

Report to	Governance and Audit Committee
Date of meeting	20 th November 2024
Lead Member / Officer	Cllr Julie Matthews / Ann Lloyd Head of Adult Social Care and Homelessness
Head of Service	Ann Lloyd
Report author	Kevin Roberts
Title	Compliments / Complaints and Public Services Ombudsman Annual Letter Report 2023/24

1. What is the report about?

The report provides an overview of complaints received by Denbighshire County Council under the council's customer feedback policy 'Your Voice' during 2023/24. The report incorporates Social Services complaints received under its statutory complaints procedure.

To provide Governance and Audit Committee with the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) Annual Letter relating to complaints received about the council, members and town councils and benchmarking Denbighshire's performance against all Local Authorities in Wales.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

This annual report provides an overview of the effectiveness of our complaints process. The figures presented in this report show performance during the financial year 2023/24. This performance is measured against the Social Services Complaints Procedures (Wales) Regulations 2014 and the council's own Corporate Complaints Procedures – adopted from Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Model Complaints Guidance 2019 and the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019.

The Ombudsman has a statutory obligation to report to Local Authorities on its interventions in the reporting areas. This report is presented to Local Authorities in Wales annually and there are specific actions requested within the PSOW Annual Letter about which Council Committees it should be reported to.

3. What are the Recommendations?

That the Committee considers the content of this report and, if appropriate, identify any areas that require action.

That Governance and Audit Committee consider the data in the letter, alongside the council's data, to understand more about performance on complaints, including any patterns or trends and the organisation's compliance with recommendations made by the Ombudsman.

4. Report details

4.1 Headlines for 2023/24 (please see appendix 1 for further detail):

The council received 286 Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints in 2023/24

4.2 99% of Stage 1 complaints were dealt with on time.

See table 1 for performance by service.

94% of Stage 2 complaints were dealt with on time.

4.3 Performance 2023/24

- 98% (217/215) Stage 1 complaints were responded to within timescale. The corporate target is 95%.
- Chart 1 in appendix 1 shows historical performance in relation to responding to stage 1 complaints. The corporate targets are purposely very ambitious, and to meet 95% represents a position of "excellence".
- 94% (65/69) of stage 2 complaints were responded to within timescale. The corporate target is 95%. See table 2 for Stage 2 performance by service.
- Chart 2 in appendix 1 shows historical performance in relation to responding to stage 2 complaints.
- Chart 3 in appendix 1 shows historical performance in relation to the number of complaints received.

4.4 Late complaints 2023/24

- There were 4 late Stage 2 complaints (2 each for Adult Social Care and Homelessness Service and Public Protection Planning and Countryside).

All were outside the recommended 20 working day response period but within a 3 month period.

There were 2 late Stage 1 complaints (1 each for Housing and Communities Service and Planning Public Protection and Countryside).

4.5 Outcomes 2023/24

The Ombudsman asks us to report on all Upheld (and Partly Upheld) complaints with Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints combined. The figure for 2023/24 was 38% (110 of 286 complaints upheld or partly upheld).

4.6 Complaints and Service Standards

- Table 3 in Appendix 1 Contains the number of complaints versus Service Standards for the council.

4.7 Public Service Ombudsman for Wales Annual Report 2023/24

- Appendix 2 is the annual letter from the PSOW As the tables show, this performance sees Denbighshire in the lower number of complaints requiring Ombudsman intervention. The Ombudsman classes intervention as when they investigate further after initial enquiries.
- Following the PSOW investigations into Denbighshire we had 6 recommendations requiring action in 2023 / 2024 and achieved 67% compliance. The one recommendation that we failed to meet the agreed timescale on was completed in 2024 / 2025. The delay was due to requiring a policy change within Education and this took longer than anticipated to get approval through Council processes.
- The accompanying letter gives no recommendations for improvement and no criticism of the council's complaints processes.
- There are 3 actions that the PSOW has asked us to take –
 - Notifying the PSOW when the Annual Letter has been through Cabinet and Governance and Audit Committee. We can confirm the report has come to Governance and Audit Committee and the Annual Letter will go to Cabinet on 21/01/2025
 - To consider and understand our performance on complaints including trends and patterns and our compliance with recommendations. Analysis of complaints is scrutinised quarterly through the Performance Scrutiny Committee, including trends and patterns. Lessons Learned are shared with services and highlighted in the quarterly scrutiny report. In relation to our compliance with recommendations, there was only 1 out of 6 that we did not achieve the agreed timescales. However, the work was

actioned and it was approval processes that delayed the policy change being agreed.

- Following Cabinet and Governance and Audit Committees a written response will be provided to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Themes?

The Your Voice scheme directly contributes to the corporate priority of A Well Run , High Performing Council, as its aim is to deliver services which are modern, efficient and well managed.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

All costs relating to customer feedback are absorbed within existing budgets.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?

This is a performance report and no decision is being sought to make any changes that would impact on staff or the community. Therefore, a Well-being Impact Assessment is not required for this report.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

Quarterly report to Scrutiny.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

There are no obvious financial implications arising from the report.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

By not dealing with complaints effectively and implementing lessons learned, the reputation of the Council may suffer.

11. Power to make the decision

Sections 7.3 and 7.4.2(b) of the Council's Constitution outlines the Committee's remit and powers with respect of Services' performance.

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