

Ombwdsmon Ombudsman

OMBWDSMON GWASANAETHAU CYHOEDDUS CYMRU
PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES

Briefing

Complaints Standards Authority

Complaints handled by Welsh Local Authorities and
Welsh Health Boards and Trusts -
April to September 2022

December 2022



At Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, we have three main aims:

- we handle complaints about public service providers
- we handle complaints about breaches of the Code of Conduct by councillors
- we drive systemic improvement of public services.

We are independent of all government bodies and the service we provide is free of charge.

We can provide copies of this document in accessible formats including Braille, large print or hard copy. To request, please contact us using the details below:

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Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn y Gymraeg.
This document is also available in Welsh.

About this briefing

The Complaints Standards Authority (CSA) was created by the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) 2019 Act. The CSA works to support effective complaint handling by Public Bodies within our jurisdiction. The CSA achieves this by:

- setting model complaints policies and guidelines
- offering advice and delivering bespoke training packages
- collecting and publishing data on complaints handled by Public Bodies.

After every quarter of the year, the CSA requests complaint handling statistics from Welsh Local Authorities and Health Boards and Trusts.

This briefing paper outlines the main trends in the **complaints handled by Welsh Local Authorities** and, for the first time, **complaints handled by Health Boards and Trusts** in the reporting period April to September 2022.

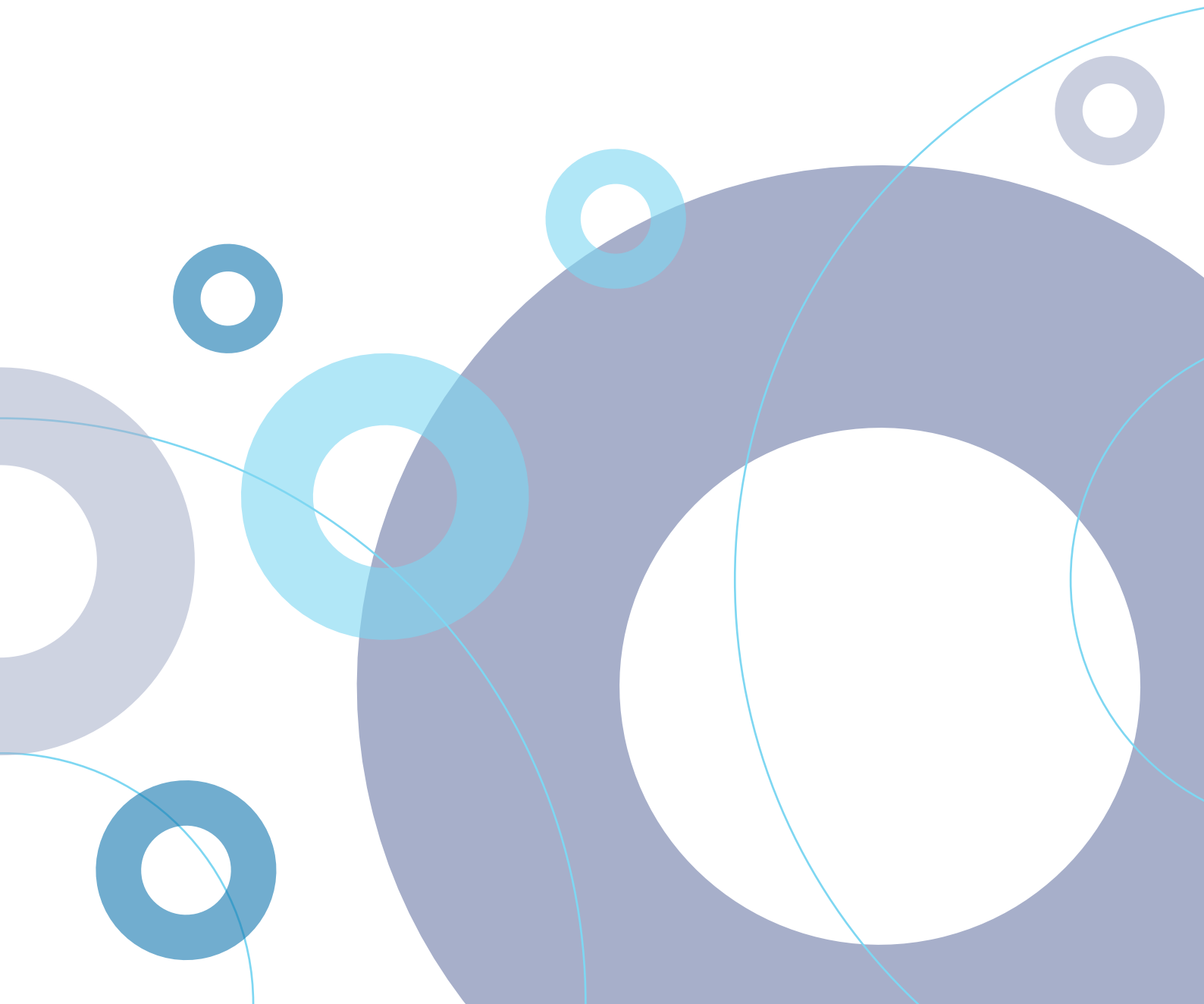
It also provides details of **complaints about Local Authorities and Health Boards and Trusts made to us** and **concluded by us** during the same period. These details indicate how satisfied complainants were with Local Authority and Health Board and Trust responses and how sound the decisions of these bodies were.

