

LEICESTERSHIRE POLICE AUTHORITY



Meeting **PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

Date **3 SEPTEMBER 2009 AT 2.00 P.M.**

Report of **CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

Subject **QUALITY OF SERVICE SURVEY**

Purpose

1. To inform Members of the Quality of Service Survey Responses received in the twelve months to the end of July 2009.

Background

2. By minute 9/05 (20 January 2005) this Committee approved a new regime to try to capture customer views. When Professional Standards Department send our their final letter on a complaint file they also enclose a letter and questionnaire from the Chief Executive (shown in Appendix 1) together with a pre-paid reply envelope. The responses arrive in the Police Authority office and are compiled from time to time.
3. It is important that the public have confidence in the way complaints against the police are handled. This provides one mechanism for judging the satisfaction levels of those in the complaints system.

Commentary

4. Fifty-seven responses were made in the twelve months to the end of July 2008 and a further ninety-five in the twelve months to the end of July 2009. A summary of those responses are found at Appendix 2.
5. The key questions to which Members will have particular regard are question 2 (complaint taken seriously), question 7 (complaint investigated thoroughly) and question 10 (overall satisfaction with outcome).
6. Table 2 in Appendix 2 shows those completely, very or quite satisfied that their complaint was taken seriously equated to 65% in 2007/08 and 60% in 2008/09. Given the relative sample sizes there is no evidence that the level has changed over this period.

7. Table 7 sheds light on satisfaction that the complaints are investigated thoroughly equated to 41% in 2007/08 and 51% in 2008/09. Given the relative sample sizes there is any no evidence that the level has changed over this period.
8. Table 10 provides overall satisfaction with the outcome. This equated to 41% in 2007/08 and 45% in 2008/09. Once again there is any no statistical evidence that the level has changed over this period.

Reasons for Responses

9. Respondents were asked for the reasons why they have answered in the way that they did. Table 11 shows these comments grouped into themes.
10. It is very notable that only a very small proportion (22% last year and 16% this year) have given reasons that actually relate to the way that the complaint was handled. It is worth noting that included in this 16% for 2008/09 are persons who are making positive comments and suggestions, these are the only people we can be certain have understand that the survey relates to the complaints process.
11. However, a further proportion (12% in 2007/08 and 19% in 2008/09) gave positive feedback and it can be assumed that they understood the nature of the survey since they must have harboured a degree of dissatisfaction with the initial handling of the aspect in order to make a complaint in the first place.
12. The reasons given by the remaining respondents do not relate to the complaints process itself. The majority refer to the original service provided (which is what they complained about) but others disagreed with the decision made but have made no comment on the process itself and a few seemed unaware that the process had concluded.
13. In summary it appears that only around a third of respondents have completed the survey in the manner in which it was intended, that is getting respondents to judge the quality of service they received whilst their complaint was being dealt with.

Issues

14. Where persons indicated that they were unaware that the process had been completed there may be three separate issues. Firstly it could be a communication issue where they do not recall having been told.
15. Alternatively it would appear that there are some people who will never see an issue as being "closed" until they get the resolution that they wanted in the first place.
16. However, the actual comments made indicate that many of these people do not consider that a matter is closed when they are told that something specific will happen (e.g. that an Officer will have to attend a certain training course). These people only consider it closed when they have had confirmation that this has actually taken place.

17. If the intention is to continue with a survey in this form, consideration could be given to delaying the invitations to complete the survey until after people have had notification that any actions that have been agreed as necessary have actually taken place and the complainant notified.
18. With potentially two thirds of respondents completing the survey based on their overall dealings with the police rather than the complaints handling process the current surveying methodology is not an efficient means of eliciting views on this subject.
19. There are several alternatives, possible options might include :
 - A) Introduce a similar process to the Quality of Service call backs that are made to the victims of crime. By making direct contact the interviewer could steer the process into the desired subject area and avoid the issues currently observed. This would give an additional workload to the Line Managers but the extent of this workload would need to be quantified.
 - B) Amend the survey to make it clearer opinions are being sought on the complaints process not the original investigation. This could be done by adding specific questions about the investigation but this would increase the length of the survey which could impact on the response rate.
 - C) Amend the letter that accompanies the survey to try and make it clearer what is being asked. This may not have much impact as the current letter seems pretty clear as it is.

Recommendation

20. Members are recommended to comment on the responses and consider the changes discussed.

Implications

Financial: none. Legal: none. Diversity: none. Risk Management: none.

Background Papers

None.

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