

[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.

[News story: £293 million deal for Apache fleet](#)

Defence Minister Stuart Andrew announced the £293 million contract with Leonardo Helicopters during a visit to the company's site in Yeovil where some of the vital work on the aircraft will take place. The Apache AH MK1 Integrated Operational Support (IOS) contract will maintain the fleet until it's out of service date in March 2024.

The Apache MK1 is being incrementally replaced by the latest Apache AH-64E aircraft that will begin entering service with the British Army in 2022. The new AH-64E model will have improved sensors and avionics as well as greater performance that will enable the Army to sustain its battle-winning capabilities in future operations.

Defence Minister Stuart Andrew said:

The Apache has provided years of crucial battlefield support to UK and coalition troops in operations in Libya and Afghanistan. This multi-million-pound contract will ensure our Armed Forces continue to benefit from this vital capability as we integrate the latest

Apache model into service in 2022.

The IOS contract secured by Defence Equipment and Support, the MOD's procurement agency, includes deep maintenance, repair and overhaul of the MK1 aircraft as well as the provision of technical and spares support. The contract has been awarded in three tranches, to maintain value for money, with this latest investment covering the final five years of the fleet in service.

Defence Minister Stuart Andrew meeting Leonardo apprentices. Leonardo copyright.

This contract reaffirms the MOD's committed investment in Leonardo's Yeovil site. Last May, the MOD announced the delivery of the first Commando Merlin Mk4 helicopters designed for Royal Marine aircraft carrier operations. This saw the fruition of a £388 million contract supporting 175 skilled jobs in Yeovil and a further 500 across the UK supply chain. The MOD also provides Leonardo with the £271 million Wildcat support and training contract securing 500 jobs in Yeovil.

The South West benefits from MOD expenditure of £920 per person each year and a huge investment in local industry and commerce of £5.1 billion. Defence spending in the region supports one in every 60 jobs – the highest proportion of jobs supported by MOD expenditure in the UK, totalling 33,500 jobs.

Director Helicopters at Defence Equipment and Support, the MOD's procurement agency, Graham Russell said:

This latest multi-million-pound investment in the existing Apache fleet not only demonstrates our positive collaboration with industry in achieving value for money, but also ensures that these battle-proven helicopters remain in-service and readily available for the British Army until their out of service date.

[Press release: Environment Agency aids scheme promoting fishing in West Bromwich](#)

The Environment Agency has stocked the pool in Dartmouth Park, West Bromwich, with more than 2,500 fish as part of an exciting scheme to encourage angling participation in the local area.

The Environment Agency has put in 2,000 roach, 200 tench, 1,000 rudd and 300

breem to rejuvenate the pool and used Christmas trees to create floating fish refuges as habitats and shelter from predator birds.

Environment Agency Project manager, Darin Alberry, said:

The Friends of Dartmouth Park approached us for help to create a scheme to allow local disadvantaged people to take up angling and we were very happy to oblige.

The Friends of Dartmouth Park Angling Club has bought fishing tackle to be loaned out free of charge and are working to gain their fishing coach badges with the Angling Trust. They hope to launch free weekly angling sessions in the spring for disadvantaged people, with other members of the public being asked to make a donation to go fishing on the pool. Everyone will need to have a licence to fish there.

Dave Lowe from the Club commented:

The Environment Agency has done a great job in restocking the pool as the fish population had been decimated by cormorants and other predators. They have also created refuges for the fish which we're really pleased with and we're looking forward to being able to offer the free fishing sessions on the pool.

A fishing licence costs just £30 and lasts for 12 months from the day it is purchased, and becomes valid around 30 minutes after buying online at <https://www.gov.uk/fishing-licences>.

Money from fishing licence sales is invested in England's fisheries and is used to fund a wide range of projects to improve facilities for anglers including; protecting stocks from illegal fishing, pollution and disease, restoring fish stocks through re-stocking, eradicating invasive species and fish habitat improvements. Fishing licence money is also used to fund the Angling Trust to provide information about fishing, to encourage participation in the sport and to manage a voluntary bailiff scheme.

Children under 13 fish for free. Anyone aged 13 to 16 also fish for free, but they do need to have a valid Environment Agency fishing licence. Anyone over 16 must pay for an Environment Agency fishing licence to fish for salmon, trout, freshwater fish, smelt or eel in England.

[Press release: National mentoring](#)

initiative to tackle employment inequality across UK

Jobseekers across the UK are set to benefit from mentoring support designed to help them into work, as Employment Minister Alok Sharma announced the rollout of a successful initiative.

Last year around 500 jobseekers from ethnic minority backgrounds attended sessions hosted by experienced staff from large companies including KPMG, Fujitsu, HSBC and Network Rail to get help with CV writing, goal setting, job applications and interview practice.

Many participants went on to start work, while others have gone into training or further education to help them get closer to the job they want.

Now, Mr Sharma has announced the rollout of the mentoring circles initiative beyond the black and minority ethnic (BAME) community to across the Jobcentre Plus network nationally, for all youth claimants who would benefit from such support. This will start in London in March and then roll-out across the country from April.

The mentoring circles were launched by the Employment Minister last year in response to the Race Disparity Audit and ran in 20 challenge areas across the country.

While the average employment gap between ethnic minorities and the white population is less than 10% – a record low – a number of areas with a high ethnic minority population have significantly wider ethnic employment gaps. For example Hackney, one challenge area, has an ethnic minority employment gap of 22.0 percentage points while Leicester, another challenge area, has a gap of 16.9 percentage points.

