

# Communications and engagement strategy 2023 – 2027

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# Introduction

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At the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC), our mission is to improve policing by independent oversight of police complaints, holding police to account and ensuring learning effects change. Communications and engagement play a crucial role in achieving this mission by fostering trust, promoting transparency and demonstrating how the IOPC can sometimes act as an honest broker between the police and the communities they serve.

We will use this strategy to guide the work of the engagement and communications teams, but everyone in our organisation owns it. We all have a part to play in advocating for what we do, no matter what your role - so this strategy belongs to everyone.

The strategy sets out a new approach to how we engage and communicate with our stakeholders that is closely aligned to our strategic plan, 'Building trust and confidence in policing'.

## Our strategy

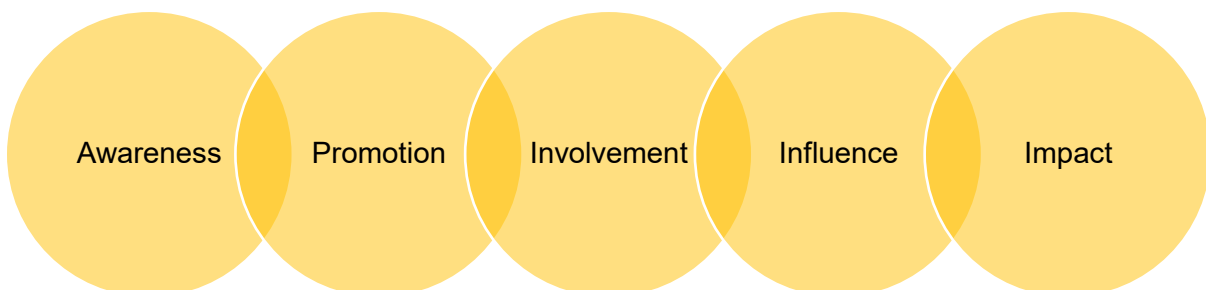
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### Aim

**To use effective communication, engagement and advocacy activities to build awareness, understanding and confidence in the police complaints system and our work.**

### Objectives

This strategy will seek to deliver seven clear objectives that focus on:

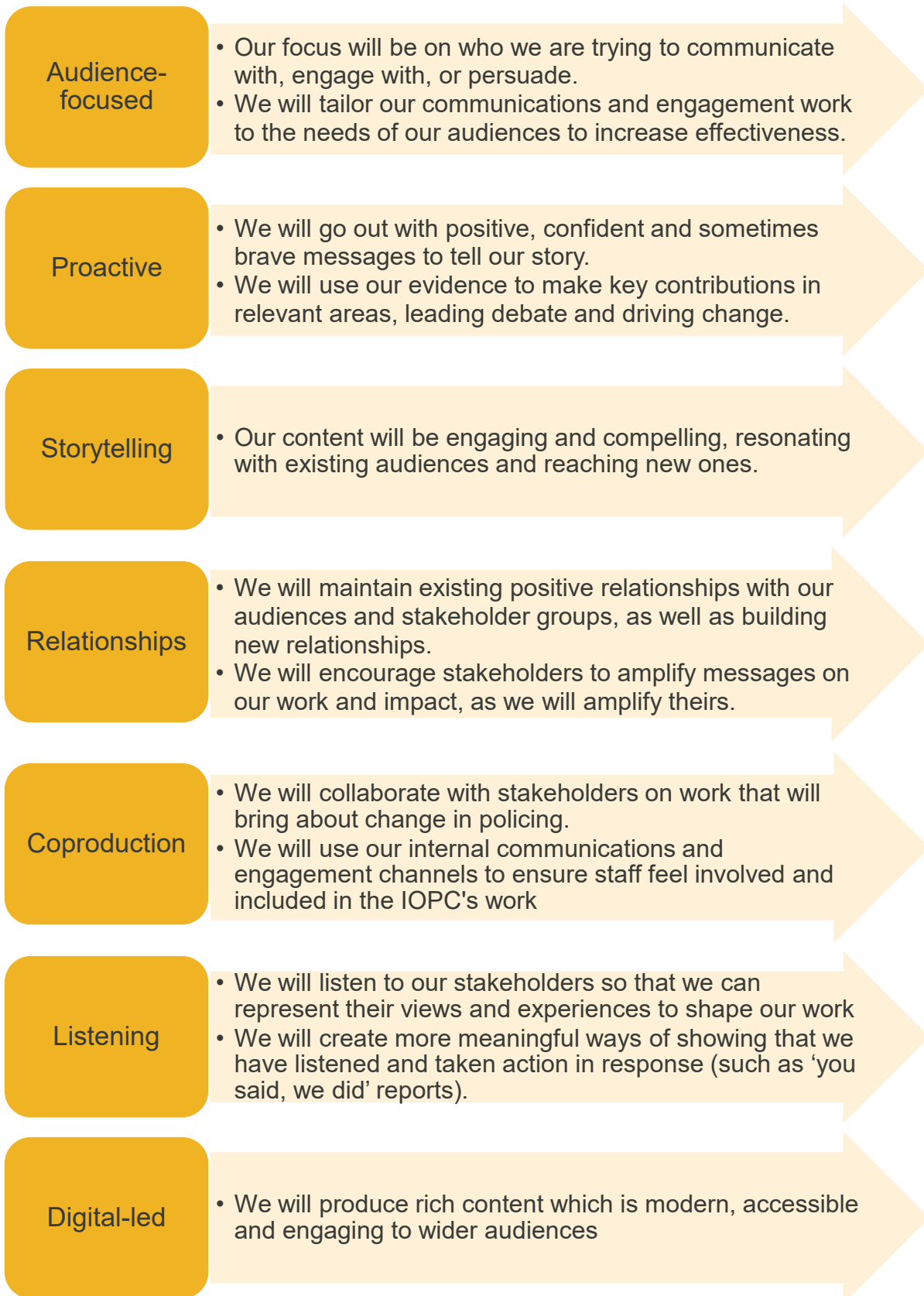


The objectives are:

1. We will focus on increasing levels of awareness, trust and confidence among the public, particularly within those groups with the lowest confidence and on the issues of greatest concern.
2. We will raise the profile of the IOPC with proactive, confident and - when needed - brave communications, engagement and public affairs work that demonstrates our independence and impact.
3. We will listen to and collaborate with existing and new stakeholders so they are informed and involved with our activity, and we will use their insight and feedback to inform and improve our work.
4. We will use our learning, evidence and influence as an honest broker to convene our stakeholders and identify ways we can improve policing together.
5. We will produce high-quality communication and engagement plans to support our colleagues in leading, influencing and advocating for change to improve the complaints system and build confidence in policing.
6. We will use our internal communications and engagement channels to inspire colleagues, informing and involving them in our work and supporting them to be strong ambassadors for the IOPC.
7. We will improve our communications and engagement capability and systems, so we have the right skills, tools and resources to deliver impactful communications and engagement

# Principles

How we deliver our work will be driven by the following principles.



## Our voice

What we say and how we say it will play a major part in how we come across to our stakeholders which encompass colleagues, partners, service users, the media - as well as the public.

