



Complaints & Conduct Committee

4 September 2025

Minutes of the Complaints & Conduct Committee held on 5 June 2024 via Webex

Board Members present:	Katharina Kasper (Committee Chair) Paul Edie (Committee Member) Chris Creegan (Committee Member)
Board Member apologies:	Angela Leitch (Committee Member)
In attendance:	<p><u>SPA</u> Darren Paterson, Head of Workforce Governance Gary Price, Complaints and Conduct Co-Ordinator Colette Craig, Governance Support Officer</p> <p><u>Police Scotland</u> Alan Speirs, Deputy Chief Constable Lynn Ratcliff, T/Assistant Chief Constable Helen Harrison, Chief Superintendent James Mann, Superintendent</p> <p><u>PIRC</u> Ilya Zharov, Head of Reviews and Policy Raymond Brown, Head of Investigations</p> <p><u>HMICS</u> Maggie Pettigrew, Lead Inspector</p>

1. Introduction and Welcome:

1.1 Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting and welcomed T/ACC Lynn Ratcliff to her first meeting of the committee.

1.2 Apologies

Angela Leitch (Committee Member)
Chris Brown Deputy Chief Executive (Resources, SPA)

1.3 Declarations of Interest and Connections

None.

1.4 Any Other Business

None.

1.5 Decisions on taking business in private (Item 9 – 12)

Members **AGREED** to take Items 9 – 12 in private.

2 Minute and Actions from previous meeting:

2.1 Minute from meeting held on 27 February 2025 for approval

Members **AGREED** the Minute of the meeting held on 27 February 2025 as an accurate record of the meeting.

2.2 Public Minute of Private Meeting held on 27 February 2025 for approval

Members **AGREED** the Public Minute of the private meeting held on 27 February 2025 as an accurate record of the meeting.

2.3 Rolling Action Log and Matters Arising

The Committee **APPROVED** the action log, noted the updates provided.

2.4 Decisions since last meeting

Members **APPROVED** a change to the Unacceptable, Persistent or Unreasonable Actions by Complainers Policy in May 2025 via email correspondence.

3. Police Scotland Professional Standards Annual Performance Report (24/25)

Members were provided with a report 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). During discussions the following matters were raised:

- Members sought clarity around the outcomes of hearings that do not result in gross misconduct and the learning from those cases. Chief Superintendent Helen Harrison (CSHHarrison) advised members that although gross misconduct might not have been the outcome, there usually is a level of misconduct identified, however, the hearings are looked at by independent chairs who assess the case presented. There could be several factors such as witnesses unable to attend that could impact in the outcome of hearings. Members were assured that as part of the HMICS assurance review, this area would be looked at in more depth. Members were further assured that cases are assessed on the evidence presented at the time with learning from cases taken forward.
- Members sought clarity on why there was a higher number of suspensions. CSHHarrison advised that there seems to be a confidence in people coming forward to report matters with checks and balances in place around suspensions and restrictions, however, there are a lot of off duty matters in relation to suspensions. T/ACC Lynn Ratcliff (T/ACCLRatcliff) provided members with further reassurance around the process that surround suspensions. DCC Alan Speirs (DCCASpeirs) added that he does not have a role in the suspension but does review the suspensions which provides a degree of independence and added that 70% of the volume of suspensions related to off duty matters.
- Members were assured that the high number of abandoned cases due to lack of contact are failed attempts by PS to reach complainers rather than complainers unable to contact PS.
- Members look forward to seeing the HMICS conduct review which will hopefully provide valuable insights and valid recommendations.
- Members queried the high level of complaints in Dumfries and Galloway and Tayside and what is being done in response to that. CSHHarrison advised that she would report back to members on this which will hopefully pull out some key trends and data. T/ACCLRatcliff assured members that there is ongoing dialogue with PSD and local divisions to understand any points and learning that needs to be taken on my officers.
- The Chair referred to emerging trends and Irregularity in Procedure and noted that some areas highlighted could be addressed at a quicker pace and sought clarity on whether there was anything that

could be pro-actively done in that space. T/ACCLRatcliff explained the need for PS to be clear and manage expectations when dealing with matters. PS committed to addressing this area to understand what could be simplified to improve performance in that area.

- The Chair referred to the Front-Line Resolution complaints (FLR) trends and asked that a deep dive was taken forward in this area to understand what the barriers are in not doing more FLR's, as driving this number up could lead to better outcomes for complainers and give staff members more time to do more complex complaints quicker and more robustly. DCCASpeirs agreed there is a piece of work that could be done to have a closer look at FLR and how a greater level of success can be achieved, particularly by looking at other sectors out with policing and how they handle complaints and how PS can gain a higher level of resolution.
- The Chair welcomed some trend information in the report but asked for further consideration to be given where further trend information could be added throughout the report.

