

# Independent police complaint bodies – lessons from England and Wales.

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# Independent complaints bodies

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➤ ***Police Complaints Authority (PCA), 1985***

Introduced as part of PACE after Scarman report.

Introduced an 'independent' civilian staff.

Investigations conducted by police officers, although often from other forces.

➤ ***Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC), 2004***

Introduced broader basis for complaints – victims and witnesses could make direct complaints.

Stronger statutory powers - a team of independent investigators and legal obligations on chief officers

➤ ***Independent Office of Police Complaints (IOPC), 2018***

# IOPC performance and issues

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- New powers came into place in 2020.
- Practical level – some personnel changes and structural changes but little awareness of the change.
- Key problems:
  - Police investigating the police
  - lack of power/will to compel the police to testify
  - length and lack of transparency of investigations.
  - Failure of the law and policy

# Structural racism

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- State violence and black deaths in custody are rooted in a long history of structural racism.
- Individual cases must be examined in light of broader social, economic and political context.
- Evidence of racial disparities and stereotyping not considered in individual cases.
- Piecemeal approach to accountability across different organisations.

# Lessons

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- IOPC lacks capacity to deal with racist police violence.
- Lacks legitimacy and trust of the public, particularly racialised groups.
- Reinventions have failed to solve the fundamental practical and structural problems.
- Need to think beyond the police complaints mechanism to the broader system of police accountability.
- Reimagining of policing and structural transformation.

# Thank you

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