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Police and Crime

Commissioner for Dyfed-Powys

Scrutiny Panel

Dip Sampling Exercise

Review of 2017/18 Quarter 1 (Apr-Jun 2017)

Public Service Bureau Case Files

&

Force Communication Centre Calls

Panel Members' Findings & Feedback

July 2017

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## 1.0 Overview

At the second meeting of the Commissioner's Quality Assurance Panel held on 13<sup>th</sup> July 2017, Members reviewed a random selection of both closed Public Service Bureau case files and calls made to the Force Communication Centre for the period April to June 2017.

The Panel considered 10 complaint files and 10 calls in total.

During the first session of the day, Members had the opportunity to discuss any feedback from the previous meeting with the relevant department leads.

Calls recorded in the Force Communication Centre were played to Members via the meeting room's speaker system. Members noted any observations during the playback. The group also had the opportunity to collectively discuss any queries, with notes being taken by Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) officers. Members' marking sheets were also collated at the end of the day to inform this report.

In the afternoon, Members worked in pairs to review complaints cases and discuss their view of the files. Members' feedback was collected through template observation forms. OPCC officers were available throughout the exercise to answer any questions and provide clarification where needed.

Following the meeting, Panel Members' findings were discussed with department leads in detail. Departments were then provided with the opportunity to formally respond to the Panel's observations. These responses are included within this report.

## 2.0 Background, Purpose and Methodology

The background and purpose of the Panel along with how the dip sampling is carried out and what the Panel is asked to consider is detailed in the Quality Assurance Panel handbook, which is available on the [PCC's website](#).

## 3.0 Approval by Panel

All Panel Members have been provided with a copy of this report for comment and have confirmed that it fully represents the views expressed by the Panel during the dip sampling exercise dated 13<sup>th</sup> July 2017.

#### 4.0 Feedback from previous meeting

Prior to reviewing the new cases, Panel Members met with representatives of Professional Standards Department and the Force Communication Centre to discuss any outstanding issues from the previous meeting.

Members suggested the following be considered by the Professional Standards Department:

1. Provide timeframes for updates within letters to complainants in order to manage their expectations. If no updates are available, a holding letter should be sent.
2. Be specific when referring complainants to other agencies and provide contact details, with an offer for the complainant to return to the Department if they were unable to contact the other organisation.
3. Provide an appendix with complex letters to explain necessary legal phrases in layman's terms.

It was agreed that the Department's template letters would be shared with Panel Members for review prior to the next meeting.

Members expressed to the Force Communication Centre representatives that they were impressed with call handling overall. Demand management in terms of lengthy calls or those which required referral to other agencies was discussed. Members were assured that the number and type of calls waiting was monitored and that call handlers were able to view this on the call status board. Call handlers are not provided with time limits for closing calls, as it is recognised that certain circumstances require the handler to provide reassurance whilst waiting for officers to attend. FCC representatives explained the vulnerability background checks which are conducted whilst the caller is on the phone so as to provide officers with as much information as possible prior to arrival at the scene, thus explaining the requirement for detailed personal information to be collected.

## 5.0 Closed Public Service Bureau Cases

The Panel reviewed 10 cases from the Public Service Bureau. The cases had been randomly selected, to include a variety of areas responsible.

### 5.1 Best practice

Panel Members highlighted the following areas they considered to be best practice:

- Three cases were identified as having been resolved by way of comprehensive action plans or solutions proposed to prevent future dissatisfaction, with the complainant being updated of any outcomes.
- It was considered that four cases were dealt with in a timely manner, either being closed or referred to a local Inspector within a reasonable timeframe.

#### 5.1.1 Public Service Bureau comments

It is pleasing to note the areas of good practice highlighted above. I am confident that the next dip sample exercise will identify further improvements.

### 5.2 Areas for learning

Panel Members highlighted some of areas of learning:

- Whilst in the majority of cases the correct action was deemed to have been taken and the dissatisfaction resolved satisfactorily, six cases were identified as not having sufficient evidence to support the procedures followed or the decision to close the case, for example, within one record where the individual raised a number of concerns, it was stated that the Sergeant had written a letter covering the issues contained in the complaint, however there was no evidence of a copy of this letter on the record.
- Insufficient updates or holding responses were considered to have been provided in three cases, which Members considered resulted in a lack of reassurance.

### 5.2.1 Public Service Bureau comments

In terms of one case identified, would be keen to understand what more the Officer could have written to support the decision to close the case. Updates were provided fortnightly which is disappointing as the matter probably could have been dealt with a lot quicker. I agreed that closure could have been brought on this sooner. The individual resubmitted complaints as these were escalated through to PSD as he felt police were biased.

In terms of a separate case I would be keen to discuss with the Panel what more could be done in terms of endorsement of the record. I would consider perhaps a copy of the email sent to RPU be uploaded on to the DISSAT and possibly a note to the DVSA/LA to raise concerns as to the glitch in the system. Agree that this should have included an update in between the case being assigned and the Officer taking responsibility after completion of a course.

All others agree that improvements could be made to the service offered and the team have been duly updated.

