Ombwdsmon
Ombudsman
Cymru • Wales

Ugain Mlynedd
Twenty Years

October 2026

Strategic Equality Plan 2026-29



We can provide a summary of this document in accessible formats, including Braille, large print and Easy Read.

To request, please contact us:

Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae

Pencoed

CF35 5LJ

Tel: 0300 790 0203

Email: communications@ombudsman.wales

Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn y Gymraeg.

This document is also available in Welsh.

Ombwdsmon
Ombudsman
Cymru · Wales

Ugain Mlynedd
Twenty Years

Strategic Equality Plan

2026-29

Contents

Foreword 6

Background 8

- Our role 9
- Our vision 10
- Our ambition 10
- Our principles 11
- Legal background 12
- How we identify, collect and publish relevant information 14
- How we assess and monitor the impact of policies and practices and publish any assessment reports 16
- Our gender pay gap 17
- Scope of this Plan 18

Our equality objectives 19

Objective 1: Promote our office and services to target groups 21

Objective 2: Ensure seamless access to our service 30

Objective 3: Deliver better outcomes for groups at risk of disadvantage, exclusion or inequality through our systemic improvement work 35

Objective 4: Continue to improve the diversity of our workforce 40

Objective 5: Promote and support diversity and inclusion in our workplace 44

How we will monitor our work under this Plan 48

Foreword



Michelle Morris

Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

This Plan has been developed in compliance with our legal duties under the Equality Act 2010 and the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011.

However, while we acknowledge and are committed to meeting our statutory duties, we are also acutely aware of the moral and business case for promoting and supporting equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI).

Promoting EDI is about ensuring that everyone is treated fairly, with dignity and respect, and has equal and equitable opportunities to participate and succeed. We recognise the value of different backgrounds, experiences and perspectives, and want to address barriers and disadvantages that some groups may face.

Promoting and supporting EDI also makes business sense. It equips us to better understand and meet the needs of the diverse communities that we serve. As an inclusive workplace, we can benefit from a wider range of skills, experiences and ideas, leading to more informed decision-making, innovation and problem-solving.

This matters because our service is all about people. Service users often come to us at a difficult point in their lives and some communities may be apprehensive that they could

face additional barriers. Although we must always remain independent and impartial, people who contact us need empathy and understanding of their varying circumstances and needs.

Our previous Equality Plan covered the period from 2023 to 2026. It identified 7 Equality Objectives, related to how we deliver our complaints service, how we embed equality considerations into our systemic improvement work and how we work as an employer.

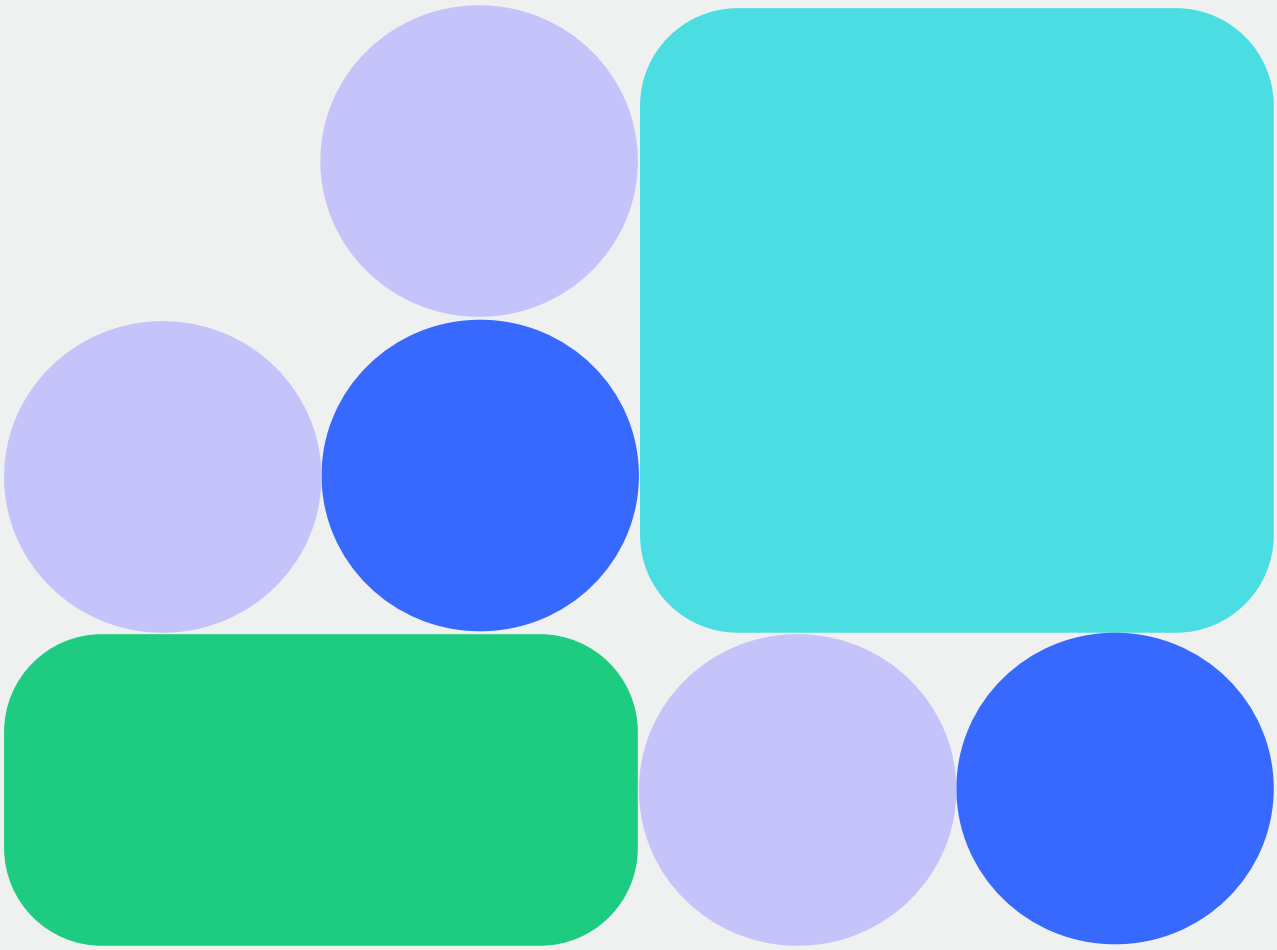
We delivered on many ambitions set out in our Equality Plan 2023-26. For example, the majority of our complainants continue to agree that we are accessible. The proportion of people who agree that we meet their requests for additional support increased significantly. Awareness of our office increased, including among under-represented groups. People from diverse ethnic backgrounds became much better represented among our complainants. Our mean gender pay gap reduced from 12% to 2%.

