



**RHONDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

**17<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2020**

**PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES - ANNUAL REPORT AND LETTER 2019–2020**

**REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER IN DISCUSSIONS WITH CLLR M. WEBBER, DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR COUNCIL BUSINESS**

**1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

To advise Cabinet of the publication of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales' ('PSOW') Annual Report and Annual Letter to this Council for 2019-2020.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

2.1 That Cabinet considers and notes the 2019-2020 Public Services Ombudsman for Wales' Annual Report and Annual Letter to this Council.

**3. BACKGROUND**

3.1 The PSOW is independent of all government bodies and has legal powers to investigate complaints about public services and independent care providers in Wales. They also investigate complaints that Members of local government bodies have breached their authority's Code of Conduct.

3.2 Following commencement of the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019 the office also has new powers aimed at:

- Providing a seamless mechanism for complaint handling when a patient's NHS care is inextricably linked with private healthcare;
- Allowing the PSOW to undertake own initiative investigations when required in the public interest (e.g. where PSOW suspects potential systemic failures of services or where residents feel unable to complain due to the fact that they are dependent on health/council services or because they are vulnerable);
- Ensuring that complaints data from across Wales may be used to drive improvement in public services for citizens in Wales; and
- Improving access to his office.

- 3.3 The Council has adopted the Model Corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy. This is a two-stage process with Stage 1 complaints being seen as informal. Stage 2 complaints are seen as formal complaints. A complainant is entitled to escalate any matter to the PSOW if they remain unhappy following receipt of a Stage 2 response.

#### **4. ANNUAL REPORT & LETTER 2019-2020**

- 4.1 The PSOW has published his Annual Report for 2019-2020 ('AR') pursuant to the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2005. The AR has been combined with the annual accounts for the PSOW as it was last year. The purpose of the AR is to report on the performance of the PSOW's office over the year, provide an update on developments and to deliver any key messages arising from their work carried out during the year.

- 4.2 The Executive Summary to the Annual Report is attached at Appendix 1 and the full report accessed via the PSOW website via the following link:

[Annual Report 2019-2020 CYMRAEG](#)

- 4.3 The PSOW also issues an Annual Letter (AL) to each Local Authority in Wales with a summary of complaints received by his office that relate specifically to that Local Authority. The 2019-2020 AL for this Council is attached as Appendix 2 to this report.

- 4.4 The AR sets out the workload that has been dealt with by the PSOW during 2019-2020. It breaks the workload down into the number of enquiries received and the number of complaints received, and also breaks down the complaints into those received about services (public body complaints) and those received in relation to Member Code of Conduct Complaints.

- 4.5 During the reporting period the overall number of complaints about public bodies was similar to last year (an increase of only 1.6%). The proportion of interventions – cases where they find maladministration or service failure – was also lower (20%, compared to 24% the previous period). In the most serious cases there was a reduction of 71% in the number of public interest reports issued (4 as against 14 previously). With regards to new complaints about local authorities the overall number has decreased by 2.4% compared to the previous year. There was also a drop of 18% in the number of complaints made concerning alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct and a 3% fall in the number of complaints about Health Boards. There has been a 20% increase in complaints about housing associations.

- 4.6 The number of complaints about local authorities across Wales reduced to 890 from 912.

- 4.7 Of the 2,242 complaints received about public bodies the top 5 categories related to health (41%), housing (15%), complaint handling (9%), social services (8%) and planning and building control (7%).

- 4.8 In terms of local authorities specifically the main subjects were: Social Services (18%) Housing (16.9%) Planning and Building Control (15.4%) Environment and Environmental Health (10.6%) Complaint Handling (9%).