More detailed data is available [on our website](#).

NOTE We report on complaints about Local Authorities and Health Boards that we handle in more detail in our [Annual Report & Accounts](#) and in [Annual Letters](#) that we send to these bodies. The Annual Report & Accounts also discusses our work on setting model complaints policies and guidance, and on the provision of complaints handling training.

Our Complaints Standards work is currently being extended to larger Housing Associations. We will publish that data in due course.

Local Authority Complaints



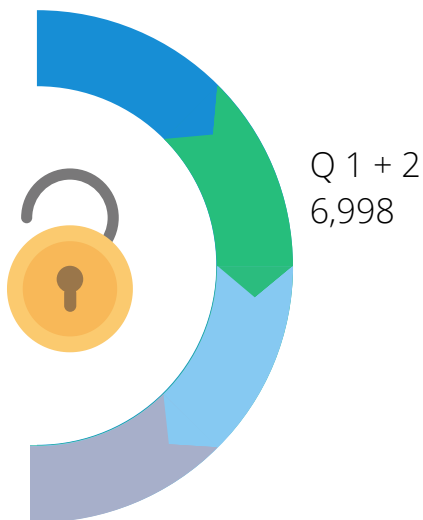
New complaints received by Local Authorities



In quarter 1 and 2, Local Authorities received **7,718** new complaints.

What this means: This is a decrease of 937 new complaints compared to quarter 1 and 2 last year. This could be related to an improvement in service. However, the absence of complaints is not necessarily an indicator of good performance.

Complaints closed by Local Authorities



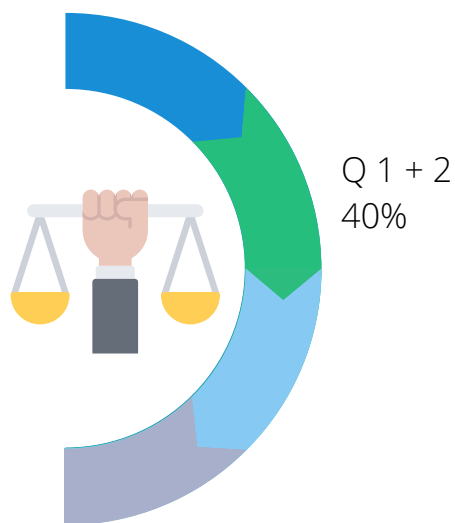
In quarter 1 and 2, Local Authorities closed **6,998** complaints. **76%** of complaints were closed within **20 working days**.

What this means: This measure of performance is important to people who use complaints services. However, although it is important that complaints investigations are conducted promptly, we stress that investigations should not be cut short simply to meet a target.

According to our data, during quarter 1 and 2 Local Authorities **received 720 more complaints than they closed**.

This suggests that Local Authorities now have a higher backlog than in the previous year, because they have closed fewer complaints than they have received.

Uphold rate of complaints closed by Local Authorities



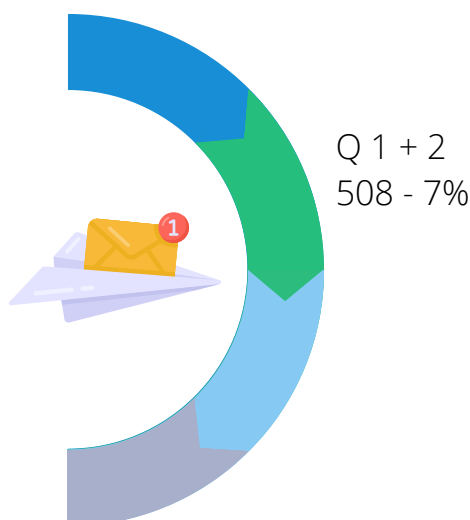
In quarter 1 and 2, Local Authorities upheld **40%** of complaints that they considered - **slightly lower than previous years.**

What this means: The uphold rates have decreased. Our data does not show the reasons for this. Although upheld complaints show that something went wrong, they also show a willingness to acknowledge that and put things right.

