

# Complaint handling toolkit - guidance

March 2024

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# Background

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We are working in a sector of ever-increasing demand and complexity. Through our discussions with police force professional standards departments (PSDs) and local policing bodies (LPBs) we appreciate that some further guidance would help provide consistency and standardisation across complaints handling. We have also carried out some in-depth analysis of our reviews work and outcomes, as well as some intrusive dip-sampling of PSD cases and discussions with complaints handlers to tell us where to focus this guidance.

This analysis, discussions with complaint handlers and our regular contact with practitioners has led to this further guidance. While it does aim to provide some consistency to handling complaints it does not seek to take away the flexibility in handling complaints that the statutory scheme gives us.

The guidance focuses on six main areas to help improve standards and deliver consistent levels of customer service. This should result in more complainant satisfaction by focusing on good, early contact with the complainant to understand their complaint better and therefore handle it more effectively.

Improving the first response to a complaint may increase the chances of the outcome being easily understood and accepted rather than being challenged via the review process, reducing the time that complainants and the subjects of complaints need to engage with the system. Service users will benefit from receiving suitable outcomes which address their concerns and explanations which are easily understood.

Our data confirms that most reviews received at the IOPC agree that investigation findings and complaint handling are reasonable and proportionate, with LPBs agreeing with an even higher proportion of outcomes. However, the picture still isn't consistent enough.

Our analysis of the reasons for upholding reviews shows that it is often simple and avoidable errors that lead to reviews being upheld.

The most common factors we have identified as causing reviews to be upheld as not being reasonable and proportionate:

- Lack of complainant contact
- Not understanding the complaint or agreeing heads of complaint
- Not having sufficient evidential audit trails
- Not providing rationales or reasons for decisions taken (or not taken)
- Not obtaining relevant evidence (or not explaining why it hasn't been obtained)
- Not analysing evidence properly/weighing up evidence to reach understandable conclusions

The dip-sampled cases (which we would not otherwise have seen) and speaking to complaints handlers, both within PSDs and operational officers who handle complaints in divisions and districts have also highlighted these factors. We have also found pockets of good practice that deserve a wider audience.

Added to this is our experience tells us that turnover of staff in PSDs seems to be quite high. This means expertise and corporate knowledge of complaints handling can dwindle over time.

All these factors lead us to believe that police complaint handlers would benefit from more guidance from the IOPC in the form of a toolkit to provide some consistency and standards across complaints handling. The guidance will focus on those areas highlighted above.

What is reasonable and proportionate is potentially different for each complaint depending on the allegations made, the evidence and the expected outcome, there are some common steps that can be taken to help ensure that there is some consistency and basic standards in complaint handling.

This guidance will adhere to the existing guidance offered by the previous IOPC publications such as [Focus](#) and is consistent with the [Statutory Guidance](#).

# Part One: Complainant Contact

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## Benefits of early engagement

Early engagement has been our focus within this project. We have identified that some police forces are engaging in a meaningful way with complainants, with some evidence of complainants being spoken to on the telephone to clarify complaints and build rapport.

Engaging with a complainant early and with meaning, can forge a connection, build rapport and assist communication both ways. If complainants don't feel heard or understood this can create unnecessary contact, review applications and further complaints which increase demand on an already busy complaints system. A quick time response or outcome could be reached during that initial conversation (if appropriate). If the complaint needs to be handled further, the complainant will be more likely to be engaged, communicate more positively and provide all relevant information if effective early engagement has taken place.

## What is early engagement?

### Define the complaint

The first step to be taken when a complaint is received is to contact the complainant and understand the detail of the complaint, establish what the focus is for the complainant and ultimately what they wish to achieve in terms of an outcome.

Encourage the complainant to explain their complaint in succinct terms. What are the most important allegations they wish to make? If the complaint is understood efforts and energies can be focused where it matters.

### Contact by telephone

Some complainants may be more comfortable speaking to someone rather than putting the complaint in writing. By discussing the complaint directly with them on the telephone, you may put them at ease. They will make a connection with a real human being, feel heard and listened to.

