

Introduction to conflict management

What and who these evidence-based guidelines are for. And how they were put together.

First published 2 September 2020

Written by College of Policing

15 mins read

About these guidelines

What are these guidelines for?

The College guidelines and supporting information are designed to provide clear evidence-based guidance to forces on how to keep officers and staff safe, by helping them to resolve conflict without needing to use force, where possible. The aim of the guidance is to ensure that officers and staff are properly supported to develop their skills in the non-physical aspects of conflict management.

In some situations, for example where there is an imminent risk to life, force will be necessary and likely to be the safest response. Officers and staff should also be skilled in tools and techniques to de-escalate situations without using force, when it is appropriate to do so, and be confident in their ability to use these skills to help resolve situations safely. Officers and staff use these skills routinely in their day-to-day work, but the degree to which these skills are formally taught as part of their professional development varies.

Who developed these guidelines?

The guidelines were developed collaboratively by a guideline committee and an internal College development team. The guideline committee was made up of frontline and specialist police practitioners, academics, and subject matter experts. The role of the guideline committee was to consider the evidence and draft the guidelines, taking into account the views of stakeholders.

How evidence-based are these guidelines?

The guidelines and supporting information draw on the **best available evidence**, in this case an extensive review of the relevant research along with insights from frontline officers and staff,

gathered through focus groups. Although the research evidence in this area is fairly limited in policing, the emerging picture from healthcare is that training in specific communication skills can help reduce assaults against staff. Because of the state of the evidence, it is not possible to be prescriptive about what should be included in conflict management training, how it should be taught or how often. There was, however, sufficient consistency across the studies that showed training was effective for the guideline committee to give a clearer idea of the key skills that officers and staff are likely to need.

Text boxes in the supporting information outline potential training content for officers and staff. The text boxes contain practical advice from the front line – which may be particularly helpful to new recruits – and example communication models. The practical advice from the front line came from a number of sources, including the officers and staff who took part in the focus groups. They were also informed by the **communications module** (you need to log into our learning platform to see this) of the Personal Safety Manual, crisis negotiator training, National Police Firearms Curriculum and the **armed policing section in Authorised Professional Practice**, all of which have been developed by subject matter experts, frontline officers and staff.

The communication models came from existing police training and guidance. Some of the models are similar to one another, which is to be expected, but have been included to show the volume and diversity of material available. Officers and staff do not need to know all the models or learn them 'off by heart'. It would be better if they understood the principles underpinning them and were able to apply them in operational settings.

Who are the guidelines for?

The guidelines are primarily aimed at chief constables. The more detailed supporting information is intended for learning and development leads and other strategic leads in forces. It may also be of interest to supervisors in supporting their teams, and frontline officers and staff in developing their own approaches to managing conflict.

What's next?

The College would like to encourage further work in this area by:

- identifying the physical tactics and techniques that are most likely to be safe and effective to support officers and staff who have to use force

- building the evidence base related to effective conflict management
- developing a better understanding of the impact of different approaches to training and the development of these skills

Tags

Conflict management Evidence-based policing