

# 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).

### Update to our 'Guidance on capturing data about police complaints' and Focus 12 publication

We recently published updated versions of both our [Guidance on capturing data about police complaints](#) and our [Focus Issue 12 publication](#). They were updated to include two new Centurion national factors of:

- Police Perpetrated Domestic Abuse and
- Police Perpetrated Domestic Abuse – Police victim

We would encourage you to consider the guidance and Focus 12 when working on police perpetrated domestic abuse (PPDA) cases, to ensure these cases are recorded correctly. Accurate recording of these factors will enable us to consistently collect and use complaint and conduct data relating to PPDA cases.

There are crossovers when using the PPDA / violence against women and girls national factor and some may see the behaviours as the same. However, while they may be similar, the definitions under each are different and they will not meet the same data recording requirements. Where applicable, **both** national factors should be used. The updates to Focus 12 and the guidance document will assist in these considerations.

### Violence against women and girls thematic update

#### Publication of report into complaint and conduct matter handling

As part of our work on violence against women and girls, the IOPC worked with eight police forces to review a selection of complaint and conduct files. We examined 121 files to review how they handled complaint and conduct matters where violence against women and girls was a factor and whether their responses were appropriate, proportionate and in line with relevant law and guidance.

As a result of our review of case files, the IOPC has made nine recommendations aimed at improving the handling of complaints involving violence against women and girls, and complaints handling in general. We aim to build the public's trust and confidence to report complaints and conduct matters involving violence against women and girls and support the police to respond in a way that is robust and victim focused.

Details of our dip sampling work, findings and recommendations can be found in our [report](#), which was shared with police forces and external stakeholders.

## Coming soon: Ending victim blaming in the context of violence against women and girls: Why language, attitudes, and behaviours matter.

We will soon publish our new guidance on ending victim blaming language in the context of violence against women and girls.

We are aware that victim blaming language, attitudes and behaviours, by their very nature, put the onus and responsibility on the victim-survivor for the abuse they have endured. For victim-survivors who have experienced significant trauma, it can worsen their experience even further. This can prevent victim-survivors from reporting their experiences and pursuing justice and can also stop other victim-survivors from coming forward. The effects are far reaching.

The words we use in our communications, written or spoken, can set the tone for an investigation, any future contact and impact on the victim-survivor. Getting this right is vital. This is why we developed guidance for our own staff as part of our commitment to improve. We will share it with forces across England and Wales and hope it will be a valuable resource to provide better service, support and understanding where it is greatly needed.

## Learning the Lessons 43 (mental health) – coming soon

Our latest issue of [Learning the Lessons](#) will be published on the 27 March.

Issue 43 contains eight new case studies, designed to encourage discussion and reflective thinking around policing and mental health. The case studies explore a range of scenarios, including in the force control room, in custody, and in frontline policing. We also welcome contributions in the upcoming magazine from a range of stakeholders working across policing at a national and local level to share local initiatives, opportunities for learning, and to highlight areas of significant national change, including as a result of *Right Care, Right Person*.

To make sure our latest issue reaches the right people once published, please contact [learning@policeconduct.gov.uk](mailto:learning@policeconduct.gov.uk) by **20<sup>th</sup> March 2024** confirming your force's learning lead contact details, including:

- Role title
- First and last name
- Email address
- Any further contact information and preferences.

We look forward to sharing the latest issue with you soon.

## Common questions from forces and LPBs

**Q: Where an officer is accused of inappropriate sexualised touching (slap on bottom) is this considered serious enough to warrant a referral to the IOPC on the grounds of sexual assault?**

**A:** Yes. Section 9.12 - 9.14 of our [Statutory guidance](#) explains that any sexual assault is serious and only off-duty summary only offences would not meet the requirements of the mandatory referral criteria. As such, this particular case should be referred to the IOPC.

**Q: If a case was referred to the IOPC, returned for a local investigation and there is no case to answer or learning points, should the IOPC be informed of the outcome for record keeping purposes?**

**A:** If a local investigation concerns a complaint or a conduct matter that has been previously referred, the force is not required to notify the IOPC of the outcome. In relation to DSI referrals, if a decision is made that it will be subject to a **local investigation**, and a decision is made by the appropriate authority that there was no evidence of criminality, or indication of behaviour justifying disciplinary proceedings, the investigating officer must send a copy of the final report to the IOPC for review. When we receive a final report, we must consider whether there is an indication that a police officer/staff may have committed a criminal offence or behaved in a manner which would justify disciplinary proceedings.

## Corporate news

### IOPC statement in response to the Angiolini Inquiry Report

IOPC [Acting Director General Tom Whiting](#) said:

"The abduction, rape and murder of Sarah Everard by a serving police officer was deeply shocking and our thoughts are again with her family and friends and all of those affected.

"And we know her murder and what subsequently came to light has damaged public trust in policing, particularly from women and girls.

"Lady Elish Angiolini's findings are stark and unflinching. She has set out a range of recommendations that must act as a catalyst for change.

"Her report reflects some of our own recommendations including better information sharing so forces are notified when a police officer is linked to an ongoing investigation, and changes to national police training and guidance to improve sexual offence investigations.

"However, as Lady Elish says, it will take more than just changes to policies, guidance and training to address systemic and cultural issues in policing. She has set out a challenge to police leaders that there must be fundamental change.

"As the police complaints watchdog, we also believe the time is right for radical reform of the police accountability system in this country. A fitness to practise or 'licencing system' would go a long way to dealing with the vetting and other issues identified in both Lady Elish review and the Baroness Casey report.

"A national licencing system, in line with many other professions, would bring much-needed consistency, legitimacy and accountability to the police service which in turn would help rebuild public trust and confidence."

### National recommendation to NPCC about review of welfare leaflet

The IOPC [recommended that the National Police Chiefs' Council considered reviewing its welfare/safeguarding information leaflet](#), or considered altering the wording to ensure that it is

clear that it is given out because an investigation is happening and this is not the same as a charge or a finding of guilt.

This follows an IOPC investigation review where the complainant's husband appeared to have taken his own life within 48 hours of his arrest on suspicion of non-recent child sexual offences. The complainant raised concerns about the welfare/safeguarding information issued to her husband. She felt the wording implied that her husband was guilty and contributed to the decision he made.

The NPCC accepted our recommendation. As a result of their review, they added new wording at the top of the letter as follows:

“Please note that this support document is provided to you with no presumption of guilt on your part and is purely designed to help and support you at this time.”

The NPCC sent this change to all force supervisors for POLIT (Paedophile online investigation teams) and OCAIT (Online Child Abuse Investigation Teams). Forces were instructed to change the letter to this revised version and it will be included in the online guidance for investigators, which has enhanced guidance covering offender and family welfare.

## 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 Cheshire Constabulary officer found guilty of misconduct in public office for abuse of power for sexual purpose](#)

[IOPC to investigate Nottinghamshire Police contact with Valdo Calocane before three people killed](#)

[IOPC investigates West Midlands Police officers for use of force on a fan after football match](#)

[Eight Met officers under investigation after boy was stopped and searched multiple times](#)

[West Yorkshire Police officer to undergo reflective practice for use of language during arrest of girl](#)

[IOPC investigation finds Gwent Police use of force reasonable prior to the death of Mouayed Bashir](#)

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

