



Meeting	SPA Complaints & Conduct Committee
Date	5 June 2025
Location	Webex
Title of Paper	SPA Annual Report 2024/25
Presented By	Darren Paterson, Head of Workforce Governance
Recommendation to Members	For Discussion
Appendix Attached	Yes – Appendix A - SPA Complaints Overview Appendix B - SPA Complaints Quarterly Report (Q4 – 2024/25) Appendix C - SPA Complaints Annual Report (2024/25)

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on complaints and conduct matters including key statistics reflecting the position at the end of Q4, 2024/25. The report also includes statistics over the past 6 years, 2019/20 to 2024/25.

The paper is presented in line with:

- *Scottish Police Authority Committee Terms of Reference*

The paper is submitted:

- *For Discussion*

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. This is a regular agenda item, containing updates on complaints and conduct matters within the SPA.

2. FURTHER DETAIL ON THE REPORT TOPIC

2.1. SPA Complaints Performance

- 2.1.1. Appendix A provides an overview of the complaint handling responsibilities of the SPA with explanatory text on reporting terminology.
- 2.1.2. The SPA Complaints Quarterly Performance Report, including key statistics reflecting the position at the end of Q4 2024/25, is attached as Appendix B to this report and provides comparison to the previous 7 quarters.
- 2.1.3. Appendix C contains the SPA Complaints Annual Report providing details over the past 6 years.

2.2. Workload Management

- 2.2.1. Detail on ongoing workload is presented as a separate agenda item at the private session of this meeting.
- 2.2.2. A review of the Authority's Unacceptable, Persistent or Unreasonable Actions by Complainers Policy has been undertaken by the team. Following Committee approval, the revised Policy has been published on the SPA website.

2.3. Dip-Sampling of Police Scotland Complaints

- 2.3.1. Following recent recruitment to the team, SPA dip-sampling of Police Scotland closed complaints will resume in 2025/26, with a first report on sampled closed cases from Q1 being reported to the September Committee.

2.4. Stakeholder Meetings

- The National Complaint Handling Development Group (NCHDG) met on Thursday 1 May, chaired by T/Superintendent James Mann who had recently commenced in role. The group discussed the following matters: updates to the 6-stage complaint capture form following earlier audit; Police Scotland website accessibility for complainers; and

recent PSD 'days of action' as part of efforts to address current unallocated complaint levels.

2.5. Organisational Learning

- 2.5.1. The SPA is committed to promoting a culture of organisational learning. Opportunities are identified through a variety of sources including the handling of complaints within the remit of the SPA and PIRC Complaint Handling Reviews (CHRs) if applicable. No specific organisational learning opportunities have been identified during this reporting period.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1. There are no financial implications in this report.

4. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. There are no personnel implications in this report.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. There are no legal implications in this report.

6. REPUTATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. There are reputational implications associated with this paper. The report (alongside corresponding reports from Police Scotland and the PIRC) serves to highlight trends in respect of complaints received and performance in respect of complaints handling, enabling the Committee to seek assurance in this important area, recognising its key link to public confidence in policing in Scotland.

7. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. There are no social implications in this report.

8. COMMUNITY IMPACT

- 8.1. There are no community implications in this report.

9. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. There are no equality implications in this report.

10. ENVIRONMENT IMPLICATIONS

10.1. There are no environmental implications in this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are invited to discuss the contents of this report.



