

DEVON AND CORNWALL POLICE AUTHORITY

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS AND COMPLAINTS MONITORING GROUP

A meeting of the Professional Standards and Complaints Monitoring Group was held on 19 May 2004.

1. Study Of Case Files

Members examined a random selection of all completed case files since the meeting in December 2003. Their subsequent discussions with officers included how completed case files are retained, how instances where an officer has been the subject of three or more complaints are dealt with and how the Professional Standards Unit liaises with the Human Resources and Occupational Health Departments.

Concern was expressed about the volume of work that is put into investigating certain complaints which are of a relatively minor nature. Whilst this does take up a significant resource, it is extremely important for public confidence and accountability that all complaints against the police are thoroughly investigated. The preferred outcome for low-level complaints would be informal resolution, an approach encouraged by the IPCC.

2. Statistics – Professional Standards and Special Cases Units

Members discussed recent statistics and issues related to the work of these departments. They noted that the statistics were obtained from the new national complaints monitoring system (Centurion) for the first time. The data included complaints received broken down by environment and by circumstances.

Previous analysis has shown a downward trend in the number of complaints each year. However new IPCC standards and the fact that the statistics for the current year will also include police staff, is likely to mean that the year end numbers for 2004/5 will be higher than in previous years.

3. Guidance Of The Registering, Handling And Monitoring Of Complaints Which Relate To Direction And Control

Members considered the guidance received from the APA and ACPO, relating to these matters. They particularly noted the requirement of each Chief Officer to establish a register of complaints that relate to direction and control received by the Force, and the section relating to oversight and scrutiny of complaints (Paragraph 34). This requires the Police Authority to have in place suitable arrangements for process review, dip sampling of completed complaint files, scrutiny of statistics and trends, strategic analysis and calling for reports on specific cases or issues. Members felt that they had access to all the data and reports necessary to carry out this oversight effectively, although this would be kept under review.

Mr Carl Wallin JP

Chairman of the Professional Standards and Complaints Monitoring Group