

An Easy Read guide to sorting out complaints with the police where you live

Who we are and what we do

We are the **Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC)**. We are an **independent** group. Being **independent** means we work for ourselves and we decide things for ourselves. We are not part of the police or the government.



We are here to sort out any **complaints** you have against the police.

A **complaint** is something you make when someone has said or done something you are not happy about.

We can only look into complaints from people who live in England and Wales.

What this leaflet is about

This leaflet tells you how to sort your complaint with your **local police force**. Your local police force means people who work for the police where you live. They make sure that everyone stays safe and does not break the law.



Sorting out your complaint with your local police force



You can make a complaint to your local police force if you are not happy with something they have said or done to you.

Sometimes the best way to sort things out is to talk to someone in charge at the police station. You can tell them what happened and they can try and put things right.



They might want to talk to you more about why the police said or did something to you.

Most complaints can be sorted out this way. Taking your complaint to your local police force can get things sorted out quickly and easily. It can also help the police do a better job in the area where you live.

Sorting it out locally



We think that sorting complaints out with your local police force can be a good way to do things. It gives you a chance to say what happened to you and the police a chance to find out why it happened.

What you can complain about to your local police force

You can sort out things with your local police force that are not against the law. This means things like if a police officer said or did something rude to you.

If something serious has happened to you then the local police force will have to ask the Independent Police Complaints Commission to look into what has happened. This is called an **investigation**.

What happens when I make a complaint to my local police force?



Once you have made your complaint, the police will get in contact with you.

They will ask you to come in to the police station and talk to them.

If you do not want to do this then you can talk to them on the telephone or send a letter.

You will need to tell them

- what happened and how you felt about it
- what you want them to do next to sort out your complaint
- you are OK with what they are doing to sort things out



Sorting things out this way is not about saying who is in the wrong. It is about learning from what has happened so the police can do a better job in the future.



Tell the police if you need any support to make your complaint. For example, you might want to make your complaint in another language or ask a friend or someone in your family to speak for you.

You can ask someone else to make the complaint for you if you want.

What the police will do about your complaint

The police will

- listen to what you say
- tell you what they are going to do
- tell you what can be done and what cannot be done so you understand everything
- tell you what will happen next and who will be sorting it out.



Things about yourself that you need to tell the police



When you make your complaint, the police will need to find out more about you.

For example, they will need to know

- how old you are
- your **race, culture or background**. Your **race, culture or background** means who you are and where you are from. This helps the police to treat everyone in a good and fair way.

Sorting out a complaint

The police will follow 4 steps to sorting out a complaint.

These steps are

Step 1 – saying you are OK for the complaint to be looked into by the police where you live

Nothing happens until you say you are OK for your **local police force** to sort things out.

You do not have to let them look into your complaint out if you do not want them to.

You can ask for someone else to find out more and sort things out. This is called an **investigation**.



More about Step 1



Most complaints can be sorted out with the police force where you live. If you are not happy with the way they do things where you live then you can make an **appeal**.

An **appeal** is something you make when you are not happy about the way your complaint has been sorted out.

If you say you are OK for the local police force to sort out your complaint then you can both need to make a plan.



The plan says what is going to happen to look into your complaint.

You will have to sign the plan to say you are OK with it.

You **cannot** change your mind about this once you have signed the plan.

The police have to follow the plan too.



If they do not do this then you can make an appeal to us at the **Independent Police Complaints Commission**. You can find out more about this in **Step 4**.

Step 2 – sorting out my complaint with the local police force

There are different ways to sort things out where you live. You can



- sort things out straight away at a meeting. This can be in person at the police station or on the telephone



- get a letter from the police saying what they have done to sort things out and how they have done this



- be in touch directly with the person you are making the complaint about. A **manager** at the police station can sort this out for you. The **manager** is in charge of running the police station



- go to see the person who is sorting out your complaint and the person you are complaining about. The person you are complaining about will need to say they are OK for this to happen

Step 3: What happens to sort things out about my complaint?



