

**Prisons &  
Probation**

**Ombudsman**  
Independent Investigations

# Stakeholder Survey

**2015-16**



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# Foreword



I am always keen to gather the views of stakeholders, to understand how my Office can reinforce its strengths and identify and address its weaknesses. We use a range of tools to collect feedback. Those stakeholders who have most direct contact with us during our individual investigations, such as complainants and bereaved families, are sent separate surveys more specific to their experience, to gather their views on our performance. This report has a wider scope and a greater emphasis on our services overall and the information and materials that we disseminate. It is particularly focused on gathering the views of staff from the services within our remit, as well as those we work alongside such as Coroners and IMB members.

This year our stakeholders provided insight into how we can broaden the readership of our Learning Lessons publications and increase the impact they and our investigations have. The majority of respondents from the prison sector were able to give concrete examples of how investigations and reports had led to a change in their establishment. Stakeholders felt there had been improvements made by my office, in particular with the timeliness of our fatal incident investigations. The majority felt that the quality of our service provided was positive and that we maintained independence and professionalism throughout our engagements.

There are still further efforts to be made to broaden our influence and encourage changes across the sector that promote safer and fairer custody and I welcome the chance to focus on such improvements.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nigel Newcomen'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Nigel Newcomen CBE

Prisons and Probation Ombudsman

## **Executive summary**

This paper presents the 2015 results of our annual stakeholder feedback survey. There were a greater number of responses this year, with 131 individuals completing the survey, compared with 84 in 2014. They were mainly from prison, health and IMB stakeholders. This year's sample composition differed from previous years. There was an increased number of respondents from the health sector which led to them warranting their own sub-group in the analysis. In addition, an increased proportion of respondents reported that they had been involved in a fatal incident investigation compared with previous years. These changes to the sample composition are likely to be a result of better targeting of clinical reviewers<sup>1</sup> when sending survey invites.

## **Conclusions**

Generally, the feedback from the survey was encouraging for the PPO and it highlighted the positive impact that our investigations and publications can have on establishments. However, there is always room for improvement, and stakeholders highlighted a number of areas for us to consider.

### **Perceptions**

- Compared with the 2014 results, there was an improvement in the proportion of respondents agreeing that the quality of fatal incident investigations, Learning Lessons publications, and general liaison and communication, was good or very good.
- The quality of the work and services provided by the PPO was rated positively. 63% felt that the quality of the work and services of the PPO overall was good or very good, also an increase from 2014.
- All four performance measures (independent, professional, influential and accessible) had a higher proportion of stakeholders deeming them “very” applicable to the PPO, compared to 2014 results, with 64% feeling that the PPO was very professional.

### **Effectiveness**

- The majority of respondents gave examples of investigations resulting in a positive impact by triggering reviews of practice or changing policy.
- In fatal incident and complaint investigations, the majority of stakeholders who responded, and had experienced them, felt that the timeliness of investigations was appropriate.
- Two-fifths of those who had been involved in fatal incident investigations in 2014 and 2015 felt there had been an improvement on timeliness this year compared to the last.

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<sup>1</sup> Clinical reviewers are health professionals who are commissioned in a fatal incident investigation to independently review the clinical care of the prisoner and whether this was equitable to what they could have expected to receive in the community.

- The majority of respondents who had been involved in complaint and fatal incident investigations felt they had been informed enough during the investigation.
- Of those who had experienced fatal incident investigations in 2014 and 2015, 19% felt that there had been an improvement in being kept updated this year.

### Publications

- The annual report was widely read (79%) and the majority of those who read it deemed it useful.
- The most widely read Learning Lessons publication was the self-inflicted deaths of prisoners thematic publication, with 8 out of 10 respondents having read it.
- Stakeholder survey publications and the PPO's business plan had the lowest readership and usefulness rating, with some respondents not finding them relevant to their role.
- Out of all of the stakeholder groups, generally IMB members were least likely to have read the 'Learning Lessons' thematics and bulletins.

# Introduction

The PPO engages with a number of stakeholders and routinely collects feedback from them in order to gauge the public's confidence in its performance. There are three specific surveys which are sent to individuals who have directly been involved in investigations. Relevant prison staff, healthcare staff and Coroners are surveyed at the end of a fatal incident investigation (post-investigation survey, reported annually); the friends and family members of the deceased who were involved with the investigation are asked for their feedback (bereaved families' survey, reported every two years); and feedback is collected from a sample of complainants (complainants' survey, reported annually). Each of these surveys provides a specific appraisal of the PPO from those who have been directly involved in our investigations.

The PPO Stakeholder Survey does not have such a defined target group of respondents; it is made available online to all individuals who would like to complete it and is sent to all stakeholders on our subscription list<sup>2</sup>. It is focused upon those who have had any contact with the PPO in the previous 12 months. It concentrates on the PPO's performance measures<sup>3</sup>, the quality and timeliness of our investigations, and the accessibility and reach of the PPO.

This publication's purpose is to report on the findings of the survey and establish what can be learned from respondents' feedback. Commentary is provided to some of the findings however there is no formal challenge to the views expressed by the respondents. There are some caveats to the data reported and these will be highlighted throughout the analysis.

This survey has been in running since 2008, when the PPO first sought to systematically collect the views of those it works with. It has been a valuable source of understanding around how the work the PPO carries out could be improved and sustained. It feeds into reviews of our internal policies and procedures and consideration of how we prioritise the objectives in the PPO's Business Plan. Although the survey has been reported on for many years and has the same underlying ethos, the method of surveying stakeholders has differed over time and the questionnaire has been refined and developed. Although this makes it difficult to make direct comparison with earlier years, the similarities in methodology<sup>4</sup> between 2014 and 2015 do allow comparisons to be made in this report.

## Responses

This year's survey was completed by a total of 131 people. This is a notable improvement from the previous year, where only 84 individuals responded. Those from the prison estate formed the largest stakeholder group, making up 43% of participants (Figure 1.1). A little over a fifth of respondents were from the health sector (21%) and a further 17% were IMB members. The remaining 19% of participants were classified as 'Other'.

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<sup>2</sup> On the PPO website individuals have the option to subscribe to the mailing list and they are notified of upcoming publications.

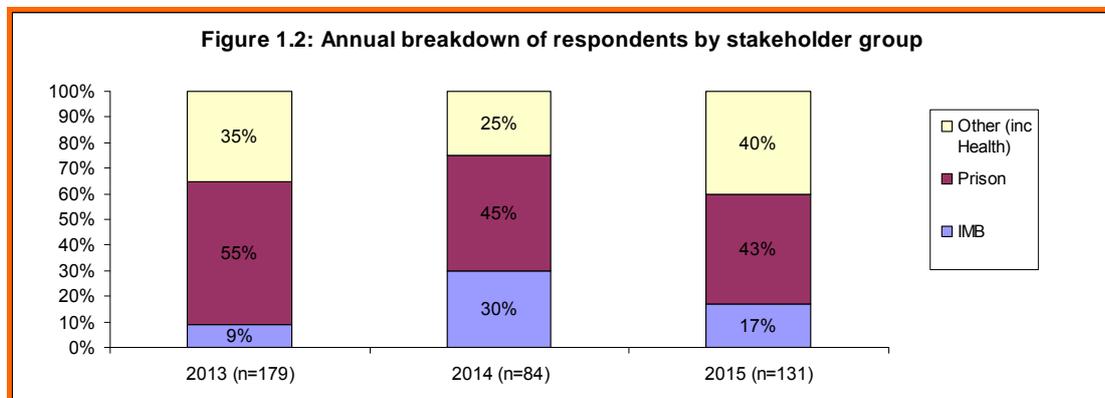
<sup>3</sup> The performance measures are: influential, accessible, independent and professional.

**Figure 1.1: Breakdown of respondents by stakeholder group (total n=131)**

<i>Stakeholder group<sup>5</sup></i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>Prison</i>	56	43%
<i>Health</i>	28	21%
<i>Other</i>	25	19%
<i>IMB</i>	22	17%

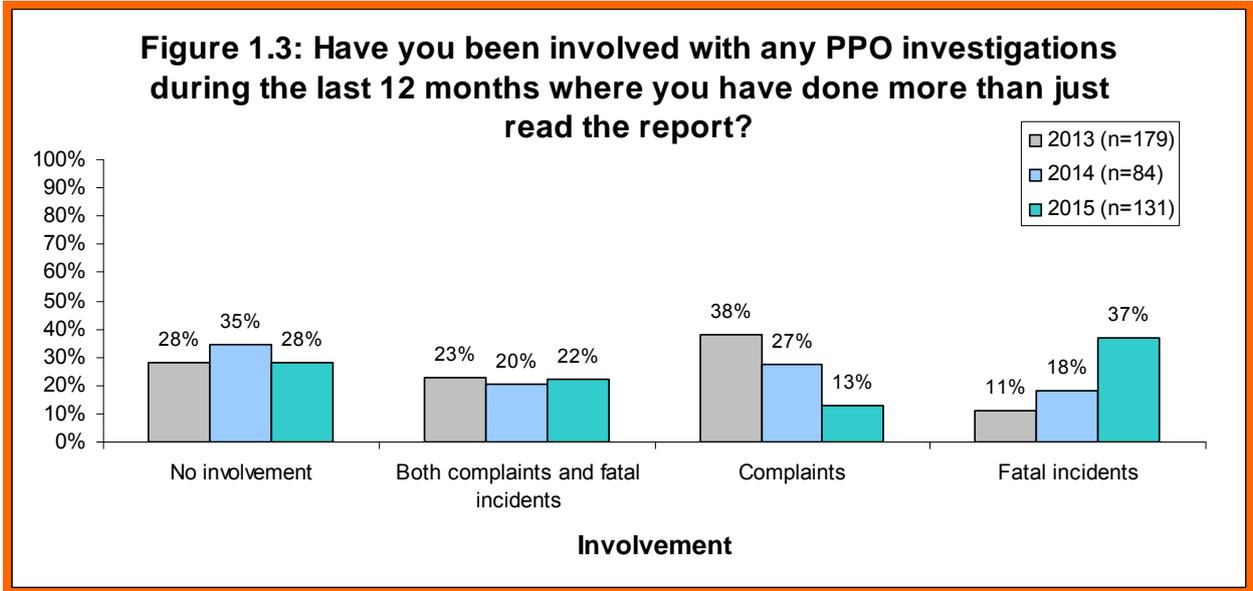
In previous years this survey has not reported ‘Health’ as a separate stakeholder group, due to the small numbers of respondents from this sector. They were instead classified within the ‘Other’ category. This year saw a far greater proportion of respondents who were from the health sector compared to previous years and therefore they now warrant their own sub-group. They will be reported separately throughout this report unless otherwise specified. For the sake of comparison to previous years, within Figure 1.2 health stakeholders have been incorporated into the ‘Other’ sub category. The higher proportion of health professionals this year is likely to be due to better targeting of clinical reviewers when sending out survey invitations.

