

IPCC GUIDANCE ON COMMUNICATING WITH THE MEDIA AND THE PUBLIC IN IPCC INDEPENDENT AND MANAGED INVESTIGATIONS

1. This Guidance sets out the respective roles and responsibilities of the IPCC and the police in relation to communication with the media and the public in cases where the IPCC is conducting an independent investigation or managing an investigation under the Police Reform Act 2002.
2. The police service and the IPCC have a shared responsibility for communication with the media and the public in IPCC independent and managed investigations. This is to ensure public confidence in the investigation and in the police complaints system as a whole.
3. Silence is not an option but it is important to remember that, in the early stages of an investigation, the information which is available is likely to be incomplete and / or unverified. It is also important to take into account the fact that the IPCC is a small organisation with a national brief whereas the police service has a local presence across England and Wales and much greater resources at its disposal.
4. Once an investigation has been determined as independent or managed, the IPCC will take the lead in communicating with the media and the public. This means that only the IPCC, and not the police, will comment or provide information directly relating to an IPCC investigation, except in the circumstances set out in para 11 below.
5. However, **referral to the IPCC does not stop the police commenting or a responding to the media or public.** Nor should referral be presented by the police as a reason for a lack of a response to questions.

Examples of information the police may wish to put into the public domain after an incident:

Information on why something has been referred to the IPCC/ reassurance that incident has been referred to an independent body which has deployed its own investigators
Information and circumstances around a pre-planned operation that has led to a referral to the IPCC / IPCC investigation
Factually correct information about – (for example) – why police were in the area or numbers of police in the area
Other matters impacting on local people or wider public interest

6. **Nor is the IPCC responsible for all communications in relation to a case.** The police are also responsible for ensuring that it is clear to the public and media exactly what is being investigated by the IPCC. Not infrequently the IPCC will only be investigating a part of the incident.

Examples:

Following a referral of a shooting during an armed raid, the IPCC may decide to investigate the shooting but not the raid, and questions about the raid should therefore be dealt with by the police.

Following a referral of a death following a police pursuit, the IPCC may decide to investigate whether the police involved in the pursuit followed correct procedures, but not the fatality itself.

7. The timing of any release will be a matter of judgement in the individual circumstances of each case. The IPCC will aim to ensure that neither the police nor interested parties such as families affected, are 'taken by surprise' as a result of IPCC public statements and, so far as practicable in the circumstances, will notify interested parties of any intention to put information in to the public domain about an investigation.
8. The police will naturally have much greater local contacts and intelligence than the IPCC. This means that the police are likely to pick up local concerns or misinformation much more quickly than the IPCC. If the police identify material misinformation or areas of concern requiring rebuttal, they should immediately bring them to the attention of the IPCC by contacting the Press Office.
9. **The police service is responsible for dealing with public disorder or potential disorder.** Where the police are concerned about the impact of information or misinformation and the need for correction they should bring this immediately to the attention of the IPCC Press Office, or on call Press Officer if this occurs outside normal office hours.
10. The Police will take the lead in communicating with the media and the public on community impact, tension or potential disorder arising from an incident; parallel criminal investigations or ongoing police operations; the employment status of an officer.
11. Where as a result of concerns about community impact, tension or potential disorder the police wish to comment or brief the media or the public about matters *connected to an IPCC investigation*, the following will apply:

They should provide a copy of the proposed lines / comment to the IPCC in advance.

Any briefing or comment should be attributed to a named police spokesperson. Unattributed comment or off-the record briefings should be avoided.

The IPCC will not "approve" proposed lines but will object to any comment or speculation about events or individuals which may prove detrimental to a future criminal or misconduct case or put its investigative strategy at risk. Ultimately however the timing and content of any statement issued by the police is a matter for the police, for which a named senior officer should be responsible.

14 February 2012