

## Police, Fire and Crime Panel

21<sup>st</sup> June 2021

### Report of the Staffordshire Commissioner

#### Questions from Members of the Public

##### Question from Mr Dodd:

*'In the light of the extremely high numbers of complaints over the last 5 years, **is it acceptable for 1 in 6 officers to have behaved inappropriately?** (304 upheld complaints across less than 2,000 officers)*

*The total received complaints were 3,249, or 2 every day, How much more goes unreported? It is widely appreciated that many people will not make an official complaint due to fear, vulnerability, and other reasons.*

*To put these atrocious figures into perspective. If this force were a high school it would be closed down. Over the same period we have seen many court cases against local officers involving, sexual offences, voyeurism, drink-driving, and more. In such a position of responsibility police officers should behave better than school children shouldn't they? **What is an acceptable number of complaints against those tasked with protecting us from harm, and what are the panel doing about all this?***

#### Answers to Mr Dodd's question

##### 1. Background.

1.1 Complaints regulations changed in February 2020. In answering the questions asked, it is helpful to understand what these changes meant.

- Pre February 2020. All complaints recorded are dealt with under the old regulations (2012) with any right of appeal to either Staffordshire Police or the IOPC. The appropriate appeal body is identified at the initial assessment of the complaint. If the case is about a senior officer, criminal or misconduct proceedings, ECHR article 2/3 then the review body is the IOPC, any other matters the appeal body prior to February 2020 will be Staffordshire Police, with the appeal being carried out by the Head or Deputy Head of Professional Standards.
- Post February 2020. Any complaints recorded after the 1st February 2020 and in line with the new police conduct regulations and are not about a senior officer, criminal or misconduct proceedings, or article 2/3, then the Commissioner's office is the local review body.

- 1.2 A complaint is defined under statutory guidance as “an expression of dissatisfaction” and through investigation and finalisation, the level of service can be found to be acceptable or unacceptable and there are a number of finalisation options. These range from a finding of Gross-Misconduct (so serious as to justify dismissal) down to words of advice from supervision or no further action. Complaints are not received solely around police officers but also staff members, police community support officers, civilian investigators and others.
- 1.3 Mr Dodd submitted a Freedom of Information request to Staffordshire Police on 24 November 2020, which was responded to on 24<sup>th</sup> December 2020. The figures quoted in Mr Dodd’s questions are for the period 2015 to 25/11/2020, so represent nearly 6 years data.

## 2. Detailed Response to Mr Dodd’s question

*In the light of the extremely high numbers of complaints over the last 5 years, is it acceptable for 1 in 6 officers to have behaved inappropriately? (304 upheld complaints across less than 2,000 officers).*

- 2.1 Staffordshire police have an average of 700 incidents reported every day and this equates to an average of over 255,000 incidents dealt with every year, many with multiple individuals involved. These are also dealt with via a multitude of different directorates and will involve, face to face interaction, telephone resolution, arrest and investigations.
- 2.2 Current data shows that the main themes in relation to complaints are lack of action following contact, enforcement and quality of investigation. Incident types are varied but domestic issues, neighbour disputes and traffic matters were the main source of complaints where detail is mentioned. A number of complainants mention officers not spending enough time with them, a lack of update following contact and the handling or accuracy of information.
- 2.3 66% of complaints are outside Schedule 3. This means that complaints do not meet a threshold where complaints must be recorded. Complaints that are outside Schedule 3 should be handled in a reasonable and proportionate manner.
- 2.4 Staffordshire Police through their Professional Standards Department will address complaints through contact with complainants and a proportionate approach; investigating and using disciplinary processes as appropriate. The Commissioner’s Office are involved as the local review body and as such, will ensure the appropriateness of the Force response.
- 2.5 Performance monitoring takes place on a regular basis through governance forums to ensure that the police response to complaints is scrutinised and monitored.

*The total received complaints were 3,249, or 2 every day, How much more goes unreported? It is widely appreciated that many people will not make an official complaint due to fear, vulnerability, and other reasons.*

- 2.6 Staffordshire Police have worked hard to ensure that members of the public are encouraged to express dissatisfaction. They engage with hard to reach groups

via bespoke routes into the service to make a complaint, using social media, email, telephone, letter and interaction in-person.

2.7 How to make a complaint guidance is clearly advertised on the force internet page. Staffordshire Police aspire to be a learning organisation and therefore, see complaints received as opportunities to learn and ensure that the best possible service is provided to the public.

