

How to complain about an MOD Police Chief Officer

MOD POLICE COMMITTEE POLICY
FOR COMPLAINTS AGAINST A SENIOR MOD POLICE OFFICER

Introduction

1. This policy explains how the MOD Police Committee (MODPC) deals with any complaints that may be made by members of the public against a senior officer (ACPO Rank) of the MOD Police (MDP). The policy takes account of both the IPCC and PCCS Statutory Guidance.
2. The MOD Police Committee is appointed by the Secretary of State for Defence in accordance with the MOD Police Act 1987 to provide independent scrutiny and assurance that the MOD Police is exercising its powers and authority lawfully and impartially, and is meeting the standards required of a police force. It is also responsible for dealing with complaints and allegations of misconduct against senior MDP officers.

What complaints does the MOD Police Committee handle?

3. The MODPC deals with complaints about the conduct of officers of the ranks of Chief Constable, Deputy Chief Constable or Assistant Chief Constable of the MOD Police (MDP).
4. Complaints against senior officers who have retired from the police service are also dealt with by the Police Committee if the complaint concerns their conduct whilst in the service.
5. Complaints against officers of the rank of Chief Superintendent and below should be made direct to the MOD Police Professional Standards Department. (See Annex A). Therefore any such complaints received by the MODPC will be acknowledged and then passed to MDP PSD for a recording decision.
6. The MOD Police Committee does not deal with complaints about the direction and control of MDP, such as strategic policing issues or decisions, general policing standards or operational management decisions, unless there are allegations relating to the conduct of one or more Senior Officers.

How to make a complaint

7. A complaint about the conduct of an MDP Senior officer can be made by a member of the public who:
 - was the victim of the alleged conduct
 - alleges that they have been adversely affected by the conduct even if it was not directed at them;
 - claims that they witnessed the conduct.

8. A complaint can also be made by someone acting on behalf of any of the above persons, providing that they have given their written consent for the representative to act. This is waived in the case of parents of someone under 16 years old.

9. Under the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) Statutory Guidance, the partner or a relative of a person serving with the police will not be able to make a complaint on behalf of that person. A partner or a relative of an MDP officer might however legitimately claim to have been adversely affected by the alleged conduct of a senior MDP officer and so become a complainant in his or her own right. The MODPC will record such a complaint, but may consider whether to request dispensation from the IPCC, depending on the nature of the complaint (for example, where it is an attempt to avoid the general rule and so may be an abuse of process).

10. There are several ways to make a complaint about a senior officer;

- contact the MODPC directly by letter, e-mail or telephone (see Annex A);
- via a solicitor who can forward your complaint to the MODPC on your behalf;
- forward your complaint to the IPCC if your complaint relates to a matter in England and Wales, to the Police Complaints Commissioner Scotland (PCCS) if your complaint relates to a matter in Scotland, or the Police Ombudsman Northern Ireland (PONI) if your complaint relates to a matter in Northern Ireland.

What happens when a complaint is made

11. When the MODPC receives a complaint about a senior officer in MDP the complaint will be logged and the MODPC must decide:

- whether to record a complaint
- whether it should be referred to the IPCC.

Recording a complaint

12. In most circumstances, the MODPC is required to make a recording decision of a complaint, and to do this within 10 days. There are some exceptions, such as a complaint by a member of staff or by a member of the public who is not within one of the categories mentioned above. If a complaint is not recorded in the time allowed, the complainant may appeal to the IPCC. If the MODPC declines to record it, the complainant will be told why and their right of appeal to the IPCC will be explained.

Referral to the IPCC

13. The MODPC is required to refer certain complaints to the IPCC for matters arising in England and Wales.

14. It is mandatory that any complaints containing allegations of the following should be referred to the Commissioner:

- Serious assault or serious sexual assault
- Serious corruption
- Criminal offence or other behaviour aggravated by discriminatory behaviour
- Serious arrestable offences.

15 The MODPC may also refer complaints to the IPCC if there are other exceptional circumstances that may have a significant impact on public confidence, or where there are other serious concerns.

16. Where a complaint is referred to the IPCC, the IPCC will determine the method of investigation. These options are:

- Local investigation (the MODPC will appoint an Investigating Officer to investigate the allegation or complaint and report back to MODPC).
- Supervised investigation (the Investigating Officer will be approved by the IPCC, who will also agree the terms of reference for the investigation, but the overall responsibility remains with the MODPC)
- Managed investigation (the Investigating Officer will be approved by the IPCC, who will also set the terms of reference for the investigation and have overall responsibility).
- Independent investigation (the IPCC will conduct the investigation independent of the MODPC).

17. Where the MODPC refers a complaint to the IPCC, the complainant will be advised of the decision in writing.

18-. It is anticipated that complaints for senior officers will normally be investigated under the England and Wales system. However, in the case of uncertainty – for example if there is a Scottish dimension to the complaint, the MODPC will decide an appropriate approach based on the specifics of the individual case.

How the MODPC deals with recorded complaints

19. The Chair of the Sub-Committee for Misconduct and Complaints, will consider how the complaint can best be resolved with advice from the Clerk to MoDPC. This may be by local resolution, dispensation or investigation.

