


Ask for: Matthew Harris

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Date: 30 September 2020

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Dilwyn Williams
Gwynedd Council

By Email only: dilwynowenwilliams@gwynedd.llyw.cymru

Dear Dilwyn

Since the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019 achieved Royal Assent in July 2019, the world has changed considerably in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Whilst I was originally planning to write to you in March this year, we have revised our plans and aimed to support Public Bodies during their response.

My Complaints Standards Authority, led by Matthew Harris, our Head of Complaints Standards, has engaged widely with representatives from all 22 Local Authorities. The Team has met with committed staff, all of whom understand the impact that considerate complaint handling and administration can have on the outcomes experienced by the people of Wales. Our visits last year started a new conversation about complaint handling standards, allowed us to take stock of existing good practice and enabled us to explain our offer of bespoke training.

The training – which will be delivered at no charge – is designed to support and enhance complaint handling throughout public services by considering best practice from multiple sectors from around the world. We will work with public bodies to ensure that the training we deliver is personalised to each service, incorporating elements of their own systems where necessary and considering the audience for each session.

This ground-breaking training was originally scheduled to begin in April 2020, with 30 dates booked through to July. We rightly took the decision to postpone these face-to-face sessions, and we have developed a new virtual approach – true to our original plan – which we began delivering this month.

Page 1 of 2

Since July last year, we have also received quarterly complaints data from public bodies – the first time this has happened in Wales. This data allows new insights into the way public bodies record and handle complaints and gives fresh context to our current data. The submitted data will ultimately be published on our website and will eventually inform the way our annual letters and reports are framed.

I think it is fair to say that, since previous complaint handling guidance was issued by Welsh Government in 2011, a diverse range of complaints practices has emerged. Our new guidance aims to bring practices back into broad alignment – providing basic standards, a common language and a set of principles to underpin how complaints are handled throughout public services.

I am very pleased to confirm that our Statement of Principles, Model Complaint Handling Process, and Guidance are in full effect. These documents now apply to Gwynedd Council, and copies can be found on our website – www.ombudsman.wales/complaints-standards-authority.

Therefore, and in compliance with Section 38 of the new Act, I would actively encourage all public bodies to reflect on how their own practices and procedures comply with the stated guidance and consider how they will ensure that all complaints are captured appropriately.

In accordance with the Act, I must receive a copy of your updated complaints handling procedure within six months of the date of this letter.

I would encourage you and your teams to engage with the Complaints Standards Authority should they have any questions, and I look forward to continuing working together to drive the improvement of public services in Wales.

Yours sincerely,



Nick Bennett
Ombudsman

cc. Cllr. Dyfrig L. Siencyn, Leader of Gwynedd Council
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