

**Joint Audit and Standards Committee**  
**21 March 2023**

**Standards Update**

**1. Update from Fairness, Policy and Standards Meeting**

- 1.1 The last Fairness, Policy and Standards meeting was held on 02/02/23. The meeting is chaired by the Deputy Chief Constable (DCC).
- 1.2 The meeting covered a range of topics including:
- Professional standards department (PSD) performance report.
  - Fairness at work (FAW);
  - Police officer promotion processes;
  - MyMax (the force's new approach to PDRs); and
- 1.3 The PSD performance presentation included data on volume of complaints, method of resolution, complaint allegation types and conduct cases. A more detailed data set is reviewed as part of the PSD performance meeting set out below, and thus a summary of quarterly performance is provided at section 2.
- 1.4 The DCC requested PSD conduct a piece of work to identify key conduct and cultural issues and use this to inform a whole-organisation action plan.
- 1.5 In January 2023, the Home Office requested that police chiefs across England and Wales check all officers and staff against national databases by the 31st March 2023, following the case of former Metropolitan Police officer David Carrick.
- 1.6 Following phase 1 of the data wash, it is anticipated that considerable lines of enquiry will be returned to forces, which will require manual review. The DCC is working with the Head of PSD to understand surge requirements that will be needed to resource this work. This needs to be understood in the context of existing backlogs within vetting and a proposed move to a new vetting system.
- 1.7 17 FAW submissions were recorded to date (01 Apr 2022 – 31 Dec 2022). Only 2 submissions were recorded in Q3, a considerable reduction compared to the same period in previous years.
- 1.8 Revised forecasting indicates that the volume of submissions in 2022/23 will be the lowest seen since 2018/19.
- 1.9 The force has improved the availability of management information in relation to FAW and are able to identify trends in reporting. Over the last five-year period, females are consistently submitting a higher volume of FAW reports than males.

- 1.10 Following extensive scrutiny, the timeliness of the FAW process has improved compared to previous years. However, there are still challenges with appointing suitable fact finders to cases.
- 1.11 Whilst the average number of days to complete a FAW case has reduced compared to previous years, the average number of days to appoint a fact finder at the start of the process in 2022/23 (19.7 days) is higher than in 2021/22 (12.8 days) and 2020/21 (9.6 days).
- 1.12 Progress continues to be made in respect of the police officer promotion process review. The purpose of this review was to design a process which will select the most able officers efficiently and in a fair, transparent, and consistent manner.
- 1.13 Following extensive consultation, the draft proposals will be used to produce a new promotion policy. This is due to go to Exec Board in March 2023.
- 1.14 As set out in the previous Standards update, the force has launched a new approach to PDRs – MyMax. The data at the last meeting focused on 6 month review completion rates.
- 1.15 As at 17/01/2023 the overall completion rate of 6 month review of PDRs was 56%. There is considerable variation in completion rates within and across directorates. This has been subject to scrutiny at Force Delivery Group.

## **2. Update from Quarterly PSD Performance Meeting**

- 2.1 The PCC has a quarterly performance meeting with the DCC, Head of PSD and the Senior Complaints and Misconduct Manager.
- 2.2 The last meeting took place on 01/02/2023. An overview of complaints performance and live misconduct matters in Q3 (Oct - Dec 2022) was provided and key headlines are summarised below.
- 2.3 The number of complaints and conduct cases recorded in the quarter continued to show an upward trend compared to previous years. 400 complaints were recorded in Q3, the highest volume since the same period in 2020/21. 37 conduct cases were recorded in Q3, this a 3-year high.
- 2.4 Despite the increase in reporting, the number of recorded complaints has remained relatively stable, suggesting that the increase in dissatisfaction has primarily been low level and suitable for resolution through informal triage. PSD have also been able to maintain a high level of performance in terms of timeliness of recording complaints despite the increase in demand.

- 2.5 PSD continue to meet their internal targets to resolve 75% of complaints outside Schedule 3 (i.e. informal triage). IOPC data continues to show that West Mercia deal with a considerably larger proportion of cases outside Schedule 3 (79%) compared to other similar forces (36% average).
- 2.6 The PCC has raised concerns regarding the time taken to finalise complaints compared to similar forces and the national average. The variation is primarily due to the level of resources available within PSD to manage the large scale of demand.
- 2.7 Conduct cases continue to rise. There has been an increase in reporting through the Integrity Line following high profile cases like David Carrick.
- 2.8 Computer misuse / data protection and inappropriate sexual behaviour account for the main themes for conduct cases.
- 2.9 The budget for 2023/24 includes capital investment in monitoring software for PSD to enable even more robust analysis of data to proactively identify conduct issues.

### **3. 12 month timeliness letters**

- 3.1 PSD must provide the PCC and the IOPC with a notification letter for any local investigation (complaint, conduct or death or serious injury matter) which has not been completed within 12 months. 6 month updates are then required thereafter until the matter has been completed.
- 3.2 In this context, 'completed' is defined as a final report being submitted to the Appropriate Authority (i.e. does not include the reviews period). Letters must still be submitted even where cases are subjudice.
- 3.3 0 letters have been submitted in Q3 2022/23. This was raised with PSD at the Q3 PCC – PSD performance meeting on 01/02/2023 to ensure it is correct. The complaint manager provided assurance that systems had been audited to ensure that the PCC was in receipt of all letters required by legislation and that no further cases had been required.
- 3.4 2 cases originally flagged in 2021/22 remain open and 6 monthly update letters were last received in August and September 2022. Further updates will be due in Q4 if the cases remain open. Both of these cases were subjudice and were awaiting the outcome of court proceedings.
- 3.5 The PCC's office has developed a mechanism to monitor the submission of these letters and to provide oversight of trends. These trends are discussed at the PCC's quarterly PSD performance meeting where appropriate.

## **4.**

## **5. PCC Review Function**

- 5.1 As of February 2020, the PCC has become the relevant review body (RRB) for low level complaints.
- 5.2 A log has been created to monitor the progress, outcomes and learning for all complaint reviews. This data is also recorded on Centurion (the ICT system used by PSDs nationally), to ensure compliance with national data standards.
- 5.3 Complaint review data has now been integrated into the PCC's quarterly performance meeting with PSD. This ensures greater oversight of trends and learning. The following data was presented at the Q3 meeting.
- 5.4 55 reviews have been completed Q1-Q3.
- 5.5 Of those completed, 23 have been upheld (41%). This is an increase on the upheld rate in previous years, but a small decrease compared to the last quarter (44%). The upheld rate is higher than the national average (20%). It should be noted that the volumes are still low and therefore percentages likely to fluctuate.
- 5.6 Key themes identified through the recommendations are set out below:
- Not all aspects of the complaint were addressed. This was more common for complex cases with multiple allegations.
  - The finding of acceptable service did not logically follow from the information provided in the final letter.
  - A more comprehensive explanation was required to enable the complainant to understand the process / outcomes of complaint handling.
  - Further lines of inquiry/ investigation were conducted.
- 5.7 These trends have been shared with the Complaint Sergeant in PSD to help inform and improve internal processes.