

Ethical policing principles

Principles that form the Code of Ethics, along with the guidance for ethical and professional behaviour in policing.

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The ethical policing principles are a series of guiding statements that should be used to help people in policing do the right things, in the right way, for the right reasons.

Everyone in policing routinely makes important decisions. We make these decisions because it is our duty to uphold the law, prevent crime and disorder, protect and reassure communities, investigate crime and bring offenders to justice.

Carrying out these duties can be physically, mentally and emotionally demanding. Our decisions can raise complex ethical issues because they affect other people, often at difficult times in their lives. Deciding what to do is not always straightforward and the best course of action may only become apparent after decisions have been made.

Everyone in policing holds a privileged position in society that depends on the consent of the public. Our mission, to help keep the public safe, relies on us having public acceptance and cooperation. We must all strive to deliver an honourable and legitimate police service deserving of the public's support.

We work with, and for, the public. We earn the public's confidence when we listen to what they have to say, make decisions that are fair and unbiased, and are open and honest about our decisions. Securing public trust also means working within the limits of the law and being accountable for our actions.

Each of us is responsible for upholding the integrity of our profession. We support each other, but never to the detriment of the public. We treat each other with respect and behave in ways that demonstrate and reinforce the standards of our society and the standards expected of us.

The ethical policing principles help us to achieve this.

Using the principles

We will use the ethical policing principles to help us make and reflect on our professional decisions. As policing professionals, we commit to the following.

- **Courage** – making, communicating and being accountable for decisions, and standing against anything that could bring our profession into disrepute.
- **Respect and empathy** – encouraging, listening to and understanding the views of others, and seeking to recognise and respond to the physical, mental and emotional challenges that we and other people may face.
- **Public service** – working in the public interest, fostering public trust and confidence, and taking pride in providing an excellent service to the public.

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Video Transcript

Ethical policing requires courage, respect and empathy, and public service.

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Courage – making, communicating and being accountable for decisions, and standing against anything that could bring our profession into disrepute.

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Public service – working in the public interest, fostering public trust and confidence, and taking pride in providing an excellent service to the public.

Ethical policing principles help people in policing do the right things, in the right way, for the right reasons.

- [Gallwch wylio'r fideo yma yn Gymraeg \(You can watch this video in Welsh\)](#)

Courage

We show courage by:

- taking responsibility
- setting an example
- challenging unprofessional behaviour and practice
- being honest, open and accountable
- encouraging feedback and scrutiny

Video Transcript

Ethical policing requires courage

We show courage by taking responsibility

- We are responsible for doing the right thing, even when the circumstances are difficult. Deciding the right course of action is not always easy, particularly in situations that are uncertain.
- We embrace the trust placed on us by the public.
- As part of our decision-making process, we consider our options and think about the impact that our decisions could have on those affected.
- We are open and transparent, clearly communicating our rationale for the decisions and actions we take.
- We take ownership of our actions, address the consequences and learn from the experience.

We show courage by setting an example

- We are role models and consistently demonstrate professional behaviour.
- We support our leaders in creating a positive ethical culture.
- We seek to build and maintain the confidence of the public we serve, and with our colleagues and partners, through the way that we conduct ourselves.
- We help to protect ourselves, our colleagues and those around us by maintaining professional boundaries.

We show courage by challenging unprofessional behaviour and practice

- We always challenge behaviours, language and attitudes that undermine our profession.
- We challenge all prejudice, discriminatory behaviour and any activity that undermines the impartiality of policing.
- We are courageous in challenging colleagues, irrespective of rank or grade.
- We support an environment where ethical issues can be raised and addressed.
- We may have to engage in difficult conversations with colleagues when we hear or see things that are unprofessional.
- We call out unprofessional behaviour, report incidents of unprofessional conduct, ask for assistance and/or offer support to those involved.

We show courage by being honest, open and accountable

- We demonstrate integrity and understand the need to be truthful in accounting for our decisions and actions.
- We expect to be judged by the quality of our decision-making, rather than just the outcome.

We show courage by encouraging feedback and scrutiny

- We welcome feedback, scrutiny and challenge on our decisions, including where we make mistakes.
- We reflect on our actions and their impact so that we can learn and develop.
- [Gallwch wyllo'r fideo yma yn Gymraeg \(You can watch this video in Welsh\)](#)

Taking responsibility

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Setting an example

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Challenging unprofessional behaviour and practice

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Being honest, open and accountable

- We demonstrate integrity and understand the need to be truthful in accounting for our decisions and actions.
- We expect to be judged by the quality of our decision-making, rather than just the outcome.

Encouraging feedback and scrutiny

- We welcome feedback, scrutiny and challenge on our decisions, including where we make mistakes.
- We reflect on our actions and their impact so that we can learn and develop.

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- [Code of Ethics – Courage A4 poster \(pdf\) 46.87 KB](#)

Respect and empathy

We show respect and empathy by:

- acting with respect
- listening to and understanding different perspectives
- understanding the impact of emotions and welfare
- responding to individual needs
- being fair and impartial

Video Transcript

Ethical policing requires respect and empathy

We show respect and empathy by acting with respect

- We treat everyone with dignity, respect, patience and courtesy where at all possible.
- We recognise that everyone may respond to the same situation in different ways, so we always seek to consider how others are thinking, feeling or behaving.

