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Twenty Years

Closing a chapter, looking to the future

Annual Report and Accounts 2025-26

July 2026

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Twenty Years

Closing a chapter, looking to the future

Annual Report and Accounts 2025-26

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

Laid before the Welsh Parliament under paragraphs 15, 17 and 18 of Schedule 1 of the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019.

Contents

Foreword

I am pleased to present this Annual Report, covering the final year of our Strategic Plan 2023-26 'A New Chapter'.

As we close the 2025-26 financial year, we mark a special point in the history of the office. It is now 20 years since the first Public Services Ombudsman for Wales took the post. It's a great opportunity to take stock of the impact we have delivered for the people of Wales over the last two decades and appreciate how our powers have changed to not only deliver justice to individuals but also support systemic improvement of services.

One of the key contrasts with the early days of the office is the volume of casework. In 2025-26, we close the busiest year on record. We received 4,507 new complaints across our public services and Code of Conduct remits. This is 27% more than last year and three times more than 20 years ago.

Against that backdrop, I am proud to report on many successes this year. We closed a record number of complaints, delivering positive outcomes to more people, while also working to improve our timeliness. We continue to receive high assurance on our Code of Conduct process. Awareness of our office is at a record high, and we have seen improved representation of some groups among our complainants. We have made progress in bringing more organisations under our Complaints Standards and used our own initiative powers in further investigations. The post-legislative review of our legislation and work, undertaken by the Senedd's Finance Committee, concluded that our Act provides a good practice template for the role of ombudsman internationally and remains an effective legislative framework that is fit for purpose.

We were pleased to see that 88% of our staff said that PSOW is a great

place to work. I want to take this opportunity to thank them for their hard work and dedication.

However, challenges remain. Chief among them is the sharp increase in the number of new complaints reaching our office. Health boards, local authorities and housing associations account for 85% of our new casework, and the volumes of complaints about these service providers increased since last year by 42%, 27% and 25% respectively. Despite these increases, we continue to see that some groups still rarely complain to us. In addition, although our service is fully bilingual, very few people interact with us in Welsh. Looking beyond our office, many people still find it hard to complain to public service providers and there remain areas of public services in Wales where access to justice is incomplete.

Yet, as we mark the 20th anniversary of the office, our eyes are firmly on the future. In April 2026, we were delighted to publish our new Strategic Plan 2026-29. The Plan responds to the challenges that we face with a renewed focus on impact, accessibility and improvement, setting out our clear ambition: to deliver a stronger service, with better impact for the people of Wales. I look forward to the work ahead.

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.

Key messages

We received **27%** more new complaints.

We closed **29%** more complaints.

We intervened in **14%** of complaints about public services that we closed, with more than ever resolved early.

We saw increases in complaints about:

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

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

15

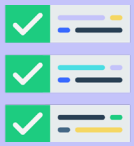
During the year, these bodies upheld **81%** of the suggested breaches that we referred.

We upheld only **5%** of review requests.

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.

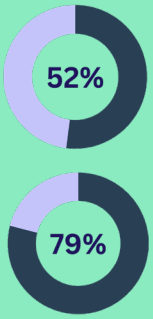
86% of cases we checked as part of our Service Quality process resulted in little or no feedback.



We accepted **236** oral complaints.

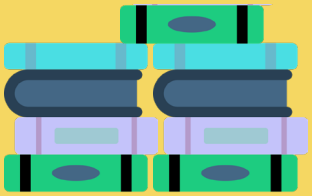
Since April 2025, **806 people** received our training on good complaint handling.

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

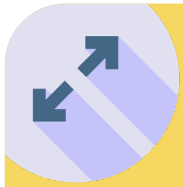


The Finance Committee decided that our 2019 Act provided "**an effective statutory basis**" which supports and enables our work.

We issued **9** public interest reports.



We **published a follow up report** on our own initiative investigation which looked into carers needs assessments.



To date, we closed **20** own initiative investigations.

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

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

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

Welsh language skills of our staff have improved.

We reduced our CO_2 emissions by **4%**.

Strategic Aim 1: Delivering justice

Introduction

This year, we again received and closed the highest number of duly made complaints* on record.

*You can find a definition of what constitutes a duly made complaint in the Appendix.

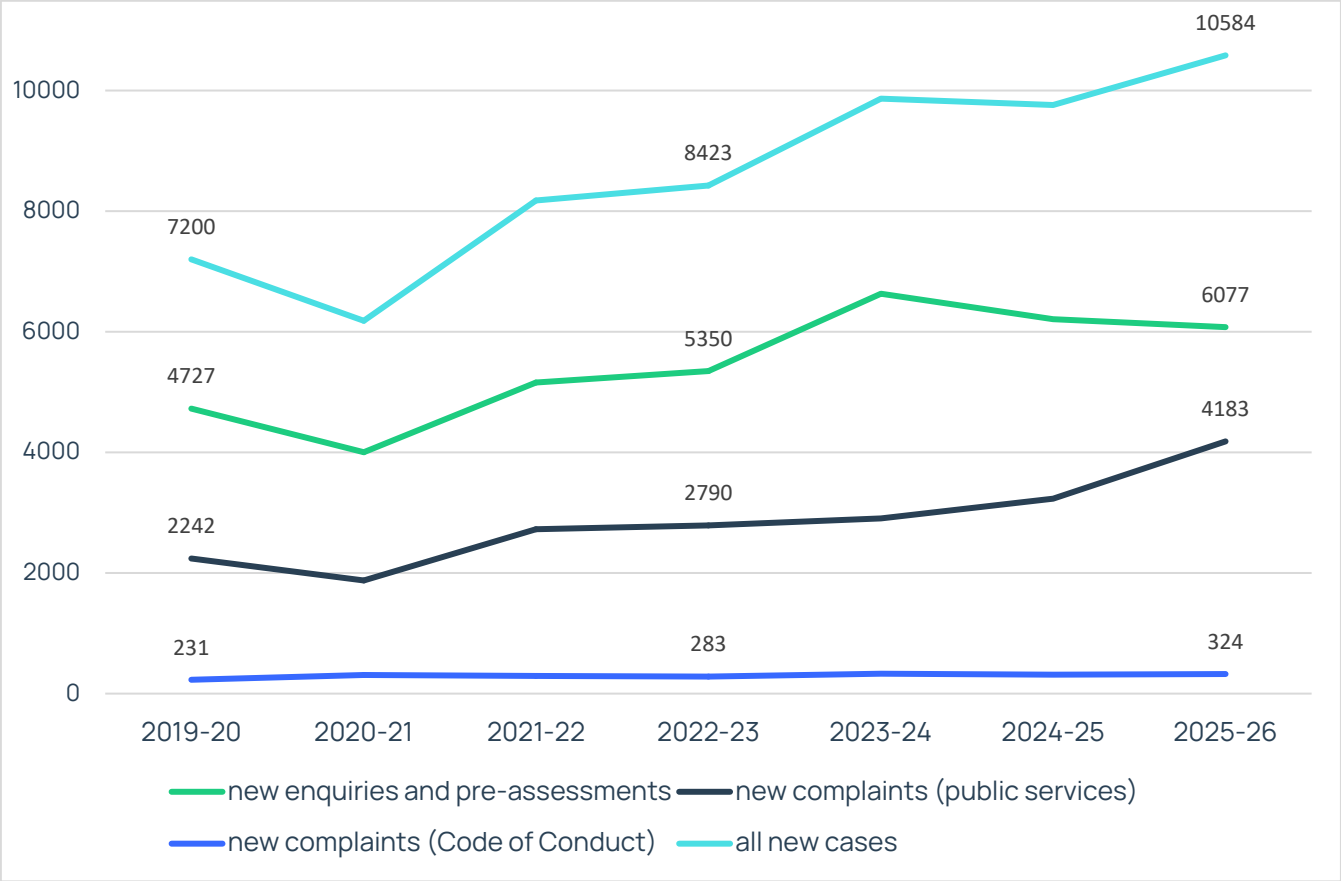
New cases

During 2025-26, we received 10,584 new cases overall. This was 8% more than last year and represents an increase of 26% over the last 3 years, during the lifetime of our 2023-26 Strategic Plan.

Of the new cases received, 6,077 were enquiries and Code of Conduct pre-assessments. These are cases that we cannot look into because the issue, or the organisation complained about is not one we can investigate, because, despite prompts, we do not have enough information about the concern or because the complainant contacted us too late or before complaining to the organisation.

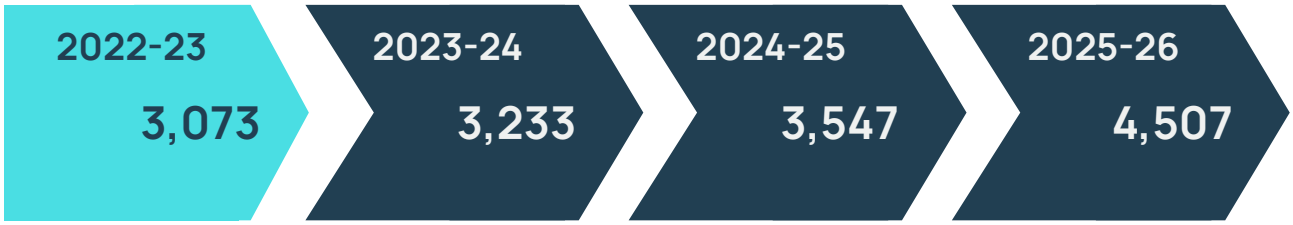
However, 4,507 of new cases were duly made complaints. This was 27% more than last year, 47% more than three years ago and the highest number of complaints we have ever received in a single year.

Figure 1: New cases (enquiries, pre-assessments and complaints) received, 2019-20 to 2025-26



As we mark the 20th anniversary of the office, we note that we now receive three times as many complaints as 20 years ago.

Figure 2 : New complaints numbers (public services and Code of Conduct)



Closed cases

Overall, we closed 10,572 cases – 9% more than last year, and 25% more than 3 years ago.

Most of these were enquiries that we would usually close after an initial check, because we cannot look into the organisation or issue complained about or we do not have enough information to proceed. When we close an enquiry, we often offer advice or point complainants to another organisation for help.

However, we also closed a record 4,496 duly made complaints about public services or the Code of Conduct – 29% more than last year and 43% more than three years ago.

We finished the year with 567 cases that will be carried forward. This is about the same as last year (562) and reflects incredible effort by our staff to consider complaints as efficiently as possible despite the ever-increasing volume of new cases received.

4,496 closed complaints overall

4,145 closed complaints about public services

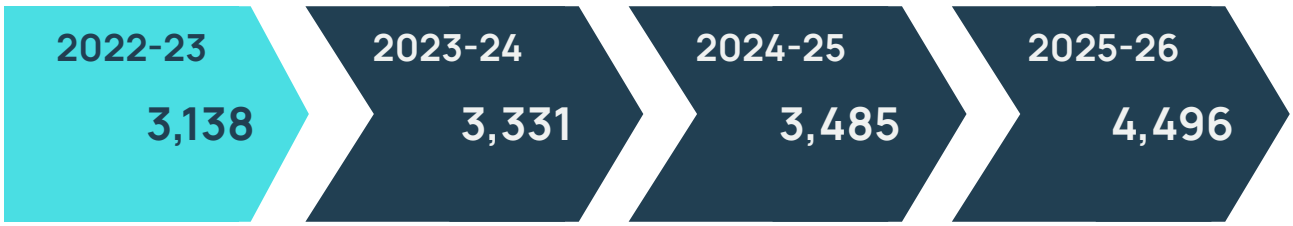
351 closed complaints about Code of Conduct

567 cases to be carried forward

Figure 3: Closed cases (enquiries, pre-assessments and complaints), 2019-20 to 2025-26

In terms of the volume of cases, a lot of our work involves the handling of enquiries. However, it is through the handling of complaints that we deliver justice for individuals, as well as supporting broader, systemic improvements across public service in Wales. The remainder of this section of our Annual Report focuses on **our complaint trends only**.

Figure 4: Closed complaints numbers (public services and Code of Conduct)



Our complaints about public services

New complaints about public services

Every year, we report on increased complaint numbers. This year was no exception; however, we have never seen as sharp an increase. For the first time, we have received more than 4,000 complaints about public services, a 29% increase compared to last year, and 50% increase compared to 3 years ago.

New complaint subjects

Health remains the most common subject of our new complaints, overall. These complaints account for 36% of our new workload, marginally higher than last year (34%). The number of complaints about clinical treatment in hospital and about GP services has increased again. These two subjects now account for 60% of all our health-related complaints (compared to 61% last year).

The proportion of complaints about complaint handling remains unchanged from last year (12%). While we welcome that there has been no increase in the representation of these complaints, we hope for further reduction as we expand our complaints standards work and training to further organisations (see 'Complaints Standards' section later in this report).

The proportion of complaints about social housing has marginally decreased, to 18%, from 19% last year. Over the last three years, these complaints have consistently accounted for about 18% of our new workload. We trust that this reflects the impact of our complaints standards work and better recording practices within the sector.


Health 36%


Housing 18%


Complaint handling 12%


Other 34%

Health boards

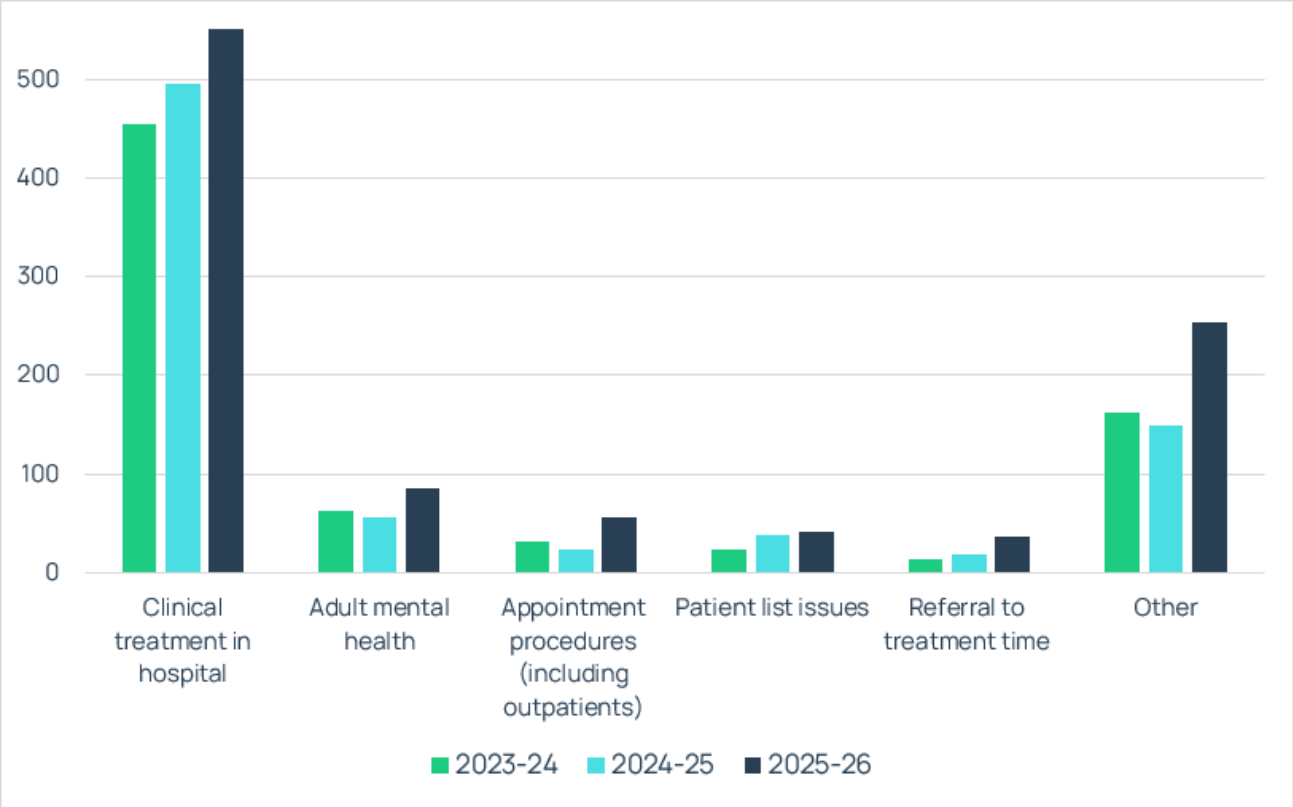
In 2025-26, we received 1,351 complaints about Welsh health boards. This is a very significant increase of 42% since last year and 46% compared to 3 years ago.

By far, the most common area of these complaints is clinical treatment in hospital, and we have seen the proportion of these complains increasing between 2023-24 and 2025-26.

In addition, about 14% of complaints about health boards related to complaint handling. This was a welcome drop from 16% the year before.

We consistently receive more complaints about Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board than any other health board. However, when we consider the population figures for each health board, Swansea Bay University Health Board was subject to most complaints per 1000 residents.

Figure 5: Subjects of new complaints about Welsh health boards



Local authorities

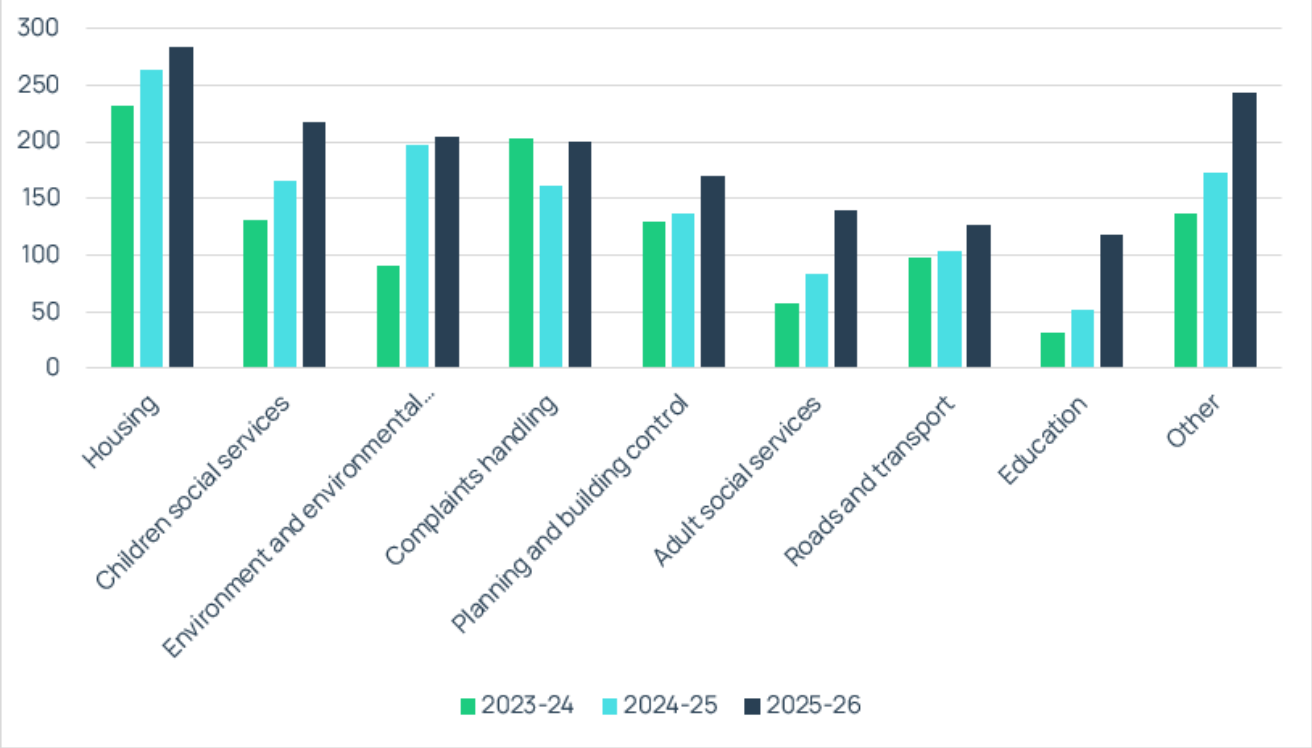
We received 1,704 complaints about local authorities – a significant increase of 27% on the previous year and 67% compared to 3 years ago.

Over the last three years, we have seen a consistent increase in the numbers of complaints across a range of subjects – from housing and social services to environment and environmental health, planning and education.

Complaint handling was the only subject for which the number of complaints has marginally decreased compared to 2023-24 – though again, we noted an increase for this subject between 2024-25 and this year.

Unsurprisingly, the local authorities with the largest number of residents generate the highest number of complaints. However, the authority with the highest proportion of complaints per 1000 residents was Denbighshire County Council. Still, we saw large increases in complaints numbers across the sector, with the number of complaints increasing by over 50% at several authorities. This year, only Ceredigion, Torfaen and Wrexham recorded fewer complaints than in 2024-25.

Figure 6: Subjects of new complaints about Welsh local authorities



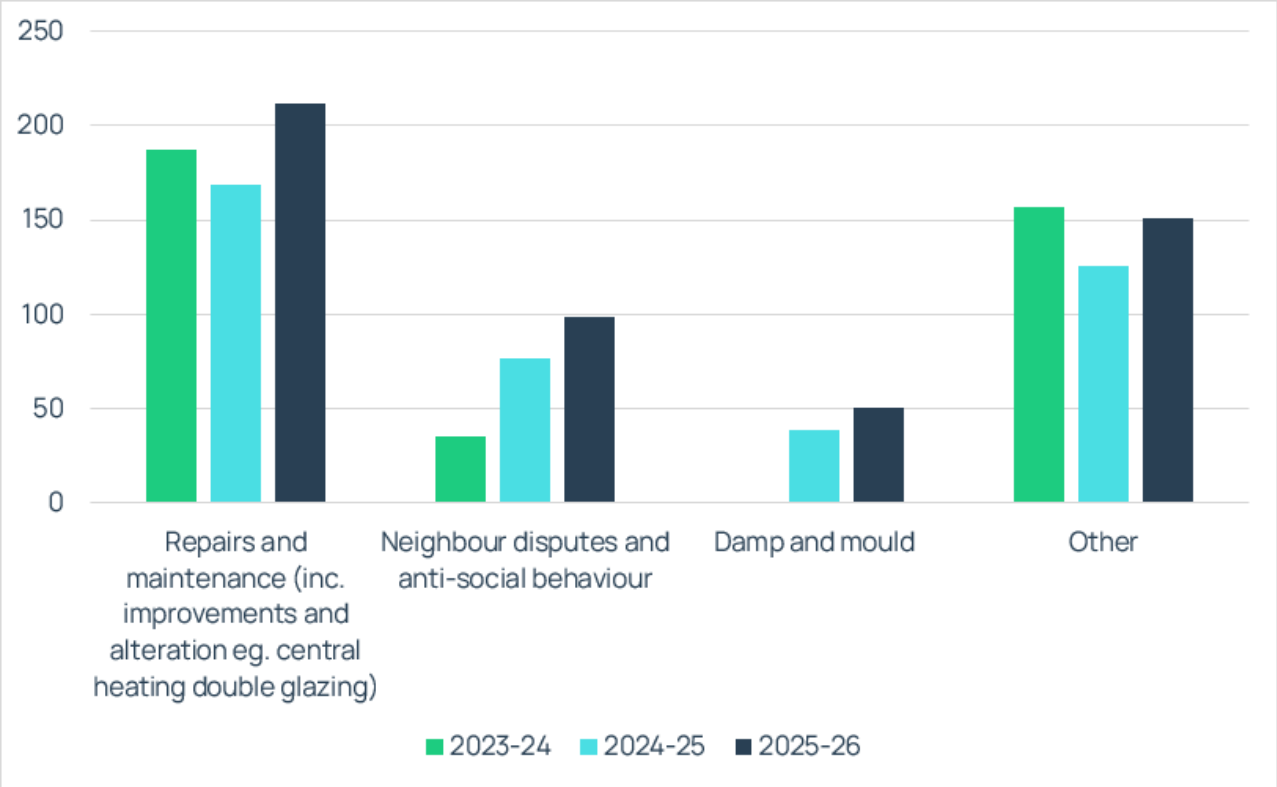
Housing associations

We received 513 complaints about housing associations. This is a significant 25% increase from the previous year and an increase of 47% compared to 3 years ago.

