



ACCOUNTABILITY AND GOVERNANCE BOARD

June 2026

Professional Standards Department and Vetting

Presented by: T/DCC MATTINSON

Cover Report

1. Police and Crime Plan

1.1 Building trust and confidence amongst the people and communities that West Midlands Police (WMP) serves is a clear focus in the Police and Crime Plan 2025-29. It details the importance to consistently meet the public's expectations, ensuring that all police officers and staff comply with the highest standards of conduct, ethics, integrity and professionalism. This report outlines the WMP service delivery in relation to the complaints process that is available to the public, the annual integrity vetting review procedure for all employees, how misconduct is addressed and what early prevention and intervention measures are available to improve behaviours.

2. Achievements and Challenges:

2.1 Police Complaints Process

2.1.1 West Midlands Police encourage members of the public to submit their dissatisfaction via the Single Online Home form on the Force Internet which enables submissions to be triaged in a timely manner by the Force Contact Digi Team who ensure the complaint is either forwarded to be resolved locally or submitted into the Professional Standards Department (PSD) for handling.

2.1.2 Due to the volume of submissions this process ensures an efficient and fair service. If a person is unable to submit via the form, as they require reasonable adjustments, the complainant will be given access to a complaint handler in PSD. Anyone unhappy with local handling will have their complaint sent into PSD, with the complainant contacted and the

complaint handled under Schedule 3, which provides a right of review to the Relevant Review Body. This process will also apply to anyone attending a local police station or submitting a complaint in writing or via the telephone to a police officer or department.

2.1.3 Complaints that are not suitable for local handling are automatically submitted to PSD by the Force Contact Digi Team and considered by a Complaint Supervisor. This supervisor ensures legislation is complied with and if required, either refers the case to the Independent Office of Police Conduct (IOPC) or passes it to the Investigation Team.

2.1.4 The complainant is then contacted and their complaint progressed to determine if the service was acceptable or, in relation to Special Procedure complaints, a decision is made regarding whether there is a case to answer. Both will come with a right of review either to the OPCC or the IOPC.

2.1.5 The change to the national complaint form, Single Online Home has significantly increased complaint submissions which is an ongoing challenge between volume verses resource.

2.1.6 Social media and events nationally have directly increased complaint submissions. A new approach to public complaints has been identified, where complainants are now seeking to complain via social media campaigns, providing a proforma for people to complain and submit to Force. This approach has had a detrimental effect on IT within the organisation, congesting email accounts. This is a process that was unknown when complaint legislation was amended in 2020.

2.1.7 The number of DSI referrals has increased for 25/26 in comparison to 24/25 financial year from 193 in 24/25 to 259 in 25/26. This has increased the workload of the NSP Team. Upheld reviews have reduced even though the volume of complaint submissions has increased.

2.1.8 Police and Crime Plan KPIs and baselines:

- Reduce complaint investigation times (The average number of working days taken to investigate complaints against WMP) – schedule 3 complaints (baseline = 126 days average).

Quarter 4 2025/26 latest performance figures: 107 days average

- Reduce complaint investigation times (The average number of working days taken to investigate complaints against WMP) – non-schedule 3 complaints (baseline = 29 days average)

Quarter 4 2025/26 latest performance figures: 19 days average

2.1.9 Please see further detail on complaint numbers in the background report.

2.2 Annual Integrity Vetting Review and Vetting

2.2.1 Vetting for police officers and staff is subject to a number of checks including PNC and PND, finances, open source, associations and out of force or overseas checks, where applicable. Where the officers are transitioning from another force, their PSD/CCU history is obtained, accompanied with an appraisal from their supervisor. Internally, employees have a supervisor appraisal when their vetting is renewed. Upgrades of vetting levels are completed with a stronger emphasis on finances to ensure the risk of coercion is low. This operates under the guidance of the Vetting APP.

2.2.2 The annual integrity and vetting review is completed via our personnel system, Oracle, which means performance and compliance can be tracked as well as a record kept of previous completions. This is launched annually in September.

