



Lancashire
Constabulary
police and communities together

REPORT TO: JOINT AUDIT AND ETHICS COMMITTEE

DATE: 7 DECEMBER 2015

REPORT AUTHOR: MEMBERS OF AUDIT & ETHICS COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: SCRUTINY OF COMPLAINT FILES – NOVEMBER 2015

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, two Members of the Committee have 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 January to June 2015 and had all been closed in the preceding quarter.
The files can be analysed by type as follows:

Complaint type	Number	Outcomes
Local Resolution by Division	4	3 were resolved. 1 was appealed to PSD and the appeal was not upheld
Direction & Control	4	None of the complaints were upheld
Full investigation by PSD	2	1 upheld and officer disciplined 1 not upheld
Complaint withdrawn	2	

- 3.3 The Members found that there were administrative delays in dealing with 7 of the cases, including delay in recording the complaint, initial contact with complainant, and in finalising the reporting of the outcome. PSD have commented that the system for dealing with complaints was centralised and streamlined on 1 September 2015, and they are confident that most of these delays would not occur under the new system.
- 3.4 The Members had concerns about the language used and style of writing to complainants, which is often defensive. Reports are written for internal managerial processes and then copied verbatim to the complainant with potential for isolated words, phrases and expressions to be misinterpreted or to inflame a complaint..e.g "*The officer will say*" and "*the male*" when referring to the complainant. The local resolution process is about exploring the concerns and finding a resolution with the complainant and the use of terms such as the complaint is '*not upheld*', has the potential to inflame the complainant. Such comments have the potential to undermine agreements reached. PSD have commented that they have identified that defensiveness when dealing with complaints is an area to improve on and they incorporate this into training for AO's on complaints. PSD acknowledge that more work is required. PSD also accept the need to move away from police jargon within the reports.
- 3.5 The Members identified one case where they had concerns about categorisation, which PSD commented would not have happened under the current reorganised system.
- 3.6 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:	
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5 List of attachments / appendices

6 Background Papers

- None

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