

SURREY POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

SUMMARY OF COMPLAINTS AGAINST SURREY POLICE

10th September 2013

SUMMARY

This is a report setting out complaints information received by Surrey Police's Professional Standards Department (PSD) in 2011 and 2012, and sets out the number of recorded contacts received by the Police and Crime Commissioner's Officer since November 2012.

To update the Police and Crime Panel (PCP) on the number of complaints received by Surrey Police and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members of the Police and Crime Panel note the report.

EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

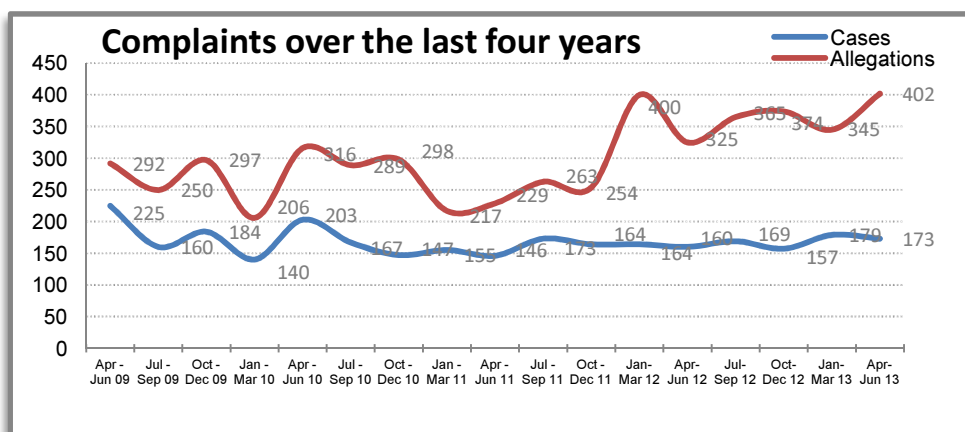
No implications.

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Surrey Police: It is important to recognise that the volume of complaint allegations received by Surrey Police is, to some extent, driven by the complainant and so to use this factor as a measurement of performance can be misleading. For example, a sharp increase could be misinterpreted as showing a broad deterioration in behaviour whereas it could simply indicate that the complainant had a list of concerns relating to one event. It is also important to note that the Professional Standards Department (PSD) changed the way it recorded allegations in January 2012, which explains the rise in recorded allegations from this date.



A breakdown of the number of complaints received by PSD in 2011 and 2012 is attached as **Annex A**. This shows that in 2011 there was a grand total of 1,283 complaints recorded, which rose to 1,864 in 2012, equalling 3,147. However, it is worth noting that of these complaints only 183 were upheld by the Force, and that only 547 were locally resolved, meaning 77% of complaints are not upheld, withdrawn or discontinued for various reasons.

Conclusion: Surrey Police continues to perform well against most similar forces and nationally.

Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey

General: Since 22 November 2012 the Office has recorded 1,166 types of contact. Over a hundred were comments on the Police and Crime Plan and the precept. These were mostly from two pressure groups, one regarding cycling and road safety, the other regarding wildlife crime. Almost half of contacts recorded (405) were businesses offering their services, while 54 were invitations to meetings and 58 were asking questions of the Office, such as its address. Of the remainder, 9 offered congratulations or compliments on services delivered, 9 were FOI requests and 18 were in relation to the engagement events held.

In April 2013 the Office changed the way it recorded the general correspondence it received, recording less general enquiries. Therefore, the actual number and time spent dealing with day-to-day contact will be higher than recorded. Lastly, at the same time the Office stopped recording FOIs on the Contact Log and simply recorded them on its separate FOI Log. In all the Office has received 29 Freedom of Information requests in the last nine months. Responses have been provided to 18.5 of them and 9.5 have been referred on to the Force's Information Action Team, with 1 'information not held'.

The remaining 450 contacts were either complaints about the way Surrey Police had handled their case (300) or dissatisfaction with the approach/policy/strategy adopted by Surrey Police (150). The first month (22 November to 31 December 2012) saw 65 complaint/dissatisfaction contacts recorded. This dropped to 49 in January 2013 and again to 38 in February 2013. The number of incidents rose to 59 in March 2013, but has fallen month on month since this time. There were 36 recorded incidents in July 2013 and, at the time of writing, only 16 recorded incidents for August 2013.

Complaints: In all, the PCCs Office has received complaints from 129 individuals, 7 of whom have made repeated contact throughout the last nine months and who account for approximately a quarter of all complaints received. All of these complainants have long running complaints with Surrey Police and have involved the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC). They tend to follow a similar pattern:

- The complainant has contact with the police;
- They are not happy with the officers approach/outcome;
- They complain to the Force's Professional Standards Department (PSD);
- PSD then investigate their complaint, tend to find that the Officer did all that could be done so do not uphold the complaint;
- The complainant then appeals this decision to the IPCC, who investigate the case, agree with PSD, and dismiss the complaint;
- The IPCC judgement is final (there is no appeal other than by judicial review), which frustrates the complainant; and
- The complainant then contacts the PCC's Office expecting the PCC to be able to use his authority to resolve the complaint in their favour.

Sadly, the PCC is not able to do this, but his Office is able to use the information provided by the complainants to build a picture on the nature and type of complaints received by Surrey Police. Several of the complaints circulate around the complainant (often the victim) not being kept informed of developments in the investigation of their case, or around officers being rude and unhelpful in the first instance. The PCC is then able to use this information, with the examples gathered where appropriate, to hold the Chief Constable to account.

Dissatisfaction: The vast majority of dissatisfaction contact received relate to low level incidents, such as neighbourly disputes about hedges and parking.

However, on occasion the PCC is contacted about more critical occurrences, such as gypsy/traveller incursions and the subsequent course of action/inaction taken by Surrey Police.

Although these matters are predominantly operational and therefore outside the remit of the PCC, the information provides him with a picture of how Surrey Police is operating. In some areas, such as gypsy/traveller incursions in Nutfield Marsh or Asian Gold Burglaries in Stanwell, the PCC's Office has been able to help the Force identify a perceived problem and take appropriate steps to try and address it.

Conclusions: The number of complaints and dissatisfactions received by this Office has fallen every month, apart from March 2013. There is no discernible pattern/link to explain why the number of complaints received in March rose (they are not about the precept for instance). Although it is likely that the PCC's profile was higher at this time due to the publication of the precept and his Police and Crime Plan.

That the number of complaints/dissatisfactions recorded by this Office has fallen every month since March is a positive sign that Surrey Police are improving the customer service it provides to the public and colleagues.