

# Making a difference

## Impact report **2019/20**

CUSTOMER  
SERVICE  
EXCELLENCE®





# Contents

A message from the Director General	4
Who we are and what we do	6
Our work and impact at a glance	7
Executive summary	8
Our mission and values	11
Improving public confidence in police accountability	12
Using learning to improve policing practice	24
Working with others to improve the police complaints system	36
Ensuring we are an effective organisation	46

# A message from the Director General

**It is my pleasure to present the 2019/20 Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) Impact Report. This has been an extremely busy year for the IOPC, building on the work commenced during our first year of operation since establishment in January 2018.**

The public expects accountability from police officers and staff who fall short of the professional standards the community rightly expect. Our role overseeing the police complaints system in England and Wales and investigating the most serious matters, including deaths, is vital to the public having confidence in policing practice.

While accountability of individual officers for wrongdoing is important, the greater impact of our work comes from the themes and learning we identify that help strengthen policing practice more broadly. This has been further strengthened by legislative reforms made in February this year which further emphasise learning as a key tool in improving policing practice.

While much of the complaints system is administered locally by police forces, the police complaints system as a whole is overseen by

the IOPC. Our review function is an important part of our role as an oversight body, allowing us to consider the quality of local investigations and complainants' concerns. This year we dealt with over 2,800 appeals, a significant proportion of which were upheld. Appeals enable us to identify and share learning to improve policing practice, and can result in different outcomes for some complainants.

We completed over 700 investigations into serious and sensitive matters, with a continued focus on improving timeliness and quality of our work. Our investigations meant some officers faced discipline or dismissal from forces, but also identified that police acted appropriately, reasonably and proportionately in many cases.

More significantly, our work identified learning recommendations which helped drive national and local changes to policing practice from making tactical pursuits safer for police to



***The greater impact of our work comes from the themes and learning we identify that helps strengthen policing practice more broadly.***

strengthening the way police respond to stalking and harassment cases.

Work also continued to deliver investigations of national significance, including our investigation into police actions in the aftermath of the Hillsborough disaster and Operation Linden, looking at police actions following non-recent allegations of child sexual abuse in Rotherham.

Our work has resulted in 105 learning recommendations, including national recommendations on stop and search, tactical pursuits and search warrants.

We also know that some people may not understand that they have the right to complain if they feel they have been treated in an

unsatisfactory way. Low levels of awareness and understanding can contribute not only to reduced confidence in the system, but can also impact on policing the community and public trust.

Increasing levels of trust and confidence among the public, particularly amongst those groups with the lowest confidence in the system, is a key focus of our work.

Importantly, there was a 16% increase in the number of people from a Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) background who said they are aware of the IOPC. We recognise we still have more work to do to improve this and continue to raise confidence, which will be informed by deliberative research we conducted with BAME and black communities during the year.

While we play a central role in ensuring the police are held to account, we are part of a much wider system where Coroners, juries and disciplinary panels ultimately decide the outcomes of proceedings. We will also

continue to work with our partners in this system to improve the timeliness and quality of investigations.

As we enter our third year of operation, we are well aware that expectations for the IOPC to deliver ongoing and sustained impact will only continue to grow as there is a global focus on police accountability. Our plans for 2020/21 and beyond remain ambitious and I look forward to sharing further outcomes from our work with you in the year ahead.

It has been a successful year for the IOPC. I would like to thank our non-executive directors for their support and constructive challenge, and my management team and staff for their hard work, commitment and dedication.



**Michael Lockwood**  
**Director General**

# Who we are and what we do

**We are the Independent Office for Police Conduct, established in January 2018. We oversee the police complaints system in England and Wales<sup>1</sup>.**

In particular, we:

- investigate the most serious incidents and complaints involving the police
- consider applications for a review or appeal from people who are unhappy about the outcome of their complaint or the way it has been handled by the police
- set and monitor the standards by which the police should handle complaints
- publish research and statistics on specific areas of policing and the police complaints system
- use learning from our work to influence changes in policing

While we play a central role in ensuring the police are held to account, we are part of a much wider system. We do not have responsibility for deciding the outcomes of criminal or misconduct proceedings or inquests, but the findings from our work are used to inform those important decisions.

All our decisions are made independently of the police, government and interest groups. Our Director General and executive team, and our Director for Wales and Regional Directors, have never worked for the police in any capacity.

Our mission is to improve public confidence in policing by ensuring the police are accountable for their actions and lessons are learnt. Our work plays a vital role in promoting transparency and ensuring effective oversight of policing. We also help to bring about improvements in policing and make sure that where something has gone wrong, it does not happen again.

Our priorities set out the areas we focus on and show how we intend to make a real difference to people's lives and to public safety. This includes a strong emphasis on ensuring lessons are learnt, whether from a single complaint or incident, or by looking at systemic issues.

1. As well as the police, our remit includes several organisations that have police-like powers but are not police forces. This includes Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, the National Crime Agency, and the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority. We also investigate criminal allegations against police and crime commissioners (PCCs) and their deputies. The statistical information referred to in this report includes cases involving the police service and the other organisations under our remit. However, we refer to the police throughout this report because the majority of our work and impact relates to the police service.

# Our work and impact at a glance

## 1 Police accountability

**718** independent investigations completed **210** more than we started

**83%** independent investigations completed within **12 months**<sup>2</sup>

By the end of the year we closed

**97%** of cases inherited from the IPCC

**551**  
**425**

appeals upheld about a person's complaint not recorded<sup>3</sup>  
appeals upheld about how a complaint was investigated locally by police

**This led to different outcomes for complainants**

## 2 Using learning

made

**105**



**SUCH AS**



better training for officers on search powers and warrants

updated national policing guidance around police pursuits

better training and support for officers on stalking and harassment



after reading our

**LEARNING THE LESSONS**

magazine on young people



said they would think differently about how they interact with young people

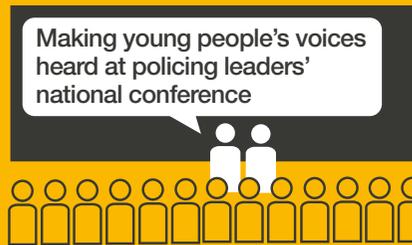
## 3 Working with others

CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE®



achieved Customer Service Excellence® accreditation

**our Youth Panel:**



Making young people's voices heard at policing leaders' national conference



**a young person's guide to the police complaints system**

## 4 Being an effective organisation



Supported staff welfare and mental health through **STREAM**, a bespoke peer-support programme

**Staff satisfaction increased across nearly all measures**

of the **30** categories measured in our annual staff survey,



**21** showed significant improvements

2. This excludes cases managed by our Directorate of Major Investigations (DMI). This directorate handles some of our most complex and large-scale cases, such as investigating police actions in the immediate aftermath of the Hillsborough disaster and the police response to non-recent allegations of child sexual abuse in Rotherham.

3. Before 1 February 2020, the first stage of complaint handling was for the relevant police force or organisation to decide whether to record the complaint. When a complaint was recorded, it had to be dealt with according to certain rules and guidance. If the force or organisation did not record the complaint, the complainant had a right of appeal to the IOPC against this decision.

# Executive summary

**Our mission is to improve public confidence in policing by ensuring the police are accountable for their actions and lessons are learnt. Our work plays a vital role in bringing about improvements in policing, promoting transparency and helping to make sure that where something has gone wrong it doesn't happen again.**

Our aim is to make a positive difference to policing and to the public. During the course of the year, our work has positively changed both local and national policing practice. Our work helped police forces understand key issues, improve the way they handle complaints and implement good practice. Our investigations helped to hold officers to account for misconduct in the most serious matters, and also highlighted opportunities organisationally to help prevent future risks.

Ensuring the police are accountable for their actions and working to ensure all parts of the police complaints system consistently deliver impartial, fair and evidence-based outcomes in a timely way is a core part of our work.

Working with a range of stakeholders and communities so they understand how to access and have confidence in the police complaints system was a key priority during the year.

Awareness of the IOPC over the past 12 months has increased from 40% to 51% of survey respondents saying they had heard of the IOPC. While there is more work to do, awareness of the IOPC and confidence levels that police deal with complaints fairly also increased amongst young people and people from BAME backgrounds, two of our key target groups who have lower confidence levels in policing.

Our youth panel contributed significantly to our work, sharing the views of young people at the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) Child-centred Policing Conference, publishing learning resources for police and developing a young person's guide to the police complaints system.

We retain a clear focus on our service users and in March 2020 gained Customer Service Excellence® accreditation, an independent mark of quality reflecting our commitment to listening and responding to the needs of those affected by our work (our service users). We will continue to strive to make further improvements so our service user journeys are the best they can be.

Feedback from our stakeholders indicates better dealings with the IOPC than at any time in the past, attributed to three areas:

- a much-welcomed shift in focus towards learning
- better stakeholder outreach and engagement
- leadership that is listening to stakeholders' concerns and showing an intention to deal with them

However, we are also only one element of the police complaints and criminal justice system. Our work is also impacted by coronial inquests, prosecutions and hearings, which we do not lead or manage. Working with our stakeholders to further improve quality and timeliness across the whole system is critical to driving further improvements.

