



Complaints & Conduct Committee

27 February 2025

Minutes of the Complaints & Conduct Committee held on 14 November 2024 via Webex

Board Members present:	Katharina Kasper (Committee Chair) Fiona McQueen (Committee Member) Paul Edie (Committee Member)
Board Member apologies:	Catriona Stewart (Committee Member)
In attendance:	<p><u>SPA</u> Chris Brown, Deputy Chief Executive (Resources) Darren Paterson, Head of Workforce Governance Colette Craig, Governance Support Officer</p> <p><u>Police Scotland</u> Assistant Chief Constable Stuart Houston Chief Superintendent Helen Harrison Superintendent Kate Stephen Superintendent Alan Sommerville</p> <p><u>PIRC</u> Ilya Zharov, Head of Reviews and Policy Raymond Brown, Head of Investigations</p> <p><u>HMICS</u> Carly Bryce</p>

1. Introduction and Welcome:

1.1 Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting.

1.2 Apologies

Catriona Stewart (Committee Member)

Declarations of Interest and Connections

None.

1.3 Any Other Business

None.

1.4 Decisions on taking business in private (Item 11 – 15)

Members **AGREED** to take Items 11 – 15 in private.

2. Minute and Actions from previous meeting:

2.1 Minute from meeting held on 5 September 2024 for approval

Members **AGREED** the Minute of the meeting held on 5 September 2024 as an accurate record of the meeting.

2.2 Public Minute of Private Meeting held on 5 September 2024 for approval

Members **AGREED** the Public Minute of the private meeting held on 5 September 2024 as an accurate record of the meeting.

2.3 Rolling Action Log and Matters Arising

Members **AGREED** that actions proposed for closure, however, those linked to Item 7 on the agenda remained open until members were content that all matters had been addressed within that report.

Following discussions at Item 7, the actions proposed for closure were **AGREED**.

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

2.4 Decisions since last meeting

None.

3. Police Scotland Professional Standards Quarterly Performance Report (Q2 - 24/25)

Assistant Chief Constable Stuart Houston (ACCSHouston) provided opening comments, advising that PSD are still seeing an increase in complaints and that the report presented did not represent figures to date. ACCSHouston advised that there are internal discussions being had around how these reports can be more accurate at committee dates. ACCSHouston informed members on work being done within PSD and Chief Superintendent Helen Harrison (CSHHarrison) provided an overview of the statistical information on the overarching performance activity in relation to complaints and conduct matters about members of Police Scotland (PS) for period (1 April 2024 – 30 September 2024). During the report, CSHHarrison referred to page 14 and **average time under investigation** and advised that the figure should read **95 days**. During discussions the following matters were raised:

- Members sought clarity on how confident PS were that there was a good level of investigation in relation to allegation outcomes for discriminatory behaviour and what feedback came from complainers who are advised their complaint was not upheld. CSHHarrison advised that although content with the level of investigation and detail in which these matters were addressed, she would like to take this piece further to understand themes and identify opportunity to engage with complainers. CSHHarrison committed to link in with Policing Together colleagues and come back to the committee on this, however noted that upgrades to centurion would improve that information. Members asked that within that feedback to the committee, there are data linkages (user satisfaction, complaints and protected characteristics) to gain an understanding of what is being recorded, particularly during stop and search and vehicle stops. The Chair referred to discrimination allegations and the need for an extra layer of assurance. The Chair asked that PSD staff link in with SPA staff to ensure there is a focus on a dip sampling exercise carried out in this area
- Members noted that additional resource had been brought in during 2021 and sought clarity on how confident PS were that resource, systems and processes in place now will provide a contemporaneous and modern system that will meet the needs of the public. CSHHarrison advised this has been a journey since 2021, but with that has come a huge increase in terms of demand and volume. ACCSHouston noted the complexities that are now faced by PSD, meaning that timelines are stretched which perhaps needs

reviewed. The nature of business has changed in the past 2 years and the new uplift in staff is required to address these challenges and provide a more sustainable model for the future.

- Members sought clarity on how the public know how to complain (e.g. after a vehicle stop or stop and search). ACCSHouston advised that this is an area being looked at and how to make that more understandable, particularly for online and this will be part of the improvement plan going forward.
- The Chair asked for more data in relation to complainer satisfaction, it being confirmed that this would form part of a more detailed annual report. .

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

20261411- CCC-001: Chief Superintendent Helen Harrison to link in with Policing Together colleagues and report back on the level of investigation in relation to allegation outcomes for discriminatory behaviour. Within this feedback include data linkages (user satisfaction, complaints and protected characteristics) to gain an understanding of what is being recorded, particularly during stop and search and vehicle stops.

20261411- CCC-002: PSD staff to link in with SPA staff to take forward a dip sampling piece of work in relation to discrimination to ensure an extra level of assurance in this area.

20261411- CCC-003: Chief Superintendent Helen Harrison to provide the committee with more data in relation to reasons for dissatisfaction to provide members with a fuller picture. In addition, advise members how the new resource is impacting on dissatisfaction to identify trends on a 6 monthly/annual basis.

