



Our ref: NB

Ask for: Communications

 01656 641150

Date: 7 September 2020

 Communications
@ombudsman-wales.org.uk

Councillor Rob G. Jones
Council Leader
Neath Port Talbot Council

By Email Only
cllr.r.g.jones@npt.gov.uk

Dear Councillor Jones

Annual Letter 2019/20

I am pleased to provide you with the Annual letter (2019/20) for Neath Port Talbot Council.

I write this at an unprecedented time for public services in Wales and those that use them. Most of the data in this correspondence relates to the period before the rapid escalation in Covid-19 spread and before restrictions on economic and social activity had been introduced. However, I am only too aware of the impact the pandemic continues to have on us all.

I am delighted to report that, during the past financial year, we had to intervene in (uphold, settle or resolve early) a smaller proportion of complaints about public bodies: 20% compared to 24% last year.

We also referred a smaller proportion of Code of Conduct complaints to a Standards Committee or the Adjudication Panel for Wales: 2% compared to 3% last year.

With regard to new complaints relating to Local Authorities, the overall number has decreased by 2.4% compared to the previous financial year. I am also glad that we had to intervene in a smaller proportion of the cases closed (13% compared to 15% last year). That said, I am concerned that complaint handling persists as one of the main subjects of our complaints again this year.

Amongst the main highlights of the year, in 2019 the National Assembly for Wales (now Senedd Cymru Welsh Parliament) passed our new Act. We are now the first ombudsman's office in the UK to have full and operational powers to drive systemic improvement of public services through investigations on our 'own initiative' and the Complaints Standards role.

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During 2019/20, we have engaged intensively with Local Authorities on this issue, starting to exercise our new Complaints Standards powers.

Local Authorities in Wales submitted data about the complaints they handled to the Complaints Standards Authority (CSA) for the first time in 2019/2020, revealing much more about the complaints landscape in Wales.

The data submitted for 2019/2020 shows:

- Over 13,000 complaints were recorded by Local Authorities – 4.25 for every 1000 residents.
- Nearly half (42%) of those complaints were upheld in full or in part.
- About 80% (79.51%) were investigated within 20 working days.
- About 7% (6.91%) of all complaints ended up being referred to PSOW.

The CSA will work with public bodies to ensure the data submitted is an accurate representation of complaints being submitted by service users.

A summary of the complaints of maladministration/service failure received relating to your Council is attached.

Also attached is a summary of the Code of Conduct complaints relating to members of the Council and the Town & Community Councils in your area.

Action for the Council to take:

- Present my Annual Letter to the Cabinet to assist members in their scrutiny of the Council's performance.
- Engage with my Complaints Standards work, accessing training for your staff and providing complaints data.
- Inform me of the outcome of the Council's considerations and proposed actions on the above matters by 30 November.

This correspondence is copied to the Chief Executive of your Council and to your Contact Officer. Finally, a copy of all Annual Letters will be published on my website.

Yours sincerely



Nick Bennett
Ombudsman

CC: Steve Phillips, Chief Executive
Craig Griffiths, Contact Officer

Factsheet

A. Complaints Received

| Local Authority | Complaints Received | Complaints received per 1000 residents |
|--|---------------------|--|
| Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council | 17 | 0.24 |
| Bridgend County Borough Council | 34 | 0.23 |
| Caerphilly County Borough Council | 49 | 0.27 |
| Cardiff Council* | 122 | 0.33 |
| Carmarthenshire County Council | 42 | 0.22 |
| Ceredigion County Council | 31 | 0.42 |
| Conwy County Borough Council | 29 | 0.25 |
| Denbighshire County Council | 32 | 0.34 |
| Flintshire County Council | 61 | 0.39 |
| Gwynedd Council | 37 | 0.30 |
| Isle of Anglesey County Council | 26 | 0.37 |
| Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council | 13 | 0.22 |
| Monmouthshire County Council | 16 | 0.17 |
| Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council | 22 | 0.15 |
| Newport City Council | 39 | 0.25 |
| Pembrokeshire County Council | 25 | 0.20 |
| Powys County Council | 72 | 0.54 |
| Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council | 39 | 0.16 |
| Swansea Council | 92 | 0.37 |
| Torfaen County Borough Council | 5 | 0.05 |
| Vale of Glamorgan Council | 30 | 0.23 |
| Wrexham County Borough Council | 33 | 0.24 |
| Wales | 866 | 0.28 |

