

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.

Changes to standard wording for mode of investigation decision e-mails

The Assessment Unit has amended or removed some of the standard wording in the mode of investigation (MOI) decision e-mails that you receive to reflect a process change and avoid confusion about when re-referrals are required. Please note the changes to local death and serious injuries / complaints / conduct MOIs and return to force conduct / complaint MOIs. Key changes are noted below:

- Local complaint MOI decisions – Previous wording suggested that there was a mandatory requirement to re-refer a complaint to us once it was deemed subject to special procedures. This is not the case, so the following wording has been added, *‘Please note that there is no requirement to re-refer this complaint if you have deemed it subject to special procedures, unless asked to do so by the decision maker’*.
- Local death and serious injury MOI decisions - If at any point during the local investigation, the investigator identifies a criminal offence or misconduct justifying disciplinary proceedings, then you must record the matter. We advise that you send us a copy of the investigator’s submission by means of a referral form. However, **the referral forms should now be sent to assessmentteam@policeconduct.gov.uk** (and not our national referrals inbox for assessment).

Change to the process for power of initiative cases

We recently wrote to professional standards departments and the offices for police and crime commissioners to tell them about an improvement to our process regarding the circumstances when we will use our power of initiative (POI) to treat a matter as having been referred.

Currently, when new complaints or conduct matters come to the attention of the IOPC during an Independent investigation that we consider should be added or linked to the existing investigation, the IOPC will forward this to the appropriate authority (AA) for it to make the recording and referral decisions.

The new process will be for the IOPC to instead use POI to treat the matter as having been referred and decide the mode of investigation (MOI) all at once. PSDs will be notified of the POI / MOI decision and they should just confirm that they have recorded the matter.

This change was raised in recent regional meetings across the country and feedback has been positive.

Appropriate authorities will benefit as they are no longer required to assess these matters and complete referral paperwork. It will also prevent delays because the referral and MOI will be decided / completed together.

Please note:

- Any matters that come to our attention during an independent investigation where we decide not to link at that stage, will be forwarded to you as per the current process for consideration of recording / referral.
- If matters come to the AA's attention before the IOPC (such as new complaints), that may be linked to an ongoing independent investigation - where possible – you are encouraged to liaise with the IOPC lead investigator before making the referral.
- The process does not change for conduct matters identified during an independent DSI investigation where the AA is not required to refer the matter in any case.
- The process for any other matters that may require consideration of our powers of call-in / POI remain the same. Unless the matter is urgent, we will continue to consult with you before we use these powers.
- POI linked and POI non-linked cases will now be captured separately within our case management system for reporting purposes.
- Existing processes for notifying subject officers will remain unchanged and the IOPC investigator will liaise with you to ensure welfare provisions can be put in place if needed.

If you have any questions, please contact [oversight](#)

Reminder: PSD new starter sessions are now available to book

As we outlined in our November edition newsletter, we will hold new starter sessions in 2025 and the beginning of 2026 and these are now available to book. The dates are listed below:

- Thursday 10 April 2025
- Tuesday 15 July 2025
- Wednesday 15 October 2025
- Thursday 22 January 2026

To book, please email [oversight](#) and include the name and email address for each new starter, and their first and second choice of preferred dates. We will do our best to accommodate them.

Publication of the police perpetrated domestic abuse report

The [Centre for Women's Justice super-complaint](#) submitted in 2020, raised concerns that [police forces were not responding appropriately to cases of domestic abuse](#) involving police officers or police staff. Following a [joint investigation and report in 2022](#) involving the IOPC, College of Policing and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services, we began looking into how the police handle police perpetrated domestic abuse (PPDA).

To provide us with better insight into how forces respond to reports of PPDA, we surveyed all police forces in England and Wales and held follow-up discussions with six forces. We asked them how reports are identified and recorded, about initial assessment decisions and subsequent investigations. We asked for information on the training complaints handlers receive and what support is given to victim-survivors.

Through his work, we obtained up-to-date information on current practices in all police forces. This led to us issuing calls to action, highlighting the promising practice that we found and the areas still requiring improvement. We want these calls to action to set the standards for handling complaint and conduct matters involving PPDA and are calling on police forces to use them as a checklist to consider against their processes. This will help to identify any areas for improvement that might apply to their police force.

