

# OVERSIGHT

## newsletter

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).

### Information for police

You can find lots of useful information for police officers and staff on our [website](#). This includes information and guidance for professional standards departments, complaint handlers and local policing body reviewers.

Topics include complaint handling guidance and a toolkit, IOPC discrimination guidelines, guidance on managing unreasonable and unacceptable complainant behaviour, an operational advice note on 12-month timeliness reports and more.

### Spotlight on: Restorative practice

Restorative practice is a process that can be used to prevent conflict, build relationships and repair harm where conflict has already arisen, by enabling people to communicate effectively and positively. Restorative practice is increasingly being used in schools, children's services, workplaces, hospitals and the criminal justice system.

We are pleased to share two of our independent investigations that used restorative practice to facilitate meaningful engagement between the police and members of the public who had been affected by distressing incidents. All names have been changed in the following case studies. **For more details on each case study, see 'Annex A: Restorative Practice case studies' at the end of this newsletter issue.**

#### Stop and Search

One case related to a complaint arising from the stop and search of a black child. Our investigation found that the service provided was unacceptable and we recommended the reflective practice review process for three officers. We also advised that officers should apologise and that the force should take steps to prevent a recurrence of the issues identified.

Throughout the investigation, the child and their mother spoke of the trauma and long-term impact of the incident. An agreement was reached to hold a restorative practice meeting.

The meeting took place in a neutral community space and was attended by the child, their mother, a force representative and a facilitator from the IOPC. The child and their mother shared their experiences, how it affected them, and what they needed to move forward. The force representative apologised and said the incident was far from the standards expected from the police. They shared their personal reflections on the incident, discussing their disappointment that the police are not getting things right around stop and search.

As a result of the meeting, the child stated that they felt more comfortable. The mother reflected that she now had more understanding of what happened and even though things had gone wrong, a positive had come out of a negative.

### **Fatal road traffic incident**

An IOPC investigation into a fatal road traffic incident found that officers had used inappropriate language towards the man who died. No misconduct was found, but we recommended learning for one officer.

The mother of the man who died wanted to engage with the officer involved, to share the emotional impact of witnessing her son's last moments and how it affected her and her family. On this basis, the IOPC Lead Investigator explored the option of a restorative practice meeting to enable the mother to have her voice heard. The Chief Inspector of Roads Policing and a representative of the force learning department agreed to take part.

The meeting took place in a neutral community venue and the mother brought a family member for support. The meeting involved three parts:

1. discussing the emotional impact of viewing the body worn video footage
2. providing space for the mother to talk about her son
3. allowing the mother to ask the Chief Inspector questions about the incident

The mother described the experience as healing. A report on the meeting was shared with all officers involved. The learning officer committed to developing training for officers focused on compassion and respect in policing, as highlighted in the Police Code of Conduct.

The Chief Inspector stated the meeting was more impactful than any formal investigation and pledged to promote restorative practice across the force.

Please contact [oversight@policeconduct.gov.uk](mailto:oversight@policeconduct.gov.uk) if you would like more information about restorative practice or have questions about the case studies.

## **Communicating the outcome when the appropriate authority reaches a different conclusion to the investigating officer**

Where an appropriate authority disagrees with the opinion of the investigating officer at the end of a complaint investigation, it is important that sufficient rationale is given to the complainant to allow them to understand why the appropriate authority has taken a different view. This has been identified as a concern during our review considerations.

Section 20(2) of the *Police Reform Act 2002* requires the appropriate authority to provide the complainant with "all such information as will keep him properly informed of ... the outcome of the handling of the complaint".

Paragraph 17.72 of the IOPC [Statutory Guidance](#) goes on to say that the explanation provided to the complainant should "provide the recipient with sufficient information to properly understand and examine the handling of the matter, the decisions taken and the conclusions reached."

Where an appropriate authority reaches a different conclusion to that of the investigating officer, there is an expectation that appropriate authorities will provide more of an explanation than simply setting out the decision they reached. This explanation should allow the complainant to understand how the appropriate authority has considered and weighed the evidence obtained

during the complaint investigation, and what factors led the appropriate authority to reach a different conclusion than that recommended by the investigating officer.

The IOPC has seen cases on review, where the appropriate authority decision making was captured in the file (such as on a Regulation 23 form), but this rationale is not shared with the complainant in the decision letter.

Where a review is submitted to the IOPC, if the IOPC determines that the lack of explanation from the appropriate authority means that not enough information was given to the complainant to allow them to understand the decision, that could be sufficient reason to uphold the review.

