



IOPC Complaints and Feedback policy

June 2026

Contents

Contents	1
Introduction	2
Contacting the IOPC’s Complaints and feedback team	2
Help with accessing our services	3
Use of Artificial Intelligence.....	3
Our service standards.....	3
Feedback	4
What is feedback?	4
How to provide feedback	4
Complaints	5
What is a complaint?	5
How to make a complaint	5
Assessment	6
Stage 1	6
Stage 2	9
External escalation	10
Restriction complaints.....	10
Data handling	11
How this policy links to our other policies	11
Annex 1: Matters the IOPC Complaints & Feedback Team cannot help with ...	12
Annex 2: Complaints Process Flow	14
Glossary of terms	15

This policy is written in English. If you would prefer to read the Welsh language version, this can be accessed [on our website](#).

Introduction

At the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC), we strive to offer a fair, efficient, and high-quality service. If we do not meet your expectations or you are unhappy with the service provided, this policy outlines how you can complain about, or give feedback on, the IOPC and its staff.

This policy explains how the IOPC defines complaints and feedback, and sets out how the Complaints and Feedback team will handle different types of complaints, including those where the [IPCC Staff Conduct Regulations 2004](#) apply.¹

Contacting the IOPC's Complaints and feedback team

In the first instance, the best way to provide feedback to the IOPC is to contact the person dealing with your case or query. They may be able to help straight away.

Alternatively, you can make a complaint, provide feedback, or pass on a compliment through one of the following channels:

- Email us at feedback@policeconduct.gov.uk
- Use our online form: [Submit feedback | Independent Office for Police Conduct \(IOPC\)](#)
- Leave a secure voicemail for the Complaints and Feedback team on 020 7166 3261, ensuring you provide details of your complaint, and your contact details
- Write to:
Complaints and Feedback team
Independent Office for Police Conduct
PO Box 473
Sale
M33 0BW

We welcome emails and written communication in Welsh.

Rydym yn croesawu e-byst ac unrhyw gyfathrebu ysgrifenedig yn y Gymraeg.

¹ Text **in bold** is defined in this policy's Glossary. Where the Staff Conduct Regulations apply, this is indicated in the footnotes. The regulations retain the reference to IPCC, but apply to the IOPC.

Help with accessing our services

If you need help to make a complaint or give feedback about the IOPC, you can:

- Request reasonable adjustments to be considered under our [Reasonable Adjustments for Service Users policy](#).
- Ask a friend, family member or representative to contact us on your behalf, with your consent.
- Contact Citizens Advice or another support service.
- We are not able to offer face-to-face contact with the team; however, you can reach us via one of the contact methods listed above.

Use of Artificial Intelligence

Your complaint does not need to be written in formal or complex language. The Complaints and Feedback team want to hear about your personal experience of the IOPC, and the impact the service provided has had on you.

We understand that you may want to use artificial intelligence (AI) tools such as ChatGPT to help you make your complaint. We recommend caution when entering sensitive information into AI tools, as this may not always be processed securely. Remember to check any material generated by AI to ensure it is accurate.

Please do not ask AI to add features such as legal arguments or references to legislation, as this makes it harder for us to understand your complaint. In these cases, we may take longer to respond to your complaint or ask you to re-submit your complaint in your own words.

Our service standards

The IOPC service standards apply to everything we do and set out what you can expect from us. You can make a complaint to us if you feel we have not acted in line with these standards.

1. We will make sure we understand your circumstances and needs. We will tell you what we can and can't do, and the reasons why
2. We will tell you about other organisations that may be able to help you if we can't
3. We will have a clear and transparent process to handle any complaints or feedback you have about our service
4. We will always treat you with respect and courtesy
5. We will make sure our service is accessible and meets your needs
6. We will ask you how you want to be kept informed about the progress of our work, and how often you want to be contacted
7. We will be open and honest with you about how long we think our work will take. If we think we will take longer than anticipated, we will let you know and explain why

8. We will explain our processes to you and what you can expect from us at every stage of our work
9. We will tell you our finding(s) in relation to your case, which will be independent and based on all the evidence that is available to us
10. We will apologise straightforwardly and genuinely when our service falls short, or we have made mistakes
11. We will keep any information we have about you safe and secure, and will use it only as described in our [privacy notice](#).

