



Meeting	SPA Complaints & Conduct Committee
Date	6 June 2024
Location	Webex
Title of Paper	SPA Annual and Quarterly Report
Presented By	Darren Paterson, Head of Workforce Governance
Recommendation to Members	For Discussion
Appendix Attached	Yes – Appendix A - SPA Complaints Overview Appendix B - SPA Complaints Quarterly Report Q4 – 23/24 Appendix C - SPA Complaints Annual Report 2023/24

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on complaints and conduct matters including key statistics reflecting the position at the end of Q4, 2023/24. The report also includes key statistics over the past 5 years, 2019/20 to 2023/24.

The paper is presented in line with:

- *Scottish Police Authority Committee Terms of Reference*

The paper is submitted:

- *For Discussion*

1 BACKGROUND

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

2 FURTHER DETAIL ON THE REPORT TOPIC

2.1. SPA Complaints Performance

- 2.1.1. Appendix A provides an overview of the complaint handling responsibilities of the SPA with explanatory text on reporting terminology.
- 2.1.2. The SPA Complaints Quarterly Performance Report, including key statistics reflecting the position at the end of Q4 2023/24, is attached as Appendix B to this report. The quarterly report provides comparison to the previous 8 quarters.
- 2.1.3. Appendix C contains the SPA Complaints Annual Report providing details over the past 5 years.

2.2. Workload Management

- 2.2.1. Detail on ongoing workload is presented as a separate agenda item at the private session of this meeting.

2.3. Dip-Sampling of Police Scotland Complaints

- 2.3.1. Due to essential IT upgrades and staffing challenges, dip-sampling of complaints closed by Police Scotland during Q2 2023/24 has been postponed. The report to the next Committee in September 2024 will cover both Q2 and Q3 2023/24 closed complaints.

2.4. Stakeholder Meetings

- 2.4.1. The National Complaint Handling Development Group (NCHDG) met again on 18 March 2024, chaired by Superintendent Kate Stephen, where it considered areas of focus as part of planned engagement with other policing complaints bodies (Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland, Independent Office for Police Conduct (England & Wales) and Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission (Republic of Ireland)). The group also discussed actions to address recent trends in Complaint Handling Review outcomes; potential review of communications in respect of complaint handling timescales; and actions to enhance public reporting of organisational learning.

2.4.2. The Strategic Oversight Group (SOG) has not met since the last CCC meeting.

2.5. Engagement with Other Organisations

2.5.1. A benchmarking exercise comparing public reporting on policing complaints and conduct matters in England, Wales and Northern Ireland has recently been completed. Whilst there are a number of areas where public reporting by Police Scotland goes beyond that published elsewhere, the benchmarking exercise does identify a number of opportunities to further enhance its reports, although it is noted that some of these may be dependent on current system developments. The benchmarking report will be shared with Members and with Police Scotland colleagues with a view to exploring scope to adopt potential changes going forward.

2.6. Improvement Activity

2.6.1. Measures continue to be taken to reduce the number of cases received that are outwith the remit of the SPA and ensure that members of the public are signposted appropriately when making a complaint.

2.7. Organisational Learning

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

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.5. There are no financial implications in this report.

4. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

4.5. There are no personnel implications in this report.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.5. There are no legal implications in this report.

6. REPUTATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

6.5. 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

7.5. There are no social implications in this report.

8. COMMUNITY IMPACT

8.5. There are no community implications in this report.

9. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

9.5. There are no equality implications in this report.

10. ENVIRONMENT IMPLICATIONS

10.5. 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

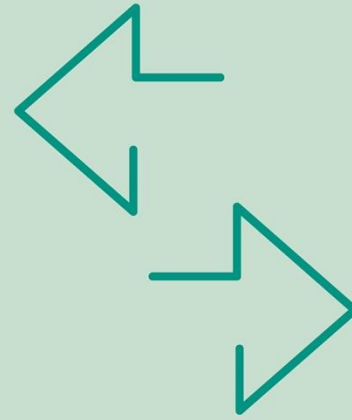
SPA Complaints Overview

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 14 May 2023, there are 12 officers of senior rank in Police Scotland and 652 staff working across SPA Corporate and Forensic Services functions.
- On receipt of a complaint, the SPA will complete an initial evaluation to determine who the complaint is about and if it is within its remit. For cases within the SPA remit, the initial assessment will ensure they are categorised and dealt with in the most appropriate manner (i.e. relevant complaint; grievance; whistleblowing concern; criminal allegation; misconduct allegation; or a miscellaneous case (which refers to enquiries or other correspondence received by the SPA)).
- A 'relevant complaint' is defined in legislation and is essentially a non-criminal complaint made by a member of the public. The SPA Complaints Performance Report mainly provides statistical information on relevant complaints within the remit of the SPA.
- A single complaint may consist of a number of component parts that can be determined separately. For the purposes of this report, these are referred to as 'allegations' and each complaint may include multiple allegations.
- The handling of relevant complaints are subject to the oversight of the PIRC, who have an expectation that such complaints should be completed within 40 working days.

