

Meeting of:	Governance and Audit Committee
Date of Meeting:	Monday, 16 December 2024
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	All Scrutiny Committees
Report Title:	Corporate Complaints Annual Report 2023/24
Purpose of Report:	To allow consideration of corporate complaints received from customers and the Public Service Ombudsman's Annual Letter for the corresponding period
Report Owner:	Chief Executive
Responsible Officer:	Operational Manager – Customer Relations
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	There are no matters in this report which relate to an individual ward
Policy Framework:	This is a matter for Executive decision
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council adopted the Welsh Government's Model Corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy in July 2013. Complainants who remain unsatisfied after Stages 1 and 2 of the Policy are able to refer their complaint to the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW). • Recording and management of Complaints and Compliments transferred from Oracle CRM to the Granicus GovService platform in August 2022. These exclude Social Services complaints which are investigated under the Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014 and the Representations Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014 and are reported separately. • The Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act (2021) requires the Governance and Audit Committee to review and assess the authority's ability to handle complaints effectively and to make reports and recommendations in relation to the authority's ability to handle complaints effectively. These provisions are included in Part 6 of the legislation relating to the Performance and Governance of Principal Councils and Duty of Principal Council to keep its performance under review. • The purpose of the policy is to ensure that complainants experience a consistent and fair response. Recording and monitoring of complaints allows the council to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Gain insight into citizens' satisfaction with services provided. ○ Understand how satisfied customers are with how we investigate complaints. 	

- Monitor responsiveness to statutory guidance and customer expectations in relation to how quickly we complete complaints investigations (responsiveness).
- Identify potential for improving service by analysing what has been learned from complaints.
- Analysis of complaints information for 2023/24 shows a significant increase in the number of complaints received to 881 (495) in line with the long-term trend of increasing complaints. This is the highest number of annual complaints recorded since 2013, and above the 10-year annual average of 439.
- Responsiveness, in terms of adherence to deadlines, has been a key focus for improvement and interventions including enhancing systems and providing complaints investigation training to colleagues have been employed. As a result, the trend of reducing performance in the area has been stabilised with a performance of 59% of complaints resolved within deadlines being achieved for 2023/2024 and 2022/23 and 60.9% in 2021/22.
- The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) received 77 complaints relating to the council during the period. This represents a significant increase compared to 49 2022/23 and is the highest number of complaints in a single year.
- No complaints were taken into investigation; however, 15 complaints were resolved through Early Resolution and 27 (15) were considered to be Premature. 12 (4) were out of jurisdiction and 17 (19) were other cases closed after initial consideration. The full PSOW Annual Letter (2023/24) is provided in Appendix B.
- The annual report details complaint performance for directorates for 2023/24 and includes performance trends since 2014/15
- User research undertaken with residents who made complaints during 2023/24 indicated that responsiveness and communication are key areas affecting complainant satisfaction.
- In April 2022 the Council implemented the Unacceptable Actions by Citizens and Social Media Policies. The Policy on Unacceptable Actions by Citizens has been applied to one citizen since its adoption.
- As of the date of this report 12 accounts have been blocked on 'X' and 14 on Facebook under the Social Media Policy. No accounts were blocked between April and October 2024.

Recommendations

1. That Governance and Audit Committee note the contents of the report and Appendix A (Annual Complaints & Compliments Report).
2. That Governance and Audit Committee continues to receive an annual update in relation to Corporate Complaints and Compliments.
3. That Governance and Audit Committee refer this report and the comments of the Committee to Cabinet for their consideration.

Reasons for Recommendations

1. & 2 To ensure effective monitoring of corporate complaints as an indicator of citizen satisfaction with service provided.
3. In order that Cabinet can be apprised of the report and the comments made by Governance and Audit Committee and reply to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Annual Letter.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Council operates a two-stage process for handling complaints from residents. Should the complainant remain unsatisfied at the end of this process they are advised to contact the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW).
- 1.2 The contents of this year's report are generated from data entered on to Oracle Customer Relationship Management system and Granicus GovService platform by Customer Relations, service based staff and directly by residents using an online form.
- 1.3 Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee receives quarterly updates on local performance indicators relating to complaint handling, including those escalated to the PSOW.
- 1.4 Management of complaints transferred to the GovService platform in August 2022. Since then, service managers have benefitted from additional functionality including automatic email notifications when complaints are recorded for their service and 2 working days before individual complaint deadlines are reached.
- 1.5 An annual complaints and compliments report has been produced for the ten financial years since 2014/15. Appendix A provides Committee with the Annual Complaints and Compliments Report for 2023/24, including detailed performance information.
- 1.6 Performance reporting for the Place Directorate was included under Corporate Resources performance, prior to 2022/23.
- 1.7 Following a recommendation from Corporate Resources and Performance Scrutiny Committee (14 April 2021) the Annual Complaints and Compliments Report includes information relating to the application of the Unreasonable Actions by Citizens and Social Media Policies.

2. Key Issues

- 2.1** The total number of complaints received during 2023/24 increased by 386 compared to the previous year from 495 to 881, double the 10-year average of 439.
- 2.2** The Council operated under unusual circumstances during the 2020/21 and 2021/22 reporting periods with the impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic still being felt. The number of complaints received, is significantly higher than the previous highest total in 2018/19 of 559. The performance confirms a trend over the 10-year period of increasing numbers of recorded complaints.
- 2.3** One key indicator of complainant satisfaction with the quality of complaint investigation and the fairness of outcomes is the percentage of complaints escalated past Stage 1. During 2023/24 7.6% of complaints were escalated to Stage 2 of the procedure. While this is an increase on 2022/23 performance of 5.5%, it remains significantly lower than 2021/22 which saw 10% of complaints escalated to Stage 2. This represents a clear indication that corporate complaints continue to be investigated well and effectively across the Council.
- 2.4** In a continuation of previous years, distribution of complaints reflects the high number of direct citizen interactions delivered by the Environment and Housing Directorate which accounted for 679 complaints compared to 343 for the previous year. This is 77% of total complaints for the council as a whole compared with 69.3% for the previous year.
- 2.5** With 13 complaints raised Learning and Skills received the fewest number of complaints, this is an increase of 3 compared to 2022/23. Managing Director and Resources directorate also saw an increase, receiving 158 complaints during the period, an increase of 66% on the previous year. The Place directorate received 31 complaints a decrease of 43% compared to 2022/23.
- 2.6** Waste Management continues to account for the highest number of complaints received by a single service at 357, an increase of 178% on the previous year. This represents 52.6% of the directorate total and 40.5% of the total number of complaints received by the Council. It should be note that the Waste Management Services make 4.7m waste collections from 60,000 households each year. In addition, during the reporting period the service undertook a number of significant changes in service, including the introduction of a subscription for Garden Waste in June 2023.
- 2.7** The percentage of valid complaints has increased during the year with 63% upheld in full or in part, compared to 45.3% of complaints in 2022/23.
- 2.8** In 2022/23 the Council undertook a user research exercise with an objective of obtaining qualitative data on complainants experiencing of making a complaint. While the quality of information gained through direct interviews was useful,

only 3 complainants were able to be interviewed. In order to gain a wider range of complainant views an online survey was offered to complainants for 2023/24. The details of 67 responses are included in the Annual Corporate Complaints and Compliments Report. Responsiveness and communication are highlighted as key areas affecting complainant satisfaction.

- 2.9** Performance in relation to responsiveness to complaints is now reported on a quarterly basis to the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales Compliance Standards authority. Overall, the Council performance in resolving complaints within target timescales has stabilised with 59% resolved within target compared to 59.2% in 2022/23 and 61% the previous year. This remains well below the best performance of 75.1% in 2016/17 and improving results in this area of performance is a key focus going forward. It should be noted that there is an increasing trend for complaints received by the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales regarding complaint handling from Vale of Glamorgan residents with 21 recorded for 2023/24 compared to 11 the previous year.
- 2.10** Environment and Housing achieved the best responsiveness performance across all directorates with 62% of complaints were resolved within target. Corporate Resources achieved 53%, Learning and Skills achieved 25% and Place 54.2%.
- 2.11** In August 2022 the complaints process was moved from Oracle CRM to the GovService platform. The new platform allows for automated, timed notifications to be sent to complaint owners when time scales are about to be breached. In addition, where investigations cannot be processed because information is required from the complainant the process can be placed “on hold” to ensure that a better the time taken to investigate the complaint can be better reflected. It is anticipated, as colleagues become more used to administrating the system, that this will help the Council to achieve improved performance in this area going forward.
- 2.12** Learning from complaints continues to be a key area for improvement as it provides the opportunity for services to manage customer expectations and to make improvements in service delivery where possible.
- 2.13** A total of 22 examples of how services have been improved as a result of learning from undertaking complaints investigations have been provided since records began to be kept in 2022/23. 7 of these, all from Social Services, relate to complaint investigations during 2023/24. Common themes include Improving Communications, Responding Within Timescales and Reinforcing Adherence to Policy and Procedures. Details are included in the Annual Complaints and Compliments Report.
- 2.14** In 2022/23 only 29.2% of complaints had no recorded cause while 100% of complaints had a cause recorded for 2023/24. ‘Service Standards Not Met’ remained the most common reason for complaints amounting to 61.1%. ‘Policy and Process Not Followed’ accounted for 16.8%. ‘Staff Behaviour’ and ‘Incorrect Information Provided’ accounted for 10.6% and 10.4% respectively.

- 2.15** All complaints where investigations were completed during the reporting period had a recorded Learning Outcome, with 'Staff Training' being the most frequent response accounting for 55.7%.
- 2.16** In the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales Annual Letter 2023/24 (Appendix B) the number of recorded complaints from Vale of Glamorgan residents increased from 49 in 2022/23 to 77, of which 71 have been closed. Although this appears to indicate a worsening performance, it should be noted that the majority of the increase in complaints were inappropriate. 8 being Out of Jurisdiction, 12 being Premature, 2 closed after initial consideration. While 6 had not yet been determined as of the date of this report No complaints were taken into investigation the number of complaints resolved through the PSOW Early Resolution process stayed constant at 15.
- 2.17** Of the recommendations agreed through the Early Resolution Process, 92% were delivered within agreed timescales. A total of £450 was paid to complaints in redress and time and trouble payments.
- 2.18** In April 2022 Cabinet (ref C904) approved the introduction of new Unacceptable Actions by Citizens and Social Media Policies. The policies recognise that opportunities for interaction with the Council and its officers have multiplied with increasing popularity of social media platforms. Communication is quick and easy but could quickly become intrusive and difficult to manage on both professional and private profiles.
- 2.19** Since its adoption, the Policy on Unacceptable Actions by Citizens has been applied to one resident.
- 2.20** 12 accounts have been blocked on 'X' (previously known as Twitter) and 14 on Facebook under the Social Media Policy. No accounts have been blocked between April and October 2024.

3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?

- 3.1** Listening to and understanding complaints is a key source of the "voice of the customer", what they need from us and involving them in decisions about how we deliver services.
- 3.2** Learning from complaints is an important way in which the council can develop services that meet the changing needs of residents and are sustainable. Similarly, services can be improved to prevent complaints occurring in the future and improve access to and delivery of services.
- 3.3** The Council's Corporate Plan (and Annual Delivery Plan) include commitments to improving customer service and engagement with our communities. Learning from and effectively handling complaints is a key element of this work.

4. Climate Change and Nature Implications

- 4.1** There are no matters in this report relating to climate change and nature.

5. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 5.1** There are no direct financial implications associated with this report.
- 5.2** The Public Service Ombudsman for Wales has powers to require the council to compensate complainants financially should it be found guilty of maladministration. Effective investigation and management of complaints will minimise the risk of this happening.

Employment

- 5.3** There are no matters in this report relating to employment matters

Legal (Including Equalities)

- 5.4** Under part 6 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, section 115, Governance and Audit Committee are given statutory functions, with effect from 1st April 2021, to “review and assess the authority’s ability to handle complaints effectively” and “make reports and recommendations in relation to the authority’s ability to handle complaints effectively”.
- 5.5** There is no statutory requirement to adopt the Model Concerns and Complaints Policy and Guidance for Public Service providers in Wales. However, the Welsh Government and Public Services Ombudsman for Wales have commended its adoption.
- 5.6** The Council's complaints process is promoted online and via leaflets at reception points. Complaints can be registered on the website, using the mobile app, by post and by telephone. This ensures that all residents are aware of and have access to the complaints process irrespective of age, gender, belief or disability.

6. Background Papers

Appendix A - Annual Corporate Complaints and Compliments Report 2022/23

Appendix B – Public Service Ombudsman for Wales Annual letter 2022/23



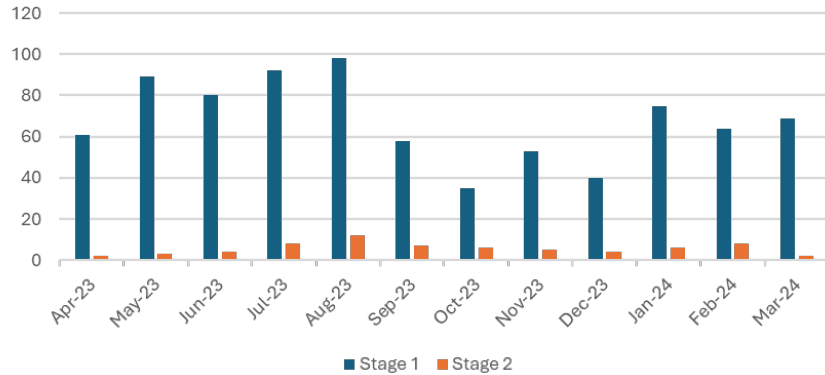
Vale of Glamorgan Council

**Annual Complaints
&
Compliments Report
2023/24**

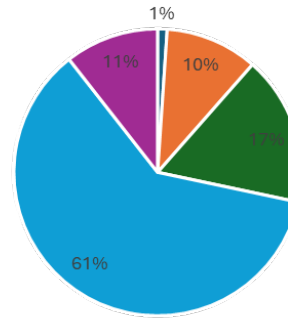
COUNCIL CORPORATE COMPLAINTS PERFORMANCE 2023 / 24

Stage 1: 814 Stage 2: 67*

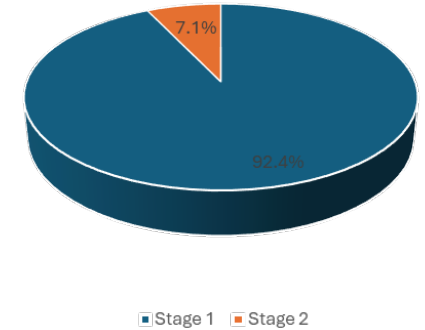
Stage 1 & Stage 2 Complaints 23/24



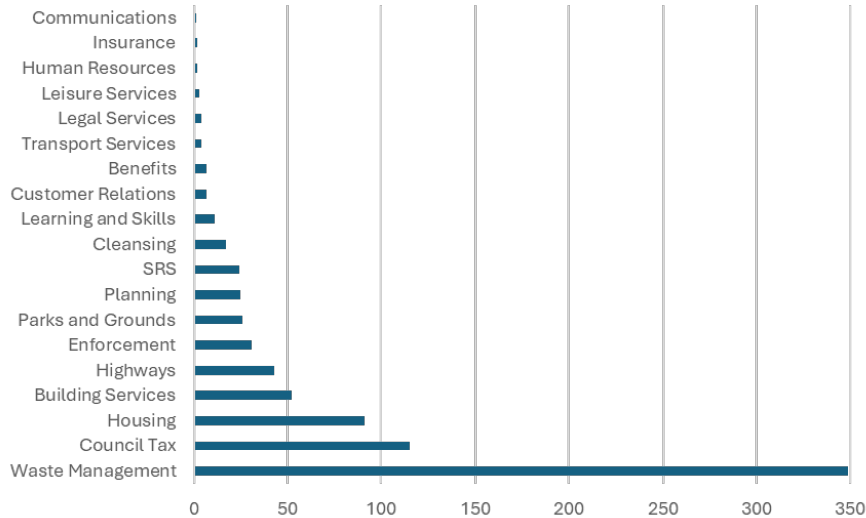
Cause of Complaint



Complaint Resolution Stage



Stage 1 by Service Area 23/24



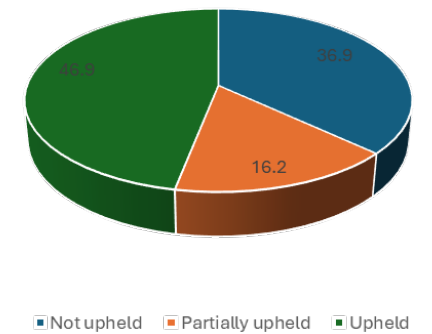
Cause of Complaint Legend

- Discrimination
- Policy/process not followed
- Staff behaviour
- Incorrect information provided
- Service standard not met

Stage 2 by Service Area 2023 2024



% Outcome Stage 1 & Stage 2



*9 Stage 2 Complaints have no corresponding Stage 1 investigation

Vale of Glamorgan Council – Corporate Complaints and Compliments Annual Report 2023/24

Executive Summary

This is the tenth annual corporate complaints and compliments report under the current policy. This report details all formally recorded complaints investigated through the Corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy between 01 April 2023 and 31 March 2024.

Social Services complaints are investigated under Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014 and the Representations Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014 and are reported separately.

A summary of complaints raised with the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW), Welsh Language Commissioner and Social Services is provided for completeness and context.

In 2022/23 the format of this report was amended so that most tables and charts of statistical data were included in appendices to make the report commentary shorter and easier to access.

- The **long-term trend of increasing numbers of complaints continues**. The 881 complaints received in 2023/24 represents the highest annual total recorded and 386 more than 2022/23.
- **Environment & Housing** directorate generated the highest number of complaints at 679, with **Waste Management receiving 39.6% of all complaints** made to the Council.
- **115 Compliments** were recorded with **Environment & Housing** directorate receiving the majority. (excluding 163 compliments received by Social Services)
- **Responsiveness stabilised** – the percentage of investigations **completed within timescales was 59%**, matching the 2022/23 performance and only slightly less than the 61% in 2021/22 and 64% in 2020/21. Moving to a new software application and process changes may have impacted on 2023/24 performance.
- **Most complaints are resolved at Stage 1** – only 7.6% of complaints were escalated to Stage 2. This was 5.5% in 2022/23
- **Recording of the Cause and Lessons Learned from complaints has improved** with 100% recorded since complaints administration moved to the new GovService software application in August 2022. The main cause of complaints is “Service Standards Not Met” representing 61% of reasons recorded.

- Research undertaken with complainants indicates that **improving response times** as the best way of **providing a more positive experience for residents**. Only **45% of responders felt that the time taken to respond to complaints was satisfactory**.
- Services provided a further **7 examples of how services have been improved** as a result of lessons learned from complaint investigations during 2023/24.
- **Complaints are meeting the requirements of statutory bodies** – Complaints made to the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) increased to 77 (2022/23: 49) and (2021/22: 61) or 8.7% of total complaints received. None were investigated, although 15 (19.4%) were resolved through the Early Resolution process. The Welsh Language Commissioner investigated 3 complaints during the year.
- The **Unacceptable Actions by Citizens Policy** was not applied to any resident during the year.

Activities undertaken to improve complaint handling, administration and reporting:

- Complainants have been surveyed to obtain direct feedback and insight about their experience of making a complaint.
- Examples of how services have been improved because of lessons learned from complaints have been collated and shared as examples of good practice.
- Complaint investigators and administrators have been canvassed regarding their experience of using the complaints system and enhancements have been made to reflect feedback.
- Complaint investigators and administrators have received additional training on use of the complaints system and policy.
- Drop-in sessions have been created to allow complaints investigators to ask questions and share best practice
- A regular Complaints Newsletter has been launched which is distributed by email to all complaint investigators and administrators. The newsletter includes case studies, best practice hints and tips and performance data.

Performance Summary

In 2022/23 the council has undertaken a research pilot with the objective of providing qualitative insight into the resident experience of accessing the complaints process.

Although 95 complainants were contacted, response rates were very low and only 3 interviews were undertaken.

To obtain a wider set of views about the experience of complaints investigation process, 257 complainants were surveyed by email with 67 responses (26%) were received.

Key insights include:

- 60% of complainants stated that they were unaware of the timescales for Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaint responses
- Only 45% of respondents felt that the response to their complaint was timely
- Complainants had low satisfaction with the online complaint process; with only 71% feeling that they had enough opportunity to provide full details (Telephone 88%).

A total of **7 examples of service improvements** (Appendix B) being made as a result of learning from complaint investigations during 2023/24 were provided. Common themes include:

- Improving Communications
- Responding within time scales
- Reinforcing adherence to policy and procedures

Social Services provided all examples for 2023/24 and the highest number of examples (9) in 2022/23.

Total number of **corporate complaints received increased from 495 to 881**, reflecting the long-term trend of increasing numbers for Stage 1 and Stage 2.

This is the highest number of complaints received by the Council for a single year since formal records began in 2014/15 and a **57% increase on the previous high of 559** in 2019/20.

The **percentage of Stage 1 complaints escalated to Stage 2 also increased to 7.6%** (67), compared to 5.5% (27) in 2022/23.

The **Environment and Housing Directorate continues to drive the highest volume of complaints**, with numbers **increasing from 343 in 2022/23 to 679** (Stage 1: 642 Stage 2: 37) during 2023/24.

This represents **an increase in the overall share of complaints for the whole Council** from 69.3% in 2022/23 **to 77%** (2021/22: 76.5%).

The **Waste Management** service handled the highest number of complaints at 357 including Stage 2s representing 52.5% of the directorate total and **40.5% of the total for the Council**. The service saw significant changes in service delivery during the reporting period, including the introduction of a subscription model for Garden Waste collection.

The **Corporate Resources** directorate reported **136 Stage 1 and 22 Stage 2** complaints, an increase of 62 on 2022/23 (96).

Learning & Skills remains the directorate with the **fewest complaints** at 12 Stage 1 and 2 Stage 2.

Place directorate showed a **43% reduction in complaints** from 54 in 2022/23 to 31 in 2023/24.

Complaint Outcomes (Appendix C)

92.4% of all complaints were resolved at Stage 1, a reduction on the previous year's performance of 94.5%. Place directorate recorded the highest proportion escalated to Stage 2 at 19.4%

There has been an increase in the number of valid complaints during the year. **63.1% of complaints were upheld either in full or part**, compared to 45% in 2022/23. The Place directorate upheld the lowest number of complaints at 16.7% and Environment and Housing the highest at 67.2%.

Responsiveness (Appendix C)

There is a significant challenge for the Council as a whole in meeting response times for Stage 1 complaints, albeit that performance has stabilised during the past three reporting periods.

During 2023/24 the percentage of **Stage 1 complaints resolved within the 10-working day target was 59%** (59.2% 2022/23). Some of this stabilisation of performance may be as a result of colleagues increased experience in using the GovService software, improvements made to the process following feedback received from users and additional training provided to complaint investigators.

64.6% of Stage 2 complaints received were investigated within the 20-working day target.

Environment and Housing directorate achieved the highest percentage of Stage 1 and 2 cases completed within target at 62%.

The council has an ambition to improve performance in this area in the future.

What is causing complaints? (Appendix C)

Failing to meet service standards remains the most common reason for residents to make a complaint, **accounting for 61% of the total**. This significantly exceeds the next most common cause of Policy or Process Not Followed at 16.8%. **Allegations of discrimination accounted for 1%** of all complaints (7 cases).

Learning Outcomes

The percentage of complaints with **learning outcomes recorded has increased significantly to 100%** compared to 35.5% in 2022/23; the highest percentage recorded.

Staff Training was the most popular outcome at 55.7% followed by Review Service Standards at 16.4% and Review and Revise Information at 15.9%.

Complaints made to statutory bodies.

The number of complaints made to the **Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) increased during the year to 77** compared to the historic high of 49 during 2022/23.

No complaints were taken into investigation during the period although **15 were resolved through the Early Resolution** process.

Service Area Complaint Handling (21), Housing Services (19) and Social Services (14) continue to drive the highest volume of PSOW complaints.

During the period **3** Complaints were investigated by the **Welsh Language Commissioner**.

Public Services Ombudsman Complaints

77 (49 in 2022/23) complaints in respect of the Council were received by the PSOW during 2023/24, which is an increase of **28** on the previous year.

It should be noted that although the number of complaints increased by 28 on the previous year most of that growth has been generated through cases that were referred to the PSOW inappropriately.

Out of Jurisdiction	8
Premature Complaint	12
Closed after Initial Consideration	2

A further 6 have yet to be determined. Out of 28 additional complaints only 2 have accepted by PSOW as potentially valid and there was no increase in the number of complaints resolved through the early resolution process compared to 2022/23 (15).

Vale of Glamorgan Council	Complaints Received	% Share
Adult Social Services	4	5%
Benefits Administration	1	1%
Childrens' Social Services	10	13%
Community Facilities, Recreation and Leisure	1	1%
Complaints Handling	21	27%
Covid19	0	0%
Education	2	3%
Environment and Environmental Health	3	4%
Finance and Taxation	3	4%
Housing	19	25%
Licensing	1	1%
Planning and Building Control	4	5%
Roads and Transport	4	5%
Various Other	4	5%
Total	77	

	Out of Jurisdiction	Premature	Other cases closed after initial consideration	Early Resolution/voluntary settlement*	Discontinued	Other Reports-Not Upheld	Other Reports Upheld*	Public Interest Report*	Special Interest Report*	Total
Vale of Glamorgan Council	12	27	17	15	0	0	0	0	0	71
% Share	17%	38%	24%	21%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	

There were no complaints taken into investigation during 2023/24, however 15 complaints were resolved through the Early Resolution process.

Complaint Handling (21), Housing Services (19) and Social Services (14) drive the highest volume of PSOW complaints.

Ombudsman Complaints	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20
Adult Social Services	4	2	2	3	0
Benefits Administration	1	1	2	1	1
Children's Social Services	10	6	5	3	2
Community Facilities, Recreation and Leisure	1	1	2	0	0
Complaints Handling	21	11	10	5	4
Covid19	0	0	1	0	0
Education	2	0	2	1	1
Environment and Environmental Health	3	2	4	3	2
Finance and Taxation	3	1	1	2	1
Housing	19	11	14	7	7
Licensing	1	1	1	0	0
Planning and Building Control	4	8	13	3	6
Roads and Transport	4	1	3	6	3
Various Other	4	4	1	4	3
Total	77	49	61	38	30

Through the PSOW Early Resolutions process (Appendix E) the council made time and trouble payments totalling £450.

Welsh Language Complaints - April 2023 to March 2024 (Appendix D)

During the period **3** Complaints were investigated by the **Welsh Language Commissioner**. 2 complaints relating to use of Welsh language were also received directly from members of the public.

Date	Area	Received From	Subject
27/06/23	E&H	WLC	Welsh language on toilet signs
08/02/24	Corporate Resources	WLC	Lack of reference to the Welsh language in the budget consultation.
28/02/24	E&H	WLC	related to the Welsh language version of the leisure centre website and communications with Legacy Leisure.
15/05/23	E&H	Public	The complaint related to a parking officer who allegedly mocked the member of the public and claimed they did not need to speak Welsh.
29/12/23	E&H	Public	The complaint related to the Welsh language version of the leisure centre website and communications with Legacy Leisure.

Social Service Complaints

Social Service representations and complaints are dealt with under the Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014 and the Representations Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014.

As of 31st of March 2024, the number of Stage 1 Complaints received increase to 56 compared to 51 in 2022/23.

Out of the 56 complaints received, 16 were for Adult Services, 36 were for Children and Young People Services and 4 related to the Resource Management and Safeguarding Division.

4 complaints for Children and Young Peoples Services were investigated directly as a Stage 2 Investigation after the investigation through the Stage 1 process did not provide a satisfactory outcome for the complainant.

52% of these Stage 1 complaints were resolved within the designated timescales.

During this period **17 complaints were referred to the Ombudsman**. Of those 7 were closed and not investigated, 3 were out of jurisdiction, 3 were premature and 4 complaints were closed with an early resolution settlement.

The table shown below provides a full breakdown of all enquiries and complaints received during 2023/2024:

Service Division	Enquiries	Complaint Stage 1	Complaint Stage 2	PSOW	Response Timescale	Total Complaint and Enquiries Received
Adult Services	31	16	0	4	10	47
Children and Young People Services	76	36	4	13	18	116
Resource Management & Safeguarding	6	4	0	0	1	10

During 2023/2024 the highest number of Stage 1 complaints received by type of complaint were in relation to the quality/level of service (94) followed by a lack of communication (74) and relating to rude or discourteous staff (12).

Complaints were also received regarding Incorrect Information given (9), unhappy with timescales (8) and Citizens who were unhappy with the costs/ Financial support (5). There were also 39 complaints received for other reasons.

The table below provides a breakdown of the nature of Social Services complaints by Division.

Type of Complaint	Adult Services	Children and Young People Services	Resource Management and Safeguarding	Total Complaints by Nature of Complaint
Quality/level of service	26	64	4	94
Communication	10	61	3	74
Rude Discourteous staff	4	8	0	12
Unhappy with timescales	1	5	2	8
Incorrect Information Given	2	5	1	9
Unhappy with costs/financial support	3	2	0	5
Data Protection Failures	1	2	0	3
Other	12	23	4	39

1-Please note there may be more than one reason a complaint is received. For example, one complaint was related to a communication, the quality of services provided and also charges for services.

Customer Research (Appendix A)

The Council is keen to understand residents experience when raising a complaint to ensure that their needs are being met and in 2022/23 undertook research interviews with complainants to gather their views and opinions.

This exercise provided useful insight into the complainant experience, however while the quality of feedback was good the range of views expressed was very limited with only 3 complainants interviewed, despite an extensive recruitment process.

The Council was keen to hear a wider range of views and for the 2023/24 period an email survey was piloted. 257 complainants were contacted with 67 responses being received.

The council will continue to explore approaches to user research in this area that provide qualitative insight and reflects a broad range of complainant views.

Data was collated via a Microsoft Form, offering a range of questions on the following themes:

- Overall user Experience
- Channel choice
- Timescales
- Communication
- Future behaviours

Research Findings Summary

Survey responses indicate that younger residents are least likely to complain, with only 1 of respondents indicating that they are under 24 years old and 4 between the ages of 25 and 34. This compares to 35 of complaints being received from those over 55 and a total of 51 (77%) over the age of 45.

Consideration needs to be given to how the Council ensures that younger residents are aware of the complaints policy and feel confident in using the process to raise concerns.

69% of respondents stated that they complained using the online service, however only just over half of those said that they would use the online again. Respondents expected the online service to be “easier, efficient and convenient” however satisfaction with this channel was low.

71% of those making a complaint online said they felt that they had enough opportunity to provide full details of their complaint compared to 88% of those making a complaint by telephone.

Communication has been highlighted as a key area for improvement. 60% of respondents stated that they were unaware how quickly they should expect to receive a response to their complaint. 65% said that they felt the response they received took too long.

Only **27% of respondents** felt that the Council provided adequate updates on the progress of their complaint, with **64% stating that they needed to contact the Council** to again to receive an update.

Work is ongoing with colleagues who are responsible for investigating complaints to improve responsiveness and communications. This includes sharing complainant survey responses.

Learning from Complaints (Appendix B)

Previous reports have focussed on outcome categories as a way of demonstrating what lessons have been learned by the Council and individual services from investigating complaints. Key learning Points are categorised as:

- Review & Amend Systems
- Review & Revise Information / Communication
- Review & Revise Policies / Procedures
- Review Service Standards
- Staff Training & Development
- No Learning

While this data provided useful statistical insight, it does not provide examples of the improvement within services that will be experienced by residents.

Since 2022/23 services have asked to provide examples of where services have been improved as a result dealing with a specific complaint or series of complaints.

In total 22 examples have provided, 15 in 2022/23 and 7 in 2023/24. Examples detail the nature of complaint, how the service was improved and how the impact of the change is being monitored.

Directorate	Service	Examples
Social Services	Children and Young People Services	4
Social Services	Adult Services	3

Example 1 – Children and Young People Services

Complaint - Quality and timeliness of communication from the social care workforce.

Response - Building on Strengths tool kit has been developed, which outlines the timeframes for returning calls/emails to families. All contact (telephone calls or emails) from our families must be responded to within 48 hours of receipt or sooner). Staff will continue to be reminded of the above timeframe as outlined within the tool kit.

Example 2 – Children and Young People Services

Complaint – Stage 2 complaint around a YP not being able to access a Direct Payment due to level of need.

Response – A review of the Direct Payment Policy is currently being undertaken. This has included consulting with those who are currently and previously those who have been in receipt of a direct payment and also the staff who set up the direct payment. A work plan has been developed and time has been set aside to review the current Direct Payment Policy.

Example 3 – Children and Young People Services

Complaint – Incorrect information being given around subject access requests.

Response – Social care workforce training to be carried out in relation to LA information management process for processing subject access requests.

Example 4 – Children and Young People Services

Complaint – Citizens feeling as though they are not being listened to by the social care workforce.

Response – Within Wellbeing Assessment and Review meetings there is now a mandatory question which asks: “Are you happy for us to contact you to get feedback on how we have done”. When this question is answered yes, the Quality Assurance team will make contact with the citizens for their views and feedback to be obtained.

Example 5 – Adult Services

Complaint – Poor quality of service.

Response - The Quality Assurance and Policy Officer will continue to carry out engagement and consultation in order to understand the citizen’s lived experience. This will feed into improvement planning moving forward.

Example 6 – Adult Services

Complaint - Support not being provided on a bank holiday.

Response - Error in communication has now been rectified and citizens within the Vale of Glamorgan are now able to access the sitting service on Bank Holidays.

Example 7 – Adult Services

Complaint - We received a complaint from a gentleman that was not accepted to the Vales St Michaels move-on project. He stated that he was promised a flat after a six-week period of support. This was not the case, but we took the opportunity to reflect on how our systems and communication could be improved.

Response - We met up with the St Michaels panel which consist of VOGC, NHS and Wallich staff, and evaluated the selection process. We saw how the criteria for St Michaels could be clearer for both referrer and service user. We set up a further meeting to look at ideas and what we could do to improve. We then collaboratively produced a criteria for St Michaels, that clearly communicates the selection and support process. St Michaels now

operates in accordance with the Recovery Model and Recovery STAR we use for other areas of our support work. We are currently piloting the new process.

Further Work

Services will be canvassed for examples of service improvements on a quarterly basis in order to capture and highlight a greater number.

Accessibility and Equality Survey

An online Equality Survey is available for members of the public to complete following the submission of an online form using GovService. As of the date of this report **146** responses have been received (26 in 2022/23). This form is now available on most Granicus services, it is sent automatically when a form is submitted.

Of those who provided data, 30% were male, 67% were female. The following age range completed the online form (4 people did not provide the information):

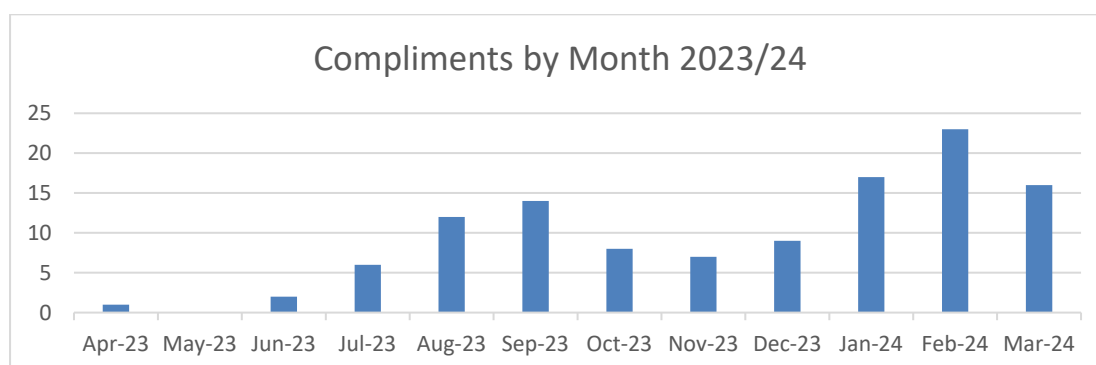
20 to 24 years	10 people
25 to 34	24
35 to 44	19
45 to 54	22
55 to 64	17
65 to 74	23
75+	27
No age provided	4

