

Code of Ethics – have your say

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Help shape a modern-day police service you're proud of by taking part in the Code of Ethics consultation

Consultation 4 mins read

We're updating the Code of Ethics and would like to know what you think of the proposed new version.

The Code of Ethics sets out how we work together in policing and with the public, so we can keep people safe. It provides a framework to guide the actions taken and decisions made by police officers, police staff, special constables and volunteers every day.

Everyone in policing has to make important and difficult decisions daily. These can raise complex ethical issues because they affect other people, often at the worst moment of their lives. Deciding what to do is rarely straightforward.

Revised Code of Ethics

The proposed Code of Ethics provides a supportive framework to help guide everyone in policing in these decisions, explain them and know they have acted in a fair and ethical way.

The Code of Ethics encourages personal responsibility and supports professional judgement, rather than a list of things to do or not do. It is made up of two parts.

Ethical policing principles

The principles say we will prioritise public service, lead with courage and respond with respect. In using them there is a responsibility to learn from experience and reflection, continue to improve and review and apply new knowledge. The principles can be applied to all actions and decisions from arresting a suspect, through to delivering training.

- Prioritising a public service – the commitment to work in the public interest, communicate clearly and openly, and take pride in providing an excellent service to the public.

- Leading with professional courage – demonstrating integrity and accountability in our decisions, leading by example and standing against anything that could bring our profession into disrepute.
- Responding with respect and empathy – listening to and understanding the needs of the public, and trying to recognise and respond to the physical, mental and emotional challenges that both colleagues and communities face.

Guidance for ethical and professional behaviour in policing

The guidance is designed to help everyone in policing apply the ethical policing principles in day-to-day practice.

The guidance provides practical advice on areas of policing that are important to maintaining public trust and legitimacy, such as:

- being open, honest and candid
- treating all people and their property with fairness, dignity and respect
- challenging or reporting behaviour that is unprofessional

The guidance outlines the professional behaviours the public has a right to expect from us, and what we should expect from ourselves and each other. It will help to build a positive workplace culture by providing examples of what good policing looks like.

The Code of Ethics is supported by the Code of Practice for ethical and professional policing.

Code of Practice for ethical and professional policing

The Code of Practice sets a statutory requirement for chief officers. It includes personal and organisational actions that chief officers can take to support people in their force to use the ethical policing principles and demonstrate professional behaviour.

Activity could include areas such as ensuring continuous professional development, encouraging a culture that challenges unprofessional behaviour as well as one that encourages openness and candour, and ensuring relevant policies are well publicised and followed within their own forces.

The Code of Practice also describes how forces should deal with misconduct and corruption.

What's changed

We have revised the Code of Ethics to reflect the challenges of modern-day policing and to better support informed and ethical decisions.

The proposed code of ethics:

- clarifies the expectations of candour for people working in policing
- includes a focus on individual and organisational reflection and learning
- clarifies what should happen when behaviour does not meet expectations
- provides direction to chief officers (through the Code of Practice) on how they can promote and support a professional culture in their forces
- applies to everyone working in policing including staff and volunteers

How we've decided what changes to make

We held a public consultation between July and September 2021 to get feedback on what should be included in the revised Code of Ethics.

- [Find information about the scope of the Code of Ethics review](#)

We also set up committees with volunteers from across policing and the wider criminal justice system to help inform the changes. We worked with serving police officers, police staff, academics, and representatives from partner organisations to develop the revised Code of Ethics.

Rapid evidence assessment

A rapid evidence assessment was carried out in support of the review of the ethical policing principles. A transparent, structured and systematic process was followed to search for, screen and bring together the results of 44 studies that help to answer the question 'How do officers, staff and volunteers identify, approach and resolve ethical issues in policing?'.

- [Download the rapid evidence assessment](#)

Consultation closed

The consultation closed on Friday 28 April 2023 at 11:59pm. Thank you to all those who provided feedback.

Summary of response

Read the summary of response to the public consultation for the Code of Ethics.

- [Code of Ethics summary of response to public consultation \(pdf\) 113.31 KB](#)

Tags

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