

SPA Complaints & Conduct Committee

2024/25 – Quarter 3

1 October – 31 December 2024



Executive Summary

Complaint Handling Reviews

In Q3 2024/25 PIRC received 58 applications for a Complaint Handling Review (CHR) for cases involving Police Scotland.

Although Police Scotland generally continues to provide initial case papers timeously, the proportion of papers being provided within the agreed timescale has decreased from 94% to 78%.

PIRC made 29 further information requests to Police Scotland as part of an ongoing review. On average, requests were fulfilled within 13.9 working days of receipt of the request. This is in line with the timescales agreed with Police Scotland.

Overall, 64% of complaints reviewed in Q3 were deemed to be handled to a reasonable standard.

PIRC made 40 recommendations to Police Scotland within 24 CHRs.

Investigations

Overall, there were 206 referrals concerning Police Scotland in Q3 2024/25. Just under two thirds of these originated from Police Scotland itself.

Incapacitant Spray remains the most common referral type, despite significant quarterly decrease.(58%).

Taser referrals increased by 13 (57%), indicating a greater prevalence of Taser discharges than were reported in Q2.

Four of the Police Scotland referrals made in Q3 progressed to investigation. This included one Death Following Police Contact, two Serious Injuries following Police Contact and one Presentation of Firearms.

PIRC received responses to five recommendations in Q3, three of which were issued earlier in the same period. One recommendation remain outstanding.

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Introduction

This is the third submission of the Police Investigation and Review Commissioner to the SPA Complaints and Conduct Committee for 2024/25.

This is the second year where revised recording standards and counting rules have been in place. PIRC introduced these standards and rules on 1st April 2023, following an extensive Performance Data Review and consultation.

The counting rules aim to increase public confidence in policing through scrutiny of their actions and ensuring any lessons are learned to improve the standard of service provided by the Police bodies operating in Scotland.

This report provides details in relation to the interaction between Police Scotland and the PIRC to increase public confidence in policing by ensuring learning recommendations which have been identified, issued and are intended to result in positive change in police practice.

Our Role

The role of the Police Investigations & 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.

The 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:

- 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.



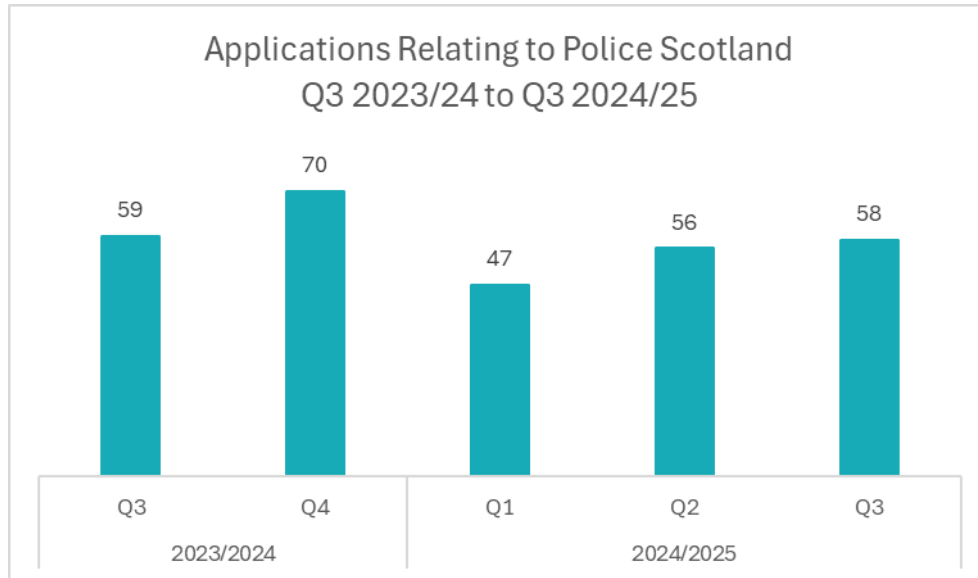
We cannot review:

- 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

In Q3 2024/25 PIRC received 58 applications for a Complaint Handling Review (CHR) for cases involving Police Scotland, an increase of 2 applications (+3.5%) on the previous quarter and a decrease of one on the preceding year's Q3 applications.

The quantity of applications submitted to PIRC appears to be returning to previously recorded levels, despite the significant backlog of unallocated relevant complaints previously highlighted by PSD.

The anticipated significant increase in CHR applications as a result of Police Scotland's efforts to reduce the backlog has not yet materialised, with the last of PSD civilian complaint handlers taking up their post in February 2025. The PIRC will support Police Scotland and assist with PSD induction training which will take place at the end of February/March 2025.

PIRC understands that remedial measures implemented by Police Scotland under the auspices of Operation GLADE, will likely begin to take effect in Q1 of 2025/2026. PIRC will continue to monitor this to ensure an appropriate response, if and when this occurs.

