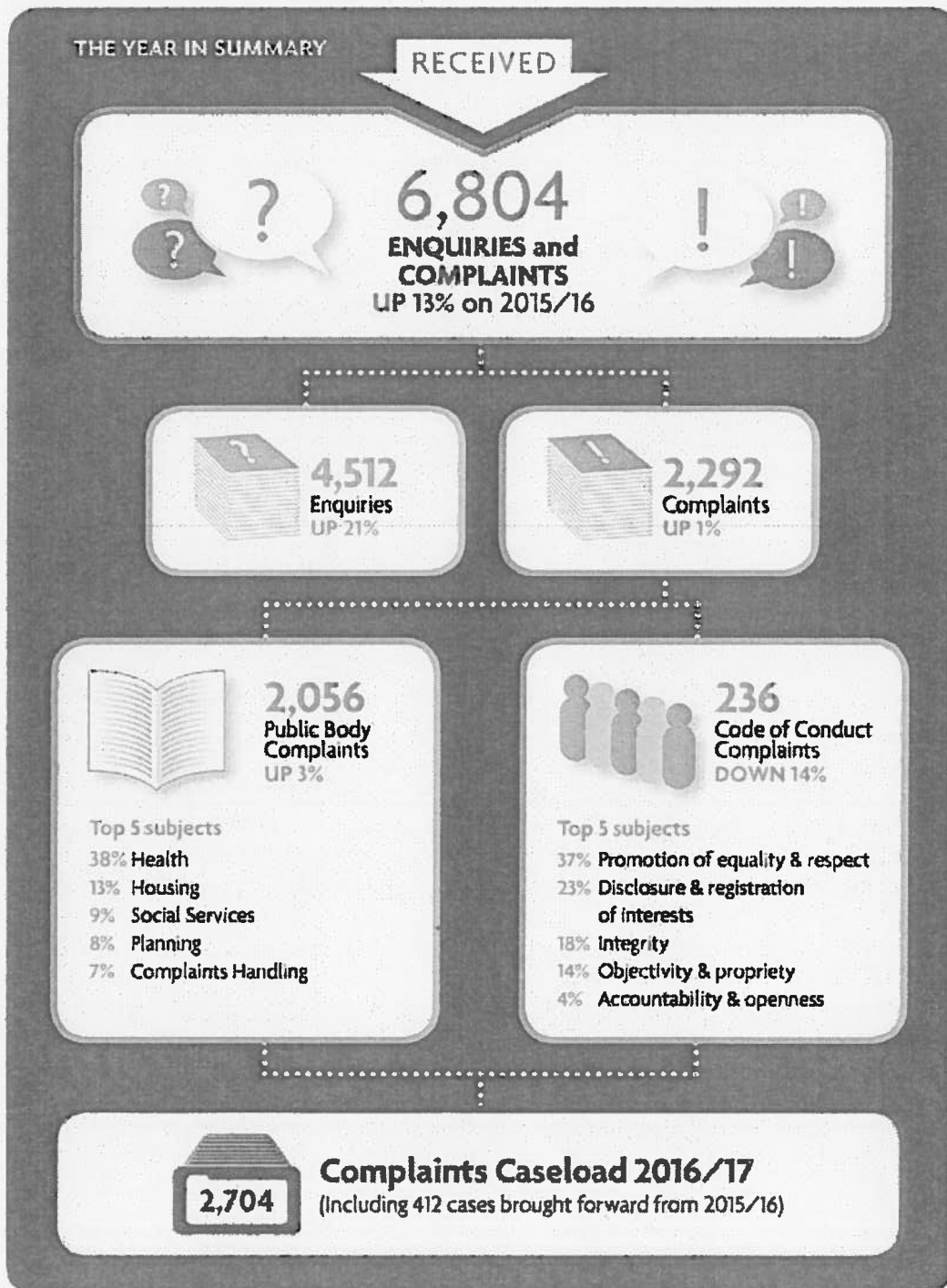
