

Complaints and Recognition Service

Summary

In February 2020, new Regulations came into effect because of the Policing and Crime Act 2017, to allow for Police and Crime Commissioners to take on more responsibility regarding police complaints. In North Yorkshire, the Commissioner implemented model 3, as detailed to the Panel in the report of September 2019 and previously. Six months in, this report gives Panel an update on progress at the first point of review of the service.

The new service has been successfully implemented and embedded, with strong working relationships having been built between the new team and the Professional Standards Department (PSD). Progress in realising the full scope of the team regarding organisational learning has been hampered by the volume of contact during the coronavirus crisis. However, overall, the team is receiving a higher volume of contact than was predicted in the business case, but is also service recovering a higher proportion with few cases being transferred to PSD.

Since service settled to a steady-state in August, the team have been working closely with NYP to implement the organisational and performance aspects of their work which is expected to be fully embedded by April 2021.

Implementation

Since early-2019 the OPFCC had a working group set up to support the implementation of the new service. This was led from the top of the organisation by A/CE Sharon Caddell and involved senior officers from within PSD, technical support from ICT and team members from within PSD and the OPFCC. This met on a fortnightly basis and had a number of task and finish groups to address key issues, such as the implementation of the new version of the complaints handling software and communications out to frontline officers and staff. Regular updates were provided to the PFCC and Chief Officers. The working group continues to run on a monthly basis post-implementation to keep progress under review and ensure smooth working between the teams.

Recruitment began in late 2019, and the new team of one Team Leader and three Service Advisers began their training in mid-January 2020. The Team Leader comes from HMCTS having led their Operations Centre, managing the customer service operations for civil claims and hearings, with significant experience of implementing best practice in process and procedure for customer service. The Service Advisers come from a range of customer service backgrounds with high levels of experience in managing complaints and service recovery. Training was provided by Sancus, the market leader in training for police complaints, alongside in-house training modules, training by Force Information Systems who provide the Centurion software, and visits to different departments and teams within NYP. The team went live on 3 March 2020.

Coronavirus

The coronavirus crisis has had an impact on the work of the new team in working practice and volume of contact.

Three weeks after launch, the team started working from home full time. This has removed their ability to visit and learn about different teams and departments within NYP, though luckily they had managed to visit some of the most important prior to lockdown. They have continued to learn about teams virtually over MS Teams, but this has stopped them meeting the wider teams and getting to know people and build in-person relationships which is not ideal. It is testament to their hard work and skills that they have continued to build highly effective working relationships across the police service despite this setback.

Working from home full-time also means that they do not have each other's direct support during calls or to discuss cases or issues. Again, work-arounds have been put in place using MS Teams, but there has been a greater welfare impact as a result and extra measures have been put in place to ensure the team have the support and aftercare that they need.

Most significantly the team saw their case load double from the three weeks before lockdown across the lockdown period and thereafter. Prior to lockdown the team were managing 15 new cases per week, during lockdown they were managing 30 new cases a week and were a team member down for part of that time. Post-lockdown there has been another rise, and for the period July-September the team have been handling 40 new cases per week.

Six-month review

The OPFCC has conducted a six-month review of the service implementation and performance. It has concluded that the initial service implementation has been successful and that the team is well embedded and performing its main function, the handling and service recovery of complaints, at a high level. However, due to the challenging circumstances almost immediately after launch created by the coronavirus, as outlined above, the full scope of the team and service, particularly in relation to organisational learning, is yet to be realised. Given these circumstances, it is all the more credit to the team for having succeeded at the level they have to date, especially as they have not been at full strength consistently during this period.

As a demonstration of this, compared to the original business case there is significant extra demand on the team as set out in the table below. The business case anticipated that 54% of cases coming in would be service recovered, but in reality the team are service recovering 87% of all cases, meaning that the number of cases progressing through to PSD is also reduced. Simultaneously we are seeing a reduction in the number of reviews being made, suggesting that the work the team are doing is leaving customers highly satisfied. Further work to survey customers will be undertaken to assess levels of satisfaction.

Activity	Anticipated demand as set out in the business case	Revised demand	Percentage increase
Recording	1441	2207	53%
Assessing	1441	2207	53%
Service recovery	774	1920	148%
Receipt of Reviews	68	46	-32%

Key achievements highlighted by the review are:

- The team that has been recruited have excellent skill set and have maintained the service through a challenging period as the service was set up.
- Excellent working relationships developed between the team, PSD and operational departments.
- Well-embedded processes for complaints handling to manage priority cases and workload.
- A flexible approach to team learning and development to allow for focus on areas of need.

Key areas of focus for on-going development are:

- Improving operational resilience to manage high demand and improved service recovery rate against business case.
- Develop and embed mechanisms to achieve organisational learning from complaints.
- Review and improve processes to optimise service delivery, particularly between frontline officers and staff and the team, including relay of service recovery effected at frontline for recording.

Now that contact levels have normalised, work is underway to achieve these areas.