

Independent Scrutiny of Police Complaints Panel

March 2025

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Purpose of the Independent Scrutiny of Police Complaints Panel

The Independent Scrutiny of Police Complaints Panel (ISPCP) consists of 11 independent panel members, as pictured below, who are all volunteers representing the communities of Avon and Somerset. Their aim is:

‘To act as a ‘critical friend’ to the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and to Avon and Somerset Constabulary by providing feedback on completed complaint files to the office of the PCC and to the Constabulary’s Professional Standards Department (PSD). The Independent Scrutiny of Police Complaints Panel (ISPCP) will review complaints against the police from a local citizen’s viewpoint.’

Further information can be found [on our website](#).



Figure 1 – The Independent Scrutiny of Police Complaints Panel

STRUCTURE OF THE SESSION

5 panel members attended this quarter, and each panel member worked independently to scrutinise their own complaint cases. A total number of 27 completed complaint files were reviewed in detail by the panel prior to the meeting. The Panel opted to focus their meeting on the theme of complaints relating to the individual behaviour of officers – such as unprofessional attitudes or impolite language.

The cases scrutinised were discussed in depth verbally with HOPSD Larisa Hunt and Inspector Louise Pressly attending from Avon and Somerset Constabulary’s PSD.

Panel Attendees – KS, BK, JB, PR, JFT, AD

Apologies - JS-G, TW, SB, EK, LC



Police & Crime Plan 2025-2029

The PCC, Clare Moody, attended the start of the meeting, thanking the panel for their thoughtful contributions which help to ensure transparency, accountability and trust in the police complaints system. Clare was pleased to announce the launch of her new Police and Crime Plan to guide the work of Avon and

Somerset Police over the next five years; setting out clear priorities for delivering effective, responsive policing that serve the needs of all our communities. The plan focuses on five key priorities for policing:

- **Strengthening neighbourhood policing**, including tackling anti-social behaviour
- **Reducing violent crime**, particularly male violence against women and girls and serious youth violence
- **Preventing crime**
- **Supporting victims**
- **Improving policing standards so that people receive a fair and effective service.**

You can read the plan [here](#)

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS DEPARTMENT (PSD) UPDATE

Head of PSD Larisa Hunt



POLICE INTEGRITY INSPECTION PROGRAMME

The focus of the update was the recent Police Integrity Inspection. PSD was inspected as part of the police integrity inspection programme in February 2025, with findings and reports available in August from HMICFRS. It was an intense week with an audit/deep dive taking place and many staff being interviewed as part of the inspection. Vetting, Complaints and the Counter Corruption team were inspected, 60 files in each area of business were examined. As part of the inspection the work of the ISPCP and the role of the panel in having independent oversight of the police complaints regime was highlighted. The inspectorate was most impressed by the work of the panel and felt the panel's work had a clear impact. PSD extended a big thank you to the panel for all their hard work.

Comments from Supt Larisa Hunt, Head of Professional Standards Department:

Following the HMICFRS Integrity Inspection in February this year, it was a pleasure to be able to provide a short update at the March meeting and share the positive feedback they had about the ISPCP. I am looking forward to presenting you with more detail at the next meeting ahead of us receiving the final report which is anticipated in the Summer. I was again very impressed to hear the care and detail you took with the examination of the cases which has provided some extremely valuable feedback.



