

User Guide to

Statistics on Complaints and Allegations Received by the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland

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Contents

Introduction.....	2
Data Use.....	2
Understanding Our Findings.....	3
Publications.....	4
Additional Information.....	4
Future Changes.....	5
Understanding the Complaints Process.....	7
Data Availability & Quality.....	8
User Feedback.....	9
Contact Details.....	9
Glossary of Terms.....	10

Introduction

This user guide should be used in conjunction with the statistical reports¹ on complaints and allegations received by the Police Ombudsman's Office in Northern Ireland (OPONI) to gain a better understanding of the official statistics released.

Statistics are produced by staff from the Information Directorate of the Office of the Police Ombudsman. The Directorate includes NISRA statisticians and Police Ombudsman research support staff.

These statistics are produced in accordance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, details of which can be found on the UK Statistics Authority website: www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk.

Data Use

The statistics have been produced to meet the needs of a variety of individuals and organisations who have a particular interest in the issue of police complaints, with the main users are OPONI, the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), the Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB), the Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs), and the Department of Justice (DOJ).

The statistics are used within the Office as management information, to monitor trends in the number of complaints and allegations received as well as monitoring the outcomes of investigations. It is also used to monitor performance against key performance indicators and also as an indicator of caseload.

The PSNI have an interest in knowing about the trends and patterns in the complaints against their officers and use this information to help identify and address particular problems. Those that hold the police to account, in particular the NIPB, have an interest in developing an understanding of what aspects of police conduct are attracting public concern and whether these concerns are of substance. The PCSPs use this information to monitor police performance and to identify any particular issues of concern regarding policing in their area.

Also the general public have a right to know how both their police service and their police complaints service are performing.

¹ Both the Annual Trends Report and the Quarterly Statistical Updates.

Understanding the Statistics

Users of the statistics will range from people with a professional knowledge of policing issues to those with none at all. For this reason we try to keep the terminology in the statistical reports jargon free, but where this has not been possible we have provided an explanation of those terms and an explanation of the police complaints process in this user guide.

The statistical releases from OPONI have been designed to give users the key information they need. There are a number of factors that may influence whether or not a person will make a complaint against an officer and these are listed below:

- The number and nature of police operations conducted;
- The performance of police officers;
- The level of interaction between the public and the police service;
- 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 in PSNI's or the Office's procedures;
- The level of crime in Northern Ireland;
- The number of major public order incidents; and
- Population demographics of an area.

It is important to take these factors into account when drawing any conclusions regarding trends in the number of complaints and allegations received and not to take a simplistic view.

Care should be taken when comparing the number of complaints or allegations received at police district or police area level as some of the differences between areas may reflect variations in their composition, such as the degree of urbanisation, level of deprivation and the balance between the resident population, day-time population and night-time economy. If, for example, a lot of people are employed in the area during working hours or move into it in the evening or at night time to socialise, that can have an effect on the number of complaints made in the area.

It is also difficult to make meaningful comparisons on the number of complaints and allegations received between the four jurisdictions (Northern Ireland, England and Wales, and Scotland). As each region uses different systems to record complaints, they record and investigate different types of complaints and use different mechanisms for counting them. These factors make it difficult to compare all aspects of complaints such as, the outcomes of investigations, length of investigations or investigation method.

Publications

OPONI publish a statistical report at the end of each financial year presenting trends in complaints and allegations over the last five years. In addition to this annual report the Office release quarterly statistical updates providing top-level information on complaints and allegations received.

Both statistical reports present information in a number of formats including tables, charts and commentary, in order to meet all users' needs. The commentary has been provided to enable users to have an insight into the context of the statistics and also where possible to provide an explanation or interpretation of the emerging trends.

All publication dates are preannounced and can be found via a [publication schedule](#) on the Police Ombudsman's Internet site.

The data used for the publications are taken from the CHS which is a 'live' case handling system that is updated daily. In order to compile the statistics for the yearly trend report a download of five years data is taken from the CHS and the statistics in the most recent report supersede those previously published.

