



**Subject: POLICE - COMPLAINTS ABOUT THE POLICE**  
**Date: 29 JULY 2013**  
**Author: LOCAL COMMANDER, FORTH VALLEY DIVISION**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Police Scotland aims to deliver high quality policing services to the communities it serves across Scotland. It is accepted that on occasion things will go wrong and mistakes will be made. Members of the public need to have confidence that when they wish to raise a concern or make a complaint about either the quality of the policing service provided or about the conduct of an individual, then their concerns will be listened to and appropriate action taken.
- 1.2 Public feedback through the complaints process helps to ensure that lessons are learned and action is taken to deal with inappropriate behaviour or flawed procedures. The complaints process can also afford an opportunity to explain actions which were lawful and appropriate to the situation and to clarify a complainer's understanding of that situation and of the extent of police powers to deal with it. Such explanation often resolves the complaint to the complainer's satisfaction at an early stage.
- 1.3 A complaint about the police is defined as "a statement (whether oral, written or electronic) expressing dissatisfaction about an act or omission by the Authority, the Police service or by a person who at the time of the act or omission was a person serving with the police". Further information about the different categories of complaint and about the processes used in dealing with complaints can be found in section 9 of the information pack issued to members.

## **2. INFORMATION**

- 2.1 Between 1 April and 30 June 2013, police in Falkirk Area Command responded to 12,549 calls for service. During the same period, there were 35 complaints made about the police which equates to 1 complaint made for every 358 incidents attended or, expressed differently, 0.2% of the total calls for service resulted in a complaint. These complaints covered acts and omissions by members of staff and issues about quality of service. This was 9

complaints less than the same period for the previous year and 3 fewer than the 3 year average.

- 2.2 Some complaints contained more than one allegation, with the result that there were in total 58 allegations about behaviour on-duty and 5 relating to quality of service.
- 2.3 The most common categories of allegations were incivility (13), irregularity in procedure (13), assault (8) and excessive force (7). Many of the complaints in the last two categories emerge from situations of conflict, for example when officers are effecting the arrest of a disorderly individual.
- 2.4 Of the 5 quality of service allegations, 2 related to policing procedures, 2 for the type of response and 1 for the time taken to respond.
- 2.5 Most complaints investigations do not lead to formal sanctions. For example, of the 56 allegations which were closed in Forth Valley Division in the first quarter of the year, about two thirds fell under the categories of concluded by explanation, withdrawn by complainer or abandoned. In 15 of the remaining 19 cases there was insufficient evidence following investigation to proceed further, whilst the remaining 4 cases were reported to the Area Procurator fiscal for consideration. Two of these resulted in criminal proceedings.
- 2.6 The location of incidents leading to complaints can be varied with over 30% of those in this reporting period taking place in a street or public place, with just under a quarter being in a private house.
- 2.7 This report is submitted during a period of transition in respect of investigation of complaints. This is accompanied by changes in reporting practices for complaints statistics which have resulted in the limited content and format of this report. This will be expanded as new procedures are introduced.

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LOCAL COMMANDER, FORTH VALLEY DIVISION

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