### ***Our focus on timeliness saw 35% of independent investigations completed within six months and 83% within 12 months.***

A significant focus for us this year was working with the Home Office and others to support changes to the legislation that underpins the police complaints and discipline systems.

On 1 February 2020, legislative changes to the police complaints system were introduced and aim to simplify the complaints system, making it easier to navigate and ensuring that complaints are dealt with more quickly and effectively.

These reforms require complaints to be handled in a reasonable and proportionate way and aim to further improve timeliness. They provide greater flexibility in complaint handling and a focus on service. Importantly, they also include a stronger focus on learning.

The reforms also give us new powers, including the power to investigate without having received a referral from the relevant police force and to present our own cases at police misconduct hearings.

Our role in handling appeals where someone isn't happy with how the police have dealt with their complaint means that hundreds of people who otherwise would not have, had their complaint recorded and dealt with under the police complaints system (and so have the accompanying legal rights) during the year.

During the year we dealt with 2,838 valid appeals and upheld a significant number of these, which resulted in different outcomes for complainants. This work helps provide assurance.

We began 508 independent investigations and completed 718. Our focus on timeliness saw 35% of independent investigations completed within six months and 83% within 12 months.

We also focused our work on key themes including domestic abuse, deaths in custody, mental health, roads policing, use of force, Taser and less lethal options, and abuse of position for sexual purposes.

During this period we reduced the number of older, longstanding cases. Of the 538 cases we inherited from the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC), only 18 remained outstanding at the end of the financial year.

We also have a strong focus on sharing learning that improves policing, protects the public and prevents similar incidents from happening again. In some cases, this ultimately saves lives.

Our research shows that consistently members of the public who make a complaint about the police want those involved, and the wider police service, to learn from it. Legislative reforms to the complaints system also place a greater emphasis on learning and continuous improvement.

During the year, we made 105 formal organisational learning recommendations relating to policy or guidance, training for police officers and staff or legislation and other matters. Our learning recommendations this year changed national policing practice on tactical pursuits, stalking and search warrants, as well as local policing practice on matters ranging from the response to domestic violence to application of the use of force.

Our thematic case selection will hone our focus on identifying opportunities for learning, any force-specific concerns, or if there is potential for good practice to be identified. We now have four thematic areas on which to focus our investigations and learning; mental health, road traffic incidents, domestic abuse, and abuse of position for sexual purpose. Two more thematic areas, discrimination and near misses in custody, are due to be launched in 2020/21.

We continued to publish information about our work and raise awareness of our findings. Our annual reports on deaths during or following police contact, research into key themes highlighted by our work, investigation reports and summaries, quarterly and annual police complaints statistics and organisational learning recommendations all contributed to learning, public confidence and police accountability.

Our work informed consultations on firearms licensing and changes to counter-terrorism legislation, the code of practice on armed policing and police use of less lethal weapons and the National Strategy on Policing and Mental Health. Our data and cases contributed to an important HMICFRS report and recommendations on abuse of position for a sexual purpose.

You can read more about our work planned for the year ahead in our 2020/21 business plan.

# Our mission

To improve public confidence in policing by ensuring the police are accountable for their actions and lessons are learnt

## Our priorities

To improve confidence in police accountability

## What we will do

We will engage with a range of stakeholders and communities, focusing on those with the least confidence in policing, so they understand their right to complain and expect fair and just treatment in response to complaints and serious incidents

## What we hope to achieve

Those with low confidence in policing access and value the complaints system.

## Our values



Seeking truth

To improve policing by identifying and sharing learning from our work

We will focus our work on areas of concern to both the public and police and work with partners to share our learning to improve policing and protect the public from harm.

Our recommendations lead to improvements in policing and prevent harm to the public.



Empowering people

To work with others to improve the police complaints system

We will work to improve all parts of the complaints system – both our own work and that carried out by others – so that it consistently delivers impartial, fair and evidence-based outcomes in a timely way.

The police complaints system delivers impartial, fair and evidence-based outcomes in a timely way.



Being tenacious

To be an efficient and effective organisation

We will attract and retain a highly skilled, diverse workforce and provide them with a good working environment while continually improving to provide value for money

Our highly skilled, diverse workforce delivers an excellent service, which is value for money.



Being inclusive



Making a difference



Improving public  
confidence in police  
accountability

# Ensuring the police are accountable for their actions. Working to ensure all parts of the police complaints system consistently deliver impartial, fair and evidence-based outcomes in a timely way

We are responsible for overseeing the police complaints system. This means we play a key role in making sure that:

- complaints are dealt with reasonably and proportionately
- police officers and staff are held to account
- the police service learns and policing practice improves

An effective complaints system, which commands public confidence, is a vital part of the model of policing by consent. The police are given significant powers, and the complaints system provides important balance by ensuring the police are accountable for their actions. Our work not only helps to ensure accountability, it gives a unique insight into how police processes and procedures are working. We use this insight to bring about change and improvements to help improve public confidence in the police.

# Our work on appeals

The majority of complaints are dealt with locally by police force professional standards departments (PSDs).

Before reforms to the police complaints system came into effect on 1 February 2020, when someone wasn't happy with the outcome of their complaint, or how it had been handled, they had the right to appeal either to us or to the chief officer of the force concerned<sup>4</sup>. Complainants had different rights of appeal depending on how their complaint was handled.

After this date, changes to the law replaced these different rights with a single right to apply for a review of the outcome of a recorded complaint. This change aims to make the system simpler and more accessible for complainants, while maintaining their rights to have decisions about their complaints reviewed.

When a complainant appealed to us, we independently assessed how their complaint was dealt with. If we found it wasn't dealt with properly, or we disagreed with the findings, we directed that appropriate action be taken<sup>5</sup>.

From 1 February 2020, when a complainant applies to us for a review, we independently assess whether the outcome of their complaint was reasonable and proportionate. If we find the outcome was not reasonable and proportionate, we can make appropriate directions and recommendations.

## From 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020 we dealt with 2,838 valid appeals<sup>6</sup>:

- we dealt with 1,370 appeals about a person's complaint not being recorded. We upheld 551 of these appeals
- we dealt with 112 appeals about how the police tried to locally resolve a complaint<sup>7</sup>. We upheld 42 of these appeals
- we dealt with 1,257 appeals about how a complaint was investigated locally by the police. We upheld 425 of these appeals

### This meant that:

- in 551 cases, people's complaints were recorded and dealt with under the police complaints system when they would not have been without an appeal. This afforded them the accompanying legal rights

4. There were various grounds for appeal, explained on our website. Legislation sets out which organisation was responsible for dealing with an appeal. All appeals about a complaint not being recorded were dealt with by the IOPC.

5. For example, we can direct that officers or staff have a case to answer for misconduct or gross misconduct or highlight areas of learning for individuals so the force can take appropriate action. We can also direct the police to reinvestigate a complaint or decide the IOPC shall independently investigate a complaint if we think the police's initial investigation did not sufficiently investigate one or more allegations.

6. As the relevant appeal body, we had to assess whether the appeal was valid before we were able to consider it. There were a number of reasons why an appeal may have been judged to be invalid. These were; if the appeal did not contain certain information that was required by legislation; if there was no right of appeal; and if the appeal was received more than 28 days after the date of the decision being appealed and there were no special circumstances to justify the delay.

7. Local resolution was one way for a police force to resolve a complaint. It was suitable only for complaints that did not need IOPC involvement. Local resolution involved the force providing an explanation or apology, or otherwise satisfying the complainant that it was taking appropriate action.

- in 42 cases, people achieved a different outcome to the one they received when local resolution was used to deal with their complaint
- in 425 cases, people had their complaint reinvestigated and/or they achieved a different outcome to the one they received when their complaint was initially investigated. Where we upheld these appeals, our conclusions included that:
  - the findings of the police investigation weren't appropriate
  - the complainant should have been given more information
  - officers had a case to answer for misconduct or gross misconduct
  - the police should have asked the Crown Prosecution Service to decide if an officer should be prosecuted
  - the action (or lack of action) that the police planned to take as a result of the complaint wasn't appropriate



## Case study

### An insight into appeals

We upheld an individual's appeal against the outcome of an investigation conducted locally by a police force.

The individual complained to the force about an officer's handling of their allegation of a sexual assault, which resulted in the alleged perpetrator being issued with a caution<sup>8</sup> for common assault.

The force investigated the complaint and initially considered the officer had a case to answer for misconduct. Before misconduct proceedings could take place the force reviewed the case and redetermined that it should be dealt with as a performance matter.

The individual appealed the outcome and we reviewed the force's handling of their complaint. We found that the force's reasons for changing its decision on the outcome of the investigations were not appropriate, given the evidence in the case. As a result, we upheld the appeal and decided the officer should attend misconduct proceedings.

***The individual appealed the outcome and we reviewed the force's handling of their complaint. We found that the force's reasons for changing its decision on the outcome of the investigation were not appropriate, given the evidence in the case.***

After receiving our appeal decision the force again reviewed the case and carried out some further enquiries. During this process it identified two additional allegations against the officer concerning their handling of the sexual assault allegation. As a result, the force redetermined that the officer had a case to answer for gross misconduct.

