

*From the Office of Sir David Nicholson KCB CBE  
Chief Executive of the NHS in England*



**To:**  
Chairs in all NHS Trusts in England  
Chairs in all Primary Care Trusts in England  
Chairs in all Strategic Health Authorities in England  
Chairs in all NHS Foundation Trusts in England  
**Cc:**  
Monitor

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Dear

**Care and Compassion? Report of the Health Service Ombudsman on ten investigations into NHS care of older people**

You will be aware that, today, the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman has published a report on ten investigations into NHS care of older people.

The report raises important issues for all of us and I am writing to urge you to learn where you can from its findings, so that we can ensure all of our patients get the treatment they should.

I know it is the hard work and dedication of our staff that has brought about major improvements in the quality of care and experience, for our patients. But there are still times when our patients do not receive that high quality care and these instances must not be ignored and must not be repeated.

We know that when the NHS listens and acts on direct feedback from patients, carers and service users, the quality of service delivery improves. There are many examples of the NHS doing this - including the handling of

individual complaints, the use of real-time feedback from patients at the point of care and the national patient survey programme.

It is the responsibility of each of us as leaders to ensure we – and our organisations - listen to that feedback, so that we constantly improve the quality of care to patients and take the appropriate actions to reassure patients and their families that their voices have been heard and any mistakes will not be repeated.

To support organisations in how they collect and act on patient feedback, the NHS Institute for Innovation and Improvement has an on-line Patient Experience Network. This identifies models of gathering patient experience feedback that all of us may use.

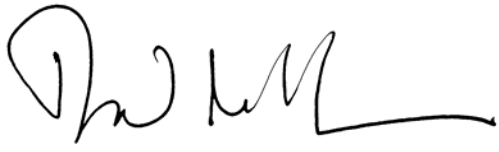
We know that the care experienced by people in hospitals and communities has a profound effect on them, their carers and families. This is an important report from the Ombudsman, which acts a reality check for us on the service we are providing to older people.

I urge each of you to take the time to read this report and to share it with members of your Board. It is not a long document, but it illustrates graphically the effect on older people, their families and carers where standards fall below what they, and we, should expect. We should not approach this report defensively, but openly, as this way we will learn from it.

The report provides a valuable learning tool for you to examine the service provided in your own organisation, and for you to assure yourselves that these situations are not happening in your organisation.

As our population ages, and demands on our service increase, we must ensure that we continue to challenge ourselves to treat everyone in our care with dignity, respect and professionalism.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D Nicholson', with a long horizontal stroke at the end. A thin vertical red line is positioned to the right of the signature.

**Sir David Nicholson KCB CBE  
NHS Chief Executive**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Oliver', with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

**Professor David Oliver  
National Clinical Director  
For Older People**