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Appendix A

SPA Complaints Overview

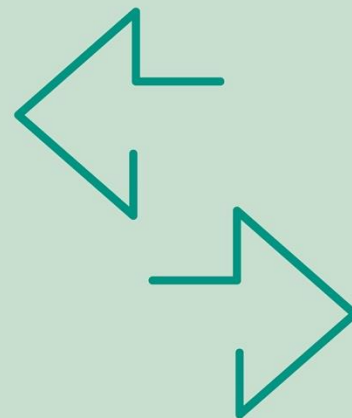


SPA Complaints Overview

- A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, and the SPA is responsible for handling complaints about: the SPA itself (including Forensic Services); members of SPA Corporate/Forensic Services staff; and senior officers of Police Scotland (i.e. Assistant Chief Constable, Deputy Chief Constable and Chief Constable).
- As of 5 May 2025, there are 14 officers of senior rank in Police Scotland and 673 staff working across SPA Corporate and Forensic Services functions.
- On receipt of a complaint, the SPA will complete an initial evaluation to determine who the complaint is about and if it is within its remit. For cases within the SPA remit, the initial assessment will ensure they are categorised and dealt with in the most appropriate manner (i.e. relevant complaint; grievance; whistleblowing concern; criminal allegation; misconduct allegation; or a miscellaneous case (which refers to enquiries or other correspondence received by the SPA)).
- A 'relevant complaint' is defined in legislation and is essentially a non-criminal complaint made by a member of the public. The SPA Complaints Performance Report mainly provides statistical information on relevant complaints within the remit of the SPA.
- A single complaint may consist of a number of component parts that can be determined separately. For the purposes of this report, these are referred to as 'allegations' and each complaint may include multiple allegations.
- The handling of relevant complaints are subject to the oversight of the PIRC, who have an expectation that such complaints should be completed within 40 working days.

SPA Complaints Performance Report

Quarterly Report
Q4 2024/25



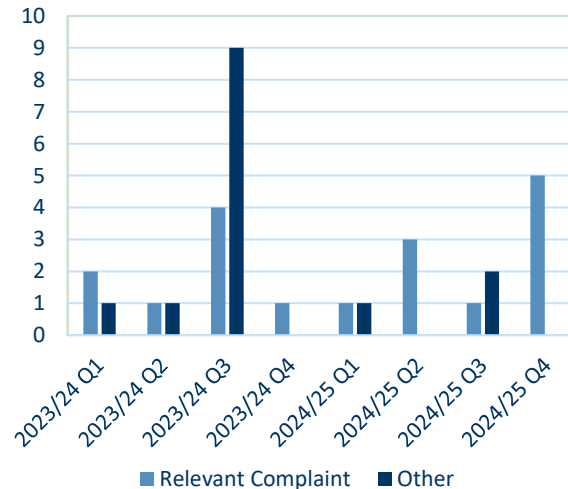
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Highlights (8 quarter view)

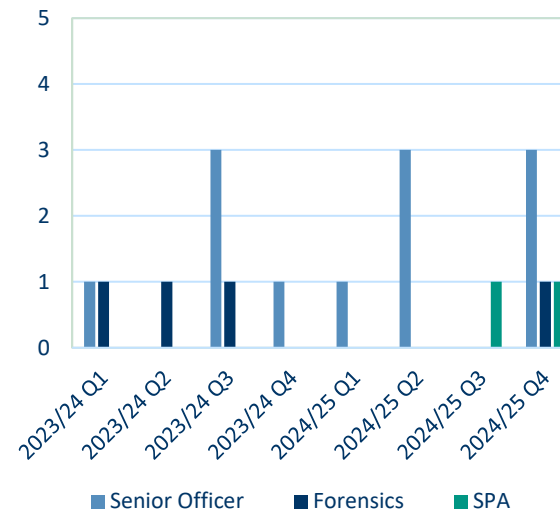
- In context of generally low volume of relevant complaints (and allegations), numbers remain largely consistent
- Majority of relevant complaints, and allegations, relate to senior officers
- 77% of allegations relate to On Duty complaints, the remaining 23% relate to complainers' dissatisfaction with the Quality of Service
- Early Stage Resolution remains an effective means of addressing complaints of a less serious nature (31% of allegations closed during period)
- Of the 17 complaints closed over the reporting period, 4 were out with the target completion time of 40 working days
- At the end of Q4, 1 complaint was ongoing
- Data excludes complaints received that are outside the SPA's mandate

Cases received



- Across the 8 quarter period, 56% of cases received (within SPA remit) classed as relevant complaints
- 'Other' cases include grievances, whistleblowing, misconduct allegations, criminal allegations etc
- Most cases received outside of SPA remit related to matters that have since been brought to the attention of Police Scotland's Professional Standards Department

