

## **Public Services Ombudsman for Wales**

# **Outreach Strategy and Work Programme 2016/17**

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## Introduction

The overall mission of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales is

*'to put things right for service users and contribute  
to improved public service delivery and standards in public life'*

If the complaints we should be investigating are not reaching us in the first place because people do not know about us or find our services too difficult to access then this mission is unachievable.

A successful outreach strategy is integral to achieving the strategic aims set out in the PSOW Three Year Strategic Plan and ultimately our overall mission.

This outreach strategy and work programme, as part of the wider communications strategy, aims to raise awareness and improve understanding of the Ombudsman's services and to ensure that the same level of service is offered to everyone. To do this, our outreach strategy should be:

- Proactive
- Interactive
- Relevant
- Inclusive.

## Objectives

The outreach strategy has three overarching objectives.

### Awareness

- Ensuring the people who need us, know about us
- Providing appropriate and timely information about our services
- Sharing good practice and lessons learnt from our investigations

### Engagement

- To engage effectively with stakeholders by establishing a two-way communications channel
- Utilise established networks/umbrella organisations to engage with wider audience i.e. WCVA and County Voluntary Councils
- Utilise the range of communications channels available to improve engagement

### Accessibility

- Ensuring our services are accessible to all
- Targeting hard to reach groups
- Developing products/services to improve accessibility
- Develop Social Media methods to extend the reach

#### Awareness

If people do not know about us, they won't complain to us. Therefore raising our profile amongst people in Wales is the main objective of this strategy. However knowing about us isn't sufficient; we want to manage expectations by improving public understanding of what we can and cannot do. In this way, we hope to alleviate any misconceptions about, and consequently, dissatisfaction with the service we provide.

For the information we provide to be effective, it must be appropriate, relevant and timely. This involves ensuring the right information is targeted at the right people in the right way. We should always be prepared to respond to differing requirements of our service users and to adapt and develop our information to meet these requirements (i.e. the BSL video / language line etc).

#### Engagement

To achieve our aim of improving public services for people in Wales, we need to engage with our stakeholders in order to foster productive relationships. Different stakeholders will require different levels of engagement, so rather than a 'one size fits all' approach, successful engagement should focus on the particular needs and interests of each stakeholder.

Engaging with staff members is also important for the success of the outreach strategy/programme. Staff should be encouraged to suggest new outreach opportunities and become involved in outreach activities (i.e. speaking at conferences/meetings).

### Accessibility

The services and information we provide must be easily accessed by anyone who needs them. We must be aware of and remove any barriers that could prevent interaction with or access to our services by people with disabilities or linguistic difficulties or differences, and ensure that we do everything possible to provide services or products to assist them.

### Who should we target and how

PSOW's key stakeholder groups are listed below:

1. Service users
2. Bodies in jurisdiction
3. Elected representatives
4. Advocacy/voluntary groups
5. Media
6. Commissioners
7. Other Ombudsmen.

We must ensure this strategy is targeting the right stakeholders in the right way. As mentioned above we should consider the individual needs of each stakeholder to determine how best to target them.

Stakeholder	Aim
Service users	To raise awareness and understanding of our services Ensure people know how to contact us and to help us improve access to our services through feedback
Bodies in jurisdiction	Help them improve by sharing best practice and lessons learned
Assembly members	Keep informed of our work and developments to enable them to support their constituents Encourage support for new powers
Advocacy/voluntary groups	Knowledge of our services to help support their customers. Feedback to us with regards to accessibility
Media	To increase transparency, maintain a positive image and raise awareness of our work
Commissioners	To be kept informed of developments in the office and seek out ways in which we can work collaboratively
Other Ombudsmen	To be kept informed of developments in the office and to share good practice/ideas

## Potentially marginalised groups

Our services must be easily accessed by everyone regardless of age, gender, race, disability, religion, sexual orientation, linguistic or any other characteristic. Whilst our equality data reflects the national picture, we would expect the proportion of potentially marginalised groups to exceed this as they are often those who frequently make the most use of public services. However these groups are amongst those least likely to complain to us. Whether this is because they are not aware of us, find it difficult to reach us or simply put up with poor service, our outreach strategy should strive to change this.

Whilst the outreach strategy should not be limited to any particular group, for 2016/17 we are keen to focus engagement efforts on **children and young people, in particular those with disabilities and mental health issues**. This can be done through the following:

- Making our literature and publications 'child friendly'
- Meetings/talks at schools and colleges
- Targeting children's charities / support groups in informal settings
- Training in what to expect when dealing with a young person.

Some of the organisations we could potentially work with on this are listed below:

- Children and Young Person's Commissioner
- Funky Dragon
- Save the Children
- Local Parents Networks
- Children in Wales
- SNAP Cymru
- MENCAP
- Hafal
- Mind
- Barnardo's
- School Councils
- Youth Cymru.

## 2017 and beyond

Other hard to reach groups that we could focus on from 2017 onwards are:

- LGBT community
- People with disabilities
- People in deprived areas.

## Outreach tools

Outreach can be achieved through a variety of communications tools which are outlined below.

### Digital communications

**Website** – This is our main channel for sharing information with various stakeholders. We should ensure that content is up to date and relevant. The website review should take into account ease of use for different groups of people i.e. accessibility issues. We should also develop a new outreach section to showcase the outreach activity carried out and where organisations can contact us with opportunities. We also need to encourage all potential stakeholders to have a direct link on their own website to extend the visibility of the PSOW site.

**Social media** – Utilise the social media accounts to improve sharing of information and key news items; and to highlight outreach activity.

**Internet blogs/forums** – We should explore how we can link in with certain internet groups or forums as this could be an easy way to access a large amount of people from a certain area of the population.

### Non-digital communications

**Conferences/events** – We should proactively seek out opportunities to speak or host stands at events or conferences held by other organisations

**Meetings/workshops/seminars** – Similarly to conferences we should look for opportunities to talk at external meetings or to hold our own workshops or seminars aimed at certain sectors.

**Road shows/public surgeries** – This would allow us to take the Ombudsman's service to people who may otherwise find it difficult to access and to raise awareness perhaps in more rural parts of Wales

**Training** – this can work both ways – either have organisations come and train our staff on various subjects or for us to offer training to organisations in what we do / good complaints practices.

**Focus groups/sounding boards** – to allow two way communication with stakeholders, to gather feedback to help improve our service and to share information

**Press** – We should proactively seek out opportunities to publish news items about our work/what Ombudsman has achieved, both online and in print, and on tv/radio. We should target media to ensure all-Wales coverage.

**Advertising** – We currently do a small amount of advertising for the Complaints Wales service each year some of which has been successful (newspaper/radio ads) and some which hasn't (bus adverts). This year we could increase the amount of advertising we do or seek out other channels to ensure maximum return (e.g. Google/Facebook ads).

**Organisational literature** – We need to better utilise our publications (Casebook/annual letters/how to complain leaflets/factsheets/thematic reports) to showcase our work. Also develop our literature to be more user friendly for different groups i.e. easy read /different languages/ young person friendly).

### **Measurement of success**

The success of this strategy will be measured by the achievement of the activities outlined in the work programme below. Feedback could also be sought from stakeholders on the impact and effectiveness of our outreach activity

### **Review**

This strategy and work programme will be reviewed within 12 months.