

## Police, Fire and Crime Panel – 10 February 2025

### Annual Update on Complaint Reviews

#### Report of the Staffordshire Commissioner

## 1. Purpose of Report

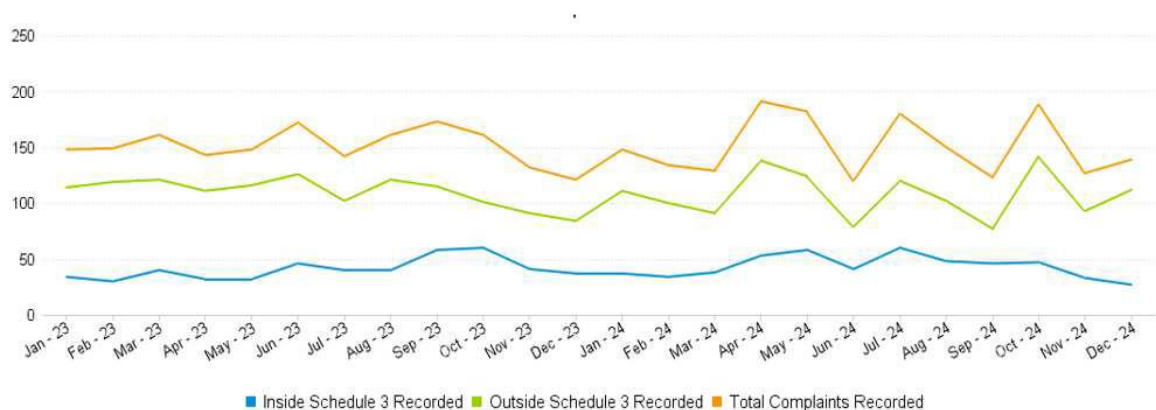
- 1.1 The report updates the panel on the Staffordshire Commissioner's statutory function of reviews following the implementation in February 2020, of the police misconduct and complaint reforms.
- 1.2 A reminder to the panel that the specific role was introduced for Police and Crime Commissioners to increase and strengthen independence and improve complaints handling, ensuring the public can maintain confidence in the integrity of policing.

## 2. Recommendation

- 2.1. That the panel note the contents and agree to receive annual updates for scrutiny at future panel meetings.

## 3. Complaints

- 3.1 The below graphs show the number of complaints being received by Staffordshire Police for the period of 2023 and 2024. It is noted that in 2023, 1811 complaints were received by Staffordshire Police. For 2024, a total of 1813 complaints were received and dealt with by the Professional Standards Department.





3.2 The above graph for 2024 will show a stable flow of complaints being received over the year, with the difference being just two additional complaints compared to figures in 2023.

3.2 Staffordshire Police's Professional Standards Department whilst handling complaints received will deal with them by two means, inside or outside schedule 3. When complaints are dealt with outside schedule 3, this means that any dissatisfaction is resolved via the Professional Standards Department Triage team. Where a complainant still remains dissatisfied or the allegation would require it, the complaint is dealt with under schedule 3, this then gives the complainant a right of review should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome. Depending on the allegation this will either be by the Staffordshire Commissioners Office or the IOPC.

3.3 To further breakdown the figures in 3.1 and in particular the second graph.

In 2024, of the 1813 complaints received 1271 were dealt with outside Schedule 3, so locally resolved by the Professional Standards Triage Team. In comparison to 2023 this shows a slight decrease where 1321 complaints were dealt with in this manner.

Of the remaining 542 complaints recorded under schedule 3 for 2024, the Staffordshire Commissioners Office was the review body for 449 (83%), with the IOPC being the review body for the remaining complaints.

3.4 All data is recorded and published by the Independent Office of Police Conduct (IOPC) and the links are documented below. It sets out performance against a number of measures and compares force results to their most similar force (MSF) group (where applicable) and with the overall result for all forces (national). This data is used by the IOPC to discuss performance on a quarterly basis with both Staffordshire Police's Professional Standards Department and the Staffordshire Commissioners Office. The purpose is to recognise good practice but, to also identify any areas of improvement, where Staffordshire is an outlier.

