



College of  
**Policing**

Working together  
to prevent crime

# Fundamental review of the College of Policing

Boosting professionalism, improving leadership,  
and driving consistency



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# Contents

<b>Foreword by Nick Herbert</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Foreword by Andy Marsh</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Listening to the service</b>	<b>7</b>
What were we told?	7
<b>A new vision for the College of Policing</b>	<b>9</b>
Delivering the vision	11
A national policing leadership centre	14
The way the College works	16
Supporting the policing system	16





## Foreword by Nick Herbert



When, as Policing Minister, I established the College of Policing, my ambition was to improve leadership, standards and professionalism in policing. Ten years on, it is sobering to see that many of the challenges facing the service remain, and in some cases have increased. The College itself has, to be candid, had an uncertain start, doing good work but failing to fulfil its potential.

So, when I became Chair last year, I immediately instituted a fundamental review of the College, its role, its effectiveness and how it operates alongside other organisations in the policing landscape. I wanted to ensure that, as the professional body for policing, the College is highly valued by every section of the service, from the newest recruit or member of police staff to the most experienced chief officer. After extensive consultation, the feedback was stark. The College was seen as too remote from the service and of insufficient utility to frontline officers. Change is clearly needed.

There was widespread support for what the College aims to do, and undoubtedly an effective professional body is needed now more than ever. The service faces many challenges, from its relationship with Black communities and its ability to protect women, to the need to respond to ever-changing crime threats. The culture within policing is under the microscope, with serious questions being asked about leadership and professionalism. The public rightly expect the highest standards.

Alongside this, a significant investment in officer numbers will lead to almost 50,000 new recruits entering policing in the next few years. This is a seismic turnover within the service, and these officers are at the vanguard of a significant potential change in policing. They need to be trained to the very highest standard, supported to develop

professionally, and equipped to exercise the leadership that is needed at every rank of the service.

The government, in its Beating Crime Plan, is rightly setting expectations on the police that, along with the demands set by local communities through their police and crime commissioners, need to be met. A stronger College, working for all in policing, is needed to help drive the change needed to meet these expectations.

Every day, the College shows what it can achieve. The focus on evidence-based policing and what works has changed the attitude to research and evidence in the service, and the creation of Authorised Professional Practice and other guidance has set clear standards for forces in the best practice to respond to crime and policing challenges. The Strategic Command Course for the most senior leaders provides excellent development for the next generation of policing leaders to lead the service. More recently, the response to the COVID-19 pandemic and changes to the way the College's work is developed and delivered shows promise. But this review makes it clear that much more in this vein is needed.

With its new leadership, I believe the College can reform and meet the expectations that the service is rightly placing on us. In Andy Marsh, we have an experienced and respected policing leader who is committed to delivering the change needed. This is an exciting time for the College, as we learn the lessons from this review, reset our ambition and set a new vision for the organisation.

For all the problems confronting the service, I have never lost my admiration for the thousands of committed police officers and staff who – day in, day out – do a great job for the public in difficult circumstances. They deserve to have a strong professional body alongside them, supporting them with better training, high-quality professional development, and the practical help they need to cut crime and keep people safe.

## Foreword by Andy Marsh



Throughout my 34 years in policing, I have seen thousands of examples of courage, professionalism and leadership, many of which have been admired nationally – and even globally. Policing is full of dedicated officers and staff who work selflessly to make a difference every day.

However, we all know of examples where a police officer or member of staff has failed to abide by the standards expected by the public, which has rightly led those who we serve to question us. Each example underlines the need for a strong and effective professional body in policing.

The demands and challenges placed on officers and staff, which are often overwhelming, mean that they rarely have the opportunity to reflect and learn – or sometimes, even look after themselves and their own wellbeing. These challenges should never be an excuse, but if they are not addressed by strong leadership, they can create breeding grounds for the wrong type of culture.

The College of Policing must take a lead role in helping officers and staff to overcome these barriers. To do that, a new deal needs to be struck between policing and the College, and this fundamental review sets out the terms of that new deal.

We must improve our understanding of what officers and staff need. We must also draw upon the best from within the service and beyond, via a new approach to secondments into the organisation. We need a new, fair and transparent approach to funding the services that the College provides, while pursuing our ambition to ease our funding burden by increasing work in wider markets. We must become the dynamic, relevant and connected professional body that we were created to be.

Our renewed mission is to drive consistency where both the public and the service expect it, to boost professionalism across the service through standards and sharing knowledge, and to improve leadership at each level.

