

Policing professional standards and core principles

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

First published 23 October 2013 Updated 8 June 2023

8 mins read

When planning for a public order public safety (POPS) event and operation, POPS commanders and public order public safety advisers (POPSAs) should consider the extent to which the response will achieve core operational duties – as set out in the [Operations APP](#) – and meet the following six principles.

- Use of the national decision model (NDM) and joint decision model (JDM) (as in [Approaches to POPS](#)).
- Command (as in [Command structure and role profiles](#)).
- Policing professional standards, style and tone.
- Communication.
- Proportionate response.
- Capacity and capability.

Policing professional standards, style and tone

All officers deployed on an event or operation, including POPS commanders and POPSAs, must ensure that their decision making, advice, conduct and actions are:

- proportionate
- legitimate
- accountable
- necessary
- in accordance with the:
 - [Code of Ethics](#)
 - [standards of professional behaviour](#)
 - [Seven Principles of Public Life](#)

All officers involved in planning and policing an event should be aware of how their conduct and deployment may affect those attending the event and should consider the impact of broader public scrutiny.

POPS commanders should set the policing standards, style and tone at the start of the planning phase of an operation. POPS commanders should be aware of the potential impact on public perceptions relating to the proportionality and legitimacy of the policing operation. The policing professional standards, style and tone relevant to the operation should be recorded in command logs and operational orders, and should be sufficiently covered in briefings to officers deployed.

When planning and policing an event or operation, commanders should consider the type of event and community feelings towards the event. Commanders should also consider that the policing operation and response pays due regard to any sensitivities related to the event.

POPS commanders should consider any potential impacts on staff and should put in place actions to ensure staff welfare and mitigate any negative impacts. Relevant planning should also consider potential impacts to the community where the event is occurring, as well as the broader community, who may be affected by the event and policing operation.

All officers deployed to events and operations should consider key factors in relation to the transparency and legitimacy of a policing operation, which include the following.

- Policing by consent should underpin POPS events and operations.
- Police deployed to an event or operation should be readily identifiable with correct epaulettes showing rank and force identification number, which must be clearly visible.
- Police officers deployed to an event or operation should be appropriately trained and accredited for the roles that they are performing. This should be in line with the national role profiles that have been set for each POPS role.

The gold POPS commander for an event or operation may make a decision (in their own force area) to deploy police officers to an event or operation where they do not satisfy the relevant role profile requirements. When doing so they should have a clear rationale for the decision to deploy such staff and record that rationale, together with any risk management measures that have been implemented.

Any decision to deviate from the national standards must be made by the gold POPS commander. They must also inform their chief officer who has responsibility for POPS officers that are being deployed outside of national role profile requirements. The relevant force will then be responsible for any associated risks that arise from deploying officers who do not satisfy POPS role profiles on a POPS event or operation.

Officers who do not satisfy the relevant POPS role profile requirements and are deployed by their force shall only be deployed in their force area and not deployed on mutual aid operations until those officers become fully role profile compliant.

POPS commanders and POPSAs who are deployed while not fully satisfying the role profile requirements should:

- inform the gold POPS commander for the event or operation
- include the following information in their policy log:
 - the fact that they are not fully compliant with the role profile
 - which aspect they are not currently compliant with in the role profile
 - the rationale for performing those roles while operating outside of the associated standards and/or role profile requirements
- identify the chief officer who has underwritten the risk to deploy the POPS commanders and/or POPSAs who are not compliant with the role profile

Communication

POPS commanders should consider how to best communicate with individuals, groups and organisations who may be affected by a POPS event or operation. This should require a joint approach with event organisers, other emergency services and local authorities to ensure that all communication is consistent and coordinated.

Any communication strategy and subsequent media engagement should be inclusive in terms of content, language and medium used for delivering key messages. POPS commanders and POPS planners should consider **POPS communications and considerations** when developing communication strategies as part of a POPS operation, to ensure they are in keeping with the policing standards, style and tone of the event or operation.

See also [**Community engagement, impact assessments and communication**](#).

