

Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland

# Corporate Plan 2011-2014

## ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN 2011-2012

INDEPENDENT IMPARTIAL INVESTIGATION

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## **Vision**

Excellence in the independent and impartial investigation of police complaints.

## **Mission**

Providing an effective, efficient and accountable Police Complaints system, which is independent, impartial and designed to secure the confidence of the public and police.

## **Goals**

Building confidence.

Contributing to improving policing with the community.

Dealing with the Past.

## Foreword from the Police Ombudsman

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I am pleased to publish my fourth Corporate Plan (2011-2014) outlining the strategic direction of the Office over the next three years. It includes the specific business objectives and targets for the year 2011-2012.

The Office of the Police Ombudsman has operated over the past year within the policing and justice powers recently devolved to Northern Ireland. The devolution has brought a welcomed local perspective and an opportunity to move the justice agencies toward more 'joined up justice'. Against this aspiration and in the face of a sustained security threat, the fiscal realities of the next number of years will present significant challenges for the justice sector, including this Office, which is facing budget reductions in each of the next four years. With reducing resources, it is imperative that we do things differently.

A 2008 organisational review indicated the need for our Office to embark on an organisational development programme to improve corporate leadership and quality. Although it has been challenging, this programme is now in its final year and should increasingly result in more resilient collective leadership, corporate governance and investigative quality.

The cornerstone of this Office has been the concept of holding the police to account. In addition to that vital part of our remit, I have established and continue three important and supportive goals:

1. Building confidence.
2. Contributing to improving policing with the community.
3. Dealing with the Past.

In advancing these goals there are supporting objectives and targets addressing the quality of investigations; ensuring adaptation to meet community and institutional needs; ensuring correct stewardship of public funds; delivering an effective strategy for dealing with historic cases; and pursuing more effective and accountable policing.

It will be important that all of the Northern Ireland justice institutions contribute to building public confidence in the newly devolved justice administration and Assembly, particularly in the face of the fiscal and security challenges. My staff and I must demonstrate the Office's value in contributing to improving policing activity and interactions between the police and the community and in supporting a rule-of-law ethos. Accountability will remain important, but it is of course meaningless if results do not lead to improved policing practices. Our ability to monitor and report on this is important.

Dealing with the Past remains an important focus for this Office. With no political or societal solutions in view, it is incumbent on this Office to continue, in conjunction with others, to do what we can. The Office was not designed to provide societal resolutions, however, internal process improvements will provide some limited answers to families seeking some measure of resolution regarding police actions during the conflict. One of the successes of the devolution of justice has been the approval in principle by the Department of Justice for some additional funding over the next four years to assist in this task, subject to business case.

The commitment of our staff remains at a high level despite a challenging past year. Complaint levels for the past year were the third highest in our 10 years of operations and they are expected to remain high because of societal conditions. Despite this there has been improvement in our processing of complaints and surveys indicate that public and police confidence remains high. The presentation of historic cases has, however, been problematic. While our office is, in my view, not the appropriate instrument to deal with societal reconciliation, we will continue to try and assist families moving toward a resolution in respect of the Past.

**AL HUTCHINSON**  
*Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland*



# Statutory Duties

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## THE POLICE OMBUDSMAN FOR NORTHERN IRELAND IS:

- Established by the Police (NI) Act 1998;
- Accountable to the Northern Ireland Assembly through the Department of Justice;
- Constituted and operated independently of the Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB) and the Chief Constable;
- Required to have regard to any guidance given by the Department of Justice or Secretary of State in certain circumstances;
- An executive non-departmental public body financed by a Grant in Aid from the Department of Justice (DOJ).

## THE POLICE (NI) ACT 1998 (as amended) DIRECTS THE POLICE OMBUDSMAN TO:

- Secure an efficient, effective and independent complaints system;
- Secure the confidence of the public and members of the police force;
- Observe all requirements as to confidentiality;
- Receive complaints and other referred matters and to decide how to deal with them;
- Receive and record policy complaints and refer them to the Chief Constable;
- Make recommendations to the Director of the Public Prosecution Service (PPS) for criminal action;
- Make recommendations and directions in respect of disciplinary action against police officers;
- Notify the Department of Justice and Secretary of State in some circumstances, NIPB and Chief Constable of the outcome of certain complaints, referred matters and any investigation which the Ombudsman initiates without a complaint;
- Report to the Department of Justice annually.

