

Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland:

# Annual Business Plan 2013-2014

## Vision

Excellence in the independent and impartial investigation of police complaints.

## Mission

To provide an effective, efficient and accountable police complaints system, which is independent, impartial and designed to secure the confidence of the public and police.

## Goals

To deliver a police complaints service capable of winning the confidence of the public and the police.

To deliver a service which contributes to improving policing within the community.

To deliver a mechanism for the effective investigation and reporting on events from 'The Past.'

## Values

**INDEPENDENCE** - The Police Ombudsman operates independently of the Police Service, the Northern Ireland Policing Board and the Department of Justice, 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.

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# 1. Foreword by the Police Ombudsman

**I am pleased to welcome you to the 2013-2014 Business Plan for the Office of the Police Ombudsman, which sets out our objectives and targets for the year and the resources we propose to deploy to meet them.**

The aim of the Office of the Police Ombudsman is to provide an effective, efficient and accountable police complaints system which is independent, impartial and designed to secure the confidence of the public and the police. To achieve this requires investigations that are of the highest quality and totally independent of the police, of government or any sectional community interest.

In delivering an independent and impartial police complaints service we must be mindful of the context within which the Office has worked. The past year in particular has seen a number of challenges for the Office.

I believe we can look forward to 2013-2014 with a degree of enthusiasm. We have already made a number of significant changes to the way we deliver our business. As well as my appointment in July 2012, we have made a number of senior appointments, including a new Chief Executive Officer. The resource made available to the history directorate is the largest commitment ever by the Police Ombudsman's Office to this area of work. We have adopted a new approach to investigations and review, and aim to provide a more consistent and professional approach to our engagement with families who trust the Office with their complaints. The changes we have made in this area have been externally and independently validated by the Criminal Justice Inspectorate.

These changes taken together, as well as other improvements, have addressed concerns around the flawed nature of the investigative process which led to the suspension of history cases. This suspension was lifted in January 2013.

The Business Plan for 2013 – 2014 sets out how we propose to continue to develop the service we provide through further improvements in the investigative process across the organization and by demonstrating the value of the Office in the information we provide. This represents the implementation of a new approach to investigation and greater professionalism in how we interact with those who engage with us. Achieving excellence in investigations will be the thread running through all the work that we do.

Operational independence is, and must always be, the cornerstone of the organization. Confidence in the ability to deliver on this principle will be hard won and easily lost. There is a determination within the organization to embed a consistent and effective investigative process that will withstand any challenge. We are united to deliver a police complaints service that leads the world in independent police oversight.

**Dr Michael Maguire**  
**Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland**

## 2. Foreword by the Chief Executive

**This is the Business Plan of the Police Ombudsman's Office for Northern Ireland for the financial year 2013/14. A more strategic three year business plan (2013- 2017) will be developed in the second quarter of 2013 and will take into account this Plan.**

The Plan for 2013/14 has been developed through consultation in the Police Ombudsman's Office and has passed through the Office governance arrangements, including the Audit Committee.

The Plan has not been subject to wide-ranging external consultation given the time line for producing the document. The Office has taken into account the results of previous consultation exercises and public opinion as gauged by surveys, media coverage and corporate memory. The three year plan will give us the opportunity to consult more widely.

The Office looks forward to 2013/14 and beyond with renewed optimism, energy and a steely determination to re-establish the reputation of the Office, which has been damaged in the eyes of some. Nothing is more important than establishing, maintaining and ultimately enhancing the confidence of the public and the police in the police complaints system.

The focus of this plan is on delivering our core business – investigations into allegations of criminality and misconduct by the police whether they are contemporary or historical. We must do so to the highest professional and investigative standards. The plan also recognises the vital contribution that all staff make to supporting that core business.

This year will bring key challenges and opportunities for the Office. The test will be how we measure up to both. As a public body, the Office will need to find new and imaginative ways of working as it faces tightening budgets and potentially increasing demand. This brings opportunities to rethink how we work, how we use technology and how we focus our resources.

