

Career conversations

Guidance on how to get the most from career conversations.

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Introduction

Career conversations in policing are an essential part of [professional development review](#) (PDR) conversations and people processes.

A career conversation is the continuing structured, supportive dialogue that is rooted within the PDR process. It is focused on the [competency and values framework](#) (CVF) behaviours and aligned to the [continuing professional development](#) (CPD) principles and force priorities.

A career conversation is not a single annual meeting. It is a continuing cycle of supportive and coaching style conversations that help you to:

- recognise, record and build your skills
- explore and shape development opportunities and career aspirations
- understand how your skills, knowledge, experience and competence contribute within the policing landscape or could be applied in another role

This guidance supports officers and staff in having effective PDR conversations that enable the exploration and planning of careers within or beyond policing. There are more resources available to help you get the most out of these conversations in our downloadable [career conversations guidance](#).

Purpose and preparation

Career conversations are intended to support people in their role, development and progression. They are ongoing conversations that provide a framework to help you and your line manager to explore:

- learning and professional development
- career aspirations and goals
- skills, behaviours and current competence

- the impact of these factors on wellbeing

Preparation for PDR conversations ideally includes:

- reviewing recent progress towards goals or objectives, wellbeing indicators, CPD activities and feedback, as recommended in the [PDR guidance](#)
- understanding force priorities to ensure that conversations and development opportunities align with organisational objectives
- encouraging officers and staff to reflect on achievements, aspirations, challenges and development needs

Creating a safe, open and professional environment

PDRs should be viewed as a safe space where you can:

- openly discuss your achievements
- be transparent about your future ambitions and aspirations
- consider your goals
- identify any current challenges
- explore opportunities for development or support that may be required

Good practice includes:

- face-to-face conversations that work around shift patterns
- recognition of achievements
- prioritisation of workload
- exploring current examples of feedback or evidence
- supportive, people-centred dialogue focusing on development and opportunities for the application of learning into practice

Exploring motivations, skills, behaviours and strengths

The [CVF](#) provides a shared language for behaviours and can guide strengths-based career exploration. The CVF describes six competencies and three values relevant to all roles.

Career conversations that support self-awareness and feedback should explore:

- which CVF competencies you feel are your strongest
- where you want to develop or gain further experience
- how your values align with policing and organisational values
- long-term aspirations linked to career pathways, considering the responsibilities, skills and knowledge, expectations and experience identified within the [policing professional profiles](#) (where available)

For more information on opportunities for CPD, go to our [CPD guidance](#).

Understanding current reality and opportunities

PDR conversations help ensure that career development decisions are grounded in relevant evidence and operational or occupational realities. They also provide clarity on the following:

- Anticipated performance goals, expectations and success criteria.
- Skills and development needs required to follow a career pathway.
- Wellbeing and work-life integration. This is an important element in considering career options and the potential impact of taking a new direction.
- Feedback (positive and developmental) gathered throughout the year. This especially relates to how it can evidence competence and potential, as well as how it can be presented to confirm eligibility or assist in an application.

Policing offers great diversity of potential roles. Career conversations can help to maximise the potential of everyone by identifying the varied pathways and possible options for:

- specialisation
- in-role development
- progression
- promotion

Opportunities provided could include the following:

- In-role development, such as webinars, events and learning programmes. A range of resources are available on the [leadership learning platform \(LLP\)](#) (you will need to log in).

- Specialist development, such as the professionalising investigations programme (PIP), firearms, safeguarding, roads policing and digital forensics.
- Lateral development, such as enhancing a current role to include community experience or taking a secondment to a partner agency.
- Leadership pathways, such as the sergeant and inspector promotion and progression (SIPP) framework.
- National programmes, such as the [executive leaders programme \(ELP\)](#).
- CPD aligned with our [CPD guidance](#).

Identifying CPD

Our CPD guidance emphasises ongoing learning to maintain and enhance competence, recognising both formal and informal development activities.

Actions may include:

- role-specific, local or national CPD
- stretch assignments or project work
- shadowing, coaching or mentoring
- preparing for promotion or progression using the CVF and the policing professional profiles (PPPs)
- training aligned to force priorities

The PDR and embedded career conversation encourages you to track and evidence development for progression, promotion and professional growth that supports career aspirations and development pathways. Ideally, this process would involve using a promotion and progression readiness reflection tool.

Creating a development or career plan

A focus on career conversations within PDR offers a structured framework to record:

- short-term and long-term goals linked to policing priorities
- specific development activities and opportunities
- alignment to CVF behaviours, PPPs and selection criteria
- links to learning and education options

- outputs that support promotion boards or specialist role applications

PDRs should do the following in relation to both personal and organisational priorities:

- create clarity
- improve engagement and awareness
- strengthen alignment

Follow-up and ongoing check-ins

PDR and career conversations should not be an annual event. They should involve regular, flexible, ongoing conversations throughout the year to include:

- monitoring progress against agreed objectives, goals and development actions
- reviewing progress, learning and development and career plans
- recognising and recording achievements, skills and knowledge
- shaping career development plans based on experiential, operational or personal change

This continuous approach contributes to enhanced retention, engagement and motivation, leading to a positive organisational culture.

Career conversations guidance

We've created core guidance to help forces enhance and further embed good practice for career conversations. It includes further information on structuring conversations, organisational responsibilities, benefits and additional resources.

- [Go to career conversations guidance](#)

Related resources

To decide on the next steps in your development you can:

- [find tools and guidance to support PDR conversations](#)
- [find out how to get the most from CPD](#)
- [choose a policing professional profile to see role-specific development](#)

Tags

CPD Career pathways Leadership development