However, we want to do more to further widen access to our service. While our research suggests that most people find it easy to get in touch with us, some 17% of people disagree that this is the case. Some groups remain under-represented among our complainants and Welsh speakers very rarely use our service in Welsh. We are also not fully representative of the communities we serve, with representation of disabled people lower than we would like.

We now have a new Strategic Plan for 2026-29, which places impact for people experiencing disadvantage, exclusion or inequality at the heart of our commitments. This Equality Plan is one of the ways in which we will turn that commitment into practical action, ensuring that equality considerations shape how we deliver our service, how we influence improvement in public services and how we work as an employer.

Over the lifetime of this Plan, we want to redouble our efforts to ensure that everyone has equal and equitable access to our service, and that our work delivers impact for all. We will continue to listen, learn and adapt, so that people across Wales can be confident that our service is accessible, fair and responsive to their needs.

Background



Our role

We have three main roles.



We investigate complaints about public services.

We consider complaints about councillors breaching the Code of Conduct.





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

Our vision

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

Our ambition



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



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



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



We continue to be an influential and respected voice in public service improvement.

Our principles

We are **independent**. We are funded by and accountable to Senedd Cymru.

We are **impartial and fair**. We do not take sides. We examine the facts before us and reach our own, unbiased conclusions.

We are **open to all who need us**. Our service is free to use, and we are committed to ensuring seamless access.

We are **people centred**. We understand that people come to us at difficult times, and that complaints processes can feel daunting. Whatever the outcome, everyone who interacts with us should feel respected, heard and understood.

Legal background

General equality duty

The Equality Act 2010 introduced a Public Sector Equality Duty (the 'general duty'), replacing the separate duties on race, disability and gender equality. Under the general duty we must have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The general duty covers the following protected characteristics:

- age
- disability
- sex
- sexual orientation
- gender reassignment
- race (including ethnic or national origin, colour or nationality)
- religion or belief (including lack of belief)
- pregnancy and maternity; and
- marriage and civil partnership (but only in respect of the requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination).

Specific equality duties

Under the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 listed bodies in Wales, including our office, also have 'specific duties' to help them comply with the general duty.

We must set Equality Objectives and prepare Strategic Equality Plans. We must also:

- assess and monitor policies and practices
- identify and collect relevant information about equality
- identify and collect information about differences in pay
- promote knowledge and understanding of the general duty and specific duties among our employees
- involve people with protected characteristics or their representatives who have an interest in the way you carry out your functions
- produce an annual report each year.

In line with the specific duties, we have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations when procuring goods, services and works. We consider equality impacts of major procurement projects, and, where proportionate and relevant to the contract, we will seek to promote accessible, inclusive and fair outcomes through our procurement requirements and contract management arrangements.

Socio-economic duty

Part 1 of the Equality Act 2010 requires specified public bodies to consider how their strategic decisions may help to reduce socio-economic inequalities – resulting, for instance, from differences in occupation, educational opportunities or place of residence. This is referred to as the socio-economic duty. This duty was introduced in Wales in March 2021.

We are not one of the organisations required to comply with the socio-economic duty. However, we are committed to act in the spirit of the duty and have already taken steps to strengthen consideration of socio-economic inequalities in our work.

Welsh language

We fully embrace the Welsh language, and we want to make sure that we treat it no less favourably than English in all aspects of our work and that we meet the needs of Welsh speakers. Go to our Welsh Language Policy.

Our Equality Plan includes attention to how we intend to support Welsh speakers and the use of Welsh.

How we identify, collect and publish relevant information

To create our Equality Plans and monitor and evaluate our compliance with the general duty, we rely on several sources of data.

General public

We commission an annual national awareness survey, to capture level of awareness and understanding of our office. We can analyse the results of this survey by age, gender, ability to speak Welsh, ethnicity, nationality, social grade and geographic location. We report on this research in our Annual Report.

People who use our service

We invite our complainants to share equality data with us through our online complaint form, a survey on our website, paper forms or telephone survey. In 2025-26, the response rate through all these channels was 45% (data does not include quarter 3 of the financial year). We analyse this data every quarter to capture any changes in the profile of our complainants. We publish this general profile every year in our Annual Equality Report.

When preparing this Plan, we also considered our equality monitoring data for April to September 2026, which gives us additional insights into Welsh language skills of our complainants and their socio-economic circumstances. In 2025-26, for the first time we added some quality monitoring questions to our annual service user survey. This allows us to see if different groups experience our service differently. These ask questions about age, gender, disability, ethnicity and ability to speak Welsh.

We report on the equality profile of our complainants in our Annual Report and Annual Equality Report.

Our staff

We conduct an annual staff equality survey. In 2025-26, 87% of staff responded to that survey. We gather and analyse information about the gender pay gap and gender breakdown by salary and role, contract type and working arrangements. We publish the general equality profile of our staff every year in our Annual Equality Report.

We also publish information about the gender pay gap and gender breakdown by salary and role, contract type and working arrangement. However, we do not publish equality information related to the use of our grievance and disciplinary process. This is because publishing this information could lead to the identification of individuals involved.

Our job candidates

We invite all people who apply to join us to take part in our equality survey. We analyse this data every year to capture any changes in the profile of our job candidates and we publish it, if appropriate, in our Annual Equality Report.

Engagement

When developing this Plan, we consulted and engaged internally and externally. Internally, all staff had opportunities to contribute ideas and feedback. One of the most prominent themes related to support for staff with additional needs, and people who identify as neurodiverse.

Responses to the external consultation gave us assurance that the proposed Plan broadly covers the right areas of work, with many recommendations already reflected wholly or partly in the draft. However, we also received some new suggestions – for instance, that we should strengthen the emphasis on support for disabled people, including people with learning disabilities, and neurodivergent people, where appropriate.

We have sought to reflect these suggestions in the final version of the Plan where that was proportionate and aligned with our capacity and business aims. We are grateful for the insights of all the stakeholders that contributed to the development of this Plan.

How we assess and monitor the impact of policies and practices and publish any assessment reports

Our service and workplace must be free from discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and our policies and processes must support us to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different groups.

To ensure this, we have in place a Welsh Language and Equality Impact Assessment Policy and Procedure. It includes the consideration of impacts on equality, socio-economic disadvantage, and the Welsh language.

We apply this procedure to assess our policies, major projects and decisions and (in respect of Welsh language) research and consultations that inform our decisions.

We publish summaries of all our impact assessments in our Annual Equality Report.

Our gender pay gap

Under the specific duties in Wales we must:

- have due regard to the need to have objectives to address the causes of any pay differences that seem reasonably likely to be related to any of the protected characteristics
- publish an equality objective to address any gender pay gap identified or else publish reasons why we have not done so.

We do not propose to set an objective to address a gender pay gap for two reasons. We have reduced our gender pay gap significantly over the last 3 years. At March 2023, when we were launching our last Equality Plan, our mean gender pay gap was 12% and we had no median gender pay gap. At March 2026, our mean gender pay gap was 2% and there is no median gender pay gap.

Also, in a relatively small organisation such as ours, individual recruitment outcomes can make significant differences. For example, an appointment of one senior female manager could affect the overall Gender Pay Gap. Equally, more appointments of men in junior roles would also affect the pay balance. Therefore, although it is important that we closely monitor our Gender Pay Gap, we know that it is difficult for us to directly control it.

We also considered expanding our pay gap monitoring to other characteristics – particularly, disability. We recognise the importance of eliminating the disability employment gap across the public sector in Wales and in the UK. However, we believe that currently the representation of disabled people among our staff is too low to generate meaningful insights into pay differences. Under this Plan, we are committing to take steps to improve representation of disabled people in our workforce. If we are successful, we will revisit the feasibility of monitoring the disability pay gap.

Scope of this Plan

This Equality Plan is aligned with and supports the delivery of our new Strategic Plan 2026-29 and its mission: to have a positive impact on people and public services in Wales. It is relevant to all Aims of the Plan.

Strategic Aim 1: Deliver justice with positive impact for people of Wales

This Plan will help us ensure that, whatever their characteristics, people who use our service have equal experience, feel respected and agree that we clearly explained our decisions.

Strategic Aim 2: Influence positive change in public services and high standards of conduct in local government

This Plan will help us to ensure that lessons from our complaints and own initiative investigations lead to better services for all communities in Wales, including those that are most likely to experience disadvantage, exclusion or inequality. We will also continue to explore how we can improve the accessibility of local complaints processes.

