

## Bereaved family survey – Feedback 2011-13

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### Outline

The Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO) investigates deaths of prisoners, residents of probation Approved Premises, those held in Immigration Removal Centres and those subject to managed escort. One of the key aims of these investigations is to provide explanation and insight for bereaved relatives. In order to do this, Family Liaison Officers (FLOs) contact the next of kin to make them aware of the PPO investigation and guide them through the process, which culminates in a final report.

The PPO routinely collects feedback from its stakeholders to support the delivery of a high quality service to a range of prisoners, their families and those involved in the wider criminal justice system.

The family feedback survey is one of a series of stakeholder focused tools which the PPO uses to support the delivery of a high quality service. The survey is designed to capture the opinions and experiences of bereaved families and to learn lessons to improve future delivery.

The survey was first conducted in 2009 with 56 families responding. This bulletin summarises the responses from a similar number of responses, 59 families, received between March 2011 and April 2013 and compares to the 2009 feedback<sup>1</sup>.

### Family expectations

Families were asked, in an open ended question, what they expected from the investigation. Seven themes emerged (Figure 1), as with 2009, the most frequent was seeking an explanation of the events surrounding the death. Five families stated that they were uncertain what to expect.

**Figure 1: Family expectations of the PPO investigation**

What families hoped to get from the investigation	
Explanation of events	27
Uncertain	5
Identify flaws in care	4
Conclusion/final verdict	4
The 'truth'	2
Confirm correct care was provided	1
Justice	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>

When asked to what extent their expectations had been met, 30 families (out of 55) replied they had been fully (Figure 2), an increase from a third in 2009.

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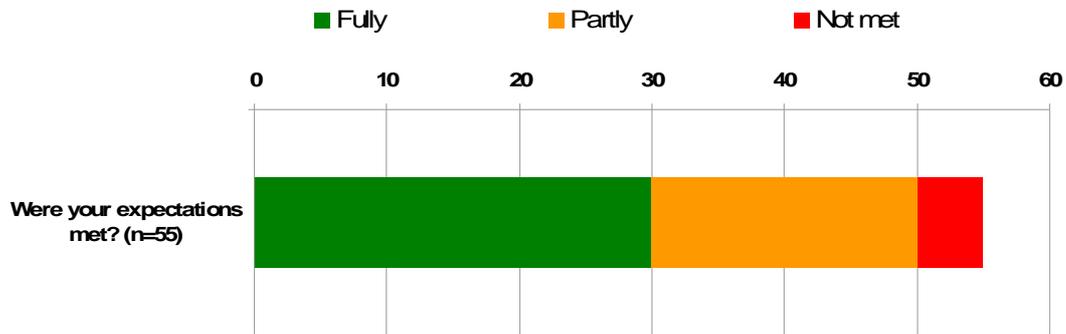
<sup>1</sup> Following 2009, some questions on the survey were updated and reworded. Comparisons of results are made where questions address similar areas of PPO work.

*“We were lead to believe my brother’s death was instant but now we know thanks to the PPO he had been ill for several days”*

However, five families felt their expectations had not been met, with one stating:

*“I think you just went through the motions”*

**Figure 2: Extent family expectations were met**



### Quality of the service and work provided by the PPO

#### a. Family Liaison Officers

FLOs act as the primary contact point for families and play an important role in ensuring families are able to ask questions about the investigation and raise concerns about the report where necessary. The majority of families - 52 out of 57 -rated their FLO as ‘good’ or ‘very good’ (Figure 3) and increase from 45 families (out of 53) in 2009

**Figure 3: How families rated the quality and service from FLO staff**



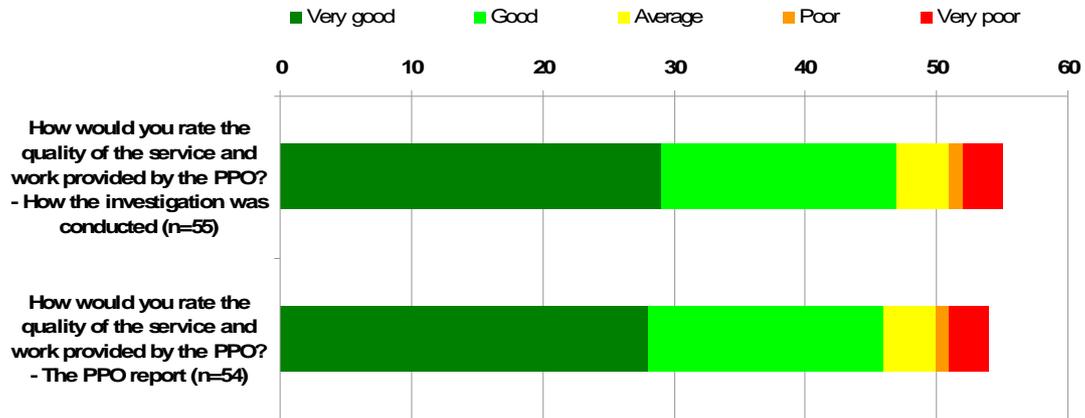
Out of a total of 55 families, 41 felt that the level of contact they received from their FLO was about the right amount both at the start and during the investigation.

