

Complaints against police hit record high

► More than 30,000 grievances against the forces received in the past year

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COMPLAINTS AGAINST police officers in England and Wales rose to record levels last year, according to a report released today. The Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) said that 31,259 complaints were made by members of the public in the financial year 2008/09.

It represents an increase of 8 per cent on the previous year. The number of complaints received last year was nearly double the number received in 2003/2004, the year before the IPCC came into existence.

Among the complaints upheld, 46 officers were found to have committed perjury, 11 were found to have indulged in "corrupt practice" and six committed sexual assaults.

The IPCC said the increase may be indicative of greater public awareness of the IPCC in the wake of high-profile investigations that it has carried out, most notably that into the death of Jean Charles de Menezes, the Brazilian shot dead on the Tube by Metropolitan Police officers who mistakenly thought he was a terrorist.

The increase is also said to reflect changes in the way incidents are recorded. Last year, all police forces were required for the first time to record and refer to the IPCC all complaints received, rather than only serious ones.

Of the allegations made, 46 per cent related to perceived rudeness or a "neglect or failure in duty" – officers being slow or ineffective when responding to calls. Another 13 per cent of complaints related to assault. Complaints over the G20 protests on 1 April this year were excluded as they fell just outside the reporting period.

The release of the figures coincides with new data from the 2006/7 British Crime Survey which revealed that more than one in four respondents said their contact with the police had left them "really annoyed". But of

those, only one in 10 made a complaint.

The IPCC chairman, Nick Hardwick, said: "At a time when politicians and the police are debating public confidence in the police and how to make them more accountable, the complaint figures published today give a strong indication of what the public want sorted out. The public recognise the police have a difficult job to do. However, this does not alter the fact that they expect officers to do their job politely and efficiently. These statistics show that when it is not done in this manner, they are likely to complain."

Of the 43 police forces in England and Wales, 25 reported an increase in complaints on last year, while 17 saw a decrease. One force, Dyfed-Powys in Wales, saw no change. Lincolnshire saw the biggest increase in complaints, up 46 per cent. Staffordshire saw the largest drop, down 24 per cent. Compared to 2003/04, the number of complaints rose by 97 per cent last year. Every force in England and Wales saw an increase, with the biggest in West Mercia, up 200 per cent.

The number of complaints upheld remained relatively static at 10 per cent, compared to 11 per cent last year and 12 per cent in 2003/04.

Mr Hardwick said the increase in complaints "reflects growing confidence in the system and more consistent complaint recording standards.

be occasions where we do not always get it right. When we get it wrong we should recognise the facts quickly, encourage debate and be willing to listen to the views of those who wish to engage in the policing debate and learn more from them."

Simon Reed, the vice-chairman of the Police Federation, which represents frontline officers, said: "These complaints not only reflect the increasing pressures on police officers but also highlight the need to invest in appropriate training for officers."

8%

Average rise in number of complaints against police in England and Wales

We want to make sure all sections of society have confidence."

The Association of Chief Police Officers spokesman chief constable John Feavours said: "Inevitably there will



Police complaints by constabulary