A misconduct hearing later found the officer had failed to record the individual's allegation as a sexual assault, did not conduct a proportionate investigation into the allegation, failed to consider the individual's views before issuing the caution and did not fully explain the caution to them. The officer was dismissed from the force.

8. Cautions can be given by the police to anyone aged 10 or over for minor crimes. To receive a caution a person must admit an offence and agree to be cautioned. A caution is not a criminal conviction, but it could be used in future legal proceedings and can show on a criminal record check.

# Our investigations

**By law, the police must refer certain complaints and incidents to us. We decide whether an investigation is necessary and, if so, what level of involvement we should have. We can conduct our own independent investigation, direct a police force to carry out an investigation under our control, or decide the matter can be dealt with locally by the police.**

During an investigation, our investigators gather evidence to establish the circumstances of what happened. Sometimes we find organisational issues or failings. In some cases, even those with serious or tragic outcomes, we find the police acted appropriately. Sometimes, we find an individual's actions may have amounted to poor performance, misconduct or a criminal offence.

Where our investigation relates to a death, our investigation report is provided to the coroner so our findings can be used at the inquest<sup>9</sup>.

Where we find there may have been significant wrongdoing by an individual, we also have the power to:

- refer a matter to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) for it to decide whether someone should be prosecuted
- direct that someone's actions are considered at disciplinary proceedings

While we play a central role in making sure the police are held to account, we are part of a much wider system. Sometimes there will be inquests, criminal and/or disciplinary proceedings before all final decisions are reached. Coroners, juries and police disciplinary panels ultimately decide the outcomes of these proceedings, but our findings help them make those important decisions and play a key role in individuals being held to account.

---

<sup>9</sup>. An inquest is a formal investigation conducted by a coroner to determine how someone died.

## Case studies

### An insight into some of our investigations

This section provides a brief snapshot of some of our investigations. It shows how our work helps to make sure that the police are accountable for their actions, and describes the outcomes of some of our investigations.

#### Case one

##### **Making, possessing and distributing indecent images**

Following our investigation, a former officer was convicted of offences relating to indecent images of children and misconduct in public office. The investigation, which involved 57 victims aged between 13 and 44, was carried out under our oversight by a police force. The former officer was jailed for four years and four months, placed on the Sex Offenders Register and will be subject to a sexual harm prevention order for life. Before sentencing, the officer was dismissed from the force for gross misconduct<sup>10</sup>.

#### Case two

##### **Perverting the course of justice**

Following our investigation, an officer was jailed for 15 months after pleading guilty to perverting the course of justice. The officer had been tasked with attending the scene of an unexplained death. A number of items, including a wallet containing £65 belonging to the deceased, were taken by the police and placed in the property store at a police station. Some days later the wallet was returned to the deceased's partner, who complained after finding the money was missing.

We found evidence the officer stole the £65 from the deceased's wallet, and then attempted to conceal the

theft and tampered with evidence after the crime was reported. The officer, who resigned from the force before disciplinary proceedings, was found to have committed gross misconduct and placed on the Police Barred List<sup>11</sup>.

#### Case three

##### **Use of force**

Our investigation into the police's response to someone with a knife who was threatening to stab themselves and others found that an officer acted above and beyond their duties to ensure the safety of the person and others.

Officers attended an address to conduct a welfare check and found someone under the influence of drugs and holding a knife. They refused to let the police officers into the flat. Another person could be heard inside pleading for the officers to be let in. An officer forced entry to the flat and, after being threatened with the knife, used Taser to subdue the person, who

had stabbed himself in the chest.

We found the use of a Taser was justified to prevent the person hurting themselves or others. We recommended the officer, who displayed considerable courage, should be commended for their actions. The force agreed with our conclusion and the officer received a commendation.

#### Case four

##### **Abuse of position**

An officer was dismissed for abusing their position to engage in sexual relationships both on and off duty with two individuals they met through their work. Our investigation started after one of the individuals made a complaint. We found the officer contacted the two individuals to meet and engage in sexual activity - one was a domestic abuse survivor and the other was 16 at the time. A misconduct hearing found the officer's actions constituted gross misconduct.

10. Gross misconduct is defined as a breach of the standards of professional behaviour by a police officer or member of staff that is so serious it could justify their dismissal.

11. The Police Barred List is held by the College of Policing. It lists all police officers, special constables and staff who have been dismissed from policing, or who would have been if they had not retired or resigned. It ensures these individuals are not able to find positions in policing again.

## Case five

### Fraudulent offences

An officer was jailed for 12 months after purchasing access to pornographic channels using the account of a property owner while on duty after the death of a child at the property. The officer was guarding the house while waiting for the undertaker to remove the child's body. The family of the child was elsewhere at the time.

The officer downloaded four pornographic films while at the house. They falsified their attendance logs, claiming they left the property almost two hours earlier that day. Initially the family thought their child had downloaded the films. When they realised their child had not done this, they complained about the officer. The officer was dismissed for gross misconduct.

## Case six

### Road traffic incident

Our investigation into a road traffic incident involving the police led to an officer receiving a written warning after their behaviour fell short of acceptable standards.

The officer was driving a marked police vehicle when they tried to stop another vehicle. After a short pursuit, the other vehicle collided with a wall and the driver got out. The police vehicle collided with the driver, who sustained serious injuries.

Before a misconduct hearing, the officer admitted gross misconduct for failing to adhere to force policies on assessing the risk while in pursuit of a vehicle.

## Case seven

### Failure to investigate

An officer who worked as a Safer School Officer was dismissed for failing to take appropriate action in

response to reports a child under 13 was having sex with a number of individuals. We found the officer failed to record the information as a crime and did not initiate an investigation or refer the matter for safeguarding. This put the child at risk of further harm. A misconduct hearing ruled the officer had committed gross misconduct and they were dismissed.

## Case eight

### Use of force

We investigated the police's contact with a burglar who sustained a serious injury while being detained by the police. We commended an officer for their actions in preventing the burglar falling out of the first-floor window of a house, despite sustaining an injury to their arm.

The officer and a police dog entered the house after the police received reports that the house was being broken into. In an effort to escape the police, the

burglar tried to climb out of a first-floor window while being held by the officer. The officer was pulled onto a shard of glass and received a serious injury to their arm. Despite this, the officer held onto the burglar with one arm until other officers arrived to assist.

We found the officer's use of force and tactics were a justified attempt to prevent harm to the burglar from falling, and they should be commended for their actions. The force agreed with our conclusion and the officer was recognised for their bravery.

# Improving timeliness across the system

**The length of time an investigation and any subsequent proceedings take can have a significant impact on complainants, the families of people who have died or been seriously injured, police officers and other members of staff. Delays in completing investigations can also have a negative impact on wider public confidence in the police complaints system.**

**We focused on reducing the time our investigations take by:**

- piloting a new investigation model focused on quick-time decision making and improved early engagement with police forces, the Police Federation and CPS. This is now being evaluated for national rollout
- making changes to the way we identify and engage experts to procure evidence more quickly
- working with the Police Federation and other staff associations to improve understanding of our role, resulting in increased co-operation with investigations and securing earlier statements and interviews

We also worked with others to identify where improvements can be made across the system – for example, with the CPS to focus on early

advice and handover of cases to support more timely decision making. In addition, we developed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Chief Coroner to ensure a better understanding of our respective responsibilities and more efficient ways of working.

From 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020, we began 508 independent investigations and completed 718. During this period:

- we completed 35% of independent investigations within six months – an improvement of five percentage points from last year
- we completed 79% of our investigations within 12 months. Excluding cases managed by our Directorate of Major Investigations, we completed 83% of independent investigations within 12 months

During this period we focused on closing older, longstanding cases and reducing the age of our open caseload:

- we reduced the number of open independent investigations from 548 to 327
- we reduced the average age of our cases from more than ten months at the start of the year to fewer than nine months at the end of the year
- we reduced the number of investigations carried over from the IPCC from 93 to 18

By the end of 2019/20, two thirds of our open caseload were less than six months old. The proportion of cases open for longer than 12 months decreased from 24% to 17%.

We have begun an ambitious programme redesigning the way we undertake our investigations to continue to make them more efficient and effective. This work will be informed by best practice and input from stakeholders.

Further details about our performance can be found in our annual report.

# Helping to deliver reforms to the police complaints system

**On 1 February 2020, legislative changes to the police complaints system were introduced. We had long argued that the complaints system should be reformed because of concerns that it was complex, difficult to understand and difficult to access. The changes aim to simplify the complaints system, making it easier to navigate and ensuring that complaints are dealt with more quickly and effectively.**

The reforms require complaints to be handled in a reasonable and proportionate way and aim to further improve timeliness. They provide greater flexibility in complaint handling and a focus on service. Importantly, they also include a stronger focus on learning.

The reforms also give us new powers. This includes the power to investigate without having received a referral from the relevant police force and to present our own cases at police misconduct hearings.

Using our experience, the learning from our cases, and feedback from service users, we worked with the Home Office and others to help shape these reforms and improve confidence in the police complaints system.