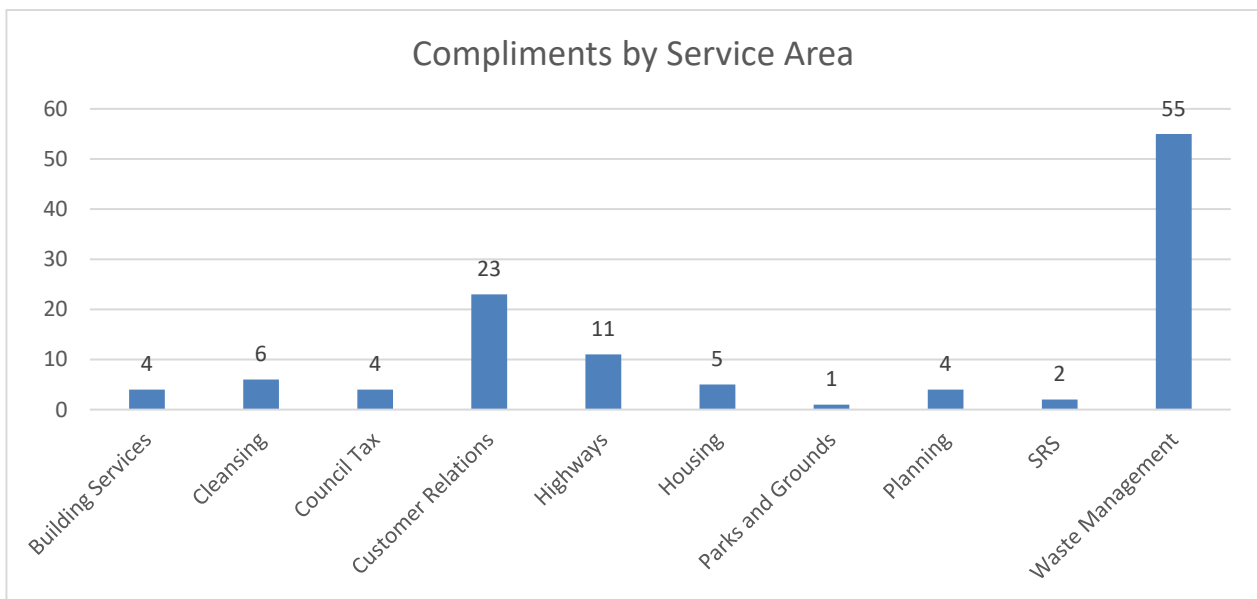
61% of the responses were aged 45 or over. Only 10 responses were received from customers between 20 and 24, despite the ability to record Corporate Complaints online. **58%** of the responses were from customers whose day-to-day activities were limited by some form of disability.

Compliments

The council received a total of **115 compliments** during the reporting period. The majority of compliments were recorded for **Environment & Housing at 84**, with 77 for Neighbourhood Services, 5 for Housing and 2 for Shared Regulatory Services. 27 compliments were received for Corporate Resources and 4 for Place.

Compliments April 2023 to March 2024





Areas for future work

1. Continue to develop a user research approach to engage more complainants and develop insights that will inform improvements to the complaints policy and process.
2. Deliver recommendations from the complaint survey report to improve the complainant experience of making a complaint.
3. Develop and deliver a communications plan to ensure residents aged between 18 and 35 years old are aware of the Corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy and feel confident in making a complaint.
4. Collate examples of service improvements made as a result of lessons learned from complaint investigations on a quarterly basis and share as examples of best practice.
5. Continue to work with services to improve responsiveness and communications the colleague experience of administrating and investigating complaints.
6. Use data from complaint handling and other data sets, such as customer satisfaction survey results, to develop improved insight into the resident experience of accessing council services.
7. Work with the digital service to develop real time reporting of complaints for service managers so that they have the information needed to manage the complaint investigation process and identify opportunities for service improvement.

Complaints Process

User Research Summary Report

Discovery Goals

Corporate Goals

The Vale of Glamorgan Council have made clear in the 2023-2028 Digital Strategy, their commitment to transforming services and digital services, that are designed to meet the needs of its users:

“Listen to the community to understand their needs in order to transform digital services”

The commitment to providing accessible and inclusive online services, relies upon the involvement of service users in the user centred design process. This user research project was initiated to do exactly that, the review our current provision of services, to see if it can be tailored to meet the needs of those resident requiring the service.

Complaints Process

The Vale of Glamorgan Council have a range of services to members of the public, some of which are currently available online, giving residents an option to self-serve. With an ambition to increase the number of self-service requests and to ensure that these processes are as efficient as possible, based on the needs of users, a user research project was initiated to look at how we can involve residents in the review of these existing online services.

As part of the Annual Complaints report for submission to the Ombudsman, a user research project was initiated, to review user feedback on the current complaints processes offered by the Vale of Glamorgan Council. The council offer a variety of channels to customers wishing to make a complaint, consisting of online via VoG website, email, by phone, in person and in writing, all of which were to be included as part of the research.

Approach

Recruitment

The project was initiated to review the end-to-end process of raising a complaint. As there are high volumes of these requests coming in via all channels, it was decided to conduct the research with those that had already contacted us regarding a complaint.

As with user research project, it is important to endeavour to reach as many user groups as possible, to ensure that the data is representative of all those who may use the service presently and in the future. To offer the opportunity to as many possible candidates, a report was created to list all those that had contacted us for the period of October 2023 to March 2024.

Data Collection

A communications campaign was created and sent out to all 256 complainants, asking for their participation in the user research project. The survey was live for a period of 2 weeks.

Data was collated via a Microsoft Form, offering a range of questions on the following themes:

- *Overall user Experience*
- *Channel choice*
- *Timescales*
- *Communication*
- *Future behaviours*

Outcomes

Participation/ Demographics

Of the 257 customers that were included in the communications campaign, there was a total of 67 survey responses.

There was a varied age range amongst volunteers, with the majority representing those between the age of 35 - 65+



In addition to having a representation across a wide age demographic, the campaign was successful in reaching out to those communicating with us, via all channels.

● Online	45
● By phone	16
● In person	1
● Other	3



Key Learnings

The most popular channel chosen was online via Vale of Glamorgan website, followed by phone.

Based on the results of the user experience survey, it appears that while many customers are using the online complaint process, there are significant gaps in satisfaction, particularly with the overall experience. Here's a breakdown of key insights and recommendations:

1. Online Reporting Experience

- **69% reported online**, but only **53% said they are likely to use it again**.
- Average rating of the online process was **2.1** (out of 5).
- **71% felt they had enough opportunity** to provide full details of the complaint, but this is still lower than phone users (88%).
- Customers chose online primarily because they saw it as "**easier, efficient, and convenient**", yet their satisfaction is quite low.

2. Phone Reporting Experience

- **25% reported by phone**, and **88% felt they had enough opportunity** to explain their complaint.
- **50% of these customers may consider using the online process** in the future.
- Reasons stated for not using the online process include a preference for human interaction and concerns about speed and flexibility.

3. Timescales and Complaint Follow-up

- **60% of users were unaware** of the legal timescales for complaint responses, and **65% of those** felt responses were not timely.
- **79% of council responses were via email or phone**
- 7% of customers thought raising a new complaint was the best way to contact the council for an update or further information regarding their complaint.

Recommendations

Functionality/ Process

- 1. Simplify and enhance the online form:** Based on feedback, users may feel that the current format is too restrictive (e.g., "issues often do not fit into the boxes provided"). Redesign the form to offer:
 - More flexible fields (e.g, longer text boxes, and less rigid categorisation of issues).
 - Intuitive prompts that guide the user through the process.
- 2. Enhance speed and responsiveness:** Since some respondents said the online process is "slow" and not suitable for emergencies, consider creating a **"priority complaint" option** for urgent queries. This would help ensure quicker response times and cater to customers needing immediate assistance.
- 3. Encourage follow-up communication through the online platform:** Since many users follow up via email or phone, promote the options to track and respond to their complaints within the same online portal (Granicus). This would make it more attractive for customers to stick to one platform. In addition to standard progress updates, consider offering a personalised update to give more detailed information relating to the next stage and what can be expected.
- 4. Highlight key online improvements:** Many phone users value the personal touch and perceive online as slow. To encourage online adoption, emphasise the improvements made to the online service (speed, flexibility, and personal follow-up). Consider marketing campaigns or email updates to show how online complaints are now processed faster and allow for more comprehensive detail submission.
- 5. Communicate response timelines clearly:** On both the website and during the complaint submission process, provide clear information on legal timescales and expected response times. Consider sending automated updates with timelines after a complaint is submitted (e.g., "We aim to respond to your complaint within 5 business days").
- 6. Standardise response times:** Ensure internal teams adhere to the communicated response times, especially for online submissions. Delayed responses can lead to dissatisfaction and a perception that online services are inefficient. In addition to this, communicate effectively with complainants if any timescales are to be exceeded.

Communications

- 1. Create an ongoing internal communication campaign/ dashboard** to communicate and review Directorate/ organisational success in managing complaints. Highlighting response targets, goals and achievements. Improving the overall responsiveness to complaints made online will encourage more customers to chose to report complaints online in the future.
- 2. Create and external communication campaign** with residents to promote use of online services.

General

1. **User-Centric Approach:** Given the mixed feedback across both online and phone reporting, it's critical to create a more personalised and flexible approach. Tailor options based on the urgency of the complaint, the user's preference for interaction (phone or online), and their past behaviour (e.g, someone who previously submitted by phone may be more inclined to use online if personalised instructions are sent to them).
2. **Continuous Feedback Loop:** After implementing changes, collect feedback on a regular basis to track improvements. Consider offering incentives for users who provide feedback on new features or usability improvements

Appendix B – Learning from Complaints. Service Improvement Examples

Name of Service / Process	Details of Complaint	How the service has been improved	How impact is being monitored.
Children & Young People Services	Quality and timeliness of communication from the social care workforce.	Building on Strengths tool kit has been developed, which outlines the timeframes for returning calls/emails to families. All contact (telephone calls or emails) from our families must be responded to within 48 hours of receipt or sooner). Staff will continue to be reminded of the above timeframe as outlined within the tool kit.	As part of the Quality Assurance Framework monthly audits will be undertaken across teams to ensure practice standards are upheld.
Children & Young People Services	Stage 2 complaint around a YP not being able to access a Direct Payment due to level of need.	A review of the Direct Payment Policy is currently being undertaken. This has included consulting with those who are currently and previously those who have been in receipt of a direct payment and also the staff who set up the direct payment. A work plan has been developed and time has been set aside to review the current Direct Payment Policy.	Learning from the consultation and engagement work will be reviewed and analysed with any learning implemented.
Children & Young People Services	Incorrect information being given around subject access requests.	Social care workforce training to be carried out in relation to LA information management process for processing subject access requests.	Staff will be updated in the form of a briefing which will be discussed at team meetings. The briefing will be available on the CYPS when it goes live.
Children & Young People Services	Citizens feeling as though they are not being listened to by the social care workforce.	Within Wellbeing Assessment and Review meetings there is now a mandatory question which asks: "Are you happy for us to contact you to get feedback on how we have done". When this question is answered yes, the Quality Assurance team will make contact with the citizens for their views and feedback to be obtained.	The Performance team will develop a dashboard for the data to be reported upon.

Name of Service / Process	Details of Complaint	How the service has been improved	How impact is being monitored.
Adult Services	Poor quality of service.	The Quality Assurance and Policy Officer will continue to carry out engagement and consultation in order to understand the citizen's lived experience. This will feed into improvement planning moving forward.	The commissioning team continue to review all commissioned services with ongoing surveys being undertaken.
Adult Services	Support not being provided on a bank holiday.	Error in communication has now been rectified and citizens within the Vale of Glamorgan are now able to access the sitting service on Bank Holidays.	As part of the Quality Assurance Framework monthly audits will be undertaken across teams to ensure citizens are receiving the services as outlined within care and support plans.
Community Support Workers - Vale Mental Health Team	We received a complaint from a gentleman that was not accepted to the Vales St Michaels move-on project. He stated that he was promised a flat after a six-week period of support. This was not the case, but we took the opportunity to reflect on how our systems and communication could be improved.	We met up with the St Michaels panel which consist of VOGC, NHS and Wallich staff, and evaluated the selection process. We saw how the criteria for St Michaels could be clearer for both referrer and service user. We set up a further meeting to look at ideas and what we could do to improve. We then collaboratively produced a criteria for St Michaels, that clearly communicates the selection and support process. St Michaels now operates in accordance with the Recovery Model and Recovery STAR we use for other areas of our support work. We are currently piloting the new process.	We will review in 6 months time , seeking feedback from individuals, family/carers and professionals to see if the process is helpful; clear, person-centred and outcome focussed. No further complaints.