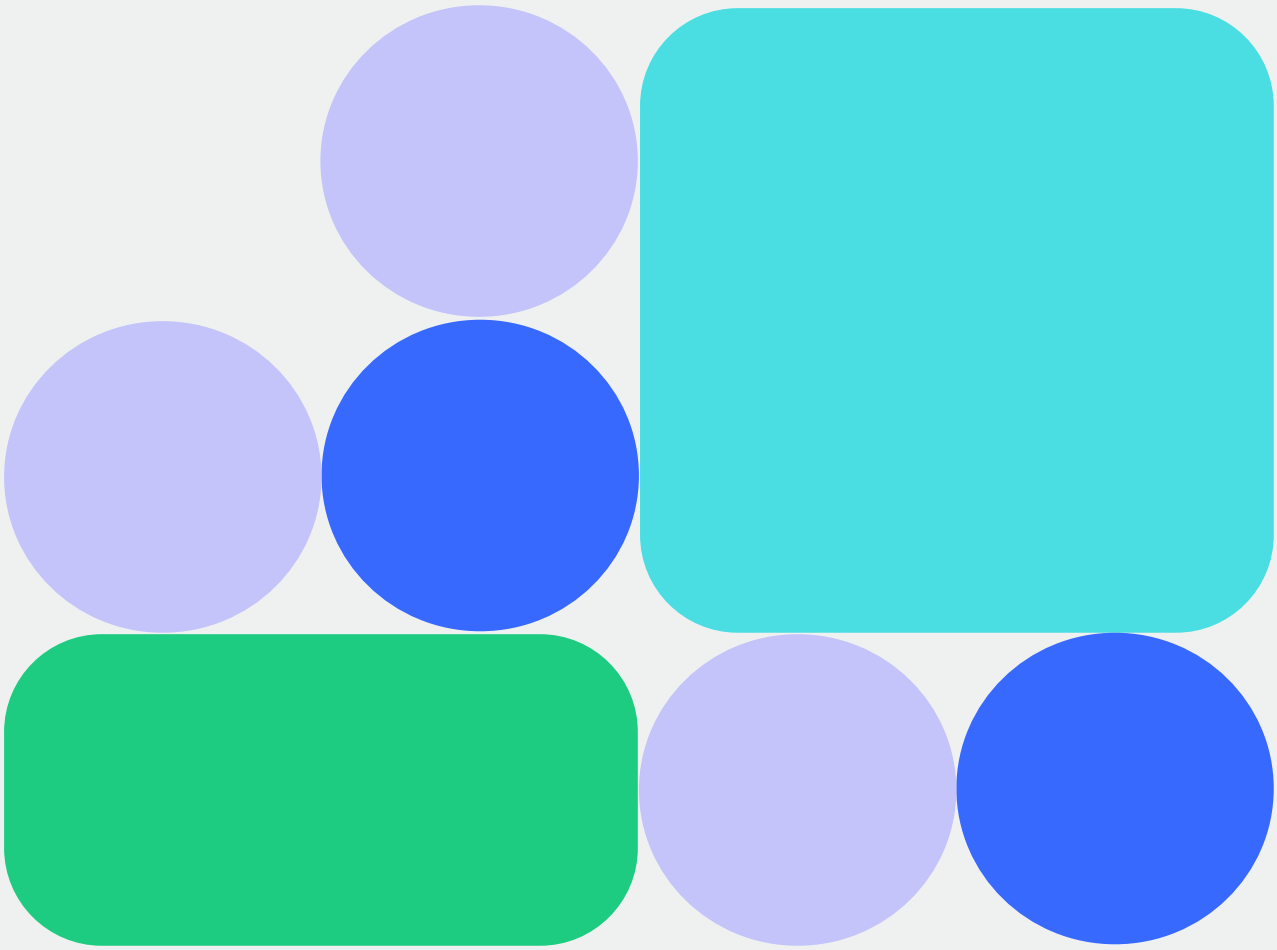
Strategic Aim 3: Strengthen access and impact for those who need our service the most

This Plan will set out how we will work to raise awareness and understanding of our office as well as tackle any barriers that could stop people from engaging with our complaints process, to ensure equal and equitable access. It will support us in promoting more interactions with the service in Welsh.

Strategic Aim 4: Ensure that we are a resilient, agile and accountable organisation

This Plan will support us in recruiting, retaining and developing a diverse workforce, that is more representative of the communities that we serve. It will also frame our work to promote inclusion within our workplace.

Our equality objectives

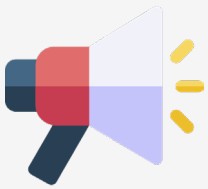


The equality objectives of our Equality Plan must meet the aims of the general equality duty. The objectives that we set must help us continue to ensure that

- our service and workplace are free from discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- different groups face no barriers to our service, and we act to reduce or remove any barriers
- all our staff, regardless of their background and characteristics, feel equally welcome and supported.

For each objective, the Plan outlines the current situation and a number of specific actions to be taken in working towards fulfilling the objective. Under each objective, the Plan also states its relevance to protected characteristics.

