| Police Scotland logo | Freedom of Information Response Our reference: FOI 25-1603  Responded to: 5th June 2025 |
| --- | --- |

Your recent request for information is replicated below, together with our response.

## I am requesting the following information regarding the investigation of public complaints and incidents by your department:

## 1. Guidelines for Investigations: Please provide copies of, or links to, any publicly available internal guidelines, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), or codes of practice that govern the investigation of public complaints and incidents by Police Scotland's Professional Standards Department. This should include, but not be limited to, guidelines on:

## O The criteria for initiating an investigation.

## O The stages of an investigation.

## O The process for ensuring impartiality and thoroughness.

## O How vulnerability of a complainer or subject of a complaint is considered during an investigation.

## 4. Internal and Statutory Time Limits: Please detail any internal targets, statutory time limits, or expected timescales that Police Scotland's Professional Standards Department is required or aims to observe for:

## O Acknowledging receipt of a complaint.

## O Allocating a complaint for investigation.

## O Concluding an investigation and issuing a final response.

## 5. Redress for Non-Compliance: Please provide information on the formal mechanisms of redress available to a complainer if Police Scotland's Professional Standards Department fails to comply with its own stated guidelines, time limits, or statutory obligations in the handling or investigation of a complaint. This should include details on how to escalate concerns or seek review of the handling of a complaint.

The information sought within questions 1, 4 and 5 is publicly available:

[The Police Scotland Complaints About the Police Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)](https://www.scotland.police.uk/spa-media/lgyddvsi/complaints-about-the-police-sop.docx)

The information is therefore held by Police Scotland, but I am refusing to provide it in terms of section 16(1) of the Act on the basis that the section 25(1) exemption applies:

“Information which the applicant can reasonably obtain other than by requesting it […] is exempt information”.

## 2. Average Case Allocation Time: Please provide the average time (in calendar days) from the date of receipt of a public complaint or incident report by the Professional Standards Department to the date it is formally allocated to an officer for investigation, for the last three financial years (e.g., 2022/23, 2023/24, current financial year to date).

Criminal complaints are allocated on being received by the Professional Standards Department. Unlike criminal complaints, non-criminal complaints are not immediately allocated to an officer. Each non-criminal complaint is, however, further assessed with appropriate measures put in place to allocate the investigation, considering risk, complexity and volume of complaints.

There is a variety of means in which a non-criminal complaint is allocated and to identify the date of allocation, each file would need to be manually reviewed. As such, and in terms of section 16(4) of the Act where section 12(1) (Excessive Cost of Compliance) has been applied, this represents a refusal notice for the information sought.

To explain, for a six month period there would be approximately 1,000 non-criminal Complaints About the Police not resolved through Frontline Resolution. If it took 10 minutes to individually look through each file then this would take 166 hours and cost £2,500. The current cost threshold is £600 and I therefore would cost well in excess of this amount to process your request.

## 3. Average Processing and Response Times: Please provide the average total time (in calendar days) from the date of receipt of a public complaint or incident report to the date a final response or conclusion is issued to the complainer, for the last three financial years. Please break this down, if possible, by complaint category (e.g., service delivery, conduct).

The information sought is publicly available on the SPA website.

Professional Standards Quarterly reports are available via the following link: [Search | Scottish Police Authority](https://www.spa.police.uk/search-results/?Query=professional+standards).

The latest report can be found via the below link:

[Professional Standards (PSD) SPA Performance Report - Quarter 3 of 2024/25](https://www.spa.police.uk/spa-media/exgjp4vx/item-3-police-scotland-professional-standards-quartlerly-performance-report-q3.pdf)

The information is therefore held by Police Scotland, but I am refusing to provide it in terms of section 16(1) of the Act on the basis that the section 25(1) exemption applies:

“Information which the applicant can reasonably obtain other than by requesting it […] is exempt information”.

If you require any further assistance, please contact us quoting the reference above.

You can request a review of this response within the next 40 working days by [email](mailto:foi@scotland.police.uk) or by letter (Information Management - FOI, Police Scotland, Clyde Gateway, 2 French Street, Dalmarnock, G40 4EH). Requests must include the reason for your dissatisfaction.

If you remain dissatisfied following our review response, you can appeal to the Office of the Scottish Information Commissioner (OSIC) within 6 months - [online](https://www.foi.scot/appeal), by [email](mailto:enquiries@foi.scot) or by letter (OSIC, Kinburn Castle, Doubledykes Road, St Andrews, KY16 9DS).

Following an OSIC appeal, you can appeal to the Court of Session on a point of law only.

This response will be added to our [Disclosure Log](http://www.scotland.police.uk/access-to-information/freedom-of-information/disclosure-log) in seven days' time.

Every effort has been taken to ensure our response is as accessible as possible. If you require this response to be provided in an alternative format, please let us know.