

OVERSIGHT

newsletter

Welcome to our 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 police officers and staff 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.

Protocol on handling complaints about the Victims' Code

The IOPC has an agreed protocol with the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO) to clarify the potential crossover of jurisdiction regarding the handling of Victims' Code complaints.

The role of the PHSO in Victims' Code complaints:

The PHSO has a statutory responsibility to consider complaints from victims of crime who allege a failure by any of the criminal justice agencies in England or Wales who are subject to the Code, where a victim has been unable to get their complaint resolved locally to their satisfaction. The police are subject to obligations under the Code and the PHSO has jurisdiction to investigate their actions in relation to the Code. If the PHSO finds a complaint is justified, it can recommend a range of actions. These include that the agency correct the error, take action to prevent recurrence, pay compensation for inconvenience and financial loss, apologise for the error, offer a full explanation, or, if necessary, revise practice and procedure.

We expect that only a small proportion of Victims' Code complaints against the police will need to be dealt with by the PHSO. The vast majority of these complaints will be resolved locally by the police themselves. They will only be referred to the PHSO as a last resort, if the victim has failed to get their complaint resolved satisfactorily by the police at a local level.

The role of the IOPC in Victims' Code complaints:

The IOPC may choose to independently investigate or direct an investigation into the most serious complaints, which could include compliance and adherence with the Victims' Code.

However, it is anticipated that the majority of Victims' Code complaints will not include conduct issues, and so will be dealt with by the police and have a subsequent right of complaint to PHSO.

It is also anticipated that where a Victims' Code complaint does include a conduct matter, the majority will be dealt with by the force, with a right of review to the relevant review body.

Victims have parallel appeal routes to the relevant review body (LPB or IOPC) and PHSO in a number of situations. The PHSO has a statutory responsibility to provide oversight of all Victims' Code complaints.

Where a complaint was handled by a police professional standards department (PSD) and subject to a review by the LPB, it can also be handled by the PHSO. This may be relevant in circumstances where a review has been upheld on the basis of non-compliance with the Victims' Code.

Violence against women and girls update

End-to-end case handling review – recommendations follow-up work

Following the [publication](#) of our violence against women and girls dip sampling review in February 2024, your Oversight Liaison may have spoken to you about the recommendations made in the report. We wanted to understand what those recommendations meant for your force and what changes you implemented as a result. We were also keen to hear about the areas in which you felt you need more support.

The information provided to your Oversight Liaison will help us to understand the challenges facing policing in this area and consider how we can support forces to make improvements in the handling of cases involving violence against women and girls. We are reviewing all of the feedback received and we aim to share any positive practice we find in this newsletter over the coming months. In some cases, we may contact you to ask permission to share initiatives and positive practice, including relevant documents where appropriate.

Focus guidance on violence against women and girls

We are working on a special edition of our Focus guidance on violence against women and girls. This was referenced in our [report](#) about the police handling of police perpetrated domestic abuse. The guidance will provide PSDs and complaint handlers with practical guidance and examples on dealing with complaint and conduct matters and aims to improve standards. This guidance will capture the learning, information and insights we have identified through our focused work in this area.

We emailed all heads of PSD and local policing bodies on 31 March 2025 to share a copy of the draft guidance with you to seek your feedback. Please provide any comments by 11 April 2025 to oversight@policeconduct.gov.uk

Our Focus guidance will complement our special edition of [Learning the Lessons](#) magazine on violence against women and girls, which we told you about in last month's newsletter.

Updated information on reviews on IOPC website

Our ['Reviews and Appeals' page on the website](#) now includes more detail about the review process and possible outcomes, to help manage the expectations of complainants. It asks complainants to only submit a review to the IOPC if we are the relevant review body. We have

also added a video explaining the process. This may be a useful resource for forces to signpost to complainants.

Youth Panel poster mailing

The IOPC Youth Panel is a group of 40 young people aged 16-25 from across England and Wales who are working to improve trust and confidence in policing and police complaints. Panel members are passionate about helping young people to know their rights when it comes to policing and police complaints. They believe “If you don’t know your rights, you haven’t got them”.

Last week, the Youth Panel sent a pack of posters to around 290 police stations across England and Wales and asked them to put them on display. The posters help people to know their rights and signpost them to our website for more information.