Appendix C - Statistical Performance

Complaints Resolved at Stage 1

	Percentage (%) Resolved at Stage 1									
Directorate	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17	2015/16	2014/15
Learning and Skills	84.6	80	66.7	66.7	72.7	80	85.7	90.9	77.8	91.3
Resources	86.1	97.9	84	90.8	91.8	86.6	81.4	77.5	80.3	96.9
Environment And Housing	94.6	96.2	91.6	90.4	94.1	94.5	88.1	90.2	90.7	87.7
Place	80.6	78.3	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total	92.4	94.5	89.7	90.2	93.4	93.1	86.4	87.7	88.3	91.3

Stage 1 and Stage 2 Complaints Outcome

Directorate	Not Upheld (%)	Upheld (%)	Part Upheld (%)
Learning & Skills			
2023/24	50	25	25
2022/23	55.6	22.2	22.2
2021/22	66.7	0	33.3
2020/21	66.7	0	33.3
2019/20	18.2	54.4	27.3
2018/19	60	0	40
2017/18	28.6	35.7	35.7
2016/17	54.5	27.3	18.2
2015/16	0	44.4	55.6
2014/15	31.7	34	32.7
Resources			
2023/24	43	30.5	26.5
2022/23	36.8	40.8	22.4
2021/22	44.4	34.6	8.6
2020/21	32.3	38.5	15.4
2019/20	30.1	42.5	19.2
2018/19	57.4	22.1	11.8
2017/18	51.4	30	18.6
2016/17	56.3	26.3	17.5
2015/16	53.9	18.4	27.6
2014/15	23.7	15.3	61.1
Environment & Housing			
2023/24	32.8	53.7	13.6
2022/23	56.6	29.6	13.9
2021/22	42.7	38	8
2020/21	35.2	38.1	15.6
2019/20	36.6	41.9	16.4
2018/19	36.0	44.7	12.4
2017/18	39.5	36.7	21.9
2016/17	32.7	46.7	18.6
2015/16	38.3	49	11.4
2014/15	37.4	49.7	9.8
Place			
2023/24	83.3	12.5	4.2
2022/23	74.4	14	11.6
	Not Upheld (%)	Upheld (%)	Part Upheld (%)
Total (excluding Social Services)			
2023/24	36.9	46.9	16.2
2022/23	54.7	29.9	15.4
2021/22	43.3	36.9	8.4
2020/21	34.9	37.9	16
2019/20	35.4	42.2	17.0
2018/19	39.7	40.4	12.6
2017/18	41.8	35	21.8
2016/17	38	41.8	18.6
2015/16	40.7	42.6	15.7
2014/15	31.7	34	32.7

Complaints Resolved within Target

Directorate	Resolved within target (%)									
	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17	2015/16	2014/15
Learning & Skills	25	33.3	100	66.7	81.8	80	71.4	90.1	66.7	73
Resources	53	59.2	69.1	56.9	63	58.8	75.7	82.5	77.6	87
Environment & Housing	62	55.8	58	65.9	68.4	55.9	50.5	72.5	73.4	62
Place	54.2	86	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Council	59	59.2	60.9	64.2	68	56.5	56.8	75.1	74.2	73

Causes of Complaints - Learning and Skills

Year	Incorrect Info Provided (%)	Other (%)	Policy/ Procedure not Followed (%)	Service Standards not met (%)	Staff Behaviour (%)	Not Recorded (%)	Discrimination (%)
2023/24	20	0	30	50	0	0	0
2022/23	14.3	0	0	57.1	14.3	14.3	0
2021/22	0	0	33.3	0	0	66.7	0
2020/21	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2019/20	8.3	0	0	0	8.3	83.3	0
2018/19	0	0	0	0	0	100	0
2017/18	13.6	0	13.6	18.2	18.2	36.4	0
2016/17	17.6	11.8	11.8	5.9	29.4	23.5	-
2015/16	12.5	0	18.8	18.8	12.5	37.5	-
2014/15	0	0	0	0	0	0	-

Causes of Complaints - Resources

Year	Incorrect Info Provided (%)	Other (%)	Policy/ Procedure not Followed (%)	Service Standards not met (%)	Staff Behaviour (%)	Not Recorded (%)	Discrimination (%)
2023/24	8.4	0	17.6	64.1	9.2	0	0.7
2022/23	10	0	8.9	43.3	4.4	32.2	1.1
2021/22	2.4	0	7.1	5.9	7.1	77.6	0
2020/21	2.8	2.8	5.6	9.7	9.7	69.4	0
2019/20	6.4	6.4	9	10.3	7.7	60.3	0
2018/19	1.3	14.5	9.2	18.4	9.2	47.4	0
2017/18	12	12	13	20.7	18.5	22.8	1.1
2016/17	17.2	14.7	12.1	10.3	25.9	19.8	-
2015/16	10.6	11.7	9.6	12.8	16	39.4	-
2014/15	2	35.8	37.3	2.9	3.9	18.1	-

Causes of Complaints – Environment and Housing

Year	Incorrect Info Provided (%)	Other (%)	Policy/ Procedure not Followed (%)	Service Standards not met (%)	Staff Behaviour (%)	Not Recorded (%)	Discrimination (%)
2023/24	11	0	15.5	61	11.5	0	1
2022/23	10.1	0.7	9.7	41	7.9	30.6	0
2021/22	1	1.8	6	19.7	6.3	64.8	0.4
2020/21	3.2	4.2	8.8	20.8	4.2	58.8	0
2019/20	2.5	3.5	6.9	23.1	2.7	61.2	0
2018/19	2.9	7.7	7.1	10.1	6.1	70.4	0
2017/18	4	24.9	5.3	12.2	11.8	41.2	0.4
2016/17	4.8	8.7	3	6	7.5	70.1	-
2015/16	6.5	8.6	11.8	8.3	21	43.8	-
2014/15	7.5	5.2	2.9	4	5.2	75.1	-

Causes of Complaints – Place (separated from Resources reporting 2022/23)

Year	Incorrect Info Provided (%)	Other (%)	Policy/ Procedure not Followed (%)	Service Standards not met (%)	Staff Behaviour (%)	Not Recorded (%)	Discrimination (%)
2023/24	5.6	0	44.4	39	0	0	11
2022/23	8.2	2	20.4	36.7	12.2	18.4	2
2021/22	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
2020/21	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
2019/20	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
2018/19	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
2017/18	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
2016/17	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
2015/16	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
2014/15	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Causes of Complaints - Council

Year	Incorrect Info Provided (%)	Other (%)	Policy/ Procedure not Followed (%)	Service Standards not met (%)	Staff Behaviour (%)	Not Recorded (%)	Discrimination (%)
2023/24	10.4	0	16.8	61.1	10.6	0	1.1
2022/23	9.9	0.7	10.6	41.3	7.8	29.2	0.5
2021/22	1.3	1.3	6.5	16.4	6.5	67.7	0.3
2020/21	3.1	3.9	8.1	18.4	5.3	61.3	0
2019/20	3.2	3.8	7	21	3.5	61.5	0
2018/19	3.9	8.8	3.9	11.4	6.6	67	0
2017/18	6.7	20.1	7.8	14.8	13.9	36.2	0.6
2016/17	8.4	10.3	5.6	7.1	12.8	55.9	-
2015/16	7.6	9.1	11.6	9.6	19.6	42.5	-
2014/15	4.4	21.4	21.9	3.4	4.4	44.4	-

Learning from Complaints - Learning and Skills

Year	No Learning (%)	Review Systems (%)	Review Information (%)	Review Procedures (%)	Review Service Standards (%)	Staff Training (%)
2023/24	0	0	80	10	0	10
2022/23	14.3	14.3	42.9	14.3	0	14.3
2021/22	66.7	0	33.3	0	0	0
2020/21	0	0	0	0	0	0
2019/20	27.3	18.2	18.2	0	9.1	27.3
2018/19	60	40	0	0	0	0
2017/18	42.9	7.1	14.3	14.3	0	21.4
2016/17	54.5	9.1	27.3	9.1	0	0
2015/16	66.7	11.1	11.1	0	0	11.1
2014/15	66.7	0	16.7	0	0	16.7

Learning from Complaints - Resources

Year	No Learning (%)	Review Systems (%)	Review Information (%)	Review Procedures (%)	Review Service Standards (%)	Staff Training (%)
2023/24	0	7.6	19.8	11.5	9.2	51.9
2022/23	34.5	4.6	11.5	2.3	12.6	34.5
2021/22	77.8	3.7	0	1.2	1.2	16
2020/21	67.7	3.1	4.6	1.5	3.1	20
2019/20	56.2	4.1	4.1	1.4	11	23.3
2018/19	73.5	0	2.9	1.5	10.3	11.8
2017/18	45.7	0	12.9	2.9	1.4	37.1
2016/17	60	6.3	12.5	5	2.5	13.8
2015/16	64.5	6.6	5.3	1.3	0	22.4
2014/15	33.6	2.3	55	2.3	0	6.9

Learning from Complaints – Environment and Housing

Year	No Learning (%)	Review Systems (%)	Review Information (%)	Review Procedures (%)	Review Service Standards (%)	Staff Training (%)
2023/24	0	6.7	13.5	3.6	18.8	57.4
2022/23	36.2	4	20.7	5.8	12.7	20.7
2021/22	92	1.1	2.6	0.2	1.5	2.6
2020/21	90	1.9	4.1	0	2.2	1.9
2019/20	88.8	0	0.4	0.4	4.8	5.5
2018/19	64	2	3.5	0.3	19	11.2
2017/18	65.7	1	10	4.3	3.3	15.7
2016/17	42.2	2.9	7.2	2	25.8	19.9
2015/16	41	5.5	4.1	6.2	1.4	41.7
2014/15	39.3	8.6	10.4	2.5	1.2	38

Learning from Complaints – Place (separated from Resources reporting 2022/23)

Year	No Learning (%)	Review Systems (%)	Review Information (%)	Review Procedures (%)	Review Service Standards (%)	Staff Training (%)
2023/24	0	11.1	16.7	0	11.1	61.1
2022/23	36.8	2.6	13.2	2.6	7.9	36.8
2021/22	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
2020/21	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
2019/20	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
2018/19	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
2017/18	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
2016/17	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
2015/16	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
2014/15	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Learning from Complaints - Council

Year	No Learning (%)	Review Systems (%)	Review Information (%)	Review Procedures (%)	Review Service Standards (%)	Staff Training (%)
2023/24	0	6.9	15.9	5.2	16.4	55.7
2022/23	35.5	4.2	18.4	4.9	12	25
2021/22	88.5	1.7	2.2	0.6	1.4	5.6
2020/21	85.8	2.1	4.1	0.3	2.4	5.3
2019/20	83.4	0.9	1.3	0.5	5.7	8.2
2018/19	65.6	2.1	3.3	0.5	17.3	11.2
2017/18	59.9	1	10.9	4.4	2.7	21.1
2016/17	46.1	3.8	8.8	2.8	20.4	18.1
2015/16	46.5	5.9	4.5	5.1	1.1	37
2014/15	37.3	5.7	30	2.3	0.7	24

Appendix D Welsh Language Complaints

Complaints from the Welsh Language Commissioner

Complaint	Department	Date Received	Complaint
CS1164	Neighbourhood Services (Public Conveniences)	27/06/2023	Men's toilets were out of order and men were instructed to use the upstairs ladies toilets instead. The 'Wo' of the 'Womens' sign was masked out so it read 'Mens'. No Welsh language version of Mens was provided, and the Welsh language 'Menywod' (womens) was left on the sign.
We forwarded a letter from Colin Smith to the Welsh Language Commissioner. In September, we received a letter from WLC confirming no further action with investigation as we've remedied issue, acknowledged noncompliance, and confirmed actions to be taken (training etc). Forwarded to Colin Smith for reference and check in re training.			
CS1234	Corporate Resources	08/02/2024	Lack of reference to the Welsh language in the budget consultation.
This investigation is still ongoing. We responded with comments on 21/02/24, 14/03/24, and 15/04/24. We received the decision notice on 04/06/24 with relevant actions: guidance document and training to raise awareness of standards 91, 92 and 93. We emailed the Welsh Language Commissioner in June for further assistance. We have since spoken with other Welsh Language Officers and have sight of Cardiff /Council's documents to assist. We have a deadline of 11/10/2024 to complete relevant actions.			
	Regeneration and Planning	28/02/2024	This was not an official notification of a complaint or investigation but a representative of the Welsh Language Commissioner's office about English-only 'what3words' on Wales Coast Path signs.
The Welsh Language Commissioner had received an enquiry about them and have been dealing with Natural Resources Wales, but the signs are Local Authority responsibility. Phil Chappel responded to the Welsh Language Commissioner. No further action.			

