



Rt Hon. Darren Jones MP
Chief Secretary to the Prime Minister
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
Cabinet Office 70 Whitehall London
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Simon Hoare MP
Chair
Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee
House of Commons

11 March 2026

Dear Simon,

Last month, you will have seen that I announced to Parliament details on further action that the Government will take to rebuild trust in public life, in light of the revelations of the depth and extent of Peter Mandelson's relationship with Jeffrey Epstein. While the specifics of that case are now a matter for the Police, this scandal has rightfully led many to reflect on our systems, infrastructure, and processes for upholding standards more broadly.

I know standards in public life are of close interest and review for PACAC, and you will of course be aware that we have already taken action in this area. We strengthened the powers of the Independent Adviser, introduced financial sanctions for breaches of the Ministerial Code, reformed severance payments, and tightened rules around gifts and hospitality with more frequent transparency declarations. We set up the new Ethics and Integrity Commission, giving what was the Committee on Standards in Public Life a stronger mandate and renewed purpose. We are also progressing the Duty of Candour Bill to ensure the truth is never inappropriately concealed by the state again.

Similarly, in Parliament, the Hereditary Peers Bill brings much needed reform to the House of Lords, further legislation will enable the removal of peerages from disgraced peers, and the Government has asked the Lords Conduct Committee to review the Code of Conduct. The Government has also committed to the principle that second jobs for MPs should be banned with very limited exceptions, such as maintaining a professional qualification, and is engaging with the Standards Committee to introduce reforms to this effect.

In addition, of relevance to this area is the introduction to Parliament of the Representation of the People Bill, which includes landmark changes to boost transparency and accountability in politics via political finance reforms. The forthcoming recommendations from the Rycroft Review into foreign financial interference will enable us, via any amendments to the Bill, to introduce stronger safeguards against foreign interference in our elections.

However, we can still do more and I believe that we should continue to go further to strengthen standards in public life. As PACAC has made clear, both in its May 2024 report and in subsequent correspondence, one area where we can make improvements is on transparency around lobbying and access to government. The Prime Minister has therefore asked the Ethics and

Integrity Commission to review these important matters, relating to financial disclosures and the Business Appointment Rules, taking into account the views of PACAC and others. The EIC review will cover, as per its terms of reference:

- Whether the current arrangements for the declaration and publication of financial interests for Ministers and senior government officials are sufficient and whether in the future, regular published financial disclosure forms or other additional transparency should be used.
- Whether the current arrangements for transparency around lobbying are sufficient, including the government's publication of monthly and quarterly integrity data and the Register of Consultant Lobbying.
- Whether the current Business Appointment Rules are sufficient, in particular in respect of managing potentially improper access to, and influence within, government.

Following the EIC returning its report to the Cabinet Office, the Government will set out its response to Parliament, and as we do so I will ensure that PACAC is kept updated on any policy developments in this area.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Darren Jones". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'D'.

Rt Hon. Darren Jones MP
Chief Secretary to the Prime Minister