

**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST REFERENCE NO 2025-26-068**

Your request has now been considered under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the Act) and we provide our response below.

You asked:

1. Please provide in PDF format the minutes of any meeting where the decision was discussed and proposed that the policy or remit of the OPCC would be to not carry out or accept any investigation of complaints against Dorset Police by the public.
2. Also to provide the original copy of that policy or remit not to accept complaints against Dorset Police.
3. Please provide in PDF format copies of any meeting minutes, original policy, process and standard operating procedures for when the OPCC reviews any complaint processed by Dorset Police, and specifically with regards to the OPCC looking at the original complaint from the member of the public when reviewing Dorset Police's complaint handling.

Your request for information has been considered under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the Act) and our response is as follows:

- 1. Please provide in PDF format the minutes of any meeting where the decision was discussed and proposed that the policy or remit of the OPCC would be to not carry out or accept any investigation of complaints against Dorset Police by the public.**

No information held.

- 2. Also to provide the original copy of that policy or remit not to accept complaints against Dorset Police.**

Please refer to the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) Complaints Policy, available on our website - [Complaints Policy](#)

For the sake of clarity, the Police and Crime Commissioner is not the appropriate authority for handling and investigating individual complaints against Dorset Police. This is the responsibility of Dorset Police's Professional Standards Department (PSD), in line with the [Police Reform Act 2002](#) and [The Police \(Complaints and Misconduct\) Regulations 2012](#).

- 3. Please provide in PDF format copies of any meeting minutes, original policy, process and standard operating procedures for when the OPCC reviews any complaint processed by Dorset Police, and specifically with regards to the OPCC looking at the original complaint from the member of the public when reviewing Dorset Police's complaint handling.**

For relevant policies, please refer to Section 8 of the OPCC's [Complaint Policy](#), titled Complaint Reviews. Also refer to the enclosed PDF attachment, *FOI 2025-26-068 – Attachment 1- Complaint Review Policy*.

#### Complaint Dip Sampling

The OPCC oversees a quarterly dip sample process of Dorset Police complaints as part of the OPCC Use of Police Powers and Standards Scrutiny Panel. Feedback and learning from this dip sample is shared with PSD to aid learning and continuous improvement.

Please refer to the Use of Police Powers and Standards Scrutiny Panel meeting minutes available on our website ([Scrutiny Panels](#)) which features feedback from the dip sampling of complaints.



# Complaint Review Policy Management and Process

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## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 Where a complaint has been recorded under Schedule 3 to the *Police Reform Act 2002*, the complainant has a right to apply for a review of the outcome of the complaint. The review will consider whether the outcome of the complaint is reasonable and proportionate. Where the Review Officer finds that the outcome of the complaint is not reasonable and proportionate, they will uphold the review and make recommendations to put it right.
- 1.2 This document sets out the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner's procedure for undertaking complaint reviews. It provides a step by step guide to undertaking a review and sets out how reviews will be recorded. It details how actions and recommendations identified will be monitored to completion, and how patterns, themes and issues will be identified and analysed. Good practice and learning will also be identified and fed back to relevant parties.

## **2. INITIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

- 2.1 When a complainant contacts the Police and Crime Commissioner's Office to ask for a review, a formal acknowledgement and Review Request Form will be sent to them either via email or post. The acknowledgement letter informs the complainant of the role of the Review Officer, what they can expect to happen next and when they can expect to hear about the outcome. It will also give the complainant a point of contact should they have any queries. Reviews should ideally be undertaken within 28 days, dependent on the complexity of the complaint. In the event of any delay, the complainant will be kept regularly updated via their preferred contact method as to the progress of the review. The Review Request form ensures that all the information required is captured (why they are dissatisfied and what they are seeking as an outcome) and also that the complainant's accessibility requirements are identified and met. Demographic details are also captured at this point.
- 2.2 On receiving a completed review request form, an email/letter should be sent to the complainant acknowledging receipt by the Review Officer, preferably digitally. The estimated date of final response should then be calculated from the date that the completed Review Request form is received.
- 2.3 Should the complainant not return a completed Review Request form, the Review Officer will issue two reminder emails/letters. In the second reminder the complainant will be informed that should the completed form not be returned within the next week (and final date given), the review will be closed and acknowledgement of closure sent to the complainant.
- 2.4 The validity of the review request must be confirmed. In considering the validity of a review request, the following information must be ascertained:

### **Is the application complete?**

An application for a review must be made using the Review Request form and state:

- i. The details of the complaint;
- ii. The date on which the complaint was made;
- iii. The date on which the complainant was provided with the details about their right of review at the conclusion of the investigation.

2.5 However, the Review Officer may decide to consider a review even though it does not comply with one or more of these requirements.

2.6 If a request is received that does not contain this information the complainant will be advised that this information is required, or the review will not take place.

### **Is there a right to apply for a review?**

2.7 Only a complainant, or someone acting on their behalf (with written consent unless a minor) can make an application for a review in relation to a complaint. If anyone other than the complainant or someone acting on their behalf tries to make an application, the application will be invalid.

2.8 Before an application can be made there must be a written notification of the outcome of the complaint.

### **Has the application been made in time?**

2.9 Applications for reviews must be made within 28 days, starting the day after the day the complainant was provided with a response at the conclusion of the investigation. An application for review cannot be made until the handling of their complaint has been completed.

2.10 The Review Officer may extend the period for making an application for a review where they are satisfied that because of the special circumstances of a case it is just to do so. This will be considered on a case by case basis.

### **Notifying the complainant where the application is invalid**

2.11 The complainant will be informed of the decision to treat the application as invalid. This notification will be made in writing (and by other means where appropriate, taking into account any particular needs or requests) as soon as reasonably practicable. The reasons for deciding that the application is invalid will be explained clearly to the complainant via their preferred method of communication.

## **3. CONDUCTING THE REVIEW**

3.1 An application for a review offers the opportunity to consider whether the complaint outcome is reasonable and proportionate and, if not, to put things right. Conducting a review should not merely be a quality check of what has happened before. The

Review Officer will reach a conclusion about whether the outcome is reasonable and proportionate.

- 3.2 The Review Officer will consider what information is required to enable them to undertake the review, which may include but is not limited to:
- i. Database information
  - ii. Pre-existing reports, for example arrest statements, pocket notebook entries, log entries
  - iii. Video footage, for example body worn video or dash cam footage
  - iv. All documentation related to the investigation of the complaint
  - v. Any relevant legislation or guidance pertaining to the complaint.
- 3.3 The Review Officer will take a consistent and fair approach to each application for review, considering the following:
- i. Were reasonable lines of enquiry undertaken to be able to provide a reasonable and proportionate outcome?
  - ii. Was the complaint fully understood, and have all complaints been addressed?
  - iii. If any aspects of the complaint were not addressed, or any lines of enquiry not pursued, were there sound reasons for this?
  - iv. Was information or evidence weighed appropriately and fairly?
  - v. Do the findings or determination reached logically follow from the information or evidence obtained?
- 3.4 Further questions to consider may include:
- i. Were there regular updates on complaint handling?
  - ii. The quality and content of any outcome letters or reports to the complainant;
  - iii. Was there early initial engagement with the complainant?
  - iv. Was the complainant's preferred method of contact used?
  - v. If the complaint was originally dealt with outside of Schedule 3, was it appropriate to be handled this way?

