

SPA Complaints & Conduct Committee

2025/26 – Quarter 2

1 July – 30 September 2025



Executive Summary

Complaint Handling Reviews (CHRs)

PIRC received 76 applications for CHRs concerning Police Scotland in Q2 2025/26. This represents a 3% increase on the previous quarter, and a 38% increase on Q2 2024/25.

This marks a new upper threshold of applications received by PIRC in a single quarter over the past two years.

Initial case papers continue to be provided timeously by Police Scotland, with 99% of initial papers being provided within the agreed 15 working day timescale.

In terms of requests for additional papers, there were 37 responses received in Q2. The overall average time taken to respond was 10.4 working days; all teams averaged returns within agreed timescale.

PIRC concluded 37 CHRs in Q2 and concluded a further 33 CHR applications by Discretionary Decision letters.

The proportion of Heads of Complaint (HoCs) found to have been reasonably handled has increased by Q2; but still accounts for less than half (49%) of complaints being assessed.

Recurring themes from Learning Points identified during the CHR process include: lack of engagement and communication with complainers; the importance of agreeing the Heads of Complaint at the start of the complaint enquiry; and inappropriate use of Front Line Resolution. Where appropriate, our Learning Points highlighted examples of good complaint handling practice.

Investigations

In Q2 2025/26, PIRC received 183 referrals concerning Police Scotland – a quarterly decrease of 38 (-17%). 67% of these referrals originated from Police Scotland itself. For the same period last year, the proportion was 56%.

There were two referrals concerning Deaths in Police Custody in Q2 – the first such referrals PIRC has received from Police Scotland. Both referrals were superseded by referrals from COPFS which progressed to investigation

One PIRC investigation that commenced in Q2 originated from a Police Scotland referral. This was instigated at the discretion of the Commissioner in the interest of public safety.

Five recommendations made by PIRC to Police Scotland have been responded to, four within the agreed timescale. No new recommendations were issued in the quarter and none previously issued remain outstanding.

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Introduction

This is the second submission of the Police Investigations and Review Commissioner to the SPA Complaints and Conduct Committee for 2025/26.

PIRC aims to increase public confidence in policing through scrutiny of police actions and ensuring any lessons are learned to improve the standard of service provided by the police bodies operating in Scotland.

This report details the interaction between Police Scotland and PIRC to increase public confidence in policing by ensuring identified learning and recommendations result in positive change in police practice.

Our Role

The role of the Police Investigations and Review Commissioner (PIRC) was established in 2013 at the same time as the single Police Service of Scotland.

The Commissioner, who is appointed by Scottish Ministers, is independent of the police. Her role is to independently investigate incidents involving the police and independently review the way the police handle complaints from the public.

PIRC ensures that the SPA and the Chief Constable maintain a suitable system for handling complaints and issues statutory guidance where appropriate.



We can investigate:

- Incidents involving the police, referred by COPFS. These may include deaths in custody and allegations of criminality made about police officers or members of police staff.
- Serious incidents involving the police, at the request of the Chief Constable or SPA. Reasons for requests for investigations from the Chief Constable may include the serious injury of a person in police custody, the death or serious injury of a person following contact with the police or the use of firearms by police officers.
- Allegations of misconduct by senior police officers of the rank of Assistant Chief Constable (ACC) and above, if requested by the SPA.
- Other matters relating to the SPA or the Police Service where the Commissioner considers it in the public interest.
- At the conclusion of an investigation, the Commissioner can recommend learning and improvements to the way the police operate and deliver services to the public in Scotland.



We can review:

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- How the police in Scotland handle complaints made to them by the public. The purpose of the Complaint Handling Review (CHR) process is to determine whether or not the complaint was handled to a reasonable standard by the police.
- At the conclusion of a CHR, the Commissioner can make recommendations, identify learning points, or direct the policing body to reconsider their response.



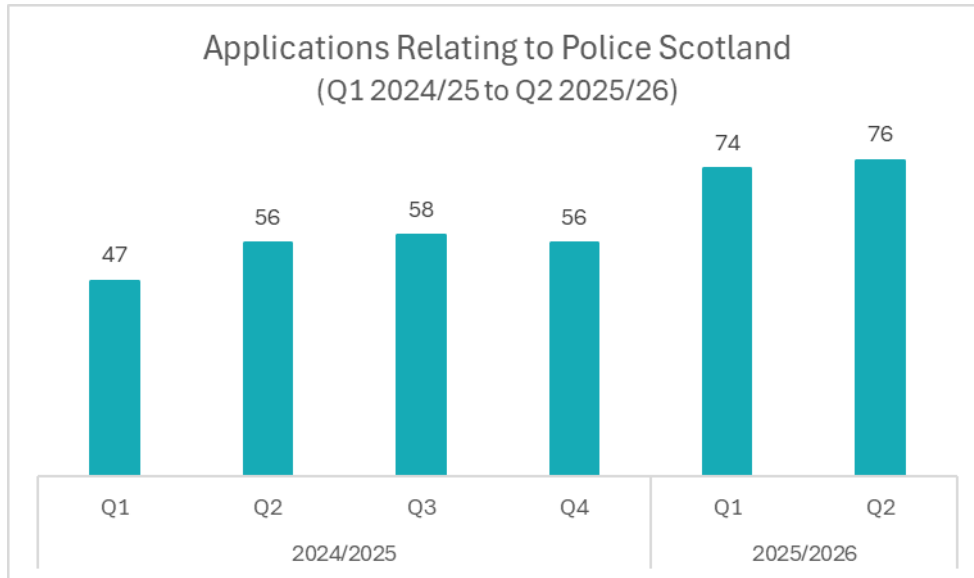
We cannot review:

- Complaints which have not been considered and adjudicated upon by the policing body.
- Complaints of criminality.
- Complaints made by individuals currently serving, or who formerly served, with the police about the terms and conditions of their service.



Complaint Handling Reviews

Applications



1. Source: PIRC Centurion System - Applications Report

Quarter 2 of 2025/26 saw 76 applications for Complaint Handling Reviews (CHRs) received by PIRC for cases involving Police Scotland. This is an increase of 2 applications (3%) on the previous quarter and an increase of 20 (38%) on the preceding year's Q2 applications.

