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Quality Assurance Panel Handbook

Dyfed-Powys Police & Crime Commissioner

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Version	Date	Author	Reason for Change
1.0	27/09/2016	Hannah Hyde	
2.0	26/04/2017	Caryl Bond	To reflect the addition of reviewing FCC calls
3.0	11/01/2018	Claire Bryant	Changes to reflect developments to the QAP remit and frequency of meetings
4.0	21/06/2018	Caryl Bond	Further Changes to reflect developments to the QAP remit, membership size and frequency of meetings.
4.1	01/09/2020	Caryl Bond	Annual review - Addition of the possibility of virtual meetings via a secure online platform.
4.2	24/03/2022	Caryl Bond	Annual review - Addition of online training and the possibility of an interview being held virtually via Microsoft Teams.
4.3	10/01/2023	Caryl Bond	Addition of the QAP Code of Conduct and changes to the number of Panel Members.
4.4	24/03/2023	Caryl Bond	Review of expenses for the Quality Assurance Panel.

Contents

1. Volunteer Policy

This document should be read in conjunction with the Police and Crime Commissioner's Volunteer Policy. The Policy is an overarching policy covering the broad principles of volunteering for the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC). All volunteers will be provided with a copy of the Policy. It is also available on the PCC's [website](#) or by request to the Commissioner's office.

The Policy provides further information on the following aspects of volunteering:

- 1. Management of the Volunteer Schemes;**
- 2. Eligibility criteria;**
- 3. Recruitment, application and vetting;**
- 4. Training;**

- 5. Probationary period and tenure;**
- 6. Volunteer roles and responsibilities;**
- 7. Expenses and insurance;**
- 8. Termination of appointment;**
- 9. Confidentiality and disposing of documentation;**
- 10. Publicity guidelines; and**
- 11. Settling difference and complaints against the Police.**

1. Quality Assurance Panel Handbook

The Quality Assurance Panel has been established to review the quality of Police contact with the public, in a transparent and independent manner, on behalf of the communities within the Dyfed-Powys area.

The Panel will review any area of police contact with the public they may be called upon to look at, for example, complaints, Police handling of calls in to the Force's Communication Centre i.e. 101, 999, Stop and Search records, Hate Crime Incidents etc.

This Handbook provides detailed guidance on the role of the Quality Assurance Panel.

1. Management of the Quality Assurance Panel

The running of the Panel is co-ordinated within the PCC's office. Panel Members will be provided with a single point of contact on joining the scheme, and will be kept updated of any changes.

Panel members can claim mileage expenses for any travelling in relation to the role. Overnight accommodation expenses will be considered for Members who are required to travel a considerable distance to attend meetings. Overnight expenses will only be payable when deemed necessary to complete duties and following advance approval with the OPCC.

1. Recruitment and Eligibility

The Panel will consist of a maximum of 20 individuals who meet the eligibility criteria detailed in the Role Specification at . The OPCC will advertise positions as and when vacancies open up.

The eligibility criteria will form the basis for shortlisting suitable applicants to become a Panel Member.

Applicants on the shortlist will be invited to attend an informal interview at DPP Headquarters (HQ) in Carmarthen or virtually online via Microsoft Teams.

A final decision will be made by the interviewing team and communicated in writing to the applicant. Panel Members will be appointed pending Non-Police Personnel Vetting (Level 2) clearance being granted. Appointment to the Panel will be set for an initial term of three years.

We welcome applications from diverse backgrounds and are happy to assist those who may require additional support in applying and participating in the Panel. Each application will be judged on its own merits and in order to safeguard the independence of the Panel, the Commissioner reserves the right to refuse any application.

Feedback will be provided to unsuccessful applications, on request.

1. Training

Inputs will be given on the focus area within each Panel meeting. Panel Members will be informed in greater detail of the review process, i.e. the information they will be asked to scrutinise, the way in which they should provide feedback, and how their findings will be reported and acted upon.

Panel Members are required to complete some online training modules and may be asked to attend DPP HQ for refresher training, or training on specific areas, as and when it is deemed necessary by the PCC's office, or if a need has been identified by the Panel. Panel Members may liaise with the PCC's office about any training requirements they feel are relevant to the role.

1. The Scrutiny Process

The Quality Assurance Panel will meet on a bi-monthly basis; 6 times a year. The PCC's staff will provide background information such as performance data,

national and local developments or feedback from other assurance functions in order to advise the Panel's future activities. A rolling forward work plan for each financial year will be drafted with Members, which will set out each meeting's areas of focus.