2.2.3 Vetting has made huge steps with delivering the changes required by the Vetting APP. Under the Police (Vetting) Regulations 2025, the review and removal of vetting is now routine where applicable, and supports PSD in managing risk across the force. Our process for Police Staff vetting removal has been recognised as best practice.

2.2.4 Other forces are also beginning vetting regulation work, but WMP have been be one of the first forces to go through the entire process from start to finish. Vetting faces challenges with the growth of life online and how we conduct social media checks. This needs to be broader and standardised.

2.3 Performance and Misconduct

2.3.1 Officer performance and misconduct is managed through the police regulations (Police Performance, Police Conduct, Police Complaints and Misconduct) and supported by the associated statutory guidance (Home Office Guidance, IOPC Guidance).

Staff performance and Misconduct is managed through policy (Capability & Disciplinary) and supported by the Police Staff Council Handbook.

2.3.2 Both structures provide a focus on dealing with matters effectively utilising where appropriate, the opportunity to support, reflect, develop, and learn, in order to improve standards and prevent misconduct. Both structures also provide formal outcomes and sanctions which include dismissal if necessary.

2.3.3 PSD undertake approximately 600 misconduct assessment annually, with approximately 220 of these resulting in an investigation. All professional standards staff receive appropriate training and support through the college of Policing and/or external training providers (Sancus) to progress efficient and thorough investigations. The department have a PIP 2, PIP 3 and PIP4 resource capability, including reactive investigation teams, a counter corruption intelligence cell, an operations team and in house surveillance capability. The department routinely undertakes swift enforcement action for disciplinary cases involving the service of notices and posting restrictions or suspension, and for criminal cases involving arrests, searches and seizure.

2.4 Early Intervention

2.4.1 PSD's Prevention portfolio lead on early identification and interventions to prevent and deter misconduct and poor performance utilising a variety of engagement platforms, including training, online discussions and forums. There are local department points of contact such as Standards Managers and Standards Ambassadors to reinforce appropriate standards in the workplace. The Integrity Unit also lead on risk mitigation to ensure that staff at risk through notifiable associations or through service confidence concerns, are supported and deployed appropriately to reduce the risk to the individual and the organisation.

2.4.2 This prevention strategy enhances the department's ability to reach all areas of the organisation, and we also ensure the engagement is underpinned by PSD data to focus any relevant learning on the trends, themes and concerns relevant to WMP.

2.4.3 Future challenges include societal issues such as social media use and cost of living, offers new and younger WMP employees greater level of vulnerabilities which may impact upon future misconduct cases.

3. Actions undertaken:

3.1 Police Complaints Process

3.1.1 The PSD Complaints and Service Recovery Team continues to work with a high volume of submissions but handles in the region of 250 complaints at any one time. The Team are working faster than the last calendar year, even though complaint numbers have increased. The number of review submissions is small and the amount upheld is minimal in comparison to the amount of complaints handled.

3.1.2 In terms of specific action taken, the Investigation Team has altered their working practises, it is now divided into two, creating a Special Procedures and Non Special Procedures teams. This approach has aided better data capture and quality on the national Complaints computer system, Centurion, reduced the number of outstanding upheld review investigations, increased timeliness and reduced the number of cases exceeding twelve months.

3.2 Annual Integrity Vetting Review and Vetting

3.2.1 Demand continues to increase year on year, not only with the uplift in staffing for WMP but with vetting renewals and additional work required as a result of the new Vetting APP. Vetting has seen an uplift in staff, which remains under review, to safeguard the force in the future as well as incoming recruitment demand which can outweigh resource.

3.2.2 As the risk appetite for vetting is low there are increased failure rates which can impact on disproportionality as well as impact on recruitment targets and costs. In terms of specific action taken, there exists robust system of review in place, including dip sampling and reviews through SEG and IAG, to ensure fair and balanced decision-making.

3.3 Performance and Misconduct

3.3.1 Recent changes to legislation for performance and misconduct, along with the implementation of the vetting regulations have presented a challenge for the department to upskill, this has been coupled with an officer uplift and associated increase for Regulation 13 cases. Early in 2026 there was a level of significant disruption to the availability of chairs for disciplinary proceedings, which had an unforeseen temporary impact on delivery.