Feedback

What is feedback?

We define feedback about the IOPC as information about where we have got things right, or suggestions as to how we can improve.

We strive to get things right first time and provide the best level of service in everything we do. We welcome feedback about how we are doing and will use any feedback received to improve or amend our approach where appropriate.

How to provide feedback

We welcome all feedback in relation to our staff and services. Please contact us via any of the methods listed on page two. Your feedback may relate to something you think we've done well, or an area you think we could improve, but which we do not class as a complaint.

The Complaints and Feedback team aim to acknowledge all feedback within **three working days**. We will ensure it is shared with the relevant team(s).

If your feedback requires a response, we will ask a manager to provide this within **20 working days**.

Complaints

What is a complaint?

For the purposes of this policy, the IOPC defines a complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction from a service user in relation to the standard of service provided by the IOPC, or the conduct of a member of IOPC staff.

This means you have a right to complain about matters such as:

- Delays to your case, or delays in providing agreed updates
- The quality of our communication with you
- The IOPC failing to meet our service standards (see pages 3-4)
- The IOPC failing to comply with the Welsh language standards²

There are some matters the Complaints and Feedback team cannot consider. This includes complaints which relate to:

- A case decision
- An incident which occurred over 12 months ago
- An incident which did not directly, adversely impact you
- An organisation other than the IOPC

See [Annex 1](#) for more information on matters the Complaints and Feedback team are unable to help with.

How to make a complaint

The Complaints and Feedback team can only handle complaints from IOPC service users, and/or those who are directly, adversely affected by the IOPC's actions.

If you have chosen to make your complaint in Welsh, we will reply to you in Welsh.

When submitting your complaint, please ensure you provide the following information:

- Your name and contact details
- Your IOPC reference number(s), if applicable
- The name of the member(s) of IOPC staff you want to complain about, and the reasons for your complaint, including any evidence
- Any reasonable adjustments or communication preferences to be considered under our [Reasonable Adjustments for Service Users policy](#)
- Your preferred outcomes for consideration – how you would ideally like your complaint to be resolved

² [Welsh Language \(Wales\) Measure 2011](#)

- If your complaint relates to an incident which occurred over 12 months ago, the reason(s) for the delay

Assessment

When the Complaints and Feedback team receive contact which may be a complaint, we carry out an initial assessment to determine whether it is within the scope of our policy, and whether we are the appropriate organisation to respond.

If we determine the contact to be a valid complaint, we will aim to acknowledge your complaint within **three working days**. We will provide you with a unique reference number. Your complaint will progress to Stage 1 of our complaints process.

If we determine that we cannot deal with your complaint, we will let you know why. We may be able to suggest other organisations who could help. For a full list of complaints we cannot consider, please refer to [Annex 1](#).

If the Complaints and Feedback team cannot deal with your complaint, we will tell you within **20 working days**, and explain why, unless it is not in the public interest to do so.³

If we need further information to be able to assess your complaint, we will ask you to provide this within **10 working days**.⁴

Please note that if you make a complaint while you are under investigation by the IOPC, we may have to postpone your complaint until the investigation, and any associated proceedings, are complete.⁵

At the IOPC, we follow a two-stage complaints process. These stages are explained in detail below.

Stage 1

Your complaint will be assigned to an appropriate manager within the relevant team. The manager will gather the necessary information and ensure a fair and proportionate consideration of your concerns before reaching a decision.

Once the manager has drafted the response, a member of the Complaints and Feedback team will review it to ensure the complaint has been answered in full.

We aim to respond to complaints within **20 working days**. In some cases, especially where a complaint is deemed particularly complex or serious (see pages 7-8), a

³ *Staff Conduct Regulation 6(1)(5)*

⁴ Throughout this policy, 'working days' are defined as weekdays (Monday to Friday), excluding statutory public holidays. Day 1 is the day after we receive the contact/request

⁵ *Staff Conduct Regulation 8*

response is likely to take longer. We will keep you updated on the progress of your complaint and let you know if we expect the response to take longer.

