

Isle of Anglesey County Council

Report to:	Executive
Date:	21/10/2025
Subject:	Complaints and Whistleblowing 04/2024 – 03/2025
Portfolio holder(s):	
Head of service / director:	Director of Function (Council Business)/Monitoring Officer
Report author:	Director of Function (Council Business)/Monitoring Officer
Local members:	All

A – Recommendation(s) and reasons

Recommendations

(a) To implement, as soon as possible:

- the introduction of the Power BI dashboard for Heads of Service and Directors, in relation to complaints about their service
- training for complaints officers, and their deputies, on customer care and equalities/diversity
- updated guidance note on effective complaints handling.

(b) Having considered the Annual Letter from the Public Services Ombudsman (PSOW) for 2024/2025, to require that current performance data on service complaints become a standing item in the routine meetings between Heads of Service/Directors and their Executive lead (Portfolio Holder).

(c) To instruct the Monitoring Officer to remind services of the requirement to:

- action any recommendations from the PSOW, and report completion to the PSOW, within the timeframe set
- routinely record any lessons learnt from complaints, identifying any patterns and implementing suitable mitigation measures

(d) To instruct the Monitoring Officer to respond to the PSOW's Annual Letter 2024/202, as required in the penultimate paragraph of the said Letter.

Reasons

Introduction

Complaints may provide valuable information about the performance of the Council's services, including the opinions of service users. This data may be used, where possible

and appropriate, to improve service delivery. The link to the Corporate Complaints Policy is [here](#).

The primary purpose of this report is to provide information on service complaints for the period 01/04/2024 – 31/03/2025.

This report also includes limited information on whistleblowing disclosures made during that period. The link to the Whistleblowing Policy and Guidance is [here](#).

Some information is also provided on code of conduct complaints. These are reported quarterly to the Standards Committee and formally at the ordinary meetings of the Committee. The links to these reports for the relevant period are below.

[Quarter 1, 2 and 3](#)

[Quarter 4](#)

Appendix 4 contains a summary of Code of Conduct complaints and whistleblowing.

Social Services complaints follow a different statutory procedure, namely the Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014 and the Representations Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014, and are considered by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee. For anyone wishing to obtain further information the relevant report will be received by the Social Services Scrutiny Panel in November 2025 and then published on the Council's website.

Complaints about the Council's use of the Welsh language are not included in this report but are reported annually in the Welsh Language Standards Annual Report, which is published on the Council's website. The report is considered annually by the Partnership and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee. Any Welsh language complaints are also discussed by the Welsh Language and Equality Steering Group, and complaints data is also reported as part of the corporate scorecard and annual delivery document. For anyone wishing to obtain further information the link to the most recent Welsh Language Standards Annual Report is [here](#)

1. The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) may consider service related complaints from the public. The PSOW's powers for this fall under the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019.

To trigger an investigation, the PSOW must be satisfied that a complainant has pursued the local complaints procedure. The PSOW aims to complete investigations within 12 months of receipt of a complaint.

In addition to investigatory powers, the PSOW also offers guidance and support. For example, a model Complaints Handling Policy, issued under Section 38 of the Public Service Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019. The Model policy provisions have been used to develop the Council's Complaints Policy. This was most recently revised in 2024.

2. What Constitutes a Complaint?

2.1 The PSOW defines a complaint as:

- An expression of dissatisfaction or concern **and**
- Written or spoken or made by any other communication method **and**
- Made by one or more members of the public **and**
- **About a public provider's action or lack of action or the standard of service provided and**
- Something that needs a response.

Note:

Request for Service – *It should be noted that a complaint is to be distinguished from an initial 'request for service.'* A request for service is not a complaint (e.g. a request for service may be a request to repair a faulty street light or missed bin collection). A complaint would only arise should the request for service not be properly addressed.

2.2 Stage 1 Complaints

The best way to deal with a complaint is as soon as possible after it has arisen; preferably at the first point of contact. Where this is possible, the relevant service area is expected to respond to the complaint by no later than **ten working days of receipt of the complaint.**

Stage 2 Complaints

A Stage 2 investigation is conducted if a complainant has not received a response at Stage 1, or they are dissatisfied with the response they have received.

The complainant should receive a response to **a Stage 2 investigation within twenty working days**. This may take longer if there are complex issues involved, or several service areas are required to contribute to the response. In such instances, the complainant must be kept informed of the reason/s for any delay and estimated time for response.

If a complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of a Stage 2 investigation, they may refer the matter to the PSOW. Relevant information, enabling a complainant to refer the matter to the PSOW, is

provided in all Stage 2 responses. There is no internal right of review or appeal.

2.3 How Complaints are Received

Most complaints are received via email (161) followed by face-to-face (7) and via post (3). The intention is to encourage complainants to use the Corporate Records Management (CRM) system, rather than email. Complainants do not have to create an account to lodge a complaint (but will be encouraged to do so) and may also submit a complaint as a guest user.

