

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).

## Corporate news

### Survivors of Rotherham child sexual abuse must be heard if police are to learn from the past

Police must do more to support survivors of child sexual abuse and listen to their experiences, the Independent Office for Police Conduct said following a series of investigations into South Yorkshire Police's response to non-recent allegations in the Rotherham area.

We published details of [national and local recommendations to tackle systemic issues identified during Operation Linden](#), which encompasses 91 separate investigations completed so far.

They involved 265 separate allegations, covering the period from 1997 to 2013. There were 51 complainants, 44 of whom were survivors of abuse.

IOPC Director of Major Investigations, Steve Noonan said: "Throughout Operation Linden, our priority has been the welfare of the survivors whose bravery in coming forward has enabled us to shine a light on the failings of the past.

"The complexity of these investigations – which have seen us take almost 1,000 statements, log more than 1,400 exhibits, and carry out nearly 4,000 investigative actions – is unparalleled, but it was vital to explore every line of inquiry thoroughly.

The IOPC has published details of 12 recommendations on training for officers, support provided to survivors, information sharing between forces, and recording of offences. Among the learning we identified are:

- a national recommendation, to the College of Policing, that the voices of survivors should be included in training for officers dealing with child sexual abuse
- that South Yorkshire Police should take steps to ensure its public protection units are complying with Home Office rules around crime recording
- a review of the laws surrounding offences committed by young people who are being groomed or exploited, which we are asking the Law Commission to carry out, in order to reduce the impact of the abuse on their future life prospects.

Mr Noonan added: "Survivors of abuse will no doubt be deeply concerned, as are we, that some of these problems still exist today. It is a tragedy that so many of the survivors we spoke to now have criminal records as a result of their actions while being exploited. There must be action across the judicial system to protect vulnerable young people and safeguard their futures. We now await confirmation that our recommendations are being implemented".

### 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. You can also read about the [learning recommendations we make following our investigations](#).

[Recommendations made about Immigration Enforcement visits following death of Sudanese man](#)  
[Final IOPC investigation following fatal police shooting of Anthony Grainger concludes](#)  
[Former National Crime Agency officer charged with misconduct in public office in Warrington](#)  
[Former Leicestershire Police officer dismissed following inappropriate contact with three women](#)  
[IOPC statement following conclusion of inquest into fatal police shooting of man in Birmingham](#)  
[IOPC statement following conclusion of inquest into restraint and death of man in Coventry](#)

## Update contact details for your learning and development lead

We want to make sure we have the right contact details for your force's learning and development lead so we can send our upcoming publications, including [Learning the Lessons](#) and our [Impact Report](#), to the right person.

Refreshing our contact list of learning and development leads is key to building awareness of the learning arising from our work with those who play an important role in how learning is shared in your force.

To support this work, could you please email [oversight@policeconduct.gov.uk](mailto:oversight@policeconduct.gov.uk) by **Tuesday 4 January 2022** with the following up to date details of your learning and development lead:

- role title
- first and last name
- email address
- any other relevant contact information.

## 12-month letter analysis

Since February 2021, we have recorded the 12-month letters we receive from police forces and monitored the information provided around timeliness of investigations. The Oversight team conducts analysis of our 12-month letter database every quarter to identify possible patterns and trends or shareable practice. You can read our latest analysis, which is attached to this newsletter. We hope it is useful to you. If you have any feedback about the analysis document, please email [oversight@policeconduct.gov.uk](mailto:oversight@policeconduct.gov.uk).

Now that we have operated under the new system for nine months and gathered insights into 12-month letters, the Oversight team is having wider discussions to agree the IOPC response to 12-month letters and the level of oversight required. We are clarifying the application of the legislation to ensure that it is applied consistently and fuller guidance can be provided on the circumstances in which a letter is required. We also liaised with the Home Office to ensure they are sighted on our work. We will update you when progress has been made.

## Appropriate sign off for suspending investigations or other procedure

Did you know that the suspension of an investigation or other procedure into a complaint must receive the necessary Appropriate Authority (AA) sign off and that this can be delegated?

Furthermore, did you know that delegation only applies to the rank of inspector level and above, or a staff member with a similar level of seniority?

We are highlighting these requirements because we see more cases where the decision was made by the investigating officer, rather than the delegated AA.

To help with identifying whether the decision was made at the correct level, when receiving a challenge to the decision to suspend a complaint investigation, the IOPC administration team will request a copy of the AA decision and rationale, in addition to the request for relevant background papers. We would be grateful if you could please provide this information when asked.

For more information on both the sign off and delegated responsibilities, please refer to [Regulation 40 and Regulation 46 of the Police \(Complaints & Misconduct\) Regulations 2020](#).

## Forward look – updates to Focus issues 13, 14, 15 and 18

Our [Focus Magazine](#) aims to provide practical guidance on complaints handling and we are keen to ensure the guidance is as up-to-date and relevant as possible. Last year we conducted our initial handling intervention, where we dip sampled cases from eight forces and one local policing body (that chose model three of complaints handling) and held professional discussions with complaint handlers. As a result, we identified some shareable practice that you might find useful. We are currently working on some subtle amendments to issues 13, 14, 15 and 18 to incorporate the findings from our intervention and to strengthen some of the messages around effective complaints handling. We aim to publish updates to issues 13, 14 and 15 in December and issue 18 in the new year.



### Recent information

#### Annual Police Complaint Statistics report for 2020/21

On 16 November 2021, we wrote to heads of professional standards departments and police and crime commissioners confirming the Annual Police Complaints Statistics report for England and Wales 2020/2021 was published on our website. As they are the first statistics since significant changes to the police complaints system were implemented in February 2020, more time is needed to ensure the consistency and completeness of this data. Therefore, these figures are what the Office of National Statistics defines as ‘experimental statistics’ - they are in the testing phase and not yet fully developed. You can find more information on our [website](#).



### Common questions from forces and LPBs

**Q: The Reflective Practice Review Process (RPRP) is an outcome, so why am I seeing reflective practice also referred to as a process, when reviewing a case?**

A: There are two types of reflection, the first is RPRP, defined within the legislation as the *outcome* of a complaint handled otherwise than by investigation (OTBI) or by investigation and the outcome of a conduct matter that has been investigated.

The other is ‘reflective practice techniques’ and is a method of *handling* a complaint dealt with by OTBI. Reflective practice techniques look and feel very similar to the formal RPRP. Line managers can ask their staff to reflect at any point during this process and are encouraged to use reflection techniques as part of daily learning and improvement. The College of Policing has [resources](#) available on its website for reflective practice and our guidance can be found in Focus [issue 14](#).

Where a review handler is considering upholding a review and recommending RPRP as an outcome, it is important to make enquiries with the force to establish if ‘reflective practice techniques’ were already used and if so, request evidence of this. As the processes are very similar, there would be little benefit in recommending the officer reflects a second time around. Similarly, when considering RPRP as an outcome, it is important to check if the matters concerned were previously addressed in this way. RPRP and reflective practice techniques are appropriate for addressing one-off issues or instances where there were limited previous attempts to address any emerging concerns around performance.

**Q: Can an officer refuse to engage in RPRP if it has been recommended as part of the review decision?**

A: RPRP is available to handle low level conduct, mistakes or performance issues that can be handled more proportionally and constructively. It is designed to be non-adversarial with officers taking responsibility for their actions. Emphasis should not be on apportioning blame, but to learn and develop through reflection. As such all parties must be willing to listen, to reflect and to take meaningful action to learn lessons. If an officer refuses to engage with the process, the matter should be referred back to the AA for assessment. This could include dealing with the matter as a performance issue.