

Strategic Plan

2009/10 to 2011/12

Update: Year 3

Contributing to Excellence

Foreword by the Ombudsman

The Strategic Plan was originally published in April 2009 and set out some stretching targets for the three years to 2011/12. This year's update of the Plan is designed to build on the achievements of the previous two years and sets out a programme for the year ahead which seeks to realise the ambitions envisaged in 2009. Our Vision, Values, Purpose and Strategic Objectives continue to be appropriate, and are restated here. The objectives for the year ahead, however, combine activities to bring to fruition new aspects of the service offered by the office, together with others that take forward the innovative approaches to handling complaints introduced over the past couple of years.

In March 2011, we began piloting a new Signposting service which aims to advise people in Wales how to make a complaint about a public service they have received. We will be looking to fully implement and then further develop this service during 2011/12.

When this three year Strategic Plan was first conceived, the financial situation of the office was somewhat different to the position we will face in 2011/12. The office is having to take a budget reduction of 3% to our core service (a 4.9% reduction in real terms compared with 2010/11). As a consequence to this, we are having to cut posts from our establishment, which will involve a management and staffing restructure. The key focus of our Strategic Plan has been and continues to be to offer high quality complaints handling. Further, by taking action on our key priorities over the past couple of years we have considerably improved our performance in relation to the rate at which we close cases. We will endeavour to maintain this momentum, despite the reduction in complaint handling staff. We will also be mindful of the need to offer the new services introduced at the end of 2010/11 in a way that does not undermine the core service of the office.



Peter Tyndall
Ombudsman

Our vision

To contribute to the development of excellent public services in Wales by ensuring that service providers continue to value and learn from complaints.

Our values

Accessibility – to be open to everyone from all of our communities and work to ensure that people who face challenges in access are not excluded. We will be courteous, respectful and approachable, and communicate with complainants in the way they tell us they prefer.

Excellence – to be professional and authoritative in all that we do and promote excellence in the services with which we work

Learning – we believe that we should improve through learning from our own experiences and should help others to learn from theirs

Fairness – we will maintain our independence and reach decisions objectively having carefully considered the facts

Effectiveness – we will make sure that we use resources to secure best value for the public purse

Being good employers – we will continue to invest in our well trained and well motivated staff.

Our purposes

- To consider complaints about public bodies
- To consider complaints that members of local authorities have broken the code of conduct
- To put things right – we aim to put people back in the position they would have been in if they had not suffered an injustice, and work to secure the best possible outcome where injustice has occurred
- To recognise and share good practice
- To work with public bodies so that lessons from our investigations are learnt
- To ensure continued improvement in the standards of public services in Wales by helping bodies to get it right first time – we will work to reduce complaints by helping service providers to improve their initial decision making.

Strategic aims

The strategic aims set out are ones we look to achieve over the life of this three year plan. Below are the key priorities and targets for this third year (i.e. 2011/12).

Detailed objectives and targets for 2011/12 will be set in the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales's annual Operational Plan.

Strategic Aim 1: To raise awareness of our service so that people understand what we do, and that all who need it can access it and make use of it.

Key priorities for 2011/12:

- For the new public services complaints signposting service:
 - produce publicity material
 - formally launch the new service.
- Further develop our arrangements for making our service accessible to all, with particular focus this year on any specific action we might need to take in light of the Equality Act 2010.
- Continue to engage with voluntary/advocacy organisations that specifically represent and assist communities who may be particularly vulnerable to exclusion from our service, including holding an all-Wales seminar.

Strategic Aim 2: To have in place high quality complaints handling processes, which consider and determine complaints thoroughly but proportionately, and convey decisions clearly.

Key priorities for 2011/12:

- Integrate the work of the new Signposting service into the Complaints Advice Team (see also Strategic Aim 3).
- In relation to investigations teams, and bearing in mind the staffing reduction which has been necessary for 2011/12:
 - reorganise the three investigation teams into two
 - implement the arrangements made to deal with the anticipated increase in health complaints as a result of changes to the NHS complaints procedure emanating from the NHS Redress Measure
 - seek continued improvements in throughput made possible by our streamlined processes introduced over the past two years.
- Implement the new complaints handling system developed during 2010/11 and undertake a six month review to consider whether any changes/improvements are required.
- Ensure that investigations take full account of any potential human rights breaches in complaints we receive.

Strategic Aim 3: To work with public bodies in Wales so that better quality public services are provided as a result of the lessons that can be learnt from the complaints we investigate.

Key priorities for 2011/12:

- Fully implement and further develop the public service complaints signposting service piloted in March 2011 that helps complainants make their complaints to public service providers.
- Reinforce the model complaints policy for public service providers in Wales, issued by the Welsh Assembly Government at the beginning of 2011 by issuing complementary guidance.
- Publish annual letters issued to local authorities/local health boards as a means of sharing best practice and identifying lessons that can be learnt at both an individual organisation level and across the board.

Strategic Aim 4: To demonstrate that our resources are efficiently and effectively deployed.

Key priorities for 2011/12:

- Continue to support the Audit Committee in its expanded role.
- Proceed with improvements to staff development by systematically developing our training and other programmes to ensure a strong linkage between our strategic objectives and our workforce development, with the eventual aim of being recognised as Investors in People.
- In the face of reduced funding of the office, introduce changes at a management level and put in place arrangements to deal with the consequential effects of this.
- Ensure that expenditure is managed so that the office spend is contained within the budget for the financial year 2011/12.
- Produce budget paper for the National Assembly for Wales identifying financial needs for 2012/13 whilst demonstrating continued efficiencies and effectiveness.
- Further build upon our risk management arrangements so that these support strategic prioritisation and decision making.
- Introduce procedures to meet the obligation arising from HM Treasury's commitment to sustainability reporting that becomes compulsory in 2011/12.

Key Delivery Targets

The key delivery targets below have been set to underpin the strategic aims of this three year plan and the key priorities set for 2011/12.

Service Delivery Area	Target	Underpinning
Signposting Service	By April 2012, we will have evaluated the effectiveness of the signposting service offered by Complaints Wales during its first year in operation.	Strategic Aims 1 and 3
Complaints Handling	By April 2012, we will have introduced our new complaints handling system and assessed whether any changes are necessary. By April 2012, we will have introduced the arrangements for handling the anticipated increase in health complaints.	Strategic Aims 1 and 2
Communication	By April 2012 we will have introduced promotional literature on the new Complaints Wales service.	Strategic Aims 1, 2 and 3
Governance/ Effective use of resources	By April 2012, we will have implemented changes at management level and introduced the other staffing changes necessary as a result of this.	Strategic Aim 4

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