



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

**Quarterly Statistical Update to 31<sup>st</sup> December  
2017**

**Published January 2018**

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

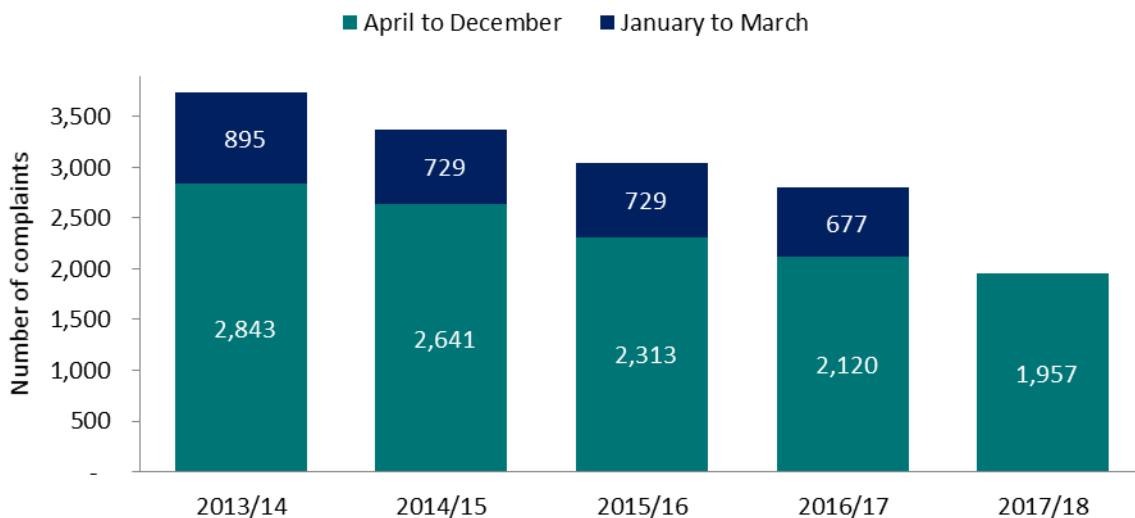
## Statistical Update to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2017, published on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2018

This quarterly bulletin presents the most recent statistics on the number of complaints and allegations received by the Police Ombudsman, up to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2017. The statistics are based on information extracted from the Police Ombudsman’s Case Handling System (CHS) on the 18<sup>th</sup> January 2018.

### Complaints Received

The Office received over 1,950 complaints so far this year (up to the end of December 2017). This is an 8% decrease in the number of complaints received when compared with the same time period last year. The number of complaints received during this time period has continued to fall year on year for the past five years (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Number of complaints received by the Police Ombudsman’s Office, 2013/14 to December 2017



## Main Complaint Factor

So far this year (up to the end of December 2017), criminal investigation was the most common main factor<sup>1</sup> underlying complaints, followed by arrest. This continues to be the normal trend observed for complaint factors.

Eight out of the ten known complaints factors decreased between April and December 2017 when compared with the same time period last year.

The largest percentage decreases in complaints were arising from police searches followed by traffic related incidents.

Complaints relating to parade/demonstrations and police enquiries (no investigations) were the only complaint factors to increase in number during this time (Table 1).

**Table 1: Comparison in the main factor of complaints received between April to December 2016 and April to December 2017**

	April to December 2016	April to December 2017	Difference	% Difference
Criminal Investigation	621	575	-46	-7%
Arrest	329	299	-30	-9%
Traffic Related Incident	172	153	-19	-11%
Search	169	124	-45	-27%
Domestic Incident	115	105	-10	-9%
Police Enquiries (no investigation)	81	84	3	4%
Complaints relating to the Troubles	51	38	-13	-
Domestic Violence	41	35	-6	-
Parade/Demonstration	21	32	11	-
Other	396	394	-2	-1%
Unknown	124	118	-6	-5%
Total	2,120	1,957	-163	-8%

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

<sup>1</sup> The main complaint factor refers to the main situation giving rise to the complaint.

## Complaints Received by Police District

The number of complaints decreased in 9 of the 11 police districts between April and December 2017 when compared with the same time period last year. Districts F, A and D had the largest percentage decrease. The number of complaints increased in District J and L (Table 2).

