

ORIGINATOR: CHIEF EXECUTIVE

DECISION NUMBER: 19 – 2025

REASON FOR SUBMISSION: FOR DECISION

SUBMITTED TO: POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

**SUBJECT: POLICE COMPLAINTS AND CONDUCT SYSTEM STATEMENT OF
POLICY / PERSISTENT ABUSIVE OR UNREASONABLE CONTACT
STATEMENT OF POLICY**

SUMMARY:

The Police Complaints and Conduct System Statement of Policy replaces the previous version of this policy agreed in May 2024. It updates the policy to reflect several legislative changes around police misconduct hearings brought into law through The Police (Conduct) (Amendment) Regulations 2024.

The decision also introduces a Persistent, Abusive or Unreasonable Contact Policy to provide a clearer more transparent explanation of the approach taken. This is informed by the IOPC's Managing Unacceptable Service User contact policy.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Police and Crime Commissioner adopts these policies.

APPROVAL BY: PCC

The recommendation set out is agreed.

Signature:



Date: 12 June 2025

DETAIL OF THE SUBMISSION

1. KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION:

- 1.1 The Police and Crime Commissioner for Suffolk (PCC) is a statutory role established by the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011. The role, functions and powers of the PCC are set out in the 2011 Act, which established PCCs. The Policing Protocol Order 2024 summarises the requirements and responsibilities placed upon the PCC. Whilst this legislation touches upon the PCC's responsibilities in the police complaints and conduct system, the vast bulk of the PCC's responsibilities in this area are found elsewhere.
- 1.2 The PCC has a statutory role to maintain oversight of the complaints system and to ensure that the complaints process is operating effectively and ethically and to hold the Chief Constable to account for this. How this is done is set out within the statement of policy.
- 1.3 The Policing and Crime Act 2017 gave PCCs the responsibility for reviews in respect of complaints considered by the Chief Constable. How this will be done is set out within this statement of policy alongside the process for receiving relevant information, providing recommendations and monitoring their implementation.
- 1.4 The PCC for Suffolk is committed to dealing with all contact, correspondence and complaints equitably, effectively and in a timely manner.
- 1.5 The PCC does not seek to limit contact that individuals have with their office, or with the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC). However, there may be occasions when:
 - the behaviour of an individual is such that it prevents the PCC's office from dealing effectively with their concern;
 - an individual's behaviour causes harassment or distress to the PCC or their staff, and/or
 - where dealing with an individual's contact, correspondence and/or complaints has significant resource implications which are not assessed to be proportionate to the nature of the concern itself.
- 1.6 In these cases, contact with the individual complainant may be limited or, in more extreme cases and while protecting their statutory rights, stopped altogether. These situations and the proportionate actions that would follow are set out clearly in the Persistent, Abusive or Unreasonable Contact Policy.

2. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

- 2.1 The agreement does not have any specific financial implications.

3. OTHER IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS:

- 3.1 There are no other known implications and risks.

ORIGINATOR CHECKLIST (MUST BE COMPLETED)	PLEASE STATE 'YES' OR 'NO'
Has legal advice been sought on this submission?	No
Has the PCC's Chief Finance Officer been consulted?	Yes
Have equality, diversity and human rights implications been considered including equality analysis, as appropriate?	Yes
Have human resource implications been considered?	Yes
Is the recommendation consistent with the objectives in the Police and Crime Plan?	Yes
Has consultation been undertaken with people or agencies likely to be affected by the recommendation?	No
Has communications advice been sought on areas of likely media interest and how they might be managed?	No
Have all relevant ethical factors been taken into consideration in developing this submission?	Yes

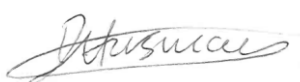
In relation to the above, please ensure that all relevant issues have been highlighted in the 'other implications and risks' section of the submission.

APPROVAL TO SUBMIT TO THE DECISION-MAKER (this approval is required only for submissions to the PCC).

Chief Executive

I am satisfied that relevant advice has been taken into account in the preparation of the report and that this is an appropriate request to be submitted to the PCC.

Signature:



Date: 13 June 2025



POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

POLICE COMPLAINTS AND CONDUCT SYSTEM

STATEMENT OF POLICY AND PROCEDURE

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Policing and Crime Act 2017 established the basis for the long-term reform of the complaints and conduct system that applies to police officers. This has been divided into three phases. The first phase, now implemented, introduced a barred and advisory list to ensure that former officers could not avoid accountability for gross misconduct and to prevent them from re-joining the police service. The second phase, also now implemented, saw the replacement of the Independent Police Complaints Commission with the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) with changes to role, powers and governance in respect of the complaints and conduct system.
- 1.2. The third phase, which has led to the creation of this policy document, overhauls the regulations on complaints and conduct and implements the reforms in the 2017 Act to provide a new regulatory framework. Whilst the introduction of this new regulatory framework has been delayed, it will now come into force on 1 February 2020.
- 1.3. This policy document sets out some of the key aspects of the law and responsibilities relating to the Police and Crime Commissioner in this area and how they will be applied in the County of Suffolk from the introduction of the new regulatory framework in 2020.
- 1.4. This document does not seek to explore each and every aspect of the complaints and conduct system, rather just those areas where the Police and Crime Commissioner has a specific responsibility to discharge. It needs to be read in conjunction with the key legislation and the various guidance produced by the Home Office and Independent Office for Police Conduct that relates to it.

2. Overview of the Statutory Obligations upon Police and Crime Commissioners relating to Police Complaints and Conduct

- 2.1. The Police and Crime Commissioner for Suffolk (the PCC) is a statutory role established by the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011. The role, functions and powers of the PCC are set out in the 2011 Act, which established PCCs. The Policing Protocol Order 2024 also helpfully summarises the requirements and responsibilities placed upon the PCC. Whilst this legislation touches upon the PCC's responsibilities in the police complaints and conduct system, the vast bulk of the PCC's responsibilities in this area is found elsewhere.

