Justice Committee

Post-legislative scrutiny of the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012

Written submission from Anonymous 1

Members of the Justice Committee and Justice Sub-Committee on Policing have taken a prominent role in the scrutiny of concerns in other cases regarding the conduct of PSOS, PSD & CCU units and I believe may share my frustrations in Police Scotland’s implementation of its complaints handling process.

Public confidence in the police is being undermined on a regular basis by articles in the press about the complaints process.

Complaints can be on-going for many years without being brought to a conclusion by the Professional Standards Department (PSD) within Police Scotland. Part of the challenge in many cases is the delay in any decision about whether there will be any charges brought. The COPFS can often take over a year to consider a report from Police Scotland, PIRC, and other agencies. This is unacceptable. The PSD, PIRC and COPFS investigation process is not transparent or efficient.

The length of time taken to undertake and conclude an investigation, as well as the lack of information provided to those who are the subject of a complaint, can cause considerable stress and can also have a physical impact.

Taking many years to conclude an investigation can mean that those who are the subject of a complaint can be eligible to retire before the investigation is completed. For those who wish their innocence to be proven, this means either making a decision to leave the organisation without the investigation being completed or to remain and await the outcome of the investigation.

Whilst under criminal investigation the accused is powerless to respond to any public comments made about them by the police service.

The system can leave those who are the subject of a complaint, as well as the victim, desperate for closure and frustrated and disappointed in a system that they should be able to trust.

I would welcome the Committee considering the issues I have raised in my submission and ways in which the complaints system can be improved to ensure that police officers, victims, and complainers are not let down by processes that are supposed to offer justice.

12 June 2018