- 4.9 During 2019-2020 39 complaints (for periods 2018/2019 – 36 and 2017/2018 – 36) were received by the PSOW relating to this Authority which equates to 0.16 complaints per 1000 residents. Encouragingly, this represents the second lowest total in Wales out of the 22 authorities.
- 4.10 The highest number of complaints for this Council, by subject, related to Environment and Environmental Health followed by Children’s Social Services. Two complaints were received relating to complaints handling (as against 4 in the previous period):

<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>COMPLAINTS 17/18</b>	<b>COMPLAINTS 18/19</b>	<b>COMPLAINTS 19/20</b>
Adult Social Services	2	5	3
Benefits Administration	1	1	2
Children’s Social Services	10	9	7
Community Facilities, Recreation and Leisure	-	1	-
Complaints Handling	3	4	2
Education	1	2	1
Environment & Environmental Health	5	1	9
Finance and Taxation	2	2	-
Health	-	1	-
Housing	2	4	5
Planning and Building Control	4	3	3
Roads and Transport	3	2	4
Various Other	3	1	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>39</b>

- 4.11 Of the 40 complaints closed by the PSOW during the period, 12 were closed after initial consideration, 2 were considered to be out of jurisdiction and 21 premature. Those considered to have been premature related to cases where the complainant had not exhausted the Council’s complaints policy. 5 complaints were resolved through the PSOW ‘early resolution’ process, meaning that the Council agreed to undertake actions to resolve matters without the need for a formal PSOW investigation – see Table C of Appendix 2.
- 4.12 In total 12.5% of the Council’s cases during the period required PSOW intervention, the same as reported in the previous period.
- 4.13 There were no Code of Conduct complaints made about Members in relation to their role as County Borough Councillors during the period.
- 4.14 26 complaints were received in relation to Town and Community Councils within RCT, and all save for one, were closed after initial consideration or

were withdrawn. – see Table E and F of Appendix 2. One complaint was investigated but subsequently discontinued.

- 4.15 The PSOW also publishes a quarterly casebook which contains the summaries of all reports issued during the quarter, as well as a selection of summaries relating to quick fixes and voluntary settlements. These can be accessed via the following link:

<https://www.ombudsman.wales/case-books/> [CYMRAEG](#)

- 4.16 Appendix 3 contains the relevant extracts from the Casebooks for the 2019-2020 period that related to this Council.

## **5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

## **6. CONSULTATION**

- 6.1 The PSOW requests that his Annual Letter to the Council is presented to Cabinet to assist Members in their scrutiny of the Council's performance.

## **7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There are no equality and diversity implications arising from this report.

## **8. FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report however it should be noted that the PSOW has legal powers to require the Council to make payments to complainants where they have suffered financial loss or compensation as a consequence of maladministration.

## **9. WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS (WALES) ACT**

- 9.1 Learning from complaints, and customer feedback, can contribute to the development of services that meet the needs and expectations of the Council's residents and service users. In this way residents and service users can be involved in improving services and ensuring that they meet long-term needs in a sustainable way. The ability to identify the causes of complaint and service failure presents an opportunity to have a preventative impact – particularly where services manage wellbeing issues.

## **10. CONCLUSION**

- 10.1 The PSOW has requested that the Annual Letter for this Council be presented to Cabinet for consideration the details of which have been set out in this report.

- 10.2 Cabinet also receives an Annual Report in respect of complaints, compliments and comments received during the relevant period in respect of both the Statutory Social Services complaints process and those handled through the Council's corporate Customer Feedback Scheme. These reports enable Cabinet to further review and assess how the Council is managing, and learning from, the feedback it receives.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

**AS AMENDED BY**

**THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

**17 NOVEMBER 2020**

**REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER IN DISCUSSIONS WITH CLLR M. WEBBER, DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR COUNCIL BUSINESS**

**Background Papers:**

Public Services Ombudsman For Wales – Annual Report & Accounts 2019-2020

**Contact:** Andy Wilkins – Director of Legal Services & Monitoring Officer –  
(01443) 424105

**Report Consultees:**

Jayne Thomas - Customer Feedback, Engagement and Complaints Manager

# Ombudsman Ombwdsmon

PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES  
OMBWDSMON GWASANAETHAU CYHOEDDUS CYMRU

## Delivering Justice

The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

### ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS

2019/20

Executive Summary



## Message from the Ombudsman

This document was prepared during the Covid-19 global pandemic which has put unprecedented pressures on Welsh public services, particularly health and social care. I am therefore glad to report this year some trends that could indicate improvement in practice by bodies in my jurisdiction.



