



**Ombwdsmon
Ombudsman**
Cymru • Wales

Strategic Plan 2023 - 2026

A new chapter

April 2023



We can provide a summary of this document in accessible formats, including Braille, large print and Easy Read.
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Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn y Gymraeg.

This document is also available in Welsh.



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Strategic Plan 2023 - 2026

A new chapter

Our vision:

**To have a positive impact
on people and public services in Wales.**

Foreword

I am proud to publish this Strategic Plan, setting out my ambition for the office over the next three years.

In developing this Plan, I have been acutely aware of the challenges facing the public sector and this office in post-pandemic Wales.

As the Ombudsman, I have the duty and the privilege to deliver justice for individuals who feel that public services or their elected local representatives have let them down.

Our caseload continues to increase year on year. More complaints means more opportunities to deliver justice when things have gone wrong. However, with limited resources and capacity, it can also affect the quality of our service and limit our ability to drive more systemic improvement.

Our challenge is how to manage that caseload in a way that does not compromise our service and delivers best outcomes for people who have suffered injustice, while also setting realistic expectations for the bodies in our jurisdiction.

We are confident that the standard of our decision making is very good. However, we know that our service users want us to listen more and be

easier to reach. Many may also feel vulnerable or at a disadvantage when complaining against a service provider. Although we must remain independent and impartial, and we cannot always deliver the outcome that people seek from us, we know that a supportive approach and empathy must be at the heart of our service.

We are equipped with powerful tools to improve public services in Wales, especially for people who face barriers in complaining. We can initiate our own investigations on significant issues. We can also set complaint handling standards for bodies in our jurisdiction and monitor how they implement these standards. Over the coming years, we need to expand how we use these tools to have even more impact.

This Plan identifies four Strategic Aims to address these and other challenges and opportunities. If we are to have a meaningful and lasting impact business as usual is not an option. Like all public sector organisations in Wales, we must adjust how we operate – adopt new ways of working and try new solutions.

We need to wisely invest in our staff, offering the right support and reaping the benefits of agile working.

We must also continue to improve the security and resilience of our systems, and contribute to tackling the climate crisis. Finally, we need to always deliver value for money in a difficult economic situation and so be ambitious but also realistic about the resources and capacity available to us.

We cannot do this alone. This Plan draws on the valued feedback we have had from our staff, service users and public bodies. We will continue to engage closely with them to work towards our ambition for the office over the next three years.

I am grateful to all who contributed to developing this Plan and look with hope and excitement to the future, as we embark on this new chapter in our service to the people of Wales.

Michelle Morris

Public Services
Ombudsman for Wales

April 2023



Our role

We have three main roles:



We investigate complaints about public services.



We consider complaints about councillors breaching the Code of Conduct.



We drive systemic improvement of public services and standards of conduct in local government in Wales.

Our ambition



People of Wales feel that public services treat them fairly and respond when things go wrong.



Welsh public services listen to individuals and use their complaints to learn and improve.



Welsh local government is trusted to deliver the highest standards of conduct.



The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales continues to be an influential and respected voice in public service improvement.

Our principles

We are

- independent
- impartial
- fair
- open to all who need us.

Our Strategic Aims

The challenges that we face are different to those in the past - and we need to tackle them differently. Our actions under the Strategic Aims emphasise how together with our staff we will innovate and explore new ways of working to deliver our ambitions.

Strategic Aim 1:

Delivering justice with a positive impact for people and public services.

We deliver an efficient, empathetic and proportionate service that supports justice and improves public services.



Strategic Aim 2:

Increasing accessibility and inclusion.

People across Wales are aware of our office, understand how we can help them and our service is relevant and accessible.



Strategic Aim 3:

Increasing the impact of our proactive improvement work.

We contribute to improvement in public services, through complaints standards work, wider learning from complaints and own initiative investigations and supporting high standards of conduct amongst councillors.



Strategic Aim 4:

Ensuring that we are a healthy, efficient and accountable organisation.

We maintain and improve efficient and effective use of our financial, staff and IT resources, and ensure good governance, accountability and transparency.



We will continue to promote equal and equitable services and human rights considerations across all our work.

We will continue to comply with the Welsh language standards, promote the use of Welsh and ensure that all our services are available in Welsh.



What we will do

Strategic Aim 1:

Delivering justice with a positive impact for people and public services.