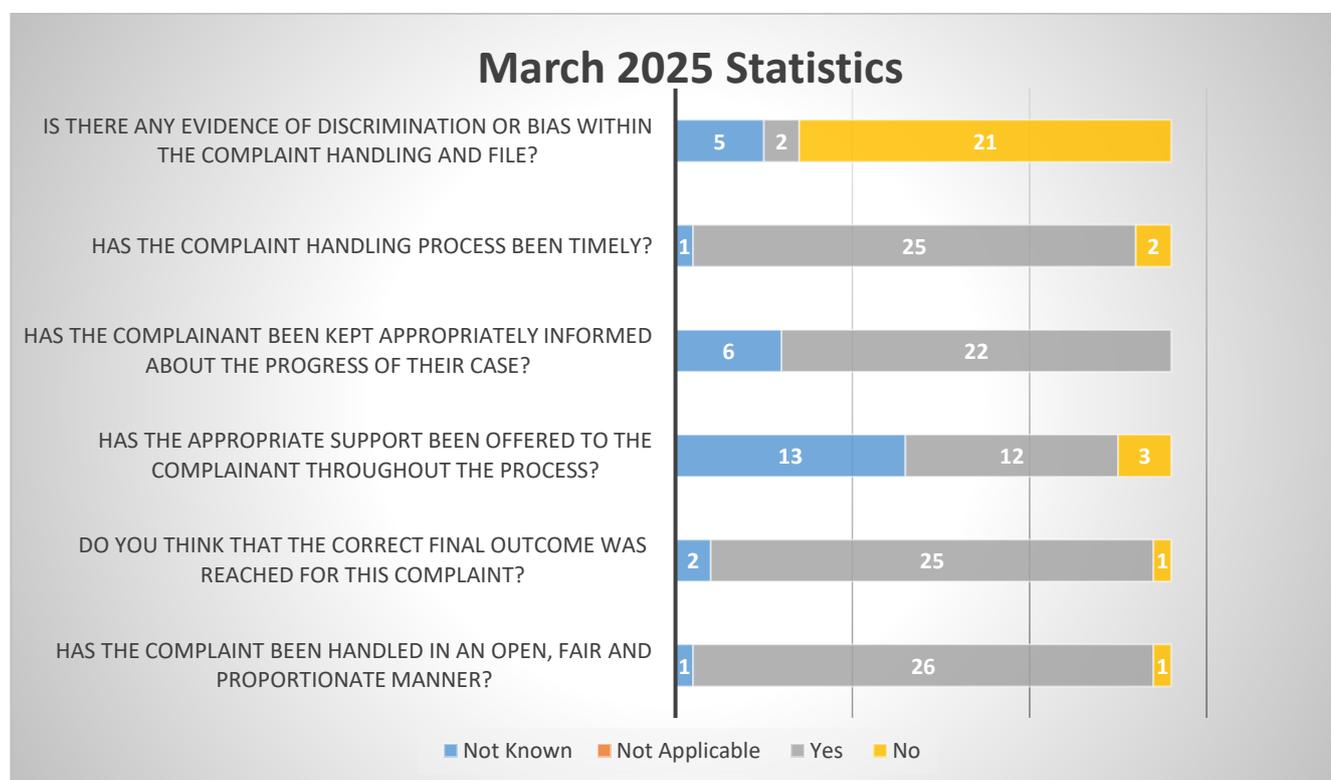
ACTIONS

This section logs ongoing actions requested by the Panel and forms part of their ongoing work to scrutinise police complaint handling.

| No | Date | Action (OPCC, ASC, Panel) | Progress update | Completed Ongoing/KIV |
|----|---------|---|---|-----------------------|
| 1 | Sept 22 | PSD to update the panel following Learning Meetings & provide a briefing on any recent complaint statistics of interest including the IOPC quarterly bulletins and annual complaints report. (ASC) | Dec 24 – C/I Baker shared Quarter 2 learning captured. | KIV |
| 2 | Feb 23 | Schedule 3 advice issue to be monitored. (Panel) | KIV the wording in the finalisation documents, whilst the Complainant has the option of having the complaint formally recorded under Schedule 3 of the Police Report Act 2003, the 'outcome will remain the same'. Agreed this statement should be avoided as complainants could be dissuaded from exercising their right to have their complaint recorded. | KIV |
| 3 | Mar 24 | Identifying Disproportionality in the Criminal Justice system. Recommendation 9 – examination of all Stop & Search Complaints to be examined. (Panel) | Update March 2025 - the June 25 meeting will see the start of these cases being reviewed, starting with Q4 S&S cases from Oct-Dec 2024. | To commence June 2025 |
| 4 | Jun 24 | Individual Learning Tracker created. New feedback system introduced: panel issues identified with grammar, spelling & tone of correspondence being sent out by PSD to complainants to be fed back directly to relevant individuals, this will also include positive feedback. | Dec 24 – system continues to work well with feedback being fed back directly to named individuals, including areas for improvement and work that can be positively praised. | Ongoing |

| No | Date | Action (OPCC, ASC, Panel) | Progress update | Completed Ongoing/KIV |
|----|---------|---|---|-----------------------|
| 5 | Sept 24 | IOPC Youth Panel National Survey Report - Youth-Panel-National-Survey-2024.pdf . ISPCP Chair requests an update from PSD on what they are doing to take account of the key recommendations contained in the report? | Due to recent staff changes from C/I Barlow, this action remains outstanding. BM to forward report to LH. | KIV |
| 6 | Sept 24 | Otherwise Than By Investigation Workshops | PSD – workshops rolled out over the autumn, Powerpoint presentation shared with panel SB & emailed BM. | KIV |
| 7 | Dec 24 | PSD have compiled a list of FAQs for the benefit of the panel (LP) | Share with Chair & Deputy for comments then circulate to all, updated version Mar 25 (BM) | Ongoing |
| 8 | Mar 25 | Police Integrity Inspection Feb 2025 | Supt Hunt to provide a full debrief at the next meeting in June | Ongoing |

