



IOPC Impact Report 2021/22

## Welcome

Welcome to our Impact Report 2021/22, sharing the highlights of our work and, most importantly, the difference we have made over the year. We have now come to the end of our first three-year strategy which has given us an opportunity to take stock as we launch our new five-year plan.

Despite the disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have continued to perform well. I am pleased to report that 90% of our core investigations were completed within 12 months, surpassing our target, and 35% of our core investigations were completed within six months.

Our focus on learning and improving policing practice is an important part of our work. We made some 180 recommendations in 2021/22, leading to improved training, better policies and guidance, and changes to the way officers go about their work. Our major report and recommendations on the use of Taser is a good example. Our Learning the Lessons magazine continues to share information and best practice, which I know is well received.

Awareness of the IOPC is a key part of how we raise confidence in police accountability. While there is always more work to do in this area,

we're making good progress. In the last year, awareness has increased from half of the public having heard of the IOPC, to almost two thirds.

However, awareness isn't everything – importantly, what do people think of us? While not complacent we are very proud of the feedback we have received, examples of which are quoted in this report.

# Awareness of the IOPC is a key part of how we raise confidence in police accountability

We have continued to focus on making the IOPC a diverse and inclusive organisation to work for, with 81% of staff agreeing that we value diversity. Improvements in this area are helping us to better reflect and serve the public.

Our progress was helped by feedback from members of the public, stakeholders and policing organisations. These conversations have enabled us to understand and recommend improvements to the things that matter most to the public.



As always, I would like to thank our nonexecutive directors for their knowledge, constructive challenge and support, and my management team and staff for their hard work and commitment.

I hope that you enjoy reading about our impact over this past year. We are always looking for ways to improve policing in England and Wales, and to improve ourselves as an organisation. I look forward to continuing that work over the coming years.

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Michael Lockwood
Director General

IOPC Impact Report 2021/22

# Who we are and what we do

We are the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC). We oversee the police complaints system in England and Wales and set and monitor the standards by which the police should handle complaints. We investigate the most serious matters, including allegations of serious corruption, and cases where someone has died or been seriously injured following contact with the police. We also consider certain types of reviews from people who are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been dealt with.

We play a vital role in improving police practice by ensuring the police are accountable for their actions and lessons are learnt. Working with our partners, service users and communities, we use evidence from our work to influence and drive changes to policing, particularly on issues that we know are affecting community and public confidence - for example, our thematic focus on race discrimination in policing and on the police response to violence against women and girls.

As part of our wider oversight work, we provide guidance to help the police handle complaints at a local level. We also monitor the performance of police force professional standards departments and we hold them to account for their performance in complaint handling.

Along with Her Maiestv's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) and the College of Policing we assess and respond to super-complaints. Super-complaints are made by a range of organisations about broad or systemic issues that could affect public confidence in policing.

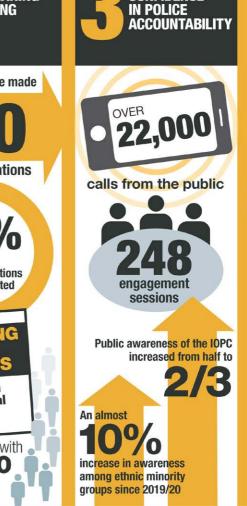
We also have powers in relation to a number of other organisations that are not police forces but have police-like powers, and we investigate criminal allegations against police and crime commissioners and their deputies.

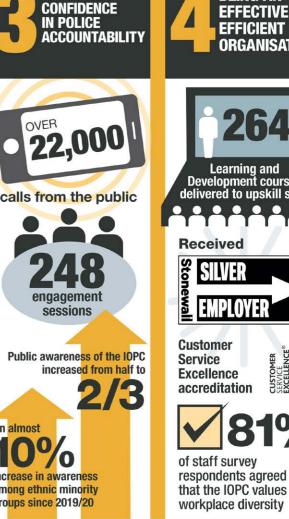
You can read our recommendations, summaries of investigations, and publications on our website.

IOPC Impact Report 2021/22

# Our impact in 2021/22







**IMPROVING** 



Improving public confidence in policing through accountability and learning

"[Your report] was incredibly detailed and I felt you completely understood the entire situation ... you have addressed every point so well the whole way through. ... Thank you for your support and communication."

