

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR POLICE OFFICERS¹

(a) The primary duties of those who hold the office of constable are the protection of life and property, the preservation of the Queen's peace, and the prevention and detection of criminal offences. To fulfil these duties police officers are granted extraordinary powers; the public and the police service therefore have the right to expect the highest standards of conduct from them.

(b) This Code sets out the principles which guide police officers' conduct. It does not seek to restrict officers' discretion: rather, it aims to define the parameters of conduct within which that discretion should be exercised. However, it is important to note that any breach of the principles in this Code may result in action being taken by the organisation, which, in serious cases, could involve dismissal.

(c) Police behaviour, whether on or off duty, affects public confidence in the police service. Any conduct which brings or is likely to bring discredit to the police service may be the subject of sanction. Accordingly, any allegation of conduct which could, if proved, bring or be likely to bring discredit to the police service should be investigated in order to establish whether or not a breach of the Code has occurred and whether formal disciplinary action is appropriate. No investigation is required where the conduct, if proved, would not bring or would not be likely to bring, discredit to the police service.

Honesty and integrity

1. It is of paramount importance that the public has faith in the honesty and integrity of police officers. Officers should therefore be open and truthful in their dealings; avoid being improperly beholden to any person or institution; and discharge their duties with integrity.

Fairness and impartiality

2. Police officers have a particular responsibility to act with fairness and impartiality in all their dealings with the public and their colleagues.

Politeness and tolerance

3. Officers should treat members of the public and colleagues with courtesy and respect, avoiding abusive or deriding attitudes or behaviour. In particular, officers must avoid: favouritism of an individual or group; all forms of harassment, victimisation or unreasonable discrimination; and overbearing conduct to a colleague, particularly to one junior in rank or service.

Use of force and abuse of authority

¹ See Schedule 1 to the Police (Conduct) Regulations 2004

4. Officers must never knowingly use more force than is reasonable, nor should they abuse their authority.

Performance of duties

5. Officers should be conscientious and diligent in the performance of their duties. Officers should attend work promptly when rostered for duty. If absent through sickness or injury, they should avoid activities likely to retard their return to duty.

Lawful orders

6. The police service is a disciplined body. Unless there is good and sufficient cause to do otherwise, officers must obey all lawful orders and abide by the provisions of Police Regulations. Officers should support their colleagues in the execution of their lawful duties, and oppose any improper behaviour, reporting it where appropriate.

Confidentiality

7. Information which comes into the possession of the police should be treated as confidential. It should not be used for personal benefit and nor should it be divulged to other parties except in the proper course of police duty. Similarly, officers should respect, as confidential, information about force policy and operations unless authorised to disclose it in the course of their duties.

Criminal offences

8. Officers must report any proceedings for a criminal offence taken against them. Conviction of a criminal offence or the administration of a caution may of itself result in further action being taken.

Property

9. Officers must exercise reasonable care to prevent loss or damage to property (excluding their own personal property but including police property).

Sobriety

10. Whilst on duty² officers must be sober³. Officers should not consume alcohol when on duty unless specifically authorised to do so or it becomes necessary for the proper discharge of police duty.

² For senior officers and superintendents, "on duty" includes any period when the officer is off duty but has agreed to be available for recall to duty to deal with matters, which might occur within the area(s) he/she has agreed to cover. It does not apply to the general 24-hour responsibility that senior officers and superintendents have for their own command area/department.

³ An officer who is unexpectedly called out for duty should be able, at no risk of discredit, to say that he or she has had too much to drink.

Appearance

11. Unless on duties which dictate otherwise, officers should always be well turned out, clean and tidy whilst on duty in uniform or in plain clothes.

General conduct

12. Whether on or off duty, police officers should not behave in a way which is likely to bring discredit upon the police service.