<https://www.policeconduct.gov.uk/police-force/staffordshire-police>

\*Avon & Somerset, Derbyshire, Hertfordshire, Essex, Cheshire, Hampshire, Nottinghamshire

3.5 As noted in the chart/graph outlined in 3.1, as expected there are peaks and troughs with demand, some of these can be attributed to a specific event/occurrence that



have happened locally, regionally or nationally. For example, going into lockdown, coming out of lockdown, restrictions being lifted, protests. Policing is under more scrutiny now than ever before and members of the public are more likely to complain about the level of service they have received, by either an officer(s) or the force in general. National headlines for other forces will also drive an increase in complaints being reported in Staffordshire and all other forces throughout the UK. It is noted that there is currently a number of documentaries with police forces or police focused that will drive the number of complaints being received, which focuses on the areas in the programmes.

- 3.6 Staffordshire Police's Professional Standards Department continues to ensure that members of the public are aware of how to make a complaint, and that the system is accessible for all. This is done through many mechanisms which includes posters, booklets and engagement with local communities through the neighbourhood policing team. Below is the information available online.

<https://www.staffordshire.police.uk/fo/feedback/complaints/complain-about-the-police/>

- 3.7 Staffordshire Police's Professional Standards Department Triage Team continues to have a positive impact on dealing with complaints at the first point of contact with 70% of the overall complaints received being resolved at the initial stage. The continued benefit of the triage team is minimal complaints are sent out for resolution by the neighbourhood policing team which allows more time for proactive policing/working with the community. It also allows for a quicker resolution of the dissatisfaction raised and reduces repeat demand.

- 3.8 Work continues with the Prevent Officer who successfully engages with officers and staff to identify training with the view to ultimately improving the service provided to the communities of Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire. Communication campaigns are delivered throughout the force giving examples of what the top categories of complaints are. Work is also done with Officers who are subject to a high number of complaints. There are many factors to consider when looking at this element, to determine whether it is a learning issue, potentially a misconduct issue or in most cases where an Officer is just being proactive. This work then allows for the relevant support and training, where required to be implemented. The success of a number of team's channels continues where examples of good and bad policing are shared, with examples being used to LPT briefings to Officers of all ranks. The Prevent Officer continues to do an input on day one of every new recruit about the standards of professional behaviour expected, this is followed up by either a half or full day input



3-6 months into their service that focuses on complaints that have been received by the service.

3.9 Work continues with the Commissioner's Office and Staffordshire Police's Professional Standards department around organisational learning. This includes:

- The PSD Bulletin supplemented with real-time emerging trends and patterns.
- Findings from reviews fed into the Appropriate Authority for the department and the Prevent Officer
- Delivery of preventative briefings.
- Any individual learnings identified being disseminated real time.
- Identifying reoccurring themes & proactive action taken to resolve.
- Input with student officers by the Prevent Officer.
- Continued input into the Teams channels led by the Prevent Officer that raises issues within policing that are local, regional and national.
- Weekly & monthly feedback from the Independent Review Manager (SCO) on findings from reviews and any trends identified through complaints.
- Regular meetings with the Head of Professional Standards.
- Monthly meetings to analysis performance.
- Quarterly meetings with the Independent Office of Police Conduct (IOPC).
- Working with Professional Standards around the analysis of their performance data.

3.10 Staffordshire Police continue to develop and adapt their approach to the management of complaints in line with the new legislation and a trust driven policing model, where there is the focus on organisational and individual learning and development. The Commissioner is confident that these changes, together with the role of the Independent Review Manager meet the aspirations that have been set out by government in introducing national reforms.

#### **4.0 Complaint Reviews**

4.1 To remind the panel that the Staffordshire Commissioner adopted Model 1. This requires all PCC's to receive reviews from the public, where they are identified as the local policing body, and consider whether Staffordshire Police took reasonable and proportionate action to address the complaint. Once the review has been completed to then notify the complainant of the outcome.

4.2 In order to fulfil this statutory requirement, this is undertaken by the Independent Review Manager, who has delegated authority from the Staffordshire Commissioner to undertake this function.