## Learning the Lessons 46 (frontline policing) – Your feedback needed

In November 2025, we published issue 46 of our [Learning the Lessons](#) magazine focusing on the topic of frontline policing. This edition includes ten thought-provoking case studies, covering themes such as call handling, use of force, children and young people, use of equipment, stop and search, first aid, and more.

We would appreciate your feedback to help us understand the reach and impact of this issue, and to help improve future editions of the magazine. This is your chance tell us how the magazine was shared in your force, how it may have supported your work, and any other feedback you wish to share. **We welcome your feedback by email at [learning@policeconduct.gov.uk](mailto:learning@policeconduct.gov.uk).**

You can sign up to our mailing list to receive future issues of Learning the Lessons, or join our virtual panel who help develop the magazine, by emailing [learning@policeconduct.gov.uk](mailto:learning@policeconduct.gov.uk). You can also request a free pack of hard copies of the latest issue to share with officers and staff at training sessions, meetings or events.

The next issue of Learning the Lessons on the topic of use of force will be published in Spring 2026.

## ? Common questions from forces and LPBs

**Q: A public complaint was referred to the IOPC and the mode of investigation (MOI) was a local investigation. If the complainant does not respond, and the appropriate authority has not identified any conduct, can the allegation be closed and deemed to be withdrawn?**

A: No, it is not deemed to be a withdrawn complaint. The complaint would only be treated as a withdrawn complaint if the appropriate authority has received a notice of withdrawal from the complainant. This is in accordance with Regulation 38 of the Police (Complaints and Misconduct) Regulations 2020. The appropriate authority must take all reasonable steps to contact the complainant and ensure they have the right contact details for them. The complainant's circumstances may have changed and a lack of reply may not be owing to an unwillingness to co-operate.

If there is still no response from the complainant, the appropriate authority should conduct a reasonable and proportionate investigation based on the information available to them and make a determination based on the investigation. Within the investigation report, the complaint handler should write up their findings and explain the attempts that were made to contact the complainant. The complainant should be notified of the outcome, and a right of review provided to them.

**Q: There is some debate in our force about whether or not the date of initial contact with the complainant should be recorded as the same date that the complaint case is logged. Is there any additional guidance to clarify this?**

A: Our [guidance on capturing data about police complaints](#) outlines the definitions of both the date the complaint case is logged and the date of initial contact with the complainant (see pages 6-7). It provides guidance for logging complaints and sets out definitions for a range of terms used in relation to police complaints.

The timing of your decisions for logging and recording will depend on the structure of your complaints team. Usually, there will be enough detail within the complaint to know whether it requires logging or recording. Therefore, the initial contact with the complainant, by someone within the team or the complaint handler themselves, will tend to happen after logging or recording.

However, there may be occasions where the details of the complaint are unclear or limited and more information is required before a decision can be made about logging or recording. To resolve this, the complaint handler should contact the complainant to understand the matters being complained about. This will help to determine whether it should be logged or recorded. In this circumstance, the date the complaint case is logged and the date of the initial contact would be the same, because the initial contact has determined the logging decision.

For more information on the initial handling of a complaint and recording see [chapter 6 of the IOPC statutory guidance](#).

## Corporate news

### **New Hillsborough report: summary of IOPC and Op Resolve investigations**

In December we published our report setting out a summary of the wide-ranging investigations conducted by the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) and Operation Resolve into the role of the police in the Hillsborough disaster and its aftermath.

Our findings reinforce, and build upon, those of the Hillsborough Independent Panel (HIP) Report published in 2012.

The investigations again found no evidence to support police accounts that the behaviour of supporters caused or was a contributing factor to the disaster.

We found South Yorkshire Police (SYP) fundamentally failed in its planning for the match, in its response as the disaster unfolded and in how it dealt with traumatised supporters and families searching for their loved ones.

We carried out 161 separate investigations into 352 complaints and conduct matters. More than 100 of the complaints related to the actions of senior officers at SYP and WMP, who were integral to either the policing of the match or involved in the aftermath of the disaster.

Read a [summary of our findings on our website](#).

## Opinion piece on police reform, by IOPC Director General Rachel Watson

Please read [our response](#) to the police reform white paper, which was published in [the Times online](#) on 22 January 2026.