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.
 - Q3 2024/25 - 100% (YTD – 99%)
- 80% of CHRs including discretionary decisions (minus major cases) to be completed within 90 working days, following receipt of the relevant police case papers.
 - Q3 2024/25 – 98% (YTD – 98%)

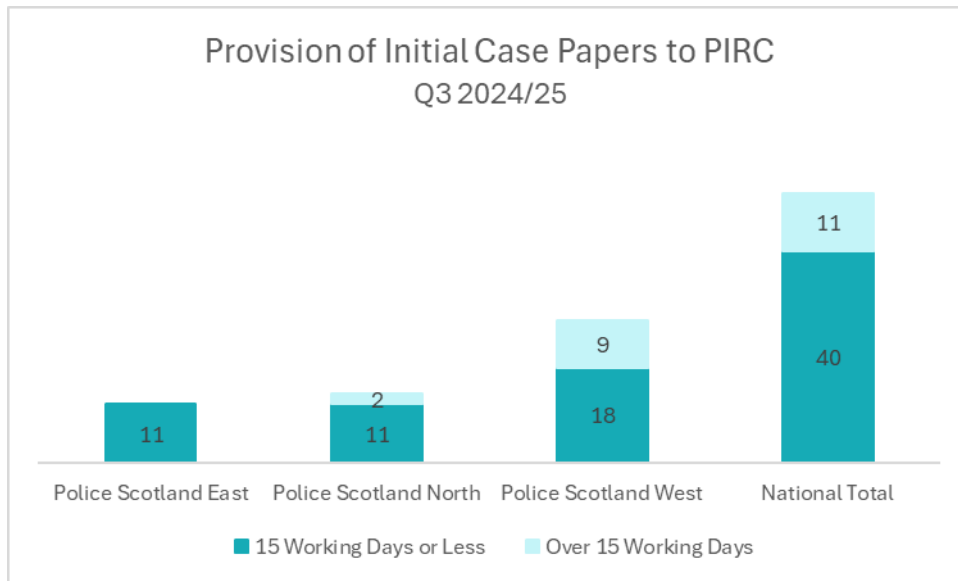


Timescales

Provision of Initial Case Papers

As part of the PIRC's Performance Data Review, it has been agreed that Police Scotland will now aim to provide all complaint case papers to the PIRC within 15 working days of request. This was previously 14 calendar days. This approach standardises the process for the provision of case papers across the Reviews and Investigations functions within PIRC.

In May 2024, PSD and PIRC started to exchange information via Egress file sharing system to ensure efficient and secure provision of police complaint files.



2. Source: PIRC Centurion System

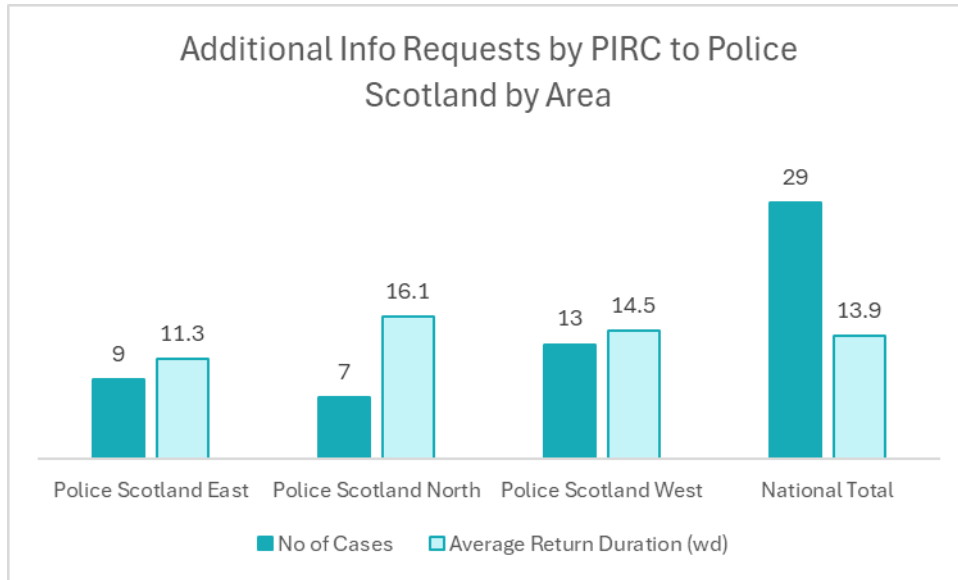
In Q3, there were 51 cases where papers were requested from Police Scotland. Requests were compiled within timescale in 40 of these cases (78%). Background papers were provided, on average, within 9.5 working days.

Whilst Police Scotland generally continues to provide necessary documentation timeously, it is noted that the proportion of papers being provided within the agreed timescale has decreased from the previous quarter (Q2 = 94%). The increase is understood to be attributable to PSD Admin team experiencing staffing issues in December 2024.

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 the PIRC.

