

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.

Accelerated misconduct proceedings for police staff

West Midlands Police has recently launched a new policy for running accelerated misconduct proceedings for their police staff members. West Midlands Police are happy to share information about this with other forces who may be interested in establishing their own policy.

If you would like to find out more, please email us at oversight@policeconduct.gov.uk to request contact details for the relevant team at West Midlands Police.

Distressing material in death or serious injury (DSI) cases

When sending background papers or media to the IOPC as part of a DSI report submission, we ask that you please flag any potentially distressing material to us at the start of the document or covering email and label the item accordingly. This will allow our staff to be aware of potentially distressing content before opening the image or footage.

To help us avoid our colleagues being exposed to potentially distressing material unnecessarily, we also ask that you consider the relevance of any such material to our assessment or review of a matter when you are deciding what information to send to the IOPC. Colleagues in our Casework team have recently encountered a number of cases where graphic footage or images were sent to us in cases where that material was not relevant to us performing our duties. For example, footage of a deceased person following an incident where the focus of the review is on officers' interactions with that person before their death.

? Questions from forces and LPBs

Q: A force made a death or serious injury (DSI) referral to the IOPC and the matter was returned to the appropriate authority (AA) to be handled in any manner they determined. Although the IOPC has not directed the AA to do an investigation, if the AA chooses to investigate the DSI matter, is it still necessary for them to submit a DSI report to the IOPC at the end of that investigation?

A: Yes. Because a DSI matter has been investigated, a DSI report must be sent to the IOPC for us to make our decisions at the end of the investigation. The legislation states in paragraph 24A of Schedule 3 of the *Police Reform Act 2002* that “This paragraph applies on the completion of an investigation of a DSI matter in respect of which neither the Director General nor the appropriate authority had made determinations under para 21A(2), (2A), (2B) or (4). The person investigating shall - (a) submit a report on the investigation to the Director General”.

Q: For a DSI investigation, can preliminary findings of an investigation be sent to a coroner to assist with the upcoming inquest before the IOPC have reviewed the final report? Or does the IOPC need to agree the findings in the report before a copy is shared with the coroner?

A: For a DSI investigation that is returned to the force to investigate, the force will be an interested person in the coroner’s inquest and disclosure will be a matter for the force and the coroner. The IOPC will not become involved until the investigation is complete.

There is a legal requirement for forces to disclose all relevant material to assist coroners with an inquest and there should not be any delay to this. It is important that the coroner is kept informed of the status of the DSI investigation at all stages, so they are aware of what stage of the process it is in. If a force discloses a final report to the coroner before the IOPC has reviewed it, it is important that the coroner is made aware that final decisions remain outstanding. The coroner should then be informed once the IOPC has made a decision on the report.

Also, when a coroner is involved, that would usually be a reason for the IOPC to expedite our review. So when the force has completed their investigation and sends the final report to the IOPC, we advise you to ask for it to be expedited due to an upcoming inquest.

Corporate news

Research on public perceptions of the police complaints system

We recently published a research report which tracks public perceptions of the IOPC each year. The research involved canvassing the views of over 6,000 people in England and Wales, and was conducted by independent research firm, Yonder Consulting. It explores views about the IOPC, the police, the complaints system, racial discrimination and independent investigations. It looks at awareness, public confidence, willingness to complain among different groups, and what the public think we should prioritise for independent investigation.

You can [download the report on our website](#).

IOPC makes 10 recommendations to improve child strip search practice

Following a [recent disciplinary hearing involving the strip search a child](#), we want to let you know about the IOPC's national recommendations to improve policing practice of strip searches of children. These recommendations were made last year and help to ensure that children's safety and wellbeing of children is prioritised.

We made [ten nationwide recommendations](#) to the Home Office, National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) and the College of Policing after drawing on evidence from several IOPC investigations that looked at police searches of children involving the exposure of intimate parts (EIP).

In September 2023, we called for the government to undertake a [substantial review](#) of policing powers relating to the strip searches of children to improve safeguarding.

These latest recommendations include a specific call for the government to amend relevant laws, so police forces are required to make mandatory safeguarding referrals for any child subject to an EIP search.

The Home Office has said it's factoring our recommendations, including child safeguarding measures, into reforms they are carefully considering into policing powers around the searches of children.

We have also called for national policing bodies – the College of Policing and NPCC – to review and update all relevant police guidance and training products relating to EIP searches of children, so sufficient emphasis is placed on the child's safety and wellbeing, and prioritising safeguarding.

As a result of our recommendations, which also included involving young people in any review of training to ensure the voice of the child is reflected, both policing bodies have committed to carrying out a dedicated review of Stop & Search Authorised Policing Practice (APP).

We also found there was an inconsistent use of appropriate adults by forces when strip searching children and we've called for the NPCC, which accepted our recommendation, to work with chief officers to ensure all officers understand the laws around appropriate adults.

Read the [full release on our recommendations](#) 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 Surrey Police officer given two-year sentence for passing policing information to criminals](#)

[Avon and Somerset Police officer given six-month sentence for causing serious injury by dangerous driving](#)

[West Midlands Police officer dismissed over use of force on a football fan](#)

[IOPC reinvestigation into conduct of Greater Manchester Police officers following fatal fire in Salford](#)

[IOPC investigation after woman's death found no breach of professional standards by West Yorkshire Police and Greater Manchester Police](#)

[Findings and recommendations after investigation into West Mercia Police contact before the murder of nine- year-old boy](#)

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

