



Ask for: Communications

 01656 641150

Date: September 2021

 communications@ombudsman.wales

Cllr. Huw Thomas
Cardiff Council

By Email only: huw.thomas@cardiff.gov.uk

Annual Letter 2020/21

Dear Cllr Thomas

I am pleased to provide you with the Annual letter (2020/21) for Cardiff Council.

This letter discusses information from a year unlike any other in recent memory, and as such may not be useful for establishing trends or patterns. Information received during this remarkable year will, however, bring insights on how public services reacted in the face of unprecedented demand and the most difficult of circumstances.

During the past financial year, we have intervened in (upheld, settled or resolved at an early stage) the same proportion of complaints about public bodies, 20%, compared with 2019/20.

Regarding new complaints received relating to Local Authorities, the overall number decreased by 12.5% compared with last year. This reflects the reduction in complaints being reported by Local Authorities during the Covid-19 pandemic. My office intervened in a similar proportion of the cases closed as in the previous year (13%).

However, we referred a higher proportion of Code of Conduct complaints to a Standards Committee or the Adjudication Panel for Wales: 3.4% compared to 2% in the previous year. This higher referral rate was also accompanied by a sharp increase in the number of Code of Conduct complaints received.

During 2020/21, despite challenges caused by the pandemic, my office made great strides in progressing work related to Complaints Standards and Own Initiative Investigations. The theme and consultation period of the first wider Own Initiative Investigation – into Local Authority Homelessness Assessments - was

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launched in September 2020 and the report is due in the coming months. We also commenced 4 extended Own Initiative Investigations, where we extended the scope of our work on a complaint already under investigation.

Last year, my office also pushed ahead with two new publications – ‘Our Findings’ and our first Equality Report.

‘Our Findings’ will be accessed via the PSOW website and replaces the quarterly casebooks. Our Findings will be updated more frequently and will be a more useful tool in sharing the outcomes of investigations. Our first Equality Report highlights the work done to improve equality and diversity, and to ensure that our service is available to people from all parts of society.

Local Authorities in Wales continued to submit data about the complaints they handled to the Complaints Standards Authority (CSA) during 2020/21, as well as receiving a model complaints procedure and accessing 76 virtual training sessions.

The data submitted for 2020/2021 shows:

- Nearly 12,000 complaints were recorded by Local Authorities
- This equates to 3.77 for every 1000 residents.
- Nearly half (44%) of those complaints were upheld.
- About 75% were investigated within 20 working days.
- About 9% of all complaints closed were referred to PSOW.

The CSA will publish data to the PSOW website for the first time in the coming year, marking a key achievement in the progress of this work. Training sessions have been delivered to almost all Local Authorities in Wales, and our offer of training remains open ended and will be delivered free of charge.

A summary of the complaints of maladministration/service failure received relating to your Council is attached.

Also attached is a summary of the Code of Conduct complaints relating to members of the Council and to the Town & Community Councils in your area.

I ask that the Council takes the following actions:

- Present my Annual Letter to the Cabinet to assist members in their scrutiny of the Council’s complaints performance and any actions to be taken as a result.
- Engage with my Complaints Standards work, accessing training for your staff and providing complaints data.
- Inform me of the outcome of the Council’s considerations and proposed actions on the above matters by 15 November.

This correspondence is copied to the Chief Executive of your Council and to your Contact Officer. Finally, a copy of all Annual Letters will be published on my website.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Bennett', written in a cursive style.

Nick Bennett
Ombudsman

cc.Paul Orders, Chief Executive, Cardiff Council
By Email only: Rhian.Jones3@cardiff.gov.uk

Factsheet

Appendix A - Complaints Received

| Local Authority | Complaints Received | Received per 1000 residents |
|--|---------------------|-----------------------------|
| Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council | 15 | 0.21 |
| Bridgend County Borough Council | 31 | 0.21 |
| Caerphilly County Borough Council | 46 | 0.25 |
| Cardiff Council* | 96 | 0.26 |
| Carmarthenshire County Council | 27 | 0.14 |
| Ceredigion County Council | 32 | 0.44 |
| Conwy County Borough Council | 32 | 0.27 |
| Denbighshire County Council | 32 | 0.33 |
| Flintshire County Council | 59 | 0.38 |
| Gwynedd Council | 30 | 0.24 |
| Isle of Anglesey County Council | 18 | 0.26 |
| Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council | 15 | 0.25 |
| Monmouthshire County Council | 20 | 0.21 |
| Neath Port Talbot Council | 19 | 0.13 |
| Newport City Council | 31 | 0.20 |
| Pembrokeshire County Council | 28 | 0.22 |
| Powys County Council | 38 | 0.29 |
| Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council | 40 | 0.17 |
| Swansea Council | 73 | 0.30 |
| Torfaen County Borough Council | 12 | 0.13 |
| Vale of Glamorgan Council | 39 | 0.29 |
| Wrexham County Borough Council | 43 | 0.32 |
| Total | 776 | 0.25 |

