



Ask for: Communications

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Mark Polin  
Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board

By Email only: mark.polin@wales.nhs.uk

## Annual Letter 2021/22

Dear Mark

I am pleased to provide you with the Annual letter (2021/22) for Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board which deals with complaints relating to maladministration and service failure and the actions being taken to improve public services

This is my first annual letter since taking up the role of Public Services Ombudsman in April 2022, and I appreciate that the effects of the pandemic are still being felt by all public bodies in Wales. Our office has not been immune from this, with records numbers of cases being referred to us over the last two years. The strong working relationships between my Office and Health Boards continues to deliver improvements in how we are dealing with complaints and ensuring that, when things go wrong, we are learning from that and building stronger public services.

### Complaints relating to Maladministration & Service Failure

Last year the number of complaints referred to us regarding health boards increased by 30% (compared to 20/21 figures) and are now well above pre-pandemic levels. It is likely that complaints to my office, and public services in general, were suppressed during the pandemic, and we are now starting to see the expected 'rebound' effect.

During this period, we intervened in (upheld, settled or resolved at an early stage) a similar proportion of complaints about public bodies, 18%, when compared with recent years. Intervention rates (where we have investigated complaints) for health boards also remained at a similar level – 30% compared to 33% in recent years.

We will be liaising closely with Health Boards, Welsh Government and the Community Health Councils to monitor likely caseloads over the coming year, including in relation to any cases of Nosocomial transmission of Covid which may reach my office after the Board's local investigations under the national framework have been completed.

## **Supporting improvement of public services**

### **Improvement Work**

The Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019 formalised our work with public bodies to improve complaints handling and learning from complaints. This work has now been consolidated within our Improvement Team who are engaging with a wide range of organisations to support better complaints handling in public bodies.

### **Proactive Powers**

In addition to managing record levels of complaints, we also continued our work using our proactive powers in the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019. Specifically undertaking our first Own Initiative Investigation and continuing our work on the Complaints Standards Authority.

October 2021 saw the publication of the first own initiative investigation in Wales: [Homelessness Reviewed](#). The investigation featured three Local Authorities and sought to scrutinise the way Homelessness assessments were conducted. The report made specific recommendations to the investigated authorities, as well as suggestions to all other Local Authorities in Wales and Welsh Government. Some of these recommendations will bring about immediate change – updating factsheets and letter and assessment templates to ensure that key equality and human rights considerations are routinely embedded into processes for example – all the recommendations were designed to bring about tangible change to people using homelessness services in Wales.

The Complaints Standards Authority (CSA) continued its work with public bodies in Wales last year. The model complaints policy has already been adopted by local authorities and health boards in Wales, we have now extended this to an initial tranche of Housing Associations and Natural Resources Wales. The aim being to implement this work across the Welsh public sector.

In addition to this, the CSA published information on complaints handled by local authorities for the [first time](#) – a key achievement for this work. The CSA receives similar data from Health Boards on a quarterly basis in line with Welsh Government reporting responsibilities, and will look to publish this data for the first time later in 2022.

The CSA has now implemented a model complaints policy with nearly 50 public bodies, and delivered 140 training sessions, completely free of charge, during the

last financial year. The feedback has been excellent, and the training has been very popular - so I would encourage Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board to engage as fully as possible.

### **Complaints made to the Ombudsman**

A summary of the complaints of maladministration/service failure received relating to your Health Board is attached.


Finally, can I thank you and your officials for the positive way that health boards have engaged with my Office to enable us to deliver these achievements during what has been a challenging year for everyone. I very much look forward to continuing this work and collaboration to ensure we further improve public services across Wales.

Further to this letter can I ask that your Health Board takes the following actions:

- Present my Annual Letter to the Board and share any feedback from the with my office.
- Continue to engage with our Complaints Standards work, accessing training for your staff, fully implementing the model policy, and providing complaints data.
- Inform me of the outcome of the Board's considerations and proposed actions on the above matters by 30 September.

This correspondence is copied to the Chief Executive of your Health Board and to your Contact Officer. Finally, a copy of all Annual Letters will be published on my website.

Yours sincerely,



**Michelle Morris**  
**Public Services Ombudsman**

Cc. Jo Whitehead, Chief Executive, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board  
By Email only: jo.whitehead@wales.nhs.uk

## Factsheet

### Appendix A - Complaints made to PSOW

<b>Health Board</b>	<b>Complaints Received</b>	<b>Received per 1000 residents</b>
Aneurin Bevan University Health Board	142	0.24
Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board	213	0.30
Cardiff and Vale University Health Board	89	0.18
Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board	113	0.25
Hywel Dda University Health Board	88	0.23
Powys Teaching Health Board	10	0.08
Swansea Bay University Health Board	110	0.28
<b>Total</b>	<b>765</b>	<b>0.24</b>

## Appendix B – Complaints made to PSOW by subject

<b>Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board</b>	<b>Complaints Received</b>	<b>% share</b>
Ambulance Services	0	0%
Appointments/admissions/discharge and transfer procedures	8	4%
Clinical treatment in hospital	104	49%
Clinical treatment outside hospital	23	11%
Complaints Handling	27	13%
Confidentiality	1	0%
Continuing care	8	4%
COVID19	7	3%
De-registration	0	0%
Disclosure of personal information / data loss	0	0%
Funding	0	0%
Medical records/standards of record-keeping	0	0%
Medication> Prescription dispensing	1	0%
Mental Health	12	6%
NHS Independent Provider	0	0%
Non-medical services	2	1%
Other	10	5%
Out Of Hours	0	0%
Parking (including enforcement and bailiffs)	0	0%
Patient list issues	5	2%
Poor/No communication or failure to provide information	0	0%
Prisoner Care	1	0%
Referral to Treatment Time	2	1%
Rudeness/inconsiderate behaviour/staff attitude	2	1%
	213	

Appendix C – Complaints closed by PSOW - Outcomes  
 (\* denotes intervention)

Local Health Board/NHS Trust	Out of Jurisdiction	Premature	Other cases closed after initial consideration	Early Resolution/voluntary settlement*	Discontinued	Other Reports- Not Upheld	Other Reports Upheld*	Public Interest Report*	Total
Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board	34	29	61	29	0	8	30	2	193
% share	18%	15%	32%	15%	0%	4%	16%	1%	

## Appendix D - Cases with PSOW Intervention

	No. of Interventions	No. of Closures	% Of Interventions
Aneurin Bevan University Health Board	42	125	34%
Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board	61	193	32%
Cardiff and Vale University Health Board	18	81	22%
Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board	30	99	30%
Hywel Dda University Health Board	23	82	28%
Powys Teaching Health Board	3	6	50%
Swansea Bay University Health Board	29	105	28%
<b>Total</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>691</b>	<b>30%</b>

## Information Sheet

Appendix A shows the number of complaints received by PSOW for all Health Boards in 2021/2022. These complaints are contextualised by the number of people each health board reportedly serves.

Appendix B shows the categorisation of each complaint received, and what proportion of received complaints represents for the Health Board.

Appendix C shows outcomes of the complaints which PSOW closed for the Health Board in 2021/2022. This table shows both the volume, and the proportion that each outcome represents for the Health Board.

Appendix D shows Intervention Rates for all Health Boards in 2021/2022. An intervention is categorised by either an upheld complaint (either public interest or non-public interest), an early resolution, or a voluntary settlement.