Subject of complaints

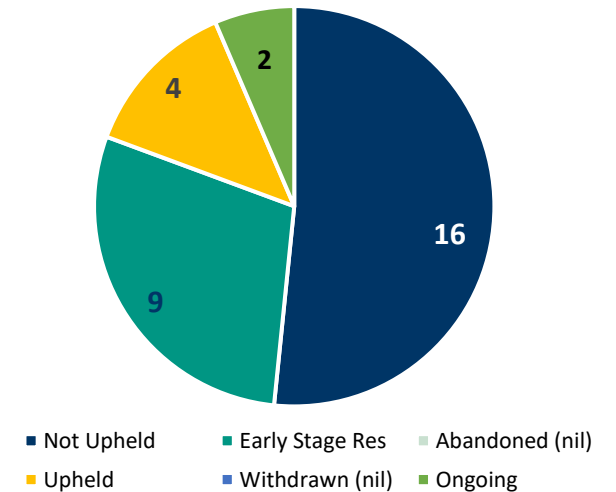


- The majority of relevant complaints (67%) relate to senior officers, although absolute volumes remain low
- Within these complaints, 31 individual allegations were made, with 71% relating to senior officers.

Beyond the first chart (Cases received) all other charts in this report refer to relevant complaints only

Determination

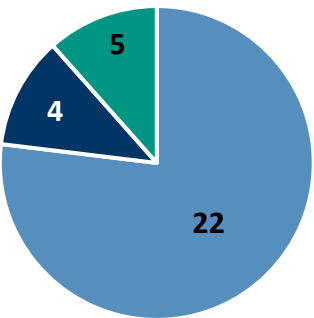
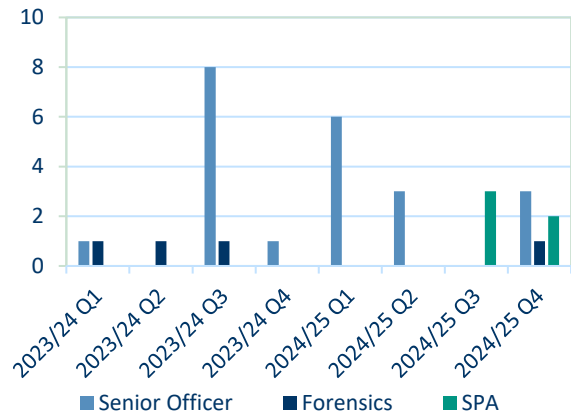
8 quarter view of allegations



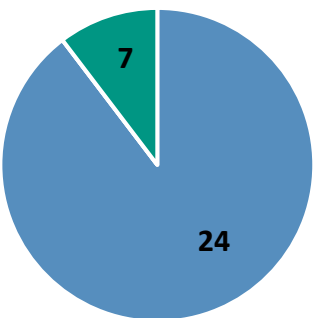
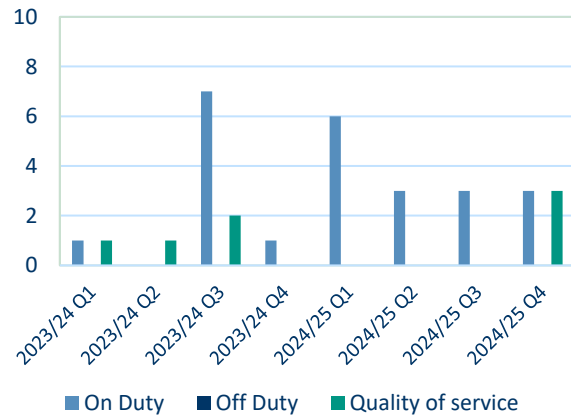
- Of the cases closed during the reporting period, 9 allegations were resolved by Early Stage Resolution (ESR) via explanation, assurance or apology.

Allegations by subject

Drill down from 'Subject of complaints' on previous page



Allegations by category



Timescales to close

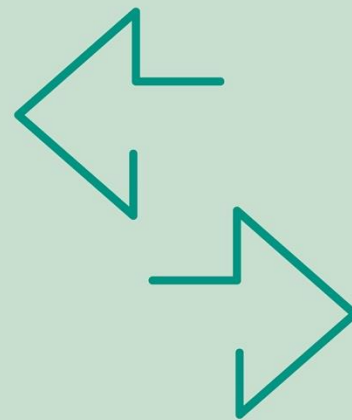
	23/24				24/25			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Closed	2	1	1	1	1	1	3	7
Ave. working days to close	27	1	2	13	81	207	21	70
Cases closed beyond 40 working days								
Closed	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	2
Days to close					81	207		160, 272

