**Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey**

**comments on the Home Office**

**Police Misconduct Statistics for Year Ending 31/03/2024**

An effective police complaints system is vital. The way in which complaints, conduct matters and death and serious injury matters are dealt with by Surrey Police has a huge impact on confidence in your local police. Where they are dealt with well, it helps to restore trust, bring about improvements in local policing and makes sure something that has gone wrong does not happen again. Where they are dealt with badly, it damages confidence in both Surrey Police and the police complaints system.

The handling of all matters should aim to improve the police service and individual performance through learning, and to put things right when they have gone wrong. This should be done while ensuring there is appropriate accountability at both individual and force level.

Your Police and Crime Commissioner holds the Chief Constable to account for performance of Surrey Police, including the handling of complains and police misconduct. Following the release of the Home Office data on Police Misconduct statistics for year ending 31st March 2024, the Commissioner is pleased to provide this update on the performance of Surrey Police.

**Surrey’s position**

The Most Similar Force grouping for Surrey Police includes Cambridgeshire, Dorset and Thames Valley police forces.

**Public Complaints**

Complaints can be handled differently depending on their seriousness; they are either logged and dealt with by way of service recovery (for example by way of an apology, or feedback) or require recording under Schedule 3 of the Police Reform Act 2002, due to their seriousness or a request from the complainant which can result in reflective learning or a misconduct sanction.

Each complaint can be made up of a number of allegations against the same or a number of different individuals, or against the force as an organisational complaint. It is important to note however, that depending on the nature of the complaint, a single complaint can contain one allegation or multiple allegations. Each complaint finalised in the financial year up to March 2024 resulted on average with 1.97 allegations being logged, which is below the national average of 2.36 and third lowest in the most similar force group.

Surrey Police handled by way of service recovery 134 **allegations** against police staff and 1,357 against police officers compared to 121 and 1,379 respectively the previous year; a 38% handling average, higher than the national and most similar force average. This means that Surrey Police is resolving more complaints at first handling compared to their most similar force group.

Dealing with complaints in a timely manner can go a long way to building trust and confidence in the complaints system and the Commissioner encourages greater focus on timely outcomes for complainants, where possible. Surrey Police recorded a total of 239 allegations under the legislation against police staff and 2,158 against police officers, and it resolved a high number of public complaints on first handling.

The most common category of complaint was ‘police action following contact’ against both police officers and police staff, which includes Surrey Police deployment to an incident and the quality of its investigations. This is followed by ‘Use of Force’ complaints against police officers and ‘Decisions’ made by police staff. Police staff make up the majority of its Contact Centre, thus complaints about decisions on what action it takes following a call for service are logged against police staff.

The Force finalised 1,978 **complaint cases** against a police officer or member of police staff compared to 1,973 in the previous year, ranking second in their most similar force grouping. In 75% of the cases recorded under Schedule 3, the level of service was found to be acceptable per allegation, 4% higher than the national average but midway in the most similar force table; in 14%, the level of service for the allegation was found to not be acceptable, higher than the national average and ranking second to Dorset Police.

Where the level of service was found to not be acceptable, 5% of allegations resulted in Learning from Reflection, a figure lower than the most similar force group and national average, whilst 3% resulted in referral to the Reflective Practice Review Process. Surrey Police took no further action on 92% of allegations, this is only slightly higher than their most similar forces and national average.

The Force has identified that lower-level learning has been taking place, but it has not been recorded; work is therefore underway to rectify this and Surrey Police is confident this will be reflected in next years figures.

A total of 19 cases (0.5% of all cases logged) were dealt with as Special Procedures (78 allegations against police officers and 1 x allegation against a member of police staff), where there was an indication of misconduct or gross misconduct at the start or during the handling of that complaint. Of those 79 allegations against police officers and staff, 46 (1.2% of total allegations logged) resulted in a Case to Answer determination, which is higher than the national (0.4%) and most similar force average (0.6% for Thames Valley).

A total of 35 case to answer allegations (44%) were referred to misconduct proceedings, whilst 13 (16%) resulted in a referral to the Reflective Practice Review Process. Surrey Polices’ referral to misconduct proceedings was higher than the national average (23%), whilst its referral to the Reflective Practice Review Process was slightly lower (20%).

In cases where the police officer or member of police staff was identifiable, 37% of complaints were logged against a female and 57% were logged against a male; 6% were ‘not known’ and one person declared their gender as ‘other’; this is in keeping with their most similar force grouping and national average.

Surrey recorded the highest proportion of officers and staff with an ethnicity of ‘not known’ at 48%, this is reflected in the proportion of ‘white’ officers and staff which is recorded at 49%, much lower than other forces. The Force is actively working with its Human Resources department to encourage officers and staff to disclose their protected characteristics.

**Conduct**

A conduct matter is any matter which is not and has not been the subject of a complaint, where there is an indication (whether from the circumstances or otherwise) that a person serving with the police may have committed a criminal offence or behaved in a manner which would justify disciplinary proceedings. The Force has been extremely proactive in identifying ‘conduct’ matters and is far more effective than ever before in highlighting such cases for action.

Surrey Police finalised the highest number of conduct cases against police officers and members of police staff within the most similar force grouping with 124 cases compared to 84 cases in the previous year, an increase of 32%. Robust decision making by Surrey Professional Standards Department (PSD) has contributed this increase.

The most common conduct type for police officers related to unprofessional attitude and disrespect, whilst the most common type for members of police staff related to use of police systems.

A total of 40% of conduct allegations resulted in a case to answer determination, compared to 34% in the previous year and higher than the national average but below Thames Valley and Dorset police. Of those, 30% of case to answer allegations were referred to misconduct proceedings, compared to 22% in the previous year and higher than the national average, but below Thames Valley and Dorset police; 16% of cases were referred to the Reflective Practice Review Process, lower than the national average and Cambridgeshire police; in 49% of allegations, no further action was taken, which is higher than the national average and the top of the most similar force groupings.

Most conduct cases investigated by Surrey Police took less than 3 months to finalise, followed by 3 to 6 months indicating that Surrey police is performing top in their most similar force grouping in respect of timeliness for conduct investigations.

In cases were the police officer or member of police staff was identifiable, 15% of conduct cases were logged against a female and 34% were logged against a male; 1% were ‘not known’ and one person declared their gender as ‘other’; this is in keeping with their most similar force grouping and national average.

Surrey recorded the highest proportion of officers and staff with an ethnicity of ‘not known’ at 14%, this is reflected in the proportion of ‘white’ officers and staff which is recorded at 76%, much lower than the other forces. PSD are actively working with its Human Resources department to encourage officers and staff to disclose their protected characteristics.

**Recordable Conduct Matters**

Recordable conduct matters occur where there is no public complaint, but the matter has had an effect on a member of public or that it is of a serious nature.

Surrey police recorded the lowest number of recordable conduct matters within their most similar force grouping with no allegations resulting in a case to answer determination; no further action was taken on 10 allegations, and 22 allegations resulted in referral to the Reflective Practice review Process.

**Misconduct Proceedings**

Within the most similar force, Surrey Police had the second highest number of officers and staff being referred to misconduct proceedings. (24 x officers and 10 x staff). There are many reasons for this increase but the proactive and robust approach by the Force in dealing with breaches of standards of professional behaviour goes someway in helping to build trust and confidence in Surrey Police, and its steadfast approach to dealing with it should be commended.