

Ethics and Transparency Panel – Police Misconduct

Paper Brief

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Background:

Public confidence in the police has seen a notable decline in recent years.

According to the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW), confidence in the police stood at approximately 67% in the year ending March 2025, which was lower compared to a decade ago.

It is important to identify that police misconduct, and particularly a series of high-profile cases of police misconduct, has significantly undermined trust in the police. Most recently, the BBC Panorama documentary 'Undercover in the Police' exposed evidence of racism and misogyny within the MET. This raises serious questions about culture and accountability within police forces.

This paper sets out Leicestershire Police current policies and procedures on how the force addresses issues of misconduct and promotes public confidence in Leicestershire Police through transparency.

Organisational Structures:

Leicestershire Police Professional Standards Department is made up of 4 distinct functions: Public Complaints, Conduct, Counter-Corruption and Vetting units.

Each unit is overseen by a dedicated Senior Leader, reporting into the Head of Department, Detective Superintendent Nicole Main.

Both Detective Superintendent Main and the Deputy Head of Department, DCI Chris Gamble, have specific responsibilities and authority levels set by the nationally Approved Professional Practice for the Standards of Professional Behaviour and have attended the requisite national training and accreditation requirements.

Due to the sensitivity, impact and levels of decision making required in managing our responsibilities and expectations around Professional Standards, the department sits within the Deputy Chief Constable's portfolio with the Head of Department reporting directly to the DCC.

Misconduct Overview:

Misconduct is not reported directly from external sources, with any external reports being recorded as a public complaint.

However, if a public complaint meets special procedures under the Police Complaints and Misconduct Regulations 2000 (PCMR) a misconduct investigation is initiated.

The below are figures from the past 12 months and reflect:

- 204 misconduct cases recorded with a total of 442 allegations.
- 3 public complaints have resulted in special procedures and treated as misconduct.

Leicestershire Police data is in line with the national average of misconduct reports, as a force 33% of allegations are investigated and finalised are found to have a case to answer compared to the national average of 32%.

Leicestershire Police are particularly effective, with the use of Accelerated Misconduct Hearings, sitting at 60% compared to the national average of 25%.

Within the past 12 months, the force has recorded 326 Misconduct allegations which have resulted in 4 Gross misconduct cases, 13 Accelerated Misconduct cases and 5 misconduct meetings.

Restrictions are applied to individuals on a case-by-case basis when under misconduct investigation based on identified risks to individual, community, colleagues, and organisation to uphold public trust and confidence.

Once those subject to misconduct proceedings have received their outcome, restrictions are removed, and management of the individual remains with local line supervisory.

In limited cases we will consider keeping the PSD restrictions.

Misconduct cases are aligned to the standards of professional behaviour and are separated into the following categories:

1. Delivery of Duties and Service
2. Police Powers, Policies and Procedures
3. Handling of / or damage to property / premises
4. Access and/or disclosure of information
5. Use of police vehicles
6. Discriminatory Behaviour
7. Abuse of Position / Corruption
8. Individual Behaviours
9. Sexual Conduct
10. Discreditable Conduct
11. Other

Transparency and Communication:

The responsibility for updating complainants and witnesses in misconduct cases is with the Investigating Officer and their supervisor and recorded on an internal system.

Communication and updates are via the avenue as agreed with the complaint and witness, this can be through the Federation and Unison.

Reduction and Effectiveness

Leicestershire Police are actively pursuing a number of initiatives to reduce misconduct by staff and officers, including:

1. Code of Ethics training

- The Code of Ethics training is a mandatory programme for all officers and staff, introduced to embed the ethical standards set by the College of Policing. It reinforces principles such as courage, respect, empathy, and public service, ensuring decisions are made “in the right way, for the right reasons.”

2. PSD training schedule

- Professional standards inputs are delivered to all new joiners and transfers. Inputs are also delivered to regularly throughout the year to different areas as refreshers.

3. Targeted media campaigns

- Campaigns are posted on internal staff websites, a recent example launched May 2024 is the ‘You’re right, that’s wrong’ campaign which focused on tackling sexism and misogynist behaviour.

