



# **Complaints and Allegations Received by the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland**

**Quarterly Statistical Update to 30<sup>th</sup> September  
2016**

**Published October 2016**

# Complaints and Allegations Received by the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland:

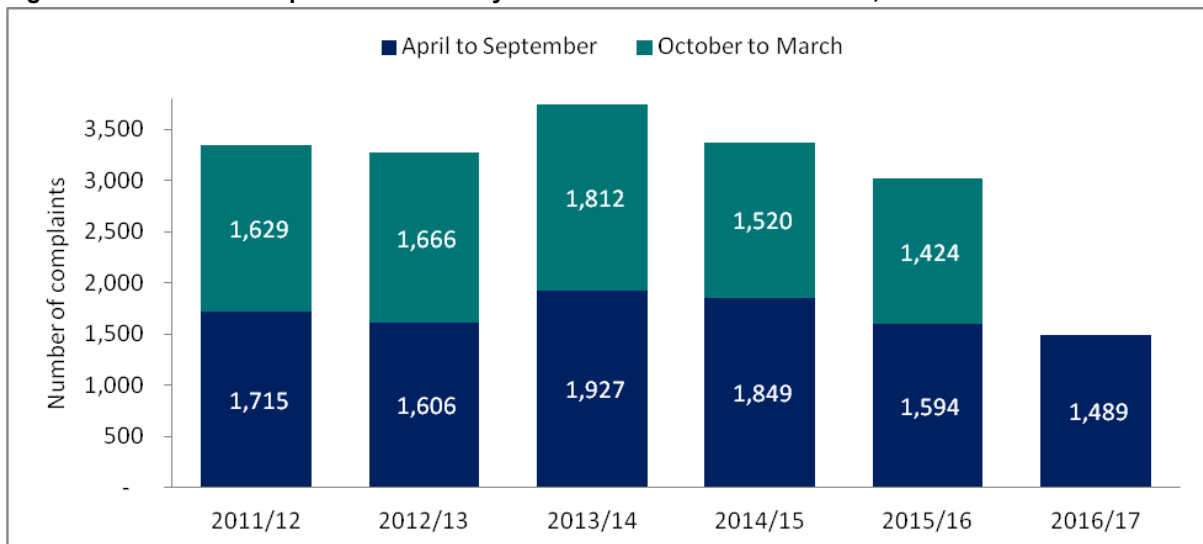
**Statistical Update to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2016, published on 27<sup>th</sup> October 2016**

This quarterly bulletin presents the most recent statistics on the number of complaints and allegations received by the Police Ombudsman, up to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2016. The statistics are based on information extracted from the Police Ombudsman’s Case Handling System (CHS) on the 20<sup>th</sup> October 2016.

## Complaints Received

In the first half of 2016/17, the Office received just under 1,500 complaints<sup>1</sup>. This is a 7% decrease in the number of complaints reported for the same time period last year (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Number of complaints received by the Police Ombudsman’s Office, 2011/12 to 2016/17**



<sup>1</sup> See Additional Information: Understanding the Statistics

### Main Complaint Factor

Between April and September 2016, Criminal Investigation was the most common main factor<sup>2</sup> underlying complaints followed by Arrest. This is the normal trend observed for complaint factors.

Of the known complaints factors, Domestic Incident had the largest percentage increase during the first half of 2016/17 compared with the same time period last year, while complaints arising from Arrest had the largest percentage decrease during this time (Table 1).

**Table 1: Comparison in the main factor of complaints received between April to September 2015 and April to September 2016**

|                                     | April to September 2015/16 | April to September 2016/17 | Difference | % Difference |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|------------|--------------|
| Criminal Investigation              | 390                        | 438                        | 48         | 12%          |
| Arrest                              | 294                        | 241                        | -53        | -18%         |
| Search                              | 139                        | 117                        | -22        | -16%         |
| Domestic Incident                   | 89                         | 117                        | 28         | 31%          |
| Traffic Related Incident            | 104                        | 114                        | 10         | 10%          |
| Police Enquiries (no investigation) | 46                         | 57                         | 11         | 24%          |
| Historic Investigation              | 39                         | 40                         | 1          | -            |
| Parade/Demonstration                | 38                         | 20                         | -18        | -            |
| Other                               | 383                        | 267                        | -116       | -30%         |
| Unknown                             | 72                         | 78                         | 6          | 8%           |
| Total                               | 1,594                      | 1,489                      | -105       | -7%          |

**Note: % Difference only reported when base numbers are greater than 50**

<sup>2</sup> The main complaint factor refers to the main situation giving rise to the complaint.

## Complaints Received by Police District

Four of the 11 police districts had an increase in the number of complaints received during the first half of 2016/17 when compared to the same time last year. District K-Mid & East Antrim had the biggest percentage increase during this time followed by District F-Mid Ulster. There was decrease in the number of complaints received in 6 police districts with the largest decrease being in District A-Belfast City. The number of complaints received in District C-Ards & North Down remained unchanged during this time when compared to last year (Table 2).

