



Ombwdsmon
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Data Strategy

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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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Data Strategy



Contents

Background	5
Our role	6
Our ambition	6
Our principles	6
Purpose and scope	7
Data Strategy and our Strategic Plan	8
Data governance and security	9
Our objectives	10
1. Collection and quality	11
2. Literacy and culture	13
3. Analytics capability	15
4. Communicating data	17
Measure and refine	18
The roadmap	19

Background



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 and open to all who need us.

Purpose and scope

We gather data from various sources, including internal systems, external data providers, sensors and user interactions. As a public sector organisation, it is essential that we use our data securely and in line with relevant legal and ethical standards. However, we must also explore every opportunity to use the data available to us to work more efficiently and add value, for the benefit of people of Wales.

We already have in place IT and Digital Strategy. While that Strategy focuses predominantly on the quality and resilience of our processes, technology and digital infrastructure and staff digital skills, it also commits us to 'Make better use of our data', in order to

- identify priorities for public service improvement
- help identify and support public service users less likely to complain
- identify the areas for Own Initiative investigations and thematic reports.

The IT and Digital Strategy further states that better data analytics would help optimise performance, identify inefficiencies and provide insight to inform strategic decisions.

The purpose of our Data Strategy is to build on and develop these commitments, with specific focus on our data collection and quality, literacy and analytics capability.

Data Strategy and our Strategic Plan

The Data Strategy will contribute to all four aims of our Strategic Plan:

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

By improving our data organisation, literacy and processes, the Strategy will support us to better manage our increasing workload and deliver better and faster service for the people of Wales.

Strategic Aim 2: Increasing accessibility and inclusion.

The Strategy will support us to use all the data available to us to identify trends in accessibility of our service and define areas for improvement.

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

Under this Strategy, we will use our data better to provide insights which will drive change in Welsh public services.

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

One of the key goals of the Strategy will be to increase the data literacy of our staff by building a data culture that will flow through the organisation, which in turn will improve our organisational capacity and reduce risks of data errors.

We believe our data can contribute to our Strategic Aims and can make our a positive impact to our organisation. The insights from our data will help us to drive improvement in public services whilst continuing to provide services of the highest standard.

This is our first data strategy and it will cover the final year of the 2023 – 2026 Strategic Plan. As the new Strategic Plan is developed, our Data Strategy will also be revisited to make sure that its scope aligns with our strategic priorities.

Data governance and security

Robust data governance is essential to protect sensitive data and ensure compliance with legal and ethical standards.

We already have in place several strategies and policies relevant to these areas:

- Information Security Policy - encompassing our organisational and technical security controls to protect personal data from unauthorised or unlawful processing and accidental loss, destruction or damage.
- IT Governance Policy - focused on the management of our IT provision in line with these policies
- Data Protection Policy - setting out the basis on which we process any personal data to ensure compliance with data protection legislation

To avoid duplication, our Data Strategy does not extend to the areas covered by those policies.

Our objectives



1. Collection and quality

Where we are now

We already collect a broad range of data. We gather extensive complaint information and personal information from our complainants. We ask public bodies in Wales to share data with us about the complaints they receive to help us understand and compare complaint handling practice. We also monitor trends related to our internal operations, gathering statistics related to HR, business sustainability and financial performance.

However, we lack a strategic overview over our data sources and collection practices. This could mean that some of our data will not be collected to consistently high standard, that some data collected will go underused or unused and that there will be some gaps in our data, which could affect our overall performance monitoring.

Where we want to be

We want to have confidence that

- we gather the right data to support our work
- our data is accurate, consistent, and complete across all systems
- we can easily find the data we need and can manage it effectively, with owners assigned to each data item.

How we will get there

- undertake an audit of all our data to identify key data sources (internal and external) as well as integration methods (APIs, ETL processes)
- create a data catalogue, enabling us to quickly locate the data we hold
- ensure that the data collected is accurate, complete, up to date and consistent (if recorded across more than one platform) through with a thorough Quality Assurance process to eliminate potential errors
- identify any gaps and develop a plan to collect any missing data required to support our business goals and Key Performance Indicators
- continue to work with relevant bodies on standardised approach to provision of information on complaint handling, to ensure robustness of the data shared with us.

How we will know we have made a difference

- % of data records meeting quality standards
- reduction in duplicate or incomplete records
- fewer manual data processes taking less time to complete with elimination of duplication in data sources.

2. Literacy and culture

Where we are now

Almost everyone within the organisation is responsible for data input or analysis. However, there's no real sense of data culture, with only a few "data experts" in the organisation. Staff have had no training to improve their data literacy.