To support the introduction of this legislation, we published Statutory Guidance to help police forces and police and crime commissioners (PCCs) to comply with their new legal obligations and achieve high standards in the handling of complaints. The College of Policing (the College) used our guidance to help officers and staff understand the reforms by developing a training package. We also supported the College's work by critically reviewing the training package they developed.

Throughout the development of the new legislation we liaised with the Home Office, police forces, local policing bodies<sup>12</sup> and the NPCC to support the practical and cultural changes needed to implement the new system effectively. For example, we helped the NPCC

***“My perception (completely unfounded) was always that the IOPC was incredibly detached and formal, but the staff were so approachable, friendly, experienced, funny, knowledgeable, down to earth, whilst all being so professional - as a member of the public as well as a practitioner I felt more assured that the IOPC was an organisation that is fair, ethical and that cares about real people.”***

Anonymous, survey respondent

12. A local policing body is a collective term for: PCCs, the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (in relation to the Metropolitan Police Service), the Common Council (in relation to City of London Police) and any other mayor of a combined authority that exercises the functions of a PCC. These bodies have a significantly enhanced role in the police complaints system with effect from 1 February 2020.

group that developed the new Reflective Practice Review process. The process recognises that complaints can provide an opportunity for reflection and development, and it provides a new learning tool for officers and staff.

Between November 2019 and January 2020, we ran 13 events to support police forces and PCCs to better understand the new complaints system and help them apply the new legislation and guidance consistently. The events attracted 400 delegates from across England and Wales, with 95% of survey respondents finding them very or fairly informative. The majority (79%) of respondents said that attending the event increased their understanding of the new complaints system and their role within it.

Another piece of feedback from a PCC's office highlighted that the events addressed a gap in staff knowledge and helped them feel confident in making robust decisions under the new legislation.

Together with the NPCC, the Home Office, the Police Federation and other national policing bodies, we created a video explaining the reforms to the complaints system. We also collaborated on a poster encouraging officers and staff to reflect and learn from any mistakes or errors as part of building a culture of improvement. Both were distributed to forces across England and Wales.

We published eight issues of 'Focus', our publication for police forces and local policing bodies. These provided practical guidance and advice on specific topics where complaint handlers needed increased support before and immediately after the launch of the new system. For example, one issue provided examples of how to approach allegations about chief officers. Another issue discussed how complaint handlers can ensure people can effectively access the police complaints system.

# Our appeals and investigations

From 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020

we dealt with **2,838** valid appeals

we dealt with **1,370** appeals about a person's complaint not being recorded

we upheld **551** of these appeals

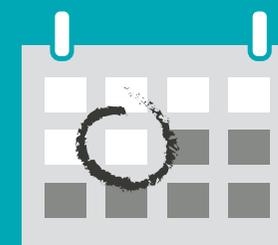
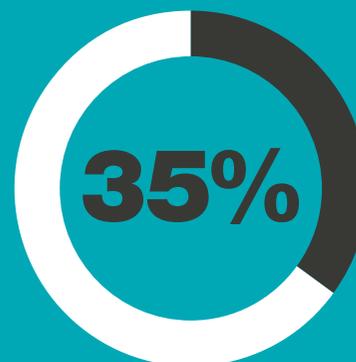
we dealt with **112** appeals about how the police tried to locally resolve a complaint

we upheld **42** of these appeals

we dealt with **1,257** appeals about how a complaint was investigated locally by the police

we upheld **425** of these appeals

we completed **718** independent investigations



of our investigations completed within **six months** – an improvement of **5 percentage points** from the previous year



of our investigations completed within **12 months** – comparable to the previous year

This includes all independent investigations. Excluding cases managed by our DMI, this figure is 83%

A close-up photograph of a person's hands. The right hand holds a silver ballpoint pen, and the left hand holds a spiral-bound notebook. The person is in the process of writing on a page. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be a classroom or office setting with other people and desks.

Using learning

to improve  
police practice

# Working to identify and share learning that improves policing, protects the public and prevents similar incidents from happening again

Our research<sup>13</sup> shows consistently that members of the public who make a complaint about the police want those involved, and the wider police service, to learn from it. This is reflected in reforms to the complaints system, launched on 1 February 2020, which place a greater emphasis on learning and continuous improvement.

We aim to make the greatest impact by building a culture of learning and continuous improvement so the public has confidence that not only have we or the police force responded to complaints or serious incidents, but that the lessons arising from them will have a long-term impact at an individual and organisational level.

Our work on appeals/reviews, investigations, research and engagement with stakeholders offers opportunities to identify learning to improve the service the police delivers to the public. We share this learning to prevent similar issues occurring in the future, to ensure continuous improvement and support best practice. This approach is supported by our stakeholders who believe focusing on learning is advantageous to the police service, the public and the IOPC<sup>14</sup>.

---

13. Since 2017, we have commissioned an external research specialist to produce a public perceptions tracker, which provides a routine measure of public confidence throughout the year.

14. Since 2016, we have commissioned an external research specialist to carry out studies on stakeholders' experiences of our organisation.

# How we use learning from our work



## Case studies

# Helping improve the safety of roads policing

In 2018/19, there were 42 fatalities from road traffic incidents involving the police – an increase of 13 on the previous year and the highest figure in the past decade. Our investigations and Subject Matter Network (SMN) on roads policing help to identify key learning to improve roads policing.

### Case one

#### Tactical contact

We conducted five investigations involving police using tactical contact against two-wheeled vehicles. Tactical contact is a technique, which may be used by appropriately trained police drivers, to end a pursuit by making deliberate contact with a moped or motorbike ridden by a suspected criminal. We identified risks to the police, riders and the public because of a gap in national policing guidance around the use of the tactic.

Following our recommendations, the NPCC and the College updated national

guidance to help police officers use tactical contact more safely. The updated guidance better supports officers to assess the situation and risks posed. It covers use of alternative tactics, weighing up the severity of the suspected offence and the likelihood of causing injury to the riders, others and themselves. It also reinforces the fact that use of tactical contact must be authorised.

### Case two

#### Use of life hammers

We investigated a road traffic incident when a van being pursued by the police collided with another vehicle and killed two members of the public. After the collision, an officer used a life hammer<sup>15</sup> to try to break the window of the other vehicle to reach the occupants who were trapped inside. The officer was unable to break the window using this tool and so used their baton to get into the vehicle.

We identified a lack of guidance surrounding the use of life hammers specifically in relation to officer training, use of alternative methods and replacing this equipment when it becomes ineffective.

The NPCC and the police force involved accepted a range of learning recommendations. The chair of the NPCC wrote to all chief constables outlining the issues raised by our investigation, and the action their forces should take to implement this learning, where applicable.

### Case three

#### Use of audio recording equipment during police pursuits

Following a road traffic incident, the driver of a vehicle being pursued by the police was seriously injured. Two other passengers were also injured. Our investigation found that audio recording equipment in the police vehicle had not been activated during

the pursuit. This meant that potentially important evidence was not available. The force confirmed that activation of this equipment was considered best practice, but was not required.

To ensure greater transparency, we recommended that the force make activation of audio recording equipment mandatory once officers begin a pursuit. The force has updated its guidance and training, with officers now being required to either activate in-vehicle recording equipment (where available), or use their body worn camera at the start of the pursuit.

15. Life hammers are tools designed to be used by police officers or other road users to break the windows if they are trapped in a vehicle and need to escape. These tools become blunt and ineffective over time.

## Case study

### Changes on the use of search powers and warrants

Our Operation Kentia investigation means police officers will have a greater understanding of the use of search powers and warrants, with improvements in training implemented both nationally and by the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), the force involved in this investigation.

Operation Kentia investigated police conduct around applications for search warrants made by the MPS as part of Operation Midland, which focused on the investigation of several high-profile citizens over claims of historic

child sexual abuse and homicide. Our investigation found no evidence that police officers had deliberately misled a district court judge when applying for search warrants, but found gaps in processes and systems.

We made 16 recommendations to improve policing practice, which will result in national changes to the application and checking of search warrants, as well as significant changes to policy and practices within the MPS. Of the 16

recommendations made, 13 (including all nine recommendations made to the MPS) were accepted<sup>16</sup>, two were not accepted and one was identified as needing to be redirected to the Ministry of Justice.

The following changes have, or are being, implemented:

- two elements of national policing policy have been updated and published by the College

- the College updated professional investigator training to explicitly include outcomes about search powers and search warrants
- the MPS carried out a range of activity to review guidance, provide refresher training, communicate with staff and update training materials
- the MPS is reviewing its process to improve communication with suspects who attend interviews voluntarily

***“I remain optimistic that these recommendations, along with all the other learning we have in this field, will help improve working practices in the Met, and ...short term changes have already been made. I welcome the approach taken by the IOPC...focusing very clearly on learning and improvement.”***

Cressida Dick, MPS Commissioner

16. One recommendation about amending statutory guidance to make search warrant applications clearer was not accepted. This is because the recipient felt it could be addressed by the Police and Criminal Evidence (PACE) Strategy Board, working with the Criminal Procedure Rules Committee, to ensure concerns around these applications are addressed. The other recommendation concerned ensuring that police forces take steps to ensure a fair and balanced summary of the reasons for taking no further action at the end of an investigation are put into the public domain. This was not taken forward due to concerns about the fair treatment of suspects during and after investigations.

