

14th January 2015 Statement to the Chair of the Police and Crime Panel

Dear Chair of the Police and Crime Panel

According to complaint statistics published quarterly on the IPCC website, Lancashire Constabulary only investigated 7% of allegations made by the public in the year ending March 2014. This was against a national average of 52% across all 43 forces. It was the lowest across all 43 forces and the only one in single figures. Lancashire's figure for handling allegations by local resolution was 73%, the national average was 33%. I have attached a copy of the relevant page.

The average of the "Most Similar Forces" to which Lancashire belongs was 40% investigated, 39% local resolution. This figure is the average of 7 other forces and Lancashire.

I found these figures interesting, not least because I don't think the decision making process taken when deciding how to handle a complaint I had submitted, complied with the IPCC mandatory threshold test. I did email the Professional Standards in October and asked if the process they had described to me complied with the IPCC but they didn't respond.

According to the IPCC Statutory Guidance 2013, "local resolution cannot be used for complaints that reach a certain threshold of seriousness. Those complaints must be dealt with by a formal local investigation, which may result in disciplinary or criminal sanctions, and carry a right of appeal to the IPCC if the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome."

It also says "It is important that appropriate authorities understand which complaints can be dealt with by local resolution and which require investigation." It goes on to state the threshold test which must be applied when deciding whether to investigate a complaint or handle the matter under local resolution.

Due to my concerns about the figures above and because of some serious concerns I have regarding my own experience of the complaints procedure to date, I visited the PCC website. I found the PCC has a "legal duty to monitor all complaints" against the police. He also has a duty to ensure the Constabulary is complying with statutory requirements.

The Commissioner's Scrutiny Principles state,

" The Commissioner and his team will meet quarterly with the Chief Constable to conduct formal scrutiny of Constabulary activity and performance. The scrutiny will be carried out in a spirit of challenge and support. This will be known as the Strategic Scrutiny Meeting."

" The Commissioner will report publicly on the outcomes of the performance scrutiny process. This will include information on areas where the Constabulary is performing well and areas identified for improvement."

These are clearly important meetings and I wanted to see if the PCC had raised the low investigation figures with the Chief Constable in 2014. I also wanted to see if he was monitoring the complaints submitted by victims of crime. Victims of crime are a top priority for the Commissioner having signed the Five Promises to Victims and Witnesses' in March 2013. In his Police and Crime Plan he states "[I will] identify and address the causes of dissatisfaction and complaint with services

received by victims” This was of interest to me as I am a victim of crime and my complaint was related to a police visit to my house relating to my case.

I checked the Scrutiny minutes and was disappointed to find that the last available minutes were for June 2013. I have attached a copy of the webpage. Minutes are in a column titled ‘Reports’ and also up until Sept 2013 are available under Agenda (September’s Agenda also have June’s minutes). Subsequent Agenda’s have no minutes attached at all.

The ‘Agenda’ Column shows that only 1 Scrutiny Meeting took place in 2014 instead of 4.

The ‘Documents’ column contains the reports from the Chief Constable to the PCC. These are the only documents that are up to date, the last one being 12th January 2015. Amongst other things they provide information to the PCC about complaints. The most recent one from the Chief Constable shows that complaints have risen 34% in the last year in Lancashire and there has been an increase in the use of local resolution, 76% for the last year and a decrease in investigations at 5%. It does not show any information relating to complainants who are victims of crime.

There are also no reports available from the Commissioner as mentioned in the Scrutiny Principles and the last Annual Report available is for Nov 2012/March 2013.

So whilst I can find information about the Commissioner’s favourite holiday destination, “ski-ing in the alps” and his favourite film, “the Godfather part 2” , I cannot find information that he is doing what he has said he will do and is paid to do.

Ironically in the last available minutes of the Scrutiny Meeting dated 20th June 2013 it states

“there was a need to make more information publically available. It was noted that, from January, 2014, the OPCC would be based at County Hall, Preston, and, from that date, Strategic Scrutiny Meetings could be webcast to a wider audience. It was suggested that a small Working Group be established, along the lines of the former Planning Working Group, with Bev Wood and Leah Watson taking the lead on the scrutiny process for the next Strategic Scrutiny Meeting, due to be held on the 19th September, 2013.

Action: Bev Wood and Leah Watson to consider the establishment of a Working Group, looking at the scrutiny process; and the development of a 12 month 'Scrutiny Plan' ”

For the avoidance of doubt this is not a complaint. It is an expression of disappointment in the PCC . He is well paid and well funded and I simply don’t think this is good enough.

I contacted the PCC on 8th January via the online contact form requesting that the Strategic Scrutiny Meeting Minutes are made available to the public on his website. I have also asked questions relating to what monitoring has been taking place in relation to complaints, victim of crime complainants and the low number of investigations compared to the other 42 forces.

I am sorry I am unable to attend. Thank you for considering my statement in my absence.

Mrs Carol Lingard
(Lancaster Resident)