



Meeting	SPA Complaints and Conduct Committee
Date	5 June 2025
Location	Video Conference
Title of Paper	Police Scotland Professional Standards Department Quarterly Performance Report (Q4 – 24/25)
Presented By	Assistant Chief Constable Lynn Ratcliff and Chief Superintendent Helen Harrison, Professional Standards Department.
Recommendation to Members	For Discussion
Appendix Attached	Appendix A – Performance Report (Q4 – 24/25) Appendix B – Misconduct Outcomes Appendix C – The Standard

PURPOSE

To report to Members of the SPA Complaints and Conduct Committee, for the purposes of noting, statistical information on the overarching performance activity in relation to complaints and conduct matters about members of Police Scotland for period (1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025).

Members are invited to discuss the content of this report.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The attached performance report provides data relating to the period ending Quarter 4 (1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025).

Data contained in this report is management information and is correct as at 22/04/2025, unless elsewhere specified.

2. FURTHER DETAIL ON THE REPORT TOPIC

- 2.1 There are no further details on this report.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are no financial implications in this report.

4. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The nature of the matters reported inevitably leads to implications for both individual and wider personnel matters. These are considered on a case-by-case basis to ensure welfare, conduct and both individual and organisational learning opportunities are identified and addressed.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no legal implications in this report.

6. REPUTATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 As per Item 4.1, each case is assessed for individual and organisational reputational risks and implications and appropriate action taken.

7. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The nature of the data reported in this paper is related to complaints about the police and conduct matters. By its very nature, the subject matter implies a level of negative social, community and equalities impact. By addressing the individual matters and thereafter considering holistically that which has been

reported, Police Scotland seeks to mitigate the negative impact of those cases reported.

8. COMMUNITY IMPACT

8.1 As per 7.1 above.

9. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

9.1 As per 7.1 above.

10. ENVIRONMENT IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no environmental implications in this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are invited to discuss the content of this report.



Professional Standards (PSD) SPA Performance Report - Quarter 4 of 2024/25

Meeting Date: 05 June 2025

PSD - Summary of Preventions Activity

PREVENTIONS AND PROFESSIONALISM PROGRAMME

The Preventions and Professionalism Tactical and Operational Groups continue to meet on a bi-monthly basis to drive prevention activities aligned to the themes and trends identified through complaint and conduct investigations.

Momentum continues with the online prevention engagement sessions with first- and second-line managers. The most recent session focussing on the conduct process, how they are assessed and the range of outcomes available. The session in May focused on PSD Gateway Unit, SI Dept & touch on Death & Serious Injury following Police Contact. Learning from these sessions is augmented through publication of the Standard Newsletter. An Ethical CPD Event is being arranged for 19th August 2025. Inputs will focus on Ethical Policing relating to Death & Serious Injury following Police Contact, Post Incident Procedures and an update to attendees on the introduction of PECSS and Duty of Candour.

The Youth Ethics Advisory Panels, facilitated by the Scottish Youth Parliament, attended at a National Ethics Meeting and presented a recently discussed dilemma on the use of AI within promotion applications. This was a request from various forces in England & Wales who are considering establishing their own youth panels and sought engagement with Police Scotland's YEAP. Ongoing work to present ethical dilemmas at various Ethics Advisory Panels. Discussion and feedback from these panels will be used to inform policy and decision making.

THE STANDARD NEWSLETTER AND PUBLICATION OF MISCONDUCT OUTCOMES

The ninth Misconduct Outcomes edition were published in May 2025. Engagement with Line Managers and Senior Management Teams by PSD form part of business as usual and encourages the use of these products to generate discussion at team briefings to further reinforce preventions messaging and learning.

The eighth edition of The Standard newsletter was published in May 2025 and is attached at Appendix C of this report. This addition looks at the conduct process, assessments & potential outcomes, as well as some examples of breaches of the Standards of Professional Behaviour.

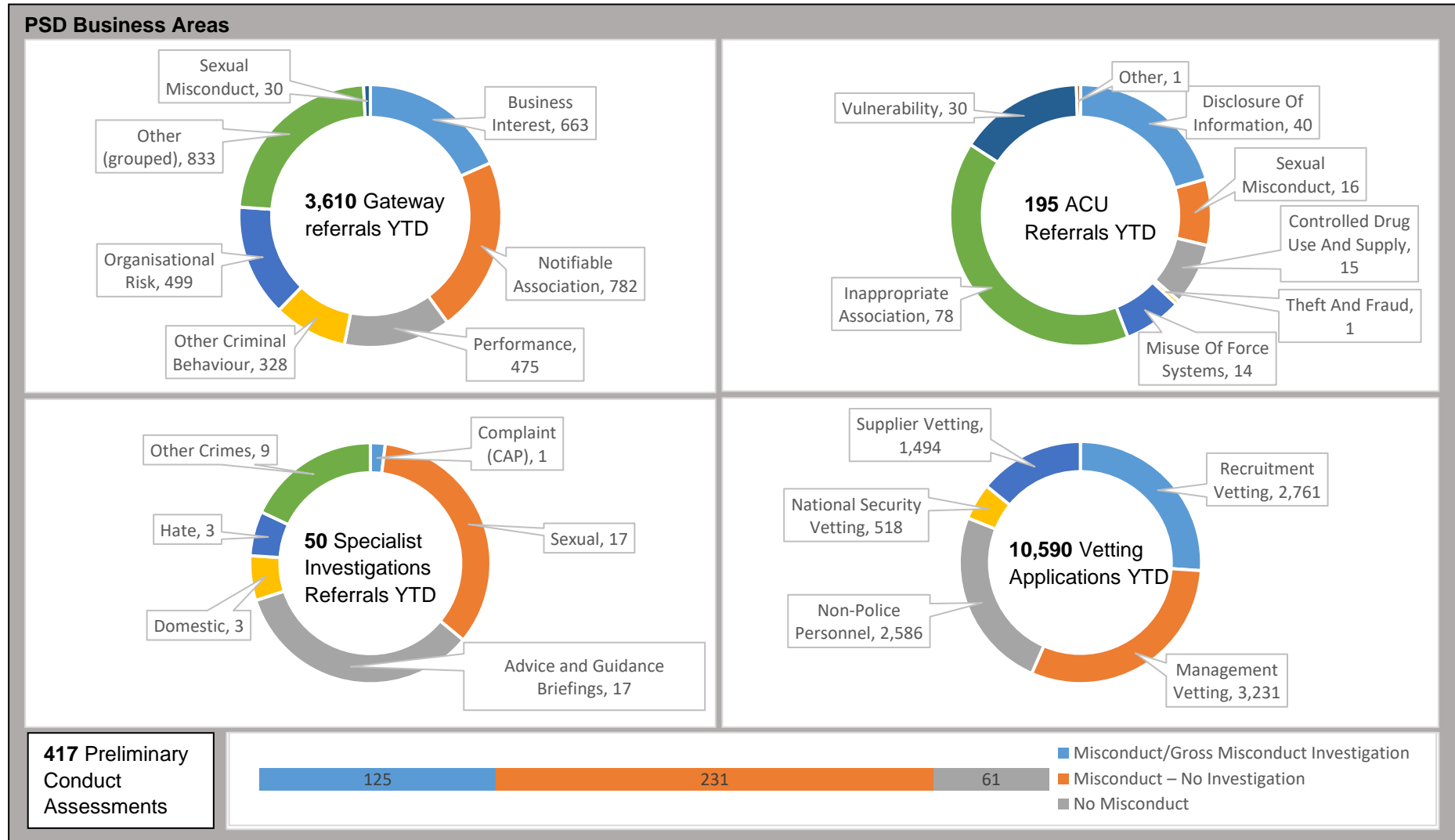
PIRC/PSD TRAINING EVENT

Practitioner meetings with PSD and PIRC continue to take place to ensure learning and improvement remains ongoing. Learning from Compliant Handling Reviews (CHR) continues to be captured and shared forcewide through regular engagement with local and national divisions.

PIRC/PSD Liaison event is scheduled for 24th September 2025 at SPC. No agenda has been confirmed at this time and engagement to confirm content for both parties.

PSD Learning and Development continuously work closely with probationer training to evaluate and continuously improve understanding of the Standards of Professional Behaviour and embed learning in everyday practice.

PSD Service Delivery Dashboards



PSD Service Delivery Dashboards

Complaint Monitoring

(*Further details held within main body of the report)

Complaints Received, by
Financial Year (from 2019/20)

6,637

-9.0% from 2023/24

-2.5% from five-year avg.

Allegations Received, by
Financial Year (from 2019/20)

11,099

-9.0% from 2023/24

-10.0% from five-year avg.

Excessive Force

672 (+119)

Increased volume compared to the five-year average linked to North East, Ayrshire and Greater Glasgow.

Discriminatory Behaviour

165 (+39)

Increased volume compared to the five-year average, linked to Race.

49.6%

Complaints
Frontline Resolved
(FLR) 2024/25

Service Delivery

13.1%

Non Criminal (not FLR)
complaints closed YTD
within 56 days

92.1%

Frontline Resolved
(FLR) complaints
closed within 56 days

83.0%

Implementation of CHR
learning points

87.1%

Statutory Referrals YTD –
No Investigation by PIRC

57.9%

Assault referrals YTD
(assessed) – No
Investigation by PIRC

342

Statutory Referrals YTD

347

Assault Referrals YTD

62.3%

CHR Allegations YTD
assessed as being handled
to a reasonable standard

15.9%

Allegations closed YTD
resulted as upheld

PSD Service Delivery Dashboards – Executive Summary

- A total of **6,637** complaints were received during 2024/25 YTD (-9.0% decrease from the PYTD and -2.5% decrease against the five-year average).
- **49.6%** were Frontline Resolved (FLR), a decrease from the PYTD rate of **51.7%**.
- **129** CHRs were received YTD, with **62.3%** of allegations reviewed found to be handled to a reasonable standard (+3.2% from PYTD).
- Approximately **1.9%** of complaints reported are subject of CHR.
- **342** statutory referrals were made to PIRC, a **14.0%** increase from the PYTD. Of these, **87.1%** resulted in no investigation by PIRC.
- A total of **87** Police officers were suspended and a further **113** subject to duty restrictions at the conclusion of Q4 YTD, with **15** members of Police staff also suspended at this time.
- **34** misconduct hearings in respect of Gross Misconduct were scheduled YTD with **8** dismissals, **1** required to resign and **8** formal warnings issued. A further **15** allegations were concluded with resignation prior to a hearing. The remaining **2** hearings were concluded as no misconduct, with no action taken.

Complaints Received

6,637 complaints were received YTD, -9.0% from the PYTD and -2.5% decrease from the five-year average. Complaints YTD are at a reduced level, affirmed by this volume sitting within the upper and lower confidence limits (i.e. 95 times out of 100 the number of complaints YTD will range between 6,523 and 7,040), based on the current YTD and the prior five year-to-date periods.

- 3,293 complaints (49.6%) were Frontline Resolved (FLR), compared with 51.7% PYTD.
- 26.9% were Non-Criminal (1,787), 11.5% Abandoned (761), 5.0% Withdrawn (333), 0.7% Ongoing (47), 0.0% not relevant complaint (3) plus 6.2% Criminal (413).

North Command

- 1,520 complaints received YTD, -11.4% from PYTD and -6.0% against the five-year average.
- Decreases are noted across all territorial divisions in the North, compared to the PYTD and the five-year average. Those divisional YTD volumes sit within confidence limits, except Tayside which sits below confidence limits. Allegations of Excessive Force in North East division are however an increase of note (+28 from PYTD; +34 from the five-year average).

East Command

- 1,956 complaints received YTD, -11.9% on the PYTD and -7.4% against the five-year average.
- All territorial divisions have registered decreases against the PYTD and the five-year average. Those divisional volumes sit below confidence limits, except Fife which sits within the limits.

Chart 1: Complaints Received, by YTD Period

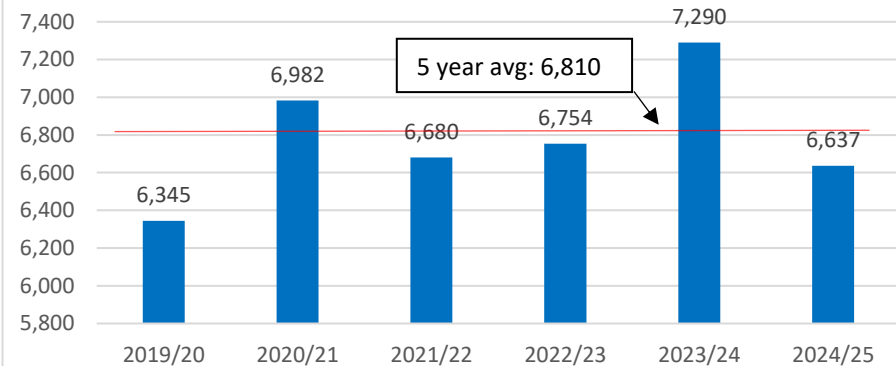
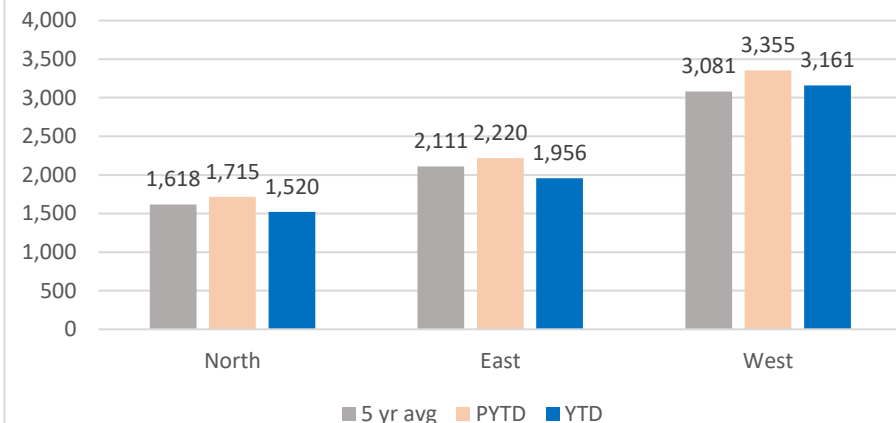


Chart 2: Complaints Received, by Command Area and Period



Complaints Received (continued)

West Command

- 3,161 complaints received YTD, -5.8% from PYTD and +2.6% against the five-year average. This is impacted by increases in Greater Glasgow (+48) and Ayrshire (+29) from the five-year average. Although Greater Glasgow sits above the confidence limits, Ayrshire sits within those.
 - In Greater Glasgow, Discriminatory Behaviour (+5 from PYTD, +21 from five-year average) and Excessive Force (+25 from PYTD, +16 from five-year average) influence the divisional increase. Irregularity in Procedure subtypes 'Provide insufficient explanation regarding police procedures' (+20), and 'Road Traffic Procedures' (+14) also rose from the five-year average.
 - The increase in Ayrshire is most influenced by Irregularity in Procedure (+4 from PYTD, +25 from five-year average), Excessive Force (+23 from PYTD, +21 from five-year average) and Incivility (+30 from PYTD, +20 from five-year average). Irregularity in Procedure allegation sub types of 'Officer did not provide name or shoulder number' (+8) and 'Custody Procedures/Care of Prisoners' (+6) also increased compared against the five-year average.

As seen in Chart 3, complaint volumes have spiked during Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 YTD, similar to the previous spike in complaints received during those same quarters during 2023/24. Complaint volumes have decreased in subsequent quarters of the YTD.

- Further analysis comparing YTD rates of complaint per employee headcount identified variance across territorial divisions, ranging from 42 to 58 complaints per 100 employees.
 - The rates for Specialist divisions are low by comparison (ranging from 2 per 100 employees in Corporate Services and Specialist Crime Division, to 16 per 100 employees in C3).

Chart 3: Complaints Received, by Quarter (latest eight quarters)

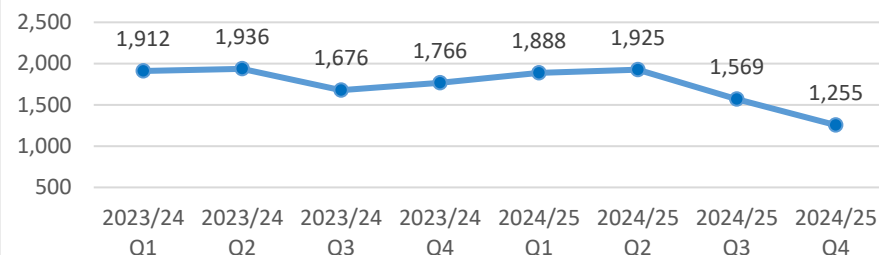
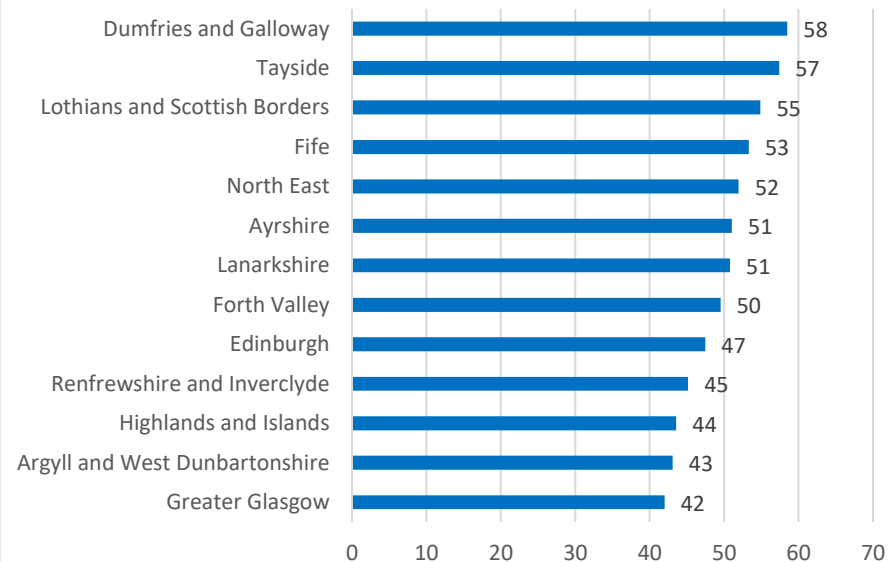


Chart 4: Complaints per 100 employees, by Division



Emerging Trends

- Discriminatory Behaviour allegations have increased from the PYTD (+4 allegations) and, most notably, the five-year average (+39 allegations), with 165 received YTD. The increase from the five-year average is chiefly linked to allegations with a Race sub type (+10 from PYTD, +33 from the five-year average), with 101 allegations received YTD. This category was previously identified as being at an increased level during 2023/24. Greater Glasgow primarily influences the race sub type increase YTD (+6 from PYTD, +16 from the five-year average). Lower volume increase was also registered in Lanarkshire (+7 from PYTD, +7 from the five-year average).
 - A low volume increase in the Faith sub type was also identified, with 8 allegations received YTD (+5 from PYTD, +5 from the five-year average). This is influenced by an increase in Renfrewshire and Inverclyde (+4 from PYTD, +4 from the five-year average).
- Excessive Force allegations have increased from the PYTD (+127) and the five-year average (+119), with 672 received YTD. This is influenced by increases in North East (+28 from PYTD, +34 from five-year average), Ayrshire (+23 from PYTD, +21 from five-year average) and Greater Glasgow (+25 from PYTD, +16 from five-year average). This is supplemented by increases at lower volume across seven other divisions, when compared against the five-year average.
- Although Incivility allegations sit below the five-year average (-68), these have increased notably from the PYTD (+50). This remains the second highest volume allegation type nationally, with a total of 1,837 allegations received YTD. Although Greater Glasgow registered the highest volume increase from the PYTD (+36), it is assessed that the increases in C3 (+20 from PYTD, +45 from five-year average) and Ayrshire (+30 from PYTD, +20 from five-year average) are of most significance.
- Policy/Procedure - Policing Policy allegations have also increased, with 173 allegations received YTD (+42 from PYTD, +47 from five-year average).

Chart 5: Discriminatory Behaviour Allegations, by Sub Type and Period

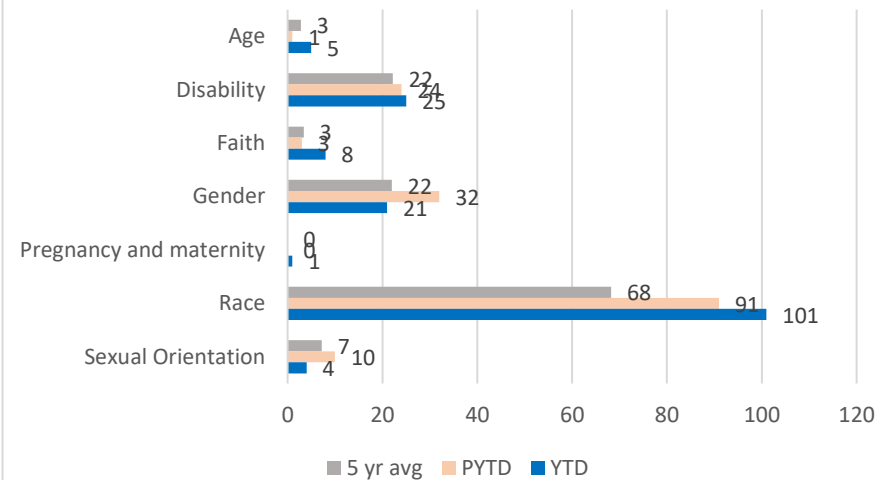
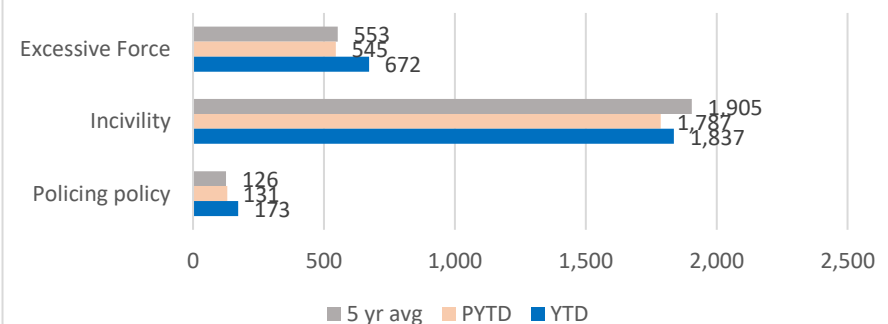


Chart 6: Allegations Received, by Type (selected) and Period

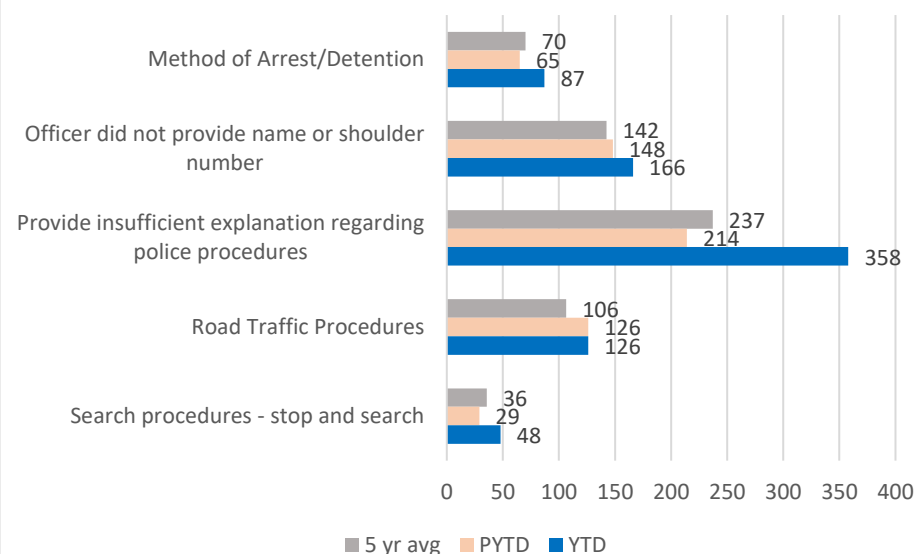


Emerging Trends (continued)

average). Although the increase relates to Lanarkshire, North East and Tayside, these allegations are recorded against the organisation and not regarding the inactions/inactions of subject officers in these divisions.

- Irregularity in Procedure - Provide insufficient explanation regarding police procedures allegations have increased from the PYTD (+144) and the five-year average (+121), with 358 received YTD. This increase is widespread, with 13 divisions registering increases against the five-year average. The highest volume of those are in Greater Glasgow (+20), plus Lothians and Scottish Borders (+18).
- Irregularity in Procedure - Officer did not provide name or shoulder number allegations have also increased from the PYTD (+18) and the five-year average (+24), with 166 received YTD. The highest volume divisions influencing this are Ayrshire (+9 from PYTD, +8 from the five-year average), Fife (+4 from PYTD, +5 from the five-year average) and North East (+3 from PYTD, +5 from the five-year average).
- Irregularity in Procedure – Road Traffic Procedures allegations show no variance from the PYTD (+0) but has increased from the five-year average (+20), with 126 received YTD. This is primarily linked to Greater Glasgow (-5 from PYTD, +14 from the five-year average).
- Irregularity in Procedure – Method of Arrest/Detention allegations have increased from PYTD (+22) and the five-year average (+17), with 87 received YTD. Increases were identified across 7 divisions, the highest of which was Greater Glasgow (+10 from PYTD, +6 from the five-year average). The remainder are closely matched, ranging from an additional 1 to 4 allegations increase from the five-year average.
- Irregularity in Procedure - Search procedures - stop and search allegations have increased from the PYTD (+19) and the five-year average (+12), with 48 received YTD. Linked to low volume increases in Greater Glasgow (+6 from PYTD, +4 from the five-year average), plus Highlands and Islands (+7 from PYTD, +3 from the five-year average).
- A total of 133 allegations attached to 94 separate complaints related to the use of Stop and Search by Police Scotland officers were received during the YTD. These represent a low volume in the context of the overall number of Stop and Search incidents recorded (33,020 noted at year-end 2023/24, therefore averaging around 8,255 per quarter). Relevant statistics are routinely included the Quarterly Policing Performance Report. These are also reported monthly to the Violence, Disorder & Anti-Social Behaviour Strategic Meeting and bi-annually to the Stop Search Mainstreaming and Assurance Group.

Chart 7: Irregularity in Procedure Allegations (selected), by Sub Type and Period



Emerging Trends (continued)

A breakdown of the 11,099 allegations received YTD, by type, are summarised here in Chart 8.

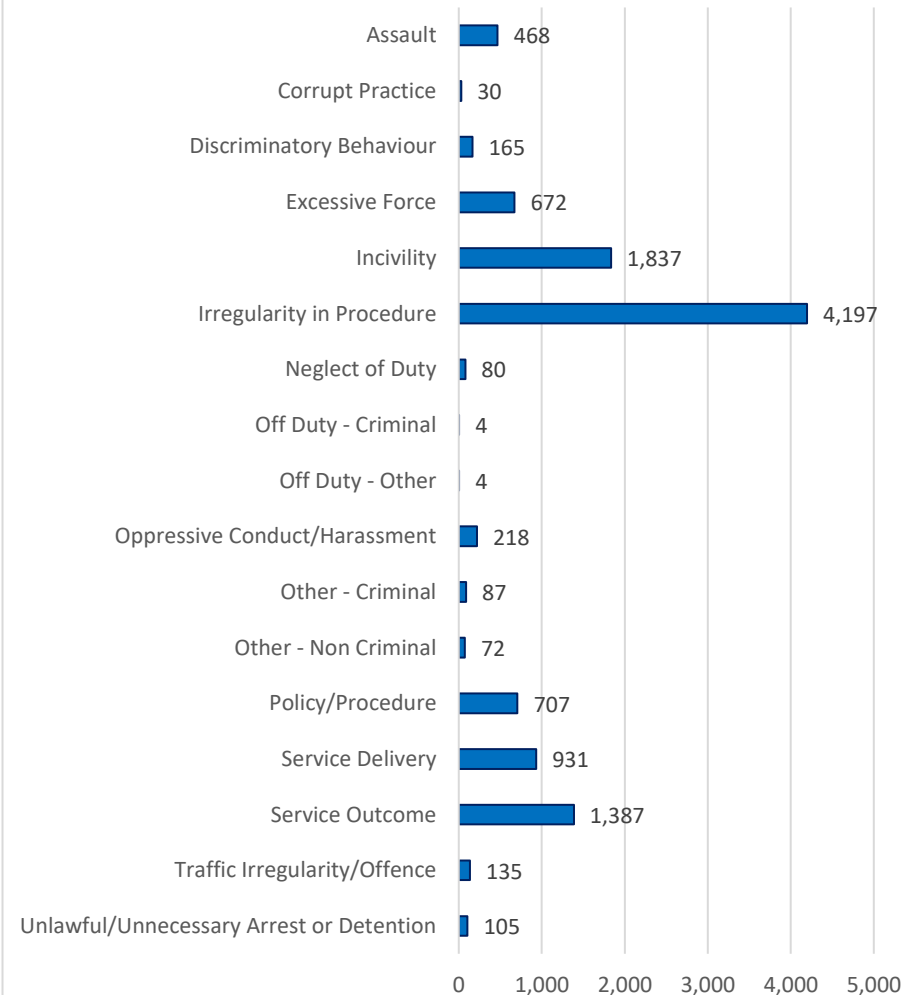
Moreover, the allegation type of Irregularity in Procedure involves a further nineteen sub types. The highest volume of those are detailed below:

- Insufficient Enquiry carried out (879).
- Other (737).
- Provide insufficient updates to the complainer (473).
- Custody Procedures/Care of Prisoners (415).
- Provide insufficient explanation regarding police procedures (358).

Quality of Service allegations also involve several sub types, with the highest volume of those listed below:

- Service Outcome – Lack of satisfaction with action taken (947).
- Service Delivery – Type of Response (537).
- Policy/Procedure – Policing Procedure (534).

Chart 8: Allegations Received, by Type (YTD)



Service Delivery

- 3,375 allegations attached to completed complaint investigations (criminal and non-criminal) concluded YTD, with 15.9% upheld representing an increase from PYTD (15.1%) and the five-year average (15.1%).
 - The largest volume of the 537 allegations upheld YTD were Irregularity in Procedure (217), Service Delivery (151) and Service Outcome (74).
 - Highest volume sub types involved were: Insufficient Enquiry carried out (67) and Time of Response (109) and Lack of satisfaction with action taken (40).
- 13.1% of the 602 non-criminal (not FLR) complaints concluded YTD were closed within 56 days, an increase on the PYTD rate of 10.5% (+2.6%) but a decrease from the five-year average rate of 30.1% (-17.0%). The average closure time YTD was 306 days, an increase from the PYTD average of 237 days and the five-year average of 145 days.
- 1,137 complaints are with PSD Non-Criminal Investigations and awaiting allocation to an investigating officer, as at 31/03/2025.
 - The vast majority of those awaiting allocation are graded Category A (34.4%, 391 in total) plus Category B (53.7%, 611 in total). The remainder are Category C (11.3%, 128 in total) and Category A+ (0.6%, 7 in total).
 - As per Chart 11, the volume awaiting allocation at month-end has fluctuated throughout the financial year, from 1,022 in October to a peak of 1,340 in January. The volume has thereafter been subject to month-on-month decreases.
 - As at 31/03/2025, a further 327 submissions are awaiting assessment by the NCARU, representing a significant decrease at month-end compared to the first 8 months of 2024/25.
- 129 Complaint Handling Reviews (CHRs) were received YTD, -16.8% from PYTD, with 62.3% of allegations reviewed found to have been handled to a reasonable standard (+3.2% from PYTD).
- This rate of allegations handled to a reasonable standard sits at a high level compared to 2023/24 (which ranged between 50.0% during quarter 3 and 63.8% during quarter 1).

Chart 9: Allegations Upheld, by YTD Period

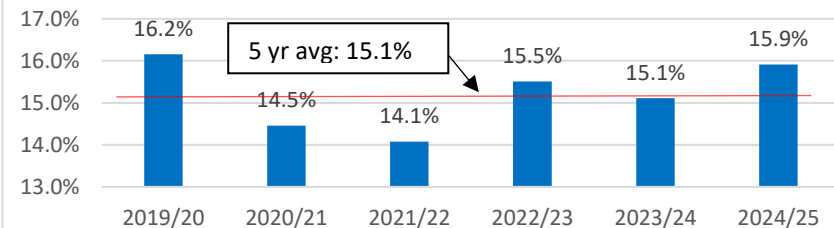


Chart 10: Non-Criminal (not FLR) Complaint Timescales, by Days to Close (YTD)

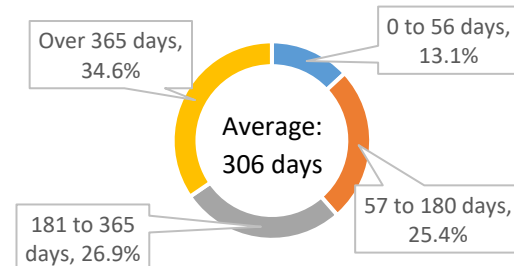
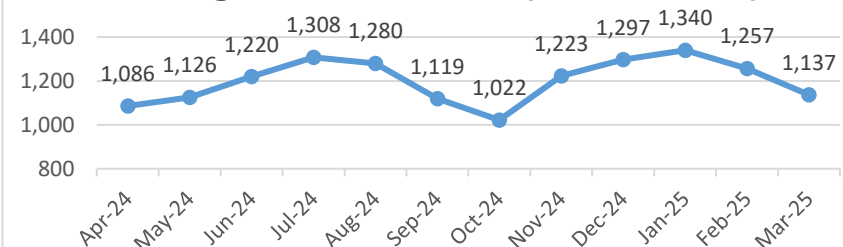


Chart 11: Non-criminal complaint investigations unallocated (at month-end)



Service Delivery (continued)

- Discretionary decisions from PIRC also impact on the rate handled to a reasonable standard, as those are considered to have been handled to a standard whereby a full review is not required.
- 176 recommendations and 102 learning points were received YTD. The majority of recommendations received were categorised as requiring 'further enquiry' or 'fuller/further response' (56.3% and 31.8% respectively). A further 1.1% were categorised as 'record/respond' and the remaining 10.8% as 'Other'.
- A total of 868 user experience survey responses were received YTD from 4,190 complainers contacted (20.7%). Of those, 28.2% responded that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the response received from the Professional Standards Department regarding their complaint (+4.9% points from PYTD).

Chart 12: Submissions awaiting NCARU assessment (at month-end)

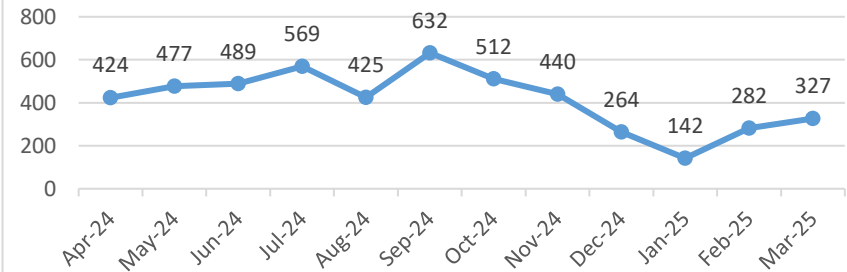


Chart 13: CHR Allegations YTD, by Outcome

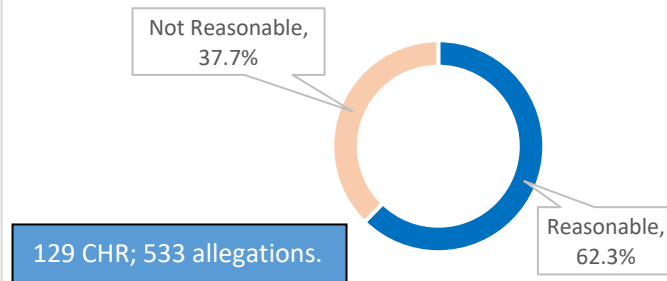
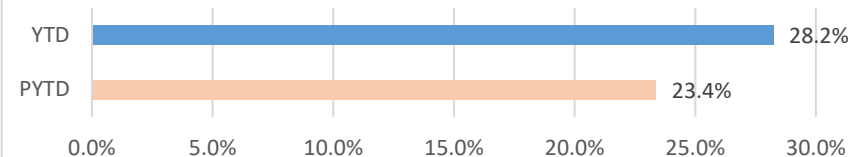


Chart 14: Complainers satisfied or very satisfied with response received from PSD



PIRC Referrals

- 342 statutory referrals were made to PIRC during the YTD, a 14.0% increase on the PYTD total of 300.
 - Serious Injury following Police Contact (+25), Armed Policing (+24), STO Taser (+9) and Death Following Police Contact (+1) referrals have increased YTD.
 - Armed Policing and STO Taser referrals remain the highest volume categories.
- Of the 342 statutory referrals YTD, 28 are subject to PIRC investigation (8.2%). This is a reduction from the 15.0% of referrals PYTD which were subject to PIRC investigation.
 - This is linked to a decreased number of investigations categorised as Crown Directed Investigation (-11) and Serious Injury following Police Contact (-7).
- All allegations of On Duty Assault and any associated criminal allegations are also referred to PIRC for assessment and potential investigation. 347 such referrals were made to PIRC YTD, -3.1% on the 358 made during the PYTD. Of those assessed, 136 are subject to PIRC investigation (42.1%), an increase from the 85 such referrals subject to PIRC investigation PYTD.
 - An increased volume in PIRC investigations is related to changes to the law of corroboration, following the de recenti judgement by the High Court of Justiciary.

Chart 15: Statutory Referrals to PIRC, by Category and Period

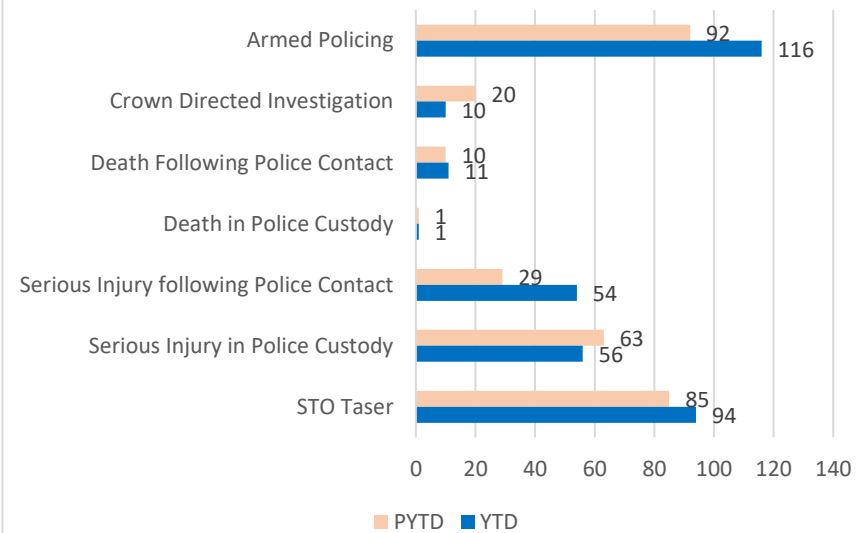
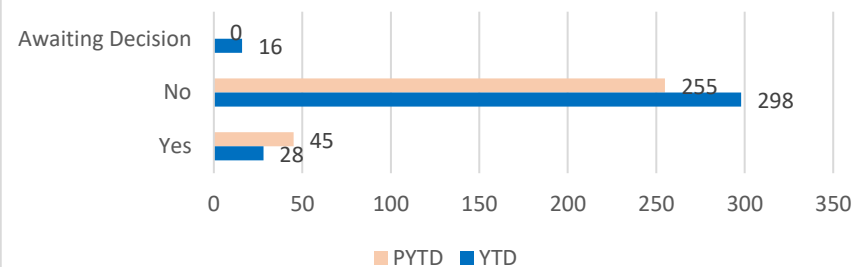


Chart 16: Statutory Referrals to PIRC, by Decision Type and Period



Conduct Unit

At the conclusion of Q4 YTD, 87 Police officers were suspended and 113 subject to duty restrictions. A further 15 members of Police Staff were suspended at this time.

The Police Service of Scotland (Conduct) Regulations 2014 is the primary legislation through which allegations of misconduct by serving police officers up to the rank of Chief Superintendent are considered. These regulations are underpinned by Scottish Government guidance and supported by Staff Associations, Scottish Government and Police Scotland.

The misconduct procedures aim to provide a fair, open and proportionate method of dealing with alleged misconduct while recognising that police officers have a special status as holders of the Office of Constable.

The procedures are intended to encourage a culture of learning and development for individuals and the organisation. Disciplinary action has a part, when circumstances require this, but improvement will always be an integral dimension of any outcome.

Conduct Assessments

- 417 preliminary conduct assessments were undertaken YTD, -10.3% from the PYTD total of 465.
- Despite the YTD decrease, notable increases are identified in assessments resulting in investigation. Those are categorised as 'Gross Misconduct' (+40) and 'Misconduct – Investigation' (+15).
- The volume of preliminary assessments have increased in OSD (+10) and Fife (+9). These are however mitigated by decreases across 11 divisions. Most notably, North East (-18), Edinburgh (-15), plus Highlands and Islands (-12).

Chart 17: Police Officers Restricted and Suspended, by period (as at 01 April)

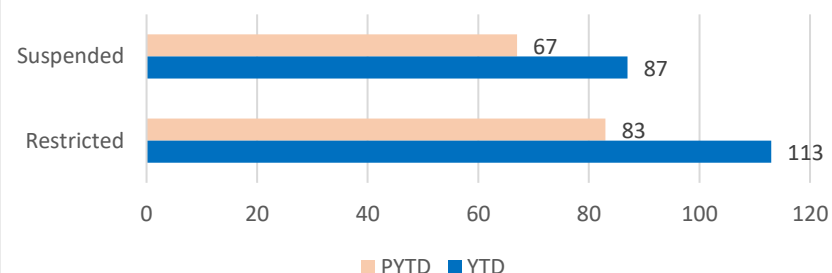
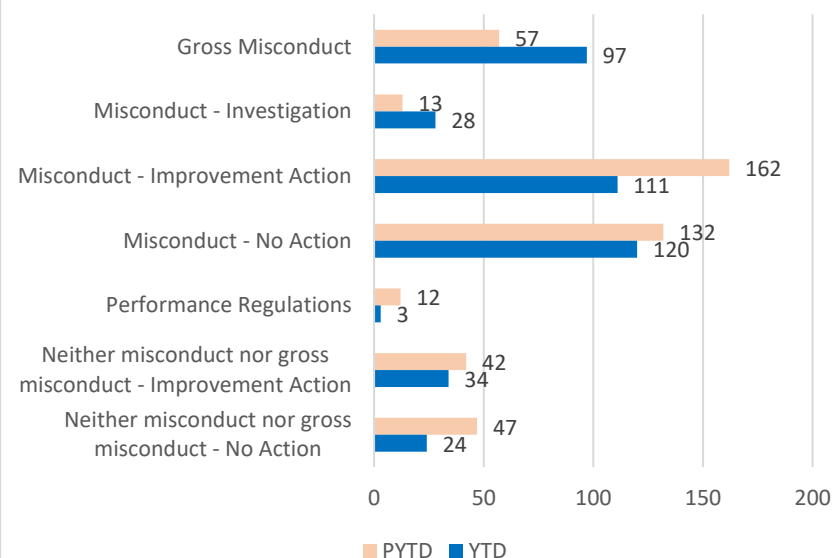


Chart 18: Conduct Assessments YTD



Conduct Unit (continued)

Misconduct Hearing and Meetings

- Please note that each meeting or hearing may involve multiple subject officers and multiple allegations, with a disposal attached to each allegation.

Time period for when the Regulation 10 (assessment) was completed for live investigations and proceedings.

Date Reg 10 completed	Number of cases
Prior to 2024/25	5
Quarter 1 of 2024/25	12
Quarter 2 of 2024/25	13
Quarter 3 of 2024/25	28
Quarter 4 of 2024/25	30

Average time duration for gross misconduct/misconduct investigations and proceedings that have concluded in 2024/25 (till Q4 end).

Category	Days
Average time under investigation	147
Average time for investigation and proceedings	262

Chart 19: Misconduct Hearing Disposals YTD

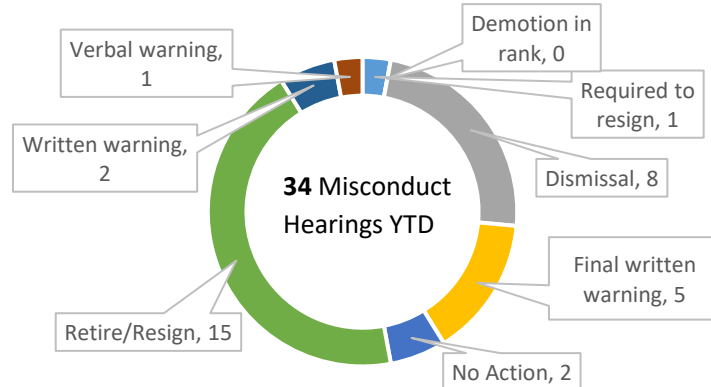
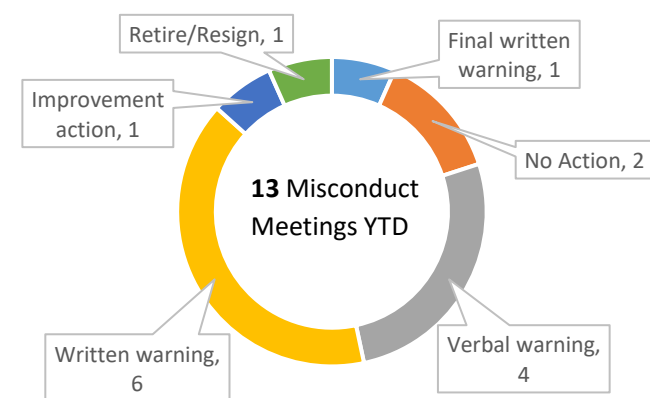


Chart 20: Misconduct Meeting Disposals YTD



Organisational Learning

Learning identified via PIRC CHR and Discretionary Decisions:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It was observed that an account from (a subject officer) to inform the complaint enquiry was an example of a thorough and detailed response to a complaint. Each attachment and its relevance are clearly identified which we found beneficial when carrying out this review. This learning should be shared with (subject officer), (investigating officer) and all complaint handling staff as an example of good practice. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> On comparing the filed versions of the HOC forms, (the investigating officer) noticed that two complaints had been omitted from the enquiry. We consider that (Investigating Officer's) actions in bringing the matter to the attention of (Supervisor), and the timeous recording of these additional complaints, to be evidence of good complaint handling. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The statutory guidance that we provide to policing bodies operating in Scotland stipulates that "auditable records will be kept in respect of all complaints detailing all enquiries" and requires the complaint enquiry officer to carry out an objective analysis of the evidence obtained, and to consider whether the facts established support or contradict the complainer's position. In this case (Investigating Officer) record keeping was meticulous. <p>Detailed records of the enquiry were kept which explained the rationale clearly for certain decisions made. Maintaining a thorough record of the complaint enquiry and documenting the rationale for decisions is an example of good complaint handling practice. We would encourage all complaint enquiry officers to clearly document all enquiries and rationales for any decisions made. This approach ensures that the information is readily available should it be required by supervisory officers or in the event of an external audit or review.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The PIRC statutory guidance provided to policing bodies across Scotland recognises that during the complaint investigation, information may be uncovered that shows a failing on the part of the policing body, which has not been subject of a complaint made by the applicant. In these instances, the guidance stipulates that such failings should not be ignored, with appropriate action taken. <p>In this case (Investigating Officers) identified learning opportunities for officers during the complaint enquiry and thereafter disseminated learning to the necessary departments. These findings within the complaint response demonstrates objectivity and impartiality by the Professional Standards Department (PSD) and will improve public confidence in the complaints handling process. This is an example of good complaint handling practice.</p> |

Organisational Learning

Learning identified via PIRC Investigation report recommendations

In the most recent quarter, there have been no recommendations received from the PIRC to instigate reactive learning.

Nevertheless, Professional Standards Department have been working proactively to identify and address learning opportunities ahead of the receipt of PIRC recommendations and are currently rolling out a Divisional Learning Form (primarily in respect of Death or Serious injury Incidents) and a Complaint Handling Learning Form.

- PSD have introduced a structured, auditable process for the identification, recording and dissemination of individual and/or organisational learning from complaints and Death or Serious Injury (DSI) matters. This formalises previous learning practices. PSD Senior Leadership Team have reviewed and approved the new process and a presentation provided to Divisional Commanders at a DCC engagement session. Further local awareness inputs have been carried out with Divisional Superintendents.

Appendix B – Misconduct Outcomes – May 2025



The [10 Standards of Professional Behaviour](#) set out the legislative standards expected of police officers while on and off duty as outlined in the [Police Service of Scotland \(Conduct\) Regulations 2014](#). These regulations govern all police conduct matters. Officers who breach these standards risk finding themselves subject to misconduct proceedings, which may result in dismissal or demotion.

Officers and staff will be aware that police misconduct is subject to greater public and professional scrutiny than ever. The Standards of Professional Behaviour are designed to reflect the values and ethics of Police Scotland, of integrity, fairness and respect, and a commitment to upholding human rights. They also ensure we maintain public confidence in policing and are part of a Service in which we can be truly proud.

This is the ninth publication of [gross misconduct outcomes](#). This publication covers the fourth quarter of the fiscal year 2024-25 and a summary of 2024 in relation to conduct matters.

GROSS MISCONDUCT

It is important to understand there are a range of disposal options available upon a finding of Gross Misconduct and dismissal is not always considered necessary. However, this publication focusses on conduct cases where officers were either dismissed or resigned prior to a hearing.

In the fourth quarter of 2024-25, January to March, nine officers were scheduled to attend a gross misconduct hearing before an independent chairperson of the rank of Chief Superintendent.

Three officers resigned in advance of their attendance at a gross misconduct hearing.

Two officers were dismissed without notice, one officer was demoted in rank, one officer was given a final written warning, one officer received a written warning, and one officer received a verbal warning.

Below are summaries of the circumstances which led to gross misconduct proceedings being instigated and led to dismissal/resignation:

Appendix B – Misconduct Outcomes – May 2025

1. An officer resigned prior to attending their Gross Misconduct Hearing, which related to substance misuse. The officer was required to provide 'with cause' samples and the results of the analysis were positive for cocaine.
- Due to the links with criminality, including organised crime, using illegal drugs is behaviour which is not compatible with the role of a police officer and can impact on fitness for duty. Such activity can place officers in vulnerable positions, putting themselves and the organisation at risk. Where there is reason to suppose an officer is misusing a controlled drug, a 'with cause' sample will be required. This is an opportunity to disprove any such allegation and where a requirement to provide a sample is refused, consideration will be given to gross misconduct proceedings.

Standard of Professional Behaviour - Discreditable Conduct

2. An officer was dismissed without notice following a Gross Misconduct Hearing, which related to threatening behaviour within licenced premises, towards members of the public while off duty. The officer had been found guilty at court.
- Police officers must not use language or behave in a manner which is offensive or likely to cause offense, whether on or off duty. Behaviour of this manner falls significantly short of the standards expected of, and by, Police Scotland. This impacts on the trust and confidence of the public in the police service, and as such it discredits the organisation.

Standard of Professional Behaviour - Discreditable Conduct

3. An officer resigned prior to attending their Gross Misconduct Hearing which related to being found guilty of an on duty assault at trial. This related to the officer using excessive force on a member of the public, pushing them to the ground while effecting their arrest.
- Police officers are given extraordinary powers which should not be abused. When using any kind of force police officers must always act in accordance with their training and be able to fully account for and justify their actions.

Standard of Professional Behaviour - Discreditable Conduct

4. An officer resigned prior to attending their Gross Misconduct Hearing which related to substance misuse. The officer was required to provide 'with cause' samples and refused to do so. The officer also engaged in communication with members of the public in relation to the procurement and consumption of controlled substances.
- Due to the links with criminality, including organised crime, using illegal drugs is behaviour which is not compatible with the role of a police officer and can impact on fitness for duty. Such activity can place officers in vulnerable positions, putting themselves and the organisation at risk. Where there is reason to suppose an officer is misusing a controlled drug, a 'with cause' sample will be required. This is an opportunity to disprove any such allegation and where a requirement to provide a sample is refused, consideration will be given to gross misconduct proceedings.

Appendix B – Misconduct Outcomes – May 2025

Standard of Professional Behaviour - [Orders and instructions](#)

Standard of Professional Behaviour - [Discreditable Conduct](#)

The determination and outcome for each case is made by an independent chair based on the circumstances of the case. This includes consideration of the evidence in support of the allegation(s), any exculpatory evidence, and the response of the subject officer. There are varied and unique circumstances in every case and outcomes cannot be compared across cases as the severity of the outcome will be dependent on the circumstances.

During 2024

- 461 matters were assessed by the National Conduct Unit
- 106 progressed to investigation, 355 did not require further investigation and were subject of alternative disposal namely 46 Advice, 65 Not Misconduct, 3 Performance, 128 Misconduct No Action, 113 Misconduct Improvement Action.
- 25 Gross misconduct and misconduct matters progressed to proceedings resulting in 12 officers resigning or retiring and 2 officers were dismissed.

In a hearing or meeting officers appeared at either a gross misconduct hearing or a misconduct meeting and received disposals ranging from final written warnings to no misconduct for matters such as:

- Causing a disturbance while off duty and use of offensive language;
- Assault on and off duty;
- Domestic related circumstances;
- Inappropriate use of social media, including sharing policing information;
- Viewing a police system without a policing purpose;
- Directing unwanted attention towards others at work and/or at social gatherings.

The determination and outcome for each case is made by an independent chair based on the circumstances of the case.

Appendix C – The Standard – April 2025



THE STANDARD

The Standard Issue 8

This edition of The Standard looks at the work of the National Conduct Unit (NCU).

The team forms part of the Professional Standards Department and has responsibility for identifying, assessing and considering any conduct issues which are alleged to have fallen below our Standards of Professional Behaviour.

The aim of this edition is to tell you about the misconduct procedure.

Police Scotland NCU operate under the direction and delegated authority from DCC Professionalism and Assurance.

The unit is always open to receiving feedback to enable them to continue to meet the challenges of modern policing, as well as to develop and enhance our approaches, policies and practices.

Wellbeing

We know being involved in a misconduct investigation is likely to cause stress and anxiety. Officers who become subject of a misconduct investigation should be signposted to the [Scottish Police Federation](#) or the [Association of Scottish Police Superintendents](#), along with being allocated a Wellbeing Liaison Single Point of Contact (SPoC) at their local division.

The liaison officer will provide impartial support to the officer, independent of the investigation, throughout the various stages, including any subsequent hearings and outcomes.

The liaison officer will not discuss specifics about the investigation and will provide witness support and updates to the officer in the preferred mode of contact.

They will provide appropriate support and ensure the officer is signposted to any further support mechanisms.

Further information can be found in the Investigation Wellbeing Guidance.

Let's start with a reminder of the 10 Standards of Professional Behaviour are below and what these mean to you?

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Our Standards of Professional Behaviour

These standards reflect our expectations of our officers, whether on or off duty.

Honesty and integrity We act with honesty and integrity and do not compromise or abuse our position.	Duties and responsibilities We are diligent in the exercise of our duties and responsibilities.
Authority, respect and courtesy We act with self-control and tolerance, treating members of the public and colleagues with respect and courtesy in line with our values. We do not abuse our powers or authority and respect the rights of all individuals.	Confidentiality We treat information with respect and access or disclose it only in the proper course of our duties.
Equality and diversity We act with fairness and impartiality. We do not discriminate unlawfully or unfairly.	Fitness for duty When on duty or presenting ourselves for duty, we are fit to carry out our responsibilities.
Use of force We use force only to the extent that it is necessary, proportionate and reasonable in all the circumstances.	Discreditable conduct We behave in a manner which does not discredit the Police Service or undermine public confidence in it, whether on or off duty.
Orders and instructions We give and carry out only lawful orders and instructions.	Challenging and reporting improper conduct We report, challenge or take action against the conduct of others which has fallen below the Standards of Professional Behaviour.

For more information on our standards visit the intranet.



Standards of Professional Behaviour Poster

Did you know Duty of Candor will soon be Police Scotland's 11th Standard of Professional Behaviour?

More information coming soon.

How does the NCU find out about potential issues?

There is no set route for referrals to conduct, however, they normally come via the conclusion of criminal investigations, [Police Independent Review Commissioner](#) (PIRC) enquiries, local division, confidential reporting or members of the public.



The Preliminary Assessment

A preliminary assessment (known as a Regulation 10) is carried out and a proposed course of action is discussed with a panel of senior officers within the National Conduct Unit with input from Police Scotland's Fair Play Advisor. At this stage, any known or likely mitigation regarding the alleged behaviour will be considered as well as any welfare issues.

Suspension is considered in line with the regulatory process in the Conduct

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Regulations, and restriction to duty is considered based on the circumstances and a risk assessment on a case-by-case basis.

There is also duty to consider any obvious or likely mitigation regarding the alleged behaviour and to comply with legislation, including the Equalities Act 2010 to consider welfare ensuring fairness to all.

The assessment will detail the conduct that's the subject of the allegation and the reason this falls below the Standards of Professional Behaviour. It must identify if the conduct outlined were to be proven whether it is deemed to amount to the following:

- Gross misconduct (classed as misconduct which is so serious it may require demotion in rank or dismissal)
- Misconduct (a breach of the Standards of Professional Behaviour) with investigation required
- Misconduct with no investigation required
- Neither misconduct or gross misconduct

Below are examples of what could constitute gross misconduct and misconduct, but please note, **this is not an exhaustive list**:

Gross Misconduct (On-Duty):

- Sexualised behaviour towards others, be they colleagues or members of the public (sexualised comments and/or actions).
- Criminal conviction for serious matters, e.g. neglect of duty, perjury, assault, theft.
- Discriminatory behaviour, including inappropriate social media messaging.

Gross Misconduct (Off-Duty):

- Allegations of serious criminality, whether convicted or not, e.g. domestic / sexual offending.
- Criminal conviction for serious matter, e.g. domestic offending, sexual offending, assault, drink driving, disorder offence with significant aggravator.
- Controlled drug misuse.

Misconduct (On-Duty):

- Absence without genuine reason.
- Oppressive/bullying type behaviour towards colleagues.
- Driving offence.
- Inappropriate use of language.

Misconduct (Off-Duty):

- Criminal conviction for less serious matter, e.g. low level disorder with mitigation.
- Inappropriate use of social media (not involving discriminatory behaviour).
- Disorderly behaviour not leading to criminal charge.

Performance:

- Repeated low-level incivility/failure to take direction.

Failure to adequately manage workload/investigate reports.

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Anything deemed to be misconduct where investigation is not required, or not found to be misconduct, will be concluded at this stage either by:

Misconduct – no further action required

e.g. a road traffic offence resulting in a total of three points only.

Misconduct – improvement action required

e.g. a further offence causing a total of six points.

Not Misconduct – improvement action required

e.g. an officer is reported to police for threatening behaviour off-duty, but no evidence to substantiate a breach of the Standards of Professional Behaviour however there is room for learning.

Not Misconduct - No Further Action Required

e.g. an officer is reported and found not guilty for on-duty assault where the use of force has been reviewed and deemed to be proportionate and necessary.



What happens during a conduct investigation?

For cases assessed to be either misconduct or gross misconduct, an Investigating Officer will be appointed.

No investigation will begin until the subject officer (officer being investigated) is served with a copy of the Regulation 11 paperwork as notification.

This document also signposts the subject officer to the Scottish Police Federation (SPF) or the Association of Scottish Police Superintendents (ASPS) and enables welfare/support to be put in place.

The subject officer can, at any time during the investigation stage, provide an oral or written response to the allegations under investigation.

The subject officer will be updated throughout the investigation through their welfare officer or SPF representative, whichever they have requested.

Conclusion of investigation

At the conclusion of each investigation, the investigating officer submits a comprehensive report to a Senior or Executive Officer, who will determine whether there is a case to answer, and if so, whether it is misconduct or gross misconduct.

There are a range of options, such as the matter being referred to a misconduct meeting or hearing or no case to answer.

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Misconduct proceedings – what should I expect?

Should it be determined a misconduct meeting or hearing is to be held, the Conduct Proceedings Unit will facilitate this and the subject officer will be provided with the necessary paperwork relating to the proceedings which will include regulatory paperwork including in summary, the facts established by the investigator.



Chair and Assessor

A Chair and Assessor will be identified for misconduct meetings and gross misconduct hearings. The appointed chair and assessor will be at least one rank above the subject officer, and an advocate or solicitor may also be present in some cases.

For misconduct meetings, the chair and assessor are at least one rank higher than the subject officers.

For gross misconduct hearings the chair and assessor will be at least one rank higher than the subject officer.

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In gross misconduct hearings, the chair will be at least a Superintendent, and at least two ranks above the subject officer.

The assessor will be at least a Superintendent, or an advocate or solicitor.



What next?

The chair will be provided the necessary paperwork and a witness list agreed.

A date will be set for the hearing or meeting.

- A misconduct meeting will typically take place over one to two days.
- A gross misconduct meeting can generally take place between two to five days
- Meetings and hearings are audio recorded with copies being provided to the subject officer.

What can the outcomes be?

For both a misconduct meeting and a gross misconduct hearing, the outcome is based on the balance of probability.

Within a **misconduct meeting**, the outcome will be either misconduct being established, or no misconduct being found.

Within a **gross misconduct meeting**, the outcome can result in misconduct or gross misconduct being established, or no misconduct being found.

Should there be **no misconduct found**, the chair can:

- Take no further action.
- Take improvement action
- Refer to Performance Regulations

If **misconduct is found** the Chair can impose:

- Improvement Action

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- Verbal warning
- Written warning
- Final Written warning

If **gross misconduct is found** at hearing, the chair can impose:

- Verbal warning
- Written warning
- Final written warning
- Demotion in Rank
- Dismissal with notice
- Dismissal without notice

On conclusion of the meeting/hearing, the Chair will advise the subject officer of the outcome. Written confirmation will be provided within ten working days. Any appeal submitted will be considered by an officer higher in rank to the original chairing constable.

An appeal can also be submitted to the Police Appeal Tribunal (PAT) at the conclusion of the internal appeal process.

In summary...

The misconduct process is designed to be fair and thorough. Matters are progressed as swiftly as possible but, depending on circumstances and complexity, this can take quite a long time to proceed from the first notification to the subject officers, through to the conclusions of a meeting/hearing, and any potential appeal.

The information in this edition has been provided to make the process more transparent and answer any questions you might have.

Should you need further information or wish to provide feedback please do so by contacting the unit direct, or through your own management and/or associations. Should you wish to remain anonymous, then options such as 'Integrity Matters' can be used.

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