Repairs and maintenance made up 41% of our new complaints about housing associations – the same as last year and a decrease compared to the first year of our Strategic Plan 2023-26.

Compared to last year, we have seen increases in all main subjects of our housing complaints – from repairs and maintenance and neighbour disputes and antisocial behaviour to complaints about damp and mould. This year, we launched 2 own initiative investigations looking into how social landlords respond to complaints about repairs and damp and mould. We talk more about this work in the 'Own Initiative investigations' section of this report.

Figure 7: Subjects of new complaints about Welsh housing associations



Closed complaints about public services

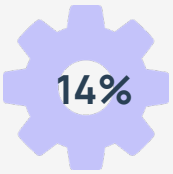
In 2025-26, we closed a record 4,145 complaints about public services – 31% more than last year and 45% more than 3 years ago, when we were commencing our Strategic Plan 2023-26.

Despite this increase, we continued to resolve complaints in a timely fashion, with investigations into public services taking on average 10.8 months - well within the target of 12 months (52 weeks).

If we find that things went wrong, we will intervene to put them right. We can intervene without investigating by suggesting an Early Resolution. We can also intervene after we investigate - by issuing a report which upholds a complaint, or by suggesting a settlement between the body and the person complaining.

This year, we intervened in 14% of complaints about public services that we closed.

We closed **4,145** complaints about public services - 31% more than last year.



We intervened in **14%** of complaints about public services that we closed.

Assessment (Stage 1): 3,984 complaints closed

We look at all complaints carefully, to decide if we can or should investigate and where something has gone wrong, whether we can help to put things right by way of an Early Resolution. However, assessing all these cases requires a lot of detailed work from our staff, especially if we are in a position to propose how the complaint can be resolved early.

We closed **3,518** complaints at assessment, because, for example

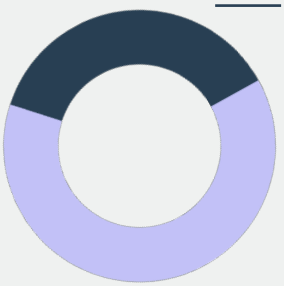
- they came to us prematurely
- were not serious enough to meet our threshold for full investigation, or
- we did not consider we could achieve anything further by means of an investigation.

Many of these decisions were reached after we gathered further information and completed a carefully considered and detailed assessment.

We closed **466** further complaints by intervening early.

Investigation (Stage 2): 161 complaints closed

We only investigate in more complex cases that we cannot resolve in any other way.



In **59** cases, we did not uphold the complaint, or we discontinued the investigation as we did not find evidence of maladministration or service failure and/or injustice.

In **102** cases, we upheld the complaint, agreed a voluntary settlement or discontinued the investigation but still offered some Early Resolution.

Overall, we intervened in 568 or 14% of the complaints that we closed. This was a lower intervention rate than last year (18%). However, because of the unprecedented 31% increase in complaints that we closed, we intervened in a higher number of cases overall – 568, compared with 554 last year.

Positively, this year we continued to intervene mainly early on. We understand that many people who complain to us want a swift resolution, as investigations can take significant time. When we can, we want to close complaints promptly. This year, 85% of our interventions included an element of Early Resolution.

Recommendations

When we find that something has gone wrong with public services, we recommend that the body that provided those services puts things right.

In 2025-26, 1,534 recommendations were falling due.

As in previous years, we most commonly recommended that the organisation should apologise – with this type of action making up 25% of our recommendations.

While it is not our primary remedy, we sometimes recommend financial redress - for example, for the complainant's time and trouble in bringing a complaint to the Ombudsman, or for distress caused to the complainant.

However, most people who complain to us want to make sure that others will not have to face the same injustice.

16% of our recommendations falling due this year were about taking steps to make sure that services improve – for example, through training or feedback for staff, review of current practice, or us recommending that a procedure should change.

16% of our recommendations were about making sure that services improve.

Compliance

Our recommendations aim to put things right, secure justice and improve services for the benefit of the public - not just for those who complain. In practice, public bodies routinely carry out the actions we suggest.

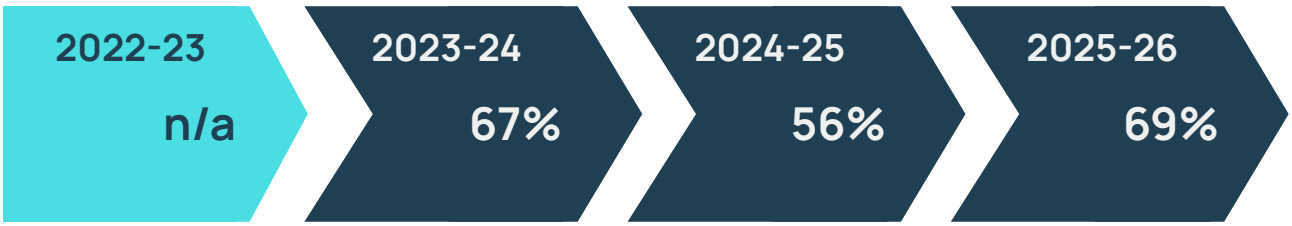
When we make recommendations, we agree a date by which the organisation needs to comply and we ask them to provide evidence that they have complied. During the year, we have continued our efforts to ensure that organisations show us how they complied with our recommendations and we have also changed the way we measure this, to focus on timely action.

- 94% of our recommendations were complied with in 2025-26.
- 69% of these were in time with the target date agreed. This was a higher proportion than last year (56%) and much closer to our target of 75%.

Overall, while the timeliness of compliance with our recommendations has improved, we continue to experience delays in organisations providing evidence to demonstrate that they have complied with our recommendations in time.

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

Figure 8: Compliance with our recommendations within the target date



Our complaints about the Code of Conduct

The Model Code of Conduct

The Model Code of Conduct, introduced in Wales in 2008, sets out enforceable minimum standards for the way in which councillors and members of some other public bodies should conduct themselves, both in terms of their official capacity and (in some instances) in their personal capacity as well.

The public bodies that the Model Code of Conduct applies to include local councils; town and community councils; fire and rescue authorities; national park authorities and police and crime panels in Wales.

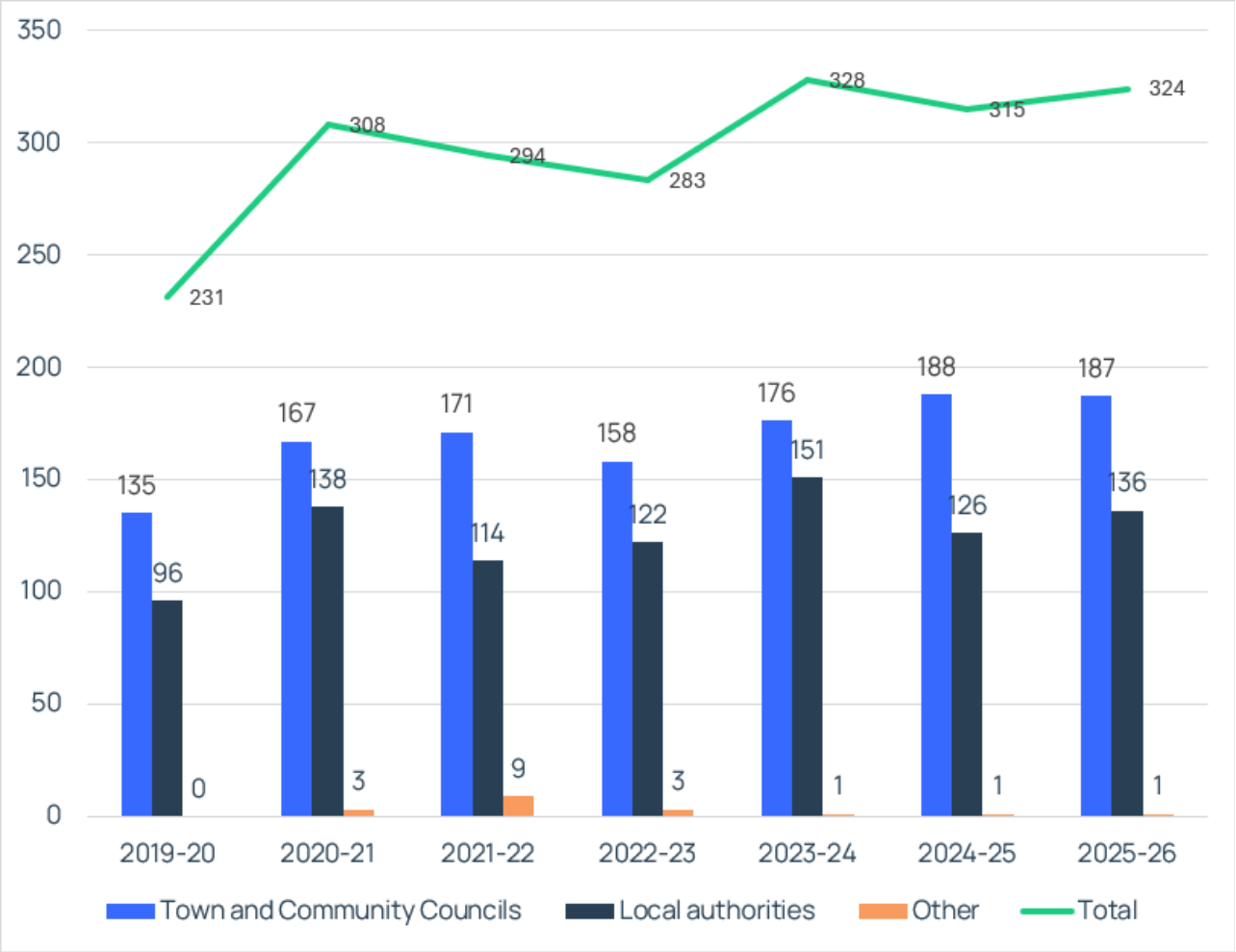
New Code of Conduct complaints

In 2025-26, we received 324 duly made Code of Conduct complaints – 3% more than last year and 14% more than 3 years ago, when we were commencing our Strategic Plan 2023-26.

Of these, 187 (58%) were complaints about town and community councillors and 136 (42%) about local authority councillors, with 1 further complaint concerning a national park councillor.

Town and community council complaints remain the largest group of our Code of Conduct complaints overall, but we saw the proportion of these complaints decrease slightly to 58% (from 60% last year).

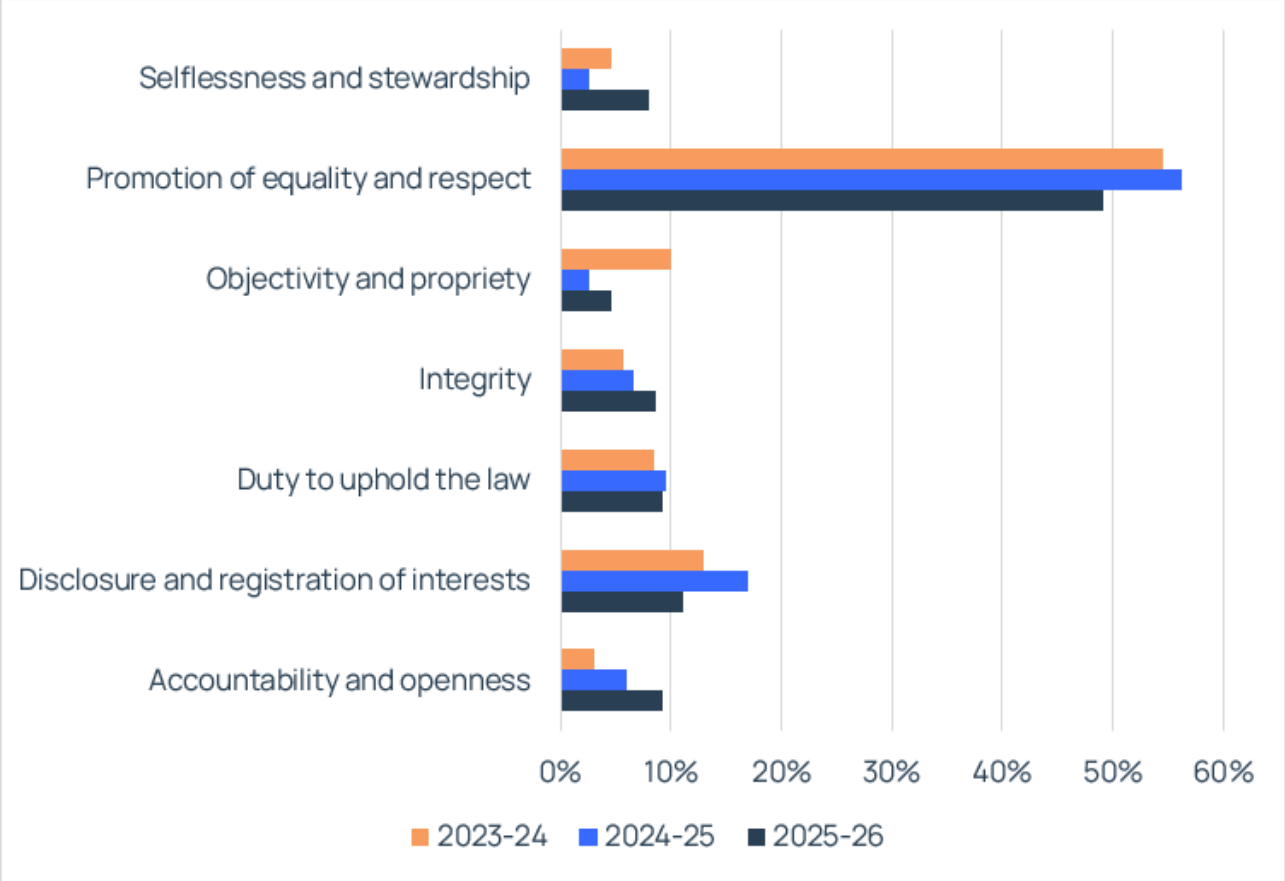
Figure 9: New Code of Conduct complaints by body



We analyse and report on the subject of Code of Conduct complaints, based on the Nolan Principles which are designed to promote high standards in public life. While the majority (49%) of duly made complaints were about the promotion of equality and respect, this subject accounted for a much lower proportion of our Code of Conduct complaints overall than last year (56%).

Generally, the cases that we categorise under 'respect' are lower-level complaints. These are the ones where we tend to decide quickly that we will not investigate, where we recommend that the complaint is best resolved locally, or where the complaint is withdrawn. The complaints that we categorise under 'equality' commonly involve more serious allegations of bullying or discrimination.

Figure 10: New Code of Conduct complaints subjects



Closed Code of Conduct complaints

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 cases to either the relevant Standards Committee or the Adjudication Panel for Wales. 81% of the suggested breaches we referred were upheld.

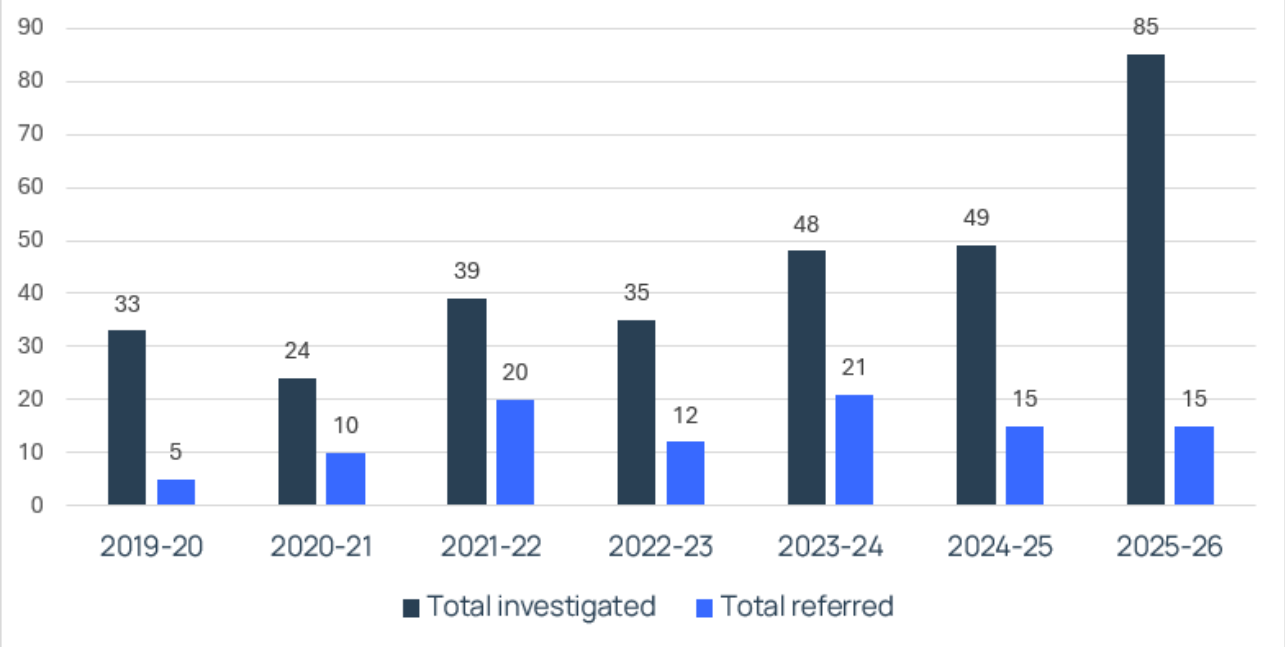
We apply our 'public interest test' to decide which cases we should investigate. Public interest can be described as something which is of serious concern or benefit to the public.

Generally, we investigate only a small proportion of the Code of Conduct complaints we receive. This shows that the standards of conduct in local government are generally good.

In 2025-26, we closed 351 complaints about the Code of Conduct - an increase of 10% compared to last year and 25% more than 3 years ago.

Within this number, we also closed significantly more investigations. We investigated 85 of the complaints that we closed – 73% more than last year and 143% more than 3 years ago. At the same time, we succeeded in significantly reducing the number of aged investigations (over 12 months).

Figure 11: Closed Code of Conduct complaints investigated and referred



It is not up to us to decide whether a councillor has breached the Code. We investigate and consider that there may have been a sufficiently serious breach of the Code and we then refer the complaint and our findings to a local Standards Committee or to the Adjudication Panel for Wales to determine.

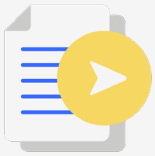
These bodies then independently look at the evidence we have gathered, together with any information put forward by the councillor concerned.

They then decide whether the councillor breached the Code of Conduct and if so, what sanction to impose.

In 2025-26, we referred 15 complaints to the Standards Committees of the relevant local authorities or to the Adjudication Panel for Wales – the same number as last year.

Standards Committees of the relevant local authorities and the Adjudication Panel for Wales upheld 81% of the suggested breaches that we referred. While this was a slightly lower proportion than last year (85%), this performance continues to demonstrate the high standard and consistency of our Code of Conduct investigations.

We include overleaf the summaries of all decisions on our referrals this year.



In 2025-26, we referred **15** complaints to the Adjudication Panel for Wales and Standards Committees.

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

St Nicholas & Bonvilston Community Council (202104717)

Our report, which we referred to a Standards Committee for hearing in 2024-25, was considered on appeal by the Adjudication Panel for Wales in 2025-26.

The Adjudication Panel for Wales decided that the Councillor had not failed to comply with the Code of Conduct and overturned the Standards Committee's determination.

Isle of Anglesey County Council (202302251)

Our report concerned a complaint that a Councillor of Isle of Anglesey County Council had made inappropriate comments at a meeting and, in doing so, brought his office and/or authority into disrepute.

The Standards Committee decided to censure the Councillor. It also made 2 recommendations to support its aim of maintaining public confidence.

Pembrokeshire County Council (202300186)

Our report concerned a complaint that a Councillor of Pembrokeshire County Council had recorded a racist voice note, shared information relating to Council business, made disrespectful comments about members of the public and, in doing so, brought his office and/or authority into disrepute. The Adjudication Panel for Wales decided to disqualify the Councillor from acting as a councillor for any authority for a period of 4 years.

Brackla Community Council (202208538)

Our report concerned a complaint that a Councillor of Brackla Community Council had maliciously and deliberately tried to discredit another councillor during a public Council meeting. The Standards Committee decided to censure the Councillor.

Chirk Town Council (202108695)

Our report concerned a complaint that a former Councillor of Chirk Town Council had brought his office and authority into disrepute. The Standards Committee decided to censure the former Councillor.

Neyland Town Council (202303825, 202306824 and 202307937)

Our report concerned a complaint that a Councillor of Neyland Town Council had failed to treat the Clerk and fellow councillors with consideration and respect over a prolonged period and amounted to bullying and/or harassment, brought his office and/or authority into disrepute and failed to comply with the Ombudsman's requests in respect of the investigation into his conduct. The Adjudication Panel for Wales decided to disqualify the Councillor from acting as a councillor for any authority for a period of 4 years.

Welshpool Town Council (202202515 and 202208668)

Our report concerned a complaint that a Councillor of Welshpool Town Council had behaved in a bullying and disrespectful way towards others and brought his office into disrepute. The Standards Committee decided to censure the Councillor.

Neyland Town Council (202302731, 202304678, 202306825 and 202307936)

Our report concerned a complaint that a former Councillor of Neyland Town Council had bullied the Clerk and fellow councillors, failed to show them respect, made vexatious, malicious or frivolous complaints and brought his office and/or authority into disrepute. The Adjudication Panel for Wales decided to disqualify the former Councillor from acting as a councillor for any authority for a period of 3 years.

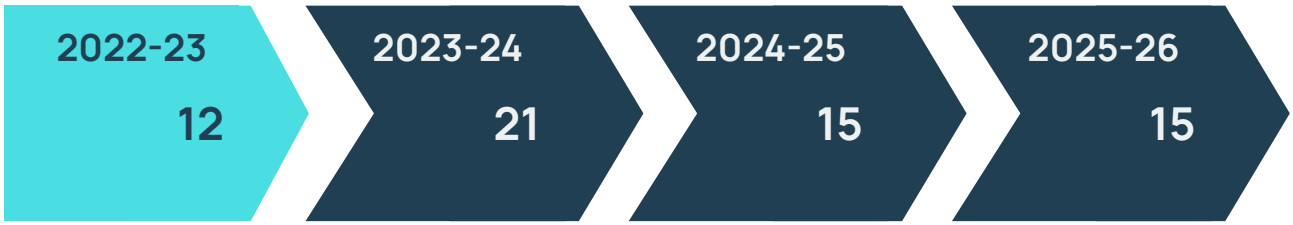
Cyngor Gwynedd (202309568)

Our report concerned a complaint that a Councillor of Cyngor Gwynedd had received a Conditional Caution for "Fraud by abuse of position" by attempting to defraud his employer, through the misappropriation of funds and bringing his office and authority into disrepute. The Adjudication Panel for Wales decided to disqualify the former Councillor from acting as a councillor for any authority for a period of 3 years.