In delivering our mission, we are in a unique position to solve national problems. We know there are many benefits for communities being able to receive policing services from trusted local forces and constabularies. However, only the consistent development of skills, knowledge and leadership can produce lasting culture change across the whole service. We will seize the opportunity presented by our position, work closely with our partners and achieve improvements for the public.

The work to turn the review into action has already started. We will be setting out a four-year strategy and clear business plans to show how we intend to implement the findings of the review as quickly as possible. We won't achieve the scale of our ambition overnight, but I am confident that the findings of this review, combined with the committed efforts of the people who work across the College, will mean that policing's professional body will provide real value to the service and the public in the coming years.





## Listening to the service

This review was commissioned to undertake a fundamental assessment of the College, its role, its effectiveness and how it operates alongside other organisations in the policing landscape. The review seeks to ensure that, as the professional body for policing, the College is highly valued by every section of policing, from frontline officers and staff to chief constables and police and crime commissioners (PCCs).

The review was able to take into account the views of 15,000 officers and staff, and hear directly from key stakeholders across policing through over 80 interviews.

## What were we told?

While there was universal agreement of the need for a strong College that plays a central role in the policing landscape, the College has not yet lived up to our potential or fully delivered on the expectations that officers, staff and the public have of policing's professional body.

Many in the service, particularly those on the front line, are not fully aware of what we do or the value we can add. We are seen as too remote and as serving only policing leaders and academics.

The quality of the College's products are not always as good as they could be, which undermines our credibility in the eyes of the service. This is compounded by an often slow and bureaucratic culture that is not sufficiently responsive to policing or other parts of the system, such as PCCs.

In essence, there is concern about our usefulness to all in policing, whether those on the front line or in senior roles, police staff or policy makers, those overseeing the police or those in government.

At the same time, national issues in policing persist. The value of continuing professional development (CPD) is not recognised, nor is the need to develop leadership skills at all levels of the service. The evidence of what works is not fully understood or implemented, which compounds the systemic lack of consistency across the 43 regional forces and beyond.

Much needs to change to ensure that we deliver on our potential and play our part in helping policing meet the challenges it is facing. With the findings of this review, which are set out in much more detail in the [fundamental review full report](#), there is an opportunity for a reset of both our activity and the way we work, to change the College so we can deliver for all in policing and for the public who we collectively serve.



# A new vision for the College of Policing

The need to meet the challenges we are facing, as well as those facing policing more widely, means that we need a new vision for the College that provides greater focus across our functions. Making marginal improvements in what we do will not be enough to ensure that we are reaching our potential and are useful to all in policing.

There are three key strategic priorities for the College that have emerged through the review:

- **Boosting professionalism** – Equipping officers and staff with the best possible professional skills needed to do their job by ensuring that they have access to the best in CPD and that this is properly prioritised. This does not seek to suggest that officers and staff are unprofessional, rather that policing has not collectively prioritised their development as professionals. Achieving this will further empower officers and staff to use excellent professional judgement across their work to protect the public, and to address concerns about some elements of policing culture.
- **Improving leadership** – Developing the leadership skills of police officers and staff at all levels. All those working in policing are leaders, whether probationers on the front line or those running big teams or whole forces. The service needs to develop a culture of inclusive, data-driven and effective leadership. This will drive performance and ensure that talent is recognised at whatever level it exists.
- **Driving consistency** – Overcoming the weaknesses of the 43-force model to bring consistency where it matters most for the public and the policing workforce. There is too much unhelpful variation across forces, which frustrates the delivery of excellence in the basics and impedes the sharing of good practice and innovation. By driving greater consistency in key areas, the right things will be prioritised and the public will know what they can expect from their police service, as officers and staff focus on the activity that we know works to cut crime and keep them safe.



In order to deliver these priorities, we are committing to a College that is dynamic, relevant and connected.

- **Dynamic** – We will be responsive to the needs of all in policing, working with energy and pace.
- **Relevant** – We will deliver what policing needs, when it is needed, responding to demands from the service, as well as those in government and oversight roles.
- **Connected** – We will listen to, and engage with, all of our customers and stakeholders, understanding their needs and becoming the first port of call when they are facing challenges.

A new College Strategy, building on the review, will be published in spring 2022, along with a clear business plan setting out how we will deliver the vision.

## Delivering the vision

To deliver this ambitious new vision, we have identified a range of priorities for improvement or development across our core functions of sharing knowledge and good practice, setting standards and supporting professional development.