Panel members are keen to know if these posters are being used in your station. They encourage people to share photos of the posters on social media using the hashtags #KnowYourRights #IOPCYouthPanel.

If you’d like copies of the posters or would like to provide feedback about this mailing, please email: info@leaders-unlocked.org or youthpanel@policeconduct.gov.uk

? Common questions from forces and LPBs

Q: Would a complaint about racially discriminatory comments, posted on social media by a police officer or staff member warrant a mandatory referral to the IOPC?

A: Chapter 9 of our [statutory guidance](#) explains that the appropriate authority must refer complaints and recordable conduct matters that include allegations of a criminal offence or behaviour, which is liable to lead to disciplinary proceedings and is aggravated by discriminatory behaviour.

When assessing the gravity of a discrimination complaint and whether it should be referred to the IOPC, it is important to separate the two elements of the complaint. This establishes firstly whether the alleged behaviour, without the discrimination element would, if proven, lead to criminal or misconduct proceedings. Secondly, it establishes whether the alleged discrimination is an aggravating factor. Both conditions must be met for the matter to meet the mandatory referral criteria. In this question, the crime or conduct is the hate crime or malicious communications, so the first part of the test is met. The hate crime is racially motivated, so the second part is also met and so the matter should be referred to the IOPC.

Q: In an IOPC directed investigation, does the appropriate authority need to approve the completed 12 month (or beyond) timeliness report?

A: The process should mirror that of an IOPC independent investigation, so the appropriate authority does not need to approve the timeliness report. The IOPC should produce the timeliness report and share with the force and local policing body. More information about 12 month timeliness reports can be found in our [operational advice note](#).

Corporate news

Learning recommendation to NPCC on Flexible Lift and Carry System

We identified organisational learning following an IOPC investigation where a man was arrested and taken to hospital after swallowing a large quantity of tablets. After being discharged from hospital, he was physically restrained by police officers in the prone position, handcuffed and placed in limb restraints. The man's condition deteriorated over the following days and the man sadly died.

The National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) accepted all our four of recommendations, which are listed briefly below:

1. The NPCC should review the processes through which the Flexible Lift and Carry System and other operational equipment are introduced and ensure these are aligned with the most recent medical and professional guidance.
2. NPCC should undertake medical testing of the Flexible Lift and Carry System independent of the manufacturer and including specific scenarios.
3. The NPCC and College of Policing work together to review and update guidance on the use of the Flexible Lift and Carry System following completion of medical testing.
4. The NPCC requires all forces to ensure they have mechanisms for recording the use of Flexible Lift and Carry Systems, and similar manual handling devices, providing a clear audit process.

You can find more detail on these [recommendations on our website](#).

Learning recommendation to College of Policing to create guidance on topic of chemsex

We identified organisational learning after an IOPC review of a complaint following local investigation in which the complainant had concerns over the handling of the investigations into her son's death by drug overdose. The police investigation was subject to an internal Serious Crime Review which identified that the scene contained many indicators of a chemsex scene.

The College of Policing accepted our recommendation to create guidance for officers to help them understand the topic of chemsex and recognise the signs that an incident may include a chemsex element. The guidance created should include:

- a working definition of chemsex to increase officers' awareness
- guidance about the key indicators officers should look out for when attending an incident which may indicate the involvement of chemsex
- guidance on recognising the increased vulnerability that a person, or community, may face as a result of involvement in the chemsex scene
- guidance on the possible effects of drugs which are predominantly used within chemsex, including information on possible links and reactions with alcohol or other drugs

Read more about this recommendation on [this recommendation 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.

[Former Sussex Police officer jailed for over 3 years for fraud by false representation and failing to disclose information](#)

[Gross misconduct proven against former Bedfordshire Police officer for failing to safeguard woman who was later kidnapped](#)

[IOPC reopens investigation into Leicestershire Police handling of Valdo Calocane assault allegations following new evidence](#)

[IOPC seeks witnesses after fatal collision involving marked West Midlands police car that was responding to emergency](#)

[IOPC investigation finds no indication of misconduct for Met officers in Chelsea Bridge Taser incident](#)

[IOPC investigation finds South Wales Police treated man appropriately prior to death in custody](#)

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

