INQUEST Handbook Update, January 2018

In January 2018 the Independent Police Complaints Commission changed some functions and their title, and became the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC). They provided the following information to service users which we note here by way of an update to the handbook. If you have any questions you are welcome to speak to your INQUEST caseworker about this. More information is available on the IOPC’s new website: policeconduct.gov.uk

“Becoming the Independent Office for Police Conduct:
A note provided by the IOPC, formerly known as the IPCC

On January 8, the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) became the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC). This change was set out in the Policing and Crime Act 2017.

A new structure
Apart from a new name, the other significant change is to our senior structure. Previously, our staff had two reporting lines: through their managers to the Chief Executive and also to the relevant Commissioner in their role as decision-maker.

We now have a single line of accountability running up to our new Director General, Michael Lockwood. He is ultimately responsible for the work of the organisation and its decisions – which are delegated to the various teams that make up the IOPC.

Our investigations are delegated via the Deputy Director General, Operations to a network of five Regional Directors and a Director for Wales, who manage local operational teams. We no longer have Commissioners, which is why we are no longer called a ‘Commission’.

This new structure should make our processes more efficient. Within the regional teams, investigators are responsible for the investigative process. Investigators are overseen by managers who are also responsible for making key decisions about the terms of reference for, and outcomes of investigations. All operational teams adhere to the same operating policies and standards to ensure consistency.

Ultimately, all decisions are taken in the name of the Director General. The independence of our decision-making is vested in the organisation and not in any specific employee.

The vast majority of members of the public or police officers involved with an IOPC investigation will keep the same point of contact with us (usually the investigator) and only a small number of cases will have a new senior decision maker. The majority of IPCC investigations were overseen by senior managers, not Commissioners and so the decision maker has not changed now we are the IOPC. Decisions on the particularly sensitive cases that had been retained by IPCC Commissioners, will now become the responsibility of the relevant IOPC Regional Director.

Maintaining independence
Our investigations have three broad outcomes – which have not changed since we became the IOPC: that an officer has no case to answer in relation to their conduct; that the police force should launch disciplinary proceedings; or that evidence is passed to the Crown Prosecution Service, for criminal charging to be considered. Disciplinary and criminal proceedings are based on evidence that we have supplied, but the decision-making process is entirely independent of the IOPC. We also strive wherever possible to highlight what can be learnt from the cases we investigate - so that whatever the outcome of the investigation, we can help shape policing for the better.”