



Lancashire
Constabulary
police and communities together

REPORT TO: JOINT AUDIT AND ETHICS COMMITTEE

DATE: 13 JUNE 2016

REPORT AUTHOR: MEMBERS OF AUDIT & ETHICS COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: SCRUTINY OF COMPLAINT FILES – MAY 2016

1 Issue for Consideration

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to enable Members of the Committee to comment at the meeting on the Constabulary's procedures for handling and investigating complaints in respect of files they have viewed.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 To receive a report on the scrutiny of complaints files.

3 Background

- 3.1 The Commissioner has requested that the Joint Audit and Ethics Committee undertake the scrutiny of complaints against police officers and police staff.
- 3.2 In the last quarter, a Member of the Committee reviewed 13 files which were selected at random and comprised of a cross section of complaint type. The files reviewed had been opened over a period from April 2015 to April 2016 and were randomly selected by the reviewers from a list of closed cases provided by PSD. The files can be analysed by type as follows:

| Complaint type | Number | Outcomes |
|--------------------------------|--------|--------------------------------------|
| Local Resolution by Division | 4 | 2 were resolved. 3 1 remains open |
| Direction & Control | 4 | None of the complaints were upheld |
| Full investigation by PSD | 1 | Not upheld |
| Full investigation by Division | 2 | Not upheld |
| Complaint withdrawn | 2 | |

The review also looked at a further 2 complaint files where the complaint issues had been brought to the attention of the PCC. Those two files remain open.

- 3.3 A new computerised system for dealing with complaints was introduced in May 2016.
- 3.4 Generally the quality of the complaint process was found to be good, with positive engagement with the complainants and reasonably prompt resolution. The reviewers were pleased to note that complainants now receive a full copy of the internal report rather than an extract as previously.
- 3.5 The following areas were identified as raising some concern:
- One case was still open due to problems with resolving responsibility for the case between Division and Custody. This is recognised by PSD as an issue in some complaints and action is being taken to address this
 - Standard letters are sometimes used when a more tailored letter would be suitable. PSD recognise this, but are not able to action at present due to resourcing pressures.
 - There were 2 cases where the use of language such as *"The officer will say"* and *"the male"* were used in reports which were sent to complainants. Such wording could potentially inflame complainants and has been highlighted in previous reports as an issue of concern. PSD have said that they are aware of residual issues around language and engagement with complainants and are aware that further training is required in this area. The reviewers also found good examples of language and style of correspondence and positive engagement with complainants.
 - In one case, the final report was undated. PSD are aware of this and have identified it as a learning point.
 - In one case the outcome is not recorded due to problems with data migration to the new system. PSD have a large number of data migration issues to resolve as a result of the new system coming on line.
 - In one case an appeal was received in July 2015 and has still not been concluded. PSD say that there are resourcing issues around appeals and there is currently an appeal backlog of 8 months. A new role of 'Appeal handler' has been introduced to

the department and is due to start on the 1st July 2016 and PSD hope to see a dramatic improvement in timescales from then.

- 3.6 The 2 additional files remain open and it is not considered appropriate to comment further on these in this report.
- 3.7 Overall the Members did not have any issues of serious concern and were satisfied that the complaint handling process was being followed appropriately and in line with statutory and IPCC requirements.

4 Implications

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Financial: | Resource requirements to enable development and implementation of the above can be found from existing budgets. |
| Legal: | |
| Equality Impact Assessment: | |
| Risks and Impact: | |
| Link to Police and Crime Plan: | |

5 List of attachments / appendices

6 Background Papers

- None

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