Ethics and Integrity Commission
Public Sector Ombudsman Review

Call for evidence

The Commission invites responses to the following questions. Submissions need not respond to every question.

1. Is the role of a modern public sector ombudsman primarily to investigate complaints from citizens? Should it also investigate systemic failings and support public bodies with institutional learning? If the ombudsman should have a role in promoting institutional learning, how should it balance this with its responsibility to provide redress for individuals?

2. Should ombudsman schemes be granted "own-initiative" powers to investigate areas of concern without having first to receive a complaint? What type of issue should be considered for launch of an own-initiative investigation?

3. As an alternative to "own-initiative" powers, would there be benefit to the right of initiative being shared between the Government and the Parliamentary and Health Services Ombudsman (PHSO), with the Government directing the ombudsman to investigate a specific systemic issue or failure? How would this work in practice?

4. Are there any barriers to public sector ombudsman schemes investigating potential or known systemic issues within their remit?

5. What formal accountability mechanisms are required for an ombudsman with enhanced powers of investigation?

6. It is often said that the MP filter is a barrier to accessing the PHSO's services. Should complainants have direct access to an ombudsman or are there advantages to retaining the MP filter?

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7. How effective are the PHSO, Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) and Housing Ombudsman Complaint Standards in supporting public services to respond to complaints effectively and learn from their mistakes?

8. Should the PHSO and LGSCO be granted statutory powers to mandate adherence to their Complaints Standards?

9. Should the PHSO and LGSCO findings be binding?

10. Should the ombudsman and other bodies, such as the courts, be able to refer thematic or systemic issues to each other in order to examine wider failings beyond individual complaints?

11. What changes could make it easier for the public to navigate the public sector ombudsman landscape?

How to make a submission

Anyone with an interest may make a submission. The Commission particularly welcomes submissions from public bodies. Submissions should be emailed to contact@eic.independent.gov.uk. Please include "Ombudsman Review" in the subject line.

Submissions should:

● State clearly who the submission is from, i.e. whether from your or sent on behalf of an organisation.
● Include a brief introduction about you/ your organisation and your reason for submitting evidence.
● Be in word or another editable format. Please do not send uneditable formats like PDF.
● Have numbered paragraphs.
● Comprise a single document. If there are any annexes or appendices, these should be included in the same document.
● Be concise – we recommend no more than 2,000 words in length.
● Contain a contact email address.

The Commission may choose not to accept a submission as evidence, or not to publish a submission even if it is accepted as evidence. This may occur where a submission is very long or contains material which is inappropriate. Submissions may be published online with any contact information removed.

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The Commission will publish anonymised submissions (where the name of the respondent and any references to named individuals are removed) where a respondent makes a reasonable request to do so. Submissions sent to the Commission after the deadline of **30 April 2026** may not be considered.

If you have any questions, please email contact@eic.independent.gov.uk.

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