

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).

Violence against women and girls – update on thematic work

We are now halfway through our end-to-end review of violence against women and girls cases. Dip sampling in forces will continue until August when a period of analysis of the data will begin. We would like to thank the eight police forces taking part in the dip sampling work for supporting the project and working with us. Upon completion of the sampling, each force will receive a short report setting out our findings alongside a feedback meeting where we will discuss the file sampling headlines and any learning identified. In this meeting, police forces will have the opportunity to tell us about any new initiatives or processes that may have been implemented post the date of the cases we have sampled.

An initial draft of guidance about avoiding victim blaming attitudes and behaviours is being finalised and will be shared with stakeholders for feedback shortly.

Work on designing a Know your Rights campaign is continuing. The campaign will be informed by our conversations with a wide range of stakeholders.

We are working with the NPCC to create a Centurion national factor for police perpetrated domestic abuse (PPDA).

In June we spoke at a College of Policing online knowledge sharing event about police perpetrated domestic abuse. Forces shared insight on their work to tackle PPDA, including the use of external force investigations and external scrutiny panels. A recording of the event can be found on [KnowledgeHub](#).

Terminology around suicide

When dealing with cases involving suicide, the term 'committing/committed suicide' should be avoided. The guidance by the National Suicide Prevention line says "While the illegality of suicide went away, the phrase "committed suicide" did not. By using the terms 'committing/committed suicide', we subconsciously associate the act of someone taking their own life as a crime, which could alter the way we view those who are struggling and the treatments available. This stigmatisation of mental illness can cause many who are struggling, to avoid treatment and potentially deny their psychological disorders altogether. Instead, we remind you to use phrases like "took their own life", "died by suicide", or "completed suicide."

Reminder: Misconduct proceedings and Unsatisfactory Performance Procedures (UPP) while reviews are ongoing

Recently the IOPC has identified a number of cases where procedural issues have arisen as a result of misconduct proceedings being arranged, or due to forces carrying out other actions such as UPP, prior to reviews being completed. Misconduct proceedings and UPP should not be arranged whilst the review is still open with the Relevant Review Body (RRB), as any decisions made in that review could affect the proceedings which take place.

In the event that a force proposes misconduct proceedings or UPP for an officer and a subsequent review application is made by the complainant to the IOPC, we request that the force contact us to ask for the case to be expedited so that proceedings can be arranged in a timely manner. The IOPC Casework team will do their best to prioritise these matters.

Additionally, we request that all officers subject to a complaint are made aware that a review application has been submitted at the earliest opportunity.

Reminder: PSD new starter sessions

Please continue to send the names and email addresses of any PSD new starters who would like to attend a session to oversight@policeconduct.gov.uk. The sessions will be held on Teams and should last around 90 minutes.

The remaining sessions are:

- Thursday 9 November 2023
- Tuesday 16 January 2024

Please include first choice and second choice date preferences and we will do our best to accommodate them.

Backlog of review and investigation appeals - update

On 7 July 2023 an update was sent to all Heads of PSD about the work being undertaken by the IOPC to help reduce the backlog of reviews and investigation appeals. We are also keeping our [website](#) regularly updated with the latest available information on allocation dates.

Cases can be prioritised where the allegation is subject to a statutory time limit for criminal charge, or if there are upcoming misconduct proceedings or a special case hearing, or where there are any safeguarding issues for the subject officer or complainant. If you have any cases that have particular time and/or other sensitivities, meaning a decision is required sooner, please do let us know. This could be at the time we advise you that a review is received, or later, should circumstances change.

Contact the [administration department](#) if a more detailed update is needed on a specific case, or if there is a need to prioritise cases. For general queries, please contact your Oversight Liaison.

? Common questions from forces and LPBs

Q: Is there a requirement for all complaints that are suspended under Regulation 41 to be dealt with inside of Schedule 3 of the *Police Reform Act 2002*? It seems somewhat disproportionate to bring cases inside Schedule 3 simply because they are suspended when clearly, they are complaints that could be dealt with outside Schedule 3 once the case becomes 'live'.

A: Whilst there is no explicit guidance about this, dealing with such complaints inside Schedule 3 is appropriate as these cases are not able to be completed in a timely manner. The IOPC's Statutory Guidance confirms that if, at any point, it appears to the complaint handler that remedying the matter to the complainant's satisfaction cannot be achieved in a timely manner or without substantial additional steps being taken, this is likely to indicate the matter should be recorded. Suspending a complaint due to the appropriate authority reaching the opinion that it would prejudice a criminal investigation or criminal proceedings, and that this prejudice is specific and significant, affects timeliness and may indicate that, upon resumption, more detailed enquiries are needed to inform the outcome.

