

# Building trust and confidence in policing

IOPC Strategic plan **2022/27**

# Contents

Director General's foreword	4
Introduction	6
Values	8
Our Strategic plan	10
Mission and vision	12
Awareness and confidence	14
Accountability	16
Leading improvement	18
Performance	20

# Director General's foreword

**I am really pleased to introduce our Strategic plan 2022/27 – Building Trust and Confidence in Policing. It is an ambitious strategy which builds on our successes of the past three years.**

Since the IOPC was created in 2018, we have significantly improved the timeliness of our investigations – increasing core investigations delivered within 12 months from 68% in 2018 to 90% in 2021/22.

We have completely changed our approach to stakeholder engagement, with dedicated resources across every region in England and Wales. We have significantly increased our focus on learning, making more than 550 learning recommendations for policing nationally and for specific local forces. Our thematic work has focused on issues of most concern to the public – including race discrimination, abuse of power for sexual purpose and violence against women and girls.

This new Strategy sets out our new vision and mission and objectives for the next five years.

Our mission is improving policing by independent oversight of police complaints, holding police to account and ensuring learning effects change.

Our vision is that everyone is able to have trust and confidence in the police.

Our four objectives are:

- That people know about the complaints system and are confident to use it.

- The complaints system delivers evidence-based, fair outcomes which hold police to account.
- Our evidence and influence improves policing.
- We are an organisation that delivers high performance.

Detailed annual [business plans](#) will support the new strategy. The first of these plans was published alongside this strategy document.

The strategy reflects our ambition beyond the police complaints system; that we are part of a system that is looking to improve confidence in the police and we will work with other agencies to that end.

Fundamentally we believe you cannot have trust and confidence in the police without there being a strong complaints system, in which everyone is confident.

We must deliver high-quality and timely investigations. This will always remain a priority, but we recognise independent investigations may not always be the best tool to improve public confidence. We will invest our limited resources where they have the potential for the greatest impact. For example, our oversight of the police complaints system improves the handling of the vast majority of complaints made against the police by police forces themselves.

Our thematic approach to work allows us to gather evidence and build the expertise needed to call for change in specific areas of low confidence, for example, our work on race discrimination. Our research and



**‘Our thematic approach to work allows us to gather evidence and build the expertise needed to call for change in specific areas of low confidence’**

reports call out issues in policing and promote opportunities for learning and improvement, such as our work on Taser. Our role in the super-complaints system allows us to respond to voices highlighting systemic issues in policing.

This shift in approach will be driven by our understanding of what matters to communities. We have developed our understanding through much-improved stakeholder engagement, and by the information, evidence, and trends we see in our operational work. This will help us become less reactive and focus more on prevention by spotting trends and intervening early.

We have worked closely with our stakeholders over a number of months to develop this plan. I am grateful for their helpful challenge and advice. I would also like to thank members of Unitary Board and our staff for their contribution and support.

I hope you will agree this is an exciting plan, signalling a new chapter in which we approach our statutory duty in a broader and more impactful way.

*Thomas Whiting*

**Tom Whiting**  
Interim Director General



# Introduction

## Who we are

The Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) oversees the police complaints system<sup>1</sup> in England and Wales and has a statutory duty to secure and maintain public confidence in it. We investigate the most serious matters, including deaths following police contact regardless of whether a complaint has been made. We also set the standards by which the police should handle complaints. We use learning from our work to influence changes in policing.

We are independent and make our decisions entirely independently of the police and government. Our Director General, our Director for Wales and Regional Directors, have never worked for the police in any capacity.

## What we do

The majority of complaints from the public are dealt with by police forces. However, the IOPC sets and monitors the standards by which they should handle complaints. We also consider certain types of reviews from people who are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been dealt with.

Forces must refer certain serious incidents to the IOPC, whether or not someone has made a complaint. These include where someone has died or been seriously injured following contact with police, as well as allegations of serious corruption, serious assault and certain behaviour aggravated by discrimination. We may decide to investigate such cases independently or return them to police forces for local investigation.

We assess and respond to super complaints along with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) and the College of Policing (CoP). Super-complaints are complaints made by designated bodies, for example charities, about broad or systemic issues that could affect public confidence in policing.

