Honesty | Objectivity | Openness | Selflessness | Integrity | Accountability | Leadership

The Rt Hon Sir Keir Starmer KCB KC MP

10 Downing Street

London SW1A 2AA

[sent by email] 23 February 2026

Dear Prime Minister,

Further to my letter of 3 February, in which I updated you on the work of the Ethics and Integrity Commission to date, I am now pleased to inform you that the Ethics and Integrity Commission is launching its first Review, which will consider the potential reform of the public sector ombudsman system.

This Review follows the Committee on Standards in Public Life 2025 report, *Recognising and Responding to Early Warning Signs*. That study identified a critical need for the early detection of systemic failures to prevent future tragedies. The EIC is seeking to explore whether the unique vantage point of ombudsman schemes - informed by the volume and nature of public complaints - may offer a significant opportunity to recognise these warning signs.

Our Review will therefore examine how the perspectives of the Ombudsman services can be better utilised, identifying and addressing major public sector issues before they escalate, with the ultimate goal of preventing future tragedies.

The draft Terms of Reference for the Review are attached for your information. We intend to launch our Review on 3 March 2026.

We will place a copy of this letter on the EIC's website.

ETHICS & INTEGRITY Commission

chair@eic.independent.gov.uk
1 Horse Guards Road
London, SW1A 2HQ

I am copying this letter to Rt Hon Darren Jones MP, Chief Secretary to the Prime Minister; Rt Hon Nick Thomas-Symonds, Paymaster General and Minister for the Cabinet Office; and Chris Ward MP, Parliamentary Secretary, Cabinet Office, Ellen Atkinson, Director General (Acting), Propriety and Constitution Group, Cabinet Office.

I also plan to write to the Chair of the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee to inform him and his Committee of the launch.

Yours sincerely,

Doug Chalmers CB DSO OBE
Chair, Ethics and Integrity Commission

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chair@eic.independent.gov.uk
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London, SW1A 2HQ