As the focus of the quarterly bulletins is to provide an update on key information for the current year, only data for the current financial year are extracted. Similarly to the statistics in the Trends report the most recently published statistics supersede those previously published.

Whilst these revisions may have little impact on the overall trends the Office deems that it is necessary to capture the data every year to ensure sufficient data quality. Information regarding the size and nature of the revisions will be included in the Additional Information Section in the publications.

Additional Information

In order to give our users better access to the statistics in the reports, they are also published in an excel spreadsheet. This spreadsheet includes data for the tables and charts in the reports as well as providing some additional statistics and can be found on the [Police Ombudsman's internet site](#).

Additional geographic breakdowns of the types of complaints and allegations received and recommendations made by the Police Ombudsman are 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 internet [site](#).

Future Changes

From the introduction of the CHS the Office has reported outcomes at recommendation level. After consultation with internal and external users of these statistics the Statistics and Research Team concluded that this method of reporting on outcomes is not easily understood. From June 2015 the Office intends to report outcomes in terms of complaints dealt with rather than recommendations made.

Understanding the Complaints Process

In order to help users understand the complaints process, we have provided this short summary of the police complaints service in Northern Ireland and how it works.

What we do

The Police Ombudsman's Office opened on 6 November 2000, marking the beginning of an entirely new system for investigating complaints against police officers in Northern Ireland.

The Office provides for the independent and impartial investigation of complaints about the police in Northern Ireland. The Police Ombudsman is committed to providing a police complaints service in the way he thinks best calculated to secure the confidence of the public and the police. He believes that for such confidence to be forthcoming, it is essential that people are informed about the nature of his work.

The Police Ombudsman has the remit to investigate the conduct of police officers within six organisations which operate in Northern Ireland:

- Police Service of Northern Ireland including Designated Civilians;
- Larne Harbour Police;
- Belfast Harbour Police;
- Belfast International Airport Police;
- Ministry of Defence Police; and
- Serious and Organised Crime Agency.

The Office deals primarily with complaints made by members of the public about the conduct of police officers. It also deals with matters referred to it by

the PSNI Chief Constable (referred to as Chief Constable section 55 referrals). These include:

- All discharges of police firearms (including those used in riot situations);
- All fatal road traffic collisions involving police officers;
- Any death which may have occurred as a result of the actions of a police officer; and
- Any other serious allegation.

It also deals with matters referred to it by the NIPB, the DoJ and the PPS (section 55 referrals).

The Police Ombudsman also has the power to initiate an investigation without a complaint having been made if it appears to him to be desirable and in the public interest (referred to as a “call-in”).

In most circumstances the Police Ombudsman can only investigate incidents which have occurred in the previous 12 months. However, there is no time limit on the investigation of grave matters, or where exceptional circumstances exist. Many of the investigations the Office is undertaking into incidents during which happened between 1968 and 1998 (the period known as the Troubles) are matters the Police Ombudsman viewed as grave or exceptional.

The Police Ombudsman does not investigate complaints against officers whose conduct has been the subject of disciplinary or criminal proceedings; or complaints about off-duty police officers, unless the fact that he or she is a police officer is relevant to the complaint. The Office also does not investigate matters relating to the direction and control of the police service by the Chief Constable.

How we do it

By law the Police Ombudsman must keep a register of complaints. A complaint does not need to be communicated in writing, nor does it need to explicitly say that it is a complaint for it to be recorded as such. All complaints are recorded on the CHS, even where they are later determined to be outside the remit of the Office.

A complaint from a member of the public will invariably include a number of allegations. For example, if a person alleges a police officer pushed them *and* was rude to them, it would be recorded as one complaint with two allegations on the system.

Once a complaint has been received, the Office will consider if the matter can be resolved informally. Before we decide to take such an approach, the person who has made the complaint must agree. If this proves unsuccessful, the Police Ombudsman will refer the allegation for investigation.

When a matter has been the subject of a formal investigation, and the evidence indicates that police officers may have committed a criminal offence or breached the police Code of Ethics, the Police Ombudsman can recommend that they are prosecuted or disciplined.