We have powers in relation to a small number of specialist police forces and organisations that have police-like powers. These include:

- **the National Crime Agency (NCA)**
- **Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC)**



- **certain specialist police forces (including the British Transport Police, Civil Nuclear Constabulary and Ministry of Defence Police)**
- **some activities of Home Office immigration and enforcement staff**
- **the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA)**

We also investigate criminal allegations against police and crime commissioners (PCCs) and their deputies.

Our remit includes oversight of the whole complaints system, no matter which organisation is handling the matter. We use learning from our work to influence changes and improvements to policing practice, leadership and culture.

The IOPC cannot drive system-wide improvements on its own and we need to work with others. This includes policing bodies such as PCCs, the CoP and HMICFRS, as well as service users and communities. With our partners, inside and outside the policing world, we make sure public complaints and investigations into misconduct and serious incidents are part of a cycle of learning which improves policing in England and Wales.

<sup>1</sup> This term includes complaints made by members of the public, most of which are handled by police force professional standards departments. It also refers to matters that forces must refer to us, which we assess and may investigate. These include allegations of police officers committing crimes, and deaths or serious injuries during or following contact with the police.



# Values

Our values were developed by our staff and underpin all our work. The values will influence the work we deliver and our interactions with service users and stakeholders. Our staff, future and current, will be guided by these values and we will consider how well we reflect these through surveys and engagement activity.



## Seeking truth

We feel privileged to be the custodians of the police complaints system. We value the trust of the public and police and commit to being just and fair in uncovering the truth. We recognise a just outcome relies on being unbiased and transparent in getting to the truth of what happened.



## Being inclusive

We have an inclusive culture. We are fair and impartial in our treatment of all individuals. We work across boundaries, both internal and external, collaborating and building strong relationships.



## Empowering people

We believe everyone should be a leader and play a part in shaping the direction of the organisation. We provide a supportive and challenging environment where people can thrive and reach their potential. We trust our people to do the right things. We encourage calculated risk taking and evidence-based decision making. Where genuine mistakes are made, we will support people and identify opportunities for learning and improvement. We make sure that people can make complaints without experiencing unfair treatment.



## Being tenacious

Our work requires us to be bold, resilient and committed to making a difference to the public. We take our duties as public servants to heart and our dedication is reflected in our work. We meet challenges with perseverance to attain individual and organisational goals.



## Making a difference

The value of our work is not defined solely by volume, but by the impact our work has on policing and public confidence. We define quality by how well our work meets the service user needs. We will focus our efforts on areas that will make a difference to our communities.





# Our Strategic plan

This is the IOPC's second Strategic plan which sets out our vision for the future and the strategy for achieving it. It explains what our priorities will be and what we hope to achieve in each of those areas. It sets out the actions we will take over the coming years and how we will measure success. This will be the guiding document for all our work until 2027.

It is an ambitious plan with our aim over the coming years to build trust and confidence in policing through robust, independent oversight. We will do that by working towards four strategic objectives:

## Awareness and confidence

- We will engage with communities and the public to understand issues which affect their confidence in policing. We will work with them to inform how the IOPC can use our work to respond.
- We will raise awareness of the police complaints system so people understand their right to complain, how to access the system and how they should expect the police to respond when concerns are raised.
- We will raise awareness of the IOPC's unique role and the impact of our work, so the public are confident there is independent oversight of the complaints system and serious incidents involving the police.

## Accountability

- We will make sure our work responds to issues which affect public confidence in police legitimacy by selecting the

right mix of work – whether that is independent investigations, setting and monitoring standards for complaints handling, reviewing how complaints have been handled, sharing learning or making recommendations to improve policing – to have the most impact on public confidence.

- We will make sure our work is timely and high-quality so it meets the needs of our service users and withstands external scrutiny.
- We will conduct robust oversight of the police complaints system – intervening where evidence suggests local handling is not effective or consistent and working with police forces, PCCs and others to improve timeliness and quality across the system.