4. SPA Quarterly Report (Q2 - 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 Q2, 2024/25. Members were advised that the SPA had received three complaints in relation to senior officers within Police Scotland. Members were updated on the range definitions in which relevant complaints can fall into and noted that many of them can be dealt with quickly,

Members **NOTED** the report.

5. PIRC Annual Report on Police Scotland Handling of Complaints and Investigation Referrals (Q2 - 24/25)

Members were provided with a report detailing key statistics reflecting Quarter 2 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 Investigation Referrals. During discussions the following matters were raised:

Members sought clarity on whether the quality of complaint handling was diminishing. IZharov advised that compared to 2 years ago that is the case, however, they are seeing improvements against last year.

Members **NOTED** the report.

6. ~~SPA/PIRC Joint Audit (Triage) — Recommendations Progress Update~~

Item deferred to February 2025 committee meeting.

7. PIRC 6-Stage Process Audit Action & Improvement Plan

Superintendent Kate Stephen (SuptKStephen) provided members with an update on the PIRC Audit Report of Police Scotland on the Six Stage Complaint Handling Process and how recommendations were progressing. ACCSHouston provided members with an update on Operation Glade (section 3 of report). ACCSHouston referred to the backlog of complaints and how PSD are trying to improve this area. Along with looking at the categorisation of complaints, PSD have looked at benchmarking with other forces and the public services ombudsman in relation to approach they have taken in the past to address the large number of complaints. As part of this, PSD have emailed and written to complainers who have not had their complaint allocated for some time. This allowed complainers to advise if they still wanted their complaint addressed. This was not an easy decision, and there have been extensive conversations with PIRC. Assurance was sought that this approach would be taken for category B and category C complaints. PSD made an error by taking this approach for category A complaints and this has been rectified over the past few weeks. During discussions the following matters were raised;

- Members welcomed the update in terms of transparency and look forward to seeing future improvements.
- The Chair welcomed the external focus and how other bodies deal with large amounts of complaints. Although it is understood the approach taken by the letter writing, in terms of limited public

resource, it was noted that the tone of communication needs to be correct for the purposes of public perception.

- The Chair sought clarity on when members can expect to see improvements following the embedding of the additional resource. ACCSHouston advised that following the intense training, it is hoped that members will see the change by June 2025 with some credible data being provided. The Chair asked that an update on progress being made is provided at the February 2025 committee on the programme of activity.
- The Chair asked that PSD keep SPA colleagues updated on progress being made with Operation Glade to ensure a degree of visibility.
- Members agreed the closure of action 20240606-CCC-001, however, noted the need for members to have more analysis and reassurance around Police Scotland's assessment of complaints. CSHHarrison advised that she would look to incorporate this within the performance report and highlight emerging trends from NCARU and the approach being taken to the categorisation of complaints to understand the priorities. In addition, to understand if the categorisation and approach to the type of allegations are right and fulfilling what is needed to capture the data.

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

20261411- CCC-004: ACC Stuart Houston to update members at the February 2025 committee meeting on the progress being made and activity of programme following the additional resource being implemented.

20261411- CCC-005: ACC Stuart Houston to ensure SPA colleagues are updated on progress being made with Operation Glade to ensure a degree of visibility.

20261411- CCC-006: Chief Superintendent Helen Harrison to provide analysis and reassurance around Police Scotland's assessment of complaints within future performance reports. In doing this providing an understanding that categorisation and approach to the type of allegations are correct and fulfilling what is needed to capture the data.

8. HMICS Vetting Review Action Plan Progress Report

Members were provided with a report providing an update on the progress being made in relation to Police Scotland's Improvement Plan to address the recommendations contained within the recent HMICS Assurance review of vetting policy and procedures within Police Scotland

report, published on 03 October 2023. During discussions the following matters were raised.

- Members were advised that there is regular engagement with HMICS who are content with the work being taken forward.

Members **NOTED** the report.

9. 2023-24 Committee Annual Report

Members were advised on the intention to publish the fourth annual Committee-specific Annual Report for 2023-24. The report also provided an update on text included in the SPA Annual Report 2023-24. During discussions the following matters were raised.

- Members welcomed the report which contained additional layers of data that had not come to the committee, however, noted the importance of all data coming through the committee. The Chair ask that SPA Complaints to consider how more granular data is included within future annual reports to the committee and asked that the additional data included within this report is caveated.

Members **NOTED** the report and **AGREED** the following action.

20261411- CCC-007: Darren Paterson to caveat any additional data noted within the report and consider how this more granular data is included within future annual reports to the committee.

10. Committee Work Plan

The Chair noted the need for consideration to be given to the timings on a number of annual reports due to come to the committee, to ensure that they are not all reported to the same future committee meeting.

Members **NOTED** the report and **AGREED** the following action.

20261411- CCC-008: SPA colleagues to consider the timing of annual reports to future committees to ensure not all come to the same future meeting.