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council (202407222)

Our report concerned a complaint that a Councillor of Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council had sent an email to a Council employee which was disrespectful and bullying in nature and subsequently victimised the employee by lodging a complaint against them. The Standards Committee decided to censure the Councillor.

Figure 12: Code of Conduct complaint referrals



The quality of our decisions

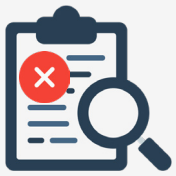
Review requests

We do our best to make sure that we handle complaints fairly and in a transparent way. We have a process to deal with requests for a review of our decisions. Those reviews are considered by an experienced member of staff who was not previously involved in the case.

This year, we saw a significant increase in demand for our review service. Despite this, we confirmed our decision at review in 95% of cases.

In 2025-26, we received 311 requests from complainants asking us to review our decision. This was 39% more than last year (224). In addition, we brought 33 requests from the previous year, bringing the total review requests caseload to 344. We closed 267 of our review requests, with 86 requests open at year-end.

Once we have issued our review decision, we sometimes receive further correspondence from complainants. We log these as a 'follow-up'. In 2025-26, we received 45 follow-ups, 18% more than last year (38). We also brought 3 follow-ups from the previous year, bringing the total follow-up caseload to 48. We closed 45 follow-ups, with 3 open at year-end.



We upheld only **5%** of the review requests that we dealt with this year - a smaller proportion than last year (6%).

We include follow-ups in this calculation as we take care to consider everything sent to us. The number of upheld cases (15) constitutes only a very small proportion of our closed complaints overall (0.4%) and gives us confidence that our process is sound.

When we uphold a review request, we take steps to make sure we learn any lessons.

Cases subject to judicial review

The Ombudsman is a Corporation Sole. This means that the person appointed to the role is fully responsible for casework decisions. Complainants can request an internal review of a casework decision that they are unhappy with (as described above). However, the appropriate route to challenge our decisions further is through judicial review.

One application for permission to bring a judicial review to challenge a decision we took was made to the High Court during 2025-26. The application was refused by the Court.

The quality of our service

We want to deliver an excellent service. We have 5 Service Standards that explain the service people can expect from us.

To check how we are doing, every year we monitor and analyse our performance and gather feedback from our service users and from organisations that we look into.

What complainants think about our service

Every February, we organise a telephone survey of a sample of people who have complained to us during that year.

The proportion of people who said that they were happy with the service they received from us was 36% - lower than last year (42%).

This figure increased to 87% for those satisfied with the outcome of their complaint – a very high proportion, though a decline compared to the previous year (95%).

Generally, people tended to be much happier when we intervened in their complaint.

As last year, we checked in more detail how satisfied people were with our service depending on the type of intervention (early resolution or intervention at investigation stage).

- Timeliness of our service was rated higher by people whose complaints we resolved early.
- However, overall, satisfaction scores were higher or much higher among respondents for whom we intervened at investigation. This included overall satisfaction with the outcome and customer service.

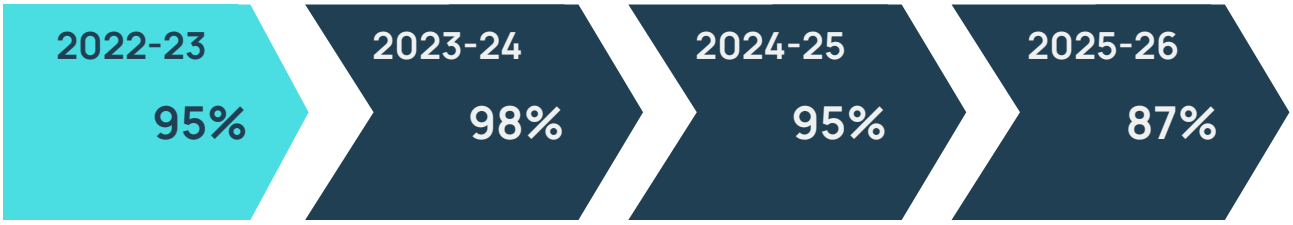
We understand that the outcome of a complaint will influence assessment of our service. As our investigations take much longer than the process we use to resolve complaints early, and people whose complaints we investigated have more opportunity to develop a deeper, more personal relationship with our office, it is also not surprising that people whose complaints we investigated tend to rate our service higher.

Nevertheless, we take this feedback seriously. As we will have to continue to use our limited investigation resources wisely and proportionately, resorting to early resolution as often as possible, a key area of our focus will be to improve the satisfaction with our service by those whose complaints we intervene in at an early stage.

36% of people that we asked said that they were happy with the service they received from us.

However, this proportion increased to **87%** among service users satisfied with the outcome of their complaint.

Figure 13: Service user satisfaction with our service (people satisfied with the outcome)



Complaints about our service

In 2025-26, we received 34 complaints about our service, with 4 further complaints carried over from 2024-25.

We closed 34 complaints about us. Of these, we upheld or partially upheld 8 or 24%, a lower proportion than last year (29%).

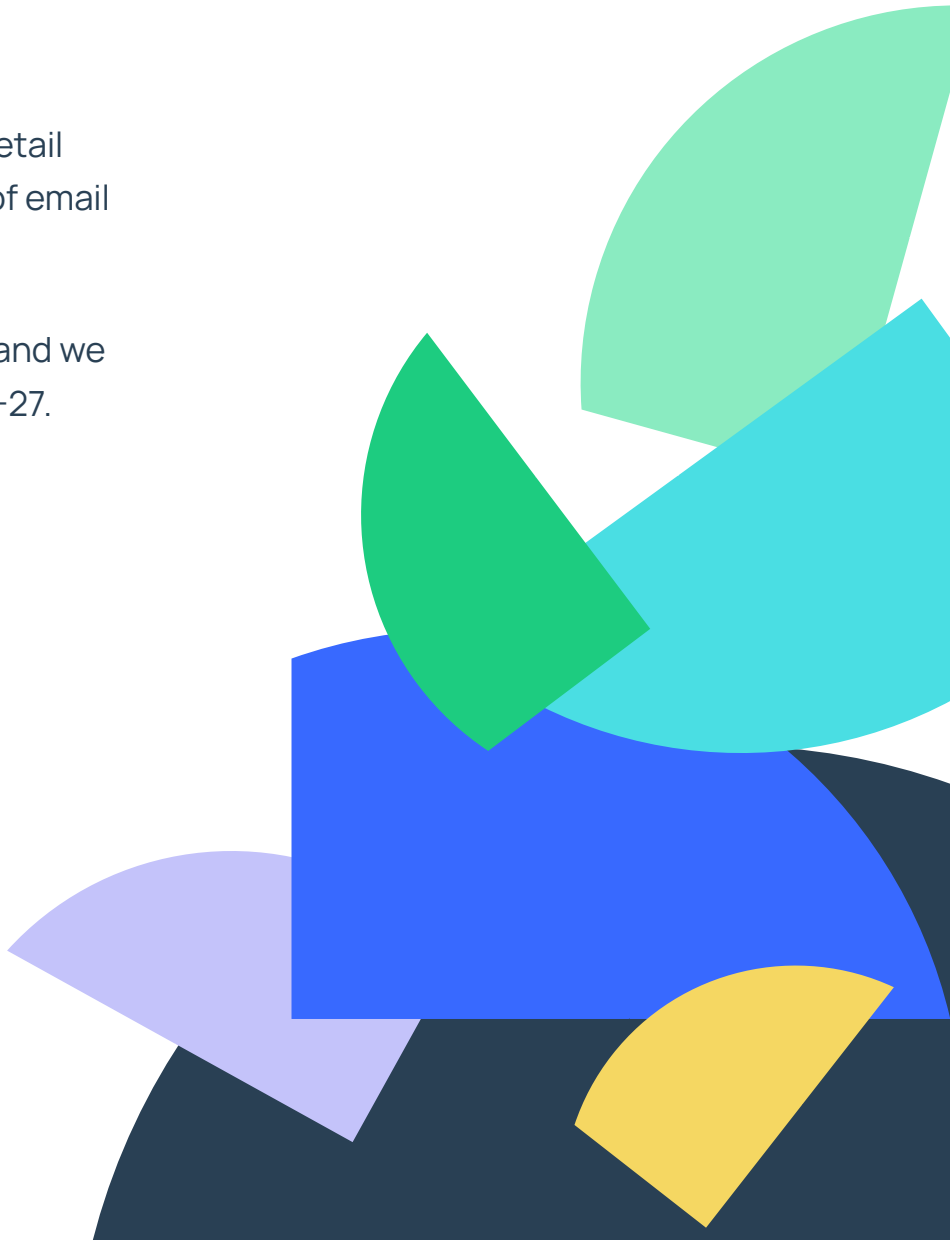
To put this into context, the upheld complaints about us related to 0.2% of all complaints that we closed during 2025-26.

These complaints related to communication, attention to detail and issues with management of email correspondence.

2 complaints were withdrawn, and we carried 2 complaints into 2026-27.

To ensure that we are open and accountable, if people are unhappy with how we handled their complaint about us, they can ask for that complaint about our service to be considered by an external independent review service.

During 2025-26, the service considered 6 complaints. It partially upheld 1 of these complaints.



What organisations think about our service

We conduct an annual survey of officers that deal with complaints at main bodies within our jurisdiction – health boards, local authorities and housing associations - to gather views on our service.

This year, we also conducted a similar survey gathering views of Chief Executive Officers at those organisations.

Questions related to aspects such as communications, process, our decision making, provision of guidance and training, quality of publications and our impact.

Our complaints officer research showed that:

- While respondents scored different aspects of our recent service generally lower than last year, the overall satisfaction with the service was 8.4 out of 10 – compared to 8.1 last year.
- We saw significant improvements in assessment of impact of our public interest reports, thematic reports and own initiative investigations.
- 85% of complaints officers agreed that our findings positively influenced their organisation, and 81% said that we contributed to improving public services in Wales.

Complaints officers that took part in our survey rated our service 8.4 out of 10.

Our survey of Chief Executive Officers showed that:

- the respondents generally agreed that we were effective in handling complaints about their organisation and that we were fair in our approach.
- almost all respondents agreed that we were independent and impartial.
- 78% of respondents told us that our work had positive impact on their organisation and 82% agreed that we had positive impact on public services in Wales.

However, the research pointed to some areas that we need to look at.

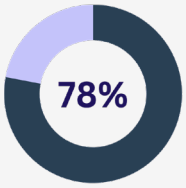
These included:

- the timeliness of our process and updates.
- consistency of our deadlines and more appreciation of organisations' capacity to respond.
- clarity and consistency of our communication and decisions.

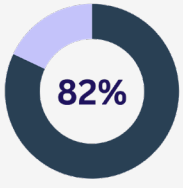
Respondents also highlighted interest in more sharing of good practice and learning and more sector-specific learning materials and complaints standards training.

This feedback is important to us, and we will look at what improvements we can make to reflect it.

Of the Chief Executive Officers that responded to our survey



78% agreed that that our work had positive impact on their organisation.



82% agreed that we had positive impact on public services in Wales.

How quickly we consider complaints

We understand that the people who come to us want their complaints resolved as quickly as possible and we are committed to dealing with them in a timely manner.

In 2025-26, we assessed incoming complaints, or intervened with an Early Resolution, within an average of 4 weeks - well within our target of 6 weeks.

Across our public services and Code of Conduct work, we completed investigations on average in 54 weeks, slightly above our target of 52 weeks. Nevertheless, this performance continues to represent an improvement from 64 weeks in 2023-24.

Despite the significant increase in closures of public service complaints, we continued to resolve these complaints in a timely fashion, with investigations into public services taking on average 10.8 months - well within the target of 12 months (52 weeks).

In respect of our Code of Conduct work, we assigned more resources to our Code of Conduct team and made significant progress in reducing our investigation time and resolving a number of aged cases. With this work now largely complete, we expect our timeliness performance to continue to improve.

We are continually adapting our ways of working to ensure efficient use of resources and progression of cases in a more timely and effective manner.

In 2025-26, we assessed incoming complaints, or intervened with an Early Resolution, within an average of 4 weeks - well within our target of 6 weeks.

Service quality checks

The goal of our Service Quality work is to provide feedback to our staff, and management, on how the actions of our investigation officers, in their day-to-day handling of complaints, affect the level of service we provide to the general public.

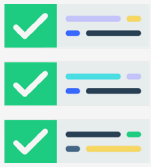
Service Quality operates in real time – checking cases which are still ongoing, giving us the opportunity to remedy service issues more quickly – as opposed to providing feedback on a closed case.

We completed 267 checks throughout the year.

Overall, our Service Quality checks highlighted the hard work and dedication of our investigation officers who provided a good service on often challenging and complex matters.

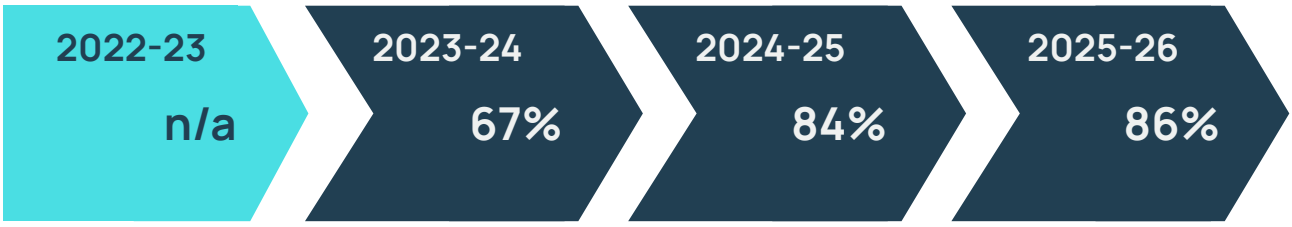
86% of cases we checked this year resulted in little or no feedback – against our target of 85%.

We'll continue to implement our Service Quality process, ensuring that the feedback we provide leads to the best service possible to the people of Wales.



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

Figure 14: Proportion of Service Quality reviews satisfactory or better



Automation and AI

One of our ongoing challenges is how to manage our growing workload without compromising the quality of our service.

- We have already made changes to reduce the administrative effort required when new complaints are received, for example through the use of automatic acknowledgements and improved online guidance.
- Our website includes a complaints checker to help people understand whether we can consider their complaint before it is submitted.
- We continue to explore opportunities to improve how we communicate and exchange information with complainants and public bodies, including the potential use of digital portal technology.

During the year, we continued our work to understand how Artificial Intelligence (AI) could support our services and ways of working. We have developed an AI policy and governance arrangements to ensure any use of AI is safe, ethical, transparent and subject to appropriate human oversight.

We will continue to assess opportunities to use AI and automation to improve efficiency and staff productivity, while maintaining public trust, protecting information, and ensuring that people remain accountable for decisions and outcomes.

Whistle-blowing Disclosure Report

Since 1 April 2017, the Ombudsman is a 'prescribed person' under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998. The Act provides protection for employees who pass on information concerning wrongdoing in certain circumstances. The protection only applies where the person who makes the disclosure reasonably believes that:

1. They are acting in the public interest, which means that protection is not normally given for personal grievances.

2. The disclosure is about one of the following:

- Criminal offences (this includes financial improprieties, such as fraud)
- Failure to comply with duties set out in law
- Miscarriages of justice
- Endangering someone's health and safety
- Damage to the environment
- Covering up wrongdoing in any of the above categories.

As a 'prescribed person', the Ombudsman is required to report annually on whistleblowing disclosures made in the context of Code of Conduct complaints only.

We started the year with 25 open complaints that would potentially meet the statutory definition of disclosure from employees or former employees of a council, carried over from the previous years:

- 1 complaint received in 2022-23: at Investigation stage.
- 10 complaints received in 2023-24: all at Investigation stage.
- 14 complaints received in 2024-25: 13 at Investigation stage and 1 at Assessment stage.

In 2025-26, we received 20 further such complaints.

Of these, during 2025-26, we closed the following:

- 1 complaint received in 2022-23: we closed this investigation with decision that no action was necessary.
- 10 complaints received in 2023-24: we closed 8 of these investigations with decision that no action was necessary, with further 2 investigations discontinued.
- 12 complaints received in 2024-25: we closed 3 of these investigations with decision that no action was necessary, with further 4 investigations discontinued. We referred 5 of these investigations to the relevant Standards Committees. All of these investigations related to promotion of equality and respect.
- 11 complaints received in 2025-26: of these 2 proceeded to be investigated. We closed 1 of these investigations with a decision that no action was necessary, with 1 further investigation of a complaint related to disclosure and registration of interests referred to a Standards Committee.

At 2025-26 year-end, the following complaints were open:

- 2 complaints received in 2024-25: 1 at Assessment stage and one at Investigation stage.
- 8 complaints received in 2025-26: 5 of these complaints are currently at Investigation stage.

Investigation of 1 further complaint received in 2025-26 is currently suspended.

Strategic Aim 2: Increasing accessibility and inclusion

We want to make sure that we offer a fair and equal service to all. We had some successes this year, but we will continue to work to improve how accessible we are. We publish detailed information about the profile of people who complain to us in our Annual Equality Report. Go to our Annual Equality Reports on our website.

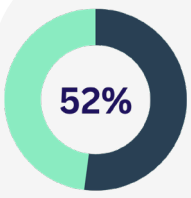
Awareness of our service

We regularly commission a survey to check how many people in Wales know about our services. This survey is based on a representative quota sample, consisting of a minimum of 1,000 adults aged 16+ who are resident in Wales.

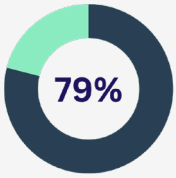
This year, 52% of people asked said that they knew about us – compared to 48% last year. Crucially, awareness increased for all target groups, with particular gains among ethnically diverse communities. Of all the groups that we monitor, only younger respondent group (16-34) reported significantly lower than average awareness of the office.

This year, for the first time we sought to capture also awareness of our Code of Conduct remit. 75% of people who knew about us stated correctly that we can look into complaints about conduct of councillors.

Positively, confidence in our office has remained high, at 79% - the same as last year. 80% of people believed we are impartial and 87% felt they could approach us if they needed to. These are strong results, suggesting that, on the whole, the Welsh public has a positive opinion of our service.



52% of people asked said that they knew about us.



79% of people who knew about us said that they had confidence in our service.

Access

Contacting us

Some people may find it more difficult to complain than others and there are many ways in which we can help.

We were glad to see that, in 2025-26, 83% of our complainants that we asked said that it was easy to contact us. Though a slightly lower result than last year (86%), this was still a very large proportion of our complainants. Importantly, views on accessibility of our service were broadly the same regardless of complainant age, ethnicity, disability, educational attainment and ability to speak Welsh.

While most people complain to us online, by email or by post, we can accept complaints that are not in writing. This year, we took 236 oral complaints, a much higher number than last year (162).

We want to make sure that everyone who may need to use this service knows about it. Nation-wide awareness research that we commission showed again that about three quarters of respondents knew that we could accept oral complaints. 59% - a higher proportion than last year – knew that we could accept a complaint via British Sign Language (BSL). This shows that the level of awareness of this option to complain is generally good but could still be improved, particularly among disabled people. We will continue to raise awareness of this service.

We took 236 oral complaints, a much higher number than last year.

Figure 15: Number of oral complaints received

Additional support

We ask everyone who complains to us if they need help and support. For example, we can offer documents in different formats, arrange translation into different languages, or signpost people to relevant advice or advocacy bodies.

In 2025-26, people in 526 cases informed us of their needs (for example, that they had dyslexia or they were neurodiverse) or asked us to adjust the way we communicate with them.

Every year, we ask people if they agree that we met their requests for additional support. While the sample tends to be small, but the proportion who agreed that we did meet their needs increased from 36% in 2024-25 to 70% in 2025-26.

Diversity and inclusion

We continue in our efforts to make sure that the profile of our complainants reflects the demographic profile of Wales. In our communications and engagement work during 2025-26, we have focused in particular on:

- people from diverse ethnic backgrounds
- people from diverse national backgrounds
- Welsh speakers
- people experiencing socio-economic disadvantage.

We attended several events to promote our services, including the Royal Welsh Agricultural Show, National Eisteddfod, Minority Ethnic Communities Health Fair and TPAS Cymru national conference.

We were also grateful to contribute to talk about our work in a podcast produced by the Polish Integration Support Centre in Wrexham.

We want to use social media to help us reach out to more people. This year, we secured very strong engagement with our content on LinkedIn and Facebook, and we sought new audiences on Instagram.

During the year, we were delighted to see a marked improvement in the uptake of our service by people from diverse ethnic backgrounds. However, some groups still rarely complain to us. We will continue to work to reach more people in these groups.

Organisations that support our complainants

We know that third sector organisation and elected representatives – Senedd Members and Members of the UK Parliament – offer key support and advice to people experiencing problems with public services.

Of our service users that we surveyed this year, 5% heard about us from advice and advocacy organisations; and 4% from an elected representative.

We have continued to engage with these stakeholders to raise awareness of how we can help:

- For the first time, we attended and exhibited at gofod3, the largest event for voluntary sector organisations in Wales.
- We offered free training on our role and powers to 4 constituency offices in Wales and 1 third sector organisation.
- We attended an advice fair in Westminster to speak about our work and support we can offer to Members of Parliament representing Welsh constituencies.

Under our new Strategic Plan, we will do more to engage with key organisations and stakeholders that support, advise and represent complainants.

We offered free training on our role and powers to 4 constituency offices in Wales and 1 third sector organisation.

Welsh language

At PSOW, we wholeheartedly support the Welsh language and are committed to supporting Welsh speakers and promoting the use of the Welsh language. Download our Welsh Language Policy [PDF 248 KB].

Our service is fully bilingual, and we always emphasise that contacting us in Welsh will not lead to any delay in how quickly we consider a complaint. Between 25% and 30% of our staff have Welsh language skills.

Welsh speakers appear to be more likely than other groups to complain directly to organisations in our jurisdiction; and to be happy with the outcome of their complaint. Welsh speakers are also generally more aware of our office and have higher levels of confidence in us than the wider public.

Nevertheless, this year, only 17 people asked us to communicate with them in Welsh, with 7 further people using some Welsh when communicating with us.

We know that we can only influence the choices and preference of our service users. There may be many reasons why Welsh speakers who reach us choose to communicate with us in English. Nevertheless, we are determined to continue to explore ways to encourage interactions with our service in Welsh.

Very few people use our service in Welsh. We want to change this.

Strategic Aim 3: Increasing impact of proactive improvement work

Complaints standards

Our work in 2025-26

In 2025-26, we continued our important work to introduce Complaints Standards to public bodies in Wales.

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.

