

National decision model

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Application

The national decision model (NDM) is suitable for all decisions and should be used by everyone in policing. It can be applied:

- to spontaneous incidents or planned operations
- by an individual or team of people
- to both operational and non-operational situations

Decision makers can use the NDM to structure a rationale of what they did during an incident and why.

Managers and others can use it to [review decisions](#) and actions, and promote learning.

In a fast-moving incident, the police service recognises that it may not always be possible to segregate thinking or response according to each phase of the model. In such cases, the main priority of decision makers is to keep in mind their overarching mission to act with integrity to protect and serve the public.

The model

The NDM has six key elements.

1. Code of Ethics.
2. Gather information and intelligence.
3. Assess threat and risk and develop a working strategy.
4. Consider powers and policy.
5. Identify options and contingencies.

6. Take action and review what happened.

Each component provides the user with an area for focus and consideration. The element that binds the model together is the Code of Ethics at the centre.



Code of Ethics

The NDM puts the Code of Ethics at the heart of all police decision making. This distinguishes the NDM from other decision-making models and recognises the need for all police decisions to be consistent with the principles and standards of behaviour set out in the Code.

Policing principles

The policing principles originate from the [Principles of Public Life](#) developed by the Committee on Standards in Public Life in 1995. The Code of Ethics includes the principles of 'fairness' and 'respect' as research has shown these to be crucial to maintaining and enhancing public confidence in policing.

- Accountability – you are answerable for your decisions, actions and omissions.
- Fairness – you treat people fairly.
- Honesty – you are truthful and trustworthy.
- Integrity – you always do the right thing.
- Leadership – you lead by good example.
- Objectivity – you make choices on evidence and your best professional judgement.

- Openness – you are open and transparent in your actions and decisions.
- Respect – you treat everyone with respect.
- Selflessness – you act in the public interest.

Standards of professional behaviour

These standards originate from the [Police \(Conduct\) Regulations 2012](#) (for police officers) and the [Police Staff Council Joint Circular 54](#) (for police staff). They reflect the expectations that the College of Policing and the public have of the behaviour of those working in policing.

1. Honesty and integrity — I will be honest and act with integrity at all times, and will not compromise or abuse my position.
2. Authority, respect and courtesy — I will act with self-control and tolerance, treating members of the public and colleagues with respect and courtesy. I will use my powers and authority lawfully and proportionately, and will respect the rights of all individuals.
3. Equality and diversity — I will act with fairness and impartiality. I will not discriminate unlawfully or unfairly.
4. Use of force — I will only use force as part of my role and responsibilities, and only to the extent that it is necessary, proportionate and reasonable in all the circumstances.
5. Orders and instructions — I will, as a police officer, give and carry out lawful orders only, and will abide by police regulations. I will give reasonable instructions only, and will follow all reasonable instructions.
6. Duties and responsibilities — I will be diligent in the exercise of my duties and responsibilities.
7. Confidentiality — I will treat information with respect, and access or disclose it only in the proper course of my duties.
8. Fitness for work — I will ensure, when on duty or at work, that I am fit to carry out my responsibilities.
9. Conduct — I will behave in a manner, whether on or off duty, which does not bring discredit on the police service or undermine public confidence in policing.
10. Challenging and reporting improper behaviour — I will report, challenge or take action against the conduct of colleagues which has fallen below the standards of professional behaviour.

Six key elements (CIAPOAR)

The mnemonic CIAPOAR can help users to remember the six key elements of the NDM. It also acts as an aide-memoire in aspects of decision making.

- Code of Ethics – principles and standards of professional behaviour.
- Information – gather information and intelligence.
- Assessment – assess threat and risk and develop a working strategy.
- Powers and policy – consider powers and policy.
- Options – identify options and contingencies.
- Action and review – take action and review what happened.



Code of Ethics

The Code of Ethics sets out the policing principles that members of the police service are expected to uphold and the standards of behaviour they are expected to meet. Many forces have their own values statements which are complementary to the Code of Ethics.

Throughout a situation, decision makers should ask themselves the following questions.

- Is what I am considering consistent with the Code of Ethics?
- What would the victim or community affected expect of me in this situation?
- What does the police service expect of me in this situation?
- Is this action or decision likely to reflect positively on my professionalism and policing generally?
- Could I explain my action or decision in public?

Information – gather information and intelligence

During this stage the decision maker defines the situation (ie, defines what is happening or has happened) and clarifies matters relating to any initial information and intelligence.

Decision makers (ie, potentially everyone in policing) could ask themselves the following questions.

- What is happening?
- What do I know so far?
- What do I not know?
- What further information (or intelligence) do I want/need at this moment?

Assessment – assess threat and risk and develop a working strategy

This analytical stage involves assessing the situation, including any specific threat, the risk of harm and the potential for benefits. Among other things decision makers should consider the objectives of preventing discrimination, promoting good relations and fostering equal opportunities.

Develop a working strategy to guide subsequent stages by asking the following questions.

- Do I need to take action immediately?
- Do I need to seek more information?
- What could go wrong (and what could go well)?
- What is causing the situation?
- How probable is the risk of harm?
- How serious would it be?
- Is that level of risk acceptable?
- Is this a situation for the police alone to deal with?
- Am I the appropriate person to deal with this?
- What am I trying to achieve?
- Will my action resolve the situation?

Powers and policy – consider powers and policy

This stage involves considering the powers, policies and legislation that could apply in this particular situation.

Decision makers could ask themselves the following questions.

- What police powers might be required?

- Is there any national guidance covering this type of situation?
- Do any local organisational policies or guidelines apply?
- What legislation might apply?
- Is there any research evidence?

