

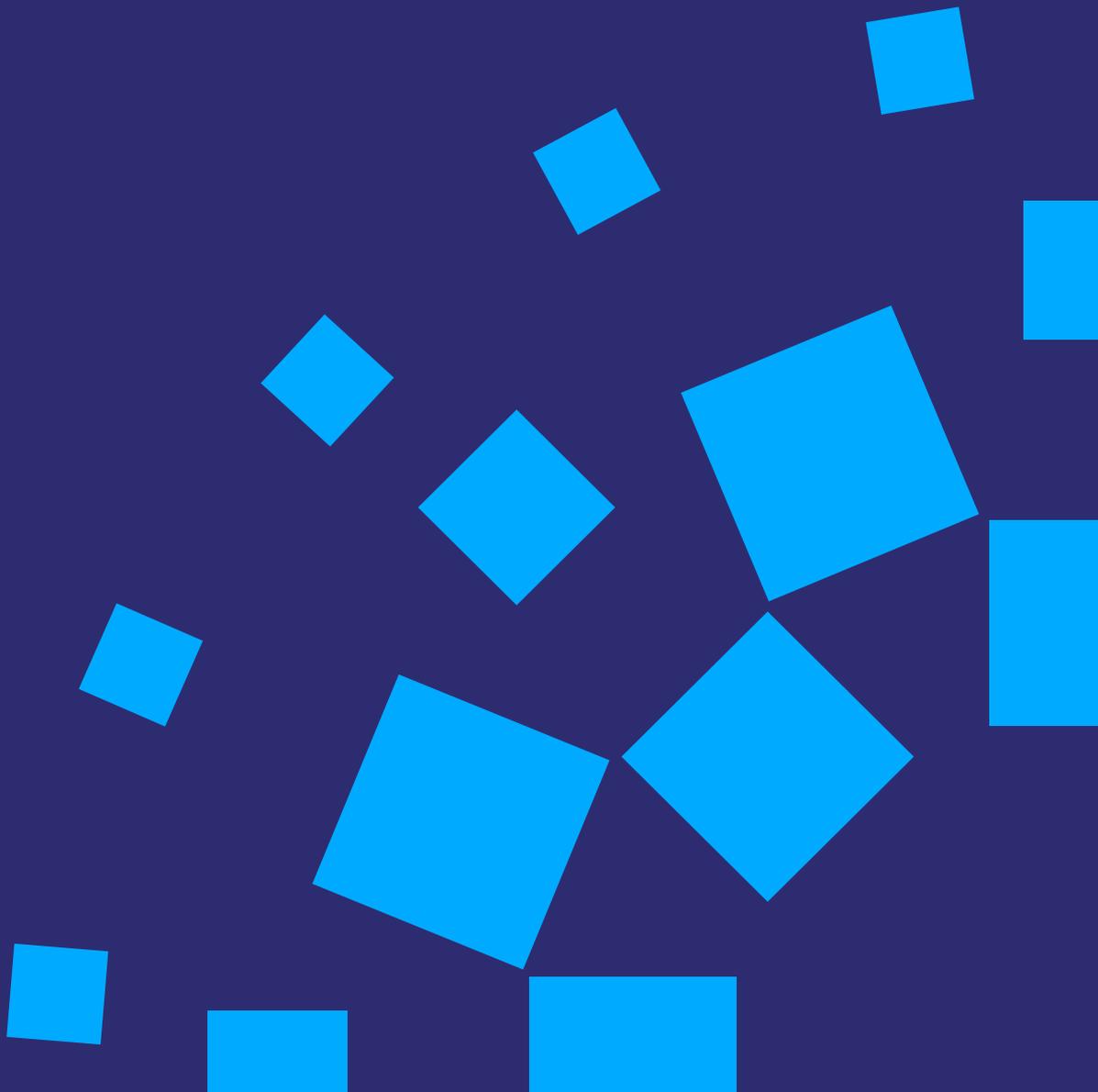


College of  
**Policing**

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# Vetting Code of Practice

## October 2017





# Vetting Code of Practice

Presented to Parliament pursuant to Section 39A(5) of the Police Act 1996,  
as amended by Section 124 of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing  
Act 2014