There are three possible [outcomes](#) for your complaint:

- Upheld
- Partially upheld
- Not upheld

We will provide a written response for your records, unless otherwise agreed. We will clearly explain the reasons for our decision. We will let you know about any learning we have identified from your complaint, and any action we intend to take as a result.

Should you have any queries about the response, please let us know within **ten working days**, and we will forward them to the decision-maker. For efficiency and clarity, we ask that all queries are submitted together in a single email, as we are unable to consider multiple requests.

If you feel the response to your complaint was not reasonable and/or proportionate, you may be able to progress to Stage 2 of our complaints process (see page 9). You will need to request a Stage 2 response, and provide your reasoning, within **20 working days** of receiving your complaint decision letter.

Please note you will not be able to make a new complaint about the responding manager on the grounds that you do not agree with their decision.

Complex complaints

In some cases, an investigation of a complaint is required to ensure we can respond in full. This could happen if your complaint involves multiple teams or relates to events taking place over an extended period.

If your complaint is particularly complex, the responding manager may decide to commission a [fact-finding review](#). This decision is at the manager's discretion. The review will be carried out by a member of IOPC staff with the necessary and appropriate knowledge and experience.

The Complaints and Feedback team will provide you with updates on the progress of the fact-finding review every 20 working days. Once the fact-finding review is complete, we will write to you to explain the outcome, and any action we will take as a result.

If you feel the response to your complaint is not reasonable and proportionate, you will be able to progress to Stage 2 of our complaints process (see page 9).

Serious complaints

Where the initial assessment of your complaint indicates that the matter is so serious that it may amount to an allegation of misconduct or gross misconduct,⁶ the Complaints and Feedback team will liaise with the relevant senior manager, and with colleagues from our People Services team.

The initial assessment may include a brief fact-finding review to enable us to determine whether it constitutes a serious complaint.

If it is agreed that your complaint should be treated as serious (misconduct or gross misconduct) under the Independent Police Complaints Commission (Staff Conduct) Regulations (i.e. it would, if proven, be likely to result in the person involved being dismissed or required to resign⁷), we will let you know, unless it is not in the public interest to do so.

A formal [management investigation](#) will be carried out under the IOPC's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure, by an appointed investigation manager. We will provide you with updates on the progress of the investigation every 20 working days.

Once the management investigation is complete, a senior manager will write to you to explain the findings. This may include information about what happened, whether misconduct has been identified, whether our policies/procedures were followed, and whether we have identified any learning.

We will tell you about any disciplinary action taken, unless it is not in the public interest to do so.⁸ Complaints can be upheld with or without a finding of misconduct.

We will acknowledge when we've got something wrong, and apologise to you.

Please note that there is no right to progress to a Stage 2 complaint where a complaint has been assessed as serious under the Regulations. The management investigation is the final stage in the process. However, in some circumstances, you may be able to escalate your complaint externally (see page 10).

⁶ *Staff Conduct Regulation 3(1)(b)*

⁷ *Staff Conduct Regulation 3(3)*

⁸ *Staff Conduct Regulation 5(5)*

Stage 2

If you remain unhappy following the response to your complaint, you can request that your complaint progresses to Stage 2 of the complaints process.

Disagreeing with the decision made in relation to your complaint is not a valid reason for progressing to Stage 2.

You will be asked to provide a valid reason for your request. You may also be asked to provide evidence. We consider the following to be valid reasons:

- The response does not address part of your complaint
- Information included in the response is inaccurate
- The reasons for the decision are not clearly explained

You will need to request a Stage 2 response, and provide your reasoning, within **20 working days** of receiving your complaint decision letter.

If you are unable to provide a valid reason, the Complaints & Feedback will be unable to assist you further. Where this is the case, we will let you know.

If your request has been assessed and is deemed valid, your complaint will be assigned to an internal reviewer who has not had any prior involvement in your complaint.

The reviewer will consider the complaint response issued to you, and determine whether the complaint was handled appropriately, and whether the outcome reached was reasonable and proportionate.

They will not reinvestigate your original complaint. They will aim to complete the Stage 2 process within **20 working days** of your request for a review.