SPA Complaints Performance Report

Quarterly Report
Q4 2023/24

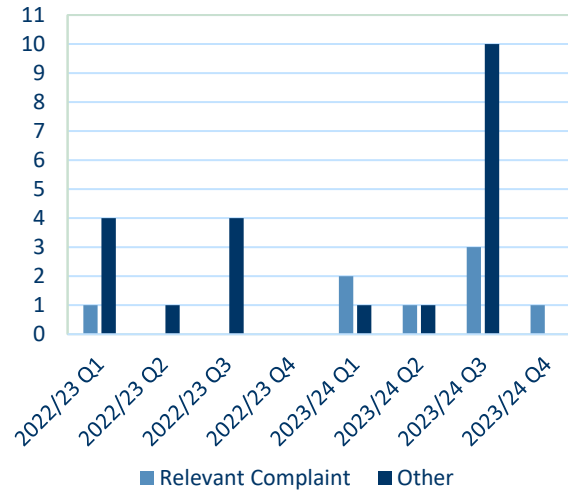


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Highlights (8 quarter view)

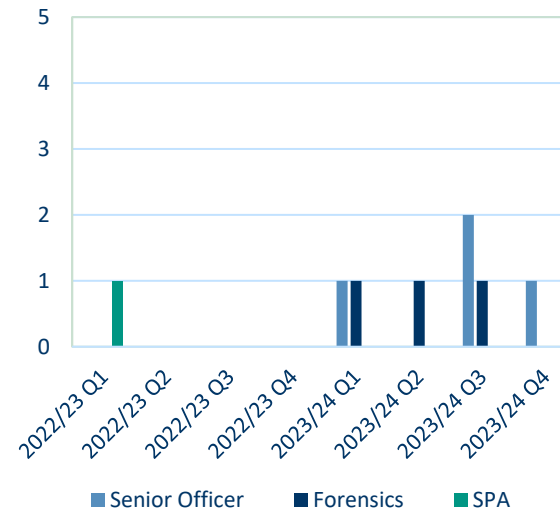
- In context of generally low volume of relevant complaints (and allegations), numbers remain largely consistent
- Majority of relevant complaints, and allegations, relate to senior officers
- 62% of allegations relate to On Duty complaints and the remaining 38% relate to complainers' dissatisfaction with the Quality of Service received
- Early Stage Resolution (ESR) continues to be an effective means of addressing complaints of a less serious nature (all allegations received during period)
- Of the 5 complaints closed over the reporting period, all were completed within the targeted completion time of 40 working days
- At the end of Q4, 2 allegations are ongoing
- Data excludes complaints received that are outside the SPA's mandate

Cases received



- Across the 8 quarter period, 28% 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

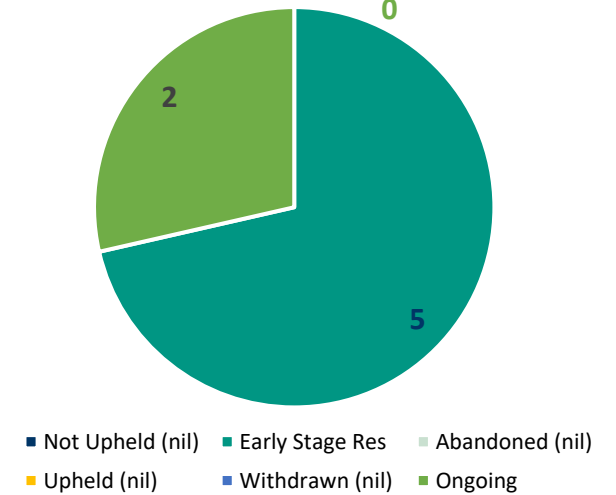


- The majority of relevant complaints (50%) relate to senior officers, although absolute volumes remain low
- Within these complaints, 8 individual allegations were made, with 50% relating to senior officers.

