



Complaints and Allegations Received by the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland

Quarterly Statistical Update to 31st March 2017

Published April 2017

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

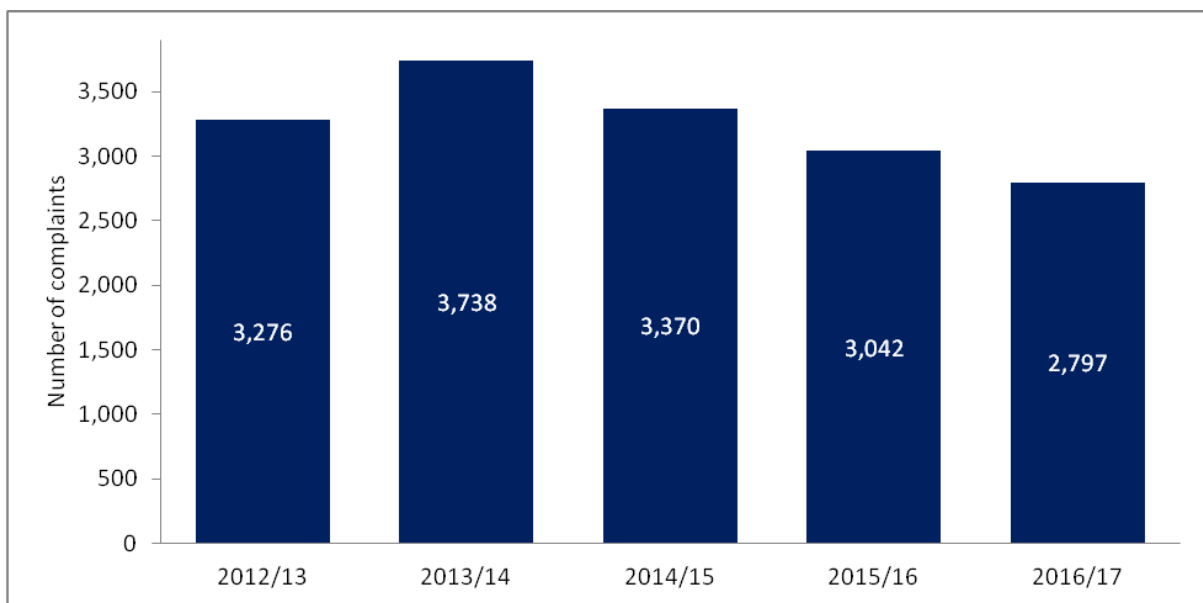
Statistical Update to 31st March 2017, published on 27th April 2017

This quarterly bulletin presents the most recent statistics on the number of complaints and allegations received by the Police Ombudsman, up to 31st March 2017. The statistics are based on information extracted from the Police Ombudsman’s Case Handling System (CHS) on the 7th April 2017.

Complaints Received

The Office received almost 2,800 complaints during 2016/17¹. This is an 8% decrease in the number of complaints reported last year. It is also the lowest number of complaints received when compared with the previous five years (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Number of complaints received by the Police Ombudsman’s Office, 2012/13 to 2016/17



¹ See Additional Information: Understanding the Statistics

Main Complaint Factor

Criminal Investigation was the most common main factor² underlying complaints during 2016/17, making up 30% of all complaints received.

Of the known complaints factors, Police Enquiries (no investigation) had the largest percentage increase during 2016/17 when compared with last year, while complaints relating to the 'Troubles' had the largest percentage decrease. Although, Arrests had the largest decrease in the **number** of complaints received (Table 1).

Table 1: Comparison in the main factor of complaints received between 2015/16 and 2016/17

	2015/16	2016/17	Difference	% Difference
Criminal Investigation	770	848	78	10%
Arrest	565	411	-154	-27%
Traffic Related Incident	228	239	11	5%
Search	244	224	-20	-8%
Domestic Incident	152	157	5	3%
Police Enquiries (no investigation)	92	105	13	14%
Complaints relating to the 'Troubles'	96	67	-29	-30%
Domestic Violence	27	54	27	-
Parade/Demonstration	63	21	-42	-
Other	675	515	-160	-24%
Unknown	130	156	26	20%
Total	3,042	2,797	-245	-8%

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

The number of Domestic Violence complaints doubled during 2016/17 when compared to last year. In 2016/17, the manner in which complaints of Domestic Violence³ were recorded was changed and are now categorised into two groups; complaints made by the victims of a domestic violence incident and complaints made by another person following a domestic violence incident. This change may have led to more complaints being categorised as arising from a domestic violence situation.

² The main complaint factor refers to the main situation giving rise to the complaint.

³ This is the first-time the Quarterly Statistical bulletin has presented complaints arising from a Domestic Violence incident s separately. Previously they were included in the Domestic Incident category. They have been presented separately due to a recommendation in the NIPB's Human Rights Annual Report 2015.

Complaints Received by Police District

During 2016/17, the number of complaints increased in 4 of the 11 police districts when compared to last year with District K (Mid & East Antrim) having the largest percentage increase. Some of this increase can be attributable to the policing of the protest at the Woodburn Forest near Carrickfergus during the early part of 2016/17.

The number of complaints decreased in the remaining seven police districts during this time with the largest decrease being in District A (Belfast City) (Table 2).

