

The Elected Local Policing Bodies (Specified information) Amendment Order 2021

'As Police and Crime Commissioner for Northumbria, I know our police officers and staff work hard to serve our local communities – I also recognise that at times things go wrong, but when they do I want local residents to have the confidence to contact Northumbria Police to raise their concerns, by doing this we can ensure that the police learn from their mistakes and going forward provide an improved service.

In February 2020, the government changed the complaints system. Northumbria Police remain responsible for dealing with all complaints relating to investigations and police officers / staff, as this sits under the remit of the Chief Constable. However, if you are not happy with the outcome, any review (formerly known as appeal) will be directed to my office or the IOPC, depending on the nature of the complaint. I want to reassure you that we are here to help, the Chief Constable and I are determined to continue delivering a service that meets the needs of local resident and businesses.

To help you understand how we deal with complaints and what is done 'behind the scenes', you may find the questions below useful.

Kim

Kim McGuinness
Police and Crime Commissioner
January 2024.

Role of Northumbria Police – Holding the Chief Constable to account

How Northumbria Police measure satisfaction?

Data is collected by Northumbria Police in relation to the number of complaints received and reported to the PCC as part of her ongoing scrutiny programme. To measure satisfaction with the complaints process a voluntary survey captures feedback on how people found the system to use. It also offers the opportunity to suggest improvements in the complaints process. Demographic information is compiled and analysed for disproportionality making sure that the system is accessible to all. This survey is regularly reviewed by Northumbria to ensure that it remains relevant.

How do Northumbria Police deal with progress updates on implementing relevant recommendations made by the Independent Office for Police Complaint (IOPC) and/or Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) in relation to complaints handling, or where recommendations were not accepted an explanation as to why and how the PCC hold the Chief Constable to account?

Northumbria Police work closely with the IOPC and HMICFRS in relation to complaints handling. There are times when they may make recommendations around improvements to complaints handling, if this happens both Northumbria Police and the OPCC work to deliver a quick resolution and the PCC expects the Chief Constable to update her on the timescale for improvements and how an action plan will be delivered. At present there are no outstanding recommendations in relation to complaints handling.

How Northumbria Police respond to trends or themes identified through complaints.

The Chief Constable and Police and Crime Commissioner regularly look at trends/themes identified through complaints. The top 3 categories are currently:

- *Delivery of duties.* General level of service, police action following contact, decisions
- *Police powers, policies and procedures.* Use of force, power to arrest, search of premises
- *Individual behaviours.* Unprofessional attitude, lack of fairness and impartiality, overbearing or harassing behaviour

Professional Standards Department engage with Area Commands to address issues identified by complaints. Bulletins are prepared focusing on key themes and trends. The bulletins provide information about good practice and organisational learning, and management are advised when officers and staff have received more than four complaints in a year. This instigates a locally driven reflective practice process to address any issues, provide support and reduce the likelihood of future complaints. Northumbria Police continue to use complaints as a learning mechanism to facilitate improvement. In addition to help identify, promote and drive organisational learning an additional Inspector post has been created in the Professional Standards Department. This role seeks to identify themes and issues which will improve service delivery in the drive to prevent complaints and dissatisfaction.

How Northumbria Police monitor and improve performance in timeliness of complaints handling

Northumbria Police have internal performance monitoring processes and the Engaged Communities Board with internal and external representation including the IOPC, whose remit is to improve service standards across the force area. The Board meet regularly and an update is provided by the Head of Professional Standards in relation to complaints, the OPCC Director for Confidence, Standards and Statutory Reviews sits on this Board.

How does Northumbria Police deal with the number of written communications issued by the force under regulation 13 where complaints are over 12 months old.

All complaint investigations which are coming close or have passed the 12 month timeframe are monitored and reviewed on a regular basis. This is captured by the OPCC and IOPC via reports from Northumbria Police PSD. This allows the service to focus on timeliness.

What quality assurance mechanisms are in place to monitor and improve the quality of its responses to complaints?

Complaint investigations are subject to a quality assurance process, a Complaints Services Manager at Northumbria Police dip samples the formally recorded complaints handled and makes recommendations for improvements in the response or investigation where necessary.

Details of the arrangements that the PCC has in place to hold the Chief Constable to account for complaints handling.

Through her scrutiny process the PCC receives a report from the Professional Standards Department that provides performance information, trends and key themes. This includes information about complaints volume, timeliness or recording, themes and nature of complaints across the force. It also provides an overview of the number of reviews processed and upheld, application of the 'practice requiring improvement' process and IOPC referrals.

On a regular basis the OPCC Director of Confidence, Standards and Reviews meets with the IOPC and Northumbria Police PSD, to discuss Northumbria Police performance. At the latest meeting (November 2023) there were no key issues identified, but discussions

focused on local matters and the IOPC are confident in the work undertaken by Northumbria Police Professional Standards Department. The next meeting will take place in the Spring of 2024.

Role of the PCC in respect of her complaints handling functions

The timeliness of complaint reviews dealt with by the OPCC e.g. the average time taken to complete reviews and details of which review functions the PCC has delegated and what measures they have taken to ensure quality, integrity and impartiality?

In February 2020, the OPCC took on the role of dealing with appeals in relation to the outcome of police complaints. The process is now known as reviews. This focuses on the original complaint to determine if it was handled in a reasonable and proportionate manner, it does not reinvestigate the complaint. The Commissioner has appointed the Director of Confidence, Standards and Statutory Reviews to deal with all reviews. Within five days of receiving the application for a review, we acknowledge the correspondence and inform complainants when they can expect to hear about the review and what will happen next. We give Northumbria Police two weeks to pull together all the papers they have relating to the case, a decision will then be reached as soon as practicable. However, we will provide an update every 28 days.

What quality assurance mechanisms the PCC has established to ensure that review decisions are sound and in line with the requirements of the complaints legislation and IOPC statutory guidance?

The Police and Crime Commissioner and Chief of Staff at the OPCC are made aware of any concerns that may arise through the review process. The Director of Confidence, Standards and Statutory Reviews provides a monthly overview of all reviews, complaints and correspondence, referencing any issues and learning. Dip sampling is carried out by the Chief of Staff. In the spirit of transparency, the Commissioner requires that all review outcomes are published every quarter on the OPCC website. The purpose for this is to allow local residents to know the reasons why reviews have or have not been upheld.

How the PCC assesses complainant satisfaction with the way in which they have dealt with complaints?

The OPCC works closely with those who have submitted a review request. To conclude, we never see dealing with complaints and reviews as a problem. We will always help facilitate someone who wishes to make a complaint or request a review. Only by learning from mistakes can improvements be delivered officers. We will learn and improve from the process to ensure our vision that Northumbria Police becomes one of the best forces in the country is delivered. Northumbria's quarterly and annually performance data can be found here –

[Northumbria Police | Independent Office for Police Conduct \(IOPC\)](#) – Current available IOPC performance data.

[Police complaints statistics | Independent Office for Police Conduct \(IOPC\)](#) IOPC Annual Complaints Statistics Report. (This is the latest data available on the IOPC website).

January 2024.