* inc 2 Rent Smart Wales

Appendix B - Received by Subject

| Cardiff Council | Complaints Received | % Share |
|--|----------------------------|----------------|
| Adult Social Services | 3 | 3% |
| Benefits Administration | 0 | 0% |
| Children's Social Services | 11 | 11% |
| Community Facilities, Recreation and Leisure | 1 | 1% |
| Complaints Handling | 27 | 28% |
| Covid19 | 2 | 2% |
| Education | 0 | 0% |
| Environment and Environmental Health | 9 | 9% |
| Finance and Taxation | 2 | 2% |
| Housing | 16 | 17% |
| Licensing | 1 | 1% |
| Planning and Building Control | 8 | 8% |
| Rent Smart Wales | 2 | 2% |
| Roads and Transport | 10 | 10% |
| Various Other | 4 | 4% |
| Total | 96 | |

Appendix C - Complaint Outcomes
(* denotes intervention)

| County/County Borough Councils | Out of Jurisdiction | Premature | Other cases closed after initial consideration | Early Resolution/voluntary settlement* | Discontinued | Other Reports-Not Upheld | Other Reports Upheld* | Public Interest Report* | Total |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|-----------|--|--|--------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|-------|
| Cardiff Council | 16 | 25 | 33 | 23 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 100 |
| % Share | 16% | 25% | 33% | 23% | 0% | 0% | 2% | 1% | |

Appendix D - Cases with PSOW Intervention

| | No. of interventions | No. of closures | % of interventions |
|--|----------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council | 1 | 17 | 6% |
| Bridgend County Borough Council | 2 | 30 | 7% |
| Caerphilly County Borough Council | 3 | 45 | 7% |
| Cardiff Council | 26 | 100 | 26% |
| Cardiff Council - Rent Smart Wales | 0 | 2 | 0% |
| Carmarthenshire County Council | 6 | 29 | 21% |
| Ceredigion County Council | 4 | 31 | 13% |
| Conwy County Borough Council | 5 | 31 | 16% |
| Denbighshire County Council | 2 | 31 | 6% |
| Flintshire County Council | 11 | 62 | 18% |
| Gwynedd Council | 5 | 27 | 19% |
| Isle of Anglesey County Council | 1 | 17 | 6% |
| Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council | 0 | 14 | 0% |
| Monmouthshire County Council | 1 | 19 | 5% |
| Neath Port Talbot Council | 1 | 17 | 6% |
| Newport City Council | 5 | 29 | 17% |
| Pembrokeshire County Council | 3 | 26 | 12% |
| Powys County Council | 4 | 47 | 9% |
| Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council | 2 | 43 | 5% |
| Swansea Council | 9 | 67 | 13% |
| Torfaen County Borough Council | 0 | 11 | 0% |
| Vale of Glamorgan Council | 5 | 38 | 13% |
| Wrexham County Borough Council | 6 | 48 | 13% |
| Total | 102 | 781 | 13% |

Appendix E - Code of Conduct Complaints

| County/County Borough Councils | Discontinued | No evidence of breach | No action necessary | Refer to Adjudication Panel | Refer to Standards Committee | Withdrawn | Total |
|--------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|-----------|-------|
| Cardiff Council | 1 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 11 |

Appendix F - Town/Community Council Code of Complaints

| Town/Community Council | Discontinued | No evidence of breach | No action necessary | Refer to Adjudication Panel | Refer to Standards Committee | Withdrawn | Total |
|------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|-----------|-------|
| - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |

Information Sheet

Appendix A shows the number of complaints received by PSOW for all Local Authorities in 2020/2021. These complaints are contextualised by the number of people each health board reportedly serves.

Appendix B shows the categorisation of each complaint received, and what proportion of received complaints represents for the Local Authority.

Appendix C shows outcomes of the complaints which PSOW closed for the Local Authority in 2020/2021. This table shows both the volume, and the proportion that each outcome represents for the Local Authority.

Appendix D shows Intervention Rates for all Local Authorities in 2020/2021. An intervention is categorised by either an upheld complaint (either public interest or non-public interest), an early resolution, or a voluntary settlement.

Appendix E shows the outcomes of Code Of Conduct complaints closed by PSOW related to Local Authority in 2020/2021. This table shows both the volume, and the proportion that each outcome represents for the Local Authority.

Appendix F shows the outcomes of Code of Conduct complaints closed by PSOW related to Town and Community Councils in the Local Authority's area. This table shows both the volume, and the proportion that each outcome represents for each Town or Community Council.