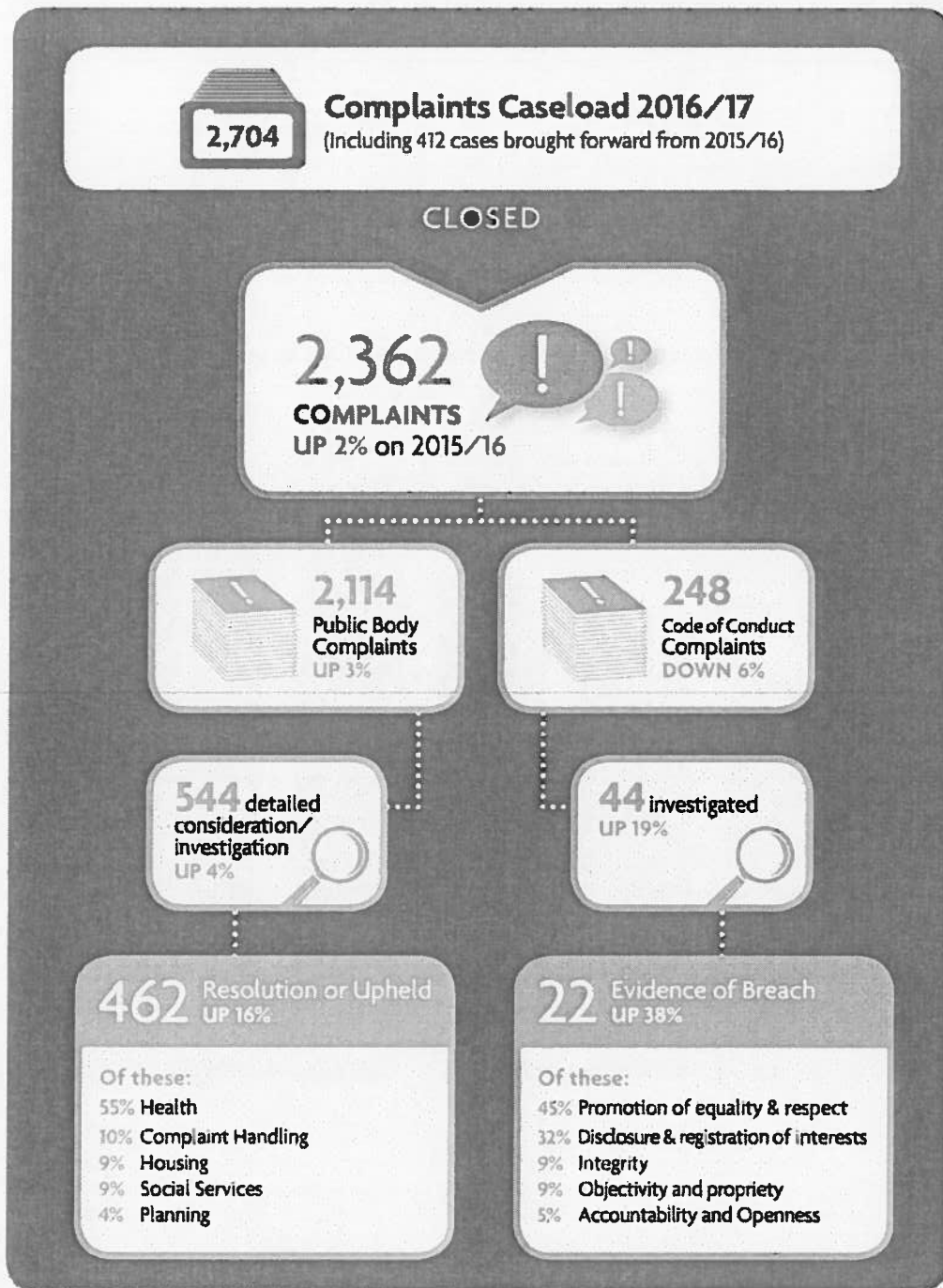