Direct Complaints:

Direct from customer	Neighbourhood Services – Enforcement	15/05/2023	The complaint related to a parking officer who allegedly mocked the member of the public and claimed they did not need to speak Welsh.
The Enforcement Manager looked into the matter as a Stage 1 complaint.			
Direct from customer	Leisure Services (Parkwood/Legacy – Leisure Centres)	29/12/2023	The complaint related to the Welsh language version of the leisure centre website and communications with Legacy Leisure. The customer was unable to easily cancel membership on the app or portal in Welsh. Then received automated emails in English only. Concerns with other aspects of Welsh language website.
The Operational Manager of Leisure Services held a meeting with Legacy Leisure/Parkwood representatives who provided a Welsh language improvement action plan. Progress on the actions has been shared and improvements have been noted.			

Appendix E – Public Service Ombudsman Interventions (Summary)

- The Council paid a total of £450 in time and trouble payments during the reporting period.
- Council Tax - Provide Miss L with an apology for the delay and for providing her with incorrect contact details. It also agreed to issue Miss L with a time and trouble payment of £50, and to issue a detailed complaint response that explains what information the Council requires, what discounts have been applied to date, and any outstanding balances owed. Furthermore, the Council made assurances that improvements would be made to ensure that all relevant departments had up to date contact details to prevent further incidents. The Council agreed that it would action the above within 30 working days.
- Children's Services - Start a stage 2 investigation, provide Mr L with a complaint response and issue a time and trouble payment of £150 within 30 working days. The Council also agreed to communicate its obligation to advise complainants of its internal complaint's procedure.
- Learning & Skills - Mrs A had not received a formal response to her complaint response and it was unclear whether the Council was intending to issue a formal complaint response. Provide Mrs A with a formal complaint response together with an apology and explanation for the failure to do so, within 20 working days.
- Planning - Issue an acknowledgement letter, apologise to Mr B, offer Mr B a financial redress of £50.00 for the time and trouble taken in making a complaint and to advise its staff of the correct process for accepting complaints. The Council agreed to complete these actions within 20 working days.
- Waste Management - The Ombudsman found that whilst the Council had responded to Ms L's complaints of September 2022, it had not responded to her latest complaint dated July 2023. She said that this caused frustration and uncertainty to Ms L. Provide Ms L with an apology and explanation for the delays in responding to her latest complaint, issue a complaint response, and provide contact details for the complaints department within 30 working days
- Council Tax - Provide an apology and explanation for the failure to issue a complaint response and provide assurances that steps have been taken to address the programming error identified. The Council also agreed to pay Mrs V redress of £50 and issue a complaint response within 2 weeks.
- SRS - Apologise to Mrs A for not providing clear information about the validation process and to pay the sum equal to the cost of re-advertising the public notice, within 10 working days.
- Building Services - The Ombudsman found that whilst the Council had been in contact with Mr G, it had failed to issue a complaint response and had not provided regular and meaningful updates. She said this caused frustration and uncertainty to Mr G. Write to Mr G with an apology and explanation for the identified failures and to issue a Stage 1 complaint response within 3 weeks.
- Children's Services - Write to Mrs N with an apology and explanation for the failure within 2 weeks. It further agreed to commission and progress with an independent investigation as soon as reasonably practicable.
- Building Services - The Council had failed to log her concerns as a complaint and had not issued a complaint response. She said that this caused frustration and uncertainty to Mrs G. The Ombudsman sought and gained the Council's agreement to write to Mrs G with an apology for the failure to log her complaint and to issue a complaint response within 2 weeks.

- Children's Services - The Ombudsman decided that whilst the Council had carried out a Stage 2 investigation, the findings of which it had accepted in full, it had not completed one of the recommendations made by the Independent Investigator. The Ombudsman sought and gained the Council's agreement that it would write to Ms A addressing the outstanding recommendation.
- Council Tax - The Council had not logged Mrs B's complaint due to a system failure which incorrectly identified Mrs B's email as SPAM, which in turn was deleted from its system after 30 days. Write to Mrs B with an apology and explanation for the failure to log her Stage 2 complaint, offer £50 redress for her time and trouble in making her complaint to the Ombudsman and issue a complaint response within 4 weeks.
- Waste Management - The Ombudsman found that whilst the Council issued a Stage 1 complaint response the outcome was a refusal to investigate the complaint as it was being considered by the recycling centre. However, the recycling centre refused to issue a complaint response as the complaint had been made to the Council. The Ombudsman sought and gained the Council's agreement to write to Mr K with an apology for its failure to investigate his complaint and to issue a Stage 2 complaint response within 2 weeks.
- Housing - The Council agreed to apologise for failing to acknowledge or address Ms P's email, to contact Ms P to gather the additional evidence she wanted to present, and to provide a further response to address the outstanding issues. It agreed to complete these actions within 6 weeks.
- Building Services - The Ombudsman sought and gained the Council's agreement to apologise to Mr T and pay him redress of £50 in recognition of the delay in dealing with his complaint. The Council also agreed to provide Mr T with a stage 2 complaint response within 3 weeks.
- Children's Services - The Ombudsman sought and gained the Council's agreement to issue a response to the complaint (within 2 weeks), which should also include an apology for the oversight and delay in correctly logging and responding to the complaint. The response should also provide an explanation and details of the improvements made to prevent similar occurrences in future, and a redress payment of £50.



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Ask for: Communications



01656 641150



Caseinfo@ombudsman.wales

Date: 9 September 2024

Councillor Lis Burnett
Vale of Glamorgan Council

By email only
lburnett@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk
DRThomas@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

Annual Letter 2023/24

Dear Councillor Burnett

Role of PSOW

As you know, the role of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales is to consider complaints about public services, to investigate alleged breaches of the councillor Code of Conduct, to set standards for complaints handling by public bodies and to drive improvement in complaints handling and learning from complaints. I also undertake investigations into public services on my own initiative.

Purpose of letter

This letter is intended to provide an update on the work of my office, to share key issues for local government in Wales and to highlight any particular issues for your organisation, together with actions I would like your organisation to take.

Overview of 2023/24

This letter, as always, coincides with my Annual Report – “A New Chapter Unfolds” – and comes at a time when public services continue to be in the spotlight, and under considerable pressures. My office has seen another increase in the number of people asking for our help – a 17% increase in overall contacts compared to the previous year, with nearly 10,000 enquiries and complaints received. Our caseload has increased substantially - by 37% - since 2019.

During 2023/24 we considered and closed more enquiries and complaints than we ever have done before, and we reduced the average cost for each case and investigation. We started the year with a focus on reducing our aging cases, those over 12 months old, by 50% by the end of the year. These cases are often the most complex and distressing for the people making the complaint. I am extremely pleased to say we exceeded this target, reducing our aged investigations by over 70%. We are now well on track to meeting our objective to complete investigation of complaints within 12 months.

Public Services Complaints and compliance with recommendations

In total 1,108 complaints about local authorities were made to us last year – broadly the same number as the previous year. During this period, we intervened in (upheld, settled or resolved at an early stage) 14% of local authority complaints – a similar proportion to recent years.

We received 77 complaints about Vale of Glamorgan Council in 2023/24 and closed 71. Vale of Glamorgan Council's intervention rate was 21%. Further information on complaints about your organisation can be found in the appendices.

We made 50 recommendations to your council during the year. To ensure that our investigations and reports drive improvement, we follow up compliance with the recommendations agreed with your organisation. In 2023/24, 48 recommendations were due and 92% were complied with in the timescale agreed. The remainder were complied with, but outside the timescales agreed, or remain outstanding as at 9 April 2024.

Recommendations and timescales for complying with recommendations are always agreed with the public body concerned before being finalised, and we therefore expect organisations to comply within the timescales agreed.

Our Code of Conduct work

My role is to investigate allegations that councillors have breached their Code of Conduct. Where an investigation finds evidence to support the complaint on a matter which is serious enough to require a referral in the public interest, these cases are referred either to the local Standards Committee or to the Adjudication Panel for Wales for consideration.

In 2023/24, we received 16% more Code of Conduct complaints than the previous year, relating to both Principal Councils and Town and Community Councils. My office made 21 referrals – to Standards Committees or the Adjudication Panel for Wales, an increase from 12 the previous year.

I am grateful to your Monitoring Officer for their positive engagement with my office over the last year. We will continue to engage with them on matters relating to the ethical standards framework, including Local Resolution Procedures this year.

Independent Review

As you will be aware, I became aware of inappropriate comments, of a political nature, made by a member of my staff via social media. These comments were widely reported in the media. The member of staff in question was suspended and subsequently resigned. However, the comments prompted questions about my office's work on councillor Code of Conduct cases.

In view of the seriousness of the matter, I commissioned Dr Melissa McCullough to conduct an independent review of our Code of Conduct work, and I have published the full [Terms of Reference](#) for that review. I and my staff are engaging closely with the Monitoring Officer Group and the National Forum for Standards Committee Chairs in relation to this matter. I will be publishing Dr McCullough's final report on completion of the review and sharing it with the Senedd's Finance Committee this Autumn.

Supporting improvement of public services

We continued our work on supporting improvement in public services last year and worked on our second wider Own Initiative investigation. The investigation includes four local authorities and considers carers' needs assessments. I am grateful to the investigated authorities for their co-operation and candour throughout the year, and we look forward to sharing our finalised report this Autumn. This will make recommendations to the investigated authorities and will ask all local authorities across Wales to make similar improvements.

We have continued our work on complaints handling standards for public bodies in Wales and now have 56 public bodies following our model complaints handling policy. These public bodies account for around 85% of the complaints we receive. We have continued our work to publish complaints statistics, gathered from public bodies, with data published twice a year.

We continued our work to publish complaints statistics into a third year, with data now published twice a year. This data allows us to see information with greater context – for example, last year 9% of complaints made to Vale of Glamorgan Council's went on to be referred to PSOW.

Action we would like your organisation to take

Further to this letter can I ask that your Council takes the following actions:

- Present my Annual Letter to the Cabinet and to the Governance and Audit Committee at the next available opportunity and notify me of when these meetings will take place.
- Consider the data in this letter, alongside your own data, to understand more about your performance on complaints, including any patterns or trends and your organisation's compliance with recommendations made by my office.

- Inform me of the outcome of the Council's considerations and proposed actions on the above matters at the earliest opportunity.

I would like to thank you, and your officers, for your continued openness and engagement with my office. Our information shows that local authorities are looking into more complaints than ever before and are using information from complaints to deliver better outcomes for the people of Wales.

Yours sincerely,

M.M. Morris.