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS



This chart related to the six questions in the feedback form, 27 cases were sampled. Panel members record 'not known' when the case file does not give sufficient detail to allow a categorical yes or no answer

HIGHLIGHTS OF CONCERNS, QUESTIONS OR ISSUES RAISED BY THE PANEL

| Panel Member Feedback | PSD Response |
|--|---|
| <p><u>PR/1 - Complaint Summary (Individual behaviours)</u></p> <p>Police were called by complainants' sister who had concerns for her brother's mental welfare and threats from him that he would take his own life. The complainant would not open the door to the police or allow entry and so forced entry was necessary to ensure that the complainant did not carry out his threat to self-harm.</p> <p>The complainant further alleges that a CCTV camera, doors, and a fridge freezer were damaged by the police who were in attendance. Other allegations including threatening and aggressive behaviour by the officers and the complainant cites tasers being drawn and being kned in the face as evidence. He also further asserts that the attending police sergeant was drunk and slurred his speech.</p> <p>Video footage taken at the time does not uphold these allegations and scratches to the complainant's face caused by the need to restrain him and carrying out the threat to self-harm. There is an additional complaint which is his objection to travel to Bridgwater to meet bail conditions for an earlier offence given that he lives in Yeovil and cannot afford the travel costs.</p> <p>The investigation carried out under schedule 3 OTBI and the complaints not upheld.</p> <p><u>Panel Member Feedback</u> <i>Given the history and fragile mental health of the complainant would it not have been possible for him to have met his bail conditions in Yeovil where he lives and not travel to Bridgwater.? One can only imagine he has little financial resources.</i></p> | <p><i>As Yeovil does not have a designated custody suite, they cannot issue or receive detainees under arrest or on bail. The Bail Act does allow for a custody sergeant to nominate a police station for answering bail, which may be different from the one they were initially</i></p> |

| Panel Member Feedback | PSD Response |
|--|--|
| | <p><i>detained at; however, it does need to be a designated police station, which Yeovil is not. Since the centralisation of our custody units, travel for people answering bail, particularly from Yeovil can present problems. Custody sergeants should be mindful of this, for instance not making bail times too early in the morning, allowing plenty of time for public transport etc. If a Yeovil officer is dealing and travelling across to Bridgwater, they will sometimes arrange to pick up the detainee to assist them and ensure their attendance. But generally, the onus is on the detainee to make sufficient plans to travel and answer their bail. If they are particularly vulnerable and may struggle with this, custody should be pointing them to support services to assist, AA or family members.</i></p> |
| <p><u>AD/2- Complaint Summary (Individual behaviours)</u></p> <p>The complainant states that the officer has acted in a bias manner, "He has taken one side of the story with no reference to myself and the threats that I have received from the complainant. For which I have written evidence".</p> <p><u>Panel Member Feedback:</u> <i>I do not agree with a comment made in email dated 28.08.24 where the following statement was made; "I have no real concerns about the content of that (text) message."</i> <i>The text message sent to the complainant was unusually informal and then goes on to state rather questionable legal outcomes as fact. Its tone was unprofessional, intimidating, and not what I would expect as a professional communication</i></p> | <p><i>This point was raised during the meeting. Panel member felt there was a problem with the content of the text message sent by an officer, it was felt that the message was far too personal. The tone was noted as being quite unprofessional and intimidating and not what was expected from an officer. PSD agreed to take these comments away and review this.</i></p> |
| <p><u>PR/2- Complaint Summary (Individual behaviours)</u></p> <p>The complainant criticises and makes numerous allegations against the police over the way in which a long-standing dispute with their</p> | |

Panel Member Feedback

PSD Response

neighbours has been handled. There are accusations of intimidation, threatening behaviour and criminal damage inflicted on the complainants and their property by their neighbours. The complainants allege they have not been listened to or taken seriously by the police who have been slow to respond. They assert they have supplied police with CCTV evidence showing threatening behaviour towards them and criminal damage to their property which has not resulted in prosecution of the perpetrators'.

