

Report to:	QSMTM
Report by:	Margaret Keyse
Meeting Date:	25 April 2018
Subject/ Title: (and VC no)	Quality Assurance Monitoring Report (Investigations) (VC101350)
Attached Papers (title and VC no)	

Purpose of report

1. To report to QSMTM on the lack of quality assurance work carried out in relation to investigations over the last six months.

Recommendation and actions

2. I recommend that QSMTM:
 - (i) notes the content of the report
 - (ii) agrees that this report be published.

Executive summary

3. For the past few years, we have carried out quality assurance work in relation to investigations. The work is time consuming and complex. In line with the procedures (VC60483), at least five cases should be assessed each month against a number of criteria (26 for substantive cases and 10 for failure to respond cases). This involves checking the hard and electronic copies of the files as well as Virtual Cabinet.
4. On 2 November 2017, I submitted a report to QSMTM which looked at the assessment work which had been carried out in the first half of 2017/18 (VC94705). In that report, I noted that, as a result of a lack of resources, only 15 cases had been assessed against a target of 30.
5. It proved to be even more difficult over the second half of 2017/18 to find time to carry out quality assessment work on investigations. I am therefore having to report to QSMTM that no cases were assessed during the second half of the year. SMT are already aware of this fact and agreed, as part of the work on the Operational Plan 2018/19, that I should review our existing quality assurance arrangements with a view to introducing a simpler, but smarter, assurance programme.
6. It should be noted that the aim of the assessment work is to ensure that internal procedures are being complied with. It is not to check that the correct decision was made in any one case. Consequently, while it is unfortunate that no assessment work has been carried out over the past six months, there has been little risk to the organisation.

Risk impact

7. The quality assurance procedures are designed to ensure that investigations are carried out in line with the Investigations Handbook and are carried out to a high standard. As such, the fact that no assessment work has been carried out could have had a negative impact on risk

1 in the 2018/19 operational risk register: *If case journey times, from validation, are not in line with standards and targets set, &/or are reduced at the expense of quality and technical robustness, the SIC may come under closer scrutiny and criticism from stakeholders, undermining confidence in the way applications are processed and the way in which the SIC is managed.*

8. However, I consider this impact to have been very low, given that the focus of the quality assessment work is compliance with procedures, not on ensuring that the correct decision is made. It should also be noted that the principal KPIs have been met by the Enforcement Team.

Equalities impact

9. Quality assurance work allows us to ensure that investigations are carried out professionally and objectively, regardless of the applicant. It also allows us to highlight and share good practice in our work with those who share protected characteristics.

Resources impact

10. It is the impact of the assessment work on resources which has caused difficulties over the past six months and a decision had to be made to prioritise other work over the quality assessment work.
11. New procedures will be introduced later this year. These will have less impact on our resources.

Operational/ strategic plan impact

12. As noted above, in line with the Operational Plan 2018/19, a review of the way quality assessment work is carried out will be undertaken.

Records management impact (including any key documents actions)

13. None arising from this report.

Consultation and Communication

14. None.

Publication

15. I recommend that this committee report is published in full.