

# IOPC Managing Unacceptable Service User Contact policy

June 2026

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This policy is written in English. If you would prefer to read the Welsh language version, this can be accessed [on our website](#).

# Introduction

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The Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) is committed to providing a fair, consistent and accessible service to everyone who has cause to contact us.

We also have a responsibility to provide a safe working environment for our colleagues. If we deem the contact we receive from you is unacceptable, we will support IOPC colleagues to manage this effectively.

We understand that some of our service users require reasonable adjustments in their contact with us, and we will always try to work with you to understand and meet your needs, depending on your individual circumstances. Please see our [Reasonable Adjustments for Service Users policy](#) for more information.

However, in a minority of cases, we may decide it is necessary to restrict the frequency or nature of your contact with us. This policy applies to contact with all IOPC colleagues and explains how and why we would do this.

## Meeting the needs of service users

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We will always consider how to adjust our service to meet the needs of the people who use it. However, our colleagues deserve to work without receiving abuse or other unacceptable contact, and we will support our colleagues to manage these difficult situations effectively.

On occasion, we may still consider it appropriate to restrict contact with people who have a reasonable adjustment in place. This will be a last resort and will depend on all the circumstances of the case.

The IOPC has a duty of care to our service users. If, during the course of our contact with you, we become concerned about your safety, or the safety of those around you, we may need to take steps to raise safeguarding concerns with the relevant organisation. If we believe you to be in immediate danger, we will contact the emergency services.

# Defining unacceptable contact

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We define unacceptable contact as any communication which is:

- aggressive or abusive
- unreasonably persistent
- an unreasonable demand, or
- illegal content

**and** which has one or more of the following impacts:

- causes our colleagues to feel harassed, distressed, threatened or afraid
- reduces our ability to provide our services to any service user
- prevents us from meeting our statutory obligations

This communication may be through any channel, or a mixture of channels.

We will assess each situation on a case-by-case basis, but the behaviours we generally consider unacceptable are detailed below.

## Aggressive or abusive contact

We understand that, on occasion, you may be dissatisfied with the service you have received from us. However, we consider the following to be unacceptable:

- threats (implicit or explicit) against any another person
- harassment
- persistent shouting, swearing, insults, or other offensive language<sup>1</sup>
- any contact which discriminates against a person or group, on the grounds of race, age, sex, gender, religion or belief, sexual orientation, or disability

## Unreasonably persistent contact

We recognise that you may not agree with a decision or action we have taken, or with the matters we can and cannot help with as an organisation.

We will do our best to clearly explain our decisions, and to advise you on next steps. We will signpost, where appropriate, other organisations who may be able to help.

However, if you continue to contact us where you have been fully informed of any next steps or repeatedly challenge decisions we cannot change, we may consider this unreasonably persistent.

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<sup>1</sup> where this behaviour is deliberate, and not attributable to a recognised medical or psychological condition

This includes continued contact with members of the Complaints and Feedback team after the IOPC's complaints process has been exhausted. Repeated unwarranted complaints against members of IOPC staff are also considered unreasonable.

## Unreasonable demands

We consider the following to be unacceptable:

- timescale demands, other than those we work towards
- demands for a specific colleague or team to carry out a task
- demands made to more than one IOPC team or member of staff (i.e. sending the same request to different members of staff)
- making repeated or multiple demands which are substantially the same
- demands for things we cannot do, whether for practical or legal reasons
- unreasonable escalation of complaints

Unreasonable amounts of contact may also amount to an unreasonable demand. This includes inundating members of staff with information or repetitive communications, or with material which is not directly relevant to our work.

It also includes content which has been made intentionally difficult to read or understand, including where Artificial Intelligence has been used for this purpose.

## Illegal content

We are committed to maintaining a safe and respectful environment for all service users and members of staff. We will not tolerate content that we consider unacceptable owing to its nature or presentation. This includes:

- distressing or graphic images, videos or descriptions sent by email including attachments, references and links
- content relating to Child Sexual Abuse (CSA), including links or references
- sexual content, threats, harassment, or explicit language

We may be required to report such matters to the police, which may lead to criminal prosecution. We will consider restricting contact or withdrawing communication altogether, depending on the nature of the content.

# Managing unacceptable contact

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## Warnings

Should we deem your contact to be unacceptable, we may provide you with up to three warnings. We will explain the reasons for the warnings and ask you to adjust your approach to communicating with us.

We will do all we can to work with you to resolve an issue before putting a restriction in place. We will not remove your access to IOPC colleagues without good reason.

However, as a last resort, we may need to restrict your contact with us. Please note that we are also able to do this immediately, **without warning**, if your contact is deemed extremely unacceptable, for example if it contains serious abuse or threats.

## Types of restriction

To manage your contact with the IOPC, we may decide to restrict the nature or frequency of contact by:

- terminating phone calls
- restricting times, days or durations of permitted contact
- allocating reasonable times to respond
- assigning a Single Point of Contact to you
- limiting the channels you can contact us through
- letting you know we will read your communication, but won't respond
- reporting extreme instances of unacceptable contact to the police

If we do need to restrict your contact, we will be transparent about this. The final decision will be made by a manager, and where possible, we will contact you to let you know we are going to restrict your contact, and the reasons why.

## Ongoing access to IOPC services

If we do need to take steps to restrict your access, we will always aim to ensure you can access the IOPC's services through another means. For example, we may restrict your email contact with us but allow you to contact us by post.

You will not be prevented from exercising your rights to request a complaint review or submit a complaint via our online forms. However, if you abuse the use of our online form this may lead to an extension of your restriction.

Restrictions are applied for a period of three, six or twelve months at a time. The type and length of restriction applied will depend on the severity and persistence of the unacceptable behaviour.

