



**Ombwdsmon
Ombudsman**
Cymru · Wales

A year of change - a year of challenge

Annual Report and Accounts 2022/23

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

July 2023



We can provide a summary of this document in accessible formats, including Braille, large print and Easy Read. To request, please contact us:

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Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn y Gymraeg.

This document is also available in Welsh.



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A year of change - a year of challenge **Annual Report and Accounts 2022/23**

of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales
for the year ended 31 March 2023

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our role

We have three main roles.



We investigate complaints about public services.



We consider complaints about councillors breaching the Code of Conduct.



We drive systemic improvement of public services and standards of conduct in local government in Wales.

Our ambition



People of Wales feel that public services treat them fairly and respond when things go wrong.



Welsh public services listen to individuals and use their complaints to learn and improve.



Welsh local government is trusted to deliver the highest standards of conduct.



The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales continues to be an influential and respected voice in public service improvement.

Our principles

We are independent, impartial, fair and open to all who need us.

A word from the Ombudsman

This annual report reflects my first year in office. It has been a year of many successes and positive change, but also some challenges.

We have had fewer new complaints about breaches of the Code of Conduct by Welsh councillors. We also closed a record number of complaints about public services, delivering justice to many more people. During the year, we have continued to help public services improve. We delivered over 180 free training sessions to public bodies on good complaint handling. We also consulted on our next 'own initiative investigation' – which will look at carers needs assessments. Internally, we launched our new Service Quality process and celebrated removing our median gender pay gap.

Despite these and other positives, it has also been a very challenging year. We are seeing more and more complaints about public services. Health continues to be the subject of over 80% of our investigations overall and these investigations are often lengthy and complex. This workload meant that some people have had to wait longer for an outcome, and impacted the well-being of our staff.

We trust that our new Strategic Plan will help us work more efficiently


and have more impact, while also allowing us to remain a supportive and healthy workplace. Nevertheless, our increasing caseload pressures are a growing concern and we will be realistic about the resources and capacity available to us to deliver change as we embark on this new chapter in our service to the people of Wales.

Michelle Morris




Strategic Aim 1: Deliver justice




We received **2%** more new complaints about public services and Code of Conduct.



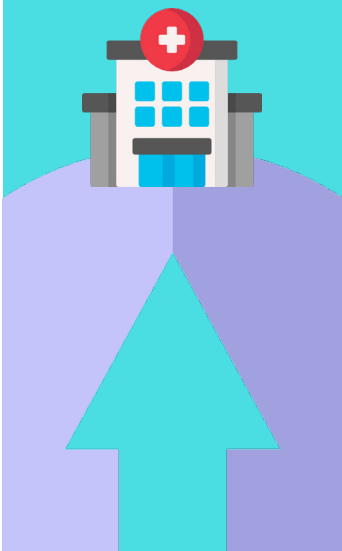
We closed **10%** more complaints about public services and Code of Conduct.



We had **2%** more new public service complaints:

-  37% were about healthcare
-  18% were about housing
-  18% were about complaint handling

We saw a **21%** increase in complaints about Health Boards.



We intervened (found that an organisation got things wrong and should put things right) in **19%** of complaints about public services...


... and 3 out of 4 times, we intervened early, without having to conduct a full investigation.



Organisations complied with **90%** of our recommendations due during the year.



We issued **1** Special Report about an organisation not complying with our recommendations.

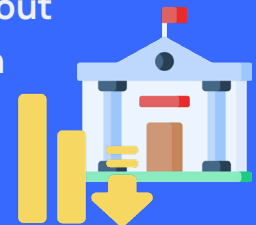


We received **4% fewer** new complaints about the Code of Conduct.



61% of these new complaints were about promotion of equality and respect.

We received fewer new complaints about councillors at Town and Community Councils.



12

We made 12 referrals of Code of Conduct complaints made to the Adjudication Panel for Wales or local Standards Committees.

The Adjudication Panel for Wales and Standards Committees upheld and found breaches in **96%** of our referrals they considered in 2022/23.



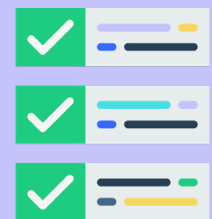
We upheld only **7%** of requests for review of our decisions, which gives us confidence that our process is sound.



We launched our new Service Quality process, through which we will look at how well we meet our service standards.



48% of people - and **95%** of those satisfied with the outcome of their complaint - were happy with our service.



Strategic Aim 2: Promote improvement

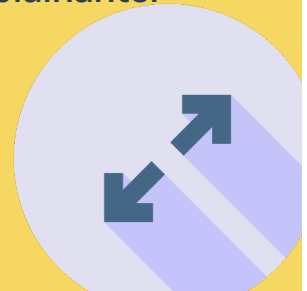
We delivered 183 training sessions on good complaint handling.



“ Since the training I am trying to change my behaviour so that I listen to incoming calls with an open mind and not type up the log notes before they have finished speaking.

” My many thanks for the training sessions. They really did make me think very deeply about how we respond to clients.

We completed 2 extended investigations, when we are already investigating a problem and we extend the investigation to other issues or complainants.



We published 5 Public Interest Reports, about serious cases related to healthcare.



We completed public consultation on our next 'Own Initiative' investigation - which will look at carers' needs assessments.

For the fourth time, we published a casebook in which we highlight complaints where human rights or equality issues have either been raised as part of the complaint or have been central to our findings.



Strategic Aim 3: Use resources wisely

We had no median gender pay gap.



It cost us 16% less to consider each complaint this year.



We avoided 134kg of CO2 in emissions.



Cymraeg

A higher proportion of our staff told us that they had good or fluent Welsh language skills.

We developed our new Strategic Plan, which sets out 4 aims:

1. Delivering justice with a positive impact for people and public services
2. Increasing accessibility and inclusion
3. Increasing the impact of our proactive improvement work
4. Ensuring that we are a healthy, efficient and accountable organisation.





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