As with previous years, the prison stakeholder group made up the largest proportion of respondents, although there has been a small year on year decrease in the proportion (Figure 1.2). Although the number of IMB respondents was similar to 2014 (25 in 2014 compared to 22 in 2015), there was a notably lower proportion of IMB members than the previous year. This was a result of the higher number of stakeholders from the prison and health sectors, leading to a decrease in the proportion of IMB members.



<sup>5</sup> The health category includes all individuals who were a health professionals regardless if they were healthcare staff within a custodial environment or establishment.

Almost three quarters of respondents reported some involvement with a PPO investigation in the previous 12 months, an increase from 2014. This year was the first year in the three year period where the majority of respondents (59%; Figure 1.3) had been involved in a fatal incident investigation. The change may be a result of the increased number of clinical reviewers taking part, who by the nature of their job are regularly involved in our fatal incident investigations.



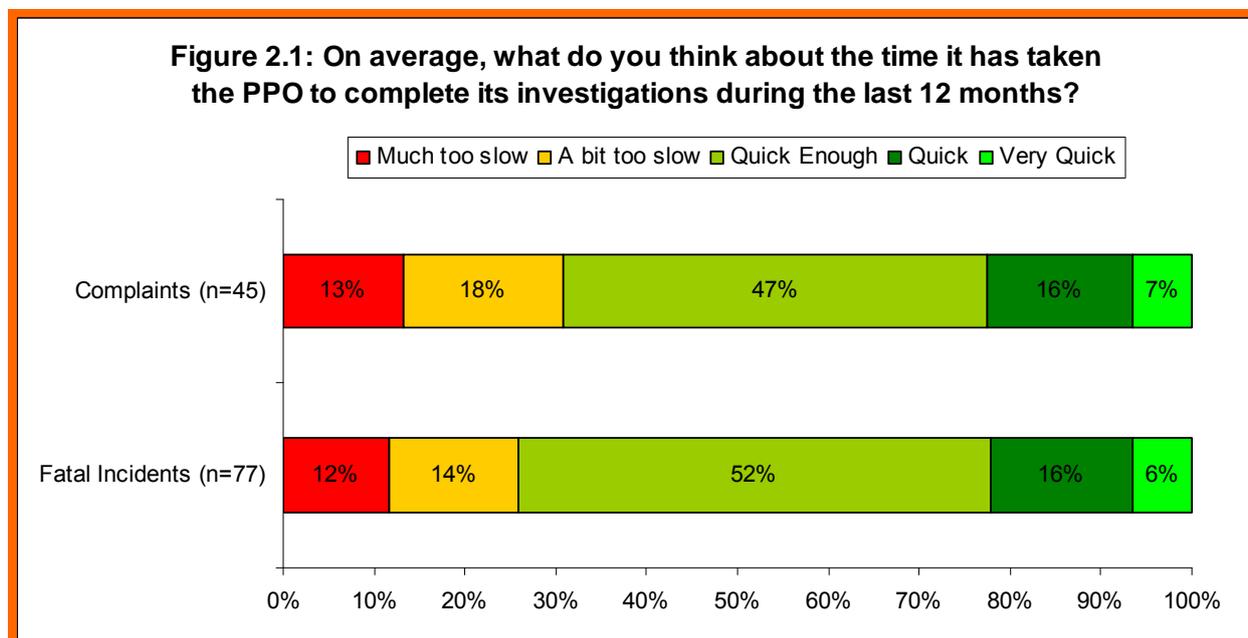
# Findings

## Timeliness

Timeliness is a key performance indicator for the PPO. For several years there has been a specific drive on clearing a backlog of complaint cases and of improving the timeliness of issuing fatal incident investigation reports. Timeliness continues to be a strategic objective in the current Business Plan. For fatal incident investigations, the PPO’s timeliness target is to issue at least 70% of reports within the standard timeframe. Complaint investigations have differing deadlines and performance targets dependent on the severity of the complaint.

Timeliness was rated highly by the majority of respondents. Out of the 45 respondents who had involvement with complaint investigations within the past 12 months, over two thirds (70%, see Figure 2.1) felt that our investigations were ‘quick enough’ or better. This was an improvement in comparison to 2014, where 62% felt they were quick enough or better.

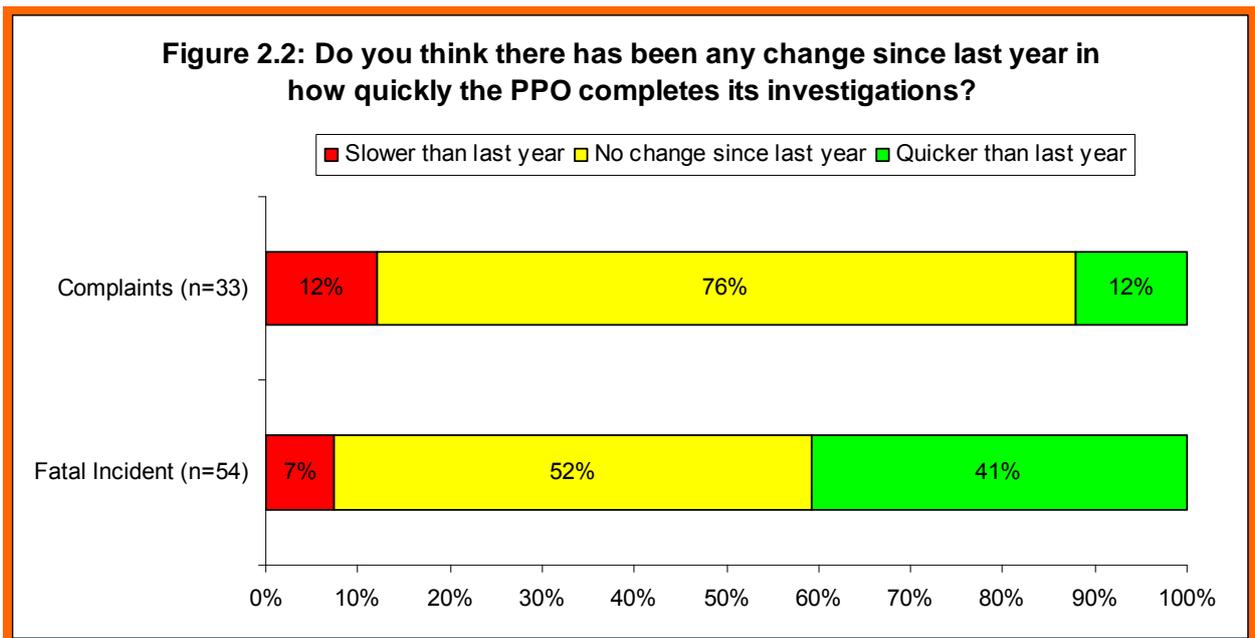
Timeliness of fatal incident investigations was rated highly, with nearly three quarters (74%) of the 77 respondents who had experienced them feeling they were quick enough or better. Likewise, fatal incident investigations saw a high proportion of respondents this year (74%) who felt investigations were timely than the proportion of respondents in 2014, where 61% felt they were at least quick enough.



As the survey is anonymous, we do not know whether the respondents had completed the survey in previous years. In order to capture year on year changes, stakeholders were asked to compare whether they felt there had been an improvement made by the PPO compared to their experiences of 2014, where relevant.

Respondents who had also experienced complaint investigations in 2014 were asked to comment on whether they perceived there had been an improvement in the timeliness of complaint investigations. Of the 33 respondents that identified they had experienced investigations in both years, more than three quarters of them felt that timeliness had remained the same (Figure 2.2). The remaining respondents were evenly split as to whether they felt the investigations had been quicker or slower than the previous year.

A larger number of individuals identified they had been involved in fatal incident investigations (n=54) in 2014 and 2015 than complaint investigations (n=33). Over two-fifths of these stakeholders felt that there had been an improvement in timeliness in 2015 for fatal incident investigations.



Respondents were given the option to elaborate on their answers to give context to their views. Those who viewed timeliness positively commented that speeding the process up may risk reducing the quality of the investigation, which would be detrimental. Some respondents who viewed timeliness poorly raised frustrations at the speed they were required to respond to the PPO’s queries, which they felt was not reciprocated by the PPO investigator keeping them up to date or producing the reports speedily.

