

Police Complaints Information Bulletin

Force Commentary Sheet

Reporting Period: Reporting Period: 1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022

Commentary:

Sussex Police is pleased to see that the introduction of our Public Confidence Team and investment in this important area of policing has led to improvements to timeliness around initially handling and contact. It has taken time to build the team which is now fully staffed since August 2022 and it is already recognised that there will be opportunities to absorb further work into this team reducing the reliance on divisional complaint handlers where performance is lower. Work is ongoing and will continue to improve complaint handling service at a divisional level which we hope will help lead to speedier and more effective outcomes for complainants in respect of those schedule 3 complaints handled other than by investigation. In addition to the Public Confidence Team, the force continues to invest in Professional Standards more widely, recognising the importance of improving performance, conduct and behaviour of officers and staff as well as promoting higher levels of trust and confidence from our communities.

In respect of other aspects of the report, Sussex Police notes that our highest levels of review sought by complainants are related to those complaints dealt with other than by investigation and continue to work to improve the quality of these aspects of complaint handling as well as scrutinising whether complaint handling decisions are being made appropriately with increased levels of supervision and oversight.

We do note that whilst the percentage of LPB upheld reviews is high (33%) for investigation cases, this is a very small number of cases (2) and we consider that the low levels of reviews sought in respect of complaint investigations (11 including IOPC) gives reassurance around the quality of our complaint investigations when undertaken and the satisfaction of those complainants.

The report details that 96% of LPB reviews result in a recommendation being made. This statistic is misleading and is mirrored for other forces. Most forces use the same software to administer complaints. Prior to a recent upgrade, it was not possible to close a review without inputting a recommendation even if the review had not made a recommendation and had found the handling to be reasonable and proportionate. In a large proportion of cases the recommendation recorded was 'reasonable and proportionate – no action' as a workaround to the limitations of the system. This has since been resolved and so we anticipate being able to rely on the data in this field from next quarter.

Lastly, the force has done a great deal of work in improving the approach to complaint outcome recording to ensure that the records reflect the proactive approach we take to ensuring that we are engaging effectively with complainants and seeking to use all complaints as a way to improve both individually and organisationally. Whilst this appears to be improving in the figures for schedule 3 complaints, we note that the outside schedule 3

figures continue to show high levels of NFA. We will be working with our Public Confidence Team to ensure that the recording of explanations, apologies and learning that is being progressed, is accurately recorded on these records.