The lower uphold rate could be a result of improvements made by Local Authorities (for example, the complaints do not hold merit), or reduced willingness to acknowledge failings. The work of the CSA aims to support transparency.

Complaints about Local Authorities made to us

If people are not satisfied with the Local Authority's response to their complaint, they can refer that complaint to us.



In quarter 1 and 2, **508** complaints about Local Authorities were referred to us. This represents **7%** of all complaints considered by Local Authorities in the same period.

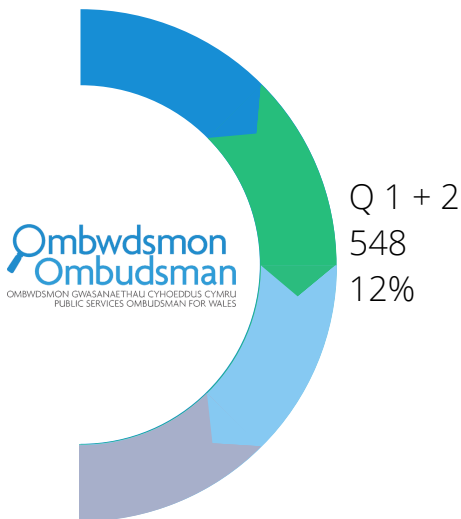
What this means: **7%** of people who had their complaints considered by Local Authorities during the reporting period still wanted to continue their complaint.

This trend could be an indicator of how well complaints are being handled by Local Authorities. If so, an increase in the proportion of referrals is not necessarily a positive trend.

However, people are also more likely to refer complaints to us if they are unhappy with the outcome. Therefore, the lower uphold rate by Local Authorities could also lead to more referrals to us.

Trends in our complaints about Local Authorities

The volume of complaints handled, closed and referred by Local Authorities provides some context for our own caseload about those bodies.



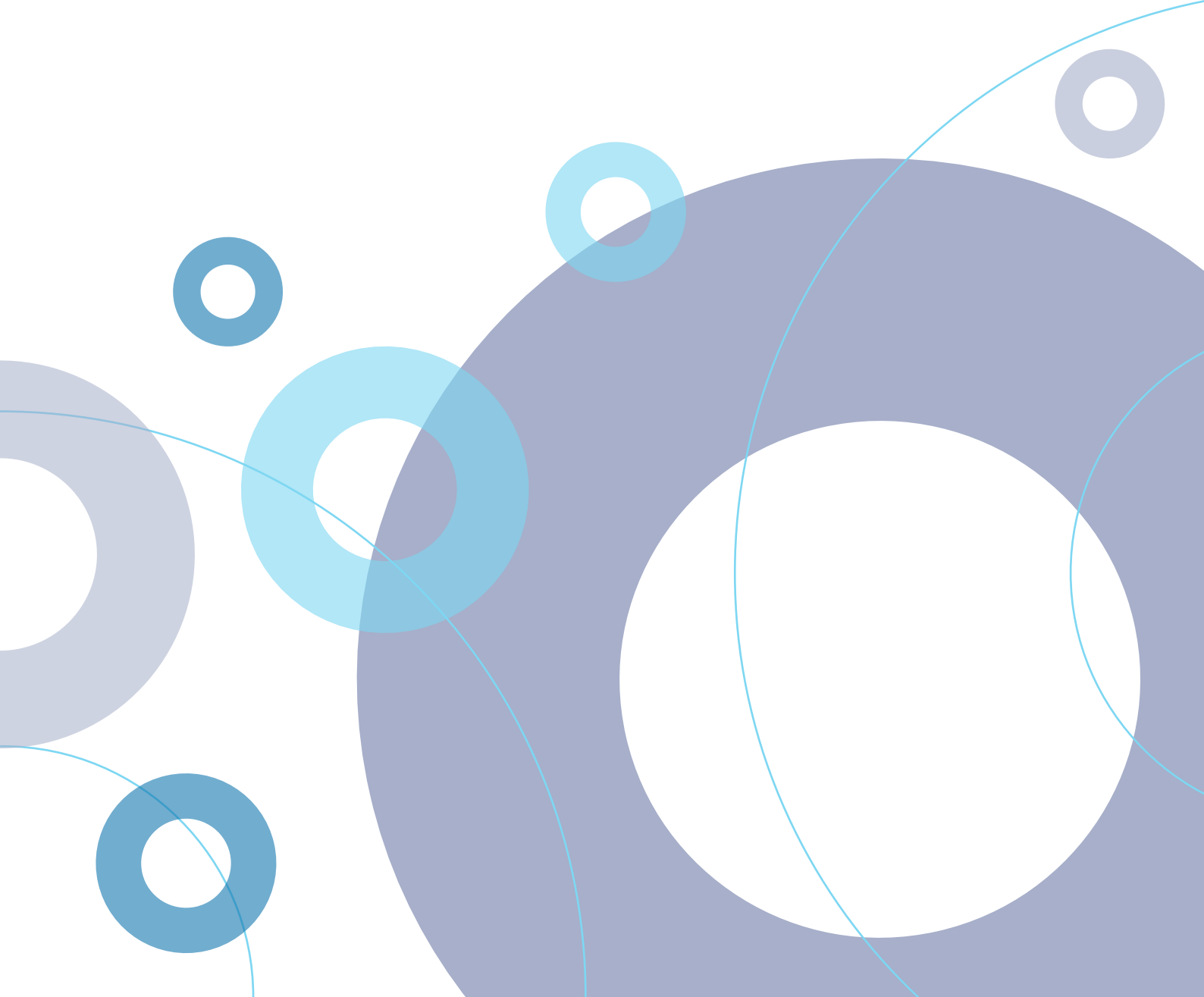
In quarter 1 and 2, we closed **548** complaints about Local Authorities.* Some of those complaints would have been referred to us during the quarter; others would have been received before that period.