Where the Police Ombudsman considers that a criminal offence may have been committed by a member of the police, he must send a copy of the investigation report to the PPS, making appropriate recommendations. The PPS then decides whether or not to prosecute the police officer under investigation.

If the Police Ombudsman decides that no criminal offence has been committed, he is required to consider whether it is appropriate to recommend disciplinary proceedings and to send a memorandum to the relevant disciplinary authority, recommending whether or not such proceedings should be brought and stating the reasons for his decision. If he recommends disciplinary proceedings should be brought in relation to a particular investigation and the Chief Constable is unwilling to do so, the Police Ombudsman may, after consultation with the Chief Constable, direct him to do so.

To help in the understanding of the police complaints process we have produced a glossary of terms used, included at the end of this user guide.

Data Availability and Quality

Statistical information on complaints and allegations is derived from the CHS, an integrated and comprehensive ICT system that covers all key aspects of receiving and processing a complaint from receipt to closure, including the investigation process and final recommendations. The system captures data about the complainant, the complained against parties, the incident and allegations made. Data can be downloaded and exported to a number of commonly used software packages for analysis (Excel, Access, SPSS²). In addition the Office uses the DI Diver reporting tool and the CHS has a number of management reports run directly from a menu on the system.

Data Quality

CHS data quality is considered to be high. The system has been designed to limit the incidence of inaccurate data through the use of measures such as logical validation checks, drop down menus for data input and a minimum of free text input. The Police Ombudsman has a dedicated team who assure the quality of CHS content. All data input is completely auditable and allows for an effective quality control procedure to review and, where necessary, amend key data for the purposes of accurate reporting. When considered necessary, focused data cleansing exercises of key fields are also conducted. Additionally, complete audits of fields with small numbers associated are conducted.

As stated above, substantial validation and quality control procedures are in place to ensure that the data derived from CHS are of high quality. However, there is still the possibility of a small number of errors arising from data input, missing data, failure to update data and errors in communication. The Police Ombudsman estimates that the level of this error is so small that it has no impact on the quality of statistical reporting. However, where errors are identified, corrections are made to reports as soon as practicable. Further details are set out in the Police Ombudsman [statement of revision and errors strategy](#) .

The Office's full strategy for revisions and errors can be found within the publications section of the [Office's website](#).

Data Limitations

Because of the nature of some of the highly sensitive material handled by the Police Ombudsman in the investigation of cases, a small proportion of cases

² SPSS is a statistical software package developed for use by social scientists.

will have only limited information available on the CHS. On balance, the Police Ombudsman considers that the assurance of the privacy of the information and individuals associated with this small number of sensitive cases outweighs the need for full access to the data. In practice, the number of cases is so small that the restriction has no impact on the quality of statistical reporting.

User feedback

We continuously welcome feedback or comments on the statistics released. If you would like to forward your views or receive notifications of statistical releases please email your contact details to the email address below.

On a regular basis we contact our key users to review the statistical releases. The last user consultation took place in February 2014. Details of the comments and feedback will be available later this year on the [Police Ombudsman's Internet Site](#).

Contact Details

For further information about the complaints and allegations received by the Office or to contact the Office's Statistics and Research Team please:

Email: research@policeombudsman.org

Write to: Statistics and Research Team, Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland, New Cathedral Buildings, 11 Church Street, Belfast, BT1 1PG

Telephone: 028 9082 8669

Glossary of Terms

This glossary is designed to assist users of our statistical information to understand the terms which we use to describe data contained in the statistical bulletin. Terms are listed in the order in which they appear in the report.

Complaint

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction by or on behalf of a member of the public about a member of the police service or an officer of another service over which the Office has jurisdiction. This could be about the way the individual was treated or the service they received.

Allegation

This describes the types of behaviour being complained about or the separate issues being complained about. A single complaint can contain one or more allegations. For example, a complainant may allege that a police officer pushed him or her *and* was rude. This would be recorded as two separate allegations forming one complaint. Allegations are categorised into main allegation types and subtypes. These subtypes facilitate greater understanding of what the allegation relates to.

