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Mr William Wragg MP  
Chair, Public Administration and  
Constitutional Affairs Committee  
House of Commons  
London  
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Our reference: MC2020/11823

9 September 2020

Dear William,

Thank you for your letter of 2 September regarding the Government's plans to merge the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO) and the Local Government Ombudsman.

At present there is no active work in Government to continue exploring the merger of these two organisations. The current pressures on the Government and the parliamentary timetable mean the bill has not progressed and there are no plans to introduce legislation to merge the two organisations into a single Public Service Ombudsman within the period covered by the current Spending Review (2021/22 to 2023/24).

**With every good wish,**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Gove".

**Rt Hon Michael Gove MP  
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster  
and Minister for the Cabinet Office**



# PACAC (Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee)

House of Commons · London SW1A 0AA

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Rt Hon Michael Gove MP  
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office  
Cabinet Office  
SW1A 2AS

2<sup>nd</sup> September 2020

## **Merger of Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman and Local Government Ombudsman**

The Committee is looking forward to your appearance on Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> September and is grateful to you for making the time for the session. I am writing to you today to ask what the Government's plans are for merging the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman with the Local Government Ombudsman. As you will be aware, a draft Bill to establish a single Public Services Ombudsman was published in 2016 but the Bill was never taken through Parliament.

The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman recently argued to us that:

*"Both PHSO and the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman want to see our two Ombudsman services replaced with a single Public Service Ombudsman, with an integrated jurisdiction across health, social care, local government, UK Government departments and other public services. This would make the complaints process easier for complainants and organisations we investigate, and provide better value-for-money for the taxpayer. While any new Public Service Ombudsman would need to be supported with initial investment, we would expect it to be more efficient in the longer-term."*

I should be grateful if you could confirm whether the Government plans to introduce legislation merging the two organisations into a single Public Services Ombudsman within the period of time covered by the upcoming Spending Review. There are budget implications for the PHSO if the merger does not occur as the Committee understands that its previous settlement was based on realising the savings that would come from a single organisation. If this is not a Government priority in the short-term – which would be understandable given the current full programme that has already been announced – it is important this is clear to the Treasury when it considers the PHSO settlement for the next period.

Given the relevance to the Spending Review and the tight deadlines to which officials are working, I'd be grateful if you could respond to this letter by 10<sup>th</sup> September. I will place this letter and your reply in the public domain.

*Yours ever,*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'William Wragg', written in a cursive style.

**William Wragg MP**  
**Chair, Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee**