

Meeting of:	<b>Governance and Audit Committee</b>
Date of Meeting:	<b>Monday, 23 February 2026</b>
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	No Relevant Scrutiny Committee
Report Title:	Corporate Complaints Annual Report 2024/25
Purpose of Report:	To allow consideration of corporate complaints received from customers and the Public Service Ombudsman's Annual Letter for the corresponding period
Report Owner:	Chief Executive
Responsible Officer:	Chief Executive
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	There are no matters in this report which relate to an individual ward
Policy Framework:	This is a matter for executive decision
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council adopted the Welsh Government's Model Corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy in July 2013, . Complainants who remain unsatisfied after Stages 1 and 2 of the Policy can refer their complaint to the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW).</li> <li>• Recording and management of Complaints and Compliments transferred from Oracle CRM to the Granicus GovService platform in August 2022. These exclude Social Services complaints which are investigated under the Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014 and the Representations Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014 and are reported separately.</li> <li>• In December 2025 responsibility for the strategic management of corporate complaints including managing the Corporate Concerns and Complaints and performance reporting, transferred from Customer Relations to the Information Governance Team within Legal and Democratic Services. This brings complaints handling, FOI and data governance into a single area with aligned skills and processes, supporting organisation resilience and improved oversight in the context of rising numbers of Complaints and Freedom of Information requests which has placed sustained pressure on each team. As part of this reorganisation, a new Deputy Data Protection Officer role has been created. This post will ensure continuity of service whenever the Data Protection Officer is unavailable, strengthening our ability to meet statutory responsibilities and maintain a consistent service for residents and colleagues. In June 2025 Audit Wales undertook a review of the Council's Corporate Complaints processes to ensure that appropriate measures are in place to deal with resident complaints effectively. The review identified that the council had taken steps to improve</li> </ul>	

complaints arrangements. Four priority areas were identified, which could be strengthened - further development and promotion of the new policy, improving digital functionality, staff training and improved monitoring and learning from complaints. These four priority areas have been incorporated in the Corporate Resources Directorate Plan.

- The Audit Wales report was presented to the Senior Leadership Team in December 2025. In response to the issues raised and as part of the Council's initial response a workshop was held with the Strategic Leadership Team and Heads of Service on the 3<sup>rd</sup> February to consider how complaints can be used positively to improve services, reduce future demand, make better use of resources and deliver better outcomes for residents. The outcome of this review is reported separately on this agenda, and Committee's considerations will be forwarded to Cabinet.
- PSOW has a role to ensure accountability and improve service quality addressing grievances from individuals who feel they have been treated unfairly or have received poor service from public authorities. It seeks to resolve complaints through investigation and mediation, promoting transparency and helping to uphold citizens' rights.
- The PSOW produces an Annual letter which summarises the work they have undertaken across Wales and in relation to specific organisations.
- The Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act (2021) requires the Governance and Audit Committee to review and assess the authority's ability to handle complaints effectively and to make reports and recommendations in relation to the authority's ability to handle complaints effectively. These provisions are included in Part 6 of the legislation relating to the Performance and Governance of Principal Councils and Duty of Principal Council to keep its performance under review.
- The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) received 64 complaints relating to the council during the period. This represents a significant reduction from a high of 77 in 2023/24. The council rate of PSOW complaints was 0.48 per 1000 residents, which compares well against the Welsh local authority average of 0.45.
- No complaints were taken into investigation; complaints resolved through Early Resolution fell to 11 from 15 the previous year. The full PSOW Annual Letter (2024/25) is provided in appendix B.
- Despite rising volumes, performance indicators demonstrate important strengths. The proportion of complaints escalating to Stage 2 has reduced significantly to 4.7% suggesting improved early-stage resolution.

The council continues to face sustained pressure on frontline services, reflected in a further increase in corporate complaints during 2024/25. A total of 944 complaints were recorded, the highest to date and a 7% rise on the previous year. While greater use of digital channels has made it easier for residents to contact us, performance data indicates that we are not consistently meeting expectations around timeliness, reliability, and communication.

- Analysis of complaint information entered directly by complainants during 2024/25 reinforces these themes. Over half of all complaints (51.6%) related to delays or services not being delivered as expected, and a further 17.5% highlighted issues with communication and accessibility. Many residents report not being kept informed about progress, particularly when delays occur. These insights underline the need for more proactive communication and a clear review of whether current service standards remain achievable within existing resources.

- National benchmarking using the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) confirms a wider upward trend. Between 2021/22 and 2024/25, complaints to Welsh councils increased by 67%. The Vale has seen a sharper rise, from 3.17 to 9.99 complaints per 1,000 residents, moving the Council from the 11th to the 4th highest rate in Wales. This shift reflects both operational pressures and the increasing visibility of issues raised by residents.
- Responsiveness remains an area for improvement. Only 45% of complaints were resolved within internal target timescales; however, PSOW data shows that 97.72% of cases were concluded within three months, broadly in line with the Welsh local authority average. This demonstrates that while early stage timeliness needs focused attention, the overall quality and fairness of investigations remain robust.
- Alongside these trends, the Council continues to manage unacceptable behaviour appropriately. Since the adoption of the Unacceptable Actions by Citizens Policy (2022), it has been applied to one individual in 2024/25.
- Taken together, these findings highlight clear priorities for action: strengthening service resilience, improving the reliability and timeliness of service delivery, and enhancing communication with residents. Addressing these areas will help reduce repeat contact, improve customer confidence, and support teams to deliver a more consistent standard of service across the organisation.

