

Public Petition Committee
Thursday 10 September 2026
2nd Meeting, 2026 (Session 7)

PE2161: Extend the time period for complaints through the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman for neurodivergent people to two years

Introduction

Petitioner Ivor Roderick Bisset

Petition Summary Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to amend the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman Act 2002 to allow for a two-year complaints period for people with cognitive disabilities.

Website <https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE2161>

1. This is a continued petition that was published on 8 May 2025.
2. A full summary of this petition and its aims, along with previous action taken, can be found at **Annexe A**. Details of action taken by the previous committee are set out on the website highlighted above.
3. Every petition collects signatures while it remains under consideration. At the time of writing, 77 signatures have been received on this petition.
4. The Committee sought the views of the Scottish Government on all petitions carried over from Session 6 to inform its consideration. This response is included at **Annexe B**. The Committee also sought a response from the Petitioner. The Petitioner indicated that he intends to respond, and requested additional time to do so. It is understood that a response is currently being finalised by the Petitioner, and it is expected that it will be published and circulated prior to the meeting.
5. The Scottish Government's response states that "the Scottish Ministers are giving consideration to what legislation should be taken forward during this Parliamentary session". The Scottish Government adds that the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) had piloted a revised and updated version of the time bar guidance tool, which has now been fully implemented. Moreover, the Government response states that the SPSO can now gather data on when discretion is exercised by a decision maker in respect of the time-bar.
6. It is understood that the Petitioner has concerns that the new approach taken by the SPSO to data gathering has yet to be tested against evidence.
7. The predecessor committee, in its [Legacy Report](#), stated that the new committee may wish to receive further evidence from the SPSO to inform its consideration of the petition.

Action

8. The Committee is invited to consider what action it wishes to take.

Clerks to the Committee
September 2026

Annexe A: Summary of petition

PE2161: Extend the time period for complaints through the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman for neurodivergent people to two years

Petitioner

Ivor Roderick Bisset

Date Published

8 May 2025

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to amend the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman Act 2002 to allow for a two-year complaints period for people with cognitive disabilities.

Previous action

I have raised this issue with my local MSP, Edward Mountain, and outlined my deep concern and frustration. He supports my resolve to raise a petition and bring forward an opportunity to discuss this matter in Parliament.

Background information

I applied for a time extension from the SPSO believing I would get a reasonable adjustment under the Equality Act on account of my neurodivergence and was rejected. I am aware of similar issues and anxieties from my local autism community and local services, where I have established that this practice is quite common.

Many neurodivergent people struggle with executive functioning, including adhering to strict deadlines. The time restriction creates an unfair barrier to justice, preventing valid complaints from being heard. We are being excluded from the SPSO by design. Allowing additional time for us would promote accessibility, fairness, and equal treatment under the law.

The SPSO has no record of what types of disabilities are granted 'exceptional circumstances'. I feel their policy is unreliable. I don't think the service is transparent or understands the massive impact being 'timed bar' has on the neurodivergent community. My intention is to have a Scottish wide protection of inclusion to stop this practice.

Annexe B: Written Submissions

Scottish Government written submission, 6 August 2026

PE2161/G: Extend the time period for complaints through the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman for neurodivergent people to two years

Thank you for your email of 29 June 2026, in which the Public Petitions Committee asked the Scottish Government for an update on Petition PE2161

Learning Disabilities, Autism and Neurodivergence Bill

The previous Scottish Government response to the Committee discussed the consultation on the Learning Disabilities, Autism and Neurodivergence Bill. The Scottish Government took forward extensive preparatory work with partners and stakeholder in the previous parliamentary session to explore potential legislative options for neurodivergence policy. This resulted in the [publication of draft provisions for a potential Learning Disabilities, Autism and Neurodivergence \(LDAN\) Bill](#) in March 2026 setting out the Government's thinking at that time.

Following the recent election, the Scottish Ministers are giving consideration to what legislation should be taken forward during this Parliamentary session. Legislative priorities will be announced to the Scottish Parliament in the usual way, through the Programme **for Government**.

SPSO and previous Committee consideration

When the Public Petitions Committee last considered this petition on 25 February 2026, it was noted by the Committee that the SPSO was piloting a revised and updated version of the time bar guidance tool. The SPSO have confirmed to the Scottish Government that this updated guidance tool has now been fully implemented. In addition, the SPSO have confirmed to the Scottish Government that they have a solution in place to gather data on the number of cases where discretion was exercised by decision makers in respect of the time-bar. The SPSO state that they should have figures in respect of this for 2026-2027 at the end of the reporting year.

The Scottish Government remains of the view that the current legislation in respect of the time limits for making a complaint offers the SPSO, which is operationally independent of Scottish Ministers, a wide degree of flexibility and discretion as to whether or not to waive the time limit for making a complaint.