

Stakeholder Update

September 2024

Hillsborough investigations' outcome letters

We wrote to you in June to let you know that we would soon be able to start communicating the outcomes of our complaint and conduct investigations in personalised letters. The letters aim to provide a summary of the investigation we have carried out, an analysis of the evidence available to us, and an explanation of decisions and/or opinions of the IOPC Hillsborough decision maker, Sarah Green.

Our intention in sending the letters was to inform families and complainants as soon as possible about the outcome of those complaint and conduct investigations, in line with our obligations under the Police Reform Act (PRA) 2002.

The first letters were sent to complainants and the linked subject officers at the end of June, and you may be aware that we received feedback about the approach and some of the language we used to explain our decisions.

This week, we have written to the families of those who lost their lives as a result of the Hillsborough disaster and those who have made complaints to apologise for any distress these letters have caused.

We explained to them that, after we received the feedback, we immediately paused the process to consider how we could improve our approach and do everything possible to minimise any further distress. We also thanked those who brought these matters to our attention.

As a result of that feedback, we have now put in place a number of additional steps in the process following a full review of the letters that are yet to be sent to complainants. We have amended the content in line with the feedback we received, which has included changing some of the language we use and better explaining the evidence we have used in our decision making.

We understand that, as some of the content in the letters includes detail of the traumatic events of the Hillsborough disaster and the immediate aftermath, it can have a significant impact. We will therefore write to complainants with 7–10 days' notice to let them know

when they can expect to receive their outcome letter. There will be the option to delay receiving an outcome letter if someone feels that it is not a good time or if they are away. Similarly, if they would prefer us to send the letter at a time where they feel they have greater support, we are able to arrange this. We will also include where to find wellbeing support services that are available on the NHS website.

In the letters, we now further explain that our investigation is based on the evidence that is available to us. In some instances, there is insufficient evidence to support a complaint, which means we are not able to uphold it. We understand that this can be upsetting and frustrating for people, especially as they have waited a long time to receive the outcome but, this does not mean that we do not believe someone's account. Our investigation has only been able to be as thorough as it has been thanks to witnesses and complainants who have shared their account(s) with us. We do not underestimate the impact sharing such detailed and emotional information has and will continue to have.

To help explain what has been investigated and what has informed our decisions, in the letters we occasionally quote verbatim phrases and terminology from the statements and evidence we have used. We understand the impact of using verbatim phrases and terminology can have and how this can be upsetting or perceived as though we are endorsing those phrases or terminology. Therefore, we will only do this where it is absolutely necessary to do so and will make it clear that these are direct quotes and not our words.

Now we have put those steps in place, we will soon be able to resume sending outcome letters and, as we have said previously, will notify recipients in advance.

We will also be writing to family members—as Interested Persons (IPs)—before sending them information about specific investigations concerning South Yorkshire Police and West Midlands Police, as we mentioned in our update in May 2024.

We anticipate that we will make good progress in the issuing of outcome letters by the end of Autumn, and we will update you again at that time.

If you would like to talk about the outcome letters process, please email [!Outcome_Enquiries@policeconduct.gov.uk](mailto:Outcome_Enquiries@policeconduct.gov.uk)

To find out more about our work or to request this document in an alternative format, you can contact us in a number of ways:

Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC)

Hillsborough PO Box 1245 Warrington WA1 9FW

Tel: 0161 246 8503

Email: hillsborough@policeconduct.gov.uk

Website: www.policeconduct.gov.uk

We welcome telephone calls in Welsh

Rydym yn croesawu galwadau ffôn yn y Gymraeg

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