During 2025-26, we 'triggered' the remaining housing associations , and we expect them to be fully compliant with our Complaints Standards by the end of September 2026.

Overall, the organisations already or soon to be compliant with the Complaints Standards represent 85% of new complaints about public services which we receive. We have targeted these bodies to adopt the policy first, to provide the most benefit to people using public services in Wales.

Our offer of free complaints handling training has remained popular, with 806 people receiving training since April 2025. We are currently prioritising training dates for housing associations coming under the Standards. We also developed new online training resources, including content tailored to the needs of health boards, local authorities and housing associations. Go to the training resources.

In 2026-27 and in the years that follow we will be looking to extend the Complaints Standards roll out to other bodies in our jurisdiction, with the next phase likely to target primary healthcare in Wales providing NHS services.

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

Our impact

Our training is almost universally well received by public service providers.

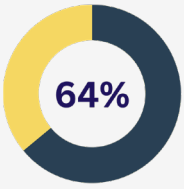
Of the complaints officers that responded to our survey this year 75% agreed that our training improves how their organisations handle complaints.

Of the Chief Executive Officers that responded to our survey:

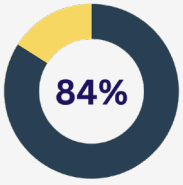
- 64% agreed that our complaints standards work improves their data collection practices.
- 84% agreed that this work improves reporting on how complaints are handled.

> I would like to thank PSOW staff for their input in relation to training. The [organisation] booked three sessions last year but only one could be delivered at the time. The quality of the initial session was such that we were able to deliver the two other sessions on the basis of the information provided by the PSOW officers during their first session. Thank you.
>
> A local authority respondent

Of the Chief Executive Officers that responded to our survey



64% agreed that our complaints standards work improves their data collection practices.



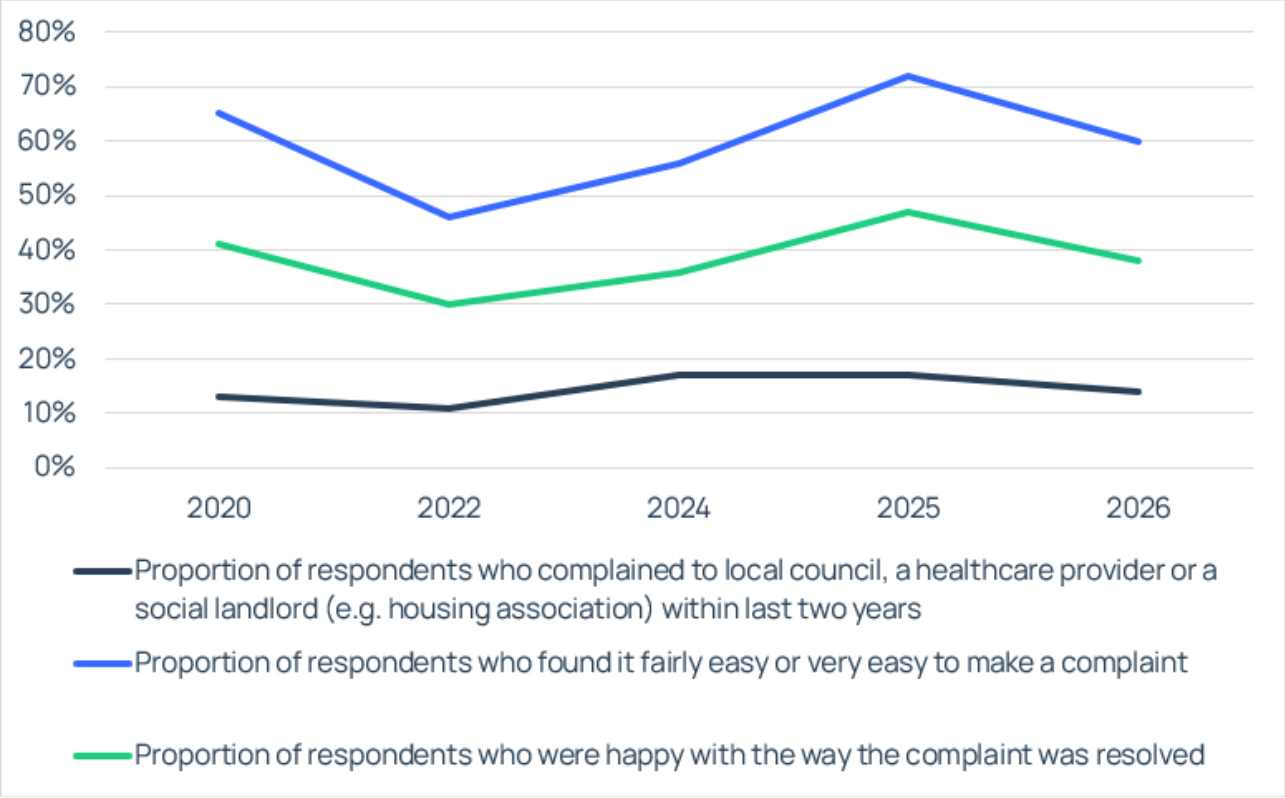
84% agreed that this work improves reporting on how complaints are handled.

However, it is most important that our complaints standards work leads to improvements for the Welsh public.

The results of our national survey offer valuable insights into the experience of people complaining to public service providers. Between 2020 and 2025, our research showed that while an increasing proportion of the Welsh public submitted complaints to local councils, healthcare providers or social landlords in Wales, an increased proportion was finding the process easy and were happy with how their complaint was resolved.

However, in 2026 the levels of satisfaction with these aspects of complaints processes appeared to have dropped. These findings highlight the ongoing need to closely monitor complaints processes of organisations that offer key services to the Welsh public, with opportunities for improvement effectively identified and communicated.

Figure 16: Responses to our national awareness survey - experiences of complaining to local councils, healthcare providers or social landlords in Wales



Own Initiative investigations

We use our powers to:

- **extend an existing investigation into issues not covered by the initial complaint.**
- **launch an investigation if we have reasonable suspicion there could be systemic maladministration and service failures resulting in injustice to individuals, and we believe that such investigation would be in the public interest.**

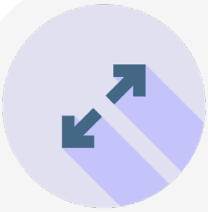
Our work in 2025-26

During 2025-26, we closed 3 investigations opened in the previous year using our own initiative powers. Two of these investigations were discontinued following detailed investigation because the complainant chose to take legal action, while one investigation resulted in a non-public interest report.

Overall, since we have been granted these powers in 2019, we used own initiative powers in 20 investigations. These investigations considered a range of issues including potential serious health care failings, homeless assessments by local authorities and needs assessments for unpaid carers by local authorities.

At March 2026, we were conducting a further 4 investigations, considering:

- potential health care failings
- how social landlords deal with complaints about disrepair and damp and mould.



To date, we closed **20** own initiative investigations.

Our impact

The Senedd entrusted us with the power to investigate under our own initiative, and it is key for us that this power delivers positive impact for the people of Wales.

As we do in the case of all complaints that we intervene in, we have been actively monitoring how organisations' have been complying with recommendations from our own-initiative investigations.

Are we caring for our carers - a follow-up report

In March 2026 we issued a follow-up report on compliance with the recommendations of four separate investigations which looked into carers' needs assessments in Wales (concluded in October 2024).

The investigations considered whether 4 local authorities – Caerphilly County Borough Council, Ceredigion County Council, Flintshire County Council and Neath Port Talbot Council – undertook carers' assessments in line with their statutory obligations.

While we identified some areas of good practice, we also made several recommendations including to:

- improve recording practices
- improve how information is shared with carers
- offer staff refresher training on carers' rights
- collaborate better with the healthcare sector.

Are we caring for our carers - a follow-up report (continued)

Our follow-up report explains that we found that all 4 of the investigated authorities had taken positive action since the investigation, although only Caerphilly County Borough Council and Neath Port Talbot Council had fully implemented all of the recommendations that were made. We made further recommendations to Ceredigion County Council and Flintshire County Council and urged these authorities to continue to make the necessary changes to comply with the remaining recommendations.

We also welcomed comments and data from other authorities across Wales, in response to our investigation, demonstrating wider impact and learning. However, it remains that all local authorities in Wales need to continue to focus on ensuring carers are informed of their rights and can access appropriate information, advice or support to enable them to continue in their caring role, if they so wish.

The feedback we receive from organisations gives us further assurance that our own initiative investigations have a positive impact.

Of the complaints officers that responded to our survey this year, 82% agreed that their organisations were moderately or significantly influenced by our own initiative investigation reports.

> The Ombudsman's "own initiative" work showed gaps in the way we record information about young carers. In response, we improved how we record and store data and created more reliable baseline data to help with future planning.
>
> - CEO survey respondent

Sharing our findings and insights

We believe that it is very important that we share findings and insights from our casework as widely as possible to help improve public services. We publish summaries of all our investigations on our website and share our public interest reports with a wide range of organisations, including the Welsh Government.

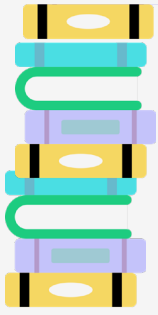
Public interest reports

When we investigate a complaint and we think that something has gone wrong, we usually prepare a report which explains our findings.

Sometimes, we decide to issue a public interest report. We do this, for example, when:

- there are wider lessons from our investigation for other bodies
- what went wrong was very significant
- the problem that we found may be affecting many people, not just the person who complained to us, or
- we had pointed out the problem to the body in the past, but the body did not address it.

When we issue a public interest report, we draw attention to it in the media and share it with other organisations who could learn from our findings or have an interest in the subject matter. The public body must also publish an announcement in the press about the Report.



This year, we issued **9** public interest reports - compared to 8 last year.

Hywel Dda University Health Board (202401728)

Ms A, representing seven families, complained that the Health Board stopped providing an appropriate specialist epilepsy service for adults with learning disabilities and failed to ensure suitable ongoing care after the service ended in June 2021. We found that the Health Board did not promptly review affected patients or put adequate alternative support in place. Four years later, there was still no appropriate or accessible care pathway to meet the needs of this patient group (**go to full report**).

Cardiff Council (202404828)

Ms C complained that the Council failed to act on long standing reports of leaks, damp and mould in her home, and then delayed repairs and support even after the property was declared unfit for human habitation in July 2024. We found serious and prolonged service failures, including years of missed opportunities to address hazardous conditions that severely affected Ms C's family as they spent many months living in unsuitable conditions (**go to full report**).

Flintshire County Council (202401983)

We found that the Council treated each home repair request by Miss Y in isolation, missing multiple opportunities over time to identify and resolve underlying issues. As a result, Miss Y and her children were left living in unacceptable conditions for five months after the Council became aware of the damp problem (**go to full report**).

Trivallis (202402960)

We found that the Association did not respond appropriately to reports of damp and mould in Mr B's home. When Mr B reported issues to the Association, they were not dealt with in line with relevant policies and guidance. As a result, Mr B lived in a home with outstanding repairs for nearly 7 years (go to full report).

Trivallis (202405250)

We found that the Association did not always respond appropriately to reports of damp and mould. Reports of issues in Mrs C's home were not always acted on promptly or line with relevant policies and we saw no evidence that the Association considered the needs of disabled children living in Mrs C's home when responding to reports of damp and mould (go to full report).

Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (202404388)

We found that although Mr C's prostate cancer care broadly followed the NHS Wales National Optimal Pathway, significant delays, particularly a 4 month wait for a PSMA PET scan, meant he waited more than 3 times longer than expected for treatment, likely allowing his cancer to progress. The case is especially troubling given previous reports of similar failings, and the Health Board's poor complaint handling further compounded the injustice (go to full report).

Swansea Bay University Health Board (202407678)

We found that Mr W's waiting time clock was wrongly re-set in October 2023 without clinical justification or communication, despite no evidence that he was unfit for surgery. This error caused significant delays, during which Mr W experienced pain, reduced mobility and frustration, and ultimately lost the opportunity to proceed with surgery. The case is particularly concerning given that similar failures had already been identified in public interest reports published in January 2024 (go to full report).

Hywel Dda University Health Board (202403251)

We found that the Health Board failed to act appropriately on specialist advice about Mrs B's care and did not adequately assess the risks posed to her during COVID 19 restrictions. When she was eventually reviewed, relevant tests were not carried out, communication with her GP was insufficient, and opportunities for earlier referral and treatment were missed, alongside repeated clinic cancellations. These significant failings contributed to a serious deterioration in Mrs B's sight, with devastating consequences for her and her family (go to full report).

Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board (202400797)

We found that, without his knowledge, Mr B had been removed from the orthopaedic surgery waiting list. We also found that the Health Board had failed to rectify the situation for well over a year despite complaints being made to it (go to full report).

Annual Letters

Every year, we send letters to health boards, local authorities and housing associations about the complaints we received and considered about them during the year. We do this to help these organisations improve their complaint handling and the services that they provide.

The organisations must report this information through their internal governance arrangements and use it to see how they can improve.

Go to information about the annual letters on our website.

Engagement with public bodies

It is important that we directly engage with the bodies in our jurisdiction and other stakeholders operating in the sectors which account for most of our complaints.

The Ombudsman and our senior staff met during the year with representatives of several Health Boards, local councils and housing associations, as well as with other key stakeholders such as: Health Inspectorate Wales, Care Inspectorate Wales, General Medical Council, Enforcement Conduct Board, Audit Wales, the Welsh Commissioners, the Equalities and Human Rights Commission, Senedd Commission and other Public Sector Ombudsmen across the UK and Ireland, to share relevant information and insights.

We renewed our Memorandum of Understanding with the Welsh Commissioners.

Public policy

We use our expertise and the evidence from our casework to contribute to the development of public policy in areas such as health, social care and local government.

During the year, we continued to contribute to the post-legislative review of the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019 ('the 2019 Act'), launched by the Senedd's Finance Committee in 2025. The Committee has now concluded this review, with its report confirming the overall conclusion that:

- The 2019 Act provides an effective statutory basis which supports and enables our work.
- The 2019 Act provides a good practice template for the role of ombudsman internationally and remains an effective legislative framework that is fit for purpose.

We welcome these conclusions as well as the Committee's recommendations on how we can further strengthen our process and impact. We include more details about the background and findings of this review as well as our response in the Appendix. Go to the Appendix.

During 2025-26, we responded to 6 public consultations.

Consultation on regulation of the debt enforcement sector (Ministry of Justice)

In our response, we underlined that for enforcement agents employed by or commissioned by local councils in Wales, there is already a statutory complaints route through councils and then our office. We emphasised that we supported placing the Enforcement Conduct Board (ECB) on a statutory footing for the wider sector and welcomed proportionate data-sharing and monitoring powers. However, we underlined that any statutory role for the ECB must avoid duplication, confusion and longer complaint journeys.

Review of Petitions Arrangements (Welsh Parliament: Petitions Committee)

We expressed strong support for the value of petitions. We also noted that we would welcome more opportunities to provide evidence from our casework and improvement work and suggested improving accessibility and expectation management by publishing clearer information on timescales, how many petitions progress, and how often they lead to policy change.

Improving access to support for unpaid carers (Welsh Parliament - the Health and Social Care Committee)

We used the response to highlight that our own initiative investigation, Are we caring for our carers?, found very low levels of carers' needs assessments and support plans, alongside poor awareness of carers' rights, inconsistent terminology, unclear information, weak equality data and variable recording of support. We emphasised that better access to support depends on improving administration of carers' assessments, clearer information for carers, better staff training, stronger equality data, and closer collaboration between local authorities and health services.

Inquiry into hazardous disrepair in social housing (Welsh Parliament, Local Government and Housing Committee)

We highlighted that we are seeing an increase in the numbers of complaints about damp and mould or repairs and maintenance; and that these complaints attract higher uphold rates compared to other housing complaints that we look into.

We were also invited by the Committee to give oral evidence.

Setting timescales for social housing landlords to respond to reports of hazards (Welsh Government)

We pointed out the inconsistencies in the current landlord response times that we saw in our casework, and highlighted the importance of clearer, sector wide definitions and more robust, transparent arrangements for performance monitoring.

British Sign Language (Wales) Bill (Welsh Parliament, Equality and Social Justice Committee)

In our response, we talked about the current uptake of our service in BSL, and of prevalence of issues related to BSL interpretation in our casework. We emphasised that the Bill or any accompanying guidance should offer more clarity on the options available to the BSL users who find that public services are not meeting their duties under the proposed legislation.

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

Our people

We value and support our staff. We want to continue to support staff to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes to continue to offer an efficient and professional service. We are also committed to creating a healthy, equal, diverse and inclusive workplace. We are proud of how our staff performed this year and our focus continues to be on maintaining the health and well-being of staff.

Training and development

All staff are expected to complete 28 hours of training and development each year (pro rata for staff who work part time). In 2025-26, 91% of staff achieved this target which was higher than in the previous year (77%).

Through our Performance Review & Development Process (PRDP), we make sure that each member of staff has clear objectives and priorities for the year ahead and we review their progress regularly as part of the 1:1 Progress Meeting discussions, that take place every 4 – 6 weeks. New staff are set more immediate objectives and priorities and undertake an extensive Induction Programme. For staff returning from maternity leave or long-term sickness, we discuss and agree their objectives when they return. This year again, 100% of staff completed their PRDP.

In addition, each staff member has an Individual Development Plan which is developed at the same time as the PRDP. The plan identifies the development needs of each staff member and details how any gaps in expected performance and what is being delivered is addressed through development interventions.

We successfully recruited 2 more Graduate Investigation Officers in 2025. This is the second year of recruiting to the Graduate scheme which was a new initiative for the office in 2024.

Health and wellbeing

We want our staff to be healthy and well. The average percentage of working days lost through staff sickness decreased from 2.3% to 0.77% this year.

An average of 1.96 days per employee were lost because of sickness, compared to 5.8 days in 2024-25. Our target was an average of 6 days per person, and we are pleased to see that the average is way below our target and is a significant improvement.

We have continued to offer staff support to safeguard staff wellbeing and to listen to staff feedback on how we can support them and make things even better. We do this through our staff survey feedback and through feedback provided through team meetings. Our Future Working at PSOW document details the responsibilities of all staff and specific responsibilities for various levels. In addition, we have a Leadership Charter in place helping to further enhance a culture that safeguards wellbeing at work. We will continue to listen and to take steps to make things even better.

We continued to offer Mental Health First Aider support to staff, support through Menopause Mentors and continued to offer our external counselling services. Our Wellbeing Working Group has continued to deliver a schedule of events throughout the year for staff to access. This has included voluntary health assessments held on site. We have continued to look for ways to handle work more efficiently and continue to successfully recruit excellent staff when vacancies arise.

On average, only 1.96 days per employee were lost this year due to staff sickness.

Equality, diversity and inclusion

Equality, diversity and inclusion are important to us – as a service provider and as an employer.

Every year, we look at how well the profile of our staff and job candidates reflects the population of Wales.

Our staff

78% of our current staff identified as female (compared to 74% last year)

We saw a welcome increase in the proportion of our staff under 25 – from 6% to 7% this year. However, this group remains under-represented in our workforce.

The proportion of people in our workforce who identified with diverse ethnic backgrounds was 4%, a slightly lower proportion than last year (5%) and below the national proportion of this population (6.2%, Welsh Government).

As in the previous year, 4% of our staff identified as disabled. This is significantly lower than the proportion of the working-age population in Wales who according to Welsh Government Annual Population Survey are economically active and disabled.

Job applicants

For us to reflect the diversity in society, our aim is to attract more applicants from diverse backgrounds.

Positively, in 2025-26, of people applying to join us*:

- 60% identified as female, with this group accounting for 67% of successful candidates.
- 8% identified as belonging to diverse ethnicities (the same proportion as last year) and this group was strongly represented in successful applications (17%).

* We have reliable equality data for 4 out of the 10 externally advertised roles we recruited for this year.

- While 7% stated that Welsh was their main language (compared to 13% last year), 19-20% said that they had fluent or fairly good Welsh language skills. Furthermore, 33% of successful candidates had fluent or fairly good Welsh language skills.
- 5% of our job candidates, and 33% of successful candidates, were under 25.
- Positively, 5% of candidates identified as belonging to diverse nationalities and 10% identified with diverse sexual orientations. However, there was no representation of these groups among successful candidates.

Furthermore,

- 3% of our job candidates identified with diverse religions, with no representation among successful candidates.
- 11% of the candidates identified as disabled – a higher proportion than last year (8%). However, this group was not represented among shortlisted or successful candidates.

While we want to attract applications from a wide range of diverse communities, we see under-representation of disabled people among our workforce and job candidates as a particularly pressing concern. We will be takings steps to address this under-representation under our new Strategic Plan 2026-29.

Welsh language skills of our staff

Under the Welsh Language Standards, every year we measure the Welsh language skills of our workforce.

In 2025-26, 12% of our staff said that Welsh was their main language – the same proportion as last year.

The proportion of people who spoke Welsh fairly well or fluently has generally improved again compared to the previous year:

- speaking: 30% (compared to 28%)
- reading: 28% (compared to 27%)
- writing: 25% (compared to 26%)
- understanding: 29% (compared to 28%).

We supported 2 colleagues to undertake Welsh language training during the year.

Gender pay gap

In 2025-26:

- our mean gender pay gap was 2%
- there was no median gender pay gap.

For comparison, the UK Government-commissioned research suggests that, in 2024, the mean gender pay gap in the UK stood at 6.9% and median at 4.4%.

While we are proud of this result, we have always been clear that, in a small organisation, individual appointments can make a significant difference to the pay gap calculations.

Welsh language skills of our staff have improved.

We had no median gender pay gap.

Staff survey

68 out of 79 staff took part in our staff survey this year, with a response rate of 86%.

The results of the staff remain positive, and we have maintained good results in many of the areas explored. One of our key performance indicators is the number of staff who would say PSOW is a great place to work.

We were pleased to see that 88% of staff said that PSOW is a great place to work. In addition, 89% of staff said they were proud to work for PSOW.

Below, we present average favourable scores across questions under each survey heading (where the respondent agreed or agreed strongly).

Theme	2023-24 Average favourable score	2024-25 Average favourable score	2025-26 Average favourable score	% point difference to 2024-25
My job	74%	78%	80%	+2
Internal Communications & Engagement	69%	83%	75%	-8
IT arrangements and facilities	60%	83%	81%	-2
Our service	74%	77%	78%	+1
My manager	77%	90%	89%	-1
Leadership	62%	79%	77%	-2
Learning & Development	69%	81%	77%	-4
Equality & Diversity	76%	87%	83%	-4
Work life balance and wellbeing	68%	81%	81%	-
Perceptions of PSOW	82%	92%	91%	-1

Sustainability

We understand that we need to play our part in protecting the environment and continue to develop sustainable working practices.

During the year, we produced 4,717kg of waste, representing a 36% reduction of compared to the previous year. This is a result of a 'normal' year, with no large-scale disposal of legacy IT equipment. Of the waste generated, 87% was recycled, demonstrating an improvement on last year's performance. We can report that no waste was sent to landfill.

Office presence remains flexible, with home working continuing to be the preferred place of work. As a result, our electricity usage has reduced by 23% compared to the previous year.