Objective 1: Promote our office and services to target groups



This Objective is relevant to

- the protected characteristics of age, race and disability
- Welsh language
- socio-economic disadvantage.

Where we are now

The first barrier that may stop people from accessing our service is a lack of awareness of who we are and how we can help.

In the previous years, our communications and engagement work targeted:

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

To raise awareness of our office, we organised more face-to-face outreach, created some multilingual resources, contributed content to the communications channels of some organisations working with our target communities, and strengthened our social media presence, targeting a younger demographic.

During the last three years, awareness of the office increased from 49% to 52%. Crucially, awareness increased for all target groups, with particular gains among ethnically diverse communities.

Many groups are well-represented among our complainants; we are particularly pleased that in 2025-26 representation of people from diverse ethnic groups increased significantly.

However, as we detail below, several groups remain less aware of our service or under-represented among our complainants.

In addition, while we have grounds to believe that Welsh speakers are relatively well-represented among our complainants, we see very little use of our service in Welsh.

Some people or communities may find complaints processes more challenging, and it is key that they are aware of how we can support access to our service. We have in place services and resources that can help.

While most people complain to us online, we can also accept complaints that are not in writing. In 2025-26, we took 236 oral complaints – a record number. Our equality data suggests that this service is particularly popular among people who identify as disabled.

In 2026, of respondents to our national survey, 77% thought that we could accept oral complaints, though this awareness was lower among disabled people and people in lower skilled occupations.

Awareness that we could receive complaints in British Sign Language (BSL) was lower, at 59%. Again, disabled people were less aware of this service (50%).

We also have in place additional resources that can support people who complain to us – these include resources in community languages, Easy Read format and audiovisual content.

Where we want to be

We want to continue to build awareness of who we are and how we can help among the groups that remain less than average aware of us, under-represented among our complainants or most likely to need our help.

We also want these groups to understand the support available to help them use our service. In particular, we want to make greater use of our oral complaints service.

Based on our data, the groups that we want to prioritise include:

Young people and older people

People under the age of 25 are slightly more likely than average to complain to a public service provider. However, this group is much less aware than average of our office and rarely submit complaints. While older people are relatively well aware of our office, we see few complaints from this group.

Our ambition

Based on benchmarking against relevant organisations, we believe that it may be difficult to increase the uptake of our service by young people. However, we want to increase their awareness of our office.

We also expect that many complaints concerning experiences of older people are submitted to us by their relatives or carers. Nevertheless, we want to have assurance that our complaints service delivers sufficient impact for older people.

People of diverse nationalities

Our 2026 survey suggests that people who did not identify as Welsh, English or British were slightly less aware than average of our service. This group is also under-represented among our complainants. We rarely receive oral complaints in community languages.

Our ambition

We want to improve awareness among this group and improve its representation among our complainants. We also would like to see more use of our oral complaints process in community languages.

Disabled people

Disabled people are comparatively well aware of our service and are well-represented among our complainants. However, this group has lower awareness of the option to submit complaints other than in writing.

Our ambition

We want to improve awareness of oral complaints service among this group.

People experiencing socio-economic disadvantage

People experiencing socio-economic disadvantage live in less favourable social and economic circumstances than others in the same society, which can have long-lasting impacts on all areas of their life (GOV Wales). These impacts can relate to poorer health, lower life expectancy, poorer skills and educational attainment, lower paid work, greater chance of living in inadequate housing, greater chances of being a victim of a crime, poorer participation in public life, and poorer access to services.

To help us capture our impact on this group, we ask our complainants about a range of circumstances that could indicate that they already experience socio-economic disadvantage or may be more likely to experience it in the future. Our equality data shows that between April and September 2026:

- 15% of complainants were not in paid work due to a health problem or disability
- 12% were on welfare benefits
- 10% lived in social housing
- 9% had no qualifications.

In addition, our national awareness research shows that people who are in lower skilled occupations were less than average aware of our office and of the option to submit their complaint other than in writing.

Our ambition

We want to improve awareness of our service and how we can help among people that could be at risk of socio-economic disadvantage.

Welsh speakers

Welsh speakers appear to experience different barriers to our service than other groups. They appear to be generally more aware of our office. However, we still see that very few people use our service in Welsh. In 2025-26 only 17 people expressed the preference to communicate with us in Welsh.

Our ambition

We do not believe that we need to raise awareness of our office among this group. However, we are concerned that so few Welsh speakers choose to exercise their right to complain in Welsh.

We know that we can only influence the choices and preferences of our service users. Nevertheless, we are determined to explore new ways to encourage interactions with our service in Welsh. In particular, we want to encourage the use of oral complaints service in Welsh, which could help to alleviate any concerns over inadequate written skills.

How we will get there

We are conscious that we do not have the capacity to effectively target all these groups equally at the same time. We will prioritise different groups each year to ensure impact for all.

We will communicate clear messages to target groups, tailored to their needs and shaped by our organisational priorities. These will include:

- the right to complain when public service providers get things wrong
- our role, independence and impartiality
- the right to complain in Welsh
- the benefits of our oral complaints service (also in Welsh and other languages, including BSL)
- the key steps that must be completed by the complainant before we can help.