2.4 Corporate Complaints Statistics

Appendix 1 sets out the complaints data. However, the following points are noted:

- 171 complaints across all services, including Stage 1 and Stage 2
- 56 upheld (33.3%)
- 112 not upheld (66.7%)
- 152 responses on time (88.9%)
- 19 late responses (11.1%)

2.5

Complaints by Service

Environment/Public Protection

Total Complaints: 11 (6.4% of all complaints)

Stage 1: 10 complaints

Stage 2: 1 complaint

Upheld: 4 complaints (36.4% upheld rate)

Not Upheld: 7 complaints (63.6%)

Discontinued: 0 complaints

On-Time Responses: 10 complaints (90.9%)

Late Responses: 1 complaint (9.1%)

Highways & Property

Total Complaints: 49 (28.5% of all complaints)

Stage 1: 38 complaints

Stage 2: 11 complaints

Upheld: 8 complaints (16.7% upheld rate)

Not Upheld: 40 complaints (83.3%)

Discontinued: 1 complaint

On-Time Responses: 42 complaints (85.7%)

Late Responses: 7 complaints (14.3%)

Housing

Total Complaints: 47 (27.3% of all complaints)

Stage 1: 40 complaints

Stage 2: 7 complaints

Upheld: 25 complaints (54.3% upheld)

Not Upheld: 21 complaints (45.7%)

Discontinued: 1 complaint

On-Time Responses: 43 complaints (91.5%)

Late Responses: 4 complaints (8.5%)

Learning

Total Complaints: 13 (7.6% of all complaints)

Stage 1: 12 complaints

Stage 2: 1 complaint

Upheld: 0 complaints (0.0% upheld rate)

Not Upheld: 13 complaints (100%)

Discontinued: 0 complaints

On-Time Responses: 10 complaints (76.9%)

Late Responses: 3 complaints (23.1%)

Leisure

Total Complaints: 15 (8.8% of all complaints)

Stage 1: 15 complaints

Stage 2: 0 complaints

Upheld: 14 complaints (93.3% upheld rate)

Not Upheld: 1 complaint (6.7%)

Discontinued: 0 complaints

On-Time Responses: 15 complaints (100.0%)

Late Responses: 0 complaints (0%)

Planning

Total Complaints: 4 (2.4% of all complaints)

Stage 1: 2 complaints

Stage 2: 2 complaints

Upheld: 0 complaints (0% upheld rate)

Not Upheld: 4 complaint (100%)

Discontinued: 0 complaints

On-Time Responses: 4 complaint (100%)

Late Responses: 0 complaints (0%)

Resources

Total Complaints: 20 (11.6% of all complaints)

Stage 1: 14 complaints

Stage 2: 6 complaints

Upheld: 4 complaints (21.1% upheld rate)

Not Upheld: 15 complaints (78.9%)

Discontinued: 1 complaint

On-Time Responses: 17 complaints (85%)

Late Responses: 3 complaints (15%)

Waste

Total Complaints: 12 (7.0% of all complaints)

Stage 1: 10 complaints

Stage 2: 2 complaints

Upheld: 1 complaint (8.3% upheld rate)

Not Upheld: 11 complaints (91.7%)

Discontinued: 0 complaints

On-Time Responses: 11 complaints (91.7%)

Late Responses: 1 complaint (8.3%)

Corporate Complaints by Stage	Number
Stage 1	141
Stage 2	30
Total	171

2.6 Analysis of Internal Complaints Data

This is attached at **Appendix 2**

3. Complaints Submitted to the PSOW

3.1 The PSOW's Annual Letter 2024/2025 is at **Appendix 3**.

During 2024/2025 the PSOW's office experienced record levels of complaints, with 3,547 properly made complaints during the year. This was 10% higher than the previous year, and 43% higher than 2019/2020. There are also notable shifts in subject areas, with housing complaints rising nationally (19% vs 15% in 2019/2020). This rise in PSOW Housing complaints is also evident within the Council's internal complaints statistics too.

Despite this national rise in complaints received by the PSOW, this Council was the subject of 0.32 complaints per 1,000 residents compared to the Wales average of 0.41 per 1,000.

3.2 Volume of Complaints against Isle of Anglesey County Council 2023/2024 and 2024/2025

Performance Trends	2023/24	2024/25	Change
PSOW Complaints	38*	22*	- 42%

This data shows a decline in the volume of complaints over the relevant periods. It may be recalled that, during 2023/2024, 24% of complaints related to the Council's handling of complaints themselves, and suggests improvement in complaints resolution at a local level; avoiding escalation to the PSOW.

3.3 Outcomes of Complaints to the PSOW

Of the twenty-two complaints received by the PSOW, the outcomes were as follows:-

Outcome	2023/2024	2024/2025
Decision not to investigate	34% (14 cases)	40% (8 cases)
Premature complaints	32% (13 cases)	30% (6 cases)
Matter out of jurisdiction	10% (4 cases)	25% (5 cases)
Early resolution (intervention)	24% (10 cases)	5% (1 case)
Investigations	0	0

* The apparent discrepancy between the numbers of complaints received, and complaints closed is explained by the following extract from the PSOW's Annual Letter:-

"2023/2024

We received 38 complaints about Isle of Anglesey County Council in 2023/24 and closed 41 – some complaints were carried over from the previous year.