Review of Complaints

- 2.2. The Policing and Crime Act 2017 gives PCCs the responsibility for reviews in respect of complaints considered by the Chief Constable. This responsibility is covered in detail in section 3 of this statement wherein it is set out how the PCC will operate the discharge of this function.

- 2.3. The 2017 Act also gives PCCs the option to give notice to the relevant Chief Constable that they, rather than Chief Constable, will exercise certain other complaints functions. Those functions are initial complaints handling (including the recording of complaints) and responsibility for being the single point of contact throughout the complaints handling process. Whilst the PCC in Suffolk will discharge the review function, which is a mandatory requirement, the PCC has determined thus far, in common with the majority of other PCCs, not to give notice to the Chief Constable to take on the additional voluntary complaints functions (see Decision Paper 37-2019, Complaints Reforms). Accordingly the Chief Constable will remain responsible for initial complaints handling and be the contact point throughout the complaints handling process.
- 2.4. Section 3 sets out how the PCC will operate the discharge of the statutory review function placed upon PCCs. Section 3 needs to be read and applied in conjunction with the identified “Key Reading” on which it is based.

Protocol

- 2.5. The section also has an associated Protocol found at Appendix A. This Protocol sets out how the provisions relating to review will operate as between PCC and Chief Constable and what can be expected from each of the parties where there is an interface between their respective responsibilities.

Complaints against the Chief Constable

- 2.6. PCCs are responsible for complaints against Chief Constables. The new complaints system will bring changes to how this operates in practice. Guidance on the handling of matters about chief officers is set out in Annex A of the Statutory Guidance on the Police Complaints System published by the IOPC. There is an automatic requirement to refer complaints above a certain threshold to the Independent Office for Police Conduct.

Misconduct Hearings – Legally Qualified Person and Independent Members

- 2.7. Following a review of the handling of misconduct hearings by the government several changes were introduced on the 7 May 2024. The primary change was to the composition of misconduct panels, removing the role of Legally Qualified Chair (LQC) and giving responsibility for chairing non-senior misconduct proceedings to chief officers, or their delegate.
- 2.8. A new Legal Qualified Person (LQP) role, which provides misconduct panels with advice on legal and procedural matters, was introduced and panels, for non-senior officers, now consisting of a chair and two independent panel members, one of whom has specific relevant experience or qualifications. The LQP is a person appointed by the OPCC or their representative, selected on a fair and transparent basis from a list of candidates maintained by the PFCC for the purposes of the 2020 Regulations.

- 2.9. A Regional approach has been taken to maintaining lists of legally qualified people and independent members. Section 5 has an associated statement whereby the Region has set out its approach to appointing the membership of particular misconduct panels to hear misconduct cases.
- 2.10. The scrutiny role of the PCC was also enhanced with the chair now required to provide certain information, including where it is decided to hold a hearing in private or where an officer is found to have committed gross misconduct, but a decision is made not to dismiss them.

Complaints Monitoring and Dip-Sampling

The PCC has a statutory role to maintain oversight of the complaints system and help ensure that the complaints process is operating effectively and ethically and to hold the Chief Constable to account for this.

- 2.11. The Professional Standards Department will provide information on a twice yearly basis which will be published on the PCC's website. This report will be used to identify themes, trends and patterns in complaints being handled by Suffolk Police as the appropriate authority. These themes, trends and patterns will be considered in more detail and scrutinised through regular meetings. PCC staff will also dip-sample an agreed number of cases completed each quarter as part of the scrutiny programme.
- 2.12. The OPCC or their representative will also attend relevant Suffolk Constabulary boards and meetings to reassure themselves that the organisation is learning from complaints, expressions of dissatisfaction and conduct matters.

Police Appeals Tribunals

- 2.13. PCCs have administrative responsibility for running particular police appeals tribunals, including selecting the membership of such. Section 7 has an associated statement whereby the Region has set out its approach to appointing the membership of particular police appeals tribunals.

Delegation of Complaints and Misconduct Function by the PCC to Officers of the Office of the PCC

- 2.14. The arrangements for delegation of functions in relation to complaints and misconduct are set out in Section 8 below and are further described and provided for in the PCC's Scheme of Governance and Consent.

3. Review of Complaints

Key Reading:

- The Police (Complaints and Misconduct) Regulations 2020
- The Police (Conduct) (Amendment) Regulations 2024
- [Statutory Guidance – 2020 - IOPC](#)
- College of Policing Guidance on Outcomes in Police Misconduct Proceedings

Right of Review

- 3.1. There is a right of review in respect of complaints that have been investigated by the Chief Constable and those that have been dealt with other than by investigation.
- 3.2. An application for a review will be considered either by the PCC or by the IOPC.

Relevant Review Body

- 3.3. The IOPC is the relevant review body where:
 - 3.3.1. the appropriate authority is a local policing body;
 - 3.3.2. the complaint is about the conduct of the Chief Constable, Deputy Chief Constable or an Assistant Chief Constable;
 - 3.3.3. the Chief Constable, as appropriate authority, is unable to satisfy themselves, from the complaint alone, that the conduct complained of (if it were proved) would not justify the bringing of criminal or disciplinary proceedings against a person serving with the police, or would not involve the infringement of a person's rights under Article 2 or 3 of the European Convention of Human Rights;
 - 3.3.4. the complaint has been, or must be referred to the IOPC;
 - 3.3.5. the IOPC is treating the complaint as having been referred;
 - 3.3.6. the complaint arises from the same incident as a complaint falling within 3.3.2 – 3.3.5;
 - 3.3.7. any part of the complaint falls within any of the above.
- 3.4. In all other cases the PCC is the review body.
- 3.5. The question at 3.3.3 of whether the IOPC is the relevant review body must be assessed on the substance of the complaint alone, not on the merit of the allegations or with hindsight after the complaint has been dealt with.

