

MAY 2025

EXECUTIVE & PRESENTING OFFICER:

STATUS: FOR INFORMATION

PURPOSE

This is a report covering the period of 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025 (12 months) and its purpose is to advise members of the number and types of civil and employment claims against the Force received during the period and the amount paid out for those claims finalised during the period. The report also includes the current legal activity for Cleveland, Evolve Legal Services and the development of the collaborated Legal Service.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 It is recommended that Members note the content of the report.

SUMMARY OF LEGAL SERVICES COLLABORATION

1.2 Evolve Legal Services (ELS) is a policing collaboration that delivers legal services on behalf of 6 corporations sole (the Commissioners, Mayor (YNYCA) and Chief Constables of North Yorkshire, Durham and Cleveland).

1.3 The service provides in-house legal advice and representation across a broad range of legal matters and has expertise in civil litigation, employment litigation, commercial and operational law.

1.4 The service is a virtual service which has 62 permanent and temporary staff comprising barristers, solicitors, legal executives and paralegals. 3 posts are currently vacant. The service is delivered out of three hubs located at Peterlee, Middlesbrough and Northallerton but legal staff are expected to work across all clients. All staff are equipped to work remotely.

1.5 The service records legal activity using case management systems and monthly activity reports are maintained to manage trends in demand and skills gaps.

1.6 As of May 2025, ELS collaboration has:

1.6.1 The teams are led by a professional head with a business and legal portfolio, each reporting to the Deputy Director of Legal Services. Each professional head has responsibility for the quality, costs and efficiency of the service delivery in their portfolio areas. Risk management is undertaken by each Head of Portfolio with the Director of Evolve Legal reporting to each executive on high-risk cases.

- 1.6.2 Evolve Legal Services have moved to a leaner management structure effective as of 1 January 2024. The changes introduce career pathways for non-legally qualified leaders. Recruitment to one of the two vacant posts commenced in May 2025.
- 1.6.3 Costs are attributed to each corporation sole as a 'client' so that reporting on costs, forecasts and performance can be delivered to each client Chief Finance Officer.
- 1.6.4 Legal Services provides external legal services using the National Legal Services Framework (NLSF) and CLEP Framework which are nationally agreed fee structures for external law firms and Chambers. The NLSF has been renegotiated and this has been adopted as of 31st May 2024. External legal fees are managed by individual lawyers who use the National Legal Services Framework and CLEP Framework to achieve the best value for money across a range of external legal providers. The CLEP framework is subject to periodic review with a 20% increase in hourly rates as from 1 January 2025. We instruct external law firms and Chambers to act on our behalf to provide the services in accordance with NLSF and CLEP Framework when required.
- 1.6.5 Financial, risk and corporate management of legal services are delivered between the Director and Heads of Portfolio and relevant statutory officers within the relevant Offices of the Police and Crime Commissioners and police forces. This is managed internally in compliance with the ELS governance and performance management arrangements. These arrangements preserve local, trusted relationships, specifically legal services provided direct to the Police and Crime Commissioners and Chief Constables.
- 1.6.6 Previously ELS has had limited staff turnover. The service has developed an accurate assessment of skills gaps and succession planning and has undertaken recent recruitment to build capacity and increase efficiency in reducing the work referred to external providers. We have now established a renewed period of stability in the structure but continue to experience difficulty recruiting to niche posts which have attracted small numbers of applicants with generalist skills. This marks a recent change in our ability to recruit but this does not extend to posts requiring civil or employment law experience.
- 1.6.7 Legal work continues to be delivered across force boundaries. There continues to be a sustained increase in demand for advice relating to conduct proceedings and vetting.
- 1.6.8 Single processes have been designed by practitioners and are in place. ELS are now working to Lexcel accreditation and the introduction of the new case management system has enabled a key step forward in alignment and process improvements.

EMPLOYMENT TRIBUNAL STATISTICS

- 1.7 The summary below sets out the number of employment tribunal claims received and finalised within Cleveland including total spend on cases finalised.

- 1.7.1 3 Employment Tribunal claims received 01/04/2024 to 31/3/2025 (including ACAS early reconciliation matters).
- 1.7.2 5 Employment Tribunal claim finalised 01/04/2024 to 31/03/2025.
- 1.7.3 Total spend on Employment Tribunal claims finalised 01/04/2024 to 31/3/2025 (costs and damages) was £2,637,365.40.
- 1.7.4 Learning from employment matters is shared via a professional legal digest, the Knowledge Hub and via case outcomes for the specific clients.