Residual matters

A small number of residual matters are included in the number of allegations (usually 1-2% of allegations each year). A residual matter is one identified by the Office's Investigator, which has not been previously complained of by the complainant. Examples include failure to complete notebook records, anomalies in custody record, and failure to supervise situations adequately.

Section 55 referral

Under section 55 of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 1998 the Police Ombudsman can investigate matters about which no complaint has been made.

The Chief Constable, The Director of PPS, the NIPB and the DoJ can refer non complaint matters to the Office.

In addition the Police Ombudsman may investigate a non complaint matter if it appears to him that a police officer may have committed a criminal offence or behaved in a manner which would justify disciplinary proceedings and it is considered desirable in the public interest to do so.

Main factor behind complaint

The Office also records information on the type of situation which has led to the complaint. When the Complaints Officer determines that there are several factors that have led to the complaint, the main factor behind the complaint is recorded. Factors behind complaints are categorised as follows:

Criminal investigation - where the main burden of the complaint relates to the police conduct of a criminal investigation.

Arrest - where the main burden of the complaint relates to events taking place during or immediately after the complainant's arrest.

Search - where the main burden of the complaint relates to an incident involving a search. This may be a police stop and search of a person, usually the complainant; a police search of premises; or a police search of a vehicle.

Traffic related incident - where the main burden of the complaint relates to any incident involving police where traffic is a relevant factor, encompassing road traffic collisions, breath tests, parking offences and the manner of police driving.

Police enquiries (no investigation) - where the main burden of the complaint relates to an incident where police carried out preliminary enquiries but no formal investigation took place.

Domestic incident - where the main burden of the complaint relates to a domestic incident including incidents of domestic violence or neighbour disputes.

Parade/Demonstration - where the main burden of the complaint relates to an incident which took place during a parade and/or demonstration.

Historic investigation - an investigation (potentially criminal and/or misconduct) into the actions of police where the allegation(s) made are considered Grave or Exceptional, "Troubles" related (1969-1998) and predates the establishment of the Good Friday Agreement, 10 April 1998.

Other category - where the main burden of the complaint relates to other situations including, for example, incidents during the interview or detention of the complainant; a death in custody or following other types of police contact; police attempting to recruit the complainant as an informer; police response or lack of response; lack of investigation by police; issues around records management or the disclosure of information; seizure, return or disposal of property; other operational/policy matters or some other off-duty incidents.

Allegation types and Subtypes

Failure in duty

This allegation type includes situations where the complainant alleged that the officer failed in his or her duty as a police officer. Currently on the CHS, failure in duty allegations are categorised into 23 subtypes. In February 2014, a 'user consultation' meeting was held which was attended by key stakeholders of the Office. One of the main outcomes of this meeting was an acknowledgement that there were, especially for reporting purposes, too many failure in duty allegation subtypes. It was also noted that a large number of failure in duty allegations were categorised within the 'other failure in duty' subtype. In order to address these issues and to simplify the allegation subtype table in this report, it was decided to re-categorise failure in duty allegations into the following:

Conduct of police investigations / incident response

Conduct of police investigations - where the alleged failure in duty is specific to the conduct of an ongoing or completed police investigation.

Failure to supervise / adequately supervise¹ - where supervision of an officer has either not taken place or is perceived to have been inadequate. This subtype will most commonly be used where a failure to supervise has been identified by Ombudsman investigators as a residual matter.

Failure to investigate - where the complainant alleges a failure of police to carry out any investigation into an incident.

Delay/failure to respond to incident¹ - where the complainant alleges that police have been excessively slow to attend or failed to attend a reported incident. This also includes incidents relating to the delay or failure to respond to emergency calls made via the '999' system.

Improper disclosure of information - where the complainant alleges that one or more police officers have disclosed information inappropriately.

Failure/refusal to identify self - where the complainant alleges that police have failed to identify themselves when dealing with the complainant or have refused to do so when asked.

