

Dip Sampling of Complaints Files

Overview of findings on service recovered complaints

Theme: Incivility

Purpose of Report

To provide an overview of the findings from the dip sampling session relating to service recovered complaints.

Background

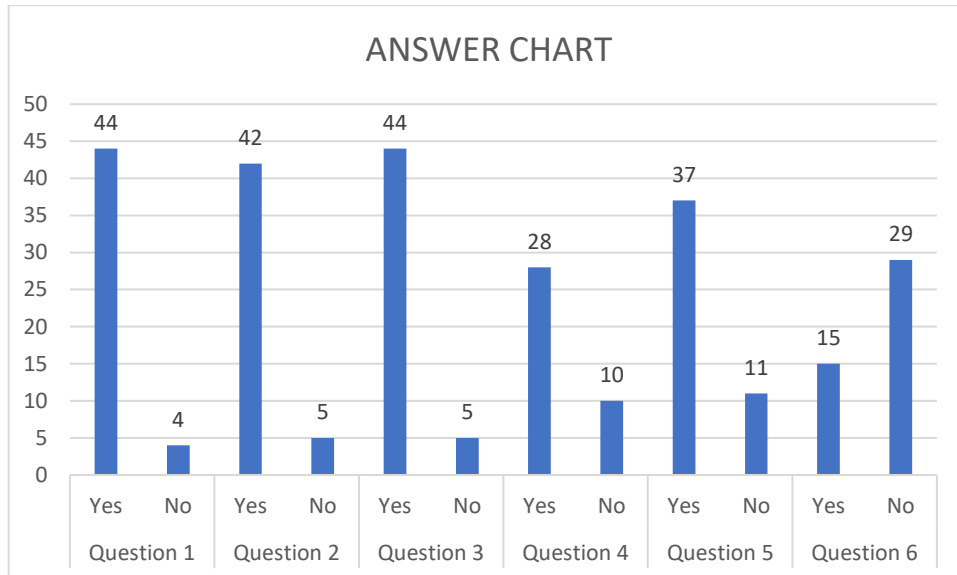
1. PCCs do not have the power to investigate complaints against the police, other than complaints against the Chief Constable. However, PCCs do have a responsibility to ensure that the system for dealing with complaints against the police is effective and that it is well managed. The West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner, supported by the Strategic Policing and Crime Board, undertake this duty by receiving regular performance reports related to 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.
2. The dip sampling sessions took place on the 24/01/2023 and 26/01/2023. Nine members of staff were in attendance; they examined complaints that had been dealt via the process of 'service recovery' (non-schedule 3) relating to incivility.
3. The content of 49 files were sampled¹, all consisting of complaints where the allegations related to incivility. Participants were provided with feedback forms - they restricted their examination of the files to 6 questions where they were asked to answer with a simple 'yes' or 'no' with the option to add additional comments at the end of the response form. The six lines of enquiry were:
 1. Was the complaint fully understood and were all allegations or concerns addressed?
 2. Were reasonable lines of enquiry undertaken to be able to provide a reasonable and proportionate outcome?
 3. Did the proposed actions seek to remedy the issues raised by the complainant so far as was reasonably possible?
 4. Was the outcome communicated in an empathetic way?

¹ Please note- a "sample" is defined as a complaint file which has been examined by dip samplers. There were 40 in total.

5. Was a conditional apology offered?

6. Would a personal apology have been more appropriate?

4. A breakdown of the answers to each line of enquiry can be seen below:



5. The approach was 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. Members of the complaints review team were also present to answer any queries dip samplers had.

6. The quantitative data points the following assumptions:

- Participants felt that in 90% of samples the complaint had been fully understood and all concerns/allegations were addressed.
- Participants felt that in 86% of samples the police undertook reasonable lines of enquiry to be able to provide a reasonable and proportionate outcome.
- Participants felt that in 90% of samples, the proposed actions sought to remedy the allegations raised by the complainant as so far as was reasonably possible.
- Participants felt that in 57% of samples, the outcome was communicated in an empathic way. In 22% of samples, participants felt there was not enough evidence to determine if the outcome was communicated empathetically.
- Participants observed that in 75% of samples, a conditional apology was offered.
- Participants felt that in 30% of samples, a personal apology from the subject offer would have been more appropriate.

7. The feedback forms were also subjected to qualitative content analysis – where the comments made by participants were coded and common themes and recurring concepts identified. The table below shows the areas where participants felt it important to emphasise particular points.

Code/Theme	Coding Frequency
Complainants deserved a better response	30%
No reassurance that alleged conduct will change in future	10%
The complaint was lacking in investigation	26%
Complaints identified as good practice	16%

8. No learning for officers was recommended by participants.

9. **The next dip sampling session will be held in November 2023.**

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