

OVERSIGHT

newsletter

Welcome to our bi-monthly newsletter which provides updates about the work of the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC). The newsletter is for complaint handlers in forces and local policing bodies (LPBs).

Information for police

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

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

Introducing Learning the Lessons 47 (use of force)

On 6 May, we published [issue 47 of our Learning the Lessons magazine](#) on use of force. We encourage you to read and share this edition with your colleagues to highlight opportunities for reflective learning and help share examples of best practice. Key themes in this edition include use of restraint, incapacitant spray, taser, firearms, mental health, and children and young people.

Issue 47 features ten, new case studies based on real investigations and reviews completed by the IOPC.

Please complete our [three-minute feedback survey](#) to tell us what you think about this issue. **The survey closes on 1 July 2026.**

If you have any upcoming conferences, meetings, or training events you can request a small pack of free hard copies of issue 47, or previous editions. If you would like hard copies of Learning the Lessons sent to your office, please email learning@policeconduct.gov.uk.

Commissioning Further Work leaflet

Commissioning further work is used when the information obtained during an investigation or complaint handling is not sufficient for the IOPC to determine a review. It allows the appropriate authority to conduct new lines of enquiry, that could yield evidence that was not previously revealed, commented on or properly considered by the investigating officer / complaint handler. It prevents the need to initiate a full re-investigation.

The new information is then assessed as part of the review by the IOPC to determine its impact and whether any further steps are required.

This approach has huge benefits for everyone involved in the complaints process. It can improve timeliness by avoiding unnecessary re-investigations, address gaps or discrepancies of concern to the complainant, and reduce the demand on police resources.

The IOPC has produced a new commissioning further work leaflet for complaint handlers, investigating officers and Professional Standards Departments (PSDs) to better understand the process and benefits. The leaflet is attached to this newsletter and we encourage you to familiarise yourself with this guidance. If you have any questions, please contact oversight@policeconduct.gov.uk.

Reminder: Complaints handling toolkit and guidance

We encourage forces to make use of our [complaint handling toolkit](#) and guidance, to assist complaint handlers and investigators within PSD's when handling or investigating complaints about police officers.

The toolkit is a useful resource, that guides and prompts complaint handlers through the police complaints process, and is designed to achieve best practice and greater consistency across all police forces. You might choose to use it as a standalone document, or use particular pages from it to include in your own templates.

It is hoped that using the checklists in the toolkit can prevent issues arising from your complaint handling.

We recently carried out some focused reviews work with a force and found that simple steps highlighted in the toolkit were not being done, resulting in upheld reviews which could easily be avoided. Therefore, we do recommend refreshing your knowledge of the toolkit and making sure that complaint handlers are aware of it and using the guidance within it.

Two new forms for sending information to the IOPC

On 15 May, we emailed you to share two new forms for sending information to the IOPC:

- an updated 7.1 referrals form and
- a new form for submitting background papers for suspended investigations or other handling cases

Please refer to the email for a copy of the forms and share the information with members of your team. Both forms should be used with immediate effect. They will help you to provide the information the IOPC needs to make decisions.

'Introduction to the IOPC' online course for College of Policing

The Oversight team created an 'Introduction to the IOPC' online course for the College of Policing. This was published on 21 May 2026 and is available on the College's learning platform, College Learn.

This course will become a part of the curriculum for all student officers and staff, so that new recruits gain a comprehensive understanding of the IOPC from the outset. Also, existing police officers or staff members with access to College Learn will be able to access the course.

The programme offers an insight into the history of the IOPC, the work we do, and the ways we contribute to strengthening the police complaints system. The course also covers what police officers and staff should expect if they are part of an IOPC review or an independent investigation,

and insights on the IOPC's responsibilities. We believe this resource will help build awareness of the IOPC and our work, and foster positive engagement across policing.

To help maximise its impact, we kindly ask you to promote the course and encourage participation among your staff and officers. Your support in spreading the word will help ensure the course reaches everyone who can benefit from it.

If you have any queries or would like more information about the course, please contact oversight@policeconduct.gov.uk.

Notifying complainants of a referral to the IOPC

The IOPC Assessment Unit has recently seen an increase in queries from complainants who informed us they did not know that their complaint had been referred to the IOPC.

Some complainants told us that they had received no communication from the police force about their complaint, and the IOPC's letter to them explaining the referral decision was their first contact.

As a result of this, we would like to remind appropriate authorities of their duty to contact complainants about their complaint, particularly to inform them of the date it was recorded and referred to the IOPC.

Paragraphs 4 and 13, Schedule 3 of the *Police Reform Act 2002* state:

Whenever a local policing body or chief officer refers a complaint or conduct matter to the IOPC, it must notify:

- **the complainant** (if there is one); and
- *the person complained against or to whose conduct the matter relates unless it would prejudice an investigation or possible future investigation of the complaint or matter.*

Also, the IOPC Statutory Guidance states:

*The body responsible for the initial handling of the complaint must contact the complainant and seek their views on how the complaint should be handled. Where it is immediately obvious that the complaint is one that must be recorded...the body responsible for initial handling may record the complaint before contacting the complainant. **After recording, the complainant must still be contacted.***

While we appreciate that attempts to contact the complainant should not delay the referral of a complaint to the IOPC, appropriate authorities are reminded to notify the complainant as soon as a referral is made.

? Common questions from forces and LPBs

We often receive several queries on the same theme or topic. We grouped the queries into themes and for this newsletter, we focussed on the topic of **eligibility** in making a complaint.

Q: Are PSD's able to accept a lasting power of attorney as a reasonable proof of consent for complaints made on behalf of somebody else?