3.3.2 In terms of specific action taken, PSD have focused on two key areas of business, namely investing in training staff and securing highly skilled external chairs for proceedings. Simultaneously, a change to the Regulation 13 procedure has ensured robust management of increased numbers, and has enabled PSD to maintain pace with the number of all proceedings being brought.

3.4 Early Intervention

3.4.1 PSD ensure the standards of behaviour are reinforced through Op Excellence training for Sergeants and Inspectors. Mandated CPD events for all training days and inputs are delivered to probationers during their first two years. To support the wider workforce, PSD deliver monthly updates and training to Standards Managers and quarterly inputs for the 150 Standards Ambassadors, that span a variety of roles and ranks.

3.4.2 The “On The Panel” monthly online articles in Newsbeat is one of the most read articles. These raise awareness and provides learning in relation to real life misconduct cases, which invites the readers to understand the standards that have been breached, and what the outcome should be.

4. Future work:

4.1 Police Complaints Process:

4.1.1 WMP PSD are currently supporting the Metropolitan Police with revisiting the Single Online Home process and assisting with options in relation to signposting members of the public to assist reduce the number of submissions that are not complaints but members of the public accessing the form for other reasons.

4.1.2 PSD currently employ a robot that inputs complaint data. The intention is that the robot will be adapted to read submissions, enter more information and assist with complaint allocation. It is also hoped Artificial Intelligence (AI) will be used to assist the writing of 'otherwise than investigation letters' to aid timeliness and efficiency.

4.1.3 WMP are currently liaising with Merseyside Police and the IOPC, both of whom are using AI to aid complaint handling. By working with these organisations who are already successfully utilising AI technology, WMP will be able to explore opportunities for its own PSD AI journey, whilst building understanding of any risks and challenges.

4.2 Annual Integrity Vetting Review

4.2.1 With the support of the NPCC, vetting is currently looking for external providers to provide a technological response to this, which will test standardising and broadening social media checks for vetting applicants. This is currently being assessed for the DCC change board, but it is anticipated that it will significantly improve the quality of vetting checks in this changing area of work and also improve risk assessments being completed on existing employees for aftercare vetting and enhanced vetting.

4.2.2 There are some changes to the APP which remain in progress, such as an extra review where staff members are working with the vulnerable individuals directly. The vetting team is currently reviewing the impact of this and how it can be addressed.

4.3 Poor Performance and Misconduct

4.3.1 PSD have developed an in house QATT process which focusses on opportunities to improve the quality and efficiency of investigations. PSD are developing the approach to people intelligence elevating the existing service confidence structures to enable a local board with escalation routes.

4.4 Early Intervention

4.4.1 Future work will focus on introducing debriefs. This will assist with improving understanding the reasons why employees, breach the Standards of Professional Behaviour. This will support a more focused approach to preventative work.

ANNEX ONE

Background Report

AX.1 Complaints – system must be accessible, fair, efficient and transparent

AX1.1 What are the national and local themes in regard to complaints and conduct

Nationally, themes with regards to complaints and conduct mirror the local picture which is outlined below.

AX.1.2 Complaints:

The majority of complaints are in relation to dissatisfaction with the service provided (Delivery of duties and service in below table) such as being unhappy with the outcome of an investigation; lack of updates; unhappy with the progress of an investigation.

Below are the total allegations split by allegation category made by members of the public in the 2025/26 financial year.

Allegation Category	Count
Delivery of duties and service	3401
Police powers, policies and procedures	1408
Individual behaviours	403
Discreditable conduct	122
Handling of or damage to property/premises	105
Access and/or disclosure of information	103
Other	91
Discriminatory behaviour	82
Use of police vehicles	39
Abuse of position/corruption	30
Sexual conduct	4
Grand Total	5788

AX.1.3 National/Local Themes for Misconduct

Conduct matters are internal matters of alleged breaches of standards of professional behaviour, these do not necessarily involve a member of the public (but can do), each allegation within a misconduct matter has the breach type which demonstrates the alleged breach of the standards of professional behaviour.

