

Honesty

Objectivity

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Mr Simon Hoare MP

Chair Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee

House of Commons

London SW1A 0AA

By email

24 February 2026

Dear Mr Hoare,

I am pleased to make you aware that I have recently written to the Prime Minister to inform him that the Ethics and Integrity Commission will shortly launch its first Review, which will consider the potential reform of the public sector ombudsman system.

Our Review follows the 2025 report, *Recognising and Responding to Early Warning Signs*. That study, by the Committee on Standards in Public Life, 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. As part of this we would welcome an opportunity to speak to you as part of our evidence phase in the capacity of your committee's role in examining the reports of PHSO.

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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.

I am copying this letter to Ellen Atkinson, Director General (Acting), Propriety and Constitution Group, Cabinet Office.

Yours sincerely,



Doug Chalmers CB DSO OBE
Chair, Ethics and Integrity Commission