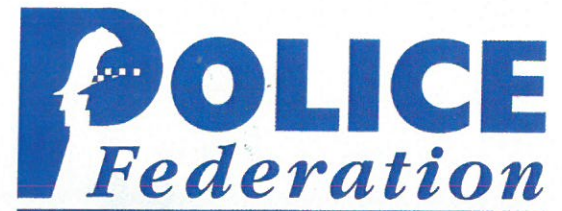


Blame culture a thing of the past



As the Home Office unveils the reformed complaints system, the Police Federation of England and Wales highlights what to expect in coming months

The Police Federation welcomes changes to the conduct and performance arena which will make the procedure fairer and less stressful for officers in the future.

A new Performance Requires Improvement (PRI) process, where officers will take part in Reflective Practice – similar to the old Local Resolution or Management Action system – has been rolled out to forces by the Home Office.

In essence, it is a more informal way to record and resolve lower-level complaints where learning can be made, both for the officers and the force involved.

A key part of the changes includes the misconduct threshold being raised – meaning all low-level matters will be dealt with through the PRI process, with misconduct processes being reserved for matters so serious that at least a written warning is required.

If an officer is found to be underperforming, or if their conduct does not amount to the new definition of misconduct or gross misconduct, their Professional Standards Department may refer them to undergo the PRI process with their line manager.

Once notified in writing, a line manager (the reviewing officer) will conduct a proportionate investigation including asking for an account of what happened within five days, encouraging the officer to be open and acknowledge the effect of their actions and whether they have taken any measures since to learn as part of the Reflective Practice.

Following steps will include the reviewing officer drafting a report with what actions, if any, have been agreed with the officer in question – for example, extra training, mentoring or learning.

In some cases, there may be a referral to support services and additional welfare, or it may be appropriate for an apology to be issued either from the officer or the force to the complainant.

The main objective will always be to embed learning and ensure performance is improved as quickly as possible, therefore there are no sanctions and officers will not be prevented from applying for or obtaining promotions or transfers.

It is hoped the reforms will promote a shift away from blame culture as well as giving managers the confidence

to rapidly deal with lower level issues in a much more proportionate and sensible manner, without involvement from their PSD.

Police Federation Conduct and Performance Lead Phill Matthews said: "After many previous reforms and incarnations of the conduct regulations the Home Office has listened to our concerns and created a process to try and embed a learning, performance culture into policing.

"The whole 'blame culture' – a belief that any deviation from the standards of Professional Behaviour has to be put through a misconduct process – belongs in the past.

"There needs to be a shift in mindset whereby forces

are alive to the fact that mistakes, errors or poor working practice can be corrected and learned from – not just by the individual but by the whole service – and learnt from quickly.

He added: "Not only is a formal written warning a serious stain on an officer's record, but misconduct hearings brought for mistakes which could have been dealt with through more appropriate means, cause unnecessary stress for members who are under enough strain already. The formal misconduct process should in future be reserved for the most serious of cases only.

"There will also be opportunities throughout formal misconduct proceedings for matters to be weeded out into the Reflective Practice arena as more info comes to light

which should result in more timely investigations. This is something we are campaigning tirelessly for. There have been far too many dragged out investigations in the past which have been damaging for the officers involved."

Forces will be issuing training and guidance to managers in how to action and record matters dealt with in this way, but local Federation Representatives will also be more than happy to provide advice to managers.

Some forces have already begun to trial the new system, with the rest expected to adopt it once the new Conduct and Performance regulations land early next year.

Mr Matthews concluded: "We very much welcome these fairer and more sensible reforms and hope all senior and chief officers will support implementation to make a real and long-lasting difference to our members and the public we all serve."

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**Phill Matthews
Conduct and Performance Lead**

Reflective Practice Review Process for reviewing officer and participating officer



Officer account

- You will ask the officer for their account and you may undertake proportionate fact finding to satisfy yourself that you fully understand the issues and that the matter is still suitable to be dealt with by Reflective Practice
- If in the unlikely event during your fact finding you discover that the breach is far more serious that it may justify formal disciplinary action you should stop your fact finding and refer the matter back to the AA



Meet with officer

- In all circumstances following your fact finding you will need to arrange a meeting with the officer concerned



Agree pros and cons of the incident

- This discussion should be arranged as soon as practicable and be a constructive dialogue, reflecting on what happened, why, lessons learnt and actions to prevent a recurrence
- Learning points can be established at this stage for both the officer and the organisation