***“These [recommendations] will make tangible differences, with police officers receiving better training and having a better understanding of search powers and warrants, particularly around issues such as duty of disclosure and seizure of property.”***

Michael Lockwood, Director General

- the Criminal Procedure Rules Committee<sup>17</sup> agreed to amend guidance notes on applications for search warrants
- the College developed clearer guidance to support chief officers in communicating the national position about the ‘culture of belief’<sup>18</sup>
- the College worked closely with the NPCC and the MPS to develop clearer communications on the position of policing on ‘belief’. Final discussions are taking place to ensure the materials forces receive give the clearest information possible

- the MPS updated its media policy to fully incorporate the College’s policy on media relations

The IOPC also recommended the Ministry of Justice considers the costs and benefits of implementing audio recording of search warrant application hearings, and whether this should form part of the hearing process.



17. The Criminal Procedure Rules govern the way criminal cases are managed, and set out the processes of the criminal courts. The Committee is responsible for amending and making new Criminal Procedure Rules.

18. The culture of belief ensures a victim focused approach to crime recording. The intention is that those reporting crime are believed, are treated with empathy and their allegations are taken seriously. Any investigation which follows should then be taken forward with an open mind to establish the truth.

# Organisational learning recommendations

**While most complaints, investigations and appeals or reviews focus on individual cases, they can also have a significant wider impact when we find that learning or improvement is needed at an organisational or national level.**

Our recommendations can help bring about changes to policing and protect both members of the public and the police by:

- preventing similar incidents where something has gone wrong
- raising awareness of gaps in policy or training
- highlighting issues with equipment, systems or practices
- encouraging forces to adopt good practice
- 90 learning recommendations made to local police forces
- 81 recommendations about policy or guidance
- 19 recommendations about training for police officers and staff
- 15 recommendations targeted at national organisations, such as the NPCC and the College
- five recommendations about legislation, record management and the provision of equipment to officers

From 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020, we made 105 formal organisational learning recommendations<sup>19</sup>.

Source: IOPC recommendations tracker

19. Seventy seven recommendations were made under paragraph 28A of Schedule 3 of the *Police Reform Act 2002* and 28 recommendations were made outside of the paragraph 28A provisions. Of the 77 recommendations we made under paragraph 28A, 65 were accepted and three were rejected. We are awaiting responses to the remaining 9.

## Case study

# Improving the handling of stalking and harassment allegations

After a woman was murdered by her ex-partner, our investigation resulted in police officers nationally being instructed not to hand out Police Information Notices (PINs)<sup>20</sup> in stalking and harassment cases. The recommendation was issued to chief constables of all forces in England and Wales by the NPCC in the wake of the woman's killing at the hands of her ex-partner who had spent months stalking and harassing her.

In the months before her death, the woman made several reports to the police, but was fined for wasting officers' time after she initially failed to disclose the relationship with her ex-partner. The harassment case was closed before her pleas for help were properly investigated.

In our final report on the police force's contact with the woman before she died, we found a number of failings by the police. Two officers, who had left the force before disciplinary

proceedings, were found to have committed gross misconduct and misconduct respectively for the way they dealt with the allegations, and for failing to comply with force policies on domestic abuse. The officer who committed gross misconduct was placed on the Police Barred List. A third officer was given a written warning after being found to have committed misconduct for the way they dealt with the woman's allegations. Three other officers received management action<sup>21</sup>.

We made 16 recommendations to the force to improve training for officers and staff, risks assessments, the recording of information, and the identification of stalking victims and perpetrators on its systems.

As a result, more than 2,600 officers and staff across the force have completed an e-learning package on stalking and harassment. The force also delivered vulnerability and stalking training to over 800 officers and staff to

***As a result, more than 2,600 officers and staff have completed an e-learning package on stalking and harassment.***

ensure stalking patterns of behaviour are recognised and action is taken. Over 250 officers and staff have been trained as domestic abuse points of contact, and over 50 staff have been trained as harassment and stalking points of contact to review incidents and provide support to staff across the force.

The force updated its policy and systems to ensure that:

- risk assessments are completed in all instances of stalking and harassment
- allegations of harassment and stalking are recorded clearly
- victims and perpetrators are highlighted on force systems

Control room staff have been given updated training on conducting searches on force computer systems and recording information about ongoing allegations or incidents. Guidance has also been issued by the force to clarify that fixed penalty notices should no longer be issued in cases of domestic abuse.

Adding to previous calls by HMICFRS and the NPCC, we also recommended that the NPCC advise forces that PINs should not be issued in cases involving stalking or harassment. This was done with immediate effect.

20. PINs were issued by police forces to alleged perpetrators of harassment, warning them about their behaviour. These notices didn't constitute formal legal action and weren't formal police cautions.

21. Management action is where a manager deals with the way a police officer or member of staff has behaved. It can include: showing the officer or staff member how their behaviour fell short of expectations set out in the standards of professional behaviour; identifying expectations for future conduct; or addressing any underlying causes of misconduct.

# Learning the Lessons magazines

**Our Learning the Lessons magazines support police forces to improve police policy and practice. Short, anonymised case studies and questions about real-life cases help readers to consider whether they need to make any changes in their own force.**

Last year we launched a panel bringing together a range of stakeholders to support us in developing new editions of the magazine. Representatives from policing, the community and voluntary sector and academia provided advice and guidance on content for the magazines. This year we published issues on custody, missing people and young people. Around 1,000 people receive each issue, with over 5,000 downloads of the magazines from the IOPC website during the year.

The issue on custody featured learning on communication, use of welfare equipment<sup>22</sup>, and checks on people held in custody. It included articles on findings from recent HMICFRS custody inspections and academic research on good practice in custody.

***“...[Learning the Lessons] helps make our training packages appropriate to the risks and situations that are current... being the lead for custody first aid training it keeps me up to date and informed on the issues and events happening in custody nationally and I adapt my training packages around these topics.”***

Anonymous reader feedback on Learning the Lessons custody issue

The issue on missing people included a new section on innovation and improvement to highlight good practice in forces and non-police organisations – 93% of people who provided feedback on this issue said they wanted to see similar content in future magazines. The magazine also included accounts from three people who shared their lived experience of missing persons investigations. The magazine was promoted to 400 delegates at the National Missing Persons Conference.

The issue on young people was guest edited by members of the IOPC Youth Panel, highlighting different scenarios and outcomes of real-life interactions between young people and the police. It included young people’s experiences of contact with the police and provided useful hints and tips for police working with young people. This content has now been designed as a poster and will be distributed to all police stations across England and Wales. The magazine was launched at the NPCC’s Child Centre Policing Conference in January 2020.

22. The learning concerning welfare equipment related to access to wheelchairs, access to anti-rip clothing, and the risk posed by red lifeline cords in disabled toilets.

## What the feedback shows

Our readers value the practical examples and guidance provided by the magazine, which has positively impacted policing practice on the ground.

***“[I circulate Learning the Lessons] widely across the force. Delegated business owners review cases, the key questions and action taken by the force concerned, compare with policies, procedures and practice in their area of business and take any necessary action if deficiencies are apparent in order to prevent similar occurrences happening in this force.”***

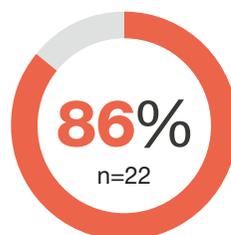
Anonymous, via reader feedback survey about our issue on missing people



**2,009** people  
downloaded this issue from our website



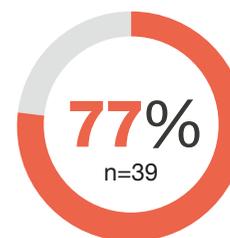
of respondents intended to share the issue on custody with colleagues to help disseminate the learning it contains



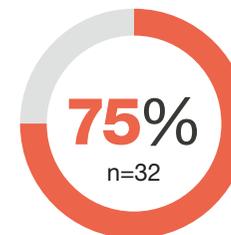
of respondents who work in a custody setting said they will think differently about how they communicate with people who are brought into custody



**1,335** people  
downloaded this issue from our website



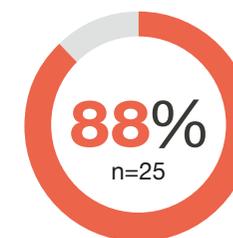
of respondents said they would think differently about how they communicate with people whose friends, family or loved ones are missing



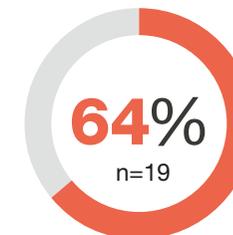
of respondents said they would think differently about how they handle missing persons investigations



**1,410** people  
downloaded this issue from our website



of respondents would think differently about how they interact with young people they encounter during their work



of respondents would consider making changes to policies, guidance or training they are responsible for to reflect the learning from the magazine