Now with the roll-out of the mentoring circles, every jobcentre has access to a local toolkit help work coaches get to know the make-up of their micro-labour market for all claimants on all benefits and will help to determine who will benefit from an initiative of this kind.

Work coaches can also use the toolkit to improve on the personalised service they offer by finding out more about the health profile of people living in their area and the disability employment rate.

Minister of State for Employment Alok Sharma said:

The whole purpose of the Race Disparity Audit was to get us to face difficult, and sometimes uncomfortable, issues. Where there were differences in representation, participation or achievement across ethnic minorities, we were challenged to explain them – or change them.

I took the road for change.

The mentoring pilots for jobseekers from ethnic minority backgrounds have made a difference by supporting them into further training, work experience placements or jobs and I pay tribute to all employers who have taken part in the mentoring circles programme.

This support has clear value which is why I have asked jobcentres across the country to run more mentoring circles together with employers, supporting youth jobseekers, regardless of their background, to overcome the barriers they face and to find the work they want.

Rupal Karia, Head of UK&I – Public and Private Sector and Executive Sponsor of the Cultural Diversity Network at Fujitsu said:

Mentoring circles are an excellent initiative and one Fujitsu is delighted to be involved in. I am committed to this initiative and it was an honour to host the first in-house industry led mentoring circles session in our Manchester office.

This initiative helps people to maximise their potential, develop their skills and enable them to be completely themselves in the workplace. If we help one person get into work it will have been worth it.

Speaking at an event today with mentees and mentors from the initiative, Mr Sharma thanked them for their support and hard work.

Media enquiries for this press release – 020 3267 5122

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[News story: Call for universities to improve support for disabled students](#)

Universities are being urged to boost the number of students with disabilities going into higher education and do more to help them succeed, as the Universities Minister calls for greater action today (Thursday 17 January).

Figures published today show that the numbers going to university from this underrepresented group has increased to a record amount. There were 94,120

new students with a disability that started university in England in 2017/18. Representing 13% of entrants this is still below the proportion of working-age adults with a disability, and the minister wants universities to review their offer and provision for disabled students.

To build on the encouraging figures out today and to drive forward his ambition for even greater participation of disabled students in higher education, the Universities Minister will call for a roundtable of key stakeholders to discuss how the higher education sector can continue to break down barriers and secure improvements for students with disabilities.

Mr Skidmore has also highlighted the financial help at hand to all prospective students with a disability through the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA). Previous [figures](#) show that students in receipt of the DSA are more likely to continue on their course (91 per cent) than not only disabled students not receiving the allowance, but also more likely to than students without a disability (90 per cent).

Universities Minister Chris Skidmore said:

No-one's background or circumstances should hold them back from the opportunity of a university education and there is no reason why disability should be a barrier to fulfilling someone's potential.

I am encouraged by the figures out today showing record numbers of students with a disability going to university – but there is more work to be done, and I want to see the access and participation plans that universities are beginning to produce increase the ways they can support this group.

Institutions such as Brunel University, with their award-winning Disability and Dyslexia Service, and the University of Worcester, who have built their entire campus with accessibility in mind, are leading the way – there is no reason why other universities can't follow suit and match their provision. Working with key stakeholders and disabled students, I believe that we can do more to break down access and participation barriers in higher education by focusing on spreading good practice and listening to disabled students about their needs.

We have a collective responsibility to make that happen and I am calling on universities to consider the barriers that disabled students experience and the support on offer to them so we can help them succeed in higher education.

The figures from the Higher Education Statistics Authority (HESA) out today show that in 2017/18 there were 26,100 more new students with a disability at English universities than in 2013/14 – an increase of 38% per cent.

Alongside these figures, the Department for Education has published research today showing that the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) has helped to break

down barriers that can exist for disabled students at university. The research shows results from a survey of disabled students, which found that 69 per cent felt confident about completing their course and 68 per cent felt confident about passing their course.

In addition, more than half (59 per cent) of students who receive the DSA said they would not feel confident about passing their course without receiving the allowance.

As part of the Government's ambition for everyone to have the opportunity to benefit from higher education, whatever their background, universities that charge fees above the basic level must draw up an access and participation plan agreed by the Office for Students.

The Universities Minister expects the plans to be ambitious in driving increased numbers of students from underrepresented groups and for their use of DSAs. Higher education providers have legal responsibilities to support disabled students under the Equality Act 2010, and the Minister wants access and participation plans to meet these obligations in order to support those with disabilities thrive in higher education.

A National Association of Disability Practitioners spokesperson said:

The National Association of Disability Practitioners (NADP) welcome the findings from this research, which evidences the current experience of disabled students' in accessing DSA. DSA continues to provide valued support to disabled students, and ensuring students have timely awareness of the DSA and the application process in advance of starting university remains a vital and clear ongoing priority for the sector.

Effective DSA support along with ongoing developments in inclusive and accessible teaching and learning will enable future generations of disabled people to participate successfully in higher education.

In 2018/19 higher education providers plan to spend £860m on measures to improve access and successful outcomes for students from disadvantaged backgrounds and under-represented groups, including students with disabilities.

Last year saw a record proportion of English 18-year-olds from disadvantaged backgrounds going to university, but more is still more to do to ensure all young people have the opportunity to succeed in higher education and break down any barriers they encounter.