2024/2025

We received 22 complaints about Isle of Anglesey County Council and closed 20 – some complaints were carried over from previous year."

3.4 Intervention by the PSOW

Intervention by the PSOW refers to those complaints which have been assessed, and where the PSOW considers that early resolution may be possible without investigation. Inevitably, this also implies that a council may have done more at the Stage 2 to resolve the matter internally and avoid escalation to the PSOW.

In 2023/2024 there was an intervention rate of 24% (10 cases). In 2024/2025 the intervention rate was 5% (1 case). This against a Wales average of 13% intervention. This suggests:-

- more effective internal complaints resolution;
- improved case management at the initial stages of a complaint;
- revision of the Council's Complaints Policy and complaints officers undertaking training with the PSOW

are likely to have resulted in this improvement.

3.5 Categories of Complaints

Service Area changes	2023/2024	2024/2025
Complaints handling	24% (9 cases)	5% (1case)
Resources	16% (6 cases)	23% (5 cases)
Housing	8% (3 cases)	18% (4 cases)
Planning and Building control	16% (6 cases)	9% (2 cases)
Leisure	3% (1 case)	9% (2 cases)
Environmental Health	Zero	5% (1 case)
Education	3% (1 case)	Zero
Licensing	3% (1 case)	Zero

HWP	3% (1 case)	5% (1 case)
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There has been a notable shift in complaint categories, with housing complaints more than doubling, which aligns with the national trend identified in PSOW thematic reports.

Resources complaints to the PSOW have also increased, potentially indicating service pressures.

Complaints handling was one of the highest categories of complaint in 2023/2024 with 24% of the total. In 2024/2025 complaints handling was one of the lowest complaint categories with 5% share.

The Council has demonstrated improvement over 2024/2025 in its complaints management, achieving reductions in both the volume of complaints and PSOW intervention rates.

4. Learning from Complaints in 2024/2025

4.1 The Council's Complaints Policy places an emphasis on learning from mistakes and using the information to improve services.

Lessons learnt are currently recorded on the complaints database but not all services record complaints consistently.

4.2 The most significant lessons for 2024/2025 are:

4.2.1 The importance of considering equalities issues. During 2024/2025 the PSOW made recommendations based on a vulnerable resident's experience of navigating the Council's procedures and requested the Council prepare and publish an 'easy read' document highlighting the requirement to pay Council Tax on time and what to do about accruing arrears. Equalities are a major focus for the PSOW. In her 2024/2025 Annual Report the PSOW states:

'...Among the key themes and learning points highlighted in the report is the lack of reasonable adjustments for individuals with disabilities, such as learning disabilities, severe mobility issues, or autism and dyslexia. The Report also notes challenges arising from poor communication with people who have language needs or sensory loss...Additionally, the (thematic – Equality Matters 2025) report raises concerns about public bodies failing to align service delivery policies with their legal duties under equality and human rights legislation. (PSOW Annual report 2024/2025)

There is a need to refresh equalities training for complaints officers and to raise awareness of the Council's [Equalities Policy](#) and the availability of advice from the Equalities Officer.

- 4.2.2** The need for service areas to identify recurring issues, themes and make improvements where possible. For example, the rise in complaints in Housing, which coincides with the national rise in Housing (including 54.3% upheld) matters referred to by the PSOW.
- 4.2.3** That procedures are interpreted consistently and well understood by all complaints officers. The PSOW training to the Council's complaints officers, in 2024, highlighted a misunderstanding by some in the interpretation of what constituted a complaint, which has been compounded by the fact that the Council has had four corporate complaints officers in the last three years and has still been unable to make a permanent appointment. This training resulted in amendments to the Council's Complaints Policy and a subsequent consultation response, provided by the Council to the PSOW, followed by a meeting with the PSOW's office, has resulted in agreement to produce further national draft advice and guidance.
- 4.2.4** To engage more with the PSOW and especially to ensure that the PSOW is included in any correspondence with complainants regarding the implementation of PSOW recommendations, as failure to do so in two cases (involving six recommendations) during 2024/2025 has led to recommendations which were actioned, being recorded as non-compliance.
- 4.2.5** Although internal training and testing has taken place, further training is now taking place on the new complaints CRM. Once completed, with the system embedded, further training is to take place on equalities and customer care.

5. Looking Forward – 2025/2026

- 5.1** As referred to above, the Council undertook training with the PSOW in 2024 and the Council's Complaints Policy was updated.

This section outlines the actions that we are/will be taking in 2025/2026 to improve the Council's handling of service complaints.

- 5.2** When the CRM goes live, all Directors and Heads of Service will have access to a dashboard on PowerBI which will allow them to access information whenever they like about the status of their services' complaints.

The development and introduction of the CRM is for the purpose of improving the Council's oversight and management of complaints; day to day operations by the service complaints officers and oversight by their Directors and Heads of Service.

