



**STRATEGIC POLICING AND CRIME BOARD
7 March 2017**

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 on 20 December 2016.

BACKGROUND

2. 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. During this dip sample six SPCB members and one member of staff examined complaints that had been dealt with by local resolution related to equality and diversity. For the first time, the dip sample also included an examination of completed misconduct files
4. During the session dip samplers examined 16 completed files which were a mixture of complaints and conduct cases. During dip sampling they 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/conduct matter was investigated inspire confidence?
5. The approach is intended to allow dip samplers 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 dip samplers to consider the levels of customer service in response to complaints.

6. In most of the cases sampled, the dip samplers considered that the outcome seemed to be justified and reasonable, and the way in which the complaint was investigated did inspire confidence. There were a number of issues raised and these have been referred to the head of Professional Standards for further consideration:
 - There appears to be a difference in the level of information stored on conduct files dealt with locally as opposed to those dealt with by PSD. This could impact on confidence in the system, as it is not obvious that there is parity between the two processes.
 - In one case the information stored on Centurion did not contain enough information to make an assessment that the outcome was justified. The background log did not contain enough detail to be able to make this assessment.
 - It would be useful if duty logs were included as part of the Centurion files in order to properly assess the outcomes.
 - In one case it was difficult to understand why management action was the outcome for the officer in the conduct case.
 - Timeliness was an issue in one of the complaint cases.
 - Terminology is not helpful. For example, the word 'disapplication' has little meaning outside of the world of police jargon. Using common sense English would be helpful.
 - In one case a complaint was withdrawn, but it appears from the file that the officer did use some inappropriate language and training would be helpful to address this. Such issues should be picked up even if a complaint is withdrawn.

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 note the outcomes of the dip sampling session and determine whether any further action is required as a result of the dip sampling.

Andrea Gabbitas, Business Services Manager