We saw this year fewer new complaints; a smaller proportion of cases where we found maladministration or service failure; and fewer most serious cases, requiring us to issue a public interest report or refer an alleged breach of the Code of Conduct to the Adjudication Panel for Wales or Local Authority Standards Committees.

Amongst the main highlights of the year, in 2019 the National Assembly for Wales passed our new Act. We are now the first ombudsman office in the UK to have full and operational powers to drive systemic improvement of public services through investigations on own initiative and the Complaints Standards role. We took this year major steps to implement these new powers, alongside our more traditional work to promote improvement.

None of this work would have happened without my dedicated staff. My thanks to them for the excellent work that they have done in delivering justice in Wales.

### Nick Bennett

Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

### About us

We have three main roles:

- handling complaints about public service providers
- considering complaints about breaches of the Code of Conduct by elected members
- driving systemic improvement of public services.

We are independent of all government bodies and the service we provide is free of charge.

We are based in Pencoed, South Wales. We also have a small office in North Wales.

### Contact us

1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae, Pencoed, CF35 5LJ

**0300 790 0203**

[ask@ombudsman.wales](mailto:ask@ombudsman.wales)

<https://www.ombudsman.wales/>



We have **73** staff





## We deliver for those who have suffered injustice

	2019/20		2018/19
<b>New enquiries and complaints</b>	<b>7200</b>		<b>7116</b>

<b>New complaints about public bodies</b>	<b>2242</b>		<b>2207</b>
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### About

**1.6%**

more new complaints about public bodies. This could indicate a drop in their performance - but could also be attributed to increasing awareness of our service.

Health	41%		41%
Housing	15%		12%
Complaint handling	9%		11%
Social services	8%		9%
Planning and building control	7%		9%
Other	20%	...	18%

Despite the same level of complaints about health overall,

**3%**

fall in new complaints about Health Boards, suggesting that our work with these bodies may be helping to support improvement.

<b>New Code of Conduct complaints</b>	<b>231</b>		<b>282</b>
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### About

**18%**

fewer allegations of breaches of the Code of Conduct, due to a significant and welcome drop in frivolous complaints made against members of Town and Community Councils.

Promotion of equality and respect	49%		51%
Disclosure and registration of interests	17%		17%
Accountability and openness	11%		7%
Integrity	10%		13%
Duty to uphold the law	7%		9%
Selflessness and stewardship	3%		1%
Objectivity and propriety	2%		2%



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.

1222

recommendations issued to public bodies.

Almost £80k

of financial redress recommended.

0

We did not need to issue any special reports.

20%

of our recommendations highlighted retraining or process reviews. This can lead to significant improvement in public services.

### An example of impact of our recommendations

We investigated this year a complaint brought to us by the family of someone who had sadly died. The family was concerned about the care given by the Health Board in question, including intravenous (IV) fluid management. We recommended that the Health Board review its procedures. As a result, the Health Board recognised it did not have an up to date IV fluid management policy. The Health Board also appointed a clinical lead to co-ordinate new guidelines and, in December 2019, published new guidance on this issue.

## We innovate and drive improvement across the public sector



Our new legislation passed in 2019 gave us new powers to undertake investigations on 'own initiative' as well as to establish a Complaints Standards role.



We launched a consultation on our proposal to focus our first own initiative investigation on homelessness.



We finalised our Complaint Handling Principles, Model Complaints Handling Policy and accompanying guidance.



We engaged extensively about our new powers with stakeholders across Wales.



We issued criteria and a process for undertaking own initiative investigations.




We started to gather data from Local Authorities on their complaint handling, finding much divergence in practices across Wales.


We also continued to share our findings through public interest reports, casebooks, thematic reports and annual letters to the bodies in our jurisdiction.

We issued:

**4** public interest reports

**About**

Health  2

Planning  1

Student loans  1

**1** thematic report

[Justice Mislaidd: Lost Records and Lost Opportunities](#) 

We published our first [Equality and Human Rights Casebook](#)



“The new Human Rights Casebook by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales is an excellent resource for ensuring that public bodies remain committed to their equality and human rights obligations.”