Our emissions data is calculated based on where staff are working from (office/ home), commuting mileage and other business travel. While business travel emissions increased by 237%, this was offset by lower energy use in the office (including lighting and heating), as well as continued home working and reduced commuting.

This year we achieved a 4% reduction in our total emissions. The total emissions for the year were 56,212.49 kg CO_2e which is 6% below our target figure of 60,000kg.

We are required by law to publish a report on our sustainability under the Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty (section 6 duty). We publish detailed information on how we managed waste, used electricity and calculated emissions.

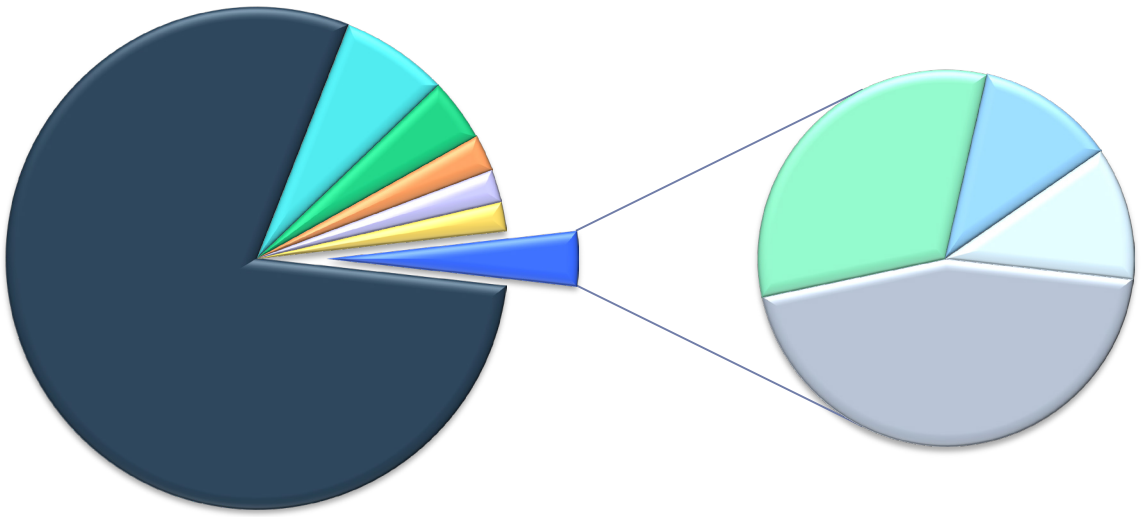
We reduced our CO_2 emissions by **4%.**

Financial Management

Overall resource and cash expenditure has increased as a result of the additional funding provided to PSOW from the Welsh Consolidated Fund to fund pay awards, inflation and some investment in our strategic priorities.

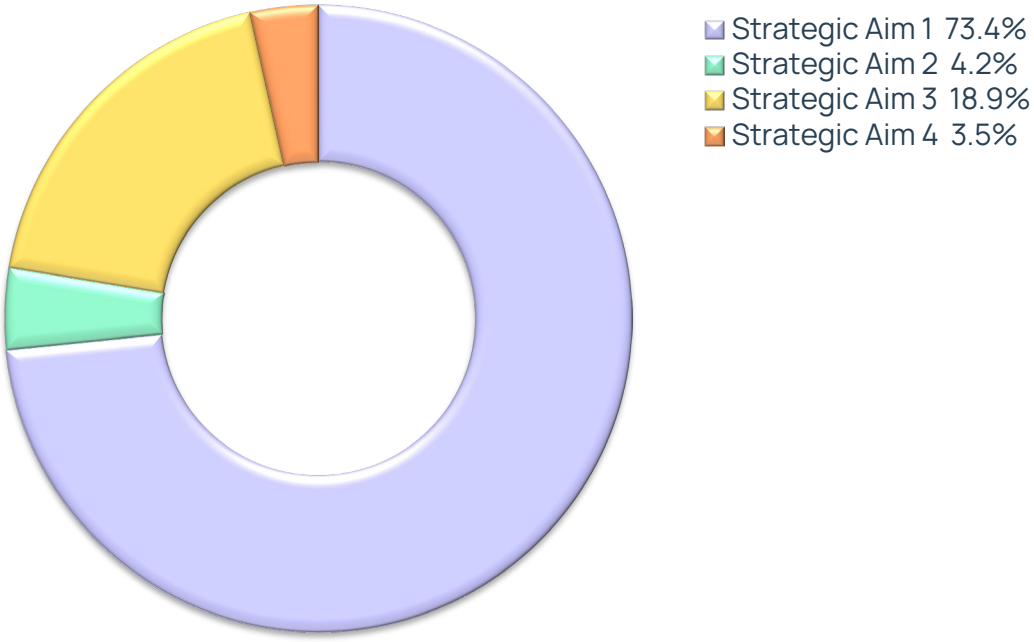
Resource Out-turn	2025/26	2024/25	Change
	£000	£000	£000
Total Resource	6,330	6,089	+241
Cash Requirement	6,406	6,211	+195

Gross Resource Expenditure 2025/26



Staff 79.2%
Computer services 6.9%
Legal and professional fees 4.1%
Other property costs 2.4%
Depreciation (incl. IFRS 16) 2.1%
Office costs 1.9%
Communications 1.6%
Training and recruitment 1.1%
Travel and subsistence 0.4%
Rent (irrecoverable VAT) 0.3%

Analysis of Spending by Strategic Aims



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

Aim 2: Increasing accessibility and inclusion

Aim 3: Increasing the impact of our proactive improvement work

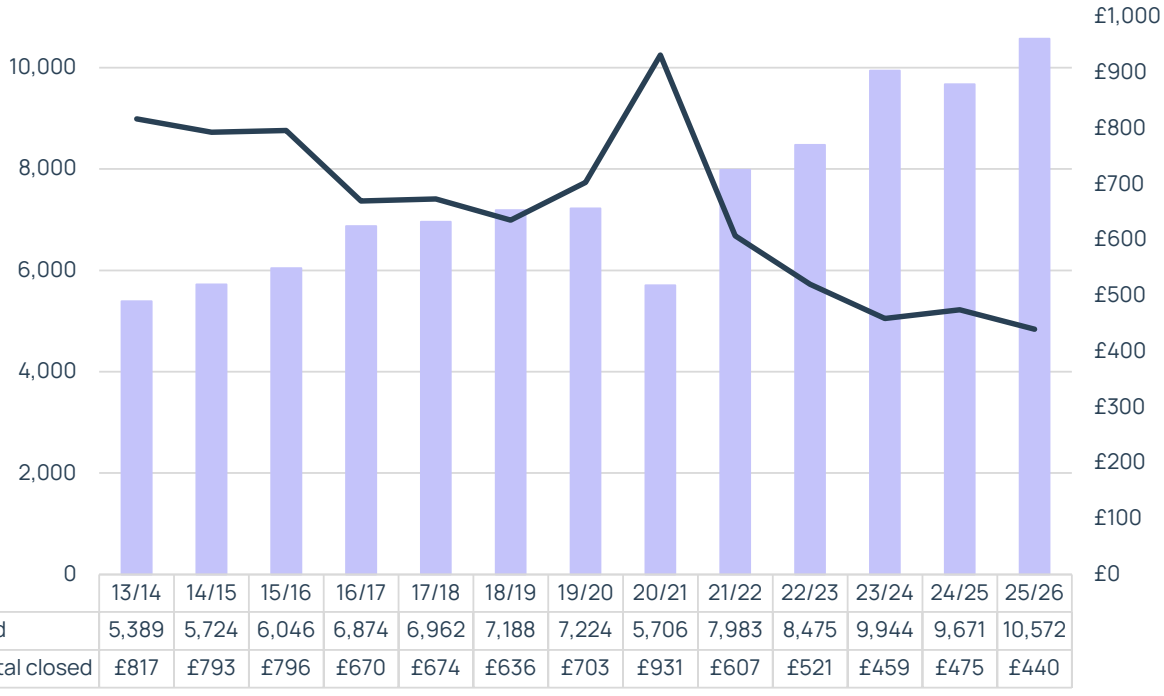
Aim 4: Ensuring that we are a healthy, efficient and accountable organisation

Casework costs

As outlined in previous Annual Report & Accounts we present average costs as calculated for our main activity – receiving, considering, investigating and responding to enquiries and complaints. This is our activity under Strategic Aim 1, and we will use the analysis figures for Operating Costs by Strategic Aims, presented within these audited accounts.

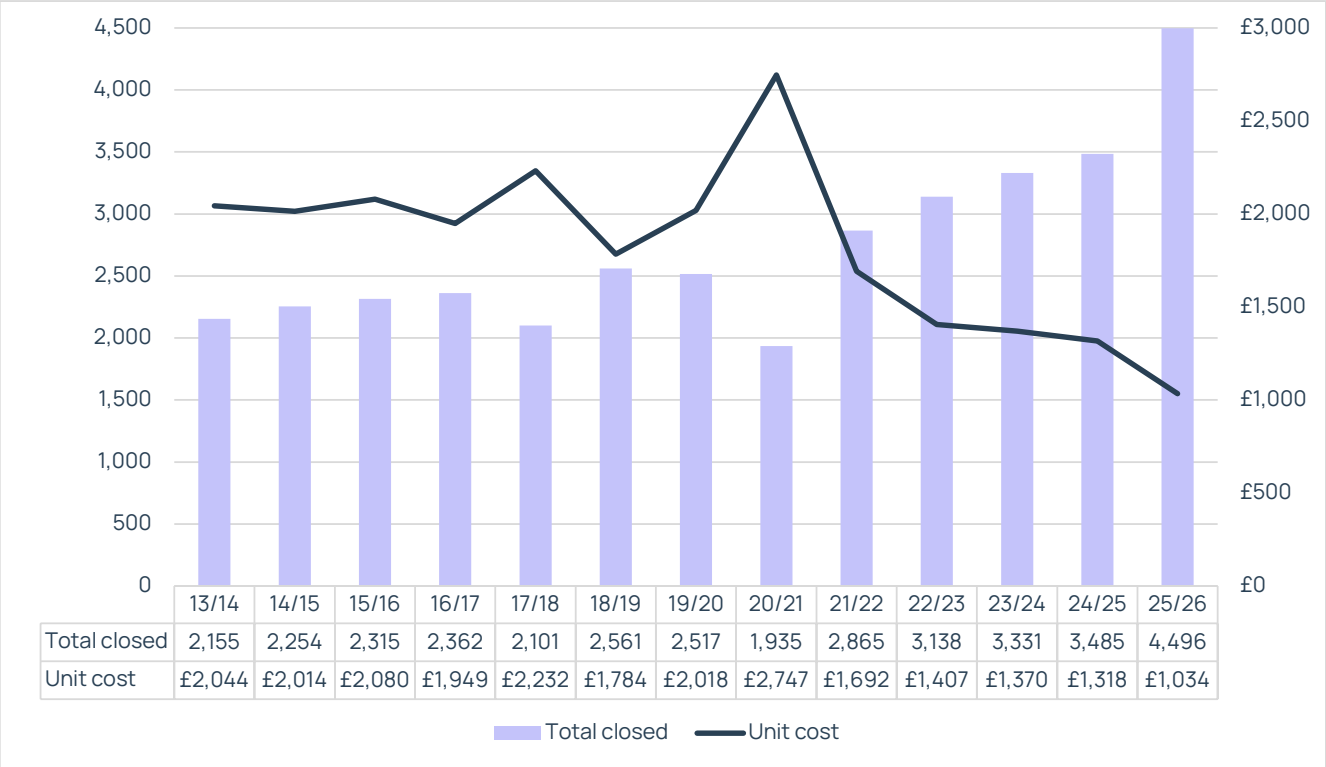
The graphs below show firstly cost per case for the full enquiry and complaints work completed in the year and secondly for cases completed in the year.

Cost per Case for Total Casework (Enquiries & Complaints) Closed



	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25	25/26
Total closed	5,389	5,724	6,046	6,874	6,962	7,188	7,224	5,706	7,983	8,475	9,944	9,671	10,572
Cost per total closed	£817	£793	£796	£670	£674	£636	£703	£931	£607	£521	£459	£475	£440

Cost per Case for Total Complaints Closed



	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25	25/26
Total closed	2,155	2,254	2,315	2,362	2,101	2,561	2,517	1,935	2,865	3,138	3,331	3,485	4,496
Unit cost	£2,044	£2,014	£2,080	£1,949	£2,232	£1,784	£2,018	£2,747	£1,692	£1,407	£1,370	£1,318	£1,034

Note: These graphs are based on expenditure on this Strategic Objective and adjusted to 2025/26 prices. Figures reported in the previous Annual Reports are not directly comparable because of this approach.

Systemic Improvement Powers (Proactive Powers)

We identify expenditure related to our discharge of the additional powers provided to the Ombudsman under the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019, and for 2025/26 this is as reported below.

PSOW Act 2019: Expenditure in 2025/26	**£000s**
Staff costs	351
Communications	21
Premises	12
Professional Fees	1
Training and Recruitment	2
Computer Services	14
Total	**401**
Budget	450
Variance	**49**

This year's underspend is higher than normal, due to staff turnover within our Complaints Standards Authority Team, in the final quarter of the year. We have worked to fill those vacancies during the first quarter of the 2026/27 financial year.

Expenditure to 31 March 2026 compared to previous year

	2025/26	2024/25	Reasons for significant changes
	£000	£000	
Salaries	3,588	3,444	Pay award settled at 3.2%.
Social Security costs	477	355	Investment in additional temporary staff to deal with casework pressures.
Pension costs	990	946	
Pension fund charges	(32)	49	One pensioner passed away in 2025/26.
Total Pay	**5,023**	**4,794**	
Rent	25	35	
External Audit fee	23	22	
Legal and professional fees	236	259	Reduced external legal advice in 2025/26.
Other property costs	150	188	Release of dilapidations provision in 2024/25.
Computer services	438	405	Investment in case management system in 2025/26.
Office costs	118	89	Additional all staff meetings and engagement in 2025/26.
Travel and Subsistence	26	19	Increased travel to all staff meetings in 2025/26.
Training and Recruitment	70	120	Increased recruitment costs in 2024/25.
Communications	99	77	Increased engagement work in 2025/26.
Depreciation	133	151	
Total other Administration Costs	**1,318**	**1,365**	
Gross Costs	**6,341**	**6,159**	
Income	(11)	(70)	End of staff secondment to Ombudsman Association.
Net Expenditure	**6,330**	**6,089**	
Capital	-	-	
Net Resource	**6,330**	**6,089**	

More detailed financial information can be found in the financial statements and notes that support the accounts.

Michelle Morris

Accounting Officer
Public Services Ombudsman for Wales 21 July 2026

Accountability Report 2025/26

Corporate Governance Report

Ombudsman's Report:

Under the Government of Wales Act 2006, the Office is financed through the Welsh Consolidated Fund (WCF) with any unspent cash balances repaid into the WCF after a certified copy of the accounts has been laid before the Senedd. This creates a further control in that there is a need to effectively manage the budget on both a cash and a resource basis. The salary of the office holder of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales and the related costs are a direct charge on the WCF and are administered through the Senedd.

As at 31 March 2026, the Office comprised 79 permanent full and part-time staff based in Pencoed, Bridgend including the Ombudsman, Executive Director - Corporate Resources, Executive Director - Casework & Legal, as well as investigation and support staff.

The Welsh Parliament provided cash of £6.4 million for the funding of the Office. £20k of this overall funding is due to be returned to the WCF, being the unused cash balance at the year-end. The expenditure of the Office was kept within the Estimate agreed in November 2024 and amended by Supplementary Budgets during 2025/26.

Our unit costs have fallen to their lowest levels ever and reflect the record number of complaints and enquiries closed by the Office, whilst our costs were significantly lower, when adjusted for CPI inflation.

Remuneration and Pension Liabilities

Details of the pay and related costs of the Ombudsman and the Office are shown in the Remuneration Report.

Pension obligations to present and past employees are discharged through the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme (PCSPS) and the pensions paid directly to former Commissioners or their dependants.

Further details are given in the Pensions Disclosures.

Corporate Governance

The office holder of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales is a Corporation Sole.

The Audit & Risk Assurance Committee supports the Ombudsman by reviewing the comprehensiveness and reliability of assurances on governance, risk management, the control environment and on the integrity of financial statements and the annual report. Further details are set out in the Annual Governance Statement.

Register of Interests

A register of interests is maintained for all staff, and the disclosures for the Ombudsman, Executive Directors and members of the Advisory Panel and Audit & Risk Assurance Committee are published on our website.

Accounts Direction

Under the Accounts Direction issued by HM Treasury dated 21 December 2006, the Ombudsman is required to prepare accounts for the financial year ended 31 March 2026 in compliance with the accounting principles and disclosure requirements of the edition of the Government Financial Reporting Manual (the FReM) issued by HM Treasury which was in force for 2025/26.

The accounts have been prepared to:

- Give a true and fair view of the state of affairs at 31 March 2026 and of the net resource out-turn, resources applied to objectives, recognised gains and losses and cash flows for the financial year then ended.
- Provide disclosure of any material expenditure or income that has not been applied for the purposes intended by the Senedd or material transactions that have not conformed to the authorities that govern them.

Auditors

The Auditor General for Wales is the External Auditor of the PSOW as laid down in paragraph 18 of Schedule 1 to the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019.

The cost of the audit for 2025/26 was £23k (2024/25 = £22k).

As far as I am aware, I have taken all the steps necessary to make the auditors aware of any relevant audit information.

Michelle Morris

Accounting Officer

Public Services Ombudsman for Wales 21 July 2026

Statement of Accounting Officer's Responsibilities

Under the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019, as Public Services Ombudsman for Wales I am required to prepare, for each financial year, resource accounts detailing the resources acquired, held or disposed of during the year and the use of resources by the PSOW during the year.

The accounts are prepared on an accruals basis and must give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the PSOW and its net resource out-turn, Statement of Financial Position and cash flows for the financial year.

In preparing the accounts, as the Accounting Officer, I am required to comply with the requirements of the 'Government Financial Reporting Manual' and in particular to:

- Observe the Accounts Direction issued by the Treasury including the relevant accounting and disclosure requirements and apply suitable accounting policies on a consistent basis.
- Make judgements and estimates on a reasonable basis.
- State whether applicable accounting standards as set out in the Government Financial Reporting Manual have been followed and disclose and explain any material departures in the accounts.
- Prepare the accounts on a going concern basis.
- Confirm that the annual report and accounts as a whole is fair, balanced and understandable.
- Take personal responsibility for the annual report and accounts and the judgements required for determining that it is fair, balanced and understandable.

My relevant responsibilities as Accounting Officer include the propriety and regularity of the public finances for which the Accounting Officer is answerable, for keeping proper records and for safeguarding the PSOW's assets, as set out in Managing Welsh Public Money and the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019.

As the Accounting Officer, I have taken all the steps that I ought to have taken to make myself aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that PSOW's auditors are aware of that information. So far as I am aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the auditors are unaware.

Annual Governance Statement 2025/26

Status of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

As laid down in Schedule 1 paragraph 2 of the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019, the Ombudsman is a Corporation Sole holding office under His Majesty. The Ombudsman discharges the functions set down in legislation on behalf of the Crown. Schedule 1 paragraph 19 states that the Ombudsman is the Accounting Officer for the office of the Ombudsman.

Scope of Responsibility

In undertaking the role of Accounting Officer, I have ensured that the office operates effectively and to a high standard of probity. In addition, I have responsibility for maintaining a sound system of internal control that supports the achievement of PSOW's policies, aims and objectives, whilst safeguarding the public funds and assets for which I am personally responsible, in accordance with the responsibilities set out in 'Managing Welsh Public Money'.

The Ombudsman's office is independent of the Senedd but is accountable to its Finance Committee for the use of resources provided. In determining the level of resources available to the office, the PSOW's budget proposals are considered by the Finance Committee of the Senedd in accordance with the process laid down in the Act. A combined Annual Report and Accounts is prepared for consideration by the Finance Committee.

I am required to include this Governance Statement with my annual report and accounts to explain how the governance of my office works and to ensure it meets the requirements of the Corporate Governance Code and The Orange Book: Management of Risk. To enable me to satisfy these requirements, I have maintained appropriate structures, systems and procedures that are comprehensive and provide me with evidence that the governance arrangements are working as intended across the whole organisation and its activities. Such arrangements include my Governance Framework, a comprehensive internal control environment, effective internal and external audit arrangements and robust financial management, risk planning and monitoring procedures. These areas will be covered in the remainder of this report.

Strategic Planning and Performance Monitoring

In my Strategic Plan, which was launched in April 2023, for the three years 2023/24 to 2025/26, I established the following:

Our ambition for public services in Wales:

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

Our Strategic Aims:

- **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.

Whilst individual teams within the office are charged with implementing the actions identified, the Management Team monitors progress made against targets and the outcomes achieved.

System of Internal Control

The system of internal control is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level rather than eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives; it can therefore only provide reasonable, and not absolute, assurance of effectiveness. It is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of my policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

The system has been in place in the office of the PSOW for the year ended 31 March 2026 and up to the date of approval of these accounts and accords with HM Treasury guidance. No significant areas of internal control weaknesses have been identified from audit work and steps to improve controls further are implemented promptly by management and are monitored by the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee.

Corporate Governance arrangements: Audit & Risk Assurance Committee

Governance arrangements include an Audit & Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC). The Committee's responsibilities are:

a) Terms of Reference

The Committee supports me by reviewing the comprehensiveness and reliability of assurances on governance, risk management, the control environment and the integrity of financial statements and the annual report. The Committee has a scrutiny and advisory role and has no role or remit in relation to operational or casework decisions made by the PSOW.

b) Membership

Membership comprises a minimum of four, and a maximum of eight, independent external members.

The membership of the Committee during 2025/26 was:

- Mike Usher – Chair
- Dave Tosh OBE – Vice Chair
- John McSherry
- Jane Martin CBE (term of office concluded July 2025)
- Laura Davies
- Jayne Woods
- Nia Roberts (from July 2025)

More details on our independent members can be found on our website.

c) Training

Members of the Committee are invited to assess their training needs annually. An induction programme is provided for all new members of the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee.

(d) Meetings

The Committee sets itself an annual work programme. There are generally four meetings of the Committee during the year.

I attend all Committee Meetings and the Executive Director – Corporate Resources acts as Secretary to the Committee. The meetings were also regularly attended by internal and external auditors and appropriate members of the PSOW's Management Team.

At each meeting, the Committee received a number of standing agenda items Including budget management, risk management and declarations of any identified fraud or losses, including any data losses.

Regarding budget management, at each meeting, the Committee received a copy of the latest Budget Monitoring report considered by the Management Team. This is intended to provide the Committee with an assurance that there is regular scrutiny of the financial position of the office.

Regarding risk management, at each meeting the Committee considered the full Risk Register, including a report on the greatest identified risks. The Committee explored and challenged the reported risks to satisfy itself that key risks had been identified. In addition, the Committee undertakes, at alternate meetings, an in-depth review of a specific risk selected from the risk register.

During the year, the Committee also received reports on a number of other appropriate matters within its Terms of Reference. They included:

- the 9- and 12- month accounts
- internal audit plans and reports
- a review of the Whistleblowing Policy
- updates on major IT developments
- relevant financial and corporate governance matters.