Ongoing Employment Tribunals

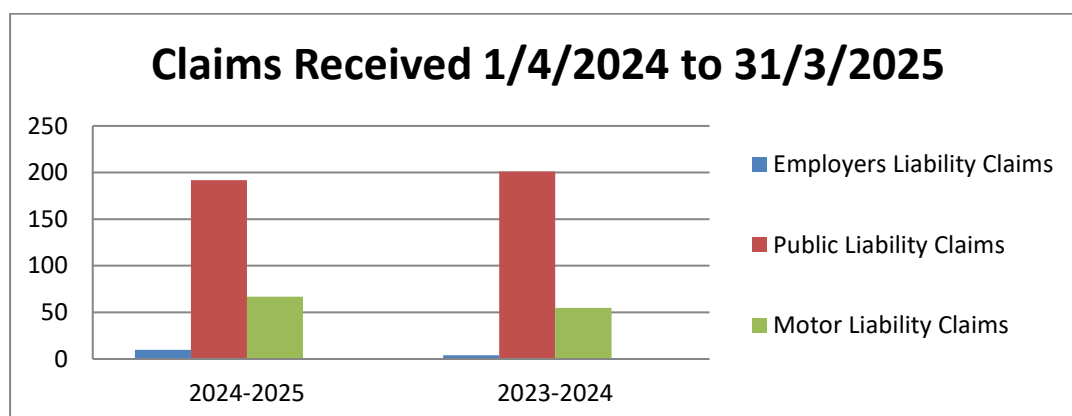
- 1.7.5 Evolve Employment Team are as whole dealing with 10 on-going Employment Tribunal Claims (claims that have progressed beyond early conciliation period) across the three forces (2 within Cleveland as of 21st May 2025). This is in comparison to the last report of March 2025, where we were dealing with 8 on-going Employment Tribunal Claims across the three forces (2 within Cleveland).

Please note that the above information has been provided to the best of our knowledge/ability due to a change in the case management system.

CIVIL CLAIM STATISTICS

Number & Types of Claims Received

- 1.8 There were 269 claims received during the period. This is compared to the previous period, 2023 to 2024, in which there were 260 claims received.

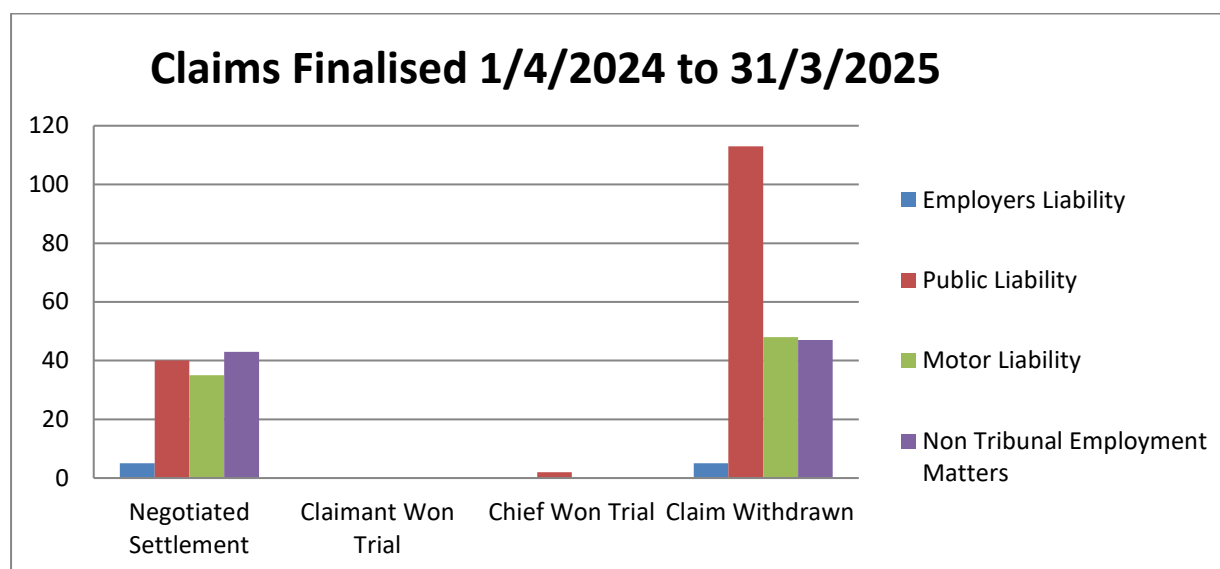


- 1.8.1 Please note that the public liability figures now include small claims, which were previously handled by Finance and relate to claims for damage to property following a forced entry, and low level property claims for damages to/loss of/destruction of property.

- 1.8.2 Evolve Legal Services have dealt with these claims since April 2023. These were not previously included in these reports or provided to insurers historically. However, to provide full claims experience they are now included.
- 1.8.3 Employers Liability claims are those made by Force employees and police officers following injuries sustained at work.
- 1.8.4 Public Liability claims include those made by members of the public who are accidentally injured or whose property is accidentally damaged / lost as a result of police activities. They also include those made by arrested persons alleging false imprisonment, assault, malicious prosecution, misfeasance and trespass to property. (This is not an exhaustive list.)
- 1.8.5 Motor Liability claims are those made by members of the public and police officers following damage and injuries sustained in road accidents involving a police vehicle.
- 1.8.6 Non tribunal employment matters (NTEM) are those claims made by police officers for pay, overtime and other allowances which they believe should have been paid during their service.
- 1.8.7 The time limit for bringing claims involving injury is three years and, for those not involving injury, it is six years. The Court can sometimes extend the time limit.

Numbers of Claims Finalised & Results

- 1.9 Of the 255 cases finalised during the period, 167 were successfully defended/withdrawn (65%).



