

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.

Violence against women and girls update

We are continuing our work focussing on police perpetrated domestic abuse (PPDA). As you will be aware, we issued a survey to all police forces asking how they record and respond to PPDA. The survey has helped us to understand the challenges facing policing in this area and what's working well. We are currently considering how we can support forces to make improvements in the handling of complaint and conduct matters involving PPDA.

Following the survey, we completed six professional discussions with professional standards departments to explore the main themes. We would like to thank Durham, Dyfed-Powys, Essex, Hampshire, Lancashire and Lincolnshire for the time they gave to engage in the discussions. We have found them extremely insightful and have learnt a lot. The discussions highlighted the structures in PSDs that support PPDA investigations, the training and expertise of complaint handlers that can really benefit the handling of a PPDA matter, and the support provided to victim-survivors.

Once we have analysed all the responses and decided our findings, we will consult with violence against women and girls and policing stakeholders on our next steps. Our PPDA report will be published in the Autumn.

Mandatory referral criteria - discrimination

We would like to remind you that for complaints or conduct matters about discrimination to be referred on a mandatory basis, there must be an allegation of a criminal offence or other behaviour liable to lead to disciplinary proceedings, that is aggravated by discrimination. This is a two-part test which requires there to be conduct that, in itself, would justify criminal/disciplinary proceedings, in addition to a discriminatory element. So matters that involve discriminatory comments or behaviour alone, with no other underlying conduct, would not satisfy the mandatory referral criteria.

A recent case prompted us to make sure we clarify that, if the discrimination element is removed, there is still conduct that in itself would justify criminal or disciplinary action if proven. If a referral is sent on a mandatory basis when the mandatory criteria is not met, we have no remit to assess or make any decision on it and must invalidate the referral. However, we can assess and provide a mode of investigation decision, if the referral is made on a voluntary basis.

Going forward, if we receive referrals and we are not clear whether the two-part test is met, we may contact you to clarify the conduct. If needed, we may ask you to consider a voluntary referral instead.

Timeliness reports

We would like to remind you of the requirement to send a timeliness report on all matters over 12 months (and every six months after that). The IOPC's [operational advice note](#) sets out what the relevant period is, what your report must include and how you should send it. It also includes a template for your report.

If you have any questions about timeliness reports, please contact Oversight on oversight@policeconduct.gov.uk.

Case management system update

On 19 April 2024, we wrote to Heads of Professional Standards Departments and to all forces, to update you on our move to a new case management system. Due to some technical issues around rollout of the new system, our Customer Contact Centre currently has a backlog of enquiries and direct complaints from May and June. Unfortunately, the processing time for enquiries and direct complaints has increased substantially. However, we are working hard to reduce these timescales and aim to be back to our usual processing times within 4-6 weeks. We will, of course, keep you updated on our progress.

Contact information request

On 11 July 2024, we wrote to the Offices of Police and Crime Commissioners (OPCCs) asking for up-to-date contact information for both the office and their individual Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs), following the recent PCC elections and the move we made to our new case management system. We have had a good response, but we are still waiting on some replies, so we have extended the deadline. If you've not yet responded, could you please complete the two forms that were emailed to you and submit them to oversight@policeconduct.gov.uk by **13 August 2024**.

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:

- Wednesday 16 October 2024
- Tuesday 21 January 2025

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

? Common questions from forces and local policing bodies

Q: How do PSDs handle a second complaint that is made several years after an incident, but is about a different officer and it now relates to violence against women and girls?

A: The new complaint must be recorded and handled accordingly. As the complaint is about another officer, it would not be correct to take no further action simply because the original complaint has been dealt with. To help you in handling this complaint, please take a look at our [guidance on ending victim blaming](#), and the recommendations in our [review of violence against women and girls complaints handling](#).

Corporate news

Our response to the London Stalking Review

In response to the publication of the London Victim Commissioner's stalking review, IOPC Director General Rachel Watson said:

“Stalking can have a devastating impact upon the lives of victims. Those who experience this crime need to be able to have confidence to come forward and report it, knowing they will be listened to, and action will be taken.

“Working with HMICFRS and the College of Policing, we have spoken with victims and support services to better understand their experiences.

“This vital work contributes to our joint response to a super-complaint made by the Suzy Lamplugh Trust on behalf of the National Stalking Consortium about the police response to stalking.

“The findings of London Victims’ Commissioner, and our joint report, due to be published in the autumn, offer vital opportunities for policing to listen and make the changes needed.

“All those involved in the criminal justice system have a role to play to make sure stalking is always treated seriously and those affected, get the support they deserve. We will continue to work with all forces to make sure this happens.”

Our statement in response to the Vera Baird report

IOPC Regional Director Catherine Bates said:

“Dame Vera’s report raises deeply uncomfortable questions – ones which must be addressed in order to regain the trust of those who have been let down by the police complaints process.

“An effective complaints system is vital for the public to have confidence in the police – they must be assured that when concerns are raised about the management of police forces and the behaviour of individual officers, these are taken seriously and dealt with effectively.

“The IOPC oversees the police complaints system, setting standards for how complaints should be handled and supporting police forces to meet those standards. We remain committed to holding the police service to account in their handling of complaints and conduct matters, and helping to drive improvements in policing practice to build the trust and confidence of those who have reason to make a complaint.

“Some of the issues raised in this report about the importance of initial complaint handling mirror what we have found through our own reviews of GMP and other force’s complaint handling. We have previously raised these with the force and will continue to work with GMP as they work to address them.

“We are also working with all forces to help ensure professional standards departments get complaint handling right first time. This will mean a better outcome for complainants, and fewer cases being sent for review, which will ease the strain on the complaints system.

“Through our oversight work, we will now work with GMP as they address the recommendations in this report and monitor complaint handling to make sure the changes are having the desired impact. This report is a significant opportunity to learn and to demonstrate real change - the trust and confidence of the public depends on it.”

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.

[West Yorkshire Police officer charged in court with misconduct in public office for abuse of power for sexual purpose](#)

[Former Bedfordshire staff member receives suspended prison sentence for corruption for sharing confidential information externally](#)

[Final written warning for Derbyshire constable for excessive use of force on drunk man](#)

[IOPC investigating South Wales Police response to concerns for welfare calls about a man prior to his death](#)

[IOPC investigations into Nottinghamshire Police are progressing following complaints by families of deceased victims](#)

[IOPC criminally investigating Greater Manchester Police officer following arrests at airport](#)

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

