



# HELPLINE AND WEBSITE NEWS SEPTEMBER 2008 TO AUGUST 2009

## INTRODUCTION

Governors Wales' confidential helpline provides independent advice and support on any issue concerning school governance in Wales.

The helpline (0845 60 20 100) is available from 9.00am to 10.00pm during weekdays and 11.00am to 4.00pm at weekends, excluding Public and Bank Holidays. All calls to the helpline are local rate and a bilingual service is available.

The helpline is operated by an expert team of helpline staff and governor volunteers who are supported, when necessary, by independent legal advisers retained on Governors Wales' behalf.

Ongoing support and training via regular meetings is provided to all who assist with the helpline.

This report provides an overview of the helpline during the academic year of 2008-2009, looking at the overall usage, summarising key findings and showing trends.

This report also provides an overview of the website during the academic year 2008-2009.

## INDEPENDENT LEGAL ADVICE

The helpline service is underpinned by independent legal advice provided by a blue chip, nationwide, legal practice brokered by Judicium Consulting Ltd. Although Governors Wales takes great pride in its ability to respond authoritatively to queries from helpline calls and e-mails, by reference to statutory regulations and published guidance, a relatively small proportion of enquiries present greater difficulty. These queries will often relate to circumstances that are at the margins of the law or where regulations and guidance may appear to be ambiguous. Governors Wales is able to obtain independent legal opinion in such circumstances, thus providing callers with a legally informed response, when this is appropriate.

## TOTAL NUMBER OF CALLS RECEIVED

**Calls (office and out of office) = 389**

**Number of e-mails = 60**

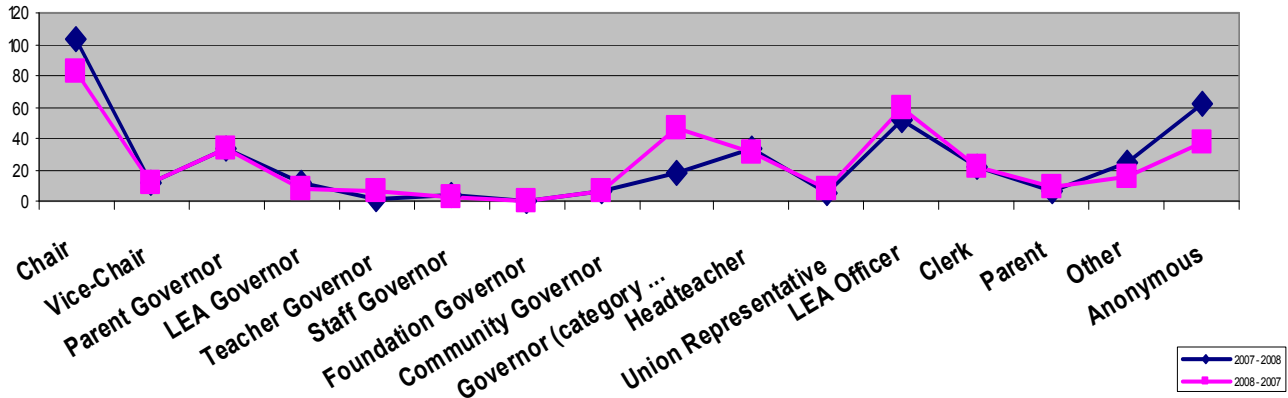
**Overall Total = 449**

Queries have been received from all 22 Local Authority areas in Wales during the year.