Table 2: Comparison in the number of complaints received in each police district between 2015/16 and 2016/17

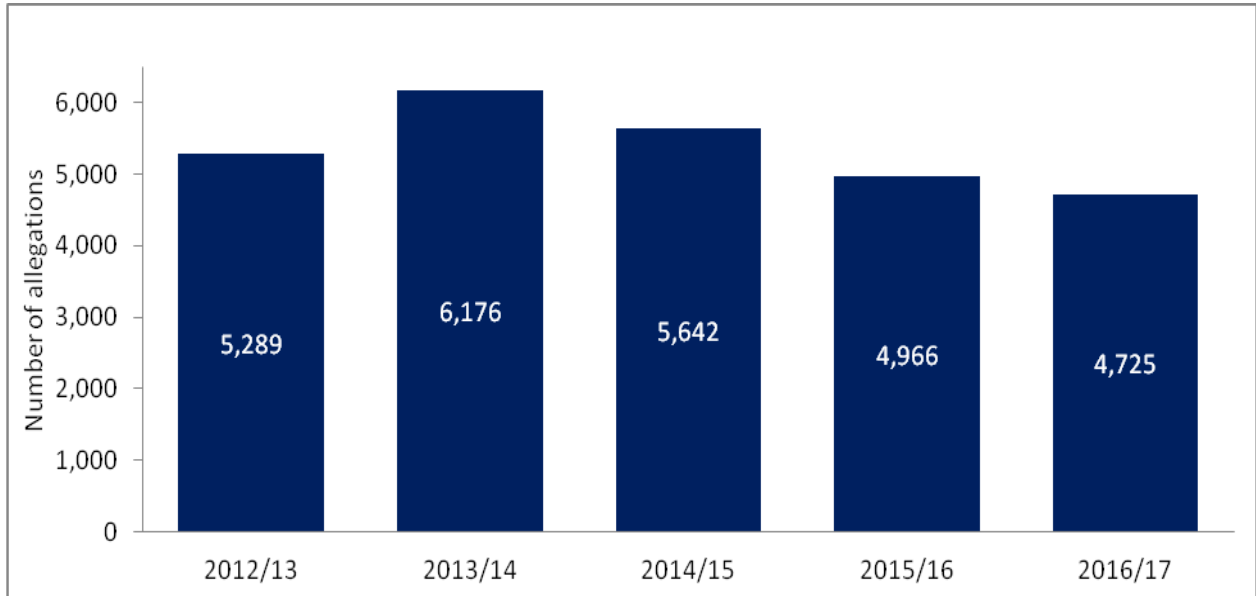
	2015/16	2016/17	Difference	% Difference
District A - Belfast City	914	739	-175	-19%
District B - Lisburn & Castlereagh City	122	114	-8	-7%
District C - Ards & North Down	183	187	4	2%
District D – Newry, Mourne & Down	180	165	-15	-8%
District E - Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	227	216	-11	-5%
District F - Mid Ulster	105	118	13	12%
District G - Fermanagh & Omagh	140	137	-3	-2%
District H - Derry City & Strabane	235	204	-31	-13%
District J - Causeway Coast & Glens	227	238	11	5%
District K - Mid & East Antrim	146	171	25	17%
District L - Antrim & Newtownabbey	181	171	-10	-6%
Unknown / Other Organisation	382	337	-45	-12%
Northern Ireland	3,042	2,797	-245	-8%

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

Allegations Received

The Office received over 4,700 allegations during 2016/17. This is the lowest number of allegations received when compared with each of the last five years (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Number of allegations received by the Police Ombudsman's Office, 2012/13 to 2016/17



Allegation Type

During 2016/17, Failure in Duty was the most common allegation type making up almost half of the total number of allegations received during the year.

Four of the 12 allegations types had increased in number; Failure in Duty, Malpractice and Traffic, while the remaining eight allegations types had decreased in number when compared with last year (Table 3).

The largest percentage decreases in allegations received were for the Mishandling of Property, followed by Incivility and the Oppressive Behaviour.

Table 3: Comparison in the Types of Allegations received between 2015/16 and 2016/17

	2015/16	2016/17	Difference	% Difference
Failure in Duty	2,117	2,207	90	4%
Oppressive Behaviour	1,230	1,073	-157	-13%
Incivility	383	282	-101	-26%
Search	246	240	-6	-2%
Unlawful/Unnecessary Arrest/Detention	208	202	-6	-3%
Mishandling of Property	133	95	-38	-29%
Allegations relating to the 'Troubles' ⁴	73	75	2	3%
Malpractice	57	71	14	25%
Traffic	43	61	18	-
Discriminatory Behaviour	54	53	-1	-2%
Section 55 Referral	72	27	-45	-
Other	350	339	-11	-3%
Total	4,966	4,725	-241	-5%

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

⁴ This allegation category was added to the CHS during 2016/17 and some of the information has been backdated for 2015/16. Therefore, it is difficult to make direct comparisons between these two years.

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 April 2016 and March 2017 (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, December 2016 and March 2017

Twelve month period ending	Number of officers with three or more complaints that were formally investigated or dealt with Informal/Local Resolution
June 2016	47
September 2016	44
December 2016	57
March 2017	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 remit⁵. The number of complaints also includes those matters that have been referred to the Police Ombudsman's Office from other organisations⁶, 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.

⁵ The Office's remit extends to: Police Service of Northern Ireland including Designated Civilians, the Belfast Harbour Police, The Belfast International Airport Police, the Ministry of Defence Police, the National Crime Agency, 'serious' complaints regarding mutual aid police officers from Great Britain and 'serious' complaints regarding certain Home Office employees (immigration officers, designated customs officials and custom revenue officials).

⁶ 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, will be presented in the 'Annual Statistical Bulletin of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland, 2016/17'. This bulletin will be published by the end of June 2017 and will be made available on the Office's [website](#).

An additional geographic breakdown of the types of complaints and allegations received by the Police Ombudsman in previous years is available on the [Northern Ireland Neighbourhood Information Service \(NINIS\)](#). This information will be updated later in the year to include figures for 2016/17.

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 first quarterly update of 2017/18 is due to be published on Thursday 27th July 2017 and it will include statistics up to the 30th June 2017.

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, 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



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