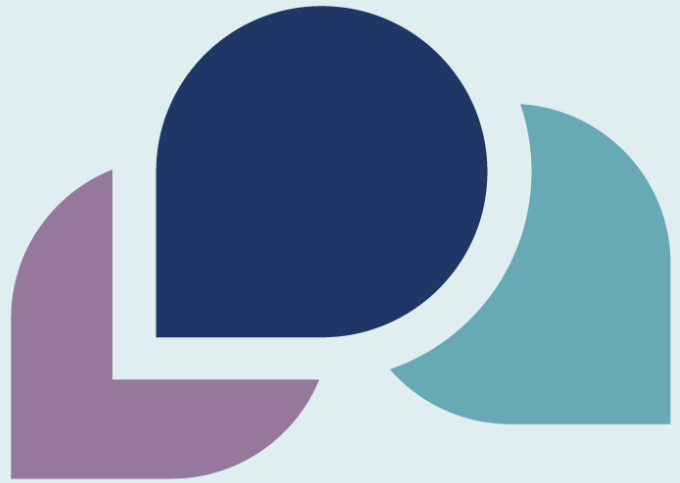


**SCOTTISH
PUBLIC
SERVICES
OMBUDSMAN**



Executive Director (Chief Operating Officer)

Candidate Information Pack

Welcome

Thank you for your interest in joining the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) as our Executive Director (Chief Operating Officer).

SPSO plays a unique role in Scotland's public service landscape, providing independent scrutiny and redress while helping public bodies learn and improve the services they deliver.

This is an exciting opportunity to join SPSO at a significant point in our development. Public expectations of services continue to evolve, demand for our services is increasing, and the opportunities presented by digital technology, data and innovation are growing rapidly. At the same time, public bodies face increasing complexity, financial pressures and the need to demonstrate accountability, transparency and continuous improvement. SPSO has an important role to play in supporting these ambitions while continuing to deliver high-quality, independent and accessible services for the people of Scotland.

As Executive Director (Chief Operating Officer), you will be my strategic partner in leading the organisation through this changing environment. You will provide leadership across service delivery, organisational performance, transformation, governance and corporate services, ensuring that SPSO remains resilient, efficient and well-positioned for the future. You will help shape and implement our vision, drive innovation and continuous improvement, and create the conditions that enable our people to deliver their best work.

We are looking for an inspiring and collaborative leader who combines strategic thinking with operational excellence, embraces innovation and change, and is committed to improvement and the values that underpin our work. This role offers the opportunity to make a lasting contribution to SPSO, to Scotland's public services and, ultimately, the people and communities we serve.

This is a rare opportunity to help shape the future of an organisation with a clear public purpose, a people-centred approach and a strong reputation for independence, fairness, learning and improvement. If this opportunity inspires you, I look forward to receiving your application.



Paul McFadden

Scottish Public Services Ombudsman

About the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman

The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman has a wide remit, covering a variety of functions and services. The Ombudsman's powers and duties come (predominantly) from the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman Act 2002, which gives him four distinct statutory functions:

1. the final stage for complaints about most devolved public services in Scotland including councils, the health service, housing associations, prisons, water and sewerage providers, Scottish Government and associated public bodies, universities and colleges
2. specific powers and responsibilities to publish complaints handling procedures, and monitor and support best practice in complaints handling. [Please visit our web pages 'For organisation' for further information.](#)
3. independent review service for the Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) with the power to overturn and substitute decisions made by councils on Community Care and Crisis Grant applications. [Please visit our SWF website for further information.](#)
4. Independent National Whistleblowing Officer for the NHS in Scotland (INWO) – final stage for complaints about how the NHS considers whistleblowing disclosures and the treatment of individuals concerned. [Please visit our INWO website for further information.](#)

Our vision

The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman puts people and learning at the heart of what we do. We achieve the best outcomes for people and drive efficiency in public services through the impact of shared learning from complaints oversight.

Our values

We are committed to living our values to deliver our functions efficiently, effectively and economically. While our remit is wide, and expanding, we aspire to deliver our business coherently and consistently across all functions. We strive to continue to give great service to all who come to us; whether to make a complaint about a public body, seek our advice and support, ask for a review of a Scottish Welfare Fund decision or complain about how the NHS has handled a whistleblowing concern.



Our strategic themes

We will live our values through four strategic themes that drive our activity and annual business plans. You can click below to see our objectives within each Strategic Theme.

Access to justice through everyday rights

1. We will develop and adopt rights-based approaches to complaints handling; updating and monitoring Model Complaints Handling Procedures and Model National Whistleblowing Standards to ensure rights are reflected in accessibility to public bodies complaints handling.
2. We will make our own services as accessible, and rights based as they can be, promoting awareness of the right to complain.
3. We will continue to develop stakeholder relationships to contribute to development of fair, accessible Scottish public services, and wider access to justice environment.
4. We will continue to develop relationships with our stakeholders to both learn from and to contribute to fair, accessible Scottish public services.

Agile capacity

5. We will build and maintain our capacity, financial, human and infrastructure, to implement and deliver our statutory functions, taking an agile and flexible approach.
6. We will be acknowledged for having well-trained, properly supported people, who have the tools they need to deliver our services.
7. We will review and develop the support, guidance and training we offer to public bodies, complainants, and whistleblowers to enable them to develop their own capacity, to handle service complaints, whistleblowing concerns and applications to the Scottish Welfare Fund.