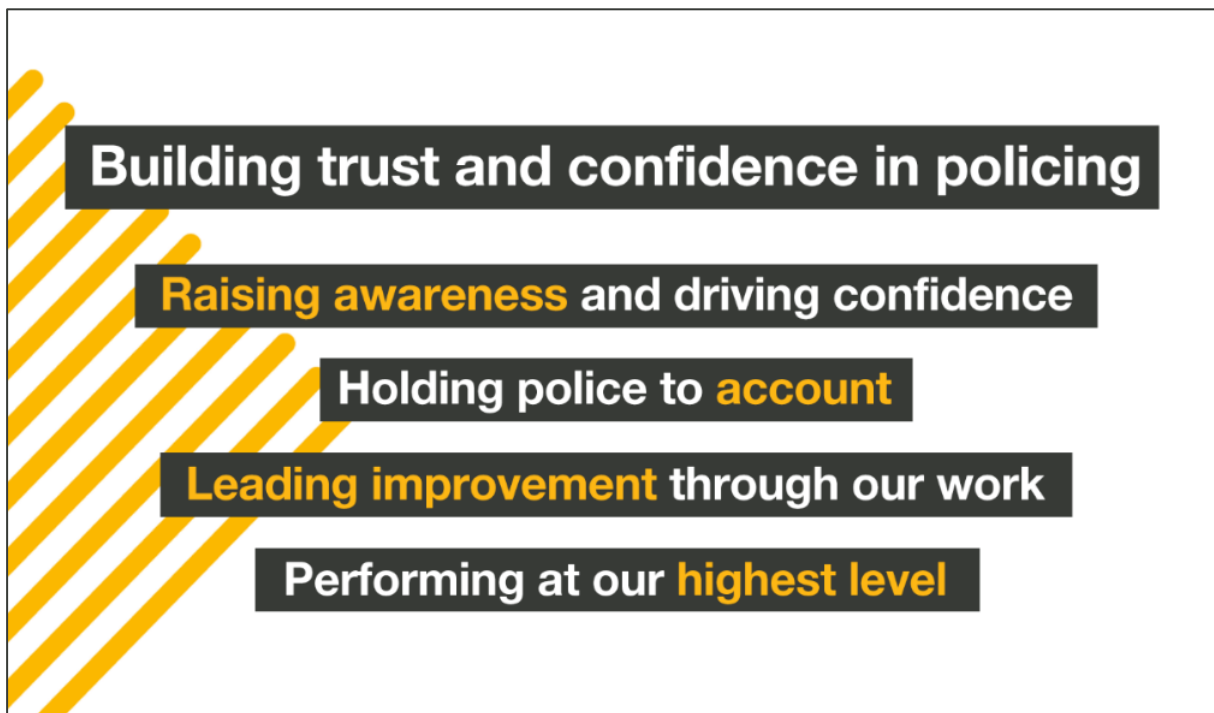
By working with our internal and external audiences we have developed a communications and engagement style that demonstrates our personality, which is to be audience-focused, evidence-based, transparent, human, clear, calm, confident and authoritative.

But this goes further than specific activities carried out by the communications and stakeholder engagement teams, such as creating web content, hosting engagement events and issuing media releases. It extends to all our work including policies, strategies, correspondence, reports, presentations, speeches and direct contact with service users in areas such as investigations and casework.

The communications team has developed a tone of voice document which sets out more about how we use our organisation's "personality" to express our values and engage with our stakeholders.

## Core messages

Our strategic plan – 'Building trust and confidence in policing' – sets out our objectives for the next five years. All our communications and engagement activity should be rooted in this plan with all of our messaging clearly linked to our four strategic objectives:



Part of the essential toolkit of our strategy is to provide core messages which are linked to our strategic objectives. These core messages should be woven throughout our formal communications and engagement activity. They should also be used informally by everyone who works at the IOPC because communications and engagement is not something solely done by the communications and engagement teams. Everyone who works at the IOPC should be an advocate for the organisation and be able to explain what we do and how we go about it.

We have therefore developed one core message for each of our strategic objectives, along with an “elevator pitch” and “boilerplate”, which are explained in more detail below. These support our audience-focused principle and should centre on the fact we are providing a public service.

### **Strategic objective one: Awareness and confidence**

The first strategic objective is focused on how we want people to know about the complaints system and be confident to use it. We will deliver our strategic plan, ‘Building trust and confidence in policing’ by:

- engaging with communities and the public to understand issues that affect their confidence in policing. We will work with them to inform how the IOPC can use its work to respond
- raising awareness of the police complaints system so people understand their right to complain, how to access the system and how the police should respond when concerns are raised
- raising confidence in the complaints system so the public will use it when they need to – demonstrating that it is responding to issues which affect them and delivering appropriate outcomes and improvements to policing
- raising awareness of the IOPC’s unique role and the impact of our work, so the public is confident there is independent oversight of the complaints system and serious incidents involving the police.