# OFFICE HOURS

## CATEGORY OF CALLER

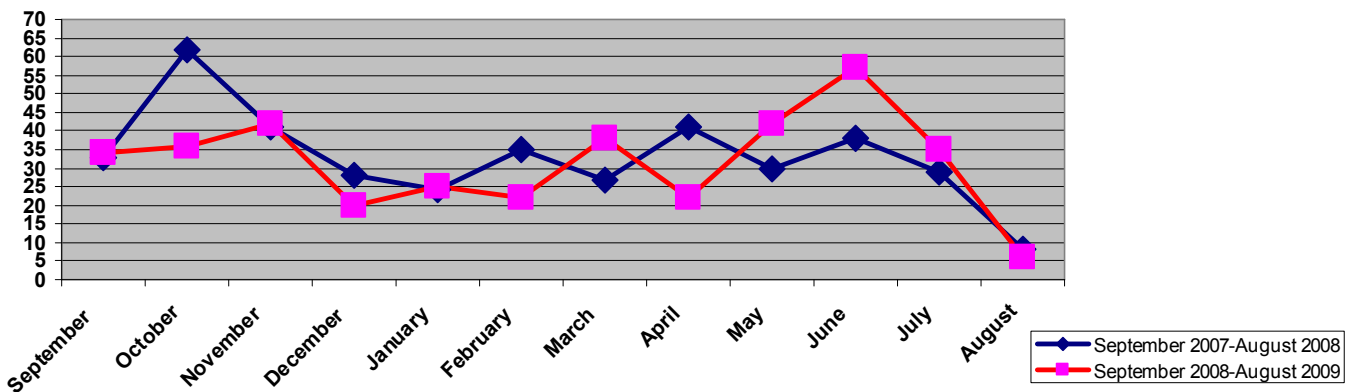
Comparison of calls received  
September 2007 - August 2008 and September 2008 - August 2009



The group “Governor—category not known” was introduced in April 2008. The most frequent category of caller using the service during the school year 2008-2009 falls to Chairs of governing bodies. This trend has not changed since the commencement of the helpline, although it is understandable that Chairs and Vice-Chairs will usually take the responsibility for clarifying issues and concerns before reporting back to governor colleagues at meetings etc.

## NUMBER OF CALLS ON A MONTHLY BASIS

Comparison of calls received  
September 2007-August 2008 and September 2008-August 2009

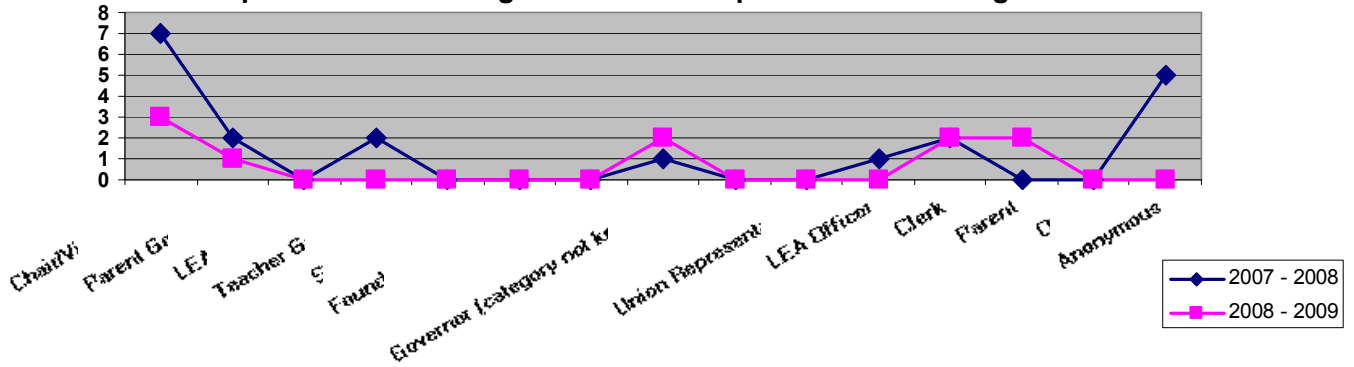


The number of queries received are less frequent during holiday times. This is particularly noticeable in August. “Follow-up” calls resulting from queries or e-mails are not reflected in the above totals, many of which require considerable research.