Below are the allegation categories and breach types that have been logged in the 2025/26 period.

Allegation Category	Count
Discreditable conduct	328
Access and/or disclosure of information	128
Other	101
Individual behaviours	56
Police powers, policies and procedures	52
Sexual conduct	45
Delivery of duties and service	36
Discriminatory behaviour	25
Use of police vehicles	11
Abuse of position/corruption	7
Grand Total	789

Breach Type	Count
09 Discreditable Conduct	378
07 Confidentiality	100
02 Authority, Respect and Courtesy	91
06 Duties and Responsibilities	75
01 Honesty and Integrity	71
05 Orders and Instructions	30
04 Use of Force	20
03 Equality and Diversity	11
Not Stated	8
08 Fitness for Duty	3
10 Challenging and Reporting Improper Conduct	2
Grand Total	789

AX.1.4 How Does PSD Learn From Complaints, And How Is Learning Disseminated Across The Force?

PSD learns from complaints in several ways. One is through review and analysis of common themes of dissatisfaction where once identified, appropriate learning and development is put in place. An example of this is the high number of complaints expressing dissatisfaction with investigations, which led to PSD supporting work carried out via Operation Vanguard – the force response to improving investigations.

In addition, the this, the Prevention and Intervention Team (part of the Professional Standards Department) also carry out regular inputs to WMP staff stressing the importance of upholding the standards of professional behaviour such as the Op Excellence inputs to officers on promotion and new recruits. The content of these inputs is informed by the identified themes as well as national themes.

This team also tracks delivery of all practice requiring improvement for individual officers and staff across the force to ensure learning completion. They also direct any identified organisational learning to the appropriate governance meeting to resolve. They monitor progression of this learning, which is recorded on the Centurion database (used by the Professional Standards department) to update and file when completed. This includes learning identified from IOPC investigation.

AX.1.5 Update on Prevention and Intervention work

PSD follows four Prevention Strands:

1. Service Confidence
2. Engagement
3. Learning
4. Vulnerability

Our approach to Service Confidence uses a scoring system which highlights staff with a developing pattern of behaviour over all conduct, complaints, MIs as well as considering broader information of overtime, RTC data, grievance and risk management measures. Some of these employees have ongoing matters so it can feed investigative activity, so the investigating officers understand the full picture of individuals when resolving conduct matters. Further to this it can prevent matters proceeding to conduct by notifying LPAs and departments early so they can intervene and offer learning opportunities.

PSD Prevent takes many approaches to engagement to encourage reporting of matters. All inputs to employees include what is required to be reported and why it is important. There is also the PSD Passport which is a go to guide available to everyone 24/7 with explanation on requirements to report and explain the process. Further to this we deliver to all student officers and new promoted officers, so they understand their requirements both themselves and of those that they line manage to ensure the right things are being reported in PSD.

RPRP and Organisational Learning sit under the prevention portfolio and this contributes to investigative activity by ensuring RPRP at the end of investigations is delivered in both a timely and effective manner. The team have become experts in the subject and provide line management guidance to ensure the intervention prevents any further occurrences in the future. Organisational learning is tracked through Centurion ensuring at the end of investigations and complaints any changes required are actioned to improve the service offered to the public.

AX.1.6 What is the strategy to ensure that the Code of Ethics is upheld?

In 2024, the organisation implemented the revisions to the Code of Ethics which streamlined the foundational framework by reducing the number of core principles from nine down to three

– Public Service; Courage; Respect and Empathy. To ensure the new Code of Ethics is embedded across the organisation, a mandatory training programme was subsequently rolled out. As of the latest reporting period, the overall completion rate for this mandatory training stands at 85%.

In relation specifically to decision making within PSD to ensure the Code of Ethics is upheld, we adhere to the statutory guidance on Professional Standards, Performance and Integrity in policing. This guidance mandates that the Code of Ethics is considered alongside the provisions of the statutory guidance in all decision making.