- 5.3** The Interim Corporate Complaints Officer, together with the Training and Development Manager, are arranging training on customer care to raise awareness of best practice in effective complaints handling. Further training is also being arranged on equality and diversity.

5.4 The Interim Corporate Complaints Officer is updating a guidance note for complaints officers in order to further underline the principle of a well understood and consistently applied process of claims handling.

B – What other options did you consider and why did you reject them and/or opt for this opinion?

None. Reporting to the Executive is a requirement in the PSOW's Annual Letter 2024/2025.

C – Why is this a decision for the Executive?

It is a requirement by the PSOW

Ch – Is this decision consistent with policy approved by the full Council?

N/A

D – Is this decision within budget approved by the Council?

N/A. The funding required to implement some of the recommendations is already within budget.

Dd – Assessment of potential impacts (if relevant)

1. How does this decision affect our long-term needs as an island?

Reducing the number of complaints, and improving our complaints handling, will improve the experience of our customers, enable officers to focus on their core areas of responsibility and improve the reputation of the Council.

2. Is this a decision that is anticipated to prevent future costs/dependencies on the Council? If so, how?

Yes, because fewer complaints and better complaints handling will avoid duplication of work and the cost involved in officer time devoted to dealing with complaints, carrying out investigations and corresponding with the PSOW.

3. Have we collaborated with other organisations to come to this decision? If so, with whom?

Yes, the PSOW.

4. Have the citizens of Anglesey played a part in drafting this way forward, including those directly affected by the decision? Explain how.

The experiences of customers in dealing with complaints has directly affected some of the recommendations in the report.

5. Note any potential impact this decision would have on the protected groups under the Equality Act 2010.

Yes. One of the recommendations is training for complaints officers in relation to equality and diversity. This is also a national theme in the PSOW's thematic work in 2024/2025.

6. If this is a strategic decision, note any potential impacts the decision would have on those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage.

N/A

7. Please note any potential effects that this decision would have on opportunities for people to use Welsh and not treat the language less favourably than English.

There are no anticipated effects as the interaction between the recommendations and the Council's customers will remain fully bilingual.

E – Who did you consult with and what were their comments?

1. Chief Executive / Leadership Team (mandatory)	Circulated to the Chief Executive and the Leadership Team on 15/09/2025 and any material feedback has been included into this Report.
2. Finance / 151 Officer	Part of the Leadership Team
3. Legal / Monitoring Officer (mandatory)	Author of the report
4. HR	All part of the Heads of Service consultation on the draft report
5. Property	
6. IT	
7. Procurement	
8. Scrutiny	No
9. Local members	No

F – Appendices

Appendix 1 : Summary of Complaint by Service for 2024-2025
Appendix 2 : Analysis of Internal Complaints Data
Appendix 3 : PSOW's Annual Letter 2024/2025
Appendix 4 : Summary of Code of Conduct Complaints and Whistleblowing

Ff – Background papers (contact the report author for more information)

All directly relevant background papers are provided in the Appendices above.

Appendix 1

Summary of Complaints by Service for 2024 – 2025

Service	No. of Stage 1 complaints	No. of Stage 2 complaints	No. upheld	Complaints not upheld	Complaints discontinued	Responded to on time	Late responses (within 3 months)	No of responses (over 3 months)
	Council Business							
Council Business	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
	Highways, Waste & Property							
Highways & Property	38	11	8	40	1	42	7	
Waste	10	2	1	11		11	1	
	Housing							
Housing	40	7	25	21	1	43	4	
	Learning							
Learning (excludes schools)	12	1		13		10	3	
	Regulation & Economic							
Economic Development/ Maritime								
Leisure	15		14	1		15		
Planning	2	2		4		4		
Env/Public Protection	10	1	4	7		10	1	
	Resources							
Resources	14	6	4	15	1	17	3	
	Transformation							
Cyswllt Môn	-	-	-	-	-		-	
H R	-	-	-	-	-		-	
Totals	141	30	56	112	3	152	19	

APPENDIX 2

Environment/Public Protection

- 15 complaints, compared to 10 in 2023/2024, representing 8.7% of the total service complaints in 2024/2025.
- 14 of the 15 complaints responded to on time.
- Although the numbers of complaints were few, 5 of the 15 complaints were escalated to Stage 2. This suggests that Stage 1 claims handling could be more effective.
- Nevertheless, only 2 complaints were upheld.

Highways & Property

- The highest number of complaints at 49, compared with 19 in 2023/2024, representing 28.5% of the total number of complaints in 2024/2025.
- Given the increase in the number of complaints, from one year to the next, suggests that the Service should review the reasons for this and whether there are any adaptations which may be made to systems/processes/capacity/training to reduce complaints in 2025/2026. However, this may be because of funding/staffing issues over which limited mitigations may be available.
- It should be noted that only 8 complaints were upheld (16.7%) but also that few complaints have been recorded in Q1 and Q2 of 2024/2025, which suggests that the number of complaints may be higher than recorded.