The next year presents a new opportunity to re-establish the Office as a highly regarded organisation that has the confidence of all key stakeholders with an ambition to achieve excellence in everything it does. This plan is the first stage of that process and provides the focus for the work of the office over the next twelve months. I commend it to you.

**Adrian McAllister**  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
**June 2013**

## 3. Looking Forward to 2013-14

### Our Challenges and Opportunities

The Office faces a number of key challenges and opportunities.

It plays a critical role in building public confidence in the criminal justice system. Financial pressures make the challenge of maintaining the number of staff available to conduct investigations an increasingly demanding one. While we have managed successfully up to this point, future resourcing is a concern for the Office. This means that we have to be innovative and creative in ensuring that the quality of our investigations and overall performance of the Office is not compromised.

- The CJINI report, An Inspection into the Independence of the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland (September 2011), highlighted weaknesses in our processes, particularly in respect of complex historical cases. We have already gone a considerable way to addressing those concerns and will continue to do so. We recognise that high-profile contentious cases are the subject of intense interest and scrutiny. A key challenge for the Office is how we engage with affected parties throughout complex investigations, many of which can take several years to conclude. Ultimately, the rigour with which we conduct investigations will be what provides assurance in such high profile cases.
- The criminal justice landscape is changing rapidly in Northern Ireland. Proposed changes to legislation may impact on how some complaints are investigated, for example

through ‘local resolution’. When introducing any new legislation the Office needs to carefully navigate relationships with key players such as the Department of Justice and the Policing Board. We interact with a large number of stakeholders who may have legitimate, albeit different, expectations of the Office.

- Social media is fundamentally changing how organisations engage with the public. There is significant potential for the Office to use social media to re-define how we engage with the public. As well as social media, there are exciting developments in Information Technology that can significantly enhance our ability to investigate. We will seek opportunities to exploit that technology with the overall objective of improving our efficiency and effectiveness and the service we provide.

Finally, a number of high profile events are scheduled for 2013-2014, including the G8 summit that will impact significantly on police operations. Some have the potential to trigger additional complaints to the Office and we need to plan and be well placed to deal with those issues.

Managing those challenges and opportunities will require fortitude and resilience coupled with an unstinting determination to succeed. We have opportunities to prove how effective we can be in managing competing demands and change whilst continuing to deliver high performance across the Office.

## 4. Our Priorities

The hallmark of our work is the quality of our investigation process. The rigour with which we conduct investigations of complaints and allegations is ultimately the test of whether people have confidence in the work of the Office.

Our overall priority for the year is to strengthen our investigation process for historical, complex and current cases. We are also conscious that, as a publicly-funded body with an explicit goal of building public confidence, we need to be able to demonstrate the impact of our work. We have therefore identified three key priorities for 2013-2014, as illustrated below.



To achieve these priorities we also need to make changes in our organisational structure and capability. Our focus is to build an Office with the structure and resourcing needed to complete thorough, rigorous investigations.

## 4. Our Priorities

### Priority 1: To achieve excellence in the management of 'current' investigations, and in doing so, ensure optimum use of available resources.

#### What we want to achieve

We will develop investigation processes that ensure a proportionate and professional response at each stage of a complaint.

The Office receives over 3,000 complaints annually (3,265 in 2012/2013). We will further align resources according to the seriousness of each complaint, while ensuring that service standards are maintained.

#### How we will achieve it

We will:

- Identify opportunities to deal with less serious complaints in a more efficient way.
- Develop clear customer service standards that meet the needs of all service users. We will develop a clear commitment to customer standards and increasingly deliver against those standards.
- Review resource allocation to ensure that we are able to fully exploit the potential of our investigative staff.
- Develop more efficient reporting mechanisms to ensure that all statutory reports and public statements relating to current investigations are produced in a timely manner.

This re-designed approach will make our processes simpler and more transparent. This is key to inspiring the confidence of all service users in the work of the Office.