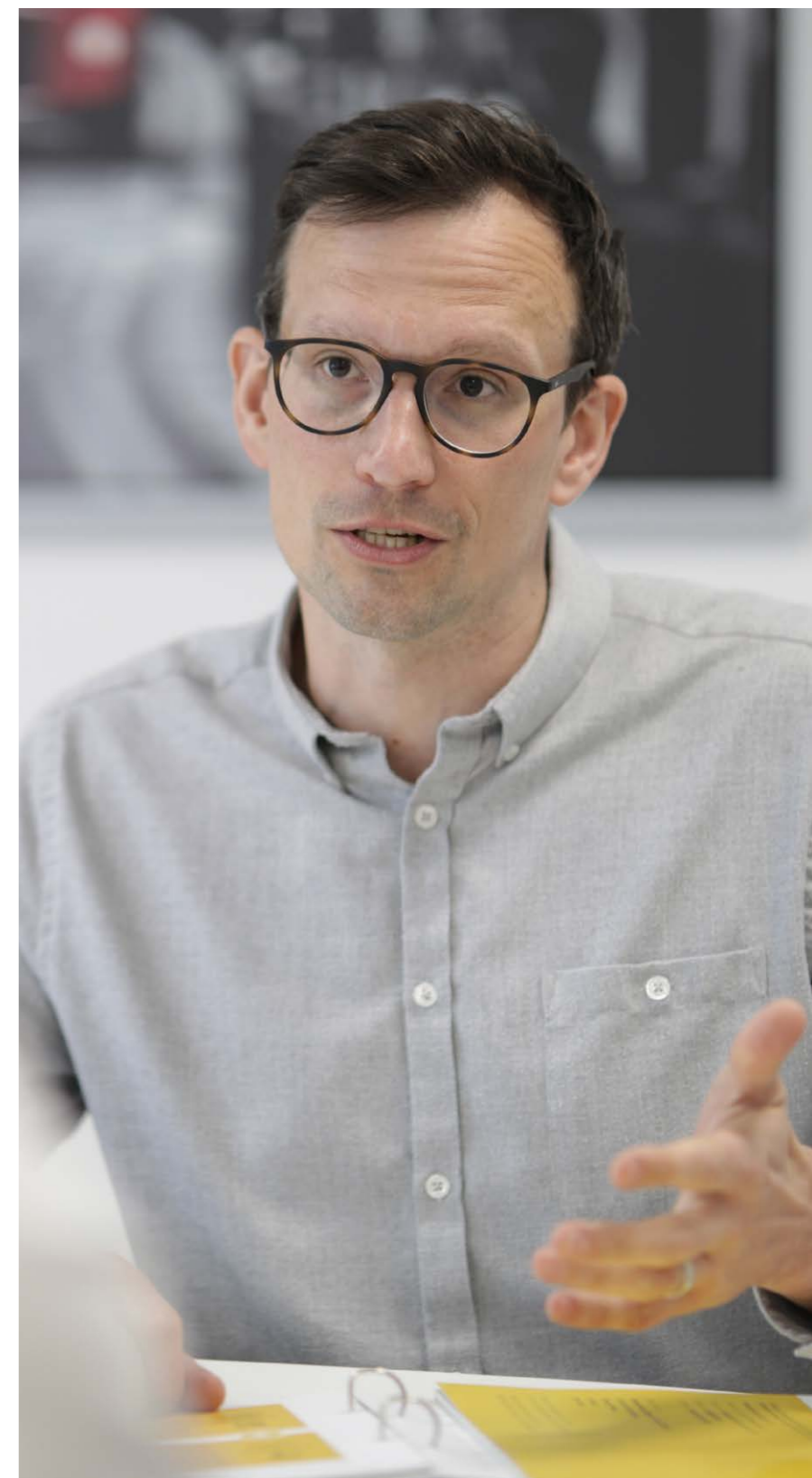
## Leading improvement

- We will use our independence and evidence from our work to be a trusted and authoritative voice in calling for change to improve policing, particularly in areas affecting public confidence.
- We will work with those who deliver policing to make the case for those improvements – leading, convening and persuading so that our recommendations lead to tangible change.
- We will work with partners such as CoP, HMICFRS and others so that our work influences and complements theirs. We can demonstrate to the public a system response to the issues which affect their confidence in policing.