This continues the increase noted in Q1 and marks a new upper threshold of applications received by PIRC in a single quarter over the past two years. This sustained increase in CHR applications may be influenced by increased complaint case conclusions by Police Scotland, resulting from the measures implemented as part of PSoS dealing with their backlog (Op Glade).

Key Performance Indicators

- 90% of CHR applications to undergo SRO assessment and decision to be taken within 5 working days of receipt of the relevant police case papers.
 - Q2 2025/26 - **97%**
- 80% of CHRs including discretionary decisions (minus major cases) to be completed within 90 working days, following receipt of the relevant police case papers.
 - Q2 2025/26 – **100%**

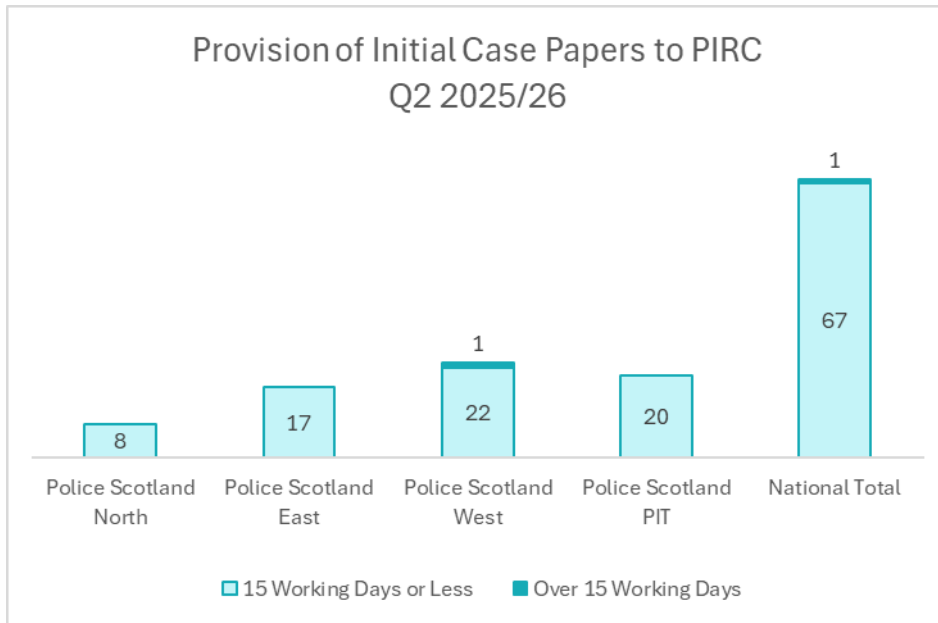


Timescales

Provision of Initial Case Papers

It has been agreed that Police Scotland will aim to provide all complaint case papers to PIRC within 15 working days of request. This approach standardises the process for the provision of case papers across the Reviews and Investigations functions within PIRC.

PSD and PIRC exchange information via the Egress file sharing system to ensure efficient and secure provision of police complaint files.



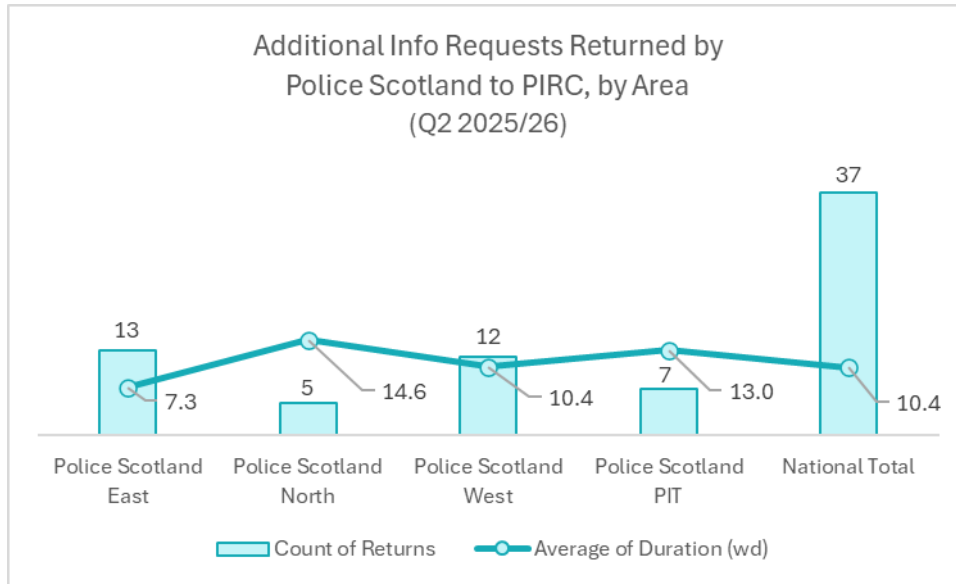
2. Source: PIRC Centurion System – Initial Papers Report

In Q2, there were 68 cases where papers requested by PIRC were received from Police Scotland. Requests were compiled within timescale in 67 of these cases (99%). The average time taken by Police Scotland as a whole to provide background papers was 6.4 working days.

Information Requests During Review

On receipt of background papers, the Reviews team will undertake a detailed assessment of the police complaint file and identify any information or documentation that was relied upon or referred to in the police complaint response but not included in the papers initially provided to PIRC.

In these circumstances, a further information request is made, with Police Scotland aiming to provide the further information requested within 15 working days.