## **Recommendations**

1. That Governance and Audit Committee note the contents of the report and Appendix A (Annual Complaints & Compliments Report).
2. That Governance and Audit Committee continues to receive an annual update in relation to Corporate Complaints and Compliments.
3. That Governance and Audit Committee refer this report and the comments of the Committee to Cabinet for their consideration.

## **Reasons for Recommendations**

- 1&2 To ensure effective monitoring of corporate complaints as an indicator of citizen satisfaction with service provided.
3. In order that Cabinet can be apprised of the report and the comments made by Governance and Audit Committee and reply to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Annual Letter.

## **1. Background**

- 1.0 The Council operates a two-stage process for handling complaints from residents. Should the complainant remain unsatisfied at the end of this process they are advised to contact the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW).
- 1.1 The contents of this year's report are generated from data entered on to the Granicus GovService platform by Customer Relations, service based staff and directly by residents using an online form.
- 1.2 Senior Leadership Team receives quarterly updates on local performance indicators relating to complaint handling, including those escalated to the PSOW.
- 1.3 Management of complaints transferred to the GovService platform in August 2022. Since then, service managers have benefitted from additional functionality including automatic email notifications when complaints are recorded for their service and 2 working days before individual complaint deadlines are reached.
- 1.4 An annual complaints and compliments report has been produced for the eleven financial years since 2014/15. Appendix A provides Committee with the Annual Complaints and Compliments Report for 2023/24, including detailed performance information.
- 1.5 Following a recommendation from Corporate Resources and Performance Scrutiny Committee (14 April 2021) the Annual Complaints and Compliments Report includes information relating to the application of the Unreasonable Actions by Citizens and Social Media Policies.
- 1.6 Appendix B provides committee with the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales Annual Letter for 2024/25.

## **2. Key Issues for Consideration**

- 2.1** The long term trend of increasing numbers of complaints continued during 2024/25 with the 944 received being 7% higher than the previous year and represents the highest number recorded.
- 2.2** Data collected by the PSOW Complaints Standards Authority ranked the Vale of Glamorgan Council 4th highest rate of complaints per 1,000 residents for local authorities in Wales at 9.99. In 2021/22 the Council was ranked 11<sup>th</sup> highest. Across Wales, the highest rate recorded in 2024/25 was 14.92 complaints per 1,000 residents, and the lowest was 0.61.
- 2.3** The percentage of complaints that are resolved without escalation to Stage 2 is a key indicator of complainant satisfaction with the quality and fairness of investigation. During 2024/25 the percentage of complaints escalated to Stage 2 fell by 38% compared to the previous year, from 7.5% to 4.7%.
- 2.4** The most frequent drivers of complaints remain consistent year-on-year and relate to service failure, communication issues, and staff behaviours.
- 2.5** Distribution of complaints during 2024/25 continues to reflect the high number of direct resident interactions delivered by the Environment and Housing Directorate which contributed 715 complaints to the corporate total, with 24 escalated to Stage 2. This is a further increase on the previous year's total 679 and is a similar proportion of total complaints to previous years (76%).
- 2.6** Learning and Skills directorate recorded the fewest complaints with 21 at Stage 1 and 3 escalated to Stage 2.
- 2.7** Data captured from complaints on the Granicus platform highlights that 78% of complaints stem from service failure, including unmet service standards (69%) and failure to follow policies or procedures (9%). Content analysis of complaint forms further shows complainants issues include 48.3% related to delays, slow resolution, missed timescales, failed service delivery, or infrastructure maintenance backlogs. 21.4% referenced inappropriate staff behaviour. 15.5% involved communication failures such as poor information, lack of updates, or process confusion.
- 2.8** The proportion of complaints upheld by local authorities has been rising over the last three years, increasing from 41.12% in 2022/23 to 51.67% in 2024/25. This national trend is also reflected in the Vale of Glamorgan's performance. During the same period, the percentage of upheld complaints by the council increased from 53.22% to 66.67%. This means that two thirds of the complaints we investigated were found to have some element of service failure. As a result, the Vale has moved from having the 11th highest rate of upheld complaints in Wales to the 5th highest.
- 2.9** This data underlines the need for more proactive communication and a clear review of whether current service standards remain achievable within existing resources.