The Committee considered cyber security risks and scrutinised arrangements in place to maintain cyber security. The Committee also reviewed the Office's counter-fraud and anti-corruption arrangements and policies, in the context of the Cabinet Office Counter-Fraud Framework.

The Committee provided advice to me to ensure that this 2025/26 Annual Governance Statement included appropriate information and complied with best practice.

The Committee is chaired by an independent member and includes the Chair of the Advisory Panel. The number of meetings attended, along with the number of meetings each member was eligible to attend, was as follows:

Committee Member	Maximum number of attendances possible	Actual number of attendances	% attended
Mike Usher (Chair)	4	4	100
Dave Tosh OBE (Vice Chair)	4	4	100
John McSherry	4	3	75
Jane Martin CBE	2	2	100
Laura Davies	4	4	100
Jayne Woods	4	4	100
Nia Roberts	3	3	100

e) Internal and External Audit

The Committee received regular reports from both the internal and external auditors. The work of internal audit during the year was planned based on their overall needs assessment and carried out through their agreed annual programme, including a review of our Risk Register. Their reports highlighted a satisfactory internal control framework within the organisation and made recommendations for improvement where necessary.

The internal audits undertaken in 2025/26 and overall assessments were as follows:

	Assurance level
Information Security (GDPR) including records management	**SUBSTANTIAL**
Complaints Handling - Compliance	**SUBSTANTIAL**
Staff Performance Management	**SUBSTANTIAL**
Risk Management – Mitigating Controls	**SUBSTANTIAL**
Equality, Diversity & Inclusion	**SUBSTANTIAL**
Key Financial Controls (Payroll, General Ledger & Fixed Assets)	**REASONABLE**

In all but one audit, the overall level of assurance was considered 'Substantial', the highest assurance level meaning there is a robust system of internal controls operating effectively to ensure that risks are managed and process objectives achieved. A number of recommendations were made, and these have either been completed or will be completed in accordance with agreed timescales.

The lower level of assurance on the Key Financial Controls audit was as a result of a number of minor record-keeping related matters, rather than any specific operational issues that increased our level of risk. The report made 5 recommendations, all of which had been implemented by 31 March 2026.

In addition, an audit of previous internal audit recommendations was undertaken. This found that all previous recommendations had been implemented. The internal auditors' Annual Report for 2025/26 stated: '*TIAA is satisfied that, for the areas reviewed during the year, Public Services Ombudsman for Wales has reasonable and effective risk management, control and governance processes in place.'* These findings also provide assurance that the arrangements in place are reducing the office's exposure to risk.

The Committee noted the thoroughness of the audit work, practicality of recommendations and the open and positive response of management to the recommendations made.

In respect of the previous financial year, the Committee considered the 2024/25 Annual Report and Accounts that included the Governance Statement, together with the External Audit of Financial Statements Report and Management Letter. An unqualified opinion was given by Audit Wales on the 2024/25 Accounts. There was 1 recommendation following the external audit, which was implemented by 31 March 2026.

Both Internal and External Auditors have the right to raise any matter through an open access policy to the Chair and, through that right, to bring any matter to the attention of the Committee. The Committee, by reviewing the programmes of both the External and the Internal Auditors, satisfied itself that both auditors were co-ordinating effectively with each other. The quality of the audit work has been evaluated during the year through consideration of the audit reports and recommendations and dialogue at meetings between Committee Members and the Auditors. The quality of the work has been considered satisfactory.

Before every formal Committee meeting, the Committee meets privately with representatives of the External and Internal Auditors. In addition, to ensure that appropriate matters can be raised in confidence, the Chair of the Committee holds an annual meeting with representatives of the External and Internal Auditors.

(f) Monitoring processes

At each meeting during 2025/26, the Committee received a report on progress made on the implementation of Internal Audit recommendations. Committee members were satisfied that all the recommendations made, had been implemented or would be implemented in accordance with agreed timescales.

(g) Annual Review and Assessment

This annual review is undertaken to evaluate the work of the Committee and to ensure that the work of the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee continues to comply with the Good Practice Principles set out in the HM Treasury Audit Committee Handbook.

To assist the Committee in determining that it was complying with good practice, each member was invited to complete the National Audit Office's 'The Audit Committee self-assessment checklist'. Comments received from Committee members were considered in preparing the Annual Review for 2025/26.

The ARAC Annual Review concluded that it had received comprehensive assurances and information that was reliable and sufficient to enable it to carry out its responsibilities. Those assurances demonstrated a satisfactory overall internal control environment, financial reporting and the management of risk and of the quality of both the Internal and External Audit work undertaken.

The Committee was therefore able to provide assurances to support me effectively, as Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, to comply with my Accounting Officer responsibilities. The Committee provided evidence to assist in the preparation of this Annual Governance Statement.

Corporate Governance arrangements: Advisory Panel

The Advisory Panel is a non-statutory forum whose main role is to provide support and advice to me in providing leadership and setting the strategic objectives of the office of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. The Panel also brings an external perspective to assist in the development of policy and practice. The Panel's work during the year included advising on the progress of our Strategic Plan and the Estimate for 2026/27, reviewing the organisation's performance and assessing the impact of the Ombudsman's proactive powers.

As Jane Martin's term of office as ARAC member and Advisory Panel Chair concluded in July 2025, Dave Tosh was appointed as an additional Independent Member of the Advisory Panel from October 2025. Nia Roberts was appointed to take over as Chair and took up the role with effect from October 2025.

Also during the year, Advisory Panel independent member Bernie Davies resigned from her position following the October 2025 meeting. We will recruit a new independent member to the Advisory Panel during 2026/27.

The Advisory Panel has an advisory role and has no role or remit in relation to operational or casework decisions made by the PSOW.

Reporting of Personal Data Related Incidents

All incidents involving personal data are reported to the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee. Where PSOW is at fault, guidance issued by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) is considered to establish whether it is necessary to report the incident to that office. In 2025/26 there were no incidents which were reported to the ICO.

The Risk and Control Framework

As required by 'Managing Welsh Public Money', I am supported by a professionally qualified Financial Accountant who carries out the responsibilities of a Finance Director as set out in that document.

Risk management and the risk register are standing agenda items for the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee, and the Risk Management Policy, is reviewed periodically.

I am continuing to enhance the robust internal control arrangements to ensure that the office has the capacity to identify, assess and manage risk effectively.

In undertaking this responsibility during the year ended 31 March 2026, I was supported by an Executive Director – Corporate Resources to whom some of my responsibilities were delegated. From March 2025, an Interim Executive Director - Corporate Resources was appointed to cover this post until the permanent position was filled from August 2025.

I am satisfied that the systems in place identify potential risks at an early stage and enable, through active management, the appropriate action to be taken to minimise any adverse impact on the office.

The Audit & Risk Assurance Committee receives regular reports on the risks relating to this office, explores the office's approach to managing those risks and provides comments and suggestions on current and emerging risks.

Risks are considered across a number of key areas or risk themes. These are:

- Casework
- Staffing
- Technology
- Financial
- Reputational
- Governance and Legal
- Data & Information Management.

Key risks and issues

The last Annual Governance Statement (2024/25) highlighted a red risk relating to our future capacity to continue to improve service delivery. The continued increases in workload meant that there was a risk of only being able to intervene positively in a proportion of our caseload.

Despite another year of increasing complaints, we have been able to reduce our open caseload. We have consistently applied our proportionality and public interest tests to ensure we devote our resources to the right cases which is helping us to manage the high volume of work and ensure detailed investigations are appropriately focussed.

We have also been successful in securing additional resources from the Senedd for 2026/27, which means we will be able to 'reset' our staffing and approach on casework to cope with future demands. However, until this work has happened, this remains a high risk to PSOW.

At 31 March 2026, the Risk Register identified the following high risk:

Risk theme	Risk/issue and impact:	Risk/issue management and mitigation:	Residual risk:
Casework	If we continue to manage our increasing caseload by raising the bar for cases which are suitable for resolution or accepted for detailed investigation, then we will risk only being able to intervene positively in a small proportion of our caseload with casework resources being devoted to closing cases at initial consideration. The position at 31 March 2026 was improved on 31 March 2025 with a reduction in our open caseload, and an increase in the number of cases we were able to intervene in.	As part of our Budget Estimate we set out the reasons why 2026/27 needs to be a 'step-change' year for PSOW. We requested more substantial investment to provide vital, additional resources to help us deal with both the current workload, and to future-proof the organisation against the future workload challenges our data shows we can expect to deal with. As we receive additional funding from 1 April 2026, we are able to implement our fresh staffing structure which provides greater agility and extra posts to deal with casework.	We are consistently applying our proportionality and public interest tests to ensure we devote our resources to the right cases which is helping us to manage the high volume of work and ensure detailed investigations are appropriately focused. However until we are able to invest our additional resources and implement the new structure to further improve the position, the risk remains **RED.**

Risk Assurance Framework Arrangements

<table>
<tr><th colspan="4">PSOW Framework</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">

- **Strategic objectives from Corporate Plan**
- **Work programme**
- **Risk management**
- **Anti-fraud policy**
- **Governance framework**
- **Policies, procedures and code of conduct**

</td></tr>
<tr><td>Advisory Panel</td><td>Accounting Officer</td><td>Audit & Risk Assurance Committee</td><td>Management Team</td></tr>
<tr><td>Provides support and advice on vision, values and purposes as well as strategic direction and planning.</td><td>Governance.
Decision making.
Financial management.
Risk management.</td><td>Reviews and monitors governance, risks and internal controls. Agrees annual governance statement.</td><td>3-year Strategic Plan.
Business Plan.
Performance monitoring.
Corporate policies.
Risk management.
Value for money.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Central Guidance
HM Treasury.
FReM.
Managing Welsh Public Money.
Public Sector Internal Audit Standards.</td><td>PSOW policies, plans and risk register</td><td>Annual Governance Statement</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Assurance Map Components</td></tr>
<tr><td>1st line of defence
Strategic and operational delivery reporting.
KPI reporting.
Financial controls / Budget monitoring.</td><td>2nd line of defence
Risk register reviews.
Quality assurance.
Information security assurance.</td><td>3rd line of defence
Internal audit reports.
Financial Manager spot checks.</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Other assurances
External audit.
Scrutiny by Finance Committee.</td></tr>
</table>

I and my Management Team will continue to work to manage and minimise all key risks in line with our assessed risk appetite, and the risks will be considered at each meeting of the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee.

Budgeting Process

As Accounting Officer, I ensure that I have in place arrangements for tight control of the public money entrusted to me. The Management Team receives a monthly budget monitoring report setting out details of actual, against budgeted expenditure. Any unexpected expenditure issues that may arise during the year are considered so that appropriate action can be taken to remain within the budgeted expenditure where possible or to seek additional resources where cost pressures cannot be contained.

In producing the PSOW's financial estimate for 2026/27, a paper setting out initial budget criteria was considered by the Advisory Panel in July 2025. Overall, the submission sought an increase of 5.4% to reflect pay and price increases and investment in our strategic priorities. Following Finance Committee scrutiny in October, the Committee supported the submission, and this was included in the Welsh Government's Annual Budget Motion approved by the Senedd in January 2026.

Conclusion

I am satisfied that there were no significant weaknesses in the office's system of internal controls in 2025/26 which would affect the achievement of the office's policies, aims and objectives and that robust Corporate Governance is in operation with no breaches of the Corporate Governance Code.

Michelle Morris

Accounting Officer
Public Services Ombudsman for Wales 21 July 2026

Remuneration Report

Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

The Government of Wales Act 2006 provides for my remuneration and associated national insurance and pension costs to be met from the Welsh Consolidated Fund, rather than being paid directly. These costs are included, for transparency, in the remuneration report.

Remuneration

The following sections provide details of the remuneration and pension interest of the most senior management of the Office: Michelle Morris – Ombudsman, Simon Hart – Interim Executive Director - Corporate Resources, Heather Beynon - Executive Director - Corporate Resources and Katrin Shaw – Executive Director - Casework & Legal.

Single Total Figure of Remuneration					
2025/26					
Officials	Salary (£'000)	Bonus payments (£'000)	Benefits in Kind (to nearest £100)	Pension benefits (to nearest £1,000)	Total (£'000)
Michelle Morris	160-165	-	-	44,000	205-210
Simon Hart (until 31 August)	30-35	-	-	-	30-35
Heather Beynon (from 26 August)	65-70	-	-	23,000	85-90
Katrin Shaw	105-110	-	-	17,000	120-125

Heather Beynon was employed as Executive Director - Corporate Resources from 26 August 2025. The annual equivalent of her salary is £108,960 per annum.

Simon Hart was employed as Interim Executive Director - Corporate Resources until 31 August 2025, on a 0.5 FTE basis. The annual equivalent of his salary is £77,400 per annum.

Single Total Figure of Remuneration					
2024/25 (restated)					
Officials	Salary (£'000)	Bonus payments (£'000)	Benefits in Kind (to nearest £100)	Pension befits (to nearest £1,000)	Total (£'000)
Michelle Morris	155-160	-	-	50,000*	205-210
Chris Vinestock (until 2 March)	110-115	-	-	50,000	160-165
Simon Hart (from 3 March)	5-10	-	-	-	5-10
Katrin Shaw	105-110	-	-	75,000*	180-185

*** The 2024/25 comparative figures have been restated in accordance with the latest figures supplied by the pension administrator.**

Chris Vinestock was employed as Chief Operating Officer during 2024/25.

Salary

Salary includes gross salary, overtime and any other allowances to the extent that they are subject to UK taxation.

Off-payroll engagements

At 31 March 2026, there were the following off-payroll appointments:

Highly paid off-payroll worker engagements, earning £245 per day or greater.	**As at 31 March 2026**	**As at 31 March 2025**
Number of existing engagements	0	1
Of which: Existed for less than 1 year	0	1

All highly paid off-payroll workers engaged at any point during the year, earning £245 per day or greater.	**2025/26**	**2024/25**
Number	1	1
Of which: Subject to off-payroll legislation and determined as out-of-scope of IR35	1	1

There were no off-payroll engagements of board members or senior officials with significant financial responsibility between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026.

Benefits in kind

The monetary value of benefits in kind, covers any expenditure paid by the PSOW and treated by HM Revenue and Customs as a taxable emolument. There was no such expenditure.

Bonuses

No bonus was paid during the year to me or to any staff within my office, as no bonus scheme is in operation.

Pay multiples

The banded remuneration of the highest-paid director in the financial year 2025/26 was £160-£165,000 (2024/25 = £155-160,000) and increase of 3.1%.

The following section provide details of the required fair pay disclosures:

	2025/26	2024/25
25th percentile remuneration	£33,144	£37,938
25th percentile pay ratio	4.9	4.2
50th percentile remuneration	£51,357	£49,764
50th percentile pay ratio	3.2	3.2
75th percentile remuneration	£51,357	£50,799
75th percentile pay ratio	3.2	3.1

In 2025/26, no employee received remuneration in excess of the highest-paid director (2024/25 = none).

Remuneration ranged from £28,000 to £165,000 (2024/25 = £27,000-£160,000). Total remuneration includes salary, non-consolidated performance-related pay and benefits-in-kind. It does not include severance payments, temporary payments, employer pension contributions and the cash equivalent transfer value of pensions.

Pay awards

Staff pay is linked to the pay awards made to employees within Local Government in England and Wales. In line with that procedure, a pay award of 3.2% was awarded to staff in August 2025 backdated to April 2025.

Pensions

Pension entitlements for the employees shown earlier in the report are detailed below:

Name	As at 31/03/26				As at 31/03/25 (restated)
	Accrued pension at pension age and related lump sum	Real increase in pension and related lump sum at pension age	CETV	Real Increase in CETV	CETV
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Michelle Morris	100 - 105	2.5 - 5	1,747	32	1,621*
Heather Beynon	0 - 5	0 - 2.5	16	12	-
Katrin Shaw	55 - 60	0 - 2.5	1,123	4	1,056

*** The 2024/25 comparative figures have been restated in accordance with the latest figures supplied by the pension administrator.**

Simon Hart is not included in these calculations as he has 'opted-out' of the PCSPS. CETV refers to the Cash Equivalent Transfer Value, and further information can be found in the Pensions Disclosures.

Pension Liabilities

The pension obligations to present and past employees are discharged through the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme (PCSPS) and the pension obligations to former Commissioners or their dependants are paid directly by PSOW.

Sickness

During the year, an average of 1.9 days per employee were lost through sickness, compared with 5.8 days in 2024/25. This is the equivalent of 0.77% (2.3% in 2024/25) of total possible workdays. This reflects typical short-term absences and a small number of staff incurring long-term sickness.

Reporting of Civil Service and other compensation schemes

No exit packages were paid in 2025/26 (2024/25 = Nil).

Advisory Panel and Audit & Risk Assurance Committee

The following non-pensionable payments, based on a daily rate, were made to members of the Advisory Panel and Audit & Risk Assurance Committee:

	2025/26	2024/25
Mike Usher	3,600	4,600
Nia Roberts	2,700	1,900
Dave Tosh OBE	2,000	2,300
Jane Martin CBE	1,900	4,200
Carys Evans	1,700	1,600
Felicity Mitchell	1,700	1,000
Laura Davies	1,700	800
Jayne Woods	1,700	800
Sue Phelps	1,400	1,800
John McSherry	1,200	2,000
Bernie Davies	1,200	1,500
Ian Williams	-	2,200
Joanest Varney-Jackson	-	800

These figures comprise payments made to members for attendance at meetings, workshops and training sessions during 2025/26. Some members also assisted with staff recruitment during the year.

For staff reporting issues see the Annual Equality Report.

Michelle Morris

Accounting Officer

Public Services Ombudsman for Wales 21 July 2026

Welsh Parliament Accountability and Audit Report

In addition to the primary statements prepared under **International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS)**, the Government Financial Reporting Manual (FReM) requires the Ombudsman to prepare a statement and supporting notes to show resource out-turn against the Supply Estimate presented to the Senedd, in respect of each request for resource.

Summary of Net Resource Out-turn for year ending 31 March 2026

	Revised Estimate			Out-turn				2024/25
	Gross Expenditure	Income	Net Total	Gross Expenditure	Income	Net Total	Net total compared to estimate	Net Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Revenue	6,468	(13)	6,455	6,341	(11)	6,330	125	6,089
Capital	5	-	5	-	-	-	5	-
Resource DEL	**6,473**	**(13)**	**6,460**	**6,341**	**(11)**	**6,330**	**130**	**6,089**
Total Resources	**6,473**	**(13)**	**6,460**	**6,341**	**(11)**	**6,330**	**130**	**6,089**
Net Cash Requirement	**6,439**	**(13)**	**6,426**	**6,417**	**(11)**	**6,406**	**20**	**6,211**

The Ombudsman's salary is paid directly from the Welsh Consolidated Fund with only the reimbursement of actual business expenses included in the PSOW accounts.

Reconciliation of Net Resource to Net Cash Requirements

for the year ended 31 March 2026

	Note	2025/26			2024/25
		Revised Estimate	Net Total Out-turn	Net total out-turn compared to revised estimate	Out-turn
		£000	£000	£000	£000
Net Revenue	2-4	6,455	6,330	125	6,089
Net Capital	6	5	-	5	-
Total Resources		**6,460**	**6,330**	**130**	**6,089**
Depreciation	6	(157)	(133)	(24)	(151)
Movements in working capital	6-9	103	125	(22)	124
Movements in provisions	10	20	84	(64)	149
Net cash requirement		**6,426**	**6,406**	**20**	**6,211**

Michelle Morris

Accounting Officer

Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

21 July 2026

The Certificate and Report of the Auditor General for Wales to the Senedd

Opinion on financial statements

I certify that I have audited the financial statements of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales for the year ended 31 March 2026 under paragraph 18 (2) of Schedule 1 of the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019.

The financial statements comprise the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure, Statement of Financial Position, Statement of Cash Flows, Statement of Changes in Taxpayers Equity and related notes, including the material accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and UK adopted international accounting standards as interpreted and adapted by HM Treasury's Financial Reporting Manual.

In my opinion, in all material respects, the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales' affairs as at 31 March 2026 and of its net operating cost for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with UK adopted international accounting standards as interpreted and adapted by HM Treasury's Financial Reporting Manual and
- have been properly prepared in accordance with HM Treasury issued under the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019.

Opinion on regularity

In my opinion, in all material respects:

- the Statement of Resource Outturn properly presents the outturn

against the sums authorised by the Senedd for the year ended 31 March 2026 and shows that those totals have not been exceeded; and

- the income and expenditure in the financial statements have been applied to the purposes intended by the Senedd and the financial transactions recorded in the financial statements conform to the authorities which govern them.

Opinion on arrangements for the economic, efficient and effective use of resources

In my opinion, the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in its use of resources throughout the financial year ended 31 March 2026.

Basis of opinions

I conducted my audit in accordance with applicable law and International Standards on Auditing in the UK (ISAs (UK)) and Practice Note 10 "Audit of financial statements and regularity of public sector bodies in the United Kingdom". My responsibilities under those standards are further described in the auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of my certificate.

My staff and I are independent of the body in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to my audit of the financial statements in the UK including the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard, and I have fulfilled my other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinions.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, I have concluded that the use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work I have performed, I have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the body's ability to continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

My responsibilities and the responsibilities of the Accounting Officer with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this certificate.

The going concern basis of accounting for Public Service Ombudsman for Wales is adopted in consideration of the requirements set out in HM Treasury's Government Financial Reporting Manual, which require entities to adopt the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements where it anticipated that the services which they provide will continue into the future.

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the annual report other than the financial statements and my auditor's report thereon. The Accounting Officer is responsible for the other information in the annual report. My opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in my certificate, I do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon. My responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or knowledge obtained in the course of the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated.

If I identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, I am required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work I have performed, I conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, I am required to report that fact.

I have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinion on other matters

In my opinion, the part of the Remuneration Report to be audited has been properly prepared in accordance with HM Treasury directions made under section 17(1) of the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019.

In my opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of my audit:

- the parts of the Accountability Report subject to audit have been properly prepared in accordance with HM Treasury directions made under section 17(1) of the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019; and
- the information given in the Annual Report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements and is in accordance with the applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which I report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the body and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, I have not identified material misstatements in the Annual Report.

I have nothing to report in respect of the following matters which I report to you if, in my opinion:

- I have not received all of the information and explanations I require for my audit;
- proper accounting records have not been kept or returns adequate for my audit have not been received from branches not visited by my team;
- the financial statements and the audited part of the Accountability Report are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns;
- information specified by HM Treasury regarding the remuneration and other transactions is not disclosed;
- certain disclosures of remuneration specified by HM Treasury's Government Financial Reporting Manual are not made or parts of the Remuneration Report to be audited are not in

agreement with the accounting records and returns; or

- the Governance Statement does not reflect compliance with HM Treasury's guidance.

Responsibilities of the Accounting Officer for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the Statement of Accounting Officer's Responsibilities, the Accounting Officer is responsible for:

- maintaining proper accounting records;
- the preparation of the financial statements and Annual Report in accordance with the applicable financial reporting framework and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view;
- ensuring that the Annual Report and financial statements as a whole are fair, balanced and understandable;
- ensuring the regularity of financial transactions;
- internal controls as the Accounting Officer determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements to be free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error;
- assessing the body's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Accounting Officer anticipates that the services provided by the Public Sector Ombudsman for Wales will not continue to be provided in the future; and
- for putting in place proper arrangements for the economic, efficient and effective use of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales resources.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

My responsibility is to examine, certify and report on the financial statements in accordance with section 18(1) of the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019.

My objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue a certificate that includes my opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. I design procedures in line with my responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud.

My procedures included the following:

- Enquiring of management, and those charged with governance, including obtaining and reviewing supporting documentation relating to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales' policies and procedures concerned with: identifying, evaluating and complying with laws and regulations and whether they were aware of any instances of non-compliance;
- Detecting and responding to the risks of fraud and whether they have knowledge of any actual, suspected or alleged fraud;
- The internal controls established to mitigate risks related to fraud or non-compliance with laws and regulations;
- Considering as an audit team how and where fraud might occur in the financial statements and any potential indicators of fraud. As part of this discussion, I identified potential for fraud in the following areas: expenditure recognition and posting of unusual journals;
- Obtaining an understanding of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales' framework of authority, as well as other legal and regulatory frameworks that the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales operates in, focusing on those laws and regulations that had a direct effect on the financial statements or that had a fundamental effect on the

operations of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales; and

- Obtaining an understanding of related party relationships.

In addition to the above, my procedures to respond to identified risks included the following:

- reviewing the financial statement disclosures and testing to supporting documentation to assess compliance with relevant laws and regulations discussed above;
- enquiring of management, the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and legal advisors about actual and potential litigation and claims;
- reading minutes of meetings of those charged with governance and the Advisory Board; and
- in addressing the risk of fraud through management override of controls, testing the appropriateness of journal entries and other adjustments; assessing whether the judgements made in making accounting estimates are indicative of a potential bias; and evaluating the business rationale of any significant transactions that are unusual or outside the normal course of business.

I also communicated relevant identified laws and regulations and potential fraud risks to all audit team members and remained alert to any indications of fraud or non-compliance with laws and regulations throughout the audit.

The extent to which my procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud, is affected by the inherent difficulty in detecting irregularities, the effectiveness of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales controls, and the nature, timing and extent of the audit procedures performed.

A further description of the auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of my auditor's report.

Other auditor's responsibilities

I am required to obtain evidence sufficient to give:

- reasonable assurance that the Statement of Resource Outturn properly presents the outturn against the sums authorised by the Senedd for the year ended 31 March 2026 and shows that those totals have not been exceeded.
- reasonable assurance that the expenditure and income recorded in the financial statements have been applied to the purposes intended by the Senedd and the financial transactions recorded in the financial statements conform to the authorities which govern them.
- assurance that the Accounting Officer has made appropriate arrangements for the economic, efficient and effective use of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales resources.

I communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that I identify during my audit.

Report

I have no observations to make on these financial statements.

Catherine Mealing-Jones

Auditor General for Wales

23 July 2026

1 Capital Quarter
Tyndall Street
Cardiff, CF10 4BZ

The maintenance and integrity of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales website is the responsibility of the Accounting Officer; the work carried out by auditors does not involve consideration of these matters and accordingly auditors accept no responsibility for any changes that may have occurred to the financial statements since they were initially presented on the website

Annual Accounts 2025/26

Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure

for the year ended 31 March 2026

Administration costs	Note	2025/26	2024/25
		£000	£000
Staff costs	2	5,023	4,794
Other non-staff administration costs	3	1,318	1,365
Gross Administration Costs		**6,341**	**6,159**
Operating Income	4	(11)	(70)
Net Administration Costs		**6,330**	**6,089**
Net Revenue Out-turn		**6,330**	**6,089**

Notes 1 to 18 form part of these statements.

All activities commenced in the period are continuing.

Statement of Financial Position

for the year ended 31 March 2026

	Note	As at 31 March 2026	As at 31 March 2025
		£000	£000
Non-current assets			
Property, Plant and Equipment	6a	22	43
Intangible assets	6b	15	38
Right of use asset	6c	835	924
Receivables due after more than 1 year	7	-	-
		872	**1,005**
Current Assets			
Trade and other receivables	7	369	304
Cash and cash equivalents	8	20	25
		389	**329**
Total assets		**1,261**	**1,334**
Current liabilities			
Trade and other payables	9	(1,064)	(1,129)
Provisions less than 1 year	10	(27)	(54)
		(1,091)	**(1,183)**
Total assets less current liabilities		**170**	**151**
Non-current liabilities			
Trade and other payables due after 1 year	9	-	-
Provisions greater than 1 year	10	(238)	(295)
		(238)	**(295)**
Total assets less liabilities		**(68)**	**(144)**
General Fund		**(68)**	**(144)**

Notes 1 to 18 and the Pension Disclosures form part of these statements.

The financial statements were approved by the Accounting Officer and authorised for issue on 21 July 2026 by:

Michelle Morris

Accounting Officer

Public Services Ombudsman for Wales 21 July 2026

Statement of Cash Flows

for the year ended 31 March 2026

	Note	2025/26	2024/25
		£000	£000
Net cash outflow from operating activities	11	(6,406)	(6,174)
Net cash outflow from investing activities	12	-	-
Financing from Welsh Parliament	13	6,426	6,236
Prior year cash balance repaid		(25)	(17)
Prior year cash not drawn down		-	(37)
Net increase (decrease) in cash equivalents after adjustments for payments to Welsh Consolidated Fund		**(5)**	**8**
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of period		**25**	**17**
Cash and cash equivalents at end of period		**20**	**25**

Notes 1 to 18 form part of these statements.

Statement of Changes in Taxpayers' Equity

for the year ended 31 March 2025

General Fund	2025/26	2024/25
	£000	£000
Balance as at 1 April	**(144)**	**(229)**
Net operating costs	(6,330)	(6,089)
Funding by Welsh Parliament	6,426	6,236
Prior year cash not drawn down	-	(37)
Due back to Welsh Consolidated Fund:		
Cash	(20)	(25)
Non-operating income	-	-
Total recognised income and expense for year	**76**	**85**
Balance as at 31 March	**(68)**	**(144)**

Notes 1 to 18 and the Pension Disclosures form part of these statements.

Notes to the Financial Statements

1. Statement of Accounting Policies

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the Government Financial Reporting Manual (the FReM) issued by HM Treasury which is in force for 2025/26. The accounting policies contained in the FReM apply International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) as adopted or interpreted for the public sector. Where the FReM permits a choice of accounting policy, the accounting policy which has been judged to be most appropriate to the particular circumstances of the PSOW for the purpose of giving a true and fair view has been selected. The particular accounting policies adopted by the PSOW are described below. They have been applied consistently in dealing with items considered material in relation to the accounts.

1.1. Accounting Convention

These accounts have been prepared under the historical cost convention modified to account for any revaluation of fixed assets, where material to their value to the business, by reference to their current costs.

1.2. Property, Plant and Equipment

Expenditure on property, plant and equipment is capitalised where the purchases are expected to have a useful life extending over more than 1 year and the cost exceeds £5k. Assets costing less than £5k may be capitalised providing they are capital in nature and are part of a larger scheme that is, in total, more than £5k. Assets are shown at cost less an allowance for depreciation. On initial recognition, fixed assets are measured at cost, including such costs as installation, which are directly attributable to bringing them into working condition for their intended use. In reviewing the costs of fixed assets previously acquired and the prices paid for new acquisitions during the year there is no material difference between the historic net book value of the assets and their replacement cost less depreciation.

1.3. Depreciation

Assets are depreciated at rates calculated to write them down to zero or, if applicable, estimated residual value on a straight-line basis over their estimated useful life following an initial charge of a full month's depreciation in the month of purchase. Assets in the course of construction are depreciated from the month in which the asset is brought into use.

Except where otherwise noted asset lives are assumed to be the following:

Plant	10 years or the lease term if shorter
Furniture and other fittings	10 years or in the case of fittings, the lease term
Computers and other equipment	3 to 10 years

1.4. Intangible assets

Purchased computer software licences and developed software are capitalised where expenditure of £5k or more is incurred, and the useful life is more than 1 year. Intangible assets costing less than £5k may be capitalised providing they are capital in nature and are part of a larger scheme that is, in total, more than £5k. Intangible assets are reviewed annually for impairment and are stated at amortised historic cost. Software licences are amortised over the shorter of the term of the licence and the useful economic life of the computer equipment on which they are installed. This would usually be from 3 to 5 years. Developed software is amortised over the estimated useful life. In the year of acquisition, amortisation charges commence when the asset is brought into use.

1.5. Value Added Tax

The PSOW is not registered for VAT. Expenditure is therefore disclosed gross of VAT.

1.6. Pensions

The pension obligations to present and past employees are covered by the provisions of the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme (PCSPS) and by direct payment to previous Commissioners for Local Administration in Wales or any surviving beneficiaries. Full details are disclosed in the Pension Disclosures at the end of the Financial Statements. The costs of providing these pensions are charged through the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure.

1.7. Early departure costs

Where the PSOW is required to meet the additional cost of benefits beyond the normal benefits payable by the appropriate pension scheme in respect of employees who retire early, these costs are charged to the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure in full when the liability arises.

1.8. Leases

Expenditure on leased property and equipment is charged in the period to which it relates.

1.9. Staff Costs

In line with IAS 19, short-term employee benefits, such as wages, salaries and social security contributions, paid annual leave and paid sick leave, as well as non-monetary benefits for current employees, are recognised when an employee has rendered services in exchange for those benefits.

1.10. Provisions

These are sums which are of uncertain timing or amount at the balance sheet date and represent the best estimate of the expenditure required to settle the obligations. Where the effect of the time value of money is significant, the estimated risk adjusted cash flows are discounted using the recommended HM Treasury discount rate.

1.11. Income

All income is recognised in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure in accordance with IAS 18 and IFRS 15.

1.12. Standards Not Yet Effective

Standard	Effective date	Further details
IFRS 18 Presentation and disclosure in financial statements	n/a	IFRS 18 will replace IAS 1 Presentation of Financial Statements and is effective for annual reporting periods beginning on or after the 1 January 2027 in the private sector. The impact of IFRS 18 on the Public Sector is still being assessed, and a decision has not yet been taken on an implementation date.
IFRS 19 Subsidiaries without public accountability: Disclosures	n/a	IFRS 19 allows eligible subsidiaries to apply IFRS Accounting Standards with reduced disclosure requirements and is effective for annual reporting periods beginning on or after the 1 January 2027 in the private sector. The impact of IFRS 19 on the Public Sector is still being assessed, and a decision has not yet been taken on an implementation date.

2. Staff Costs and Numbers

The aggregate employment costs were as follows:

	2025/26	2024/25
	£000	£000
Permanent staff:		
Salaries	3,437	3,352
Social Security costs	458	349
Pension costs	969	936
Pension fund charges	(32)	49
Total	**4,832**	**4,686**
Temporary staff:		
Salaries	151	92
Social Security costs	19	6
Pension costs	21	10
Total	**191**	**108**
Total Staff Costs	**5,023**	**4,794**

The average number of whole-time equivalent persons employed (including senior management and fixed term appointments) during the year was as follows:

	2025/26	2024/25
	No.	No.
Directors	2	2
Communications and PA	3	3
Complaints and Investigations	54	51
Improvement Team	8	7
Support	8	8
Total	**75**	**71**

3. Non-Staff Administration Costs

	2025/26	2024/25
	£000	£000
Rent	25	35
External Audit fee	23	22
Legal and professional fees	236	259
Other property costs	106	140
IFRS 16 interest charge	44	48
Computer services	438	405
Office costs	118	89
Travel and Subsistence	26	19
Training and Recruitment	70	120
Communications	99	77
Sub-total	**1,185**	**1,214**
Depreciation	110	123
Amortisation charge	23	28
Loss on disposal	-	-
Sub-total	**133**	**151**
Total Other Administration Costs	**1,318**	**1,365**

4. Operating Income

	2025/26	2024/25
	£000	£000
Seconded staff	(8)	(69)
Other – Future Generations Commissioner payroll services	(3)	(1)
Total	**(11)**	**(70)**

5. Operating Costs by Strategic Aims

The costs of providing a first-class Ombudsman service to Wales are set out below. We have 4 strategic aims for delivering our mission and the allocation of costs to each of the aims has been based on the following:

(a) an estimate of the staff time spent on the objective

(b) direct allocation of expenditure where applicable

(c) apportionment of other costs pro rata to the estimate of staff time.

	2025/26		2024/25	
	£000	%	£000	%
Strategic Aim 1: Delivering justice with a positive impact for people and public services	4,650	73.4	4,440	72.9
Strategic Aim 2: Increasing accessibility and inclusion	266	4.2	263	4.3
Strategic Aim 3: Expanding our proactive improvement work	1,194	18.9	1,163	19.1
Strategic Aim 4: Ensuring that we are a healthy, efficient and accountable organisation	220	3.5	223	3.7
Net Resources Out-turn	**6,330**	**100.0**	**6,089**	**100.0**

The Aims analysis excludes capital expenditure.

6a. Property, Plant and Equipment

2025/26	Plant	Computers and other equipment	Furniture and other fittings	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Cost or valuation at 1 April	**156**	**147**	**353**	**656**
Additions	-	-	-	-
De-recognition	(33)	-	(61)	(94)
Disposals	-	-	-	-
At 31 March	**123**	**147**	**292**	**562**
Depreciation as at 1 April	**(156)**	**(130)**	**(327)**	**(613)**
Charged in the year	-	(13)	(8)	(21)
De-recognition	33	-	61	94
Disposals	-	-	-	-
At 31 March	**(123)**	**(143)**	**(274)**	**(540)**
Carrying amount as at 31 March 2026	**-**	**4**	**18**	**22**
Carrying amount as at 31 March 2025	-	17	26	43

2024/25	Plant	Computers and other equipment	Furniture and other fittings	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Cost or valuation at 1 April	**156**	**147**	**353**	**656**
Additions	-	-	-	-
Disposals	-	-	-	-
At 31 March	**156**	**147**	**353**	**656**
Depreciation as at 1 April	**(156)**	**(115)**	**(308)**	**(579)**
Charged in the year	-	(15)	(19)	(34)
Disposals	-	-	-	-
At 31 March	**(156)**	**(130)**	**(327)**	**(613)**
Carrying amount as at 31 March 2025	**-**	**17**	**26**	**43**
Carrying amount as at 31 March 2024	-	32	45	77

6b. Intangible Assets

2025/26	Information Technology	Software Licences	Total
	£000	£000	£000
Cost or valuation at 1 April	**518**	**52**	**570**
Additions	-	-	-
Disposals	-	-	-
At 31 March	**518**	**52**	**570**
Amortisation as at 1 April	**(480)**	**(52)**	**(532)**
Amortisation charged in the year	(23)	-	(23)
Disposals	-	-	-
At 31 March	**(503)**	**(52)**	**(555)**
Carrying Value as at 31 March 2026	**15**	**-**	**15**
Carrying Value as at 31 March 2025	38	-	38

2024/25	Information Technology	Software Licences	Total
	£000	£000	£000
Cost or valuation at 1 April	**518**	**52**	**570**
Additions	-	-	-
Disposals	-	-	-
At 31 March	**518**	**52**	**570**
Amortisation as at 1 April	**(452)**	**(52)**	**(504)**
Amortisation charged in the year	(28)	-	(28)
Disposals	-	-	-
At 31 March	**(480)**	**(52)**	**(532)**
Carrying Value as at 31 March 2025	**38**	**-**	**38**
Carrying Value as at 31 March 2024	66	-	66

In the opinion of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales there is no material difference between the net book value of assets at current values and at their historic cost.

6c. Right of Use Assets

2025/26	IFRS 16 right of use asset	Total
	£000	£000
Cost or valuation at 1 April	**1,013**	**1,013**
Additions	-	-
Disposals	-	-
At 31 March	**1,013**	**1,013**
Depreciation as at 1 April	**(89)**	**(89)**
Charged in the year	(89)	(89)
Disposals	-	-
At 31 March	**(178)**	**(178)**
Carrying amount as at 31 March 2026	**835**	**835**
Carrying amount as at 31 March 2025	924	924

2024/25	IFRS 16 right of use asset	Total
	£000	£000
Cost or valuation at 1 April	**571**	**571**
Additions	1,013	1,013
Disposals	(571)	(571)
At 31 March	**1,013**	**1,013**
Depreciation as at 1 April	**(340)**	**(340)**
Charged in the year	(89)	(89)
Disposals	340	340
At 31 March	**(89)**	**(89)**
Carrying amount as at 31 March 2025	**924**	**924**
Carrying amount as at 31 March 2024	231	231

7. Trade and other Receivables

	As at 31 March 2026	As at 31 March 2025
	£000	£000
Amounts falling due within 1 year		
Prepayments	369	304
Trade debtors	-	-
Amounts falling due after more than 1 year		
Prepayments	-	-
Total	**369**	**304**

8. Cash and Cash Equivalents

Any bank balance held at the year-end must be returned to the Welsh Consolidated Fund. A figure of £20k (£25k in 2024/25) has been included within the accounts, being the net balance at the year-end on all the bank accounts operated by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, irrespective of whether the individual account is in debit or credit.

The year-end balance will be repaid to the Welsh Consolidated Fund in 2026/27 under the Government of Wales Act 2006.

9. Trade Payables and other Current Liabilities

	As at 31 March 2026	As at 31 March 2025
	£000	£000
Amounts falling due in 1 year		
Untaken annual leave	120	130
Welsh Consolidated Fund - unspent balances	20	25
Trade payables	16	5
IFRS 16 creditor	861	930
Accruals	47	39
Total	**1,064**	**1,129**

10. Provisions for Liabilities and Charges

	2025/26				2024/25
	Pensions for Former Commissioners	Dilapidation Costs	Other Costs	Total	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Balance at 1 April	170	179	-	349	498
Movement in provision required	(31)	(14)	-	(45)	49
Discount rate movement	(1)	-	-	(1)	-
Provisions utilised in the year	(38)	-	-	(38)	(198)
Balance at 31 March	**100**	**165**	**-**	**265**	**349**

Analysis of expected timings of payment of provisions:

	As at 31 March 2026	As at 31 March 2025
	£000	£000
Payable within 1 year	27	54
Payable within 2 to 5 years	73	116
Payable in more than 5 years	165	179
Balance at 31 March 2025	**265**	**349**

Pension provisions are calculated based on the National Life Tables for England and Wales issued by the Office of National Statistics. Later year pension increases are in line with GDP deflator information issued by HM Treasury. The discount factor has been amended to 2.95% for the financial year (2.40% in 2024/25) in line with the guidance issued by the Treasury. One surviving spouse of former Commissioners remains as a pension liability.

11. Reconciliation of Operating Cost to Operating Cash Flows

	Notes	2025/26	2024/25
		£000	£000
Net operating cost		**(6,330)**	**(6,089)**
Adjust for non-cash items	3/6c	133	(631)
Decrease/(Increase) in trade and other receivables	7	(65)	21
Increase/(Decrease) in trade and other payables	9	(65)	682
Movement in provisions	10	(84)	(149)
Movement in cash repaid to Welsh Consolidated Fund	8	5	(8)
Net cash outflow from operating activities		**(6,406)**	**(6,174)**

12. Non-Current Asset Expenditure and Financial Investment

	2025/26	2024/25
	£000	£000
Purchases of property, plant and equipment	-	-
Proceeds of disposals of property, plant and equipment	-	-
Purchases of intangible assets	-	-
Net cash outflow from investing activities	**-**	**-**

13. Reconciliation of Net Cash Requirement to Increase/(Decrease) in Cash

	2025/26	2024/25
	£000	£000
Net Cash Requirement:		
Operating activities	(6,406)	(6,174)
Capital Expenditure	-	-
	(6,406)	**(6,174)**
Financing from Welsh Parliament	6,426	6,236
Prior year cash balance repaid	(25)	(17)
Prior year cash not drawn down	-	(37)
Increase/(Decrease) in cash and cash equivalents	**(5)**	**8**

14. Commitments under Operating Leases

	As at 31 March 2026	As at 31 March 2025
	£000	£000
Total future minimum lease payments on building:		
Payable within 1 year	139	136
Within 2 and 5 years	556	556
More than 5 years	606	745
	1,301	**1,437**
Other:		
Payable within 1 year	-	-
Within 2 and 5 years	-	-
More than 5 years	-	-
	-	**-**
Total of all operating leases	**1,301**	**1,437**

15. Contingent Liabilities

None.

16. Capital Commitments

There were no capital commitments at 31 March 2026 (2024/25 = Nil).

17. Related Party Transactions

The PSOW is headed by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. The Office was established under the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2005 and is now governed by the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019. The Ombudsman is independent of Government and the funding arrangements of the Office are set up to ensure that the independence of the Office is secured.

The PSOW has had a number of material transactions with the Welsh Parliament - who provided funding of £6,426k during the year (2024/25: £6,236k), HM Revenue and Customs - for Tax, National Insurance and Student Loan payments totalling £1,241k (2024/25: £1,124k) and the Cabinet Office - for payments in respect of the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme totalling £988k (2024/25: £946k).

During the year, no directors, key members of staff or their close relatives have undertaken any material transactions. Mike Usher (Audit & Risk Assurance Committee Chair and Advisory Panel member) was employed as a Non-Executive Board member and Audit & Risk Assurance Committee Chair of the Welsh Government throughout 2025/26.

18. Events after the Reporting Period

None.

Pension Disclosures

One pension scheme was operated on behalf of current staff during 2025/26 – The Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme (PCSPS). There also remains an ongoing liability to meet the unfunded pensions of one dependant relative of former Local Government Commissioners.

Civil Service Pensions

Pension benefits are provided through the Civil Service pension arrangements. From 1 April 2015 a new pension scheme for civil servants was introduced – the Civil Servants and Others Pension Scheme or **alpha**, which provides benefits on a career average basis with a normal pension age equal to the member's State Pension Age (or 65 if higher). From that date all newly appointed civil servants and the majority of those already in service joined **alpha**. Prior to that date, civil servants participated in the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme (PCSPS). The PCSPS has four sections: 3 providing benefits on a final salary basis (**classic**, **premium** or **classic plus**) with a normal pension age of 60; and one providing benefits on a whole career basis (**nuvos**) with a normal pension age of 65.

These statutory arrangements are unfunded with the cost of benefits met by monies voted by Parliament each year. Pensions payable under **classic**, **premium**, **classic plus**, **nuvos** and **alpha** are increased annually in line with Pensions Increase legislation. Existing members of the PCSPS who were within 10 years of their normal pension age on 1 April 2012 remained in the PCSPS after 1 April 2015. Those who were between 10 years and 13 years and 5 months from their normal pension age on 1 April 2012 switch into **alpha** sometime between 1 June 2015 and 1 February 2022. Because the Government plans to remove discrimination identified by the courts in the way that the 2015 pension reforms were introduced for some members, eligible members with relevant service between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2022 may be entitled to different pension benefits in relation to that period (and this may affect the Cash Equivalent Transfer Values shown in this report – see below). All members who switch to **alpha** have their PCSPS benefits 'banked', with those with earlier benefits in one of the final salary sections of the PCSPS having those benefits based on their final salary when they leave **alpha**. (The pension figures quoted for officials

show pension earned in PCSPS or **alpha** – as appropriate. Where the official has benefits in both the PCSPS and alpha the figure quoted is the combined value of their benefits in the two schemes.) Members joining from October 2002 may opt for either the appropriate defined benefit arrangement or a defined contribution (money purchase) pension with an employer contribution (**partnership** pension account).

