

GCSE



CCEA GCSE TEACHER GUIDANCE

Learning for Life and Work

Unit 1: The Police Ombudsman



For first teaching from September 2017

Welcome to the **Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland's student portal**. This page is designed to help GCSE pupils studying the role of the Police Ombudsman as part of the Local and Global Citizenship module of Learning and Life for Work. The information will also be helpful in providing all students with an overview of the Office and its work.

What is the role of the Police Ombudsman of Northern Ireland?

The Police Ombudsman provides an independent, impartial system for dealing with complaints about police officers in Northern Ireland.

Dr Michael Maguire is the current Police Ombudsman and heads up the Police Ombudsman's Office.

<https://policeombudsman.org/About-Us>

Is the Police Ombudsman independent?

Yes. Independence is an extremely important issue for the Police Ombudsman. It is important that complainants are confident that their allegations will be investigated thoroughly and fairly. The Police Ombudsman's Office is committed to providing independent, impartial investigations which are free from police, governmental or community influence.

<https://policeombudsman.org/About-Us/Historical-Investigations/Independence>

What kind of things does the Police Ombudsman investigate and who can complain?

Anyone who feels they have been mistreated or let down by police in Northern Ireland can make a complaint to the Police Ombudsman's Office. It costs nothing to make a complaint.

The most common types of complaint we receive include that police officers failed in their duty or did not do their jobs properly, used excessive force or acted oppressively, or were rude or uncivil.

Investigators from the Police Ombudsman's Office also look at more serious issues, including:

- All incidents in which police officers use live fire against someone,
- All fatal road traffic collisions involving police,
- All deaths in police custody,
- Any situation in which police may have caused a death or contributed to the circumstances of a death,
- And every occasion on which a police officer uses CS spray against a juvenile.

<https://policeombudsman.org/About-Us/Current-Investigations>

The Police Ombudsman's Office is also responsible for investigating historical matters relating to the period known as 'The Troubles', between 1968 and 1998.

The Police Ombudsman's Historical Investigations Directorate is dealing with more than 400 cases from this period. They involve concerns and allegations of police criminality, including involvement in murder and attempted murder, as well as conspiracy and incitement to murder.

<https://policeombudsman.org/About-Us/Historical-Investigations>

What are the potential consequences if a Police Ombudsman investigation finds that a police officer has acted improperly?

If a Police Ombudsman investigation concludes that a police officer has breached police procedures or the police Code of Ethics, the Police Ombudsman can:

- recommend that the officer should be disciplined
- or recommend that the officer should undertake training or other measures designed to improve his or her performance.

The police will consider the evidence provided by the Police Ombudsman and will ultimately decide what action should be taken against the officer.

In cases involving potential criminality by a police officer, the Police Ombudsman will submit a file of evidence to the Public Prosecution Service (PPS). The PPS will then consider the evidence and decide whether the officer should be prosecuted.

Why is it important to have a Police Ombudsman in Northern Ireland?

In order to do their jobs, police officers are given powers to arrest and detain people, to search people and property, to seize items as evidence, and to use force, including weapons, when needed. It is important that officers use these powers properly. It is also important to have a way of dealing with people's concerns if they believe that officers have abused these powers or acted improperly.

In addition, policing has long been a controversial issue in Northern Ireland. A series of measures have been taken over the past 25 years aimed at securing the widest possible public support for policing and the police complaints system.

In November 1995, a senior civil servant, the late Dr Maurice Hayes, was appointed to review the police complaints system and produce a blueprint for a new system that could earn the confidence of the people of Northern Ireland and of the police themselves.

He produced his report in January 1997. It recommended that an independent Police Ombudsman be appointed to deal with all complaints against the police. The Police Ombudsman's Office opened in November 2000.

The Patten Commission – set up to review policing as part of the Good Friday Agreement – had released its report the year before. It made 175 recommendations for change, including that the Royal Ulster Constabulary should be replaced by a new Police Service of Northern Ireland.

The Police Ombudsman’s Office was therefore born into a period of momentous policing change in Northern Ireland.

pages 7 and 8 <https://policeombudsman.org/PONI/files/f2/f27a5142-0c57-4d30-af26-ea963dfa43a7.PDF>

What publications does the Police Ombudsman produce and why?

The Police Ombudsman’s Office is committed to informing the public about the service it provides and the work it does on their behalf.

The Office publishes reports detailing the issues it has investigated, the evidence it has considered, and explaining the conclusions it has reached.

You can find [investigation reports](#) and reports on [historical investigations](#) on our website, along with a series of [case studies](#) which illustrate the breadth of our work.

In addition, we regularly publish [statistical reports](#) which give details about the number and types of complaints and allegations we receive, and about how satisfied members of the public and police officers are with the way in which we do our work.

We also produce a number of leaflets. [“The Police Complaints System in Northern Ireland”](#) explains how to make a complaint, and outlines what happens during an investigation and the possible outcomes.

[“Investigating the Past”](#) outlines the work of the Police Ombudsman’s Historical Investigations Directorate.

<https://policeombudsman.org/Statistics-and-Research>

The Police Ombudsman Quiz App

Test your knowledge of the work of the Office and learn about your rights and responsibilities with the Police Ombudsman’s quiz app. It is available for both [Android](#) and [iPhone](#).

To access some short videos about the work of the Police Ombudsman click [here](#).

If you would like more information, or if you would like to enquire about a visit to your school by Police Ombudsman staff, please contact our Information Directorate on 02890828604.