Members **NOTED** the report and **AGREED** the following actions;

20250506-CCC-001 – Chief Superintendent Helen Harrison to report back to the committee on key trends and data in relation to the high level of complaints in Dumfries and Galloway and Tayside and how Police Scotland are responding to this.

20250506-CCC-002 - T/ACC Lynn Ratcliff to review how Police Scotland can improve performance within Irregularity in Procedure.

20250506-CCC-003 – Superintendent James Mann to take forward a piece of work that to have a closer look at Front Line Resolution (FLR) to identify how a greater level of success can be achieved, particularly by looking at other sectors out with policing and how they handle complaints to assist Police Scotland to gain a higher level of resolution.

4. SPA Annual Report (24/25)

Darren Paterson (DPaterson) provided a report updating members on complaints and conduct matters including key statistics reflecting the position at the end of Q4, 2024/25. The report also included statistics over the past 6 years, 2019/20 to 2024/25.

Members **NOTED** the report.

5. PIRC Annual Report on Police Scotland Handling of Complaints and Referral Investigations (24/25)

Members were provided with a report detailing key statistics reflecting Quarter 4 2024/25. Ilya Zharov (IZharov) provided a detailed summary of the report which noted statistical information in relation to PIRC Complaint Handling Reviews (CHR's). Raymond Brown (RBrown) provided an overview on the Referral Investigations. During discussions the following matters were raised:

- Members sought clarity on the 25% increase of referrals from PS and sought clarity on how much relates to the roll out of taser. RBrown was unable to say, however, the increase correlates with the increase in equipment provision to officers and this trend is to be expected.
- Members referred to outstanding organisational learning points and when members can expect to see an improvement. CSHarrison assured members that these are all pieces of work being taken forward, with immediate implications and changes taking place, however, delays usually sit with the policy change which can take time to work through. IZharov assured members that engagement with PS is being progressed in relation to outstanding organisational learning points.
- The Chair referred to a previous action for PS to ensure the full SPA Board are made aware of the Revision to Law for Corroboration and the wider implications in relation to policing practice. The Chair advised that she would be keen that is completed ahead of the next committee meeting.

Members **NOTED** the report.

6. Operation Glade Update

Members were provided with a report which provided an update in relation to Operation Glade. During discussions the following matters were raised:

- T/ACCLRatcliff provided the report and assured members on Police Scotland's collective commitment to this along with her own personal focus.
- James Mann provided assurance to members that he was committed to reducing the unallocated queue of complaints and informed members on the short, medium and long term actions that will be taken forward on this.

- Members asked that the title of the report was more transparent for the reader. T/ACCLRatcliff welcomed the comments and advised she would undertake to update future reports.
- Members sought clarity on the timescales to reduce the backlog back to a business-as-usual status. T/ACCLRatcliff advised that she is keen to get the numbers down to the low hundreds (approx. 300), however, was unable to provide a timeline on when this could be achieved, but hoped that 3-6months will provide a better sense on the impact of resource and processes now in place. T/ACCLRatcliff reassured members that there would be regular updates to the committee. DCC Speirs agreed with members concerns around not having an indication around timelines, however, assured members that as this is now a political matter and that weekly updates are being provided to the chief constable. The committee discussed and agreed that there would be benefit of an internal audit in this area. DCCASpeirs agreed and advised members that this had been discussed internally, and a Terms of Reference is underway, with an update coming to the Sept committee.

Members **NOTED** the report and **AGREED** the following actions:

20250506-CCC-004 - T/ACC Lynn Ratcliff to consider the name of this report for future reports, taking into consideration public transparency.

20250506-CCC-005 – DCC Alan Speirs to take forward an audit in the backlog of complaints, share the Terms of Reference for this audit with members and provide an update to the next committee.

8. Police (Ethics, Conduct & Scrutiny) (Scotland) Bill Update

Members were provided with a report which provided an update and overview of activity ongoing to prepare for the implementation of the Police (Ethics, Conduct & Scrutiny) Scotland Act 2025 and its implications for Police Scotland. During discussions the following matters were raised.

- CSHHarrison advised members that there would be a further additional committee to discuss the development of code of ethics, which is the current focus and priority for the team at the moment.

Members **NOTED** the report.

11. Committee Work Plan

The Chair noted that this item linked into action 20252702 - CCC-003 on the public action log.

Members **NOTED** the report.