

Alyn Smith MSP
Convener
Criminal Justice Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

Via email to Committee Clerk criminaljustice.committee@parliament.scot

16 July 2026

Dear Convener

Many congratulations on being elected Convener of the Criminal Justice Committee.

The role of the Police Investigations and Review Commissioner (PIRC) is to independently investigate serious incidents involving the police and to review how policing bodies handle complaints from members of the public.

I am looking forward to engaging with you and members of the Committee during this session. I will welcome the opportunity to discuss how PIRC provides independent oversight of policing in Scotland, holds policing bodies to account, and supports learning and improvement in the service delivered to the public.

In the meantime, it may be of interest to the Committee that PIRC will today publish Child Friendly Complaint Handling Guidance to Policing Bodies in Scotland. The guidance requires policing bodies to ensure that complaints processes are suitably accessible to those under 18, that children's views are taken into consideration, and that children's best interests are a primary consideration.

Publication of the guidance today marks the second anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) being incorporated in Scottish domestic law via the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024 (the 2024 Act).

The 2024 Act makes it unlawful for Scottish public bodies – including policing bodies and PIRC – to act, or fail to act, in a way which is incompatible with the UNCRC requirements.

The new Child Friendly Complaint Handling Guidance now forms part of the statutory guidance that PIRC issues to policing bodies under section 45 of the Police, Public Order and Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2006 on how complaints from members of the public should be handled.

The guidance has been developed in consultation with policing bodies and other stakeholders and draws on work previously carried out by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman, in consultation with children and those who work with them.

The guidance will be available on our website (www.pirc.scot) from today.

Where a member of the public is dissatisfied with how the police have handled their complaint, they can apply to PIRC for a Complaint Handling Review. As well as guidance for policing bodies, PIRC has also developed child friendly complaint handling guidance for our own staff – this will be followed when carrying out a Complaint Handling Review involving a child, or when dealing with any complaints received about PIRC itself.

We have also undertaken a range of other activity to consider how we can safeguard children's rights across all PIRC's functions. That work will remain ongoing as we continue to develop and improve the service provided by PIRC. I look forward to keeping you informed of our progress.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Laura Paton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Laura Paton
Police Investigations and Review Commissioner