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



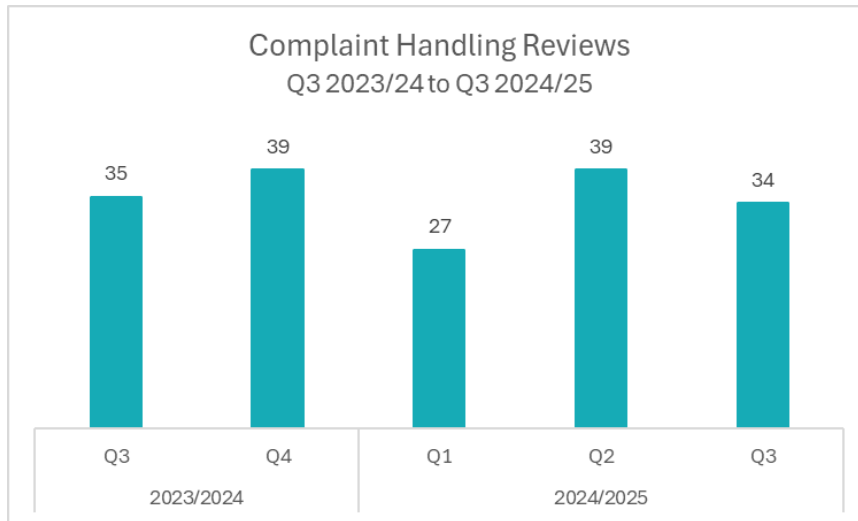
During Q3 2024/25, PIRC made 29 further information requests to Police Scotland as part of an ongoing review. This is four fewer requests than were made in Q2. On average, requests were fulfilled within 13.9 working days of receipt of the request. This is in line with the timescales agreed with Police Scotland.

The 12% decrease in requests, relative to those made in Q2, is noted. However, there remains significant scope for improvement in terms of PSD complaint files containing all of the relevant material when it is provided to the PIRC at the outset of a CHR process.

Analysis of the information requested during Q1 and Q2 demonstrated that the most common types of information routinely missing from complaint files are: incident reports (58%), iVPD entries (50%), witness statements (29%), call recordings (19%) and subject officer(s) accounts (11%).



Complaint Handling Review Reports Cases completed – National.



3. Source: PIRC Centurion System

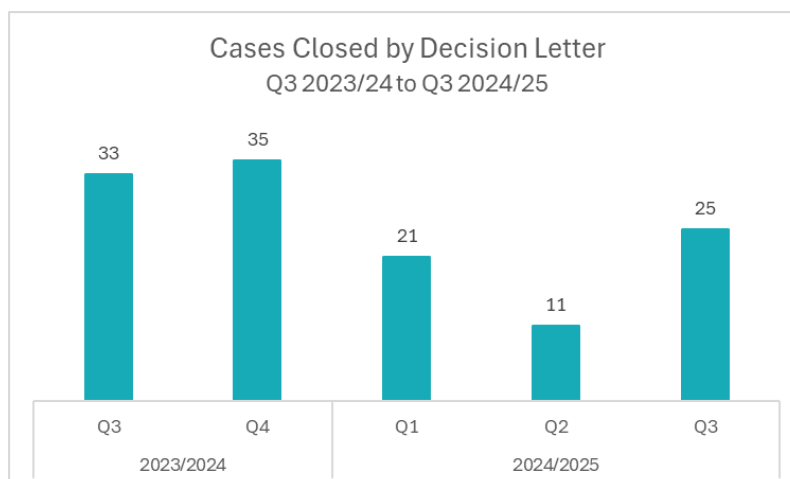
Thirty-four Complaint Handling Reviews were issued by PIRC to Police Scotland in Q3 2024/25, a decrease of 5 (13%) compared to the previous quarter and one fewer than in the same quarter in 2023/24. This decrease is generally within expected quarterly variances.

Cases closed - Decisions.

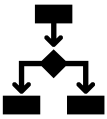
PIRC now records and reports the number of applications that were the subject of a discretionary decision. This includes applications where, following an assessment, the PIRC is satisfied that Police Scotland has taken reasonable steps to address a complaint. Consequently, the PIRC will not proceed with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

The PIRC recognise that complaints that are not reviewed on proportionality grounds represents opportunities for PSD to identify good complaint handling practice. To assist in this regard, the PIRC now send PSD a detailed letter explaining why discretion was exercised, so that good practice can be 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.