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

Determination

8 quarter view of allegations

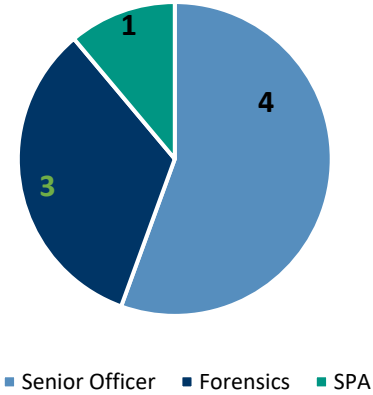
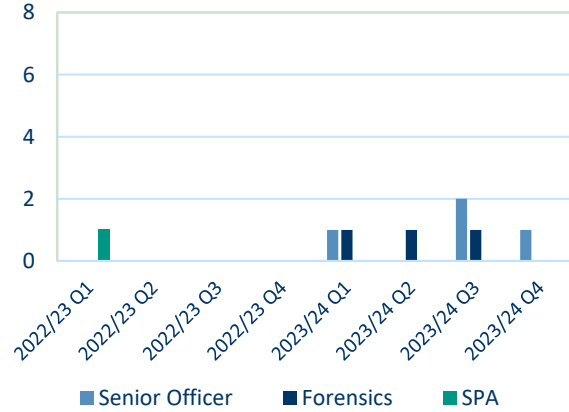


- Of the cases closed during the reporting period, all allegations were resolved by Early Stage Resolution (ESR) via explanation, assurance or apology

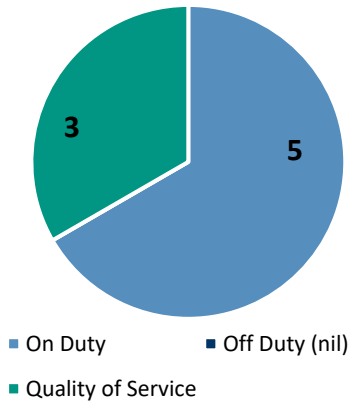
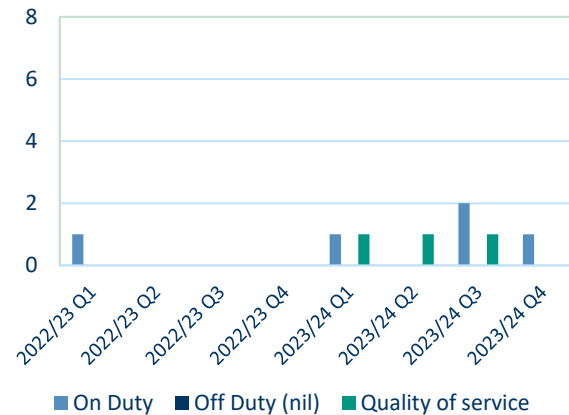


Allegations by subject

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Allegations by category



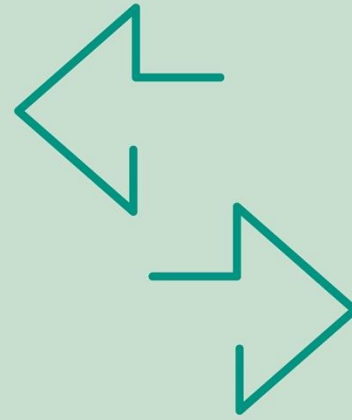
Timescales to close

	2022/23				2023/24			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Closed	1	0	0	0	2	0	1	1
Ave. working days to close	14	0	0	0	27	0	2	13
Cases closed beyond 40 working days								
Closed	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Days to close								

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. There were no cases closed over 40 working days during this period.

SPA Complaints Performance Report

Annual Report
2023/24

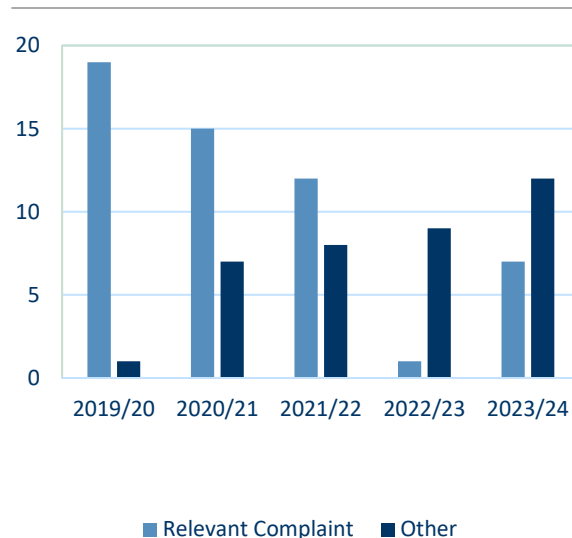


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Highlights (5 year view)