#### Our measures of success

We will identify and baseline for future performance a 'work in progress' target.

We will complete a review of investigative processes and resources.

We will streamline the statutory reporting process and aim to produce at least six public statements by the end of the year.

We will maintain high levels of public confidence in the impartiality of the Office.

We will increase the level of complainant satisfaction with the service provided by the Office.

## 4. Our Priorities

### Priority 2: Achieve excellence in the investigation of historical cases.

#### What we want to achieve

We will deliver investigative excellence in historical investigations. We will do so through independent, professional and timely investigations which ensure that victims and families are at the heart of the investigation. Our reports will be available to public scrutiny.

At the beginning of 2013/14, the Police Ombudsman has a caseload of over 150 'historical cases'. Historical cases are defined as public complaints and referrals from the Chief Constable, including the Historical Enquiries Team, concerning the conduct of police officers in relation to events attributable to what are often referred to as "The Troubles", between 1968 and the Good Friday Agreement in 1998.

There has been some valid challenge to our process for investigating historical cases. Significant progress has been made in addressing those concerns, including a positive endorsement by CJINI/HMIC. We remain committed to continuous improvement in our service.

#### How we will achieve it

We will:

- Ensure we have staff with the skills and experience necessary to conduct effective investigations into complex historical cases. We will ensure that none of these people performed roles with the RUC or military in Northern Ireland during 'the Troubles'.
- Maintain regular contact with victims, their families or other representatives at agreed intervals.
- Make a clear commitment on the number of investigations we will complete each year.
- Comply with our processes for case progression, including our prioritisation policy, which informs the sequence in which cases enter the investigative process.
- Ensure historical investigations are subject to intrusive quality assurance processes.
- Deliver investigations that comply with recognised best practice.
- Report on investigations through the release of public statements by the Police Ombudsman, thereby delivering on our commitment to make investigations available to public scrutiny.

All of these measures are designed to strengthen how we conduct investigations.

## 4. Our Priorities

### Our measures of success

1. Deliver an effective communications strategy to families at all stages of historical investigations, including:
  - a) Quality initial contact.
  - b) Quality communication throughout initial case progression processes.
  - c) Quality communication during the course of investigations.
  - d) Quality communication during delivery of outcomes.

**The data collected will form a 'baseline' during 2013/14 in order to measure performance going forward.**

2. Deliver high quality and thorough historical investigations by ensuring compliance with all Quality Assurance processes.
3. Complete at least 75% of investigations within twelve months of commencement of enquiries under the Police Ombudsman's new strategic plan for historical investigations.
4. Publish public statements detailing the findings of at least eight historical investigations.

## 4. Our Priorities

### Priority 3: Provide information that enhances confidence in the Office and the police complaints system.

#### What we want to achieve

The Office will provide a range of information to the general public, police and those with a specific interest in our work, with the aim of providing assurance that they can have confidence in the work of the Office and the police complaints system.

We will engage with the community in a way that provides assurance that the service we provide meets the requirements of an independent police complaint system.

#### How will we achieve it?

We will:

- Demonstrate the independence, impartiality and professionalism of the Office and the police complaints system by reporting publicly on the outcomes of significant investigations into current and historical policing.
- Demonstrate the importance and relevance of the police complaints system by providing information about how it informs and enhances contemporary policing.
- Demonstrate the impact of the police complaints system by providing information about the recommendations we make to the development of contemporary policing.

- Ensure that key interest groups have access to the information they need to be properly informed about the police complaints system, and to be able to provide their views on the effectiveness of the service provided.
- We will provide information about the work of the Office and trends, patterns and outcomes of complaints against police.
- We will deliver a website better suited to meet the needs of the public.

#### Our measures of success

We will aim to improve confidence in the police complaints system.

We will report publicly on the findings of significant investigations into 'current' and 'historical' policing matters and publish at least 14 public reports on our work.

We will measure young persons' awareness of and access to the police complaints system.

# 5. Developing our Organisational Capability

## What we want to achieve

We will continue to build the capability of the Office to deliver our key business priorities.