Restrictions are reviewed after the set period of time to assess the impact they have had on the unacceptable behaviour. The restriction will either be removed, or extended for a further three, six, or twelve months.

## Disputing restrictions

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If you are unhappy with the IOPC's decision to implement a restriction, you can make a complaint about a restriction. Depending on the nature of your restriction, you can contact us in the following ways:

- Email [feedback@policeconduct.gov.uk](mailto:feedback@policeconduct.gov.uk)
- Leave a secure voicemail for the IOPC's Complaints and Feedback team on 020 7166 3261, ensuring you provide your contact details
- Complete our online form: [Feedback about our service | Independent Office for Police Conduct \(IOPC\)](#)
- Write to:  
Quality Standards and Research Team  
Independent Office for Police Conduct  
PO Box 473  
Sale  
M33 0BW

The complaint will be assessed and responded to by a member of the Quality, Standards and Research team, in line with **Stage 2** of the IOPC's complaints process. They will assess whether the restriction is reasonable and proportionate. You can expect to receive an outcome within 20 working days. Please see the [Complaints and Feedback policy](#) (page 9) for more information.

As per our complaints process, **Stage 2** is the final stage in the process; once we have completed a review of your restriction, there is no right to request a further review, or to make a complaint against the restrictor or complaint handler on the grounds that you do not agree with their decision.

If your contact becomes unreasonable during the dispute process, we will assess whether it would be appropriate to extend the conditions of your restriction.

## How this policy links to our other policies

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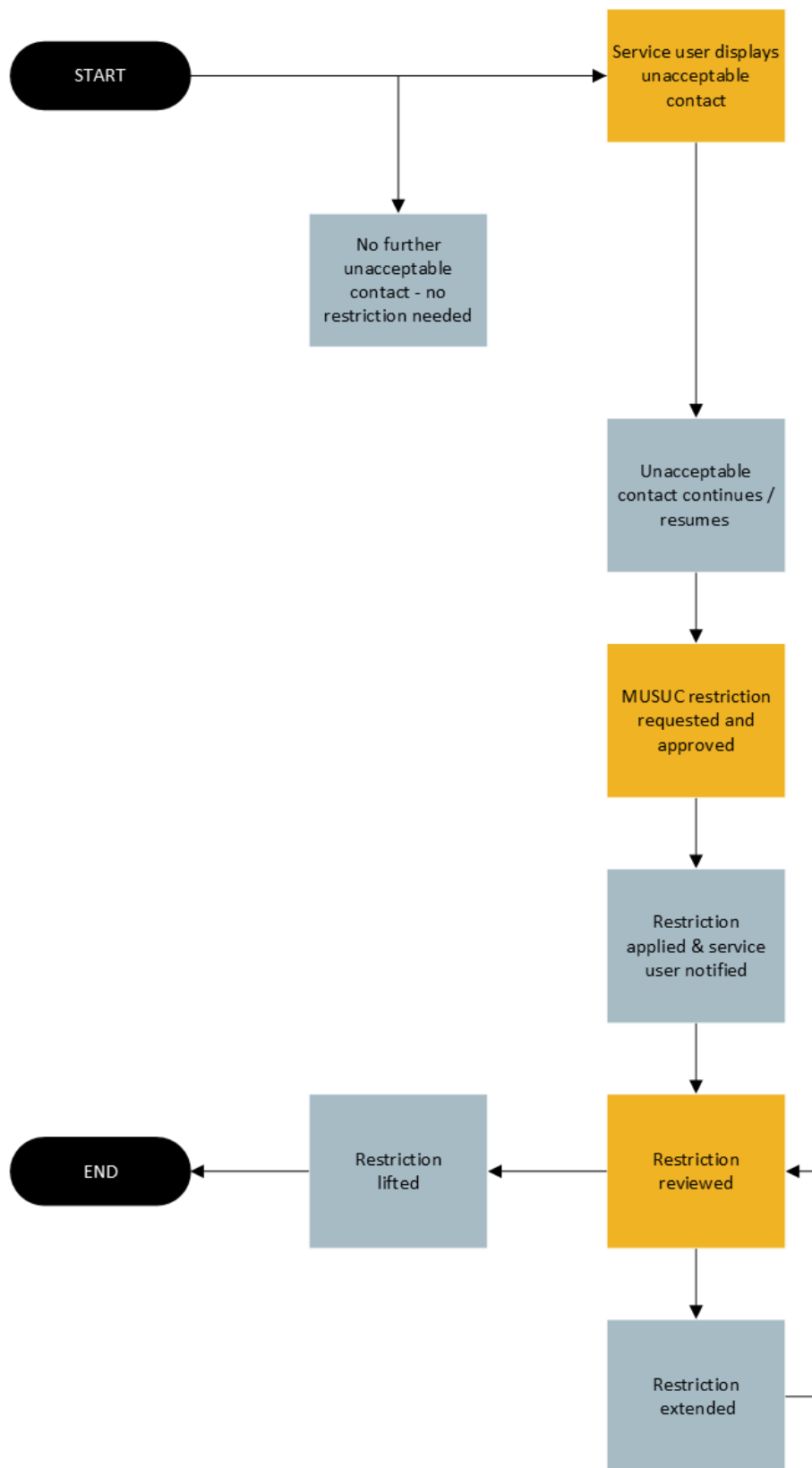
This document should be read in conjunction with the following:

- [Complaints and Feedback policy](#)
- [Reasonable Adjustments for Service Users policy](#)

Our privacy notice and associated information are available [on our website](#).

# Annex 1: MUSUC Process Flow Chart

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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.