Ombudsman
PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES

What we do when we get your complaint about a public body in Wales

Factsheet

Introduction

This fact sheet explains what happens after you complain to us about a public body in Wales. It also explains what different approaches we can take to help resolve your complaint.

New complaints

All new complaints are first considered by our Complaints Assessment Team. Once the team has received sufficient information to assess your complaint, we aim to tell you within six weeks whether or not we can help you. Sometimes we may contact you and/or the organisation, for more details.

We examine each complaint, and any supporting information sent in with it, to see if it is about a subject or organisation we can look at. We also check when the events complained about took place and what has happened since. We do not normally accept complaints unless

- the events happened or came to light within the previous year and
- the organisation being complained about has already been given a reasonable opportunity to address the issues.

If, from the evidence you send us, we believe that the organisation may have acted unreasonably and that as a result you, or a person on whose behalf you are complaining, have suffered hardship or injustice, we may decide to investigate to find out the full facts of the case. We will also look to see if there is other action that the organisation might take which could quickly resolve your complaint.

Meeting your needs

Please let us know if you need us to adapt the way we communicate with you. If anything makes it difficult for you to use our service, for example, if you have a disability, please inform us.

We will consider whether your request is reasonable and appropriate in the circumstances. This is because we need to use public money carefully.

If we cannot accept your complaint

If we cannot accept your complaint or we do not consider that investigation is appropriate, we will write to you explaining why. We will also send the organisation an anonymised copy of our decision. If possible, we will identify any further action you can take and/or suggest what other organisations may be able to help you.

In some cases, we may refer the details of your complaint directly to the organisation you complained against and ask it to consider the issues and respond to you. We usually do this when it appears that the organisation has not previously had a reasonable opportunity to consider the complaint.

Early Resolution

In some cases, we may decide that there is action that the organisation you complained about could take quickly to resolve your complaint. In these cases, we will contact the organisation involved to explain what we think might be done and seek its agreement to take that forward. Once we are satisfied that this action has been or will be taken we will write to you explaining what will happen.

If we decide to investigate your complaint

If we decide to investigate your complaint, the investigator may contact you to discuss your concerns and explain what will happen next. We will always write to you and the organisation confirming our decision to investigate. We will send a copy of your complaint to the organisation and ask it to formally comment and send all relevant documents.

Each investigation we conduct varies and while it may be necessary to interview those involved, many cases may be concluded through examination of documents alone. We have professional advisers to assist us in some of our investigations and the investigators may need to ask them for advice on your complaint. We aim to complete all investigations within 12 months but most are concluded sooner. We will keep you informed of how the investigation is progressing. If for any reason we decide to discontinue our investigation we will write to you explaining this decision.

When we have all the information we need we will write to you setting out what evidence we have considered and what initial conclusions we have reached in a letter or report. We will send this to you and the organisation and give you both an opportunity to comment. After that, we will complete and issue our final decision.

Where we make recommendations to the organisation we will also check to see how and when these are implemented. We have arrangements for publicising our work and in doing so will take appropriate steps to protect your identity.

If you remain unhappy with our decisions

Once we have made our final decision about your complaint our task is effectively ended and we close our complaint file.

We will not reopen a case only because you may disagree with our decision. However, you can write to us within twenty working days to ask us to review your case. You may ask for this review if

- you have relevant new evidence to show us; or
- you can show that in making our decision we have not properly considered the information that we received previously.

Our Review Officer will consider if there are any grounds to review your complaint and if we need to do anything further.

In times of trouble or distress, some people may act out of character. There may have been upsetting or distressing circumstances leading up to a complaint. We do not view behaviour as unacceptable just because someone is forceful or determined.

We believe that all complainants should have the right to be heard, understood and respected. However, our staff also have the same rights. We, therefore, expect you to be polite and courteous in your dealings with us. We will not tolerate aggressive or abusive behaviour, unreasonable demands or unreasonable persistence.

Contact us

If you would like to know more about the way we consider new complaints, please refer to our Complaints Handling Process – Summary, on the 'How To Complain' page under the 'Making a Complaint' tab.

If you are unsure whether we are able to look into your complaint, please contact us on 0300 790 0203 or ask@ombudsman.wales

Also available in Welsh.

This document is available in Welsh and English. You can write to us in Welsh and we will reply in Welsh. This will not lead to a delay in responding.

ask@ombudsman.wales

0300 790 0203 Our phone line is open 10am-12:30pm and 1:30pm-4pm Monday – Friday