

Annual Report on  
Police Officer Satisfaction  
with services provided by the  
Police Ombudsman's Office in  
Northern Ireland  
2016/17

# Contents

	Page
1. Main Findings	3
2. Introduction	4
3. Results	
Perception of Ombudsman staff	5
Level of satisfaction with aspects of the complaints process	6
Independence, Satisfaction and Accountability	7
4. Appendix 1: Results tables	8
5. Appendix 2: Notes to readers	10

## Main Findings of 2016/17:

- The majority of police officers had positive views of Ombudsman staff:
  - 89% felt they were treated with respect,
  - 80% felt they were treated fairly,
  - 89% felt staff were easy to understand, and
  - 76% thought staff were knowledgeable.
- Officers were more satisfied with the explanation of the process, the manner in which they were treated and the clarity of the correspondence than for other aspects of the complaints process.
- Just over three quarters of officers surveyed (76%) felt their complaint was dealt with independently.
- Almost half of officers (49%) stated that they were satisfied with how the Office handled their complaint.
- Just under three fifths of officers (57%) felt that the police complaints system makes the police more accountable.

## Introduction

This is an Official Statistics publication. Official Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. They undergo regular validation checks to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political interference.

The Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland (the Office) was set up by the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 1998 in order to provide an independent system for investigating complaints against the police in Northern Ireland. The Police Ombudsman is committed to providing an independent and impartial investigation process of the highest quality, which is timely and secures the confidence of both the public and police.

This report presents the findings from the Police Officer Satisfaction Survey. It includes information collected from officers who were subject of an investigation which was subsequently closed during 2016/17 and compares the findings to results obtained for the previous two years<sup>1</sup>.

A total of 1,091 officers were emailed a questionnaire and 478 questionnaires were returned. This represents a response rate of 44%.

Information from this survey is used by the Office to measure compliance against three key performance indicators which deal with developing and implementing the standards for the services we provide.

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<sup>1</sup> This is the third year that the police officer satisfaction survey was carried out electronically; therefore comparisons can only be made with the previous two years.

