

# College of Policing Fundamental Review

June 2021

Author: Jo Strong, Policy Department

---

<b>Security classification</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not protectively marked	May be published openly / immediately
	<input type="checkbox"/> Protected	Review whether broader publication
	<input type="checkbox"/> Restricted	Not for open publication. Restricted to: .....
	<input type="checkbox"/> Confidential	

## **Introduction**

The Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW) welcomes the fundamental review of the College of Policing by its Chair, Lord Herbert. The review specifically asks for views on the following four areas:

- 1. What the College does particularly well, and where could it improve?**
- 2. What issues and areas, either set out above or missing, should be prioritised for activity and what should be deprioritised?**
- 3. Is the College occupying the right part of the policing landscape, or do relationships across policing need amending, and, if so, how?**
- 4. How can the work of the College, across the areas set out, be better understood and valued by all in policing?**

In this document, we set out initial views on a number of these areas and welcome the opportunity to expand further in interviews to be held with the PFEW National Chair and National Secretary. In addition, we have already facilitated a session for Lord Herbert with the PFEW Professional Development leads in March this year, and Lord Herbert and interim-CEO Bernie O'Reilly hosted a round table meeting at the PFEW annual conference in June. All of these contribute to the PFEW response provided.

In meetings between the PFEW National Chair and the previous and current College of Policing CEO and Chair, there has been much discussion about the need for the College to be relevant to rank and file police officers. The PFEW has expressed concern in the past that the College is trying to be 'all things to all people' and therefore its relevance to the PFEW membership is diluted and unclear. In addition, the PFEW National Chair has made clear that, on occasions in the past, media communications issued by the College of Policing have been confusing and, at times, unpalatable, if not insulting, to police officers. We are pleased that, when such issues have arisen, the College of Policing has been approachable and understanding. More about wider communication issues is examined later in this document.

## **Support professional development**

Many of the comments PFEW offer with regard to College support for professional development have already been suggested at the meeting between Lord Herbert and a number of leading Federation representatives in March, and in response to the College consultation on promotion and progression in January of this year.

A significant priority for the College in terms of professional development should be through implementation and embedding an effective Professional Development Review (PDR) process incorporating and recording evaluation of individuals' training and development needs. We consider that the College has a critical role to play in encouraging and, as far as possible, mandating this. The guidance arising from last year's PDR review provided a good foundation; however, we are not convinced that it was sufficiently publicised or promoted by the College to achieve any real benefit. The College must challenge forces to encourage and support professional development; a fair and effective PDR process would provide a positive step in the right direction towards this.

Support for ongoing development in rank should form a College priority. All officers should have access to development opportunities, irrespective of whether they intend to seek promotion. This must include time to prepare for and undertake training and development. The College should encourage forces to value development opportunities as investment in the competence and professionalism of all officers, rather than an abstraction to manage. We recognise that this will involve a significant culture change in some forces, but the College needs to address this issue as part of its core function of supporting professional development. Our members must not be made to feel that they are imposing on colleagues if they take time out to undertake professional development. Prioritisation of training and development opportunities would reflect policing as a professional body and the College of Policing as the professional support for this.

An important role of the College must be to assess the impact of the work and initiatives it introduces in terms of professional development and standards. For example, professional development leads from different parts of the country pointed out to Lord Herbert that Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship (PCDA) student officers are struggling to combine the requirement to be both full-time students and full-time officers while on probation and studying for their degrees. Some of these students are in their third year of study now, and issues experienced by earlier cohorts have not been addressed or fixed for later ones.

Generally, having set the standard, the College has a significant role to play in monitoring implementation; proactively seeking to identify issues and ensuring that the standards are appropriate and achievable. We consider that this should form a priority for the College, which in turn will help to demonstrate that the College is providing a service that policing requires.

#### **Lack of consistency between forces – setting standards**

The College should prioritise the creation and enforcement (as far as possible) of national standards across professional development areas. This would help to secure transparency, consistency in approach and fairness between forces. There are currently significant differences in standards and expectations between forces. These are particularly apparent in terms of access to an effective PDR system, access to training and development opportunities and local management of the promotion process, which were described by our representatives when they met with Lord Herbert. National standards and expectations of all supervisors and leaders, including for senior ranks, should be included as part of this programme, and all managers should be trained and confident to hold constructive and honest conversations with their officers to help maintain such standards. Accredited national training standards should form part of the College's work in this respect.

We are sure that the College share PFEW's priority to ensure that officers have parity in terms of management support and development opportunities irrespective of which force they serve in. We do appreciate that there are issues regarding

monitoring and compliance and PFEW would be happy to work with the College to assist on that in any way we can. However, as a professional body the College needs to take responsibility for setting professional standards and ensuring that they are applied consistently across the service.