**Table 2: Comparison in the number of complaints received in each police district between April to September 2015 and April to September 2016**

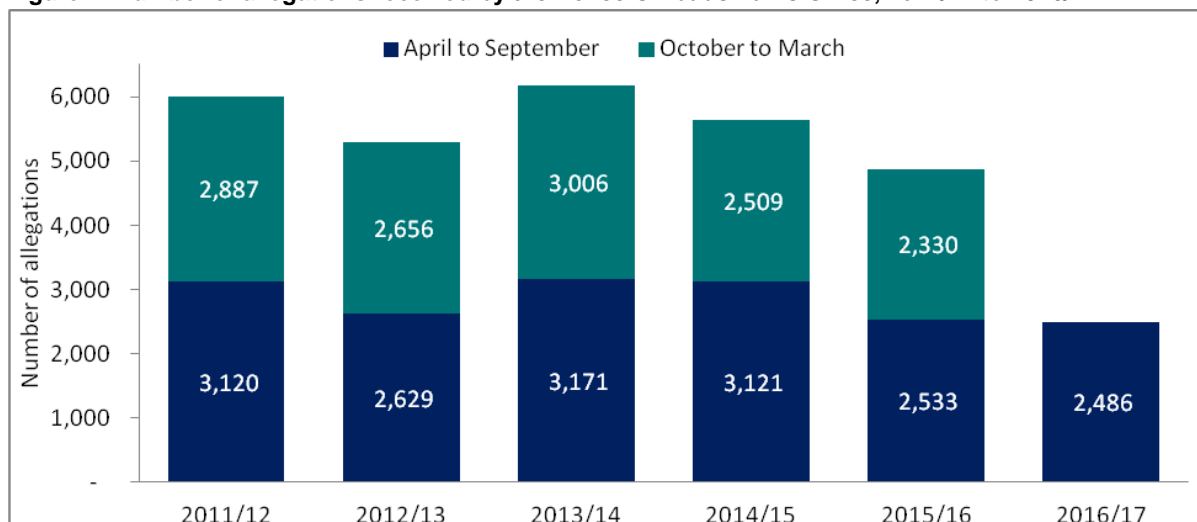
|   | April to September 2015/16 | April to September 2016/17 | Difference | % Difference |
|---|----------------------------|----------------------------|------------|--------------|
| District A - Belfast City                       | 507                        | 396                        | -111       | -22%         |
| District B - Lisburn & Castlereagh City         | 63                         | 60                         | -3         | -5%          |
| District C - Ards & North Down                  | 91                         | 91                         | 0          | 0%           |
| District D – Newry, Mourne & Down               | 99                         | 88                         | -11        | -11%         |
| District E - Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon | 123                        | 114                        | -9         | -7%          |
| District F - Mid Ulster                         | 52                         | 69                         | 17         | 33%          |
| District G - Fermanagh & Omagh                  | 67                         | 66                         | -1         | -1%          |
| District H - Derry City & Strabane              | 121                        | 100                        | -21        | -17%         |
| District J - Causeway Coast & Glens             | 121                        | 137                        | 16         | 13%          |
| District K - Mid & East Antrim                  | 78                         | 105                        | 27         | 35%          |
| District L - Antrim & Newtownabbey              | 81                         | 96                         | 15         | 19%          |
| Unknown / Other Organisation                    | 191                        | 167                        | -24        | -13%         |
| Northern Ireland                                | 1,594                      | 1,489                      | -105       | -7%          |

**Note: % Difference only reported when base numbers are greater than 50**

## Allegations Received

The Office received almost 2,500 allegations during the first half of 2016/17 compared with the same time period last year (Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Number of allegations received by the Police Ombudsman's Office, 2011/12 to 2016/17**



## Allegation Type

Allegations of Incivility had the largest percentage decrease during the first half of 2016/17 when compared to the same time period last year, followed by Oppressive Behaviour. The number of allegations of Failure in Duty increased more than for other types during this time. Allegations of Unlawful/Unnecessary Arrest/Detention had the largest percentage increase during this time although the numbers are relatively small (Table 3).

**Table 3: Comparison in the Types of Allegations received between April to September 2015 and April to September 2016**

|                                       | April to September 2015/16 | April to September 2016/17 | Difference | % Difference |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|------------|--------------|
| Failure in Duty                       | 1,040                      | 1,120                      | 80         | 8%           |
| Oppressive Behaviour                  | 674                        | 562                        | -112       | -17%         |
| Incivility                            | 213                        | 171                        | -42        | -20%         |
| Search                                | 140                        | 132                        | -8         | -6%          |
| Unlawful/Unnecessary Arrest/Detention | 105                        | 116                        | 11         | 10%          |
| Historic Investigation <sup>3</sup>   | -                          | 48                         | -          | -            |
| Mishandling of Property               | 75                         | 47                         | -28        | -            |
| Traffic                               | 18                         | 32                         | 14         | -            |
| Discriminatory Behaviour              | 32                         | 31                         | -1         | -            |
| Malpractice                           | 30                         | 28                         | -2         | -            |
| Section 55 Referral                   | 37                         | 16                         | -21        | -            |
| Other                                 | 169                        | 183                        | 14         | 8%           |

<sup>3</sup> Historical Investigation added as a separate category in 2016/17.

|       |       |       |     |     |
|-------|-------|-------|-----|-----|
| Total | 2,533 | 2,486 | -47 | -2% |
|-------|-------|-------|-----|-----|

Note: % Difference only reported when base numbers are greater than 50

## Officers with multiple complaints

There were 44 PSNI officers who attracted three or more complaints that were formally investigated or dealt with by way of informal or local resolution between October 2015 and September 2016 (Table 4).

