



Making a Complaint Against the Police

We are a voluntary group set up to support people who take part in protest. The process outlined below is the same regardless of the nature of your complaint. However, if your claim / complaint is not protest-related then further advice should be sought through a [solicitor](#). **Please do not phone us if your claim does not arise from taking part in protest. We will not be able to assist you.**

Have you been a victim of police misconduct and want to know if you can do anything about it?

This guide will take you through the complaints process.

We recommend that as well as making a complaint against the police that **you also make a civil claim** to [sue them for compensation](#) through the courts. Although the complaint system and a civil claim are separate processes, they both have the same aim: holding the police to account.

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1. What Can I Make a Complaint About?

You can make a complaint about almost anything.

Most people want to make a complaint because they have been wrongly arrested, assaulted by the police or prosecuted for something they didn't do, and make it in parallel with a [civil claim](#).

You are additionally able make a complaint about unprofessional conduct and rudeness.

Wrongful Arrest

Unlawful arrest and detention is called false imprisonment. The police must justify any arrest and detention, so if you think the police have acted outside their powers it is worthwhile getting further advice. False imprisonment can happen on the street, in your home, in a police vehicle and of course at the police station – in fact any place where the police control your freedom.

Assault

This is much wider than many people think. You are assaulted as soon as someone touches you without a lawful reason to do so, and when they put you in fear of unlawful violence. Of course, it includes being punched and kicked and being subjected to illegal body searches. If you are assaulted by the police it is important to see a doctor (at casualty or your GP) straight away and for the injuries to be noted. You should also take photos of any injuries, if possible.

Prosecuted for something I didn't do

This is called malicious prosecution. You have to prove that the police had no reasonable cause to prosecute you and that they had a "wrongful motive" in doing so. You have to win your criminal case, which means either (a) any charges were dropped before the case went to court, or , or (b) you were acquitted (found innocent) in court at your trial or on appeal.

Other complaints

You can also sue the police for breach of your right to protest or breach of other human right; negligence; trespass to land and goods; breach of your rights under the Data Protection Act; race, sex, disability or other discrimination; and a few other civil wrongs.



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2. Making a Complaint

Making a complaint against the police can be a difficult and frustrating process. The Independent Police Complaints Commission will pass complaints that they consider to be minor incidents back to the police to process, whose internal investigations often lead nowhere. That said, we will offer as much assistance as we can to support you through the process and it is important to remember that a significant number of complaints can help the political / media battle against police violence.

How to make a complaint

1. Gather evidence of what has happened. This will ideally include both a video of the incident and witness statements from independent bystanders. Also remember to record the badge number of the officer(s) involved.

» [See 'How do I write a witness statement'](#)

2. Gather evidence of your injury, if applicable. This will ideally be something written down by a doctor. Take photos of your injury.

3. Get in touch with [ACAB](#) if your case is related to protest. We can help support you through this process, mainly by launching appeals for information relating to the incident(s). **Please do not phone us if your claim does not arise from taking part in protest.**

4. File your complaint via the [Independent Office of Police Complaints](#) (IOPC) website.

3. Outcomes

You can choose between an informal resolution, which means a chat with the police about the incident, or a formal resolution, which has the potential to lead to disciplinary action or in extreme cases charges being brought forward against the police officer(s).

In our experience, the outcome of your complaint will often be one you don't agree with. An alternative process is to contact your local MP who may take up the matter. Otherwise you may also want to consider more creative ways to organise against police brutality.

We recommend that as well as making a complaint against the police that you also sue them for compensation through the courts. Although the complaint system and a civil claim are separate processes, they both have the same aim: holding the police to account.