**Table 2: Comparison in the number of complaints received in each police district between April to December 2016 and April to December 2017**

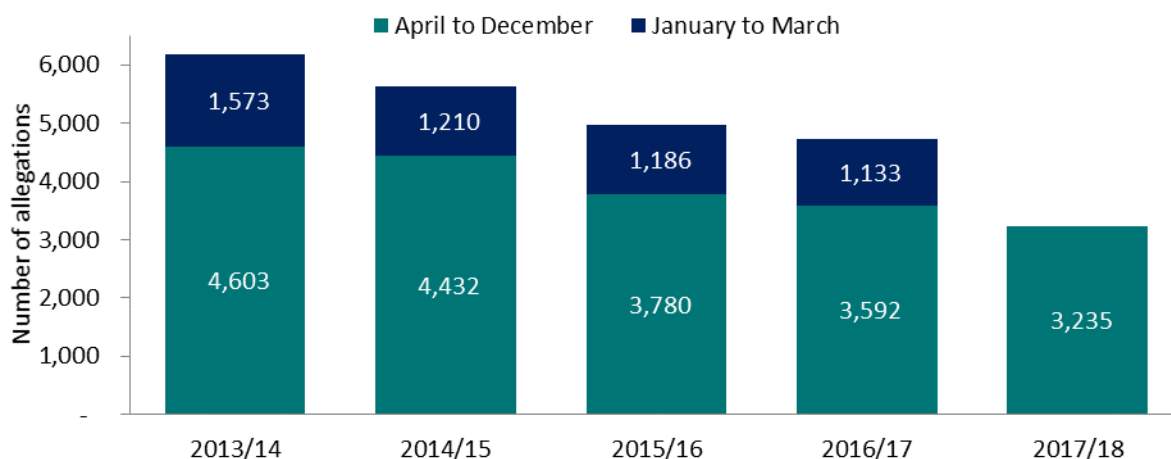
	April to December 2016	April to December 2017	Difference	% Difference
District A - Belfast City	570	481	-89	-16%
District B - Lisburn & Castlereagh City	87	78	-9	-10%
District C - Ards & North Down	130	115	-15	-12%
District D – Newry, Mourne & Down	122	102	-20	-16%
District E - Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	162	161	-1	-1%
District F - Mid Ulster	95	74	-21	-22%
District G - Fermanagh & Omagh	103	89	-14	-14%
District H - Derry City & Strabane	148	132	-16	-11%
District J - Causeway Coast & Glens	183	189	6	3%
District K - Mid & East Antrim	134	117	-17	-13%
District L - Antrim & Newtownabbey	130	138	8	6%
Unknown / Other Organisation	256	281	25	10%
Northern Ireland	2,120	1,957	-163	-8%

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

## Allegations Received

So far this year (up to the end of December 2017), the Office received over 3,230 allegations. This is the lowest number of allegations received during this time period when compared with each of the last five years (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Number of allegations received by the Police Ombudsman's Office, 2013/14 to December 2017



## Allegation Type

Eleven of the 12 allegation types decreased during this time when compared with the same time period last year. Allegations about unlawful/unnecessary arrest/detention had the largest percentage decrease followed by allegations of incivility and police searches (Table 3).

Table 3: Comparison in the Types of Allegations received between April to December 2016 and April to December 2017

	April to December 2016	April to December 2017	Difference	% Difference
Failure in Duty	1,637	1,593	-44	-3%
Oppressive Behaviour	812	691	-121	-15%
Incivility	232	182	-50	-22%
Search	186	156	-30	-16%
Unlawful/Unnecessary Arrest/Detention	163	122	-41	-25%
Mishandling of Property	68	78	10	15%
Malpractice	54	45	-9	-
Allegations related to the Troubles	59	38	-21	-
Discriminatory Behaviour	43	30	-13	-
Traffic	46	27	-19	-
Section 55 Referral	21	15	-6	-
Other	271	258	-13	-5%
Total	3,592	3,235	-357	-10%

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

## Officers with multiple complaints

There were 26 PSNI officers who attracted three or more complaints that were formally investigated or dealt with by way of Informal Resolution between January 2017 and December 2017 (Table 4).

**Table 4: Officers with three or more complaints that were formally investigated or dealt with by Informal Resolution, twelve month period ending June 2017, September 2017, December 2017.**

Twelve month period ending	Number of officers with three or more complaints that were formally investigated or dealt with Informal Resolution
June 2017	32
September 2017	31
December 2017	26

## 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>2</sup>. The number of complaints also includes those matters that have been referred to the Police Ombudsman's Office from other organisations<sup>3</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.

---

<sup>2</sup> 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).

<sup>3</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 2016/17 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 is 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 \(NINIS\)](#).

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. Where possible, 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. In some instances however it may be necessary to publish the bulletin earlier in 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 final quarterly update of 2017/18 is due to be published on Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> April 2018 and it will include statistics up to the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018.

### **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.



**Contact details:**

Information Directorate  
Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland  
New Cathedral Buildings  
11 Church Street  
Belfast  
BT1 1PG

**Telephone:** 028 9082 8634

**Textphone:** 028 9082 8756

**Witness Appeal Line:** 0800 0327 880

**Email:** [info@policeombudsman.org](mailto:info@policeombudsman.org)

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)



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE