

News story: Home Office approves IOPC guidance and concludes firearms review

Home Secretary Sajid Javid has today approved revised IOPC guidance which strikes the right balance between the need for robust investigation whilst supporting firearms officers in the line of duty.

The IOPC's section 22 guidance, which has been made statutory today, includes a preference that key police witnesses should be separated after an incident, but also gives senior officers operational discretion to use alternatives, like recording proceedings on body worn video.

This completes the Home Office review into police use of firearms, which was commissioned following concerns officers could be deterred from volunteering for armed roles if they did not feel sufficiently protected.

The review has concluded that the right legal and procedural protections are in place for officers following a police shooting and in a great majority of incidents officers were dealt with as witnesses rather than suspects.

The Home Secretary Sajid Javid said:

Firearms officers are highly-trained professionals who do a uniquely challenging job – putting themselves in harm's way to protect the public and taking split-second decisions on whether to discharge their weapons.

Any use of force by the police must be proportionate and necessary and the public must have confidence that investigations following a police shooting incident are independent and robust.

But we must also make sure armed officers feel empowered to use their skills and experience in order to save lives in the most dangerous situations.

Today's approval of the IOPC section 22 guidance sets out a police officer's responsibilities and duties in the period immediately following a death or serious injury during arrest, in or following custody or after a firearms incident. The new guidelines will take effect immediately.

Additionally, the [Crown Prosecution Service \(CPS\) has published revised guidance](#) which requires prosecutors to take into account the dynamic and often fast-evolving situations police find themselves in when considering a prosecution.

The revised guidance takes into account recent court judgements and ensures there is a consistent approach to prosecutions involving self-defence and reasonable force by police.

The firearms review has also concluded that:

- the police and IOPC agreed post-incident procedures for the aftermath of a terrorist attack. As a result, the post-incident procedures that followed last year's terrorist attacks worked well and were concluded quickly
- the length of time taken to conclude IOPC investigations, inquests and sometimes further legal proceedings following a fatality causes distress to both officers and families of the deceased. In a very small number of cases, the period of time has been significant
- however, the average length of an independent investigation by the IOPC has fallen and improving the timeliness of their investigations remains a key priority to avoid distress to families and police officers
- the Home Office is leading work to look for further improvements to make the process simpler and quicker. The police also have a role to play in reducing delays, along with other partners

[Latest Home Office figures](#) have revealed recruits of firearms officers are up by 3% compared to the previous year to 6,459 as of March 2018, following a £144 million funding boost for armed policing at the 2015 spending review.