

SURREY POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

OPCC COMPLAINTS HANDLING UPDATE

22 MARCH 2021

INTRODUCTION

The Panel received a report on the main changes to the police complaints review system and details of how they have been implemented in the Surrey OPCC in September 2020. This report presents the Panel with an update on subsequent progress.

Correspondence received by the OPCC

Last year the OPCC recorded 1,150 expressions of complaint or dissatisfaction, roughly 22 a week. However, for obvious reasons the year was unusual, which was reflected in the contact received. The first half of the year, January to June, was one of the quietest dealt with, with approximately 18.48 complaints a week, compared to the second half of the year, which rose to 25.6 a week.

The largest categories of complaints were recorded as follows:

Issue	Number of contacts	Percentage
Reviews (i.e. requests for reviews of complaints dealt with by Surrey Police)	135	11.7%
Anti-Social Behaviour	113	9.8%
Covid-19	67	5.8%
Speeding	63	5.5%
Unauthorised Encampments	53	4.6%
Parking	45	3.9%
Total	476	41.3%

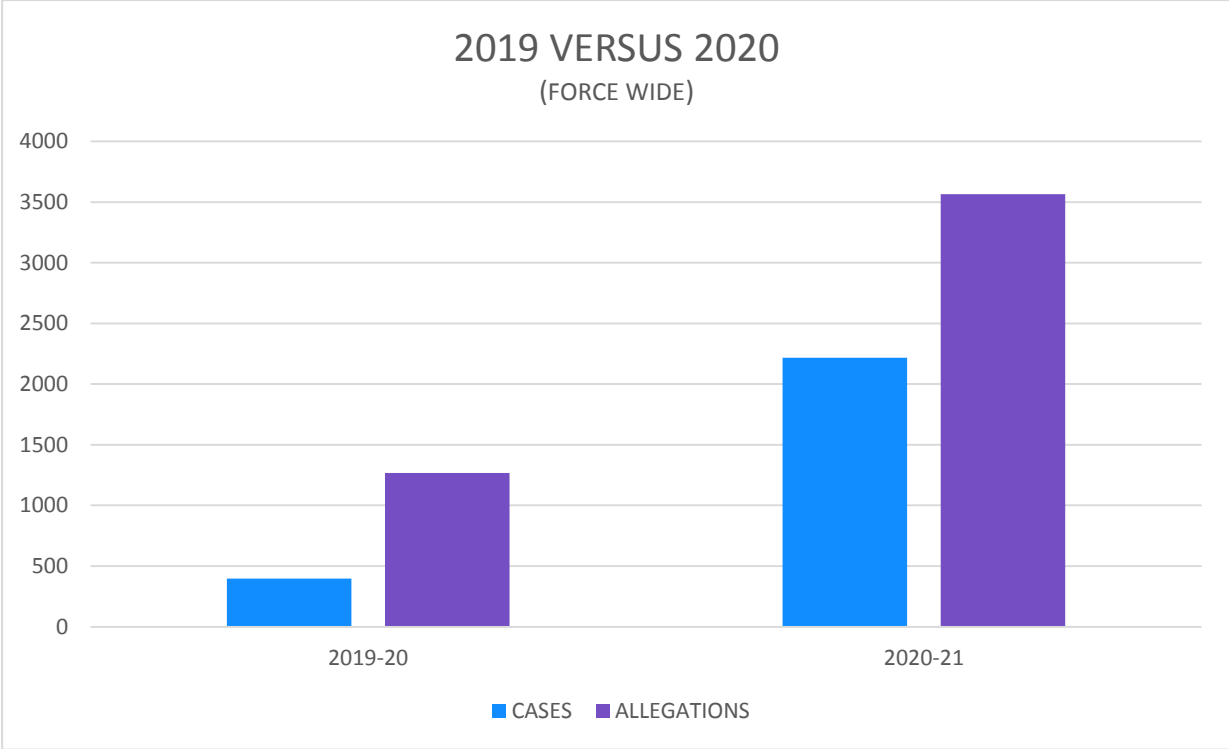
Additionally, the OPCC received a high number of contact from certain individuals, for instance, one individual contacted the OPCC 94 times alone in the last six months of the year, another 42 times in the last five months. Overall, 13 individuals were responsible for 343, or 29.8%, of all the correspondence received.

The vast majority of these matters are passed to Surrey Police's Professional Standards Department to manage, who are the Appropriate Authority in most cases.

There has been an increase in complaints relating to the Chief Constable. However, these remain low and have tended to be attempts by persistent complainants to

escalate their complaint to the highest level having been disappointed with the outcome of the original complaint.

Cases handled by PSD



Surrey’s Professional Standards Department (PSD) has seen a fourfold increase in the number of complaints cases coming to it since the introduction of the new regulations. This has meant that the time taken to resolve complaints has risen slightly in the last year. This is an issue that has been noticed nationally. Additional resources have now been made available to the Department, which should see this figure fall.

OPCC Review Process

	Requests for Reviews	Accepted	Rejected
01/02/2020 – 31/12/2020	117	96	21

Completed Reviews	Not Upheld	Upheld
91	85 (93/5%)	6 (6.5%)

Numbers of Reviews

Since last year, complainants now have a right of review if they are unhappy about the outcome of a complaint or the way it was handled. These reviews (apart from the most serious cases which are handled by the IOPC) are carried out by the Police &

Crime Commissioner and the office employs a Complaints Review Manager who fulfils this role.

It was expected that the Complaints Review Manager (CRM) would receive in the region of 50 requests for reviews per annum. However, in 2020 there were 117 requests in the 10 months since the new Regulations were introduced. This pattern is continuing into 2021 with 15 new requests received in the first eight weeks. As a consequence, the CRM will be increasing from two to three days a week from April.

Timeliness

There is no time limit for the completion of a review. However, the CRM has informed all complainants that the review will be completed within 40 working days. This has achieved 99% compliance (with just one deadline missed due to CRM requesting a further doc from PSD). This 40 day target date for completion compares favourably with previous appeal bodies for similar complaints (IPCC set previous targets of six months).

Review Decisions

Of the reviews completed, 93.5% were Not Upheld. Although this may seem a high figure, it is in line with figures under previous regulations, where upheld appeals would vary between 5-10%.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Police and Crime Panel notes the progress report on complaint handling from the OPCC.

LEAD/ CONTACT OFFICER:

Sam Meyer, Complaints and Diversity
Policy Lead, OPCC

TELEPHONE NUMBER:

01483 630200

E-MAIL:

SurreyPCC@surrey.pnn.police.uk

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