



**Ombwdsmon
Ombudsman**
Cymru • Wales



Ugain Mlynedd
Twenty Years

Closing a chapter, looking to the future

Annual Report and Accounts 2025-26

Executive Summary

July 2026



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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Closing a chapter, looking to the future

Executive Summary **of Annual Report and Accounts 2025-26**

of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales for the year ended 31 March 2026

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Foreword

As we conclude the final year of our Strategic Plan 2023-26, A New Chapter, we do so against the backdrop of the busiest year in the history of the office. Demand for our services continued to grow significantly, with a record numbers of complaints received and closed across our public services and Code of Conduct remits. Despite these challenges, we maintained our focus on delivering justice, improving public services and supporting higher standards of conduct across Wales.

This year marks the twentieth anniversary of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. This milestone offers an opportunity to reflect on how the role has evolved from resolving individual complaints to influencing service improvement, complaints standards and systemic change. The post-legislative review of our 2019 Act confirmed that it remains an effective and internationally recognised framework for modern ombudsman services.

Throughout the year, we delivered positive outcomes for more people than ever before, expanded the reach

of our complaints standards work, continued to develop our own initiative investigations and strengthened awareness of our service among the Welsh public. We also remained committed to improving accessibility, inclusion and organisational resilience, while maintaining high levels of staff engagement and wellbeing.

However, important challenges remain. Rising complaint volumes, possible barriers to access for some communities and the need to maximise the impact of our work continue to shape our priorities. Our new Strategic Plan 2026-29 responds to these challenges with a renewed focus on impact, accessibility and improvement, setting a clear direction for delivering a stronger service and better outcomes for the people of Wales.

Michelle Morris

Public Services Ombudsman
for Wales

July 2026

About us

We have three main roles.



We investigate complaints about public services.

We can look at the services provided by devolved public bodies in Wales such as local councils, health boards, social landlords and others. We can also look at complaints about private social care and end-of-life care, as well as some private healthcare.



We consider complaints about councillors breaching the Code of Conduct.

We look at complaints about councillors at local councils, fire authorities, national park authorities. We also look at complaints about police and crime panels. We are also a “prescribed person” under the Public Interest Disclosure Act for raising whistleblowing concerns about breaches of the Code of Conduct by members of local authorities.



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

We can investigate on our own initiative, even if we have not received a complaint. We can also set complaints standards for public bodies in Wales, monitor how they handle complaints and provide training to them.

Strategic Aim 1: Delivering justice





We received **27% more new complaints** and closed 29% more complaints overall. As we mark the 20th anniversary of the office, we note that we now receive **three times as many complaints as 20 years ago**.

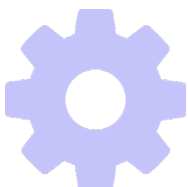


During the year, we received **4,183 new complaints about public services** – 29% more than last year.



We saw increases in the volume of complaints about

- health boards **+42%**
 - local authorities **+27%**
 - housing associations **+25%**
-



We **intervened in 568 complaints** about public services that we closed, with more than ever resolved early.



69% of recommendations due during the year were complied with in line with the target set.



In 2025-26, we received **324** duly made Code of Conduct complaints – **3%** more than last year.



We investigated **85** (about 24%) of Code of Conduct complaints that we closed this year – a significant increase on last year.



We referred **15** Code of Conduct complaints to the Adjudication Panel for Wales or local Standards Committees.



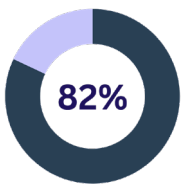
During the year, those bodies upheld **81%** of the suggested breaches that we referred.



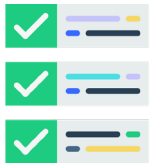
We upheld only **5%** of review requests, confirming again that our process is sound.



36% of people we asked said they were happy with our service, but this increased to **87%** among people who were happy with the outcome of their complaint.



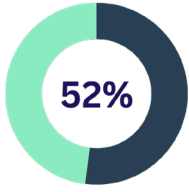
82% of Chief Executive Officers that we surveyed agreed that we had positive impact on public services in Wales.



86% of cases checked through our Service Quality process resulted in little or no feedback.

Strategic Aim 2: Increasing accessibility and inclusion





52% of the Welsh public knew about us, and 79% agreed that they had confidence in our office.



83% of our complainants that we asked said that it was easy to contact us.



We received **236 oral complaints** - a much higher number than last year (162).



We saw a marked improvement in the uptake of our service by people from diverse ethnic backgrounds.



Very few people currently use our service in Welsh, and we remain committed to encouraging more interactions with our service in Welsh.

Strategic Aim 3: Increasing impact of proactive improvement work





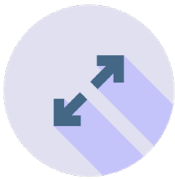
Since April 2025, 806 people received our training on good complaint handling.



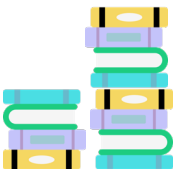
As of the end of March 2026, all local authorities, health boards and 21 housing associations in Wales were operating under our model complaints policy.



We published a follow-up report on our own initiative investigation into carers' needs assessments.



We have closed 20 own initiative investigations since we were granted this power.



We issued 9 public interest reports.



The Finance Committee concluded that our 2019 Act provided "an effective statutory basis" which supports and enables our work.

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





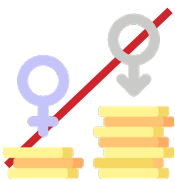
88% of our staff said that PSOW was a good place to work.



On average, only **1.96 days per employee** were lost due to sickness during the year.



Welsh language skills of our staff have again improved.



We had **no median gender pay gap**.



We reduced our CO₂ emissions further by **4%**.



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