- 2.10** Meeting response times for Stage 1 complaints continues to be a significant challenge for the council, with performance against targets in 2024/25 continuing a deteriorating trend. 45% of complaints met deadlines.
- 2.11** PSOW Complaints Standard Authority data shows 97.72% of complaints were resolved within 30 days, comparing well with the Welsh local authority average of 97.29%.
- 2.12** Learning from complaints continues to be a key area for improvement as it provides the opportunity for services to manage customer expectations and to make improvements in service delivery where possible. Social Services provided 7 examples of how services have been improved as a result of lessons learned from complaint investigations during 2024/25, and where the only directorate to provide data.
- 2.13** Data captured on the Granicus platform showed Staff Training was the most popular action following complaint investigation at 39% followed by Review Service Standards at 27% and Review and Revise Information at 23%.
- 2.14** In the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales Annual Letter 2024/25 (appendix B) the number of recorded complaints from Vale of Glamorgan residents reduced from 77 in 2023/24 to 64 or 0.48 complaints per 1,000 (Welsh local authority average of 0.41). 63 complaints were closed during the period with a total of 11 requiring intervention through the Early Resolution Process. 19 complaints were closed as being Out of Jurisdiction, 15 being Premature and a decision not to investigate was made in a further 17 cases. No complaints were taken into investigation.
- 2.15** The PSOW made 30 recommendations to the Council in relation to complaint resolved through the Early Resolution process, of which 55% were completed within agreed target timescales.
- 2.16** A survey sent to 727 complainants in June 2025 received 108 responses and indicates that improving response times as the best way of providing a more positive experience for residents. Only 30% of responders felt that the time taken to respond to complaints was satisfactory compared to 45% in 2023/24.
- 2.17** 231 responses to an equality survey distributed with each Complaint response shows that 65% of the responses were aged 45 or over. Only 13 responses were received from customers between 15 and 24, despite the ability to record Corporate Complaints online. 58% of the responses were from customers whose day-to-day activities were limited by some form of disability. 5.5% of the responses speak Welsh and 35.5% have limited Welsh knowledge
- 2.18** In April 2022 Cabinet (ref C904) approved the introduction of new Unacceptable Actions by Citizens and Social Media Policies. The policies recognise that opportunities for interaction with the Council and its officers have multiplied with increasing popularity of social media platforms. Communication is quick and easy but could quickly become intrusive and difficult to manage on both professional and private profiles.

- 2.19** Since its adoption, the Policy on Unacceptable Actions by Citizens wasn't applied to any resident during the reporting year 2023/24. However, the policy has been applied to one resident during 2024/25.
- 2.20** Taken together, these findings highlight clear priorities for action: strengthening service resilience, improving the reliability and timeliness of service delivery, and enhancing communication with residents. Addressing these areas will help reduce repeat contact, improve customer confidence, and support teams to deliver a more consistent standard of service across the organisation.
- 2.21** In December 2025 responsibility for managing the Corporate Concerns and Complaints and performance reporting transferred from Customer Relations to the Information Governance Team in Democratic Services. Rising numbers of Complaints and Freedom of Information requests have placed sustained pressure on each team. Because the work requires similar processes, procedures and skills, resources have been brought together to increase resilience and improve overall performance. As part of this reorganisation, a new Deputy Data Protection Officer role has been created. This post will ensure continuity of service whenever the Data Protection Officer is unavailable, strengthening our ability to meet statutory responsibilities and maintain a consistent service for residents and colleagues.
- 2.22** In June 2025 Audit Wales undertook a review of the Council's Corporate Complaints processes to ensure that appropriate measures are in place to deal with resident complaints effectively. The review identified that the council had taken steps to improve complaints arrangements. Four areas were identified which could be strengthened - further development and promotion of the new policy, improving functionality of the IT system, staff training and improving monitoring and learning from complaints.
- 2.23** A number of improvement actions have been agreed and have been included in the Corporate Resources service Directorate plan. The report was presented to the Senior Leadership Team in December 2025. In response to the issues raised. As part of the Council's initial response a workshop was held with the Senior Strategic Leadership Team and Heads of Service on 03 February to consider how complaints can be used positively to improve services, reduce future demand, make better use of resources and deliver better outcomes for residents. The outcome of this review is reported separately on this agenda and Committee's considerations will be forwarded to Cabinet.

### **3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?**

- 3.1** Listening to and understanding complaints is a key source of the "voice of the customer", what they need from us and involving them in decisions about how we deliver services.
- 3.2** Learning from complaints is an important way in which the council can develop services that meet the changing needs of residents and are sustainable. Similarly, services can be improved to prevent complaints occurring in the future and improve access to and delivery of services.
- 3.3** The Council's Corporate Plan (and Annual Delivery Plan) include commitments to improving customer service and engagement with our communities. Learning from and effectively handling complaints is a key element of this work.

### **4. Climate Change and Nature Implications**

- 4.1** There are no matters in this report relating to climate change and nature

### **5. Resources and Legal Considerations**

#### **Financial**

- 5.1** There are no direct financial implications associated with this report.
- 5.2** The Public Service Ombudsman for Wales has powers to require the council to compensate complainants financially should it be found guilty of maladministration. Effective investigation and management of complaints will minimise the risk of this happening.

#### **Employment**

- 5.3** There are no matters in this report relating to employment matters

#### **Legal (Including Equalities)**

- 5.4** Under part 6 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, section 115, Governance and Audit Committee are given statutory functions, with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021, to "review and assess the authority's ability to handle complaints effectively" and "make reports and recommendations in relation to the authority's ability to handle complaints effectively".
- 5.5** There is no statutory requirement to adopt the Model Concerns and Complaints Policy and Guidance for Public Service providers in Wales. However, the Welsh Government and Public Services Ombudsman for Wales have commended its adoption.

- 5.6** The Council's complaints process is promoted online and via leaflets at reception points. Complaints can be registered on the website, using the mobile app, by post and by telephone. This ensures that all residents are aware of and have access to the complaints process irrespective of age, gender, belief or disability.

