
POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY

Version 4

1. Policy statement

We all have a duty to ensure a policing environment where people can speak out and raise concerns; where lessons can be learned and shared across forces. We must have an open, transparent and accountable system that demonstrates fairness: one which has the independent Office of Constable at its heart, where officers can make impartial decisions to police communities in a fair and impartial way according to the law.

Policing is at its most successful when it enjoys public confidence and support. The police service must be seen to be fully accountable for its actions

2. Responsibility

The National Board is responsible for all policy formation.

3. Summary

High standards of integrity and accountability reinforce public trust and confidence in policing.

Police officers across the country work tirelessly and to a very high standard every day protecting the public and keeping the community safe. We fully support the College of Policing's Code of Ethics as it highlights the standards and principles expected of police officers. It provides a clear guideline for officers to follow as they continue to work to these high ethical standards into the future.

It is absolutely right that the police are accountable to those we serve, the public as well as being accountable to each other. Integrity should be at the core of all we do and all our decision-making from the actions of a single patrolling officer all the way up to the actions and decisions of the Home Secretary and the government.

We need a public-focused police service. Our core purpose now enshrines the duty to act in the interests of members and of the public.

The public should have a say in the changes happening in policing in order to protect and maintain police accountability. We believe a Royal Commission is the best way to achieve this.

Cuts to budgets threaten our ability to be part of the communities we serve. They threaten our public focus and, in turn, they threaten whether we remain to be seen as independent and accountable.

It is also vitally important that we help maintain a culture where complaints are fully investigated and there are procedures in place to protect whistleblowers. A fully independent system must be in place to investigate complaints made. This is in the interest of the public but also helps protect the rights of those under investigation. It is vital that investigations are seen to be fair and impartial. Whilst the IPCC enables some cases to be investigated independently, we do not believe its creation has led to a totally independent system. It is also important that investigations into police officers' conduct by the IPCC or by the forces do not have an adverse effect upon policing or police officers.

PFEW is especially concerned about the length of time investigations take, for example, with incidents when armed officers have discharged their weapons.

We are concerned that at present many officers are prevented from returning to work until they are exonerated; their career in a state of flux. This is not the correct way to treat officers.

We call for all cases to be investigated quickly to minimise the impact upon career progression, retention and recruitment and the wellbeing of officers. This is also important for public accountability.

Police officers and the public must have confidence in the system. Confidence, however, will only stem from a system that is equitable, thorough and swift.

In 2012, the Home Office published an *Accountability System Statement for Policing and Crime Reduction*. This sets out a framework of checks and balances, statutory roles and scrutiny mechanisms that would allow it to give Parliament the required assurance, while meeting its objective to increase local autonomy and accountability. This framework is comprised of local commissioners, police forces, police and crime panels, auditors and national bodies like the Home Office, IOPC and HMICFRS¹. PFEW supports attempts to ensure full and proper mechanisms are in place to protect and maintain accountability. However, it will take time to establish whether or not this is the best way to achieve these aims. A National Audit Office review noted that there is a potential gap in the assurance framework whereby HMICFRS does not have the statutory authority to routinely inspect commissioners or their offices. This must be rectified.

In addition, we believe the public should be able to hold PCCs to account more frequently than every four years, by means of an election.

4. Procedures/implementation

We will continue to call for a Royal Commission into policing.

We will work with the College of Policing and the Independent Office for Police Conduct to ensure that the police service has robust and effective systems in place.

¹ National Audit Office, Police accountability: landscape review, 2014

Through the Police Advisory Board for England and Wales we will contribute to a review of police integrity arrangements following the publication of the Policing and Crime Act 2017.

We will continue to support the Office of Constable; it is the fundamental bedrock of policing in this country and the basis for policing by consent.

We will continue to fight cuts to policing budgets.

We will continue to monitor and evaluate the accountability of PCCs.

Responsibility is delegated to the National Secretary and/or appropriate sub-committee.

	Author	Date	Date to be reviewed	Change
Version 1	EP-KP	September 2015	Sep 2016	
Version 2	KP-EP	September 2016	September 2017	No change
Version 3	KP-EP	September 2017	September 2018	Insert reference to Policing & Crime Act 2017
Version 4	KP	January 2019	September 2020	Minor changes

Signed by:



National Chair



National Secretary