**Feedback from service user** 



# PRIORITY 1: 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 fair outcomes, that are based on the evidence, in a timely way.

We play a key role in making sure that complaints are dealt with in a reasonable and proportionate way. We ensure police officers and staff are held to account and that they learn and improve the service they provide.

### CASE STUDY

### Issuing remedies after a stop and search incident

As an IOPC casework manager, I assess reviews when people are unhappy with the outcome of their complaint to the police. I review the actions the police took to resolve the complaint and look for opportunities for them to improve the service they provide. I can direct the police to look into the complaint again, identify areas of learning and recommend remedies to resolve the issues. Examples of remedies include an apology, return of property or reflective practice for police officers.

In one case, a complaint was made to the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) after officers stopped, handcuffed and searched a 12-year-old Black child suspected of being part of a group reported for 'playing' with a large knife. The search did not find a knife or any evidence of an offence.

The MPS concluded that the stop was not discriminatory, and that excessive force was not used. However, it did find that the service provided was not acceptable and decided to address it through the Reflective Practice Review Process. In this process officers reflect, learn, and put things right

where necessary to prevent any problems from re-occurring.

The mother and child were not happy with this outcome and asked the IOPC to formally review their complaint. They were particularly concerned that the child was stopped because they were Black, and how their personal information would be used following the encounter with the police.

#### I established that an officer handcuffed the child before offering any explanation of the stop

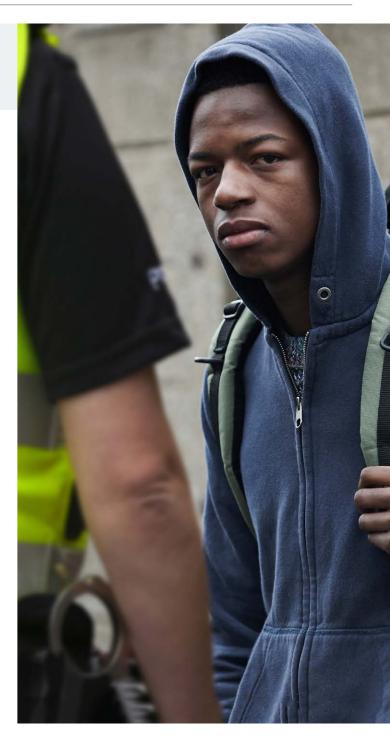
At the IOPC, we have a group of staff who provide specialist advice on complaints concerning race and discrimination. Members highlighted some useful resources to consider including an MPS report on routine handcuffing, the IOPC's stop and search recommendations to the MPS, and the poster guide 'Hints and tips for officers when coming into contact with young people' produced by the IOPC Youth Panel.

I established that an officer handcuffed the child before offering any explanation of the stop. The officer also implied that they routinely handcuffed anyone they stopped and searched – which goes against the rules governing stop and search and contradicts the best practice set out in resources I had read.

Based on this evidence, I was satisfied the officer did not stop the child because they were Black, and therefore their actions were non-discriminatory. However, I did feel that the child should have been given more of an opportunity to explain themselves, and that the officer should have offered an apology when nothing was found.

I made three additional remedies to resolve the issues of the complaint and help the MPS to learn from the incident. As a result, the MPS:

- issued an apology to the child
- reassured the family by explaining how their child's personal information would be used
- expanded the officer's Reflective Practice Review Process to consider the learning I had identified and the resources I reviewed



### **PRIORITY 1**

To work with others to improve the police complaints system

#### Our work on reviews

The majority of complaints from the public are dealt with by police forces. When someone is not happy with how the police handled their complaint, they have a right of review to the IOPC or the local policing body.

Reviewing complaints is a key aspect of our work in holding the police to account. When we complete a review, we assess whether the outcome of a complaint was reasonable and proportionate. This means doing what is appropriate in the circumstances, taking into account the facts and the context in which the complaint was raised.



proportionate.

# Working with forces to improve the complaints system

On 1 February 2020, legal changes were made to the police complaints system to make it simpler, more effective and more customer focused. This includes a duty on police and crime commissioners to oversee and review local complaints.