Housing

- 47 complaints, compared with 113 in 2023/2024, representing 27.3% of the total service complaints in 2024/2025. This is a marked improvement, albeit from a low base, with performance in 2023/2024 being attributed to the implementation of a new IT system.
- However, 45 of the 47 complaints in 2024/2025 were logged for Quarters 3 and 4. It is unlikely that only 2 complaints were made in Quarters 1 and 2 combined. It is therefore reasonable to assume that the annual number of complaints for Housing may be significantly higher.
- The Housing Service needs to validate its data for 2024/2025 and consider reviewing the reasons for the high number of complaints upheld. 54.3% of the complaints logged during 2024/2025 were upheld. The Service should identify the primary causes of the complaints and devise a plan to improve these areas, where possible.

Learning

- 13 complaints, compared to 6 in 2023/2024, representing 7.6% of the total service complaints in 2024/2025.
- 12 out of 13 complaints resolved at Stage 1, which suggests effective complaints handling.
- None of the complaints upheld yet none escalated to Stage 2.
- However, the only issue relates to the slowest response times with 23.1% late responses. It should be noted that complaints in this field can be complex, and the absence of Stage 2 complaints suggests the complaints were dealt with effectively.

Leisure

- 15 complaints, compared to 29 in 2023/2024, representing 8.7% of the total service complaints in 2024/2025.
- All complaints responded to on time.
- All complaints resolved at Stage 1. This suggests good customer care skills in a largely front facing service. However, the number of complaints upheld is high at 93%, with only one complaint not upheld. This may be a result of the nature of the Service and the immediacy of the complaints made. However, it may be a training need, to ensure that complaints are not being confused with requests for service.

Planning

- 4 complaint, compared to 25 in 2023/2024, representing 0.6% of the total service complaints in 2024/2025.
- 2 complaints resolved at Stage 1, and 2 complaints resolved at Stage 2.
- None of the 4 complaints were upheld, and all complaints were responded to on time.
- High level of performance raising no concerns.

Resources

- 20 complaints, compared to 56 in 2023/2024, representing 11.6% of the total service complaints in 2024/2025. This demonstrates marked improvement.
- 14 complaints resolved at Stage 1 with 6 escalating to Stage 2. This is relatively high at 30% of the total number of complaints. This suggests that Stage 1 complaints handling could be more effective, but this is a broad service, and complaints often span more than one service area, leading to delay and complexity.
- 4 out of 20 complaints upheld.

Waste

- 12 complaints, compared to 21 in 2023/2024, representing 7% of the total service complaints in 2024/2025.
- 10 out of 12 complaints resolved at Stage 1, which suggests effective complaints handling.
- Only 1 complaint upheld.
- 11 out of 12 complaints received responses on time.
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Ask for: Communications



01656 641150



Caseinfo@ombudsman.wales

Date: 14 August 2025

PERSONAL & CONFIDENTIAL

Councillor Gary Pritchard
Isle of Anglesey County Council

By email only

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Dear Councillor Gary Pritchard

Annual Letter 2024-25

Role of PSOW

As you know, our role as 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. We also undertake investigations into public services on own initiative.

Purpose of letter

Through this letter, we want to give you an update on our work, share key trends in complaints about local government in Wales and highlight any particular issues for your organisation, together with actions I would like your organisation to take.

Complaints about public services

This letter, as always, coincides with the publication of our Annual Report. Again, we saw an increase in the number of people contacting us about public services. Since 2019-20, the volume of new complaints about public services reaching our office has increased by 44%.

We also closed a record number of complaints about public services – 5% more than last year. This year, we intervened (found that something has gone wrong, and recommended how to put things right) in 18% of complaints that we closed. Positively, this year we resolved many more complaints early on. 87% of our interventions this year involved Early Resolution, compared to 70% in 2023-24.

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

Overall, we assessed incoming complaints, or intervened with an Early Resolution, within an average of 4 weeks; well within our target of 6 weeks. We have also reduced the time it takes us to complete an average investigation, from 64 weeks in 2023-24, to 53 weeks this year.

During 2024-25, we received 1,337 complaints about local councils - an increase of 20% on the previous year and 54% more than in 2019-20.

The main complaint subjects accounting for this increase related to social services, environment and environmental health, and housing. However, we also saw a welcome drop in complaints about complaint handling.

We intervened in 13% of local council complaints that we closed – a similar proportion to recent years.

We received 22 complaints about Isle of Anglesey County Council and closed 20 – some complaints were carried over from the previous year. Isle of Anglesey County Council's intervention rate was 5%. Of note, 18% of the complaints received about Isle of Anglesey County Council were in relation to Housing, an increase from 8% in 2023-24. You can find detailed information on complaints about your organisation that we handled this year can be found in the appendices.

In 2024-25, we made 4 recommendations to your organisation. To ensure that our investigations and reports drive improvement, we follow up compliance with the recommendations agreed with your organisation. In 2024-25, 6 recommendations were due. 0% of the recommendations due was complied within the timescale agreed. 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

Our 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 2024-25, we received 4% less new Code of Conduct complaints than the previous year. 60% of these complaints related to members of Town and Community Councils. We continue to see that over a half of these complaints (56% this year) tends to relate to promotion of equality and respect.