A: Para 5.11 of the IOPC Statutory Guidance states that we must have written consent from a person to confirm that they are happy for someone else to act on their behalf. However, we understand there may be circumstances where this is not possible. In such circumstances, decision makers should look at whether there is a formal arrangement in place, such as a lasting power of attorney or being a court appointed 'deputy'.

If there is documented evidence to indicate that a person has a lasting power of attorney to act on behalf of someone, a PSD may accept this as consent for a complaint to be made on behalf of someone else.

Q: A complainant must be a member of the public, but what about those working alongside the police?

A: Joint agencies who work alongside the police, such as fire, ambulance and social workers, would still be deemed members of public, even when performing their duties alongside the police. Such individuals would be able to make complaints as members of the public, as they will not be under the direction and control of the chief constable.

However, professionals working together should have avenues available to them, to provide feedback about matters/encounters that happen as part of their working relationship. This does not detract from or prevent the right to complain under the *Police Reform Act 2002*. Clarifying with the individual whether they would like to raise feedback for their organisation or whether they want to exercise their rights under the *Police Reform Act 2002*, would be an important step in that process.

For further guidance on who can make a complaint and particularly on the requirement for a complainant to be 'adversely affected', please also refer to guidance in [Focus issue 13](#).

Q. A complaint was received from a former officer who previously worked in police force A with another officer that moved to police force B. The former officer made a complaint to police force A about the officer, who has since retired. Should the force record the complaint/conduct?

The person making the complaint is a former officer from police force A. The complaint relates to something that happened when he was under the direction and control of the same chief constable as the officer complained about. Therefore, the former officer is not eligible to be a complainant under the *Police Reform Act 2002*.

However, in relation to the conduct; if the officer being complained about has moved to another force, this should be forwarded to the new force to consider whether there is any conduct that requires investigation.

If the officer has retired or left policing, police force B, as the appropriate authority, should consider the conduct. If it does meet the conduct threshold, then police force A would still need to be involved in any conduct investigation, but police force B would remain the appropriate authority. If it does not, then it should be treated as intelligence and passed back to police force A as it relates to their force.

Q: Can family members be considered 'adversely affected' when related to the complainant or the officer under investigation?

A: Section 5.6 of the IOPC Statutory guidance states that to be adversely affected, a person must have either:

- suffered any form of loss, damage, distress, or inconvenience as a result of the matter complained about
- been put in danger, or
- otherwise unduly put at risk of being adversely affected

[Focus issue 13](#) provides examples of family members being adversely affected by the actions of the police.

Where it is unclear from the complaint whether the family members reach the definition of being adversely affected, the appropriate authority can ask for more detail and seek clarification to inform its recording and handling options.

Corporate news

IOPC figures show more police referrals than ever before

Figures released by the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) reveal a record number of referrals from police forces – and a big increase in the number of independent investigations taken on by the police watchdog.

End-of-year data shows the IOPC received 7,088 referrals in 2025-26 – the most over a 12-month period since IOPC’s inception – and completed more than 7,000 referrals for the first time in our history. [Read more on our website.](#)

New IOPC events aim to improve police response to violence against women

Domestic abuse support groups and women’s charities are sharing experiences of women and girls who’ve suffered physical and sexual violence, at a series of events arranged by the IOPC aimed at improving the police response to survivors.

The events follow extensive IOPC engagement with more than 100 VAWG organisations, academics and activists who have disclosed survivors’ experiences of how police have dealt with their cases and any related use of the police complaints system. [Read more on our website.](#)

IOPC responds to Children's Commissioner's report on child strip searches

Andrew Johnson, IOPC Director for Policy, Strategy and Impact, said: “We welcome the latest [report](#) from the Children’s Commissioner regarding strip searches of children outside of police custody.

“The report highlights some areas of good progress including an improvement in police compliancy and an overall drop in the number of strip searches taking place.

“However it also identified a number of ongoing concerns we have previously highlighted including disproportionality – with Black children almost eight times more likely to be strip searched than White children - and issues around adultification, with Black children far more likely to have their ‘build’ identified as a reason for force being used.

“Our own investigations into incidents involving child strip searches led to a series of [10 national recommendations](#) aimed to improve legislation and policing practice. [Read more on our website.](#)

IOPC Youth Panel showcase

In April, the IOPC Youth Panel hosted their Annual Showcase 2026. It brought together youth-led evidence and practical solutions with partners committed to creating a police service and a police complaints system that communities can all trust.

We welcomed 60+ senior leaders and decision-makers from across policing and partner organisations. The day reflected the breadth of the panel's evidence base, including peer-to-peer research and engagement with more than 1,800 young people and four annual surveys since 2022. This work captured over 8,000 young voices (including 1,586 responses this year).

The showcase reflected the panel's recent move to go beyond raising awareness and into practical influencing, connecting our youth insight directly to people involved in decision making, policy and practice. [Read more on our website.](#)

Latest news

Keep up to date on our investigations and other work to increase public confidence in the police complaints system. You can find our [latest IOPC news](#) on our website.

[IOPC responds to Ofcom's ruling on complaints about Panorama documentary 'The Chris Kaba shooting'](#)

[Independent investigation following wrongful conviction of Peter Sullivan](#)

[Derbyshire Constabulary staff in court accused of leaking confidential police information](#)

[Gross misconduct found against Warwickshire Police officer who pursued inappropriate relationship with woman](#)

[Warwickshire police officers face disciplinary proceedings after reinvestigation into death of Darren Cumberbatch](#)

[Merseyside officer under criminal investigation following collision with motorbike](#)

[Investigation finds Thames Valley Police used necessary force in Milton Keynes fatal shooting](#)

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If you have any questions, please get in touch with your Oversight Liaison or a member of the Oversight team.