

# 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.

### The power to suspend the investigation or other handling of a complaint

Following the question last month about the power to suspend investigations or other handling of a complaint, we thought it worthwhile to send a reminder of when the power to suspend a complaint should be exercised. In the last few months, our Casework teams saw several cases which were suspended but no specific, identified prejudice was provided or rationale for why the prejudice would be significant to back up the reason for the complaint to be suspended. This has led us to direct the police force to continue the complaint handling.

Chapter 15 of the IOPC Statutory Guidance gives a comprehensive overview of the considerations that should be made when suspending a complaint, including at paragraph 15.2 where it states there needs to be a specific, identified prejudice and that the prejudice should be significant. It states where continuing the investigation or other handling **would**, if it were to continue, prejudice any criminal or other proceedings. Our bold emphasis here on the word '**would**' in conjunction with a specific, identified and significant prejudice highlights that this is a high threshold to reach.

Even when this high threshold is met, the use of the power to suspend is still discretionary. Forces should consider getting the views of the CPS or their own legal department about whether continuing the investigation or handling would prejudice any criminal or other proceedings.

Forces should also consider whether any steps short of suspension can be taken to mitigate the prejudice. The complaint handler should document the reason for the decision to suspend the complaint and inform the complainant of this reason. If the complainant makes representations to have the decision to suspend considered, please send the IOPC the detailed reasons for the suspension.

## Using IOPC data – Northumbria Police

The IOPC quarterly complaints information bulletin has helped Northumbria Police identify that it is an outlier in the number of ‘Individual Behaviour’ complaints it receives. Northumbria Police’s Professional Standards Department (PSD) undertook a deep dive into these types of complaints to better understand where and how it could improve. It became evident that one of the key areas was officers’ use of language when engaging with the public.

Presentations, using a combination of IOPC data and hard-hitting examples, were delivered at strategic force boards, to give senior leaders across the force a clear understanding of the problem. PSD and People Development staff produced a mandatory training package for all frontline officers and staff titled “Respect and Empathy: Improving our Communication.” The package revisits the basics of how to effectively communicate with members of the public. It also helps officers to recognise and manage compassion fatigue, and other factors that can impact their ability to be empathetic. While it is too early for the interventions to show quantitative results, initial feedback is positive.

Northumbria Police recognises the limitations of e-learning packages, so it developed a presentation for delivery by sergeants during response policing team briefings and protected learning days. This includes recordings of inappropriate language from real complaints / scenarios and encourages officers on shifts to discuss the issues among themselves. These will launch in early 2025.

IOPC data is a vital tool to monitor Northumbria Police’s complaint performance and allows it to benchmark itself against similar and national forces. The IOPC Oversight regional Liaison Officer for Northumbria Police, has highlighted several areas for it to focus on, which often results in changes to processes, practices, and associated behaviour.

If you would like to consider the data about your force from the IOPC quarterly complaints information bulletin, please contact your Oversight Liaison Officer directly or email the Oversight team at [oversight@policeconduct.gov.uk](mailto:oversight@policeconduct.gov.uk).

## Are you sending the IOPC information sheet with decision letters?

After consulting with you, the IOPC introduced an information sheet for service users setting out what complainants could expect if they choose to submit a review to the IOPC. The benefits of completing this work included: managing service user expectations at the earliest opportunity; a possible reduction in the number of reviews being submitted where the service user’s expectation is unachievable and a possible reduction in the number of enquiries and requests for information being submitted to PSDs. On 24 October we requested your assistance and asked you to send the information sheet out alongside outcome letters to service users where the IOPC was the relevant review body.

As part of the post implementation work, we are engaging with PSDs to understand how the new process is being adopted and whether the information sheet is being sent out with the appropriate cases. Once we have given the new process time to embed as a new way of working, we will

monitor the incoming demand to see whether this information is having an impact on the number of reviews submitted. Thank you for your support in adopting a new way of working. If you have any queries, please contact your local Oversight Liaison.