# Influencing the bigger picture

**Contributing to inquiries and consultations is one way in which we help to share and maximise the learning from our work. This can inform and influence changes not only to policing, but across the criminal justice system and other sectors.**

We used our experience and the learning from our work to help inform:

- Home Office consultations on firearms licensing and changes to counter-terrorism legislation
- a College consultation on the code of practice on armed policing and police use of less lethal weapons
- the Police Foundation’s strategic review of policing in England and Wales
- policing inspection programmes undertaken by HMICFRS

We also informed national guidance and reports developed by policing bodies. In March 2020, the NPCC published the National Strategy on Policing and Mental Health. We used the learning from our work to help shape the NPCC’s strategy. As a result, several amendments were made to the strategy before publication, including:

- revising a core principle to highlight the importance of de-escalation<sup>23</sup> and containment<sup>24</sup> as preferable to using restraint
- adding a strategic objective reinforcing the need for police forces to review their mental health training regularly, including consideration of learning from IOPC investigations, coroners’ recommendations and HMICFRS inspections
- adding a section about people with mental health concerns and police complaints. This was based on our research, which found that there are a number of barriers to using the police complaints system for people with mental health concerns. This reinforced the importance of them being confident that their concerns will be dealt with in a fair and thorough manner

We shared information to help HMICFRS produce its report on Shining a light on betrayal: Abuse of position for a sexual

purpose. We provided data on cases and critically reviewed the report, as well as playing a role on an external reference group, which helped to inform the recommendations within the report.

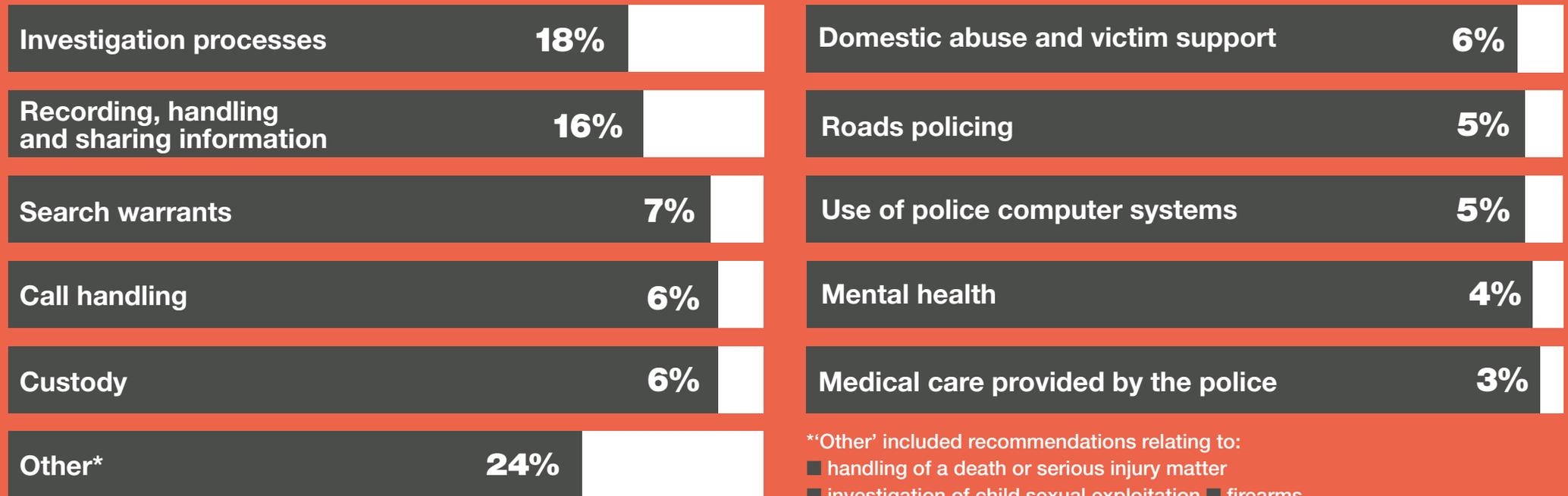
***“I am writing to pass on my sincere thanks for being part of our external reference group helping to inform this important piece of work. The success of this report was down to the expert advice, guidance and support provided by the group.”***

Zoë Billingham  
HM Inspector of Constabulary

23. De-escalation is a way of reducing the intensity of a situation or conflict.

24. Containment is a way of keeping a harmful situation under control.

# Learning recommendations (broken down by theme)

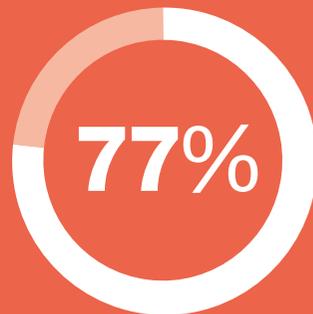


\*'Other' included recommendations relating to:

- handling of a death or serious injury matter
- investigation of child sexual exploitation ■ firearms
- management and supervision ■ decision making during policing investigations



learning recommendations made to local police forces



recommendations on policy or guidance



recommendations concerned training for police officers and staff



recommendations made to national policing bodies and other organisations\*

\*such as the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice



Working with others  
to improve the police  
complaints system

# Engaging with a range of stakeholders and communities so they understand how to access and have confidence in the police complaints system

We work with and listen to a wide range of people, including complainants, families, police officers and staff and community and voluntary groups. We also work with organisations across the criminal justice system to identify how individually and collectively we can make a real difference.

Our work has a particular focus on increasing the confidence of those who we know have the least trust in the complaints system – for example, young people and those from a black, asian and minority ethnic (BAME) background. We want to ensure these groups understand their right to complain and have confidence in accessing and using the complaints system.

Ultimately, changes made as a result of this work and listening to our service users deliver a positive impact by improving the police complaints system, improving policing and helping to protect the public.



Source: IOPC Public Perceptions Tracker: Annual 2019/20 report summary and 2018/19 report summary

# Working with young people

**Research shows that young people have lower levels of confidence in the police complaints system than others. They are also less willing to complain and less likely to have heard of the IOPC.**

This is an important area of focus for us and in January 2018 we established a Youth Panel to support this work. The panel help us to understand why young people have lower levels of confidence in the police complaints system, and to explore how we can increase young people’s confidence in the system.

The Youth Panel’s consultation with over 800 young people helped to provide a better understanding of young people’s concerns about the police complaints system. Those taking part reported feelings of powerlessness, negative experiences with the police and difficulty navigating the complaints system. This year, the panel helped us to implement a range of recommendations which resulted from this consultation.

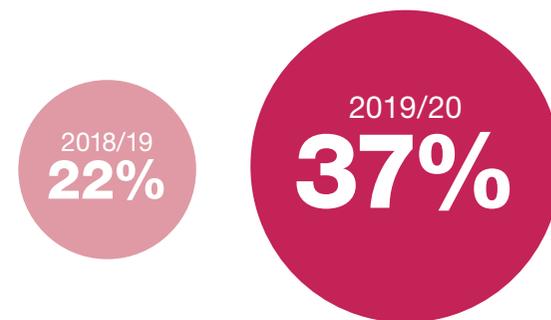
As part of the NPCC’s Child-centred Policing Conference, the Youth Panel shared the findings from this consultation with an audience

made up of senior police officers from forces across England and Wales. Their message voiced common issues experienced by young people dealing with police. A video and posts we shared on the NPCC’s youth Instagram account about how to make a complaint were seen by 700 people. Of those, 250 voted in a poll, with 76% saying they would be confident in making a complaint after watching the video.

The panel also attended a range of other events to improve engagement and build positive relationships. For example, a member of the panel spoke to school liaison officers and members of a youth offending team about our role and about the panel’s work.

Members of the Youth Panel helped provide training for staff in our customer contact centre. This is part of our continuing work to improve the service we provide to young people and build their confidence in the complaints system.

## Young people’s awareness of the IOPC

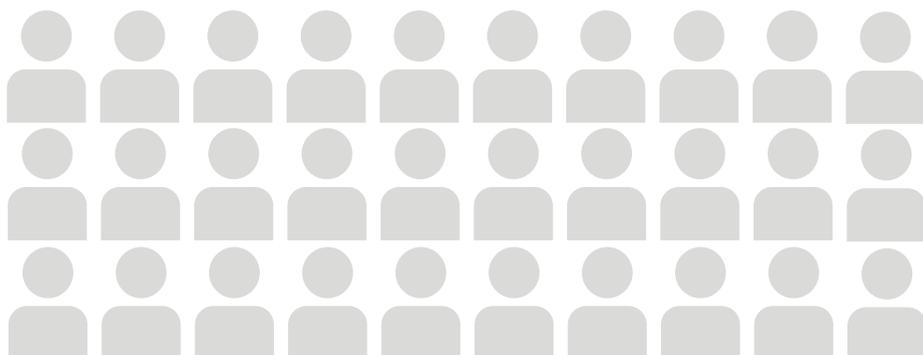


Source: IOPC Public Perceptions Tracker: Annual 2019/20 report summary and 2018/19 report summary

Working with the panel, we also developed a young person’s guide to the police complaints system, communicating clearly and concisely what they need to know, and what they can expect if they make a complaint.

