



Complaints and Allegations Received by the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland

**Quarterly Statistical Update to 31st December
2016**

Published January 2017

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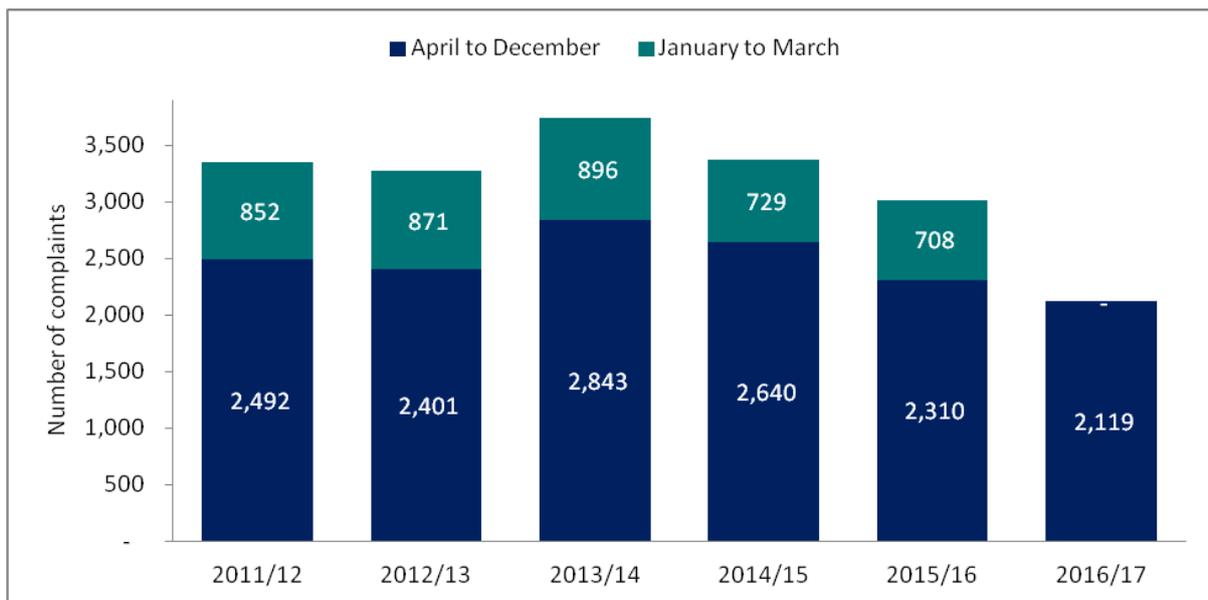
Statistical Update to 31st December 2016, published on 26th January 2017

This quarterly bulletin presents the most recent statistics on the number of complaints and allegations received by the Police Ombudsman, up to 31st December 2016. The statistics are based on information extracted from the Police Ombudsman’s Case Handling System (CHS) on the 21st January 2017.

Complaints Received

During April to December 2016, the Office received just over 2,100 complaints¹. This is an 8% decrease in the number of complaints reported for the same time period last year. It is also the lowest number of complaints received during this time when compared with the previous five years (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Number of complaints received by the Police Ombudsman’s Office, 2011/12 to 2016/17



¹ See Additional Information: Understanding the Statistics

Main Complaint Factor

During April to December 2016, Criminal Investigation was the most common main factor² underlying complaints followed by Arrest. This continues to be the normal trend observed for complaint factors.

Of the known complaints factors, Police Enquiries (no investigation) had the largest percentage increase during this time when compared with the same time period last year, while complaints arising from Arrest had the largest percentage decrease (Table 1).

Table 1: Comparison in the main factor of complaints received between April to December 2015 and April to December 2016

	April to December 2015	April to December 2016	Difference	% Difference
Criminal Investigation	586	622	36	6%
Arrest	416	328	-88	-21%
Traffic Related Incident	163	172	9	6%
Search	200	169	-31	-16%
Domestic Incident	143	156	13	9%
Police Enquiries (no investigation)	68	80	12	18%
Historic Investigation	54	51	-3	-6%
Parade/Demonstration	44	21	-23	-
Other	536	396	-140	-26%
Unknown	100	124	24	24%
Total	2,310	2,119	-191	-8%

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

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

Complaints Received by Police District

The number of complaints increased in 3 of the 11 police districts between April and December 2016 when compared to the same time last year with District F-Mid Ulster having the largest percentage increase. The number of complaints decreased in the remaining eight 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 April to December 2015 and April to December 2016

	April to December 2015	April to December 2016	Difference	% Difference
District A - Belfast City	708	570	-138	-19%
District B - Lisburn & Castlereagh City	98	86	-12	-12%
District C - Ards & North Down	135	130	-5	-4%
District D – Newry, Mourne & Down	141	122	-19	-13%
District E - Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	178	162	-16	-9%
District F - Mid Ulster	76	95	19	25%
District G - Fermanagh & Omagh	105	103	-2	-2%
District H - Derry City & Strabane	173	148	-25	-14%
District J - Causeway Coast & Glens	170	183	13	8%
District K - Mid & East Antrim	118	134	16	14%
District L - Antrim & Newtownabbey	134	131	-3	-2%
Unknown / Other Organisation	274	255	-19	-7%
Northern Ireland	2,310	2,119	-191	-8%

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

Allegations Received

The Office received almost 3,600 allegations between April and December 2016. This is the lowest number of allegations received during this time period when compared with the last five years (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Number of allegations received by the Police Ombudsman's Office, 2011/12 to 2016/17



Allegation Type

During April to December 2016 Failure in Duty was the most common allegation type making up almost half of the allegations received during this time. Allegations of Unlawful/Unnecessary Arrest/Detention had the largest percentage increase during this time when compared to last year while allegations of Mishandling of Property had the largest percentage decrease (Table 3).

Table 3: Comparison in the Types of Allegations received between April to December 2015 and April to December 2016

	April to December 2015	April to December 2016	Difference	% Difference
Failure in Duty	1,599	1,633	34	2%
Oppressive Behaviour	955	808	-147	-15%
Incivility	305	231	-74	-24%
Search	202	185	-17	-8%
Unlawful/Unnecessary Arrest/Detention	149	164	15	10%
Mishandling of Property	100	67	-33	-33%
Historic Investigation	-	59	-	-
Malpractice	40	55	15	-
Traffic	27	46	19	-
Discriminatory Behaviour	42	44	2	-
Section 55 Referral	57	22	-35	-
Other	253	268	15	6%
Total	3,729	3,582	-147	-4%

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

Officers with multiple complaints

There were 57 PSNI officers who attracted three or more complaints that were formally investigated or dealt with by way of informal or local resolution between January 2016 and December 2016 (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 and December 2016

Twelve month period ending	Number of officers with three or more complaints that were formally investigated or dealt with Local/Informal Resolution
June 2016	47
September 2016	44
December 2016	57

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 remit³. The number of complaints also includes those matters that have been referred to the Police Ombudsman's Office from other organisations⁴, 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.

³ 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).

⁴ 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 is available in the 'Annual Statistical Bulletin of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland, 2015/16', which is available on the Office's [website](#).

An additional geographic breakdown of the types of complaints and allegations received by the Police Ombudsman 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. 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 final quarterly update of 2016/17 is due to be published on Thursday 27th April 2017 and it will include statistics up to the 31st March 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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