Equality and Human Rights Commission



## We embrace learning and welcome feedback

**227** review cases were closed.

**11%** of these reviews identified that we could do more, often where additional evidence was provided by the complainant.

**32** complaints about us were closed.

**22%** of these were upheld or partially upheld.

**57%** of all complainants questioned were satisfied with our customer service...

...rising to **98%** amongst those satisfied with the outcome of their complaint.



## We strive to ensure and promote accessibility, equality and diversity

**91%** of our customers questioned found it easy to contact us.

**48%** of respondents to a national survey knew about us.

**2%** of complaints were received orally. We are planning more outreach around this power in 2020/21.

**87%** of respondents to our staff survey felt that PSOW is committed to creating a diverse, equal and inclusive workplace.



We signed up as a Disability Confident Committed Employer.



We achieved the silver FairPlay Employer level for gender equality.



## We care for and invest in our staff

**99%**

of respondents to our staff survey were proud to work for PSOW.

**93%**

of staff completed 28 or more hours of continuing professional development.

We saw the average percentage of working days lost through staff sickness increase to

**3.4%**



... but we launched our new Wellbeing Strategy and a number of actions to support staff wellbeing.



## We are accountable and transparent about our performance and use of resources

Our budget

**£4,954k**

**92%**

of our budgeted funding for new powers (£231k) was actually spent on implementation.

Our unit cost per case

**£669**

Over the last 7 years we have seen

a **34%** rise in workload

a **14%** fall, in real terms, in unit cost per case.



We attended two scrutiny sessions with the National Assembly for Wales.



We reduced our energy usage by 2%.



We maintained close links with colleagues in the UK, Europe and around the world.



We reduced our waste by 13.2%.


We avoided

**41%**


more commuting mileage per day.

Our ref: NB

Ask for: Communications

 01656 641150

Date: 7 September 2020

 Communications  
@ombudsman-wales.org.uk

Councillor Andrew Morgan  
Council Leader  
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

**By Email Only**

Andrew.Morgan2@rhondda-cynon-taff.gov.uk

Dear Councillor Morgan

### **Annual Letter 2019/20**

I am pleased to provide you with the Annual letter (2019/20) for Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough 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: Chris Bradshaw, Chief Executive  
Jayne Thomas, 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
<b>Wales</b>	<b>866</b>	<b>0.28</b>

\* inc 1 Rent Smart Wales

### B. Complaints Received by Subject

Rhonnda Cynon Taf CBC	Complaints Received	Complaints Percentage Share
Adult Social Services	3	7.69%
Benefits Administration	2	5.13%
Children's Social Services	7	17.95%
Complaint Handling	2	5.13%
Education	1	2.56%
Environment and Environmental Health	9	23.08%
Housing	5	12.82%
Planning and Building Control	3	7.69%
Roads and Transport	4	10.26%
Various Other	3	7.69%

### 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
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	21	2	12	5	0	0	0	0	40
Percentage Share	52.50%	5.00%	30.00%	12.50%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	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%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>879</b>	<b>13%</b>



**E. Code of Conduct Complaints Closed**

<b>County/County Borough Councils</b>	<b>Closed after initial consideration</b>	<b>Discontinued</b>	<b>No evidence of breach</b>	<b>No action necessary</b>	<b>Refer to Standards Committee</b>	<b>Refer to Adjudication Panel</b>	<b>Withdrawn</b>	<b>Total</b>
Rhondda Cynon Taf	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

**F. Town/Community Council Code of Complaints**

<b>Town/Community Council</b>	<b>Closed after initial consideration</b>	<b>Discontinued</b>	<b>No evidence of breach</b>	<b>No action necessary</b>	<b>Refer to Standards Committee</b>	<b>Refer to Adjudication Panel</b>	<b>Withdrawn</b>	<b>Total</b>
Llantwit Fardre Community Council	21	1	-	-	-	-	-	22
Taff's Well and Nantgarw Community Council	3	-	-	-	-	-	1	4
Ynysybwl & Coed-y-cwm Community Council	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1

