



**STRATEGIC POLICING AND CRIME BOARD
11 September 2014**

Dip Sampling of Completed Complaints Files

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To report on the dip-sampling of completed complaints files undertaken by members of the Strategic Policing and Crime Board (SPCB) on Tuesday 1 July 2014.

BACKGROUND

2. Following a recommendation made by the Strategic Policing and Crime Board meeting on 4 February 2014 the previous Commissioner decided to introduce a new process for SPCB members to dip sample completed complaints files. PCCs do not have the power to investigate complaints against the police (other than a complaint against the Chief Constable) but do have a responsibility to ensure that the system for dealing with complaints against the police is effective and that it is well managed. The West Midlands Commissioner supported by the Strategic Policing and Crime Board undertake this duty by receiving regular performance reports on the work of the Professional Standards Department together with a regular programme of meetings with senior police officers to discuss complaints matters. The dip sampling process supports this and provides a further check on the system.
3. The category of complaints selected by the Commissioner for inclusion in the dip sampling exercise was discriminatory behaviour.

A random selection of completed complaints files from within this category was made available during the dip sampling session.

4. During the session SPCB members examined 5 completed complaints files. During dip sampling members restricted their examination of the files to three key issues:
 - Does the decision in the case appear reasonable? (this is different from looking for a decision that is legally correct)
 - Has the complaint been dealt with in a timely manner and were all communications polite and reasonable?
 - Does the way in which the complaint was investigated inspire confidence?

The approach is intended to allow SPCB members to concentrate on the overall flavour of the complaint and the level of customer service being delivered and also to provide an opportunity to increase their personal knowledge and understanding of the process. It should also allow SPCB members to sample the levels of customer service in response to complaints.

5. In three of the cases examined there were no major issues or discrepancies identified during the examination of the files. In one file there was a delay in responding the complaint and one of the forms was not signed correctly, but there were no major issues with the substance of the complaint or the way in which it was handled. In one of the five files the member conducting the dip sample felt that the way in which it was handled did not inspire confidence. This file has been referred to the professional standards department for a further examination, and they have offered to meet with the Board member who undertook the dip sample and with other Board members if required in order to examine this file in more detail to identify any lessons that could be learnt by the organisation.
6. The next dip sampling session will take place at 9am on Tuesday 4 November 2014 (report to Board 2 December 2014).

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7. There are no financial implications directly arising from this report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8. Section 15 of the Police Reform Act 2002 requires the Authority to ensure that it is kept informed about complaints made against police officers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

9. The Board is asked to:
 - a) Note the outcomes of the dip sampling session.
 - b) Determine whether any further action is required as a result of the dip sampling.

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