

First response national decision model (NDM) tool

This page is from APP, the official source of professional practice for policing.

First published 16 September 2015 Updated 24 January 2024

Written by College of Policing

7 mins read

Code of Practice for Ethical Policing

The Code of Practice for Ethical Policing states that there is a requirement to ensure that staff understand the requirements of, and are supported to implement, the Victims' Code. This includes consideration of their welfare needs and referral to support services.

Build rapport

- Listen to the victim and make them feel believed.
- Reassure the victim that the role of the police is to protect them, not judge them.
- Ask yourself why a victim is being hostile or uncooperative and do not take it personally.
- Understand the dynamics of domestic abuse, especially [controlling or coercive behaviour](#).
- Take each incident seriously no matter how many times you are called to the same address.
- Explain what you are doing and why.

[Read more on building rapport](#)

Keep the victim informed

- [Read about keeping the victim informed](#)

Gather information and intelligence

Get a full picture of the incident and context from the call handler.

Additional information and intelligence gathering to build on the call handler information could include:

- further database checks – [PNC](#), [PND](#), [ViSOR](#), [ASSIST](#)
- [foreign intelligence checks](#)
- [bad character evidence](#)
- [medical records](#)
- [financial information](#)
- [prison intelligence](#)
- [ANPR](#)
- [CCTV](#)
- [covert tactics](#) and [sources](#)

Assess threat and risk and develop a working strategy

- Consider the risk to officer and others at the scene (dynamic risk assessment – ongoing).
- If equipped with [body-worn video](#), consider switching it on.
- Ensure the safety of officers, victim, children and others at the scene.
- Separate the parties.
- Assess the need for first aid or other medical assistance.

Consider powers and policy

- If entry to property is refused, consider [police powers of entry](#).
- Never ask the victim if they want the suspect arrested. That is your decision.
- Consider [arrest](#) – is it lawful, proportionate and necessary (Code G)? If so, you should arrest and will have to justify your decision if you do not.

Identify options and contingencies

Positive action

[Arrest](#) must be proportionate, lawful and necessary and can give the victim breathing space, allow time to pursue lines of enquiry and show the victim you are taking them seriously.

Avoid [dual arrests](#) at the scene if possible, especially if there are children present. Dual arrests complicate the prosecution process and may leave children without either parent for a period of

time. Investigation to identify the primary perpetrator at the scene is preferable unless dual arrests are considered necessary and proportionate in the circumstances. This does not prevent investigation and later arrest of the second party if both appear to have committed offences.

See arresting the right person, dual arrests and determining the primary perpetrator and dealing with counter-allegations.

If there are insufficient grounds for arrest or it would be disproportionate, focus on victim safety and prevention of further incidents.

Consider other positive action:

- [removal to prevent breach of the peace](#)
- [domestic violence protection notices and orders](#)
- [civil orders](#) – non-molestation, occupation or prohibited steps orders

Investigation

Build an [evidence-led case](#) that does not rely solely on the victim's support.

- Record demeanour of all parties and photograph/video scene and injuries.
- Protect the scene, including the victim, suspect and other witnesses.
- Obtain first accounts from victims and witnesses.
- Remember you are a witness and your statement should include everything you see and hear in connection with the incident.

At the scene, consider calling a crime scene examiner and think about:

- [physical evidence](#) – clothing and bedding, weapons, signs of disturbance
- [forensics](#) – blood pattern distribution, other biological evidence, footwear, DNA
- [photographic evidence](#)
- [CCTV](#)
- [house-to-house enquiries](#)
- [technology and social media](#) ? mobile phones, social media, email

Safety

Check the welfare and [safety of any children](#) – see and speak to the child if possible. Consider referring to local authority children’s social care or exercising [police protection powers](#).

Initiate [safety planning](#) and set out options.

Put in place any [urgent safeguarding](#) actions – a matter of hours may make all the difference.

Refer to specialists for more detailed safety planning and referrals, eg, to a domestic abuse specialist officer, [IDVA](#), or [MARAC](#), in accordance with force policy.

If the case is not referred, safety planning remains your responsibility.

Possible options include:

- service of a [DVPN](#)
- [referral to voluntary sector support agencies](#), eg, Victim Support, Women’s Aid, Refuge
- [emergency accommodation](#)
- [improve home security](#) and target-hardening measures, eg, change of locks, alarms, lighting
- improve personal security, eg, issue [personal safety device](#)
- [crime prevention strategies](#), eg, cocoon watch, NPT involvement, sanctuary schemes
- methods to [manage the perpetrator’s behaviour](#)

Take action and review what happened

You are responsible for [risk identification and assessment](#) unless and until the case is handed over to a specialist or other investigating officer.

- Investigate the circumstances of the incident comprehensively to identify all issues relevant to your decision about level of risk.
- Make an honest risk assessment based on your findings, including any details indicative of controlling or coercive behaviour.
- Your risk assessment may be the only one done in response to the incident, depending on how you grade the risk – it needs to be as accurate as possible.

Ensure the [handover](#) pack contains all information relevant to the victim and children’s safety.

This should include:

- any risk assessment and grading of risk
- information relevant to ongoing risk assessment, including any details indicative of controlling or coercive behaviour
- information relevant to the custody sergeant's decision to bail the suspect, with or without conditions, or remand in custody
- information relevant to an application before a court for a remand in custody, eg, colour photos of injuries
- details of any safety planning measures taken
- details of any additional safety planning required

Give the victim a point of contact and remind them to call the emergency services if there are any further incidents or bail breaches.

Tags

Domestic abuse