Applications for Review

- 3.6. In each application for review received by the PCC, the PCC will consider whether the PCC is the relevant review body. If the PCC receives an application for review, but the IOPC is

the relevant review body, it will be forwarded to the IOPC. The PCC will notify the complainant that the application for review has been forwarded and that the IOPC is the relevant review body. The PCC will forward the application electronically. In such a case the application will be taken to have been made when it was forwarded.

- 3.7. On receipt of an application for review where the PCC is the relevant review body, the PCC will send an acknowledgement to the complainant. This acknowledgement should inform when the complainant can expect to hear about the review, what will happen next and advise a point of contact in case of queries.
- 3.8. The PCC will notify the appropriate authority and the original Investigating Officer as to the receipt of any review application. The Protocol at Appendix A sets out the steps to be taken to notify the person complained against.
- 3.9. The PCC will request any information from any person which it considers necessary to deal with a review. Any information requested by the PCC for this purpose must be supplied, and the PCC expects this request to be responded to as soon as is reasonably practicable.

Assessing the Application for Validity

- 3.10. Once the PCC has considered and determined that they are the relevant review body the application will be assessed.
- 3.11. An application for review must be made in writing and must state:
 - details of the complaint;
 - the date on which the complaint was made;
 - the name of the force or local policing body whose decision is subject of the application;
 - the date on which the complainant was provided with the details about their right of review at the conclusion of the investigation or other handling of their complaint.

Should an application fail to provide any information as set out above the PCC may decide to proceed as if the requirements to provide the information had been complied with.

- 3.12. It is expected that an application for review should be considered even in the absence of any of the information required unless the lack of information makes it impossible to identify the case to which the application relates. It may be appropriate to contact the complainant to clarify issues. If after taking reasonable steps to contact the complainant it has not been possible to make contact nor gather information to conduct the review, the application may be considered invalid.

- 3.13. Only a complainant, or someone acting on their behalf, can make an application for a review in relation to a complaint. An application from anyone else will be invalid.
- 3.14. An application can only be made if there has been a written notification of the outcome of the handling of the complaint.
- 3.15. An application cannot be made to review an outcome of the handling of complaints outside of Schedule 3 of the Police Reform Act 2002.
- 3.16. An application cannot be made to review the outcome of a directed or independent investigation.
- 3.17. Applications for reviews must be made within 28 days starting with the day after the complainant was provided with details about their right of review at the conclusion of the investigation or other handling of their complaint.
- 3.18. Should an application be made to the wrong review body, the time elapsing between the application being received and it being forwarded to the PCC as the correct review body will not be taken into account for the purposes of the 28 day period.
- 3.19. A complainant cannot exercise their right of review before the completion of the handling of the matter.
- 3.20. If the handling has been completed but any of the information about the complainant's right of review that was obliged to be given by the Chief Constable was not given, the application should not be treated as out of time.
- 3.21. Where an application is out of time, the complainant should be asked to provide any reasons as to why it is late, and which should be taken into account when deciding whether an application for a review should be progressed.
- 3.22. The PCC may extend the period for making an application for a review where it is satisfied that, because of the special circumstances of the case it is just to do so. Each case should be considered on their own particular merits. A non-exhaustive list of factors for consideration is set out in the IOPC Statutory Guidance.
- 3.23. If, having considered any special circumstances, the application for review is judged to be out of time and the PCC is not satisfied that it is just to extend the time, the application may be treated as invalid and not considered further. Such a decision and the reasons therefore should be notified to the complainant in writing as soon as reasonably practicable.

Conduct of the Review

- 3.24. The purpose of the review is to consider whether the outcome of the complaint is reasonable and proportionate in the circumstances and to consider, if it was not reasonable and proportionate, how to put it right. Each case must be considered on its own particular merits. The PCC will take a consistent approach in their overall handling and decision-making approach upon reviews. The PCC will observe the principles of reasonable decision-making by a public body. The PCC will act fairly and in good faith and make decisions as quickly as is practicable. The PCC will give due consideration to any representations made by the complainant, the person complained about and the Chief Constable as appropriate authority.
- 3.25. A review must consider whether the outcome of the investigation or other handling is reasonable and proportionate. The following matters should be taken into account.

Process and Method of Handling

- 3.26. Where a flaw is found in the handling of a complaint, the review is likely to be upheld unless the PCC finds that the same outcome would have been reached notwithstanding the flaws.

A Decision to Take No Further Action

- 3.27. Where such a decision has been reached the PCC will consider:
- 3.27.1. where it is considered that the complaint had been made previously, whether there is new evidence since the previous complaint was made that should have been acted on;
 - 3.27.2. where it was considered that the complainant was not co-operating with the handling of the complaint, whether that co-operation was necessary to provide a reasonable and proportionate outcome; and whether reasonable and proportionate efforts were made to communicate with the complainant and the complainant was reasonably able to co-operate.
- 3.28. In considering the efforts made to communicate, the PCC will look at the methods used, any communication preferences or needs of the complainant, and any attempts to communicate through their representative (if any).
- 3.29. Where the PCC considers that further co-operation was not required from the complainant, or that reasonable steps were taken to communicate with them, the PCC will consider whether it was reasonable and proportionate to take no further action based on the information available.

Information Provided to the Complainant

- 3.30. An outcome can only be considered reasonable and proportionate if sufficient information about it has been provided to the complainant for them to understand any findings, determinations and/or actions taken or proposed. When determining whether the complainant was provided with sufficient information about the outcome of their complaint, the PCC will consider the requirements and guidance set out in the IOPC Statutory Guidance upon communicating a complaints outcome.
- 3.31. Where information that has not been provided to the complainant is the only reason that the PCC considers that the outcome is not reasonable and proportionate, and the PCC is able to provide the missing information from the evidence they have reviewed, this will be provided to the complainant by the PCC. Although the review can be upheld on this basis the PCC will not need to make any further recommendation to address this issue.