Panel Member Feedback:

Are there strict procedures fully understood by an attending officer to follow when dealing with this type of investigation. I assume that there are and if so, how come so many errors in this case and should anything be done about it? I'm not convinced that the blame for the many failures identified here can be attributed to a single officer.

It does look like a catalogue of errors. Reviewing this I am happy that the vast majority do rest with the OIC, as they relate to victim updates and communication, preservation of evidence and the standard of interview and investigation. The OIC is primarily responsible for this, with oversight from a supervisor, who takes some responsibility too for overseeing and regularly reviewing. I note the complaint handler does mention learning for the supervisor as well.

'There is both learning for the officer and the supervisor in this investigation.'

The victims code of practice clearly outlines the level of contact an OIC must maintain. An officer would be fully aware of these requirements. They are assisted with electronic reminders on niche when victim contacts are due. From reading the issues this looks like a performance issue with this officer, and that appears to be the view of the complaint handler too, who acknowledges poor performance and has identified the learning and issues which require addressing with the officer. I think this would be very concerning if this was an experienced officer making this many mistakes, however, I have checked and the OIC is a PCDA student, and learning seems appropriate in these circumstances.

| Panel Member Feedback | PSD Response |
|--|--|
| | <p><i>There are a couple of points which are more organisational, and these have been addressed by the complaint handler.</i></p> <p><i>Further comments during the meeting from HOPSD Supt Hunt: 'there are a lot of improvements that need to take place, however, there is some good first line leader training in place. The latest government influx has seen an increase in new police officers. PSD have been able to reshape the culture that new officers bring into policing. These values are also input into our promotion processes.'</i></p> |
| <p><u>BK/1 - Complaint Summary (Individual behaviours)</u></p> <p>1. Use of force - excessive use of force when handcuffed during stop & search. Later diagnosed by A&E as a rotary cuff tear - Service level acceptable.</p> <p>2. Police action following contact - Complainant alleges small items were taken from pockets which could not have been the hammer they were looking for - Service level acceptable.</p> <p>3. Impolite and intolerant actions - Complainant states they were compliant and not aggressive yet officers' behaviour and attitude during the search made them feel like a criminal - Service level acceptable.</p> <p>Key Points: Occurrence: June 2024 – Final Letter: August 2024 Report of male walking down street with hammer. Male matching description stopped and searched. Front stack handcuff technique utilised. Very little force used. No manipulation of the shoulder joint. Nothing was found, provided with a receipt and allowed to continue journey.</p> <p>BWV reviewed by Sgt; <i>'The officers were really good and very professional...'</i> <i>'Polite, professional and acted in accordance with legislation and policy.'</i> Use of force was</p> | |

Panel Member Feedback**PSD Response**

necessary and reasonable in the circumstances. Both complainant and officers were polite and professional. Officers apologised for the inconvenience.

Panel Member Feedback:

Being stopped and searched due to mistaken identity is likely to cause alarm and distress. While the stop was necessary, lawful, and the officers apologised for the inconvenience, acknowledging this impact in the final letter would be beneficial.

This case was discussed during the panel meeting and it was unanimously agreed that the final letter should have acknowledged that this incident could have been quite distressing for the individual concerns and an apology for the inconvenience in the final letter would have been appropriate in the circumstances.

KS-1 – Complaint Summary (Individual behaviours)

Complainant alleges that

1. she has been treated like a criminal. Officers had intel that she was growing cannabis-visited complainant's address & damaged the gas box, questioned neighbours, acting in an underhand way on fake information.
2. officer failed to act with compassion, she has PTSD but no consideration given to her wellbeing
3. there was a vulnerability/disability TAU (Treat As Urgent) marker for her address, she is unaware if it is still in place.

Panel Member Feedback:

Could you explain about TAU markers for vulnerability

What is the process for removing a TAU marker?

Is the person given a written record of the removal date, or notified when the marker is removed?

If the marker is removed and the person is unaware, they may have a false sense of security, mistakenly assuming they will get an urgent response. This could put them at greater risk. Even if they are given a timescale at the

It is down to the person requesting the marker (which is normally the OIC), to explain how a marker works and how long they last - 24 hours for a verbal request to Comms, 28 days for a submission via a written request, unless there is a request to extend for longer.

The person submitting the marker request will receive an automated notification when a weed date is approaching and instructions for requesting an extension. It would be down to the 'owner' or OIC to provide a rationale for keeping a marker live and the member of the public updated.

