Dear James,

Thank you for your letter of 14 October 2019 regarding the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO).

At present we are unable to offer a timetable on when we will be in the position to progress the legislative amendments due to a number of competing priorities. I would however like to reiterate my assurance that my officials will keep this matter under regular review and will revisit the position early in the new year to assess what is feasible.

To make you aware, we have also been recently been contacted by the Public Petitions Committee in relation to a petition to which calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to improve complaints handling in relation to the SPSO (PETITION PE1740). The Petitions Committee considered this petition on 19 September 2019. During its discussion, the Committee considered legislation with regard to SPSO complaints handling to be outdated as well as recognising the importance of maintaining the openness and accountability of the Ombudsman service.

Whilst we have no plans to progress matters at this time, given that we are all supportive of improving the SPSO’s complaint handling powers, we raised the question with the Public Petitions Committee whether this could be an appropriate subject for a Member’s Bill or Committee Bill.

HUMZA YOUSAF

Ar fadhla/Our ref
4 November 2019

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