AX.1.7 Numbers of complaints recorded and timeliness

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction made by a member of the public against the police service, police staff or a police officer. This can be made by any member of the public who has had an interaction with the police or is a direct witness to any action made by the police service

In the 2025/26 financial year, 4002 complaints have been logged, the timeliness for logging complaints (between the date a complaint is received and the date a complaint is logged) is 2.1 working days which is one of the fastest across all police forces in the United Kingdom.

AX.1.8 Numbers of complaints dealt with outside of schedule 3, and timeliness

Complaints that are dealt with outside of schedule 3 are complaints that are handled informally such a phone call/email resolution rather than under the police complaints regulations 2020.

2995 complaints/3329 allegations have been dealt with outside Schedule 3 in 2025/26 where the average timeliness to deal with allegations outside of schedule 3 (from date complaint logged to date allegation finalised) is 20.4 working days average through 2025/26. With quarter 4, the latest performance period, averaging at 19 days showing consistency.

1075 complaints/2856 allegations have been finalised under Schedule 3 in 2025/26 where the average timeliness to finalise allegations under schedule 3 (from date complaint logged to date allegation finalised) is 156.3 working days average through 2025/26. With quarter 4, the

latest performance period, averaging at 107 days showing improvement and bringing performance under baseline.

AX.2 Update on the work to ensure annual integrity health checks for all personnel and regular vetting for all officers and staff, including those transiting from other forces

This is covered in the main report.

AX.3 Effective police misconduct processes

AX.3.1 Themes of misconduct

This is covered in AX.1.3

AX.3.2 Number of meetings and hearings with outcomes

Misconduct proceedings are disciplinary processes that occur when an officer or member of staff is being investigated for a potential breach of the standards of professional behaviour. Below is a breakdown of police officer & police staff proceedings with outcomes, for the most recent financial year.

12 Police Officer Hearings have taken place, with outcomes:

Would Have Been Dismissed	6
Dismissal	3
Reduction in Rank	1
Final Written Warning	1
No Action	1
Grand Total	12

Note. The “no action” outcome was in relation to a hearing that was proven, but officer had already left and finding was misconduct only so no official outcome could be given.

7 Police Officer Meetings have taken place with outcomes:

Written Warning	5
Final Written Warning	1
Refer to AA for RPRP	1
Grand Total	7

Note. The RPRP outcome was for meeting that was not proven for misconduct.

AX.3.3 Number of accelerated hearings, with outcomes

31 Police Officer Accelerated Hearings have taken place, with outcomes:

Would Have Been Dismissed	20
Dismissal	6
Final Written Warning	4
Reduction in Rank	1
Grand Total	31