* inc 1 Rent Smart Wales

B. Complaints Received by Subject

| Neath Port Talbot Council | Complaints Received | Complaints Percentage Share |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|
| Adult Social Services | 1 | 4.55% |
| Benefits Administration | 1 | 4.55% |
| Children's Social Services | 4 | 18.18% |
| Complaint Handling | 5 | 22.73% |
| Education | 2 | 9.09% |
| Environment and Environmental Health | 5 | 22.73% |
| Planning and Building Control | 2 | 9.09% |
| Roads and Transport | 2 | 9.09% |

C. Complaint Outcomes

(* denotes intervention)

| Complaints Closed | Premature/ Out of Time/Right to Appeal | Out of Jurisdiction | Other cases closed after initial consideration | Early Resolution/ voluntary settlement* | Discontinued | Other Reports- Not Upheld | Other Reports Upheld - in whole or in part* | Public Interest Report * | Grand Total |
|-----------------------------|---|------------------------|---|--|--------------|------------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|-------------|
| Neath Port Talbot Council | 12 | 3 | 6 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 25 |
| Complaints Percentage Share | 48.00% | 12.00% | 24.00% | 12.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 4.00% | 0.00% | |

D. Number of cases with PSOW intervention

| | No. of interventions | No. of closures | % of interventions |
|--|----------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council | 1 | 17 | 6% |
| Bridgend County Borough Council | 1 | 34 | 3% |
| Caerphilly County Borough Council | 6 | 50 | 12% |
| Cardiff Council | 21 | 120 | 18% |
| Cardiff Council - Rent Smart Wales | - | 1 | 0% |
| Carmarthenshire County Council | 6 | 46 | 13% |
| Ceredigion County Council | 4 | 30 | 13% |
| Conwy County Borough Council | 6 | 34 | 18% |
| Denbighshire County Council | 2 | 32 | 6% |
| Flintshire County Council | 8 | 57 | 14% |
| Gwynedd Council | 4 | 39 | 10% |
| Isle of Anglesey County Council | 3 | 28 | 11% |
| Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council | 2 | 15 | 13% |
| Monmouthshire County Council | 2 | 15 | 13% |
| Neath Port Talbot Council | 4 | 25 | 16% |
| Newport City Council | 4 | 38 | 11% |
| Pembrokeshire County Council | 7 | 29 | 24% |
| Powys County Council | 14 | 71 | 20% |
| Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council | 5 | 40 | 13% |
| Swansea Council | 4 | 93 | 4% |
| Torfaen County Borough Council | 1 | 5 | 20% |
| Vale of Glamorgan Council | 4 | 27 | 15% |
| Wrexham County Borough Council | 4 | 33 | 12% |
| Grand Total | 113 | 879 | 13% |

E. Code of Conduct Complaints Closed

| County/County Borough Councils | Closed after initial consideration | Discontinued | No evidence of breach | No action necessary | Refer to Standards Committee | Refer to Adjudication Panel | Withdrawn | Total |
|---------------------------------------|---|---------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------|--------------|
| Neath Port Talbot | 4 | - | - | - | - | - | - | 4 |

F. Town/Community Council Code of Complaints

| Town/Community Council | Closed after initial consideration | Discontinued | No evidence of breach | No action necessary | Refer to Standards Committee | Refer to Adjudication Panel | Withdrawn | Total |
|-------------------------------|---|---------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------|--------------|
| Briton Ferry Town Council | 2 | - | - | - | - | - | - | 2 |
| Coedffranc Town Council | 3 | - | - | - | - | - | - | 3 |
| Glynneath Town Council | 3 | - | - | - | - | - | - | 3 |

Appendix

Explanatory Notes

Section A provides a breakdown of the number of complaints against the Local Authority which were received during 2019/20, and the number of complaints per 1,000 residents (population).

Section B provides a breakdown of the number of complaints about the Local Authority which were received by my office during 2019/20. The figures are broken down into subject categories with the percentage share.

Section C provides the complaint outcomes for the Local Authority during 2019/20, with the percentage share.

Section D provides the numbers and percentages of cases received by the PSOW in which an intervention has occurred. This includes all upheld complaints, early resolutions and voluntary settlements.

Section E provides a breakdown of all Code of Conduct complaint outcomes against Councillors during 2019/20.

Section F provides a breakdown of all Code of Conduct complaint outcomes against town or community councils.

Feedback

We welcome your feedback on the enclosed information, including suggestions for any information to be enclosed in future annual summaries. Any feedback or queries should be sent via email to communications@ombudsman-wales.org.uk