## Performance

- We will make sure our colleagues have the skills and tools to deliver our strategy and respond to the evolving nature of policing and the increasing complexity of our work.
- We will be a high-performing organisation where our work is meaningful and focused on outcomes which improve policing and public confidence in it.
- We will fundamentally shift where and how people work, introducing hybrid working and improved tools and applications to support our work.
- We will make intelligent and effective use of data and information central to how the organisation operates. We will make evidence-based decisions in all areas and maximise the value we derive from the data we hold.
- We will become an employer of choice by continuing to develop our focus on equality, diversity and inclusion and the welfare of our colleagues.

Each year we will publish a detailed business plan setting out the specific actions we will take against each of these objectives. This will include a detailed performance framework setting out the measures we will use to show we are successfully delivering our strategy. The business plans we produce for each financial year will also include further information about how we will use our resources to deliver this plan.







## Mission and vision

Our mission is **improving policing by independent oversight** of police complaints, holding police to account and ensuring **learning effects change**

Our vision is that **everyone** is able to have **trust and confidence** in the police



# Our objectives

## Awareness and confidence

### Strategic objective: People know about the complaints system and are confident to use it

Confidence in policing cannot improve unless it can demonstrate it is listening and responding to the issues which concern communities. The public must have the confidence, willingness and ability to raise concerns about conduct or dissatisfaction with the service they receive.

We know that some people do not know they can complain, and others lack confidence to do so. We want the complaints system to be accessible so everyone can use it when they have concerns. We want policing to see this as an opportunity to better understand the communities they serve and to listen, learn and improve.

We will use evidence about the nature of complaints and how they are dealt with to inform all our work including the matters we should independently investigate, our work to oversee and improve how police forces handle complaints, and the recommendations we make to improve policing.

#### To deliver this objective, we will:

Continue to make the case for better support for those who need it to access and navigate the complaints system.

Use a range of communication and engagement activities to:

- Raise awareness of the complaints system, people's right to complain, and the outcomes they can expect.
- Work directly with communities to understand their concerns about policing and demonstrate how this influences our work.
- Raise awareness of the outcome of complaints, particularly where they have led to resolution for complainants and improvements in policing.
- Work with a range of community stakeholders and third parties who can help raise awareness of the right to complain and how this improves policing.
- Work with our youth panel to continue to use the voices of young people to challenge and shape our work.

Use research (our own and that of others) to:

- Make sure we focus our efforts on those who have least confidence in policing (historically, young people and those from black and minority backgrounds, but now including women and girls).
- Better understand why some people lack confidence and how we can improve their perceptions of the complaints system and policing.



- Continue to monitor confidence levels and be agile in responding to specific events or emerging issues which may impact public confidence.
- Regularly seek feedback on the experience of those affected by the complaints system (from complainants and those who have been investigated).
- Produce trusted reports about public and stakeholder perceptions of the complaints system, performance of the IOPC and police forces, official statistics on deaths in custody and outcomes following IOPC investigations.
- Make sure we learn from our own mistakes by effectively investigating and responding to complaints about our service.

#### The key results we will achieve:

1. The police complaints system is trusted to tackle concerns appropriately.
2. Those with lower confidence in policing are willing and able to access the complaints system to raise their concerns.
3. Arrangements are in place (information, guidance and support) which make it easy to complain.
4. Understanding of community concerns has shaped the work we do.



# Our objectives

## Accountability

### Strategic objective: The complaints system delivers evidence-based, fair outcomes which hold police to account

Robust independent scrutiny is essential for public trust and confidence in policing. Our work holds the police to account through independently investigating complaints and serious incidents such as deaths in custody, serious injuries and allegations of corruption and misconduct. We also set standards and hold the police to account for how they respond to complaints from the public, including carrying out independent reviews in some cases when a complainant is not satisfied with how their complaint was handled.

It is not practical or desirable for all complaints to be independently investigated. We work with police forces to make sure complaints are handled appropriately, focusing on resolution for complainants and learning for the service. We intervene when police forces do not handle complaints appropriately.

We will independently investigate cases where this is a mandatory requirement and where issues significantly impact public confidence. We will use a range of evidence to understand where policing needs to improve and make sure there is an appropriate response across the complaints system to these themes.