Agree any further action if necessary



Report back

- After the discussion stage you will need to write this all up to send to AA



Close

- Your written report will close the Reflective Practice process and should summarise the previous stages
- Identifying the lessons learnt, remedial actions taken to date and, if appropriate, remedial actions still to be taken along with basic time scales

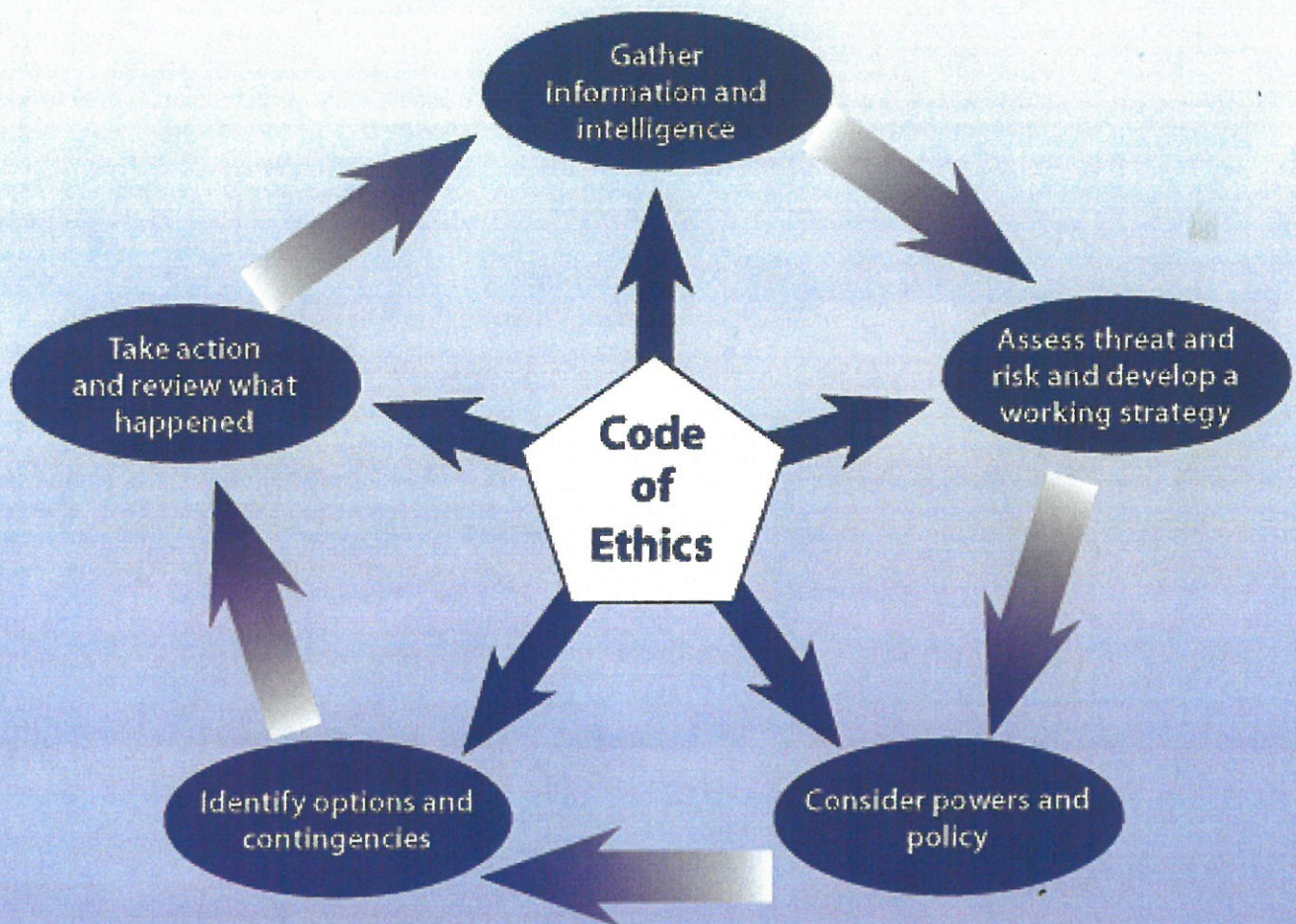


Move on

- Once you are happy and have submitted your report that is the end of the matter and, apart from reviewing any outstanding action plans both, you and the officer can move on



National Decision Making Model (NDM)



- **Honesty and integrity**
- **Authority, respect and courtesy**
- **Equality and diversity**
- **Use of force**
- **Orders and instructions**
- **Duties and responsibilities**
- **Confidentiality**
- **Fitness for work**
- **Conduct**
- **Challenging and reporting improper conduct**