We will continue to utilise existing communications channels but also explore new ones. Social media, radio and TV presence will remain our key channels. However, by far the highest proportion of people who know about us learn about us through word of mouth. This proportion has been increasing for the past three years and now stands at 29% – rising to 41% among young people.

In our view, this finding highlights the continued importance of

- communication through personal, trusted networks (for instance, advocates and other trusted organisations)
- visibility in community settings (e.g. community centres, schools, parent groups, faith groups, social clubs, or local meetings)
- face-to-face interactions.

Therefore, we will

- develop materials promoting our office and services and distribute them to target venues (e.g. local community centres, libraries, leisure centres)
- continue to utilise our established social media channels, tailoring our content and messages to the interests of each target community, including through paid ads
- develop our relationship with key media outlets to explore opportunities for community-specific programme ideas
- continue to take opportunities to deliver our messages through face-to-face interactions with the public
- develop a programme of engagement with organisations and stakeholders that support, advise and represent our target communities, to raise their awareness of our role and process and help them refer to us the right complaints at the right time.

How we will know we have made a difference

The change we want to see	How we will measure this
Awareness of the office among target groups increases	National awareness survey
Better representation of target groups among our complainants	Our equality monitoring
More oral complaints received, with evidence that target groups are benefitting from this service	Casework analysis Our equality monitoring
More oral complaints in Welsh and community languages received	Casework analysis
More people are stating Welsh as their language preference	Casework analysis
More instances of conversational use of Welsh recorded	Casework analysis
More people say that they heard about us through an advice or advocacy organisation or an elected representative	National awareness survey

Objective 2: Ensure seamless access to our service



This Objective is relevant to

- the protected characteristics of age and disability
- Welsh language
- socio-economic disadvantage.

Where we are now

Accessibility and ease of complaining

Once people know about us and reach out to us for help, it is paramount that they face no barriers to access.

We were glad to see that, in 2025-26, 83% of our complainants that we asked said that it was easy to contact us – a lower proportion than in 2022-23 (87%). These views were broadly the same regardless of age, ethnicity, disability and educational attainment.

People can complain to us in different ways. Almost 73% of our new complaints reach us through our online complaint form. However, we also accept complaints over the phone and by post.

Our service user research suggests that the online complaint form is somewhat less likely to be used by older people, disabled people, and people without formal qualifications. These groups were more likely to send their complaint by post. Disabled people and people with no degree level qualifications were also more likely to complain by phone.

Our research suggests that in terms of ease of submitting a complaint, sending it by post was rated as easiest (83% agreed), followed by our online form (78% agreed) and by phone (71% agreed).

Our information resources

Although many factors may influence how people feel about how easy it is to get in touch with us, we know that accessibility of our website is a key factor. Our website features a range of information designed to support complainants. It is also a gateway to our online complaint form, which is designed to help users decide if we are the right organisation to consider their complaint.

Over recent years, we have taken steps to improve the accessibility of our website content. We introduced an online complaint checker to help guide people through our complaints process. We also increasingly publish in more accessible formats such as videos as well as high-quality Easy Read translations, which we commission from a supplier with direct expertise of supporting people with a learning disability.

Our service is fully bilingual and so are our resources. However, the Welsh version of our website is used significantly less than the English version, although both versions are of equal standard.

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 neurodivergent) or asked us to adjust the way we communicate with them. More than 120 people told us that they identified as neurodiverse.

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

Where we want to be

We are glad that most people say that our service is accessible, and our data suggests that we meet the needs of most of our complainants. However, our ambition is to make our service and resources accessible for everyone.

While most complainants appear to find it easy to complain by phone, satisfaction with this channel is slightly lower than for our online form. This could particularly affect disabled service users and those with lower educational attainment. We want to continue to work to streamline this service, side by side with promoting it to our target groups (see Objective 1).

Our website is our key information channel and the gateway to our online complaint form. Although we have improved how accessible the website is, we want to identify and track further improvements more systematically. We know that our language does not always follow the principles of Plain English / Cymraeg Clîr, which could present a barrier for some people. We also see potential to make greater use of audiovisual formats, especially to promote oral complaints. We also want to do more to encourage Welsh speakers to navigate to our Welsh website.

Our evidence indicates that we meet the needs of most people who require additional support. However, as people ask us to adapt how we communicate, we want to continue to equip our staff to provide the best possible service, particularly for people with a learning disability and those who identify as neurodivergent.

How we will get there

We will

- begin to more systematically monitor accessibility of our website, online form and other content and identify opportunities to improve the user journey
- create more audiovisual content to make our information more accessible, with particular focus on oral complaints service
- review our internal guidance to promote and embed the principles of Plain English / Cymraeg Clîr
- take steps to improve discoverability of our Welsh-medium website and implement measures to promote selection of Welsh language choice
- streamline our oral complaints service, introducing digital and service level improvements
- proactively engage with service users who told us that our service was not sufficiently accessible to understand where we must improve
- deliver learning disability awareness and inclusive communication training to our staff.