We **intervened in 12% of those cases**, by recommending Early Resolution or upholding a complaint after an investigation.

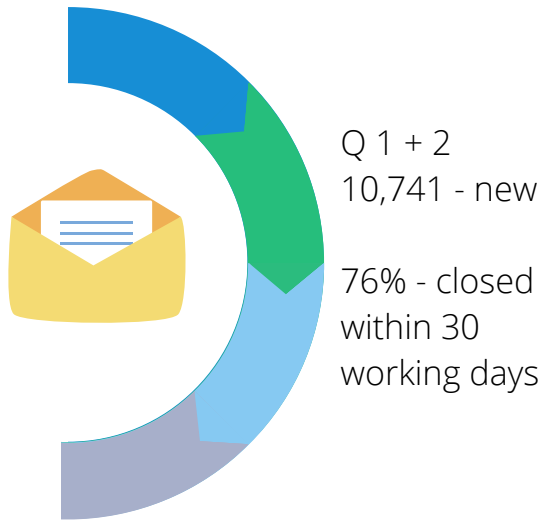
What this means: We continue to find opportunities to improve public services.

* This total does not include our closed complaints about Rent Smart Wales.

Health Board and Trust Complaints



New complaints received by Health Boards and Trusts



In quarter 1 and 2, Health Boards and Trusts received **10,741** complaints. **76%** of complaints were closed within **30 working days**.

This is the first time that we have received data from Health Boards and Trusts. The information we receive from these bodies is different to Local Authorities. We only receive what is given to the Welsh Government, which is why we do not have data on their uphold rates and specific timescales.

Complaints about Health Boards and Trusts made to us

If people are not satisfied with how Health Boards or Trusts responded to their complaint, they can refer that complaint to us.



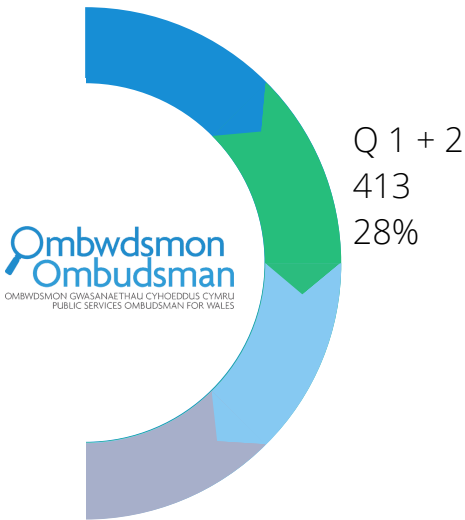
In quarter 1 and 2, **490** complaints relating to Health Boards and Trusts were referred to PSOW - about **5%** of all complaints considered by these bodies in the same period.

What this means: 5% of people who had their complaints considered by Health Boards and Trusts in quarter 1 and 2 still wanted to continue their complaint.

This trend could be an indicator of how well complaints are being handled by these bodies. If so, a low proportion of referrals could be considered a positive trend.

However, there may be many reasons why people did not refer complaints to us. Because we do not have the data on the proportion of complaints that the Health Boards and Trusts uphold, it is difficult for us to interpret this trend further at this stage.


Trends in our complaints about Health Boards and Trusts



In quarter 1 and 2, we closed **413** complaints about Health Boards and Trusts. Some of those complaints would have been referred to us during the quarter; others would have been received before that period.

We **intervened in 28% of those cases**, by recommending Early Resolution or upholding a complaint after an investigation.

What this means: We continue to find opportunities to improve public services.



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