## How we will achieve it

We have identified the following key enablers for achieving our business priorities:

- people and other resources
- investigation processes
- information technology

### 1. People and other resources:

Our key requirement is to develop a resource allocation model that will ensure that we have the right people in the right place. We will also:

- Review our system of staff development and performance management to ensure that staff are enabled to be as effective as possible in their performance;
- Review how we engage internally with our staff so that we can ensure that they are effective in the delivery of the statutory functions of the Office. We will introduce a robust and consistently applied internal communications strategy;
- Critically assess the level of funding available and ensure that business processes are adapted where necessary to work within constrained resources; and
- Focus on training ensuring it is concentrated on our business priorities. We will ensure a high level of attendance at training events.

### 2. Our core investigation process:

Strengthening our investigation process is a central business priority and will be addressed through the

three business priorities detailed in section 4. The Office has, within this plan, reviewed its measures of performance and has identified a reduced number of Key Performance Indicators upon which to concentrate. These are directly linked to business priorities.

### 3. Information Technology:

Our priority is to have an information and technology architecture which supports our core function of investigation. We will develop business cases for capital investment in our IT infrastructure in respect of our key requirements. This will include a range of delivery options to achieve best value. We will also distinguish between our short-term 2013/14 priorities and our longer-term strategic investment needs.

## Our measure of success

We will ensure that expenditure does not exceed the available budget and that at least 98% of the available budget for the financial year is spent by the Office in the performance of its statutory duties.

We will improve levels of staff satisfaction with communication within the Office.

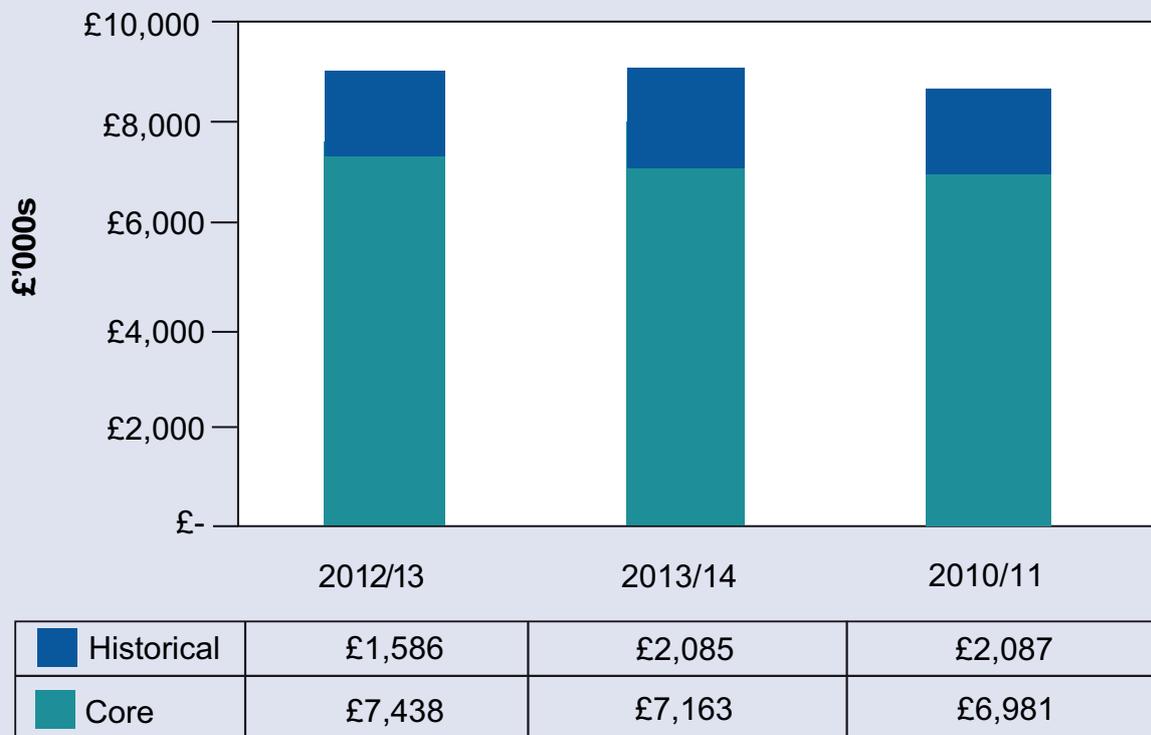
We will develop and introduce a revised performance management system with a focus on competency related performance and contribution towards organisational goals.

