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Rt Hon Dame Karen Bradley DBE MP
House of Commons
London
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BY Email to:

CC:

Minister for Policing and Crime Prevention:
Clerks, Home Affairs Committee:

18 July 2025

Dear Dame Karen,

Re: update on the IOPC's progress in implementing the recommendations of the Cabinet Office Review of the IOPC

During our helpful meeting of 3 June, I outlined the IOPC's transformation programme and agreed to write to you with further details on our progress implementing the recommendations from Dr Gillian Fairfield's review of the IOPC. This Review was undertaken shortly before I took up post and, as I mentioned when we met, has provided a very welcome basis for our current transformation. Our transformation programme will roll out major changes to how we operate, building on many of the recommendations in Dr Fairfield's report.

As you will be aware, the Review was initiated to consider our governance, accountability, efficacy and efficiency as part of the Government's regular programme of reviews of arm's length bodies. It found that there were significant issues to be addressed to put the IOPC on a sustainable financial footing to ensure we deliver our remit effectively; increase the pace of our investigations; improve transparency; and, ultimately, deliver our statutory purpose to improve public confidence in the police complaints system.

Of the 93 recommendations made by Dr Fairfield, 73 fell to the IOPC to implement and I have provided details of the progress we have made in relation to those below. We accepted 71, rejecting 2¹. Despite the recommendations covering almost all aspects of the organisation, we have already completed actions against more than 50 of the 71. We anticipate completing the remaining activities required to fulfil the recommendations by Autumn 2025. This letter outlines the progress made to date, and I will provide a comprehensive update on each recommendation once they have been finalised.

Governance

¹ The rejected recommendations were recommendation 2 (Chapter 4), which proposed that we discontinue the use of themes as a criterion in our decision about which cases to investigate independently, and recommendation 27 (Chapter 7), which proposed we use future iterations of our public perceptions tracker to test public attitudes about the IOPC conducting significantly fewer investigations and public support for an increased focus on learning.

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As with any organisation, it is essential that our board is equipped to provide strategic challenge to both myself, and the executive team. Since Dr Fairfield's report was published, we have reviewed our senior structure and corporate functions, and all senior positions are now filled on a permanent basis. The Board has a development plan and has put in place a new induction plan for all new non-executive directors. I have appointed a Finance Director to sit on the IOPC's Management Board, ensuring finance discussions take a higher priority, both at Management Board and Unitary Board. We have also strengthened our accountability with the Home Office, which is now represented at our Unitary Board.

Accountability

With regards to our accountability, we have taken steps to improve how we communicate and engage with the public. Later this month, our first service user panel will take place, providing valuable insight into the experiences of those who come into contact with our work. Their views will help us shape improvements to the way we deliver our services in the future. Our new website, launched in summer 2023, has undergone extensive user research. We have used the feedback to redesign the pages on the public's right of review to a complaint; provide people with additional information on our work; and change the way in which members of the public submit a complaint. Alongside these changes, we are developing a new format for our publications to make them easier to locate. Later this financial year, we will launch our enhanced performance dashboards online, providing clearer and more accessible data to the public.

Dr Fairfield's review also recommended that we take steps to remove barriers and offer more support to people making complaints. We have held advocacy sessions for professionals working with services users with the lowest confidence in policing and delivered a digital guide for professionals '*How to support your service user through the police complaints process*'. We have also expanded our public engagement through a series of targeted campaigns and outreach activities designed to raise awareness of the police complaints system, particularly among women and girls and young people. These include major initiatives like the *You Have A Voice* and *Your Right to Complain* campaigns alongside youth-focused and localised poster distributions, supported by ongoing mini campaigns around key publications.

Efficiency and effectiveness

Since taking up post as Director General, I have been focused on driving up our performance, investing in the recruitment of frontline staff and transforming of our operational processes. We have made significant progress tackling our backlog of reviews by improving our internal processes and increasing our headcount. We continue to see a drop in the time it takes between us receiving and completing a review and are confident we can meet our target of 50 working days by March 2026, with further momentum towards achieving our final 30-day target soon after.

In our investigation teams, we are implementing a new management structure, strengthening consistency in decision-making and enhancing subject matter expertise. These changes, which will be delivered as part of our transformation programme, will be

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key to enabling us to take on more investigations and to complete them more quickly and to a higher standard.

Whilst the changes we are making will improve both the timeliness and quality of our work, we do not operate in a vacuum. The Accountability Review found that misconduct proceedings are routinely delayed, sometimes for years, which erodes trust among complainants, officers, and forces. As I have said before, we welcome the changes to legislation in the Crime and Policing Bill to change the threshold for referral of criminal cases to the CPS to enable us to direct less serious matters via the disciplinary route and to allow us to refer investigations to them earlier, where merited. We also support the Government's commitment to establish a review to address systemic barriers to timeliness in the misconduct system and look forward to engaging with the review team once established.

Funding, spending and our financial future

As highlighted by Dr Fairfield, our budget has faced real-terms reductions over the past seven years. To manage these cuts and meet demand within our budget, we have delivered efficiencies, including a reduction in our estate, and reviewing our staff structures across all areas. We have reinvested savings into priority areas: transformation; our AI capabilities; and strengthening our frontline delivery across casework and investigations. While I remain committed to acting on the recommendations from the Fairfield Review, any further reductions in our budget would put the delivery of our transformation programme in jeopardy. This would have an impact on timeliness, quality, and consistency, resulting in more cases being handled by forces to the detriment of public trust and confidence.

Finally, I want to emphasise the importance of our staff in what we do. Like Dr Fairfield, I have been impressed by the committed, professional and dedicated members of staff working for the IOPC. It is thanks to their efforts that we have been able to make the improvements we have under our transformation programme, and I look forward to continuing these improvements with them as the IOPC Director General.

I shall be happy to write to you again in the autumn to provide you with a further update on our progress. I am copying this letter to the Minister of State for Policing and Crime. Prevention.

Yours sincerely,



Rachel Watson
Director General
Independent Office for Police Conduct