From this information we have built our first core message:

#### **Core message one:**

**We’re clear about who we are and how the complaints system works so you can be confident about using it.**

## **Strategic objective two: Accountability**

This objective sets out how the complaints system delivers evidence based, fair outcomes which hold police to account by:

- getting the right balance of work across the whole organisation - ensuring our work responds to issues which affect public confidence in police legitimacy by selecting the right mix of work – whether that is independent investigations, working with others to respond to super complaints, setting and monitoring standards for complaints handling, reviewing how complaints have been handled, sharing learning or making recommendations to improve policing – to have the most impact on public confidence
- maintaining credibility by getting the basics right - making sure our work is timely and high-quality so that it meets the needs of our service users and withstands external scrutiny
- conducting robust oversight of the police complaints system – intervening where evidence suggests local handling is not effective or consistent and working with police forces, Police and Crime Commissioners and others to improve timeliness and quality across the system.

### **Core message two:**

**Our unique and independent role means we're holding the police to account so you can trust the complaints system.**

## **Strategic objective three: Leading improvements**

This objective sets out how our evidence and influence will improve policing by:

- using our independence and evidence from our work to be a trusted and authoritative voice in calling for change to improve policing, particularly in areas affecting public confidence
- working with those who deliver policing to make the case for those improvements – leading, bringing them together and persuading them so that our recommendations lead to tangible change
- working with partners such as the College of Policing, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services and others so that our work influences and complements theirs. We can demonstrate to the public that we are part of a system-wide response to the issues which affect their confidence in policing.



**Core message three:**

**We're helping to improve policing through our work and leadership – making a difference to the issues that matter to you.**

**Strategic objective four: High performance.**

This sets out how we will be an organisation that delivers high performance by:

- being more than just efficient, effective and a great place to work – which was our focus before. The direction shifts towards supporting and enabling high performance and a really good hybrid working offer. It's still about being cost effective – but we must also think about our broader sustainability.
- giving colleagues the right tools. That's about having the right ICT, kit and applications.
- giving people control of their development and the skills they are going to need as our work becomes more complex
- leading in line with our values and our leadership having clear plans for the future – with a balanced approach towards risk. That includes governance, risk appetite and innovation.
- having good data to generate insight and good management information to manage performance
- representing the communities we serve as trailblazers for equality, diversity and inclusion.

**Core message four:**

**We're an organisation that does more than pay lip service to diversity and inclusion, using our colleagues' professional knowledge and life experience to help make the case for meaningful change.**

## Who we are

To complement these core messages we have also developed two overarching messages that explain clearly and succinctly who we are, what we do and how we go about it.

The first is an “elevator pitch”, which is a concise, persuasive and understandable summary. It’s called an elevator pitch because it should be short enough for someone to say in a brief ride in a lift. But its application is much wider than that. It’s a powerful tool, which anyone in our organisation can use to capture the attention of our stakeholders, that conveys what we’re all about in a clear and compelling way.

We’ve also created a boilerplate. A boilerplate is a standard description of an organisation which can be used in a wide range of settings. It helps us ensure consistency and accuracy in messaging across different communications and engagement channels, activity and materials.

### **Elevator pitch**

*We’re the Independent Office for Police Conduct, the police complaints watchdog. We are not the police – we’re completely independent of them.*

*Our job is to make sure the police investigate complaints about them properly and the system works. We investigate the most serious and sensitive incidents involving the police ourselves. We use the evidence from our work to drive improvements in policing.*

### **Boilerplate**

*The Independent Office for Police Conduct is the police complaints watchdog. We are not the police and are completely independent of them.*

*We set the standards for the police complaints system. We make sure the police are investigating complaints about them properly. We also investigate the most serious and sensitive incidents involving the police ourselves.*

*Through our work, we hold the police to account when things go wrong, recommend changes to prevent the same mistakes happening again and promote high standards of policing. We use our evidence to drive improvements in police practices for the benefit of the public and the police. This will help achieve our vision for everyone to be able to have trust and confidence in policing.*

# Stakeholders

We are committed to understanding the different needs, perspectives and motivations of all our stakeholders, including those that are critical of our work.