October 2017

**No content has been changed from the original 2017 imprint**

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# 1 Introduction

- 1.1 Everyone in the police service, and leaders in particular, must maintain high ethical and professional standards and act with the utmost integrity. This is crucial in ensuring public confidence in the service is maintained.
- 1.2 It is essential that the public is confident that police vetting processes are effective in identifying those who pose a potential risk to others or who are otherwise unsuitable for working within the police service.
- 1.3 Vetting is an integral part of a police force's framework of ethics and professional standards. It assists with identifying individuals who are unsuitable to work within the police service, or to have access to police assets. This includes people who are unsuitable through criminal activity or association, those who have a demonstrable lack of honesty or whose previous behaviour has been inconsistent with the Code of Ethics, and those who are financially vulnerable.
- 1.4 Contracts for outsourcing police services and related areas are often of high value. Therefore, when dealing with procurement processes, the police service must be able to minimise the threat of its personnel being induced, through monetary reward or other gratuity or favour, to reveal commercially sensitive information or unduly favouring one supplier over another. Effective vetting, and aftercare where appropriate, is a critical measure required to mitigate these very real risks.
- 1.5 A thorough and effective vetting regime is a key component in assessing a person's integrity.

## 2 Purpose

- 2.1 The Vetting Code of Practice sets out the vetting standards which are to be applied by police forces in England and Wales.
- 2.2 This Code has been developed to help achieve, implement and maintain minimum national standards and ensure those standards are consistently applied across the police service.

## 3 Scope

- 3.1 This Code of Practice replaces all guidance previously issued in relation to police vetting.
- 3.2 The Code applies to all those engaged on a permanent, temporary, full-time, part-time, casual, consultancy, contracted or voluntary basis with the police, as well as any individuals who apply to join the service. It also applies to those in partner agencies who have unrestricted access to any police premises or police information that is not publically available.
- 3.3 The purpose of the Vetting Code of Practice is to:
- support the overarching Code of Ethics
  - support the Standards of Professional Behaviour
  - set out the basic key principles of vetting in the police service
  - set out the manner these principles are to be implemented in the police service
  - ensure the consistent application of vetting standards across the police service.
- 3.4 The Code will be supported by Authorised Professional Practice (APP) on Vetting which will describe the technical processes and detail needed to implement vetting.
- 3.5 The Vetting Code of Practice applies to:
- all police forces in England and Wales
  - vetting units outside the above which conduct police vetting
  - the College of Policing and its personnel
  - applicants to the police service
  - individuals appointed to or employed by police forces, ie, police officers, members of police staff and members of the Special Constabulary ('police personnel')
  - individuals and organisations working under contract to, in partnership with or on a voluntary basis with police forces in England and Wales

- the staff of local policing bodies who have unrestricted access to any police premises or police information that is not publically available.

The term 'local policing bodies' refers to the offices of the 41 police and crime commissioners, the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime in London, and the Court of Common Council in the City of London.

Although the Code of Practice applies to the offices of police and crime commissioners, commissioners and their statutory deputies do not, by law, have to be vetted.

- 3.6 Everyone involved in policing has a personal responsibility to ensure they comply with vetting requirements and that they report any material change in circumstances as soon as practicable.
- 3.7 Although vetting will help to identify many risks, it cannot identify all threats and vulnerabilities. For example, force vetting cannot consider any vulnerability relating to medical issues such as mental health.
- 3.8 Vetting will not be effective if used in isolation. It must form part of a wider protective security regime.

## 4 Statutory basis for the Code

- 4.1 The Vetting Code of Practice has been established by the College of Policing on behalf of the police service of England and Wales.
- 4.2 The Code applies directly to the police forces maintained for the police areas of England and Wales defined in **section 1** of the Police Act 1996. It is available for adoption by other police forces or agencies.

## 5 Transparency and accountability

### Principles

The following principles should underpin all decision-making within vetting:

#### **Principle 1**

In applying vetting, practitioners will comply with the requirements of this Code and the Code of Ethics. Each case must be treated on its own merits.

#### **Principle 2**

Everyone working in a police environment will be vetted to the requisite level. This includes those who:

- have unrestricted or unsupervised access to police information, assets or estates
- have access to force or national police systems, be that directly or remotely
- act as a representative of the police service
- have the power to make or significantly influence strategic decisions in the police service, and includes members of partner agencies.