After you have met the police and told them everything they will do their best to sort out your complaint. For example they might

- tell you more about what they think happened so things get sorted out
- say sorry to you from everyone in the police force
- tell you that they have all learned from what has happened and they think things should have been different. They will tell you that they want to stop this happening again and will do their best to make sure that it does not happen again
- let you know that the person you made the complaint about is going to change the way they behave in the future
- say sorry to you from the person who you are complaining about. This will only happen if that person says they want to say sorry



Step 4 - What happens if the police do not follow the plan?

If the police do not follow the plan you can contact us, the **Independent Police Complaints Commission**.



You can make an **appeal** to say you are not happy about things but you have to do this within 28 days.

You can make an appeal if

- the police did not follow the plan that you both said was OK
- the police did not tell you that you can only get your complaint sorted out by going to your local police force
- you said you did not want to get your complaint sorted out by your local police force but they did this anyway



You cannot make an appeal against the result of your complaint just because do not like what the police tell you after they have looked into it.



There is a leaflet called **An Easy Read guide about how to make a complaint against the police** that tells you more about making a complaint.

Other useful information

There are lots of questions that people ask about making a complaint. Here are some of the questions that are asked the most and the answers to them.

Questions people ask a lot

What can I do if I do not want things to be sorted out by the police where I live?



You do not have to get things sorted out by the police where you live. You can ask for someone else to sort things out for you. This is called an **investigation**.

How long will it take for things to get sorted out by the police force where I live?



Most things can get sorted out quickly. You can say how long you think things should take and write it down in the plan you make with the police.

Will someone tell me what is happening about my complaint?



You should ask the person who is helping you sort things out at the police station about this. You can say in your plan that you want to know what happens and how your complaint is being sorted out.

What happens at the end of my complaint and how do I find out what will happen?



You should sort this out with the person who is dealing with your complaint. They will tell you what happens. This might write to you and tell you in a letter.

Can I change my mind about sorting things out with the police where I live?



You cannot change your mind once you have said you are happy for the police where you live to sort out your complaint.

If you think they have not done what you asked them to do then you can come to the Independent Police Complaints Commission for help.

Sometimes the police will have to change the way they do things.

For example, it might become too hard for them to sort things out at their police station.

They might find out that the person you are making the complaint about did something very serious.

If someone in the police has done something bad to me can this be sorted out where I live?



If a police officer has done something bad to you then this is called **misconduct**. **Misconduct** means that the police person has said or done or something that was not part of their job or was against the law.



Misconduct cannot be sorted out by the police force where you live. Most things can be sorted out by giving the police person you are complaining about some training or advice. This will help them learn from what they did so they do not do it again.

Can I make an appeal if I do not think the police force where I live have sorted things out?



You can make an **appeal** to the Independent Police Complaints Commission if you do not think the local police force have sorted out your complaint in the right way.

You cannot make an appeal against your local police force just because you do not like what they sort out for you about your complaint.

How much time do I have to make an appeal



You can make an appeal within 28 days.



What if my complaint is too serious to be sorted out by my local police force?

Some complaints are too serious to be sorted out by the police where you live. If the police think your complaint is serious then they will ask you if you want the **IPCC** to sort out your complaint instead.

How to find out more

You can find out more about the work we do and how to make a complaint. There is lots of information on the website to help you. You need to go to



www.ipcc.gov.uk



You can also send an email to

enquiries@ipcc.gsi.gov.uk

Please ask us if you want this leaflet in a different language or in Braille or in large print.

Contact us



Post **Independent Police Complaints
Commission
90 High Holborn
London
WC1V 6BH**



Telephone **08453 002 002**

Fax: **020 7404 0430**

Minicom **020 7404 0431**

Text Relay **18001 0207 166 3000**



Email: **enquiries@ipcc.gsi.gov.uk**



Website: **www.ipcc.gov.uk**

Thanks to Photosymbols for the pictures

Mencap helped to make this easy read

Other people who can help you

You can get help from the **Citizen's Advice Bureau**.

The **Citizen's Advice Bureau** can give you advice on lots of things. You can find them in the telephone book or on the internet.

To find out where the **Citizen's Advice Bureau** is where you live you need to go to

www.citizensadvice.org.uk