Local Resolution

Complainants may be offered the option of resolving a complaint quickly and satisfactorily through local resolution. Complainants have to agree that local resolution should be pursued. The procedure to be followed in local resolution will be agreed with the complainant, and the MODPC will aim to provide a satisfactory and adequate response to the concerns expressed by the complainant.

Dispensation

In certain circumstances, the MODPC can apply to the IPCC for permission to handle the complaint outside the normal procedure. This could include taking no further action in respect of the matter and is known as Dispensation. Dispensation can be requested where there has been an undue delay in bringing a complaint or where the MODPC cannot contact the complainant.

Investigation

If the MODPC determines that the complaint should be investigated, it will appoint a person to carry out the investigation. Certain criteria are laid down in relation to the

selection of an investigating officer in the case of a complaint against a senior officer, including that he or she may not be a member of the MDP.

The investigating officer will submit a report to the MODPC (or the IPCC in certain circumstances), and the MODPC (or IPCC if appropriate) will decide what action is to be taken in relation to the complaint, including whether the matter should be referred to a misconduct meeting or hearing.

If a complaint against a senior officer is upheld, either in full or in part, there are a number of remedies such as management action (which could include training or re-training), a written warning, final written warning and dismissal. In certain cases, a complaint may be upheld but no blame attached to a particular officer. In such instances, there may be an opportunity for the MDP as an organisation to learn lessons.

The complainant will be provided with a copy of the investigation report, unless to do so would prejudice criminal proceedings or national security, or it is not in the public interest or would have a disproportionate adverse effect.

The MODPC may apply to the IPCC to discontinue an investigation which has already started, providing their justification for this action, which might include:

- a crucial piece of evidence has been irretrievably lost or damaged;
- the cost of obtaining a crucial piece of evidence is not proportionate;
- non-cooperation from crucial witness(es).

Keeping the complainant and the Senior Officer informed

20. The MODPC will keep complainants informed of the progress made in relation to their complaint. The key points of communication are:

- Acknowledgement of the original complaint within 3 working days
- Decision of how the complaint will be progressed within 10 working days
- On a monthly basis, inform the complainant of the progress of any ongoing investigation;
- The final outcome in relation to the complaint.

21. The MODPC will correspond with the complainant in writing, rather than by e-mail or telephone. However, where an alternative method of communication is requested for accessibility reason, the MODPC will make every reasonable effort to meet this request.

22. The MODPC will keep the Senior Officer informed of progress in a similar way.

Complaints in Scotland

23. The MDP does not have any senior officers permanently based in Scotland, although they may visit on detached duty.

24. In the event of a complaint about the conduct of a senior officer arising from an action or incident in Scotland, this should be referred direct to the MODPC.

25. If the complainant is unhappy with the response offered by the MODPC, the complainant may in the first instance advise the MODPC of this. If the complainant

remains dissatisfied with the way the complaint was dealt with or the conclusion reached by the MODPC, the complaint may be referred to the Police Complaints Commissioner for Scotland (PCCS) who may be able to review the way the complaint was handled.

Appeals

England and Wales

26. A complainant may appeal to the IPCC against the MODPC's decision not to record a complaint or against the outcome of a complaint that has been investigated by the MODPC or has been supervised by the IPCC. Appeals must be made within 28 days of notification of the appropriate decision directly to the IPCC.

27. Where the investigation of a complaint has been carried out independently, or has been managed by the IPCC, there is no right of appeal.

28. There is no right of appeal against the outcome of the local resolution process. However, a complainant does have a right to appeal to the IPCC if they did not agree to the local resolution process or believes that the process was not carried out in the agreed manner. Appeals must be made within 28 days of the occurrence of what the complainant has alleged has gone wrong with the local resolution process.

Scotland

29. See paras 22-24 above. In the event the complaint is being dealt with under the Scottish system, a complainant may request a review of the handling of a complaint about police conduct by the Police Complaints Commissioner for Scotland (PCCS). However, the PCCS is unable to review the handling of complaints involving allegation of criminal conduct which should be directed to the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service.

30. There is currently no time limit for requesting a review from the PCCS, although the original investigating body should have completed its investigation.

Contact details

31. For contact details please refer to Annex A.

Review

32. This policy will be reviewed annually.

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MOD POLICE COMMITTEE
SENIOR OFFICERS' COMPLAINTS POLICY

CONTACT DETAILS

1. For complaints against senior officers of the MOD Police, please contact:

Clerk to the MOD Police Committee
Ministry of Defence
Desk 01.I.48
Main Building
Whitehall
London SW1A 2HB

Tel: 020 7807 8245
Email: karen.feather384@mod.uk

2. For complaints against officers of any other rank of the MOD Police, please contact:

Head of Professional Standards
MOD Police
MOD Police and Guarding Agency HQ
Wethersfield
Braintree
Essex CM7

Tel: 01371 854187
Email: psd.mdp@mdp-hq [Group email]

3. For general advice about making police related complaints, please contact:

England and Wales

The Independent Police Complaints Commissioner (IPCC)

Website: http://www.ipcc.gov.uk/index/complaints/your_complaint.htm
Email: enquires@ipcc.gsi.gov.uk
Tel: 08453 002002 (Customer Services)

Scotland

If you wish to complaint about how your complaint was handled by the MODPC you should contact:

Website: <http://www.pcc-scotland.org/>
E-Mail: enquiries@pcc-scotland.org
Tel: Freephone: 0808 178 5577