“

*Reasonable time is taken in order to make sure the investigation is carried out correctly.*  
- Prison

”

“

*I think that given the amount of investigations undertaken that to be any quicker you may potentially lose the quality of the outcomes.*

- Prison

”

“

*Some of the DIC [deaths in custody] investigations start with requests for enormous amounts of data with very short deadlines.*

- Prison  
”

“

*One of the issues we face is the limited time given to provide a response. Often this is just part of our busy day.*

- Other  
”

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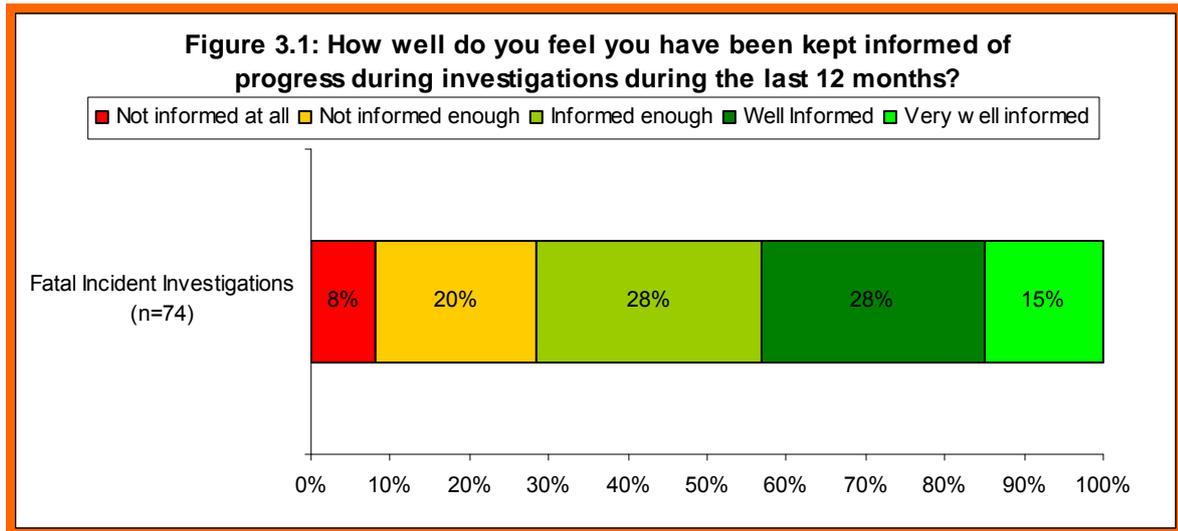
## Being kept informed

Being kept informed of the progress of an investigation was an issue identified in the 2014-15 post-investigation survey. Due to the anonymous nature of the survey, we do not know whether the respondents to this survey had direct involvement with a particular investigation. Some of our stakeholders will be very involved in a fatal incident investigation, others less so, depending on their role. It is hoped that those who have given feedback on how well they were kept updated during the investigation, have taken into account that their role will have determined the amount of information they should have received.

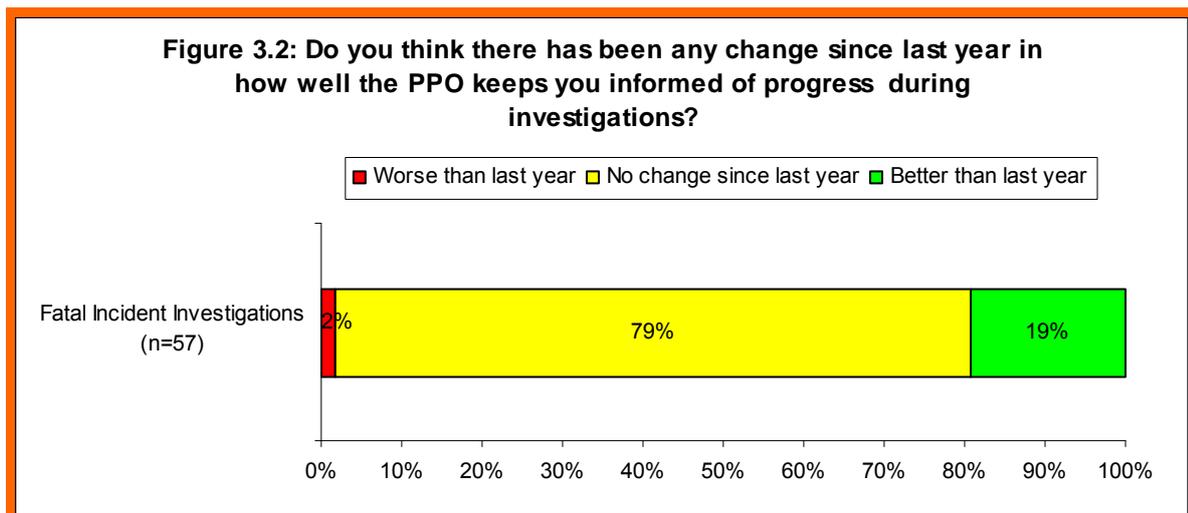
For complaint investigations, governors and other stakeholders generally are not updated on the progress of complaint investigations and if the complaint is not upheld the establishment is not informed for confidentiality reasons. If a complaint is upheld then a draft report is sent to the establishment for them to comment on. As there is no mechanism for all stakeholders to be given progress updates during complaint investigations, only fatal incident investigation responses are considered in this section.

Fatal incident investigations saw an improvement in how well updated individuals felt. The results from last year's survey (2014) showed nearly half of respondents (46%) felt under-informed, however only 28% of 2015's respondents reported feeling this way. This equates to 7 out of 10 individuals feeling that they were informed enough during the PPO's fatal incident investigations (Figure 3.1).

Following concerns previously raised by our stakeholders, the PPO has made efforts over the last year to provide better information at the start of a fatal incident investigation. This has entailed setting expectations appropriately and informing stakeholders how regularly they can expect to be contacted.



Respondents who identified that they had been involved in investigations in 2014 and 2015 were asked to reflect on whether they felt there had been any improvements in regards to how well informed they were about investigations. Of those involved in fatal incident investigations in both years the majority felt there had been no identifiable change. Nearly a fifth involved over both years felt there had been an improvement (19%).



“

*Contact seemed to be as required and feedback was appropriate.*

-Prison  
”

“

*Over the past four years I have been involved with the PPO .... Recent contact has been excellent although there were times in previous years when I was not informed of the attendance of a representative of the PPO in the jail re DIC. This was not the fault of [prison] staff.*

-IMB  
”

“

*There are examples of good communication from investigators, but we could be notified more consistently, particularly of investigations that have been suspended for any reason.*

-Other  
”

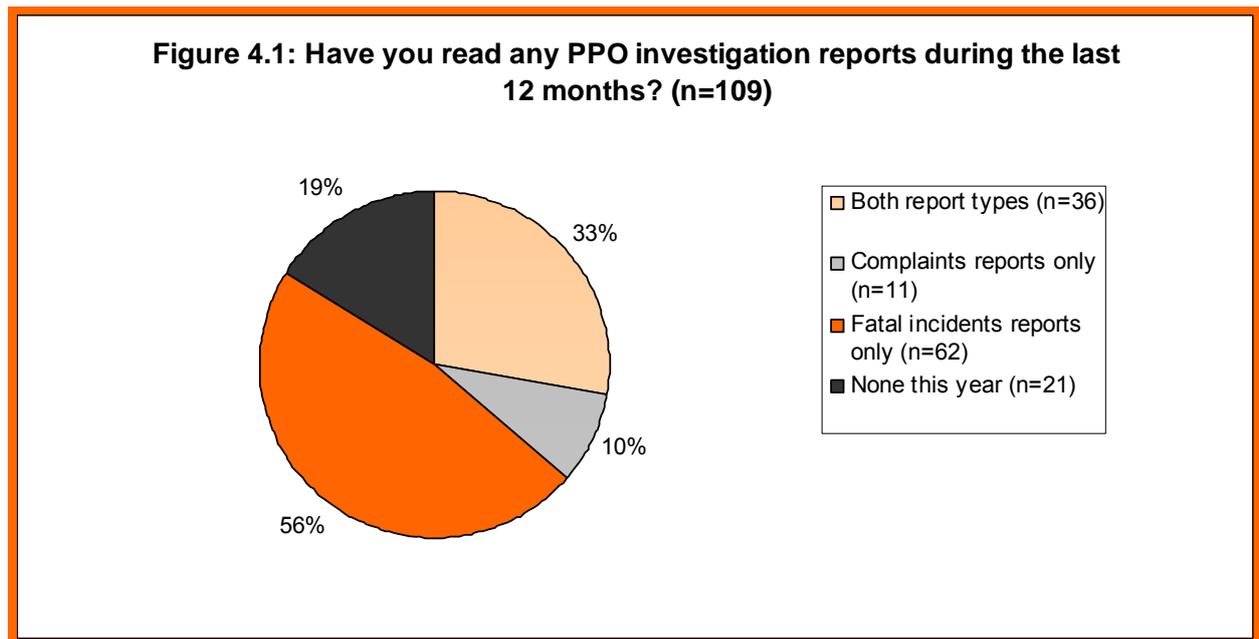
## Reports

Respondents were asked their views about the reports that follow an individual investigation. A full report is written following every fatal incident investigation. This is shared with relevant stakeholders at the end of the investigation, and then published on the PPO’s website after the inquest has concluded. A written response is provided to the complainant after every complaint investigation, in the form of a report or a letter<sup>6</sup>, depending on the complexity of the investigation. This response includes personal information and will be sent directly to the complainant<sup>7</sup>. If recommendations are made, the report will also be sent to the stakeholder responsible for responding to the recommendations. The response is not published.