We made 15 referrals to Standards Committees or the Adjudication Panel for Wales (compared to 21 last year). We are 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, last year, it was brought to our attention that a member of staff who had been the Team Leader of our Code of Conduct Team had been making inappropriate and unacceptable social media posts of a political nature.

In view of the seriousness of the matter, we commissioned Dr Melissa McCullough to conduct an independent review of our Code of Conduct work. [Dr McCullough's Report](#), published in September 2024, found that, "in general terms, the PSOW's Code of Conduct processes and delegations are robust in terms of safeguarding fairness and impartiality. They are systematic, well documented and supplemented with appropriate guidance and the reasoning for decisions is required to be recorded and explained as applicable."

While the findings overall were very positive, the review report included a number of recommendations and lessons learned, to "augment the existing safeguards for ensuring the fairness and impartiality of the processes and would clarify the related guidance as applicable."

Following this, the Senedd's Finance Committee published its report on the [Review into the operations, processes and investigations carried out by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales](#). The Committee made further recommendations to us in its report. The details of all the recommendations and lessons learned and the actions we have taken in response can be found in our Annual Report.

To provide additional assurance, Dr McCullough undertook further independent assessment of how we implemented the recommendations and lessons learned, as set out in her 2024 Independent Review Report. This [assessment](#) concluded that:

- all recommendations and lessons learned were fully accepted by us and have been fully implemented
- we demonstrated a comprehensive, thoughtful and consultative approach to the implementation
- the pace of implementation has been impressive
- a separate quality assurance review confirmed the robustness of our process.

Supporting improvement of public services

We continued our work on supporting improvement in public services.

During 2024-25, we concluded our second wider own initiative investigation which looked into unpaid carers' needs assessments in Wales. We considered whether 4 local councils – Caerphilly, Ceredigion, Flintshire and Neath Port Talbot - undertook carers' assessments in line with their statutory obligations.

We published the report on this investigation in October 2024. We found that only 2.8% of people in those council areas who identified as carers had received a needs assessment. In addition, only 1.5% had received a proper support plan following their assessment. Many carers were also not aware of their rights with regard to assessments and support services that might be available to them.

We identified some areas of good practice by the councils we investigated. However, we also made several recommendations including to:

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

We invited the other local councils in Wales to make similar improvements.

As we did in the case of our first own initiative investigation, we have been actively monitoring how organisations' have been complying with our recommendations.

We are planning to review compliance with the recommendations and any other impacts of the report in October 2025.

Currently 54 organisations across Wales operate our model complaints policy. This includes all local councils, all health boards and now most housing associations - representing about 85% of the complaints which we receive.

Our offer of free complaints handling training has remained popular and we provided a further 52 training sessions to public bodies across Wales during the year. This brings the total to 550 training sessions and 10,000 people, since 2020.

We have continued our work to publish complaints statistics, gathered from public bodies, with data published twice a year. We expect to publish the data on complaints handled by local councils in Wales during 2024-25 in the Autumn. This data allows us to see information with greater context – for example, during 2024-25 5.18% of complaints made to local councils went on to be referred to us.

Finally, this year we also published 2 thematic reports, which included as case studies complaints about local councils:

- 'Living in Disrepair' (November 2024): a thematic report about housing disrepair and damp and mould complaints.
- 'Equality Matters' (January 2025): a thematic report on inclusion and accessibility across public services.

These reports include general recommendations for public service providers, drawing on lessons learned from our casework.

Action we would like your organisation to take

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

- Present this 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 organisation'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

Michelle Morris

Michelle Morris
Public Services Ombudsman

Cc. Dylan Williams, Chief Executive, Isle of Anglesey County Council
Lynn Ball, Monitoring Officer, Isle of Anglesey County Council
Gary O'Reilly, PSOW Contact Officer, Isle of Anglesey County Council

Information Sheet

Appendix A shows the number of complaints received by PSOW for all Local Authorities in 2024-25. 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 intervention rates for all Local Authorities in 2024-25. An intervention is categorised by either an upheld complaint (either public interest or non-public interest), an early resolution, or a voluntary settlement.

Appendix D shows outcomes of the complaints which PSOW closed for the Local Authority in 2024-25. This table shows both the volume, and the proportion that each outcome represents for the Local Authority.

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 2024-25. 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 2024-25. This table shows both the number, and the proportion that each outcome represents for each Town or Community Council.