Members will be expected to attend the 6 core meetings over the year. The Panel meetings will usually be held at Dyfed-Powys Police HQ in Carmarthen due to the information scrutinised by the Panel being highly confidential. If appropriate, on occasion some meetings may be conducted virtually via a secure online platform. It is the intention that as the Panel's activities develop, there may be additional engagement meetings held across Dyfed-Powys with community groups, this will help gain a greater insight into the issues that different individuals face and their experiences.

A quorum is needed for a scheduled meeting to take place, which is at least 7 of the current Panel membership.

Meetings will last a day, with lunch and refreshments provided.

During the day, the Panel will usually examine and scrutinise a number of case files relating to the area of focus which were closed during the preceding 6 months. If the selection of cases does not allow a sufficient pool to choose a dip sample from, cases may be requested from up to the preceding 12 months. The PCC's staff will request a full case list prior to the Panel Meeting and randomly select the dip sample for scrutiny.

The Panel will be split into smaller groups to scrutinise the cases. Having a number of individuals considering the same case will result in balanced and objective feedback.

The Panel is required to electronically review certain types of files, which will require members to view read-only copies of documents on a PC screen. It is therefore considered essential that Panel members have basic I.T. skills to undertake this task, including but not limited to navigating through electronic files and documents.

For each case scrutinised, the Panel will be asked to consider whether it was handled in a fair and proportionate manner; looking at issues such as the tone and timeliness of correspondence and updates, the use of jargon or acronyms, and whether they felt the outcomes were suitable. The Panel will ensure that complaints and misconduct cases are dealt with consistently and fairly, for officers, staff and those with protected

characteristics. Any perceived unfairness should be highlighted and reported upon by the Quality Assurance Panel for further review.

When scrutinising calls the Panel will be asked to consider a variety of aspects including: the manner of the call handler, whether the caller's needs are identified, the way in which the information has been recorded and the timeliness of the calls; with the appropriate responses to emergency calls being identified and actioned.

When reviewing any types of cases, the Panel will fill in report forms noting their feedback and findings on each case. From these forms the OPCC will produce a report, which, after being approved by the Members, will be shared with the head of the relevant department / strategic lead. The report will highlight any concerns raised by the Panel, any areas for improvement, and any areas of best practice.

The relevant department head will be asked to provide a formal response to the issues identified by the Panel. Both the Panel report and the formal response will be submitted to the Commissioner for consideration. The report will also be provided to Dyfed-Powys Police's Audit and Quality Assurance Group to ensure appropriate oversight of any subsequent actions. Reports will be published on the PCC's website.

1. Impartiality and Confidentiality

During the course of their duties, Quality Assurance Panel Members will acquire considerable personal and confidential information about individuals and police matters. They are therefore asked to sign an Undertaking of Confidentiality Agreement on joining the Panel and will be required to re-sign periodically. Panel Members should be aware that the improper disclosure of information acquired during a panel meeting may attract civil or criminal proceedings.

Volunteers should also notify the OPCC if they are arrested or charged with a criminal offence, or are under investigation. They may be suspended from undertaking further volunteering duties pending the outcome of any proceedings.

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Appendix A

Quality Assurance Panel Member - Role Specification

The criteria contained within this Role Specification will form the basis for shortlisting suitable applicants to become a Panel Member. These criteria are the necessary requirements to enable an effective performance within the role.

Criterion	Competency
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Must be 18 years of age or over; ● Must live or work in the Dyfed-Powys area (Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire or Powys); ● Must be willing to travel to Dyfed-Powys Police Headquarters in Carmarthen to attend Panel meetings; ● Must be independent of the Police and the Criminal Justice System, i.e. the OPCC will not appoint serving police officers, police staff, serving members of the OPCC itself, special constables, or anybody with a direct involvement in the criminal justice system, such as solicitors or probation officers; ● A person who has been employed by Dyfed-Powys Police Force or the OPCC must have a minimum 1 year break before being appointed to serve on the Panel. ● A person who is on the Police and Crime Panel or is a councillor or an employee of a council which is represented on the Police and Crime Panel is not eligible for appointment to the Quality Assurance Panel; ● Must declare of any significant political activity which includes holding office, public speaking, making a recordable donation or candidature for election in the last 5 years; ● Must be granted vetting clearance once through the interview stage.
Working with people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Able to demonstrate the ability to work as part of a team; ● The ability to establish and maintain good working relationships with a wide range of people.
Effective communication skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The ability to communicate effectively orally and in writing; ● The ability to interpret written / statistical information; ● Must have basic IT skills, including, but not limited to, navigating through electronic files and documents; ● Able to demonstrate the ability to manage commitments and make a reliable contribution to the Panel.

