



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Board Meeting: 30 January 2014

AGENDA ITEM: 6

Title of paper:	Welsh Government Complaints Update
Purpose of paper:	To provide an update to the Board on complaints data and the lessons learnt from complaints handling.
Action required by the Board:	No decision needed but the Board is asked to note and discuss the progress made.
Official presenting the paper:	Sanjiv Vedi
Paper prepared by:	Sanjiv Vedi, Head of Complaints Unit

1. Background

1.1 The Central Complaints Unit collects complaints data and supports other departments in handling complaints made about the services which the Welsh Government provides. In addition, the Unit manages the relationship with the Ombudsman's office. The Unit also handles complaints about our compliance with the Welsh Language policy.

1.2 This report sets out:

- a) complaints data across the Welsh Government between March 2013 and September 2013;
- b) complaints registered by Welsh Government departments by
 - i) failures in our administrative action;
 - ii) failure to provide a good service;
 - iii) failure to comply with our Welsh Language Scheme and
 - iv) enquiries and complaints about policy and issues outside of our remit.

1.3 The data shown is only that collected by Central Complaints Unit and does not include complaints received by other functions such as procurement, HR, and security or Freedom of Information.

2 Complaints – last six months' report

2.1 Table 1 below sets out the number of complaints handled by the Unit since April 2010. They do appear to indicate a reduction in the number of people submitting complaints. However, the figures mask a range of contributory factors where in previous years the Welsh Government was pursuing a number of particularly controversial policies. In addition, the Unit has introduced a more transparent data collection method, which involves counting a case once across the lifetime of progression, rather than counting a complaint at each stage as a new or separate complaint.

Table 1

Period	Total number of complaints
1 April 2010 – 31 March 2011	193
1 April 2011 – 31 March 2012	166
1 April 2012 – 31 March 2013	114
1 April 2013 – 30 September 2013	62

2.2 From 1 April 2013 to 30 September 2013, the Central Complaints Unit received a total of 62 complaints. Of these 42 were outside the remit of the Welsh Government's complaints policy or were complaints about other public organisations. In these cases the Central Complaints Unit referred these to the appropriate Division or organisation to be considered and responded to direct. The remaining 22 were considered through stage 1 and/or stage 2 of our complaints process.

- 2.3 As has been the case in the previous year, the majority of complaints reported for the period identified were categorised as failure in our administrative action which is generally defined as maladministration and poor customer service.

3 Issues for consideration

- 3.1 At the last Board update in July 2013, we reported the Ombudsman's concerns about the rise in NHS and Social Care complaints. We can report that CSSIW has now introduced guidance to inspectors on handling complaints and concerns.
- 3.2 The Central Complaints Unit works closely with the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW). Officials in CSSIW Corporate Services have developed and published internal guidance to inspectors on handling complaints and concerns within their area. The guidance explains the difference between concerns which are not considered under the remit of the complaints policy and complaints about the administrative actions of CSSIW, which are. The Central Complaints Unit welcomes the work that has been undertaken to publish these guidance documents which are now available on the Intranet.
- 3.3 We can also report that the Minister for Health and Social Services has made public his intention to commission a review of Handling of Concerns (complaints) in NHS Wales.
- 3.4 In addition, the Head of the Complaints Unit met with an official from the Aneurin Bevan Health Board to share the lessons learnt from the Welsh Government's experience of handling complaints and to share experience of the recent introduction of our new complaints handling policy. The Unit will continue to provide support to those in the Welsh Government wanting to improve their customer complaints handling.
- 3.5 The Head of Complaints also met with a colleague from Natural Resources Wales (NRW) again to support and advise them in developing NRW's complaints handling policy. We shared papers, policies and practical applications, and our handling of complaints. NRW has shared its draft documents for us to comment on.
- 3.6 Finally, we held our follow up meeting with the Principality Building Society. Their operational activity is similar to that of Welsh Government—like us they have a recording system and an operational policy. Their case handling is, however, made easier by their greater willingness to offer refunds and cash incentives where appropriate.
- 3.7 Whilst we noted their case load is much higher—nearly double that of the Welsh Government—their complaints are very different to ours by their very nature. There are similarities in our strategic and high level aims, such as a willingness to be open and transparent and to learn

lessons. But unlike our operation, which is multi-faceted and departmental based, the Principality is a single operation which makes it easier to manage, collect data and to respond with a degree of uniformity to which we cannot always adhere.

- 3.8 Finally, the Board should note that Mr Peter Tyndall, has now vacated his post as Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. The Assembly Commission has appointed Professor Margaret Griffiths as acting PSOW.

4. Resource implications

- 4.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

5. Risks

- 5.1 None to report.

6. Communication

- 6.1 In December 2013 the Central Complaints Unit, in conjunction with Eliesha, held a pilot training session with officials across Departments on handling complaints. The course will hopefully be rolled out from April 2014. Feedback was useful and positive and the Unit is continuing to work on finalising the course details. The Unit will provide a more detailed update at a future meeting.

7. General Compliance Issues

- 7.1 There are no compliance issues to consider.

8. Recommendation

- 8.1 The paper is for information and is reporting on progress made, although Board members are invited to discuss.

- 9.1 This paper should be published in full as none of the exemptions in the Code of Practice on Public Access to Information apply.

Date submitted to Secretariat: 17 January 2014