Failures in contact

Failure to attend appointments / undue delay in police response² - where the complainant alleges that police have either failed to keep arranged appointments or have been excessively slow to attend / failed to attend a reported incident.

Failure to return telephone calls and/or reply to correspondence² - where the complainant alleges that police have failed to return telephone calls and / or reply to correspondence sent.

Failure to return telephone calls / reply to correspondence / attend appointments¹ - where the complainant alleges that police have either failed to return telephone calls, failed to reply to correspondence sent, or failed to keep arranged appointments.

Failure to update - where the complainant alleges that the police have failed to update him or her appropriately on the progress of a police investigation or other enquiries.

Conduct in custody suite

Denied access to legal advice - where the complainant is alleging that he or she was denied access to legal advice whilst in custody.

Denied access to medical attention - where the complainant is alleging that he or she was denied access to medical attention. This may be either in custody or at the scene of an incident.

Detention, treatment & questioning - where an alleged failure in duty has occurred while the complainant has been subject to detention, for example, failure to inform detained persons of their rights and entitlements or failure to maintain accurate custody records.

Failure in record management

Failure to keep accurate police records¹ - failure to keep accurate, complete or up to date police records e.g. in respect of police notebooks or for criminal record details, payment of fines, bail attendance at police stations, production of driving documents, name/address details, etc.

Failure to provide information / accurate information¹ - where a complainant has alleged that police have failed to provide non-documentary information, or failed to provide accurate non-documentary information, relating to them or third parties.

Failure to provide / refer appropriate documentation¹ - where it is alleged that police have failed to provide documentation requested by the complainant or their representatives or where police have failed to refer appropriate documentation to external bodies or the documentation referred is perceived to be inaccurate, incomplete or misleading.

¹ New failure in duty categories used from April 2013.

² Failure in duty categories used 2009/10 to 2012/13.

Failure to refer complaint / section 55(2) matter to the Police Ombudsman¹ - failure to take complaint details when made (e.g. in police custody / at a police station) and thereafter to forward these details on to OPONI. This also includes other matters coming to the attention of police, not necessarily the subject of a public complaint, where the matter concerned would fall under section 55(2) or otherwise require referral. e.g. discharge of taser.

Failure in duty of care

Failure in duty of care¹ - failure to take appropriate action to ensure the safety or well-being of the complainant or third party for whom they have responsibility e.g. juvenile or vulnerable adult.

Failure to act impartially

Failure to act impartially / objectively¹ - failure to adopt an independent approach and/or failure to act in an impartial manner.

Other failure in duty

Other failure in duty - a failure in duty not otherwise covered in the existing failure in duty subtypes.

Identification procedures² – where the complainant alleges that police have failed to adhere to guidelines in relation to identification procedures, for example not obtaining necessary consent to the taking of fingerprints, photographs or body samples.

Procedural irregularity² - where the complainant alleges any other procedural irregularity in relation to police adherence to established procedures.

Tape recording² - where the complainant alleges failure to tape record (without good reason) failure to handle tapes in an appropriate manner or not making a proper record of objections, complaints, breaks etc.

¹ New failure in duty categories used from April 2013.

² Failure in duty categories used 2009/10 to 2012/13.

Oppressive Behaviour

This allegation type includes situations where the complainant alleged that the officer has behaved in an oppressive manner. Oppressive Behaviour allegations are categorised into a number of subtypes as follows:

Oppressive conduct - where the complainant is alleging misconduct by a police officer in relation to oppressive conduct not involving assault.

Harassment - where the complainant is alleging that he or she was harassed, for example, where he or she was repeatedly stopped by police and searched for no legitimate reason.

Sexual assault - where the complainant is alleging an assault by a police officer which is of a sexual nature.

Serious non sexual assault - where the complainant is alleging that the conduct of a police officer resulted in serious injury, for example, an allegation that the complainant sustained a broken bone as a result of the actions of police.

