

Local Government and Regeneration Committee – Calls for Questions for the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO)

On 11 December 2013, the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (“SPSO”) and members of his senior staff will appear before the Local Government and Regeneration Committee. The session, in previous years has discussed the SPSOs performance over the last period and looked forward to the SPSOs plans for coming years.

The SPSO is the final stage for complaints about councils, the National Health Service, housing associations, colleges and universities, prisons, most water and sewerage providers, the Scottish Government and its agencies and departments and most Scottish authorities. The Ombudsman looks into complaints where a member of the public claims to have suffered injustice or hardship, as a result of maladministration or service failure.

The SPSO website states they are the 'last resort', and look at complaints which have been through the formal complaints procedure of the organisation concerned. The vision of the SPSO is

“Our vision is of enhanced public confidence in high quality, continually improving public services in Scotland which consistently meet the highest standards of public administration. We aim to bring this about by providing a trusted, effective and efficient complaint handling service which remedies injustice for individuals resulting from maladministration or service failure.”

The SPSO is required by law to lay his annual report on the work of his office before the Parliament each year. Our Committee’s role is to scrutinise the SPSO function by consideration of the SPSO’s annual report and related strategic documents.

In its evidence sessions with the Ombudsman, **the Committee cannot ask questions relating to individual complaints that are, or have been, considered by the SPSO.** Questions must relate to general matters (including issues covered in the SPSO annual report, such as the strategic approach and operational function of the SPSO; and the impact it has upon the overall effectiveness of public services complaints processes and public service provision).

You can contribute to the Committee’s evidence session on 11 December by submitting suggestions of matters within the Committees remit that should be raised with the Ombudsman. **If you would like to suggest a question please email it (maximum of 140 words) to the [LGR Committee mailbox](#) by Monday 25 November, providing your name and contact details.** Contact details will not be passed on or made public (although it should be noted that your correspondence could be subject to a freedom of information request). We have requested these details should clarification on your question be needed.

Please note that only questions submitted via the Committee mailbox and within the word limit will be considered, and it will be for Members to determine which questions they separately put to the SPSO for written answer.

If you have any difficulty emailing your question to the email address provided, please contact the Local Government and Regeneration Committee’s assistant, Ben Morton, on 0131 3486040.

The [SPSO Annual Report](#) supports the Parliaments consideration of the performance of the SPSO and the [SPSO Strategic Plan](#) sets out the forward looking plans of the SPSO. You may find it helpful to read these documents in your considerations as they form the focus of the Committee's scrutiny, and thus questions should link to the detail contained in them.