



College of Policing

The Code of Ethics – Summary July 2014

1. The College of Policing developed the Code of Ethics on behalf of every member of the policing profession of England and Wales. The work was carried out by the College's Integrity Programme in association with the national policing leads for Ethics and Professional Standards and a wide range of key stakeholders, including Chief Constables, PCCs, oversight bodies, staff associations and trade unions, and police practitioners.
2. The College of Policing has issued the Code of Ethics as a code of practice under section 39A of the Police Act 1996 (as amended by section 124 of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014).
3. As a code of practice, the legal status of the Code of Ethics: (a) applies to the police forces maintained for the police areas of England and Wales as defined in section 1 of the Police Act 1996 (or as defined in any subsequent legislation); and (b) relates specifically to chief officers in the discharge of their functions.
4. The scope of the Code of Ethics, however, extends beyond its statutory basis as a code of practice. The expectation of the professional body and the public is that every person working in policing will adopt the Code of Ethics. This includes all those engaged on a permanent, temporary, full-time, part-time, casual, consultancy, contracted or voluntary basis. It also includes all forces not funded by the Home Office and any other policing organisations outside the remit of the Code as a code of practice.
5. The main components of the Code are sets of principles and standards of professional behaviour.

Policing principles

- Accountability
- Fairness
- Honesty
- Integrity
- Leadership
- Objectivity
- Openness
- Respect
- Selflessness

Standards of professional behaviour

- Honesty and integrity
- Authority, respect and courtesy
- Equality and diversity
- Use of force
- Orders and instructions
- Duties and responsibilities
- Confidentiality
- Fitness for work
- Conduct
- Challenging and reporting improper conduct

6. The nine policing principles originate from the 'Principles of Public Life' published by the Committee on Standards in Public Life in 1995, as these continue to reflect public expectations. The Code adds the principles of fairness and respect because of their importance to the public.
7. The ten standards of professional behaviour originate from the Police (Conduct) Regulations 2012 and from the Police Staff Council Joint Circular 54. In the Code the wording of the standards has been adapted so that it applies to everyone. Where something applies solely to police officers, this is made clear.
8. The combination of policing principles and standards of professional behaviour encourages consistency between what people aspire to and what they do.
9. The vast majority of those working in policing are already upholding these principles and working to these standards; the Code simply defines the expectations more clearly and brings policing into line with other professions that have such codes (such as medicine and the law).
10. The Code provides supplementary information on how to use it to guide ethical decision making (using the National Decision Model) and how breaches of the Code will be dealt with. Specific advice is given on (a) the types of possible actions for managing unprofessional behaviour, and (b) relevant considerations in determining whether behaviour reflects the principles and standards in the Code.
11. It is made clear that breaches of the Code of Ethics will not always involve misconduct or require disciplinary proceedings. Breaches will range from relatively minor shortcomings in conduct, performance or attendance, through to gross misconduct. Different procedures exist according to the type of unprofessional behaviour or misconduct alleged. For example, relatively minor breaches of the Code will normally be dealt with locally (eg, by a line manager) whereas any breaches that are sufficiently serious to require formal action will be dealt with under the existing disciplinary regimes for police officers and staff.
12. The Code is different from anything that has been available before. For example having a Code of Ethics brings the police service in line with other professions. It also:
 - combines policing principles and standards of behaviour in a single document, thereby replacing a plethora of existing material
 - is inclusive, applying to everyone in policing, whereas previous documents tended to relate to police officers only (eg, the Oath of Attestation and the conduct and performance regulations)
 - is a guide for day-to-day ethical behaviour and decision making, unlike the current misconduct regimes, which have a disciplinary focus.

13. The Code of Ethics will empower everyone who works in policing to always do the right thing and to feel confident to challenge unprofessional behaviour by colleagues irrespective of their rank, role or position. In turn, the Code should help the public to have greatly enhanced trust and confidence in the police.

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