4. Media releases following hearing outcomes

- Leicestershire police publish outcomes on the public and internal website.

5. Proactive investigations

- PSD conduct proactive investigations and focuses on early intervention.

6. Confidential reporting mechanisms through Bad Apple / Crimestoppers

- Bad Apple is an internal anonymous reporting system managed by the Counter Corruption Unit, allowing staff to confidentially report misconduct or corruption. It uses a secure platform with two-way communication and has seen reports rise significantly, leading to more investigations and accountability.
- Crimestoppers Integrity Line is an external, anonymous service for reporting professional standards concerns. Accessible online or via phone, it complements Bad Apple and is open to staff and the public, promoting transparency and trust.

7. Work with external partners to ID conduct and corruption issues.

- In line with the strategic risk assessment, PSD focuses on conduct and corruption and engages with external partners to gain information and intelligence.

There has been a clear force focus on ensuring effective management of misconduct cases.

This has resulted in a significant increase in the use of Accelerated Misconduct Hearings to swiftly exit staff and officers out of the organisation who do not meet the standards we demand.

This reduces time an officer is under investigation, reduction of Chief Officer time chairing hearings, reduces the financial burden of administering these (legal costings), and most importantly protects the public and demonstrates our determination to root out bad officers and staff.

Staff Survey and Perceptions

Results from our most recent staff survey identified that a large majority of respondent agreed that their line manager challenges discriminatory behaviour (93.2%), create an ethical (92.7%) and inclusive (89.5%) environment, and model high standards (89.3%).

Staff survey and review evidence indicate some colleagues do experience or perceive issues with misogyny, bullying/harassment, and discrimination, although most report ethical, inclusive leadership behaviours.

The Force has active mitigation, prevention campaigns, strengthened reporting pathways, continued survey monitoring, to address these concerns.

The PEEL workforce survey shows strong day-to-day ethical leadership (93.2% agree line managers challenge discriminatory behaviour), which supports a courageous culture to speak up.

That picture is consistent with current misconduct data: in the past 12 months, the force recorded 204 misconduct cases (with 442 allegations), while only 3 public complaints progressed to special procedures, indicating that the vast majority of misconduct matters originate via internal reporting/management routes rather than externally.

Culture and Transparency

The culture around reporting misconduct amongst officers is considered supportive and increasingly proactive, with clear protections, multiple reporting routes, ethical leadership behaviours and campaigns being delivered by the force that normalise challenge.

The ethos in Leicestershire Police is clear around the standards of professional behaviour and in turn the attitude towards reporting misconduct.

Courage is a clear principle of the Code of Ethics and if staff see or hear something that is wrong, there is a responsibility to make it right.

Leicestershire Police is committed to the highest standards of openness, probity, and accountability. In line with that commitment, the force recognises that an important aspect of accountability and transparency is a mechanism to enable staff to voice concerns about breaches or failures in a reasonable and effective manner. There are a range of channels to report which includes a confidential channel.

To protect staff that raise concerns, a designated officer will decide if an investigation is appropriate. Any investigation must be led by the Designated Officer and must include at least one other member of the Professional Standards team or other senior staff member if the case involves Professional Standards.

Within ten working days of a concern being raised, the relevant designated officer or line manager with whom the Individual first raised the matter with will write to the individual setting out:

- Acknowledgement the concern has been received
- Indicating how the matter will be dealt with
- Give an estimate of how long it will take to get a final response

- Tell the employee if an investigation has been started.

Leicestershire Police will not tolerate harassment and victimisation and will protect staff when a concern has been made in good faith.

Reporting Misconduct

Force induction and new staff procedures include providing details on the full range of channels they can report misconduct or concerns. This is intended to remove barriers to reporting and demonstrate our commitment to listening to staff.