Standards and impact

8. We will monitor Scottish public bodies' complaint handling, Scottish Welfare Fund applications and whistleblowing handling, holding them to account for poor performance and giving credit for good performance.
9. We will review the Model Complaints Handling Procedures and National Whistleblowing Standards, to ensure they remain fit for purpose.
10. We will contribute to the development and/ or review of other standards and guidance to ensure they deliver services to the standards required.
11. We will develop our capacity to gather and share information and data to enable us to make efficient and impactful interventions when complaint, and Scottish Welfare Fund services handling falls below accepted standards.

12. We will promote good practice to drive efficiency in public sector complaints and Scottish Welfare Fund applications handling, to ensure learning is captured and applied to service delivery improvements.

Efficiency

13. We will manage the organisation to deliver our statutory functions within budget in line with legislative requirements, our published customer service standards, and our performance targets.
14. We will keep our approach under review to drive efficiency and ensure business continuity, taking an agile and open-minded approach to business and process development.

You can read more about SPSO at:

[Home | SPSO](#)

[Information centre | SPSO](#)

[Performance and reporting | SPSO](#)

[Our findings | SPSO](#)

Role and Person Profile

You should refer to the **Job Description** and **Person Specification** that accompany this pack for detailed information on the role, responsibilities and the skills, knowledge and experience required to succeed in this role.

We are seeking an exceptional Executive Director (Chief Operating Officer) to join SPSO at a pivotal stage in its development.

Reporting directly to the Ombudsman and serving as a key member of the organisation's Leadership Team, you will provide strategic leadership across service delivery, organisational performance, governance, corporate services and transformation.

Working closely with key stakeholders, internally and externally, including the Scottish Parliament Corporate Body and SPSO's Audit and Advisory Board, you will help shape and deliver SPSO's strategic direction, leading digital innovation, continuous improvement and organisational change. You will ensure that resources, services and capabilities are aligned to deliver high-quality outcomes for service users and stakeholders, while positioning the organisation to respond effectively to future opportunities and challenges within an evolving public service landscape.

The Executive Director (Chief Operating Officer) will have responsibility for:

- Leading service delivery, performance and continuous improvement
- Transformation, innovation and digital modernisation
- Strategy, business planning and financial sustainability
- Governance, risk management and assurance
- Corporate and shared services leadership
- Organisational resilience and business continuity
- People leadership, culture and workforce development
- Stakeholder engagement and partnership working.

We are looking for an experienced senior leader with a strong track record of delivering strategic and operational success within a public sector, regulatory, complaints, customer-focused or similarly complex environment. You will bring substantial experience of organisational transformation, performance improvement, governance and risk management, together with the ability to lead multidisciplinary teams and build high-performing, inclusive cultures.

You will have excellent strategic thinking and decision-making skills, experience of working with senior stakeholders, and the ability to translate ambitious organisational objectives into successful delivery. You will understand the importance of good governance, financial stewardship and delivering excellent outcomes for customers and stakeholders.

Knowledge of ombudsman services, administrative justice, digital transformation or parliamentary and scrutiny environments would be advantageous.

If you are a strategic, values-driven leader who can combine innovation with operational excellence and inspire others through change, we would welcome your application.

Terms and Conditions

Appointment term	Permanent
Salary	Grade 7: £89,122 – £112,945 Offers are normally made at the starting point of the scale, dependant on skills and experience.
Location	Edinburgh with hybrid working available, subject to business need.
Working hours	35 hours per week with standard and business hours between 09:00 and 17:00 Monday to Friday. Flexi-time available, subject to business need.
Benefits	• Annual leave entitlement of up to 40.5 days per annum (including 8 public holiday) • Flexible working arrangements including flexi-time and hybrid working • Civil Service Pension Scheme • Life Assurance • Employee Assistance Programme A full list of SPSO benefits are available on our website SPSO Rewards and Benefits
Pre-employment checks	Successful candidates will be required to undergo and pass pre-employment checks, including: • Satisfactory employment references covering current and previous employment • Satisfactory completion of Scottish Government Baseline Personnel Security Standard • Satisfactory completion of Disclosure Scotland criminal records checks (must be completed prior to your start date)



INVESTORS IN PEOPLE®
We invest in people Gold

How to apply

If you are interested in joining an organisation that enjoys challenge and strives for continuous improvement, please visit www.spsso.org.uk/working-us for further information. You can also contact us on 0131 243 0982 or by emailing recruitment@spso.gov.scot.

To make an application, please submit a completed application form before **10:00 on 26 October 2026**.

We are keen to accommodate any reasonable adjustments to support candidates in making their application and participating in the process. Please advise us if you have any specific requirements.

The SPSO is a Disability Confident employer. If you have a disability and meet the essential criteria for this role as outlined in the person specification, you are guaranteed an interview. Declaring a disability is an individual choice. If you choose to disclose a disability, it will be used only to meet the requirements of the Disability Confident scheme and for making reasonable adjustments to the recruitment process.

Further guidance on the recruitment process and our recruitment policy is available at www.spsso.org.uk/working-us.

Recruitment Timetable

Please note that the dates below are provisional and may be subject to change.

Closing Date for applications	10:00, 26 October 2026
Application shortlisting	26 – 30 October 2026
Applicant updates	2 November 2026
Interview and assessment	9 November 2026

Following initial interview and assessment a second stage interview may be held to assist in the final decision.