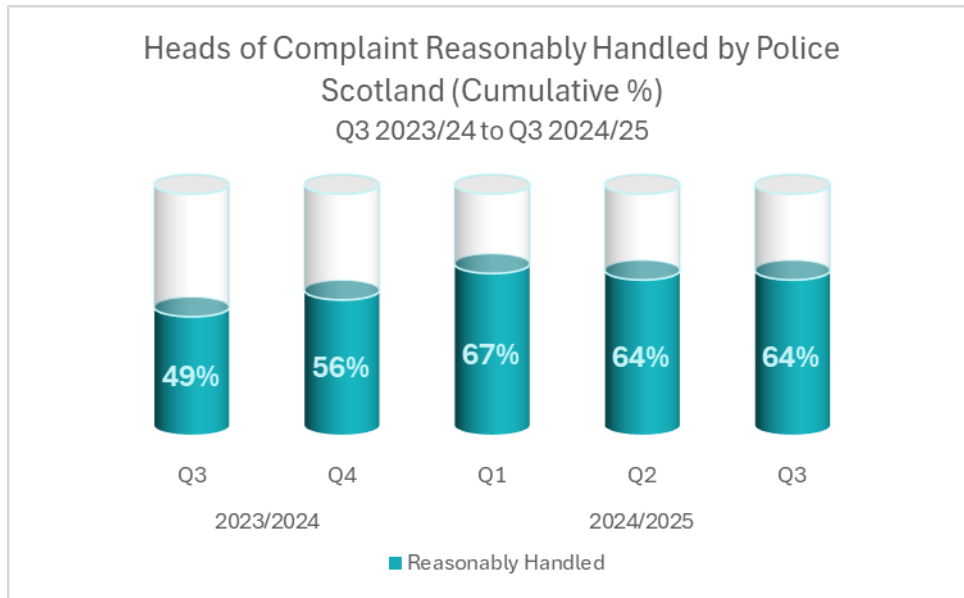


4. Source: PIRC Centurion System



Outcome

Reasonable v Not Reasonable



5. Source: PIRC Reviews Quarterly Performance Reports

Heads of Complaints assessed to have been handled reasonably by Police Scotland in Q3 was the same proportion as in Q2 (64%) but 15 percentage points higher than in the Q3 period in 2023/24.

The sustained increase in complaints handled to a reasonable standard this YTD is noted by PIRC, however, there still remains scope for significant improvement by Police Scotland. We look to assist Police Scotland in driving the standards of complaint handling up through positive engagement and identifying considered, tangible and workable recommendations.

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 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.
- **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 Complaint Handling Review.

A total of 25 decision letters were issued by PIRC to Police Scotland up to the end of Q3 2024/25.

In most cases, this means that the PIRC has deemed Police Scotland to have carried out a proportionate enquiry into these complaints. Accordingly, as the police appeared to have already taken reasonable steps to respond and address the complaint, the PIRC has determined there would be no added value to be gained from reviewing the handling of the complaints.

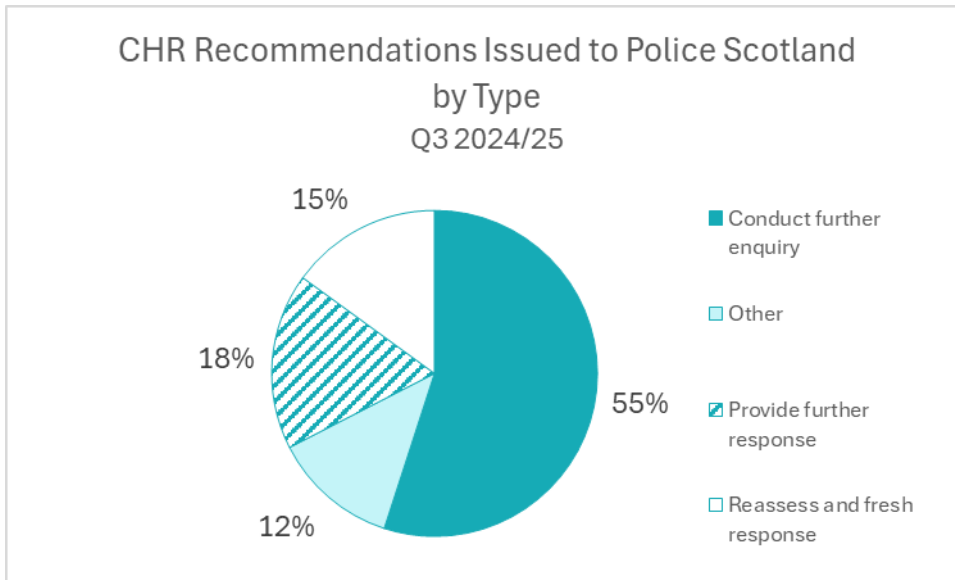
It can be reasonably assessed that - had these applications proceeded to a complaint handling review - a finding of 'reasonably handled' would follow.



Recommendations Made

Over the quarter, PIRC made 40 recommendations within 24 CHRs to Police Scotland. These are broken down by Recommendation Type and area below:

Recommendation Type	2024/25 Q3
Conduct further enquiry	22
Other ¹	5
Provide further response	7
Reassess and fresh response	6
Total	40