The panel also advised us on the impact of a high-profile stop and search investigation involving young people. Their input helped to inform our assessment of the effect of this incident on the local community, and how we engaged with the community.

## Our peer-led Youth Panel



30 young people, aged 16-25



Male, female and non-binary



Two thirds BAME



A third with lived experience of the criminal justice system



One in ten LGBT+

From across  
**England**  
and  
**Wales**



## Feedback from our Youth Panel

*“We [have] been given a unique opportunity to voice the opinions of young people that have often felt silenced by organisations bigger than them. Having an organisation as impactful as [the IOPC] actively work to listen to the concerns that we, as the youth of England and Wales, have is stirring...I have felt inspired by the IOPC’s drive to make [the] police complaints system more widely accessible to people who have previously not been aware about where to go when making a complaint.”*

Shawny, IOPC Youth Panel member

*“[The panel] has really given young people, especially those of BAME background, a voice to raise concerns and really shape the direction of policing and the criminal justice system as whole... My worry at first was that this youth panel was simply ticking the community engagement box and would be over in a year, yet the youth panel has now become a significant and prominent part of engagement and continues to support the direction of policing and the complaint system.”*

Ahmed, IOPC Youth Panel member

*“This project has allowed young people from across England and Wales to actively [be] involved with the IOPC and influence positive change at a senior level by working collaboratively to produce more young person focused practices and procedures aiming to empower, educate and engage larger numbers of young people. The project has given me the opportunity to build my confidence and knowledge of the system to pursue a complaint of my own experience with the police.”*

Anna-Louise, IOPC Youth Panel member

# Raising awareness of the IOPC

## Understanding of our role is an important part of developing confidence in the complaints system and we are working hard to increase this through better communication and engagement.

In March 2019, research told us that 40% of respondents said they had heard of the IOPC. While there is still more to do to ensure the public understand our role and work, recent research indicates an increase, with 51% of respondents saying they had heard of the IOPC<sup>25</sup>.

We proactively provide information to the media and publish news releases about cases. Media coverage helps us to raise awareness of our work and can contribute to public confidence in effective police oversight. We also share information via social media, newsletters, reports and publications.

Publishing information provides transparency around the most serious complaints and incidents, including being clear about what police forces can learn from them. It also means that members of the public can see the issues arising from their local force and policing more generally, how they are being dealt with, and how their police force compares to others.

The information we publish includes:

- an annual report on deaths during or following police contact. This provides an overview of the nature and circumstances of each death
- quarterly and annual statistics on police complaints at both local force and national level
- investigation reports and summaries
- organisational learning recommendations from investigations, appeals and reviews to improve policing practice

During the year, we also held several outreach events to increase knowledge and understanding of our organisation in local communities.

For example, an event in the north west of England was attended by people from hard-to-reach groups<sup>26</sup> as well as representatives from MPs' offices, PCCs' offices, local government, community groups and faith organisations. The event covered why the IOPC was created, our role, and how we work.

25. IOPC Public Perceptions Tracker: Annual 2019/20 report summary.

26. Our research shows that, compared to the general public, confidence in the police complaints system is lower among hard-to-reach groups and young people.

## Increase in awareness of the IOPC

**51%**  
March  
2020

Following the event, 100% of survey respondents felt their understanding of our role in the complaints system had increased. Ninety-five per cent said the event had increased their understanding of our work, and we received further requests from these organisations to learn more about our work.

We also held an event for policing stakeholders to dispel some misconceptions about our work.

**40%**  
March  
2019

Around 60 delegates from policing organisations attended the event, which aimed to help delegates better understand our work within the police complaints system. Feedback from the event was positive, with 90% of survey respondents feeling the day was useful for them, and 95% saying their awareness of the IOPC had increased.

Source: IOPC Public Perceptions Tracker: Annual 2019/20 report summary

## Case study

### Wales conference on roads policing

With deaths from police-related road traffic incidents rising in 2018/19, in October 2019 we hosted a conference in Wales on roads policing and post-incident management<sup>27</sup>. Seventy-five delegates from police forces in Wales and the south west of England, and from the Police Federation attended the conference, along with our own staff. The event shared knowledge and experiences of:

- the role and work of a police collision investigator
- the role of family liaison managers in our investigations
- guidance on post-incident management
- the work of our Roads Policing SMN

Case studies referred to throughout the conference tackled common issues encountered in roads policing, focusing on incidents that involved the police and resulted in death or serious injury.

Ninety-five per cent of survey respondents found the conference very or fairly informative.

27. Post-incident management refers to procedures that follow certain serious incidents involving the police that result in death or serious injury or reveal failings in command. These procedures ensure the subsequent investigation is conducted in a manner that supports the wellbeing of relevant parties, secures best evidence and promotes public confidence in the integrity of the process.

# Improving how we meet the needs of our service users

**Every day, we interact with many different people. We are committed to providing the highest possible standard of customer service, but are aware that service users have previously highlighted the need for us to provide more meaningful communication with them.**

To improve the service we provide, we worked towards and gained Customer Service Excellence®<sup>28</sup> accreditation in March 2020.

The Customer Service Excellence standard tests those areas that research has indicated are a priority for customers, with a focus on delivery, timeliness, information, professionalism and staff attitude. There is also emphasis on developing customer insight, understanding the user's experience and robust measurement of service satisfaction.

Before the assessment, we agreed 94 activities to ensure we put service users at the heart of our work. This included developing service user 'personas' and raising awareness of our Service User Standards among staff.

We demonstrated compliance against the 57 assessment criteria and achieved a rating of 'compliance plus' in three areas, meaning we exceeded requirements.

***“I will be sharing my experience with my colleagues so if any of them find themselves under investigation in the future they will be reassured that the investigation...will be conducted promptly and professionally.”***

Anonymous, police officer

28. Customer Service Excellence® is a nationally recognised standard that demonstrates an organisation's commitment to customer service. The accreditation assesses 57 elements, which are split across five key criteria: customer insight; the culture of the organisation; information and access; delivery; and timeliness and quality of service.



The nature of our work means we often interact with customers who don't agree with the outcomes of our investigations or decisions. In this context, not all our customers may be satisfied, but they do have a right to expect high standards and fairness. Achieving this accreditation demonstrates our focus on these areas.

***“There has been a sea change ... I was really concerned about the IPCC and about their general approach to allegations made against police officers. They had almost a default position of the officers having been involved in wrongdoing. Now, with the IOPC, they investigate the facts and the circumstances and do so without prejudice.”***

Police stakeholder, IOPC stakeholder research 2019

## ■ Feedback from service users during the assessment

---

***“Decisions are logical and fair, and relied on the information from the Subject Matter experts; the relationship is good.”***

***“The letter confirmed the outcome of the investigation and the rationale, very clear direction.”***

***“...a good relationship, we can have open and frank discussions regarding the investigation.”***

## ■ Feedback from the assessors

---

***“Employees are professional, patient and respectful and showed customers high levels of understanding and empathy. This was not just anecdotal evidence from interviews: assessors listened in to some live calls and were impressed with how staff handled very difficult conversations.”***

***“Staff endeavoured to contact and build relationships with hard-to-reach and disadvantaged groups and individuals.”***

***“There is a clear, genuine desire for staff at all levels to deliver strong performance results...”***

# Seeking feedback from our stakeholders

## Understanding confidence

We undertake regular surveys of the public to assess their perceptions and awareness of the police, the police complaints system, and our work.

In December 2019, we conducted deliberative research events to help us understand in more detail the things that drive or influence the public's perceptions. Deliberative research is in-depth research to uncover what people think and why. We held two full-day events in London and Leeds, each attended by 50 members of the public who were broadly representative of the local area.

We also held an additional event, which explored the confidence of black members of the public. Understanding the views of BAME people is a key focus for us as our research tells us they have lower confidence in the police complaints system. This event was held in London and attended by 20 people. The results are now informing our future work to

increase confidence of BAME communities in the IOPC and the police complaints system. For example, we are examining how we can use this research to target the information we provide and better engage with BAME communities.

***“We have seen them change quite a lot in a year and actually, from a civil servant’s perspective we know how difficult it is for large organisations to change. I’m impressed with the speed of change.”***

Police accountability stakeholder,  
IOPC stakeholder research 2019

## Stakeholder feedback

Last year we conducted research with our stakeholders to understand their views and seek feedback on our work<sup>29</sup>. Their views are important to our overall success, and provide an indication of their confidence in our work.

The research tells a story of positive change. Stakeholders report better dealings with the IOPC than at any time in the past, as well as an improvement in their favourability towards the organisation. This positive change is attributed to three areas:

- a much-welcomed shift in focus towards learning
- better stakeholder outreach and engagement
- leadership that is listening to stakeholders’ concerns and showing an intention to deal with them

29. Between April and August 2019, we gathered 125 quantitative responses and conducted 25 qualitative interviews with our police stakeholders, police accountability stakeholders and non-police stakeholders. Police accountability stakeholders include organisations such as HMICFRS, the College, the CPS and coroners. Non-police stakeholders includes parliamentarians, local government, charities, community groups and faith organisations.