## **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](mailto:communications@ombudsman-wales.org.uk)

**EXTRACTS FROM THE PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES  
CASEBOOKS PUBLISHED DURING THE 2019-2020 PERIOD RELATING TO  
RHONDDA CYNON TAF CBC**

**COMPLAINTS HANDLING**  
**Early Resolution and Voluntary Settlement**

**Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council - Housing**  
**Case Number: 201901678 – Report issued in July 2019**

Mr X complained that the Council failed to recognise that his neighbouring property, which has been empty for over 15 years has an overgrown garden which has damaged his property and garden. Mr X also complained that the Council failed to take any action to remedy the issue. The Ombudsman contacted the Council because he was concerned that the Council had failed to inform Mr X that his complaint email would not be treated as a formal complaint. The Council agreed to carry out the following in settlement of the complaint within 4 weeks of the Ombudsman's decision.

- a) Provide a written apology to Mr X for failing to inform him that his email was not going to be treated as a formal complaint
- b) Provide Mr X with an explanation as to why his email was not treated as a formal complaint
- c) Provide Mr X with a written explanation detailing the findings of the investigation

**Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council – Roads and Transport**  
**Case Number: 201807891 - Report issued in April 2019**

Ms X complained that the Council had failed to respond to her correspondence about a car parking Penalty Charge Notice she had received. The Council confirmed to the Ombudsman that, due to an oversight, it had failed to respond to Ms X. The Council therefore agreed to complete the following by 3 May 2019 in settlement of Ms X's complaint:

- a) Apologise to Ms X for failing to respond to her correspondence
- b) Explain why it failed to respond
- c) Provide a response to Ms X's correspondence.

**Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council-Refuse collection Recycling and waste disposal**  
**Case Number: 201905648 – Report issued in January 2020**

Ms X complained that Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council ("the Council") had not responded to her complaint regarding planning permission for a recycling yard to operate near Ms X's home. The Council agreed to undertake the following in settlement of Ms X's complaint:

- a) To issue its response letter addressing Ms X's concerns by 24 January 2020.

The Ombudsman considered this to be an appropriate resolution to the complaint.

**CHILDREN'S SOCIAL SERVICES**  
**Early Resolution and Voluntary Settlement**

**Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council - Children in care/taken into care/'at risk' register/child abuse/custody of children**  
**Case Number: 201807627 - Report issued in April 2019**

Ms X complained that the Council failed to help her gain legal custody for her granddaughter who had been placed in her care for being neglected by the mother, Ms X's daughter. Ms X complained that the Council took no action when her daughter took back her child, after two and a half years in Ms X's care.

Since receiving the complaint, circumstances had changed and Ms X understood that the Council could take no action to help her. However, as the complaint was received by the Council in December 2018, it agreed to undertake the following actions: -

- a) Write a formal apology and explanation of the current position by 22 May 2019.
- b) Explain in writing the actions the Council would have taken to support a fresh application, had the circumstances not have changed, by 22 May 2019.
- c) Explain in writing the reasons why the Council can no longer take that action, due to the change of circumstances, by 22 May 2019.

**Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council - Children in care/taken into care/'at risk' register/child abuse/custody of children**  
**Case Number: 201807835 – Report issued in June 2019**

Mrs B complained about:

- a) The decisions/actions of the social services department in relation to the removal of her newborn baby.
- b) Social workers' preparation for/participation in case conferences.
- c) Lack of support/provision.

Following commencement of the Ombudsman's investigation, the Council proposed to undertake the following in settlement of the complaint:

- a) Progress Mrs B's complaint to Stage 2 of the Social Services Complaints Procedure.
- b) Hold a learning event to share learning from the case with all relevant staff within Children's Services.
- c) Provide a report on the findings with a detailed action plan for learning and improvements identified.
- d) Offer Mrs B a full and unreserved apology for any failings identified and any distress caused.
- e) Increase the offer of financial compensation for out of pocket expenses, and in acknowledgement of the time and inconvenience of Mrs B having to pursue complaint with the Ombudsman, to £1000.

The Ombudsman considered this to be a reasonable settlement and concluded the investigation on this basis.