We will:

- Explore new digital tools and processes to help us manage our increasing complaints caseload and sustain performance.
- Further enhance the quality of our service delivery, in line with our Service Standards and service user feedback.
- Improve how we manage the expectations of our complainants throughout the complaint handling process, emphasising our duty to deliver a responsive and proportionate service.
- Ensure our recommendations to public bodies are delivered and provide remedy to individuals when things go wrong.

Strategic Aim 2:

Increasing accessibility and inclusion.

We will:

- Develop a more accessible website, structured around the needs of our service users.
- Transform our engagement with advice and advocacy bodies supporting our service users.
- Develop outreach campaigns, supported by more accessible and visual information resources, to reach those communities that are least likely to complain to us.
- Improve the quality and accessibility of our communication, including by expanding the use of accessible formats and embedding the principles of Plain English / Cymraeg Clîr across the organisation.

Strategic Aim 3:

Increasing the impact of our proactive improvement work.

We will:

- Enhance the impact of our Complaints Standards work by bringing more public bodies under our model complaints policy, developing training on good complaint handling and highlighting learning from the data we collect to improve public services.
- Launch more own initiative investigations, including with a focus on improving public services for service users under-represented among our complainants.
- Seek assurance that our recommendations deliver systemic improvement of public services in Wales.
- Support good standards of conduct by councillors in local government in Wales, and explore new ways and resources to do this.

Strategic Aim 4:

Ensuring that we are a healthy, efficient and accountable organisation.

We will:

- Improve our business processes and Casework Management Systems, to help our staff work more efficiently and effectively.
- Develop our new model of agile working, engaging with staff to review our office needs and improve internal communications.
- Develop and implement our People Strategy, to ensure that we maintain high performance and support the wellbeing of our staff.
- Implement a refreshed ICT Strategy to sustain and improve our ICT systems and ensure that we can continue to provide an efficient, secure and resilient service.
- Play our part in protecting the environment, by further reducing our carbon footprint.
- Continue to be financially accountable and demonstrate high standards of transparency.



Making a difference

In all that we do, we aim to achieve three things: deliver justice for individuals, improve public services and support high standards of conduct in local government.

Strategic Aim 1: Delivering justice with a positive impact for people and public services.

- People are more satisfied with our service.
- People better understand our role and we receive fewer complaints that we cannot consider.
- We are able to make decisions more quickly in a larger proportion of cases.
- Our service users and public bodies in our jurisdiction think that our recommendations had positive impact.

We will measure this through:

- feedback from our service users, public bodies in our jurisdiction and our staff
- analysis of our complaint handling performance using KPIs
- case studies to capture lived experience.

Strategic Aim 2: Increasing accessibility and inclusion.

- Awareness of the office is increasing.
- More people engage with our website and resources and give us positive feedback about them.
- Advice and advocacy bodies value the relationship with us and positively assess working with us.
- The equality profile of people who complain to us is more diverse.

We will measure this through:

- national awareness surveys
- Website use analytics
- feedback from our service users and advice and advocacy bodies
- equality and diversity monitoring.

We know that we are not the only organisation pursuing these goals, and we will continue to work collaboratively, with organisations across the Welsh public sector, and be ambitious and transparent in demonstrating the influence and impact of our work.

Strategic Aim 3: Increasing the impact of our proactive improvement work.

- People who use public services in Wales have better experiences of engaging with complaint processes.
- Public bodies follow our Complaints Standards guidance and model process.
- Our own initiative investigations make meaningful recommendations to address injustice and we have evidence of tangible improvements to public services as a result.

We will measure this through:

- national survey
- analysis of our complaints trends
- analysis of our compliance evidence
- feedback from bodies in our jurisdiction
- feedback from service users and advocacy groups
- case studies to capture lived experience.

Strategic Aim 4: Ensuring that we are a healthy, efficient and accountable organisation.

- We are an agile workplace, using our facilities efficiently and offering the right support to our staff.
- Our staff are motivated and high-performing.
- The profile of our workforce is more diverse, better reflecting the communities that we serve.
- Our systems are available, effective and secure.
- We reduce our carbon footprint.

We will measure this through:

- feedback from our staff
- equality and diversity monitoring
- internal and external audits
- carbon footprint monitoring.



Next steps

The Strategic Plan is a high-level document. However, we will produce an annual Business Plan for each year of the Strategic Plan.

The Business Plan will include detailed actions to deliver our Strategic Aims - for example, which groups we intend to target in our outreach work.

The Business Plan will also include the Key Performance Indicators (KPI) that we will use to monitor our performance and impact in areas that we can control or influence.

Although the Business Plan will be an internal document, to ensure transparency and accountability we will publish our priorities and KPIs for each year.



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