

Welcome to our monthly newsletter which provides updates about the work of the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC). The newsletter is for complaint handlers in forces and local policing bodies (LPBs).

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## Complaints workshops for PSDs and model 2/3 LPBs

Thank you to those who joined us for the first two workshops. If you would like to attend a workshop and have not yet booked a place, please email [oversight@policeconduct.gov.uk](mailto:oversight@policeconduct.gov.uk) as soon as possible. These workshops are an opportunity for complaints handlers to discuss and explore 'no further action' decisions and the relevant review body (RRB) test. We ask that you nominate up to two attendees from your force.

## Logging and recording complaints

We are aware that forces have adopted different practices for logging and recording complaints, which is having an impact on the number of allegations being recorded in the system. Please be assured that we expected to see a rise in recorded allegations due the legislative changes launched in 2020 and this should not automatically be perceived in a negative light. You can find guidance on logging, recording and splitting complaints in the [IOPC guidance on data capture](#) and [Focus issue 12](#).

## 12-month letters

Please continue to send your 12-month letters and subsequent 6-month updates to [oversight@policeconduct.gov.uk](mailto:oversight@policeconduct.gov.uk). In recent months we saw an increase in the number of 12-month notifications being sent much later than the 12-month point. To help us maintain accurate reporting, could you please send us notifications as close as possible to the date the case reaches 12 months. We also ask that they are not submitted more than three weeks early.

Since February 2021, we have recorded the 12-month letters we receive from police forces and monitored the information provided around timeliness of investigations. The Oversight team conducts analysis of our 12-month letter database every quarter to identify possible patterns and trends or good practice we can share. You can read our latest analysis, which is attached to this newsletter. We hope it is useful to you. If you have any feedback about the analysis document, please email [oversight@policeconduct.gov.uk](mailto:oversight@policeconduct.gov.uk).

## Egress switch and referrals

Please send IOPC referrals to us via email to the national referrals inbox. Where possible, we ask that you avoid using Egress Switch (the secure email service) as standard practice for submitting referrals. This is because our administration team cannot access the files without requesting and being granted permissions which is causing delays in processing referrals while we wait to be given access. For most referrals which do not include multiple large files or media files, email should offer a sufficient file size limit and is a secure way to send us information.

## What themes and trends have we spotted this quarter?

This quarter we received a number of questions on reviews, including when a right of review should be given and applying the relevant review body (RRB) test. Guidance on these matters can be found in [Focus issue nineteen](#). We will also discuss the RRB test in our workshops for complaints handlers in February and March 2022. Contact [oversight@policeconduct.gov.uk](mailto:oversight@policeconduct.gov.uk) for more information.

Feedback from Operations colleagues identified some concerns around communication with complainants. This included making contact with the complainant to understand their complaint, addressing complainants' concerns about the complaints process and providing meaningful updates. [Focus issues 13, 14, 15 and 17](#) offer practical guidance and examples on engaging with complainants.

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If you have any questions, please get in touch with your Oversight Liaison or a member of the Oversight team.





## Common questions from forces and LPBs

**Q: If an officer moves police force after a complaint has been recorded against them, who would be the appropriate authority (AA)? Would it continue to be the AA they were under at the time of the incident leading to the complaint?**

A: No. The AA changes when the officer moves force so that any actions can be taken by the current employer, if it is appropriate to do so. In most cases, the original force will retain an interest in the outcome and this can be managed by the original force becoming an interested party. Section 29.1 of the *Police Reform Act 2002* explains that where the officer complained about is not a senior officer, the AA for the complaint is the chief officer under whose direction and control the officer serves, not who the officer 'served' at the time of the incident. Therefore, the AA is the officer's current employer.

**Q: If a member of the public makes a complaint and provides the name of the officer, should that officer be automatically logged as the subject officer? Or do you only log the subject officer once their involvement is known?**

A: Enquiries will need to be made to establish what took place. The records should show who the complaint was made against originally, including any officers found to be involved as part of any enquiries made. If the original named officer is found to have no involvement, an explanation should be provided to the complainant as part of the outcome.

**Q: Can a police staff member make a complaint about how an officer from another force area is investigating a criminal matter?**

A: Yes, providing the police staff member is eligible to be treated as a complainant. Police officers and staff members are only restricted from making a complaint against another police officer/staff member if they were serving under the direction and control of the same chief officer when the alleged conduct took place. Off-duty police officers/staff are considered members of the public when raising issues about officers/staff from a difference force area. For more information, see [chapter 5 of the IOPC Statutory Guidance](#).

## Corporate news

### Thematic learning issued to address cultural concerns in nine linked investigations

We investigated nine linked inquiries known collectively as Operation Hotton, following referrals from the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS). The allegations stemmed largely from conduct matters occurring between 2016 and 2018.

Operation Hotton began with an allegation of bullying and sexual harassment, which was referred to us in June 2018. In total, we investigated 14 police officers, most of whom were based at Charing Cross Police Station.

Throughout Operation Hotton, we cross-referenced evidence gathered from different strands of the investigation. We also compared the evidence to relevant policing policies, procedures, and guidance. We continuously consulted 'The Code of Ethics' which sets out the principles and standards of behaviour that will promote, reinforce and support the highest standard from everyone who works in policing in England and Wales.

Fourteen officers were put under notice that they were being investigated. Two officers were dismissed for gross misconduct and put on the barred list preventing future employment with the police. One of the officers resigned before these hearings. A further four officers attended misconduct meetings and a fifth officer would have attended a misconduct meeting had they not resigned from the force. Two officers received management action and another officer received practice requiring improvement. One of the officers who attended a misconduct meeting also received practice requiring improvement.

Each investigative strand had its own final report that dealt with the alleged conduct. However, throughout the course of the investigation, concerns emerged about cultural and structural issues.

We identified behavioural themes about the attitudes and behaviour of police officers that ran through the investigations. These included bullying and aggressive behaviour; 'banter' used to excuse oppressive and offensive behaviours; discrimination; toxic masculinity, misogyny and sexual harassment; challenging and reporting improper conduct.

We also found several structural issues in working practices that enabled the behaviour to go unchecked. Such working practices included the nature of work, shift patterns, isolation and acting up in unofficial promotions.

To address these cultural issues, we issued organisational learning to the MPS. We made [15 learning recommendations to improve policing and public confidence in the police complaints system](#) and prevent a recurrence of similar incidents. We also issued [a learning report to the MPS](#) with our thematic findings.

You can read the [full media release on our website](#).

## Latest news

Keep up to date on our investigations and other work to increase public confidence in the police complaints system. You can find our [latest IOPC news](#) on our website. You can also read about the [learning recommendations we make following our investigations](#).

[Written warning for Greater Manchester Police officer after misconduct proven for use of CS spray on 13 year old](#)

[Written warning for Sussex officer for misuse of police computer systems](#)

[Misconduct charge for former Humberside Police officer for passing information from police briefing to two people](#)

[Dismissal of West Mercia Police officer for gross misconduct for having inappropriate contact with two vulnerable women](#)

[IOPC investigation into woman's death found that officers did all they could to help save her life](#)

[Learning recommendations for West Midlands police following death of elderly parents after concerns raised by daughter](#)