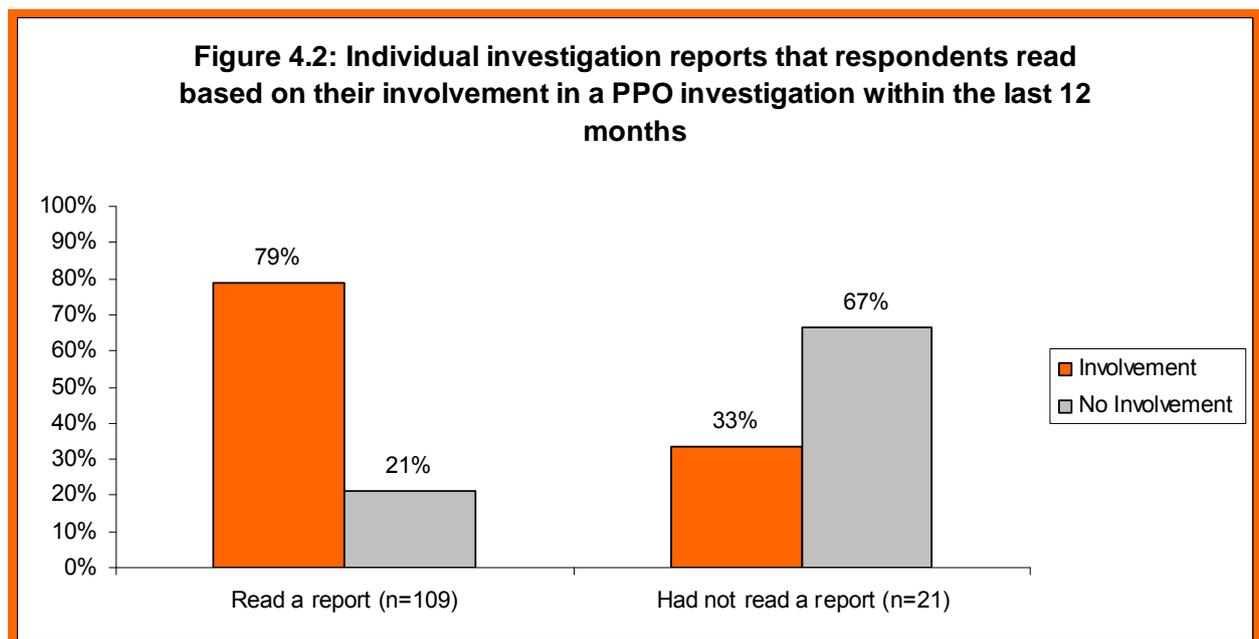
Respondents were asked whether they had read any of the individual investigation reports within the past 12 months. A total of 109 respondents had read an individual investigation report (Figure 4.1) in 2015. Nearly 9 in 10 respondents had read a fatal incident investigation. There was smaller readership for complaint investigation reports, where only 4 in 10 respondents had read a complaint report. This difference is unsurprising considering fatal incident reports are distributed to a number of stakeholders irrespective of whether there are recommendations, whereas complaint reports will only be shared with the establishment if there is a recommendation made.

<sup>6</sup> The survey asks stakeholders about the complaints ‘report’, but respondents may have interpreted this to mean any type of response to the investigation, whether this was a letter or a full report. We will consider amending the phrasing in the next distribution of this survey for additional clarity.

<sup>7</sup> In exceptional circumstances a third party may complain, with consent, on an individual’s behalf, in which case the third party will also be sent the response.



As we would expect, readership of reports depended on whether the respondent had had any involvement in a PPO investigation within the last 12 months (Figure 4.2). Out of those who had no involvement in an investigation, 1 in 5 had read a report. This figure rose to nearly 4 in 5 where there had been involvement in an investigation.



Those that had read reports provided comments and feedback as to their usefulness and whether they had any resulting impact. There were numerous positive comments about the impact investigation reports had on our stakeholders and their establishments. Stakeholders commented that both reports directed towards their own establishment, and also those directed towards others, prompted them to take action. Some commented that they had used the reports which related to other establishments to learn from within their own establishment. Others suggested that reports prompted them to reinforce existing practices, or provided a trigger to evaluate their own processes to ensure they were still effective.

“

*The establishment surveyed prisoners to assess whether they knew how to complain and whether they actually did complain to ensure all procedures are robust and highlighted.*

-Health  
”

“

*I look at these to flag any similar issues that might occur locally so we can mitigate any issues before they arise.*

- Prison  
”

There were also negative views expressed about the impact, or lack of impact, that the investigations had. Some respondents expressed frustration at recommendations that they felt were unrealistic. One individual from the IMB felt that the IMB had not been updated or informed as they would have expected and liked to be. Similar comments were made in response to the 2014 survey. Another respondent expressed frustrations surrounding the PPO’s perceived impartiality during investigations, which again was an issue raised by the 2014 survey.

“

*Individual recs [recommendations] cannot address national and systemic failings so repeating the same recs again and again is pointless.*

-Other  
”

“

*Reports are often flawed as they assume the prisoner is telling the truth and not all staff have been spoken to.*

-Prison  
”

“

*As we do not receive any feedback or information we are working entirely in the dark. This makes any change or improvement for the IMB impossible.*

-IMB  
”

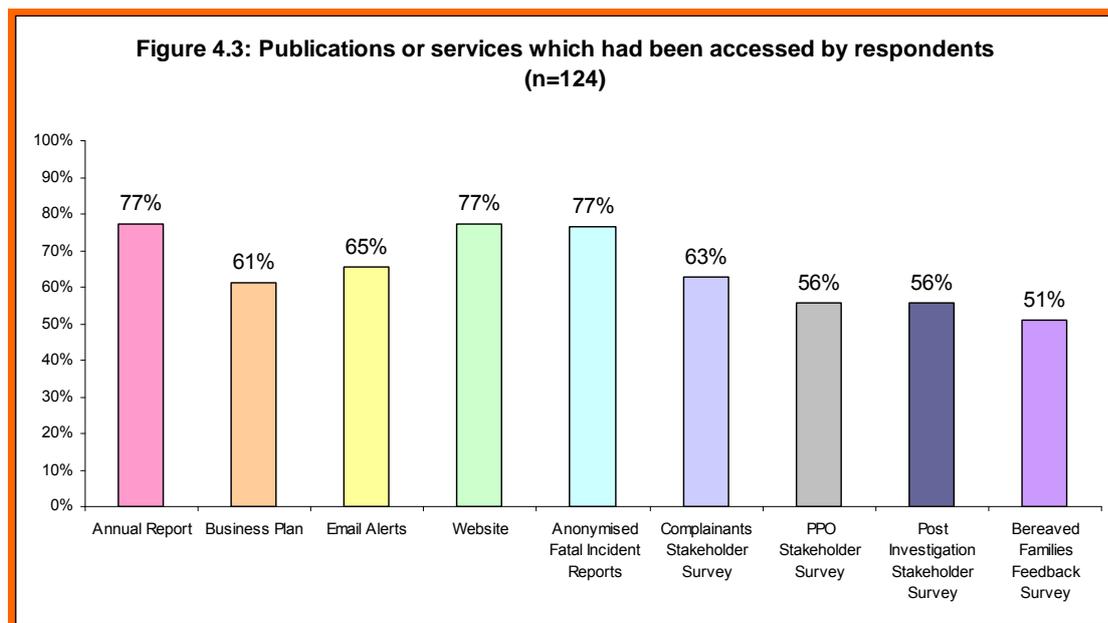
Respondents were asked about whether they had seen or accessed other PPO publications or resources and whether these had been useful. This section differentiated between general publications and resources and the ‘Learning Lessons’ research publications. Of the general publications, the PPO website, annual report and anonymised fatal incident investigation reports were each viewed by over three-quarters (77%) of the total number of respondents who answered the question (Figure 4.3). Of those who had read them, the annual report and anonymised fatal incident reports were

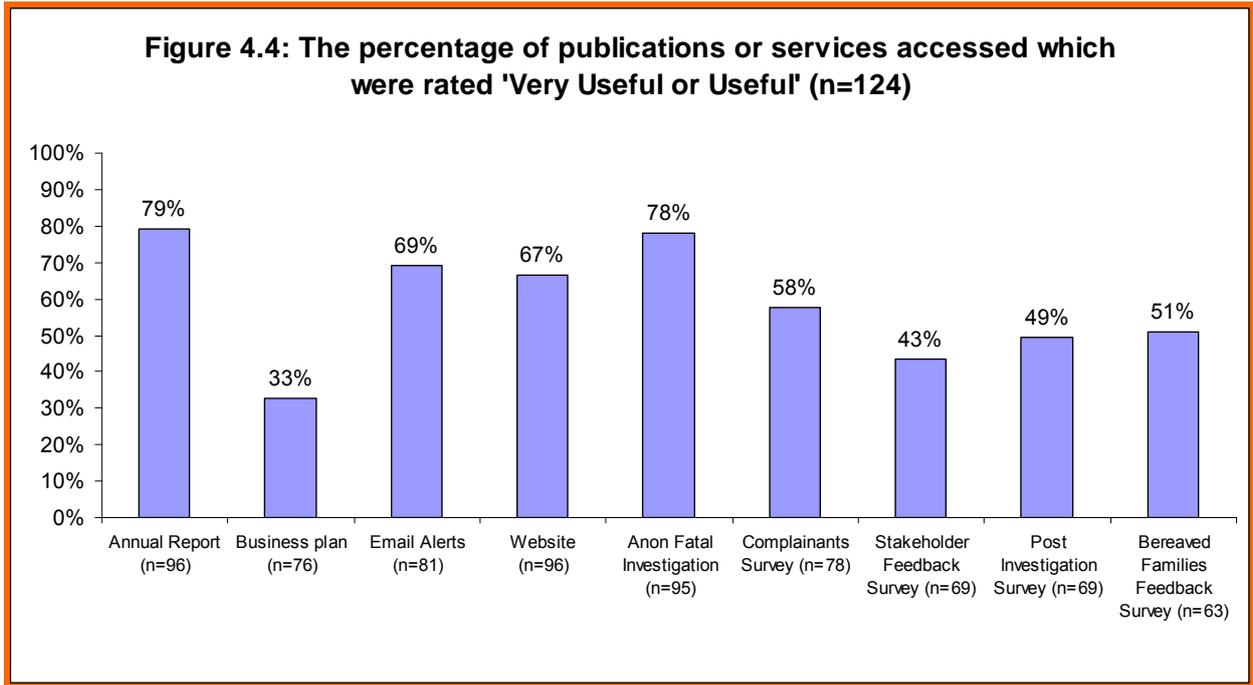
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considered to be to the most useful, with 79% and 78% respectively rating them as 'quite' or 'very useful (Figure 4.4).

The email alerts were accessed (or subscribed to) by 65% of respondents, an increase from 2014 where only 53% of respondents said they had accessed the alerts. This reflects efforts by the PPO to improve our communication with external stakeholders, and provide relevant and timely updates with useful content. More than two thirds (69%) of respondents found the email alerts 'very' or 'quite' useful: an increase from 63% in 2014.

The publications with the lowest readership were the PPO's business plan and our stakeholder survey reports (the results of the complainants' survey, the general stakeholder survey, the post-investigation survey, and the bereaved families' survey). This is perhaps to be expected, as each of these reports are primarily intended to guide the PPO in improving its performance and plans for the future. They are published for reasons of transparency, but their content is likely to be less relevant to respondents than some of our other publications, which provide guidance and learning directed specifically towards our stakeholders. Although the content of some reports may not be as directly relevant, it is encouraging that all of our publications and resources were seen by more than half of respondents.





