

**Report of the Chief Constable to the Chair and Members
of the Professional Standards Panel
29th April 2010**

Executive & Presenting Officer: Mr Derek Bonnard, Deputy Chief Constable

Status: For information

Civil Claims Statistics

1 Purpose

- 1.1 This is a report covering the period 1st April 2009 to 31st March 2010 and its purpose is to advise the panel of the number and types of civil claims against the Force received during the period, the amount paid out for those claims finalised during the period and the amount recovered. There is also a comparison between the Basic Command Units.

2 Recommendations

Members should note that:

- 2.1 The number of claims received remains the same as the number of claims received in the same period last year. Motor Liability is the leading category.
- 2.2 There has been a 25% increase in the number of claims finalised when compared with the same period last year.
- 2.3 38% of finalised cases during the period were successfully defended, which is to be compared with 20% successfully defended during the same period last year.
- 2.4 The 62 cases settled during the period cost the Force £386,797. This is to be compared with the 64 cases settled during the same period last year at a cost of £305,510.
- 2.5 Middlesbrough remains the area with most claims.

3 Reasons

- 3.1 The absence of any increase or decrease in the number of claims received is not significant as the figures will always fluctuate.
- 3.2 The moderate increase in the number of cases finalised is largely out of the control of Legal Services as the Claimant will determine when a claim is withdrawn or when evidence in support of losses is provided.
- 3.3 The moderate increase in the number of cases successfully defended is not significant as the figures will always fluctuate.
- 3.4 There was a slight increase in the average cost of a claim overall. Partially due to the fact that there was a large motor and a large public claim finalised during the period.

3.5 Number & Types of Claims Received

There were 136 claims received during the period which remains the same as last year's figure. Members should note that the claims received in the period may relate to incidents which occurred up to six years previously. Legal Services have no control over when claims are received. Legal Services do provide feedback to the districts when scope for improvement in practices is identified in order to reduce the risk of claims. The table below summarises the numbers and types of claims received during the period per district. The figures for the same period last year are in brackets.

1/4/09 – 31/03/10	Employer's Liability	Motor Liability	Public Liability	Total
Middlesbrough	2 (2)	27 (18)	18 (22)	47 (42)
Stockton	0 (0)	7 (12)	5 (6)	12 (18)
Hartlepool	0 (1)	14 (10)	6 (4)	20 (15)
Redcar & Cleveland	0 (0)	9 (13)	8 (7)	17 (20)
HQ¹	4 (3)	11 (6)	25 (32)	40 (41)
Total	6 (6)	68 (59)	62 (71)	136 (136)

- 3.6 Employer's Liability claims are those made by Force employees following injuries sustained at work. The claims received during this period relate to allegations of two back injuries attributed to unsuitable chairs, a back injury following the premature closing of a gate, a back injury due to stepping on an unstable paving stone, an ankle injury due to a slip on a ramp and a wrist injury due to a slip on a wet floor.

¹ Breakdown of claims from HQ umbrella: , Operations (21), Criminal Justice (13), Crime (3) People & Organisation Development (1) , Communications (1), Commissioning (1)