## **6. Background Papers**

Appendix A - Annual Corporate Complaints and Compliments Report 2024/25

Appendix B – Public Service Ombudsman for Wales Annual letter 2024/25

Vale of Glamorgan Council

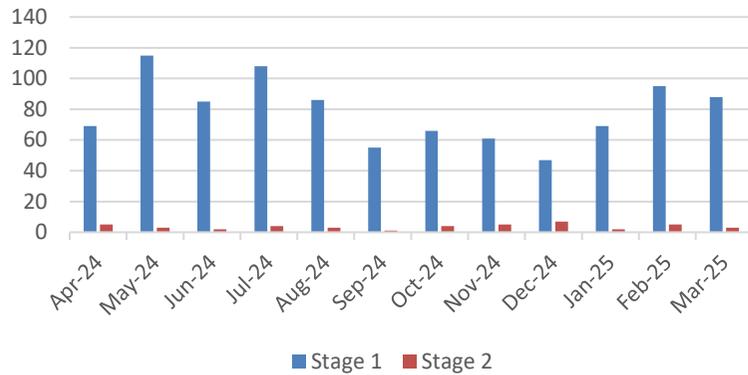
**Annual Complaints  
&  
Compliments Report  
2024/25**



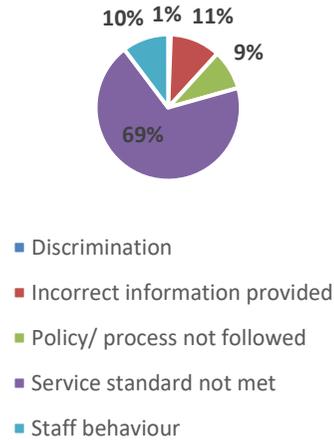
# COUNCIL CORPORATE COMPLAINTS PERFORMANCE 2024/25

**STAGE 1: 944 Stage 2: 44**

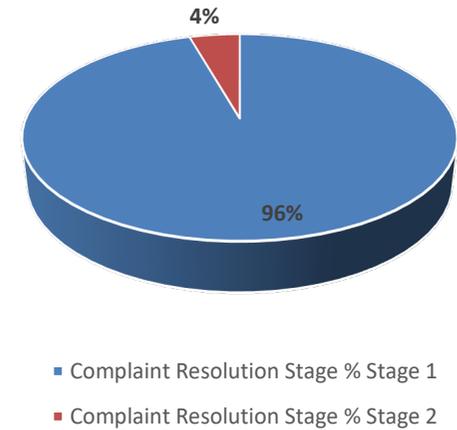
Stage1 and Stage 2 Complaints 24/25



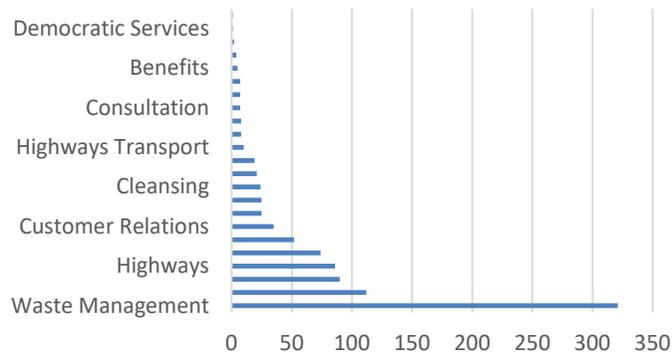
Cause of Complaint



Complaint Resolution Stage



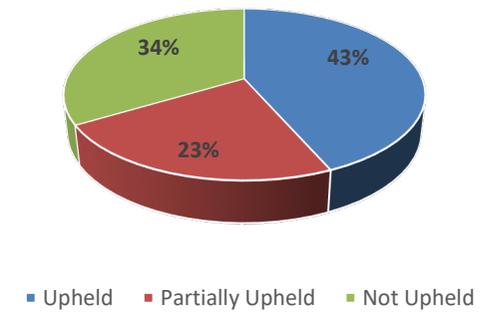
Stage 1 by Service are 24/25



Stage 2 by Service Area 24/25



% Outcome Stage 1 & Stage 2



## Vale of Glamorgan Council – Corporate Complaints and Compliments Annual Report 2024/25

This report details all formally recorded complaints investigated through the Corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy between 01 April 2024 and 31 March 2025.

Social Services complaints are investigated under Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014 and the Representations Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014 and are reported separately.

A summary of complaints raised with the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW), Welsh Language Commissioner and Social Services is provided for completeness and context.

### Executive Summary

The number of complaints continued to rise during the year, reaching 944, the highest level we have recorded. This ongoing increase shows the pressure our frontline teams are experiencing, especially those delivering high volume, customer facing services. While some of the rise is linked to residents using our online systems more confidently, the data also shows that we are not consistently meeting expectations around timeliness and reliability.

Feedback submitted directly by complainants gives us a clearer picture of what residents are experiencing. Over half of all complaints (51.6%) related to delays or services not being delivered as expected. A further 17.5% highlighted issues with communication and accessibility. This suggests that many residents do not feel kept informed about the progress of their enquiry or the services they have requested.

These insights point to important opportunities for improvement. They show the need for a targeted review of service performance, with a focus on whether current service levels remain appropriate and achievable. They also highlight the value of more proactive communication with residents, particularly when delays occur or service delivery changes.

By addressing these themes, we can improve residents' experiences, reduce repeat contact, and support teams to deliver a more consistent and reliable service.