Comments from stakeholders reinforced the hypothesis that low readership was related to respondents feeling that some publications were not relevant to their establishment or role. There was also a suggestion made by an IMB member that readership may be low for IMB stakeholders due to lack of awareness of the PPO’s work among its members.

“ I think that the work the PPO does is invaluable, it is a shame it is not more well-known

-IMB  
”

“ Most of this list not relevant to my work.

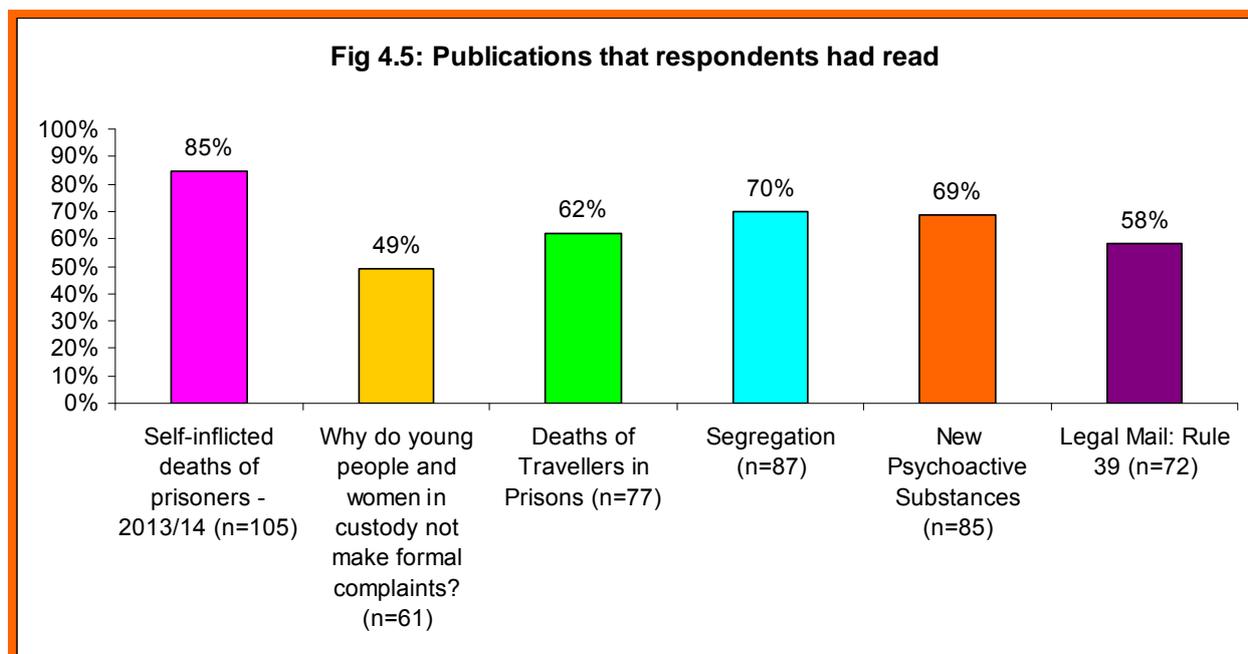
-Other  
”

“ Sorry but the PPO's office is less central to my role [now] than when at an HMP and I have been remiss in keeping up to date

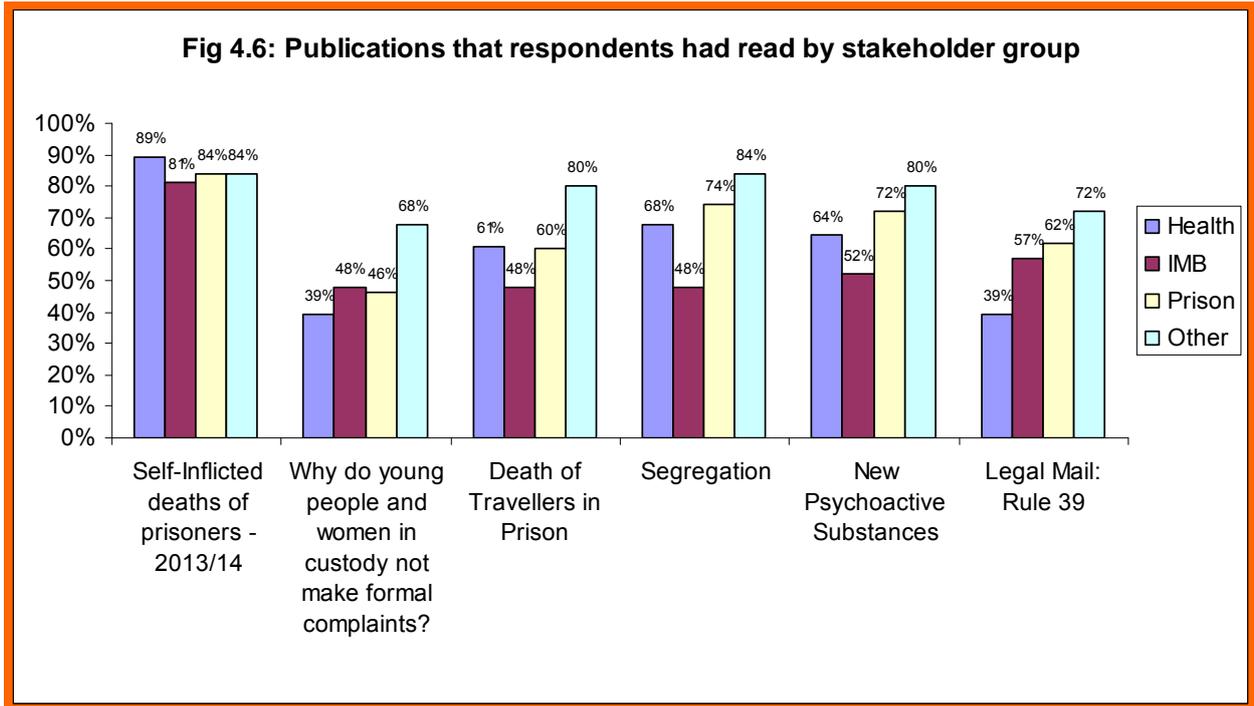
-IMB  
”

The PPO publishes a number of research bulletins and thematic reports which are branded as Learning Lessons publications. These publications are designed to provide collective analysis of the individual investigations undertaken by the PPO and to identify themes and lessons in an accessible way to those working in the sector.

In this survey, respondents were only asked about whether they had accessed the Learning Lessons publications in the previous 12 months. Given the higher number of respondents who were involved in fatal incident investigations in this survey, it is not unexpected that the ‘self inflicted deaths of prisoners’ thematic was the most widely read Learning Lessons publication, with over 4 in 5 people having read it (Figure 4.5). Of those who had read it and gave an opinion it, 96% reported finding it useful. All of the Learning Lessons publications were read by more than half of respondents, with the exception of the thematic on why women and young people are less likely to make complaints to the PPO. Again, low readership was attributed by some participants to the publication not being directly relevant to their line of work, particularly those based in adult male prisons.



The ‘other’ category had the highest readership levels for almost all of the Learning Lessons publications, whereas IMB members were less likely to have read the publications in comparison to the other groups (Figure 4.6). This may be in part a result of IMB members having less awareness of the PPO than other stakeholder groups, as a respondent suggested previously.



“ No involvement with the female and juvenile estate.

-IMB  
”

“ Not within my work area so not seen.

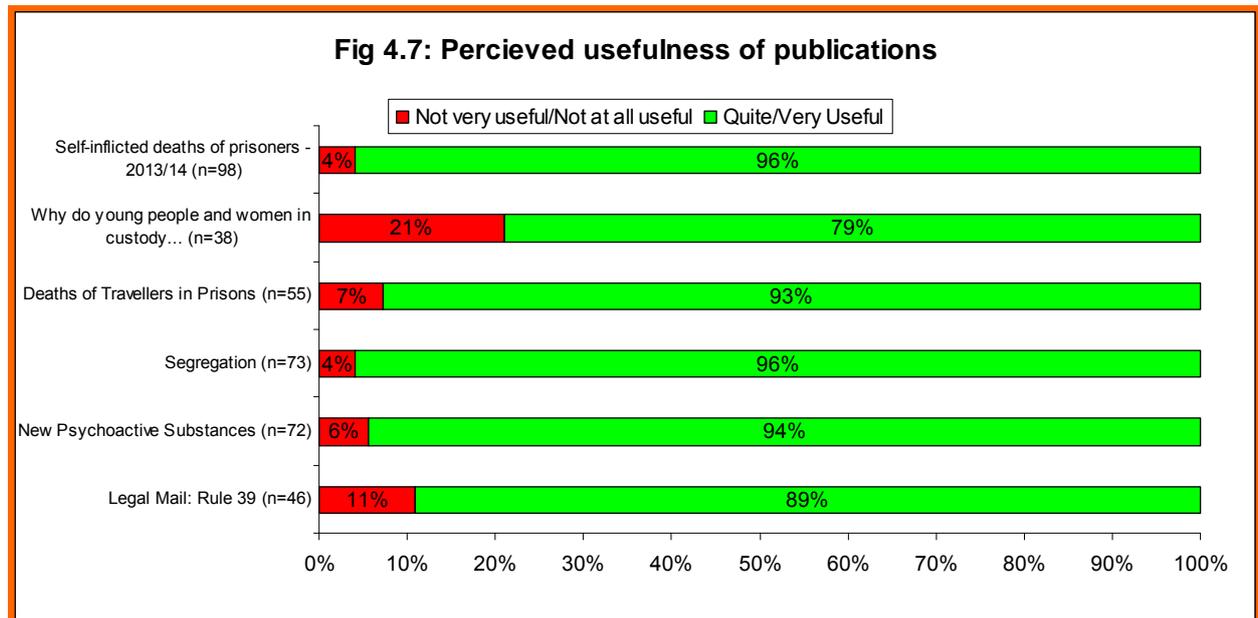
-Prison  
”

“ Because I don't deal directly with women or young people in custody.