Reporting pathways include:

- There is an email inbox.
- Confidential reporting (bad apple / crimestoppers)
- Professional standards Single Point of Contact in stations
- Professional standards internal website, hosting a range of support, policies and procedures
- Leicestershire Police website has a clear function to report a 'complaint'

Our confidence in the accessibility and trust in this arrangements is reflected by having received 126 through Bad Apple in the last 12 months, which is an increase in 8 reports from the previous year.

Misconduct themes

Consistent themes both nationally and within Leicestershire leading to Misconduct investigations are:

- Sexual Misconduct
- Information handling
- Notifiable Associations
- Business Interests
- Substance Misuse
- Theft and Fraud
- Inappropriate use of Social Media

The Force uses the Centurion Database as the primary system for recording and monitoring misconduct cases. By leveraging Centurion's analytical capabilities, PSD can identify patterns early and implement targeted measures to prevent escalation and improve standards, identifying both thematic, geographic, role and individual trends and concerns.

Public Trust and Accountability

Misconduct outcomes are published on the Force website to ensure openness and public transparency.

Neighbourhood policing remains fundamental to Leicestershire Police, enabling the Force to monitor trust and confidence levels and identify concerns within specific communities. Progress is tracked through governance boards, confidence surveys, and performance dashboards.

While these measures are not specific to misconduct cases, they form part of the wider trust and confidence framework.

Outcomes of misconduct hearings are published on the Force website to demonstrate accountability.

Where appropriate, the Chief Officer Team issues statements via official social media channels to share their views and provide reassurance to the public.

Neighbourhood teams mobilise quickly to engage with affected communities, seeking feedback and gaining an accurate understanding of local sentiment.

This insight helps shape a tailored and proportionate response to restore confidence.

Vetting Procedures

Every individual commencing employment with Leicestershire Police must secure without full vetting clearance prior to taking up their post.

Any issues or delays in vetting are actively managed and recorded on the Force Risk Register to ensure transparency and mitigate operational risk.

The Vetting Team is embedded within the Professional Standards Department (PSD), enabling close collaboration with both the Counter Corruption Unit (CCU) and HR. This partnership is maintained through regular weekly departmental and governance meetings, People Intelligence sessions, updates on notifiable associations and business interests, and individual case discussions across PSD teams. Joint training is delivered by PSD and Vetting for new starters, with additional modules incorporated into the student officer programme at key stages. Regular meetings with HR ensure effective planning for new cohorts, managing enhanced demand, and addressing specific cases promptly. This integrated approach supports robust vetting processes, risk management, and workforce planning.

There are effective flows of information and insight between the Vetting Unit, PSD, and HR. Communication within PSD is strong, supported by regular meetings and case discussions, while engagement with HR ensures alignment on recruitment and workforce planning.

Where the Vetting Unit identifies that an unsuitable candidate has progressed for reasons unrelated to vetting, such as poor communication or performance, these cases are raised with HR and clarified as outside the scope of vetting, which focuses on vulnerabilities, behaviours, associations, and honesty. This approach ensures transparency, appropriate role allocation, and clear understanding of responsibilities across departments.

The Counter Corruption Unit (CCU) also plays a key role in supporting vetting by managing notifiable associations and business interests, ensuring that any potential risks are identified and addressed.

All vetting clearances involve close liaison with CCU, including coordination with external forces where necessary.

Joint training sessions are delivered by CCU and Vetting to maintain consistent standards and awareness across teams.

Regular meetings between the CCU Sergeant and Senior Vetting Officer, as well as between departmental DCI leads, strengthen collaboration and ensure effective information sharing to uphold integrity and mitigate risk.

Acts of sexism, racism, misogyny, homophobia, and dishonesty are treated as factors requiring scrutiny within vetting procedures.

During checks, vetting researchers review each case in detail rather than relying on headlines or summaries, ensuring that any indicators of these behaviours are identified. This thorough approach

allows researchers to detect patterns or concerns that may not be immediately apparent, supporting robust decision-making and safeguarding organisational integrity.