As with our current work on race discrimination, our response may include taking on more cases independently, active assessment of how forces handle complaints, independent research, and work with stakeholders to better support

complainants. The aim of this work will be to build a body of evidence so the IOPC can make informed recommendations to improve policing and assure the public on those areas of greatest concern.

We will also use our unique position to lead improvements to the complaints and discipline systems. We will use evidence to advocate for changes to legislation and guidance as well as improvements to related process (e.g. coronial, criminal and disciplinary), particularly where these impact on timeliness and public confidence in outcomes.

#### To deliver this objective, we will:

- Improve the support we provide to service users, in particular those with additional needs. We will put them at the heart of all we do and build on our successful accreditation to the Customer Service Excellence standard.
- Make sure our work is timely, our decisions are consistently high-quality and withstand external scrutiny.
- Focus on reducing the time taken for cases to conclude once we have reached the end of our investigation, working with others where needed to improve timeliness and reduce the impact of delays on complainants and those subject to investigations.
- Respond to issues affecting public confidence in policing, using a range of intelligence to inform decisions on the right mix of work to have an impact in each area.

- Continue to investigate cases where an independent investigation is mandatory (Articles 2 and 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights<sup>2</sup>) and carefully consider where independent investigations of other matters can increase public confidence.
- Conclude our thematic work on race discrimination and introduce a new focus on violence against women and girls. We will introduce further themes based on our understanding of what impacts public confidence.
- Independently review force handling of complaints and review local investigations into death and serious injuries. We will make recommendations to change those outcomes when necessary.
- Actively oversee force handling of public complaints and intervene when this needs to be improved.
- Work with forces and local policing bodies so that user experience of the complaints system is improved, and outcomes are focused on resolution.
- Use our unique position to lead improvement across the range of factors which impact on timeliness and public confidence in the outcomes of the complaints and discipline systems.

#### The key results we will achieve:

1. Timely, high-quality and consistent handling of complaints by police forces.
2. Reviews (IOPC and PCCs) achieve user focused outcomes where complaints have not been resolved locally.
3. IOPC conducts high-quality, timely investigations that address the most serious and sensitive matters.
4. Our work demonstrates a deliberate and agile response to issues which affect confidence in policing.

2. Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights states that everyone's right to life shall be protected by law. Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights prohibits torture and "inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment". There are no exceptions or limitations on this right.



# Our objectives

## Leading improvement

### Strategic objective: Our evidence and influence improves policing

The IOPC is in a unique position to be a leading voice in improving not just the complaints system but policing itself. Through our work, we engage with those who lack confidence and have concerns about how police powers are used. We have a great deal of evidence about what causes public dissatisfaction with policing, as well as the cause of serious incidents like deaths and serious injuries, corruption and poor conduct. Often, this is not just about the behaviour of individuals, but systemic issues around policy, training, practice, leadership and culture.

We need to use evidence from all aspects of our work to lead policing improvement, but we cannot improve policing practice and public confidence alone.

Others also have responsibilities in holding the police to account and we must work with partners such as HMICFRS, CoP, PCCs, and the Home Office to make sure our recommendations have an impact and drive improvement. We will use evidence from our work to make high-quality recommendations which complement the work of others and will work to persuade chief constables, PCCs and others to implement them. Where our recommendations are not implemented, we will expect them to explain why and encourage others to seek those explanations.



### To deliver this objective, we will:

- Engage with a range of communities and stakeholders to understand their concerns and make sure our work responds to the issues which impact public confidence in policing.
- Use evidence from our work to make recommendations and call for changes to improve practice, culture and leadership within policing.
- Work with the CoP, HMICFRS and others to take a collaborative approach to areas of concern.
- Achieve greater impact by working with a range of third parties so they can use our evidence to inform their work in improving policing.
- Highlight good practice where we find it and help share it so policing can benefit.
- Be vocal on what we see as the wrong behaviour in policing – calling for change with evidence and authority.
- Convene key groups of people to work with us and on our behalf.
- Establish our role as a leader in improving policing by highlighting and sharing good practice with forces and local policing bodies.
- Make sure the official information we produce and share is accurate and trusted.

### The key results we will achieve:

1. Evidence of improvements in policing policy, practice and culture as a result of our work.
2. We influence and convene a range of partners to work with us to influence change.
3. The IOPC is recognised as a leader in improving policing and a trusted, accurate and independent voice.