-IMB  
”

## PPO Stakeholder Survey 2015-16

The Learning Lessons publications were largely well received, with a considerable majority of those who had read each one finding them to be useful (Figure 4.7).



When asked about the impact of Learning Lessons publications, some respondents identified that they had helped them to increase personal awareness, or that they were used as discussion points in safer custody meetings. Other respondents reported that they had used the publication findings to change or reinforce policy. Where stakeholders elaborated on why they had not seen an impact from the publications, they reported that this was due to finding informal feedback from PPO investigators more beneficial than published reports, or that the publications had not been widely disseminated so were limited in their impact.

“ *The ACCT process has been tightened up.*

-IMB  
”

“ *Helped shaped local practice.*

-Prison  
”

“ *Practice and communication on complaints has improved.*

-Other  
”

“ *Made me more aware of themes.*

-Other  
”

“ *A means of better educating staff and managers.*

-Prison  
”

“ *Used to inform strategy and areas to prioritise.*

-Other  
”

“ *Developed an area-based response to the self inflicted death Learning Lessons.*

-Prison  
”

“ *I always add these to my safer custody meetings and then disseminate to managers and staff so they are kept informed and up to date.*

-Prison  
”

“ *No significant impact, discussion and feedback from PPO investigators and NHS England have been more useful.*

-Health  
”

“ *I have not seen enough for it to have any influence.*

-IMB  
”

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All Learning Lessons publications are published on the PPO’s website. Of the 75 respondents who reported they had viewed the website in the last 12 months, the majority (61%) had done so to access the Learning Lessons publications. One of the key aims of the Learning Lessons publications and the PPO more generally, is to influence change and practice within establishments to promote safer and fairer custody. In order to be able to do this, the lessons need to be widely disseminated and reach as many individuals as possible within the sector.

The PPO has a free mailing list (referred to elsewhere in this report as ‘email alerts’), which individuals can sign up to and be notified when publications are released. This year, respondents were asked if there were any alternative methods that could be used to increase readership and accessibility of the publications. Although many respondents identified that the mailing list subscription was adequate, there were some helpful and interesting views of how to improve readership. Respondents identified that there was a reliance on individuals to forward on the publications, when they could be better shared through regular or formal internal communication methods.

“ Publication on intranet.

-Prison  
”

“ Put on IMB Academy website.

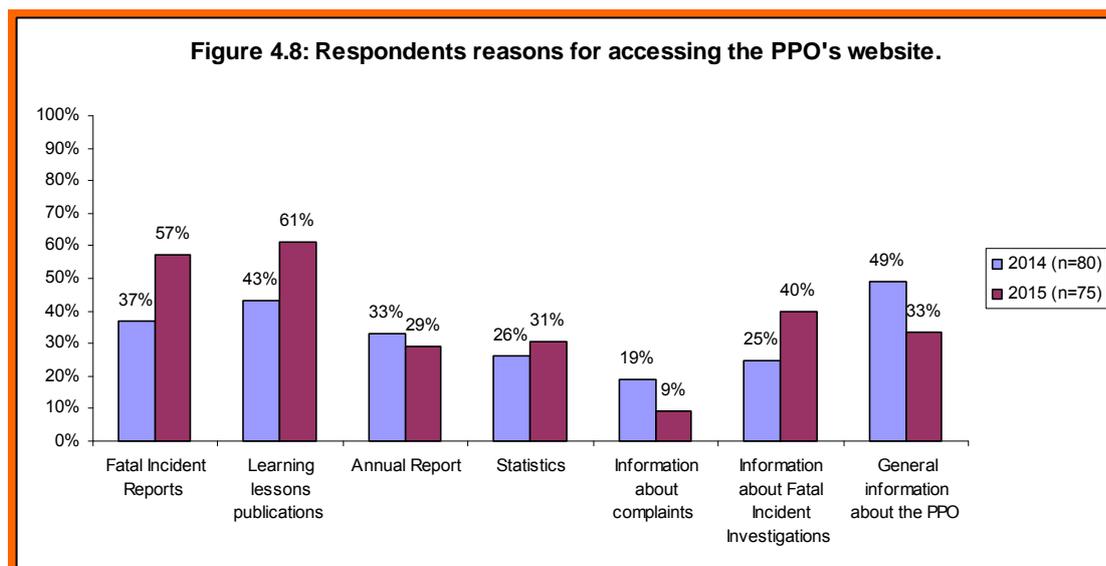
-IMB  
”

“ Send to IMB chairs and/or Secretariat.

-IMB  
”

The PPO’s website was updated in 2015. Efforts were made to make it easier to use, such as the addition of a section to show fatal incident reports uploaded in the past 7 days. The proportion of respondents accessing the website increased in comparison to the previous year, rising from 57% in 2014 to 64% in 2015. Of all those who accessed the website, 88% found it quite or very easy to use in comparison to only 75% the previous year. The remaining 12% reported finding the website difficult to use, commenting that this was due to difficulty navigating the site, incompatibility with software, or difficulty finding the postal address.

As mentioned, the Learning lessons publications were cited most commonly as the reason to access the website (61%), which increased from 43% last year (Figure 4.8). The second most common reason for accessing the website was for fatal incident investigation reports (57%), which increased from 37% in 2014 which may be linked to a change in the respondent profile. It is encouraging that stakeholders appear increasingly likely to use our website as to access the resources available, and we will continue efforts to encourage them to do so.

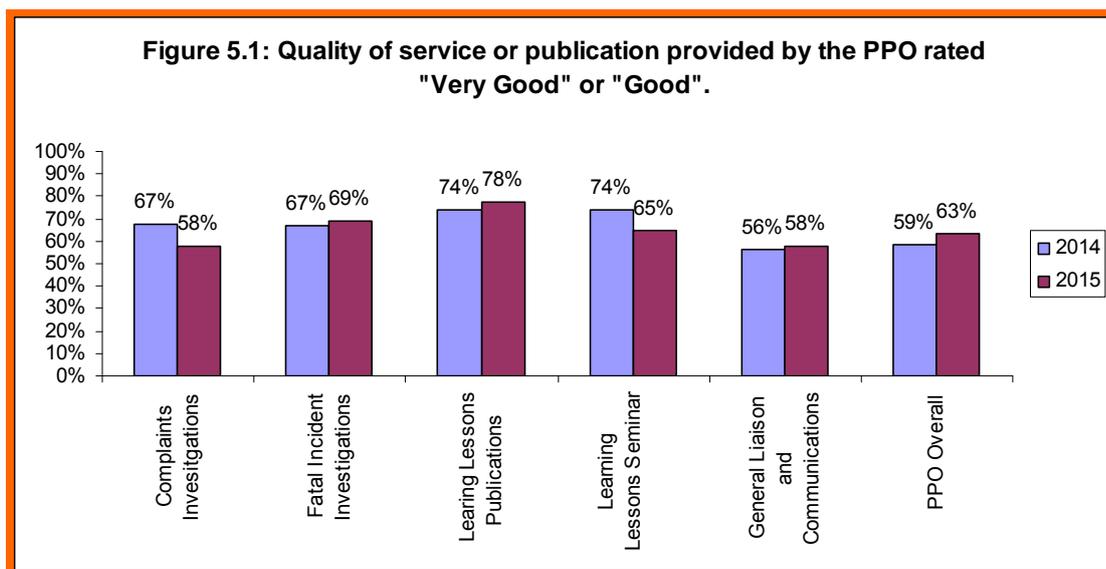


## General quality

The key aim of this survey was to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the PPO. A vital way of measuring this is to gain feedback on the perceived quality of the services we provide and publications we produce. Stakeholders were asked about their perceptions of the PPO’s investigations, publications, and the general communication that they received.

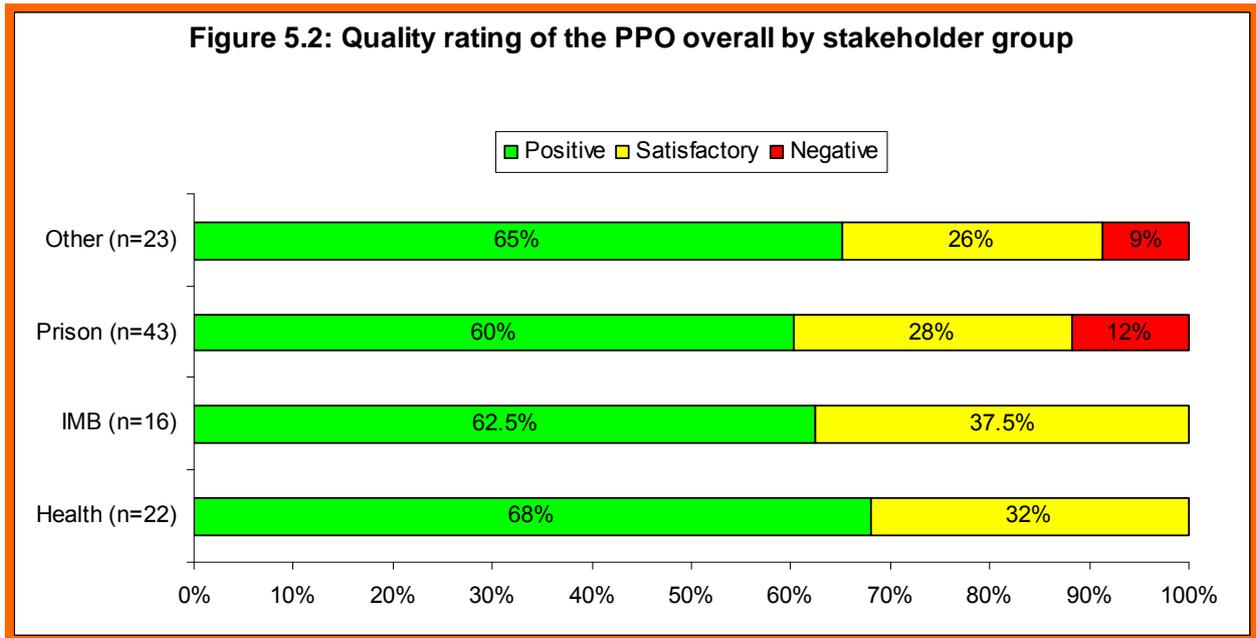
Stakeholders were most positive about Learning Lessons publications. Nearly 4 in 5 people gave them a positive quality rating, and over a third felt they were ‘very good’ (Figure 5.1). Complaint investigations and PPO’s general communications and liaison were rated lower on this scale, however the majority (58%) who had experienced them still rated them ‘good’ or ‘very good’.