The Complaints Service

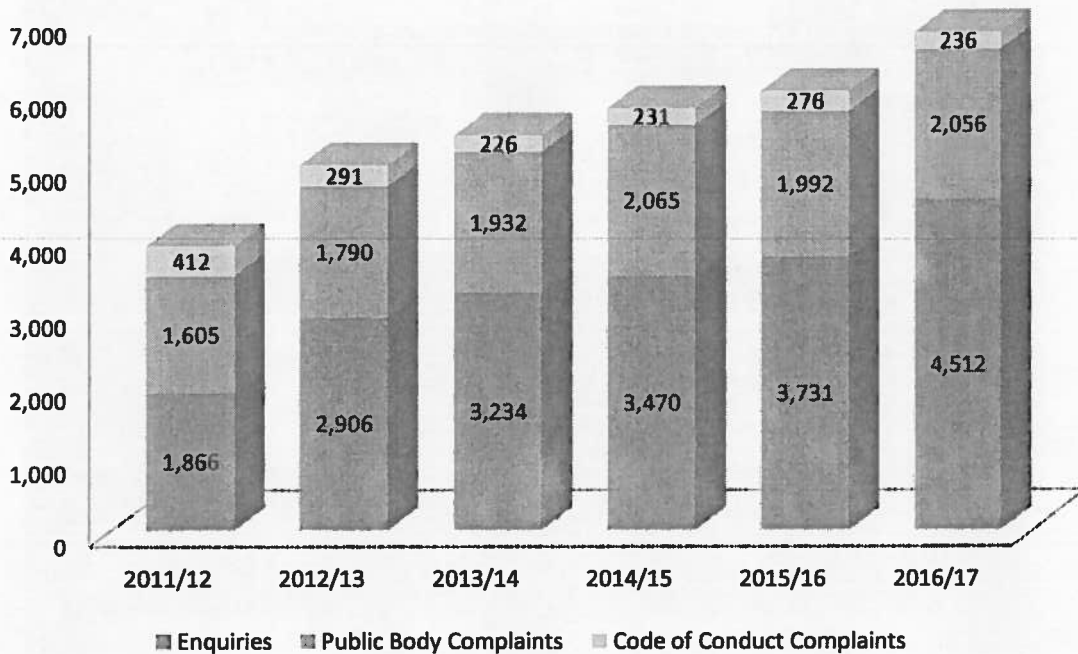




Overall Casework Statistics

The number of enquiries and complaints (public body complaints, and complaints about the conduct of members of local authorities) totalled 6804 during 2016/17 which is a 13% increase on the position for 2015/16. Over the past six years, overall casework has increased by 75%.

Total Enquiries and Complaints received by year



Enquiries

The office dealt with 4,512 enquiries during 2016/17 compared with 3,731 the previous year. This is a 21% increase. Despite this increase we have continued to maintain a fast and efficient service at the frontline.

We set ourselves the target of answering our main line reception calls within 30 seconds in 95% of cases. The Team performed impressively in this regard, answering 98% of calls within this timescale.

An enquiry is a contact made by a potential complainant asking about the service provided, which does not, result in a formal complaint being made to me at that time. At this point in our service we will advise people how to make a complaint to me or, where the matter is outside my jurisdiction, direct the enquirer to the appropriate organisation able to help them. Where appropriate, the Complaints Advice Team will also seek to resolve a problem at enquiry stage without taking the matter forward to the stage of a formal complaint.

Public Body Complaints

During 2016/17 we received 2,056 complaints about public sector providers – a 3% increase on the previous financial year. This brings public body complaints to a similar level as 2014/15 when my office received 2,065 complaints.

Sectoral breakdown of complaints received

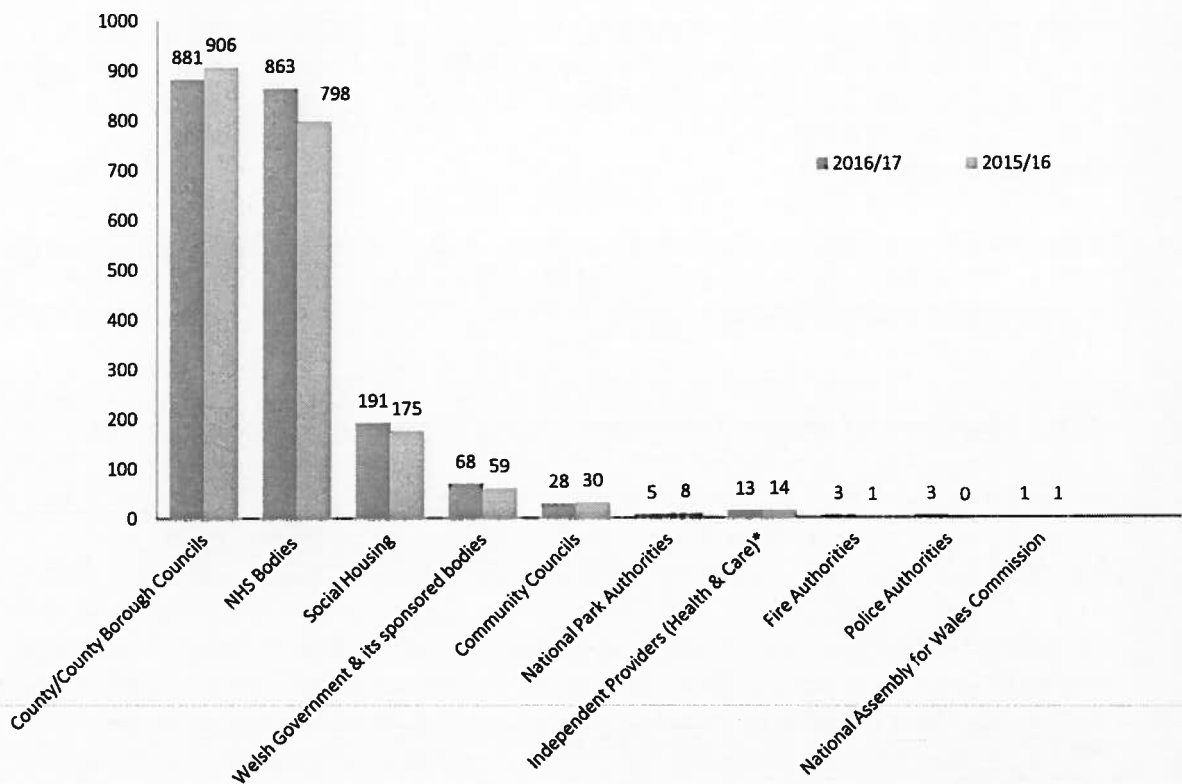
County councils have always generated the most complaints to this office due to the wide range of services they provide. However, for the second year running there has been a decrease in the number of complaints – down from 906 during 2015/16 to 881 in 2016/17.