## THE POLICE (NI) ACT 2000 DIRECTS THE POLICE OMBUDSMAN TO:

- Carry out inquiries as directed by the Department of Justice or Secretary of State in certain circumstances;
- Supply statistical information to the NIPB.

## THE POLICE (NI) ACT 2003 DIRECTS THE POLICE OMBUDSMAN TO:

- Investigate a current practice or policy of the police if:
  - The practice or policy comes to his attention under the Act;
  - He has reason to believe that it would be in the public interest to investigate the practice or policy.

# Public Values

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## INDEPENDENCE

The Police Ombudsman operates independently of the Police Service and the NIPB in Northern Ireland and strives to investigate all complaints objectively and even-handedly.

## IMPARTIALITY

The Police Ombudsman and his staff handle and investigate complaints free of bias or influence.

## INTEGRITY

The Police Ombudsman and his staff operate with integrity in all their dealings with the Public and the Police.

## OPENNESS

The Police Ombudsman must not disclose any information in relation to a complaint except as provided by the Police (NI) Act 1998.

## FAIRNESS

The Police Ombudsman gives all complainants and police officers an opportunity to state their case.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

The Police Ombudsman observes the relevant international principles and standards on policing and respects human rights.

## ACCESSIBILITY

The Office is open to the public during normal working hours, there is a dedicated phone number for complainants, and we acknowledge all complaints whether by e-mail, telephone, fax or via our website.

## SATISFACTION

The Police Ombudsman welcomes from members of the public and police officers any complaints, criticisms or comments in relation to the manner in which complaints or investigations have been handled.

## ACCOUNTABILITY

The Police Ombudsman is accountable to the Northern Ireland Assembly and to the Courts. An Annual Report and Accounts is provided to the Department of Justice and laid before the Assembly.

# Corporate Governance

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## GOVERNANCE

The Police Ombudsman, Mr Al Hutchinson, is appointed by Her Majesty, as a named person for a fixed term of seven years. The status of this public authority is that of corporate sole. The Police Ombudsman is accountable to the Assembly, through the Minister of Justice, for the duty placed on him to provide an independent and impartial police complaints system.

## CORPORATE ACCOUNTABILITY

The status of the Office of the Police Ombudsman is that of a non-departmental public body administrated through the Department of Justice. The Accounting Officer responsibility is delegated from the Permanent Secretary of that Department to Samuel Pollock, Chief Executive, who is accountable to the Police Ombudsman for the effective and efficient control and resourcing of the Office.

## SENIOR MANAGEMENT

The Chief Executive, Senior Director of Investigation and Directors carry executive responsibility for delegated functions, resources and control of operations and are required to report to the Police Ombudsman for the effective and efficient running of the police complaints system and the performance of the staff.

## AUDIT COMMITTEE

An Audit Committee has been established which is co-chaired by two independent non executive members and is attended by a representative of the Department of Justice, Internal Auditor and External Auditor. The role of the committee is to oversee internal audit and the operation of internal financial controls. External audit is the responsibility of the Comptroller and Auditor General of the Northern Ireland Audit Office. The Office is also the subject of inspection by the Surveillance Commissioner, the Interception Commissioner and the Criminal Justice Inspectorate.

## ANNUAL REPORT

The corporate governance of the Office is manifested through regular formal reporting on a quarterly basis to the Department of Justice and with a full Annual Report and Statement of Accounts in relation to the performance and funding of the Office made to the Minister of Justice and laid in the Assembly in June each year.