More than 3 in 5 (63%) respondents felt the quality of the work and services provided by the PPO overall was ‘good’ or ‘very good’, an improvement from 59% last year. In most areas there was improvement in comparison to the previous year. However, this was not the case for the quality perceptions of complaint investigations or Learning Lessons seminars. Complaint investigations saw the proportion rating them ‘very good’ or ‘good’ fall from 67% in 2014 to 54% in 2015, and the Learning Lessons seminars fell from 74% to 65%.

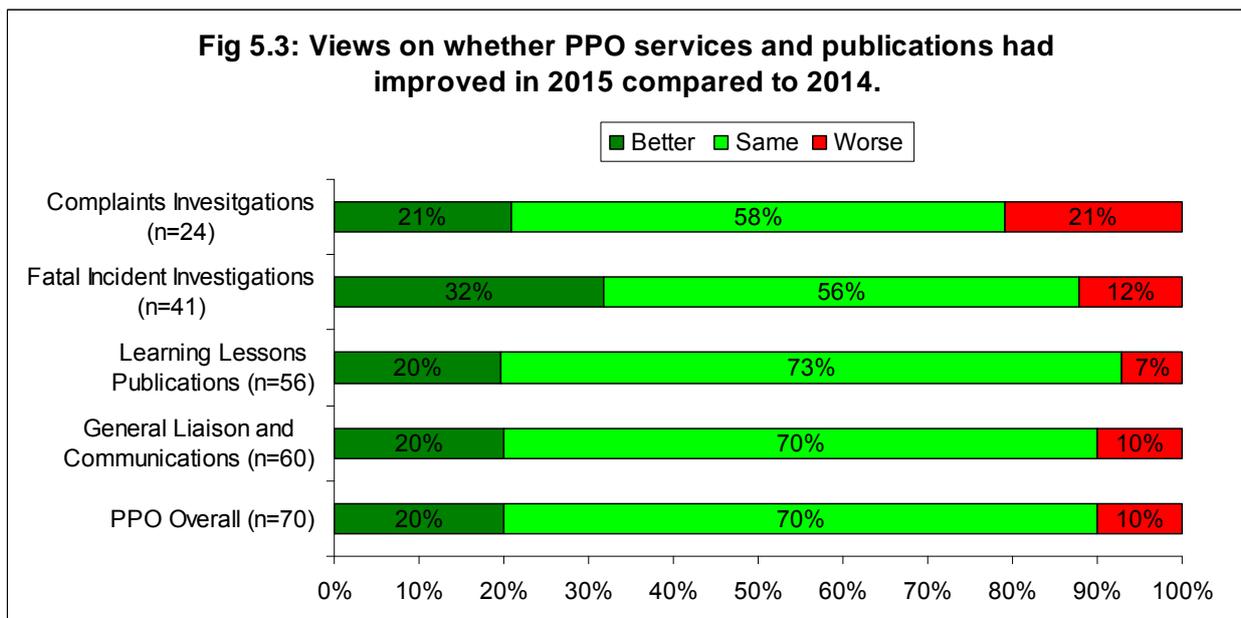


*\*\*Those who had no experience of these services or publications were removed from analysis*

The majority of each stakeholder group positively rated the quality of the work and services provided by the PPO overall. The PPO was not viewed negatively by anyone from the IMB or the health stakeholder groups. The prison sector was the least positive stakeholder group, with 12% viewing overall quality of work and services negatively. Few respondents elaborated on their answers to give some insight into why this stakeholder group viewed the PPO less favourably; among those that did elaborate, it was suggested the PPO’s lack of appreciation for the operational difficulties that prison staff face was a critical factor.



As was the case in several of the other areas, respondents who were able to compare their experiences in 2014 and 2015 were asked to do so. The majority of respondents felt that the quality of services provided had remained the same as last year (Figure 5.3). For all services provided, with the exception of complaint investigations, the proportion of those who felt they had improved in quality in 2015 considerably outweighed those who felt that things had got worse. This is particularly true for fatal incident investigations, with nearly a third of those who had experience of them in 2014 and 2015, reporting that they were better quality in 2015. In comparison, only one in ten people felt that they had deteriorated in quality.



An equal proportion of respondents who were involved in complaint investigations in both years reported feeling there had been an improvement in quality, to those who reported a deterioration. Stakeholders who felt that the quality of complaint investigations had worsened suggested that the reach of the investigation had been too narrow, and certain issues and circumstances were not considered.

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“ *There have been more cases this year in which I have thought that there were issues that were not fully investigated and/or more detail could have been included in the report.*

-Other  
”

“ *On the whole quality is good but just on occasion it is felt that insufficient enquiry has been made of the full facts and circumstances, especially where others outside a prison have been involved in the case*

-Prison  
”

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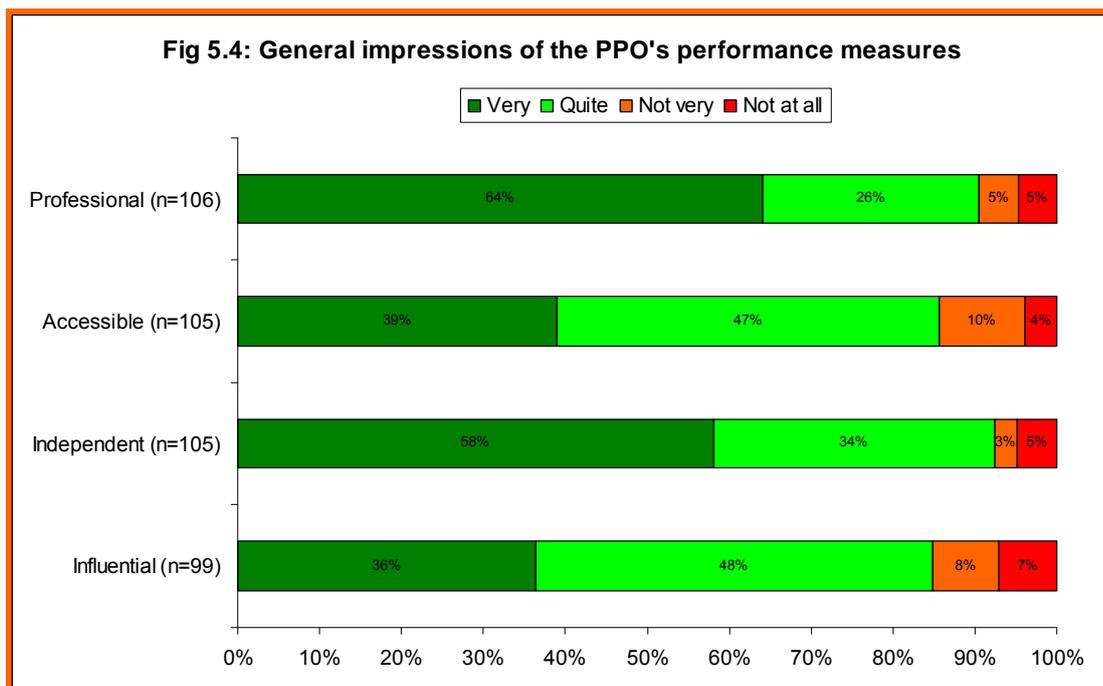
## Performance measures

The PPO has four core performance measures that it seeks to achieve during its investigations and interactions with stakeholders, and to underpin in its publications. The four measures are:

- Professional – operating in a professional manner
- Independent – unbiased, fair and impartial
- Accessible – easy to get in touch with when necessary
- Influential – able to make a difference

As a scrutiny body the PPO prides itself on independence. Maintaining public confidence that the PPO is absolutely independent is a strategic objective for the PPO and has been incorporated into our business plan for several years running. Likewise, the importance of having influence was a prominent theme in our recent Impact Paper, a strategic paper published in 2016 which identified ways the PPO will seek to increase its influence.

At least four fifths of all those who answered rated the PPO positively for these four measures (Figure 5.4). In particular, stakeholders considered the PPO to be independent and professional, with over half the respondents rating the PPO as ‘very’ independent and over two thirds viewing it as ‘very’ professional. There were still some respondents who felt the PPO did not possess these traits, with 8% and 10% respectively considering the PPO was ‘not very’ or was ‘not at all’ independent or professional. The majority of these respondents were from the prison sector.

