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## **Health Service Ombudsman record number of complaints about health care relate mainly to long term care.**

The Health Service Ombudsman, Ann Abraham, today published her [Annual Report for England 2002-03](#). The record 3,994 complaints was almost entirely due to the number of complaints about NHS funding for the continuing care of elderly and disabled people received in the wake of her report on the subject, which was published in February ([HC 399](#)).

The Ombudsman upheld a further three complaints relating to long term care in the second tranche since those reported in February. In two cases Mrs F who has Alzheimer's Disease required full time assistance with all her activities of daily living including washing, dressing, feeding and toileting, mobility and, was also doubly incontinent and Mr C who had suffered a severe stroke and also needed assistance with all personal tasks involved Shropshire Health authority. The successor Strategic Health Authority agreed to review, in conjunction with the Primary Care Trust and local authority, their eligibility criteria for funding continuing care to ensure that they were in line with the 1999 Coughlan judgment and DoH guidance. The Ombudsman also recommended that they should review their assessment procedures and documentation for clarity and consistency. In another case against Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire Strategic Health Authority Mrs M who also suffered from Alzheimer's Disease was refused NHS funding, The Ombudsman recommended that the Strategic Health Authority should make sure that their criteria were applied consistently and that the same assessment methods were used across the whole of the Authority's area and where appropriate any costs unnecessarily incurred by Mrs M or any other patients wrongly assessed should be reimbursed.

The Ombudsman's Office is currently dealing with a large number of complaints relating to the same subject and although recommending that the Department of Health should provide clearer guidance to authorities this is still awaited. The NHFA believes that the Department of Health should be more specific in defining eligibility criteria which is currently ambiguous and easily misinterpreted.

Since February the NHFA has received thousands of calls from older people, their families and carers with concerns about whether they should be entitled to continuing care funding from the NHS. In response, the NHFA have produced the attached information sheet which is available by calling the Care Advice Line on 0800 99 88 33 or through [www.nhfa.co.uk](http://www.nhfa.co.uk)

### **Notes**

70,000 homes are sold each year to pay for care – source Liberal Democrats

**NHFA advice and information is free and available to all regardless of means** and combines specialist financial advice with the complexities of local authority charging and assessment procedures, health authority responsibilities, DWP benefits and legal matters.

The aim of the NHFA is to enable older people meet the cost of their chosen care for life whilst also preserving their original capital, independence, dignity and right of choice.

Ends