The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) has collected complaints performance data through the Complaints Standards Authority since 2019. To help compare councils fairly, the data is presented as the number of complaints received per 1,000 residents.

Between **2021/22 and 2024/25**, the number of complaints made to councils across Wales rose by **67%**, increasing from **4.23 to 7.06 per 1,000 residents**. Complaints received by



the Vale of Glamorgan Council over the same period followed a similar pattern, but at a faster pace, rising from **3.17 to 9.99**.

Across Wales, the highest rate recorded in 2024/25 was **14.92 complaints per 1,000 residents**, and the lowest was **0.61**. Over the four-year period up to 2024/25, the Council moved from having the **11th highest** complaints rate in Wales to the **4th highest**, reflecting the growing pressure on our services and the increasing visibility of issues reported by residents.

Responsiveness remains an area for improvement, with only **45%** of complaints resolved within target timescales. However, PSOW data shows that **97.72%** of Vale of Glamorgan Council complaints were resolved within **three months**, which is broadly in line with the Welsh local authority average of **97.29%**. This suggests that while we need to improve timeliness in the early stages, we continue to meet wider expectations for resolving complaints in a reasonable period.

These insights highlight the need for continued focus on service resilience, clearer communication with residents, and timely responses to enquiries. They also show that while the number of complaints is rising, the quality and fairness of our investigations remain consistent with national standards.



## Performance Highlights

Tables and charts of detailed statistical data are included in appendices.

- The **long-term trend of increasing numbers of complaints continues**. The 944 complaints received in 2024/25 represents the highest annual total recorded and 63 more than 2023/24. A total of 1281 complaint forms were received, of those 220 were raised as service requests and 117 were either cancelled or withdrawn.
- During the period the council received **9.99 complaints per 1,000 residents**, ranked **4<sup>th</sup> highest** for local authorities in Wales ([PSOW Complaints Standards Authority](#))
- **Environment & Housing** directorate generated the highest number of complaints at 715, with **Waste Management receiving 34% of all complaints** made to the Council.
- **135 Compliments** were recorded with **Environment & Housing** directorate receiving the majority of 108. Corporate Resources 25 and Place 2 (excluding compliments received by Social Services)
- **Responsiveness decreased** – the percentage of investigations **completed within timescales was 45%**, 2023/2024 **59%**, 2022/23 **59%**, 2021/22 **61%** and 2020/21 **64%**.
- PSOW Complaints Standard Authority data shows **97.72% of complaints were resolved within 30 days**, comparing well with the Welsh **local authority average of 97.29%**.
- **Most complaints are resolved at Stage 1** – only 4.7% of complaints were escalated to Stage 2. This was 7.6% in 2023/24
- **Recording of the Cause and Lessons Learned from complaints has improved** with 100% recorded since complaints administration moved to the new GovService software application in August 2022. The main cause of complaints is “Service Standards Not Met” representing 69% of reasons recorded.
- A survey sent to 727 complainants in June 2025 received 108 responses and indicates that **improving response times** as the best way of **providing a more positive experience for residents**. Only **30%** of responders felt that the time taken to respond to complaints was satisfactory compared to **45% in 2023/24**.
- Social Services provided **7 examples of how services have been improved** as a result of lessons learned from complaint investigations during 2024/25.
- **Complaints are meeting the requirements of statutory bodies** – Complaints made to the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) decreased to 64



(2023/24: 77) (2022/23: 49) and (2021/22: 61) or 6.5% of total complaints received. None were investigated, although 11 (17.5%) were resolved through the Early Resolution process. The Welsh Language Commissioner investigated 2 complaints during the year.

- The **Unacceptable Actions by Citizens Policy** was applied to one resident during the year.

Activities undertaken to improve complaint handling, administration and reporting:

- Complainants have been surveyed to obtain direct feedback and insight about their experience of making a complaint. A total of 727 complainants were emailed the survey. A total of 108 responses were received.
- A Stage 1 Complaints Dashboard has been created for Managers to monitor progress. This highlights the number of open complaints and response times. See appendix I.
- A SharePoint page has been created to hold all relevant complaints policies, complaints training materials, historical annual reports, complaints bulletins and Ombudsman data.
- Complaints bulletins to all complaint handlers providing performance reports, best practice and guidance.
- Complaints process enhancements on Granicus, these include options to send back to C1V to reallocate to another service area and the option to withdraw/cancel complaints at allocation stage.
- Complaint 'drop in' sessions to review and provide guidance on complaint handling on Granicus. Providing a forum to give feedback and share best practice.



## Performance Summary

### Complaints Process Survey (See Appendix C)

In June 2025 the Council undertook a survey to obtain feedback on performance for Complaints. 727 complainants were emailed the survey, a total of 108 (15%) responses were received.

Key insights include:

- 73% of complaints were made online
- 78% of complainants didn't receive adequate updates on the progress of their complaint.
- 31% of respondents felt the response was timely
- 78% of respondents used the website to find out how to make a complaint
- 44% of respondents said they would consider using the online complaints form in the future

A User Research Survey also took place in August 2024 with complainants that had made a complaint between the period of October 2023 to March 2024. A total of 257 emails were sent to complainants which resulted in 67 responses.

