

Honesty

Objectivity

Openness

Selflessness

Integrity

Accountability

Leadership

Ethics and Integrity Commission

Public Sector Ombudsman Review

Terms of Reference - Frequently Asked Questions

Q1. Why have you chosen this area for your review?

There have been a plethora of state failings in recent times where members of the public have been severely impacted. Whilst public inquiries play their role, there is a need to identify at the earliest point where complaints are suggesting a systemic issue. Public Sector Ombudsmen are well placed to do this, but it may require changes in order for these issues to be identified and enable action to be taken. This is what our review will consider.

It follows on from our predecessor's, the Committee on Standards in Public Life, report in 2025, *Recognising and responding to early warning signs in public sector bodies*, which called on the public sector to get better at putting in place systems to identify institutional failings and develop a culture where people are ready and willing to take action.

Q2: What does this review have to do with Ethics or Integrity?

The Ethics and Integrity Commission was established in October 2025. Since then, we have put in place the foundations to deliver our new, wider remit in the standards landscape. This builds on the Committee on Standards in Public Life's reputation for independent, evidence-based work and recommendations. Focussing on the role of the Ombudsman services, and how they can support public sector organisations in delivering high quality services for the public recognises the vital role that a well functioning ombudsman system plays in upholding the highest standards in public life.

Q3: Are you considering whether all ombudsman services should be combined (as they are in Wales and Scotland and N. Ireland)?

As the Terms of Reference sets out, we will consider how the public may navigate the ombudsman landscape. We do not wish to pre judge any recommendations which may fall out of the evidence we will be gathering.

Q4. Are you looking at all Ombudsman services; including those serving the private sector?

We will be focussing on the three public sector ombudsman services (The Housing Sector Ombudsman, the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman and the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman), however we are also very keen to receive evidence from as wide a variety of ombudsman services as possible; including the smaller public sector ombudsman services and those serving the private sector.

Q5. How will this be different from the numerous other inquiries which have taken place (for example Grenfell or the Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry)?

A. While previous inquiries may have brought to light issues which impact the public sector ombudsman landscape, this review will not be investigating a particular instance of failure, albeit these cases may be relevant to our evidence. Where there are lessons to be learned from inquiries that have reported, we will take these on board. We want to understand how the role of the ombudsman service might be strengthened or improved, which in turn will strengthen and improve public services, in order that ultimately there may be fewer public inquiries resulting from system failures.

Q6. Who will you be speaking to for this review?

A. As well as an open consultation, we will be speaking to a range of people with an interest in ombudsman services, including ombudsman services and experts in this area and members of the public.

Q7. How can I contribute to the review?

A. We welcome submissions from anyone with an interest in the subject. Please email contact@eic.independent.gov.uk

Q8. How long will this review take?

A. We expect the review to report in early 2027. The report will be presented to the Prime Minister and published on our website.