While the SPA aims to deal with relevant complaints within 40 working days, each complaint is unique, and a number of factors (such as complexity and seriousness) can impact timescales. The cases closed over 40 working days above can be attributed to:

- Requirement for case reviews by Forensic Services
- Delays in obtaining evidence outwith the control of the Authority
- Delays in agreeing Heads of Complaint
- Complex cases involving officer subjects at & below senior officer rank, therefore requiring liaison with Police Scotland

SPA Complaints Performance Report

Annual Report
2024/25



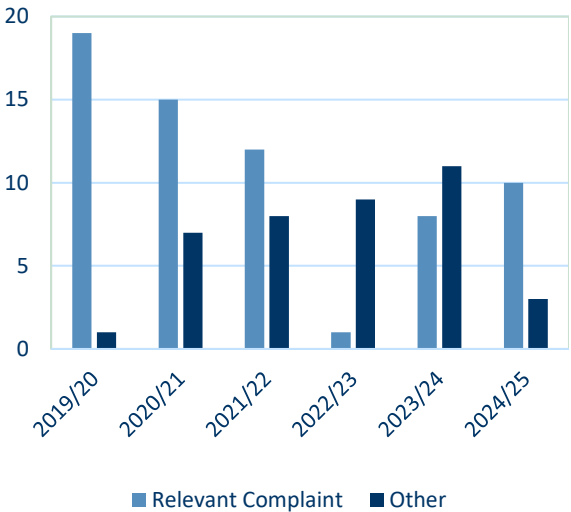
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Highlights (6 year view)

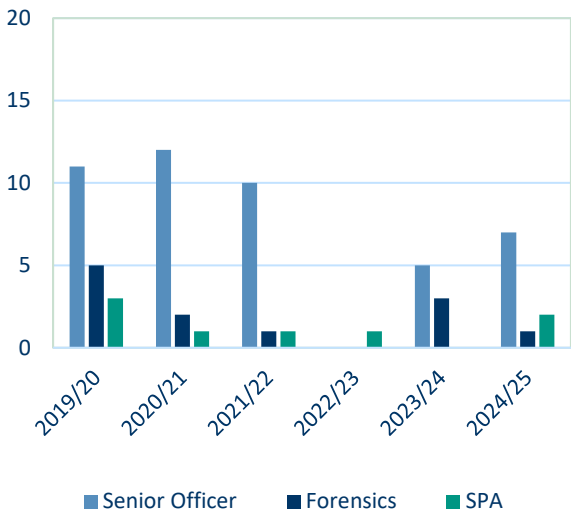
- In context of generally low volume of relevant complaints (and allegations), numbers show gradual decline (although noting steep drop in 2022/23)
- Drop in 2024/25 of Other cases not classed as relevant complaints (following earlier steady increase)
- Number of relevant complaints (and allegations) about senior officers largely static until 2022/23, when none received. Levels remain relatively low.
- Since 2019/20, relevant complaints (and allegations) about Forensics and SPA have remained consistently low
- On Duty allegations broadly similar in number (although noting steep drop in 2022/23)
- Since 2019/20, number of Quality of Service allegations has remained low
- Early Stage Resolution (ESR) continues to be an effective means of addressing complaints of a less serious nature
- With exception of 2020/21 & 2024/25, average closure times have remained below 40 working days

Cases received



- Across 6 year period 63% of cases received (within SPA remit) classed as relevant complaints
- 'Other' cases include grievances, whistleblowing, misconduct allegations, criminal allegations etc
- Most cases received outside of SPA remit related to matters that have since been brought to the attention of Police Scotland's Professional Standards Department (PSD)

Subject of complaints



- The majority of relevant complaints (69%) relate to senior officers, although absolute volumes remain low
- Within these complaints, 101 individual allegations were made, with 64% relating to senior officers

Beyond the first chart (Cases received) all other charts in this report refer to relevant complaints only

