

A guide to IPCC independent investigations

What does the IPCC do?

Funded by the Home Office, we carry out our own independent investigations into the most serious complaints and incidents involving the police. We are completely independent of the police and the government.

Who carries out IPCC investigations?

The IPCC has its own investigators who carry out independent investigations.

IPCC commissioners, or a suitable nominated delegate, oversee all investigations. In the most serious cases, the commissioner is directly responsible for key decisions during the investigation. In other cases, the commissioner may delegate these decisions to appropriate roles within the organisation. Commissioners come from a range of backgrounds. By law, they can never have worked for the police.

What does an IPCC independent investigation involve?

Our investigators will obtain evidence to establish all the circumstances. This may involve taking witness statements, interviewing police officers or members of police staff, analysing CCTV footage and obtaining other documents and records. Regular updates are provided to families and the commissioner may engage with the wider community.

An investigation may also include forensic analysis; the use of experts to provide independent evidence; liaison with the Coroner, Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and/or other agencies - for example, the Health and Safety Executive.

What happens once the investigation is over?

At the end of the investigation, we write a report. It sets out what we have found and our conclusions. In our conclusions, we outline whether there's a case to answer for misconduct or poor performance.

If we think a police officer or member of police staff may have committed a criminal offence, we will pass our report to the CPS. The CPS is then responsible for deciding whether the person should be prosecuted.

We consider whether particular action could be taken to help prevent a similar matter happening again and will say if we think lessons could be learned by the police.

Where an inquest will be held, we provide our report and evidence to the Coroner to be considered at the inquest.

The report is sent to the police force and given to the family.

The process of an IPCC independent investigation

Initial action taken by the IPCC

- IPCC staff go to the scene and provide instructions to the local police force about evidence gathering, securing the scene, and securing evidence from officers and staff involved
- IPCC staff start gathering evidence
- consider any indications of criminal/conduct matters
- identify any immediate learning

Liaison with:

- family
- Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)
- Coroner
- media
- community

Investigation by IPCC including:

- assessing questions from the family or complainant
- agreeing terms of reference
- collecting and analysing evidence, including witness statements, CCTV and other technical data, policies, forensic evidence, and independent expert evidence
- interviewing witnesses/suspects, including police, (under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 if applicable)
- consideration of use of legal powers if necessary
- continuing liaison with family, CPS, Coroner, media and community

Investigation report produced

Decision taken whether to refer to CPS, who then decide whether to prosecute

Police receive report and take disciplinary action (where applicable)

Report and evidence feed into Coroner's inquest (where applicable)

Family/complainant receive report

Learning from the case identified and shared with police force

Investigation report published (usually after inquest; prosecution and/or disciplinary action completed)

How can I find out more?

You can find out more about the police complaints system and the work of the IPCC on our website - www.ipcc.gov.uk or call our Customer Service team, available Monday to Friday between 9am and 5pm - **0300 020 0096**.