

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS OF INDEPENDENT REPORT INTO HAMPSHIRE AND ISLE OF WIGHT PROFESSIONAL STANDARD COMMISSIONED BY POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER AND CARRIED OUT BY JOHN RIDDELL, PARTNER WEIGHTMANS LLP

1. In September 2025 Police and Crime Commissioner Donna Jones commissioned John Riddell, Partner at Weightmans LLP, to carry out an independent review into Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary Professional Standard Department (PSD). PSD investigate police officers and staff for matters of misconduct and gross misconduct. The review's terms of reference were to investigate generic issues involving proportionality and timeliness in investigations, welfare provision for officers and culture. The terms of reference did not direct the investigation to any specific cases.
2. During the investigation John Riddell was provided with a large number of documents by PSD including investigation reports, severity assessments and determinations of cases and decision on gross misconduct cases over the last three years. John Riddell also received a large number of e-mails from police officers and staff and spoke to a large number of officers and staff. He also interviewed members of PSD, the Police Federation, UNISON and Force welfare representatives. John Riddell's conclusions and recommendations are now set out in summary below.
3. The number of gross misconduct (GM) cases that can lead to dismissal of police officers and staff has risen in the last four years. Many of these cases involve issues of misogyny. Public concern and the dismissal of officers in such cases show that PSD have been justified in pursuing these cases.
4. This has seen some cultural change and there is some resistance within the force to PSD confronting issues of misogyny. That resistance is a matter of concern and further justifies PSD's approach.
5. PSD do not generally pursue an over punitive approach. The overall outcomes on the initial severity assessments and determinations taken together between October 2022 and October 2025 were as follows. No further action was recommended on 55% of cases, 29% were dealt with by way of performance requiring improvement (reflective practice review.) 4% were dealt with by way of performance regulations, 0.4% by management action, 6% by dismissal and 5% by written warning. 0.1% led to reduction in rank.
6. The initial severity assessment (assessment of whether there should be an investigation) over the same period produced these results – gross misconduct 25%, misconduct 20%, no action 39%, RPRP 13% and performance 3%. In other words over half (55%) were filtered out of conduct at the first hurdle despite the expectation of investigation. 25% were assessed as GM.

7. The review of cases between October 2022 and October 2025 therefore showed that 55% of cases are filtered out of misconduct at initial assessment. 75% of cases initially assessed as GM are downgraded during their investigation or at post investigation determination. PSD are successful in the vast majority of remaining cases that go hearings. The fact that 75% of cases are downgraded is a matter of concern, if they could be downgraded earlier that would save time and reduce stress. It is necessary to measure expectation here. It may not be possible to downgrade earlier because the regulations, policies and public confidence all raise an expectation of investigation. The test to apply is an extremely low one. It may only be possible to downgrade the assessment following these investigations.
8. Timeliness of investigations remains a major concern and proactive investigative steps may help to improve that. PSD are taking steps to improve timeliness. PSD are not always in control of the investigative process, for instance where a police conduct case must await the outcome of a criminal investigation or where the Independent Office for Police Conduct are carrying out an investigation.
9. It seems that a lighter touch could have been used on some cases of alleged relationships at work. Allegations of violence by women against men must be fairly investigated for the sake of justice and to avoid allegations of gender bias. There was a perception amongst some I spoke to of gender bias. Whilst I saw some evidence of this my enquiries did not suggest that the practice was widespread. It is nevertheless something that should be avoided.
10. Even if the issues raised above are confronted GM cases are likely to remain very stressful for officers and staff. Proper welfare provision is essential. Welfare Support Officers are now supervised and trained by the Wellbeing Risk Manager. A Teams channel for all involved in welfare issues has been established, these changes are very welcome. I would recommend a feasibility study to consider (a) The appointment of full time welfare support officers (b) Whether adequate medical support is available to officers suffering from stress and anxiety.
11. There is a perception amongst officers and staff that PSD are persecuting them and that senior officers are out of touch. I do not think that either is the case but improved messaging is required.
12. The Chief Constable, through Project Connect and the PSD improvement plan, are confronting many of the issues raised in this report. There is every cause for optimism and belief that the issues raised in the review and difficulties encountered by officers and staff can be resolved. Weightmans LLP would like to provide pro bono assistance as required on issues such as severity assessment and final determination of a case.
13. The review's recommendations appear below. We have indicated where PSD are already addressing these concerns. I have also suggested timescales and ownership of the actions. This is naturally a matter for the Chief Constable's final decision.