Michelle Morris
Public Services Ombudsman

Cc. Rob Thomas, Chief Executive, Vale of Glamorgan Council



Factsheet

Appendix A - Complaints Received

Local Authority	Complaints Received	Received per 1,000 residents
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	15	0.22
Bridgend County Borough Council	59	0.41
Caerphilly County Borough Council	56	0.32
Cardiff Council*	149	0.41
Carmarthenshire County Council	69	0.37
Ceredigion County Council	32	0.45
Conwy County Borough Council	36	0.31
Denbighshire County Council**	31	0.32
Flintshire County Council	51	0.33
Cyngor Gwynedd	38	0.32
Isle of Anglesey County Council	38	0.55
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council	12	0.20
Monmouthshire County Council	29	0.31
Neath Port Talbot Council	35	0.25
Newport City Council	52	0.33
Pembrokeshire County Council	40	0.32
Powys County Council	54	0.41
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	64	0.27
Swansea Council	81	0.34
Torfaen County Borough Council	14	0.15
Vale of Glamorgan Council	77	0.58
Wrexham County Borough Council	76	0.56
Total	1108	0.36
* inc 2 Rent Smart Wales		
** inc 1 Wales Penalty Processing Partnership		



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Appendix B - Received by Subject

Vale of Glamorgan Council	Complaints Received	% share
Adult Social Services	4	5%
Benefits Administration	1	1%
Children's Social Services	10	13%
Community Facilities, Recreation and Leisure	1	1%
Complaints Handling	21	27%
Covid-19	0	0%
Education	2	3%
Environment and Environmental Health	3	4%
Finance and Taxation	3	4%
Housing	19	25%
Licensing	1	1%
Planning and Building Control	4	5%
Roads and Transport	4	5%
Various Other	4	5%
Total	77	



Appendix C - Complaint Outcomes
(* denotes intervention)

Vale of Glamorgan Council		% Share
Out of Jurisdiction	12	17%
Premature	27	38%
Other cases closed after initial consideration	17	24%
Early Resolution/ voluntary settlement*	15	21%
Discontinued	0	0%
Other Reports - Not Upheld	0	0%
Other Reports Upheld*	0	0%
Public Interest Reports*	0	0%
Special Interest Reports*	0	0%
Total	71	



Appendix D - Cases with PSOW Intervention

	No. of interventions	No. of closures	% of interventions
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	1	16	6%
Bridgend County Borough Council	8	59	14%
Caerphilly County Borough Council	3	48	6%
Cardiff Council	28	144	19%
Cardiff Council - Rent Smart Wales	0	3	0%
Carmarthenshire County Council	8	60	13%
Ceredigion County Council	7	32	22%
Conwy County Borough Council	0	37	0%
Denbighshire County Council	2	32	6%
Denbighshire County Council - Wales Penalty Processing Partnership	0	1	0%
Flintshire County Council	8	57	14%
Cyngor Gwynedd	6	39	15%
Isle of Anglesey County Council	10	41	24%
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council	3	14	21%
Monmouthshire County Council	3	32	9%
Neath Port Talbot Council	5	34	15%
Newport City Council	5	51	10%
Pembrokeshire County Council	7	38	18%
Powys County Council	7	53	13%
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	11	63	17%
Swansea Council	12	77	16%
Torfaen County Borough Council	2	14	14%
Vale of Glamorgan Council	15	71	21%
Wrexham County Borough Council	7	79	9%
Total	158	1095	14%



Appendix E – Compliance performance comparison

Local Authority	Number of recommendations made in 2023-24	Number of recommendations falling due in 2023-24	% of recommendations, complied with on time
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	1	1	100%
Bridgend County Borough Council	18	20	35%
Caerphilly County Borough Council	9	9	11%
Cardiff Council	74	75	92%
Carmarthenshire County Council	25	25	52%
Ceredigion County Council	23	23	78%
Swansea Council	29	32	63%
Conwy County Borough Council	0	1	0%
Denbighshire County Council	5	6	67%
Flintshire County Council	17	17	59%
Cyngor Gwynedd	12	19	74%
Isle of Anglesey County Council	26	24	92%
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council	11	9	56%
Monmouthshire County Council	4	4	25%
Neath Port Talbot Council	14	14	29%
Newport City Council	10	7	43%
Pembrokeshire County Council	24	23	96%
Powys County Council	18	16	31%
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	26	26	77%
Torfaen County Borough Council	3	3	67%
Vale of Glamorgan Council	50	48	92%
Wrexham County Borough Council	16	19	42%



Appendix F - Code of Conduct Complaints

Vale of Glamorgan Council

Investigations	Decision not to investigate	2
	Discontinued	0
	No evidence of breach	0
	No action necessary	0
	Refer to Adjudication Panel	0
	Refer to Standards Committee	1
	Total	3



Appendix G - Town/Community Council Code of Complaints

Town/Community Council	Decision not to investigate	Investigations					Total
		Discontinued	No evidence of breach	No action necessary	Refer to Adjudication Panel	Refer to Standards Committee	
Barry Town Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cowbridge with Llanblethian Town Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Llanfair Community Council	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
St Athan Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
St Nicholas & Bonvilston Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Sully and Lavernock Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0



Information Sheet

Appendix A shows the number of complaints received by PSOW for all Local Authorities in 2023/24. These complaints are contextualised by the population of each authority.

Appendix B shows the categorisation of each complaint received, and what proportion of received complaints represents for the Local Authority.

Appendix C shows outcomes of the complaints which PSOW closed for the Local Authority in 2023/24. This table shows both the volume, and the proportion that each outcome represents for the Local Authority.

Appendix D shows Intervention Rates for all Local Authorities in 2023/24. An intervention is categorised by either an upheld complaint (either public interest or non-public interest), an early resolution, or a voluntary settlement.

Appendix E shows the compliance performance of each Local Authority.

Appendix F shows the outcomes of Code of Conduct complaints closed by PSOW related to Local Authority in 2023/24. This table shows both the number, and the proportion that each outcome represents for the Local Authority.

Appendix G shows the outcomes of Code of Conduct complaints closed by PSOW related to Town and Community Councils in the Local Authority's area in 2023/24. This table shows both the number, and the proportion that each outcome represents for each Town or Community Council.



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Gofynnwch am: Cyfathrebu



01656 641150



Caseinfo@ombwdsmon.cymru

Dyddiad: 9 Medi 2024

Cynghorydd Lis Burnett
Cyngor Bro Morgannwg

Trwy ebost yn unig
lburnett@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk
DRThomas@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

Llythyrau Blynyddol 2023/24

Annwyl Cynghorydd Burnett

Rôl OGCC

Fel y gwyddoch, rôl Ombwdsmon Gwasanaethau Cyhoeddus Cymru yw ystyried cwynion am wasanaethau cyhoeddus, ymchwilio i achosion honedig o dorri'r Cod Ymddygiad ar gyfer Cynghorwyr, gosod safonau ar gyfer ymdrin â chwynion gan gyrff cyhoeddus a sbarduno gwelliant mewn ymdrin â chwynion a dysgu o gwynion. Rwyf hefyd yn ymgymryd ag ymchwiliadau i wasanaethau cyhoeddus ar fy liwt fy hun.

Diben y llythyr

Bwriad y llythyr hwn yw rhoi diweddariad ar waith fy swyddfa, rhannu materion allweddol ar gyfer llywodraeth leol yng Nghymru a thynnu sylw at unrhyw faterion penodol ar gyfer eich sefydliad, ynghyd â chymau yr hoffwn i'ch sefydliad eu cymryd.

Trosolwg o 2023/24

Mae'r llythyr hwn, fel bob amser, yn cyd-daro â'm Hadroddiad Blynyddol - "Pennod Newydd yn Datblygu" - a daw ar adeg pan fo gwasanaethau cyhoeddus yn parhau i fod o dan y chwyddwydr, ac o dan bwysau sylweddol. Mae fy swyddfa wedi gweld cynnydd arall yn nifer y bobl sy'n gofyn am ein cymorth - cynnydd o 17% mewn cysylltiadau cyffredinol o gymharu â'r flwyddyn flaenorol, gyda bron i 10,000 o ymholiadau a chwynion wedi'u derbyn. Mae ein llwyth achosion wedi cynyddu yn sylweddol - gan 37% - ers 2019.

Tudalen 1 o 12

ombwdsmon.cymru
holwch@ombwdsmon.cymru
0300 790 0203
1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae, CF 35 5LJ
Rydym yn hapus i dderbyn ac
ymateb i ohebiaeth yn y Gymraeg.

ombudsman.wales
ask@ombudsman.wales
0300 790 0203
1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae, CF 35 5LJ
We are happy to accept and respond
to correspondence in Welsh.

Yn 2023/24, gwnaethom ystyried a chau mwy o ymholiadau a chwynion nag yr ydym erioed wedi'u gwneud o'r blaen, a gwnaethom leihau'r gost gyfartalog ar gyfer pob achos ac ymchwiliad. Dechreuom y flwyddyn gyda ffocws ar leihau ein hachosion sy'n heneiddio, sef y rhai dros 12 mis oed, o 50% erbyn diwedd y flwyddyn. Yr achosion hyn yn aml yw'r rhai mwyaf cymhleth a gofidus i'r bobl sy'n cwyno. Mae'n bleser mawr gennyf ddweud ein bod wedi rhagori ar y targed hwn, gan leihau ein hymchwiliadau hyn o dros 70%. Rydym bellach ar y trywydd cywir i gyflawni ein hamcan i gwblhau ymchwiliadau i gwynion o fewn 12 mis.

Cwynion Gwasanaethau Cyhoeddus a Chydymffurfiaeth ag Argymhellion

Gwnaed cyfanswm o 1,108 o gwynion am awdurdodau lleol i ni'r llynedd - tua'r un nifer â'r flwyddyn flaenorol. Yn ystod y cyfnod hwn, gwnaethom ymyrryd (cadarnhau, setlo neu ddatrys yn gynnar) mewn 14% o gwynion awdurdodau lleol - cyfran debyg i'r blynyddoedd diwethaf.

Cawsom 77 o gwynion am Cyngor Bro Morgannwg yn 2023/24 a gwnaethom gau 71. Roedd cyfradd ymyrryd Cyngor Bro Morgannwg yn 21%. Gellir dod o hyd i ragor o wybodaeth am gwynion am eich sefydliad yn yr atodiadau.

Gwnaethom 50 argymhelliad i'ch cyngor yn ystod y flwyddyn. I sicrhau bod ein hymchwiliadau a'n hadroddiadau yn sbarduno gwelliant, gwnawn waith dilynol ar gydymffurfiaeth â'r argymhellion y cytunwyd arnynt gyda'ch sefydliad. Yn 2023/24, roedd angen cydymffurfio â 48 argymhelliad a chydymffurfiwyd â 92% o fewn yr amserlen y cytunwyd arni. Cydymffurfiwyd â'r gweddill, ond y tu allan i'r amserlenni y cytunwyd arnynt neu maent yn parhau i fod heb eu cyflawni yn ystod 9 Ebrill 2024.

Caiff argymhellion ac amserlenni ar gyfer cydymffurfio ag argymhellion bob amser eu cytuno gyda'r corff cyhoeddus dan sylw cyn eu cwblhau, ac felly rydym yn disgwyl sefydliadau i gydymffurfio o fewn yr amserlenni y cytunwyd arnynt.

Ein gwaith Cod Ymddygiad

Fy rôl yw ymchwilio i honiadau bod cynghorwyr wedi torri eu Cod Ymddygiad. Pan fydd ymchwiliad yn canfod tystiolaeth i gefnogi'r gŵyn ar fater sy'n ddigon difrifol fel bod angen ei gyfeirio er budd y cyhoedd, caiff yr achosion hyn eu cyfeirio naill ai at y Pwyllgor Safonau Lleol neu'r Panel Dyfarnu Cymru i'w hystyried.

Yn 2023/24, cawsom 16% yn fwy o gwynion y Cod Ymddygiad o gymharu â'r flwyddyn flaenorol, yn ymwneud â Phrif Gynghorau a Chynghorau Tref a Chynghorau Cymuned. Gwnaeth fy swyddfa 21 o atgyfeiriadau - at Bwyllgorau Safonau neu Banel Dyfarnu Cymru, cynnydd o 12 y flwyddyn flaenorol.

Rwy'n ddiolchgar i'ch Swyddog Monitro am eu hymgysylltiad cadarnhaol gyda'm swyddfa dros y flwyddyn ddiwethaf. Eleni byddwn yn parhau i ymgysylltu â nhw ar faterion sy'n ymwneud â'r fframwaith safonau moesegol, gan gynnwys Gweithdrefnau Datrys Lleol.

Adolygiad Annibynnol

Fel y gwyddoch, deuthum yn ymwybodol o sylwadau amhriodol, o natur wleidyddol, a wnaed gan aelod o'm staff ar gyfryngau cymdeithasol. Adroddwyd y sylwadau hyn yn eang yn y cyfryngau. Ataliwyd yr aelod o staff dan sylw o'i gwaith, ac wedi hynny, ymddiswyddodd. Fodd bynnag, ysgogodd y sylwadau gwestiynau am waith fy swyddfa ar achosion Cod Ymddygiad Cynghorwyr.

Oherwydd difrifoldeb y mater, comisiynais Dr Melissa McCullough i gynnal adolygiad annibynnol o'n gwaith Cod Ymddygiad, ac rwyf wedi cyhoeddi'r [Cylch Gorchwyl](#) llawn ar gyfer yr adolygiad hwnnw. Rwyf i a'm staff yn ymgysylltu yn agos â'r Grŵp Swyddogion Monitro a'r Fforwm Cenedlaethol ar gyfer Cadeiryddion Pwyllgorau Safonau mewn perthynas â'r mater hwn. Byddaf yn cyhoeddi adroddiad terfynol Dr McCullough ar ôl iddi gwblhau'r adolygiad a byddwn yn ei rannu â Phwyllgor Cyllid y Senedd yr Hydref hwn.

