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Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Annual report

What happened between 2023 and 2024



This document was written by the **Public Services Ombudsman for Wales**. It is an easy read version of ‘**A New Chapter Unfolds Annual Report and Accounts 2023/24 Executive Summary**’.

August 2024

How to use this document



This is an easy read document. But you may still need support to read it. Ask someone you know to help you.



Words in **bold blue writing** may be hard to understand. You can check what the words in blue mean on **page 20**.



Where the document says **we**, this means the **Public Services Ombudsman for Wales**. For more information contact:

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Introduction



We are the office of the **Public Services Ombudsman for Wales**.

We deal with complaints about:



- **Public services**

Public services are services paid for by Government. For example: local councils, the NHS, social landlords.



- Local councillors breaking the **code of conduct**. Local councillors are people chosen to run a council.

Code of conduct means the rules and standards someone must follow in their job.



We make sure **public services** learn from complaints and make improvements.



We make sure **local government** works to the highest possible standards. **Local government** is your local council.

Our main aims are to make sure:



- The people of Wales feel that **public services** treat them fairly. And do something when things go wrong.



- Welsh **public services** listen to people. And use their complaints to learn and improve.



- People trust their local government to work in the best ways, and to the highest standards.



- We continue to be a respected voice that **public services** listen to, to make improvements.

We are:



- **Independent** – we are not controlled by government.



- **Impartial** – we do not take sides.



- **Fair.**



- Here for everyone who needs us.

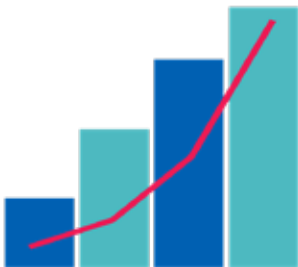
Our work in 2023 to 2024



Michelle Morris is the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.



This is our first annual report since we launched our [Strategic Plan 2023-26 'A New Chapter'](#). This is our plan for our work up until 2026.



More people contacted us with complaints this year than ever before.



We dealt with over 10 thousand cases.



We lowered the cost of each investigation. We have been more efficient than ever before.



We dealt with most of our older cases. These are usually difficult cases. And cause a lot of stress for people.



We are on track to meet our target of dealing with all old cases by the end of March 2025.



Our staff worked hard to do this.



We worked hard to talk to groups of people that do not usually complain to us. And use our service.



We are now going to focus on working more with:

- Young people
- People from poorer areas and households
- People from different parts of the world



People and services believe we help improve **public services** in Wales.



But 1 member of our staff did damage the trust people have in us this year.



We are working hard to regain people's trust.

Key information about our work in 2023 to 2024

Strategic aim 1: deliver justice



We received 1,444 **more** cases than last year. We have continued to get more and more cases since 2019.



We closed more cases than ever before.



Most complaints were about healthcare. 36 out of every 100 complaints were about healthcare.



Around 18 out of 100 complaints were about housing. This is the same as last year.



17 out of every 100 complaints were about how organisations had dealt with complaints.



We found that organisations had got things wrong and should put things right in 1 out of every 5 of the complaints we received.



3 out of 4 times we found that something has gone wrong and helped to put things right early. Which means we were able to help people without the need for a full investigation.



Organisations followed most of our **recommendations** for improving.

Recommendation means saying what actions need to be taken to solve a problem.



We wrote 1 special report about an organisation that was not willing to follow our **recommendations**.



We received more complaints about councillors not following the **code of conduct**. Half of these complaints were about equality and respect.



Over half the new complaints we had were about Town and Community councils.

We referred 21 investigations about **code of conduct** complaints to:



- the **Adjudication Panel for Wales** – a specialist tribunal that deals with councillors and national authorities that break the **code of conduct**.



- or **local Standards Committees** – this is a formal group set up locally by councils to deal with their councillors who break the **code of conduct**.



The Adjudication Panel for Wales and local Standards Committees agreed with most of the cases we referred to them.



Nearly half of the people whose complaints we dealt with were happy with our service.



Many more people were happy with our service if they got the outcome they wanted.



We have a new way of checking the quality of our service. Most cases passed our quality checks.

Strategic aim 2: make our service easier for everyone to use



Most people feel they can come to us if they need to.



Most people said we were easy to contact.



We took 103 complaints over the phone.



79 people asked us for support to make their complaint.



Almost 1 in 4 people heard about our service from someone else. More young people learn about us from someone they know.



We launched a new website. It is easier for people to use. It has new **accessibility features**. These are things that help people get around the website, find things and read content.



We published our new [Strategic Equality Plan 2023 to 2026](#). This is our plan for making sure we treat everyone fairly.



61 people asked us to talk to them in Welsh. This is double the amount from last year.

Strategic aim 3: promote improvement



We delivered 94 training sessions to 56 **public services** about how to deal with complaints well. We have provided 500 training sessions since 2020.



We did 3 **extended investigations**. This is an investigation into a problem, where we start to also look at other problems or complaints together.



We wrote and shared 8 **Public Interest Reports**. These are reports about serious complaints which are important to everyone.



We asked people for their thoughts about our **own initiative investigation** which looks at carers.

Own initiative investigations means we can look into some issues even if we have not had a complaint about them.



We wrote and shared our fifth **casebook**. In this document we talked about complaints that involve human rights or equality issues.

Strategic aim 4: run our organisation well



We have no average **Gender Pay Gap**.

Gender Pay Gap is when men and women earn different amounts of money overall at an organisation. For example, maybe there are less women in manager jobs than men.



It cost us less to deal with each case we received.



We avoided **carbon dioxide emissions** – this is a harmful substance that badly impacts our environment.



We reduced the amount of waste we make. We recycled more and sent nothing to landfill.



Fewer staff told us that they have good Welsh language skills.



Staff took fewer sick days.

Hard words

Code of conduct

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Gender Pay Gap

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Own initiative investigations

Own initiative investigations means we can look into some issues even if we have not had a complaint about them.

Public services

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Recommendation

Recommendation means saying what actions need to be taken to solve a problem.