Police complaints – Annual statistics for England and Wales 2025/26

Introduction

1.1 The annual police complaints statistics were published on 21 October 2026, this covers the period 1 April 2025 - 31 March 2026 (2025/26). This is the sixth 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 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 2025/26, there have been 108,987 complaint cases logged by forces nationally. This was a 15% increase on the total logged in 2024/25. Complaint numbers have seen a sustained increase year-on-year since the definition of a complaint broadened in 2020, consistently rising from the 67,732 cases reported in 2020/21.

The volume of complaints has increased each year under the current system: 11% in 2021/22, 8% in 2022/23, 5% in 2023/24, and 11% in 2024/25. That equates to a 61% increase in complaints since 2020/21.

In Hampshire, there were 4,007 cases logged in 2025/26. This puts Hampshire 5th out of 44 forces in terms of volume alone. This was a 6.8% increase on the total logged in 2024/25 where Hampshire was placed 6th out of 44. West Midlands has moved out of the top five moving Hampshire to 5th.

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 432 complaint cases per 1,000 employees.

The Hampshire rate is 663 complaint cases per 1,000, remaining 3rd out of 44 forces for two years. This is behind Cleveland Police with 861 per 1,000 employees and Greater Manchester with 740 per 1,000 employees.

Hampshire's average was 53% higher than the national average and places them highest in their Most Similar Force of police forces by 18%.

In effect, Hampshire are recording more complaints than similar forces by 213 complaints. 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 seven working days to log complaints from the date they were made, although most forces (28) logged complaints in five working days or less.

The average in Hampshire is one working day, consist with 2024/25.

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

In Hampshire, the average is 14 working days. This is an increase from two working days in the previous year and puts Hampshire in the six lowest performing forces.

It is acknowledged that Hampshire has provided clarity to their recording of data to ensure this is meaningful contact since 2024/25.

- The OPCC is keen to understand the increase in timeliness to contact complainants and measures in place by PSD to monitor this and to mitigate the impact on the complainant's experience.

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, 36,998 complaint cases were formally recorded. In Hampshire, 501 cases were recorded formally, putting it 25th out of 44 forces. In 2024/25 they were positioned 26th with 404 formal complaints. Despite this increase, Hampshire continued to record relatively low volumes of formal complaints compared with both national and MSG comparators.

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 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 80% of cases handed informally. This shows a decrease on 83% in 2024/25. Nationally the average is 45%, a increase on 44% in 2024/25. In Hampshire, 34% of formally recorded complaints were initially handled informally compared to the national average of 18%.

- The OPCC is keen to understand PSD's initial handling decision of complaints which means they sit above the average percentage of cases handled informally. 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.

2.7 The time taken to informally handle allegations is an average of 22 days nationally, an increase on 20 days on last year.

In Hampshire, it takes 17 working days and positions them at 20th out of 44 forces. This is an increase on last year's 14 days where they were 17th and the previous year of 6 days which positioned them joint 4th quickest in the country. This represents a year-on-year increase over three years alongside rising complaint volumes.

In 88% 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 113 days (87 days in 2024/25, 79 days in 2023/24).

For formal allegations handled by investigation, the national average is 229 working days, in Hampshire, it takes an average of 261 days (212 days in 2024/25). This illustrates an increase in the investigation time in Hampshire alongside an increase in cases handled by investigation from 90 cases in 2024/25 to 145 in 2025/26.

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.

Hampshire – Formal complaint allegations resulting in actions below:	
Explanation	61%

No further action	29%
Apology	7%
Referral to Reflective Practice Review Process (RPRP)	1%
Learning from reflection	1%
Organisational learning	0%

2.9 Nationally, of those formal allegations not investigated, the majority (69%) found the service provided was acceptable. Of those formal allegations that were investigated, there was no case to answer in 49% of instances.

For Hampshire, it was determined that the service provided was acceptable in 59% of formal allegations. For those handled by investigation, 66% were found to be service provided was acceptable. Of those formal allegations that were investigated, there was no case to answer in 56% of instances and a case to answer in 44%.

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:

Police force	**Number of complaint cases finalised under Schedule 3**	**Total LPB reviews received**	**Total IOPC reviews received**	**Total reviews received**	**Number of reviews as % of complaint cases finalised**
	N	**N**	**N**	**N**	**%**
Hampshire	502	77	107	184	37%
National Total	**37,566**	**5,277**	**3,040**	**8,317**	**22%**

The number of complaint cases finalised under Schedule 3 in 2025/26 is 502 and 37% resulted in a review.

The model adopted by Hampshire has resulted in more complaints being recorded informally.

The main reasons complaint cases are recorded under schedule 3 are due to dissatisfaction after initial handling 34% and AA determines 32%.

2.12 The average number of working days for the OPCC to complete non-investigation LPB reviews is 54 days, the national average is 44 and the most similar force is 55 days.

The average number of working days for the IOPC to complete Hampshire reviews is 113, the national average for the IOPC is 115.

2.13 Of those reviews that were completed during the 2025/26 year by the OPCC, the percentage of complaint outcomes that were not reasonable and proportionate was 29%, the national average is 20%. 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 2025/26 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 47%.