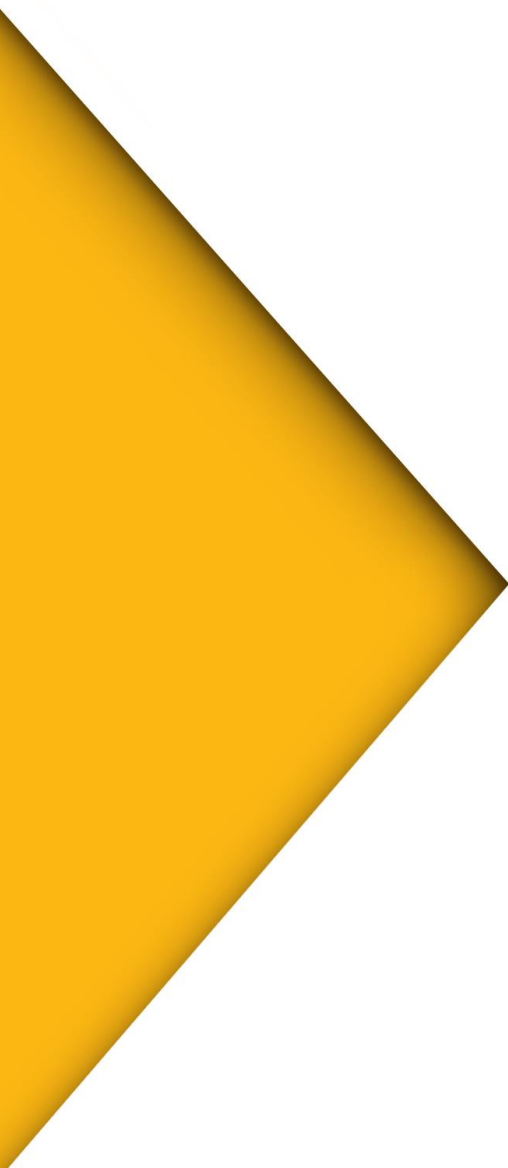


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Enhanced engagement

Information for interested persons

July 2026

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What is enhanced engagement?

The IOPC is subject to legal obligations to provide information under the *Police Reform Act 2002*. However, there are now certain categories of investigations involving the most serious incidents, such as deaths or very serious injuries, where we need to do more than the statutory scheme provides to allow effective participation in an investigation. In these cases, enhanced engagement will apply.

When the IOPC determines that enhanced engagement applies to an investigation, the bereaved family, next of kin, or the injured person themselves, will receive an enhanced level of information so they know more about the investigation.

The types of investigations where enhanced engagement will apply include:

- Any death case where Article 2 is (or is arguably) engaged, for example deaths in custody or police shootings.
- Where a use of force, or other police action, has created a threat to life arguably engaging Article 2, which has caused or contributed to a serious injury likely to substantially impact the person's ability to effectively participate in the investigation.

The application of enhanced engagement will depend on the particular facts of each investigation.

Who does enhanced engagement apply to?

Enhanced engagement is about engaging effectively with families when a person has died or is seriously injured. While enhanced engagement will not apply to all complainants, or other interested persons in the investigation, when a decision is made that enhanced engagement applies to an investigation, all interested persons and stakeholders will be informed for openness and transparency.

When a person has died, enhanced engagement will apply to the bereaved family or next of kin. This may be via a representative.

In cases where a person has suffered a serious injury, enhanced engagement will apply to the injured person, which may be through a representative. If the injury suffered is likely to substantially impact the person's ability to participate in the investigation, enhanced engagement will apply to their family or loved ones, which again may be through a representative.

Enhanced engagement will be offered to relevant families / individuals and will be available for them until the end of the investigation. Where enhanced engagement is offered, families are not obliged to participate. While we refer to 'families' in the remainder of this note, the engagement applies to any person to whom enhanced engagement applies.

What happens when there is enhanced engagement?

Enhanced engagement provides individuals or bereaved families in certain types of investigations, as set out above, with an opportunity for greater engagement in the investigation. The IOPC will work closely with the family to understand the level of involvement they want in the investigation and will tailor the enhanced engagement to suit their requirements.

When enhanced engagement applies to an investigation, the IOPC will inform other interested parties or stakeholders involved in the investigation, such as the appropriate authority, Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), and Coroner.