The complainant may be better able to convey the complaint verbally and there may be aspects of the complaint that can be quickly addressed and resolved. You can clarify issues and details, check your understanding of the complaint and provide information to the complainant about the process. A telephone call be more effective than several email exchanges. The conversation can also be directed and controlled by the handler rather than allowing the complainant to write reams of detail.

A complainant may be satisfied with the engagement and response and choose to withdraw their complaint at this stage.

Document that you have done this on the [pro-forma that accompanies this guidance](#) and in the decision letter/report so that any potential review body can see your efforts in understanding and recording the complaint correctly. It is also best practice to provide the complainant with a written response to confirm and agree the areas of the complaint you will be looking at.

**Example** - “To check my understanding of your complaint I spoke with you to confirm the wording of the allegations set out in your initial complaint; this provided me with a better understanding of your concerns.”

A good example seen in a decision letter highlighted the length of time spent to engage with a complainant which demonstrated the investment of time in the complaint.

Some forces have adopted the decision to contact complainants by telephone wherever possible and early results show that when complainant contact is good this usually leads to a good outcome and a reasonable and proportionate response from the force.

## **What to discuss in this early conversation with a Complainant**

### **What is the Complainant’s objective?**

Complainants may sometimes just want to be listened to and heard. Are they seeking information or to understand something that happened, rather than make a complaint? A complainant may not want to make a complaint after the initial submission of their complaint form; they may simply want an update or some information about an ongoing criminal report or investigation.

An honest and open conversation can ensure that what the complainant is looking to achieve is understood; are they seeking information, resolution, to be heard or to make a complaint?

If they want to make a complaint, what are they looking for? This may be an apology, to prevent something similar occurring again or learning for the officer. If the complainant is looking for something more serious such as misconduct proceedings, explore with the complainant at an early stage whether the outcome they are seeking is achievable.

**Key tip** - be open minded and work with the complainant to explore what they wish to achieve within the legislation and proportionate to what has occurred.

**Example** of where this has occurred in practice and acknowledged in the decision letter; “On speaking with you, you said you would like both officers to understand how you felt by how you were treated. You felt that XXX should be subject to training, in particular, in respect of his treatment of women. You felt that XXX’s behaviour undermined your confidence and made you feel stupid.”

It is clear in this scenario that the complaint handler had an early conversation with the complainant about the outcome they were looking for and what would satisfy them. On this occasion, the outcome agreed and achievable was feedback for the officers and some reflective practice.

### **Manage expectations**

It is rare for the IOPC to see examples where the expectations of a complainant in terms of outcomes or expected action are being discussed or managed during early engagement.

Some complainants have unreasonable expectations, such as an expectation that the officer will be sacked, a referral is made to the CPS for a criminal prosecution, financial compensation and more. Whilst some expected outcomes could in theory be actioned, they are often not achievable nor appropriate in the circumstances nor given the evidence available. As such, this will need to be explained to the complainant as early as possible. Whilst it is recognised that this may be a difficult conversation, it is important that a complainant understands what is achievable in the circumstances and will ensure that they understand any limitations from the beginning of the process. Complaint handlers need to be cautious so that outcomes don't appear pre-determined.

Managing the expectations of the complainant will prevent disappointment and comeback further along the complaint process. The complainant will gain an early understanding of the process and what can be achieved as a result of the handling of their complaint.

**Key tip** - be open and honest about what can be achieved and manage any high expectations early on. Discuss the possible and achievable outcomes, but without making a final decision or outcome, except where a quick resolution can be found outside schedule 3.

**Example** - a complainant believes they were spoken to in a rude way when they were stopped and the outcome they seek is for the officer to be sacked. The body worn video (BWV) footage shows that the officer got frustrated with the complainant who was not being compliant. Their tone and words used could have been better but were not offensive. Discuss with the complainant that such an allegation, even if proven would not result in an officer being sacked. This may result in learning or RPRP depending on the officer's ability to reflect and if there are any concerns from previous complaints. Concentrate on the benefits of learning and reflecting and changing the officer's approach rather than sanctions.