Findings and Recommendations

- 3.32. In the first instance consideration should be given to whether any findings and determinations reached upon the complaint are reasonable and proportionate. For example consideration should be given to whether:
- the complainant understood and were all allegations or concerns addressed;
 - appropriate enquiries were made to be able to provide a reasonable and proportionate outcome;
 - relevant guidance was considered;
 - aspects of the complaint were not addressed or lines of enquiry not pursued;
 - information or evidence was weighed appropriately and fairly
 - the findings or determinations logically flow from the information or evidence?

Actions proposed

- 3.33. When deciding whether any actions proposed are reasonable and proportionate the PCC will consider:
- whether due regard was given to the applicable legal tests and relevant guidance;
 - whether the complaint handler attempted to understand the outcome the complainant was seeking and gave that due consideration;
 - whether the proposed actions have sought to remedy the issues raised by the complainant, so far as is reasonably possible;

- whether the proposed actions were fair in all the circumstances;
 - whether actions have been proposed or taken in respect of any learning or other issues identified through the handling of the matter.
- 3.34. Sometimes other issues might be identified which would be appropriate to be passed back to the Chief Constable as feedback and which would be appropriate as part of the PCC's oversight role.

Outcome of the Review

Reviews of Complaints Dealt with other than by Investigation

- 3.35. Where the PCC is the relevant review body and finds that the outcome is not reasonable and proportionate, the PCC may:
- recommend that the Chief Constable refer it to the IOPC, if the complaint has not been previously referred;
 - recommend that the Chief Constable investigate the complaint;
 - make a recommendation with a view to remedying the dissatisfaction of a complainant.

Reviews with Respect to an Investigation

- 3.36. Where, following an investigation, the PCC is the relevant review body and finds that the outcome is not reasonable and proportionate, the PCC may:
- make a recommendation to the Chief Constable that the complaint be re-investigated;
 - if the complaint has not been previously referred to the IOPC, recommend that the Chief Constable refer it to the IOPC;
 - make a recommendation to the Chief Constable in respect of any person serving with the police:
 - that the person has a case to answer in respect of misconduct or gross misconduct, or has no case to answer in relation to the person's conduct to which the investigation related;
 - that the person's performance is, or is not, satisfactory;
 - that disciplinary proceedings of the form specified in the recommendation are brought against the person in respect of the person's conduct, efficiency or effectiveness to which the investigation related;

- that any disciplinary proceedings brought against that person are modified so as to deal with such aspects of that conduct, efficiency or effectiveness as may be so specified;
 - make a recommendation with a view to remedying the dissatisfaction of the complainant;
 - make a recommendation that the Chief Constable notify the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) if the PCC considers that the report indicates that a criminal offence may have been committed by a person to whose conduct the investigation related and they consider it appropriate for the matters to be considered by the CPS (or they fall within a prescribed category), and provide them with a copy of the report.
- 3.37. When considering making a recommendation in relation to conduct, performance or practice requiring improvement, the PCC will have regard to Home Office guidance and the College of Policing Guidance on Outcomes in Police Misconduct Proceedings.
- 3.38. Any decision by the PCC about whether to recommend that the report be considered by the CPS will be made in light of the report's findings and the evidence gathered. The reasons given by the Chief Constable for not referring the report to the CPS will also be taken into account. The PCC will provide a full rationale in the event the PCC decides not to recommend that a referral to the CPS be made, despite the report indicating that a criminal offence may have been committed.

Notification of the Outcome

- 3.39. Once the review has been considered the PCC will notify:
- the Chief Constable;
 - the complainant;
 - any interested person; and
 - the person complained against (if any) unless it would prejudice an investigation or re-investigation of the complaint (which may be given via the Chief Constable);

of the decisions and the reasons for the decisions.

- 3.40. The notification will be in writing and should use clear language. Sufficient information will be provided to enable understanding of the decision and why.

Response by the Chief Constable

- 3.41. The Chief Constable is required to respond in writing within 28 days (commencing with the day the recommendation was made) to any recommendation made by the PCC. Such response is expected to include whether the recommendation is accepted and should this be the case the steps proposed to be taken to give effect to the recommendations. If the recommendations are not accepted the reasons why are expected to be given.

3.42. Such response will be copied by the Chief Constable to:

- the complainant;
- any interested person; and
- the person complained against (if any) unless the person making the recommendation considers that to do so might prejudice the investigation.

3.43. The PCC may extend the time limit for a response.

4. Complaints Against the Chief Constable

4.1. PCCs are responsible for complaints against Chief Constables. Guidance on the handling of matters about chief officers is set out in Annex A of the Statutory Guidance on the Police Complaints System published by the IOPC. There is an automatic requirement to refer complaints above a certain threshold to the Independent Office for Police Conduct.

5. Misconduct Hearings – Legally Qualified People and Independent Members

Key Reading:

- *The Police (Conduct) Regulations 2020*
- *The Police (Conduct) (Amendment) Regulations 2024*
- *Home Office – Statutory Guidance on Professional Standards, Performance and Integrity in Policing*

5.1. Where misconduct hearings occur under the Police (Conduct) (Amendment) Regulations 2024, the hearings must be conducted by a panel of three persons comprising:

5.1.1. A chair, appointed by the appropriate authority, who must be a senior officer of the police force concerned.

5.1.2. a person appointed by the local policing body, who –

- has qualifications or experience relevant for the purpose of disciplinary proceedings; and
- is selected on a fair and transparent basis from the list of candidates with such qualifications or experience maintained by the local policing body.

5.1.3. a person appointed by the local policing body, who need not have such qualifications or experience, selected on a fair and transparent basis from the list of candidates maintained by the local policing body.