Scrutiny skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Previous experience in a role involving analysing, reviewing
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	<p>or developing services, evaluating performance or inspection;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Demonstrates the ability to question, challenge, weigh up issues, and make balanced, reasonable, proportionate and objective judgements.
Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ability to demonstrate enthusiasm for improving the service user's experience. ● Ability to attend the 6 core meetings a year.
Respect for people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Commitment to treat all people fairly and with respect, to value diversity and respond sensitively to difference; ● Demonstrates the ability to be open to new ideas and methods of working.

Appendix B

Code of Conduct

This Code of Conduct sets out recommended standards for all members of the Quality Assurance Panel (QAP).

All of the Commissioner's QAP members are required, on accepting appointment, to declare that they will be guided by this Code.

The Code represents the standard expected of all QAP members and is the basis for their continued membership of the Scheme.

1.Misconduct

In the event of misconduct the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) will consider whether it is appropriate to terminate the appointment of that QAP member. Misconduct will encompass such matters as: –

- Conviction of a criminal offence
- Disclosure of confidential information
- Non-compliance with meeting guidelines

2.Required Standards

For QAP members to be effective it is essential that Panel members and police staff develop and maintain professional working relationships based on a mutual respect and understanding of each other's legitimate roles. In view of which it is important that QAP members do not create difficulties by:-

- Failing to appreciate police priorities
- Engaging in excessive petty criticism
- Adopting an overly adversarial approach
- Concentrating on finding fault and trying to catch the police out
- Criticising police action or questioning their judgement in areas outside the Panels' remit
- Getting involved with interpersonal conflict situations with police staff

- Telling the police what they should do

These issues must be seen against the background of the need to strike the right balance between establishing effective working arrangements and developing a relationship that is too close and cosy. This will compromise the independence of QAP members in terms of providing objective and constructive observations and reports.

All QAP members are also expected to refrain from using discriminatory language (e.g. sexist, racist, or homophobic language) and from displaying any form of discriminatory behaviour in their role.

3.Failure to attend meetings

Where a member fails to attend a meeting within a six month period the OPCC will write to the person concerned to seek an explanation.

Where an individual has not attended any meetings within a year and no good reason has been notified to the OPCC, consideration will be given as to whether that person's appointment should be terminated.

4.Complaints against the Police

Where a QAP member makes a complaint against the police which is recorded, whether in the role as a QAP member or as a private individual, the OPCC must be informed. The full details will then be put before the OPCC's Head of Assurance and consideration will be given as to whether the duties of the member should be suspended or curtailed in the interests of impartiality.

5.Working Relationships with other QAP members

In addition to maintaining a professional working relationship with police staff, QAP members must also have the same regard for their fellow members. All members must therefore:-

- Be supportive and have a mutual respect for each other and their opinions
- Work as a team
- Play an active and equal part during meetings
- Avoid dominating conversations during meetings

6.Breach of Code of Conduct

As this Code of Conduct represents the standard expected of all QAP members and is the basis for their continued membership of the Panel, the appointment of a member who is found to be in breach of the Code may be terminated, suspended or curtailed.

In the event that a complaint or allegation is made that a QAP member has breached any part of this Code of Conduct, the following action will be taken.

The OPCC will request that the complaint/allegation be made in writing, if it has not already been done. No further action will be taken unless the complaint/allegation is made in writing.

The OPCC, on receipt of the written complaint/allegation, will notify the QAP member of its receipt and content.

The QAP member will be given the opportunity of responding to the complaint/allegation either orally or in writing.

The OPCC will make the necessary relevant enquiries to determine the substance of the complaint/allegation. In doing so, and depending on the nature of the complaint, the OPCC will contact any or all of the following parties:

- The Complainant
- Fellow QAP members
- Any other person who is able to provide relevant information

Having made the necessary enquiries, the OPCC will prepare a report, with recommendations, which will be considered by the OPCC Head of Assurance. The QAP member will receive notification in writing of the decision made.

The QAP member may submit written representations to the OPCC Chief Executive to appeal the decision made within 28 days of receiving the determinations of the Head of Assurance.

7.Declaration

I have read and understood the contents of this Code of Conduct and I agree to abide by the provisions contained herein.

Name in capitals:

Signed:

Date:

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