*“FLO was courteous and helpful”*

b. The investigation and reports

The majority of families rated the investigation and the final report highly; 47 families rated how the investigation was conducted as above average (Figure 4), a small increase from 2009 (40 families).

**Figure 4: How families rated quality of service and work provided by the PPO during the investigation and in the report**

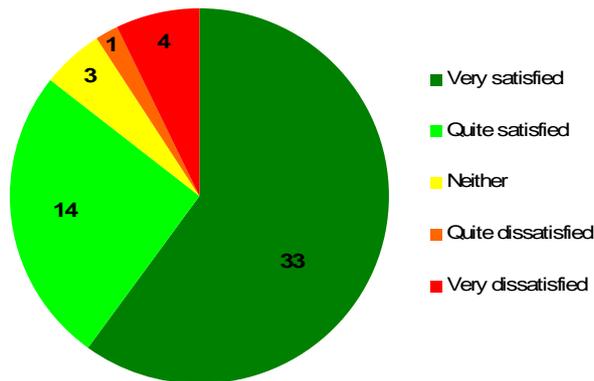


However, three families rated the investigation and report as 'very poor' and were critical of the level of professionalism and thoroughness.

c. Overall satisfaction

Overall satisfaction with the PPO is high with 47 families (out of 55) being 'quite' or 'very' satisfied (Figure 5). This is slightly higher than the 41 (out of 53) families who rated the PPO above average in 2009.

**Figure 5: Overall satisfaction of families with the PPO (n=55)**



Five families stated that they were 'quite' or 'very' dissatisfied with the PPO. They raised concerns around the thoroughness and time taken to complete the investigation.

## What we are doing well

Thirty eight families gave examples of what the PPO had done well. The most common responses were related to the way that the PPO kept them informed (16 families) and the sensitivity/kindness shown by staff members (14 families).

*“Explained all in detail, answered relevant questions I asked”*

*“The telephone calls by [FLO] were informative, she had a very caring and understanding nature and showed much patience”*

Other families also noted that the PPO had investigated thoroughly and acted professionally.

*“Everything was professionally done”*

## Where we can improve

Learning lessons, both internally and externally is critical to the work of the PPO and families were asked where improvements could be made. Thirty eight families responded to the question, twenty six of whom stating that no improvements could be made.

*“Satisfactory and efficient in all aspects”*

Although a substantial number of families had felt that the PPO had kept them well informed, five families felt that more information or contact would have improved their experience of the investigation.

*“More contact between draft and main report”*

*“The man who initially carried out the investigation or the person who continued after him, never contacted me to let me know what was going on, I had to contact PPO myself on numerous occasions.”*

These responses reflect the differences in needs and expectations of families of people who have died in custody.

Other families stated that greater liaison with stakeholders and more thorough investigation would have increased quality:

*“Greater liaison with coroner who threatened to hold inquest ahead of the report. Whilst PPO has no direct influence over coroner, both are part of Justice/Home Office and someone should be able to 'bring them together'.”*

## Lessons learned

### Lesson 1 – Feedback from families is important to the work of the PPO

Family feedback provides insight into the quality of our work. The survey should remain on going to ensure satisfaction and quality remains high.

**Lesson 2 – Overall, families are satisfied with the work and service the PPO provide**

High levels of satisfaction with the investigation and reports were reported by the majority of families.

Many families also expressed thanks for the supportive nature of the PPO and, in particular, the sensitivity and kindness displayed by individual staff. This should be applauded and maintained throughout future investigations.

**Lesson 3 – The PPO can improve by keeping families as up to date as possible**

Although the PPO is recognised by a substantial number of families as keeping them well informed during the course of the investigation, some families felt more could have been done.