This year, we worked closely with them, and others with similar responsibilities, to understand these changes and put them into practice. Our interactive workshops focused on the understanding of reasonable and proportionate handling, and the outcomes available to review handlers if they disagree with a complaint decision. This helped to improve the quality of complaint handling and the service provided to the public.

"It was very useful to have the opportunity to discuss the topics with you (the IOPC) and local policing bodies colleagues. ... it is helpful to share best practice and bring questions to the table."

Feedback provided by a workshop attendee

"It really was a good session and very well received by the team. Some of the more experienced members found it good as a refresher too."

Feedback provided by a workshop attendee

All attendees stated they were likely to attend further workshops and 83% of attendees stated that their understanding of reasonable and proportionate handling had improved as a result of attending the workshop.

We also ran workshops with forces to increase their understanding of the definition and referral process to the IOPC for death and serious injury cases. These were attended by 55 staff from the professional standards departments across eight forces.

## **PRIORITY 1**

#### Working with others to improve the police complaints system

#### **Our investigations**

Police forces must refer the most serious cases to us. We decide whether an investigation is necessary and, if so, what level of involvement we should have.

Every year since 2018, the number of referrals we receive has grown. In 2021/22 we received 5,423 referrals. The number of referrals we received where sexual assault or harassment was identified as a factor increased by two thirds, compared to 2020/21. During this time, we recognised the increasing public concern relating to cultural attitudes in policing and the police response to violence against women and girls.



In 2021/22, we started a total of 387 independent investigations, including 20 major investigations. (Major investigations are large scale or more complex cases such as Operation Linden - an investigation into historic child sexual exploitation in Rotherham). The kind of cases we are taking on are changing, becoming more complex as we focus on issues having the most impact on public confidence. This includes more multi-strand investigations, higher volumes of digital evidence and the need to support more vulnerable witnesses.

During the year, we completed 421 independent investigations including six major investigations. Our outcomes reports provide transparency about what happens following our investigations and can be found on our website.

We exceeded our target to complete 85% of core independent investigations within 12 months, achieving 90%. We also achieved our target to complete 35% of our core investigations within six months.

Throughout 2021/22, we continued to investigate cases on themes of concern to the public and police. Our current thematic areas are domestic abuse, road traffic incidents, mental health, race discrimination and abuse of power for sexual purpose. Last year we completed 85 thematic investigations, with the majority completed within 12 months.

"A really important role for the IOPC is things like the Taser report that it recently issued, so not just looking at those individual cases but also bringing it together and looking more thematically as well"

**Feedback from stakeholder** 



# PRIORITY 2: 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 can lead to changes at a local or national level to policy, training, equipment, systems, and policing practices. Changes made in response to our recommendations ultimately improve policing for everyone and build confidence.

### CASE STUDY

# National changes to training for police officers on using Taser in the presence of a child

#### We investigated nine complaints made by a man who was repeatedly tasered during his arrest, while a child was with him.

We set up a community reference group to understand the impact of this case. Through our discussions, we heard concerns about the disproportionate use of Taser on Black men and noted a disparity between some expectations about when a Taser can be used, and how national guidance allows it to be used.

We examined the actions of officers during and after the man's arrest, their use of force, and whether the man was treated less favourably because he was Black.