### Sharing knowledge and good practice

- **We will ensure that officers have access to the practical evidence they need to cut crime and keep the public safe.** Our products will reflect the different requirements that officers in different roles have, so that stretched officers responding to challenging situations have the support they need. We will also work to corral research activity so that evidence is developed in the right areas, matched to those issues of most practical benefit to officers and staff.
- **We will boost the What Works Centre** so that the products are more practically useful to policing and are focused on key areas of demand, such as those set out in the National Crime and Policing Measures. With better access to data, we will understand which forces are having more impact through their work, allowing us to share good practice across policing.
- **We will deliver a new tool to put the best guidance and support into the hands of officers.** A new College app, available to all officers and staff, would put relevant good practice, guidance and tactics into the hands of officers where and when they need it.
- **We will support the police to make the most effective use of data to reduce crime and keep people safe.** We will put the College at the forefront of data-driven policing, whether gathering evidence of what works, spotting problems before they manifest, or supporting data-drive leadership and oversight.

## Setting standards

- **We will improve the implementation of standards, deliver consistency and support forces in need.** By offering support to forces on implementation, we should be able to drive greater consistency and higher performance, as policy and innovation is implemented more effectively. Where forces face particular challenges, we will support their improvement, ideally preventing serious failings before they happen. Where these failings do happen, we will support leadership teams in responding to issues raised by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS).
- **We will drive greater consistency across policing and boost excellence in the basics.** While local variation is important in some areas, there are areas where consistency is desirable, and could perhaps be mandatory. This could include those areas where:
  - the public would expect a single, national approach
  - officers and staff would expect to be treated the same
  - the evidence base is so strong that a specific approach leads to significantly better outcomes (or other approaches lead to damaging outcomes)
- **We will support policing to improve ethics, boosting the community of practice.** There is an opportunity for the College to take a stronger role in the promotion of ethics in policing, beyond the refresh of the Code of Ethics. An important step would be to contribute to the development of the practice and teaching of ethical policing across the service.

## Supporting professional development

- **We will improve professionalism in policing through effective CPD.** Currently, many in policing only engage with the College at their point of entry into the service, at promotion or upon the acquisition of specialist skills. This lets down many in policing who have their development neglected. A culture of CPD needs to be established in policing, requiring the buy-in of chiefs, with world-class products offered in support of it. A consistent approach to professional development reviews (PDRs) should also be considered.
- **We will ensure world-class learning and development across police forces.** Greater emphasis should be given to the provision of skills linked directly to the needs of all officers, including those undertaking specific roles. Further apprenticeships may also offer an opportunity to improve skill within policing.
- **We will significantly increase secondments to bring the brightest and best from policing into the College.** This will increase our connection to the service, offer CPD to those coming in, and increase resilience and capacity in the College.
- **We will act as the professional body for all in policing, including police staff.** Staff have been neglected by forces and the College. Specific products should be developed that are tailored to the needs of police staff, rather than being seen as an add-on.

We will develop this work over the coming months as we create our new corporate strategy, to be published in the spring of 2022 with a new business plan setting out how we aim to deliver the change needed.



## A national policing leadership centre

At the heart of these changes is the need for policing to improve its development of leadership at all levels.

**Improving leadership at all levels:** All in policing need to see themselves as leaders and be developed as such, with a focus on good line management, CPD and leadership skills at all levels. New officers coming through the Police Uplift Programme need to be well managed and supported to maximise the benefit of the investment.

**Developing future leaders:** Forces run their own leadership programmes or pay for officers and staff to attend external courses. There is an opportunity to improve the quality, consistency and efficiency of the offer to officers and staff. Consistent career CPD is needed to develop those with the potential to reach the most senior ranks earlier in the system.

**Chief officer vacancies:** There is a small, homogenous talent pool for the most senior posts, with a commensurate need for a consistent, fairer and transparent chief officer appointments service.





**Responding to challenges:** Policing is facing myriad challenges, many linked to culture. Improved leadership and supervision is critical to ensuring improvements in police culture, ethics, productivity and performance, as well as taking advantage of new opportunities, such as data-driven policing.

The College will establish a new National Police Leadership Centre to bring together partners from across policing, to drive a consistent and effective change across leadership development. The Centre will focus on:

- **Consolidation.** Bringing together the existing strands of the work in the College into a single coherent package, pushing further where resources allow.
- **Investment.** Investing in high-quality training and CPD to ensure that officers are equipped with the skills to take the right decisions and develop the right culture.
- **Programmes.** Improving the quality of the programmes on offer and boosting the impact of CPD in forces, including bringing in schemes to connect policing to leaders in other sectors. Considering an Aspire+ programme for under-represented groups at all ranks.

