Decision-making with integrity – Code of Ethics training

Integration of the Code of Ethics within the public order training of Hampshire Constabulary.

First published
15 November 2024

Key details

Does it work?	Untested – new or innovative
Focus	Organisational
Topic	Community engagement Diversity and inclusion Ethics and values Leadership, development and learning Operational policing Organisation including workforce
Organisation	Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary
Contact	Paul Scott
Email address	paul.scott@hampshire.police.uk
Region	South East
Partners	Police
Stage of practice	The practice is implemented.
Start date	February 2024

Key details

Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	Adults Workforce

Aim

The Code of Ethics training aims to:

- Enhance comprehension of the Code of Ethics, ensuring officers thoroughly understand the principles.
- Support the application of the Code of Ethics in decision-making, by training officers to apply ethical considerations effectively in practical scenarios, real-world decision-making, and during challenging situations.
- Promote behavioural change by encouraging officers to internalise ethical behaviour by addressing real-world challenges, such as reporting misconduct or challenging inappropriate actions.
- Integrate the Code of Ethics with existing police models training such as Identity Capability Intent Immediacy (ICII) and Disorder Model, enhancing decision-making coherence.
- Deliver a balanced approach to training by combining theoretical instruction with practical scenarios to reinforce ethical behaviour and decision-making skills.

Intended outcome

The intended outcomes of the training are to:

- increase officer and staff understanding of the Code of Ethics

- increase the use of the Code of Ethics

- improve the support for recall of the Code of Ethics

- improve decision making

Description

As part of a broader campaign to embed the new police Code of Ethics, Hampshire Constabulary identified an opportunity to deliver Code of Ethics training through their existing public order policing training structures. The dual objective was to ensure that officers not only comprehended the Code of Ethics but also apply it effectively in their decision-making processes.

Public order policing training in Hampshire Constabulary caters to both initial training for new officers and refresher training for existing officers, usually lasting two days. Recognising this, public order policing trainers decided to integrate instruction on the Code of Ethics into their current training programme. By incorporating the Code of Ethics into the existing training programme, additional time commitments to deliver separate and specific Code of Ethics training were not required.

Hampshire Constabulary's public order policing relies on specific decision models, including the ICII and the Disorder Model, as well as the National Decision Model (NDM). To align with the Code of Ethics, a comprehensive training package was developed that combines theoretical understanding with practical application of the Code of Ethics. Usually, officers received theoretical instruction in a classroom setting, often through PowerPoint presentations. Materials were adapted and developed based on documentation provided by the College of Policing on the Code of Ethics including the 'Code of Ethics – ethical policing principles' and the 'Code of Ethics – guidance for ethical and professional behaviour in policing'. To aid memory retention, Hampshire Constabulary utilises Courage, Respect, Empathy, and Public Service (CREPS) as a mnemonic device for officers to internalise the Code of Ethics.

Case scenarios play a crucial role in challenging officers to apply the Code of Ethics during classroom-based educational sessions. For example, during a simulated football match, officers encounter a series of events and must make decisions based on ethical considerations, alongside the broader NDM, the Disorder Model, and the ICII. This reinforces learning and application of the Code of Ethics, but also demonstrates how it fits alongside other decision-making models. Officers are not only faced with how to deal with the public and respond to events in an ethical way, but also face additional scenarios such as addressing a colleague's behaviour or challenging a supervisor's actions.

As part of public order police training, live simulations of public order incidents are used. During these simulations, officers undergo informal and formative assessments related to the Code of Ethics. Trainers evaluate officers' ability to recall the Code of Ethics in practical public order scenarios.

Additionally, officers must make decisions regarding whether to challenge simulated behaviours, how to address them, whether to report incidents, and whom to report them to. This multifaceted approach ensures that officers not only understand the Code of Ethics, but also apply it effectively in real-world situations.

Overall impact

Over 370 officers have received the updated public order policing training. This represents just over 10% of the broader Hampshire Constabulary police officer workforce. The number is expected to rise as officers undergo renewal training for public order policing.

Informal conversations with officers indicate that using a mnemonic to recall and understand the Code of Ethics has been effective.

Learning

Application of Code of Ethics training

The potential exists to apply Code of Ethics training across a diverse range of policing contexts. It functions as a decision-making tool during interactions with the public and also when addressing the behaviour of colleagues and supervisors. Furthermore, this training has the capacity to extend to other specialised areas within law enforcement.

Assessing existing training procedures

Before integrating Code of Ethics training into existing processes, police forces should thoroughly evaluate their general and specialist training procedures. Understanding their current practices will help to ensure effective integration.

Considering costs beyond finances

While the direct financial impact of training may be minimal, other factors include:

- Developing materials: initial development and adaptation of the Code of Ethics material requires time and effort.
- Bespoke training: customising training for specific officer roles or contexts may increase development time and associated costs. Tailoring content to unique needs requires careful planning and resource allocation.
- Scaling up: As the initiative expands to cover multiple policing areas, additional training sessions will be necessary. This requirement extends beyond police officer training to include the adaptation of the programme for different geographic regions. Allocating officer time for both training and delivery must be considered.

Leadership support as an enabler

Although no specific implementation challenges or barriers were identified, strong support and buy-in from senior leadership plays a crucial role. Notably, a senior leader within Hampshire Constabulary was involved as the national lead for the Code of Ethics.

Balancing content delivery

Achieving an effective balance between the content delivered during Code of Ethics training and the time independently exploring specific areas of the Code is crucial. Equally important is finding the right equilibrium between theoretical classroom-based teaching and practical simulation-based training.

Wider force level environment as enabler

The Code of Ethics training was conducted in an environment where the new Code has been widely implemented across the force and at the national level. Extensive force-level communications have encouraged integration of the Code of Ethics into operational processes. To further support the uptake and integration into training, police forces should consider broader communication strategies.

Best available evidence

The 2024 Code of Ethics is now available.

Copyright

Legal disclaimer