# OUT OF OFFICE HOURS

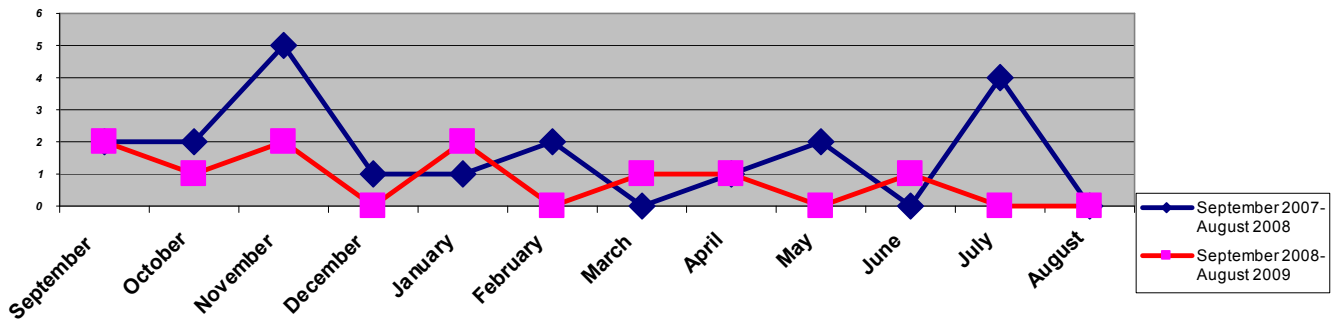
## CATEGORY OF CALLER

**Comparison of calls received  
September 2007 - August 2008 and September 2008 - August 2009**



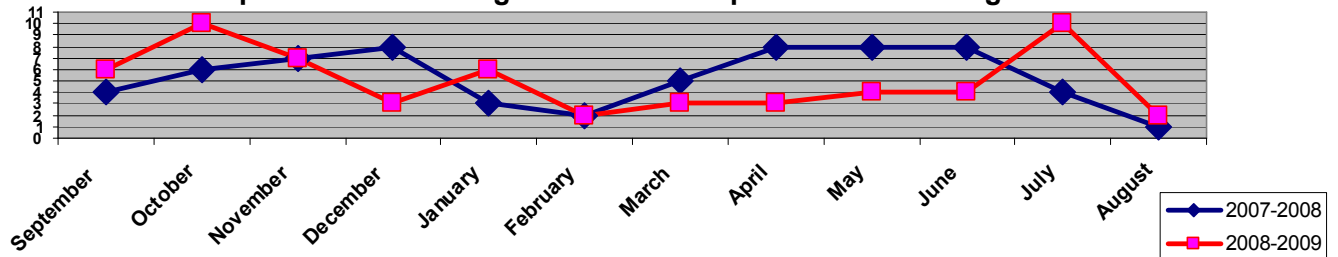
## NUMBER OF CALLS ON A MONTHLY BASIS

**Comparison of calls received  
September 2007 - August 2008 and September 2008 - August 2009**



## EMAIL QUERIES

**Comparison of emails received  
September 2007 - August 2008 and September 2008 - August 2009**



Some e-mails that are received require a considerable amount of research, in addition to follow up calls which are not reflected in the data.

## NATURE OF QUERIES

Queries received are varied and sometimes reflect the complexities, personalities and relationships that exist between governors, school staff and parents. The most frequent issues on which guidance was sought related to:

### OFFICE HOURS

- Complaints Procedures
- Request for published guidance
- Procedures for Meetings/Minutes
- Election of Parent Governors
- Disciplinary

### OUT OF OFFICE HOURS

- Complaints Procedures
- Disciplinary
- Exclusion
- Inspections
- Procedures for Meetings/Minutes

Advice is frequently sought on procedures relating to governing body meetings and minutes. Issues can vary from the number of governors required for meetings to be quorate, terms of reference, confidentiality, ratification and publication of minutes etc.

There have been occasions throughout the year where Governors Wales' Staff, as a result of a call to the helpline, have had face to face meetings with those concerned in order to resolve difficult problems that have arisen.

## HELPLINE FEEDBACK

Feedback from callers has been complimentary. It is always encouraging when callers who have contacted the helpline on previous occasions phone or e-mail again for advice on a different issue.