4.3 For 2024, of the 449 reviews where the Staffordshire Commissioner's Office is the relevant review body, a total of 104 reviews have been received. This is an increase



based on 2023 where 85 reviews were received. However, it is important to note that given the number for where the Staffordshire Commissioner's Office is the review body has increased from 349 to 449 then it is expected that in turn the number of reviews received would increase.

- 4.4 The following provides the number of reviews received in 2023 and 2024 detailing how the reviews are recording and resulted.

	2024	2023
<b>Number of Reviews</b>	104	85
<b>Still Live</b>	3	5
<b>Out of Time</b>	3	2
<b>Not Valid</b>	0	1
<b>Upheld</b>	13 (13%) *	12 (14%)
<b>Not Upheld</b>	88	66

\* This figure may alter depending on the outcome of the outstanding 3 live complaints

- 4.5 Of the 101 reviews considered so far there have been recommendations for either individual or organisational learning on 15 reviews which have not been upheld

Those recommendations include:

- Ensuring all allegations raised by the complainant are addressed
- Taking the opportunity to signpost complainants to other organisations for support.
- Engagement with the public and understanding what impacts public confidence.
- To ensure that complainants are aware of what powers have been used and how this fits with local and national policies.
- Decision making.
- Ensuring reports/letters are plain English, jargon free and reasonable and proportionate explanations are provided.
- Making complainants aware of any learnings that have been identified through the initial complaints process.
- Ensuring sufficient engagement with the complainant to ensure allegations are understood.
- Ensuring that the right outcome is attributed to complaints i.e. service level acceptable, unacceptable or undetermined
- Systems used to administer the complaints is up to date with accurate information at all time.
- Ensuring all of those subject to the complaint are identified.

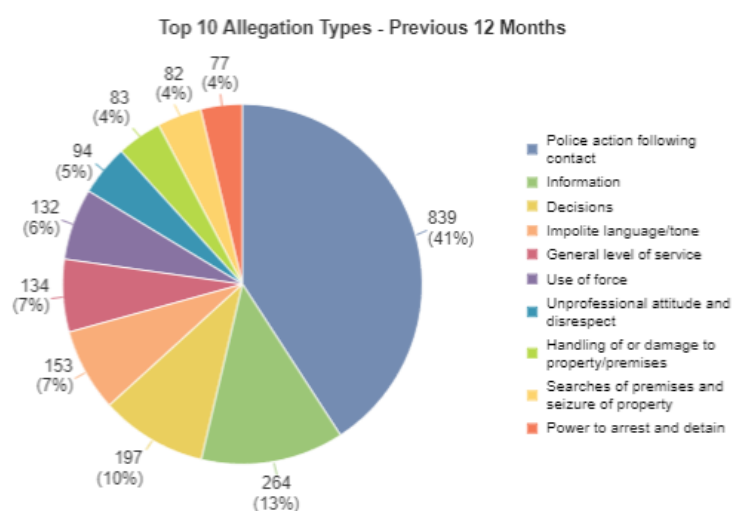
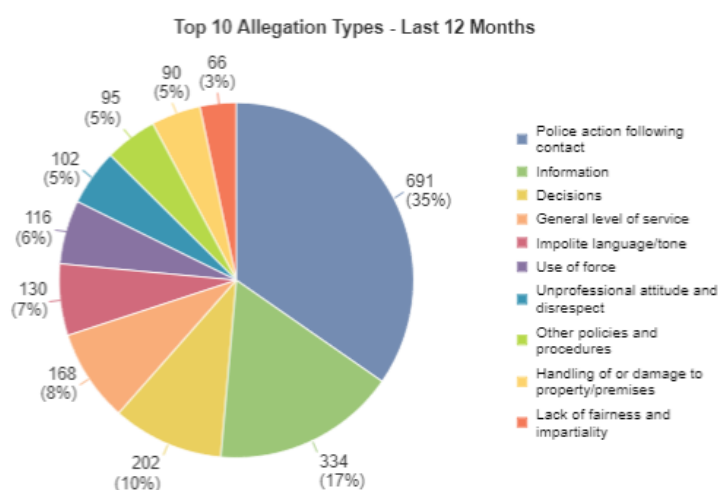


- Ensuring complainants are aware of the complaint rights, so should they still remain dissatisfied once the complaint has been triaged that they can still request that it is recorded inside schedule 3 which would then give a right of review.