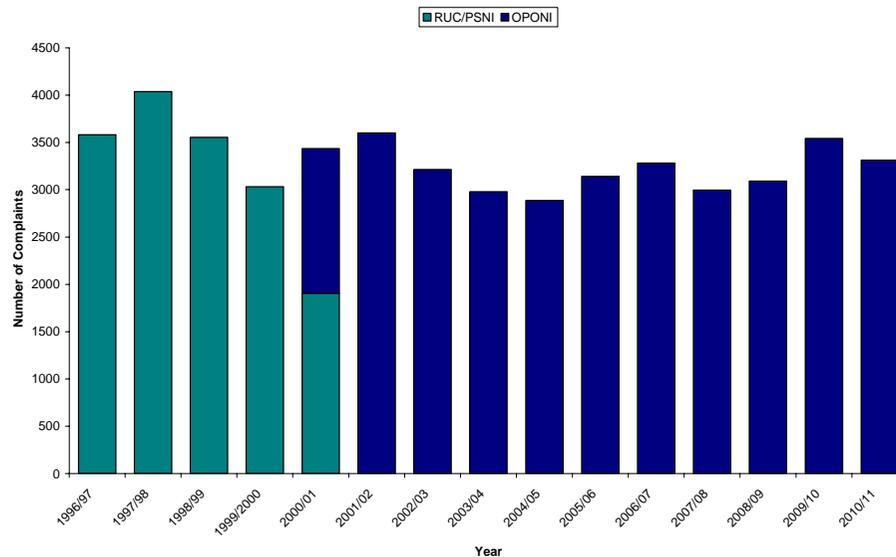
# Business Priorities 2011-2012 by the Chief Executive

The Police Ombudsman has indicated the professional and administrative context in which the Office operates. The new goals set by the Ombudsman reflect what we regard as the key focus for the next three years even though the day-to-day objectives and priorities do not in themselves alter significantly.

## COMPLAINTS AND WORKLOAD

Like most sectors in the Public Service, over the next 3 years the Office will have to face and manage very serious financial pressures. However, I believe the Office over the past 10 years has proved itself in its capacity and willingness to deliver a high level of service within constrained resources. Last year saw a decrease in the overall volume of complaints and an increase in the number of complaints closed against new complaints opened. This is an encouraging trend and the Office should continue to aim for shorter time lines in investigations and handling of complaints. The training and accreditation of investigators continues to be consolidated and the investigative capacity and experience of investigators continues to grow.