Once again there has been an increase in complaints about NHS bodies. These include complaints about Local Health Boards, NHS trusts, GPs and dentists. There was a 8% increase in complaints about health bodies compared with 2015/16 (863 compared with 798)

Complaints about NHS Bodies have increased by 8% from 798 in 2015/16 to 863 in 2016/17. A large proportion of that increase is due to a rise in complaints **received** about Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board of 23%.

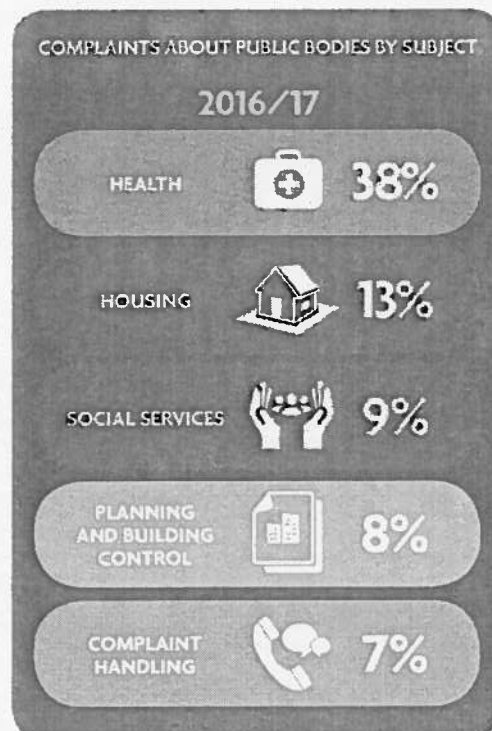
The chart on page 16 shows the distribution of the complaints received by sector.

Complaints received by public body sector

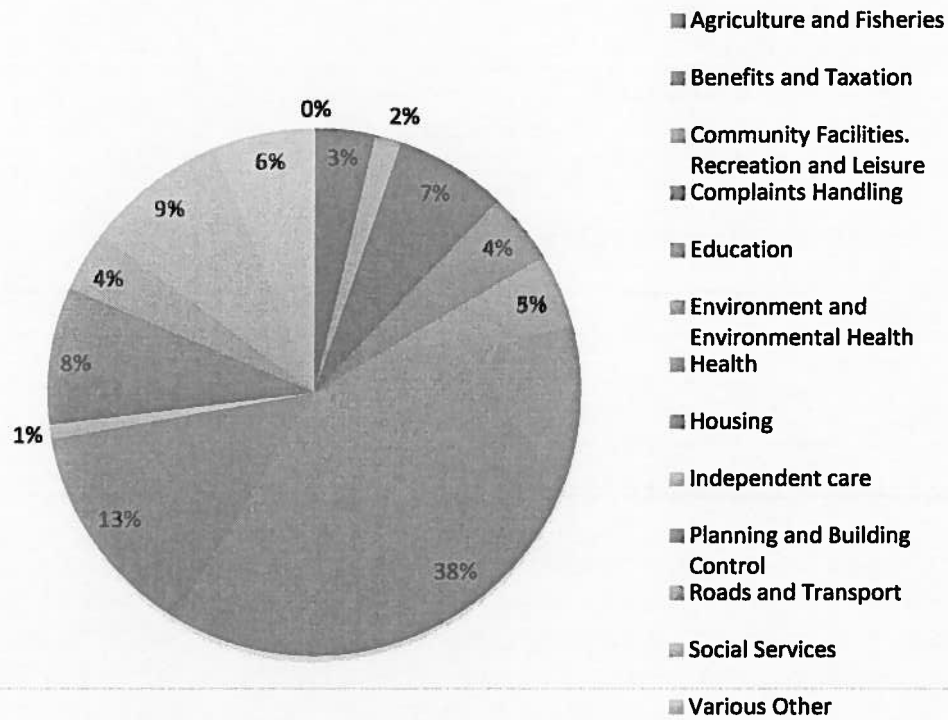


Complaints received about public bodies by subject

As consistent with previous years, health was the major part of our office caseload, up from 36% last year to 38% this year. This was followed by housing (13%) and planning and building control (8%). Social Services remained at a similar proportion as the previous financial year at 9%.



