



Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

What we do with your complaint about local councillors

This document was written by the **Public Services Ombudsman for Wales**. It is an easy read version of 'What we do when we get your complaint about the conduct of a local councillor.'

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 19**.



Ombwdsmon
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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



Hawdd ei Ddeall Cymru
Easy Read Wales

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Contents

About the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales	4
About this factsheet.....	5
Meeting your needs	6
New complaints	7
If we cannot investigate your complaint.....	10
If we decide to investigate your complaint	11
Investigation results	13
If you are unhappy with our decision.....	16
Contacting us.....	18
Hard words	19

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 explains what happens when you complain to us about councillors.

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**.



You can find more information about this in the factsheet – [Making a complaint about local councillors](#).

Meeting your needs



We want to make it easy for everyone to use our services.



We can help you find an **advocacy** organisation if you need it.

An **advocacy** organisation can help you speak up for yourself. And make sure your voice is heard.



We will communicate with you in the best way for you. Please tell us what your needs are.



[There is more information about how we can support you on our website here.](#)

New complaints



Our **Code of Conduct** Team will look at all new complaints. They will check to see if we should **investigate** your complaint.



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.



We will let you know that we have received your complaint.



We use a 2 step test to check your complaint.

Step 1



We check the supporting information and proof you sent. We check if it suggests the **Code of Conduct** was broken.

Step 2



We check if the complaint is serious enough to **investigate** it. And if an **investigation** would be best for the public.

We will think about things like:



- If a councillor has used their position to unfairly benefit themselves.



- If a councillor has abused the trust people have in them.



- If a councillor has treated anyone unfairly because of who they are. Or where they are from.



- If an **investigation** would help the public keep their trust in councillors.



We aim to tell you within 6 weeks whether we will **investigate** your complaint.



If we cannot tell you within 6 weeks, we will let you know.

If we cannot investigate your complaint



If we decide not to **investigate** your complaint, we will write to you to explain why.



We will also send a copy of the letter to:

- The councillor complained about
- The Monitoring Officer
- The Clerk, if the councillor belongs to a Town or Community Council

If we decide to investigate your complaint



We will write to you to tell you we will **investigate** your complaint.



We will also write to the other people involved in the complaint.



An **Investigation Officer** will look into the complaint.



The **Investigation Officer** will usually get further proof and supporting information. For example, documents and witness statements.



Every **investigation** is different. In some cases we may need to interview people.



You will be asked not to share any details about the **investigation**. This is to make sure the **investigation** is fair.



Councillors may be breaking the **Code of Conduct** if they share information about:

- a complaint or
- **investigation**.



When we have all the information we need, we will write:

- a report
- or notice.



It will say what we found out.

Investigation results

If we decide the **code of conduct** has not been broken, we will:



- close the **investigation**



- and write to everyone involved to explain why.



We can send the complaint to the Monitoring Officer. They may decide to do a local **investigation**.

If we decide the complaint might be right, we may:



- send it 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.



- or 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**.



These groups can decide if the **code of conduct** was broken.



We will let you know what we found out. And what decisions we have made.



We may send you a short report. We will also send a copy of the report to the councillor complained about.



The full report will be kept private until a final decision is made by:

- the **Adjudication Panel for Wales**
- or **Local Standards Committee**

If you are unhappy with our decision



Once we have made our decision, we will close the complaint.



We will not open the case again only because you disagree with our decision.



You can write to us within 24 working days to ask us to check again.

You can ask us to check your complaint again if:



- you can show that we have not thought about all the information you gave us

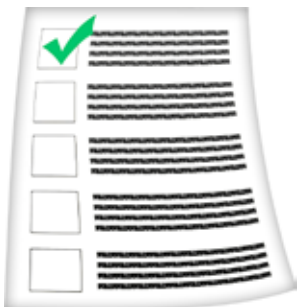


- or you have new information or proof to give us.

Our Review Officer will decide if:



- there is reason to check your complaint again



- we need to take further action.

Contacting us



We understand that some complaints can be upsetting or stressful.



We understand that you may feel strongly about your complaint.



You have the right to be heard, understood and respected.



Please be polite and kind to our staff when contacting us.

Hard words

Advocacy

An advocacy organisation can help you speak up for yourself. And make sure your voice is heard.

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

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