To put these atrocious figures into perspective. If this force were a high school it would be closed down. Over the same period we have seen many court cases against local officers involving, sexual offences, voyeurism, drink-driving, and more. In such a position of responsibility police officers should behave better than school children shouldn't they? What is an acceptable number of complaints against those tasked with protecting us from harm, and what are the panel doing about all this?

2.9 Staffordshire Police through its Professional Standards Department are proactive in tackling emerging trends, such as those referred to in the question. Examples of that proactivity include: -

- PSD Bulletins
- D-PIM. Detective Chief Inspector from PSD meets with Local policing commanders on a monthly basis to discuss dissatisfaction figures and trends.
- Directorate spocs (single-point of contact), Each staff member within PSD has an area of ownership in the force and are responsible for departmental engagement and spreading learning lessons briefings.
- Presentations given by professional standards in conjunction with learning and development to New Starters, Supervisor courses, Force control room, OPST (officer personal safety training) courses and others where requested.
- IOPC and OPFCC recommendations from review cases.
- PSD Detective Inspector meets on a weekly basis with the OPFCC compliance manager to discuss any patterns discovered and themes emerging.
- Quarterly IOPC meetings.

2.10 Nationally, Staffordshire is often compared to a number of Most Similar Force (MSF) areas. These are areas that should be comparable because of their make-up, demographics, conurbations and the like. Those comparable areas are Derbyshire, Northamptonshire, Hertfordshire, Essex, Hampshire, Avon and Somerset and Cheshire.

2.11 The table below shows data received from IOPC for 2020/21 and provides a comparison of allegations for Staffordshire compared to the MSF average.

Calculation	Delivery of duties and service	Police powers, policies and procedures	Handling of or damage to property/ premises	Access and/or disclosure of information	Use of police vehicles	Discriminatory behaviour	Abuse of position/ corruption	Individual behaviours	Sexual conduct	Discreditable conduct	Other	Total
Force	619	303	45	38	21	24	21	286	1	11	5	1,374
SPLY												
MSF Average	780	355	53	50	16	65	35	321	4	12	11	1,701
National	38,251	17,188	2,625	2,080	841	2,820	1,106	13,557	134	497	1,278	80,377

- 2.12 Performance against the MSF is generally good. As an example of proactivity, one area where Staffordshire Police perform less favourably in the table above is the use of police vehicles. The Force have identified through weekly business information reports, patterns and emerging trends and then prepared a bespoke information pack for all students who attend either standard/advanced driving courses. Qualified drivers attending a refresher are also provided with a reminder around standards of professional behaviour, anecdotal reference to conduct cases and visual media around driving standards and simple vehicle cleanliness. The Force also includes IOPC learning on roads policing and a full reminder around force policy in its publications to its officers and staff.
- 2.13 The question about what an acceptable number of complaints equates to is difficult to answer. However, if a member of the public is dissatisfied and considers the response of Staffordshire Police to be unacceptable, then a complaint should be made. Comparisons and analysis internally and externally will help judge how the Force is performing and the Commissioner will maintain a detailed overview of that performance as well as being statutorily responsible for the review of complaints.

## Question from Mr Curry

Can you please advise on how you are currently dealing with the high number of boy racers that are thrashing around the streets of Burntwood.

### 3. Detailed Response to Mr Curry's Question

3.1 The following response to Mr Curry's question has been received from Inspector Coleman (Lichfield Police Station).

- In January we completed a roads safety operation in the area, which resulted in 12 Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) being issued for speeding offences.
- In the 6 weeks between 01/03/21 and 16/04/21; we have had just 6 reports of vehicles being driven at excessive speed in the Burntwood and Chasetown area. The only trend that can be seen from these incidents is a tendency for them to be reported on the Bypass. 5 out of 6 of these incidents were at the southern end (Milestone Way/Ogley Hay Road), and one at the northern (Stables Way).
- It would appear that there are no other reports to police, recently at least, in relation to any other locations.
- The Bypass is a routinely used road for high visibility marked police patrols, and there will naturally be a visible policing presence.

3.2 The Inspector has asked for further feedback and stated that "*I would be interested to know if there are other locations or problems relating to poor standards of, or antisocial driving; so that we can respond to the issue effectively*".

3.3 The Commissioner has identified speeding of vehicles and the enforcement of this by Staffordshire Police as an area for improvement and is currently discussing this matter with the Temporary Chief Constable. Progress on this matter will be monitored closely and impact on the work of the Staffordshire Safer Roads Partnership.

**Ben Adams**  
**Staffordshire Commissioner**

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