4.6 The top three allegations that are recorded based on the complainant's dissatisfaction (categories are defined by the IOPC). Work is continually ongoing to address the issues raised with a view of reducing repeat complaints.

The charts below give the comparison between 2023 and 2024 and will show the same top 3 for both years.

- Police action following contact
- Information
- Decisions





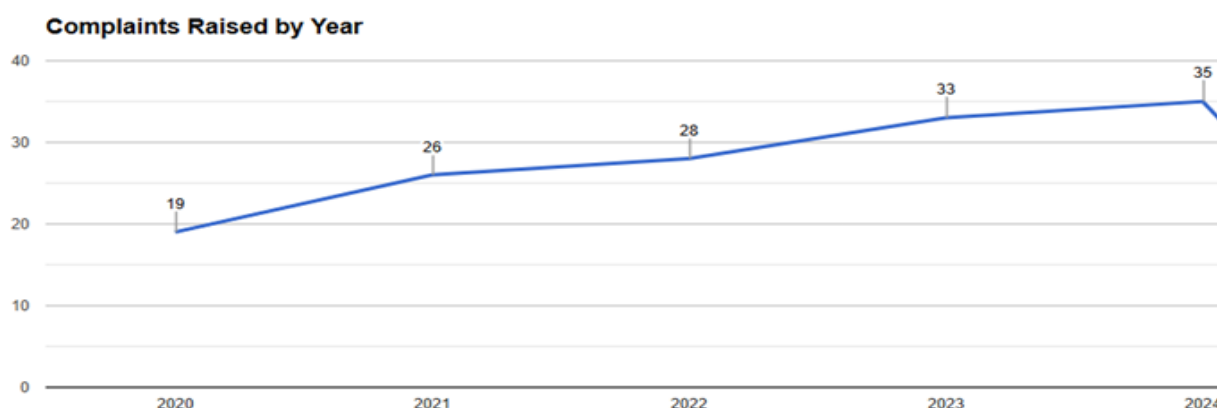
- 4.7 The Commissioner's office continues to offer members of the public varied options to make a review and also how that review outcome is delivered. This allows and shows a transparent and openness to the complaints process and demonstrates an independent approach, which is one of the fundamental reasons for PCCs undertaking this role.
- 4.7 To ensure oversight and scrutiny of the complaints system, on any cases of over 12 month's duration, Staffordshire Police must write to the Commissioner and the IOPC to inform them of the reasons and actions being taken to progress the complaint. Further communication is required every 6 months thereafter until the complaint is finalised.
- 4.8 Work continues on a quarterly basis with the Independent Office of Police Conduct (IOPC) where performance is scrutinised for both Staffordshire Police and the Commissioner's Office. The most recent quarterly data in relation to Staffordshire Police and the annual statistics report are published by the Independent Office for Police Conduct. These links are also contained with the Commissioner's website.

<https://www.policeconduct.gov.uk/information-for-police/police-data>

## **5.0 Complaint Data for Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service**

- 5.1 As this is the first time reporting on fire complaint data, this report looks to show data from 2020 to give the panel a comparison to view.
- 5.2 As part of the complaint process for Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) the Staffordshire Commissioner's Office (SCO) is the review body. So, should a complainant remain dissatisfied with the outcome then their right of review is to the SCO.
- 5.2 To ensure consistency the SCO has adopted the same approach for fire reviews as it has with force complaints.
- 5.3 The process for complaints and reviews is documented on Staffordshire Fire and Rescue's website, this also includes policy documents which were last reviewed in the last quarter of last year.
- <https://www.staffordshirefire.gov.uk/contact-us/complaints/>
- 5.4 SFRS have recently procured a system which houses complaints in one central point. This has also allowed for my detailed performance data to be provided. The graph will show below the volume of complaints received from 2021. Whilst it is noted that this shows an increase year on year, the numbers recorded are extremely low. If the figures for 2024 were to be used then it equates to 3 complaints per month.