It may be reasonable to act outside policy as long as there is a good rationale for doing so.

Options – identify options and contingencies

This stage involves considering the different ways to make a particular decision (or resolve a situation) with the least risk of harm.

Decision makers should consider:

- the options that are open
- the immediacy of any threat
- the limits of information to hand
- the amount of time available
- the available resources and support
- their own knowledge, experience and skills
- the impact of potential action on the situation and the public
- what action to take if things do not happen as anticipated

If decision makers have to account for their decisions, will they be able to say they were:

- proportionate, legitimate, necessary and ethical?
- reasonable in the circumstances facing them at the time?

Action and review – take action and review what happened

This stage has two distinct steps. At the action step, decision makers are required to make and implement appropriate decisions. The review step requires decision makers to review and reflect on what happened once an incident is over.

Action

Respond:

- Implement the option you have selected.
- Does anyone else need to know what you have decided?

Record:

- If you think it is appropriate, record what you did and why.

Monitor:

- What happened as a result of your decision?
- Was it what you wanted or expected to happen?

If the incident is continuing, go through the NDM again as necessary.

Review

If the incident is over, review your decisions, using the NDM. What lessons can you take from how things turned out and what might you do differently next time? If appropriate, evaluate the impact of the decision on outcomes.

Recording decision making

Decision makers are accountable for their decisions and must be prepared to provide a rationale for what they did and why. In some circumstances the need to document decisions is prescribed by statute, required by organisational strategies, policies or local practices, or left to the decision maker's discretion.

Whatever the circumstances, the police service recognises that it is impossible to record every single decision and that not all decisions need to be recorded. In most instances professional judgement should guide officers on whether or not to record the rationale, as well as the nature and extent of any explanation.

The record should be proportionate to the seriousness of the situation or incident, particularly if this involves a risk of harm to a person.

Decision makers may find the mnemonic CIAPOAR provides a useful structure for recording the rationale behind their decisions (for example, brief notes in notebooks against individual letters).

Any notes should be proportionate to the situation.

- C – the principles and standards of the Code of Ethics considered during decision making.
- I – information and intelligence known about the situation.
- A – how it was assessed and what the working strategy was.
- P – any powers, policies, legislation that applied.
- O – the main options considered.
- A – the decision made or action taken.
- R – the resulting outcome.

CIAPOAR may also be useful when describing or reviewing a decision.

Reviewing decision making

The NDM can be useful for examining decisions made and action taken, whether by a supervisor or during an informal investigation or a formal inquiry.

Code of Ethics

- How were the principles and standards of professional behaviour demonstrated during the situation?

Information

- What information or intelligence was available?

Assessment

- What factors (potential benefits and harms) were assessed?
- What threat and risk assessment methods were used (if any)?
- Was a working strategy developed and was it appropriate?

Powers and policy

- Were there any powers, policies and legislation that should have been considered?
- If policy was not followed, was this reasonable and proportionate in the circumstances?

Options

- How were feasible options identified and assessed?

Action and review

- Were decisions proportionate, legitimate, necessary and ethical?
- Were decisions reasonable in the circumstances facing the decision maker?
- Were decisions communicated effectively?
- Were decisions and the rationale for them recorded as appropriate?
- Were decisions monitored and reassessed where necessary?
- What lessons can be learnt from the outcomes and how the decisions were made?

Questions for supervisors

In reviewing and reflecting on decisions, questions that supervisors might ask themselves include the following.

- Did you recognise and acknowledge instances of initiative or good decisions (and were they passed to managers where appropriate)?
- Did you recognise, question and challenge instances of poor decision making?
- Can you relate the decision making to the Code of Ethics?
- Are there any opportunities for organisational learning?

Even where the outcome was not as planned, if the decision was reasonable and proportionate in the circumstances, and made in accordance with the Code of Ethics, the decision maker deserves the support of their supervisor and that of the organisation.

The joint decision model

The NDM is the primary decision model for the police service. However, responding to emergencies is a multi-agency activity and the resolution of an emergency will usually involve collaboration between police, fire and rescue, and ambulance services.

The Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme (JESIP) has been established to improve the ways in which the three emergency services work together at major and complex incidents.

When commanders arrive at the scene of a major incident, it is essential that they can quickly establish what is happening around them and jointly agree a plan of action. The **joint decision model (JDM)** has been adapted from the NDM to enable this to happen.

The single difference between the JDM and the NDM is the wording in the central box. The NDM has the Code of Ethics in the centre, whereas the JDM has 'Working Together, Saving Lives, Reducing Harm'.

According to JESIP:

Joint decisions must be made with reference to the overarching or primary aim of any response to an emergency: to save lives and reduce harm. This is achieved through a coordinated, multi-agency response. Decision makers should have this uppermost in their minds throughout the decision-making process.

The mission of policing is to prevent crime and protect the public. The objectives of saving lives and reducing harm are, therefore, entirely consistent with the police mission and the Code of Ethics.

In working towards the JESIP objectives, police personnel are expected to act with principles such as integrity, honesty, respect, fairness and selflessness – ie, all the principles and standards of professional behaviour outlined in the Code of Ethics.

When involved in joint situations, the three emergency services will apply the model collectively. For example, they will consider and share information, make a shared assessment, and take any respective powers and policies into consideration.

Emergency situations may involve differing professional opinions on the best course of action. Reaching a joint decision that is not necessarily the same one as the police would have decided on if they were the only agency making the decision is the nature of collaboration and a feature of joint working. As long as the police representatives can agree the proposed decision is proportionate, lawful, necessary and ethical, there is no conflict with the Code of Ethics.

JESIP

Tags

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