Determination

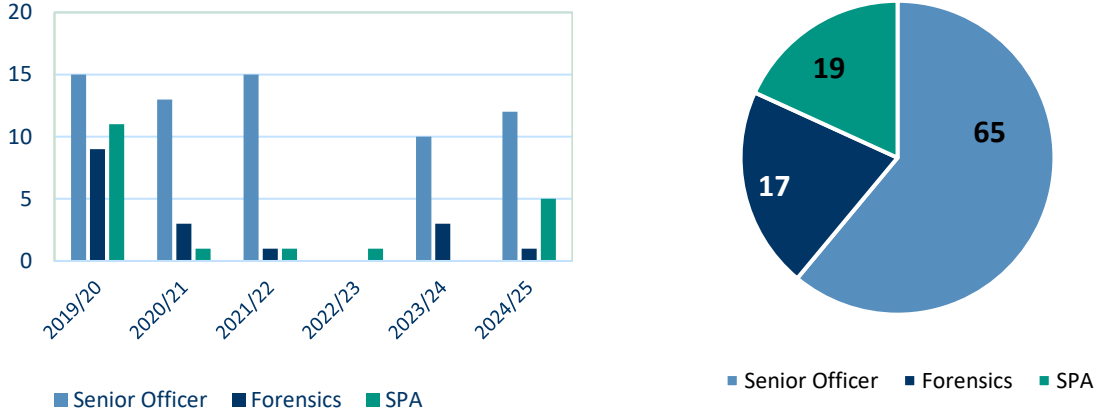
6 year view of allegations

	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25
Cases requiring formal determination – Upheld	3	0	0	0	0	4
Cases requiring formal determination - Not Upheld	17	9	13	0	0	16
ESR	4	6	4	1	5	4
Withdrawn	0	1	0	0	0	0
Abandoned	3	1	0	0	0	0
Closed UA	8	0	0	0	0	0
Ongoing	0	0	0	0	0	2
Total	35	17	17	1	5	26

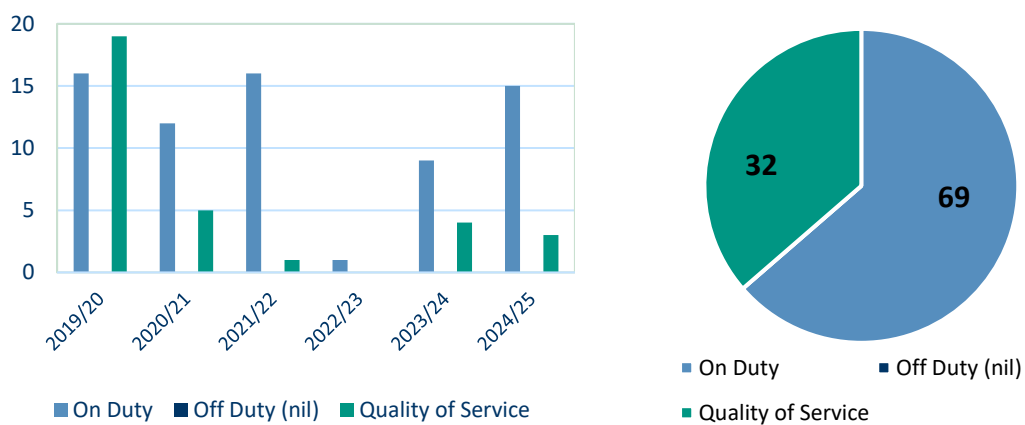
- From closed cases, 24% of all allegations were resolved by Early Stage Resolution (ESR) via explanation, assurance or apology
- Of those cases requiring a formal determination, 11% of allegations were upheld
- Closed UA refers to cases closed due to complainer being subject to SPA 'Unacceptable, Persistent or Unreasonable Actions by Complainers Policy'.

Allegations by subject

Drill down from 'Subject of complaints' on previous page



Allegations by category



Timescales to close

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Closed	19	15	12	1	5	12
Ave. working days to close	23	41	30	14	14	70
Cases Closed Beyond 40 Working Days						
Closed	4	3	3	0	0	4
Days to close	52, 60, 73, 84	44, 188, 232	51, 74, 166			81, 160, 207, 272

While the SPA aims to deal with relevant complaints within 40 working days, each complaint is unique and a number of factors (such as complexity and seriousness) can impact timescales. The cases closed over 40 working days above can be attributed to:

- Complexity/seriousness of enquiries and investigations undertaken
- Delays in obtaining information from and/or agreeing heads of complaint with complainers
- Requirement for case reviews by Forensic Services
- Delays in obtaining evidence outwith the control of the Authority
- Cases involving officer subjects both at and below senior officer rank, requiring liaison with Police Scotland