



Dip Sampling of Complaints Files Overview of findings on service recovered complaints

Purpose of Report

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

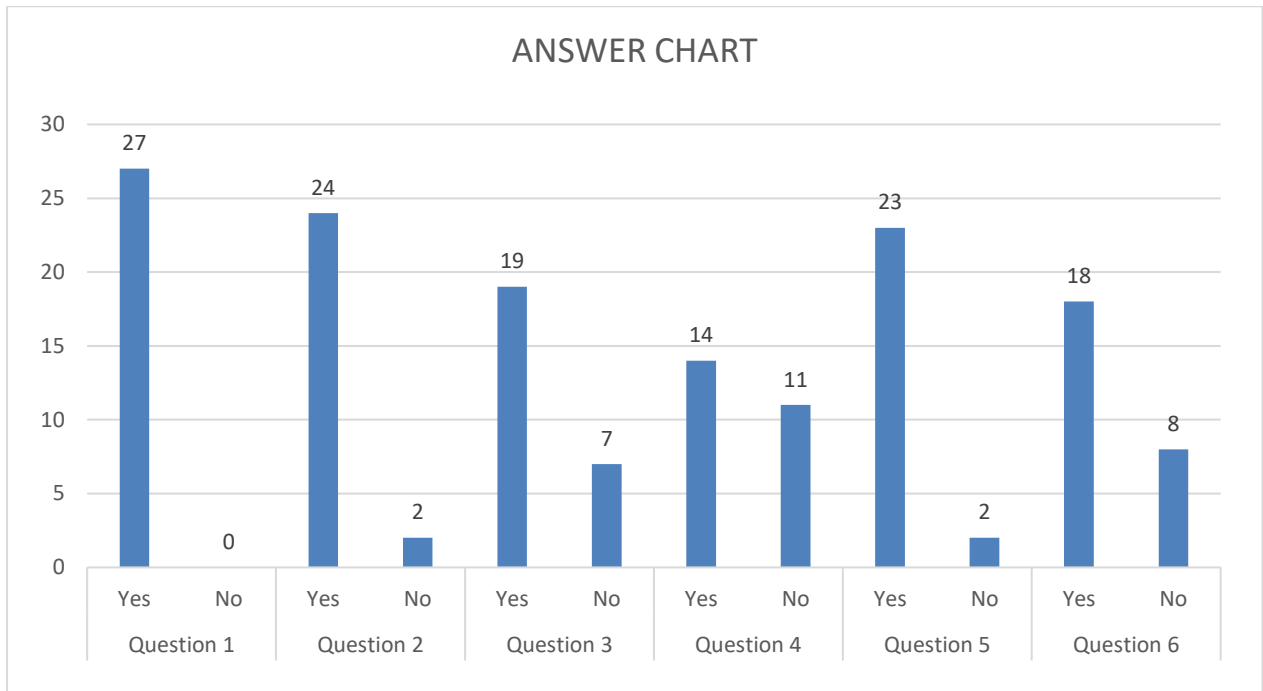
Background

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 and staff, 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 session took place on the 10/10/2023. There was one Board Member and eight members of staff present; they examined complaints that had been dealt with under Schedule 3 of the Police Reform Act 2002 where the service provided by West Midlands Police (WMP) was found by Professional Standards Department to be not acceptable.
3. The content of 27 files were sampled¹, all consisting of complaints where the service provided by WMP was found to be unacceptable. 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. Do you think the complaint was upheld for the right reasons?
6. Was the resolution/outcome given to the complainant consistent with the seriousness of the complaint? i.e., should the sanction have been greater

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.

6. The quantitative data points the following assumptions:

- Participants felt that in 100% of samples the complaint had been fully understood and all concerns/allegations were addressed.
- Participants felt that in 89% of samples the police undertook reasonable lines of enquiry to be able to provide a reasonable and proportionate outcome.
- Participants felt that in 70% 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 51% of samples, the outcome was communicated in an empathetic way.

- Participants felt that in 85% of samples the complaint was upheld for the right reasons.
 - Participants felt that in 66% of samples the resolution/outcome was consistent with 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 comments identified. The table below shows the areas where participants felt it important to emphasise particular points.

Code/Theme	Coding Frequency
Complainant deserved a better response	37%
Handler could have shown more empathy	22%
Participants suggested learning	4%
Complaint was lacking in investigation	19%
Participants said the complaint was handled reasonably and proportionately	15%

8. As cited above, in 4% of complaints sampled, participants said there was some learning or recommendations for officers involved in complaints. This consisted of:
- In one instance, learning was provided to one officer, although there were others attending on the day of the incident. Should learning be issued to all officers?
9. At the SPCB meeting on 28/11/23, 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.

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