5.2. In addition to the appointment of the three persons detailed within paragraph 5.1. A person is to be appointed by the local policing body as an adviser to the chair and panel of persons conducting a misconduct hearing, selected on a fair and transparent basis from a list of legally qualified persons maintained by a local policing body.

- 5.2.1. The legally qualified person appointed must provide advice to the panel of persons conducting or to the person chairing a misconduct hearing upon request by the chair in respect of any legal or procedural issues relating to the misconduct proceedings. The panel of persons conducting or the person chairing a misconduct hearing must have regard to any advice given by the legally qualified person.
- 5.3. If the officer subject of the misconduct hearing is a senior officer, the panel will consist of those individuals as set out at 5.1 and 5.2 above save that the chair at 5.1.1 will instead be Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Service or an inspector of constabulary nominated by such.
- 5.4. In the Eastern Region the PCCs have joined together to appoint and maintain lists of both legally qualified persons and independent panel members as referred to at 5.1.2, 5.1.3 and 5.2.1 above. Whilst the responsibility to appoint the legally qualified person and independent panel members is an individual one for PCCs, the Eastern Region Offices of PCCs recognised that there were economies of scale to be achieved in undertaking regional recruitments and appointments. Officers from each of the six offices of PCCs in the Region meet regularly as the Member Misconduct Oversight Panel (MMOP) to coordinate and operate all aspects of the administration of legally qualified persons and independent panel members which includes recruitment, appointment to the lists, issue of terms of appointment, indemnification, maintenance of the lists and training.
- 5.5. Appointment of legally qualified persons and independent panel members to a particular case hearing should be on a fair and transparent basis by a PCC following a request from the appropriate authority. The Home Office Statutory Guidance states that "fair and transparent" will generally mean that a rota system is established so the next available person from the lists is chosen for the hearing. It is stated to be good practice for the PCC to publish how their rota system operates. The Regional PCCs have produced a statement of how their rota system operates and this is found at Appendix B. This statement is published on the Suffolk PCC website.
- 5.6. The officer subject to a misconduct hearing will be informed of the person selected to chair a misconduct hearing and to whom they can object in writing within 3 days setting out their grounds for objection. The PCC will either uphold or reject the objection.

Delegation of Functions regarding Legally Qualified People and Independent Members

- 5.7. The PCC has delegated the general performance of most PCC functions to the Chief Executive. This includes those functions with regard to the appointment and selection of legally qualified chairs and independent members for hearings. This means that all relevant action, including day-to-day activity and decisions will be undertaken by the Chief Executive and officers acting upon his behalf. The appointment of members to a misconduct panel shall where the appointment is one for the PCC, be made as provided for in section 8 below, which means that the Chief Executive will make such

appointments. All appointments should be documented in writing and confirmed to the appointee in writing.

6. Complaints Monitoring and Dip-Sampling

Key Reading:

- *Police Reform Act 2002*

- 6.1. The PCC has a role in the complaints system to maintain oversight to ensure that the complaints process is operating effectively and efficiently and to hold the Chief Constable to account for this.
- 6.2. In Suffolk the PCC has agreed with the Chief Constable that the following will comprise an effective monitoring system. These oversight arrangements are designed to ensure that public trust and confidence is maintained by providing reassurance about the integrity of complaints handling by the Suffolk Constabulary.

Regular Oversight Meetings between OPCCs, PSDs and IOPC

- 6.3. Representatives from Suffolk and Norfolk OPCCs will attend a quarterly meeting with the IOPC and PSD. . The meetings would cover, as appropriate, issues relating to:
- the latest quarterly IOPC performance bulletins;
 - force performance issues and what lessons are being learned by forces;
 - local and national policy development work.
 - OPCC oversight, targets, and reviews.

Formal Chief Constable Reporting on Complaints and Misconduct Matters to the Police and Crime Commissioner

- 6.4. The Chief Constable will report twice yearly to the Police and Crime Commissioner upon complaints and misconduct matters. The reports will provide analysis of complaints data, including reasons for changes in the data and explanation of the resulting action as well as learning which is being taken forward by the Force.
- 6.5. The reports will be published on the Police and Crime Commissioner website and will include a summary of the dip-sampling as referred to below as well as the outcomes of reviews (see section 3) and responses from the Chief Constable.

Dip-Sampling Arrangements

- 6.6. The PCC will undertake a dip-sample analysis on a quarterly basis of 10% of finalised cases and consider the handling of the cases to check that due process has been applied consistently and fairly. In order to give as wide a view as possible, the cases sampled will be drawn from the different resolution types.

7. Police Appeals Tribunals

Key Reading:

- *Police Act 1996, Schedule 6*
- *The Police Appeals Tribunal Rules 2020*
- *Home Office – Statutory Guidance on Professional Standards, Performance and Integrity in Policing*

- 7.1. An officer may appeal from a misconduct hearing held under the Police (Conduct) Regulations 2020 and the Police (Performance) Regulations 2020.
- 7.2. Appeals related to decisions which have been made under the previous versions of these Regulations will be dealt with under the Police Appeals Tribunal Rules 2012.
- 7.3. The Police Appeals Tribunal Rules 2020 and the Home Office – Statutory Guidance set out clearly the circumstances in which an appeal may be brought and how the appeals should be progressed. The Police and Crime Commissioner has important procedural and administrative functions to discharge to enable the effective and efficient disposal of appeals. In the event of an appeal the Police and Crime Commissioner must ensure that they adhere closely to the legislation and the guidance.

