



Our Equality Plan

What we are going to do to make sure people are treated equally and fairly when they use our service and work for us



This document was written by the **Public Services Ombudsman for Wales**. It is an easy read version of 'Our Equality Plan'.

September 2023

How to use this document



This is an easy read document. But you may still need support to read it. Ask someone you know to help you.



Words in **bold blue writing** may be hard to understand. You can check what the words in blue mean on **page 28**.



Where the document says **we**, this means the **Public Services Ombudsmen for Wales**. For more information contact:

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About us



We are the **Public Services Ombudsman for Wales**.

We have 3 main roles:



- We look into complaints about **public services**. **Public services** are services run for the public. For example, health services and services run by local councils.



- We look at complaints about **councillors** breaking rules. A **councillor** is a person elected at a local council.



- We support making improvements to public services and local councils in Wales.

These are our goals:



- That the people of Wales feel they are listened to and treated fairly.



- That public services listen to complaints and make changes to improve.



- That local councillors have high standards of working.



- That we are respected for doing good work.



We are independent – we are not controlled or managed by government.



We are fair to anyone who needs us.

The law



We work with a law called **The Equality Act 2010**.



This law makes sure people are treated equally, fairly and well.



It recognises that many people are often treated unfairly for a number of reasons. It wants to **protect** these people from being treated unfairly.

The reasons are called **protected characteristics**. It includes things like:



- Being treated unfairly because you are disabled.



- Being treated unfairly because of your race, beliefs or culture.



- Being treated unfairly because your sex, gender or who you love.



- Being treated unfairly because you are pregnant or taking time off work to look after a baby.



- Being treated unfairly because of your age.



We must have plans and goals about equality. This is to make sure we follow this law.



When we make our plans, we also look at how people can be treated unfairly because of money.



For example, some people may have less chances in life when they do not have much money.



We think about how issues like this can affect people when we do our work.

We have achieved a lot of goals we set in our older plans. For example:



- We have spoken to more people from communities that have not spoken with us in the past.



- Staff are being paid more equally.



- We employ more people from different backgrounds.



We still have a lot of work to do. For example, we do not have many disabled staff.



We know we cannot do everything because we do not have enough money or people to do the work.



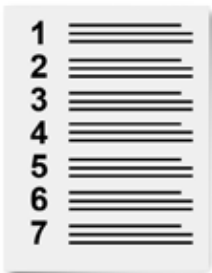
So we want to target things that can help people most.



We also want to be clear on what we did well and what we can do better.



We have 7 main goals as part of our Equality Plan.



We will now talk about these and what we are going to do to achieve them.

1. Support people with additional access needs to use our complaints service



Additional access needs means needing any kind of extra support or information in a different way to be able to use or do something.



We have asked people about our services and most people say it is easy to contact us.



But some groups of people might find it harder. For example:

- People with a learning disability.
- Older people.
- Disabled people.
- People who did not get a good education.

They may find it harder to access our services for a number of reasons. For example:



- If information is not given in a way they can understand.



- If it is difficult for them to contact us.



- If it is difficult for them to go to our offices.



We offer support to people making complaints. We also offer information in other formats. For example, in another language.



We also want to make sure that we treat the Welsh language the same as the English language.



We have a new policy about this which be found here: www.ombudsman.wales/welsh-language-standards



But we know that very few people use our service in Welsh.



Most people say we are **accessible**.

Accessible means everyone finds it easy to find to use something, whatever their needs are.



We want to make sure we are **accessible** to **everyone**.



We want to make sure people know we can offer them support to make a complaint.



We also want to improve how Welsh speakers can use our service.

This is what we are going to do:



- We will make sure the public know about the support we can offer.



- We will make sure people know about our Welsh language service.



- We will check how we support people and make sure we do it well.



- We will make sure our staff have training so they know how to support people from different groups well.

2. Talk more with different groups of people to help improve our services



We do a lot of work to get feedback from the public about our services.



However, we do not do specific work to get feedback from a range of **diverse** groups of people.

Diverse means people from a range of backgrounds.



We think we need to change this.



We want to know how to support people better. Also, what issues they face that may stop them from using our services.

This is what we are going to do:



- We will organise more chances for people from **diverse** groups to tell us what they think about what we do.

3. Make sure different groups of people know about us and what we can do



We found out last year that **under** half of the people living in Wales knew who we were and what we do.



This included different groups of people, for example people of different race, disabled people and Welsh speakers.

We want to make sure that:



- everyone knows about us



- and that we get complaints from lots of different groups of people – if they need us.

This is what we are going to do:



- We will do more to meet people from different groups face-to-face.



- We will work with more organisations to help us reach more groups.



- We will make more of our information available in different formats. For example, other languages and easy read.

4. Make more of our information accessible



It is really important that everyone can understand our information.



We think we need to do more to make sure lots of people can use our website easily.

Here are some of the things we will do:



- Use our social media accounts more. This means sites like Twitter and Facebook.



- Have more printed information.



- Make our website easier to use.



- Make more videos.

5. Help to make sure that people can easily complain to the organisations that deliver public services



One of the things that we do is to improve how organisations deal with complaints. This is our **Complaints Standard** role.



We have given training to lots of organisations about how to handle complaints well. We also told them what a good complaints policy looks like.



We expect public services to think about groups of people who may find it hard to make a complaint.



We think that organisations, for example local councils, could be doing more work here.

This is what we want to do:



- Use our **Complaints Standards** role to check if organisations know which different groups complain to them.



- Encourage organisations to improve how they support different groups to complain.

6. Make sure our staff represent all the people of Wales



We looked into the staff we employ.



We found out that we employ staff from a number of groups of people.



But we found there were some groups of people we did not employ enough of. For example:

- Young people
- Disabled people
- People who came from a range of countries.
- **Trans** people

Trans means people whose gender is not the same as the sex they were born with.



We now have a plan in place to help change this.

This is what we are going to do:



- We will advertise jobs in lots of different places.



- We will make sure applying for a job with us is **accessible**.



- We will tell groups of people about us being a supportive employer and get their views.

7. Keep checking women are paid fairly



We have looked into this and made a lot of progress. However, because we are a small organisation, small changes can make a big difference.



We know we need to keep a close check of this.



We also want to make sure all our staff have chances to develop in their career.

This is what we are going to do:



- We will make sure all staff get chances to develop when chances come up.



- We will keep checking these issues.

Who will check we are achieving our goals



Our management team is responsible for checking we are meeting all our plans and goals.



We have a **Chief Operating Officer** and **Director of Improvement**. They check we follow all the laws we need to and that we work well.



We also have an **Improvement Team** and we have a **Head of Policy, Communications and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**. We also have an **Equality Group**.



Their jobs are to check our work and help to make sure people are treated equally and fairly.



All of our staff are responsible for doing their jobs well and are checked.

How we will know that we are achieving our goals



We collect information from the people who use our service, our staff and people who work for us to check we are working well.

How we will check that we pay attention to needs of different groups in all we do



Every time we put in place a new policy or project, we check what effect it would have on different people. We publish this information on our website.

How we will help our staff understand how to support different groups



We provide training for staff about equality and let them know about other chances to learn about it.

Hard words

Accessible

Accessible means everyone finds it easy to find and use something, whatever their needs are.

Additional access needs

Additional access needs means needing any kind of extra support or information in a different way to be able to use or do something.

Trans

Trans means people whose gender is not the same as the sex they were born with.