



Report: Handling of Police Complaints

To: Chair and Members of the Audit Committee

Date: 25th September 2025

Status: For information

Executive Officer: Michael Porter, Chief Finance Officer

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This report is to update the Chair and members on the work of the Police and Crime Commissioner's (PCC's) Resolution Team and to provide an overview of the efficiency and effectiveness of the service provided to the public.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That Members note the content of the report.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Policing and Crime Act 2017 and supporting regulations made significant changes to the police complaints and disciplinary systems. They introduced a number of changes designed to achieve a more customer-focused complaints system, including strengthening the role of PCCs in deciding how the police complaints system operates at a local level.
- 3.2 These changes required, PCCs to adopt one of three complaint handling models, which includes:
 - Model 1 - is the statutory minimum required of PCCs, who are responsible for scrutinising their force's complaint handling, handling complaints about the Chief Constable, and for conducting reviews of complaint handling where the PCC is the relevant review body.

- Models 2 and 3 allow PCCs to carry out additional complaint handling functions that would otherwise be performed by the police. Under these models the PCC is responsible for the initial handling of complaints and handling suitable complaints outside of Schedule 3 to the Police Reform Act 2002 which is sometimes referred to as 'service recovery'. Under model 3 the PCC is also responsible for keeping complainants updated on the progress and outcome of their complaints.

3.3 In 2022, Model 3 was adopted and implemented in Cleveland.

4. Building Trust and Confidence in Policing

- 4.1 Building trust and confidence in policing and the criminal justice system is a key priority for the Police and Crime Commissioner. As set out in the Police and Crime Plan 2024-2029, listening, hearing and acting on concerns of the public is central to the PCC's role.
- 4.2 Inline with IOPC Statutory Guidance 2020, members of the public can make complaints via a number of channels, including via telephone, email, online forms or in person.
- 4.3 Thematic concerns highlighted through complaints about the police are included in scrutiny processes and embedded in organisational learning.

5. Resolution Team

- 5.1 All public police complaints are handled by the OPCC Resolution Team, which comprises of one Team Leader and six Resolution Team Advisors.
- 5.2 Since 2022, the team has achieved several key milestones that reflect its commitment to continuous improvement and high standards of service:
 - 31 January 2022 – The Resolution Team successfully launched the Model 3 complaints handling process, streamlining procedures and enhancing transparency in complaint resolution.
 - October 2023 – The team was awarded the Customer Service Excellence Award, recognising its performance in delivering public-facing services. This national accreditation highlights excellence across five key criteria: customer insight, culture of the organisation, information and access, delivery, and timeliness. The award followed a rigorous assessment process, including interviews, case reviews, and service evaluations.
 - February 2024 – The Resolution Team was a key contributor to the development of the national Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC) Complaints Toolkit, sharing best practices and

operational insights to support local policy development and delivery across PCC offices nationwide.

- October 2024 – The team was re-accredited for the Customer Service Excellence Award, demonstrating sustained performance and continued innovation in complaint handling and customer engagement.
- September 2025 – The Resolution Team achieved re-accreditation for the third consecutive year. The assessor made the following comment:

‘This is a great achievement, given the many challenges faced by all public sector services at present and is a real testament to the very effective and comprehensive commitment to delivering the best service for your customers’.

6. Complaints Handling 2024-2025

- 6.1 As detailed at Appendix A, during 2024-25, the Resolution Team logged 2,109 complaints relating to 3,187 allegations.
- 6.2 Locally there was a 5.8% increase in police complaints and a 4.0% rise in allegations, closely mirroring the national trend, where overall complaints rose by approximately 5%.
- 6.3 Despite a recorded increase, the Resolution Team maintained high standards of service and responsiveness, with the team meeting performance targets and are ahead of the national figure for timeliness of finalising cases handled outside of schedule 3. The target is to finalise allegations and respond to complainants within 28 days. In March 2024 the time taken was 14 days, rising to 15 days at the end March 2025.
- 6.4 94% of allegations were resolved by the Resolution Team, outside of Schedule 3.
- 6.5 The number of reviews has slightly decreased however the number of upheld reviews has increased, this is primarily due to the Force not addressing all of the allegations (53%) or the complaint not being fully understood (29%).

7. Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) Feedback

- 7.1 IOPC commentary on the Resolution Team end-of-year performance acknowledged the Team’s excellent complaint handling, highlighting swift contact with complainants, prompt logging, and efficient resolution times, all well above national standards.

8. Customer Service Feedback

- 8.1 The Resolution Team continues to actively seek customer feedback to improve service delivery. During the last Customer Service Excellence assessment, the team committed to continuously reviewing its consultation strategy with service users.
- 8.2 Initially, a targeted questionnaire was sent to complainants following the outcome of their case. However, response rates were lower than anticipated, limiting the usefulness of the data collected. In response, a broader and more accessible questionnaire was developed and distributed via Cleveland Connected, aiming to:
- Gauge public awareness of the OPCC's independence from the Force
 - Collect feedback on the complaint-handling experience
 - Identify areas for improvement in communication and service delivery
- 8.3 This revised approach is expected to provide more representative insights and support ongoing service enhancements.

9. Complaints Scrutiny Panel

- 9.1 In collaboration with Cleveland Police Department of Standards and Ethics, the OPCC re-established the Complaints Scrutiny Panel to provide independent oversight of the complaints process. The panel has now been operational for one year and is chaired by an independent member.
- 9.2 Its remit includes assessing whether the response provided in each case is appropriate and proportionate, and evaluating the extent to which the outcome aligns with reasonable expectations based on the nature of the complaint and the investigation undertaken. This independent oversight helps to maintain transparency, accountability, and public confidence in the complaints system.

10. Audit of Complaint Handling Processes

- 10.1 An audit of the Resolution Team's processes was conducted in August 2024, identifying one medium priority recommendation, five low priority recommendations, and one suggestion for improvement. Of these, two priority actions remain ongoing: a review of the Service Level Agreement and the development of themes and trends analysis to inform strategic improvements. All other recommendations have been fully addressed and are now embedded as business as usual.

11. Implications

11.1 Finance

There are no known financial implications at the present time. However, as the process progresses the financial implications will be continually reviewed.

11.2 Diversity and Equal Opportunities

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

11.3 Human Rights Act

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

11.4 Sustainability

Risk Management is a vital element in ensuring the sustainable delivery of services and delivering the PCC's priorities.

11.5 Risk

Risk Management is crucial in ensuring the sustainable delivery of services and delivery of the PCC's priorities through the effective identification and management of the principal risks to the delivery of corporate objectives.

12. Conclusion

- 12.1 This report provides members with an update in relation to the progress and impact of the PCC's Complaints Handling process and the performance of the Resolution Team.

Appendix A

Police Complaints Recording: 12 months to March 2025				
Police Complaints	Cleveland Mar-24	Cleveland Mar-25	Volume Change	% Change
Total number of complaints logged	1,993	2,109	116	5.8%
Total number of allegations logged	3,065	3,187	122	4.0%

Police Complaints Handling: March 2024 - 12 Months to March 2025

Police Complaint Handling	Cleveland Mar-24	Cleveland Mar-25	Change	National Mar-25
Average number of days to contact complainant	1 day	1 day	n/c	9 days
Average number of working days to log complaints	1 day	1 day	n/c	7 days
% allegations resolved outside of schedule 3	97.0%	94.0%	-3.0pts	95.0%
Number of days to resolve allegations outside of schedule 3	14	15	Up 1 point	20
Number of complaint reviews received	71	68	-3	3,938
Average number of days to complete complaint reviews	9 days	7 days	2 days faster	48
% reviews upheld	24%	39%	Up 15 pts	22%