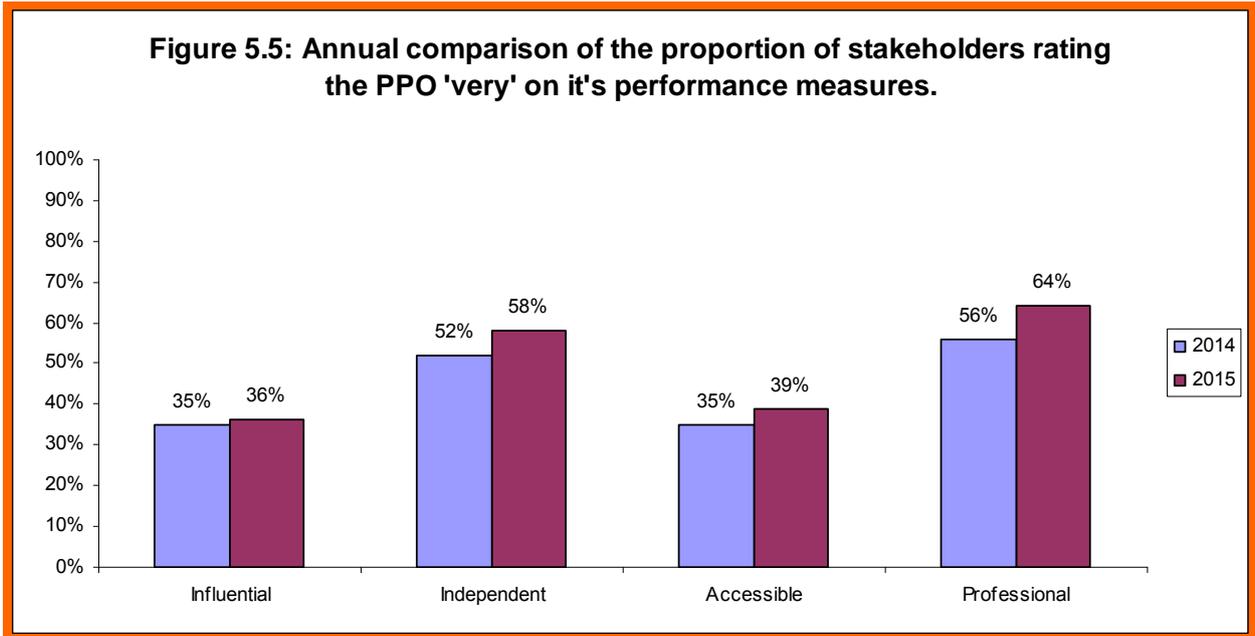


While 90% of stakeholders rated the PPO as being ‘quite’ or ‘very’ professional, this was a decrease in comparison to last year when 94% of the respondents rated the PPO as professional. This change may be a reflection in the change in the respondent profile. One respondent suggested they did not feel the PPO was independent due to what they felt was bias in our investigations.

“ Interviews with PPO always appear independent however when the report is published there are often what I would consider biased judgements which do not seem to fully reflect interviews. Interviewers appear to draw their own biased conclusions from interviews, without expressing this opinion to the interviewee.

-Prison ”

A small decline was also apparent in accessibility ratings. Last year, 89% of stakeholders felt the PPO was ‘quite’ or ‘very’ accessible, compared to 86% this year. Comparing the ‘very’ rating is to the previous year, we see an increase across all four measures in the 2015 results (Figure 5.5). It is encouraging that an increased proportion of stakeholders rate the PPO very highly on these measures, but as there was also an increase in the proportion giving the rating ‘not very’ or ‘not at all’ for some measures, this suggests that there may be some inconsistency with the services provided.



Respondents were asked to speak generally about what the PPO achieved or excelled at in 2015. As has already been discussed, the Learning Lessons publications were highlighted as being useful by respondents. A further theme, also well regarded in 2014, was the approachability and professionalism of PPO staff, especially during fatal incident investigations and interviews:

“ *Professional standards maintained.*

-IMB  
”

“ *Professionally dealing with increases in fatal incidents.*

-Health  
”

“ *Professional when conducting interviews, put staff at ease.*

-Prison  
”

“ *I have found each PPO investigator very approachable and understanding as my team have gathered information as requested.*

-Prison  
”

Praise was also given for the timeliness of reports and responses from the PPO. Again, this was noted in the previous year’s survey as a theme of what the PPO had done well. Individuals identified that communication had been helpful as well as timely:

“ *Notified when opening investigation promptly.*

-Other  
”

“ *Quick to respond to communication from the establishment.*

-Prison  
”

“ *Quicker reports in simple cases.*

-Other  
”

“ *We have very helpful informal dialogue with investigators in a number of cases, and sometimes the findings or recommendations in the initial report have been amended as a result. This willingness to engage with us is very welcome.*

-Other  
”

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However, timeliness and communication were also identified as areas where the PPO could improve. When asked what the PPO could have done better, comments suggested that additional feedback or updates would have been beneficial for many, especially when this related to fatal incident investigations:

“ *It would have been helpful to receive feedback on a more frequent basis on matters of investigation progress and PPO (draft) report progress.*

-Prison  
”

“ *I think there could be more pro-active communication with NOMS ... in cases in which investigations are suspended.*

-Other  
”

“ *More regular communication during complaint investigations.*

-Other  
”

“ *Better communication with site and timeliness of report completions.*

-Prison  
”

“ *Once interviews complete, there was no feedback as to what was happening with the report, or when it was due to be released.*

-Prison  
”

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Communication, or lack of, had been highlighted by IMB respondents throughout the survey. The theme was that IMB members and the PPO should be more collaborative with one another to support prisoners in making complaints and to encourage the implementation of changes within establishments.

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“ [PPO] could have liaised with our IMB better.

-IMB  
”

“ [The PPO could have] enabled feedback to IMBs who have assisted prisoners in making a complaint. This could be a brief upheld/not upheld email to the Board

-IMB  
”

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Another suggested area for improvement related to the recommendations that are made following investigations. Some stakeholders felt they were not relevant or realistic.

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“ Sometimes I think a few of the decisions made seem arbitrary and have challenged them on occasion.

-Prison  
”

“ Cuffing! Our main duty is to "hold in custody" and yet repeatedly we are being told not to cuff on escorts, this is in direct opposites to written instructions from NOMS. I can't please both, so will follow my pay master. This matter needs resolving at the highest level.

-Prison  
”

“ I sometimes think there is pressure on the PPO to make recommendations for the sake of them.

-Health  
”

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## Action Points

The feedback received from our stakeholders is invaluable in helping the PPO review its existing policies and practices and consider how to make them better. The learning points and themes that the stakeholders have raised need to influence future practice and decision making, and contribute to the PPO’s Business Plan for the next financial year. As this data was collected at the end of 2015, there are a number of progressive steps that the PPO has already undertaken. The following action points have been drawn from the findings of the survey:

Action	Outcome	Impact	Delivery Date
Continue to work to improve the timeliness of complaint investigations.	More timely and proportionate individual complaints investigations.	Timely redress for complainant and relevant recommendations for services in remit.	Ongoing
Liaise with IMBs & their secretariat to expand general communications to all IMB members and better distribute Learning Lessons thematics and bulletins.	Develop and enhance the PPO’s relationship with IMBs and ensure that we uphold our commitments as detailed in the Memorandum of Understanding with the IMB.	Effective joint working towards the common goal of fairer and safer custody.	
Improve communications with the IMB chair of an establishment when a fatal incident is opened.			
Review communications with the IMB chair of an establishment when complaints, particularly serious ones, are upheld.			
Find ways of providing generic and anonymous feedback on the outcomes of complaint investigations to the IMB chair.			Trial version by end March 2017
Find ways of providing generic and anonymous feedback on the complaints about the establishment, including both upheld and not upheld cases and those which are not investigated, being either ineligible or not investigated under paragraph 15 exclusions.	Improved learning from complaint investigations. Currently establishments only receive feedback when a complaint is upheld, but they	Better understanding by services in remit of the issues which cause complaints to be made and therefore greater potential for learning from complaints.	Trial version by end March 2017

	may also be able to learn from those which are not upheld.		
Explore better ways to disseminate our learning in order to reach a broader audience. This might include: publicising our Learning Lessons publications on more stakeholder groups' online platforms, and better targeting stakeholder groups directly or through their organisations.			
Trial the provision of regular data capture snapshots to stakeholders about ongoing and completed investigations at their establishment.	Better dissemination of our learning in order to reach a broader audience.	Greater awareness of learning from PPO investigations with demonstrable impact on practice in services in remit	Trial version by end March 2017
Explore use of additional learning tools to accompany Learning Lessons publications, which provide condensed, easy to read information and are aimed at increasing accessibility and readership amongst operational staff.			
Develop mechanisms to identify repeat recommendations, escalate concerns, and make national recommendations where necessary.			
Develop a measure to monitor whether establishments have successfully implementing our recommendations, using feedback about our recommendations gathered by HM Inspectorate of Prisons during their inspections.	More robust ways of ensuring recommendations and learning are translated into action by the services in remit.	Better understanding and monitoring of the PPO's impact, and contribution to safer, fairer custody.	Trialling with HMIP for introduction by Jan 2017

# Appendix

## Method

This year's survey used a combination of 'snowball' and 'convenience' sampling techniques to gather respondents. The reasoning behind this methodology is that we aim for survey participation to be as inclusive as possible, and therefore we make efforts to reach out to stakeholders who we may not currently hold contact details for.

The PPO keeps a database of contacts which includes relevant individuals from the prison estate, Immigration Removal Centres (IRC) and Secure Training Centres. The contacts database also includes the Independent Monitoring Board (IMB) chairs, Coroners, Youth Justice Board senior managers, Community Rehabilitation Company and National Probation Service senior leaders, and Health Care Commissioners, as well as contacts from selected organisations such as HMI Prisons, Inquest, the Prison Reform Trust, and the Howard League for Penal Reform. Prior to the survey launching, there was a concerted effort to increase the number of clinical reviewers that we had contact details for. We were therefore able to contact considerably more clinical reviewers than in previous years.

All database contacts were emailed a link to the online survey. The survey link was also published on the PPO's website and broadcast on the PPO's social media page. Further, it was emailed to all individuals who have subscribed to receive PPO email updates.

A link to the survey was also provided in the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) senior leaders' bulletin which asked prison Governors, Probation Senior leaders, NOMS directors and managers of Approved Probation Services to complete the survey. We also asked them to cascade the survey to their Safer Custody Leads, Heads of Healthcare and staff who had been assigned a PPO liaison role during an investigation.

The methodological approach described has pitfalls as it relies on others to broadcast the survey in order to reach a broad cross-section of our stakeholders. This restricts the reach of this survey and should be taken into account when considering the results. Due to the different methods of survey distribution, it is not possible to identify the total number of potential respondents, and therefore to calculate a response rate. It would be useful to understand how respondents heard about the survey and we will make efforts to collect this information in the next dissemination of the survey.

Survey responses were collected between November 2015 and January 2016. These findings are being reported nearly 12 months after the survey closed because of staff shortages. The views are still useful and valued, but the data provided is not necessarily reflective of current perceptions of the PPO. Some of the concerns raised by the survey are already being address by the PPO, which will be highlighted in the Actions section.

**Prisons &  
Probation**

**Ombudsman**  
Independent Investigations