We will use feedback and intelligence to adapt our communication and engagement to improve the accessibility and impact of our work for all of our stakeholders. We recognise the challenges some stakeholders face in engaging with the IOPC and the complaints system, and we will use different ways to support meaningful engagement with us.

Our stakeholders are categorised over six broad groups, which overlap in some areas:

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Service users</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bereaved families</li> <li>• Police officers, staff and contractors</li> <li>• Complainants, appellants and representatives</li> <li>• Contractors engaged by the chief constable</li> <li>• Interested parties/witnesses</li> <li>• Supercomplainants</li> <li>• Police professional standards departments</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Non-statutory stakeholders</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communities</li> <li>• Voluntary, community and faith sector</li> <li>• Advocacy groups</li> <li>• Key influencers</li> <li>• Academics and other experts</li> <li>• Professional bodies - Police Federation, Police Superintendents' Association, unions</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Statutory stakeholders</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Police forces</li> <li>• HMICFRS</li> <li>• College of Policing</li> <li>• CPS</li> <li>• Coroners</li> <li>• Police and Crime Commissioners</li> <li>• Other bodies we oversee (eg National Crime Agency)</li> <li>• MPs, MSs, peers and other elected members</li> <li>• Government</li> <li>• Others that intersect with our work such as councils and the NHS</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>The media</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National political, home affairs and crime correspondents</li> <li>• Local media</li> <li>• Specialist media</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>The public</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low confidence groups - eg minority ethnic communities, young people</li> <li>• General public</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Internal stakeholders</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-executive directors</li> <li>• Staff networks</li> <li>• Unions</li> <li>• Management board</li> <li>• Line managers</li> <li>• Wider workforce</li> </ul>

## Delivery

We will deliver this strategy by carrying out a range of planned activity, as well as responding at pace to issues and events when they arise. Each of the core functions within the communications and stakeholder engagement teams will develop delivery plans, linking our activity and outputs back to this strategy’s objectives, which support those in ‘Building trust and confidence in policing’. This is a long-term strategy, but it informs our immediate work, so for 2023/24, these deliverables will include:

### Joint communications and engagement activity

- Develop a more sophisticated understanding of public confidence, including which demographic groups have the lowest confidence and the influential factors that contribute to ‘low confidence’.
- Produce high-quality publications and products that engage our stakeholders.
- Develop a crisis management plan for communications and engagement.
- Develop a speaking engagements policy for IOPC colleagues.
- Continue to provide communications and engagement support to the Hillsborough investigation.

### Communications activity

#### Comms: Media

- Develop an annual proactive media plan that extends our profile beyond investigations, taking into account other areas such as our thematic and oversight work. This is dependent on communications being involved at an early point by other services in their activity delivery.
- We will have key spokespeople who are properly equipped to give our organisation a voice so we can tell our story in a compelling way.
- Build on our positive relationships with the media and partners to

### Stakeholder engagement activity

#### SE: National engagement

- Coordinate the IOPC Youth Panel and support the delivery of their recommendations to the IOPC and policing.
- Deliver an annual programme of corporate stakeholder meetings and events to provide advice, challenge and constructive feedback on the IOPC’s work.
- Undertake meaningful engagement and coproduction with stakeholders through our Stakeholder Partnerships project.

respond quickly, effectively and appropriately to media inquiries.

- Identify opportunities to provide thought leadership through articles in national and specialist media.

**Comms: Corporate**

- Develop a campaign calendar to plan our work.
- Be involved in policy and service development from an early stage, not just before publication / implementation, to ensure communications objectives align with policy objectives.