Recommendations Table

| No. | Recommendation | Responsible Party | Timeline |
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| 1 | <p>PSD have answered public concerns about misogyny within the police by successfully prosecuting a large number of GM cases over the last three years. It is disturbing to see that there remains some opposition to that campaign. PSD should continue to investigate and prosecute such cases.</p> | PSD Leadership | Ongoing |
| 2 | <p>It is of concern that 75% of cases that are initially assessed as gross misconduct with the threat of dismissal are later downgraded following investigation. Whilst recognising that the test is a low one these assessments run the risk of putting officers under great stress and wasting PSD time. The following should be considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Simple management issues that could never amount to conduct should be handled on division. Training should be provided to divisional managers so they can exercise their discretion in making referrals to PSD; - Investigators should be reminded that severity assessments can be revised at any time during an investigation; - Scoping exercises at the time of initial assessment might lead to a more exact assessment; - Sergeant reviews should be early and always consider the question of reassessment; - Investigations should be front loaded and aimed at key witnesses and documentation that determine the allegations. <p>I should add that Project Connect and the PSD are already looking at these issues but would ask that my specific recommendations are addressed.</p> <p>I would like to measure expectation here. PSD already filter out 55% of cases at initial assessment. The expectation is that there will be an investigation and complainant's right of review may reverse these</p> | PSD Leadership, Divisional Managers, Investigators, Sergeants | Within 6 months; training by end of next quarter |

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| | <p>decisions. It may therefore simply not be possible to reduce the number of cases that are initially assessed as gross misconduct. It may only be possible to downgrade the assessment following an investigation.</p> | | |
| 3 | <p>Whilst PSD should be applauded for confronting issues of misogyny I saw evidence on occasions where very minor transgressions or implausible allegations were assessed as gross misconduct. Care should be taken to avoid this. I would suggest that applying Recommendation 2 would assist.</p> | <p>PSD Leadership, Investigators</p> | <p>Immediate and ongoing</p> |
| 4 | <p>Allegations of violence by women against men should be investigated fairly and without any hint of gender bias.</p> | <p>PSD Investigators, PSD Leadership</p> | <p>Immediate and ongoing</p> |
| 5 | <p>It seems to me that the single biggest cause of delay is the fact that 75% of GM cases are later downgraded. As stated before, scoping at the severity assessment stage and early intervention in the investigation may assist in earlier resolution. But I am once again eager to measure expectations. This may not be possible because of the expectation of investigation set out in the regulations and policies.</p> | <p>PSD Investigators, Sergeants</p> | <p>Within 6 months</p> |
| 6 | <p>Updates should be issued every 28 days and should be meaningful, especially on timescale. PSD to their credit have recognised this issue. They have introduced prompts on their Centurion case management system, there has been improved compliance.</p> | <p>PSD Leadership, Case Managers</p> | <p>Immediate</p> |
| 7 | <p>I did not see any great failings in investigations or reports but in their reviews Sergeants should continue to ensure that the number of allegations and investigations pursued are proportionate. Responses of witnesses and obtaining digital material should be actioned in a timely manner. IOs should be proactive in following up evidential enquiries. PSD are addressing these issues in their continuous improvement plan.</p> | <p>Sergeants, Investigating Officers</p> | <p>Immediate and ongoing</p> |

