

Dip Sampling of Complaints Files

Overview of findings on service recovered complaints

Theme: Investigations

Purpose of Report

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

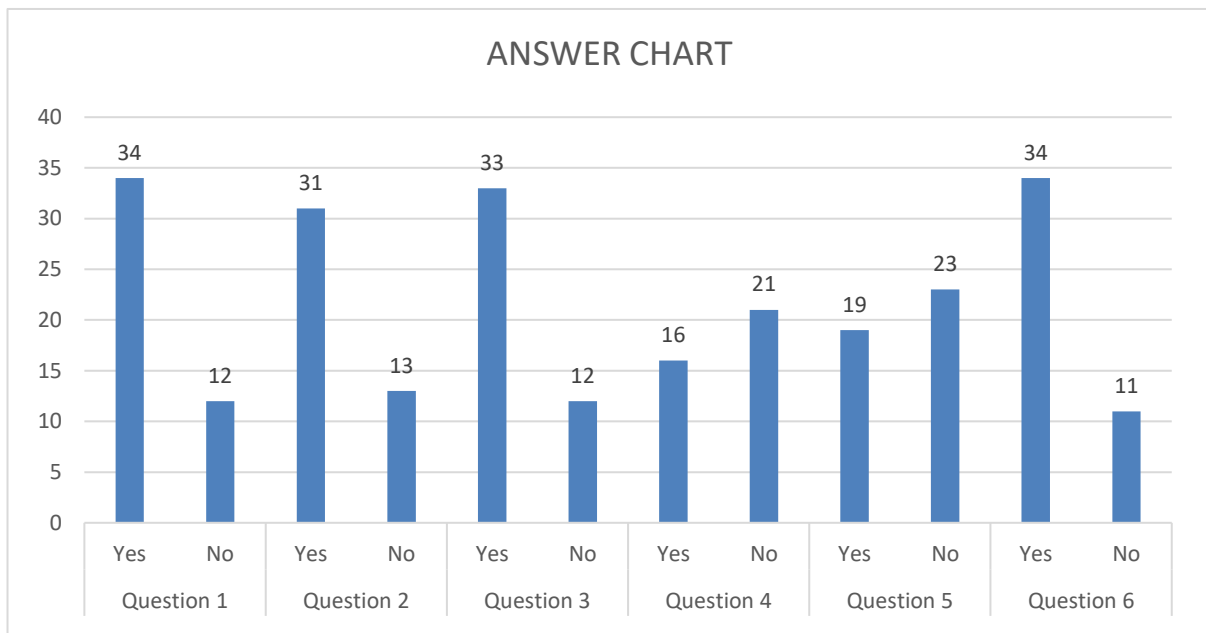
Background

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 12/07/2022 and 15/07/2022. Nine members of staff accompanied by DEX Fuller, Asst PCC McNeil and the PCC were in attendance; they examined complaints that had been dealt via the process of 'service recovery' (non-schedule 3) relating to dissatisfaction of investigations.
3. The content of 49 files were sampled¹, all consisting of complaints where the allegations related to dissatisfaction with investigations. 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?

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

4. Was the outcome communicated in an empathetic way?
5. West Midlands Police has a Proportionate Investigation Policy. Does the response to the complaint properly explain this policy? In the even that WMP has taken no further action, does the response to the complaint sufficiently explain why no further action has been taken/provided adequate reasoning?
6. Has the handler made sufficient enquiries that are proportionate to the seriousness of the complaint?

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 69% of samples the complaint had been fully understood and all concerns/allegations were addressed.
- Participants felt that in 63% of samples the police undertook reasonable lines of enquiry to be able to provide a reasonable and proportionate outcome.
- Participants felt that in 67% 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 only 33% of samples, the outcome was communicated in an empathic way.
 - Participants felt that in only 39% of samples the complaints handler provided a response that properly explains the proportionate investigation policy/ sufficiently explained why no further action had been taken/ provided adequate reasoning.
 - Participants felt that in 69% of samples the handler had made sufficient enquiries that are proportionate to the seriousness of the complaint.
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%
Handler could have been shown more empathy	10%
Poor presentation, spelling and grammar	2%
The complaint could have been kept open as actions were outstanding	12%
The complaint was lacking in investigation	18%
Unable to gauge the quality of the outcome as details of a call/recording is absent	18%
Complaints identified as good practice	10%

8. No learning for officers was recommended by participants.
9. At the SPCB Group session on 11th October 2022, members are encouraged to comment on the data provided and consider ways in which the dip-sampling process could be improved, and also consider the way in which the findings from the exercise are presented in this report.
- 10. The next dip sampling sessions will be held in January 2023.**

Author(s): Emerson Hanslip, Ernie Hendricks
 Job Title: Business Support Officer, Complaints Reviews Manager