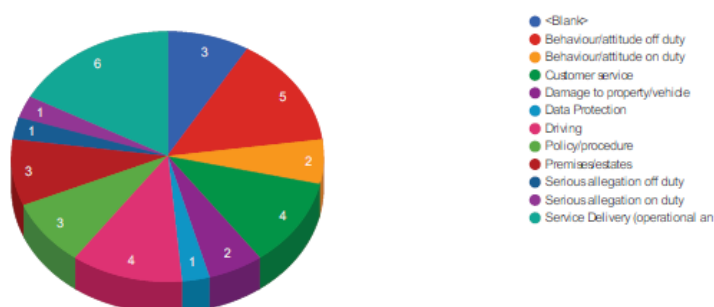


5.5 To give further insight into the complaints received, the table below breaks down the outcomes to the complaints received.

Outcome	2021	2022	2023	2024
Handled by other processes	3	1	10	4
Not Upheld	9	3	6	12
Part Upheld	6	7	5	4
Settled with apology	8	14	8	10
Upheld	0	2	2	2
Other	0	1	2	0

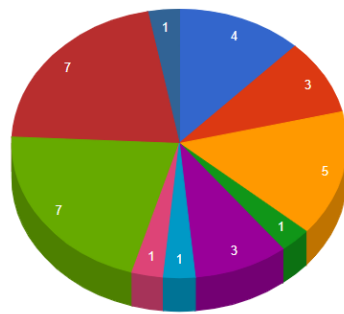
5.6 The below charts break down the complaints received into specific categories. Work is continually ongoing to address the issues raised with a view of reducing repeat complaints into the service. It is noted that the top 3 categories remain consistent in why a complaint is raised with the service.

**2024**



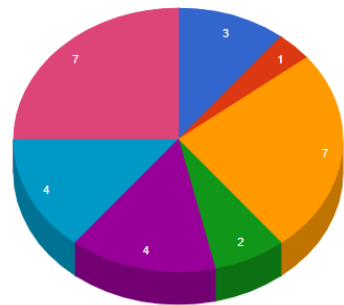


2023



- Behaviour/attitude off duty
- Behaviour/attitude on duty
- Customer service
- Damage to property/vehicle
- Driving
- Fire Safety
- Premises/estates
- Service Delivery (operational an
- Social media/communications
- Whistleblowing

2022



- Behaviour/attitude off duty
- Behaviour/attitude on duty
- Customer service
- Data Protection
- Driving
- Premises/estates
- Service Delivery (operational an

2021



- Behaviour/attitude off duty
- Behaviour/attitude on duty
- Customer service
- Damage to property/vehicle
- Data Protection
- Driving
- Policy/procedure
- Premises/estates
- Serious allegation off duty
- Service Delivery (operational an
- Social media/communications

2020



- Behaviour/attitude off duty
- Behaviour/attitude on duty
- Customer service
- Data Protection
- Driving
- Fire Safety
- Policy/procedure
- Premises/estates
- Serious allegation off duty
- Serious allegation on duty
- Social media/communications



5.7 Since the introduction of the Staffordshire Commissioner's Office as the review body there has been 1 review in 2022 which was not upheld. No reviews were received for 2023 and a total of 3 reviews received in 2024, 1 which was upheld and 2 not upheld. Given the volume of reviews received this would seem proportionate given the overall number of complaints received is low.

5.8 The SFRS continues to review its processes to ensure that they are fit for purpose ensuring that any trends identified can be addressed through specific campaigns and/or learning and training. The SCO continues to work with the service through the review process to ensure that any areas identified are implemented that ultimately ensures that our communities receive a better service.

## **5.0 What next?**

5.3 The Independent Review Manager will continue to work with Staffordshire Police's Professional Standards Department to ensure any reform/transformational work is in line with the implementation of the regulations. It will also continue to work with the Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Services complaint team through its review process, to ensure any recommendations are implemented that ultimately ensure a better service is provided to its communities.

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