- 3.7 Public Liability claims are those made by arrested persons for false imprisonment, assault, malicious prosecution, unlawful search, trespass to property and damage to property. If a person is arrested but not charged or has proceedings against them discontinued or dismissed, it is common practice for them to make a claim in the (mistaken) belief that the lack of a criminal conviction automatically means their arrest was unlawful.
- 3.8 Motor Liability claims are those made by members of the public and police officers following damage and injuries sustained in road accidents involving a police vehicle.
- 3.9 Numbers Finalised & Results
 There were 100 claims finalised during the period which is an increase of 20 on last year's figure of 80. Legal Services have little control over the number of claims finalised. For those claims where liability is denied, Legal Services simply have to wait for the Claimant to either issue proceedings or formally withdraw the claim. For those claims where liability is admitted, Legal Services often have to wait for the Claimant to provide evidence in support of losses (such as a medical report to confirm injuries) before a settlement can be negotiated.
- 3.10 Of the 100 cases finalised during the period, 38 were successfully defended and 62 were settled. This is to be compared with last year's figures when 16 were successfully defended and 64 were settled. Successfully defended claims are those that were withdrawn (whether formally or not) or judged in favour of the Chief Constable at trial. The reasons for the success or otherwise of a defence are as follows. In those claims taken to trial, account has to be taken of the performance of the witnesses for both the claimant and the force, the strength of the evidence both before and following cross-examination and the attitude of the Judge/Jury. In those claims settled before trial, account has to be taken of the witness statements and evidence provided by the officers involved.
- 3.11 The table below summarises the numbers and results of claims finalised during the period. The figures for the same period last year are in brackets.

1/4/09 – 31/03/10	Employer's Liability	Motor Liability	Public Liability	Total
Negotiated settlement	3 (3)	38 (37)	20 (24)	61 (64)
Claimant won trial	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (0)	1 (0)
Chief won trial	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (5)	2 (5)
Claim withdrawn	3 (4)	8 (1)	25 (6)	36 (11)
Total	6 (7)	46 (38)	48 (35)	100 (80)

3.12 Sums Paid Out On Finalised Cases

The sums paid out depend upon the nature of the case and the figures will therefore fluctuate year on year. The table below summarises the payments made on claims finalised during the period. The figures for the same period last year are in brackets.

1/4/09 31/03/10	Employer's Liability	Motor Liability	Public Liability	Total
Middlesbrough	£25,539	£54,127	£70,530	£150,196
Stockton	£0	£75,280	£72,260	£147,540
Hartlepool	£0	£13,499	£18,126	£31,625
Redcar & Cleveland	£0	£6,140	£1,795	£7,935
HQ	£16,264	£2,442	£30,795	£49,501
Total	£41,803 (£42,852)	£151,488 (£189,807)	£193,506 (£72,853)	£386,797 (£305,510)

3.13 Uninsured Loss Recovery

Police vehicles are insured on a third party basis only. In the event of a collision, damage caused to the other party's property is covered by our insurance but damage caused to our police vehicle is not. Where the police driver is at fault for the collision, the Force bears the cost of the damage to the police vehicle. However, where the police driver is not at fault, Legal Services seek to recover the cost of the damage to the police vehicle from the blameworthy party or their insurers.

3.14 During the period, Legal Services recovered £10,532 from third parties in relation to police vehicle damage. During the same period last year, the amount recovered was £57,822. There are 6 outstanding cases.

3.15 Occupational Sick Pay Recovery

The conditions of service under which support staff are employed state that when an employee is absent from work due to injury caused by the negligence of a third party, any sick pay paid as a result of this absence is to be treated as a loan which is repayable upon the employee receiving compensation for this loss of earnings from the third party.

3.16 During the period, Legal Services recovered £1,048 from third parties in relation to sick pay. During the same period last year, the amount recovered was £5,713. There is one outstanding case.

4 Implications

4.1 Finance

In relation to insured risks, the “excess” per claim during the period was £125,000. None of the claims finalised within the period exceeded the “excess”.

4.2 Although the sums paid out for insured risks outweigh the sums recovered, savings (in terms of potential damages) have been made in those cases successfully defended and savings (in terms of solicitor’s costs) have been made by dealing with claims in-house.

4.3 Diversity & Equal Opportunities

There are diversity or equal opportunities implications arising from this report.

4.4 Human Rights Act

There are no Human Rights Act implications arising from this report.

4.5 Sustainability

There are no sustainability implications arising from this report.

4.6 Risk

There are no risk implications arising from this report.

5 Conclusions

5.1 Whilst Legal Services have no control over the number of claims received, feedback is provided on a case by case basis to ensure assistance is given to Basic Command Units in managing risks.

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