

Misconduct in public office: the record so far

26 February 2025



Three stories of MIPO

Ministry of Justice data: convictions and prosecutions for misconduct in public office where MIPO is the principal offence only

| Financial Year | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | 2016-17 | 2017-18 | 2018-19 | 2019-20 | 2020-21 | 2021-22 | 2022-23 | 2023-24 |
|-----------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Prosecutions overall | 74 | 55 | 63 | 34 | 52 | 45 | 48 | 42 | 54 | 54 |
| Convictions overall | 29 | 47 | 36 | 29 | 29 | 33 | 36 | 45 | 33 | 45 |

Law Commission report data: convictions and prosecutions for MIPO (based on MoJ data provided to the Commission)

| Calendar year | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
|---------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Prosecutions | 93 | 148 | 93 | 94 | 95 |
| Convictions | 42 | 50 | 38 | 34 | 25 |

Publicly available data on convictions for misconduct in public office (from case law and news reports)

| Financial Year | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 |
|----------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Convictions overall | 12 | 24 | 14 | 13 | 6 | 19 | 14 | 18 | 14 | 15 | 36 |

Lessons from publicly available sources on MIPO convictions

- Of the **191** people convicted of MIPO since January 2014 where information is in the public domain from case law, law pages and news reports:
 - **92%** of MIPO offenders were police and prison staff (**57%** police, **35%** prison staff).
 - **98%** of offenders were junior to mid-level officers.
 - Only **four** offenders occupied 'senior executive' office at the time of their offending. They are:
 - Peter Ball, the Bishop of Lewes (for indecent assault, and the misuse of his office and authority to manipulate young men for sexual gratification).
 - Jeffrey Cook, Business Manager at the Ministry of Defence (receiving commission payments while an employee of the MoD, at the expense of the public purse).
 - Janice McAleese, CEO of a Northern Ireland public body (making unauthorised payments to a company and receiving payments for that company).
 - James Stewart, a secondary school Headteacher (defrauding his school out of £100,000).

Positions of the 191 offenders convicted for MIPO from public sources

| Position | Number |
|----------------------------------|------------|
| Police (Officers) | 101 |
| Police Constable | 74 |
| Detective Constable | 10 |
| Police Community Support Officer | 9 |
| Intelligence officer | 2 |
| Police sergeant | 2 |
| Border Force Officer | 1 |
| Offender manager | 1 |
| Staff investigator | 1 |
| Vehicle liaison officer | 1 |
| Prison staff | 68 |
| Prison officer | 55 |
| Nurse | 4 |
| Teacher | 2 |
| Probation officer | 2 |
| Custodial manager | 1 |
| Catering instructor | 1 |
| Family liaison officer | 1 |
| Pharmacy support office | 1 |
| Physical training officer | 1 |
| Police (services/admin) | 7 |
| Call handler | 3 |
| Camera operator | 2 |
| Intelligence development officer | 1 |
| Tech support | 1 |
| Total | 176 |

| Position ('junior', non-police, non-prison) | Number |
|---|-----------|
| Council worker | 3 |
| Social worker | 2 |
| Compliance Officer | 1 |
| Firefighter | 1 |
| Paralegal | 1 |
| Press officer | 1 |
| Unknown | 2 |
| Total | 11 |

| Position ('senior' executives) | Number |
|--------------------------------|----------|
| Bishop | 1 |
| Business Manager (MoD) | 1 |
| CEO | 1 |
| Headteacher | 1 |
| Total | 4 |

Types of conduct leading to MIPO conviction from public source information

- **Half** of MIPO offenders were convicted for having or pursuing some form of inappropriate relationship
- **One eighth** of offences involved some form of unlawful sexual activity (e.g. assault, rape, possession of child pornography)
- **Eight** convictions were for involvement in organised crime
- **Seven** convictions were for illicit financial crimes (bribery, extortion, theft, and unauthorised dealing)

| Conduct | Number |
|--------------------------------|--------|
| Inappropriate relations | 97 |
| Data offences | 30 |
| Sex offences | 24 |
| Leaking information | 22 |
| Dereliction of duty | 15 |
| Smuggling contraband | 13 |
| False testimony | 11 |
| Selling stories to journalists | 11 |
| Organised crime | 8 |
| Helping prisoners escape | 4 |
| Photographing a crime scene | 4 |
| Extortion | 2 |
| Theft | 2 |
| Bribery | 2 |
| Carrying a weapon | 1 |
| Unauthorized financial dealing | 1 |

Ongoing local government investigations relating to MIPO

Liverpool City Council

- Liverpool City Council remains in the midst of a widespread corruption scandal: an inspection report outlined dysfunctional management processes, an environment of intimidation, and the awarding of “**dubious contracts**”.
- **Operation Aloft**, launched in 2019, has arrested at least **thirteen** people, including former mayor Joe Anderson, for offences including bribery, witness intimidation, and MIPO. Anderson was previously investigated as part of Operation Sheridan (below).

Lancashire Council

- Four men, including the Leader of the Council, have been charged with committing, procuring, or aiding and abetting, misconduct in public office, over “financial irregularities” relating to a **£5 million** tender in Lancashire Council. The investigation, **Operation Sheridan**, has been ongoing since 2013, but as of yet has seen **no convictions**.

Missed opportunities (1): local government

Croydon Council

- Three independent reports have accused senior leaders at Croydon Council of financial mismanagement, a lack of accountability, and “**collective corporate blindness**”. A £136 million government bailout has been requested.
- These findings were forwarded to the police, who declined to pursue charges of MIPO, citing “**significant evidential challenges**” and a trial that could potentially last “**several years**”.
- Croydon Council is now advocating for a reform of the current MIPO framework to safeguard against such conduct.

Thurrock Council

- Thurrock Council has been pushed into a budgetary “black hole” totalling **£469 million**, following unsound and reckless financial investments.
- A government-commissioned report observed “repeated failures” from council executives, and a “**dereliction in political and managerial leadership**”.
- No charges or claims have been made against Council staff.

Missed opportunities (2): national government

Boris Johnson

- Two separate, private prosecutions were launched against the former Foreign Secretary and Mayor of London, for endorsing two misleading statements concerning the payment of £350 million by the UK to the EU, and for allegedly using his position to benefit and reward an American businesswoman.
- **Neither prosecution succeeded**, while the judicial review scrutinising the first prosecution curtailed the “acting as such” ingredient of the MIPO offence, while simultaneously dismissing the concept of ‘soft power’.

Betting scandal

- At least **thirteen people** (including five Conservatives, one Labour candidate, and seven police officers) were investigated by the Metropolitan Police, but **no charges were made** on account of the “high bar” for MIPO not being met (the Gambling Commission was conducting a separate investigation into whether breaches of the Gambling Act had occurred).