Where we want to be

We have already begun to improve data analytics capabilities and to build a data culture across the organisation, which will aid us to become trusted data experts.

We want to further promote a data-driven culture across the organisation, to ensure that

- there are no errors in data handling and reporting
- there is increased confidence in using data for decision-making
- we can easily identify relevant external data that will benefit our organisation's work
- there are limited changes to existing processes for investigators, but they are able to see the benefits of accurate and complete data.

How we will get there

- start to measure the level of staff confidence in using data
- provide targeted training to build staff skills in data analysis and data-driven decision-making
- support increasing staff familiarity with Power BI
- research external data that could help us with own initiative reports and thematic reports.

How we will know we have made a difference

- % of staff completing data literacy training
- staff confidence in using data (measured via staff survey)
- staff can confidently use our data and see the benefits of our efforts in improving our data outputs
- we make more use of relevant external data in our improvement and investigation work.

3. Analytics capability

Where we are now

Despite the wide variety of data available to us, we are currently not using it to its full potential to make business decisions or provide insights. We make very limited use of descriptive analytics (to analyse historical data), predictive analytics (to forecast trends), and prescriptive analytics (to recommend actions).

Our casework reports are still created manually, using simple tools within Workpro, Excel and Word.

We are also not extensively using data visualisation tools. This means that the presentation of our data analysis is often text-heavy and not as accessible and intuitive as it should be.

In addition, although we hold extensive and rich data on complaints reaching our organisation and handled by organisations in our jurisdiction, we have historically struggled to identify broader, systemic trends in service failings, and so also areas for improvement.

Where we want to be

We want to

- Improve the understanding of our casework capacity and support our business decision-making through data-driven insights and high-quality data visualisation tools
- enhance our ability to identify complaint trends and systemic issues, to improve public service delivery in Wales
- improve data knowledge across the data team and build resilience.

How we will get there

develop Power BI dashboards for real-time monitoring of caseload, complaint trends and performance metrics, for our use in internal monitoring and external meetings with organisations

- automate monthly and quarterly reporting
- use Power BI and other data visualisation platforms if necessary to identify trends in complaints, including those at Intake stage
- develop casework trends digest to inform development of thematic and own investigation reports.

How we will know we have made a difference

- increased uptake of Power BI for report generation, where we have access to live datasets
- insights regularly utilised in policy responses, thematic reports and own initiative investigations.

4. Communicating data

Where we are now

We regularly publish a wide range of data through our main communication channels. Our website features Open Data (updated quarterly), complaints standards statistics and data-rich publications such as our Annual Reports. We also share data in a more ad-hoc manner with the press as well as organisations in our jurisdiction, to help them improve their service.

Where we want to be

We want to

- ensure that the data we publish on our website is user-friendly, accessible and easy to understand
- improve how we share data with organisations in our jurisdiction, automating the reports where possible
- develop a standard approach to data formatting, with consistent branding and styles.

How we will get there

- scope the opportunities to complement or replace our established formats for data sharing (such as Open Data and Annual Letters) with Power BI dashboards
- improve data visualisation in key publications such as the Annual Report
- ensure that data publications receive consistent attention in our communications activities
- develop consistent templates to be used when publishing any data.

How we will know we have made a difference

- organisations know when our data is available to be viewed and will trust us to provide regular and accurate data
- our branding and style is instantly recognisable
- we receive fewer requests for statistical information or can point more queries to publicly available resources.

Measure and refine

The objectives of this Strategy will help us to achieve the aim of being a trusted data driven organisation.

We will regularly assess the effectiveness of this Strategy and adjust as needed.

The roadmap

In order to achieve the aims and objectives of this Strategy, we will focus on the following indicative actions.

As soon as possible

- offer data training to a selection of staff who are most involved in handling data
- undertake a data literacy audit
- improve internal data reporting, with quarterly and monthly reports moved to Power BI
- undertake an audit of all data to identify key data sources
- every member of staff to receive a Power BI Pro license.

Later (within the first year of the Strategy)

- offer data training to all staff
- create a data warehouse
- identify any gaps and develop a plan to collect any missing data including externally
- re-evaluate the way in which we share Open Data, complaints standards data and Annual Letters statistics, looking to replace the established formats with Power BI dashboards
- begin to identify trends in our complaints to inform improvement work
- introduce new, more accessible data visualisation formats to feature in our main publications.

Long-term (beyond the first year of the Strategy)

- move all reporting to Power BI and will begin to identify trends in our complaints
- research external data that could help us with own initiative reports and thematic reports
- develop a consistent branding standard to make our data easily recognisable
- develop casework trends digest to inform development of thematic and own investigation reports.



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