

Why the Code of Ethics has changed

Published on 24 January 2024

Why the Code of Ethics has been updated and the reasoning behind the changes

Explainer 2 mins read

As a result of public consultation and input from serving police officers, police staff, academics, staff associations and representatives from partner organisations, the 2014 Code of Ethics is now replaced by:

- the 2024 Code of Ethics (non-statutory)
- the 2023 Code of Practice for Ethical Policing (statutory)

2014 Code of Ethics

Because the 2014 Code of Ethics was issued as a statutory Code of Practice for chief officers, there was confusion regarding the strength and standing of its application across policing.

- Its perceived focus was police officers rather than 'every person working in policing' as intended.
- It only partially addressed organisational factors affecting ethical and professional behaviour.

The Code of Ethics was intended to be aspirational and guide decision-making, but many perceived it as a guide for responding to allegations of misconduct. This misconception was reinforced by the guidance on behaviour in the Code, which was set out under the headings of the standards of professional behaviour taken from the Police Conduct Regulations and mirrored in the Police Staff Council handbook.

- [Find out more about the Code of Ethics review](#)
- [See the public consultation](#)

2024 Code of Ethics

The 2024 Code of Ethics is inclusive. It provides support for everyone in policing.

It has two parts, neither of which are statutory.

- **Ethical policing principles** provide support in making ethical decisions.
- **Guidance for ethical and professional behaviour in policing** sets out expectations for how policing professionals should behave in a way that makes it easy for them to understand and follow.

The term 'Code of Ethics' has been retained, but the 2024 Code of Ethics is not a statutory Code of Practice. It has the same status as other guidance produced by the College.

2023 Code of Practice for Ethical Policing

The 2023 Code of Practice for Ethical Policing is a statutory Code of Practice for chief officers issued under section 39A of the Police Act 1996. The 2023 Code of Practice for Ethical Policing provides chief officers with direction on promoting ethical and professional behaviour within their forces.

Chief officers have a statutory duty to have due regard to the 2023 Code of Practice for Ethical Policing in discharging any functions to which it relates.

Standards for conduct

Standards against which conduct should be assessed are set by the Police Conduct Regulations for police officers and the Police Staff Council handbook, or by separate terms and conditions of employment for police staff employed by forces not covered by the Police Staff Council.

They are not set by the 2024 Code of Ethics or the 2023 Code of Practice for Ethical Policing.

Other guidance to assist with consistent assessment against the standards includes:

- **guidance on outcomes in police misconduct proceedings**
- **the statutory Home Office guidance**
- **guidance note 9 from the Police Staff Council handbook for staff employed under its provisions**

Read the new Code of Ethics

Tags

Code of Ethics