Composition of the Police Appeals Tribunal

- 7.4. The composition of the Police Appeals Tribunal (the Tribunal) is set out in Schedule 6 to the Police Act 1996 (as amended).
- 7.5. Where the appellant is not a senior officer the Tribunal shall consist of:
- 7.5.1. a legally qualified chair taken from the list maintained by the Home Office (as distinct from the legally qualified chairs described in section 5 above);
 - 7.5.2. a serving senior police officer (ie an officer above the rank of Chief Superintendent);
 - 7.5.3. a lay person, who is defined at paragraph 10(aa) of Schedule 6 to the Police Act 1996. It is a person who is not, and never has been, a member of a police force, or special constable, civilian police staff, local policing body or other policing body as per the Act.
- 7.6. The members of the Tribunal should be chosen on a fair and transparent basis by the PCC. The PCC publishes how the system for selecting a Tribunal works at Appendix B. This statement of approach is one that is adopted by the Eastern Region and is overseen by the Member Misconduct Oversight Panel.

- 7.7. Where the appellant is a senior officer, the tribunal shall consist of:
- 7.7.1. a legally qualified chair taken from the list maintained by the Home Office (as distinct from the legally qualified chairs described in section 5 above);
 - 7.7.2. HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services or an Inspector nominated by the Chief Inspector; and
 - 7.7.3. the Permanent Secretary to the Home Office or a Home Office Director nominated by the Permanent Secretary.
- 7.8. In the interests of fairness, an individual should not sit on a Tribunal for any officer if they have already heard the same case at a Misconduct Hearing. It is the responsibility of the PCC to satisfy themselves that the members who are sitting on the Tribunal are sufficiently independent of the matter so as not to give rise to any suggestion of unfairness.
- 7.9. The Regional PCCs have determined that those Independent Members appointed by them, and referred to at section 5 above, will form the body of laypersons from which individuals may be drawn to serve as appropriate upon a Tribunal.

Delegation of Functions regarding Police Appeals Tribunals

- 7.10. The handling of appeals and appointment of members of the Tribunal is provided for in section 8 below and the delegations described therein, and where appointments to the Tribunal may be made by the Chief Executive. All appointments should be documented in writing by an authorised decision-maker and confirmed to the appointee in writing.

8. Delegation of Functions and Decision-Making

- 8.1. Under the Scheme of Governance and Consent, the PCC has delegated the discharge of his statutory functions generally to the Chief Executive to act on his behalf (unless specifically prohibited from doing so). This delegation will include all those functions of a complaints and conduct nature which fall to the PCC, and which thereby enables the Chief Executive to discharge an executive decision-making role in respect of all such complaints and conduct functions.
- 8.2. The Scheme further provides that any member of the PCC's staff who is authorised by the Chief Executive to act, and provided such further delegation and the terms thereof is documented in writing, may act on behalf of the Chief Executive. The delegations by the Chief Executive are set out in the Scheme and are reproduced below including in relation to complaints and misconduct:

- “1 The Head of Commissioning and Governance is authorised to deputise for the Chief Executive as Monitoring Officer as and when required.*
- 2 The Head of Commissioning and Governance is authorised to execute all contracts, agreements and other legal instruments either in writing or by affixing and attesting the Common Seal of the PCC, on behalf of the PCC in accordance with any decisions made by or on behalf of the PCC.*
- 3 The Head of Commissioning and Governance, the Head of Policy and Performance and the Head of Communications and Engagement are authorised to deputise for the Chief Executive in his absence as required.*
- 4 The Correspondence and Support Services Officer, Head of Policy and Performance, and the Legal Clerk are authorised to take all necessary steps to progress and determine reviews arising pursuant to the Police Reform Act 2002, the Policing and Crime Act 2017 and the Police (Complaints and Misconduct) Regulations 2020.*
- 5 The Correspondence and Support Services Officer is authorised to take all necessary actions to progress appeals on behalf of the PCC under the Police Appeals Tribunals Rules 2012 and 2020 whichever is appropriate with the exception of determining Tribunal composition which will be reserved to the Chief Executive (or those authorised to deputise as set out above).”*
- 8.3. The roles described above are set out in the structure chart for the office of the PCC for Suffolk.



Policy for Dealing with Persistent, Abusive or Unreasonable Contact, Correspondence and Complaints

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Introduction

The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for Suffolk is committed to dealing with all contact, correspondence and complaints equitably, effectively and in a timely manner.

The PCC does not seek to limit contact that individuals have with their office, or with the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC). However, there may be occasions when:

- the behaviour of an individual is such that it prevents the PCC's office from dealing effectively with their concern;
- an individual's behaviour causes harassment or distress to the PCC or their staff, and / or
- where dealing with an individual's contact, correspondence and / or complaints has significant resource implications which are not assessed to be proportionate to the nature of the concern itself.

In these cases, contact with the individual complainant may be limited or, in more extreme cases and while protecting their statutory rights, stopped altogether.

Scope

This policy sets out the processes and procedures adopted by the PCC's office in responding to what is considered to be abusive, persistent or unreasonable contact, correspondence and complaints. It is applicable to all types of contact with the PCC's office including telephone calls and emails to, and wider contact with, the office. It does not cover complaints made against the PCC. It also does not cover dealing with potentially vexatious requests under the Freedom of Information Act. The guidance from the Information Commissioner's Office on this (and on dealing with repeat FOI requests) can be found on the Information Commissioner's website at www.ico.org.uk

This policy is supported by national guidance including Independent Office of Police Conduct (IOPC) [Guidance on Managing Unacceptable or Unreasonable Complaint Behaviour](#).

In applying this policy, consideration will be given to the PCC's obligations under the Equality Act 2010. In particular, it will be considered whether the application of the policy may have an unfavourable impact on an individual, whether any impact is proportionate to a legitimate aim and whether reasonable adjustments can be made to allow the individual to engage with the office in an appropriate way.

Definition of abusive, persistent or unreasonable behaviour

It is important to distinguish between people who raise a number of concerns or complaints because they really think things have gone wrong, and people who are abusing channels or opportunities for communication. It must be recognised that customers may sometimes act out of character at times of anxiety or distress and reasonable allowances should be made for this.

