

## Police & Crime Panel Report



# Update report on Police Complaints Handling at the OPFCC

## Background

This report provides an update on the implementation progress of the new police complaints handling process within North Yorkshire. It builds upon a report provided to the Panel earlier this year, which described the context and rationale for changing the current process from complaints being handled solely by police forces to being processed by the PFCC offices, supported by the force providing a triage function.

The report also detailed the PFCC's cognisance of the national review and reform of police complaints (Police & Crime Act 2017), and her desire to formally align handling of complaints with the role more generally provided by PCCs, namely an independent scrutiny and accountability function, ensuring proper monitoring of and holding the Chief Constable to account, which matches the public expectation of PCCs.

Secondary legislation is due to be brought into force in early 2020, and this will provide for a transfer of powers from Chief Constables to PCCs, in order that they can then assume responsibility for complaints, the definition of which has been expanded to include expressions of dissatisfaction with the force. Specifically, PCCs can then take on responsibility for the following process components:

- Receiving and recording
- Making an initial assessment, in order to determine whether the expression of dissatisfaction is appropriate for service recovery, local resolution or local investigation via Professional Standards Department, or referral to IOPC.
- Fact checking and resolving complaints that are eligible for service recovery
- Acting as a single point of contact with the customer, undertaking to communicate the process and any updates to them
- Holding Chief Constables to account for police complaints under their management
- Providing an adjudicator function in order to process appeals (reviews).

## Service Governance

The business case for the new process of complaints handling, with a specific proposal to establish a new Complaints and Recognition Team, was approved in principle at the Joint Executive Board, the strategic governance and oversight group responsible for North Yorkshire Police and North Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service. The business case provided a comprehensive roadmap for the establishment of the new team, though it was recognised that practical development of the service was required in order to identify and capture the tangible benefits that will be able to be realised

by transitioning the handling of complaints from the Force to the OPFCC. Regular updates will, therefore, be provided to the Executive Board.

## Recruitment

The establishment of the new team was subsumed into the wider Transform 2020 review, which included the OPFCC as well as the Force. In accordance with review and staff consultation processes, recruitment was frozen; this phase has now concluded and all posts associated with the new team have been formally assessed in terms of grade and responsibility, and they will shortly be released for advertisement and recruitment. One member of staff is already in post, as a result of the initial T2020 review phase. A recruitment timeline was drawn up to assist in setting up the team, and it includes such elements such as vetting, practitioner and legislation training, vulnerability awareness training, shadowing opportunities, acquisition of software licences and IT training among other things.

## Implementation Plan and Communications

An implementation plan was developed to expedite the whole transition of complaints handling from the force to the OPFCC. The plan includes all identified key milestones and critical components that need to be achieved and delivered in the lead up to the new team formally commencing service delivery. A central feature within this plan is the need for clear and regular communications, ensuring clarification of the service that will be delivered in the future, as well as publishing details of interim arrangements that will be in place until the service is properly launched. In view of this, the implementation plan includes communications to staff in both the Force and the OPFCC, as well as to the public.

## Working Group

A working group was set up in July 2019 to take responsibility for and ownership of the implementation plan, in order to ensure its objectives and overall aims are progressed and achieved. The group presently meets every four weeks, however the meetings are likely to increase, as the date of the new team's service delivery commencement draws closer. Given the transitioning nature of the plan, and PFCC's and Executive Board's cognisance of the likely impact on public and staffing that will result from the OPFCC assuming responsibility for the service, it was necessary to ensure the group features appropriate representation from across the Force and OPFCC to be responsible and accountable for the progress of the pre-launch service development. The following departments are thus represented at the meetings:

- OPFCC, including new team members
- Professional Standards Department
- Legal Services
- IT
- HR
- Communications

It is presently anticipated that recruitment will commence no later than end of September 2019, and that all posts will have been interviewed for and appointed to by the end of November 2019.

In respect of the overall implementation plan, a number of tasks have already been completed, including the development of a communications strategy, acquisition of licences and appropriate authorities training for a number of working group members. A series of joint briefings on the new service, to be delivered by PFCC and Chief Constable to police teams around the Force, have also been set up.

## **Service Go Live Date**

The anticipated go live date for the Complaints and Recognition Team is February 2020. It is expected that many of the pre-service commencement activities, such as customer service and complaints database training, shadowing, IT systems, and office set up, will be progressed and achieved when the team has been fully appointed to, and the implementation plan has been designed to accommodate this.

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**September 2019**