There are three possible review outcomes (please refer to Stage 1 section of policy for definitions):

- Upheld
- Partially upheld
- Not upheld

The reviewer will provide you with a written response, unless otherwise agreed. They will clearly explain the reasons for their decision and let you know about any additional action we will take as a result of your complaint.

This is the final stage of the IOPC's complaints process. We are unable to enter into further discussion or arrange a further review.

Please note you are unable to make a further complaint about the outcome or the reviewer on the grounds that you disagree with them.

External escalation

In most cases, Stage 2 is the final stage of our complaints process, and there is no right to complain to another body about the IOPC.

However, if you are a victim/survivor under the [Victims' Code](#) and your complaint is about the IOPC failing to comply with the Victims' Code in an independent or directed criminal investigation, then you can contact the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO) and ask them to look at your complaint using their [online complaint form](#).

Please note that the PHSO will only consider a complaint about the IOPC where the IOPC are investigating criminally, or directing a criminal investigation, **and** where you have completed both stages of the IOPC's internal complaints process but remain dissatisfied. Should you disagree with the IOPC's position on whether the Victims' Code was applicable in the circumstances of your contact with the IOPC then you may wish to consider contacting PHSO.

Restriction complaints

On occasion, where the IOPC receive contact which we deem unacceptable, we may take steps to restrict a service user's access to the IOPC under our [Managing Unacceptable Service User Contact Policy](#).

If we make the decision to restrict your contact, you have the right to challenge this. Any complaint about a restriction will progress directly to Stage 2 of the complaints process (detailed above).

If the reviewer upholds your complaint or finds that your restriction is not reasonable and proportionate, your restriction may be amended or removed.

This is the final stage of the process, and no further discussion will be entered into. Your restriction will be reviewed periodically in line with policy.

Data handling

If you want to dispute the way an information request has been handled by the IOPC, where this is in relation to a Subject Access Request (SAR), Freedom of Information request (FOI), or other handling of your personal data, you should contact the Data Protection Officer (DPO).

- Email: DPO1@policeconduct.gov.uk
- Write to:
Data Protection Officer
Independent Office for Police Conduct
PO Box 473
Sale
M33 0BW

You can request an internal review of a decision made in relation to an FOI request. You must do this within **40 working days** of receiving our decision notice.

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the internal review, or the outcome of any complaint raised to the DPO, you then have a right to complain to the [Information Commissioner's Office](#) (ICO).

If your complaint or feedback suggests there may have been a data breach, it will be sent to both the relevant team and the DPO for assessment.

How this policy links to our other policies

This document should be read in conjunction with the following:

- [Making complaints about the IOPC Director General, Senior Independent Director and Non-Executive Directors Policy](#)
- [Managing Unacceptable Service User Contact Policy](#)
- [Reasonable Adjustments for Service Users Policy](#)
- [Re-investigation Policy](#)

Our privacy notice and associated information are available [on our website](#).

Annex 1: Matters the IOPC Complaints & Feedback Team cannot help with

Matters raised by non-service users

The IOPC has a wide range of service users, including complainants, victims/survivors, bereaved families, police subjects and witnesses, representatives, and personally impacted professionals. All of these groups are entitled to complain if they do not receive the service they expect from the IOPC.

The Complaints and Feedback team can only consider complaints from people who are directly, adversely affected by the IOPC's work. This means we may be unable to consider your complaint if you have witnessed something but have not been directly negatively impacted by it.⁹

Matters suitable for dispensation

We can formally dispense with your complaint (i.e. close without further action) under the Independent Police Complaints Commission (Staff Conduct) Regulations 2004, where one or more of the following applies:¹⁰

- a. The incident occurred over 12 months ago (we may still be able to look into out of time complaints if you are able to provide compelling reasons for the delay – this will be assessed on a case-by-case basis)
- b. The matter you raise is already the subject of a complaint
- c. We are unable to ascertain your name and/or address
- d. The complaint is **vexatious, oppressive, or an abuse of process**
- e. The complaint is repetitious (unless there is significant new evidence)
- f. We are unable to complete a satisfactory investigation – we will explain our reasoning for this

