| Police Scotland logo | Freedom of Information Response Our reference: FOI 24-0799  Responded to: xx May 2024 |
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Your recent request for information is replicated below, together with our response.

## 1. The total public complaints lodged against officers in your force’s firearms unit(s), broken down by unit name and calendar year dating back to 2018.

## 2. The total internal complaints (known as ‘conduct matters’) flagged against officers in your force’s firearms unit(s), broken down by unit name and calendar year dating back to 2018.

The Police Scotland [Complaints About the Police Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)](https://www.scotland.police.uk/spa-media/lgyddvsi/complaints-about-the-police-sop.docx) outlines how we deal with complaints and they are categorised as per appendices C and D of that document.

The formal disciplinary process for Police Officers is governed by [The Police Service of Scotland (Conduct) Regulations 2014](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2014/68/contents/made).

The Police Service of Scotland (Conduct) Regulations 2014 [Scottish Government Guidance Document](https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/factsheet/2018/04/conduct-and-performance-procedures-police-guidance/documents/police-guidance-conduct-procedures/police-guidance-conduct-procedures/govscot%3Adocument/Police%2BService%2Bof%2BScotland%2B%2528conduct%2529%2Bregulations%2B2014.pdf) provides further information on the Conduct process and Conduct cases are categorised in line with our [Standards of Professional Behaviour](https://www.scotland.police.uk/about-us/who-we-are/our-standards-of-professional-behaviour/).

The Complaint process and the Conduct process are distinct from each other and both have separate assessment and recording processes within the Professional Standards Department (PSD) database.

Once Complaint matters are concluded, the circumstances may be referred for a Conduct Assessment (not necessarily every aspect of the complaint, or every officer involved), known as a ‘Preliminary assessment’. There is therefore potential for the same individual/circumstances to appear on a Complaint case and a Conduct case. Due to these processes, complaints and conduct matters cannot simply be added together.

There can be one or more *allegations* contained within one Complaint *case* and equally, there can be one or more subject officers relative to each *allegation*. Conduct cases may contain multiple *allegations* but are limited to one subject officer per *case*. Subject officers are counted once per Conduct *case*; however the same officer may be subject to multiple *cases* and therefore may appear more than once. Each *case* may involve multiple *allegations* and (for Complaints only) each *allegation* may be linked to multiple subject officers.

As each case may involve multiple *allegations*, it must be emphasised that Complaint or Conduct *cases* which are recorded against other divisions or departments may also involve *allegations* linked to Armed Policing (likewise those *cases* attributed to Armed Policing may involve *allegations* linked to other divisions or departments). Data has therefore been provided below which details the number of *allegations* linked to Armed Policing and, separately, the number of *cases* which involve allegations linked to Armed Policing.

Of note, the PSD database records solely whether the officer is attached to Armed Policing as opposed to which individual Armed Policing unit therefore this information is not held. On that basis section 17 of the Act applies and I can confirm that the information sought is not held by Police Scotland.

To be of assistance, we have provided a breakdown per geographical area.

***Table 1:***

*Complaint* ***cases*** *involving allegations linked to Armed Policing, by calendar year 1 2*

| **Category** | **2018** | **2019** | **2020** | **2021** | **2022** | **2023** | **2024** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Number of complaint cases | 7 | 7 | 9 | 6 | 5 | 2 | 0 |

*1 . Data is based on the case received date.*

*2 . Data for 2024 covers the period of 01/01/2024 – 21/03/2024 inclusive.*

***Table 2:***

***Allegations*** *linked to Armed Policing (Complaints), by calendar year 1 2*

| **Station Location** | **2018** | **2019** | **2020** | **2021** | **2022** | **2023** | **2024** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Aberdeen | 1 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Dundee | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Edinburgh | 5 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Glasgow | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 0 |
| Inverness | 1 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Prestwick | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Stirling | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| **Total** | **8** | **9** | **15** | **7** | **6** | **3** | **0** |

*1 . Data is based on the case received date.*

*2 . Data for 2024 covers the period of 01/01/2024 – 21/03/2024 inclusive.*

***Table 3:***

*Conduct* ***cases*** *subject to preliminary assessment involving allegations linked to Armed Policing, by calendar year 1 2*

| **Category** | **2018** | **2019** | **2020** | **2021** | **2022** | **2023** | **2024** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Number of conduct cases | 8 | 9 | 11 | 11 | 6 | 7 | 4 |

*1 . Data is based on the preliminary assessment date.*

*2 . Data for 2024 covers the period of 01/01/2024 – 21/03/2024 inclusive.*

***Table 4:***

***Allegations*** *linked to Armed Policing (Conduct), by calendar year 1 2*

| **Station Location** | **2018** | **2019** | **2020** | **2021** | **2022** | **2023** | **2024** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Edinburgh | 8 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Stirling | 2 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 9 | 0 |
| Aberdeen | 4 | 17 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 6 | 0 |
| Dundee | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 0 |
| Inverness | 0 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Dumfries | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Glasgow | 2 | 1 | 4 | 9 | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| **Total** | **17** | **26** | **11** | **15** | **8** | **19** | **4** |

*1 . Data is based on the preliminary assessment date.*

*2 . Data for 2024 covers the period of 01/01/2024 – 21/03/2024 inclusive.*

## 3. The current number of officers serving in your force’s firearms unit(s), and, if possible, historic staffing figures dating back to 2018.