Other assault - where the complainant is alleging unjustified, excessive force or violent conduct on the part of a police officer, for example, an allegation that the complainant was being pushed or otherwise physically abused without justification.

Incivility

This term covers allegations such as the police officer being rude, showing a lack of respect, being abrupt or displaying a general lack of sensitivity.

Search

This allegation type covers situations where the complainant alleged that the officer has behaved in an irregular manner during a search. Search allegations are categorised into:

Irregularity re Search of premises - where the complainant alleges an irregularity specific to a police search of premises.

Irregularity re Stop/Search of person - where the complainant alleges an irregularity specific to a police stop and search of a person.

Seizure of property - where a complainant alleges police misconduct specific to a police seizure of property occurring as a result of a police search.

Damage to property - where the complainant alleges damage to property specific to a police search of premises, person or vehicle.

Irregularity re Stop/Search of vehicle - where the complainant alleges an irregularity specific to a police stop and search of a vehicle.

Unlawful / Unnecessary Arrest / Detention

This allegation type relates to situations where unlawful / unnecessary arrest / detention is alleged.

Malpractice

This allegation type relates to situations where the complainant alleged that the officer has been involved in malpractice. This category is subdivided into the following subtypes:

Irregularity re evidence / perjury - includes any allegation in relation to perjury, other allegations of falsehood, any allegation that evidence was obtained in an irregular manner or under duress and allegations of concealment or tampering with evidence.

Corrupt practice - any criminal allegation of corruption made by a complainant.

Mishandling of property

This allegation category includes any allegation involving theft or loss of property (including money), unreasonable retention of property, damage to property, failure to account for money or property and improper disposal of property.

Discriminatory behaviour

This allegation type includes situations where the complainant alleged that the officer has displayed some form of discriminatory behaviour. Discriminatory behaviour allegations are categorised into a number of subtypes as follows:

Sectarian discriminatory behaviour - where the complainant perceives that he or she has been discriminated against on the basis of his or her religious or political identification within the Northern Ireland context.

Other religious discriminatory behaviour - where the complainant perceives that he or she has been discriminated against on the basis of his or her religion, where the religion is not one traditionally associated with the sectarian context within Northern Ireland.

Racially discriminatory behaviour - where the complainant perceives that he or she has been discriminated against on the basis of his or her race.

Disability discriminatory behaviour - where the complainant perceives that he or she has been discriminated against on the basis of a disability.

Homophobic discriminatory behaviour - where the complainant perceives that he or she has been discriminated against on the basis of his or her sexuality.

Gender discriminatory behaviour - where the complainant perceives that he or she has been discriminated against on the basis of his or her gender.

Trans-phobic discriminatory behaviour - where the complainant perceives that he or she has been discriminated against on the basis of his or her decision to identify with the opposite gender from that of his or her birth.

Other discriminatory behaviour - where the complainant perceives that he or she has been discriminated against on the basis of a factor not covered in the other subtypes.

Traffic

This allegation type includes situations where the complainant alleges that the officer has been involved in a traffic irregularity and is sub divided as follows:

Driving of police vehicles - where an allegation of misconduct is made specific to the driving of a vehicle on police business.

Other traffic irregularity - where an allegation of a traffic infringement by a police officer has been made e.g. use of mobile phone while driving, parking on double yellow lines.

Section 55 Referral

Section 55 referrals (see explanation above) are recorded under the following:

Section 55 (Chief Constable Referral) - where the matter being investigated arises from a Chief Constable Referral.

Section 55 (HET Referral) - where the matter being investigated arises from a Chief Constable Referral in relation to the Historical Enquiries Team.

Section 55 (OPONI Call In) - where the matter being investigated arises from a Police Ombudsman call in.

Section 55 (Policing Board Referral) - where the matter being investigated results from a referral by the Policing Board.

Section 55 (PPS Referral) - where the matter being investigated results from a referral by the Director of Public Prosecution.

Section 55 (Department of Justice Referral) - where the matter being investigated results from a referral by the Department of Justice.