How we will know we have made a difference

The change we want to see	How we will measure this
A higher proportion of service users agree that it was easy to get in touch with us	Service user survey
Accessibility score of our website established and any improvements identified and acted upon	WCAG compliance assessment
A higher proportion of service users find it easy to submit an oral complaint	Annual service user survey
More visits to our Welsh-medium website and strong engagement with the content	GA4 trends monitoring: number of new and active users and engagement rate
A high proportion of complainants continue to agree that we met their requests for additional support	Annual service user survey

Objective 3: Deliver better outcomes for groups at risk of disadvantage, exclusion or inequality through our systemic improvement work



This Objective is relevant to

- all protected characteristics
- socio-economic disadvantage.

Where we are now

We have legal powers that enable us to proactively drive systemic improvement of public services.

- We can **investigate on 'own initiative'** (even when we have not received a complaint) including by launching a stand-alone investigation if we think that an issue is potentially serious and could affect a wider group of service users.
- As the **Complaints Standards Authority for Wales,** we work directly with service providers to improve how they handle complaints. This includes by issuing a Model Complaints Policy and guidance as well as offering training to staff dealing with complaints.

From the outset, we have embedded consideration of accessibility and positive outcomes for groups experiencing disadvantage, exclusion or inequality into the way we use these powers.

- Our stand-alone investigations are accompanied by Welsh Language and Equality Impact Assessments. While a number of our own-initiative investigations have focused on failings in healthcare, seven investigations that we have closed to date focused on services for homeless people and unpaid carers.
- Our complaint handling guidance for service providers emphasises the importance of accessibility of complaints processes.

In 2023, we committed to support better collection and analysis of equality data by organisations under our Complaints Standards. This would not only help these organisations to better support complainants but also help us to understand to what extent the profile of people using our service reflects the profile of people complaining about Welsh public services.

In 2023-24, we asked the service providers subject to our Complaints Standards what equality data they collected from people who had complained about their services. A significant number of respondents said that they did not collect, or had stopped collecting, this data.

Where we want to be

We want to continue to focus our own initiative work on issues affecting service users most likely to experience disadvantage, exclusion or inequality. To do that effectively, we need timely and reliable intelligence on issues affecting service users. We believe that third sector organisations in Wales that directly support, advise and represent service users are best placed to offer such insights. We want to engage with the sector more closely, build awareness and trust, and establish reliable channels for issues to be communicated to us.

Accessibility of local complaints processes is central to good complaint handling practice. We remain committed to supporting better collection and analysis of equality data by organisations under our Complaints Standards. Without this data, it is difficult to ascertain how accessible complaints processes actually are, and what opportunities could exist to advance equality of opportunity and remove barriers to access.

How we will get there

We will

- develop a targeted survey and a programme of engagement with third sector organisations in Wales to gather better information on issues affecting users of public services, with special focus on groups that are under-represented or most likely to experience disadvantage, exclusion or inequality
- use our Complaints Standards powers to gather more evidence on complainant equality monitoring by public service providers in Wales
- promote better collection and analysis of equality data by service providers.

We are currently developing Child Friendly Complaints Guidance in collaboration with the Children's Commissioner for Wales, and we will finalise and promote this resource.

How we will know we have made a difference

The change we want to see	How we will measure this
Third sector survey launched and embedded	Survey response rate
Third sector organisations have good awareness of our oral complaints service and own initiative work	Third sector survey
Service providers recording and providing information on equality profile of complainants	Complaints data collected under our Complaints Standards powers

Objective 4: Continue to improve the diversity of our workforce



This Objective is relevant to

- the protected characteristics of disability, religion, age, ethnicity, and gender reassignment.

Where we are now

We serve the people of Wales and we want our workforce to be representative of the Welsh public. It is important to underline that as we are an organisation with a relatively small workforce, our data can be significantly affected by one or two changes in the number of staff. Also, as participation in staff equality monitoring is voluntary, our data may not always reflect the full equality profile of our workforce. In 2025-26, 87% of our employees completed the equality survey.

Some groups are relatively well or well-represented among our workforce.

This includes people who

- are over 55
- identify as female
- come from diverse national backgrounds
- identify with diverse sexual orientations

However, some groups remain under-represented. Based on the data available to us, this includes people who

- are under 25 – while the representation of this group in 2026 stands at 7%, this remains below the Welsh average of about 11% of population between 16 and 24 (StatsWales).
- come from diverse ethnic backgrounds – 4% of our staff who shared equality data identified in this way, slightly below the Welsh average of 6% (Census 2021).
- follow diverse religions – 1% of our staff identified with this category, much lower than the Welsh average of 4%.
- identify as trans.
- identify as disabled – 4% of our staff identified in this way, compared to 11% of the population in Wales identified as disabled and economically active. In addition, while 11% of job applicants for whom we have equality data identified as disabled, this group was not represented among shortlisted or successful candidates as they did not meet the essential criteria for the vacancies.

While 12% of our staff said that Welsh was their first language, the proportions of people with Welsh language skills were much higher:

- speaking: 30%
- reading: 28%
- writing: 25%
- understanding: 29%.