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| 8 | The longest delays were where a GM matter followed a criminal investigation or prosecution. Caution should be applied in pursuing a GM matter following a criminal acquittal with careful consideration of the Home Office Guidance paragraphs 7.88 to 7.96. | PSD Leadership, Appropriate Authority | Immediate and ongoing |
| 9 | The IOPC should consider having occasional meetings with the Police Federation to discuss common issues and understand one another's perspective with regards to delays to assist with welfare provision. | IOPC, Police Federation | Within 12 months; then annually |
| 10 | Although good use is being made of Accelerated Hearings, greater use can be made by (a) Investigating Officers being more proactive in issuing reports saying the conditions for referral to AMH applied; (b) Making use of the new power to refer former officer cases to AMH. | Investigating Officers, PSD Leadership | Within 6 months |
| 11 | A feasibility study should be carried out into the provision of full-time welfare support officers. | Occupational Health, PSD Leadership | Within 12 months |
| 12 | Further investigations should be carried out into the adequacy of medical support for officers and staff under investigation from Occupational Health with particular emphasis upon counselling and psychiatric support. | Occupational Health, PSD Leadership | Within 12 months |
| 13 | Restrictions upon officers and staff under investigation are often necessary but should be proportionate. Any new post should where possible make full use of an officer or staff member's skills and experience. | PSD Leadership, Line Managers | Immediate and ongoing |
| 14 | Anonymity in GM proceedings should be considered for officers with serious welfare issues. It should be stressed that the presumption is for officers to be named and anonymity is the exception to the rule. Anonymity seems to happen very rarely in HIOWC. The AA and the Federation may wish to adopt a more positive approach and the Chair should be made aware of the exceptions | Appropriate Authority, Police Federation, Hearing Chair | Immediate and ongoing |

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| | that are set out in the Police Conduct Regulations 2020. | | |
| 15 | Arrests and detentions may be unavoidable but voluntary attendance should always be considered as an option. | PSD Leadership, Investigators, Police Federation | Immediate and ongoing |
| 16 | A feasibility study should be carried out into the provision of Smart phones for officers and staff who have their phones seized. | PSD Leadership, Occupational Health, IT Department | Within 12 months |
| 17 | Officers and staff members believe that PSD exercise an over punitive approach. The facts suggest otherwise with 55% of cases being taken out of conduct at initial assessment and 75% of cases assessed as gross misconduct cases being downgraded during investigation or later determination. PSD prove the vast majority of cases at the GM cases that proceed. Improved messaging is needed for general awareness. PSD are working on this through their improvement plan but I would ask that they address my specific concerns. | PSD Leadership, Senior Officers, Communications Team | Within 6 months; then ongoing |
| 18 | An oppressive and inhibiting culture of fear exists amongst officers and staff members. This might be reduced if the GM cases that are downgraded were disposed of earlier at initial scoping or earlier management intervention in investigations. | PSD Leadership, Investigators, Sergeants | Within 6 months |
| 19 | Morale is low with a distrust of senior officers and PSD. The tone of messaging by senior officers is found unwelcome. There may be many causes of low morale which have nothing to do with senior officers and PSD. Senior Officers and PSD are constructively involved to improve matters through the PSD improvement plan and Project Connect. Improved messaging is required, perhaps in content and tone. The staff surveys carried out by Project Connect were helpful and considered by the PSD Improvement Plan. Periodic surveys of attitudes to PSD would assist. | Senior Officers, PSD Leadership, Communications Team | Within 6 months; then ongoing |

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| 20 | Although the listing of GM hearings seemed generally fair and timely I did hear some evidence which suggested that officer's availability and the availability of their Counsel was not always accommodated. This should be accommodated wherever possible. | PSD Leadership, Hearing Chair, Scheduling Team | Immediate and ongoing |
| 21 | The welfare reforms proposed by Project Connect are all helpful and constructive. Further investigations are required (see recommendation 12) as to whether there will be sufficient in-house welfare provision after their implementation. HIOWC have applied for additional funding and the solutions may well rest with central government and Home Office funding. | Project Connect Leads, PSD Leadership, Central Government, Home Office | Review after Project Connect implementation (by March 2026) |
| 22 | The recommendations for changes in PSD made by D/Supt Kenny in his report are all sound and should be implemented by PSD. I am pleased to say that they are doing that through their improvement plan. | PSD Leadership, Project Connect Leads | By end of improvement plan cycle (suggest: within 12 months) |
| 23 | It has been a privilege to make this report and in return Weightmans LLP would like to provide pro bono training to PSD upon severity assessments, investigations and determinations. They would also like to offer a pro bono helpline to officers involved in severity assessments and determinations. We would also be very happy to share our thoughts with all officers and staff through Reputation Matters. | Weightmans LLP, PSD Leadership | Offer to be made within 3 months; ongoing as needed |