We will develop business cases in support of remote working and internet to desk top and submit to the Department of Justice.

We will maintain staff absence at less than 4%.

## 6. Resources

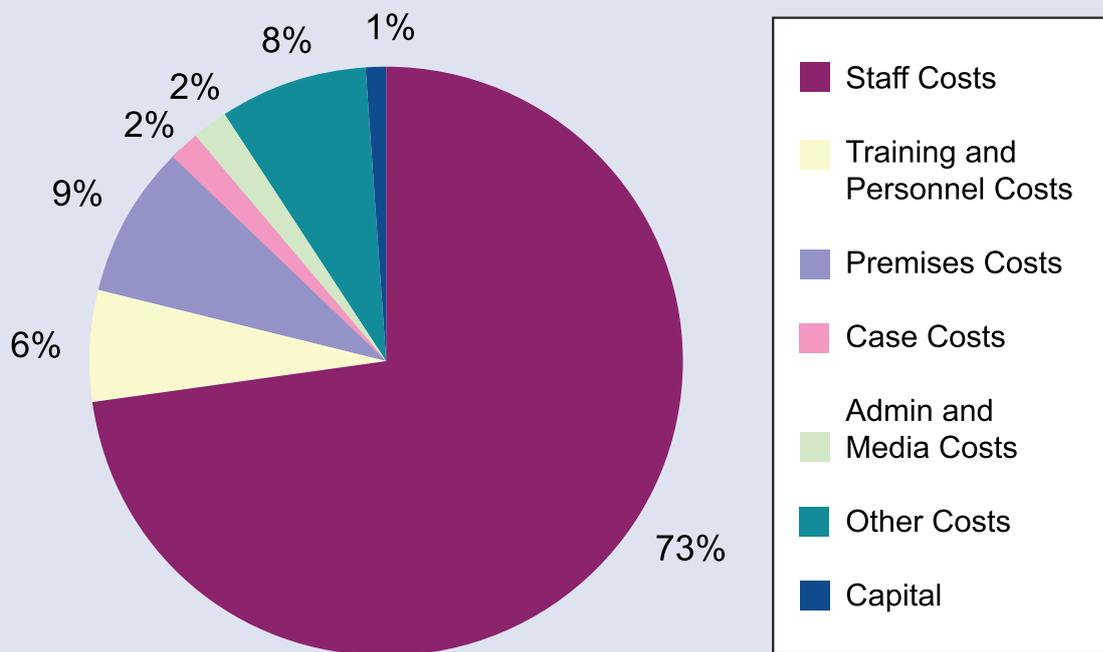
The Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland, along with other publicly-funded bodies, continues to face significant reductions in its available budgets across the four-year Comprehensive Spending Review Period from 2011/12 to 2014/15. The financial year 2013/14 represents the third year of this cycle and demonstrates an ongoing reduction in resources for the core work of the Office, alongside increases to resources dedicated to the investigation of historical matters.