Wider patterns of behaviour are assessed as part of the vetting process to determine suitability for police service. The Vetting Authorised Professional Practice (APP) provides detailed guidance on these considerations, specifically within:

- **Appendix M – Behavioural Indicators:** Outlines behaviours such as discriminatory attitudes, integrity concerns, and repeated poor judgement.
- **Appendix N – Risk Factors:** Identifies recurring patterns that may indicate vulnerability or risk to organisational integrity.

This approach ensures vetting decisions are based on a holistic view of an individual's conduct, rather than isolated incidents, supporting ethical standards and safeguarding professionalism within the Force.

As part of the vetting process, researchers conduct detailed checks to identify potentially unsuitable behaviour, focusing on patterns of adverse conduct in line with the Vetting Authorised Professional Practice (APP). Rather than treating incidents in isolation, low-level occurrences are grouped to build a broader picture of behaviour that may indicate risk. Where concerns are identified, exploratory interviews are undertaken to gather additional context and clarify issues, ensuring that vetting decisions are informed by a comprehensive understanding of the individual's conduct.

Records are retained in accordance with Management of Police Information (MOPI) on police systems when an applicant has been questioned in relation to serious allegations, such as sexual or domestic abuse, even if no charges were brought. These records are reviewed by vetting researchers and considered during the clearance process. Each case is assessed individually and judged on its own merits, with research and decision-making fully documented and authorised at the appropriate level to ensure transparency and accountability.

In light of recent concerns highlighted nationally, it is recognised both organisationally and by the College of Policing that vetting cannot operate in isolation and must form part of a wider protective security regime.

To strengthen this approach, the Force has introduced the Annual Integrity Vetting Review, ensuring ongoing scrutiny of staff beyond initial clearance. Additionally, post-misconduct vetting reviews are conducted for all employees following the conclusion of proceedings that result in any sanction other than dismissal, providing an extra safeguard.

Beyond vetting, the Force tackles root causes of misconduct through:

- Regular messaging from senior and chief officers on the intranet, reinforcing standards and expectations.
- Close collaboration with the wider Professional Standards Department (PSD) to identify and address cultural and behavioural issues.
- Integration of these measures with broader wellbeing and integrity initiatives, ensuring that misconduct prevention is proactive rather than reactive.

This multi-layered approach reflects a commitment to continuous improvement and ethical policing.

Currently, vetting procedures focus on identifying patterns of adverse behaviour in line with the Vetting Authorised Professional Practice (APP). Researchers conduct detailed checks and use exploratory interviews to build a wider picture of any concerns and inform the vetting assessment process.

Police Misconduct Hearings (APCC)

The current and anticipated number of misconduct hearings are as follows:

Since 1 April 2025:

- Gross Misconduct Hearings (GM): 4
- Accelerated Misconduct Hearings (AMH): 14
- Misconduct Meetings: 13

Projected:

- Gross Misconduct Hearings (GM): 6
- Accelerated Misconduct Hearings (AMH): 4
- Misconduct Meetings: 4

The Force is committed to facilitating and administering misconduct panels promptly and efficiently. This capability has been strengthened through increased training for all Chief Officers who chair Gross Misconduct Hearings, ensuring consistency, confidence, and compliance with procedural standards.

The Professional Standards Department (PSD) works closely with business support teams to schedule hearings without undue delay, supported by established processes and resources to manage demand effectively.

The Force operates a clear learning loop that captures insight from every misconduct outcome, converts it into individual and organisational learning, and assures delivery through established governance. Where themes and trends are identified, PSD will provide support and inputs to relevant locations.

This loop is enabled by Centurion case management, the Reflective Practice Review Process (RPRP), PSD-led organisational learning procedures and reports published by the IOPC with learning outcomes from other forces.

Furthermore, an independent scrutiny panel drawn from staff associations and internal networks reviews selected, sanitised cases to calibrate decision-making and feed learning back into the organisation (e.g., Police Federation, UNISON, BPA, AMP, WIN).

While community representatives do not take part in PSD case-level reviews, the Force's approach is subject to external strategic scrutiny via the OPCC and statutory oversight from the IOPC.