## Reminder: Professional standards department 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](mailto:oversight@policeconduct.gov.uk). The sessions will be held on Teams and should last around 90 minutes.

We have places available for the following sessions:

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

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

## ? Common questions from forces and LPBs

**Q: A recordable conduct matter was referred to the IOPC that involved internal allegations of a senior officer having abused his position for sexual gain with a lower in rank officer, and of controlling behaviour while in a relationship. The mode of investigation from the IOPC was 'local investigation'. The investigating officer and the appropriate authority (AA) had the opinion that based on the information from the reporting officer that none of the information reported would amount to a breach of the standards so serious to justify disciplinary or a criminal matter.**

**Is an investigation still required for this?**

**If an investigation was completed and a report sent to the AA for final determination, does the reporting officer have a right to review with the IOPC as it was referred to them?**

A: Yes, as the matter was referred to the IOPC, an investigation still needs to take place as this was the IOPC decision, even if serious breaches of the standards are not identified later. However, there is no right of review to the IOPC, and as it's a local and not a directed investigation, there is no need to provide the final report to the IOPC.

## Corporate news

### IOPC welcomes the responses to recommendations made in the joint super-complaint investigation into the police response to stalking

Today a [report was published setting out the responses to the recommendations](#) made in the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC), HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire &

Rescue Services (HMICFRS) and the College of Policing report into the Suzy Lamplugh Trust super-complaint regarding the police response to stalking.

The super-complaint report, published in September 2024, included 29 recommendations to chief constables, police and crime commissioners and mayor equivalents, the National Police Chiefs' Council, Ministry of Justice, Home Office and Crown Prosecution Service.

The responses published now follow an announcement by the Government in December, setting out measures aimed at protecting victims of stalking, including the Government response to our recommendations. All police forces in England and Wales have now published individual action plans on their own websites setting out the steps they will take in response to the recommendations made to chief constables. In June 2025, the NPCC will publish an update report on the progress made by police forces to deliver against the recommendations.

Read our full statement on [our website](#).

## **IOPC response to claims about our investigations into South Yorkshire Police response to allegations of child sexual abuse in Rotherham from 1997 - 2013**

Our priority from the very start of Operation Linden was always the welfare of the survivors, who showed incredible bravery in coming forward and throughout the whole process.

Many of the survivors we spoke to made it clear they wanted primarily to see meaningful changes to policing that meant other people wouldn't have to suffer in the way they did.

Every one of the 91 investigations within Operation Linden was carried out thoroughly and all lines of enquiry explored by up to 50 IOPC staff. During the seven-year investigation, the second largest in our history, we investigated 265 separate allegations made by 51 complainants, 44 of whom were survivors of abuse and exploitation. Approximately 1000 statements were taken and 4000 investigative actions undertaken.

It's completely inaccurate to suggest that investigators were told not to investigate senior South Yorkshire Police (SYP) officers – there was a dedicated investigation within Operation Linden which was focused solely on senior officers within the force and, had we found any indication of corruption, it would have been rigorously pursued.

And there was no attempt to bury that report. Like the other investigation reports, it could not be published due to the very personal information and data included within it. That is why we produced one overarching report, published in 2022, detailing our findings and recommendations.

“We concluded that SYP failed to protect vulnerable children and young people at that time and to recognise the scale of the offending and effectively tackle it. We found systemic issues including failures in leadership, lack of professional curiosity, cultural issues and gaps in skills and training. The force acknowledged past failings and the focus needs to be on learning from those mistakes.

Read about our full statement and conclusions 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.

[Kent detective sergeant sacked for breach of professional standards for sexually touching a junior officer](#)

[Gross misconduct proven against Dorset Police officers over offensive WhatsApp messages](#)

[Former Lincolnshire Police inspector would have been dismissed over use of force](#)

[Investigation into complaints about Met's handling of Al Fayed allegations](#)

[Greater Manchester Police officers acted appropriately before fatal road collision in Salford](#)

[Learning recommendation accepted by MPS on control room guidance following man's drowning after arrest](#)

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