⁹ Staff Conduct Regulation 2(4)

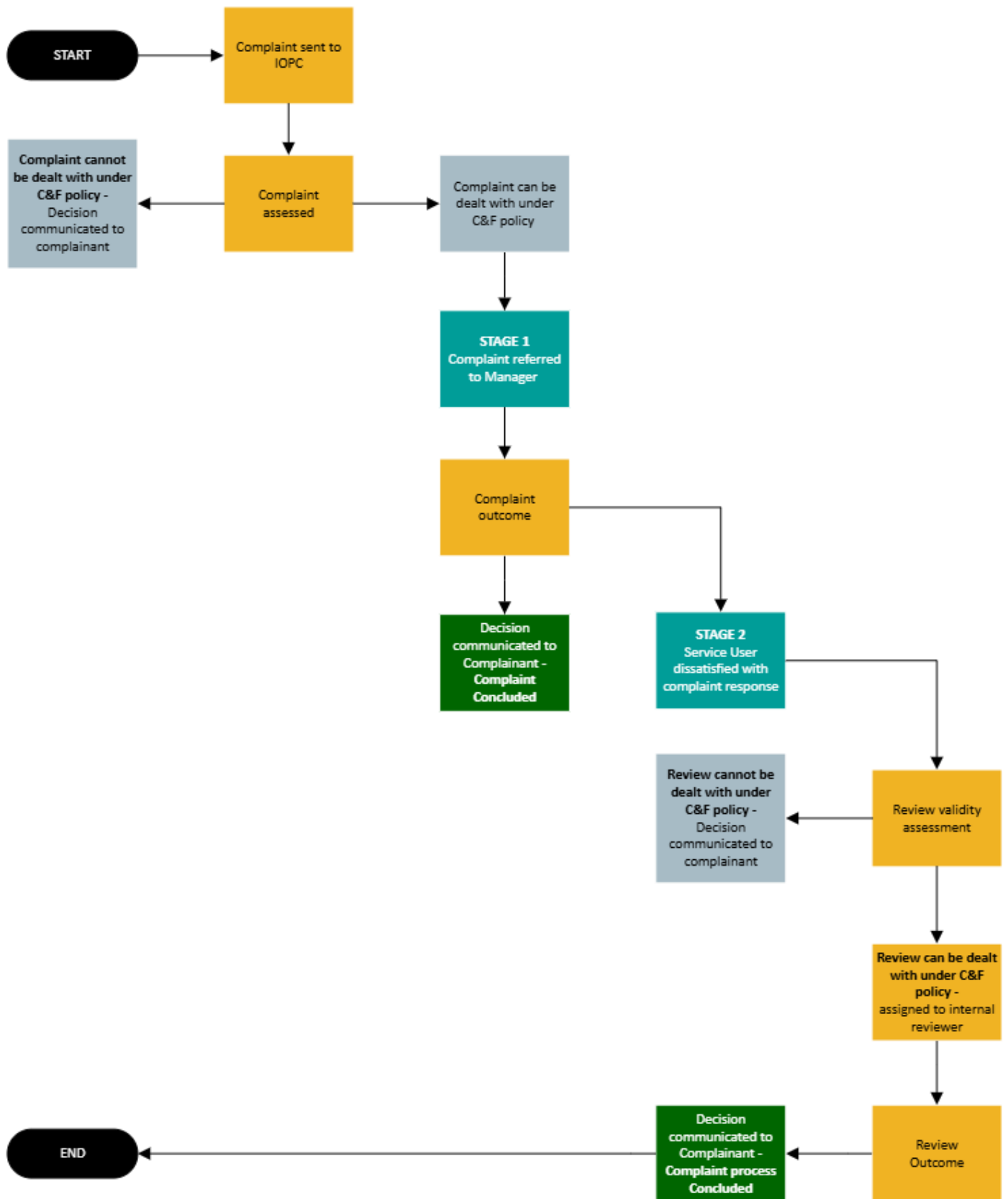
¹⁰ Staff Conduct Regulation 6(1)(a-f)

Other matters we cannot consider

We are unable to handle complaints about any of the following:

- Case-related decisions - The IOPC's decisions are final and can only be challenged via the [judicial review process](#). We advise seeking independent legal advice if you are unhappy with a decision we have made
- The police, Police and Crime Commissioners, or mayoral authorities. You can submit a direct complaint via the IOPC's online form, and this will be automatically sent to the relevant body
- Other government departments or public bodies, including the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)
- Dissatisfaction with the way your police complaint has been handled by the police. Please refer to our guidance on [Reviews and Appeals](#)
- The IOPC's role and remit. This is set out in legislation, and as such you should raise any dissatisfaction with your Member of Parliament
- General dissatisfaction with matters such as IOPC policy or strategy, or media coverage/press releases
- The Director General, Senior Independent Director and Non-Executive Directors. These roles are Home Office appointments, and complaints are dealt with under a different [policy](#)
- Former members of staff. Where appropriate, we will review the circumstances of the complaint to identify learning for the future
- Matters relating to IOPC employment, raised by current or former members of staff. These will be passed to People Services to consider
- Criminal matters: these should be made to the [police](#). The IOPC will only refer any matters to the police directly if we receive significant evidence that leads us to believe that a member of staff (current or former) ought to be criminally investigated
- Matters where it is not reasonably practicable or proportionate to identify the member of staff involved, due to limited information
- Complaints where we have been unable to communicate with you or your representative, or where you have not provided requested information

Annex 2: Complaints Process Flow



Glossary of terms

Abuse of process	A complaint may be considered an abuse of process when the procedures are used in a way that is unfair, dishonest, or not in line with their intended purpose. Examples include knowingly providing false information, attempting to use the complaint process to pursue a personal grievance unrelated to the issue, or repeatedly reopening closed matters without new evidence.
Fact Finding Review	A structured investigation to gather and verify information about a case. It involves looking at records, speaking to the people involved, and reviewing any available evidence so we can understand what happened and respond fairly.
Management Review	A formal stage in the disciplinary process where a manager, working together with HR, looks carefully at the concerns raised to decide what should happen next.
Oppressive	A complaint may be considered oppressive when someone's behaviour places unreasonable pressure on staff or the organisation. This might include excessive demands, frequent or repeated contact that prevents us from dealing with other work, or behaviour that causes staff to feel distressed or threatened.
Outcome – Not upheld	There is no evidence to support any aspects of the complaint made, and we found that the things were done as they should.
Outcome – Partially upheld	Some parts of the complaint were proven, but not all aspects. There is evidence to support that some things went wrong, while other parts of the service were delivered as they should have been.
Outcome – Upheld	We have found substantive evidence which supports the complaint. If we find that something went wrong or the service experienced fell short of what should have been delivered, we will acknowledge this, and explain the actions the organisation has taken to put things right.

Staff Conduct Regulations	<p>The Independent Police Complaints Commission (Staff Conduct) Regulations 2004 set out how allegations of misconduct against IOPC staff should be dealt with. Please note the regulations retain the reference to the IPCC but also apply to the IOPC.</p>
Vexatious	<p>A complaint may be considered vexatious when a person raises issues in a way that is unreasonable, persistent, or intended to cause disruption rather than resolve a genuine concern. Examples include making repeated complaints about the same issue after it has been fully investigated or using language or behaviour that is aggressive or intimidating.</p>
Victims Code	<p>The Code of Practice for Victims of Crime in England and Wales and supporting public information materials focuses on victims' rights and sets out the minimum standard that organisations must provide to victims of crime.</p>

Published June 2026

© IOPC 2026

OGL This is licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0
except where otherwise stated.

This does not include material belonging to third parties.

Authorisation to use such material must be obtained from the copyright holders concerned.

To find out more about our work or to request this report in an alternative format, you can contact us in a number of ways:

Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC)
10 South Colonnade Canary Wharf London E14 4PU
Tel: **0300 020 0096**
Email: enquiries@policeconduct.gov.uk
Website: www.policeconduct.gov.uk
Text relay: **18001 020 8104 1220**

We welcome correspondence and telephone calls in Welsh, no delays will be experienced.
Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth a galwadau ffôn yn y Gymraeg, ni fydd oedi mewn ymateb.