# Our stakeholders' views

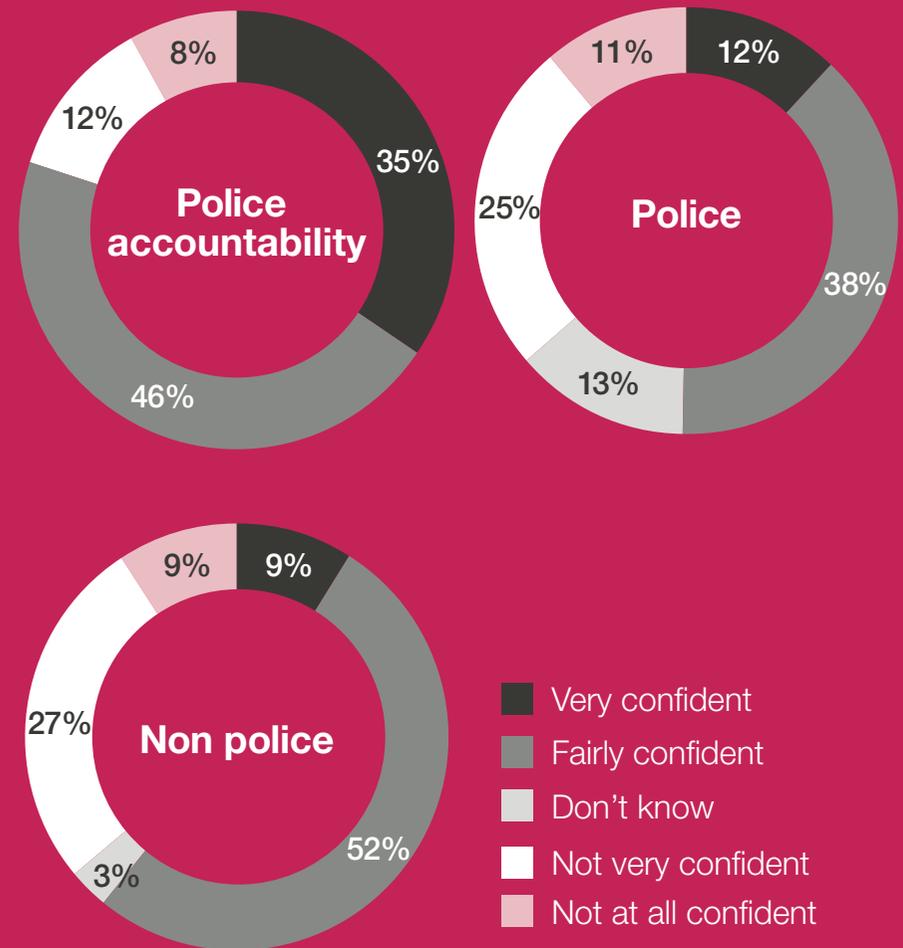
## Overview of performance on key areas

The IOPC has positive net effectiveness\* scores as follows:



\*Net effectiveness is the proportion of respondents who think an organisation is effective minus the proportion who think it is ineffective. The score measures stakeholders' overall perception of the IOPC's effectiveness in relation to our mission and priorities. A plus or minus sign before a figure shows whether an organisation has positive or negative net effectiveness.

## Confidence that the IOPC deals with its work in an impartial way



Source: IOPC Public Perceptions Tracker: Annual 2019/20 report summary.



Ensuring we  
are an effective  
organisation

Independent  
Office for  
Police Conduct  
Staff Network

# Working to continually improve as an organisation and support our workforce to deliver an excellent service

As an efficient and effective organisation, our focus is on attracting and retaining a highly skilled, diverse workforce, providing staff with a good working environment, and ensuring that they are supported.

## A great place to work – what our staff say

Ensuring our staff feel motivated, supported and proud to work for the IOPC is important in making us a great place to work. Higher employee engagement is also linked to better organisational performance. From gathering feedback to monitoring progress, regular staff surveys help us measure this engagement and improve our performance.

Each year, we take part in the Civil Service staff survey. Our staff survey is an indicator of how well we are doing in making the IOPC a great place to work. We expected to see a shift in the results, but these results were beyond expectations with areas such as understanding

of our organisational objectives and purpose now in the Civil Service high-performing range.

The October 2019 staff survey received an 80% response rate, up five percentage points from 2018. The overall response rate for the Civil Service was 67%. Highlights include:

- **staff satisfaction increased across nearly all measures**
- **of the 30 categories measured, 21 showed statistically significant improvements**
- **in some categories, there has been an improvement of nearly 25%**

Our performance in a number of categories is now in line with high-performing Civil Service teams. We need to take a closer look at some categories and consider how we can improve them, but overall, the results suggest we are on the right track.

## Staff survey results 2019

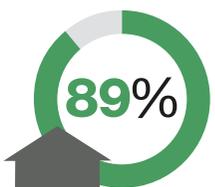
### Engagement index



### Inclusion & fair treatment



### Organisational objectives & purpose



### My team



# Happier and better supported staff

**In response to previous staff survey results which highlighted frustration with recruitment processes, we are streamlining and improving our recruitment processes, as well as developing apprentice and intern programmes.**

During the year, we launched a new leadership and management programme, introduced a leadership charter, and introduced a mentoring and coaching programme for all staff. We also started work to deliver a new digital learning platform, which will give staff access to flexible learning in real-time.

We improved access to wellbeing initiatives and health checks with a new employee assistance provider and developed an employee wellbeing strategy. We also introduced the Stress and Trauma Resilience Employee Assistance Model (STREAM), a bespoke peer-support system available for all staff experiencing stress, low resilience or exposure to trauma.

We recognise that managing staff turnover and absence are important elements in ensuring we have a highly skilled workforce. From 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020, staff turnover<sup>30</sup> was 5.77%, lower than the 9.35% turnover the previous year. Staff sickness and absence was 2.8%, lower than last year's rate of 3.02%.

---

<sup>30</sup>. Staff turnover is the percentage of employees who leave the IOPC and are replaced by new employees.

## Case study

### Supporting staff wellbeing

The nature of our work means our staff sometimes have to deal with difficult and distressing situations, such as attending a fatal incident. Resilience – the capacity to recover quickly from difficult situations – can be impacted by work-related or personal circumstances.

To support wellbeing, we created the Stress and Trauma Resilience Employee Assistance Model (STREAM) to help staff during times of stress, low resilience or exposure to trauma. Forty-seven staff have been trained as STREAM practitioners, with 166 referrals received since launch. This included supporting staff who attended the scene of a fatal shooting.

In November 2019, a STREAM practitioner spoke at a national Wellbeing@Work event attended by over 200 people. They joined panel members from Santander, Thales Group, Deloitte, and Headspace – an organisation known for its meditation app – discussing ways we are implementing wellbeing support for employees.

Since then we have provided advice to other organisations interested in introducing similar initiatives, including the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland and a student accommodation provider.

*“It has legitimised peer support, ensured that staff always have somewhere to turn and ensured that the mental health of colleagues is now talked about in the office and at the forefront of management decisions.”*

Feedback on STREAM assessments

# A more efficient organisation

**We launched an innovation and improvement scheme for staff to share their ideas on making us a more efficient organisation. Since inception, 126 staff-led improvement suggestions have been considered. One of the suggestions resulted in the launch of a group to better manage demand for advanced interviewers and provide advice to support decision-making during investigations.**

To draw together and develop our in-house expertise in key areas, we developed Operational Practitioner Groups. These groups focus on the following areas:

- disclosure
- digital investigations
- investigative interviewing
- learning recommendations
- report writing

These groups are committed to improving the quality and effectiveness of our work by increasing knowledge and specialist skillsets. For example, we established a digital investigations group to improve our capabilities and knowledge on digital evidence. Six members of staff have been trained as digital investigation specialists. They now

provide advice and support on investigations, addressing over 130 requests for assistance during the last year.

We remain committed to providing better systems and equipment for our staff and during the year completed our ICT transformation project. This helped our staff to move quickly to homeworking during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Further information about our budget, workforce data and performance is published in our annual report, available at [www.policconduct.gov.uk](http://www.policconduct.gov.uk)

# Looking ahead

This report provides examples of how we use learning from our work to influence changes in policing, ensure accountability and support best practice. While we know that we can and do make a positive difference, we recognise there is still much more to do.

Our plans are ambitious, but we are determined to bring about further improvements in our own work and across the wider complaints system. Central to this will be our continued focus on listening to those who come into contact with the system, and to those who can provide insight that helps us to achieve our mission.



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:

 [www.policeconduct.gov.uk](http://www.policeconduct.gov.uk)

 [@policeconduct](https://twitter.com/policeconduct)

 [enquiries@policeconduct.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@policeconduct.gov.uk)

 0300 020 0096

Text relay: 18001 0207 166 3000

Write to us at:

**Independent Office for Police Conduct**  
**10 South Colonnade**  
**Canary Wharf**  
**London E14 4PU**

We welcome telephone calls in Welsh  
*Rydym yn croesawu galwadau ôn yn y Gymraeg*

This document is also available in Welsh  
*Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn y Gymraeg hefyd*

September 2020