#### **Principle 3**

The level of vetting required for a person, for both force vetting and national security vetting (NSV), will be proportionate to the role they carry out. Those who hold chief officer roles must, however, be vetted to Management Vetting (MV) and Security Check (SC) standard or above. Prospective chief officers must be cleared to this level prior to attending a chief officer assessment process. Due to the nature of their role, all chief constables (and equivalents) and deputy chief constables must be cleared to developed vetting (DV) standard.

#### **Principle 4**

Police vetting should comply with the standards laid out in APP on Vetting.

### **Principle 5**

All vetting information must be stored in a suitably secure manner. The information must be treated confidentially and accessed by only those who have a clearly identified, justified business need.

### **Principle 6**

Decision-making in respect of vetting clearance should be separate from, and independent of, recruitment and other human resources processes. There should be an effective working relationship between vetting and professional standards departments.

### **Principle 7**

Vetting clearance may be transferrable between posts and forces upon the completion of a vetting health check.

### **Principle 8**

Chief constables, or their equivalents in other agencies, are responsible for ensuring that effective vetting arrangements are in place in their own organisations. In the case of collaborative arrangements, there must be a clear agreement as to who is responsible for ensuring each person is suitably vetted.

### **Principle 9**

Decisions about vetting status should follow the national decision model (NDM) and must be accurately recorded. The presumption is that the rationale for any rejection should be communicated to the applicant in as much detail as possible. There are occasions where it is not possible to provide a detailed rationale, but where this is the case, the justification must be documented and be auditable.

### **Principle 10**

Where a person is subject to a vetting rejection they should have a right of appeal to a person independent of the original decision-maker. The outcome of an appeal should be communicated to the applicant in as much detail as possible.

**Principle 11**

All police personnel should be subject to periodic re-vetting in accordance with APP on Vetting.

**Principle 12**

Public confidence may be affected if an officer has a previous conviction or caution, therefore there is a rebuttable presumption that a person will not be suitable for appointment as a police officer or special constable if they have a previous conviction or caution for a criminal offence, especially if it relates to dishonest or corrupt practices, or violence. Factors that may weigh against this presumption being applied in individual cases include the nature and severity of the offence, the person's age at the time they committed the offence, and the length of time since the offence was committed. Each case must be considered on its own merits including both the individual's role in the offence and the nature of the conviction or caution. The same presumption applies to police staff roles with designated powers or roles where there is a likelihood of being in the evidential chain.

Applications for a position as a police officer; a special constable; or as a member of police staff where that member of staff may be in the evidential chain are to be rejected in all cases where:

- offences were committed as an adult or juvenile which resulted in a prison sentence (including custodial, suspended or deferred sentence and sentences served at a young offenders' institution or community home); or
- the applicant is a registered sex offender or is subject to a registration requirement in respect of any other conviction.

## 6 Decision-making in vetting

- 6.1 Vetting clearance decisions must only be made at the appropriate level, usually the force vetting officer (FVO) or an identified or nominated vetting decision-maker.
- 6.2 The vetting decision must be made on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration all relevant matters.
- 6.3 Where vetting clearance is declined, or granted following assessment of information revealed during the vetting process, the decision-maker must record the full rationale for the decision on the vetting file.
- 6.4 In making the vetting decision, the decision-maker should refer to the NDM:

### National Decision Model



- 6.5 Vetting decision-makers must take account of the requirements of **Chapter 18** of the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) Disclosure Manual, which deals with revealing and disclosing relevant matters during judicial proceedings. Where forces find that a person cannot be relied on to act as a witness of truth in court proceedings, they should not grant vetting clearance for appointment to a post where the role would require that person to provide evidence at court.
- 6.6 Forces should monitor the application of the Vetting Code and APP on Vetting to identify whether there is any disproportionality in decision-making, for example in respect of black and minority ethnic (BME) groups. If disproportionality is identified the reasons for this should be clearly understood and, where appropriate, suitable action taken to address it.

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We're the professional body for everyone who works for the police service in England and Wales. Our purpose is to provide those working in policing with the skills and knowledge necessary to prevent crime, protect the public and secure public trust.

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