# Our objectives

## Performance

### Strategic objective: An organisation that delivers high performance

We want the IOPC to be a place where colleagues can perform at their best. We have made progress in creating a great place to work in our first strategy. We will build on that by continuing to demonstrate our commitment to equality and inclusion externally and internally, and be recognised as a values-driven organisation.

We will make sure our managers and senior leaders are equipped with the skills they need to provide effective leadership to our colleagues. We will embed our leadership charter alongside our people strategy and drive a supportive, respectful, developmental culture for all colleagues alongside an ability to deliver the change outlined in this strategy.

We will continue to invest in our people. We will make sure they have the training and support they need, alongside the tools and facilities to do their job, enabling them to perform increasingly complex work. We have made significant progress with our technology. This has resulted in financial savings and created a better technological environment for our staff to work collaboratively with our service users. There is a lot more to do to improve our core systems. They need to better integrate so we can make better use of our data, improve our processes and build the data culture we need. These and other elements of the strategy will need careful management so that the

ambitions we set out for these changes are successfully realised.

Across all of the work in our strategy, sustainability will need to inform choices we make about our workplace, travel and procurement to take greater account of our impact on the climate.

#### To deliver this objective, we will:

- Make sure our leaders have a clear and consistent view of our Strategic plan and can work across the organisation to implement it.
- Recruit, support, develop and retain a highly skilled and diverse workforce ensuring colleagues control their own development, continuously learn and have the skills to perform in the future.
- Make sure our workforce is diverse, represents communities we serve, and our commitment to diversity and inclusion is recognised by all.
- Make sure our colleagues are motivated, engaged and proud to work for the IOPC.
- Improve our welfare offer to better focus on the individual, including providing specialist trauma support to colleagues to reflect the challenging and at times distressing nature of our work.
- Have the skills needed to deliver our strategy now and into the future, reflecting the increasing complexity of our work and its technical and specialist requirements.

- Give our staff the tools they need to do the job now and into the future. This includes embracing new technology, including completing the roll out of our new case management system.
- Use our estate to enhance how we work and support the opportunities and demands that have emerged after Covid-19, in line with the Government's Levelling Up agenda<sup>3</sup>.
- Make our contribution to government sustainability ambitions. We will develop our understanding of the impact of our work on climate change and mitigating risks as needed through a greater focus on our estate and how we use it, how we travel using our fleet and other options and how we procure and purchase.
- Deliver our services efficiently and always look to improve. We will continue to prioritise against our strategic objectives to focus on doing less and doing it well.
- Deliver our new data strategy, embedding a data culture across the organisation to maximise its value across our work. As a part of this we will introduce a new electronic document and record management system and complete our response to recommendations from the Information Commissioner's Office.

#### The key results we will achieve:

1. Leadership in line with our values with a clear plan for the future.
2. A great place to work for our people.
3. Capabilities developed for the future to enable high performance.
4. Intelligent use of information and data.
5. Cost effective and sustainable use of resources.

<sup>3</sup> "Levelling up" is the UK government's plan to reduce the differences between richer and poorer parts of the UK





**IOPC**  
Independent  
Office for  
Police Conduct

**IOPC**  
Independent  
Office for  
Police Conduct



Contact us to find out more about our work or to request this plan in an alternative format.

**[www.policeconduct.gov.uk](http://www.policeconduct.gov.uk)**

Follow us:

Twitter: **@policeconduct**

Instagram: **@policeconduct**

Email: **[enquiries@policeconduct.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@policeconduct.gov.uk)**

Call: **0300 020 0096**

Text relay: **18001 0207 166 3000**

Write to us at:

**IOPC**  
**PO Box 473**  
**Sale M33 0BW**

We welcome telephone calls in Welsh.  
Rydym yn croesawu galwadau ffôn yn y Gymraeg.

This document is also available in Welsh.  
Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn y Gymraeg hefyd.

February 2023

**© IOPC 2023**

**OGI** This is licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0  
except where otherwise stated.

This does not include material on this site as belonging to third parties.  
Authorisation to use such material must be obtained from the copyright holders concerned.