Raising legitimate queries or criticisms of a complaints or correspondence procedure as it progresses, for example if agreed timescales are not met, should not lead to someone (or their

issue) being regarded as abusive, persistent or unreasonable. Similarly, the fact that somebody is unhappy with the outcome of a complaint or their issue and seeks to challenge it should not cause him or her to be treated as abusive, persistent or unreasonable.

There are however times when persistent behaviour in pursuing an issue or a complaint becomes unreasonable. This policy gives examples of when this might be the case and sets out a process for dealing with contact that is considered to have become unreasonable.

For the purposes of this policy, **abusive, persistent or unreasonable behaviour** is defined as:

‘manifestly unjustified, inappropriate or improper use of a formal procedure or manifestly unjustified, inappropriate or improper contact’.

In practice, abusive, persistent and unreasonable complainants and correspondents are those who, through the frequency and nature of their contact, impede the proper and proportionate investigation of their own and / or other people’s issues.

In order to assess whether a behaviour or complaint is **abusive, persistent or unreasonable**, the key question is whether the complaint or contact is likely to:

- prevent the PCC’s Office from dealing effectively with the concern;
- cause harassment, disruption or distress to the PCC or their staff members; and / or
- create significant resource implications which are not assessed to be proportionate to the nature of the concern itself, and / or
- deliberately fail to follow the correct procedure and points of contact for the outcome that is being sought.

Features of the types of complaints and / or behaviours that this policy covers are set out below. The list is not exhaustive and is used for illustrative purposes only. It should be noted that one single feature on its own does not necessarily imply that the person or their complaint or behaviour will be considered as being abusive, persistent or unreasonable:

- a) Ongoing persistence with a complaint after being advised that there are insufficient or no grounds for the complaint or that the PCC is not the appropriate authority to deal with it.
- b) Refusing to co-operate with the complaints process or correspondence procedure without good reason whilst still wanting the complaint to be resolved or correspondence to be answered. Such behaviour might include failing or refusing to specify the grounds of a complaint despite offers of assistance; changing the basis of the complaint as inquiries are made; denying statements made at an earlier stage of the investigation, and / or introducing trivial or irrelevant new information during the process and expecting this to be taken into account and commented on.
- c) Refusing to accept the outcome of the complaint procedure after its conclusion, repeatedly making the same or similar complaints without following the correct statutory appeal process.
- d) Adopting false identities and / or forging identity documents in order to submit multiple requests and / or complaints.
- e) Raising large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions and insisting that they are each responded to in full.
- f) Actions that are obsessive, persistent, prolific, repetitious and / or otherwise unreasonable.

- g) Harassing, verbally abusing or otherwise seeking to intimidate staff dealing with their complaint or correspondence, by using foul or inappropriate language, by the use of threatening, offensive or discriminatory language and / or making groundless complaints, inflammatory remarks and / or unsubstantiated allegations about those staff (the Chief Executive makes the final decision on whether a complaint is groundless).
- h) Making an unreasonable number of contacts with the PCC's Office, by any means, in relation to a specific complaint or correspondence including through insistence on immediate responses to numerous and / or frequent letters, faxes, telephone calls or emails, possibly sent to a multitude of staff.
- i) Requesting or demanding that a response be provided in a timeframe which is not compliant with the policies of the PCC's Office, is unfairly advantageous compared to the service provided to others and/or is not justified or supported by any special circumstances.
- j) Contacting different people in the same organisation about the same issue to try to secure a different outcome
- k) Sending such a high volume of information to the PCC's staff that it places an unreasonable burden on them and impedes their ability to carry out their duties effectively.
- l) Persistent and inappropriate use of statutory processes or procedures, or unreasonably pursuing multiple lines of enquiry regarding the same issue. For example, making a complaint to the PCC, when the same complaint has been made against Suffolk Police but not been upheld. In this case, the proper escalation route is the IOPC.
- m) Ongoing behaviour which suggests a campaign against the PCC, their staff or an individual member of staff prompted by the individual's personal views on a particular issue and / or prompted by personal animosity.

Dealing with abusive, persistent or unreasonable contacts, correspondence and complaints

The PCC's office is committed to ensuring that all contacts, correspondence and complaints made by the public are dealt with effectively, promptly and equitably.

The PCC is committed to their obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and aims to make sure that the complaints and correspondence systems are accessible to all and, where appropriate, will make reasonable adjustments to help ensure accessibility. However, even where reasonable adjustments are made there may still be occasions where it is necessary to put in place contact strategies to manage abusive, persistent or unreasonable behaviour. Where this is the case consideration will be given to whether any further reasonable adjustments can be made.

Staff should not endure or tolerate violent, threatening or abusive behaviour. The safety and wellbeing of staff should always be protected. If at the point of managing a contact, correspondence or complaint, the staff member considers that it is abusive, persistent or unreasonable then the following processes will apply:

Verbal contact

Staff are not expected to tolerate verbal abuse or excessive volumes of contact either over the telephone or face-to-face. If an individual is abusive or excessively persistent either over the telephone or face-to-face, staff should advise them that they are not prepared to continue with the call or appointment if the abuse continues.

If the individual continues to be abusive or to make repeated telephone calls to the office without giving staff adequate opportunity to respond to their concerns, staff should state “I am ending this call” and put the telephone down. If an individual is abusive during an interview or makes repeated visits to the office, demanding to be seen by staff after having been warned that this is not acceptable then the interview should be terminated and the individual asked to leave.

If an individual continues to be persistent and / or abusive on the telephone and / or in person, staff should not accept or continue with the call or interview once the caller is identified and should notify the Strategic Head of Performance and Resources (in the case of a complainant) or the Strategic Head of Policy and Public Engagement (in the case of a correspondent), so that consideration can be given to managing the individual’s contact with the office in line with this policy.

Written contact

Staff do not have to tolerate abusive and / or excessively voluminous emails, letter or faxes when processing complaints or enquiries, or in general. Such contact can be particularly frustrating for the recipient, can be resource intensive and at times can give cause for distress.