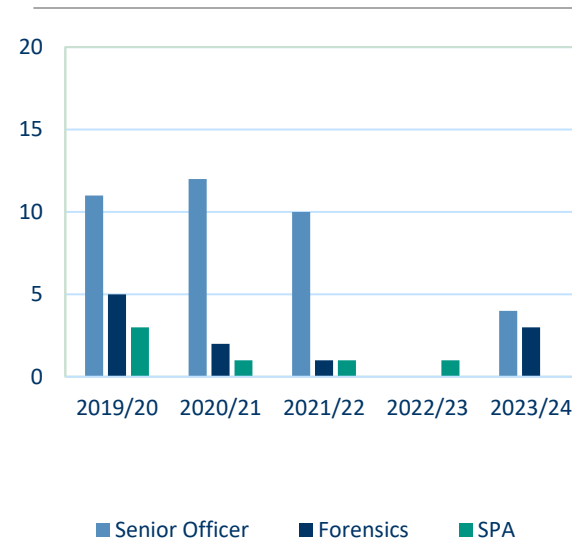
- In context of generally low volume of relevant complaints (and allegations), numbers show gradual decline (although noting steep drop in 2022/23)
- Steady increase in other cases, not classed as relevant complaints
- Number of relevant complaints (and allegations) about senior officers largely static until 2022/23, when none received. Whilst 4 complaints received in 2023/24, lower than previous levels
- Since 2019/20, relevant complaints (and allegations) about Forensics and SPA have remained consistently low
- On Duty allegations broadly similar in number until significant drop 2022/23, with numbers remaining low in 2023/24
- Since 2019/20, number of Quality of Service allegations has remained low
- In last 2 years, all allegations addressed via Early Stage Resolution
- With exception of 2020/21, average closure times have remained below 40 working days
- In last 2 years, no cases closed outwith 40 working day target

Cases received



- Across 5 year 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 (PSD)

Subject of complaints



- The majority of relevant complaints (69%) relate to senior officers, although absolute volumes remain low
- Within these complaints, 77 individual allegations were made, with 61% relating to senior officers

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

Determination

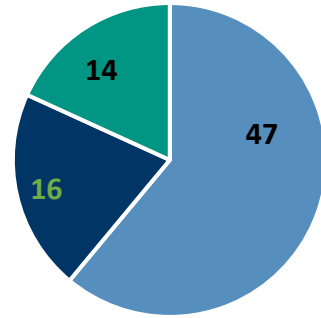
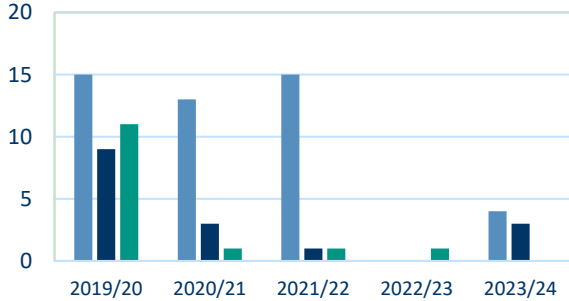
5 year view of allegations

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

- From closed cases, 26% of all allegations were resolved by Early Stage Resolution (ESR) via explanation, assurance or apology
- Of those cases requiring a formal determination, 7% of allegations were upheld
- Closed UA refers to cases closed due to complainer being subject to SPA 'Unacceptable, Persistent or Unreasonable Actions by Complainers Policy'.

Allegations by subject

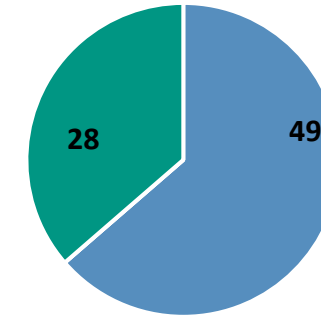
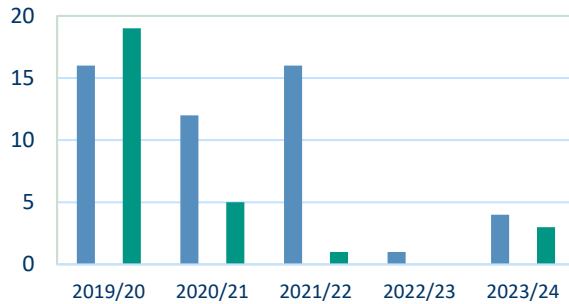
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■ Senior Officer ■ Forensics ■ SPA

■ Senior Officer ■ Forensics ■ SPA

Allegations by category



■ On Duty ■ Off Duty (nil) ■ Quality of Service

■ On Duty ■ Off Duty (nil)
■ Quality of Service

Timescales to close

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Closed	19	15	12	1	4
Ave. working days to close	23	41	30	14	17
Cases Closed Beyond 40 Working Days					
Closed	4	3	3	0	0
Days to close	52, 60, 73, 84	44, 188, 232	51, 74, 166		

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

- Complexity/seriousness of enquiries and investigations undertaken
- Requirement for case reviews by Forensic Services
- Large volumes of documentation provided by the complainer
- Information required from outside the SPA which was not readily available
- Multiple requests for complainer to submit information