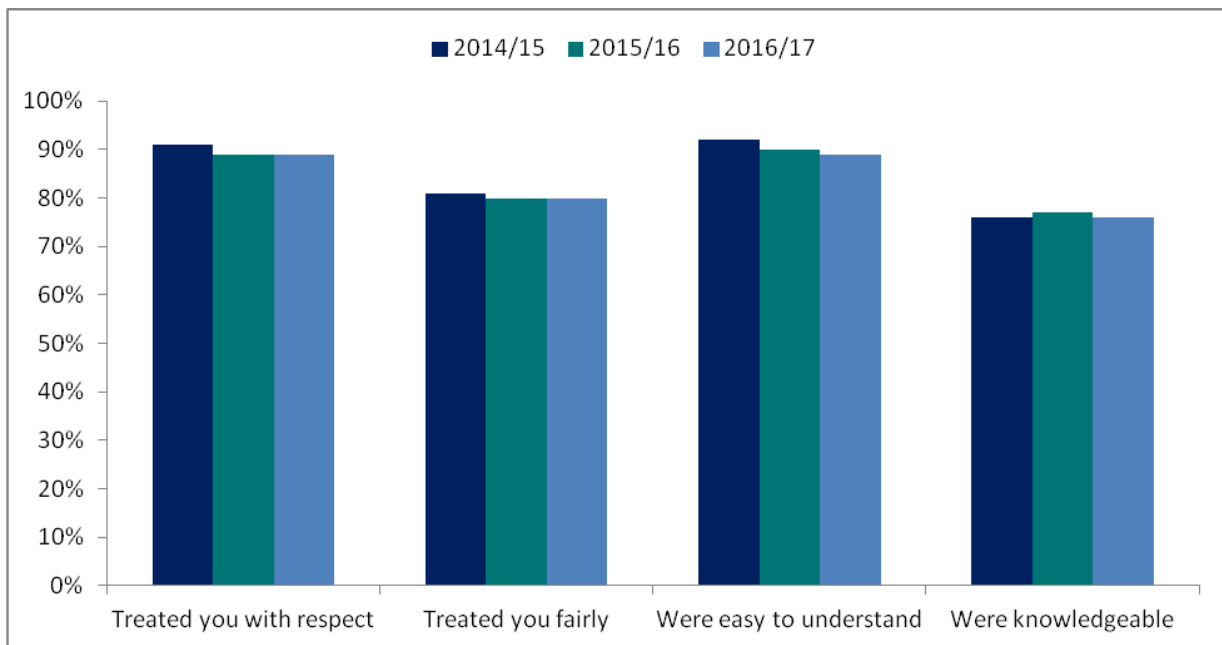
# Results

## Perception of Ombudsman staff

Police officers were asked if they spoke to a member of staff and, if they had, how staff had appeared to them in relation to a number of characteristics. In 2016/17, 87% of respondents said that they had spoken to a member of staff and of these:

- 89% felt they were treated with respect,
- 80% felt they were treated fairly,
- 89% felt staff were easy to understand and
- 76% felt staff were knowledgeable (Figure 1, Tables 1 – 4).

**Figure 1: Police officer perception of Ombudsman staff, 2014/15 - 2016/17**



Results show that the views of police officers, with respect to Ombudsman staff, have remained similar over the last three years.

**Target 1**

The Office aims to:

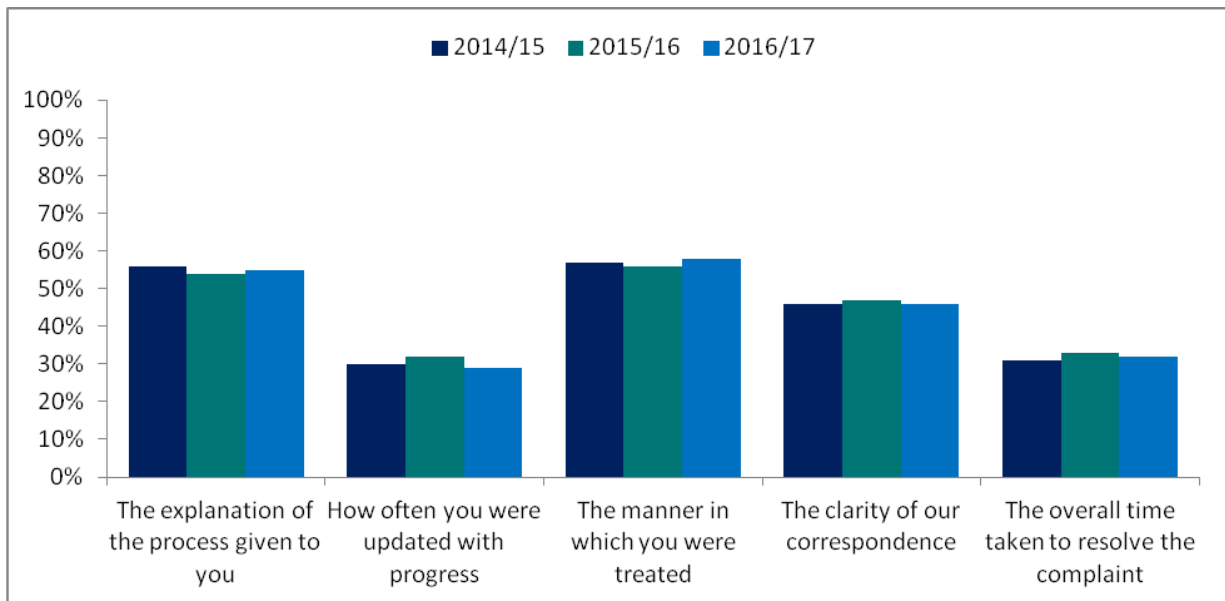
***‘maintain a level of at least 70% of police officers subject of investigation to feel that they have been dealt with fairly by the Office’.***

In 2016/17, the Office exceeded this target with 80% of officers feeling they were dealt with fairly.