Where we want to be

For us to reflect the diversity in society, our aim is to attract more applicants from diverse backgrounds who meet the essential criteria for the role. While a number of equality groups, as well as Welsh speakers, are well-represented among our staff, several groups are not.

We want to do more to promote relevant opportunities to these groups. While we know that some of our staff who meet the legal definition of disability would not identify as disabled, we want to revisit our efforts to increase the representation of this group in our workplace.

Under our Equality Plan 2023-2026 we gathered feedback on accessibility of our recruitment process. Overall, people told us that the process was accessible. However, we will continue to seek assurance that our recruitment process adequately supports those that require reasonable adjustments.

How we will get there

We will

- carry out a further review of our recruitment processes to ensure they are developed to be even more inclusive, including the needs of people who identify as neurodiverse.
- explore the requirements of the Disability Confident scheme in relation to recruitment and consider whether it is reasonable for us to commit to the scheme.

How we will know we have made a difference

The change we want to see	How we will measure this
Better representation of target groups among our staff	Equality monitoring of our staff and job candidates

Objective 5: Promote and support diversity and inclusion in our workplace



This Objective is relevant to

- all protected characteristics
- Welsh language.

Where we are now

As a workplace, we want to be an environment where everyone feels that they are included, treated fairly and have equal access to opportunities. Of our staff who responded to the staff survey in 2026:

- **88%** agreed that they felt that we are committed to creating a diverse, equal and inclusive workplace.
- **80%** agreed that we respect individual differences.
- **59%** agreed that all staff have equal access to opportunities for development and support.

Awareness of and training needs in relation to equality duties

We identify training needs through our annual performance review and development process. As part of the process, objectives are developed and agreed for the year ahead and any training and development needs are identified and included in the Individual Development Plan. All staff have an Individual Development Plan and their development needs are reviewed at each progress meeting.

For all new starters, we have a separate induction module which explains our equality and Welsh language duties.

Beyond that, we use our internal communications channels to let our staff know on an ongoing basis about relevant equality, diversity and inclusion awareness days as well as any training opportunities or events related to equality, diversity and inclusion. Of our staff who responded to the staff survey in 2026, 80% agreed that they felt well informed about the work undertaken in the office to promote equality.

Welsh language

At PSOW we are in a fortunate position that a large proportion of our staff have Welsh language skills, and we can offer a timely service in Welsh. Our intranet is bilingual, and we support staff with bilingual software and resources. Our Welsh Language Policy sets out our commitments in relation to internal use of Welsh. However, that policy focuses mainly on resources and infrastructure in place – it does not extend to proactive work to encourage the use of Welsh.

Where we want to be

As an organisation we want to support our people and equip them to deliver in their roles. Our staff survey results show that 88% agree that we are committed to creating a diverse, equal and inclusive workplace. We recognise that staff may have additional needs due to a range of protected characteristics. We would like to build on our mechanisms of support for staff and further equip our managers to recognise and deliver appropriate support when and where it is needed. We also want to encourage staff to access support through the mechanisms we have in place, for example our Wellbeing Passport.

By expanding our understanding of a variety of potential reasonable adjustments we can ensure that we continue to be an inclusive workplace where everyone can thrive.

We are delighted that so many of our staff have Welsh language skills. However, there is more that we can do to promote staff use of Welsh, even by colleagues who currently have little or no Welsh language skills.

How we will get there

We will

- support all managers with further development in relation to supporting additional needs
- promote the support available to staff as part of the HR Module of Induction
- explore the requirements of the Disability Confident Leaders scheme in relation to retention and support for disabled staff and consider whether we are able to commit to the scheme
- review our Welsh Language Policy to reflect our commitment to proactive promotion of internal use of Welsh and develop communications to support this commitment.

How we will know we have made a difference

The change we want to see	How we will measure this
A higher proportion of staff agree that we are committed to creating a diverse, equal and inclusive workplace	Staff survey
A higher proportion of staff agree that we respect individual differences	Staff survey
Staff agree that we support internal use of Welsh	Staff survey (new question)

How we will monitor our work under this Plan

Each year we will develop and agree a business plan and targets detailing what we will do to achieve our ambitions under this Equality Plan.

Progress against this business plan and targets will be reviewed by our Management Team on a quarterly basis.

Our Management Team has the overall responsibility for the strategic direction and governance of the office. Our Advisory Panel has oversight of our performance against our Strategic Aims.

Our Executive Director – Corporate Resources ensures that the way we work complies with all legal, statutory and good practice guidance requirements under the Equality Act 2010, the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 and our Welsh Language Standards.

Day-to-day responsibility for coordinating, monitoring, evaluating and reporting on the delivery of this Plan sits with the Head of Policy and Engagement.

All staff assigned responsibilities for actions are responsible for completing those assigned to them, with progress monitored on an ongoing basis at team level.

Ombwdsmon
Ombudsman
Cymru • Wales

Ugain Mlynedd
Twenty Years

Public Services Ombudsman for Wales
1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae
Pencoed
CF35 5LJ

Tel: 0300 790 0203