**Table 4: Officers with three or more complaints that were formally investigated or dealt with by Informal/Local Resolution, twelve month period ending June 2016, September 2016**

| Twelve month period ending | Number of officers with three or more complaints that were formally investigated or dealt with Local/Informal Resolution |
|----------------------------|--|
| June 2016                  | 47   |
| September 2016             | 44   |

## Additional Information

### Data Use

The information presented in this document has been produced to meet the needs of our key users who need timely information on the number of complaints and allegations received by the Police Ombudsman's Office. The main users of this quarterly bulletin are the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland (OPONI), the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and the Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB). This statistical update is the outcome of consultation with these users, it gives them access to information that they can use to form discussions at their regular meetings.

### Understanding the Statistics

The number of complaints received by the Police Ombudsman's Office includes complaints made by members of the public relating to the conduct of PSNI officers or those employed by other organisations under the Office's remit<sup>4</sup>. The number of complaints also includes those matters that have been referred to the Police Ombudsman's Office from other organisations<sup>5</sup>, and any matter that the Police Ombudsman has decided is in the public interest for him to investigate.

There are a number of factors that may influence whether or not a person makes a complaint to the Police Ombudsman. It is important when drawing conclusions from the statistics not to take a simplistic view but to consider the following factors:

- The number and nature of police operations conducted;
- The performance of police officers;
- The level of interaction between the public and the police;
- The awareness of the Police Ombudsman's Office, knowledge of how to make a complaint, and public confidence in the Office;
- The size of the police service;
- Changes to the PSNI's or the Offices' procedures;
- The level of crime;
- The number of public order incidents; and
- Population demographics.

Each complaint the Police Ombudsman's Office receives is made up of one or more allegations. The allegation describes the types of behaviours being complained about or the separate issues making up the complaint. For example, a person may make a complaint stating a police officer had pushed them *and* was rude. This would be recorded as one complaint with two allegations. The number of allegations received also includes a small number of residual matters, these are matters of concern identified during an investigation that were not originally detailed in the complaint, typically these account for around 1% to 2% of the allegations received.

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<sup>4</sup> The Office's remit extends to: Designated Civilians, G.B Officers, G8, Northern Ireland Airport Constabulary, Harbour Police and National Crime Agency.

<sup>5</sup> The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), Public Prosecution Service (PPS), Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB) and the Department of Justice (DOJ).

Care should be taken when comparing the number of complaints or allegations received at police district level as some of the differences between districts may reflect variations in their composition, such as the degree of urbanization, level of deprivation and the balance between the resident population, day-time population and the night-time economy.

It is also important to note that the system is live and data may therefore be subject to future revisions.

### **Further information**

A [user guide](#) has been published to give users of these statistics more knowledge about the complaints process, more information regarding the quality of the data and also a glossary of terms used. It is recommended that all users of these statistics should consult the user guide to aid their understanding of the statistics and ensure that they are using them appropriately. Further information regarding the number of complaints and allegations received in 2015/16 is available in the [accompanying excel spreadsheet](#). This spreadsheet also includes the data for the figures and tables in this bulletin.

A more detailed break-down of the types of complaints and allegations received by the Police Ombudsman's Office over the last five years as well as presenting information on the outcomes of complaints is available in the 'Annual Statistical Bulletin of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland, 2015/16', which is available on the Office's [website](#).

Additional geographic breakdowns of the types of complaints and allegations received by the Police Ombudsman is available on the [Northern Ireland Neighbourhood Information Service \(NINIS\)](#).

If you would like information on other statistics published by the Police Ombudsman's Office please see the statistics and research page on the Police Ombudsman's [website](#).

### **Publication**

This is the third year the Police Ombudsman's Office has published quarterly information on the number of complaints and allegations received. The Office will publish information in-year on a quarterly basis. This information will be published on the Police Ombudsman's website at 9:30am on the fourth Thursday of the month following the end of the quarter. A more detailed publication will be published at the end of the financial year concentrating on the trends in the number of complaints and allegations received over the last five years.

The next quarterly update is due to be published on Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> January 2017 and it will include statistics up to the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2016.

### **User Feedback**

We continuously welcome your feedback or comments on the statistics released. If you would like to forward your views or to receive notifications of statistical releases please email your contact details to [info@policeombudsman.org](mailto:info@policeombudsman.org), further contact details are available on the back page of this bulletin.



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This publication and other information about the work of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland are also available on the Internet at:

Website: [www.policeombudsman.org](http://www.policeombudsman.org)



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