

IPCO External Communications and Engagement Strategy 2026/27

Overview

The Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office (IPCO) provides independent authorisation and oversight of public authorities' use of investigatory powers, ensuring that surveillance and covert techniques are lawful, necessary, and proportionate. Effective external communications are integral to fulfilling this mission: public confidence in oversight depends not only on rigorous inspection, but on clear, accessible communication about IPCO's role, independence, and findings.

IPCO is publishing its external communications strategy for the second consecutive year, reflecting our commitment to transparency and public accountability. This strategy was developed in early 2026 and work on its priorities is already underway.

Strategic Context

Building on the foundations laid in 2025, including the launch of IPCO's LinkedIn and YouTube channels, the development of stakeholder frameworks, and the expansion of media and international engagement, the 2026/27 strategy focuses on deepening relationships, expanding reach, and positioning the Investigatory Powers Commissioner as an authoritative voice in national and international discourse on oversight, privacy, and security.

Overarching Objective

Enhance public confidence in the use, authorisation and oversight of covert investigatory powers through targeted, effective, and appropriate communications.

Strategic Priorities for 2026/27

IPCO's communications activity in 2026/27 is organised around four strategic priorities:

1. **Website Refresh:** A redesign of ipco.org.uk to improve navigation, accessibility, and overall user experience, with work beginning in 2026 and continuing into 2027. The refresh will introduce clearer audience pathways, new content types, and enhanced digital infrastructure to better support IPCO's transparency objectives.

2. Academic Engagement Programme: A structured programme to formalise relationships with researchers working in intelligence and security studies, surveillance, privacy, human rights law, and digital governance. The programme begins with exploratory conversations and moves onto knowledge exchange opportunities and speaking engagements at universities and research institutions to contribute to wider understanding of investigatory powers authorisation and oversight.
3. New Digital Formats: Exploring long-form audio-visual formats to make complex oversight topics more accessible and reach audiences beyond IPCO's traditional stakeholder base.
4. Proactive External Communications and Stakeholder Engagement: Deepening structured engagement with civil society organisations, parliamentarians, government partners, and international counterparts, positioning IPCO as an authoritative voice in oversight, privacy, and security debates. A key milestone in 2026 is IPCO's first public event.

Audiences

IPCO's communications are directed at a broad range of audiences, including government departments and public authorities, Parliament, independent oversight and regulatory bodies, civil society organisations, academia, the legal profession, the media, international oversight partners, and the public.

Guiding Principles

All external communications are guided by five principles: transparency, independence, integrity, accessibility, and proportionality. IPCO is committed to using plain language, producing content in inclusive formats, and ensuring all communications are proportionate and appropriate to their intended audiences.

Approach

The strategy prioritises depth of engagement over volume of activity, influence over visibility, and continuous evaluation over static planning. Progress against objectives is reviewed quarterly, with findings used to refine and improve delivery throughout the year.