If these discussions lead to the complainant not wanting to make a formal police complaint, then it is best practice to signpost them to service recovery or how to withdraw.

### **Agree the complaint in writing**

Many review applications are upheld as the complaint has not been recorded correctly. Complaints can be misinterpreted, misunderstood or an aspect of the complaint has not been addressed. Because of this, a reinvestigation of the complaint can be directed on review to address something that was missed or misinterpreted.

Clarifying the complaint in writing after the initial agreement in the telephone call will ensure the focus is on addressing the complaint. If the complainant later challenges what complaint was recorded with a review body, an audit trail will exist documenting what was agreed, which is less likely to result in a reinvestigation of the complaint based on a misunderstanding.

This written communication confirming the allegations agreed in the telephone call gives the complainant the opportunity to clarify any potential misunderstandings and miscommunications. This will ideally resolve any issues prior to the final decision being made. It should be made clear to the complainant that if they do not respond, their silence should be taken as acceptance.

There may be rare occasions when a complaint cannot be agreed upon, despite much discussion and communication. In this scenario where communication has been voluminous and unspecific with regards to the allegations, include in the report or decision letter the efforts taken to try to understand a complaint, so that the review body can easily see that attempts were made.



## Part Two: Decision Making

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### Handling the complaint

#### **Method of handling – investigation or OTBI**

When considering whether a complaint should be handled OTBI or by an investigation, look at the substance of the complaint, together with what the initial available evidence suggests. When making this decision there is no need to thoroughly consider or weigh all evidence.

If on initial examination the evidence suggests that there is no indication that the behaviour complained of would justify disciplinary proceedings or a criminal offence or engaged Article 2/3 it is likely that the matter can be reasonably and proportionately handled outside of investigation (OTBI). This decision should be regularly reviewed by the complaint handler.

When reviewing the readily available information associated with a complaint, it is likely that incontrovertible evidence such as video footage will carry more weight. Where there is one person's word against another, with no further information, the lack of information will generally not remove the need for an investigation. If the initial evidence does not provide an indication of potential misconduct or a criminal offence, then the matter can be reasonably and proportionately handled other than by investigation, but the complaint handler must keep this under review. Where there is doubt about whether there is or is not an indication, this usually suggests that it would be reasonable and proportionate to carry out an investigation into the complaint.

Any evidence or information that already exists should be taken into consideration when making this decision. Such evidence will be incident logs, pocket notebook entries, BWV/CCTV footage etc. However, at this point when considering whether a complaint should be investigated, the complaint handler should not generate new evidence - this would include requesting a statement from an officer or even an email account of what took place.

Even if there is no requirement to investigate, this does not mean that a complaint should not or could not be investigated if appropriate. It may still be reasonable and proportionate to do so for certain complaints because of public interest, concerns about public confidence or potential learning being identified.

The AA may also decide that an investigation is the most reasonable and proportionate way to handle a complaint.

Use of force and discrimination matters are more likely to need investigation because they are complex and often require further enquiries. For example, if BWV footage

clearly shows that force did not occur as alleged, then no investigation is needed, but if force was used most complaints would benefit from the structure of investigation.

## **Relevant Review Body (RRB)**

[Statutory guidance - 2020 | Independent Office for Police Conduct \(IOPC\)](#) (para 18.5-18.9)

The appropriate authority (AA) should decide who the RRB is: the local policing body or the IOPC. This must be communicated to the complainant in the outcome letter. The test must be assessed on the substance of the complaint alone, not on the apparent merit of the allegations or with hindsight after the complaint has been dealt with. (Paragraph 30, Schedule 3, Police Reform Act 2002; Regulation 32, Police (Complaints and Misconduct) Regulations 2020)

## Part Three: Evidence Gathering

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The dip sample has shown some good examples of evidence being used in decision letters to support reasons for decisions, such as stills of CCTV and BWV. What information and evidence is needed will depend on whether the complaint is being investigated or handled other than by investigation. It will depend on the type of complaint made, the nature of the allegations, what the complainant wants to achieve and what the evidence shows.

