

**Policy on Recording Complaints  
from  
Juveniles  
(less than 18 years of age)**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Protecting the rights of young people who wish to make a complaint against police is core to the work of the Police Ombudsman's Office. It is the responsibility of the Office to ensure that the rights of young people are observed; that the young person is properly advised in relation to the making of a complaint; that correct procedures are followed; that the young person understands what is being communicated and that there are no impediments to participation in the interview process. Young people making complaints can find the process stressful and intimidating and have the right to support and protection.

### 1.1. Purpose

1.1.1. This policy is designed to deal, in particular, with situations where a person less than 18 years of age wishes to make a complaint against police but, either does not have a witness supporter available or does not wish to nominate one.

## 2. Witness Supporters

2.1. Witness supporters nominated by young persons to accompany them when making a complaint against police can include: -

- Parent/s/guardians
- Legal representative/s
- Social workers or any friend / relative over the age of 18 years of age.

2.1.2 Witness supporters secured by the Office will be nominated by MindWise.

## 3. General Principles

3.1 That young persons who wish to make a complaint will be asked to nominate a witness supporter to attend interview. Police Ombudsman staff will defer the recording of the complaint until the attendance of the person nominated.

3.2 That where, for whatever reason, a witness supporter is not available or the young person declines to nominate one, the Office will, with the young person's permission, contact MindWise and request that a suitable person attends interview in support of the

youth. A formal agreement between MindWise and the Office has been entered into for the provision of this service.

3.3 That where a young person refuses all efforts at securing the attendance of a witness supporter a statement of complaint, will, nevertheless, be recorded.

3.4 In matters which are referred for investigation, the OPONI Investigation Officer appointed will make every effort to ensure that throughout the investigation, the young person is supported, advised, updated and assisted.

**Linked Policies:**

Complainant Update Agreement

Non Co-operation Guidance