A total of **7 examples of service improvements** (Appendix B) being made as a result of learning from complaint investigations during 2024/25 were provided. Social Services provided all examples for 2024/25.

Total number of **corporate complaints received increased from 881 to 944**, reflecting the long-term trend of increasing numbers for Stage 1 and Stage 2.

This is the highest number of complaints received by the Council for a single year since formal records began in 2014/15 and a **7% increase on the previous high of 881** in 2023/24.

The **percentage of Stage 1 complaints escalated to Stage 2 has decreased to 4.7%** (44), compared to 7.6% (67) in 2023/24.

The **Environment and Housing Directorate continues to drive the highest volume of complaints**, with numbers **increasing from 679 in 2023/24 to 739** (Stage 1: 715 Stage 2: 24) during 2024/25.

The **Waste Management** service handled the highest number of complaints at 324 including Stage 2s representing 45% of the directorate total and **34% of the total for the Council**.



The **Corporate Resources** directorate reported **181 Stage 1 and 8 Stage 2** complaints, an increase of 31 on 2023/24 (158).

**Learning & Skills** remains the directorate with the **fewest complaints** at 21 Stage 1 and 3 Stage 2.

**Place** directorate showed an increase in complaints from 31 in 2023/24 to 34 in 2024/25.

### Complaint Outcomes (Appendix D)

**96% of all complaints were resolved at Stage 1**, an increase on the previous year's performance of 92.4%. Environment and Housing directorate recorded the highest proportion escalated to Stage 2.

Across Wales, the proportion of complaints upheld by local authorities has been rising over the last three years, increasing from **41.12% in 2022/23** to **51.67% in 2024/25**. This national trend is also reflected in the Vale of Glamorgan's performance. During the same period, the percentage of upheld complaints in the Vale increased from **53.22% to 66.67%**. This means that two thirds of the complaints we investigated were found to have some element of service failure. As a result, the Vale has moved from having the **11th highest** rate of upheld complaints in Wales to the **5th highest**

This shift indicates that in many cases, our investigations are confirming resident concerns. It also highlights important opportunities to strengthen service delivery, address recurring issues earlier, and ensure that learning from complaints is consistently applied across all directorates.

The Place directorate upheld the lowest number of complaints at **19%** (16.7%) 2023/24 and Environment and Housing the highest at **71%** (67.2%) 2023/24.

### Responsiveness (Appendix D)

Meeting response times for Stage 1 complaints continues to be a significant challenge for the council, with performance against targets in 2024/25 continuing a deteriorating trend.

During 2024/25 the percentage of **Stage 1 complaints resolved within the 10-working day target was 40%** (59% 2023/24). However, PSOW data shows that **97.72%** of Vale of Glamorgan Council complaints were resolved within **three months**, which is broadly in line with the Welsh local authority average of **97.29%**. This suggests that while we need to improve timeliness in the early stages, we continue to meet wider expectations for resolving complaints in a reasonable period.

**55% of Stage 2 complaints received were investigated within the 20-working day target.** (64.6%) 2023/24

Environment and Housing directorate achieved the highest percentage of Stage 1 and 2 cases completed within target at **82%**.



## Repeat Complaints

There was a total of 151 complaints submitted by 65 complainants that submitted more than one complaint. Of those there were **54 repeat complaints during 2024/25**. The highest repeat complaints were for Waste Management with a total of 22 repeat complaints, followed by Parks and Cleansing 8 complaints and Housing 8 complaints. The remaining areas were Planning 6, Building Services 4, Council Tax 3, Learning and Skills 1, HR 1 and Legal Services 1. The remaining complaints were the same complainant but for other service areas.

## What is causing complaints? (Appendix E)

**Failing to meet service standards** remains the most common reason recorded on the complaints system, **accounting for 69% of the total**. This significantly exceeds the next most common cause of Incorrect Information Provided at 11% and Staff Behaviour at 10%. **Allegations of discrimination accounted for 1%** of all complaints.

Content analysis of complaint forms further shows complainants issues included combinations of:

- Delays, slow resolution, missed timescales, failed service delivery, or infrastructure maintenance backlogs **48.3%**.
- Inappropriate staff behaviour **21.4%**.
- **15.5%** included communication failures such as poor information, lack of updates, or process confusion.

## Learning Outcomes (Appendix F)

The percentage of complaints with learning outcomes recorded has increased significantly since the implementation of Granicus.

**Staff Training was the most popular outcome at 39%** followed by Review Service Standards at 27% and Review and Revise Information at 23%.

## Complaints made to statutory bodies. (Appendix A, G and H)

The number of complaints made to the **Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW)** **reduced during the year to 64** compared to the historic high of 77 during 2024/25.

No complaints were taken into investigation during the period although **11 were resolved through the Early Resolution** process.

During the period **2** Complaints were investigated by the **Welsh Language Commissioner**.

## Public Services Ombudsman Complaints



**64** (77 in 2023/24) complaints in respect of the Council were received by the PSOW during 2024/25, which is a reduction of **13** on the previous year. Inclusive were 3 Code of Conduct complaints.

Early Resolution	11
Out of Jurisdiction	19
Premature Complaint	15
Closed after Initial Consideration	17
Voluntary Settlement	1

There were no complaints taken into investigation during 2024/25, however 11 complaints were resolved through the Early Resolution process.

Details of the Ombudsman interventions are in Appendix H.