Think about what evidence is available to you. CCTV and BWV is very useful, independent evidence, but might not cover all angles or include audio. Records made contemporaneously or shortly after something has happened such as crime reports, custody logs and use of force forms are also useful pieces of evidence readily available.

**Example** - a use of force complaint is investigated and there are five pieces of BWV footage. The first piece of footage viewed is clear and shows that the allegation did not occur. There is no need to view the remaining four pieces of footage, but it is good practice to explain in the report or decision letter why you have not done so.

Furthermore, if the footage is clear, you may not need to obtain the officer's account, but again there is a need to explain why. If the allegation is that force was used and that led to injuries being sustained, if it becomes apparent that force was not used, there is no need to seek the medical evidence.

In a similar use of force complaint, there may be justification to view all the available footage as the angles show something slightly different, or it may not be clear at all.

Each complaint will be different in terms of what information or evidence is needed to address the concerns.

## Part Four: Evaluation of evidence

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Considering the evidence; think about the type and source of your evidence:

- Direct – from persons affected, or from data capture
- Contemporaneous – recorded at the time
- Real - photos, exhibits, CCTV, BWV, forensic data
- Independent witness
- Documentary evidence
- Circumstantial / drawn from inference

Consider the following (CRAW):

- Credibility
- Reliability
- Accuracy
- Weight

The weight that should be given to a piece of evidence will generally be determined once the credibility, reliability and accuracy of the evidence have been considered within the context of other evidence available.

Evidence which is direct / real / contemporaneous / gathered from an independent source or is consistent with / supported by other sources of evidence the weight that should be given to a piece of evidence will generally will often have greater 'CRAW.'

Evidence which is not credible due to inconsistent accounts given over time, implausible given the circumstances, inconsistent with other sources of evidence, unsupported by reliable sources of evidence or undermined by reliable sources of evidence will have less CRAW and make the likelihood less plausible.

### Analysing the evidence:

- The account given by officer X is consistent with both custody officers. It is further supported by what is recorded on the incident log.
- The BWV footage does not support your claim that...
- I do not consider this account to be as credible because...
- The allegation you make is not supported by other accounts and neither is the account made by officer X, as there is no one else who witnessed the alleged assault. I will consider the additional evidence which will assist me in arriving at a decision on the balance of probabilities.

- The photos you have sent me together with the account given by Mr X undermine the credibility of the evidence provided by PC X. Therefore, this casts some doubt on the reliability of PC X.
- As the account of the Health Care Practitioner can be considered independent corroboration, I find it more likely than not that this happened.
- This is not to say that I do not believe your account. It is simply the case that there is insufficient evidence to support your allegation / view that...

Relate the evidence to the decision. Often the IOPC see a decision on review that the service was deemed to be acceptable, but based on evidence which does not fully support the decision. In these circumstances a complainant will not be satisfied with this finding and be more likely to submit a review, which can be upheld if the decision is not supported by evidence.

## Reasonable and proportionate

[Statutory guidance - 2020 | Independent Office for Police Conduct \(IOPC\)](#)  
(Chapter 3)

Our statutory guidance states that reasonable and proportionate means doing what is appropriate in the circumstances, taking into account the facts of the matter and the context in which it has been raised, within the framework of legislation and guidance.

What needs to be considered is the seriousness of the complaint and its potential for learning, against using policing resources efficiently. Where the complaint is more serious and a special procedures investigation is undertaken, disciplinary and /or criminal action will also be considered.

When considering the seriousness of the complaint, considerations should be the nature of the incident, actual or potential impact, or harm to individuals, communities or the wider public and also the potential impact on confidence in the police and in the police complaints system. The more serious a complaint, the greater the need for accountability and scrutiny.

A reasonable and proportionate response includes providing a clear and evidence-based rationale for any decisions taken. As well as being reasonable and proportionate in terms of the evidence and information gathered, it is crucial to be reasonable and proportionate around the level and detail of the discussion of the evidence in the decision letter/investigation report.