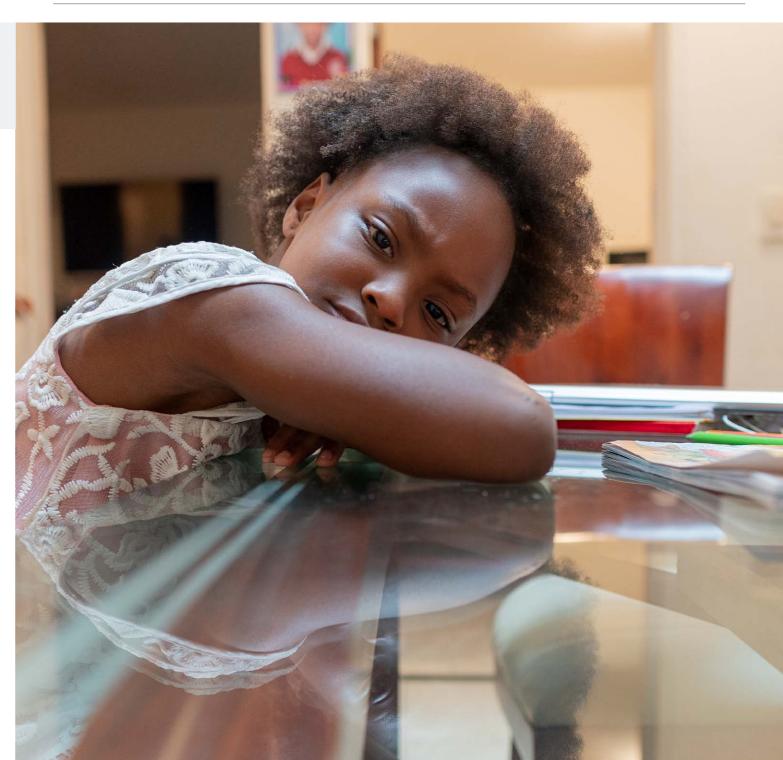
We concluded that officers had acted in line with the relevant policies, guidance and procedures. We also found no evidence to suggest the complainant's ethnicity was a factor in the decision to use force against him. However, we identified several areas of learning for Greater Manchester Police (GMP), as well as changes needed at a national level. As a result of our recommendation, the College of Policing updated its national guidance on the use of Taser. All officers are now required to consider the potential implications of Taser use in the presence of a child.

GMP developed a new Taser Standard Operating Procedure, which includes guidance on when it might be appropriate to use Taser in an environment where there are risk factors.

# As a result of our recommendation, the College of Policing updated their national quidance on the use of Taser

GMP also accepted our recommendation to ensure that officers are aware of their language when justifying their use of force. They should not refer to commonly held stereotypes that might make their actions seem discriminatory.

We shared and discussed the outcome with the community reference group so that it understood how we had come to our decision.



## **PRIORITY 2**

To improve policing by identifying and sharing learning from our work

# Organisational learning recommendations

We make learning recommendations to the police and other organisations following our investigations, reviews and thematic work.

Our recommendations help to ensure that lessons are learnt, and policing practice improves to prevent issues from happening again. We discuss potential learning recommendations with our stakeholders and intended recipients, so that our recommendations are relevant, accurate and have the greatest impact.

Recipients are required to provide a response to certain recommendations within 56 days (if issued under Paragraph 28A of Schedule 3 of the *Police Reform Act 2002*). Of these recommendations where we received a response, 92% of local recommendations were accepted and 96% of national recommendations were accepted.

During the year, we made around

180

recommendations aimed at improving policing, including changes to policy, guidance and training.

# Sharing learning to improve police practice

Our research consistently shows that members of the public who make a complaint about the police want them to learn from it.

We are pleased to see that our stakeholders firmly support our priority to identify and share learning, and that they are positive about our published learning materials, which can all be found on our website.

Since 2007, we have published Learning the Lessons magazines to share learning from our investigations and reviews. Each issue contains case studies and reflective questions for policy makers, officers, and policing staff to proactively consider what they could do to prevent similar incidents from occurring in their force. The magazines also include contributions from external organisations, which helps highlight work happening nationally to support our learning work.

Last year, we published Issue 39 of the magazine, which focused on child sexual abuse. Themes included failure to progress investigations, and intelligence around indecent images of children.

We shared the magazine with over 1,500 of our stakeholders, including police complaint handlers and learning and development leads. We also hosted two learning sessions for staff to hear from the external contributors to the magazine and increase their understanding of the issues.

"It brought us all together internally with our policing stakeholders to think about the shared agenda - appreciating the challenges and different perspectives and how we work together... Well done"

**Policy and Engagement Manager, IOPC** 

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### CASE STUDY

### National guidance on delivering a death message

As a result of our learning recommendation, the College of Policing will develop advice for police officers on delivering a death message. This will include consideration of circumstances when the person receiving the message is not in their own home.

This followed an IOPC investigation where a woman had died at the home address of her expartner. Her family was informed of her death at the scene, while in their car with another family member on a car hands-free device. The family were then allowed to drive home without considerations for potential welfare support. Although officers from the force did follow in a separate vehicle it appears that no dynamic risk assessment was undertaken, given the circumstances in which the family were informed of her death.

