

Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland

Historical Investigations Directorate

Case Prioritisation Policy

1. General Policy Statement

- 1.1 The Historical Investigations Directorate has established a policy to prioritise case progression from receipt to final reporting. This will be applied to cases currently held and those received in the future.
- 1.2 The purpose of this is to achieve a fair and equitable progression of each case.

2. Appendix A

- 2.1 Appendix A is a process map outlining the main phases of case progression:
 - Case Received
 - Assessment
 - Review
 - Investigation/Complex Investigation
 - Public Report.
- 2.2 Appendix A indicates the stages of the process at which a prioritisation matrix is applied.
- 2.3 Initial prioritisation is applied to the case from the information generated during the Assessment Phase. The case will enter the Review Phase based upon the marking received.
- 2.4 The prioritisation matrix is applied a second time to the case from information generated during the Review Phase. The case will enter the Investigation/Complex Investigation Phase based upon the marking received.
- 2.5 Where new and relevant information is received in respect of a case after the Assessment or Review phases have been conducted, the case may re-enter the Assessment or Review phase to consider the new information. This will be decided at the Historical Directorate Investigations Business Meeting. A further application of the prioritisation matrix will be conducted to reflect any changes in the marking for progression of the case to the next phase.

3. Appendix B

- 3.1 Appendix B is the prioritisation matrix which has been designed to consider each case against a number of relevant factors and apply a marking which will determine the prioritisation of a case as it enters both the Review and Investigation/Complex Investigation phases.
- 3.2 Cases in which the alleged criminality may pose immediate danger to life, serious injury to a person, serious damage to property or loss of specific evidential opportunities will be prioritised with an immediate investigative response.
- 3.3 All other cases will be subject to a four stage application of the matrix:
 - Stage One - Gravity of Specific Offences
 - Stage Two - Nature of Conduct
 - Stage Three - Pending Criminal/Inquest proceedings
 - Stage Four - Qualitative Statement applied to cases of equal marking.

4. Appendix C

- 4.1 A number of guiding principles have been derived to enable the practical application of the prioritisation policy. These can be found at Appendix C.