If the information or evidence adds nothing to the decision or carries little weight, acknowledge it, but limit the analysis of the evidence. If you provide a summary of

BWV footage, there is no need to refer in detail to further BWV footage from a different officer if it adds nothing to the first piece.

Being reasonable and proportionate does not necessarily mean that you do less. The amount of analysis of a piece of evidence and information will depend on many factors that are unique to the set of circumstances including the seriousness of the complaint, what evidence is available, and what the evidence tells you.

You should balance what is reasonable and proportionate, taking into account the nature of the allegation and what the complainant has indicated will satisfy them that their concerns have been fully addressed.

[IOPC Focus guide 14](#) discusses more on the reasonable and proportionate handling of complaints.

### **Examples of good explanations of what is reasonable and proportionate:**

**In an investigation report Gloucestershire Constabulary have referenced what reasonable and proportionate means by way of an explanation to a complainant :**

“I believe that having considered all the circumstances of your complaint, reasonable and proportionate action has been taken to address it. (Reasonable – doing what is appropriate given all the circumstances of your complaint. Proportionate – balancing the seriousness of your complaint and the response to it).”

**The MPS gave an example of wording in a review received by the IOPC:**

“I have taken the following steps to address your concerns which I consider to be both reasonable and proportionate in the circumstances, in order to address the matters described above. Where I have not pursued a particular line of enquiry, this is because I believe that it would not be reasonable or proportionate to do so. My actions take into account the guidance provided in the IOPC Focus guide on the reasonable and proportionate handling of complaints. I have provided a summary of the information obtained as a result of each of the steps taken and they are as follows:”

## National Decision Model

Officers are asked to use this when making decisions and the model can and should be applied by complaint handlers and investigators when arriving at an outcome and demonstrating their rationale and thought process. If you provide reasons, rationale and a real demonstration of how you have arrived at your decision, this will assist a complainant in their understanding of how the decision has been arrived at and even if they don't agree, there can be a level of understanding and acceptance.

### [College of Policing National Decision Model](#)

#### **Example by Northumbria Police in which the Investigating Officer explains the National Decision Model and assessing evidence in accounts of officers against this:**

“Collectively, the information contained in the accounts provide by the officers demonstrates their awareness and consideration of the National Decision Model (NDM), which all officers are expected to use whilst considering the incidents they attend; this includes gathering and weighing-up the information and intelligence available, assessing the threat and risks to all involved, assessing which powers, policies or procedures may be relevant, what options and contingencies are available and taking appropriate action whilst always being mindful of the Code of Ethics for Policing and the Standards of Professional Behaviour, which they are expected to adhere to.”

# Part Five: Writing Up

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## Address and provide a conclusion to each complaint

Every recorded complaint will require a clear and separate outcome and conclusion, together with reasoning and rationale for the decision. This should relate directly to the evidence and information summarised within the decision.

If no conclusion or outcome has been provided for one of the allegations listed, on review the decision maker will often be required to send this matter back for investigation or re-investigation.

In some cases, this will be best shown by listing each complaint in the decision letter or report and dealing with it individually, so a conclusion can clearly be seen for each one. Where appropriate, some complaints can be grouped together and discussed, but a conclusion must be provided for each complaint.

## Show your workings-out

Explain what you have done as part of the investigation/handling of the complaint and what action you have *not* taken and explain why. It is just as important to show what you have considered, but not actioned, as showing what evidence and information you have gathered. In the report or decision letter detail your thought process and rationale for not pursuing a line of enquiry.

When discussing a piece of evidence or information, state why you have gathered a piece of evidence, why it is important, what weight you give to this evidence and include a summary of what the evidence is. For example, provide a summary of what body worn video shows; that you have attributed a high level of evidential weight on this evidence as this is contemporaneous and shows the incident clearly without bias.

A powerful example of using evidence within a report was seen in the dip sample (GMP) where picture stills of custody CCTV were included in the report to show that the complainant had no marks or cuts to his face. This evidence did not support his allegation of assault by an officer in which he said that this use of force resulted in facial injuries. This was a very effective and simple tool to provide clear evidence which did not support the allegation and undermined it, with no further need to obtain other evidence. The video stills served as a strong piece of evidence to undermine the allegation.

