

The Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC)

Are young people happy with the way they have been treated by the police?

Who are the IPCC and what do they do?

The IPCC is a Non-Departmental Public Body, funded by the Home Office, but, by law, entirely independent of the police, interest groups and political parties. Their decisions on cases are free from government involvement.

Their job is to make sure that complaints against the police are dealt with effectively.

They set standards for the way the police handle complaints and, when something has gone wrong, they help the police learn lessons and improve the way they work.

The IPCC wants to see a system that is trusted by people who complain and the police service. One that is fairer, faster, more open and helps to make improvements to the way communities are policed.

The IPCC regional office for Wales and the South West of England is based in Cardiff and the regional director is Mike Benbow. He and a team of 48 investigators, caseworkers and support staff support the Commissioner for South West England and the commissioner covering Wales.

What does this mean for young people?

According to a recent survey of confidence in the police complaints system, young people aged 15 to 24 have low levels of satisfaction with contact with the police.

They have a very low awareness about the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC), with just over a quarter having heard of the organisation.

Young people were also more hesitant in terms of complaining about the police than other age groups.

What should you expect when making a complaint?

If you make your complaint against the police to the IPCC, the law requires that it must be forwarded to the force concerned. A decision is then made as to whether to record the complaint. If your complaint is not recorded, you have the right of appeal to the IPCC. Once complaints have been recorded, the way in which they are handled depends upon the nature of the incident.

Many incidents can be resolved locally by the police service, which is a quicker and more flexible way of finding out what happened than a formal investigation - about half of all complaints are handled this way.

Incidents that cannot be resolved locally will be investigated by the force's specialist professional standards department. This is called a local investigation. If complainants are still dissatisfied they can appeal to the IPCC.

More-serious complaints or incidents must be referred by the force to the IPCC, which decides how they should be investigated. The IPCC can either use its own investigators to carry out an independent inquiry or to manage the way the police service carries it out.

The IPCC web site is constantly updated at <http://www.ipcc.gov.uk> and there are a number of information leaflets available on the site at http://www.ipcc.gov.uk/index/complaints/info_leaflets.htm including:-

- 'An Introduction to the IPCC'
- 'How to Make a Complaint Against the Police'
- 'Appealing to the IPCC'.

These are available in a number of languages.

How do you make a complaint against the police?

- The IPCC can only deal with complaints about the behaviour of police officers and staff. If you think you have been treated badly by the police, or a police officer or a member of police staff was rude to you or used excessive force, you have the right to make a complaint.
- The IPCC is not responsible for complaints or queries about the police that relate to operational decisions, police policies and procedures or other service issues. These complaints are dealt with under a separate system, which is not overseen by the IPCC.
- As well as being responsible for complaints about the police, the IPCC is also responsible for the way serious complaints against members of staff of the Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA), HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and UK Border Agency (UKBA) are handled.
- If any member of the public has a complaint to make, then they can make a complaint:
 - In person, at any police station
 - Through the IPCC website at www.ipcc.gov.uk
 - Via email to enquiries@ipcc.gsi.gov.uk
 - By telephone on 0845 300 2002