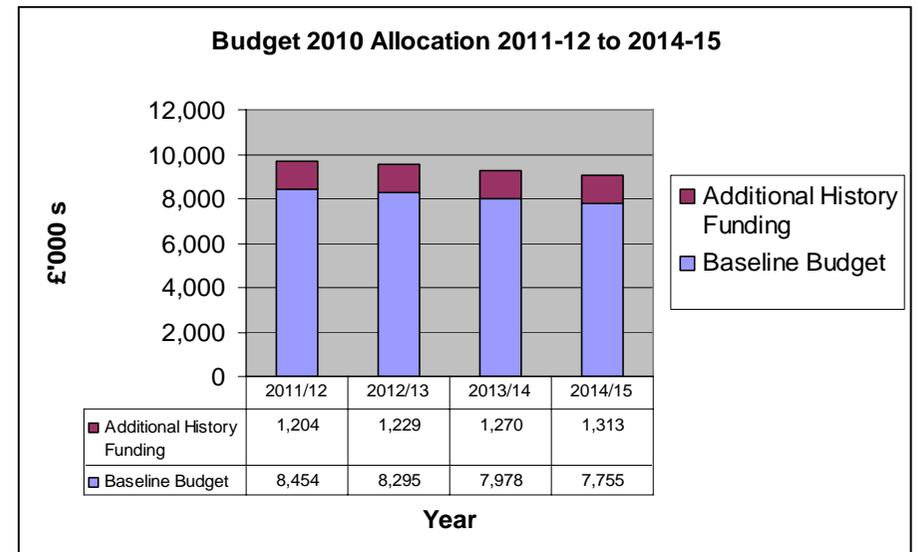
## LEVEL OF COMPLAINTS



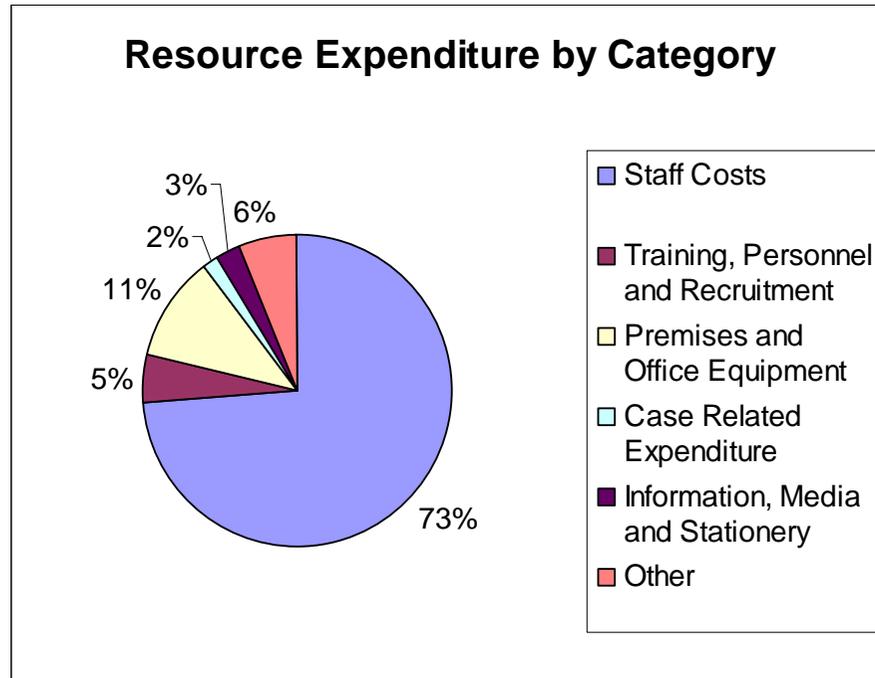
## REDUCTION IN REVENUE AND RESOURCES

Along with other publicly funded bodies, the Office is facing significant cuts in its baseline funding. The longer term resource allocation will reduce from £8.4 million to £7.7 million over the 4 years. This reduction in core funding will require the Office to realign its resources and work practices to seek to avoid impacts on front line service delivery.

The Ombudsman identified in 2008 that there was a need for additional resources to deal with the continuing challenges presented by complex historic enquiries. It is hoped that within the next few months there will be a confirmation of this additional funding for Historic work and that over a 6 year period the review and progress of the most critical and complex investigations can gain greater momentum.



## Business Priorities 2011-2012 by the Chief Executive



### GOVERNANCE

The Office has resourced an Organisational Development Programme over the last 3 years. A key issue of governance arrangements brought about by advice from consultants in September 2009 was addressed by Internal Auditors in January 2011. The Audit Committee have now received proposals that while the Police Ombudsman will oversee the Office with the support of the Chief Executive and his Directors, the Senior Management Team will now be chaired by the Chief Executive and his role as the Accounting Officer will again be the primary link with the Department officials. The Audit Committee will monitor this key matter over the months ahead. The OD programme will finish in September of this year.

### PERFORMANCE

This Business Plan will continue to reflect our immediate priorities of improving the quality of processes, decreasing delays in the completion of investigations and ensuring that resources are dedicated to a huge workload. We will monitor our performance against our plan and will continue to keep the public, key stakeholders, the Northern Ireland Assembly and the Department of Justice, informed of our work in helping deliver an effective, impartial and independent complaints system and improve the confidence in accountability of Policing.

### SUMMARY

The 3 years ahead represents a period of significant fiscal constraint which will require the Office to manage its resources tightly whilst seeking to ensure that the front line service delivery is not impacted. 2011-2012 marks the first year of a period of 4 years of 5% year on year budget cuts. The Office will continue to make every effort to improve customer service, quality and effectiveness of investigations but doing so within reduced resources. I commend the challenges, priorities and targets indicated in this Business Plan.

After 10 years as Chief Executive of the Office, I now leave in the next few weeks. It has been a privilege to be involved in such a significant development in establishing a new Complaints System for the RUC/PSNI in Northern Ireland and I thank the staff who have worked so hard to achieve what we achieved. I wish whoever is appointed to this role every success in their support of the Police Ombudsman in delivering an effective and independent service which the Public and the Police have a right to expect.