Financial Year

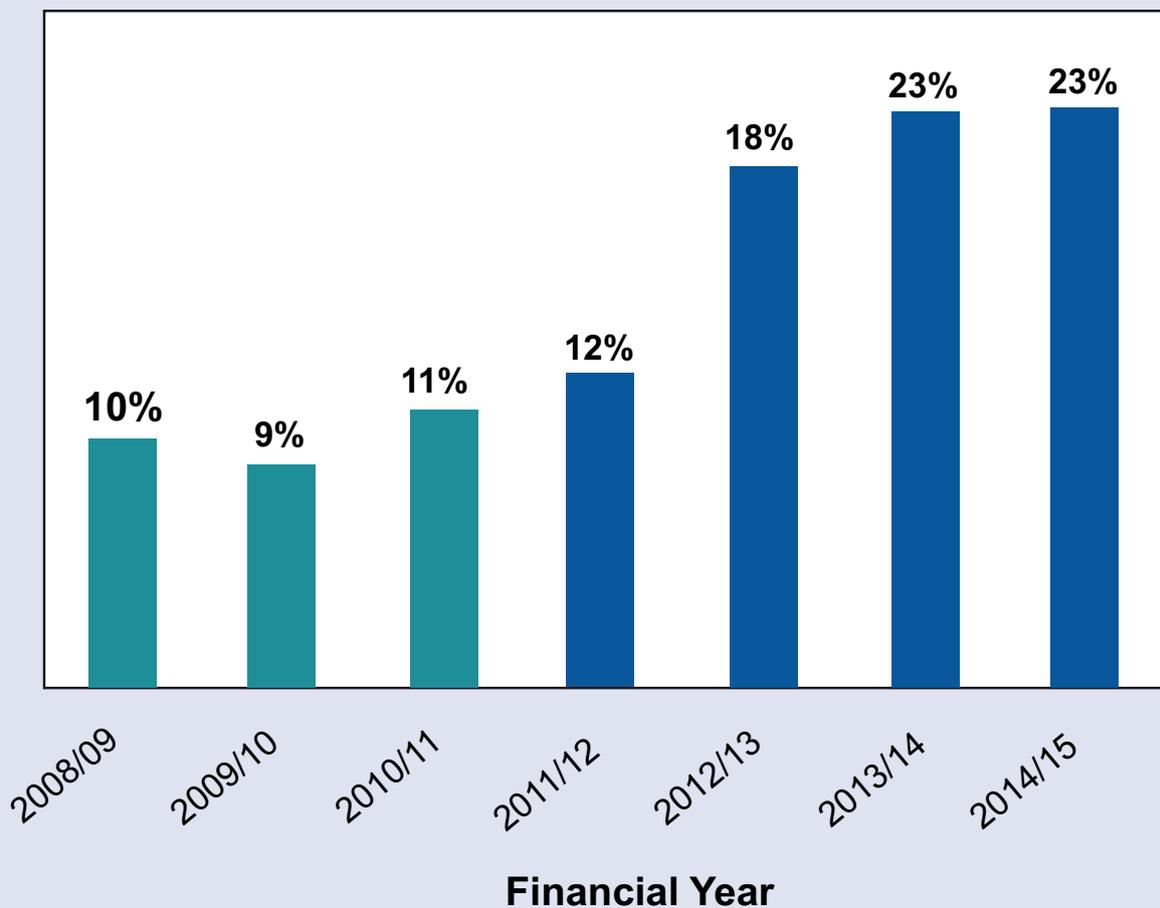
## 6. Resources

The budget allocation for 2013/14 is detailed below over the categories of expenditure that will be incurred.



## 6. Resources

The Office has for some time been seeking additional resources to be able to dedicate to the investigation of historical matters. In March 2012, the Office received approval of its business case for enlarging the team dedicated to the investigation of historical matters. This increased resource for historical work represents a significant increase in the proportion of resources in the Office which are dedicated to this work. The Office had, prior to the approval of the business case, dedicated between 9% and 12% of its available resources to the investigation of these matters (2008/09 to 2011/12). During 2012/13 the Office established the new historical team, with the result that as we move forward some 23% of the resources of the Office will be dedicated to this work.





**Additional copies of this and other publications are available from:**

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

**Tel:** 028 9082 8600

**Fax:** 028 9082 8659

**Minicom:** 028 9082 8759

**Witness Appeal Line:** 0800 0327 880

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

These publications 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)



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