15 Staff Proceedings have taken place (2 staff meetings, 13 staff hearings)

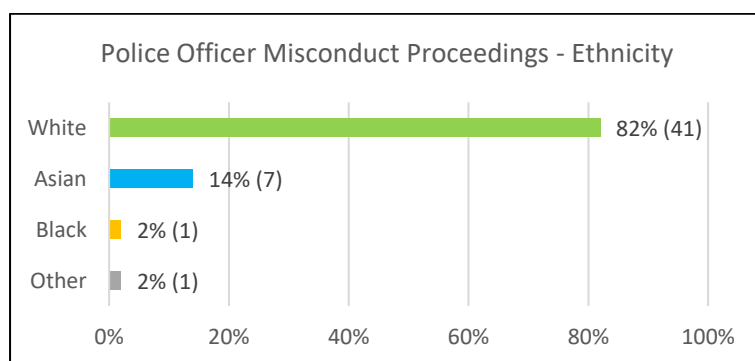
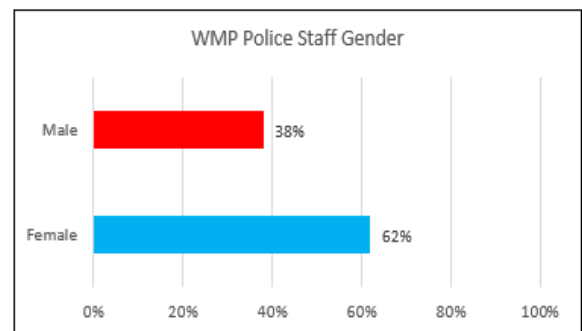
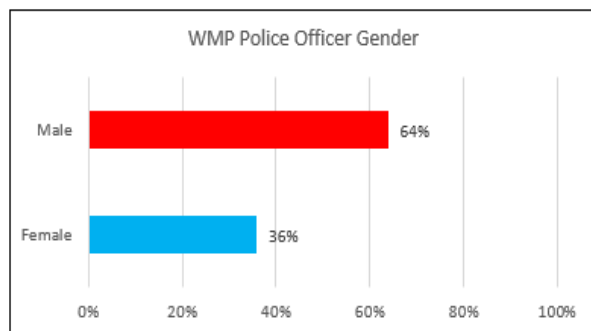
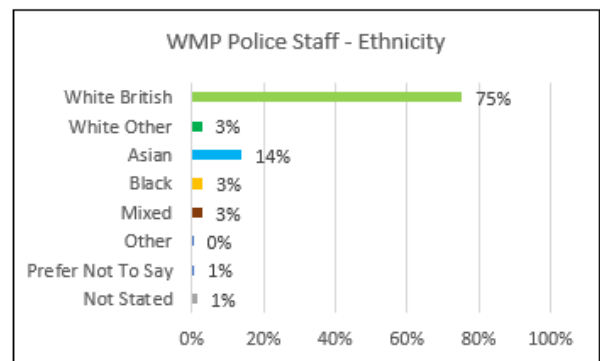
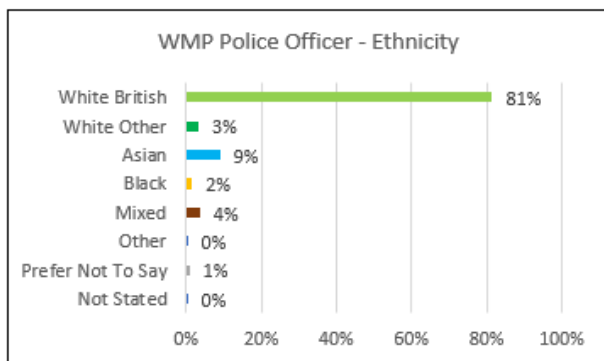
Dismiss Without Notice if Gross Misconduct	10
Would Have Been Dismissed	3
Final Written Warning	2
Grand Total	15

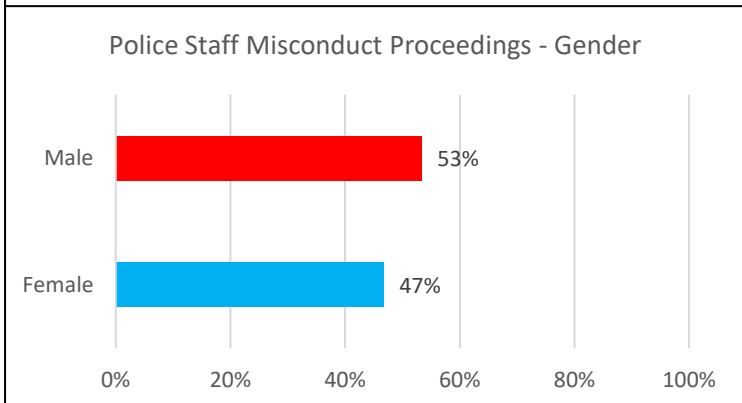
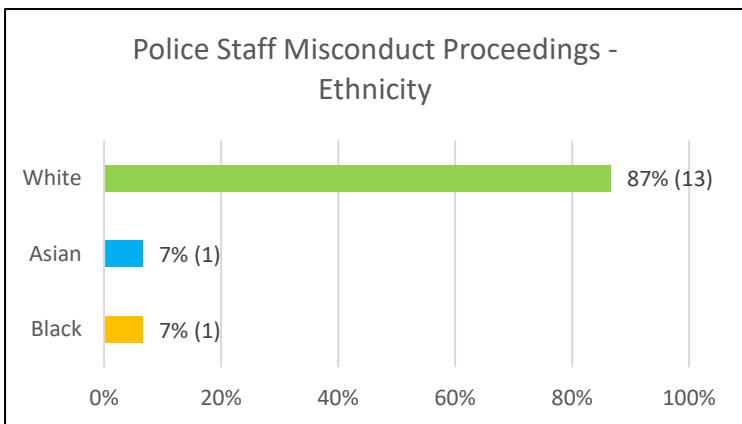
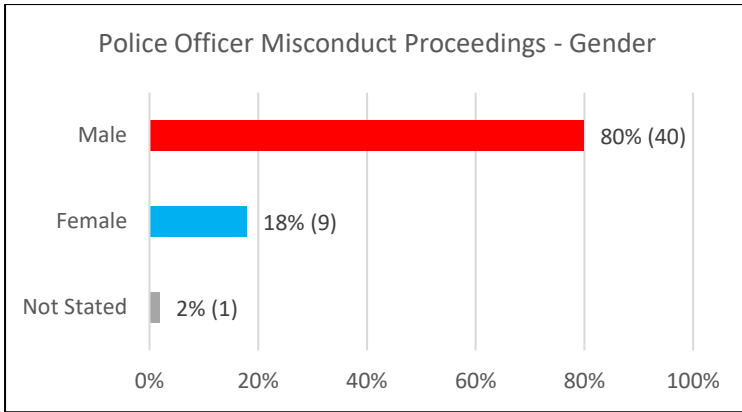
AX.3.4 Diversity analysis of staff facing misconduct processes