- 1.9.1 This is to be compared with the last period, 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024, where 109 cases were finalised, and 62 were successfully defended/withdrawn (57%).

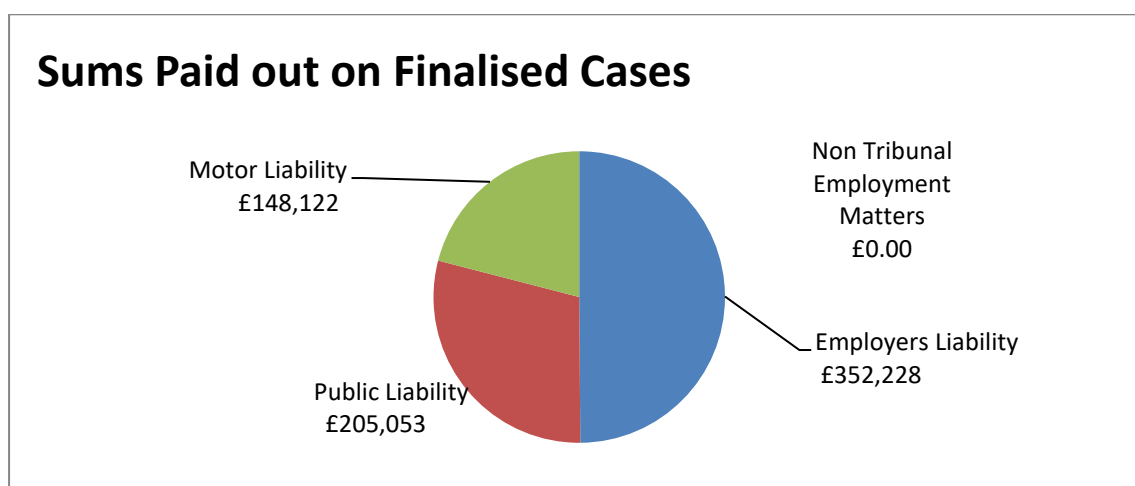
1.9.2 There was a significant number of claims closed in 2024 which follows the commencement of the forced entry/low value claims now sitting with Evolve Legal Services since 1.4.2023.

1.9.3 Feedback is provided on a case by case basis to ensure assistance is given in managing risks. At the strategic level, the Force takes its 'risk' around civil litigation very seriously and works tirelessly to ensure that 'liability' is reduced wherever possible and that the 'lessons learnt' from finalised cases are integrated into operational and organisational planning and delivery. For example, lessons learnt from motor claims are taken to the Driver Standards Gold Group and any claims arising from Custody are taken to the Force Custody Gold Group. Lessons learnt is also given to individual officers/staff; individual Departments or force wide through Executive leads.

1.9.4

Sums paid out on Finalised Cases

1.10 The Chart below summarises the payments made on claims finalised during the period.



Please note that due to the change in case management system and continued migration works, we have provided the information to the best of our knowledge and ability.

Exception Reports

1.11 The Chief Constable previously agreed to provide the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) with an exception report following the settlement of a civil claim case which meets either of the following criteria:

- The case has been defended by the Force but has been lost at trial
- The amount payable in finalising the case is above the insurance 'excess' for that claim.

1.11.1 In addition, it was agreed that the exception reports submitted to the PCC would be appended to the Civil Claims report presented to the Audit Committee for their information. There are no exception reports for claims during this period.

Implications

Finance

1.12 In relation to insured risks, none of the claims finalised exceeded the 'excess.'

1.12.1 Although the sums paid out for insured risks outweigh the sums recovered, savings (in terms of potential damages) have been made in those cases successfully defended and savings (in terms of solicitor's costs) have been made by dealing with claims in-house.

Diversity & Equal Opportunities

1.13 There are no diversity or equal opportunities implications arising from the content of this report.

Human Rights Act

1.14 There are no Human Rights Act implications arising from the content of this report.

Sustainability

1.33 There are no sustainability implications arising from the content of this report.

Risk

1.15 There are reputational and financial risk implications arising from this report as clearly enforcing the law, i.e. exercising statutory powers to arrest, search, detain and prosecute, has inherent risks that should be mitigated against through effective training, review, risk management, 'lessons learned' activities and peer review/inspection.

1.16 The Force has detailed policy and procedures that govern and direct the activities of individuals in areas of risk i.e. police use of motor vehicles, detention in custody, the police use of force and our operational firearms response. In all these areas the regular review of litigation cases and other high profile operations takes place within policy forums to improve professional practice, led by respective chief officers.

1.17 Finally, our responsibility as an employer is also an area of litigation and cost where we seek to minimise risk and discharge our duties as a lawful, responsible and diligent employer.

Conclusions

1.18 Whilst Legal Services have no control over the number of claims received, feedback is provided on a case by case basis to ensure assistance is given to Service Units in managing risks. At the strategic level, the Force takes its 'risk' around civil litigation very seriously and works tirelessly to ensure that 'liability' is reduced wherever possible and that the 'lesson learnt' from finalised cases are integrated into operational and organisational planning and delivery.

Originator of report

Michelle Phillips & Samantha Rumins