator's Office.

First Contact Interest Group

The First Contact Interest Group brings together those concerned with, and with an interest in, 'gateway' services within member schemes, and dealing with complaints and enquiries when they are first received. It is chaired by Carol Neill, Outreach Team Leader at the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. The Group met twice during the year, on 19 April 2012 in London at Gibraltar House hosted by the Gibraltar Public Services Ombudsman and on 11 October 2012 in London, hosted by the Local Government Ombudsman. The Group is also due to meet on 24 May in Edinburgh, to be hosted by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman.

(Note: notes of all Interest Group meetings are in the 'members' area' of the Association website)

MEMBERSHIP

Membership of the Association at 31 March 2013, compared with a year ago, is as follows:

Members	Now	A year ago
Total	116	123
Ombudsman Members (formerly 'Members')	33	33
Complaint Handler Members (formerly 'Corporate Associate Members')	34	37
Associate Members:		
Corporate	3	1
Individual	46	52

New member

The Association was pleased to welcome the following member during the year as an Ombudsman Member:

- Ombudsman for Children, Ireland - **Emily Logan**
(previously a Complaint Handler Member)

Executive Committee

The role of the Executive Committee is to manage the Association on behalf of members. The membership of the Committee during 2012/13 was:

Tony King	Chair UK Pensions Ombudsman
Judy Clements	The Adjudicator
Elizabeth Derrington	Independent Complaints Northern Ireland Ombudsman
Tom Frawley	Northern Ireland Ombudsman
Christopher Hamer	The Property Ombudsman
Jane Hingston	Lead Ombudsman, UK Financial Ombudsman Service
Paul Kenny	Pensions Ombudsman for Ireland
Jane Martin	Chair of the Commission for Local Administration in England (Local Government Ombudsman)
Dame Julie Mellor	Parliamentary & Health Service Ombudsman (co-opted from September 2012)
Bill Prasifka	Financial Services Ombudsman, Ireland
Bill Richardson	Deputy Chief Executive, UK Parliamentary & Health Service Ombudsman for England (until September 2012)
Lewis Shand Smith	Chief Ombudsman, Ombudsman Services
Ian Pattison	Secretary, Ombudsman Association

No Vice-Chair was elected for this year.

The Executive Committee met five times during the 2012/13 year on:

- 13 April 2012
- 12 June 2012
- 27 September 2012
- 6 December 2012
- 15 February 2013

Validation Committee

The role of the Validation Committee is to advise the Executive Committee on whether applications for Ombudsman and Complaint Handler Membership should be approved. The Committee has had the additional role during the year of advising the Executive Committee on the re-validation of existing members (see Page ? above).

The Validation Committee's membership during 2012/13 has been:

Chair

Tony King UK Pensions Ombudsman and
Ombudsman Association Chair

Representing Ombudsman members

Peter Tyndall Public Services Ombudsman
for Wales

Independent Members

Ann Abraham

Margaret Doyle

Professor Mary Seneviratne

(from December 2012)

Laurence Shurman (until July 2012)

There were three new applications for Ombudsman Membership this year, all from existing Complaint Handler members. One was approved; the other two were not.

The Association is most grateful to the members of the Validation Committee for making themselves available as required. The Executive Committee was especially saddened by the death in July 2012 of Laurence Shurman whose obituary, written by Ann Abraham and published originally in Issue 47 (September 2012) of *The Ombudsman* newsletter, is reproduced below.

Laurence Shurman

The Ombudsman world was saddened to learn of the death of Laurence Shurman on 27 July. Laurence was the Banking Ombudsman from 1988 to 1996, was instrumental in setting up BIOA in 1993, and was its first Chairman until 1995. He played a pivotal role in the Association, especially in its early years, laying the foundations for the diverse, vibrant and successful organisation it is today.

I first met Laurence many years ago and it was a great pleasure to reconnect with him more recently when we worked together, as fellow members of the Validation Committee, on the review of the Association's Rules and Criteria for Recognition of Ombudsman Schemes. Laurence's contribution was invaluable, because he knew so much of the history, because he cared so much about getting the right outcome - and because his attention to detail was second to none. And of course he was great fun to work with - a kindred spirit in so many ways - passionate about the Ombudsman institution and about the Association.

Laurence's commitment to access to justice was evident throughout his career. He was a solicitor in private practice from 1957 to 1988, and from 1975 to 1988 was Managing Partner of Kingsley Napley, a firm with a strong record in pro bono work. Amongst other roles, Laurence was a Legal Member of the

Mental Health Review Tribunal and a committed and active member of the charity Justice, including being a member of its Council.

I will miss Laurence hugely, as I know will all his friends and colleagues in the Ombudsman community. He was one of those elder statesmen whom everyone recognised, respected and admired. He has been a guiding presence in the Ombudsman world for so many years. I think we all somehow expected him to be there forever - and, of course, he always gave the impression that that was his intention as well!

