

## **Police complaints – Annual statistics for England and Wales 2023/24**

### **Introduction**

- 1.1 The annual police complaints statistics were published on 18 February 2025, this covers the period 1 April 2023 - 31 March 2024 (2023/24). This is the fourth set of statistics published since the new police complaints regime was introduced on 1 February 2020.

### **2. Findings**

- 2.1 There is recognition by the IOPC that there has been significant change to the complaints system and the consistency of the data reported relies on police forces applying the guidance correctly. They advise to remain cautious when interpreting the statistics and further development and evaluation is currently taking place.

- 2.2 In 2023/24, there have been 85,458 complaint cases logged by forces nationally. This was an 5% increase on the total logged in 2022/23, which is likely linked to the simplifying of the system and the widening in the definition of a complaint to 'any expression of dissatisfaction'. This means many more complaints will be logged than in previous years.

In Hampshire, there were 3,524 cases logged. This puts Hampshire 4<sup>th</sup> out of 44 forces in terms of volume alone. This was a 5% decrease on the total logged in 2022/23 where Hampshire was placed 3<sup>rd</sup> out of 44.

- 2.3 It is recognised there are considerable differences in the size of police forces across England and Wales, which impacts on the number of complaint cases. The national average is 338 complaint cases per 1,000 employees.

The Hampshire rate is 513 complaint cases per 1,000, putting it 2<sup>nd</sup> out of 44 forces (same position as 2022/23). This is behind Cleveland Police with 812 per 1,000 employees.

Hampshire's average was 81.4% higher than the national average and places them highest in their Most Similar Force of police forces by 32.4%. In effect, Hampshire are recording more complaints than similar forces. The model adopted in Hampshire is that all expressions of dissatisfaction and complaint matters are recorded centrally by the PSD's Business Support Team.

- The OPCC is keen to understand the themes and trends for Hampshire's average being the highest in the MSF and will challenge the force through the Accountability Board and local oversight meetings.

- 2.4 On average, it takes forces five working days to log complaints from the date they were made, although most forces (32) logged complaints in five working days or less. The average in Hampshire is one working day.

In terms of initial contact with the complainant to understand their complaint and to seek their views on how it should be handled, the average number of days to do this is six working days.

In Hampshire, the average is one working day, putting it in the top 5 forces for timeliness in contacting the complainant. This is an improvement from two day working days in the previous year. Hampshire falls within the 11% of police forces nationally to contact complainants within one day.

- 2.5 The new complaints system allows for complaints to be dealt with informally if it can be resolved quickly and to the satisfaction of the complainant. If this is not possible, or the complainant wishes it to be handled formally or given the nature of the allegation, it must be formally recorded (in accordance with legislation and with a right of review at the end of the process).

Nationally, 32,511 complaint cases were formally recorded. In Hampshire, 438 cases were recorded formally, putting it 24<sup>th</sup> out of 44 forces. In 2022/23 they were positioned 20<sup>th</sup>.

The approach adopted by PSD's Complaint Resolution Unit is to remedy complaints promptly to the complainants' satisfaction through informal measures, such as by providing an explanation by email or phone after making initial enquires from available sources of information. The flexibility in the new system means there will be different ways to handle complaints and some forces will choose to handle matters in different ways to other forces. This is illustrated in Hampshire with 75% of cases handed informally, an increase on 68% in 2022/23. Compared to the national average of 44%.

43% of formally recorded complaints were initially handled informally.

- The OPCC is keen to understand PSD's initial handling decision of complaints which has resulted in a decrease in complaints being recorded formally compared with the previous year of 644. The OPCC will challenge the force through the Accountability Board and local oversight meetings.

- 2.6 A complaint case may contain multiple allegations, and each allegation is allocated a category which aims to capture the root of the dissatisfaction. For Hampshire, the nature of the complaints are ordered by volume as follows:

- Delivery of duties or service (covers police action after contact with the public and the general level of service the police offer. Typically, these types of complaints could be about property not being returned or a member of the public not being given a regular update on progress after reporting a crime);
- Police powers, policies and procedures (including use of force, stop and search, arrest/detention);
- Individual behaviours (unprofessional attitude, impolite tone and language, lack of fairness and impartiality);
- Handling of or damage to property/premises;

- Access and/or disclosure of information;
- Discriminatory behaviour.

- 2.7 The time taken to informally handle allegations is an average of 18 days nationally. In Hampshire, it takes six working days, the joint 4<sup>th</sup> quickest in the country. In 79% of cases, Hampshire provided an explanation to remedy the complaint informally.
- 2.8 For formal allegations handled otherwise than by investigation, the national average is 106 working days, in Hampshire, it takes an average of 79 days (83 days in 2022/23).

For formal allegations handled by investigation, the national average is 191 working days, in Hampshire, it takes an average of 253 days (219 days in 2022/23). This will be kept under review with PSD in our monthly oversight meetings to understand any factors that may have influenced this increase.

A complaint case is considered finalised when all actions are completed. This includes the time to make a review, for the review body to deal with the review, the time it takes for review recommendations to be actioned, the implementation of a reflective practice review process, outcomes of unsatisfactory performance procedures to be decided and misconduct/criminal proceedings to conclude.

<b>Hampshire – Formal complaint cases resulting in actions below:</b>	
Explanation	69%
No further action	25%
Apology	8%
Learning from reflection	5%
Organisational learning	1%
Referral to Reflective Practice Review Process (RPRP)	4%

- 2.9 Nationally, of those formal allegations not investigated, the majority (67%) found the service provided was acceptable. Of those formal allegations that were investigated, there was no case to answer in 42% of instances.

For Hampshire, it was determined that the service provided was acceptable in 63% of formal allegations. For those handled by investigation, 87% were found to be service provided was acceptable. Of those formal allegations that were investigated, there was no case to answer in 39% of instances and a case to answer in 48%.

- 2.10 A complainant has a right to apply for a review where a complaint has been formally recorded. The independent review body will be either the OPCC or the IOPC, depending on the circumstances of the complaint.
- 2.11 These are the figures for the number of reviews that have been undertaken:

<b>Police force</b>	<b>Number of complaint cases finalised under Schedule 3</b>	<b>Total LPB reviews received</b>	<b>Total IOPC reviews received</b>	<b>Total reviews received</b>	<b>Number of reviews as % of complaint cases finalised</b>
	<b>N</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Hampshire	415	73	73	146	35%
<b>National Total</b>	<b>31,181</b>	<b>4,275</b>	<b>1,991</b>	<b>2,136</b>	<b>21%</b>

The number of complaint cases finalised under Schedule 3 in 2022/23 was 684 and 25% resulted in a review.

The model adopted by Hampshire has resulted in more complaints being recorded and finalised. The number of complaints being formally recorded is decreasing however the review rate is increasing.

- 2.12 The average number of working days for the OPCC to complete LPB reviews is 53 days, the national average is 50 and the most similar force is 53 days. The average number of working days for the IOPC to complete Hampshire reviews is 147, the national average for the IOPC is 136.
- 2.13 Of those reviews that were completed during the 2023/24 year by the OPCC, the percentage of complaint outcomes that were not reasonable and proportionate was 14%, the national average is 21%. The OPCC made a recommendation to the PSD for each upheld review. (The OPCC is the review body mainly for complaints handled otherwise than by investigation).

Of those reviews that were completed during the 2023/24 year by the IOPC, the percentage of complaint outcomes non-investigation that were not reasonable and proportionate was 22%, and for complaint outcomes by investigation it was 45%. The IOPC provided one recommendation for the upheld decision and they made 8 directions to the force in 2023/24.