

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).

Race discrimination workshops

Our online race discrimination complaint handler workshops will begin on 14 November. We will circulate the agenda and supporting materials ahead of each event, so please do look out for these. Thank you to the forces that are supporting us at the workshops – we are looking forward to sharing your insights and experience with the attendees.

We look forward to welcoming you all to our events and if you have any questions in the meantime, please contact the Oversight team at Oversight@policeconduct.gov.uk.

Annual police complaints statistics report 2022/23 published

We have published our annual report into Police complaints: Statistics for England and Wales 2022/23. Our report includes information about the number and type of complaints made. It also sets out how these complaints were dealt with and demographic data about the people who complained.

We should remain cautious when comparing the figures from this year to previous years, as the statistics are 'experimental'. Nonetheless, there are notable increases in complaints from last year that indicate members of the public are increasingly willing to raise their concerns. Key findings include:

- The total volume of complaints rose by 8%.
- The most commonly recorded type of complaint was about delivery of duties and service.
- The rise in the number of complaints resolved informally indicates more complaints are being sorted quickly.

You can read [our full report](#), as well as [our media release](#) and [comments from our Acting Director General](#) on our website.

Violence against Women and Girls thematic work

Our end-to-end review of cases involving violence against women and girls (VAWG) is complete. We reviewed 121 cases in total across eight police forces. Those police forces were also asked to complete an accessibility survey, to help us to understand how the complaint system is accessed by people and victim-survivors who make complaints involving VAWG. The survey allows us to collate good practice initiatives that we can share with forces to promote the complaints system to charities and support groups. We were also interested to learn what mechanisms are available to

police-victims or witnesses who report police-perpetrated conduct matters that are VAWG related. Thank you once again to those eight forces that gave their time to support the project.

Each force involved in the project received a short report setting out our findings, alongside a feedback meeting where we discussed the key findings and any learning identified. In this meeting, police forces had the opportunity to tell us about any new initiatives or processes that may have started since the date we reviewed the sample cases.

Since completing the dip sampling fieldwork, we have been analyzing all of the data to identify patterns and trends, shareable practice and areas for improvement. We are currently collating the data into a report that we will publish on our website and shared with our policing and non-policing stakeholders. We hope to publish our findings at the end of Autumn.

? Common questions from forces and LPBs

Q: If a complainant has concerns with decisions taken under the Victims Right to Review scheme (VRR), is the only way to address this by judicial review or would it constitute a complaint against the police force that should be addressed?

A: There is no right to appeal or review the VRR decision. The only way to challenge the outcome of the VRR is to seek a judicial review (JR) through the courts. If complainants/victims are considering this, you should advise them to seek legal advice.

If the complainant/ victim is purely challenging the VRR decision, then it may be appropriate to handle the complaint outside of schedule 3 and signpost them to the JR process. The JR process would consider whether the force has acted lawfully in making the decision.

If the complainant/victim is making a complaint about the *conduct* of the person/ people involved in conducting the VRR, this should be treated as a public complaint and subjected to the usual initial assessments for handling complaints.

Q: Is it suitable for us to use the category of No Further Action (NFA) for repeat complaints?

A: Once the complaint is recorded, the complaint handler should review what has been done outside of Schedule 3 and, where needed, carry out any further enquiries or actions that would be proportionate to resolve the complaint. The complaint handler should then make a decision as to whether the service level is acceptable or not. That decision would be the result and the outcome would be NFA if no further action is being taken.

If the complainant makes the same complaint repeatedly, it may be appropriate to record the complaint and take no further action if the complaint is substantially the same and has already been addressed fully. The fact that the same concerns are being raised again may suggest that more can be done to handle the matter and respond to the complainant's dissatisfaction. The complaint handler should make a decision about whether further action would be reasonable and proportionate. Nonetheless, complaints should not be revisited where it is not appropriate to do so, and where this may raise unrealistic expectations of different outcomes.

Q: Please can you clarify the IOPC position on firearms seizure and storage following an incident, and the IOPC expectations around that?

A: The IOPC cannot store firearms, live ammunition, controlled drugs, pathological exhibits, or items contaminated with bodily fluids or tissue. The term 'firearms' includes CS spray, baton guns and Tasers, but does not include replica firearms which can be stored by the IOPC once certified as a non-functioning replica by a police firearms officer.

When such items are recovered, arrangements should be made for safe and secure storage with a local police force or other licensed agency. This should be done by the IOPC exhibits manager together with the IOPC lead investigator and must be fully documented.

The police force should identify a single point of contact at the force and an agreement reached with the IOPC regarding access and retention. The location of these exhibits will be recorded by the IOPC exhibit manager on the IOPC investigation database.

IOPC investigators cannot lawfully transport or be in possession of firearms, live ammunition, prohibited weapons or controlled drugs. In independent investigations, an arrangement must be made with a police force or other authorised body to remove the items to their exhibits store.

Corporate news

Challenging race discrimination in policing: My reflections from the National Black Police Association Conference

by Kathie Cashell, Acting Deputy Director General

On 12 October, I was invited to speak at the National Black Police Association (NBPA) Conference, which was a real privilege. I was glad to share our work on race discrimination and some of the issues we have found.

I have worked at the IOPC (and previously the IPCC) for nearly 15 years, and I've held a number of different roles in the organisation. So, although I am not a police officer I have been around policing and working with communities and stakeholders involved in policing for some time.

From that work, I know how important it is for everyone – all communities - to have trust and confidence in policing. Some of the work involves challenging race discrimination in policing so that we can build trust and confidence amongst communities of colour.

The NBPA and Black police officers alike, are vital in driving cultural change within the police service, both as an employer and as an organisation that serves the public. They are doing extraordinary and brave work.

We all know there has been a focus in recent weeks about the arrangements for police accountability and the decisions we take in high-profile and complex cases. We know that sometimes our decisions can feel deeply uncomfortable for the individuals and the organisations involved. It is also the case that our decisions are scrutinised, and we have been challenged for some of them. We do not shy away from that challenge.

In these serious cases we do not take our decisions lightly, and we are led by the evidence and our responsibilities under the law. It is vital we get that balance right and that it is informed by a range of voices both inside and outside policing. This is essential because we understand the implications of the decisions we make, and the impact they can have on policing and the wider community.

Read the [full article 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 makes learning recommendation to Kent Police following death in custody](#)

[Gross misconduct allegations proven against former Cleveland Police sergeant](#)

[Former Merseyside Police officer jailed after having sex while on duty](#)

[IOPC criminal investigation after Leicestershire death in custody](#)

[IOPC investigation into Avon and Somerset Police following collision involving unmarked police car](#)

[Statement following misconduct hearing on stop and search of Bianca Williams and Ricardo Dos Santos](#)

[Met Police officer not at fault for fatal West London collision](#)

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