The principles of handling outside schedule 3 are that resolution is quick and more immediate. [Focus 13 Handling complaints – decisions and thresholds](#) includes examples of reasons for when complaints initially assessed as suitable for handling outside of Schedule 3 need handling under Schedule 3.

Corporate news

The new IOPC website and updated hyperlinks

The IOPC website has been redesigned with our current strategy - '[Building trust and confidence in policing](#)' - in mind, particularly our ambition to improve awareness of the police complaints system. The first principle for our website is to put our audiences' needs first - this is based on feedback from our users. Ultimately the aim is to help the public feel better informed about the work we do and how they can access the police complaints system.

The redesign means that many links to our previous website no longer work. We have since sent you updated links. We apologise that you were not informed about the upcoming changes to the links prior to the launch of the new website and for any inconvenience this may have caused. The main domain name www.policeconduct.gov.uk hasn't changed and our advice would be to use this wherever possible.

We have updated the links within our publications [Oversight newsletters](#) and [Focus](#) – simply download new copies from the two links above.

On the website there is a section dedicated for information for police forces which has all our guidance in one place. [Information for police | Independent Office for Police Conduct \(IOPC\)](#)

If you have any questions or feedback about the website, please contact Oversight@policeconduct.gov.uk.

The IOPC publishes its annual ‘Death during or following police contact’ report for 2022/23

Published for the 19th year, the statistics provide an official record setting out the number of such deaths, the circumstances in which they happen, and any underlying factors.

Commenting on [this year’s figures](#), IOPC Acting Director General Tom Whiting said:

“Sadly, we have seen a significant rise this year in the number of deaths in or following police custody, up to 23 from 11, and the highest figure recorded for five years. While last year’s figure was particularly low, the fact we have seen a sharp reverse is concerning and raises challenges which spread well beyond policing.

“All but two of the 23 deaths featured links to drugs and/or alcohol and over half of those who died had mental health concerns. The circumstances of each death will vary and need investigation to understand the detailed causes. But these vulnerabilities are consistent, common factors year on year. When vulnerable people in need of specialist care suffer a crisis, far too often their needs are not met by other services, and they come into contact with a police service which isn’t designed or equipped to provide for them.

“I am not alone in calling again for concerted action across agencies to help prevent these deaths wherever possible. It is clear there is an over-reliance on the police service as first responders in dealing with vulnerable people in crisis. Police chiefs have expressed understandable concern about the heavy demand placed on their resources in dealing with mental health incidents. In that context, we will monitor the development of the Right Care, Right Person scheme as it is rolled out across police forces.

“For each of the deaths reported here there will be a bereaved family dealing with the death of their loved one and I would like to again express my sympathies to everyone affected by these events.”

IOPC Stakeholder survey and Public perceptions tracker for 2022/23

Each year the IOPC research team commission independent research to gather feedback from our stakeholders and the general public: the [Stakeholder survey](#) and the [Public Perceptions Tracker](#). This research asks about the public’s awareness and confidence in the IOPC and the police complaints system, and stakeholders’ views of the IOPC and our performance.

A majority of stakeholders across all groups are confident in the IOPC. That confidence has grown significantly among policing stakeholders this year (from 49% to 63%).

In interviews, stakeholders suggested the IOPC has opportunities to:

- Increase and tailor communications: explaining what we do and the complaints process.
- Collaborate with other police accountability bodies, taking on a leadership role.
- Provide more evidence of impact: continuing to share learnings, but monitoring and enforcing that the learnings are acted upon.

We learned from the public there has been a substantial drop in confidence that police deal fairly with complaints made against the police. This is now at its lowest since 2017.

This has been driven by news stories about police failings, misconduct and criminality, as well as the highly critical Casey Review into the Metropolitan Police following the murder of Sarah Everard.

There has been an increase in awareness of the IOPC, although knowledge of what we do remains low - so we have more work to do.

These surveys are important barometers of how we are perceived so the feedback, both good and bad, is very valuable to us. You will find more detail in the 2022/23 [stakeholder research report](#) and [public perceptions report](#) 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 launches multiple investigations into handling of reports about David Carrick.](#)

[Supreme Court backs IOPC in landmark ruling on Jermaine Baker case](#)

[Learning recommendations issued to the Met Police on handling of missing person reports after man was found dead in a lake](#)

[Two West Midlands officers found guilty of misconduct in public office for abuse of power for sexual purpose](#)

[Cleveland Police officer charged with misconduct in public office for allegedly creating a false witness account](#)

[CPS decides not to press criminal charges against former officers investigated during Stephen Lawrence murder investigation](#)

Email: oversight@policeconduct.gov.uk

Tel: 01924 811699

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