POPS commanders should consider the potential for receiving and responding to freedom of information (FOI) requests in relation to a POPS event or operation. When working with other forces, partners or agencies, forces should consider who is responsible for responding. Further guidance on FOI requests is contained in the [**Information management APP**](#).

Further advice and information can be found in the [**Engagement and communication APP**](#).

POPS commanders should also consider the relevant guidance on managing information and should refer to the [**Information management APP**](#).

Proportionate response

POPS commanders, POPSAs and POPS planners need to be able to demonstrate the following as a minimum.

- Each event should be viewed as unique and distinct, requiring careful consideration of that event and associated factors.
- Forces should aim to stop the use of any pre-prepared generic strategic, tactical or operational command and/or generic resourcing plans drafted by POPS planners or previous POPS commanders for repeating events (for example, designated sporting events that reoccur throughout a season).
- POPS commanders are responsible for writing their respective plans and consider advice by a POPSA and ensure that there is a record of decision making regarding the planning and policing of the POPS event or operation.
- Consideration, relevancy and application of human rights principles to that specific event, including specific rationale of those considerations.
- Police powers and relevant legislation applicable to the event or operation should be used appropriately and proportionately. Police powers and relevant legislation should be included in briefings and/or operational orders.
- Use of force implications and considerations, both collective and individual, need to be outlined and included in relevant command logs, operational orders and briefings.
- Planning should be based on available information and intelligence, and should be subject to continuous review in line with [**the NDM**](#).

POPS commanders can make decisions based on professional judgements that build on the available information and experience, and should not rely just on formally assessed intelligence.

POPSAs should also be included in relevant planning meetings to support the POPS commander.

Reviewing and improving

Following a POPS event, reflecting on the policing response can support the development of future proportionate responses. The following questions can assist in drawing out learning.

1. Was there an event or sequence of events that could reasonably have been foreseen?
2. Was there a plan?
3. Were the staff trained and equipped to deliver the plan?
4. Did the plan work?

Throughout the planning and operation phase, POPS commanders and POPSAs should ensure that auditable records are maintained. Question four emphasises the importance of debriefing policing operations and identifying both critical success factors and lessons learned. These can then be developed as part of a continuous improvement cycle for forces locally and nationally.

Capacity and capability

The Strategic Policing Requirement (SPR), supported by the national POPS strategic risk assessment (SRA), supports chief constables and police and crime commissioners to ensure they fulfil forces' national responsibilities.

This includes maintaining a POPS capability for deployments in individual force areas and mutual aid deployments at regional and national levels. Forces are therefore required to understand their SPR commitments for POPS capacity and capability, and to ensure that they have sufficient numbers of trained and accredited staff to perform the relevant roles as outlined in the following.

Forces are required to comply with the following requirements.

- Deployed POPS equipment, uniform, personal protective equipment and vehicles should meet national requirements, as set by the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) thematic tactics, training and equipment working group.

- Sufficient numbers of protected carriers, intermediate and round shields, and other POPS-related equipment should be available, so that the full range of POPS tactics are catered for when deploying on operations both in-force and on mutual aid.
- Basic deployment unit (BDU) deployments both in-force and out of force should comply with the national definition of a BDU.
- Police support unit (PSU) deployments both in-force and out of force should comply with the national definition of a PSU.
- Plans are developed to mobilise PSUs and these are subject to regular testing in individual forces, within regions and nationally. The National Police Coordination Centre (NPoCC) is responsible for the testing and exercising of POPS capacity and capability.

Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI)

In the PSNI, the PSNI chief officer POPS lead is required to ensure that PSNI POPS-trained staff meet the relevant standard for PSNI on an annual basis.

Where PSNI officers are required to deploy elsewhere in the UK, PSNI's chief officer POPS leads should ensure that PSNI officers fully satisfy the national role profiles and [POPS standards, training, equipment and resources](#) set by the College of Policing, NPCC and NPoCC prior to any deployment to Scotland, England or Wales. (You will need to log in to College Learn to access these resources.)

Tags

Public order Public safety