Ann Abraham

Parliamentary & Health Service Ombudsman
(2002 - 2011)

MEMBER SCHEMES OF THE ASSOCIATION AT 31 MARCH 2013

Ombudsman members

Bermuda Ombudsman

Complaints Commissioner for the Cayman Islands

Financial Ombudsman Service, UK

Financial Services Ombudsman Bureau, Ireland

Financial Services Ombudsman, Isle of Man

Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission

Gibraltar Public Services Ombudsman

Glazing Ombudsman

Housing Ombudsman Service

Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education

Independent Police Complaints Commission

Legal Ombudsman, England and Wales

Local Government Ombudsmen, England

Northern Ireland Ombudsman

Ombudsman and Information Commissioner for Ireland

Ombudsman for Children, Ireland

Ombudsman for the Defence Forces, Ireland

Ombudsman Services: Communications

Ombudsman Services: Energy

Ombudsman Services: Property

Parliamentary & Health Service Ombudsman

Pensions Ombudsman

Pensions Ombudsman of Ireland

Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland

Property Ombudsman

Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

Removals Industry Ombudsman

Scottish Public Services Ombudsman

Waterways Ombudsman

Complaint handler members

Adjudicator, Revenue and Customs, Valuation Office Agency, Public Guardianship Office, and the Insolvency Service

Advertising Standards Authority

An Coimisinéir Teanga (Irish Language Commissioner)

Barristers Professional Conduct Tribunal, Ireland

Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland

Complaints Commissioner for the British Virgin Islands

Criminal Records Bureau (Independent Complaints Monitor)

First Civil Service Commissioner and Commissioner for Public Appointments

Furniture Ombudsman

Greffier of the States of Jersey

IDRS Limited

Immigration Services Commissioner

Independent Case Examiner for DWP

Independent Complaints Reviewer, Audit Commission, HM Land Registry, Land Registers NI, National Archives, Charity Commission, Housing Corporation and Youth Justice Agency

Independent Football Ombudsman

Independent Review Service for the Social Fund

Information Commissioner

Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland

Judicial Appointments & Conduct Ombudsman

Judicial Complaints Reviewer (Scotland)

Law Society of Ireland

Lay Observer for Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland Judicial Appointments Ombudsman