The College of Policing will also review its training on delivering a death message to ensure that the need to consider welfare and health and safety is included.



## **PRIORITY 2**

#### To improve policing by identifying and sharing learning from our work

#### **Thematic learning on Taser**

Last year we reviewed 101 independent IOPC investigations that involved Taser use - over a five-year period from 2015 to 2020. We considered existing data and literature and listened to the views and concerns expressed by community groups and stakeholders.

In response to the issues we identified, we made 17 learning recommendations to several national organisations. These were focused on training and guidance, scrutiny and monitoring of Taser use, data and research, and community engagement.



We also called for increased national scrutiny on the discharge of Taser by police on children. Supported by the National Police Chiefs' Council, we wrote to all forces, encouraging them to refer matters to us involving the use of Taser on a child. We want to establish better knowledge of the circumstances of each incident, and why the discharge was felt necessary by a police officer.

We will continue to monitor the impact of this work to increase public confidence in the police use of Taser.



### CASE STUDY

### Officer jailed for pursuing women for sexual purposes

We completed an independent investigation into the conduct of a police officer who had pursued six vulnerable women he met through his duties. He had sexual contact with three and sought to establish sexual contact with the others.

The officer had used police computer systems for non-policing purposes to get information about women. He also propositioned women for sex in their homes while their children were in the property.

The officer had sent hundreds of text messages to multiple women while he was on duty and sent obscene and sexually explicit texts to women. He also requested they send intimate photographs of themselves.

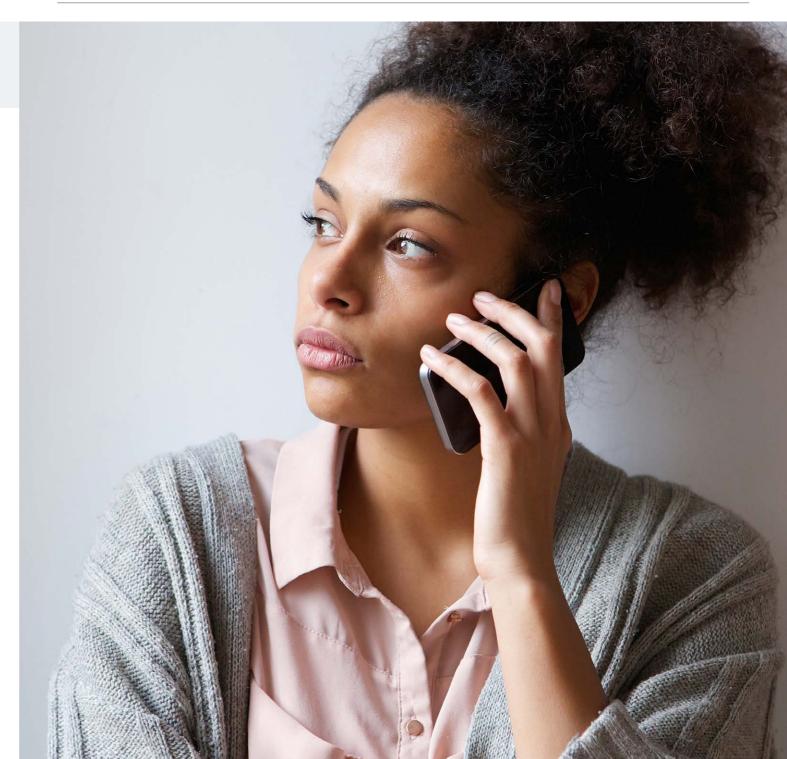
We concluded the officer had a case to answer for gross misconduct because the evidence suggested that the conduct of the officer was intentional, deliberate, targeted and planned. The former officer was jailed for over three years

and was placed on the College of Policing's barred list preventing future employment with the police.

Following our investigation, the force updated its training on abuse of power for sexual purpose and amended its social media policies on the use of WhatsApp.

