



## What we do when we get your complaint about a public body in Wales

### Factsheet

## Introduction

This fact sheet explains what happens after you put a complaint to the Ombudsman about a public body in Wales. It also explains the different approaches the Ombudsman and his staff can take to help resolve a complaint. It does not cover every detail of our procedures, which are available on our [website](#). If you have any questions about our procedures or our role you can [contact us](#).

## New Complaints

All new complaints are first considered by the Ombudsman's Complaints Advice Team. Once the team has received sufficient information to assess your complaint, we aim to tell you within six weeks, whether or not we can help you. Where necessary we may contact you and/or the organisation, for more details.

Each complaint, and any supporting information sent in with it, is examined to see if it is about a subject or organisation we can look at. We also check when the events complained about took place and what has happened since – as the Ombudsman does not normally accept complaints unless the events happened or came to light within the previous year and the organisation being complained about has already been given a reasonable opportunity to address the issues.

If, from the evidence you send us, we believe that the organisation has acted unreasonably and that as a result you, or a person on whose behalf you are complaining, have suffered hardship or injustice, we may decide to investigate to find out the full facts of the case. We will also look to see if there is other action that might be taken by the organisation which could quickly resolve the complaint.

## Meeting your needs

Please let us know if you need us to adapt the way we communicate with you. If anything makes it difficult for you to use our service, for example, if you have a disability, please inform us.

We will consider whether your request is reasonable and appropriate in the circumstances. This is because we need to use public money carefully.

## **If we cannot accept your complaint**

If we cannot accept your complaint or we do not consider that investigation is appropriate, we will write to you explaining why. We will also provide the organisation with an anonymised copy of our decision. If possible we will identify any further action you can take and/or advise you of other organisations who may be able to help you.

In some cases we may refer the details of your complaint directly to the organisation complained against and ask it to consider the issues and respond to you. We usually do this when it appears that the organisation has not previously had a reasonable opportunity to consider the complaint.

## **Early Resolution**

In some cases, we may take the view that there is action that the organisation being complained about could take quickly to resolve a complaint. In these cases, we will contact the organisation involved to explain what we think might be done and seek its agreement to take that forward. Once we are satisfied that this action has been or will be taken we will write to you explaining what will happen.

## **If we decide to investigate your complaint**

If we decide to investigate your complaint it will be passed to one of the Ombudsman's investigators. He or she may contact you to discuss your concerns and explain what will happen next. We will always write to you and the organisation confirming our decision to investigate. We will provide a copy of your complaint to the organisation and ask for its formal comments and all relevant documents.

Each investigation we conduct varies and while it may be necessary to interview those involved, some cases may be concluded through examination of documents alone. We have professional advisers to assist us in our investigations and the investigators may need to seek a view on your complaint from them. We aim to complete all investigations within 12 months but most are concluded sooner. We will keep you informed of how the investigation is progressing. If for any reason we consider it necessary to discontinue our investigation we will write to you explaining this decision.

When we have all the information we need we will write a report or a letter setting out the evidence we have considered and the conclusions we have reached. We will send this to you and the organisation and give you both an opportunity to comment before completing and issuing the final version of the report or letter.

Where we make recommendations to the organisation we will also check to see how and when these are implemented. We have arrangements for publicising our work and in doing so will take appropriate steps to protect your identity.

## If you remain dissatisfied with our decisions or investigation outcomes

Once we have issued a decision not to intervene in, or investigate your complaint, or have reached our final conclusions following an investigation, our task is effectively ended and the file is closed. We will not reopen a case solely because you may disagree with our decision but you can ask in writing (within twenty working days) for us to review your case **if** you have relevant **new** evidence to show us; **or** you are able to demonstrate that information we had was not properly taken into account in making our decision. The Ombudsman's Review Manager will consider whether there are grounds to review your case and whether further action is required.

## Contact us

If you are unsure whether the Ombudsman would be able to look into your complaint, please [contact us](#).

[ask@ombudsman.wales](mailto:ask@ombudsman.wales)

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