Panel Member Feedback**PSD Response**

time the marker is put in place, this likely to be at a time of stress and they may not remember.

Information Marker policy:

Since April 2020, much of the marker process has been automated.

Weed dates are generated automatically by the marker forms in accordance with the requesters risk assessment and to comply with policy/GDPR requirements. This ensures that information on the system is as accurate and up to date as possible. It is the responsibility of the requester to manage the weed date and to extend it if necessary.

The marker must add value to the information already recorded on any existing call card. Communications staff will make a decision on the appropriate response to an incident, taking into account all factors and not base it only on the marker information.

Call Handlers and Dispatchers have immediate access to previous incidents at an address and where appropriate will refer to them.

Markers that may ask for some form of enhanced response, for example, 'Treat all calls as urgent', 'TAU', and phrases such as these, will not be added to a STORM marker.

Any information marker request which suggests a different response to an incident, than would be considered normal in the circumstances, must be authorized by an Inspector or above (this includes statements such as 'double crewed vehicle to attend' or suggestions that police should not attend first).

Panel Member Feedback

PSD Response

LC-1 - Summary of Complaint (Individual behaviours)

Officer spoke to a member of staff at a residential facility in a condescending and frustrating manner when the facility could not provide a positive outcome to his request for a bed space. Limited engagement from complainant when requesting further information/call recordings. Officer confirms he was frustrated in the call, but wants to 'counter complain' as the complainant was also not professional in his call conduct.

Panel Member Feedback:

Contact tried numerous times on the preferred email address given - as two other contact methods was given (home address and mobile phone number), are these ever tried if the initial route is unsuccessful?

It is down to individual cases and the discretion of the complaint handler. There may be times where pursuing another means of contact may be inappropriate or insensitive. We would not attend someone's address (unless there was a risk of harm) as this could be seen as being overly intrusive. It is not unreasonable however, to consider trying to phone someone if they are not responding to their emails, and they have provided a phone number. I would probably have tried the phone number in this case. Other complaint handlers may be reticent as it can cause issues not using complainant's preferred means of contact.

Useful Reading



Annual Police complaints statistics for England and Wales report - 2023/24

Each year, the IOPC publish statistics about the complaints that forces have logged. These complaints statistics reports include information about the number and type of complaints made. They also set out how these complaints were subsequently dealt with and include demographic data about who complained and who the complaint was about.

You can download and read the report [here](#).

EXAMPLES OF POSITIVE FEEDBACK SHARED BY THE PANEL



"The complaint was dealt with in a timely manner and each point raised by the complainant was comprehensively examined, and the reactions and judgements made by the attending officer fully accounted for.

The Investigation Officer (IO) for Avon and Somerset without reservation admitted there had been failures in the level of service provided and offered his apologies for this. He stated in his final letter to the complainant that the attending officer responsible for non or poor levels of communication would receive further training"

"I feel it took a lot of patience and perseverance on the part of IO to separate fact from fancy whilst trying to provide answers to the allegations raised by the complainant. He went back to officers who were involved in the initial complaints process in 2022 and asked them to review the circumstances and to check that the correct information had been given to the complainant. Every aspect of the complainants list was fully scrutinised, and this was clearly laid out in the final letter."

"This was an anonymous complaint with minimal detail included but there is evidence of work being done to identify the victim and the staff member to see the process through.

The complainant requested follow up training for the Officer in respect of trauma informed approaches. The investigation shows that this training input had been completed by the Officer 5 months before the complaint and that the follow up discussion with the staff member involved reiterating some key learning points in relation to trauma informed responses"

"Complaint dealt with in a timely manner (less than 4 weeks)

-BWV reviewed to inform response

-Acknowledgement within response that behaviour was not acceptable and what action had been taken

-Acknowledgement that the advice given to the victim was offered in good faith and wasn't intended to be unhelpful."

"Evidence of a thorough investigation including review of staff history to inform next steps. Final letter clearly details steps taken during investigation and rationale for final decision. Evidence of repeated attempts to communicate directly with complainant."

Further information about the Independent Scrutiny of Police Complaints Panel (ISPCP)

Further information about the ISPCP can be viewed through the following link:

[Independent Scrutiny of Police Complaints Panel | OPCC for Avon and Somerset \(avonandsomerset-pcc.gov.uk\)](https://www.avonandsomerset-pcc.gov.uk)

Get in touch

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