Complaints received about public bodies by subject



Outcomes of complaints considered

We closed 2,114 complaints about public service providers during the past year compared with 2,050 in 2015/16 (an increase of 3%). A summary of the outcomes is set out in the table below and detailed breakdowns of the outcomes by public service provider can be found at Annex A.

I am pleased that staff have managed to achieve this level of case closures during the year, together with the fact that the number of cases on hand at the end of 2016/17 stood at 345, compared with 412 at the end of 2015/16 (which is a reduction of 13%). This is well within what I consider to be a reasonable caseload for the office to have open at any one time.

Complaint about a Public Body	2016/17	2015/16
Closed after initial consideration	1570	1488
Complaint withdrawn	0	41
Complaint settled voluntarily	287	227
Investigation discontinued	16	19
Investigation: complaint not upheld	66	105
Investigation: complaint upheld in whole or in part	168	163
Investigation: complaint upheld in whole or in part – public interest report	6	7
Investigation: complaint upheld in whole or in part – public interest report (S22)	1	0
Total Outcomes – Complaints	2114	2050

Decision times

Time taken to tell the complainant if I will take up their complaint

We set ourselves a target to tell complainants whether or not I will take up their complaint. This year we introduced new key performance indicators. Previously there was a blanket four week target for all complaints, regardless of complexity. This has been changed to ensure the focus is on measuring against the service user's experience rather than the previous internal focus.

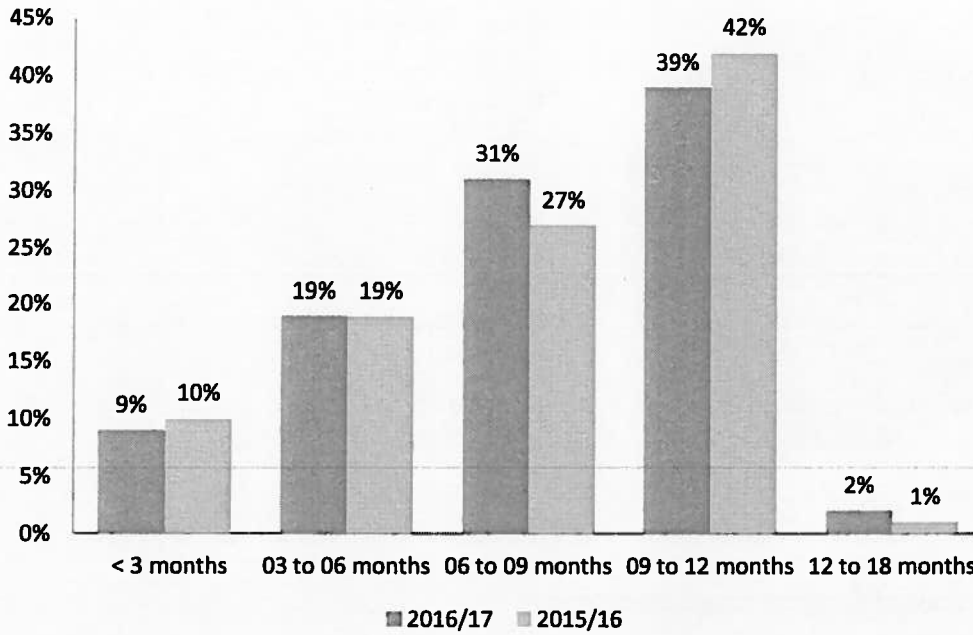
The new decision times are as follows:

- Decision on whether complaint within jurisdiction/premature - within 3 weeks.
- Decision on whether to investigate, following detailed assessment - within 6 weeks.
- Where decision to seek early resolution without need to investigate, resolution achieved - within 9 weeks.
- Date sufficient information received (DSIR) from complainant to investigation start date – within six weeks

	Percentage 2016/17
Decision on whether complaint within jurisdiction/premature – within three weeks	95%
Decision on whether or not to investigate, following detailed assessment - within six weeks.	92%
Where decision to seek early resolution without need to investigate, resolution achieved – within nine weeks	95%
DSIR to Investigation start date – within six weeks	80%

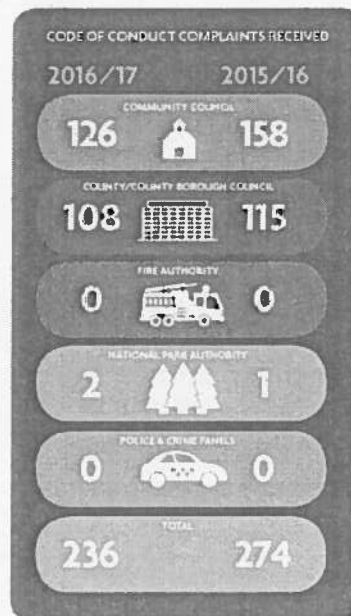
Investigation Decision Times

In 2016/17 we completed 98% of investigations within 12 months, against the 100% target we set ourselves. There were seven investigations that went over 12 months. These cases were complex and required further investigatory work, or where there were significant challenges to draft findings by the complainant or public body. The chart below gives further details on investigation timescales.