**Through the PSOW Early Resolutions process (Appendix A) the council made time and trouble payments totalling £175.**

### Social Services Complaints (see Appendix B)

### Accessibility and Equality Survey

An online Equality Survey is available for members of the public to complete following the submission of an online form using GovService. As of the date of this report **231** responses have been received (146 in 2023/24). The form is available on some Granicus services, it is sent automatically when a form is submitted. Of those who provided data, 65% were female and 35% were male. The following age range completed the online form (2 people didn't provide the full information):

Service Provided	15 to 24	25 to 34	35 to 44	45 to 54	55 to 64	65 to 74	75+
Aspire 2 Own	6	22	12	6	2		
Homelessness	6	9	7		3	3	1
Housing Services	1	2	4	3	3		1
Adult Services		1	2	3	7	8	11
Complaints		2	5	5	15	20	7
Telecare				4	3	4	34
Blue Badge						2	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>59</b>

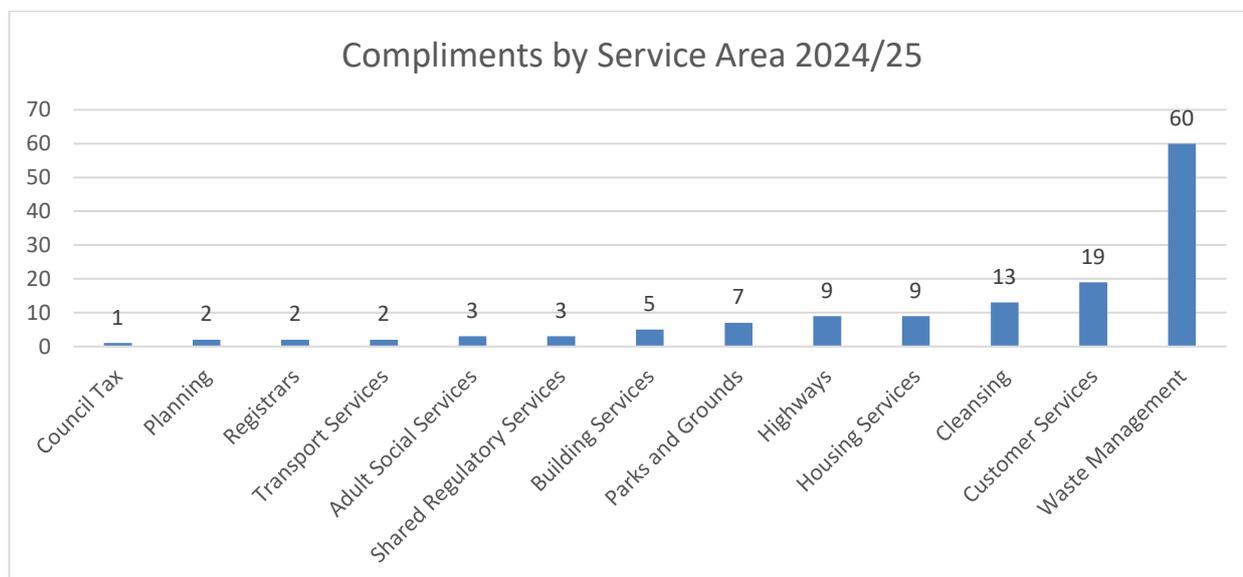
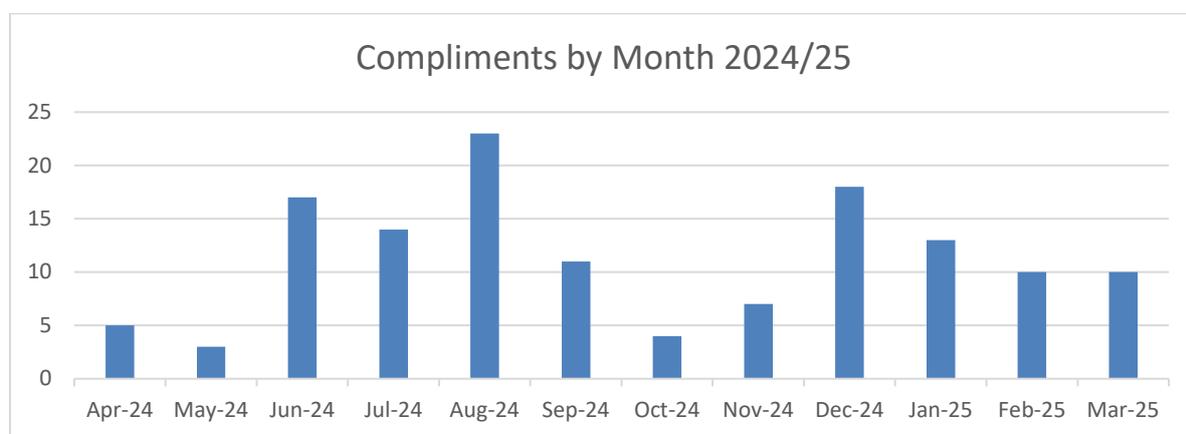


**65%** of the responses were aged 45 or over. Only 13 responses were received from customers between 15 and 24, despite the ability to record Corporate Complaints online. **58%** of the responses were from customers whose day-to-day activities were limited by some form of disability. **5.5%** of the responses speak Welsh and **35.5%** have limited Welsh knowledge.