### **Diversity, equality and inclusion**

We appreciate that the College recognises that, while there has been some progress there is a lot more work to be done in respect of diversity, equality and inclusion. A core priority for the College in building a service for the future must include building a supportive and supporting culture across the service for everyone in policing, but especially those with protected characteristics. Transparency and equality of access to recruitment, professional development and promotion opportunities, as well as consistent national standards (within and between forces) as outlined above will represent positive steps towards achieving the College's objective in this respect.

Additionally, equality impact analyses directly targeted at the impact of any proposed regulation or determination changes, conducted at the beginning of the process and made available to stakeholders will ensure that diversity, equality and inclusion are demonstrated to form an integral part of the College policy development process.

### **Communication: - sharing knowledge and good practice and setting standards**

One of the core functions of the College is to share knowledge and good practice but we consider that the effectiveness of communication in these respects must be reviewed as a matter of priority. This includes ensuring that the College web site is accessible, up to date and easy to navigate, but we consider that a more fundamental review of the College's approach to launching and communicating new guidance and promulgating important messages is required.

We are concerned that the College's role of sharing knowledge and good practice is compromised by the apparent lack of sufficient staff resource to ensure that information, training and guidance is always updated and provided as needed and in a timely manner in response to developments and changes. For example, there has

been a number of issues considered by the Police Advisory Board for England and Wales (PABEW) and its Discipline sub-committee in the past year in which the College has been unable to commit to this due to lack of resource. Potential ramifications of, for example lack of information to officers about the current position in the ongoing Metropolitan Police firearms case W80 could be very serious for individual officers. The College should be in a position to provide timely information, guidance and training to reassure both the policing community and the public that police are acting based on the current state of the law. This should form one of the core priorities of the work of the College.

Furthermore, it is the College's responsibility to ensure that important communications 'land' with forces, so forces and officers know what they are required to do. The College regularly undertakes 'soft' launches of professional development guidance, including the new PDR guidance, and we question whether this is an effective way of promoting what should be required practice nationally across forces. A similar approach appears to be taken on promulgation of important operational guidance. For example, last year the College issued a Death and Serious Injuries Authorised Professional Practice (APP) but there was a feeling among stakeholders that officers are not generally aware of it and the detailed guidance it contains. This concern was also reflected by comments at the PFEW meeting with Lord Herbert; that newly promoted sergeants were often unaware of APPs and that these need to be better publicised.

While the College clearly sends important guidance and information to forces it is not so clear whether, critically, it actually reaches those who need to see it, and that it is acted on. There should be a review to assess and evaluate the effectiveness of the College communications strategy and ensure that those who need to see the guidance actually do so, and that they are able to act on it.

## **Relationship with PFEW and other stakeholder organisations - consultation, engagement and influence**

We are pleased that one of the main focusses of this review is to ensure that 'engagement and influence is as good as it can be'. This is an area of significant concern to PFEW.

Firstly, we would like to emphasise that in certain areas of College work informal engagement and influence with PFEW works well. The professional development policy workstreams are a particular example of this. PFEW attend ongoing meetings, are fully informed of developments, and have an opportunity to contribute by representing our members' interests in the ongoing development and evolution of policy. We consider that this represents the way the College should be operating in all areas of its work. However, while there is similarly effective communication and involvement in some other areas, this is not the case throughout. There has been a number of instances when PFEW has been informed of, or discovered, proposed codes of practice and APPs for example, at a late stage of development, which, once drawn to the attention of the College, has led to delays and unnecessary complications. The College should review areas of good practice in terms of informal engagement and ensure that those principles are applied throughout its different workstreams.

The current lack of a formal College consultation process is an area of particular concern to PFEW. We have had to write to the College on a number of occasions over the past year expressing concern about the lack of a clear process for consultation. Since the College Regulatory Consultative Group was dissolved in June of last year there has been no clear or agreed process for meaningful consultation among key stakeholders (including PFEW) governing both proposed regulations and other work such as draft Codes of Practice and APPs. We have repeatedly been assured that the College is committed to early and effective engagement and consultation and that PFEW will be afforded the opportunity and

time to provide a considered response to proposals. This needs to be addressed for the benefit of all stakeholders.

As an example, an item on digital extraction guidance was brought to the most recent Professional Committee meeting to recommend to the College Board for approval. However, PFEW had not been included in the extensive consultation process which took place late last year despite having asked (and the College agreeing) to be included in February 2020. PFEW did not see the draft APP until it was produced with the papers for the recent Professional Committee meeting. We are in the process of arranging a meeting with College Governance about consultation processes. We will also be writing again separately and in more detail on the issue of consultation, as this needs to be resolved as a matter of priority.

### **Delivering the future needs of policing**

A key challenge posed by the PFEW representatives at their meeting with Lord Herbert was for the College to embed a culture of development within the service which makes it fit for purpose for the future at all levels. The points raised above provide some specific suggestions as to ways in which the core functions can be enhanced to work towards this aim.