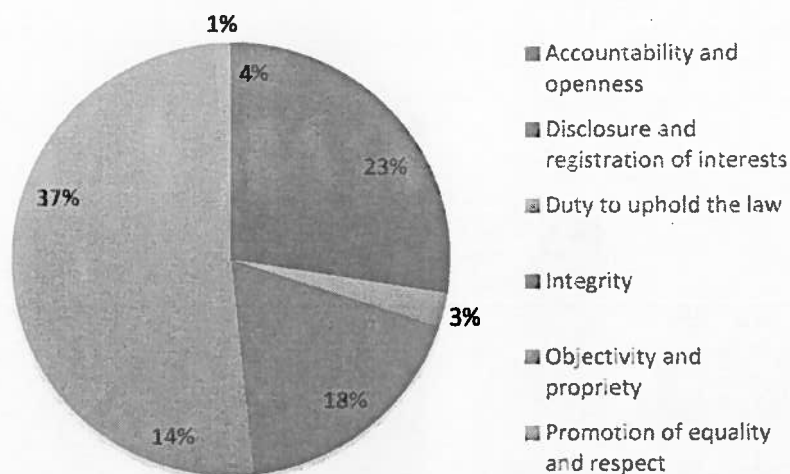
Code of Conduct Complaints

The number of code of conduct complaints decreased by 14% compared with 2015/16 (236 in 2016/17 against 274). This is encouraging considering historically, code of conduct complaints increase in the period before local elections.



Nature of Code of Conduct complaints received

The majority of complaints received during 2016/17 related to matters of 'promotion of equality and respect' accounting for 37% of the complaints made to me. (this was 41% in 2015/16). Disclosure and registration of interests (23%) and Integrity (18%) were the next largest areas of complaint which is consistent with the previous year.



Summary of Code of Conduct complaint outcomes

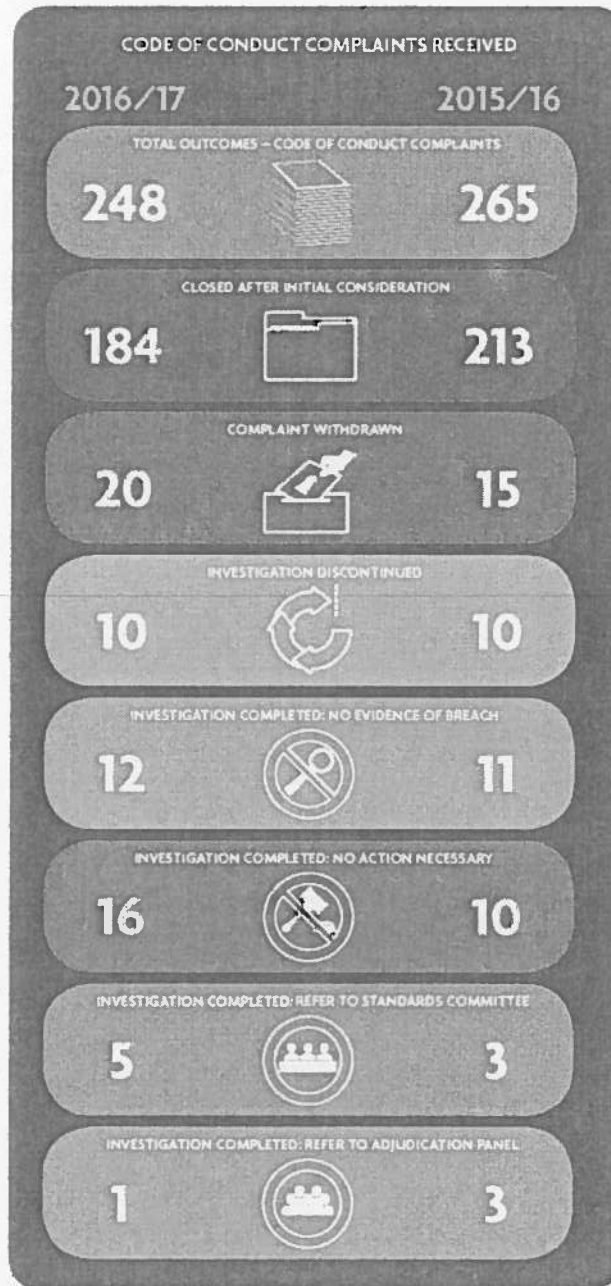
Of the 248 Code of Conduct complaints closed in 2016/17, the majority (184) were closed under the category 'Closed after initial consideration.'