"I would like to thank the IOPC for contacting me and for their incredible support ... Without the phone call from them I would have carried these feelings forever. I now realise I am not to blame; I was a victim and I hope at the end of this case there is justice"

Feedback from a witness



## **PRIORITY 3**

To improve confidence in police accountability

# Abuse of power for a sexual purpose

Abuse of power for a sexual purpose is the single largest form of police corruption the IOPC deals with. In the last two years we have seen a tripling of press queries about this subject area. This reflects the growing focus in both public concern and the work happening across policing to tackle the problem.

The public expect us to be open and transparent in our communications about our work. In October, we issued a press release in response to increasing public concerns about police who abuse their position for a sexual purpose. This resulted in significant reporting - across radio, television and print media. This included 323 online news articles with a combined reach of 500 million readers.

During this month, our Media team received twice as many queries on abuse of power than any other single month in the last three years.

#### **Building confidence** through transparency

Last year we published our learning report into the nine linked investigations known as Operation Hotton, which identified evidence of bullying and discrimination by officers predominantly based at Charing Cross Police Station.

Our learning report contained examples of the messages shared by some officers. Whilst we acknowledged that this could offend and upset the public, we felt it was necessary to promote transparency and provide context for our recommendations.

The report led to widespread calls for the Metropolitan Police Service to address the cultural issues identified. Our report has been described by various stakeholders as a watershed moment in policing.

"The report is truly shocking. The casual sexism and misogyny was an eye opener, even to me. And the rest - racism, bullying etc. The report was well written, hard hitting and the quotes spoke volumes. Thanks to... all at IOPC involved - for doing this really important thematic work towards change"

Stakeholder

On the day it was issued it was a lead story for the BBC, as well as national and regional media. We also carried out broadcast interviews on several BBC platforms and spoke to LBC radio.

In the week after publication, Operation Hotton had an immediate impact. 'Charing Cross' trended on Twitter and key terms relating to the report featured in Google searches, prompting discussion on social media platforms. In the following two months, there was still a great deal of interest in our report. Around 1,700 people had read our Operation Hotton media releases and/or learning report on our website.

Since its publication there have been nearly 500 news stories and blogs about Operation Hotton worldwide. It has been covered prominently in the United States and in countries including India, Italy and New Zealand.

The Metropolitan Police Service fully accepted our recommendations and agreed to publicly commit to a position of zero-tolerance on racism, misogyny, bullying and harassment, as well as being an anti-racist organisation. Our recommendations were also considered as part of the National Police Chiefs' Council Race Action Plan.

## **PRIORITY 3**

To improve confidence in police accountability

#### **Working with stakeholders**

In 2021/22, we held around 250 engagement sessions with a diverse range of stakeholders across England and Wales. This helped us to understand the diverse communities we serve, and the issues in policing that are of greatest concern.

In our latest survey, our stakeholders spoke highly about how we engaged with them and how they appreciate the efforts we have made to be more open, accessible and proactive.

"I've always found anyone that I have interacted with to be really professional and transparent... We can have that two-way dialogue from one organisation to another"

Stakeholder

Race discrimination and stop and search were regularly raised as areas of concern, particularly about how stop and search powers are used, and the impact this can have on individuals.

#### "There is really good engagement. It's professional, it's collaborative, it's open and fair"

**Policing stakeholder** 

Our discussions with stakeholders were vital to developing our national stop and search learning report. We listened to the views of academics, members of our Youth Panel, policing experts, police and crime commissioners, HMICFRS, the National Black Policing Association and community scrutiny and advisory groups, to ensure our report had the greatest impact.

We will continue to monitor the impact of our recommendations. We welcome consideration of our recommendations as part of the National Police Chiefs' Council and College of Policing's Police Race Action Plan.

# Our Stop & Search learning report made

learning recommendations to national organisations

# Working with children and young people

Our Youth Panel is made up of around 40 young people aged 16-25, who help us to better understand the concerns of young people and improve their low confidence in policing and the police complaints system.

Last year the Panel met with over 125 young people to talk through the issues affecting young people's perceptions and levels of trust in the police. The Panel's second report sets out several recommendations that we are working with the Panel to deliver.