Employee contributions are salary-related and range between 4.6% and 8.05% for members of **classic**, **premium**, **classic plus**, **nuvos** and **alpha**. Benefits in classic accrue at the rate of 1/80th of final pensionable earnings for each year of service. In addition, a lump sum equivalent to three years initial pension is payable on retirement. For **premium**, benefits accrue at the rate of 1/60th of final pensionable earnings for each year of service. Unlike **classic**, there is no automatic lump sum. **Classic plus** is essentially a hybrid with benefits for service before 1 October 2002 calculated broadly as per **classic** and benefits for service from October 2002 worked out as in **premium**. In **nuvos** a member builds up a pension based on his pensionable earnings during their period of scheme membership. At the end of the scheme year (31 March) the member's earned pension account is credited with 2.3% of their pensionable earnings in that scheme year and the accrued pension is uprated in line with Pensions Increase legislation. Benefits in **alpha** build up in a similar way to **nuvos**, except that the accrual rate in 2.32%. In all cases members may opt to give up (commute) pension for a lump sum up to the limits set by the Finance Act 2004.

The **partnership** pension account is an occupational defined contribution pension arrangement which is part of the Legal & General Mastertrust. The employer makes a basic contribution of between 8% and 14.75% (depending on the age of the member). The employee does not have to contribute, but where they do make contributions, the employer will match these up to a limit of 3% of pensionable salary (in addition to the employer's basic contribution). Employers also contribute a further 0.5% of pensionable salary to cover the cost of centrally provided risk benefit cover (death in service and ill health retirement).

The accrued pension quoted is the pension the member is entitled to receive when they reach pension age, or immediately on ceasing to be an active member of the scheme if they are already at or over pension age. Pension age is 60 for members of **classic**, **premium** and **classic plus**, 65 for members of **nuvos**, and the higher of 65 or State Pension Age for members of **alpha**. (The pension figures quoted for officials show pension earned in PCSPS or alpha – as appropriate. Where the official has benefits in both the PCSPS and alpha the figure quoted is the combined value of their benefits in the two schemes, but note that part of that pension may be payable from different ages.)

Further details about the Civil Service pension arrangements can be found at the website www.civilservicepensionscheme.org.uk.

Cash Equivalent Transfer Values

A Cash Equivalent Transfer Value (CETV) is the actuarially assessed capitalised value of the pension scheme benefits accrued by a member at a particular point in time. The benefits valued are the member's accrued benefits and any contingent spouse's pension payable from the scheme. A CETV is a payment made by a pension scheme or arrangement to secure pension benefits in another pension scheme or arrangement when the member leaves a scheme and chooses to transfer the benefits accrued in their former scheme. The pension figures shown relate to the benefits that the individual has accrued as a consequence of their total membership of the pension scheme, not just their service in a senior capacity to which disclosure applies.

The figures include the value of any pension benefit in another scheme or arrangement which the member has transferred to the Civil Service pension arrangements. They also include any additional pension benefit accrued to the member as a result of their buying additional pension benefits at their own cost. CETVs are worked out in accordance with The Occupational Pension Schemes (Transfer Values) (Amendment) Regulations 2008 and do not take account of any actual or potential reduction to benefits resulting from Lifetime Allowance Tax which may be due when pension benefits are taken.

Real Increase in CETV

This reflects the increase in CETV that is funded by the employer. It does not include the increase in accrued pension due to inflation, contributions paid by the employee (including the value of any benefits transferred from another pension scheme or arrangement) and uses common market valuation factors for the start and end of the period.

Compensation for loss of office

No staff left under Voluntary Exit or Voluntary Redundancy terms during the financial year.

Pensions for former Ombudsmen

With the agreement of the Secretary of State for Wales in 1991 and subsequent confirmation by Statutory Instrument 1993 No. 1367, Local Government Commissioners became eligible to join the Local Government Pension Scheme. However, the pensions of the three previous Local Government Commissioners remained the responsibility of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales and are met through the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure.

At 31 March 2026 one surviving spouse of former Commissioners continued to receive a pension. Sadly, one spouse passed away during 2025/26.

Pensions are increased annually in line with other pension schemes within the Public Sector. The basis of calculations of the Annual Pensions Increase has been changed from using the annual movement based on the Retail Price Index (RPI) to the Consumer Price Index (CPI). The amount of the uplift applied is normally set out in the Statutory Instrument Pensions Increase (Review) Order. This uplift for 2025/26 was 3.8%.

The total payments during 2025/26 were £38k (£53k in 2024/25). The liabilities arising out of the obligation to finance these pensions together with any dependant pensions has been calculated to be £100k (£170k in 2024/25). The calculation to determine the overall liability has been carried out internally using life expectancy tables for males and females in Wales obtained from the website of the Government Actuary's Department. A discount rate, from PES (2025), of 2.95% (2.40% in 2024/25) has been applied in accordance with the Treasury guidance that all pension liabilities should be discounted.

Appendices

Post-legislative review

In 2024-25, the Senedd's Finance Committee launched a post-legislative review of the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019.

The Act requires the Senedd to undertake a post-legislative review, as soon as practicable, five years after the 2019 Act received Royal Assent.

Our written submission to the review drew on rich evidence to demonstrate the impact of our proactive powers to accept complaints other than in writing; undertake investigations on own initiative and set and monitor complaints standards.

We made it clear that, despite some challenges, we were proud of how we have used these powers to date. We were glad to see that our work has been generally endorsed by public sector providers and third sector organisations that took part in the research which informed our submission. However, we were particularly pleased to see some evidence of the positive impact of these powers on our complainants and people using Welsh public services.

We also took the opportunity to invite the Finance Committee to consider some changes to our legislative framework, to enable us to better serve the people of Wales. These included bringing into our jurisdiction complaints about schools and governing body decisions in Wales.

The Committee published its report [PDF 929KB] on 10 October 2025.

We responded [PDF 349 KB] to the Committees report on 5 December 2025.

Overall, the Committee concluded that:

- The 2019 Act provides an effective statutory basis which supports and enables our work.
- The 2019 Act provides a good practice template for the role of ombudsman internationally and remains an effective

legislative framework that is fit for purpose.

The Committee noted that because some provisions of the 2019 Act has not yet been fully utilised it has not been possible to determine whether the Act has provided value for money in delivering its objectives, and that these issues would continue to be scrutinised during annual budget and oversight sessions with our office.

The Committee also made some recommendations related to:

- improving accessibility and awareness of our service
- taking steps to ensure that our own initiative investigations process is more streamlined, transparent and impactful
- strengthening our data on complaints handling by organisations in our jurisdiction
- strengthening how we communicate our impact
- exploring possible expansion of our remit to schools.

We are grateful for the Committee's scrutiny. We are already taking steps to implement the Committee's recommendations and will be reporting on our progress in our future Annual Reports.

Some terms that we use in this report

Case: any matter raised with us by a member of the public

Caseload: all cases that we handle.

Enquiry: a case where a member of the public contacts us with a general query but is not yet ready to complain – or we know straight away that we cannot look into their issue. If that happens, we try to offer advice or direct people to another organisation that can help.

Pre-assessment: a Code of Conduct case which is not a duly made complaint. People who complain to us about the Code of Conduct need to sign a declaration to say that the details of the complaint are true and they are aware that their details and the complaint will be shared with the member. If they do not sign that declaration, we close the case as a preassessment.

Complaint: a case where we have had enough information to start looking into an issue to see what we can do. Once we consider the information received, we can decline a complaint, suggest how it can be resolved quickly ('early resolution') or start an investigation.

Duly made complaint (public services): We can only consider a complaint about public services if it is submitted to us in line with our statutory guidance. Download the guidance [PDF, 283 KB].

Duly made complaint (Code of Conduct): To consider a complaint about Code of Conduct, we need:

- complainant name and contact details
- name and authority of member complained about
- details of the allegation against the member.
- a signed declaration from the complainant and any third parties whose evidence has been submitted, located at the end of our Code of Condcut complaint form.

Outcome: our decision after we have considered a complaint.

Intervention: a complaint outcome when we decided that something has gone wrong with public services and things must be put right. This could be by making recommendations or agreeing early resolution or settlement of a complaint.

Referral: a type of outcome in Code of Conduct cases where we refer a matter to a Standards Committee or the Adjudication Panel for Wales. We generally do this for cases which involve serious breaches of the Code.

Our Key Performance Indicators

We check how well we perform against a set of measures called Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Below, we explain how we aimed to perform and how we did.

We developed our KPIs in 2023 and we intend to retain them for the life of our current Strategic Plan. However, we agree targets for each KPI annually. We do this by analysing our past performance, and taking into account any challenges that may affect our ability to meet our commitments in the future. Generally, we will always seek to maintain or exceed our targets from the previous year. If we decide that we need to lower our targets, we will explain this decision below.

The tolerances for our RAG rating are: GREEN: >90%, AMBER: 70% - <90%, RED: 0-<70%.

Strategic Aim 1: Delivering justice with a positive impact for people and public services	Actual 2023-24	Actual 2024-25	Target 2025-26	Actual 2025-26
Average case closure time: Assessment (weeks)	4	4	≤6	4
Average case closure time: Investigation (weeks)	64	53	≤52	54
Proportion of complaint reviews in which we find that our original decision was appropriate	92%	94%	≥95%	95%
Proportion of decisions made by Investigation Officers and the Code Team Manager undergoing additional checks	-	5%	5%	5%
Proportion of sample checks where decision of Investigation Officers and the Code Team Manager are confirmed as appropriate	-	100%	100%	100%
Proportion of Service Quality reviews satisfactory or better	67%	84%	≥85%	86%
Proportion of recommendations due during the year complied with in line with set target cases closed within 12 months	67%	56%	≥75%	69%
Proportion of people satisfied with our service				
All respondents	40%	42%	≥50%	36%
Respondents satisfied with the outcome	98%	95%	≥95%	87%
Respondents not satisfied with the outcome	21%	17%	-	14%

Strategic Aim 2: Increasing accessibility and inclusion	Actual 2023-24	Actual 2024-25	Target 2025-26	Actual 2025-26
Level of awareness of our service	49%	48%	≥50%	52%
Complainant assessment of our accessibility ('easy to get in touch')				
All respondents	83%	86%	≥90%	83%
Respondents satisfied with the outcome	95%	95%	≥95%	91%
Respondents not satisfied with the outcome	79%	81%	-	79%
Representation of target groups among our complainants (number of 6 target groups well-represented)	1	1	≥2	2
Proportion of our complaints that are in our jurisdiction and not premature	59%	60%	≥65%	57%

Strategic Aim 3: Increasing the impact of our proactive improvement work	Actual 2023-24	Actual 2024-25	Target 2025-26	Actual 2025-26
Proportion of complaints handled by public bodies and then escalated to us: Health Boards	5.5%	6%	≤5%	11%
Proportion of complaints handled by public bodies and then escalated to us: Local Authorities	7.1%	7%	≤7%	9%
Proportion of recommendations as a result of our extended and wider investigations due during the year complied with in line with set target	100%	n/a	≥75%	93%
Proportion of Code of Conduct breaches that we referred upheld by Standards Committees or Adjudication Panel for Wales	85%	85%	≥85%	81%

Strategic Aim 4: Ensuring that we are a healthy, efficient and accountable organisation	Actual 2023-24	Actual 2024-25	Target 2025-26	Actual 2025-26
Sickness absence levels (average number of days)	7.7	5.78	≤6	1.96
Proportion of staff who agree that PSOW is a good place to work	75%	91%	≥80%	88%
Level of variance on expenditure from that set out in our Estimate for the current year (less than)	0.50%	0.40%	≤3%	0.30%
Proper management of our budget	Unqualified accounts and substantial assurance	Unqualified accounts and substantial assurance	Unqualified accounts and substantial assurance	Unqualified accounts and reasonable assurance
Average cost per case for total casework closure	£432	£459	≤£500	£440
Average cost per complaint for total complaints closure	£1,289	£1,274	≤£1,350	£1,034
Our carbon footprint (kg CO_2e produced)	62,630	58,514	≤60,000	56,212.49

Our complaints

Public services - new complaints

Health board	2023-24	Received per 1000 residents	2024-25	Received per 1000 residents	2025-26	Received per 1000 residents
Aneurin Bevan University Health Board	175	0.30	178	0.30	263	0.44
Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board	214	0.31	236	0.34	283	0.41
Cardiff and Vale University Health Board	150	0.30	149	0.29	230	0.44
Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board	109	0.25	102	0.23	173	0.39
Hywel Dda University Health Board	138	0.36	130	0.33	172	0.44
Powys Teaching Health Board	21	0.16	20	0.15	31	0.23
Swansea Bay University Health Board	132	0.34	134	0.34	199	0.50
All health boards	**939**	**0.30**	**949**	**0.28**	**1351**	**0.42**

Local authority	2023-24	Received per 1000 residents	2024-25	Received per 1000 residents	2025-26	Received per 1000 residents
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	15	0.22	14	0.21	24	0.35
Bridgend County Borough Council	59	0.40	58	0.40	68	0.46
Caerphilly County Borough Council	56	0.32	78	0.44	79	0.45
Cardiff Council*	149	0.40	219	0.60	290	0.76
Carmarthenshire County Council	69	0.36	86	0.45	109	0.57
Ceredigion County Council	32	0.45	47	0.64	35	0.48
Conwy County Borough Council	36	0.31	29	0.25	50	0.44
Cyngor Gwynedd	38	0.32	46	0.39	47	0.39
Denbighshire County Council**	31	0.32	98	1.01	107	1.09
Flintshire County Council	51	0.33	61	0.39	113	0.72
Isle of Anglesey County Council	38	0.55	22	0.32	35	0.51
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council***	12	0.20	17	0.29	23	0.39
Monmouthshire County Council	29	0.31	19	0.20	37	0.39
Neath Port Talbot Council	35	0.25	48	0.34	54	0.38
Newport City Council	52	0.32	61	0.37	74	0.44
Pembrokeshire County Council	40	0.32	47	0.38	55	0.44

continued overleaf

Powys County Council	54	0.40	55	0.41	90	0.67
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council****	64	0.27	62	0.26	98	0.40
Swansea Council	82	0.34	113	0.46	152	0.60
Torfaen County Borough Council	15	0.16	20	0.21	15	0.16
Vale of Glamorgan Council	77	0.58	61	0.45	79	0.58
Wrexham County Borough Council	76	0.56	76	0.56	70	0.51
All local authorities	**1110**	**0.35**	**1337**	**0.41**	**1704**	**0.53**

* including Rent Smart Wales

** including Wales Penalty Processing Partnership

*** including South Wales Police and Crime Panel

**** including South Wales Parking Group

Housing association	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
Adra	14	18	29
Aelwyd Housing Association Ltd	3	3	0
Ateb Group Ltd	1	4	4
Barcud	8	5	13
Beacon Cymru Group Ltd	0	0	27
Bro Myrddin Housing Association	2	0	2
Bron Afon Community Housing Ltd	23	24	31
Cadwyn Housing Association Ltd	2	3	12
Cardiff Community Housing Association	4	13	14
Caredig	5	10	11
Cartrefi Conwy	10	7	6
Charter Housing Association*	8	1	1
Clwyd Alyn Housing Association	13	14	13
Coastal Housing Group Ltd	8	9	3
Codi Group	0	0	14
Cynon Taf Community Housing Group	2	2	6
Grŵp Cynefin	7	10	10
Hafod Housing Association	55	46	18
Hedyn	0	0	34

continued overleaf

Linc Cymru Housing Association	17	18	27
Melin Homes Ltd	6	4	0
Merthyr Tydfil Housing Association Ltd	6	4	6
Merthyr Valleys Homes	7	10	8
Monmouthshire Housing Association	1	3	10
Newport City Homes	16	25	0
Newydd Housing Association	13	14	19
North Wales Housing	0	0	2
Pobl	43	35	40
Seren Living*	0	0	1
Rhondda Housing Association Ltd	0	2	0
Stori Wales	2	0	3
Taff Housing Association	4	5	7
Tai Calon Community Housing	10	13	7
Tai Tarian	10	12	26
Trivallis	26	27	33
Ty Gwalia*	2	0	0
United Welsh Housing Association	12	16	19
Valleys To Coast Housing	24	38	43
Wales & West Housing Association	16	16	14
All housing associations	**380**	**411**	**513**

*** part of the Pobl Group**

Public services - closed complaints

Health board	2023-24			2024-25			2025-26		
	No. of interventions	No. of closures	Intervention rate	No. of interventions	No. of closures	Intervention rate	No. of interventions	No. of closures	Intervention rate
Aneurin Bevan University Health Board	73	195	37%	50	176	28%	64	254	25%
Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board	81	256	32%	64	227	28%	57	272	21%
Cardiff and Vale University Health Board	34	158	22%	27	154	18%	38	216	18%
Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board	39	129	30%	36	104	35%	32	172	19%
Hywel Dda University Health Board	55	154	36%	43	131	33%	43	160	27%
Powys Teaching Health Board	3	21	14%	6	25	24%	7	28	25%
Swansea Bay University Health Board	41	141	29%	33	136	24%	49	195	25%
All health boards	**326**	**1054**	**31%**	**259**	**953**	**27%**	**290**	**1297**	**22%**

Local authority	2023-24			2024-25			2025-26		
	No. of interventions	No. of closures	Intervention rate	No. of interventions	No. of closures	Intervention rate	No. of interventions	No. of closures	Intervention rate
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	1	16	6%	0	12	0%	0	24	0%
Bridgend County Borough Council	8	59	14%	6	57	11%	3	67	4%
Caerphilly County Borough Council	3	48	6%	11	79	14%	13	83	16%
Cardiff Council*	28	147	19%	37	190	19%	52	304	17%
Carmarthenshire County Council	8	60	13%	11	86	13%	9	106	8%
Ceredigion County Council	7	32	22%	11	45	24%	3	33	9%
Conwy County Borough Council	0	37	0%	5	29	17%	1	48	2%
Cyngor Gwynedd	6	39	15%	3	44	7%	7	49	14%
Denbighshire County Council**	2	33	6%	6	98	6%	5	105	5%
Flintshire County Council	8	57	14%	7	61	11%	11	108	10%
Isle of Anglesey County Council	10	41	24%	1	20	5%	4	36	11%
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council ***	3	14	21%	1	15	7%	0	23	0%
Monmouthshire County Council	3	32	9%	1	16	6%	4	36	11%
Neath Port Talbot Council	5	34	15%	5	45	11%	7	60	12%
Newport City Council	5	51	10%	6	62	10%	3	71	4%
Pembrokeshire County Council	7	38	18%	8	47	17%	2	55	4%

Powys County Council	7	53	13%	8	51	16%	8	84	10%
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council ****	11	63	17%	6	60	10%	4	97	4%
Swansea Council	12	77	16%	12	109	11%	10	151	7%
Torfaen County Borough Council	2	14	14%	0	18	0%	1	17	6%
Vale of Glamorgan Council	15	71	21%	12	63	19%	6	78	8%
Wrexham County Borough Council	7	79	9%	7	72	10%	4	72	6%
All local authorities	**158**	**1095**	**14%**	**164**	**1279**	**13%**	**157**	**1707**	**9%**

* including Rent Smart Wales

** including Wales Penalty Processing Partnership

*** including South Wales Police and Crime Panel

**** including South Wales Parking Group

Housing association	2023-24			2024-25			2025-26		
	No. of Interventions	No. of closures	Intervention rate	No. of Interventions	No. of closures	Intervention rate	No. of interventions	No. of closures	Intervention rate
Adra	0	13		2	18	11%	4	29	14%
Aelwyd Housing Association Ltd	0	3		0	3		0	0	0%
Ateb Group Ltd	0	1		1	4	25%	1	3	33%
Barcud	0	8		1	4	25%	1	13	8%
Beacon Cymru Group Ltd							0	27	0%
Bro Myrddin Housing Association	1	2	50%	0	0		0	2	0%
Bron Afon Community Housing Ltd	1	20	5%	4	25	16%	0	30	0%
Cadwyn Housing Association Ltd	0	2	0%	0	3		1	11	9%
Cardiff Community Housing Association	1	3	33%	0	13		1	14	7%
Caredig	0	4		0	10		6	12	50%
Cartrefi Conwy	1	10	10%	0	7		0	6	0%
Charter Housing Association*	2	9	22%	0	1		0	1	0%
Clwyd Alyn Housing Association	1	14	7%	2	11	18%	0	16	0%
Coastal Housing Group Ltd	0	5		2	12	17%	0	3	0%
Codi Group							2	7	29%
Cynon Taf Community Housing Group	0	2		0	2		0	5	0%
Grwp Cynefin	0	8		3	10	30%	0	9	0%
Hafod Housing Association	8	57	14%	17	45	38%	7	21	33%
Hedyn							3	29	10%
Linc Cymru Housing Association	3	17	18%	3	15	20%	1	32	3%

Melin Homes Ltd	0	4		0	4		1	2	50%
Merthyr Tydfil Housing Association Ltd	0	5		0	5		2	6	33%
Merthyr Valleys Homes	0	7	0%	0	7		1	11	9%
Monmouthshire Housing Association	0	1		0	3		0	9	0%
Newport City Homes	1	18	6%	4	22	18%	1	3	33%
Newydd Housing Association	1	9	11%	2	16	13%	2	20	10%
North Wales Housing	0	0		0	1		1	2	50%
Pobl	4	42	10%	5	36	14%	4	45	9%
Seren Living*							0	1	0%
Rhondda Housing Association Ltd	0	1		2	2	100%	0	0	0%
Stori Wales (formerly Hafan Cymru)	0	2		0	0		0	3	0%
Taff Housing Association	1	4	25%	2	6	33%	0	5	0%
Tai Calon Community Housing	2	10	20%	1	12	8%	3	8	38%
Tai Tarian	2	9	22%	0	13	0	2	24	8%
Trivallis	2	26	8%	5	22	23%	9	39	23%
Ty Gwalia*	0	2		0	0		0	0	0%
United Welsh Housing Association	1	13	8%	3	14	21%	3	22	14%
Valleys To Coast Housing	3	23	13%	8	36	22%	3	45	7%
Wales & West Housing Association	1	15	7%	1	16	6%	3	13	23%
All housing associations	**36**	**369**	**10%**	**68**	**398**	**17%**	**62**	**528**	**12%**

*** part of the Pobl Group**

Code of Conduct – new complaints

Organisation	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
Town and Community Councils	176	188	187
County and County Borough Councils	151	126	136
National Parks	1	1	1
Fire Authorities	0	0	0
Police and Crime Commissioners and Panels	0	0	0
Total	**328**	**315**	**324**

Subjects	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
Accountability and openness	3%	6%	9%
Disclosure and registration of interests	13%	17%	11%
Duty to uphold the law	8%	10%	9%
Integrity	6%	7%	9%
Objectivity and propriety	10%	3%	5%
Promotion of equality and respect	55%	56%	49%
Selflessness and stewardship	5%	3%	8%

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