This includes decisions such as

- there was no 'prima facie' evidence of a breach of the Code
- the alleged breach was insufficiently serious to warrant an investigation (and unlikely to attract a sanction)

With regard to code of conduct closed cases, a greater number were fully investigated this year (34) compared to 2015/16 (27). Six cases were referred either to local authority's standards committee or to the Adjudication Panel for Wales in 2016/17, the same number as the previous year. In these circumstances it is for these bodies to consider the evidence found, together with any defence put forward by the member concerned. It is then for them to determine whether a breach has occurred and, if so, what penalty, if any, should be imposed.

A breakdown of the outcomes is below:



A detailed breakdown of the outcome of Code of Conduct complaints investigated, by authority, during 2016/17 is set out in the Annex.

Decision times

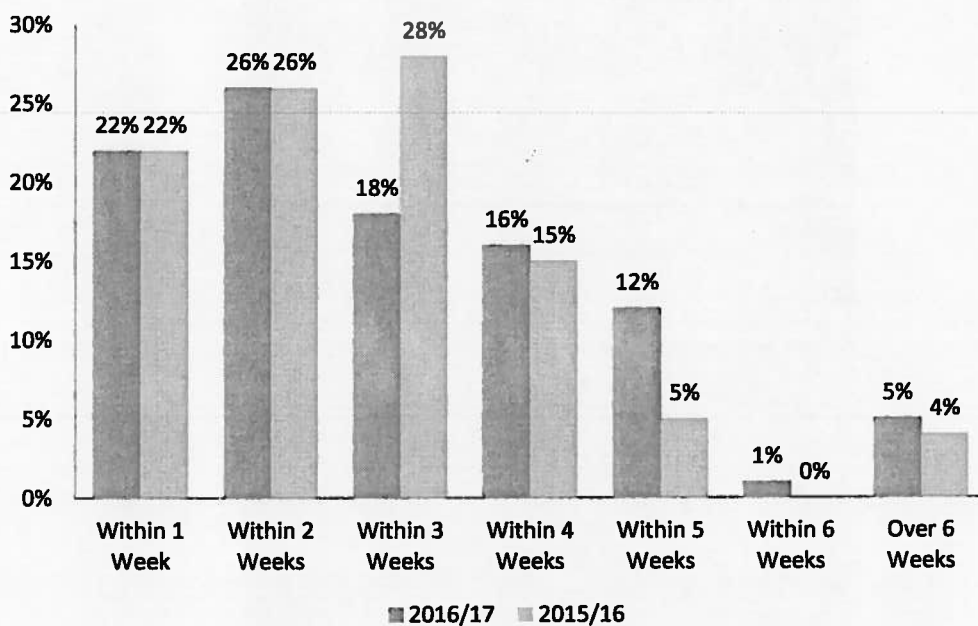
Time taken to tell the complainant if I will take up their complaint

In respect of Code of Conduct complaints, 82% of complainants were informed within four weeks of whether I would take up their complaint (from the date that sufficient information is received). This is considerably lower than during 2015/16 where 91% were informed within four weeks.

However, this is partially explained by the fact that a greater number of complaints this year reached investigation. I consider that it is fairer for us to take into consideration what a member has to say before taking a decision and this process can take some time. This is because the commencement of a formal investigation against a member is a stressful and serious matter for the member being complained about.