## Level of satisfaction with aspects of the complaints process

In 2016/17, a larger proportion of officers were satisfied with the explanation of the process, the manner in which they were treated and the clarity of the correspondence than with the frequency of progress updates and the overall time taken to resolve the complaint (Figure 2, Tables 5 – 9).

**Figure 2: Officer satisfaction with aspects of the complaints process, 2014/15 - 2016/17**



These findings are similar to those reported during the previous two years for all aspects of the complaints process.

Results also show that, in each of the last three years, a larger proportion of officers were dissatisfied than were satisfied with the frequency of updates and the overall time taken to resolve the complaint.

**Target 2**

The Office aims to:

***'maintain at least 70% of police officers to be satisfied with the time taken to resolve complaints'.***

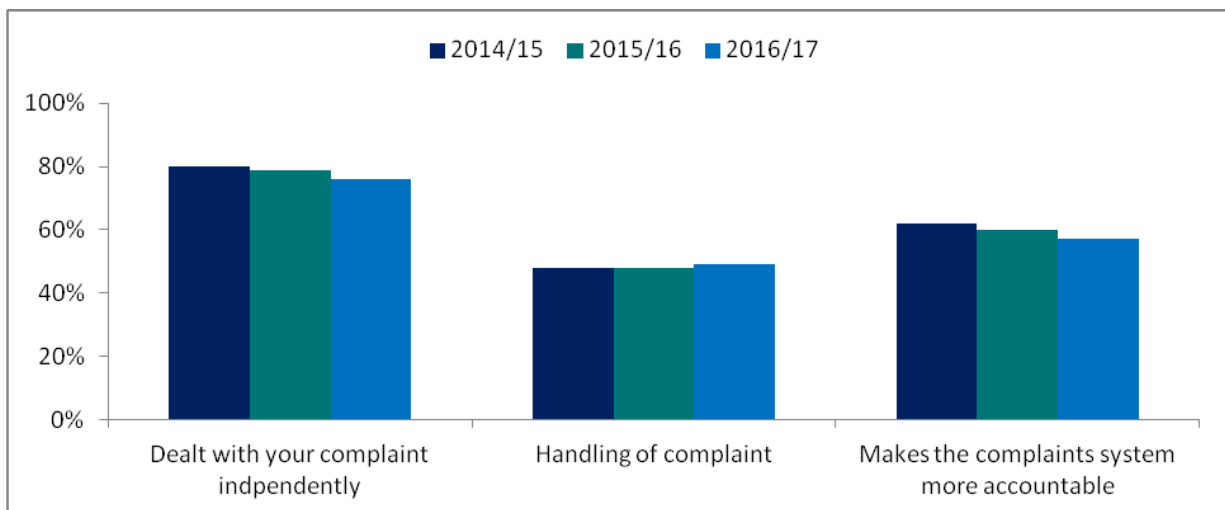
In 2016/17 the Office failed to meet this target with 32% of officers being satisfied with the time taken to resolve complaints.

## Independence, Satisfaction and Accountability

In 2016/17:

- Just over three quarters of officers (76%) felt that the Police Ombudsman's Office dealt with their complaint independently.
- Almost half of the officers (49%) who responded to the survey were satisfied with how the Office handled the complaint. A further 27% of officers were dissatisfied and 25% of officers were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.
- Almost three fifths of officers (57%) felt that the police complaints system makes the police more accountable (Figure 3, Tables 10 – 12).

**Figure 3: Deals with complaints independently, satisfied with handling of complaint and makes police more accountable, 2014/15 - 2016/17**



With regards to independence, overall satisfaction and accountability, the views of police officers have remained similar to the previous two years.

### Target 3

The Office aims to:

***'maintain a level of at least 50% of police officers to be satisfied with how the complaint was handled'.***

In 2016/17, the Office failed to meet this target with 49% of officers being satisfied with how their complaint was handled.