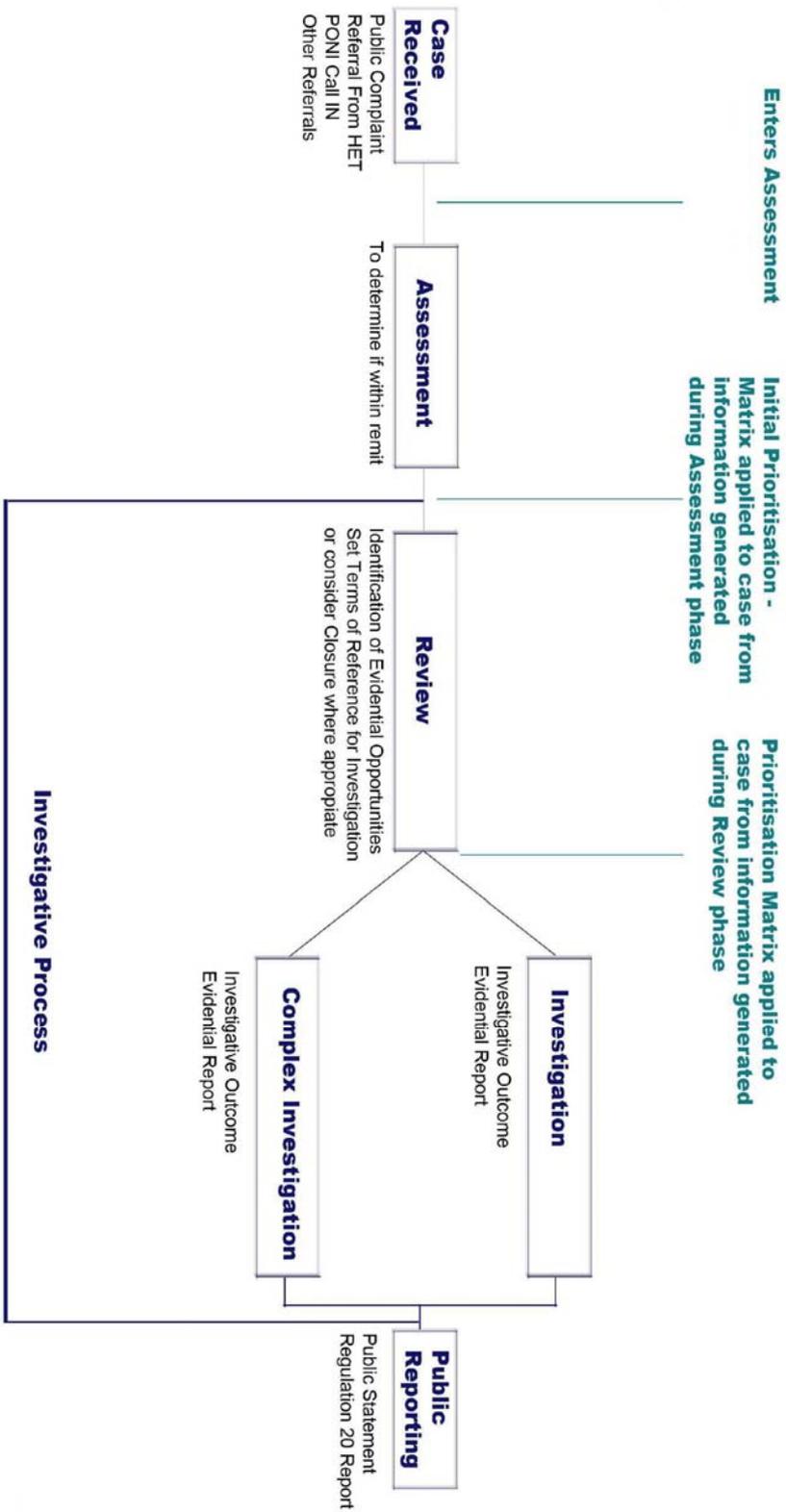
5. Schedule of Cases

- 5.1 Once a case has been assessed the case will be tabled for the Historical Investigations Directorate Business Meeting and the prioritisation matrix will be applied and recorded. A schedule of cases recording the prioritisation marking will be held and managed by the Office Manager.
- 5.2 Likewise, once a case has been reviewed, the case will be tabled for the Historical Investigations Directorate Business Meeting and the prioritisation matrix will be applied and recorded. A schedule of cases recording the prioritisation marking will be held and managed by the Office Manager.
- 5.3 The prioritisation marking and the reasons for that marking will be recorded in, and form part, of the official documentation of each case. A schedule of the prioritisation will be held by the Office Manager. The Police Ombudsman will oversee a quality assurance process to satisfy himself that the policy has been applied properly.

6. Review of Policy

- 6.1 This policy has been approved by the Police Ombudsman.
- 6.2 This policy will be reviewed on a regular basis, or as and when required. Subsequent changes must be approved by management and the Police Ombudsman.

Historical Investigations Directorate: PROCESS MAP FOR CASE PROGRESSION



HISTORICAL INVESTIGATION PRIORITISATION MATRIX

Gravity of Specific Offences	High	4	7	9
	Medium	2	5	8
	Low	1	3	6
		Low	Medium	High
Nature of Conduct				

Cases in which the alleged criminality may pose immediate danger to life, serious injury to a person, serious damage to property or loss of specific evidential opportunities, will be prioritised with an immediate investigative response.

All other cases will be subject to a four stage application of the prioritisation matrix.

Stage One - Gravity of Specific Offences

The cases are then marked against the gravity of the alleged offence by police officers within the table. As a guide:

- (A) Criminal conspiracies & murder (High)
- (B) Perjury, Perverting the Course of Public Justice (Medium)
- (C) Gross misconduct & other criminality (Low)

Stage Two – Nature of Conduct

Cases are assessed into one of the following categories:

- A) Alleged criminality by serving officers involving two or more incidents (High)
- B) Deaths in which there is a direct causal link to police action, e.g. discharge of firearm (High)
- C) Alleged criminality by former police officers involving two or more incidents (Medium)
- D) Alleged criminality by serving police officers in relation to a single incident (Medium)
- E) Alleged gross misconduct by serving police officers (Low)
- F) Alleged criminality by former police officers in relation to a single incident (Low)
- G) Alleged misconduct by former police officers (No Score).

Stage Three

Two points will be added to cases in which there are pending criminal or inquest proceedings.

Stage Four

A qualitative statement may be obtained from complainants and/or their representatives. This is designed to capture such issues as age or infirmity of parents; partners or siblings of the deceased; additional factors such as proven associated miscarriages of justice; the length of time the complaint has been with the Police Ombudsman, and other matters the Complainant or the Police Ombudsman considers relevant.

These issues will serve to prioritise matters which attract the same marking after Stages 1, 2 & 3 and in exceptional circumstances will influence the overall marking and associated prioritisation of cases.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR APPLICATION OF PRIORITISATION POLICY

- At Initial Prioritisation it is unlikely that information regarding the identities of police officers who may be subject of complaint will be available to the Police Ombudsman. Whether these are retired or former officers is, however, relevant to Initial Prioritisation. The process will therefore assume that all officers who may be potential suspects, served a standard thirty year police career and would not have been tasked with murder investigations until they had at least five years service. It follows, that as at 2012, a serving police officer could not have joined the RUC any earlier than 1982 and not been tasked with a murder investigation until 1987. For the purposes of Initial Prioritisation therefore, a complaint concerning the conduct of a murder investigation that occurred prior to 1987 will not involve currently serving potential suspects while a similar complaint in relation to an investigation that occurred in 1987 or later may involve police officers who are still serving.
- At the Assessment Phase, cases will be linked on the basis of either direct or implied allegations of links to other murders, by complainants or their representatives OR by information held by the Police Ombudsman that may suggest a potential link. The nature of any such links should be directly relevant to the remit of the Police Ombudsman. The involvement of a specific member of the public will not necessarily be a relevant matter.
- Cases that are linked at the Assessment Phase will be the subject of Initial Prioritisation and progression to the Review Phase as a potential linked group. The Review Phase will recommend links within Review Policy and identify whether potential suspect police officers are still serving. This information will support an informed, full prioritisation process at the conclusion of the Review.

Historical Investigations Directorate
Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland
New Cathedral Buildings
Writers' Square
11 Church Street
Belfast
BT1 1PG

Telephone: 028 9082 8600

Fax: 028 9082 8659

Textphone: 028 9082 8756

Witness Appeal Line: 0800 0327 880

Email: info@policeombudsman.org

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