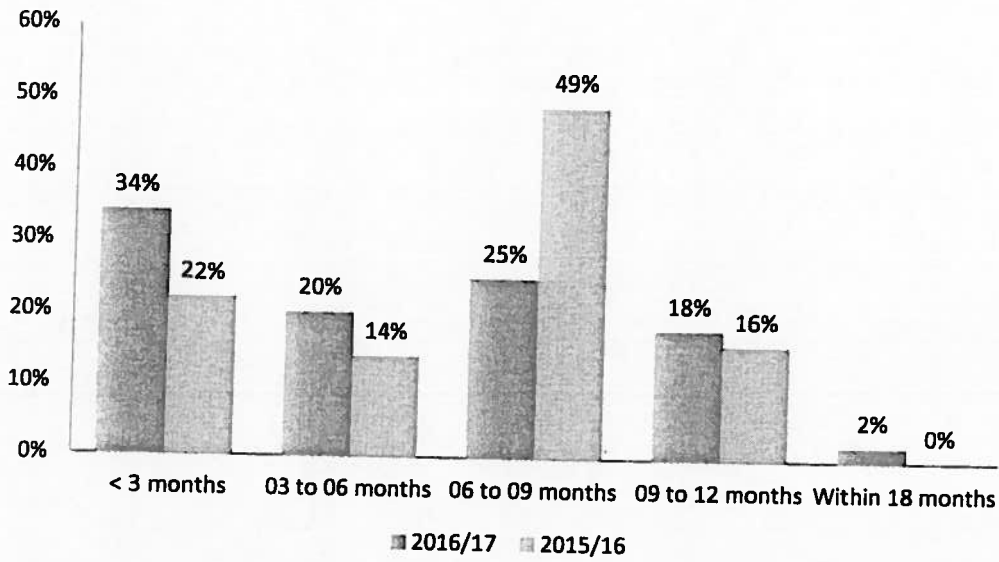
Further details on these decision timescales are shown below.

Code of Conduct time taken to tell the complainant if I will take up their complaint



Decision times for concluding Code of Conduct investigations

Comparing performance against 2015/16, a greater percentage of investigations were closed within three months (34% compared to 22% in 2015/16.)



Annex B: Code of Conduct Complaints closed – Statistical Breakdown by outcomes by local authority

County/County Borough Councils

County/County Borough Council	Closed after initial consideration	Discontinued	No evidence of breach	No action necessary	Refer to Standards Committee	Refer to Adjudication Panel	Withdrawn	Total Cases Closed
Blaenau Gwent	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Bridgend	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	4
Caerphilly	6	0	1	0	0	0	0	7
Cardiff	4	0	0	0	0	1	0	5
Cardiff	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Carmarthenshire	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
Ceredigion	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	2
Conwy	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
Denbighshire	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	4
Flintshire	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Gwynedd	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	3
Isle of Anglesey	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Merthyr	7	0	1	0	0	0	0	8
Monmouthshire	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
Neath Port Talbot	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Newport	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Pembrokeshire	16	0	1	0	0	0	0	17
Powys	6	0	1	0	3	0	2	12
Rhondda Cynon Taf	12	1	0	0	0	0	0	13
Swansea	3	0	0	0	1	0	0	4
Torfaen								

Vale of Glamorgan	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Wrexham	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
TOTAL	88	2	5	3	5	3	5	1	2	1	2	106

Community/ Town Councils

Community/Town Council	Closed after initial consideration	Discontinued	No evidence of breach	No action necessary	Refer to Standards Committee	Refer to Adjudication Panel	Withdrawn	Total Cases Closed
Abergele Town Council	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Aberporrh Community Council	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	8
Abertillery & Llanhilleth Community Council	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Aberystwyth Town Council	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Amlwch Town Council	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Bangor City Council	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Barry Town Council	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Bedwas, Trethomas & Machen Community Council	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Bodelwyddan Town Council	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Coity Higher Community Council	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Cornelly Community Council	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Cwmmaman Town Council	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Fishguard & Goodwick Town Council	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Glyneath Town Council	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	14
Gwaun Cae Gurwen Community Council	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Kidwelly Town Council	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Laleston Community Council	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Langstone Community Council	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2

INNOVATION, IMPROVEMENT, INFLUENCE

Llandrindod Wells Town Council	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Llandudno Town Council	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Llandwrog Community Council	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Llanelli Rural Council	4	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	6
Llanelli Town Council	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Llanelli Community Council	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Llanfihangel Glyn Myfyr Community Council	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Llangefni Town Council	9	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	10
Llangennech Community Council	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Llangynog Community Council	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Llantrisant Community Council	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Llantwit Major Town Council	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
Magor with Undy Community Council	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Manorbier Community Council	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Milford Haven Town Council	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Mold Town Council	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Mumbles Community Council	2	3	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	18	26
Northop Hall Community Council	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Ogmore Valley Community Council	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Pen-Y-Cae Community Council	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Pontyclun Community Council	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Pontypridd Town Council	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Prestatyn Town Council	5	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	8
Queensferry Community Council	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Radyr and Morganstown Community Council	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Saltney Town Council	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1

Sully and Laverock Community Council	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Irefriw Community Council	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Tywyn Town Council	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
TOTAL	112	8	7	13	0	0	0	0	0	18	0	140

National Park Authorities

National Park Authorities	Closed after initial consideration	Discontinued	No evidence of breach	No action necessary	Refer to Standards Committee	Refer to Adjudication Panel	Withdrawn	Total Cases Closed
Brecon Beacons	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
TOTAL	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2