#### **4. DECISIONS, OUTCOMES AND ACTIONS**

- 4.1 In reaching a decision about a review request, the Review Officer will consider a number of factors:
- Was the complaint fully understood and were all allegations or concerns addressed?
  - Were reasonable lines of enquiry undertaken to be able to provide a reasonably and proportionate outcome?
  - Was due regard given to relevant guidance?
  - If any aspects of the complaint were not addressed, or any lines of enquiry were not pursued, were there sound reasons for this?
  - Was information or evidence weighed appropriately and fairly?
  - Do the findings or determinations reached, logically follow from the information or evidence obtained?
  - Are the decisions and outcomes in the original complaint investigation clear?

- 4.2 If following review, the Review Officer finds that the outcome of the complaint investigation was reasonable and proportionate, a letter of response will be drafted to the complainant reflecting this decision and explaining the reasons why they have reached this conclusion.
- 4.3 If following review, the Review Officer finds that the outcome of the complaint investigation was not reasonable or proportionate, they will consider what actions or recommendations should be made to remedy the complaint. Actions or recommendations may take the form of:
- Providing the complainant with a debrief to help them to understand what happened
  - Providing a meaningful update and thorough explanation
  - Apologies
  - A gesture of goodwill
  - A commitment to sharing learning
  - Referral under the reflective practice review process
  - Policy or procedure review
  - Any other recommendation (other than a recommendation that compensation be paid) considered appropriate to remedy the dissatisfaction expressed by the complainant concerned
- 4.4 Where potential actions or recommendations have been identified, the Complaints and Misconduct Team will be made aware of these prior to a response being sent. This is to ascertain whether said actions or recommendations can be put in place promptly. It is preferable that any potential actions or recommendations be agreed and actioned before a response is sent – the complainant will likely be more agreeable to actions already carried out, than what they may perceive as an empty promise. Once the agreed actions or recommendations are in place, a response will be sent out to the complainant.
- 4.5 Should it not be possible to undertake any proposed actions or recommendations within the agreed response timeframe, a response will be sent out to the complainant setting out the proposed actions or recommendations.

The review investigation response will include the following:

- A clarification of the role of the Complaint Review Officer
  - A summary of the issues that the CRO was asked to investigate
  - How the investigation was undertaken and what was considered
  - The CROs' findings, investigation outcome and decision taken
  - Any recommendations proposed or actions undertaken to remedy the complaint
- 4.6 Once the response has been sent, a copy will be sent to the Complaints and Misconduct team who will forward to any police officer or police staff member involved in the complaint for their information. This copy will also be uploaded to Centurion for recording purposes. A copy will also be sent to any relevant party deemed to require sight of the review outcome.

- 4.7 The response will be stored in the relevant folder in the OPCC shared drive until the end of that quarter, to ensure that the Complaints and Misconduct Team have been able to provide the required data to the IOPC. Once assurance has been provided that the quarterly data has been sent, any personal information will be deleted.

## **5. GOVERNANCE AND REPORTING**

- 5.1 Data from review requests will be entered and tracked on the Complaint Review Clipboard. The Clipboard contains all information relevant to an individual review, including the following:

- Current status (Open/Closed)
- Date notified that review will be requested
- Date acknowledged and Review Request Form sent
- Date Review Request Form received
- Name of complainant
- Summary of review request
- Progress update section
- Estimated date of response
- Date closed
- Upheld Yes/No
- Recommendations made
- Recommendations implemented
- Complainant satisfied Yes/No

- 5.2 This information will form the basis of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and enable the Complaint Review Officer to both monitor performance and provide reporting data where required.

- 5.3 Reporting will be provided to a number of areas. Performance data will go to the quarterly Legitimacy Board and will also be provided as an update to the OPCC Senior Management Team (SMT).

- 5.4 Recommendations of significance, for example recommendations that are not case specific, and which could represent wider learning for the force will be tracked through the Legitimacy Board to be put forward for organisational learning.

- 5.5 Quarterly statistics will be provided in the Police and Crime Plan to the Police and Crime Panel. These statistics will be high level and include data such as reviews received, number resolved, upheld / not upheld etc.

## ANNEX A – FLOWCHART FOR COMPLAINT REVIEW