The lead investigator will inform the appropriate authority when an investigation is subject to enhanced engagement. In their 28-day update letter, the lead investigator will proactively request and consider representations on any material which should not be shared for public interest, prejudice or other relevant reasons (the "harm test"), and any corresponding redactions required. This will ensure that the lead investigator is already aware of any material that may need to be withheld when sharing key investigative material with the family.

The IOPC will confirm what material has been shared with the family in the 28-day update letter to the appropriate authority.

Enhanced engagement for criminal investigations

For criminal investigations, the IOPC will engage with the CPS to identify any concerns the CPS may have about the impact enhanced engagement will have on prospective criminal proceedings. The lead investigator will inform the CPS lawyer what information they plan to share, subject to the harm test, with the family during the investigation. The IOPC will request any representations on the harm test from the CPS lawyer. The IOPC will confirm what material has been shared with the family in the 28-day update letter to the CPS lawyer.

Enhanced engagement for inquests

When an inquest takes place, the lead investigator will engage with the Coroner to obtain their views about any concern of prejudice to the inquest in enhanced engagement investigations. However, as the IOPC is sharing information to comply with its own legal obligations, this is separate to the disclosure process for the inquest proceedings. The IOPC will carefully consider any views expressed by the Coroner before sharing material.

However, the decision to share documents or material with the family, once the harm test has been applied, remains the responsibility of the IOPC. The IOPC will confirm

what material has been shared with the family in the 28-day update letter to the Coroner.

Enhanced engagement for investigations

In enhanced engagement investigations, the IOPC will share the terms of reference with the family. The family will be offered the opportunity to provide representations on the terms of reference to the IOPC. This should not result in any significant delay to the investigation, as the investigation can still be progressed while the terms of reference are being reviewed by the family.

The IOPC will tell families about key investigative decisions, explain why we have made decisions, what the decisions mean, why we have decided to carry out certain lines of enquiry and, where applicable, why we are not carrying out lines of enquiry.

The IOPC will explain to families what evidence we have gathered during the investigation, and what the evidence means. We will also explain, in plain English, relevant legislation and policies that apply in the investigation.

In enhanced engagement investigations, the IOPC may also share additional documents, including audio or visual material where applicable. The IOPC will seek representations about the harm test in some circumstances, when making the decision to share documents or material.

The IOPC may also provide a copy of the draft final report to the family, agreeing a period of time to allow the family to review the report. The IOPC will answer any questions the family have about the evidence recorded in the draft final report and review representations where the family believe further lines of enquiry could be pursued to address the terms of reference

The IOPC will not routinely share the draft final report with other interested persons. On some occasions, the draft final report may need to be shared with the appropriate authority before it is shared with the family. The purpose of this is to seek any representations on the harm test and redactions. However, standard practice in enhanced engagement investigations will be to engage with the appropriate authority to seek representations on the harm test and redactions during the course of the investigation. This is to ensure this information is available when sharing key investigative material with families and to avoid the delays that could occur if this is completed at the end of the investigation.

The IOPC may also provide the family with the decision maker's opinion document, at the same time it is shared with the appropriate authority.

Referral to the CPS

In investigations where the IOPC is required to decide whether to refer the matter to the CPS, this decision will be shared with the family. If the IOPC has investigated

potential criminal offences, the IOPC's Victim's Right to Review (VRR) scheme applies.

In cases where the IOPC has not investigated potential offences, the family has the opportunity to comment on the assessment that there is no indication of a criminal offence when this decision is initially made.

Will enhanced engagement affect the timeliness of the investigation?

In practical terms, enhanced engagement could have some impact on the timeliness of the investigation. However, most of the engagement with the family should not delay the IOPC continuing with other aspects of the investigation.

At the start of the investigation, when setting the terms of reference and considering timescales, enhanced engagement will be one of the factors that will be considered. Our terms of reference will set out timescales for the investigation, which will include any additional time required to effectively engage with the family.

Enhanced engagement provides families with an opportunity for greater engagement in the investigation. The IOPC will listen to, and consider, representations from the families. However, the responsibility for the decision making in the investigation is ultimately that of the IOPC, in line with legislation and statutory guidance.

Published July 2026

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