Other

The remaining allegations are recorded under the following subtypes:

Other allegation - any other allegation made by a complainant, where the nature of the allegation is clear but it does not fit appropriately into any other allegation subtype.

Other (Insufficient detail) - where the complainant has not provided sufficient information to allow accurate categorisation of his or her complaint.

OPONI Call In/Out NFA - where the Investigating Officer (IO) has determined at an early stage that there is no requirement for any further investigation at an incident to which he or she was called out. For example where an IO was contacted in relation to the police shooting of a dangerous dog. During preliminary enquiries the IO determines that there is no suggestion of any police misconduct and determines there is no requirement for any investigation by the Office.

Location

The Office also records the location of the incident which led to the allegation. It should be noted that for some failure in duty allegations, for example, failure to update or failure to investigate, the incident is recorded as occurring in a police station.

The Office also records the location of the police station closest to the incident. This information is used to determine the policing district and area of the allegation.

Regulation 9 Notice (OMB3)

A regulation 9 notice informs the officer that an allegation has been made against him/her and that the matter is to be investigated.

Recommendations arising from allegations closed

When the investigation of an allegation is complete a recommendation for allegation closure is made. It should be noted that one allegation may have more than one associated recommendation, for example, when there is a number of police officers linked to an allegation a recommendation is made for allegation closure for each one of the officers.

Recommendation types are recorded under the following subtypes:
Not substantiated – where the Investigating Officer has completed an investigation and is satisfied that there is insufficient evidence to substantiate the allegation.

Non co-operation by complainant – where the failure by the complainant to co-operate or provide reasonable assistance for the purpose of a Police Ombudsman investigation makes a meaningful enquiry impracticable.

To PPS no Criminal Charges recommended – where a recommendation and a file is to be submitted to the Public Prosecution Service, recommending no criminal prosecution.

Outside remit – where the allegation falls outside the Office's legislative remit, for example if the alleged incident occurred outside of the 12 month period prior to the allegation being made.

Informally/Locally Resolved – where a complaint of a less serious nature has been subject to an Informal or Local Resolution process following the consent of the complainant. This closure type requires that a record of the outcome has been obtained from police confirming that the matter has been resolved. The Local Resolution process currently operates in District D only.

Withdrawn by complainant – where the Office receives written confirmation from the complainant, his or her solicitor or other authorised agent acting on his or her behalf to the effect that he or she wishes to withdraw the complaint or does not wish any further steps to be taken in consequence of it.

Recommended action – where criminal or misconduct action is recommended in respect of officers concerned. The following action can be recommended by the Office:

- Advice and Guidance: where the Office recommends an informal discipline sanction of Advice and Guidance for the officer concerned.
- Management Discussion/Training: this also involves the Office recommending that a discussion take place between the officer concerned and a more senior officer regarding the allegation. This category also includes a small number of recommendations that the officer concerned receives additional training or operational supervision based on the nature of the allegation.
- Superintendent's Written Warning: this involves the officer receiving a formal written warning from their Superintendent.
- Disciplinary / Misconduct Charges: where a recommendation is submitted to PSNI recommending formal disciplinary proceedings.
- Criminal Charges: where a recommendation and a file is submitted to the PPS recommending criminal charge(s) in respect of an officer associated with a particular allegation(s).

Ill founded – where it becomes clear during preliminary enquiries that an allegation is without basis or foundation.

Substantiated (no action recommended) – where the investigation process has substantiated the allegation but no further action is appropriate or can be taken by the Police Ombudsman. There may be a number of reasons why no action can be taken including that it has not been possible to identify the officer concerned.

Other – encompasses a range of other recommendations which are generally used less frequently than those described above. These could include cases where further enquiries or investigation is not possible due to the complainant's failure to provide personal details; where the effort and resources involved in pursuing an allegation further is disproportionate to any likely outcome; or where the complaint is repetitive.

Informal Resolution

This is a process offered to complainants who have made less serious allegations, e.g. rudeness or incivility. It involves a senior police officer

speaking to both the officer(s) involved and the complainant with a view to reaching a satisfactory resolution of the complaint.