### 5.3 Queries raised

Panel Members raised a number of issues during the session which required further clarification:

- Members queried the target timescale for acknowledging dissatisfactions, with one case being considered as receiving a prompt acknowledgement, but another took nine days, which Members considered lengthy.
- There was some discrepancy in Members views of the appropriateness of the initial Public Service Bureau response letter or email, with some considering the wording as simple and understandable, whilst others considered it to be bureaucratic with a lack of empathy. It was suggested that the acknowledgement should include a timescale for further contact and suggested course of action.
- One case was dealt with only when the assigned officer returned from a period of absence. Members subsequently queried the arrangements for oversight of cases and transfer between officers, as it was considered the case may have been dealt with sooner had it been allocated to an officer on duty.
- Two cases were highlighted as being potentially inappropriately recorded on the DISSAT system – one was a request for advice rather than dissatisfaction. Another resulted from an answerphone message requesting a

call back regarding a complaint, however PSB staff had been unable to contact the individual and therefore the case had been closed.

### 5.3.1 Public Service Bureau comments

I am grateful to the Panel for suggesting that a timescale for dealing with a dissat should be placed on the acknowledgement. This hadn't been put in place to date as we have been clearing a sizeable backlog and therefore could not have met timescales that the public would deem reasonable in all cases.

I accept the point as regards to length of time take to acknowledge in one case. The team work to a target of acknowledging all communications within 3 working days. This is met in nearly all cases. Many cases are acknowledged on the day of receipt.

In terms of queries being placed on the system, the team do log messages left where return contact has not been achieved but these are logged as "Enquiries" and are categorised as "awaiting call back". Any information such as notifications of cycle events is passed to Force Communications to ensure recording on the appropriate systems.

In response to the other feedback received, the QAP may be pleased to learn that the team have a rota that requires every team member to ensure all communication is recorded on the system daily, updates received on cases are dealt with daily. On a weekly basis, performance reports are considered and support offered to officers as regards to any cases that are overdue. In addition a systematic check of DISSAT system takes place once a week so that customer updates can be routinely provided. Liaison takes place with officers and where the customer is not happy to continue with service recovery, matters are escalated to PSD.



## 6.0 Force Communication Centre Calls

The Panel collectively reviewed 10 calls from the Force Communication Centre relating to mental health issues. There were three 999 calls and seven calls received via 101.

### 6.1 Best practice

Panel Members highlighted a number of areas they considered to be best practice:

- In the vast majority of calls, call handlers dealt with difficult issues with sensitivity and had built a good rapport with the caller. Members observed that the questioning and reassurance demonstrated by the call handler was influenced by the demeanour of the caller's presentation.
- Caller needs and vulnerability were established promptly.
- In most cases questioning was appropriate and thorough, with accurate information being recorded on the call report.
- Most callers were given appropriate advice on the next steps. Two in particular were highlighted as providing good closure advice.
- Nine of the ten calls were deemed to have been closed with the caller satisfied. One call was closed abruptly, assumedly by the caller, but Members were unable to identify if this was definitely the case.

#### 6.1.1 Force Communication Centre comments

The feedback from the scrutiny panel is welcomed and will be shared with the FCC training staff for continuous professional development including individual feedback. All supervisors have access to information which gives the length of time a call taker is engaged with a member of the public on the phone. In addition, supervisors have access to any calls for service waiting. It is accepted that at times calls can take a long time and callers are occasionally kept on the line for reassurance until Police resources arrive. Supervisors can monitor calls that are considered to be protracted but can also arrange for resources to be dispatched whilst callers are on the line. The call closed abruptly has been reviewed and we can confirm that it was terminated by the caller.

## 6.2 Areas for learning

Panel Members highlighted the following areas of learning:

- Members queried whether sufficient appropriate questions had been asked about two males the caller referenced when reporting a sexual crime.
- It was considered that during a “scheduled response” call, the call handler may have been able to support the caller further by querying if there were any friends or neighbours who could attend to reassure and help the caller prior to officers attending.
- Members considered the call handler could have demonstrated more sympathy towards an anonymous caller reporting a disturbance in the street in the early hours of the morning.

### 6.2.1 Force Communication Centre comments

The call reporting a sexual crime has been reviewed. The caller is clearly distressed but giving details and is talking freely, although very difficult to understand, and difficult to question. Their speech is slurred. The call handler informs the caller that Police will attend with her shortly. All call takers have a list of prompts for this type of call and are advised to obtain sufficient information for a prompt dispatch of Officers. Call takers are advised to avoid over-questioning the victim particularly when it's a historical matter and more appropriate for a specialist Officer to attend.

The “scheduled response” call was categorised as a “Priority” by the call handler and sent to the FCC, however the dispatcher downgraded it to Scheduled, based on Intelligence (regular caller) and sent it to ICAT, therefore the call handler believed Police would be there in an hour.

## 6.3 Queries raised

Panel members raised a number of issues during the session which required further clarification:

- Members were unclear how to identify on the call report whether the caller or handler had terminated the call.
- A number of the calls were from repeat callers, with one in particular referring to advice from officers who had attended the scene to ring again if the issue continued. Members sought clarification on how this was identified by the call handler in order to transfer the relevant history.

### 6.3.1 Force Communication Centre comments

When an address is geobased, any recent calls in the vicinity 'pops up', at which point the call handler will cross reference the two (or more) calls. The system doesn't allow us to "transfer relevant history" but we can cross reference which allows us to look at the previous reports made.