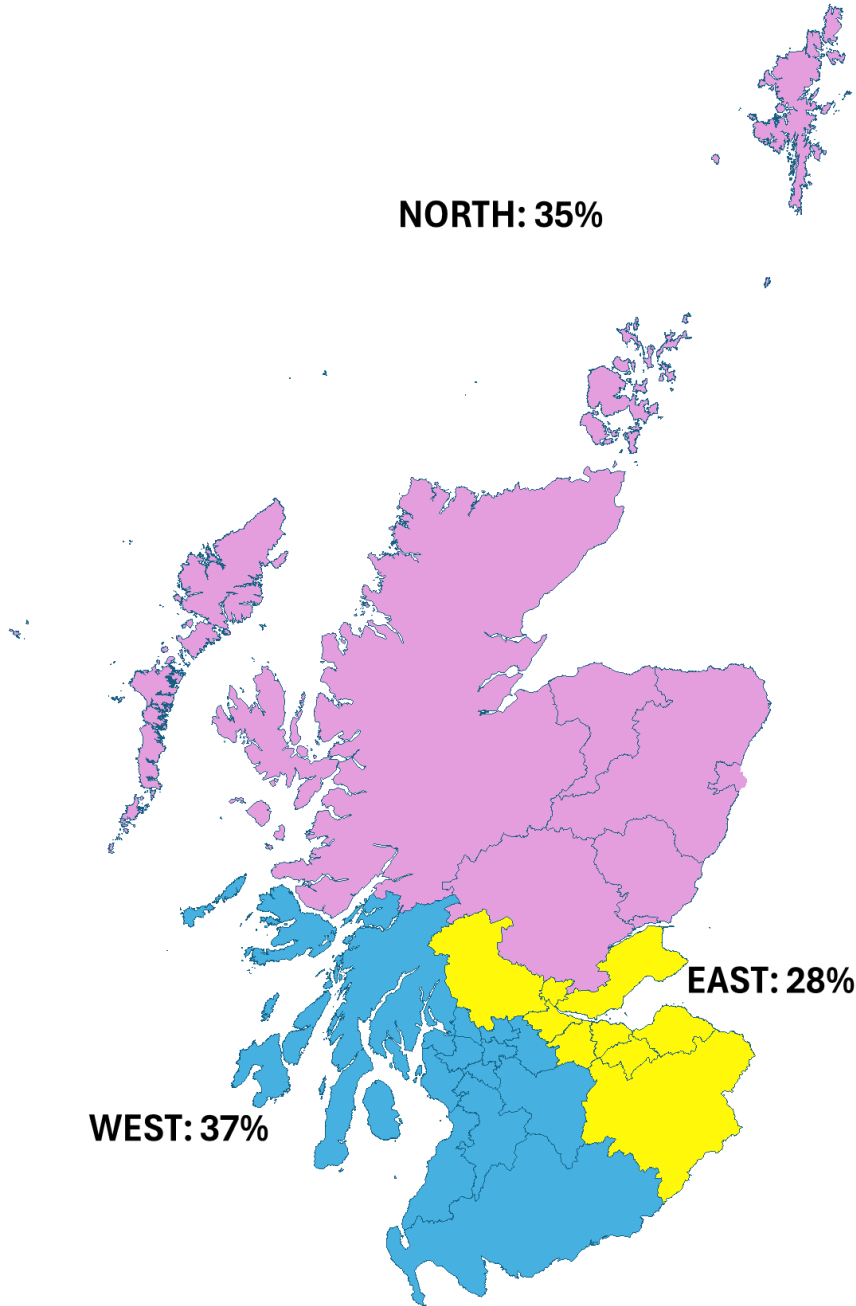


6. Source: PIRC Centurion System

¹ Four of the recommendations categorised as 'Other' involved the recategorisation of complaints and one recommended that guidance be reviewed to ensure clarity of responsibility for the referral of relevant persons to Victim Support Services.

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**CHR Recommendations Issued to Police Scotland
by Region (%)
Q3 2024/25**



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



Learning Points Identified

The PIRC identifies opportunities for organisational or individual learning and improvement as part of the Complaint Handling Review process. These learning opportunities are highlighted to the police as Learning Points within the CHR reports. All our Learning Points were 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 Quarter 3, we identified 39 Learning Points for Police Scotland arising from Complaint Handling Reviews and Discretionary Decisions.

- **Police Scotland North:** 13 Learning Points

Themes include complaint categorisation, consideration of reviewing guidance relating to the provision of receipts for seized firearms, ammunition and certificates and recognition of thorough record retention and documenting decisions and rationale throughout a complaint enquiry.

- **Police Scotland East:** 10 Learning Points

Themes include referring complaint enquiry officers to PIRC Statutory Guidance; appropriate use of language when communicating decisions to complainers and the appropriate use of Front Line Resolution process which is only appropriate for complaints that are non-criminal, straightforward, relatively minor in nature and can be resolved quickly with minimal enquiry.

- **Police Scotland West:** 16 Learning Points

Themes include complaint categorisation, case closures categories and highlighting when organisational learning opportunities have been communicated internally and in good time.

The PIRC previously highlighted organisational Learning Points which included:

- amendment to the guidance on notification of NOK 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 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 will be seeking assurance from Police Scotland that the learning identified by the PIRC will be implemented without further delay.



Stakeholder Engagement

During Q3 2024/2025, the Review 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 2024/2025. These events are held quarterly, with separate forums organised for each PSD region. The PIRC provide detailed feedback to PSD teams on the findings and themes arising out of CHR reports originating from the designated PSD 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. These events were held in April, August, and November 2024 with a further series scheduled to take place in March 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, CHR process, statutory referrals, and PIRC investigations.

This course now runs every 6 months. The second PSD Induction Training course took place at the beginning of April 2024, and thereafter in November 2024. 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 six-stage process). The NCARU input now forms part of the future PSD Induction Training course. PIRC is engaging with Police Scotland to assist with delivering induction training to new cohort of PSD complaint handlers in February/March 2025.