Cefnogi'r gwaith o wella gwasanaethau cyhoeddus

Gwnaethom barhau â'n gwaith ar gefnogi gwelliannau mewn gwasanaethau cyhoeddus y llynedd a buom yn gweithio ar ein hail ymchwiliad ehangach ar ein liwt ein hunain. Mae'r ymchwiliad yn cynnwys pedwar awdurdod lleol ac yn ystyried asesiadau o anghenion gofalwyr. Rwy'n ddiolchgar i'r awdurdodau yr ymchwiliwyd iddynt am eu cydweithrediad a'u gonestrwydd drwy gydol y flwyddyn, ac edrychwn ymlaen at rannu ein hadroddiad terfynol yr hydref hwn. Bydd hwn yn gwneud argymhellion i'r awdurdodau yr ymchwiliwyd iddynt a bydd yn gofyn i'r holl awdurdodau lleol ledled Cymru i wneud gwelliannau tebyg.

Rydym wedi parhau â'n gwaith ar safonau ymdrin â chwynion ar gyfer cyrff cyhoeddus yng Nghymru ac erbyn hyn mae gennym 56 o gyrff cyhoeddus yn dilyn ein polisi enghreifftiol ar gyfer ymdrin â chwynion. Mae'r cyrff cyhoeddus hyn yn cyfrif am tua 85% o'r cwynion a gawn. Rydym wedi parhau â'n gwaith i gyhoeddi ystadegau cwynion, a gasglir gan gyrff cyhoeddus, gan gyhoeddi data ddwywaith y flwyddyn.

Gwnaethom barhau â'n gwaith i gyhoeddi ystadegau cwynion am drydedd flwyddyn, gyda data bellach yn cael eu cyhoeddi ddwywaith y flwyddyn. Mae'r data hwn yn ein galluogi i weld gwybodaeth gyda mwy o gyd-destun - er enghraifft, y llynedd, aeth 9% o'r cwynion a wnaed i Cyngor Bro Morgannwg ymlaen i gael eu cyfeirio at OGCC.

Camau yr hoffem i'ch sefydliad eu cymryd

Ymhellach i'r llythyr hwn, a gaf ofyn i'ch Cyngor gymryd y camau canlynol:

- Cyflwyno fy Llythyr Blynyddol i'r Cabinet ac i'r Pwyllgor Llywodraethu ac Archwilio yn ystod y cyfle nesaf sydd ar gael a rhoi gwybod i mi pryd y cynhelir y cyfarfodydd hyn.

- Ystyried y data yn y llythyr hwn, ynghyd â'ch data eich hunain, i ddeall mwy am eich perfformiad ar gwynion, gan gynnwys unrhyw batrymau neu dueddiadau a chydymffurfiaeth eich sefydliad ag argymhellion a wnaed gan fy swyddfa.
- Rhoi gwybod i mi am ganlyniad ystyriaethau a chymau gweithredu arfaethedig y cyngor yng nghyswllt y materion uchod erbyn cyn gynted â phosibl.

Hoffwn ddiolch i chi, a'ch swyddogion, am barhau i fod yn agored, ac am ymgysylltu, gyda fy swyddfa. Mae ein gwybodaeth yn dangos bod awdurdodau lleol yn ystyried mwy o gwynion nag erioed o'r blaen ac yn defnyddio gwybodaeth o gwynion i sicrhau canlyniadau gwell i bobl Cymru.

Yn gywir,

MM. Morris.

Michelle Morris
Ombwdsmon Gwasanaethau Cyhoeddus

Cc. Rob Thomas, Prif Weithredwr, Cyngor Bro Morgannwg



Ombwdsmon Ombudsman

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Taflen Ffeithiau

Atodiad A - Cwynion a Gafwyd

Awdurdod Lleol	Cwynion a Gafwyd	Derbyniwyd fesul 1000 o drigolion
Cyngor Bwrfeitstref Sirol Blaenau Gwent	15	0.22
Cyngor Bwrfeitstref Sirol Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr	59	0.41
Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Caerffili	56	0.32
Cyngor Caerdydd*	149	0.41
Cyngor Sir Gâr	69	0.37
Cyngor Sir Ceredigion	32	0.45
Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Conwy	36	0.32
Cyngor Sir Ddinbych**	31	0.33
Cyngor Sir y Fflint	51	0.32
Cyngor Gwynedd	38	0.55
Cyngor Sir Ynys Môn	38	0.20
Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Merthyr Tudful	12	0.31
Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sir Fynwy	29	0.25
Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot	35	0.33
Cyngor Dinas Casnewydd	52	0.32
Cyngor Sir Penfro	40	0.41
Cyngor Sir Powys	54	0.27
Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Rhondda Cynon Taf	64	0.34
Cyngor Abertawe	81	0.34
Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Torfaen	14	0.15
Cyngor Bro Morgannwg	77	0.58
Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Wrecsam	76	0.56
Cyfanswm	1108	0.36
* yn cynnwys 2 Rhentu Doeth Cymru		
** yn cynnwys 1 Partneriaeth Prosesu Cosbau Cymru		



Atodiad B - Cwynion a Gafwyd yn ôl Pwnc

Cyngor Bro Morgannwg	Cwynion a Gafwyd	% rhannu
Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol Oedolion	4	5%
Gweinyddu Budd-daliadau	1	1%
Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol Plant	10	13%
Cyfleusterau Cymunedol. Adloniant a Hamdden	1	1%
Ymdrin â Chwynion	21	27%
Covid-19	0	0%
Addysg	2	3%
Yr Amgylchedd ac Iechyd yr Amgylchedd	3	4%
Cyllid a Threthiant	3	4%
Tai	19	25%
Trwyddedu	1	1%
Cynllunio a Rheoli Adeiladu	4	5%
Ffyrdd a Thrafnidiaeth	4	5%
Amrywiol Eraill	4	5%
Cyfanswm	77	



Atodiad C - Canlyniadau Cwynion
(* yn dynodi ymyrraeth)

Cyngor Bro Morgannwg		% rhannu
Tu hwnt i Awdurdodaeth	12	17%
Cynamserol	27	38%
Achosion eraill wedi'u cau ar ôl ystyriaeth gychwynnol	17	24%
Datrys yn Gynnar/ setliad gwirfoddol*	15	21%
Wedi rhoi'r gorau iddi	0	0%
Adroddiadau Eraill - Heb eu Cadarnhau	0	0%
Adroddiadau Eraill Wedi'u Cadarnhau	0	0%
Adroddiadau Diddordeb Cyhoeddus*	0	0%
Adroddiadau Diddordeb Arbennig*	0	0%
Cyfanswm	71	



Atodiad D - Achosion lle ymyrodd OGCC

	Nifer yr ymyriadau	Nifer y cwynion a gaewyd	% o ymyriadau
Cyngor Bwrfeitstref Sirol Blaenau Gwent	1	16	6%
Cyngor Bwrfeitstref Sirol Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr	8	59	14%
Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Caerffili	3	48	6%
Cyngor Caerdydd	28	144	19%
Cyngor Caerdydd - Rhentu Doeth Cymru	0	3	0%
Cyngor Sir Gâr	8	60	13%
Cyngor Sir Ceredigion	7	32	22%
Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Conwy	0	37	0%
Cyngor Sir Ddinbych	2	32	6%
Cyngor Sir Ddinbych - Partneriaeth Prosesu			
Cosbau Cymru	0	1	0%
Cyngor Sir y Fflint	8	57	14%
Cyngor Gwynedd	6	39	15%
Cyngor Sir Ynys Môn	10	41	24%
Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Merthyr Tudful	3	14	21%
Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sir Fynwy	3	32	9%
Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot	5	34	15%
Cyngor Dinas Casnewydd	5	51	10%
Cyngor Sir Penfro	7	38	18%
Cyngor Sir Powys	7	53	13%
Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Rhondda Cynon Taf	11	63	17%
Cyngor Abertawe	12	77	16%
Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Torfaen	2	14	14%
Cyngor Bro Morgannwg	15	71	21%
Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Wrecsam	7	79	9%
Cyfanswm	158	1095	14%



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Atodiad E – Cymhariaeth o berfformiad cydymffurfio

Awdurdod Lleol	Nifer yr argymhellion a wnaed yn 2023-24	Nifer yr argymhellion sy'n ddyledus yn 2023-24	% yr argymhellion, y cydymffurfiwyd â nhw ar amser
Cyngor Bwrfeitstref Sirol Blaenau Gwent	1	1	100%
Cyngor Bwrfeitstref Sirol Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr	18	20	35%
Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Caerffili	9	9	11%
Cyngor Caerdydd	74	75	92%
Cyngor Sir Gâr	25	25	52%
Cyngor Sir Ceredigion	23	23	78%
Cyngor Abertawe	29	32	63%
Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Conwy	0	1	0%
Cyngor Sir Ddinbych	5	6	67%
Cyngor Sir y Fflint	17	17	59%
Cyngor Gwynedd	12	19	74%
Cyngor Sir Ynys Môn	26	24	92%
Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Merthyr Tudful	11	9	56%
Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sir Fynwy	4	4	25%
Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot	14	14	29%
Cyngor Dinas Casnewydd	10	7	43%
Cyngor Sir Penfro	24	23	96%
Cyngor Sir Powys	18	16	31%
Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Rhondda Cynon Taf	26	26	77%
Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Torfaen	3	3	67%
Cyngor Bro Morgannwg	50	48	92%
Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Wrecsam	16	19	42%



Atodiad F - Cwynion Y Cod Ymddygiad

Cyngor Bro Morgannwg

Ymchwiliadau

Penderfyniad i beidio ag ymchwilio	2
Wedi rhoi'r gorau iddi	0
Dim tystiolaeth o dorri'r cod	0
Dim angen gweithredu	0
Cyfeirio at y Panel Dyfarnu	0
Cyfeirio at y Pwyllgor Safonau	1
Cyfanswm	3



Atodiad G - Cwynion Cod Ymddygiad Cyngorau Tref/Cyngor Cymuned

	Tynnwyd yn ôl	Ymchwiliadau					Cyfanswm
		Wedi rhoi'r gorau iddi	Dim tystiolaeth o dorri'r cod	Dim angen gweithredu	Cyfeiriwyd at y Panel Dyfarnu	Cyfeiriwyd at y Pwyllgor Safonau	
Cyngor Tref y Barri	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cyngor Cymuned Llanfair	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cyngor Tref y Bont-faen a Llanfleiddan	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Cyngor Cymuned Sain Tathan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cyngor Cymuned Sain Nicolas a Thresimwn	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Cyngor Cymuned Sili a Larnog	0	0	0	0	0	0	0



Taflen Wybodaeth

Mae **Atodiad A** yn dangos nifer y cwynion a gafodd OGCC ar gyfer pob Awdurdod Lleol yn 2023/24. Caiff y cwynion hyn eu rhoi mewn cyd-destun gan boblogaeth pob awdurdod.

Mae **Atodiad B** yn dangos categori pob cwyn a gafwyd, a pha gyfran o'r cwynion a gafwyd sy'n cynrychioli ar gyfer yr Awdurdod Lleol.

Mae **Atodiad C** yn dangos canlyniadau'r cwynion a gaeodd OGCC mewn cysylltiad â'r Awdurdod Lleol yn 2023/24. Mae'r tabl hwn yn dangos y niferoedd, a'r gyfran y mae pob canlyniad yn ei chynrychioli ar gyfer yr Awdurdod Lleol.

Mae **Atodiad D** yn dangos Cyfraddau Ymyrru ar gyfer pob Awdurdod Lleol yn 2023/24. Mae ymyrraeth yn cael ei gategoreiddio naill ai gan gŵyn a gadarnhawyd (naill ai cadarnhawyd er budd y cyhoedd neu cadarnhawyd nid er budd y cyhoedd), penderfyniad cynnar, neu setliad gwirfoddol.

Mae **Atodiad E** yn dangos perfformiad o ran cydymffurfriad ar gyfer Awdurdod Lleol.

Mae **Atodiad F** yn dangos canlyniadau cwynion y Cod Ymddygiad a gaewyd gan OGCC mewn perthynas ag Awdurdod Lleol yn 2023/24. Mae'r tabl hwn yn dangos y niferoedd, a'r gyfran, y mae pob canlyniad yn ei chynrychioli ar gyfer yr Awdurdod Lleol.

Mae **Atodiad G** yn dangos canlyniadau cwynion y Cod Ymddygiad a gaewyd gan OGCC mewn perthynas â Chynghorau Tref a Chynghorau Cymuned yn ardal yr Awdurdod Lleol yn 2023/24. Mae'r tabl hwn yn dangos y niferoedd, a'r gyfran y mae pob canlyniad yn ei chynrychioli ar gyfer Cynghorau Tref a Chynghorau Cymuned.