## Appendix 1: Results

### Police officer perception of Ombudsman staff (Tables 1 – 4)

**Table 1: Were you treated with respect, 2014/15 - 2016/17?**

Treated with respect	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Yes	91%	89%	89%
No	9%	11%	11%

**Table 2: Were you treated fairly, 2014/15 - 2016/17?**

Treated fairly	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Yes	81%	80%	80%
No	19%	20%	20%

**Table 3: Were staff easy to understand, 2014/15 - 2016/17?**

Easy to understand	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Yes	92%	90%	89%
No	8%	10%	11%

**Table 4: Were staff knowledgeable, 2014/15 - 2016/17?**

Knowledgeable	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Yes	76%	77%	76%
No	24%	23%	24%

### Police officer satisfaction/dissatisfaction with aspects of the complaints process (Tables 5 – 9)

**Table 5: Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction with explanation of the process, 2014/15 - 2016/17.**

Explanation of the process	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Satisfied	56%	54%	55%
Dissatisfied	15%	16%	16%
Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied	29%	29%	29%

**Table 6: Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction with frequency of updates, 2014/15 - 2016/17.**

Frequency of updates	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Satisfied	30%	32%	29%
Dissatisfied	35%	34%	38%
Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied	36%	34%	33%

**Table 7: Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction with manner of treatment, 2014/15 - 2016/17.**

Manner of treatment	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Satisfied	57%	56%	58%
Dissatisfied	16%	18%	19%
Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied	27%	26%	24%



**Table 8: Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction with clarity of correspondence, 2014/15 - 2016/17.**

Clarity of correspondence	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Satisfied	46%	47%	46%
Dissatisfied	23%	24%	24%
Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied	31%	30%	31%

**Table 9: Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction with time taken to resolve the complaint, 2014/15 - 2016/17.**

Time taken to resolve complaint	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Satisfied	31%	33%	32%
Dissatisfied	39%	41%	42%
Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied	30%	27%	26%

**Table 10: Did we deal with the complaint independently, 2014/15 - 2016/17?**

Dealt with your complaint independently	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Yes	80%	79%	76%
No	20%	21%	24%

**Table 11: Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction with how the Office handled the complaint, 2014/15 - 2016/17.**

Handling of complaint	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Satisfied	48%	48%	49%
Dissatisfied	25%	26%	27%
Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied	27%	26%	25%

**Table 12: Do you feel the police complaints system makes police more accountable, 2014/15 - 2016/17?**

Makes the complaints system more accountable	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Yes	62%	60%	57%
No	38%	40%	43%

## Appendix 2: Notes to readers

### The survey:

In 2014/15, the Office began looking at ways of defining the service it intended to deliver to police officers and how best to measure their attitudes to the service received. It was decided that a more suitable way of measuring the attitudes of police officers, with respect to the service they received from the Office, was to electronically survey those officers who had been the subject of an investigation which was subsequently closed during that reporting year<sup>2</sup>.

The identity of the officers surveyed at the end of 2016/17 was extracted from the Office's Case handling System (CHS). Although some officers had more than one complaint closed during the year, they were asked to complete the survey only once.

This is the third year that the survey has been carried out in this way. Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) software was used to carry out the survey and the Statistics Branch within the PSNI facilitated this on our behalf.

### Data use:

The data collected are used by the Office to monitor and evaluate the service provided to those police officers who have been subject to a complaint and identify any issues that arise in a timely manner. This allows the Office to fulfil its statutory duty to secure the confidence of the police in the complaints handling process.

The data are also used by this Office to comply with the key performance indicators detailed in the report which deal with developing and implementing the standards for the service the Office provides.

### Future:

Due to the recommendations made in an Audit Report, the Likert scale used in the survey will change from the current three responses to five responses. Also the question regarding overall satisfaction will no longer be included.

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<sup>2</sup> Prior to 2014/15, police officers who had been the subject of an investigation received a paper survey from the Office.



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

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These publications and other information about the work of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland are also available on the Internet at:  
Website: <http://www.policeombudsman.org>