Appendix A – Complaints received (overview)

	MAL			CODE			Total		
Local Authority	Complaints Received	Population	Received per 1,000 residents	Complaints Received	Population	Received per 1,000 residents	Complaints Received	Population	Received per 1,000 residents
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	14	67356	0.21	1	67356	0.01	15	67356	0.22
Bridgend County Borough Council	58	146743	0.40	10	146743	0.07	68	146743	0.46
Caerphilly County Borough Council	78	176437	0.44	3	176437	0.02	81	176437	0.46
Cardiff Council*	219	383536	0.57	4	383536	0.01	223	383536	0.58
Carmarthenshire County Council	86	190083	0.45	14	190083	0.07	100	190083	0.53
Ceredigion County Council	47	73050	0.64	0	73050	0.00	47	73050	0.64
Conwy County Borough Council	29	114410	0.25	9	114410	0.08	38	114410	0.33
Cyngor Gwynedd	46	119173	0.39	2	119173	0.02	48	119173	0.40
Denbighshire County Council	98	97156	1.01	7	97156	0.07	105	97156	1.08
Flintshire County Council	61	155812	0.39	3	155812	0.02	64	155812	0.41
Isle of Anglesey County Council	22	69291	0.32	2	69291	0.03	24	69291	0.35
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council	17	58593	0.29	3	58593	0.05	20	58593	0.34
Monmouthshire County Council	19	94572	0.20	9	94572	0.10	28	94572	0.30
Neath Port Talbot Council	48	142898	0.34	1	142898	0.01	49	142898	0.34
Newport City Council	61	163628	0.37	1	163628	0.01	62	163628	0.38
Pembrokeshire County Council	47	125006	0.38	6	125006	0.05	53	125006	0.42
Powys County Council	55	134439	0.41	24	134439	0.18	79	134439	0.59
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	62	241178	0.26	3	241178	0.01	65	241178	0.27
Swansea Council	113	246742	0.46	6	246742	0.02	119	246742	0.48
Torfaen County Borough Council	20	93419	0.21	4	93419	0.04	24	93419	0.26
Vale of Glamorgan Council	61	134733	0.45	3	134733	0.02	64	134733	0.48
Wrexham County Borough Council	76	136149	0.56	11	136149	0.08	87	136149	0.64
Total	1337	3164404	0.41	126	3164404	0.04	1463	3164404	0.45

Appendix B – Complaints received (by organisation)

Isle of Anglesey County Council	Complaints Received	% Share
Adult Social Services	2	9%
Benefits Administration	0	
Children's Social Services	2	9%
Community Facilities, Recreation and Leisure	2	9%
Complaints Handling	1	5%
Covid19	0	
Education	0	
Environment and Environmental Health	1	5%
Finance and Taxation	5	23%
Health	0	
Housing	4	18%
Licencing	0	
Planning and Building Control	2	9%
Roads and Transport	1	5%
Self Funding Care Provider	0	
Various Other	2	9%
Total	22	

Appendix C – Cases with PSOW intervention (overview)

Local authority	No. of interventions	No. of closures	% of interventions
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	0	12	0%
Bridgend County Borough Council	6	57	11%
Caerphilly County Borough Council	11	79	14%
Cardiff Council*	37	190	19%
Carmarthenshire County Council	11	86	13%
Ceredigion County Council	11	45	24%
Conwy County Borough Council	5	29	17%
Denbighshire County Council**	6	98	6%
Flintshire County Council	7	61	11%
Cyngor Gwynedd	3	44	7%
Isle of Anglesey County Council	1	20	5%
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council	1	15	7%
Monmouthshire County Council	1	16	6%
Neath Port Talbot Council	5	45	11%
Newport City Council	6	62	10%
Pembrokeshire County Council	8	47	17%
Powys County Council	8	51	16%
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	6	60	10%
Swansea Council	12	109	11%
Torfaen County Borough Council	0	18	0%
Vale of Glamorgan Council	12	63	19%
Wrexham County Borough Council	7	72	10%
Total	164	1279	13%

Appendix D – Complaint outcomes (by organisation) (* denotes intervention)

Isle of Anglesey County Council	Complaint Outcomes	% Share
Complaint investigation discontinued (with early resolution at assessment stages)*	0	
Complaint investigation discontinued (without settlement)	0	
Decision not to investigate complaint	8	40%
Early resolution*	1	5%
Matter out of jurisdiction	5	25%
Non-public interest report issued: complaint not upheld	0	
Non-public interest report issued: complaint upheld*	0	
Non-public interest report issued: complaint upheld with early resolution at assessment stage*	0	
Premature	6	30%
Public interest report issued: complaint upheld*	0	
Public Interest report issued: complaint upheld with early resolution at assessment stage*	0	
Special Interest Report*	0	
Voluntary settlement*	0	
Total	20	

Appendix E – Compliance performance comparison

Local Authority	Number of recommendations made on complaints closed in 2024-25	Number of recommendations falling due in 2024-25	% of recommendations, complied with in line with agreed target date
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	0	0	n/a
Bridgend County Borough Council	15	18	28%
Caerphilly County Borough Council	24	24	50%
Cardiff Council*	97	96	56%
Carmarthenshire County Council	29	27	67%
Ceredigion County Council	24	24	63%
Conwy County Borough Council	14	14	71%
Denbighshire County Council**	10	8	50%
Flintshire County Council	20	22	91%
Cyngor Gwynedd	9	9	89%
Isle of Anglesey County Council	4	6	0%
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council	2	4	0%
Monmouthshire County Council	2	2	0%
Neath Port Talbot Council	11	8	75%
Newport City Council	12	11	27%
Pembrokeshire County Council	20	18	61%
Powys County Council	21	23	22%
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	11	10	20%
Swansea Council	25	24	33%
Torfaen County Borough Council	0	0	n/a
Vale of Glamorgan Council	30	31	55%
Wrexham County Borough Council	19	16	75%