We show respect and empathy by listening to and understanding different perspectives

- We ensure that people feel valued and listened to by giving them opportunities to share their views and taking these views into account.
- We seek to understand people's experiences, values and beliefs, and we recognise that their perspectives may differ from our own.
- Through keeping an open mind, we challenge our preconceptions and consider alternative ways of responding.

We show respect and empathy by understanding the impact of emotions and welfare

- We try to recognise the physical, mental and emotional challenges that people may face, and listen to ensure that they feel valued and heard.
- We are aware of our own emotions and of the impact that we may have on those around us.

- Through reflection, we assess our biases, assumptions and knowledge gaps, understanding that they may have an impact on our decision-making.
- We recognise when we and our colleagues have been affected by the demands, stresses and traumas that can exist in policing.
- We seek help when it is needed and we understand that doing so is important for everyone's wellbeing.

We show respect and empathy by responding to individual needs

- As we engage with people who have a wide range of experiences and needs, we provide a service that takes account of each individual's unique circumstances.
- In ensuring that everyone is treated equally and fairly, regardless of background or circumstance, we recognise the need to tailor our response to ensure that we are being responsive to individual needs and acting with integrity and respect.

We show respect and empathy by being fair and impartial

- We respond fairly, impartially and with sensitivity to people's needs and situations. We accept this as part of the selflessness required to undertake our roles.
- [Gallwch wyllo'r fideo yma yn Gymraeg \(You can watch this video in Welsh\)](#)

Acting with respect

- We treat everyone with dignity, respect, patience and courtesy where at all possible.
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Listening to and understanding different perspectives

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Understanding the impact of emotions and welfare

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Responding to individual needs

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Being fair and impartial

- We respond fairly, impartially and with sensitivity to people's needs and situations. We accept this as part of the selflessness required to undertake our roles.

Download a poster

- [Code of Ethics – Respect and empathy A4 poster \(pdf\) 49.42 KB](#)

Public service

We provide public service by:

- delivering a service to be proud of
- acting lawfully
- understanding and responding to the public's needs
- reflecting on and applying knowledge and experience
- improving our self, our peers and our profession

Video Transcript

Ethical policing requires public service

We provide public service by delivering a service to be proud of

- We are committed to working in the public interest and we take pride in providing an excellent service.
- We respect the authority and influence afforded to us by our role in society.
- We work collaboratively with colleagues, agencies and partners in service of the public.

We provide public service by acting lawfully

- We take responsibility for using our powers within the law.
- We respect the degree of discretion that we have, and we apply powers when lawful, proportionate and necessary.
- We help to foster a working environment in which everyone can – in the public interest – question, challenge and report any unlawful, unethical or unprofessional actions.

We provide public service by understanding and responding to the public's needs

- We engage with a wide range of people, including some experiencing trauma and adversity.
- We seek to understand the experience and history of different communities and we take them into account in our decisions where appropriate, while always ensuring that we treat people as individuals and with impartiality.
- We build and maintain strong relationships with the public and others we work with, including agencies and bodies.

We provide public service by reflecting on and applying knowledge and experience

- We recognise the limits of our knowledge and skills, seeing these as opportunities to develop and improve.
- When making decisions and taking actions, we draw from the best available evidence, as well as our own professional judgement, practical wisdom and experience.
- We reflect on our actions and decisions to examine what went well and what could be changed to improve the service we offer to the public.
- We understand that reflecting openly, honestly and objectively might be difficult, uncomfortable or embarrassing.

We provide public service by improving our self, our peers and our profession

- To help improve ourselves, our peers and our profession, we foster a safe and open working environment where everyone can – in the public interest – share experiences, evaluate good practice and exchange feedback.
- We expect our leaders to demonstrate a commitment to self-improvement.
- We recognise that our leaders are responsible for providing a supportive organisational culture that facilitates learning and development, and for ensuring that honest reflection is supported and valued.
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Delivering a service to be proud of

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Acting lawfully

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Understanding and responding to the public's needs

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Reflecting on and applying knowledge and experience

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- [Code of Ethics – Public service A4 poster \(pdf\) 58.7 KB](#)

Mapping of Code of Ethics (2014) policing principles to the ethical policing principles

The policing principles contained in the 2014 Code of Ethics included:

- the seven principles of public life:
 - accountability
 - honesty
 - integrity
 - leadership
 - objectivity
 - openness
 - selflessness
- two additional principles that were identified from the research carried out by the College of Policing at the time:
 - fairness
 - respect

The following table shows where this revised version of the principles has drawn from the original and has built upon its strengths.

Ethical policing principles	Code of Ethics (2014) policing principles
Courage	Accountability, honesty, integrity, leadership, objectivity, openness, fairness, respect
Respect and empathy	Objectivity, openness, selflessness, fairness, respect
Public service	Accountability, honesty, integrity, leadership, objectivity, openness, selflessness, respect

Tags

Code of Ethics