

Always on duty: the ethics that follow police officers into their community lives

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Superintendent Gareth Crossley reflects on how the Code of Ethics applies in his personal life

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Superintendent Gareth Crossley's journey from sideline parent to football referee powerfully demonstrates how police values extend beyond the uniform. When his son's team needed an official, fellow parents immediately turned to him: "Gareth, you can do that. You're a copper."

This simple moment reflects deeper public expectations that the public expects police officers and police staff to lead through stepping forward, taking responsibility and making difficult decisions - whether on duty or not.

Video Transcript

Superintendent Gareth Crossley, West Yorkshire Police: My son, he started playing junior football. And it gets to a point, doesn't it, in local junior football, where the coach can't do everything and needs a referee to help. And guess what all the parents said: "Gareth, you can do that. You know, you're a copper, you can do it." And so I did.

The bottom line is the public does – okay, the friends, you know, parents that I knew – they expect more of the police. They expect you to be comfortable with putting yourself forward – that courageous position. Put yourself in taking responsibility for things, making tough decisions out there on the junior football field, putting yourself out there for potential ridicule or scrutiny.

And actually, you know, we talk about the Code of Ethics. It's that contract, isn't it, with the public? That's how I see it. Now, whether the public actually realise what the Code of Ethics is or isn't, that no matter how you articulate it, there are certain things that the public expect from policing. For me, it underpins exactly what the public expect from police. You'll be the one that steps forward, like I say. You'll stick your head above the parapet.

Every day in daily management meetings, I see and read about officers doing things that daily, it reminds me of why we're in policing. What refereeing brings is very much the same challenges. And I say this when people ask me why do I referee. You know, you've got two teams there. You've got two teams that invite you into play. There's a set of rules to play for.

Let's look at society. With police by consent, people ask you to come and police them, don't they? We're brought in to police, police by consent, by a degree set of rules that we will abide to. That's exactly what players do. They come into a football match. They've agreed to play by a set of rules. You then, as a referee, have to be courageous in implementing those rules.

You have to step forward. You have to treat people with respect on the pitch. When I was dealing with junior football, I'd say it's their cup final every day. That's how I saw it.

The [Code of Ethics](#) supports everyone in policing to deliver a service that is fair, ethical and can be trusted to make decisions in the interest of keeping people safe. Through refereeing, Gareth embodies the same core principles that guide policing: courage, respect and empathy and public service.

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Superintendent Gareth Crossley

Gareth's story forms part of a series of videos to demonstrate how the Code of Ethics shapes police officer and staff behaviour both on and off duty.

It emphasises that ethical considerations are not just professional obligations but fundamentally influence how police officers and staff engage with their communities.

Ethics and values in practice

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