National Complaint Handling Development Group (NCHDG)

The newly reformed NCHDG has resumed its work, with meetings held in December 2023, March 2024, June 2024, September 2024 and December 2024. The group, chaired by Superintendent Kate Stephen, 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. At the last meeting, the group benefited from an input from a representative from Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland (PONI), learning about the procedures and practices adopted by the PONI when dealing with complaints from members of the public.

PIRC Audit – 6-Stage Process

In line with recommendation 7 of the Lady Elish Angiolini report, the 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 ten recommendations designed to improve and strengthen the existing Police Scotland's complaint handling procedures. PSD appointed a Chief

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Inspector to oversee and progress implementation of recommendations. Following discussions with PSD, it is anticipated that five recommendations could be discharged by the end of Q4.

PIRC/SPA Joint Audit – NCARU

Following a series of engagement and consultations between the PIRC, PSD and the SPA Complaints team, the Commissioner and the SPA have confirmed that the eight recommendations made in this audit are now deemed to be implemented. The Commissioner would like to thank our PSD and SPA colleagues for their support and assistance



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 incident² 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 undertake 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 & control logs, telephone calls, Airwave radio transmissions, briefing papers or other material.

Referrals

Following a Performance Data Review in October 2022, the PIRC, as part of this review, revised referral incident types that the PIRC deal 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 Spray³

² 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.

³ 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.

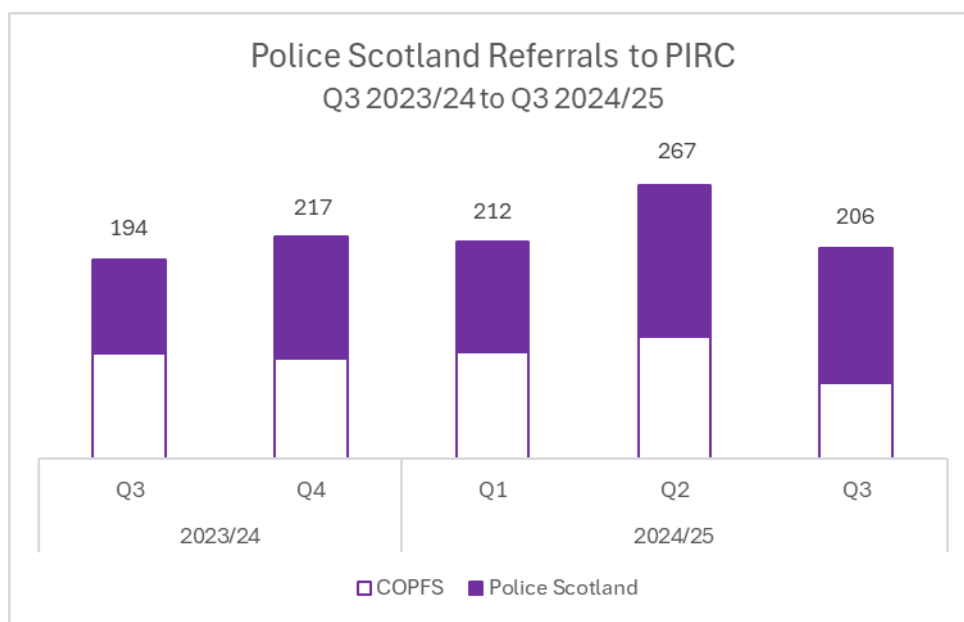
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In addition, under Section 33A(b) of the 2006 Act, COPFS may instruct PIRC to investigate:

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

COPFS investigation statistics are not included in this report, as they related 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 onwards from Police Scotland to PIRC for assessment and where appropriate investigation.



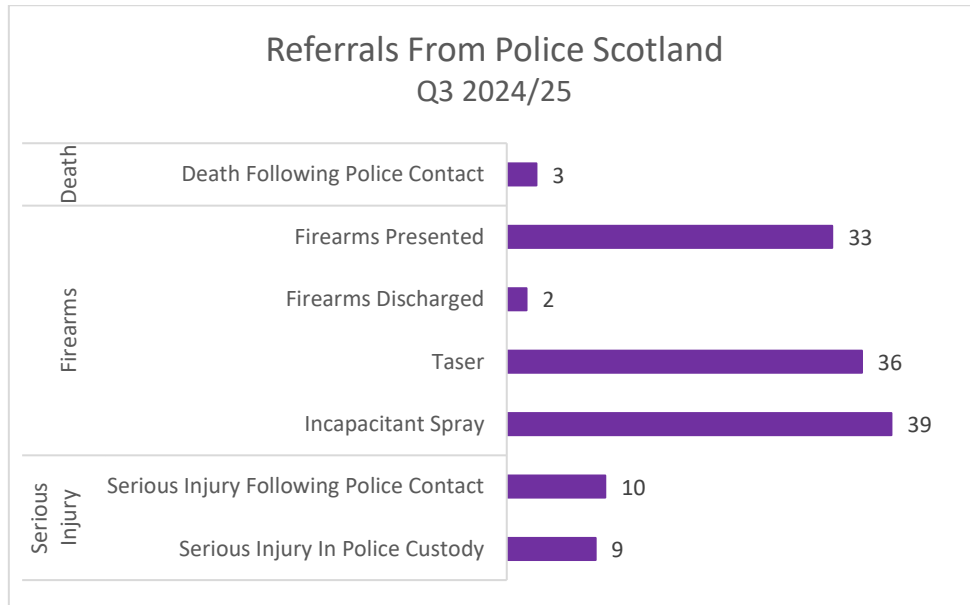
8. Source: PIRC Clue System

Overall, there were 206 referrals concerning Police Scotland in Q3 2024/25. Just under two thirds of these originated from Police Scotland itself (n=132, 64%).