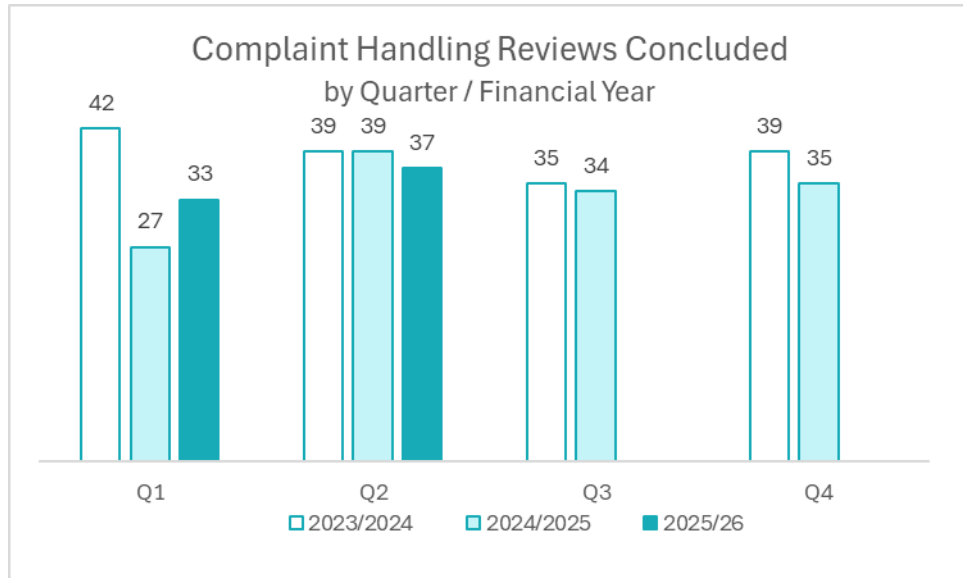


3. Source: PIRC Centurion System – Additional Info Report

There was a total of thirty-seven requests for further information responded to in Q2, with the time taken to provide the information averaging at 10.4 working days. This is two fewer than were received in Q1 and taking around the same amount of time to provide the information (10.4 working days). All areas have averaged returns within agreed timescales, although it is noted that in seven cases (19%), the additional information was returned later than 15 working days after it was requested.



Complaint Handling Review Reports Cases completed – National



4. Source: PIRC Centurion System – CHR Closures Report

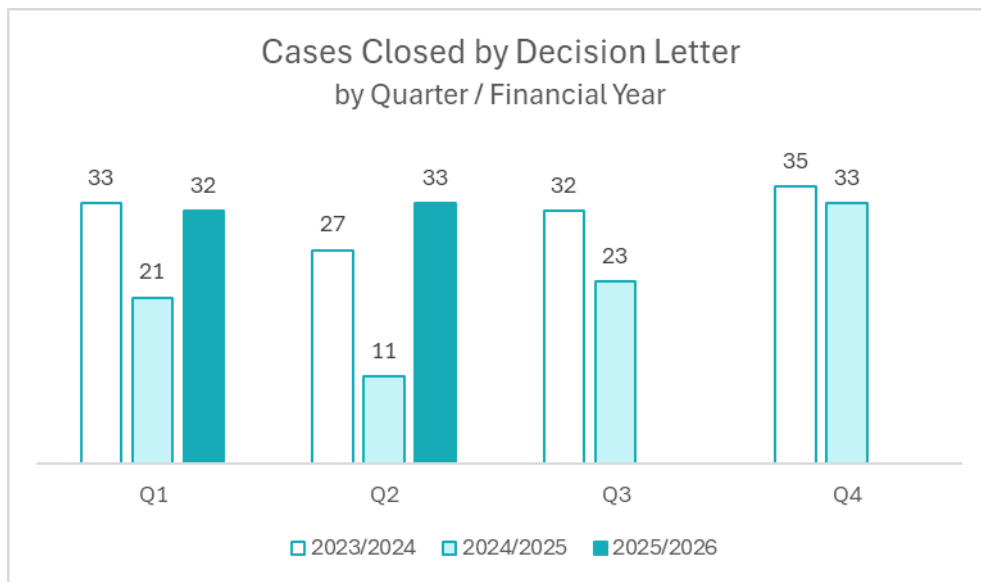
In Q2 of 2025/26, PIRC concluded 37 Complaint Handling Reviews – four more than in Q1 and of similar volume to Q2 of preceding years.

Cases closed – Decisions

PIRC records and reports the number of applications that were the subject of a discretionary decision. This includes applications where, following an assessment, PIRC is satisfied that Police Scotland has taken reasonable steps to address a complaint. Consequently, PIRC will not proceed with a review on the grounds of proportionality.

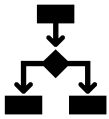
PIRC recognises that complaints that are not reviewed on proportionality grounds represent opportunities for PSD to identify good complaint handling practice. To assist in this regard, PIRC provides PSD with a detailed letter explaining why discretion was exercised, with the intention that good practice is shared with those involved in complaint handling.

It is important to highlight that applications and heads of complaint that did not progress on proportionality grounds would otherwise be complaints that were likely to be **reasonably handled**, had they been taken to review.



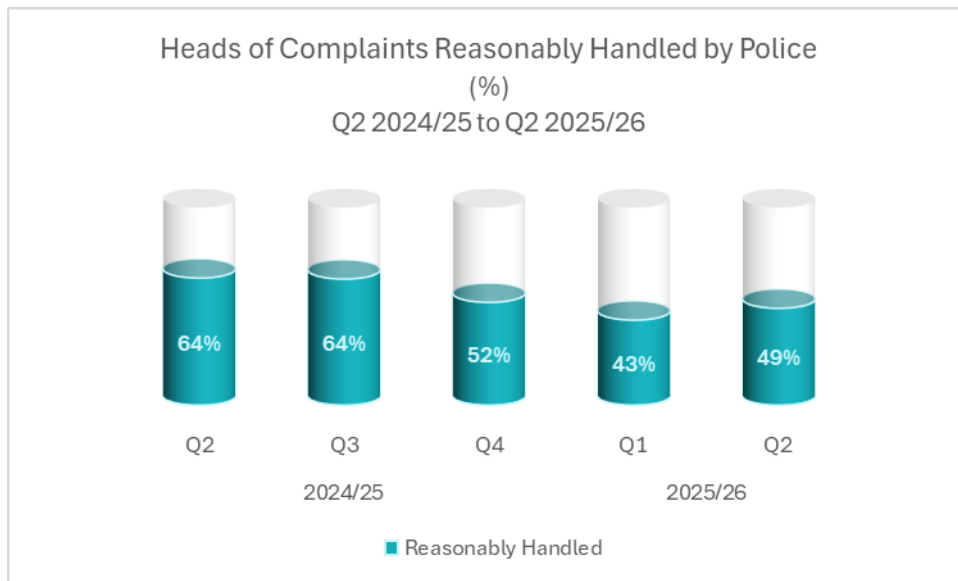
5. Source: PIRC Centurion System – Decision Letter Report

The number of cases closed due to discretionary decisions (n=33) was greater in Q2 than in previous years; six more than in 2023/24 and twenty-two more than last year. In comparison to the previous quarter, there was one more decision letter closure.



Outcome

Reasonable v Not Reasonable



6. Source: PIRC Reviews Quarterly Performance Reports

An increase in the proportion of Heads of Complaint (HoCs) found to have been reasonably handled by Police Scotland has been noted since last quarter, although these still account for less than half of the HoCs considered throughout the quarter.

