

Press Release 24th September 2013

Making Scottish Public Services Accountable

Accountability Scotland staged a Conference looking at maladministration and the lack of accountability of officials in all public sectors across Scotland.

The NHS, the Education System, Local Government Planning and Traffic Department mismanagement were featured in the 1-day event held on Monday 16th Sept 2013 at the Scottish Parliament.

Patron Dennis Canavan, and sponsor Fiona McLeod MSP participated along with four high-profile speakers, including three professors of international standing expert in administrative justice who explored reports of appalling lacks of accountability in public services from **Accountability Scotland** members.

There was a focus on the office of “The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman” (SPSO), who [reported](#) record levels of complaints about Scottish public services last year. Most grievances were directed against local authorities and the NHS, but the SPSO itself may not be fit for purpose.

Accountability Scotland likens the SPSO to a “Scottish Mid-Staffordshire”. Members are concerned that although the Scottish Parliament has decided to expand the role of SPSO, it may be a waste of money, since users are highly critical of its service. [Note the SPSO is modelled on the GPSO which failed to investigate the Mid-Staffordshire NHS Trust].

Speaker Dr Richard Burton observed:

“The SPSO often appears to disregard complainants' evidence, fails to investigate properly, be biased towards public bodies and inadequately explain decisions. Adequacy and effectiveness of SPSO investigations go unmonitored, though Parliament has appropriate powers. A commissioned survey (2010) showed an appalling 40% of complainants dissatisfied with their SPSO treatment. Dissatisfaction continues. The ombudsman recently noted that staff are still ill-trained. Bureaucratic ‘fob-off systems' must be changed.”

Accountability Scotland believes administrative justice in Scotland needs reform. The conference aimed to produce proposals for legislative changes to help make Scotland more democratic.

Attendance at the Conference was free and in a reflection of widespread public concern the event was fully booked.

The education aspects of the conference were reported in the Times Educational Supplement Scotland the link for which is:

<http://www.tes.co.uk/article.aspx?storycode=6358783>