## Good rationale

A good decision will be one which is clearly written, objective and evidence based. The outcome must be logical and rational, and the complainant must be able to understand how the decision was arrived at from what is written.



When making a decision explain why the decision has been made. A complainant can only understand the decision by what is stated in the letter or investigation report. Often a complainant may not agree with the decision but can appreciate how the decision has been arrived at. Take time to succinctly show your thought process, what evidence and information has been considered, what weight you have placed on each piece of evidence and an explanation for the decision. The rationale should relate directly to the evidence summarised within the report or decision letter.

## **Legislation/policies**

Where appropriate refer briefly to any relevant legislation, individual force policies, College of Policing authorised professional practice and other national guidance, such as National Police Chiefs' Council guidance. This demonstrates a level of support and explanation to the complainant that the actions taken by police officers can be legitimate. A brief reference and summary of the legislation/policy is helpful together with how this applies to the complaint.

For example, when dealing with a stop and search complaint refer to Pace and Code A, the College of Policing APP and be aware of the IOPC National Stop and Search learning report (published April 2022). Your force may also have a policy on stop and search. There may be generalised or person/vehicle specific intelligence that triggered the search - refer to this which assists an explanation. Discuss GOWISELY and take officer accounts if proportionate to do so to enable the complainant to understand why they were stopped and whether the stop was appropriate or not.

An example from Northumbria Police referred to all relevant use of force legislation and gave a brief summary of each piece of legislation and what this meant in practice. They then applied this legislation directly to the events that occurred. In this context, consideration could also be given to seeking a professional opinion from a subject matter expert such as the force trainer in use of force.

## **Writing style**

Use plain English where you can, summarise and explain legislation in a way that a complainant can understand. Do not use legal jargon, technical language and acronyms. Use clear, thoughtful and precise wording.

This may be the first time that someone has been in contact with the police and they may need an explanation of things that are very familiar to you.

Setting the scene and providing background information will demonstrate understanding of the situation to the complainant and assist understanding for other decision makers.

The decision must be clear, unambiguous and stated at the beginning of your response. Avoid length, depth and repetition where it is not needed and where it may obscure the rationale. Avoid overly long, rambling and wordy responses; the

perception that a longer letter is better is not always accurate. Our complainants said the amount of information they were presented with could make them feel overwhelmed and intimidated.

There is a general dislike among complainants for language which was 'legal', 'jargony', 'academic', 'technical'. For this reason, legislative references should be reduced to footnotes, apart from when it is being referred to as evidence.

Consider the layout of the decision letter or report. This should be easily accessible and clear to the reader. Use of headings and subheadings can be useful to separate out the individual allegations, evidence discussed and rationale. Consider numbering each paragraph to enable ease of reference through the letter or report. Bullet points can be helpful for lists of evidence, themes or individual allegations.

## **Tone**

Try to show understanding towards a complainant in all communications, and particularly in the decision letter or investigation report. It can be meaningful to demonstrate an appreciation and acknowledge that the situation has been difficult for them.

Try not to be defensive or complainant -blaming, but genuinely seek to understand what has led to the complaint. This may be the only interaction the complainant has had with police and they may find it naturally difficult.

A good example of tone and acknowledgement even when service was acceptable can be appropriate;

*"I believe that the decision to close the matter is the correct one. However, a decision to take no further action could have been made at the time of reporting or when the investigation was in its infancy in order to better manage your expectations. This situation may have also been prevented with more adequate supervision of this report."*

## **Buddy/peer review**

Consider asking a colleague to read the report or letter before completion. This can be helpful to both double check that your spelling and grammar is correct, but also to give a second opinion, be a sounding board and generally ensure you've communicated the decision in the best way. This can be a formal process adopted between teams or on a more ad hoc basis. Another pair of eyes can identify something that has been missed or suggest alternative wording or a more empathetic approach.