Demographic data, or more specifically data in relation to the gender and ethnicity of the individual is logged and analysed for review at a quarterly Stakeholder Engagement Meeting with staff associations, to identify current disproportionality. This data is also shared with the Professional Standards Independent Advisory Group (IAG).

Context is given with regards to the circumstances that gave rise to the proceedings that may present disparity between breach, protected characteristics and outcome. Unfortunately, there is limited data for other protected characteristics as per 2010 Equality Act where officers and staff exercise their right not to disclose such information.

The first four graphs are the demographic make-up of the force, and the next four graphs are the demographic data of WMP officers and staff who have gone through a proceeding for the 2025/26 financial year.





AX.3.5 Number of appeals, with outcomes

After proceedings, an officer or staff has the right to request an appeal to review the outcome of the proceeding that they were in, an appeal can lead to either an upheld outcome (the appeal was accepted so the original proceeding outcome must be changed) or not upheld (the appeal was not accepted so the original proceeding outcome remains the same).

For the 2025/26 financial year, 2 appeal hearings have taken place, one was for a staff hearing where the appeal was not upheld so the original outcome remains (PCSO was dismissed without notice), the second was for a police officer meeting where the appeal was not upheld so the original outcome remains (Inspector received written warning).

ANNEX TWO

Table 1. Showing the individual commitments from the Police and Crime Plan 2025-2029 relating to PSD that are the responsibility of West Midlands Police to deliver. RAG ratings as assigned through internal OPCC processes.

Reference	Individual Commitment	Q3 25/26 Deliverable Rating
181	<i>Annual integrity health checks for all personnel and regular vetting for all officers and staff, including those transitioning from other forces.</i>	Green
184	<i>Poor performance and misconduct must be managed effectively through formal structures, with support for improvement, if appropriate, but dismissal if necessary</i>	Red
187	<i>Strategy in place to ensure and improve early intervention and identification of misconduct, efficient and thorough investigations and swift enforcement action</i>	Green
188	<i>A police complaint process available to members of the public, which is accessible, fair, efficient and transparent.</i>	Amber

NB.

- **184 is RAG rated as RED by OPCC due to currently unresolvable issues regarding the PAT process**
- **188 is RAG rated as AMBER by OPCC as there were concerns that PSD were not able to track learning identified by the OPCC from their reviews. This has been addressed as the learning recommendations are now recorded in centurion and tracked for completion.**

Table 2. Showing the RAG rating definitions used in table 1 above

RAG Rating Key
On track – can be delivered by lead
Not on track – requires support from SMT lead to resolve
Not on track – requires support from wider SMT to resolve

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