PIRC has previously noted concern about the proportional decline of complaints that were reviewed that were handled to a reasonable standard. Whilst it is welcomed that this latest figure shows no further decline, there remains significant scope for improvement. This can be achieved by more consistent and rigorous adherence to the Statutory Guidance.

PIRC continues to guide and support PSD to better understand and implement best practice in handling all complaints, thereby increasing the likelihood of swift and effective resolution.

CHR Disposal Outcomes

- **Recommendations** – these are made in the CHR reports where we identify deficiencies or shortcomings in the police complaint handling. Our recommendations may, for example, ask the policing body to undertake further enquiries, to re-assess the available information, to issue an apology, to re-visit a specific policy/procedure or issue the complainer with a further response.
- **Learning Points** – PIRC is committed to promoting a culture of learning and improvement. During our reviews, we seek to identify and capture organisational and individual learning opportunities.
- **Reconsideration Directions** – reconsideration directions are used in cases where significant complaint handling failings have been identified during a review. It requires someone previously unconnected with the complaint enquiry to reconsider the complaint.
No Reconsideration Directions were issued by PIRC to Police Scotland in Q1 2025/26.
- **Discretionary Decisions** – Not every CHR application is progressed to a Complaint Handling Review. The Commissioner may carry out a CHR where it is deemed fair, reasonable, proportionate and in the public interest to do so.

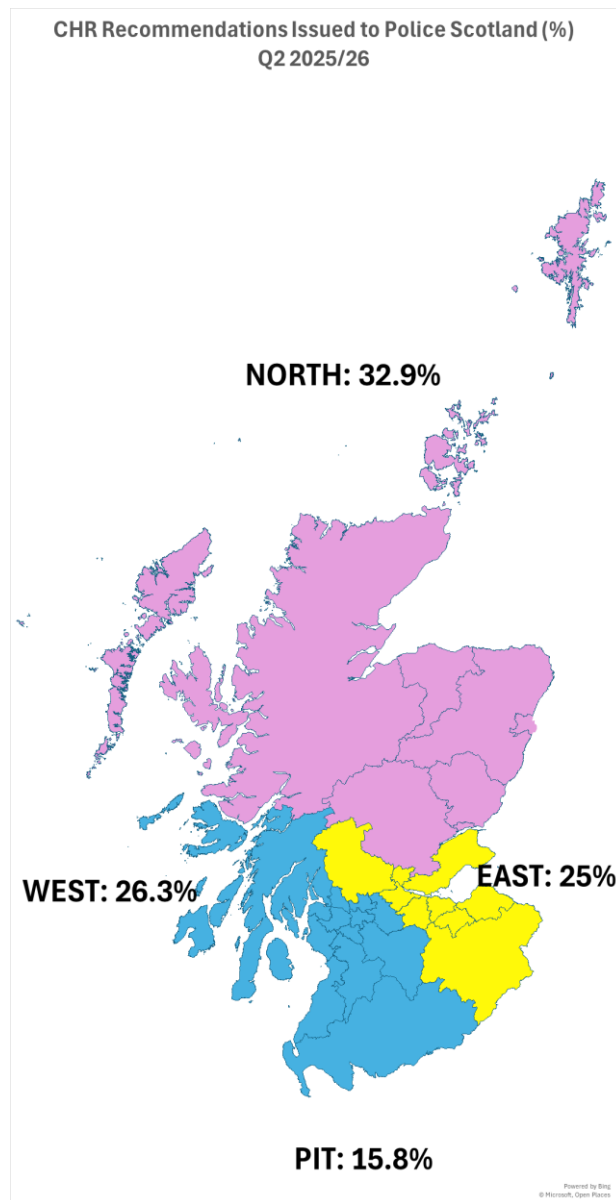
In cases where applications are not taken forward, the Commissioner will issue a discretionary decision letter, having considered the application and found that it does not merit a CHR.



Recommendations Made

In Q2, PIRC made 76 recommendations within 33 CHRs to Police Scotland. These are broken down by Recommendation Type and area below:

Recommendation Type	2025/26 Q2
Conduct further enquiry	43
Reassess and fresh response	24
Other	4
Record as CAP	3
Revisit policy/procedure	1
Total	76



7. Data source: PIRC Centurion System
Map Source: Powered by Bing © Microsoft, Open Places



Learning Points Identified

PIRC identifies opportunities for organisational or individual learning and improvement as part of the CHR process. These learning opportunities are highlighted to the police as Learning Points within CHR reports. All our Learning Points are designed to enhance PSD compliance with our Statutory Guidance and Police Scotland's Complaints About Police Standard Operating Procedures.

The Learning Points are also opportunities for PIRC to highlight examples of good complaint handling practices.

During Q2, we identified 50 Learning Points for Police Scotland arising from CHRs and Discretionary Decisions.

- **Police Scotland North:** 9 Learning Points

Themes included the importance of agreeing Heads of Complaint prior to starting the complaint enquiry; inappropriate Frontline Resolution; and the importance of identifying learning to address significant issues/failings uncovered during the complaint enquiry that may not have been made as a specific allegation by the complainer.

A good practice was identified in a case where the complaint enquiry officer handled the complaints sensitively and with compassion and signposted the complainer to various support agencies. The learning was therefore not only to praise the EO for good complaint handling practice, but to encourage other complaint handlers to adopt a similar approach when dealing with similar complaints in the future.

- **Police Scotland East:** 12 Learning Points

Themes included the need for complaints about ACU/PSD officers to be allocated outwith PSD for enquiry in line with provisions of CAP SOP, and to promote transparency and confidence in the police complaint process; the importance of complainer engagement and the need to clarify the precise nature of an applicant's complaint and agree the Heads of Complaint at the outset; and the need to ensure that final response letters not only directly and fully address each complaint allegation raised by applicants, but also communicate any learning that may have been identified as a result of the complaint.

PIRC also highlighted good practice in one case whereby the thoroughness of the record keeping by the complaint-handler enhanced PIRC's ability to conduct an efficient and effective CHR. This learning was cascaded not only to recognise good complaint-handling practice by the EO, but also designed to encourage other complaint handlers to adopt a similar approach when investigating complaints.

- **Police Scotland West:** 21 Learning Points`

Themes included inappropriate use of front-line resolution; the need to ensure that there is a robust process in place to monitor the prioritisation and allocation of complaints marked as a 'priority' to ensure that offences that can be time-barred are dealt with as promptly as possible; the importance of agreeing the Heads of Complaint at the start of the complaint enquiry; the need to maintain regular contact with applicants to ensure they are kept updated on the progress of their complaint; and the need for complaints about ACU/PSD officers to be allocated outwith PSD for enquiry to promote transparency and confidence in the police complaint process.

- **Proportionate Investigation Team:** 8 Learning Points

Themes included the importance of agreeing Heads of Complaint and obtaining complaint statements from applicants at the start of the complaint enquiry; the need to maintain contact with applicants using their preferred method of contact; inappropriate Frontline

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Resolution; and the use of incorrect closure codes on complaint case files.

PIRC previously highlighted organisational Learning Points which included:

- amendment to the guidance on notification of next of kin residing in other parts of the UK;
- amendment to guidance to ensure that serving police officers who report domestic abuse or who are suspects in domestic abuse cases are not investigated by their colleagues
- amendment to the Suspension from Duty SOP to ensure that risk assessments are properly recorded in all cases, even where suspension is not deemed necessary
- review of current procedures to document members of the public attending local police stations.

These organisational Learning Points were issued to Police Scotland between May and July 2023, and currently remain outstanding. PIRC continues to liaise with Police Scotland in this regard, however there has been no substantive or notable updates on the implementation of these Learning Points since the last reporting period (Q1 2025/26).



Stakeholder Engagement

During Q2 2025/26, the Reviews Team continued to engage with the Professional Standards Department of Police Scotland.

Practitioners Forum

Following the PSD/PIRC Liaison Event, the PIRC Reviews team in collaboration with PSD established a series of Practitioners Forums to take place during 2024/25. These events are held quarterly, with separate forums organised for each PSD region. PIRC provides detailed feedback to PSD teams on the findings and themes arising from CHR reports originating from the designated PSD teams/region. The events also provide an opportunity for PSD complaint handlers to raise any topical issues or to request additional guidance on complaint-related matters arising in their respective regions.

On 27 & 28 May 2025, the last of the planned Practitioners Forums for 2024/25 took place. Each respective PSD region participated in carefully prepared workshops and inputs which were designed to address specific issues identified by PIRC through the CHR process or raised by PSD. The next round of Practitioners Forums is due to take place on 29 October and 13 November 2025.

PSD Induction Training

In October 2023, PSD started a new comprehensive induction training course for those recently appointed to work within PSD. Over the course of four days, both PIRC Reviews and Investigations teams are invited to deliver training inputs and presentations, covering complaint handling best practice, the CHR process, statutory referrals, and PIRC investigations.

This course now runs every 6 months. As part of the implementation of the NCARU audit recommendations, a much more comprehensive input has been developed by the NCARU staff to cover accurate recording and the initial assessment and categorisation of relevant complaints (Stages 1 & 2 of the six-stage process).

This induction training course has now been re-designed and compressed by PSD. PIRC Reviews Team supported the delivery of this new induction training on 23 October 2025 by providing inputs on the role of PIRC and the CHR process.

National Complaint Handling Development Group (NCHDG)

The reformed NCHDG has resumed its work, with most recent meetings held in May 2025 and August 2025. The group is chaired by Superintendent James Mann, and consists of representatives from PSD involved in complaint handling, PIRC, and the SPA.

This group is focused primarily on practical complaint-handling trends/themes. The group is also used as the forum to discuss any recommendations arising from the PIRC/SPA NCARU Audit and PIRC 6-Stage Audit.

The Group met on 20 August 2025, when members had an opportunity to hear from representatives of West Midlands PSD and colleagues from SPSO.

PIRC Audit – 6-Stage Process

In line with recommendation 7 of the Lady Elish Angiolini report, PIRC has undertaken an audit of Police Scotland's 6-stage complaints process. The final report was published by the Commissioner on 10 July 2024. The report made 10 recommendations designed to improve and strengthen the existing Police Scotland's complaint handling procedures. PSD appointed a Chief Inspector to oversee and progress implementation of recommendations. In February 2025, the Commissioner accepted the implementation of four recommendations, which are now discharged:

Recommendation 1

Police Scotland should review the accessibility of the complaints system for members of the public whose first language is not English.

Recommendation 4

Police Scotland should enhance the existing six-stage form to prompt NCARU to secure perishable evidence at the earliest opportunity.

Recommendation 5

Police Scotland should consider separating the complainer contact and the enquiry log into two distinct logs that require to be updated by EOs.

Recommendation 10

Police Scotland should strengthen the current guidance on the Quality Assurance (QA) process and seek to ensure that all complaint files contain an auditable trail of QA by a senior officer.

Although it was anticipated that a further four recommendations could be implemented and discharged by the end of Q4 of 2024/25, due to staff changes within PSD, implementation of these recommendations did not progress.

In Q2 of this financial year, no further progress on implementation of recommendations has been achieved. PIRC will continue to engage with PSD to oversee successful implementation of all recommendations made within the PIRC audit report.



Investigations

In terms of Section 33A(c) of the Police, Public Order and Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2006 (as amended) and Regulation 3 of the Police Investigations and Review Commissioner (Investigations Procedure, Serious Incidents and Specified Weapons) Regulations 2013 (the 2013 Regulations), **the Chief Constable must request the Commissioner to investigate any serious incident¹ involving the police which is a circumstance involving, (a) a constable; or (b) a member of the police staff.**

On receipt of a referral from Police Scotland, PIRC undertakes an assessment of the referral and decide whether to investigate or not. Assessments may include examining CCTV, Body Worn Video, other video, witness statements, command and control logs, telephone calls, Airwave radio transmissions, briefing papers or other material.

Referrals

Following a Performance Data Review in October 2022, PIRC revised referral incident types that PIRC deals with, to streamline and standardise referral types.

