

Code of Ethics: Summary of response to public consultation

Public consultation on the draft of the revised Code of Ethics (CoE) was carried out between 8 March and 28 April 2023. The consultation was publicised through our website. We personally contacted key stakeholders and a range of policing professionals to inform them of the consultation.

Over 500 online responses were received, with most coming from the police service, 17% from the public and nearly 10% from stakeholders.

We collated, analysed and assessed the responses. A number of themes emerged, alongside some specific feedback on language and content.

We provided a summary of the consultation feedback, including specific suggestions to change content, to the two committees that have supported the development of the draft products. The committees include individuals from a range of forces, roles and levels of seniority, service subject matter experts on ethics, and academics with a background in police ethics.

The following sections summarise feedback themes and the College's responses.

Code of Ethics framework

Issue	Response
Feedback identified confusion around the purpose and application of the component parts of the ethical framework. Feedback also identified the need for an explanation of the relationship between the CoE and other conduct documents to clearly articulate their respective powers.	The College worked with stakeholders to develop an introduction to the CoE, which will provide the necessary clarity.

Ethical policing principles

70% of responses thought that the principles were clear in setting out expectations of everyone in policing, and almost 60% suggested they were helpful in decision making. The main issues raised were as follows.

Issue	Response
The principles were seen as too wordy and difficult to remember.	The principles have been substantially simplified.
It was seen as important that the revised principles were applied to – and demonstrated by – all ranks and roles, through leadership and role modelling, in order to create a collective cultural change in policing.	The new CoE will feature in College leadership products and will be supported through the introduction of the new Code of Practice.
The summary graphic was seen as too wordy and difficult to read.	The diagram has been revised and simplified.

Guidance on ethical and professional behaviour

Respondents indicated that overall, they found the guidance for professional and ethical behaviour easy to understand, well-structured and clear in setting out fair expectations for policing professionals. The main issues raised were as follows.

Issue	Response
A balance is needed between the length of the document and the level of detail provided.	The final content has been discussed and agreed with the development committee. The changes made have not reduced the length of the guidance but have provided better advice in respect of a number of areas. These include, among others:

Issue	Response
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ complying with policies that staff can ‘reasonably’ know about ▪ accepting the emotional impact of complaints and criticism ▪ staff entitlement to support from associations or unions ▪ including the need for officers to report any processes associated with criminal allegations ▪ the use of personal communication devices in extreme circumstances ▪ line managers supporting an open and inclusive learning environment ▪ the requirement for support of whistleblowers
It was felt that case studies should be included to aid understanding of how to apply the CoE and to encourage conversations around ethical dilemmas.	The new CoE will feature in College leadership products and will be supported through publication of a new Code of Practice, providing case studies that aid understanding of how to apply the CoE and that encourage conversations around ethical dilemmas (to be addressed during implementation).
It was felt that there needed to be better linking and signposting to the ethical policing principles.	This will be addressed through the publication process.

Code of Practice for Ethical Policing

Respondents indicated that overall, they found the Code of Practice for Ethical Policing easy to understand and clear in setting out expectations from chief officers. The main issues raised were as follows.

Issue	Response
It is important to ensure that the new CoE is in line with the Casey review.	The College will continue to monitor emerging findings to ensure that the new CoE supports the Casey review.
In the section on ensuring openness and candour, there needs to be specific reference to supporting colleagues to report any form of harassment, including sexual harassment and bullying, as well as taking appropriate action against those who perpetrate such abuse.	This is now addressed by behaviour guidance within the new CoE and in the new Code of Practice.

Implementation

The College is developing a comprehensive package of support for implementation, which will include communications material, incorporating content into training courses, and providing support to identify and share good practice.