**Comms: Content and design**

- Be the brand guardian for the IOPC to ensure that all our products are in a clear, consistent and recognisable format and our tone of voice is consistent throughout.
- Ensure all our communications messages and products are accessible.
- Continue to produce high-quality reports but in a way that engages and informs – we need to move away from an organisational tendency to believe that “transparency” is achieved by merely putting documents on the website.

**Comms: Digital**

- Maximise the opportunities to connect with communities and stakeholders with a digital-led approach by:

- Provide expertise and support to enable the effective delivery and increased impact of IOPC thematic work.
- Equip organisations across England and Wales with the knowledge and materials to be able to support potential complainants to understand their rights and make a complaint.
- Work more effectively with partners to share intelligence about emerging trends and issues to improve policing.
- Continue to produce regular stakeholder insight reports and improve the awareness and impact of stakeholder insights internally to shape our work, and externally to demonstrate to our stakeholders that we listen and respond.

**SE: Regional community engagement**

- Implement and regularly refresh local engagement plans for each IOPC region and Wales, focused on building awareness and trust in low confidence communities.
- Support local/community accountability and scrutiny of policing.
- Develop our critical incident engagement capability and capacity through refreshed guidance, training and a review of resourcing.

**SE: Internal**

- Support staff to engage effectively and confidently with stakeholders.

- Launching the new IOPC website, and
- Continuing to grow our existing social media audience and consider options to develop new social media channels to increase our reach

#### Comms: Internal

- Share information with colleagues first so they feel informed and involved and develop a range of communications products such as position statements and “top lines” on key areas of activity.
- Improve our internal channels, including a complete relaunch of the intranet, to ensure that internal communication is smooth, efficient and effective.

- Support the senior stakeholder relationship framework.
- Deliver a long-term central stakeholder information management system.
- Identify and promote opportunities for staff to hear from service users, those with lived experience and stakeholders who work with, and represent, people impacted by our work.
- Support recruitment campaigns in diverse communities.

#### Public affairs activity

- Produce a public affairs plan to support our convening and influencing activity, raise awareness of our work, change misconceptions and create advocates.
- Work with Management Board, Unitary Board and DG’s Private Office to identify areas where we seek to lobby for legislative and procedural change to improve the police complaints system and build confidence.
- Develop public affairs campaigns to support the successful delivery of change.
- Ensure the IOPC has excellent relationships with members of parliament, members of the Senedd, peers, the civil service, local government and relevant public and private sector stakeholders.

These activities will be updated in line with the outcomes of the delivery plans when we review the strategy.

# Evaluation and measurement

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We need to improve our measurement tools and this will be a longer term project for both the communications and stakeholder engagement teams. Stakeholder engagement needs to better collect data and share intelligence. A solution has been agreed, but it is currently unfunded. Communications needs to bring together its disparate measurement tools to provide better insight and reporting, and then do a gap analysis.

In the meantime, both communications and engagement can and do provide metrics such as:

- numbers of stakeholder and community reference group meetings
- event attendance numbers
- feedback from stakeholder meetings
- annual stakeholder survey by independent research firm
- number of media inquiries
- volume of coverage
- website visitors
- social media growth and interactions
- staff survey

Developing better metrics that are shared in a more consistent and digestible way will form part of the delivery plans for 2023/24.

We will use our existing research from the public perceptions tracker, annual stakeholder survey and staff survey and pulse surveys to inform the setting of performance indicators for communications and engagement. We will seek to:

- **maintain** awareness of the IOPC among the general public, which the latest public perceptions tracker data shows as 62%
- **maintain** awareness of the IOPC among stakeholders (currently at 83% in our latest stakeholder survey) and **improve** how favourably our stakeholders view us (currently at 52%) survey metric
- **measure** staff satisfaction with communications and engagement activity through the staff survey and regular pulse surveys

Alongside these, we will also work with other key teams such as the customer contact centre and the quality improvement team to enhance and improve service user experience and knowledge about the IOPC.

## Review

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This strategy aligns with our corporate strategy, 'Building trust and confidence in policing' so it covers the same period to 2027. However, we will review and update it annually.

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