

Annual Equality Report
2019/20
and
actions 2020/21
Executive Summary



Message from the Ombudsman



A commitment to treating people fairly is central to the role of an ombudsman. My team and I are committed to providing a service which is easy for everyone to use and to providing equal opportunities for all staff. We are aware that, through our casework, we can influence the way bodies in my jurisdiction consider equality and human rights issues.

In November 2019, we published our new Equality Plan covering the period between 2019 and 2022, together with actions for 2019/20. This document presents some highlights of the first year of the Plan's implementation.

However, we still have much more to do. We therefore also present in this document the main actions planned for 2020/21. Amongst others, we intend to place a new emphasis on strengthening our contribution to race equality, justice and inclusion in Wales.

I would like to thank all the stakeholders who supported me and my staff in the development of this Report and actions and look forward to further engagement with them and the public as we put the 2020/21 actions into practice.

Nick Bennett

Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

About us

We have three main roles:

- handling complaints about public service providers
- considering complaints about breaches of the Code of Conduct by elected members
- driving systemic improvement of public services.

We are independent of all government bodies and the service we provide is free of charge.

We are based in Pencoed, South Wales. We also have a small office in North Wales.

Contact us

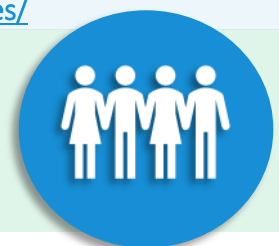
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We have **73** staff



How we manage our Equality Plan

Our Equality Plan is the responsibility of everyone at PSOW – from our Management Team to all individual staff members.

Our work under the Plan is coordinated by the Head of Policy.

We also set up in 2019/20 a staff Equality Plan Group to help monitor the implementation of the Plan; offer new ideas for actions; and act as a sounding board for equality projects and initiatives within the office.

How we prepared this Report and actions

In preparing this Report, we drew on extensive data and research publications. We also consulted and engaged in four stages:



At each stage we asked whether:

- our Equality Objectives were still current and relevant
- the proposed actions were appropriate
- we should consider any other actions.

Full equality monitoring data used to prepare this Report and actions can be found on our website.



Objective 1.1: Capture comprehensive and meaningful equality data from PSOW's service users

What we achieved in 2019/20:

- we continued to monitor the equality profile of our complainants
- we developed a plan to improve the complainants' response rate to our equality monitoring
- we developed an internal resource to help us analyse the equality data that we collect.

What we will do next year:

- we will update the complainant equality questionnaire
- we will start asking complainants more proactively to share with us their equality data, including over the phone and/or by text
- we will start tagging cases involving equality or human rights to help us better identify any trends in our casework.



Objective 1.2: Effectively target under-represented complainant groups

What we achieved in 2019/20:

- we ran a pilot Equality Focus Group with members of the Age Cymru Consultative Forum, to better understand what barriers older people may be facing in accessing the complaint handling service offered by our office or by other public bodies in Wales.

What we will do next year:

- we will organise Equality Focus Groups with migrant and BAME communities
- we will seek to improve our visibility amongst these communities by working with relevant organisations across Wales.

In 2019/20...

5%

of our complainants identified with nationalities other than Welsh, English or British

6%

were from BAME background



Objective 1.3: Ensure that PSOW's services are accessible to all public service users in Wales who need them

What we achieved in 2019/20:

- we achieved high customer satisfaction with accessibility of our service (91%)
- we reviewed our internal Reasonable Adjustment Guidelines
- we asked our service users new questions about our performance on equality.

2%

using our new powers, we received 2% of complaints orally

What we will do next year:

- we will maintain the high level of satisfaction with our accessibility
- we will launch an outreach strategy to increase awareness of our powers to accept oral complaints
- we will make it clearer to complainants that they can request reasonable adjustments.



Objective 2.1: Ensure that PSOW casework staff can identify and adequately respond to equality and human rights issues arising in casework

What we achieved in 2019/20:

- we revised our internal policy on 'Managing Customer Contact', to include a section about engaging with complainants with specific accessibility requirements
- we developed an induction module on our equality and human rights work, which was delivered to all new colleagues
- we provided training to our Complaints Assessment Team on mental health awareness, autism spectrum disorders and managing challenging conversations.