Referrals from Police Scotland are categorised in the following terms:

- Death Following Police Contact
- Serious Injury Following Police Contact
- Serious Injury in Police Custody
- Firearms Discharged
- Firearms Presented
- Taser
- Incapacitant Spray²

¹ A “serious incident involving the police” which the Commissioner may investigate in pursuance of paragraph (c) of section 33A is a circumstance in or in consequence of which a person has died or has sustained serious injury where (i) the person, at or before the time of death or serious injury, had contact (directly or indirectly) with a person serving with the police acting in the execution of that person’s duties; and (ii) there is an indication that the contact may have caused (directly or indirectly) or contributed to the death or serious injury; (b) any other circumstance in or in consequence of which (i) a person has otherwise sustained a serious injury at a time when the person was being detained or kept in custody by a person serving with the police; or (ii) a person serving with the police has used a firearm or any other weapon of such description as the Scottish Ministers may by regulations specify.

² The overall referral figures quoted by PIRC are not comparable to those reported by PSOS. This is due to the inclusion of referrals involving incapacitant spray (which are not managed by PSD, therefore not cited) as well as the PSOS inclusion of Crown Directed matters, which are excluded in PIRC figures.

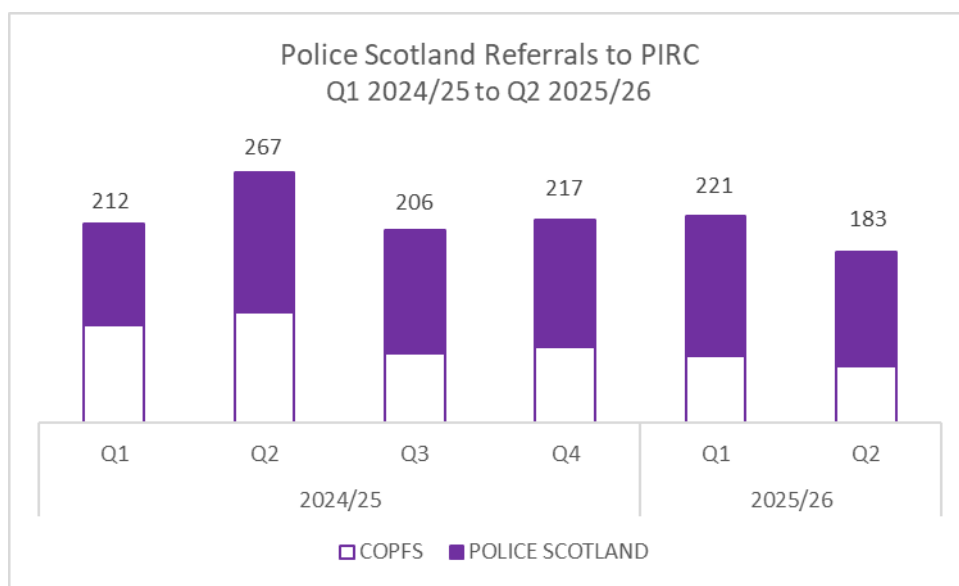
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In addition, under Section 33A(b) of the 2006 Act, COPFS may instruct PIRC to investigate:

- Death in Custody
- Death Following Police Contact
- Other Criminal Matters

COPFS investigation statistics are not included in this report, as they relate to live ongoing criminal investigations at the direction of COPFS.

(Note: Since 4 October 2021, COPFS has a standing instruction resulting from the Dame Elish Angiolini Independent Review of Complaints Handling, Investigations and Misconduct issues (Recommendation 47), which instructs that all on duty allegations of assault made against police officers and police staff are referred from Police Scotland to PIRC for assessment and where appropriate investigation.

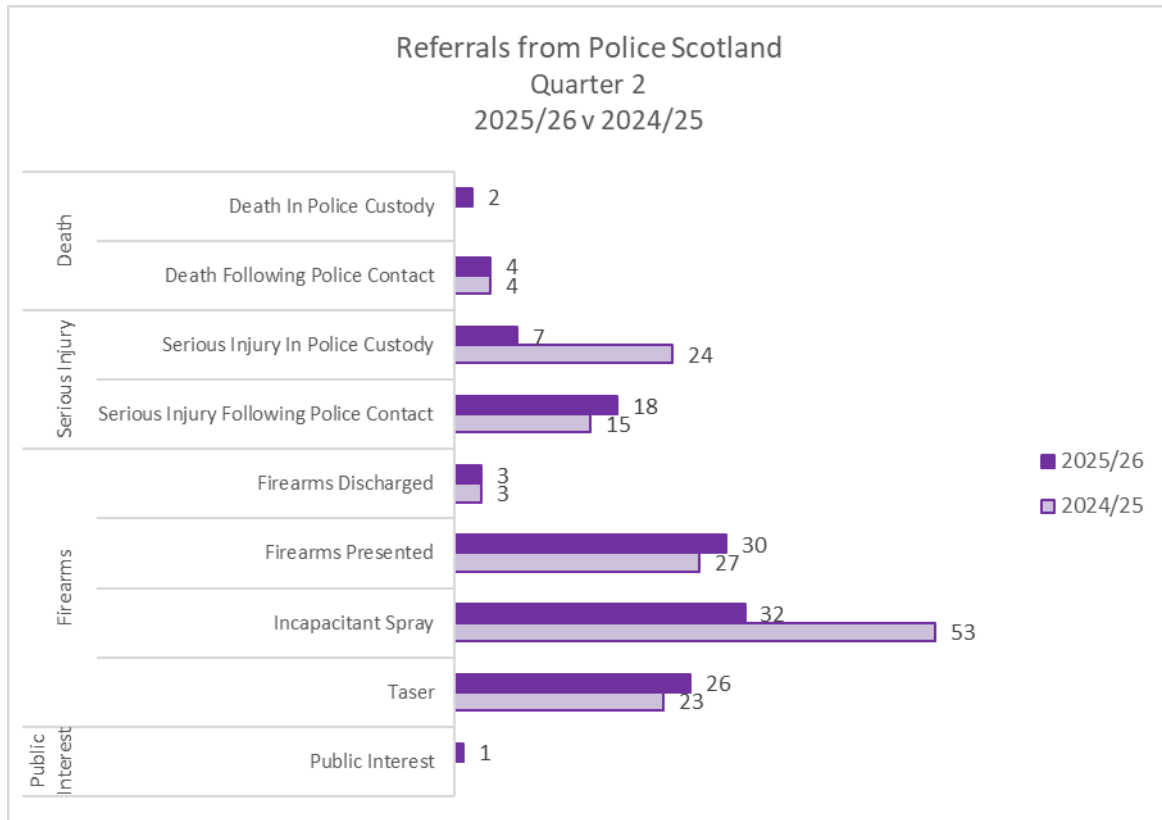


8. Source: PIRC Clue System

PIRC received notably fewer referrals concerning Police Scotland (n=38) in relation to the previous quarter and reversing the trend for incremental increase noted in recent quarters.