Appendix F - Code of Conduct Complaints Closed (* denotes investigation)

Isle of Anglesey County Council	Code of Conduct Complaints Closed
Cc not acted on	0
Code of Conduct leaflet sent/link to website provided	0
Complaint taken over telephone – awaiting signature	0
Complaint Withdrawn	0
Discontinued. Not in the public interest to pursue*	0
Duplicate complaint with no new evidence	0
Information provided	0
No action necessary*	0
No declaration rec'd – Withdrawn	0
No evidence of Breach*	0
No prima facie evidence of breach	2
Not in the public interest to investigate	0
Out of Jurisdiction - signposted	0
Premature - referred for local resolution	0
Referred to Adjudication Panel*	0
Referred to Standards Committee*	1
Withdrawn	0
Total	3

Appendix G - Town / Community Council Code of Complaints

	Decision not to investigate Code		Investigations					
	Not in the public interest to investigate	No prima facie evidence of breach	Discontinued. Not in the public interest to pursue	No action necessary	No evidence of Breach	Referred to Adjudication Panel	Referred to Standards Committee	Total
Isle of Anglesey County Council								
Aberffraw Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Amlwch Town Council	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Beaumaris Town Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bodedern Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bodffordd Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bodorgan Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bryngwran Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cwm Cadnant Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cylch-y-Garn Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Holyhead Town Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Llanbadrig Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Llanddaniel Fab Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Llanddona Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Llanddyfnan Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Llaneilian Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Llanerchymedd Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Llaneugrad Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Llanfachraeth Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Llanfaelog Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Llanfaethlu Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Llanfair Mathafarn Eithaf Community Council	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2

Llanfair yn Neubwll Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Llanfairpwll Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Llanfihangellesceifiog Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Llangefni Town Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Llangoed and Penmon Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Llangristiolus Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Llanidan Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mechell Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Menai Bridge Town Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Moelfre Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Penmynydd and Star Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pentraeth Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rhoscolyn Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rhosybol Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rhosyr Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Trearddur Community Council	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Tref Alaw Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Trewalchmai Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Valley Community Council	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1

APPENDIX 4

1. Code of Conduct Complaints

Any complaint against an elected member must be based on an alleged breach, or breaches, of the [Members' Code of Conduct](#), with the PSOW exercising 'first sift' jurisdiction (i.e. assessing merit) before deciding if, and how, to proceed.

During 2024/2025, 4 code of conduct complaints were received by the PSOW against county councillors, with 2 closed after initial assessment, and without investigation.

A complaint against 1 county councillor continues to be investigated by the PSOW and the other was concluded by the Standards Committee, but fell into the year 2025/2026, therefore not relevant to the timeframe of this report.

For the sake of completeness, complaints about the elected members of town and community councils, in relation to the same Code of Conduct, are also reported twice a year to the County Council's Standards Committee. Owing to restrictions imposed by the PSOW, only very limited information about such complaints is formally reported to the County Council's Standards Committee twice a year. Please see following links:-

[Quarter 1, 2 and 3](#)
[Quarter 4](#)

2. Whistleblowing

The Council's [Whistleblowing Policy and local Guidance](#) document were devised to support employees to raise those concerns, which fall within the ambit of the Policy, without fear of victimisation or discrimination. Whistleblowing is the popular term used when a member of staff (it includes contractors but does not relate to the public or elected members) raise concerns about fraud, criminality, danger, or serious risk that might threaten the public, their co-workers or the Council's reputation. The relevant legislation here is the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, which is a piece of employment legislation designed specifically to protect employees and contractors from adverse treatment by their employers.

Council staff undertook a development session on whistleblowing via the Policy Portal during Quarter 1, 2025/2026. Compliance rates will be included in next year's annual report.

Owing to the sensitivities involved, the level of information provided in this report has been agreed by the Leadership Team in line with the Council's legal obligation to protect whistleblowers from detriment in the workplace. Accordingly, only limited information will ever be disclosed.

	Date Raised	Type of Disclosure* /Reported to	Nature of concern	Investigated	Outcome	Lessons Learned	Results fed back to the Whistleblower
1	14/03/2025 *	Level 1 / MO	Allegations of political interference in an extant prosecution	Yes, discussions with whistleblowers and relevant parties as well as a review of records	Informal resolution by Chair of Standards Committee / Monitoring Officer	Training module developed for senior officers on Member and Officer Relationships: Roles and Responsibilities	Yes, final update to the four whistleblowers at one-to-one meetings with the Monitoring Officer on 04/06/2025
2	14/03/2025 *	Level 1 / HoS Regulation & Economic Development	Concerns in Building Control regarding compliance, competence, capacity and staff well-being	Yes, and formally reported to the Executive on 02/10/2025. The link to the Report is here	Response to Improvement Notice approved by the Executive on 02/10/2025	Improve training, supervision and support for the relevant team as detailed in Annex A to the Executive report.	Yes on 19/09/2025

* Footnote – Dates verified. Dates of reporting coincidental.