**SAM POLLOCK OBE**  
Chief Executive



## Objectives and Targets 2011-2012

OBJECTIVES	TARGETS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To deliver high quality, effective and timely investigations, incorporating creative innovation and change.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To implement a framework for monitoring the timeliness of investigations into matters referred under Section 55 of the Police ( Northern Ireland ) Act 1998 ( July 2011).</li> <li>To establish and maintain a mechanism seeking structured feedback from senior management in respect of Quality Assurance and Key Performance Indicator reports ( July 2011).</li> <li>To complete and report on the three year Organisational Development Project ( September 2011).</li> <li>To deliver a Hate Crime policy for Police Ombudsman investigations ( March 2012).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To ensure that the police complaints system addresses changes in statutory requirements and developments in policing and meets community and institutional needs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To conduct a 5 Year Legislative Review. ( December 2011).</li> <li>To establish a mechanism to advance the development and management of the Local Resolution of complaints. ( July 2011).</li> <li>To document compliance with Official Statistics legislation ( July 2011).</li> <li>To review Office Equality Scheme and produce report to the Equality Commission ( October 2011).</li> <li>To provide PSNI with monthly management information on trends and patterns in police complaints.</li> <li>To provide each PSNI District Commander with an annual report on trends and patterns in complaints within their respective policing districts.</li> <li>To provide NIPB with six-monthly statistical reports on police complaints.</li> <li>To make available on Office website, statistical information on trends and patterns in complaints during 2010/11 ( May 2011).</li> <li>To respond in a timely manner to requests for information from the public and its representatives.</li> </ul>

- To ensure that there is effective and efficient management of the physical, human and financial resources of the Office.
  - To ensure that the Office maintains its operation within 2% of the resources which are made available to it.
  - To develop a corporate records management system (March 2012).
  - To develop an Annual Training Plan in line with the Learning and Development strategy (July 2011).
  - To deliver a programme to enhance internal specialist knowledge and skills in the investigation process (March 2012).
  - To achieve a level of less than 4% staff absence per annum.
  - To review the Corporate Risk Register on a quarterly basis.
  - To implement fully agreed recommendations from the 2011 Internal Audit report (November 2011).
  - To progress identified IS/IT priorities to include the preparation of a business case seeking additional resources (March 2012).
  
- To deliver an effective strategy to deal with historic cases within resources available
  - To resource fully the Historic Investigations Directorate, consistent with the Police Ombudsman's strategy for dealing with the past and DOJ funding (September 2011).
  - To complete an assessment (scoping) of all historic matters held by the Directorate with a view to establishing the dimensions of complaints and informing prioritisation of investigative reviews (September 2011).
  - To complete investigative reviews of 20% of all historic matters not yet reviewed (March 2012).
  - To publish seven reports on historic matters not yet investigated (March 2012).
  - To convene four meetings of the Police Ombudsman's Independent Advisory Group on dealing with the past (March 2012).
  
- To seek actively to pursue measures leading to more effective and accountable policing.
  - To establish a mechanism with the PSNI to confirm the implementation of policy recommendations made by the Office (July 2011).
  - To attend and contribute to a minimum of 12 police training courses (March 2012).
  - To publish three specific research projects into policing related areas (January 2012).

## Key Performance Indicators 2011-2012

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### Customer Service Commitments

- To register all appropriate matters reported to Office within three working days of receipt.
- To action 90% of complaints within five working days of receipt.
- To update 85% of complainants every six weeks.
- To update 85% of police officers subject of investigation every six weeks.
- To deal with 90% of complaints, not subject to investigation or informal resolution, within 40 working days.
- 90% of complainants to be contacted by Investigating Officer within three working days of the complaint being allocated to that officer.
- 95% of complainants calling to the Office to be seen by appropriate staff member within five minutes.
- 85% of complaints investigated, other than grave or exceptional matters, to be completed within 110 working days.
- To maintain a level of 70% of Investigating Officers with the achievement of Accredited Investigator status.
- To maintain a level of at least 80% public awareness of the Office, its impartiality and its fairness.
- To maintain a level of at least 75% of complainants willing to use the complaints service again.
- To maintain a level of at least 75% of police officers subject of investigation to be satisfied with the service provided by the Office.

## Other Key Performance Indicators 2011-2012

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### KPI's

- Make Annual Report for the year ended 31 March 2011 available to the Department of Justice. (June 2011)
- Publish Corporate Business Plan. (June 2011)
- Publish annual complaints statistics (May 2011)
- Report on Complainant Satisfaction. (May 2011)
- Report on Police Officer Satisfaction. (May 2011)
- Report on Public Attitude Survey Findings. (May 2011)
- Complete Annual Fair Employment Monitoring Return. (May 2011).