The proportion of referrals originating from Police Scotland was 67%, which is consistent with the proportions received in recent quarters. In Q2 of 2024/25, this proportion was 56%.

Referrals by Type



9. Source: PIRC Clue System³

There were two referrals concerning Deaths in Police Custody in Q2 – the first such referrals PIRC has received from Police Scotland. Both referrals were superseded by referrals from COPFS which progressed to investigation.

Four Death Following Police Contact referrals were received in Q2. Again, each Police Scotland referral was superseded by a referral from the Crown which proceeded to investigation. Significantly fewer (n=17) Serious Injuries in Police Custody were referred to PIRC in Q2 than had been in the same period last year and four fewer than in Q1. Serious Injury Following Police Contact numbered 18 for Q2; an annual increase of three but two fewer than in Q1.

Firearms discharges were referred to PIRC on three occasions in Q2. Two involved injured deer close to busy roads and one involved the discharge of a baton launcher at a male threatening self-harm. All discharges were considered proportionate in the circumstances.

³ Discrepancies between figures submitted by PIRC and Police Scotland can arise from different categorisation requirements for each organisation’s workload management.

For example, if an Authorised Firearms Officer discharges a taser in the course of their duties – one of a suite of options available to AFOs – Police Scotland will refer this as an Armed Policing incident. If the officer involved was a Specially Trained Officer, the referral would be counted as a ‘STO – Taser’ referral by Police Scotland.

For its part, the PIRC’s interest in the same incident would be primarily concerned with the fact that a taser was discharged at all - but it would not make the distinction between the type of officer involved. PIRC would therefore always record this type of incident as a ‘Taser’ event.

If, however, firearms were also presented by AFOs at the same incident, PIRC would have an obligation to examine each element of the incident (i.e. both taser discharge and firearms) so would record a second referral for ‘Firearms Presented’.

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The presentation of firearms and taser deployment both noted annual increase of three, relative to Q2 2024/25.

The use of Incapacitant Spray was referred on 32 occasions, less than both Q2 2024/25 (n=53) as well as the preceding quarter (n=52).

Referrals from the Police Scotland Divisions in which Body Worn Video (BWV) is in use, in most instances, provides BWV footage pertaining to the incident. In such cases, where the footage captures the material part of the incident, this provides unequivocal evidence, which is beneficial to the PIRC assessment and associated decisions. PIRC continues to work with Police Scotland towards achieving a smooth process for the receipt of footage in a timely manner, to prevent avoidable delays.

Although the introduction of BWV footage adds an additional time to the PIRC assessment process, it has clear benefits in terms of securing public trust and confidence. For example, a recent referral regarding the use PAVA led to the instigation of a criminal investigation in respect of the discharging officers' actions. This may not have been identified based on the referral paperwork alone.



Investigation Categories

To ensure adequate resourcing and prioritisation, all PIRC investigations are categorised using criteria detailed in the PIRC Operations Directorate Business Counting Rules.

Prioritisation is given to death and other high-profile investigations. Each investigation is categorised either A+, A, B or C depending on the complexity or seriousness of the investigation.

Major Cases – Category A+

In exceptional circumstances, the Head of Investigations or the Head of Reviews and Policy (or their nominated representative) can request the Director of Operations or, in their absence, the Commissioner, to designate an investigation with major case status. This only applies to a very small number of complex or protracted investigations, including those where the timescales are being directed by another authority such as COPFS. In such cases it will be clear from the outset that the case is going to take a prolonged period to reach a conclusion, and there is no reasonable prospect of KPI timescales for the completion of the case being met.

An extended timescale will be provided for major cases with the Commissioner and Director of Operations given regular situational updates. PIRC will also maintain contact with affected family members or next of kin and ensure that timeous progress updates are provided on the status of the investigation.

Category A

Investigations into deaths in police custody or following police contact; or a major investigation with complex lines of enquiry where the securing of evidence requires significant resource allocation over a protracted period or an investigation which generates high levels of public/political interest placing additional demands on the organisation in relation to completion times.

Category B

An investigation where the lines of enquiry are apparent from the outset but where the securing of evidence can only be achieved through prolonged investigation.

Category C

A routine investigation where the lines of enquiry are apparent from the outset and the gathering of all relevant evidence can be achieved without placing great demands on the investigations team.

One referral received from Police Scotland in Q2 progressed to full category 'A' investigation. This related to the death of a female under the age of 18 and was instigated by the Commissioner in the Public Interest.

Key Performance Indicators

PIRC's performance in managing investigations is measured against the following key performance indicators (KPIs):

- 90% of all cases referred to PIRC will be assessed, and a decision provided of whether an investigation will proceed, within 5 working days following receipt of background case papers police.
 - Q2 2025/26 – **74%**
- 80% of Category A investigations (minus major cases) completed and reports submitted within 90 working days, following receipt of background case papers.
 - Q2 2025/26 – **100%**
- 80% of Category B & C investigations (minus major cases) completed and reports submitted within 120 working days, following receipt of background case papers.
 - Q2 2025/26 – **94%**

PIRC advised in its previous submission to the Complaints and Conduct Committee that the Lord Advocate's References around the law of corroboration would significantly increase the number of criminal investigations required to be undertaken by our Investigations Team.

This has significance for PSD, as our increased workload will require significantly higher volumes of requests for case papers.

Comparatively few PIRC investigations stem from referrals received from policing bodies. Only 4 out of 135 (3%) new PIRC investigations in 2025/26 were referred by Police Scotland.



Recommendations

PIRC reports to Police Scotland may include findings and recommendations and are intended to assist organisational learning and development or to address any systemic issues discovered. **Police Scotland does not have a legal requirement to implement any recommendations**, however, in the main these are implemented.

To assist PSD implement best practice, a PIRC Senior Investigator has been assigned responsibility for the progression of recommendations, through improved communication channels and scheduled meetings taking place to provide clarification and suggest implementation strategies, if required.