## Compliments

The council received a total of **135 compliments** during the reporting period. The majority of compliments were recorded **for Environment & Housing at 108**, which includes 60 for Waste Management, 9 for Housing, 11 for Highways, 20 for Parks and Cleansing, 5 for Building Services and 3 for Shared Regulatory Services. 25 compliments were received for Corporate Resources and 2 for Place.

### Compliments April 2024 to March 2025



## Areas for future work

1. Deliver recommendations from the complaint survey report to improve the complainant experience of making a complaint.
2. Develop and deliver a communications plan to ensure residents aged between 18 and 35 years old are aware of the Corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy and feel confident in making a complaint.
3. Work with complaint investigators to maximise functionality of complaints management system to ensure complaints are handled effectively and in a timely way.
4. Ensure that all complaints handlers receive training on effective complaint handling, how to use the complaints system, complaint processes and the revised policy.
5. Work with colleagues across the authority to improve recording and visibility of service improvements created through learning from complaints.
6. Undertake further best practice benchmarking for complaints management within and outside of Wales and use insight to improve our practice.
7. Improve signposting on how to make a complaint to help residents find this information more easily.
8. Use data from complaint handling and other data sets, such as customer satisfaction survey results, to develop improved insight into the resident experience of accessing council services.
9. Work with the digital service to develop real time reporting of complaints for service managers so that they have the information needed to manage the complaint investigation process and identify opportunities for service improvement.



Ask for: Communications



01656 641150



Caseinfo@ombudsman.wales

Date: 14 August 2025

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**PERSONAL & CONFIDENTIAL**

Councillor Lis Burnett  
Vale of Glamorgan Council

**By email only**

lburnett@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk  
DRThomas@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk  
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Dear Councillor Lis Burnett

**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.

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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 61 complaints about Vale of Glamorgan Council and closed 63 – some complaints were carried over from the previous year. Vale of Glamorgan Council's intervention rate was 19%. 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 30 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, 31 recommendations were due. 55% 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. Rob Thomas, Chief Executive, Vale of Glamorgan Council  
Victoria Davidson, Monitoring Officer, Vale of Glamorgan Council  
Tony Curliss, PSOW Liaison Officer, Vale of Glamorgan 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)

Local Authority	MAL			CODE			Total		
	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
<b>Total</b>	<b>1337</b>	<b>3164404</b>	<b>0.41</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>3164404</b>	<b>0.04</b>	<b>1463</b>	<b>3164404</b>	<b>0.45</b>

## Appendix B – Complaints received (by organisation)

Vale of Glamorgan Council	Complaints Received	% Share
Adult Social Services	2	3%
Benefits Administration	1	2%
Children's Social Services	10	16%
Community Facilities, Recreation and Leisure	1	2%
Complaints Handling	9	15%
Covid19	0	
Education	5	8%
Environment and Environmental Health	2	3%
Finance and Taxation	5	8%
Health	0	
Housing	10	16%
Licencing	0	
Planning and Building Control	3	5%
Roads and Transport	4	7%
Self Funding Care Provider	0	
Various Other	9	15%
<b>Total</b>	<b>61</b>	

## 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%
<b>Total</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>1279</b>	<b>13%</b>

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

Vale of Glamorgan 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	17	27%
Early resolution*	11	17%
Matter out of jurisdiction	19	30%
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	15	24%
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*	1	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>63</b>	

## Appendix E – Compliance performance comparison

<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>Number of recommendations made on complaints closed in 2024-25</b>	<b>Number of recommendations falling due in 2024-25</b>	<b>% of recommendations, complied with in line with agreed target date</b>
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	0	0	n/a
Bridgend County Borough Council	15	18	17%
Caerphilly County Borough Council	24	24	50%
Cardiff Council*	97	96	59%
Carmarthenshire County Council	29	27	67%
Ceredigion County Council	24	24	63%
Conwy County Borough Council	14	14	64%
Denbighshire County Council	10	8	50%
Flintshire County Council	20	22	100%
Cyngor Gwynedd	9	9	100%
Isle of Anglesey County Council	4	6	0%
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council	2	8	75%
Monmouthshire County Council	2	2	0%
Neath Port Talbot Council	11	8	88%
Newport City Council	12	11	36%
Pembrokeshire County Council	20	18	61%
Powys County Council	21	23	22%
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	11	10	20%
Swansea Council	25	22	27%
Torfaen County Borough Council	0	0	n/a
Vale of Glamorgan Council	30	31	55%
Wrexham County Borough Council	19	16	63%

## Appendix F – Code of Conduct Complaints Closed (\* denotes investigation)

Vale of Glamorgan 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	3
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*	0
Withdrawn	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>

## 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
<b>Vale of Glamorgan Council</b>								
Barry Town Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Colwinston Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cowbridge with Llanblethian Town Council	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Dinas Powys Community Council	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Ewenny Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Llancarfan Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Llandough Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Llandow Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Llanfair Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Llangan Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Llanmaes Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Llantwit Major Town Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Michaelston le Pit and Leckwith Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Penarth Town Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pendoylan Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Penllyn Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Peterston-Super-Ely Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
St Athan Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
St. Brides Major Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

St. Donats Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
St. Georges and St. Brides-Super-Ely Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
St Nicholas & Bonvilston Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sully and Lavernock Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Welsh St. Donats Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wenvoe Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wick Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0