If a staff member receives what they consider to be abusive and / or excessively voluminous written communications from an individual, they should notify the Chief Executive so that consideration can be given to managing the individual’s contact with the office in line with this policy.

Applying the policy

If a member of staff feels that contact is persistent or abusive, and / or the individual is refusing to follow the correct procedures which have been outlined, they, or another member of staff, will refer to the Chief Executive and seek agreement to inform the individual that this behaviour is considered unacceptable and explain why this is causing concern. They will ask the individual to change their behaviour and will advise that further correspondence on the same topic / issue will render the individual subject to restrictions under this policy. Wherever possible, they should be provided with a copy of this policy. They will also be notified of the possible actions that may be taken if the behaviour does not change.

If the behaviour continues, the appropriate Chief Executive will then decide whether to limit contact from the individual and to what extent. Any restriction that is imposed on contact with PCC’s office will be appropriate, proportionate and subject to review. The restrictions imposed will also be in line with the IOPC’s [Guidance on managing unacceptable and unreasonable complainant behaviour](#). It must be kept in mind that, where the investigation of legitimate correspondence or a genuine complaint is ongoing, there will need to be some continuing contact with the complainant or correspondent.

Before deciding whether the policy should be applied and what action to take, the relevant officer should satisfy themselves that:

- The original complaint or correspondence is being, or has been, properly investigated and responded to;
- Any decision reached in this regard is / was an appropriate one;
- Communications with the individual have hitherto been adequate and appropriate;
- The complainant or correspondent is not raising a substantially new matter, or providing additional evidence in relation to an ongoing matter, and

- The complainant continues to have a way to exercise their statutory right to complain about issues where the PCC is the appropriate authority.

Any restrictions applied should offer a proportionate and appropriate response to the particular issues that the complainant or correspondent brings. The kinds of restrictions which may be imposed are:

- (i) Limiting contact to a specific mailbox or one named member of staff
- (ii) Placing time limits on telephone conversations and meetings
- (iii) Restricting the number of telephone calls or visits that will be taken from the individual each day / week
- (iv) Only accepting email or written correspondence from the individual
- (v) Only accepting telephone contact through an agreed third party e.g. solicitor / advocate / councillor or friend acting on behalf of the individual
- (vi) Offering to facilitate mediation between the complainant / correspondent and the relevant member(s) of staff and / or the Commissioner
- (vii) Indicating that no further correspondence will be responded to unless substantially new matters are raised. Such information will be read and placed on file but no further action will be taken in response to it
- (viii) Requiring any personal contact to take place in the presence of a witness
- (ix) Deleting any abusive posts, tweets or other communication submitted via social media after being recorded. Any further abuse of such forms of communication may result in the individual's social media accounts being blocked.
- (x) Blocking the individual's e-mail address so that emails from this address are not received by the PCC or their staff. This should only be done in extreme cases after all other avenues have been exhausted.

Where the decision is taken to apply such restrictions, the individual will be written to, detailing the reasons for the decision; what action the PCC's Office is taking, and when the decision / restriction(s) will be reviewed or lifted. This decision will be shared with all staff in the office, all of whom will be empowered to deal with that individual as determined by the Chief Executive. The decision may be amended at a later date, and further restrictions applied, if the individual continues to behave in a way which is unacceptable. Equally, restrictions will be lifted or eased if behaviour improves.

Where the behaviour is so extreme that it threatens the immediate safety and welfare of staff and / or their families, or causes the recipient of the behaviour to feel threatened or alarmed, the PCC's staff may consider other options, for example reporting the matter to the police or taking legal action. Where material, comments or actions are grossly offensive or threatening and may be construed as an offence under the Public Order Act 1986, the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 or the Malicious Communications Act 1998, the PCC may involve the police or institute legal proceedings. In such cases, the PCC's office may not give the individual prior warning of that action and reserves the right to share any relevant communication with the police and / or to suspend all contact with the complainant / correspondent whilst legal advice is sought.

If the employee subject to abusive, persistent or unreasonable contact, correspondence or complaints is the Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer, or where there is a conflict of interest for the Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer (for example, because the individual is known to them personally, or they have already been involved in dealing with them), the application of the policy will be considered and, if necessary, applied by the PCC, , who will nominate a representative to keep the application of this policy under review.

Records will be retained by PCC's Office of all cases assessed to be abusive, persistent or unreasonable, including the action that has been taken in relation to these cases and the review / end dates.

Right of appeal

If the behaviour is related to a complaint, the complainant has the right to appeal to the IOPC (for contact details, please see [here](#)) and will be informed of this.

If the behaviour relates to a complaint review which has been finalised, there is no provision within the statutory police complaints process to further these reviews, and no means exist within the complaints process whereby the outcomes may be challenged further. In law the decision of this office is as 'Functus Officio' which means that its decisions can only be overturned by a Judicial Review. In such instances the complainant will be informed of this.

New issues

Even where an individual may have behaved in a manner that is abusive, persistent or unreasonable in the past, it must not be assumed that any future contact from them will also be unreasonable. Any new issues or complaints raised by individuals managed under this policy will be treated as new and reviewed on their individual merits. Any imposed restrictions will not apply to substantially new matters, although the individual may be reminded not to repeat behaviours which led to those restrictions.

Review process

The status of an individual judged to be abusive, persistent or unreasonable will be reviewed by the Chief Executive no less than every six months. The individual will be informed of the result of this review, and if the decision to apply this policy to them has changed, been extended or lifted. Where restrictions are lifted, immediate consideration will be given to re-introducing them should the behaviour which led to the original restrictions return.

Should the restrictions be issued with a time limit, the restrictions are lifted at the end of the period stated, unless a review determines otherwise, in which case the individual will be informed.

Monitoring and review of this policy

This policy will be reviewed again in two years' time, or sooner if required by changes in legislation, regulations or best practice.