- **Learning from elsewhere.** Learning and taking the best from leadership programmes and developments taking place in the armed forces, civil service and private sector.
- **Chief constable appointments.** Providing greater support to PCCs in the appointment of chief constables to ensure a consistent, fair and transparent process, with a workforce planning function.
- **Direct support.** Drawing the best of policing leadership together to provide support to forces facing leadership challenges.
- **A stronger role for the College.** To forge a strong connection with officers and staff at all career stages and to improve strategic coordination across policing.

We will explore the development of a site to house the Centre and to serve as a home for policing, learning from the lessons of the past.

## The way the College works

In order to deliver a dynamic, relevant and connected College, the way in which we work needs to change. As well as being more responsive and less bureaucratic, we need to engage better with all in policing so that our offer is clearly understood and the needs of our customers are met.

We can build on the success of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic to break down internal silos and respond much more rapidly to the demands being put on us. New ways of working that developed during the pandemic will also allow us to improve our own performance.

There is a great opportunity to improve the ethical international commercialisation of our products, allowing us to raise revenue that we can reinvest into UK policing.



## Supporting the policing system

The College needs to play a bigger role in the policing system, taking advantage of the position that it has in the national landscape, the powers it has to set guidance and practice, and the evidence and research it undertakes or develops.

A critical need across the system is the ability for partners to come together and agree the strategic challenges and priorities for policing, to develop a strategic direction. Our work on policing futures and perennial problems is a prime example of the value that we can add to this development of a strategic brain for policing.

There is a linked requirement to coordinate business planning in order to meet the agreed strategic direction, which will involve greater collaboration and, possibly, some pooling of sovereignty in the pursuit of shared ambitions.

Similarly, in pursuit of better support for the whole policing system, we need to improve our support for PCCs as they develop strategy, undertake their oversight functions, and develop themselves and their forces professionally.

The College must also take a more visible role in emerging challenges, such as those relating to race and inclusion or violence against women and girls. With trust and confidence in policing an overriding concern, we must use all of our levers to work with, guide and support the service in meeting these challenges. As such, we will support policing to improve equality, diversity and inclusion in forces and in the delivery of policing.

## Conditions for success

Success in meeting our ambitious plans is not entirely within the College's gift. We need all parts of the policing landscape to play their part.

The response to previous policing challenges has been to increase regulation and oversight, rather than to focus on boosting professionalism and leadership sufficiently. This has left us in a position where more is spent on scrutiny and inspection in forces than on leadership and development.

The root of effective working across the policing system is collaboration. While some have argued for clearer delineation between organisations, with harder lines, this is unrealistic in a system with so many complexities and interdependencies. Instead, effective and consistent collaboration is key.

- **NPCC** – The NPCC must become a more intelligent commissioner of the College and must, in all of its activities, seek to collaborate and coordinate with the College and give it licence to deliver on behalf of policing.
- **Forces** – Time for CPD must be prioritised in forces. Chiefs must be willing to let their brightest and best come to the College to work. While local independence is essential, there should be a greater willingness to coordinate and cooperate nationally, to accept the settled will of the majority or a strong evidence base, and to get behind key reforms or programmes that the College is delivering. Forces should not rebrand College materials and



should cease using the College as a scapegoat, or stepping into College activity without collaborating.

- **PCCs** - The College needs to significantly improve its offer to PCCs and engage them fully in the efforts to improve professionalism and leadership and drive consistency across policing, bearing in mind their unique role in the landscape.
- **HMICFRS** - HMICFRS must be clearer that the College sets standards against which it inspects, rather than seeking to develop standards through inspection, or to undermine the standards that have been set.
- **Home Office** - The protocol between the College and the Home Office should be revised to give the College more freedom from central government bureaucracy, allowing it to operate in a more dynamic, agile and flexible way, more akin to a police force.

Some of our plans will be delivered by refocusing existing work within the College, while others will be supported by bringing people into the College from policing or raising extra revenue through an appropriate and transparent charging framework as well as our international work. However, for some of the activity set out in this review, additional funding will be required.



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## About the College

We're the professional body for the police service in England and Wales.

Working together with everyone in policing, we share the skills and knowledge officers and staff need to prevent crime and keep people safe.

We set the standards in policing to build and preserve public trust and we help those in policing develop the expertise needed to meet the demands of today and prepare for the challenges of the future.

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