



TRIBUNALS  
JUDICIARY

**JUDGE MARK HINCHLIFFE**

DEPUTY CHAMBER PRESIDENT  
FIRST TIER TRIBUNAL (HEALTH EDUCATION AND SOCIAL CARE)  
MENTAL HEALTH

First, may I thank you all for making me so welcome in my new role, and for keeping me up to date with your concerns. Having appeared before this tribunal in years gone by as a patient's representative, I well understand how frustrating it is when things go wrong.

And this is what, I believe, most legal representatives would like to tell their clients:

*"You'll be seen by the tribunal doctor for a thorough examination a day or two before the hearing, the case will start promptly, you'll be treated respectfully and courteously by all Panel Members, the case will receive proper judicial consideration, and it will then proceed to a conclusion, and not drag on".*

These are surely modest aims, and we should be able to deliver, consistently.

Looking at the statistics, I'm worried by the number of cases that are adjourned.

Of course, in a tribunal such as ours where we all care passionately about the patients and their families, it is very tempting to want, as it were, to see how things progress or monitor events. But we mustn't take over the role of clinician or social worker; we simply have to look at the true facts as they appear on the day, and answer (with reasons) the statutory questions.

I would like to pay tribute to all those involved in our work, and say how much I appreciate your interest and support. I have learned so much from legal representatives, doctors on the wards, nurses, social workers, Mental Health Act Administrators, the Administrative Justice and Tribunals Council, the Royal College of Psychiatrists and, of course our own judges and members – to name but a few of those I have had the pleasure of meeting over the past three months

Our Chamber President, His Honour Judge Sycamore, and Principal Judge John Wright join me in sending you our very best wishes for a Happy Christmas, and for a busy and prosperous New Year.

Kind regards,

**Mark Hinchliffe**