Comparatively, this represents a decrease of 23% (n=61) on Q2 but an increase of 6% (n=12) on Q3 2023/24. The most significant decrease is noted in referrals submitted by COPFS, of which there were 45 fewer in Q3 compared to Q2.

Consequently, although the **volume** of Police Scotland referrals decreased by 16 in Q3, relative to Q2, this latest data shows a continued increased **proportion** (64%) of Police Scotland referrals received by PIRC.

Referrals by Type



9. Source: PIRC Clue System⁴

There was significant quarterly decrease (n=15) in Serious Injury in Police Custody referrals and a lesser decrease (n=5) in Serious Injury Following Police Contact. It should be borne in mind that these decreases follow unusually high number of referrals recorded in Q2 for both types of Serious Injury referral.

Despite the significant decrease (58%, n=14) in referrals from Police Scotland relating to the use of Incapacitant Spray, this remains the most common referral subtype. Over the same period, the number of Taser referrals increased by 13 (57%), indicating a greater prevalence of Taser discharges than were reported in Q2.

Four of the Police Scotland referrals made in Q3 progressed to investigation. This included one Death Following Police Contact, two Serious Injuries Following Police Contact and one Presentation of Firearms. Another of the Death FPC referrals was superseded by a Crown Instruction to investigate.

A Senior Investigator (SI) will review the content of assessments and/or terms of reference for a Crown directed referral. Where a decision is taken that the incident is proceeding to investigation, an SI will categorise the case (in consultation with the Head of Investigations) and allocate the investigation to a lead investigator.

⁴ 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 raise a second referral for 'Firearms Presented'.



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. The 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.

Four of the referrals made by Police Scotland in Q3 progressed to investigation. One Death Following Police Contact, one Presentation of Firearms and two allegations of Serious Assault Following Police Contact.

A further Death following Police Contact was made by Police Scotland but was superseded by a corresponding referral made by COPFS.

Therefore, the proportion of the 132 Police Scotland referrals made in Q3 that PIRC has assessed as warranting further investigation is 3%

Key Performance Indicators

The following key performance indicators, (KPI's) report on the PIRC's performance on managing all investigations:

- 90% of all cases referred to the 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.
 - Q3 2024/25 - 91%
- 80% of Category A investigations (minus major cases) completed and reports submitted within 90 working days, following receipt of background case papers.
 - Q3 2024/25 – 75%
- 80% of Category B & C investigations (minus major cases) completed and reports submitted within 120 working days, following receipt of background case papers.
 - Q3 2024/25 – 89%



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 do not have a legal requirement to implement any recommendations**, however, in the main these are implemented.

To assist Professional Standards Department, 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 recommendations previously submitted to Police Scotland, three of which were issued in Q3. All were thematic in nature and pertained solely to Police Scotland:

<i>PIRC Recommendation</i>
Police Scotland should remind all operational officers within the Greater Glasgow Division area of the established process for accessing and reviewing CCTV for ongoing incidents, in particular during outwith normal operating hours
<i>Police Response</i>
<i>On the 4th December 2024 the CCTV process was published on the Greater Glasgow Division Intranet page, re-iterating to all operational staff the out of hours process for assessing and reviewing CCTV. On 18th December 2024 a reminder was disseminated to all staff across Greater Glasgow via email. On 24th September 2024 the CCTV process for Greater Glasgow was disseminated to all C3 staff, in particular highlighting the out of hours process.</i>

PIRC Recommendation

Dog Handlers on mobile patrol, carry and have immediate access to specialist equipment within their vehicles to immediately deploy in such circumstances, to avoid any unnecessary delays in such high risk incidents.

Police Response

Following the incident in February 2024, the Operational Support Division (OSD) produced a Dangerous Dogs Protocol for officers to deal with any incidents involving dangerous dogs (attached as Enc.1). The Dangerous Dogs Protocol outlines options available, including requesting assistance from the Operational Support Unit (OSU) who have access to snitch poles and large electric shields within their vehicles that can be utilised, depending on the incident circumstances. As part of a budget proposal, a supply of dog crates has also been requested for the OSU vehicles. Although Dog Handlers are experts in working with their own Police dogs, they operate as single crewed officers and do not have the capability to manage and deal with dangerous dogs.

They can provide clear, practical advice, but should not be relied upon as the first port of call. However, as Dog Handlers work a shift pattern which provides 24/7 cover, they could be the only resource available to assist, if the OSU are not on duty. Dog Handlers do have access to snitch poles and shields to assist in certain circumstances in respect of contained dogs.

