

**DECISION NO: PCCG-2015-019**

**OFFICE OF POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER**

**LEAD CHIEF OFFICER: Chief Executive**

**TITLE: Proposal for Complaints Triage System**

**DATE: 24<sup>th</sup> March 2015**

**TIMING: Routine**

**PURPOSE: For decision**


<b>1.</b>	<p><b><u>RECOMMENDATION</u></b></p> <p>That the Commissioner and Chief Constable approve the development of a new system to deal with the initial handling of complaints against police and the policing service.</p>
<b>2.</b>	<p><b><u>INTRODUCTION &amp; BACKGROUND</u></b></p> <p>Two key elements of the Police and Crime Plan are increasing public confidence and ensuring delivery of the best quality of service available. It is important that any expressions of dissatisfaction or complaints are captured and dealt with appropriately in order to ensure public confidence in the system. We can also use feedback from the public as a valuable way of transforming the organisation for the better through learning opportunities.</p> <p>Following an Independent Review of the Police Complaints system in 2014, the Home Secretary has recently consulted on proposed changes. It has been agreed that it is important to us all that the complaints process encourages public confidence and demonstrates independence and openness. Another key factor is the timeliness of responses.</p> <p>There has been an increase in complaints of dissatisfaction with the service received since the establishment of the PCC's office and we currently work closely with the Professional Standards Department and the Chief Officers' Executive Support Team in order to ensure complaints and quality of service issues are dealt with appropriately. In order to further improve this system we would like to resolve issues of dissatisfaction quickly and effectively before they become formal complaints as classified by the IPCC Statutory Guidance 2013 and the Police Reform Act 2002. The proposal to address all of these issues is the introduction of a triage system to undertake the initial handling of complaints and lower level service quality issues.</p>

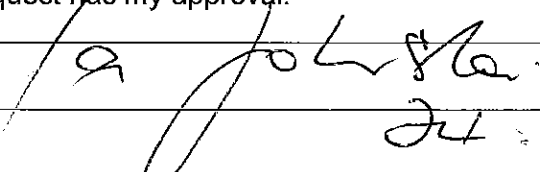
3.	<p><b><u>ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION</u></b></p> <p>Initial discussions have taken place with PSD to estimate the volume of work that would be undertaken by the triage team. The OPCC and PSD would work together to set up a triage team which would require two members of staff. The triage team would deal with and monitor all expressions of dissatisfaction, complaints and compliments made by the public relating to police services. The triage team would be the first point of contact for all issues apart from those that are raised directly with publicly facing officers and staff.</p> <p>On receipt of a concern, the team would consider how best to deal with the matter. Where appropriate, concerns would be referred to the appropriate officer for early service recovery. The team would expedite referrals of formal complaints to PSD or the OPCC as appropriate.</p>
4.	<p><b><u>NEXT STEPS</u></b></p> <p>The Federation, Unison and the IPCC will be consulted and will be asked to engage with the further development of the proposal.</p> <p>It will be necessary for the team to forge strong links with the Standards Inspectors in each local policing area as well as supervisors at all levels and within all departments across the force in order for this system to succeed.</p> <p>Internal and external communications strategies will be required to explain the system.</p> <p>Procedures and process mapping will need to be developed and agreed by both the OPCC and force. The best system for capturing the lower level issues electronically will also need to be agreed.</p> <p>Following development of the team, a baseline level of satisfaction will be determined in order to allow for benchmarking in future. Surveys could be used to measure the effectiveness of the process.</p> <p>As the single point of contact, the team could produce a clear picture of feedback both positive and negative.</p> <p>One long term goal would be to introduce a process of mediation which would aim to 'put things right' rather than entering into a formal drawn out process.</p>
5.	<p><b><u>FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS</u></b></p> <p>There will be a cost associated with the implementation of this system. However, it is hoped that that will be partly offset by the proposed changes set out by Staying Ahead 8 (the force's change management programme). The system intends to reduce pressure on the PSD.</p>

6.	<p><b><u>PERSONNEL CONSIDERATIONS</u></b></p> <p>Initially, internal recruitment will be carried out to appoint two members of staff who will work within the triage system which would sit within the OPCC under the Head of Corporate Governance. This level of staffing would be reviewed periodically. Job descriptions will need to be developed and evaluated.</p>
7.	<p><b><u>LEGAL IMPLICATIONS</u></b></p> <p>It will be essential to ensure that the remit of the system remains within the parameters of relevant legislation. The Home Secretary wrote to PCCs on 12<sup>th</sup> March to explain that the Government intends to legislate on increasing PCC involvement in complaints in the next Parliament.</p>
8.	<p><b><u>EQUALITIES AND HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS</u></b></p> <p>This project/proposal has been considered against the general duty to promote equality, as stipulated under the Strategic Equality Plan and has been assessed not to discriminate against any particular group.</p> <p>Consideration has been given to requirements of the Articles contained in the European Convention on Human Rights and the Human Rights Act 1998 in preparing this report.</p>
9.	<p><b><u>RISK</u></b></p> <p>There is a risk that the system would appear to remove responsibility from those who deal with complaints in the first instance however this would be mitigated by ensuring on-going training of officers and staff to deal with issues at first contact wherever possible.</p>
10.	<p><b><u>PUBLIC INTEREST</u></b></p> <p>The contents of this report can be made public.</p>
11.	<p><b><u>CONTACT OFFICER</u></b></p> <p>Siân Curley, Head of Corporate Governance, OPCC.</p>
12.	<p><b><u>ANNEXES</u></b></p> <p>N/A</p>

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Consultation:	Tick to confirm (if applicable)
<b>Financial</b> The Chief Finance Officer has been consulted on this proposal.	✓
<b>OPCC (insert name)</b> The Head of Corporate Governance has reviewed the request and is satisfied that it is correct and consistent with the PCC's plans and priorities.	✓
<b>Legal</b> The legal team have been consulted on this proposal.	N/A
<b>Equalities</b> The Equalities Officer has been consulted on this proposal.	N/A

<b>Chief Executive/ Deputy Chief Executive:</b>  I have been consulted about the proposal and can confirm that financial, legal, equalities etc... advice has been taken into account in the preparation of this report.  I am satisfied that this is an appropriate report to be submitted to the Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent.
<b>Signature:</b>  
<b>Date: 19/03/15</b>

<b>Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent</b>  I confirm that I have considered whether or not I have any personal or prejudicial interest in this matter and take the proposed decision in compliance with the Code of Conduct.  The above request has my approval.
<b>Signature:</b> 
<b>Date:</b> 24.3.15