Older People's Commissioner for Wales

Police Complaints Commissioner for Scotland

Press Ombudsman, Ireland

Prisoner Ombudsman for Northern Ireland

Prisons and Probation Ombudsman for England and Wales

Public Standards Commissioner for Scotland

Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors

Scottish Information Commissioner

Scottish Legal Complaints Commission

Service Complaints Commissioner for the Armed Forces

The Dispute Service Limited

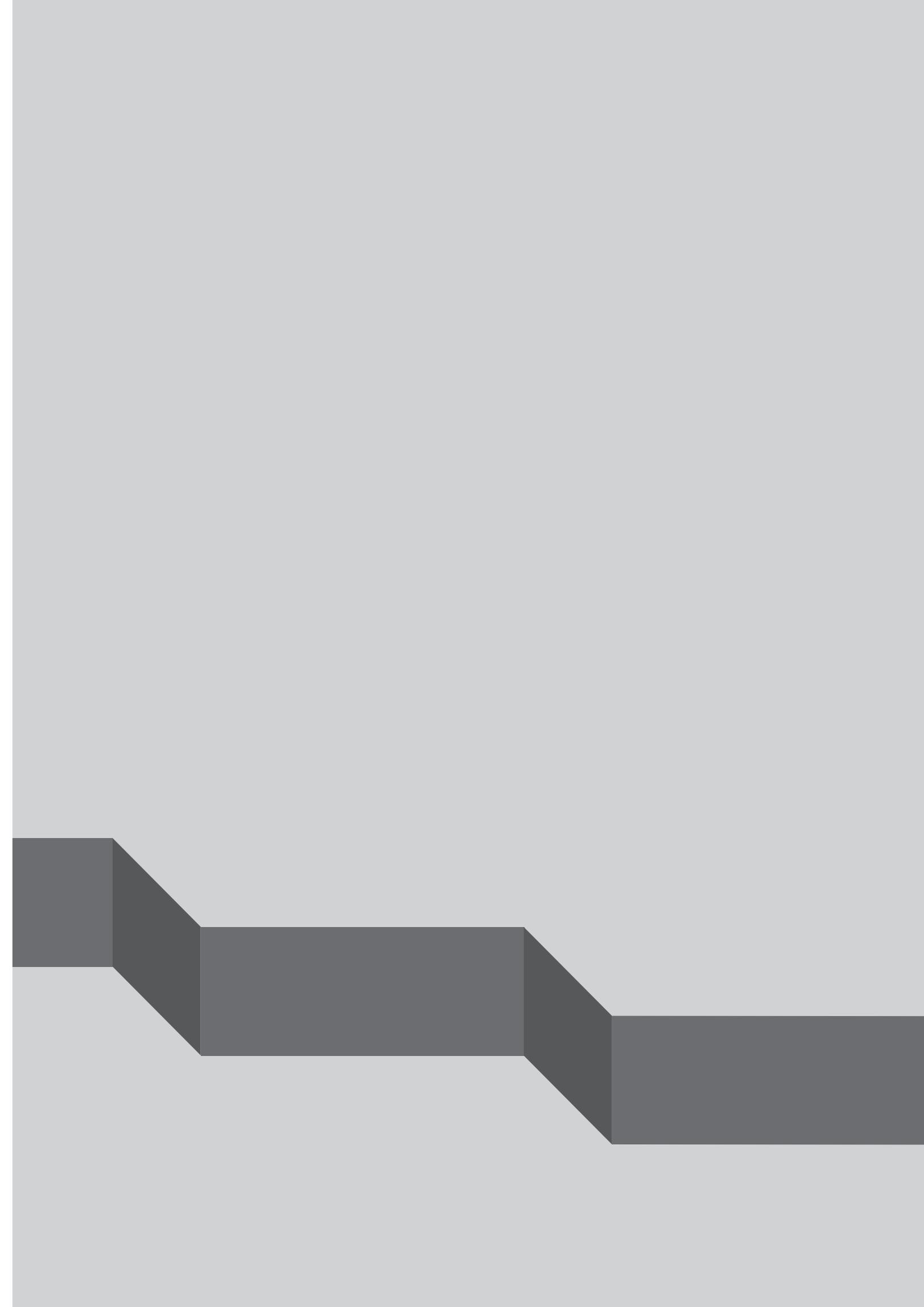
Welsh Language Commissioner

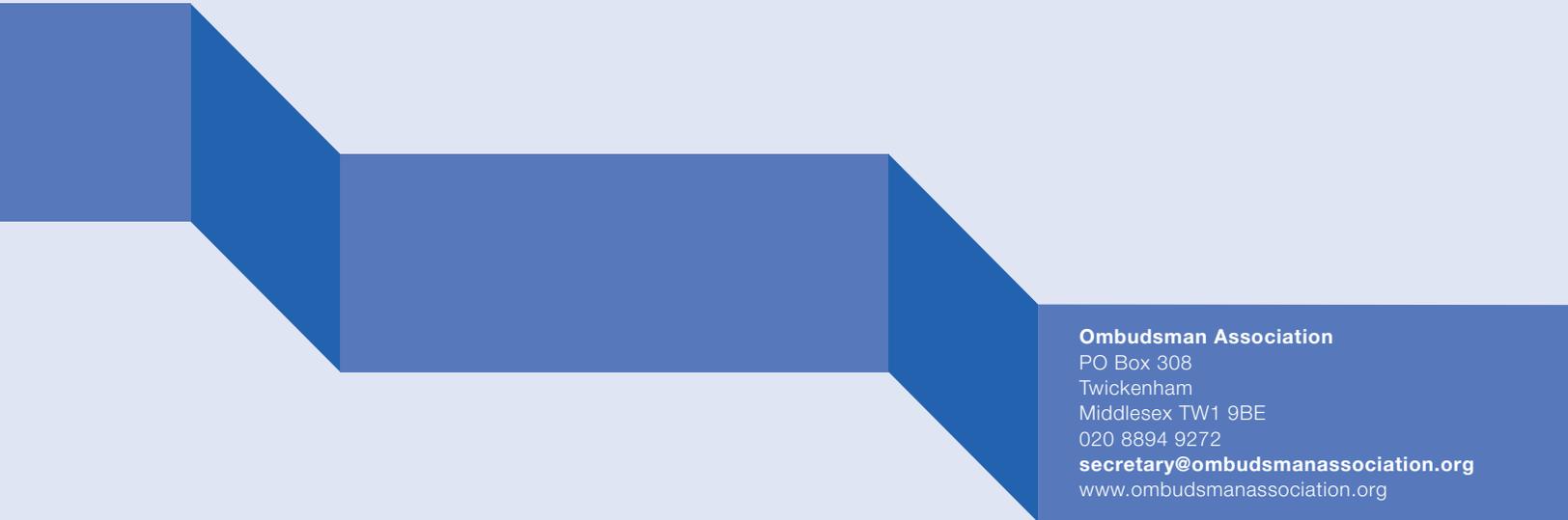
Corporate associate members

Brown Jacobson LLP, Solicitors

Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors

Law Society of Scotland





Ombudsman Association

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'Ombudsman Association' is the public name of the British and Irish Ombudsman Association