The current electric shields are large and not suitable for storing in the Dog Unit vans, therefore are stored centrally. OSD have provided assurance that all Dog Handlers will be issued with snitch poles and as part of next year's budget proposal, smaller electric shields which will fit in the Dog Unit vans have been requested.

As dangerous animals provide an unknown threat to officers and members of the public, the Dangerous Dogs protocol has been developed, a large degree of flexibility should be applied to these circumstances, given that they are all different.

On 29 May 2024, a Police Scotland memorandum was published and states that 'Dog Unit personnel can provide support in an advisory capacity; however, should not be routinely deployed to incidents. The Operational Support Unit has additional safety equipment which may assist, and their deployment will be considered by the Duty Officer, Force Overview, alongside other tactical options'.

PIRC Recommendation

Police Scotland consider drafting a protocol that establishes procedures for contacting a veterinary surgeon or other appropriate authority to attend such incidents and provide viable options for the safe management of dangerous animals.

Police Response

Local policing divisions are currently identifying vets in their areas who are willing to support the Police and be part of a cadre. Wider considerations are being discussed and a briefing paper and protocol is being drafted for Senior Management approval; I will be able to provide a more detailed update on this recommendation in due course. I trust this information will be of assistance and that you can consider the Dangerous Dogs Protocol and Force Memorandum in relation to recommendation one.

PIRC Recommendation

Police Scotland should consider supervisory oversight (ACR and Response) for disturbance calls, where individuals involved are identified as having been involved in previous domestic incidents.

Police Response

On 1st October 2024, after consultation with Contact Command and Control (C3) Division, additional guidance has been added to the C3 Procedures Guide. The guidance outlines that the local policing supervisor must be informed of any disturbance calls, where system checks reveal previous domestic incidents, as well as the relevant information passed to the local officers attending incidents. It is the responsibility of the local policing supervisor for that area to ensure all concerns relating to any potential domestic element are considered and risk managed. The guidance below has been added to the disturbance calls and domestic incident sections of the C3 Procedures guide and communicated to all ACR staff via their weekly electronic briefing.

PIRC Recommendation

Police Scotland should remind officers that in relation to calls involving reported violence in domestic settings or private premises, the requirement for officers to personally engage with all present to ensure their wellbeing and safety, in order to understand and mitigate any ongoing risk.

Police Response

Assistant Chief Constable, Professionalism and Assurance, issued a Force memorandum to all officers covering this recommendation, including considerations and the requirement to personally engage with all present to ensure their safety and wellbeing.

Recommendations Outstanding

PIRC Recommendation

In the absence of guidance within national Covert Policing manuals in relation to the identification of plain clothes officers when deployed during armed operations, Police Scotland should consider drafting specific guidance that stipulates the requirement to carry out dynamic risk assessments in such circumstances and mirrors guidelines set out within both the Armed Policing Operations Standard Operating Procedures and National Police Firearms Training Curriculum (NPFTC), specifically: 'Officers deployed in plain clothes at a firearms incident need to be clearly identifiable as police officers' 'Plain clothed officers who are unarmed will be issued with a high visibility (bright yellow) baseball cap with police markings' 'If plain clothed officers are deployed to provide observations or visual containment this information, their deployment positions and any subsequent changes must be clearly and unambiguously relayed to firearms officers and the TFC. This is especially important on any occasion where plain clothes officers do not have possession of the approved high visibility 'Police' baseball caps' Any decision to deviate from this should be recorded and a rationale provided.

Police Response – INTERIM ONLY

The recommendation is being progressed through the Scottish Covert Users Group (SCUG), it was discussed on 26th Sept 2024. Our SCD OCCTU CT, Operational Development Unit and LTD Covert Training are working in conjunction to develop National Guidance. This will be standalone guidance initially, with a view to including within existing guidance. In addition, further measures to disseminate learning are also being considered.



Stakeholder Engagement

Revision to Law for Corroboration

Following the recent Lord Advocates references, which fundamentally changes the law of corroboration, a significant rise in criminal investigations will now be undertaken by PIRC.

On 1 January 2025, PIRC implemented a revised investigative approach for such matters which, albeit are referred by COPFS, will have a consequential increase in requests by PIRC to PSD for case related information and associated processes.

Dialogue is ongoing between PIRC and Police Scotland around the efficient and effective management in relation to this unprecedented change.

Body Worn Video (BWV)

PIRC have provided significant feedback in relation to the draft Standing Operating Procedure (SOP). In particular, this has focussed on the practical use of this equipment in terms of evidence capture and ensuring the required safeguards are established.

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).

PIRC and PSD are engaged in the review and revision of the existing MoU in line with the scheduled review date. PIRC have shared their position with PSD and await a response as to the position of PSoS. This was prior to the finalisation of the Police (Ethics, Conduct and Scrutiny) (Scotland) Bill, which will now require to be considered ahead of final agreement of the updated MoU.

Site Visit: Journey of a Call

Members of PIRC staff from all business areas have been invited to attend Police Scotland's ACR in Glasgow early in 2025 to develop understanding of the people and processes involved in the handling of emergency and non-emergency calls to Police Scotland.

END OF REPORT