



Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

Making a complaint about local councillors

This document was written by the **Public Services Ombudsman for Wales**. It is an easy read version of ‘Code of conduct – General Information.’

February 2024

How to use this document



This is an easy read document. 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 15**.



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

Website: www.ombudsman.wales

E-mail: ask@ombudsman.wales

Phone: 0300 790 0203



Easy Read Wales made this document into Easy Read using **Photosymbols**. [To tell us what you think about this easy read version, click here.](#)

Photosymbols Licence number 403527247

Contents

About the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales	4
About this factsheet.....	5
Who can complain.....	8
What we can do	10
What we cannot do.....	11
Things to remember when making a complaint	13
Hard words	15

About the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales



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.



Our aim is to improve **public services**.

About this factsheet



This factsheet is about making a complaint about a local councillor.

You can complain about councillors from:



- Local authorities
- Town and community councils
- Fire and rescue authorities
- National Park authorities
- Police and crime panels in Wales



All councillors in these organisations must follow their **code of conduct**.



The **code of conduct** says how councillors must behave:

- whilst working as a councillor
- and sometimes in their personal life too.



If you think a councillor has broken the **code of conduct**, you can complain.

For example, councillors may break the code of conduct by:



- Behaving in a way that makes the organisation look bad.



- Using their position unfairly. For example to get something for themselves.
- Not using the organisation's resources the right way.

- Not being open and honest about work that would benefit them personally.

- Bullying.

- Not treating everyone equally.



- Sharing private information without good reason.



Many complaints we get are about councillors:

- being rude
- and saying things that upset someone.



You can usually get a copy of the organisation's **Code of Conduct:**

- on its website
- or by contacting the Monitoring Officer or Clerk for the organisation.

Who can complain



Anyone can make a complaint. As long as you have seen the behaviour you are complaining about yourself.

Councillors complaining about other councillors

If you are a councillor:



You must follow your organisation's complaints process.



You should make your complaint to your Monitoring Officer first. If you have one.



You should try to solve your complaint locally first without needing to involve us.



You must not make complaints just to cause problems.



For more information, you can talk to your organisation's Clerk Monitoring Officer.

What we can do



We will decide whether we will look into your complaint or not.

We can usually look at your complaint if:



- there is proof that the **Code of Conduct** was broken



- and an **investigation** or further action would be best for the public.

Investigation means looking into the facts to find out what happened. We will usually do it if we think there may be a serious problem.



There is more information about how we deal with complaints in this factsheet: [What we do with your complaint about local councillors](#)

What we cannot do



We cannot sack councillors.

We cannot ask a councillor to:



- resign



- or make any kind of payment to make up for their mistake.

If we need to, we will send the complaint to:



- The **Adjudication Panel for Wales**.

Adjudication Panel for Wales is a specialist court that deals with Councils and national authorities that break the code of conduct.



- A **Local Standards Committee**.

Local Standards Committee is a formal group set up locally by Councils. They can deal with councillors who break the code of conduct.

Things to remember when making a complaint



Your complaint must be in writing. It is best to use the form on our website here: www.ombudsman.wales/complaints



For help with the form, you can phone 0300 790 0203.



You must include enough proof to support your complaint.



We may contact you if we need more proof.



When you are making a complaint, you must give your name.

Name _____
Age _____
Address _____

You must understand that we will share details of your complaint to the councillor.

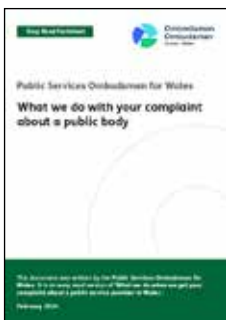


You may have to tell us about your proof face to face. Unless you are **whistleblowing**.



Whistleblowing is when a member of staff passes on information:

- about their organisation
- because something has been done wrong.



There is more information about how we deal with complaints in this factsheet: [What we do with your complaint about local councillors](#)

Hard words

Adjudication Panel for Wales

Adjudication Panel for Wales is a specialist court that deals with Councils and national authorities that break the code of conduct.

Code of conduct

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

Investigate or investigation

Investigate means looking into the facts to find out what happened. We will usually do it if we think there may be a serious problem.

Local Standards Committee

Local Standards Committee is a formal group set up locally by councils. They can deal with councillors who break the code of conduct.

Public services

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

Whistleblowing

Whistleblowing is when a member of staff passes on information:

- about their organisation
- because something has been done wrong.