We published the PPDA report on our website on 17 December and you can find it [here](#).

? Common questions from forces and LPBs

Q: Can a police officer make a complaint to their own police force when the subject of complaint relates to them as a member of the public?

A: No. An officer working for the same police force that is subject of the complaint, is not eligible to make a complaint even if it is a matter that affected them as a member of the public.

However, this does not prevent the force from handling the matter either as a query or treating the information from the officer as intelligence, and providing a reply to the officer may help to address the issues raised. The main difference being that the officer would not have the same rights as a complainant under the *Police Reform Act 2002*, such as a right of review.

The [January 2024 issue of this newsletter](#) addresses a slightly different question, but the issues on who is eligible to make a complaint are similar.

Also, see [Chapter 5 of the IOPC Statutory guidance](#) for more information on who can complain.

Q: Can a complaint only be suspended if the complainant is subject of any criminal investigation or proceedings?

A: No. An appropriate authority may suspend an investigation or other procedure that in its opinion would, if it were to continue, prejudice any criminal investigation or proceedings. This is not restricted to a criminal investigation or proceedings involving the subject of the complaint.

For example, a person who has witnessed an incident or been adversely affected by a matter that is being considered criminally, could make a complaint about this and not necessarily be the subject of the criminal investigation. Similarly, a victim of crime may make a complaint about how

their report of a criminal offence is being criminally investigated, which might result in the decision to suspend the complaint.

[Chapter 15 of the IOPC Statutory guidance](#) gives more information on what considerations form part of the decision on whether to suspend an investigation or other procedure, including the process for notifying the complainant of the reason for the decision. Where a complainant objects to the suspension of the investigation or other handling, they should also be informed that they may ask the IOPC to consider whether to direct that the investigation or other handling continue.

Corporate news

IOPC Director General welcomes new measures to support victims of stalking

IOPC Director General Rachel Watson welcomed [measures announced by the Government aimed at protecting victims of stalking](#), which include accepting recommendations made as part of our joint investigation into a super-complaint about the police response to reports of stalking.

In September, we shared the findings of the work we carried out with His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services and the College of Policing to investigate concerns raised by the Suzy Lamplugh Trust, on behalf of the National Stalking Consortium.

Responding to today's announcement, Director General Rachel Watson said:

"I am really pleased to see action being taken to address the issues identified during our joint investigation into the super-complaint about the police response to stalking.

"Working with His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services and the College of Policing, we outlined key changes needed to improve the quality of police investigations and the level of support provided to victims. This included recommended changes to law and guidance and the availability of data to better support the police response.

"Change is happening and we welcome the actions announced, which will help to make a real difference to those affected by this awful crime.

"In the new year, we will be publishing all the responses we have received to our recommendations, which will outline more of the steps being taken across policing to address this important issue."

Improvements made to detainee welfare information sharing between police and prisons, following investigation into a man's death

[Independent Office for Police Conduct \(IOPC\) recommendations](#) have led to improvements in information sharing between police forces and the Prison Service relating to detainee safety, after a man's suicide at HMP Cardiff.

Police forces across England and Wales have been urged to ensure custody staff are supported in understanding how to complete digital prisoner escort records, so that all relevant information, including any risk of self-harm and warning markers, is available to transfer and prison staff.

The improvements followed the IOPC's investigation into the death of a man who was found hanging in his prison cell within hours of arriving from Cardiff Bay police station in December 2021. Our investigation found that the escort form lacked important information, specifically that the man

had attempted an overdose the previous night, prior to his arrest, and had warning markers for self-harm. Police custody staff incorrectly believed that such information held on police systems was automatically included on a digital prisoner escort record. In fact, it needed to be manually inputted.

At the end of our investigation in July 2022, we made a number of recommendations to South Wales Police, the Ministry of Justice and the National Police Chiefs' Council, which were accepted, to help tighten arrangements for the transfer of detainee information.

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 West Midlands constable jailed for 4 years for passing on details from police computer systems](#)

[Northumbria Police officer charged following Gateshead fatal collision](#)

[West Yorkshire Police officers dismissed over offensive WhatsApp messages](#)

[Investigation under way into fatal police shooting in Redditch](#)

[Investigation finds the use of force by Essex officers before man's death was necessary](#)

[Statement on investigation into use of force arrests at Manchester Airport](#)

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

