



<b>Meeting</b>	<b>SPA Complaints &amp; Conduct Committee</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>4 September 2025</b>
<b>Location</b>	<b>Webex</b>
<b>Title of Paper</b>	<b>SPA Quarterly Report (Q1 – 25/26)</b>
<b>Presented By</b>	<b>Darren Paterson, Head of Workforce Governance</b>
<b>Recommendation to Members</b>	<b>For Discussion</b>
<b>Appendix Attached</b>	<b>Yes –</b>  <b>Appendix A - SPA Complaints Overview</b>  <b>Appendix B - SPA Complaints Performance Report Q1 – 25/26</b>

## 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 Q1, 2025/26.

*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 Q1 2025/26, is attached as Appendix B to this report and provides comparison to the previous 7 quarters.

### **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. Following recent recruitment to the team, SPA dip-sampling of Police Scotland closed complaints will resume this year, with a first report on sampled closed cases from Q1 being reported to the November Committee.
- 2.2.3. The revised SPA Unacceptable, Persistent or Unreasonable Actions by Complainers Policy is now in operation. During Q1 it has been used once, with no appeal received.

### **2.3. Stakeholder Meetings**

- 2.3.1. The National Complaint Handling Development Group (NCHDG) is scheduled to meet again on 20 August 2025.



## **2.4. Organisational Learning**

- 2.4.1. 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.
- 2.4.2. During the quarter, the PIRC reported back on its review of a complaint handled by the SPA. The report requires that the SPA reconsider the original decision in relation to 2 complaint allegations (albeit the reconsideration direction is not subject to PIRC supervision), as well as identifying a number of specific organisational learning opportunities. Further details in this regard will be reported following conclusion of the reconsideration direction, and confirmation from the PIRC that they are satisfied that matters identified have been addressed.

## **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



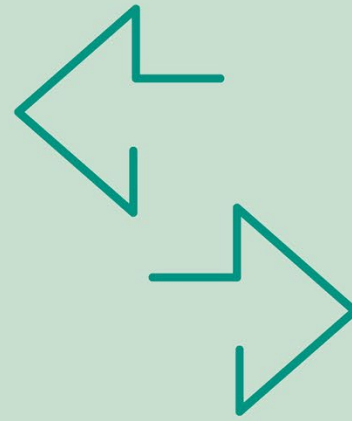
## SPA Complaints Overview

- 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 at 5 August 2025, there are 14 officers of senior rank in Police Scotland and 675 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  
Q1 2025/26



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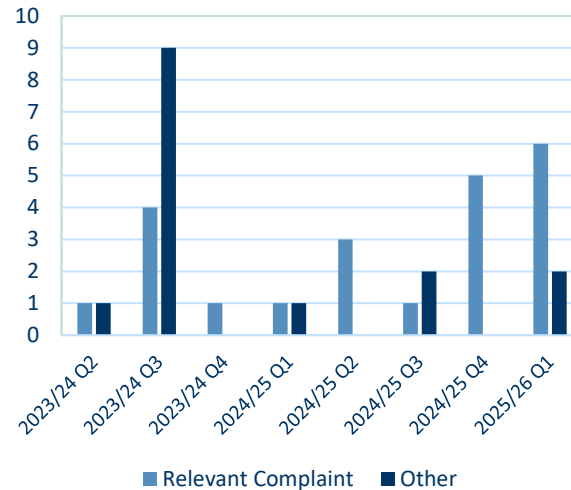




## Highlights (8 quarter view)

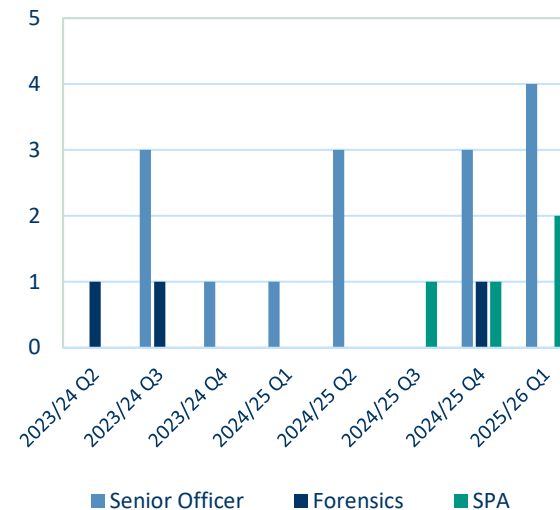
- In context of generally low volume of relevant complaints (and allegations), numbers remain largely consistent
- Majority of relevant complaints, and allegations, relate to senior officers
- 72% of allegations relate to On Duty complaints, the remaining 28% relate to complainers' dissatisfaction with the Quality of Service
- Early Stage Resolution remains an effective means of addressing complaints of a less serious nature (33% of allegations closed during period)
- Of the 18 complaints closed over the reporting period, 5 were out with the target completion time of 40 working days
- At the end of Q1, 4 complaints were ongoing
- Data excludes complaints received that are outside the SPA's mandate

## Cases received



- Across the 8 quarter period, 59% 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

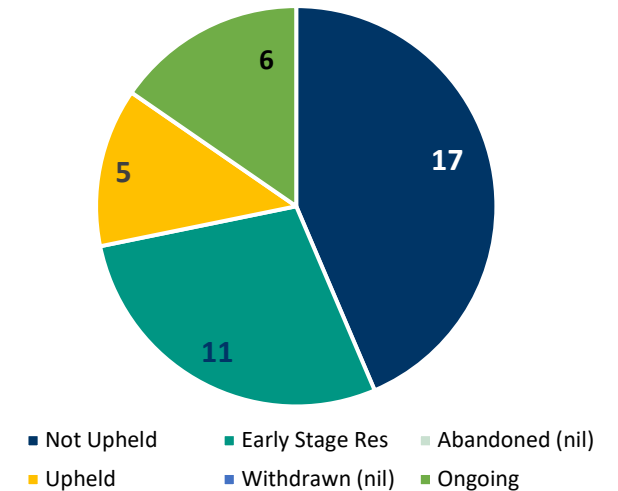


- The majority of relevant complaints (68%) relate to senior officers, although absolute volumes remain low
- Within these complaints, 39 individual allegations were made, with 74% relating to senior officers.

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

## Determination

### 8 quarter view of allegations



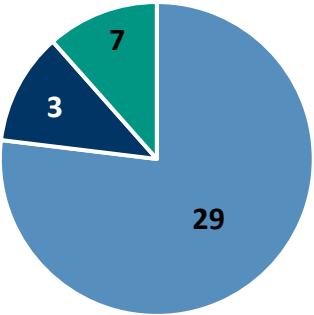
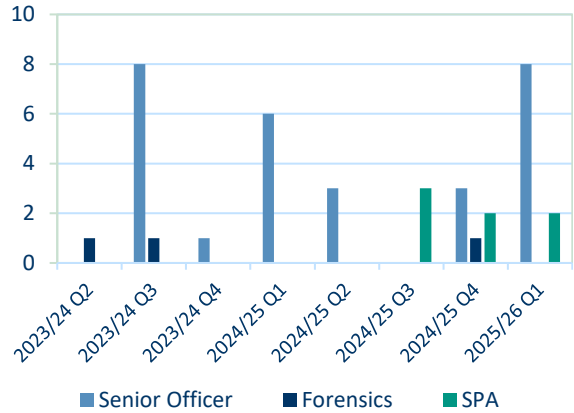
- Of the cases closed during the reporting period, 11 allegations were resolved by Early Stage Resolution (ESR) via explanation, assurance or apology.



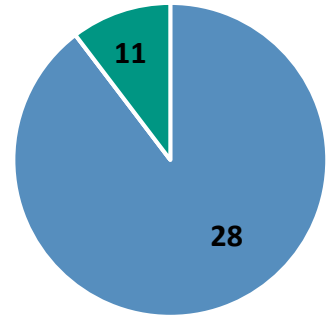
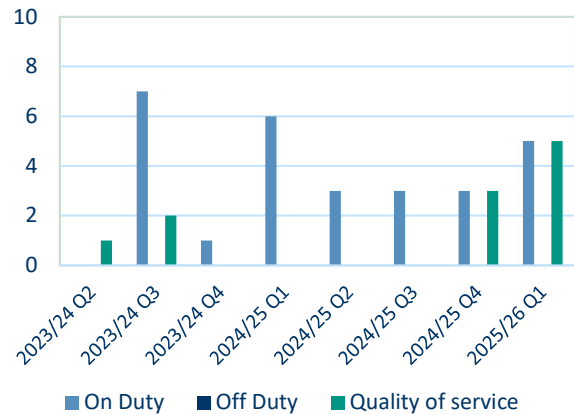


## Allegations by subject

Drill down from 'Subject of complaints' on previous page



## Allegations by category



## Timescales to close

	23/24			24/25			25/26	
	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1
Closed	1	1	1	1	1	3	7	3
Ave. working days to close	1	2	13	81	207	21	70	37
Cases closed beyond 40 working days								
Closed	0	0	0	1	1	0	2	1
Days to close				81	207		160, 272	101

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 above & below senior officer rank, therefore requiring liaison with Police Scotland