The requested information is provided below:

***Table 5:***

***Officer numbers*** *within Armed Policing by calendar year*

| **Year** | **Total Number AFO in Armed Policing** |
| --- | --- |
| 2018 | 465 |
| 2019 | 476 |
| 2020 | 505 |
| 2021 | 457 |
| 2022 | 436 |
| 2023 | 408 |
| 2024 | 394 |

## You may also be interested in further information published via the link below:

[Armed Policing Report 2023/24 - Police Scotland](https://www.scotland.police.uk/about-us/how-we-do-it/armed-policing-quarterly-reports/armed-policing-report-2023-24/)

## 4. The net total number of investigations launched into officers in your force’s firearms unit(s) as a result of public complaints, as well as a result of internal ‘conduct matters’ each year dating back to 2018.

## 5. The outcomes of those investigations – and in particular the number of officers dismissed as a result of those investigations – broken down by year dating back to 2018.

Questions 3 and 4 are interpreted to be a continuation of questions 1 and 2 above but focussed on investigations which commenced in relation to those Complaint and Conduct cases.

I would however offer some clarification on the definition of ‘investigation’ within the context of the complaints and misconduct processes.

For Complaint cases, investigations are instigated at Stage 3 of the process in accordance with the Complaints About the Police SOP. Prior to this, on receipt of an on duty non-criminal complaint PSD will make an assessment to determine whether or not it is suitable for Front Line Resolution (FLR). Where it is determined to be minor or trivial in nature, the National Complaints Assessment and Resolution Unit (NCARU) will contact the complainer directly in an effort to resolve the complaint at an early stage. Furthermore, complaints received may be abandoned or withdrawn by the complainer at this stage. Where FLR has not been achieved, or is not appropriate, the complaint will be allocated to an investigating officer.

For Conduct cases, investigations are instigated at the regulation 11 stage of The Police Service of Scotland (Conduct) Regulations 2014, where the subject officer has been served written notice that they are subject of a misconduct investigation.

For consistency with our response to questions 1 and 2 above, data has been provided based on the case received date (Complaints) or the preliminary assessment date (Conduct). These dates may vary from the dates on which complaint or misconduct investigations commenced.

Please note that allegations received may remain subject to live enquiry, pending legal proceedings and/or misconduct proceedings, therefore may not be concluded.

Please also note that dismissal from service is a disposal designated to the Misconduct process only, therefore is not a recognised disposal within the Complaints process. When concluded, officers subject to complaint and the relevant circumstances within those complaints, may be referred to the National Conduct Unit for preliminary assessment and progression through the Misconduct process.

***Table 5:***

*Complaint* ***cases*** *linked to Armed Policing subject to investigation, by calendar year 1 2*

| **Category** | **2018** | **2019** | **2020** | **2021** | **2022** | **2023** | **2024** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Number of Complaint cases subject to investigation | 2 | 5 | 5 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 0 |

*1 . Data is based on the case received date.*

*2 . Data for 2024 covers the period of 01/01/2024 – 21/03/2024 inclusive.*

***Table 6:***

***Allegations*** *linked to Armed Policing and subject to investigation (Complaints), by allegation result and calendar year 1 2*

| **Allegation Result** | **2018** | **2019** | **2020** | **2021** | **2022** | **2023** | **2024** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Not Upheld - Concluded by explanation | 2 | 4 | 6 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 |
| Not Upheld - Insufficient evidence | 0 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Not upheld - Leading to No Proceedings by APF | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Upheld - Concluded by explanation | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Total** | **2** | **6** | **11** | **2** | **2** | **2** | **0** |

*1 . Data is based on the case received date.*

*2 . Data for 2024 covers the period of 01/01/2024 – 21/03/2024 inclusive.*

***Table 7:***

*Conduct* ***cases*** *subject to misconduct investigation following a preliminary assessment and involving allegations linked to Armed Policing, by calendar year 1 2*

| **Category** | **2018** | **2019** | **2020** | **2021** | **2022** | **2023** | **2024** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Number of cases subject to a misconduct investigation | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 |

*1 . Data is based on the preliminary assessment date.*

*2 . Data for 2024 covers the period of 01/01/2024 – 21/03/2024 inclusive.*

***Table 8:***

***Allegations*** *linked to Armed Policing and subject to investigation (Conduct), by allegation disposal and calendar year 1 2*

| **Allegation Disposal** | **2018** | **2019** | **2020** | **2021** | **2022** | **2023** | **2024** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Management Action | 5 | 0 | 2 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| No Action | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Retired/Resigned | 0 | 16 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Ongoing - not yet concluded | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 9 | 0 |
| **Total** | **12** | **16** | **3** | **5** | **0** | **9** | **0** |

*1 . Data is based on the preliminary assessment date.*

*2 . Data for 2024 covers the period of 01/01/2024 – 21/03/2024 inclusive.*

If you require any further assistance please contact us quoting the reference above.

You can request a review of this response within the next 40 working days by [email](mailto:foi@scotland.police.uk) or by letter (Information Management - FOI, Police Scotland, Clyde Gateway, 2 French Street, Dalmarnock, G40 4EH). Requests must include the reason for your dissatisfaction.

If you remain dissatisfied following our review response, you can appeal to the Office of the Scottish Information Commissioner (OSIC) within 6 months - [online](http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/Appeal), by [email](mailto:enquiries@itspublicknowledge.info) or by letter (OSIC, Kinburn Castle, Doubledykes Road, St Andrews, KY16 9DS).

Following an OSIC appeal, you can appeal to the Court of Session on a point of law only.

This response will be added to our [Disclosure Log](http://www.scotland.police.uk/access-to-information/freedom-of-information/disclosure-log) in seven days' time.

Every effort has been taken to ensure our response is as accessible as possible. If you require this response to be provided in an alternative format, please let us know.