

Police complaints system in Hampshire – 2020/21

This narrative is produced in line with the requirements of The Elected Local Policing Bodies (Specified Information) (Amendment) Order 2021 which requires PCCs to set out how they are holding the chief officer to account for the performance of the police complaints system locally, and their assessment of their own performance in carrying out their other complaints handling functions.

Holding the chief officer to account

The PCC has a number of mechanisms used to monitor Hampshire Constabulary in respect of its obligation to have an efficient and effective police complaints system. These are discharged by both the PCC personally and by officials on her behalf.

At a strategic level, weekly meetings between the PCC and Chief Constable enable discussions to be held on the most significant cases, or to discuss themes or trends that have been identified through performance monitoring reported at the Force Performance Group. Direct briefings are also provided by the Deputy Chief Constable and/or Head of the Professional Standards Department on individual cases of note.

Monthly and weekly meetings take place between officials of the Professional Standards Department of the Constabulary and the Standards and Compliance department of the OPCC. These look at both performance information collated and published by the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC), but also include discussions about individual cases to ensure any recommendations or oversight observations are responded to appropriately. On a quarterly basis, these discussions also include representatives of the IOPC.

A number of measures are used as indicators of complainant satisfaction, including the number of informal complaints that are escalated to the formal process, and the number of review applications received as a percentage of overall complaints. These measures are contained within the statistics published by the IOPC.

Legislation and statutory guidance do not dictate timeframes for the handling of complaints. There are internal targets to ensure there remains a focused effort on acknowledging and resolving complaints in a timely manner. These are however subject to regular review as the average number of complaints and the time it takes to process them under the new complaints regime becomes established.

Where complaint investigations have not been completed within a 12-month period, the force is required to issue written communications to the PCC and IOPC outlining the reasons for the length of the investigation and the likely timeframe for conclusion. During 2020/21, there have been two written communications issued.

There is a quality assurance mechanism in place to monitor and improve the quality of responses to complaints. Every outcome letter is subject to a QA process by an

Inspector prior to being finalised. In cases where police intend on taking no action in response to a complaint, for reasons for that are permissible under the statutory guidance, a police staff manager of equivalent level is the final decision maker.

PCC assessment of their own performance in carrying out their complaints handling functions

The PCC has a number of functions within the police complaints system, including as an independent review body for certain types of complaints where the member of the public is not happy with the response from the police.

Responsibility for carrying out reviews has been delegated to the Head of Standards and Compliance, who in turn authorises the Standards and Compliance Officer to also carry out reviews.

There is no defined timeframe by which complaint reviews should be carried out. We recognise that it is important to complainants that reviews are carried out in a timely manner, but this will not be at the expense of the quality of the review itself. Timeliness is monitored monthly and reported to the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner, Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive. It is also reported quarterly by the IOPC. This process acts as a further check-and-balance on the quality, integrity and impartiality of the process, with a quality assurance and conflict of interest check being made before every complaint review is finalised. The process by which a review is carried is in line with the requirements of the complaints legislation and IOPC statutory guidance.