These recommendations include:

- developing a national young people's survey to gather views on policing on an annual basis
- increasing officers' knowledge of the communities they are policing and exploring improvements to training

"The way we speak to children can make a huge difference. You never know what problems they may be going through and the way we portray ourselves and our communication methods will affect how they respond to us"

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Policing stakeholder who attended a meeting with the Youth Panel

The Youth Panel also supported the creation of an IOPC Instagram account to increase the visibility of our work and improve accessibility for young people to information about the complaints system. Together, we launched the ongoing 'Know your Rights' social media campaign, developed to inform young people about their rights in areas, such as stop and search.







# PRIORITY 4: TO BE AN EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT ORGANISATION

We will attract and retain a highly skilled diverse workforce and provide our people with a good working environment, while continually improving to provide value for money. Our ambition is to be a great place to work. We strive to improve the diversity of our workforce and better represent the communities we serve.

## **PRIORITY 4**

To be an effective and efficient organisation

#### Being an inclusive organisation

As an inclusive organisation we are committed to promoting equality and valuing diversity in everything we do.

Last year we made significant progress on initiatives that build a workplace culture that respects and values difference, making the IOPC an even better place to work. This variety of backgrounds and experience helps us to better work for and empathise with communities.

#### **Reverse mentoring programme**

This initiative focused on mentors from ethnic minority backgrounds and supports us to appreciate the experiences and respond to the needs of our staff and service users. It has helped senior leaders understand and resolve some of the personal and organisational barriers faced by colleagues and have an increased awareness of the impact of their decisionmaking and the working practices they oversee.

"We created a safe space to allow both parties to be tenacious and open in learning and undertaking respectful challenge. We were able to develop growth mindsets and reflect on learnt behaviours that reinforce negative societal attitudes, help to eradicate any ignorance [and] remove any bias"

A staff member who participated in the programme

# Staff networks help us understand the impact of our work

Our staff networks play a key role in understanding the effect of our work on a particular community or people with a protected characteristic.

Our Pride LGBTQ+ staff network has provided significant support to a high-profile investigation which has impacted the LGBTQ+ community and wider public. This involved giving the investigation team information on intersectionality between LGBTQ+ and sex or gender, and guiding them on the use of inclusive and sensitive language in their reports. Staff network members also attended two community meetings to help foster communication and a better relationship with local people affected by the incident.

Despite the widespread media publicity, the network felt there was limited internal communication about the impact the case had had on the LGBTQ+ community. They hosted a forum where network members could express their concerns and be listened to by senior leaders and other staff.

Senior leaders acknowledged the concerns of staff and recognised that the organisation could do more to provide support for staff and improve its internal communications. They shared a blog post promoting LGBTQ+ inclusion and invited staff to share their pronouns in their email signatures.

Following this meeting, the LGBTQ+ network lead for the Metropolitan Police Service asked to meet with our Pride LGBTQ+ network. This meeting was really positive, and they were keen to understand more about our pronouns project to increase guidance on gender identity and how they could implement this. We have provided advice to the MPS on how it can improve their equality diversity and inclusion training.

#### **Stonewall Silver Award 2022**

We were awarded the Silver Employer Award in Stonewall's Workplace Equality Index for 2022. This is a great achievement and recognition of our efforts to become an LGBTQ+ employer.

## **PRIORITY 4**

To be an effective and efficient organisation



# **Aspiring Professionals Programme**

Our Aspiring Professionals Programme is a paid four-week placement at the IOPC, which aims to provide opportunities to those from marginalised and diverse backgrounds, who have an interest in a career in the IOPC or wider public sector.

All candidates felt more confident about applying for IOPC or public sector roles in the future. We are pleased that six of the professionals who completed the programme, secured roles within the IOPC.



# Find out more

We share all our publications and communication via our website.

- Our Annual Report describes our progress towards achieving the work we committed to in our Business Plan. It contains information about our performance audited accounts.
- Our Outcomes Report provides transparency about what happens following our investigations in the past year.
- We produce a range of publications that share learning from our work. We also publish investigation summaries and learning recommendations.
- Our Youth Panel has reached out to young people to understand their views and published new research.





Contact us to find out more about our work or to request this report in an alternative format:

www.policeconduct.gov.uk

Follow us on Twitter: @policeconduct

Email us at: enquiries@policeconduct.gov.uk

Call us on: 0300 020 0096

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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.

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