### 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.

[Senior Greater Manchester Police officer barred from policing for harassment of junior officer](#)

[Former Merseyside Police staff member charged with multiple criminal offences](#)

[Nottinghamshire Police officer charged with causing death by careless driving](#)

[Gross misconduct proven against former Essex Police officer for forming inappropriate emotional relationship](#)

[Investigation into fatal shooting by Norfolk Constabulary officers, after responding to report of collision](#)

[IOPC investigation found that West Midlands officers acted appropriately, following fatal collision](#)

[Former Humberside Chief Constable to face no further action following conduct investigation](#)

## Annex A: Restorative practice case studies

# Spotlight on restorative practice – IOPC case studies

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## Stop and search

This case study explores the use of restorative practice following a stop and search incident involving a 14-year-old Black child, referred to here as 'Jason'. Jason was stopped by plain-clothed police officers, following a report of an attempted robbery. Although Jason co-operated throughout, he was handcuffed for 37 minutes. The officers gave him little information and were heard joking among themselves. He was then taken into custody but due to complications, his mother was not informed. The IOPC independently investigated a complaint made by his mother following the incident.

The investigation found that the service provided was unacceptable on four of the complaints. We recommended the reflective practice review process (RPRP) for three officers and that the force should take steps to prevent a recurrence of the issues highlighted by our investigation. We also advised that the force should issue an apology to Jason and his mother.

Throughout the investigation, Jason and his mother spoke about the long-term impact and trauma caused by the incident. For this reason, restorative practice was explored as a way to enable Jason and his mother to have their voices heard.

As none of the original officers were available to take part in the meeting (one was dismissed, one was on long-term leave and one declined), a local force representative agreed to take part. The meeting took place in a neutral community space and was attended by Jason, his mother, the force representative, and an IOPC facilitator. The meeting was broken down into three main parts:

- Jason and his mother shared their experience of the incident, how it affected them and what they needed to move forward
- the force representative responded
- Jason and his mother were given an opportunity to ask questions and share their reflections.

## Response and outcomes

The force representative apologised personally and on behalf of the organisation for what Jason and his mother went through. He acknowledged that the standards they experienced were far from the standards his force wanted to represent.

“It hurts me that I represent an organisation that people don’t trust. I know you are not the only people who have experienced this.”

“It is important that officers understand the potential impact when they act like this. You didn’t know what was happening to you and they held all the power.”

“I am really disappointed that we are in a position of having to educate people on their rights and entitlements because we are not getting things right (around stop and search).”

- Reflections by the force representative

The force representative offered Jason and his mother other ways to make sure their voice is heard, such as meeting the Stop and Search Charter Lead, engaging in scrutiny panels and youth projects, or attending a local Police Race Action Plan meeting. He also offered an opportunity to attend a ‘ride along’ with the police and firearms training.

As a result of the restorative practice meeting, Jason stated that he felt “more comfortable” and he would think about getting involved in the options offered. His mother stated that, although things had gone wrong during the incident, she now had a better understanding of what happened and the meeting had been positive.

“I feel comforted knowing there are people like you who are pushing for change, this has given me hope”

“This has felt like therapy for me”

- Reflections from Jason’s mother

## Fatal road traffic incident

An IOPC investigation found that officers used dehumanising and degrading language towards a man who died following a road traffic incident. No misconduct was identified, but we recommended learning for one officer. The officer was required to undertake reflective practice review process. The mother of the deceased found the language used by the officer extremely distressing after hearing it on body worn video footage.

The man’s mother acknowledged that officers made every attempt to resuscitate her son, but she was shocked at how he was treated in his final moments. She wanted to engage with the officer involved to share the emotional impact of witnessing her son’s last moments and how it affected her and her family.

The subject officer declined to take part in the restorative practice process, citing personal distress around the case. The Chief Inspector of the Roads Policing Unit and a force learning department representative agreed to participate and meet with the mother of the deceased. The meeting took

place in a neutral community venue and the mother brought a family member with her for support. There was three parts to the meeting:

- discussing the emotional impact of viewing the body worn video footage
- a space for the mother to talk about her son
- an opportunity for the mother to ask questions about the incident

## Response and outcomes

The Chief Inspector apologised on behalf of the officer involved and shared some reflections from the officer, who had deep regret about the incident and had felt too ashamed to attend the meeting. The mother accepted the apology and emphasised that she did not blame the officer for her son's death. She wanted this relayed to the officer, stating that she can now move on, so he should too. She described her experience of restorative practice as "healing" and "like a weight lifted" off her shoulders.

As a result of the meeting, the learning officer committed to developing training for officers focused on compassion and respect. The Chief Inspector stated that the meeting was more impactful than any formal investigation, and pledged to promote restorative practice across the force.

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We welcome correspondence and telephone calls in Welsh, no delays will be experienced  
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