*"Thanks to Governors Wales for all their valued help, support and advice"*

*"Thank you very much for looking into this for me. I now understand why I was a little confused!"*

*"Thank you for your prompt reply"*

*"Thank you for help it made a difference about how I approached this evening's meeting"*

Many of the callers are very grateful to have a confidential helpline facility where they can express their concerns or have their fears allayed and where they can be pointed in the right direction to obtain the necessary information.

## PUBLICITY FOR THE SERVICE

Thanks are expressed to Governors Wales' staff, members of the Management Committee, local governor associations and helpline volunteers for their continued efforts and support in advertising and promoting the helpline provision, not least Governor Support Officers who assist in the distribution of Governors Wales' publications.

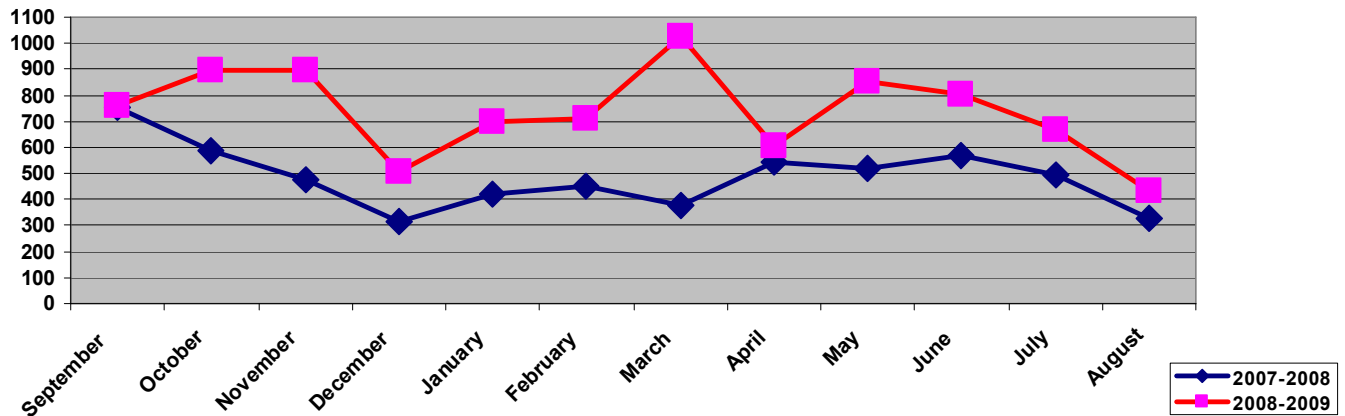
The Helpline is publicised in the termly newsletter "Cadwyn" along with Fact Files and up-to-date news from Governors Wales. Additional publicity includes:

- Promotional stands at public events/conferences
- The Governors Wales' Website
- Governors Wales' publications
- Sending helpline leaflets to Clerks to Governing Bodies during 2009-2010.

# GOVERNORS WALES WEBSITE

## [www.governorswales.org.uk](http://www.governorswales.org.uk)

Comparison of Website Hits  
September 2007 - August 2008 and September 2008 - August 2009



The Governors Wales website received 8846 hits during 2008-2009 compared to 5827 during 2007-2008. The sections viewed most frequently were:

- Publications
- FAQs
- Training
- News

The Governors Wales website contains up to date news on Governors Wales' work and developments, there are sections on:

- Governors Wales' Publications (Fact Files, Governor Guides, Conference Reports etc)
- Links to LEA Governor Training Programmes
- Links to statutory instruments
- Circular guidance published by the Welsh Assembly Government
- A FAQ section which is updated regularly

## FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS

- Case studies in a variety of areas will be added to the website during 2009-2010 to assist governors with their work.
- An evaluation of the website with stakeholders will be carried out during the autumn term 2009.
- Enhancement of local governor association pages on the Governors Wales' website.

**Why not ring or e-mail us?  
We could help you to make a difference**



**helpline@governorswales.org.uk**

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Mulberry Drive  
Cardiff Gate Business Park  
Cardiff CF23 8RS**

**The Voice of School Governors in Wales**