



The Code of Ethics – Briefing Note July 2014

Background

1. In July 2014 the Code of Ethics was laid before Parliament as a code of practice. This was achieved using a power granted to the College of Policing under section 39A of the Police Act 1996 (as amended by section 124 of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014).
2. As a code of practice, the legal status of the Code of Ethics 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 relates specifically to chief officers in the discharge of their functions.
3. The full scope of the Code of Ethics, however, extends beyond its statutory basis as a code of practice. All professional bodies have a code of ethics or conduct which lays out the expectations placed on every member of their profession. The Code of Ethics fulfils this requirement for policing.
4. The expectation of both the professional body and the public is that every person working in policing will adopt the Code of Ethics as their personal guide to the principles they are expected to uphold and the standards of behaviour they are expected to meet.
5. The College recognises and welcomes the fact that many forces have already started using the draft Code of Ethics that the College released to forces on 23 April 2014. Forces and the College will now be able to use this final version to continue with this work.

What we have provided

6. To accompany this Briefing Note, the College has provided the following resources:

(1) Code of Ethics. The most important product is the Code of Ethics. The basic structure of this document remains close to that of the version released to forces in April 2014.

The Code is the foundation document for promoting, reinforcing and supporting the highest personal standards from everyone who works in the policing profession. It is expected to underpin and strengthen all existing integrity and accountability arrangements.

The Code reflects the feedback the College received from an extensive consultation exercise carried out in 2013 (see [Appendix 1](#)). The Code has also undergone a robust quality assurance process, including EDHR validation, proof-reading and external legal validation, as well as ongoing feedback from key stakeholders. The Code was approved by the College Board in March 2014.

(2) Code of Ethics – Summary July 2014. This document includes brief points which will be of use in promoting and describing the Code.

(3) Code of Ethics – Summary of differences between the version released to forces (April 2014) and the final version laid as a code of practice (July 2014). There is little difference between these 2 versions. The main changes relate to the statutory basis for the Code (section 1.2) and the full scope of the Code (section 1.3). This summary document has been provided so the forces which are already using the April version can identify where the small differences occur.

(4) Code of Ethics – Assessment Guide. The Assessment Guide is provided to police forces and the College of Policing as a help in: benchmarking their current ethics-related activity; identifying their areas of strength as well as areas for improvement; considering essential ethics-related roles and processes; and identifying which areas should be amended or developed further.

(5) Code of Ethics – Organisational Model. This document demonstrates the actions a 'model' force may wish to complete to embed the Code of Ethics as effectively as possible. It is based on the Integrity Model developed for the police service by Transparency International and approved by the Association of Chief Police Officers in 2011, so should be familiar to all forces.

Embedding the Code

7. The College recognises that responsibility for embedding the Code of Ethics sits with chief constables and that every force or policing organisation will use a different approach in bringing the Code to life.
8. The College has frequently been asked, however, where responsibility for day to day management of the Code should sit. Many have assumed this should be in a force's Professional Standards Department. This is something for individual forces to decide; but forces should consider how they will reflect the following:
 - that the Code relates to all behaviour – from the most minor shortcomings in conduct, performance or attendance through to the types of misconduct and corruption that are the normal areas dealt with by PSDs
 - that the Code applies to everyone in policing, not just police officers
 - that the Code is a guide to exemplary behaviour not a disciplinary tool to punish poor behaviour.
9. The College of Policing will continue to seek the views of forces and consider how the College can best provide any necessary support.
10. Please do not hesitate to contact integrity.team@college.pnn.police.uk with any queries relating to the Code of Ethics or its embedding within a force or policing organisation.
11. Please also consult the College website <http://www.college.police.uk/> for further information and supporting resources.

Appendix 1

Code of Ethics – summary of consultation

- The College of Policing has developed the Code of Ethics on behalf of every member of the policing profession of England and Wales.
- The work was led by an Integrity Team set up within the College. The team developed and refined a number of early versions of the Code. Feedback from these led to the development of a formal version for widespread public and internal consultation from October to December 2013.
- Final response numbers via a range of consultation mechanisms were:

emailed/posted	301
online internal survey	2,208
focus groups attendees	294
Total	2,803
- In producing the final Code, all feedback was taken into account.

Main points:

- The majority of respondents were in favour of a single Code of Ethics for policing in England and Wales. Many strongly welcomed and supported it, seeing it as necessary, timely and of benefit to both the public and those working within policing.
- The majority were comfortable with the overarching format, ie, basing the Code on a set of ethical principles and the existing standards of professional behaviour. However, a significant number were concerned that the policing principles were placed after the standards of behaviour in the consultation version, arguing that principles should always come before standards because principles serve to guide behaviour.
- Many particularly welcomed the Code's inclusive nature, and the emphasis it places on the roles and responsibilities of chief officers and other police leaders.
- Responses contained a large number of wide-ranging comments. While there were a number of well-articulated reservations about specific aspects of the Code, most comments were supportive and constructive.
- The language and structure of the document was generally commended, in particular its positive framing and the use of 'I will' statements to generate a strong personal commitment to the standards of professional behaviour.
- Many respondents made specific suggestions for the amendment, deletion or addition of particular words or sentences. Others suggested new areas for inclusion, eg, political activity and 'associations'.

Code of Ethics: Supporting Documents

- Many asked for greater clarity in relation to the Code's status, which parts of the document constitute 'The Code' and which are supplementary to it, and particular areas of content. Others requested that the Code include advice on how breaches would be handled.
- There was a positive response to having examples included for each standard, but it was felt that the consultation version was sometimes unclear as to which were examples only and which were compulsory elements of the standard.
- The wording of the principle of 'selflessness' proved to be controversial. Many respondents (particularly police officers) took exception to the idea of putting policing before their family. Many acknowledged that this was not the intention of the wording, but nevertheless encouraged the rewriting of the principle.
- A number of respondents asked for statements in the final version to be more strongly worded than in the consultation version (eg, replacing 'The use of illegal drugs will not be condoned' with something more forceful).
- The most significant concern was how the Code would be used to support and improve existing integrity-related arrangements across policing – with respondents seeing it as essential that the Code is both embedded and promoted at every level, and reinforced in all policing courses, policies and procedures.
- Many respondents recognised the challenge of achieving the right wording in the Code and the necessary level of cultural change to ensure that the spirit and intent of the Code becomes second nature for every person working within the policing profession.

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