Responses Received

PIRC has received five responses to thematic recommendations submitted to Police Scotland in Q2. Four of these responses were received within three months of issue:

<p><i>PIRC Recommendation</i></p>
<p>Police Scotland should ensure ACR Supervisors consistently review any ‘PROMPT’ incidents which have breached the resourcing timer and the outcome of this review, including recontacting the reporter, is recorded on STORM.</p>
<p><i>Police Response</i></p>
<p><i>C3 Division reviewed the national application of the then current processes and standards, whereupon it was noted that there was a degree of regional variation in relation to the professional management of the ACR supervisory filter queues and training given to ACR supervisors.</i></p> <p><i>As a result, a set of internal recommendations were drafted and immediately implemented to ensure:</i></p> <p><i>clarity around the professional expectations and efficient management of all ACR supervisory transfer filters</i></p> <p><i>ACR Supervisors MUST append a suitable update to the STORM incident following a timer transfer acceptance.</i></p> <p><i>Once a suitable update/ instruction has been added the incident MUST then be transferred via STORM back to the relevant ACR Controller for control.</i></p> <p><i>The C3 Procedures Guide has been updated communicated out to all ACR supervisors nationally.</i></p>

PIRC Recommendation
Police Scotland should remind staff of the importance of re-contacting the person reporting an incident to establish the full circumstances and any additional information which may assist in assessing the incident and providing an appropriate police response.
Police Response
<i>Reviewing the ongoing resourcing picture and managing wider resources to attend incidents. Consideration given to arranging a Local Policing Appointment (LPA), should the incident be better suited to scheduled attendance and re-contacting the caller, ensuring they are aware of the delay in attendance with ACR controllers making efforts to speak to the caller to advise of any expected delays in attendance and gather any additional information which may amend the call grading.</i>
<i>Updated training materials have been incorporated into every ACR supervisors' course, ensuring that new supervisors are equipped with clear, consistent expectations for the efficient and professional management of all STORM supervisory filters.</i>
<i>The recommendations set out within the PIRC report are covered with this renewed focus on the importance of consistent, regular and meaningful supervisory reviews, ensuring that a robust review of individual circumstances, resource availability and any change in circumstances is suitably explored and documented.</i>

PIRC Recommendation
Police Scotland should remind officers of the importance of completing all relevant persons checks when dealing with incidents or reports which potentially have a 'domestic' element, including checks of the UNIFI crime recording system.
Police Response
<i>To ensure the identified learning has been cascaded, P Division have circulated email reminders to all officers operating within the Division, addressing the recommendations highlighted by the PIRC. The Professional Standards Department will also share details through the Divisional Commanders' Quarterly Report, next published in October 2025, under the 'Organisational Learning' heading.</i>
<i>This will highlight the importance of completing all relevant persons checks when dealing with incidents or reports which potentially have a 'domestic' element and a reminder around the execution of Apprehension Warrant and CJSD engagement.</i>

PIRC Recommendation
Police Scotland should remind officers that; 'Apprehension Warrants are to be executed as soon as practicable and without undue delay', however where there are genuine concerns regarding the wanted persons health/wellbeing this should, in the first instance, be discussed with staff from Police Scotland's Criminal Justice Services Division (CJSD), to ensure appropriate care can be provided while in police custody.
Police Response
<i>As noted above</i>

PIRC Recommendation

Police Scotland should consider providing detailed guidance to STOs in relation to identified risk factors when deploying TASER devices upon persons within vehicles.

Police Response

On 5th August 2025, staff from Police Scotland's Professional Standards Department met with members of the Police Scotland National Taser Unit and discussed the content of the Taser training programme and how incidents such the one that instigated this investigation, and associated Recommendation could be highlighted to direct future training.

It is acknowledged that the course is mandated and governed by the College of Policing and to safeguard the Force's license, deviating from the approved training material provided and making significant changes to the course cannot be locally implemented.

Nevertheless, the National Taser Unit recognise the importance of introducing real life experiences into the body of the training to encourage learning and also agree there is opportunity to focus more during training on the officer's risk assessment of incidents and emphasise internal/organisational learning such as this.

Chief Taser Officer/SME issued an email to National Taser Unit, Training Delivery (Policy and Compliance) personnel reinforcing this message. In addition, Chief Taser Officer/SME issued an email to all Specially Trained Officers (STOs) focusing on the decision-making of the STO when considering firing their weapon at an individual within a vehicle.

Also included as part of this email circulation was a reminder of the Risk Factors which formed part of their initial training, and which should be considered throughout their decision-making process at incidents.

Recommendations Outstanding

No recommendations issued by PIRC to Police Scotland remained outstanding at the end of Q2 2025/26.

Recommendations Issued

No recommendations were issued by PIRC to Police Scotland throughout Q2 2025/26.



Stakeholder Engagement

Revision to Law for Corroboration

On 1 January 2025, as a consequence of the Lord Advocate's References around the law of corroboration, PIRC was required to implement a revised investigative approach. PIRC now undertakes significantly more criminal investigations.

It is recognised that the increase in demand around criminal matters also impacts on PSD through the application of the legal change and consequently a significantly higher volume of PIRC requests for case related information. PIRC / PSD practitioner forums have been established to develop best practice and ensure efficient and effective management around information sharing and associated processes.

Practitioners Meetings between PIRC Supervisors and PSD

PIRC supervisors dealing with the assessment of referrals from Police Scotland, both Article 3&5 and 'Business as Usual' (Deaths/Serious Injuries/Firearms/Taser/PAVA), now meet quarterly with representatives from PSD.

The Article 3&5 quarterly meeting allows for constructive discussions to take place between the two organisations, with a view to finding ways of making the process more efficient. It allows both organisations to raise any issues, further enhance working practices and implement efficiencies to best manage the increased demand in relation to this area of business.

The Business as Usual quarterly meeting provides a forum for the discussion of any emerging trends in this business area. Although it is primarily a forum for PIRC Assessment supervisors and PSD, by inviting suitably senior officers from other areas within Police Scotland, e.g. Firearms or C3, it will contribute to these specialist departments developing a better understanding of the PIRC process and the material required for the PIRC assessment process and investigations. This forum provides a platform to share learning and develop good practice.

Body Worn Video (BWV)

BWV capacity has now been rolled out in seven Police Scotland Divisions. PIRC awaits the next revision of the Body Worn Video SOP, due for publication in in November 2025.

Training

PIRC staff continue to support Police Scotland training across a variety of training courses at the SPC as well as PSD Induction Training.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

The Commissioner has signed the draft MOU which was shared with PSOS.

END OF REPORT