What we will do next year:

- we will continue to deliver relevant training to our casework staff
- we will train a member of staff as 'Autism Champion', to support caseworkers and colleagues with advice on good communication with people with autism.



Objective 2.2: Publish more information about how PSOW casework takes account of equality and human rights considerations

What we achieved in 2019/20:

- we published our first [Equality and Human Rights Casebook](#) (also available in [Easy Read](#)).

What we will do next year:

- we will repeat this publication.



Objective 2.3: Ensure that equality is embedded into the planning and implementation of PSOW's new powers

What we achieved in 2019/20:

- we made sure that our model Complaints and Concerns Policy for bodies in our jurisdiction emphasised equality and diversity considerations
- we made sure that our Criteria for Own Initiative Investigations committed us to consider whether the matters to be investigated under these powers would affect wider groups, particularly if they may be vulnerable or disadvantaged.

What we will do next year:

- we will undertake an Equality Impact Assessment of our first own initiative investigation into homelessness in Wales.

Under our new Act, passed in 2019, we now have new powers to drive systemic improvement: the power to undertake investigations on our own initiative and to establish a Complaint Standards role.



Objective 3.1: Capture comprehensive and meaningful equality employment data

What we achieved in 2019/20:

- we reviewed our staff and job applicant equality questionnaires
- we started to analyse the equality profile of successful candidates
- we consulted our staff on linking their equality data to individual HR records, to help us analyse how inclusive we are as a workplace.

What we will do next year:

- in consultation with staff, we will implement a new system for staff equality monitoring connected to HR records.



Objective 3.2: Act to improve the representation of protected groups in PSOW's workforce

What we achieved in 2019/20:

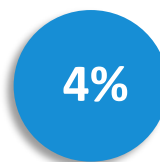
- we signed up as a Disability Confident Committed employer – a scheme which supports employers to make the most of the talents disabled people can bring to the workplace.

What we will do next year:

- we will undertake more actions under the Disability Confident scheme – including changing how we advertise our vacancies to better reach disabled people.
- we will make sure that our recruitment better targets BAME people.



In 2019/20...



of our job candidates were from BAME background



Objective 3.3: Address PSOW's Pay Gap

What we achieved in 2019/20:

- we reduced our median Gender Pay Gap, from 21% at March 2019 to 11% at March 2020
- we achieved the Chwarae Teg FairPlay Employer silver level for gender equality, having scored above the Welsh public sector average across all the categories assessed.

What we will do next year:

- we will continue to work with Chwarae Teg and implement a Fair Play Employer action plan
- we will review our flexible working policy, to make sure we offer the best support to our staff with caring responsibilities.



Chwarae Teg is a Welsh charity leading on gender equality, including in the workplace. Its FairPlay Employer scheme benchmarks organisations in terms of gender equality across four levels: bronze, silver, gold and platinum.



Objective 3.4: Promote staff wellbeing and awareness of equality and diversity issues

What we achieved in 2019/20:

- we launched our Well-being Strategy
- we trained a number of members of staff as Mental Health First Aiders, equipping them with practical skills to spot the triggers and signs of mental health issues and provide initial support
- we provided a space for a reflection/prayer room
- we encouraged all staff to set an equality objective as part of their Performance Review and Development discussion in 2020/21.

What we will do next year:

- we will maintain high staff awareness of our work to promote wellbeing and equality
- we will evaluate how many staff have an equality objective and what we can do to support them in fulfilling these objectives
- we will gather staff views about access to training opportunities.



Objective 3.5: Ensure that the consideration of equality is embedded in PSOW decision making

What we achieved in 2019/20:

- we reviewed our tool for conducting Equality Impact Assessments, ensuring that it was more comprehensive and better integrated into the decision-making process in individual cases and projects.

What we will do next year:

- we will organise training on using the tool for all staff who develop or review policies
- we will review our Procurement Policy using the new tool.