## **Appropriate decision**

Sometimes the evidence isn't clear, and it is alright to state this, rather than arrive at a conclusion which is not supported by evidence, and which then aggrieves the

complainant and may result in an upheld review. Consider whether it is appropriate to make a finding that you are unable to determine if the service provided was acceptable.

A complainant can be more likely to accept an outcome which may be ambiguous in its decision, such as that it cannot be determined whether the service was acceptable. But the explanation needs to be clear and explain that the evidence was not there to support a different decision.

## Part Six: Outcomes

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### [Statutory Guidance 17.9, 18.41](#)

Only investigations subject to special procedures could lead to misconduct outcomes, in all other cases think about what outcomes will best resolve the complaint considering learning, reflection and improvement.

### Apologies

Consider issuing an apology and saying sorry, even when the complaint is not upheld or the service is satisfactory. Wording can be constructed in such a way that it is not an acceptance that something has gone wrong or that an officer is at fault. Sometimes it can be an acknowledgement that the complainant felt a certain way or that the experience they have had with the police has felt hard. An example of this;

*“In summary, from the evidence discussed the officers did not fail to arrest, they chose a more appropriate course of action. In my opinion, if PC XXX on conveying this message to you had appraised you of the steps taken, and the reason why the suspect was not being arrested at that time, you would have had more confidence in what the officers were doing.”* The IO here acknowledges something else could have been done to reassure complainant. The wording is apologetic, without using the words apologise, or sorry.

From separate investigation reports prepared by the MPS;

*“I can only apologise as to how this would make you feel, that you were wasting police time and would have added to your distress. It was not clearly explained to you what would happen...You did not receive the service that I would expect from the Metropolitan Police, in terms of compassion, explanation, treating you as a victim and affording you the appropriate support.*

*Officers need to be aware that not everyone has dealings with police, therefore guidance, empathy, understanding are all qualities which need to be displayed when dealing with a victim of crime.”*

*“I apologise on behalf of the Metropolitan Police Service how you have been left feeling following your detention in custody. However, I can find no evidence to support that you have been discriminated against due to your race.”*

### Learning

The complaint regulations focus on individual and organisational learning. Learning and reflective practice can make a difference and prevent similar issues arising in the future.

Where RPRP is considered, be clear what is proposed and that an action plan would be put in place to enable a full and clear record of the reflective practice.

An example of where learning is suggested in a decision letter from the MPS (NW), where an IO acknowledged how the complainant interpreted her interaction with an officer and stated that guidance, empathy, understanding are all qualities which need to be displayed when dealing with a victim of crime. The learning identified;

*“both officers do an attachment for example, with Victim Support to see how their behaviour and reactions can affect victims of crime. You also suggested that XXX would benefit from learning how to speak with females, as you felt this was lacking. I will also make this recommendation to potentially work on VAWG (Violence against women and girls) project work. Having spoken to you, I know you are hugely supportive of police and I believe you will support officers’ learning.”*

A good explanation of reflective practice was given by Gloucestershire Constabulary in an investigation report;

*“The process is intended to involve accountability for actions and taking responsibility by individual officers and the organisation; it is intended to provide an open and reflective environment to approach issues and mistakes that have arisen. The principal focus of following this process is to learn and to develop by improving from mistakes, poor judgement and low-level wrongdoing through early intervention. The process is designed to be reflective and to be a process in which an officer can engage and take genuine learning and positive action from.”*

## Useful Links

IOPC Statutory Guidance;

[https://www.policeconduct.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/2020\\_statutory\\_guidance\\_english.pdf](https://www.policeconduct.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/2020_statutory_guidance_english.pdf)

Home Office Guidance Conduct, Efficiency and Effectiveness: Statutory Guidance on Professional Standards, Performance and Integrity in Policing;

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/863820/Home\\_Office\\_Statutory\\_Guidance\\_0502.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/863820/Home_Office_Statutory_Guidance_0502.pdf)

College of Policing Guidance on outcomes in police misconduct proceedings;

<https://assets.college.police.uk/s3fs-public/2022-08/Guidance-on-outcomes-in-police-misconduct-proceedings.pdf>

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