

How does Staffordshire Police Force promote ethical behaviour and professional standards?

What did we look at this and why is this important?

All police forces work to a police Code of Ethics, which applies to all the people who work for the force. Behaving ethically and transparently is key to public confidence. The force should monitor what it does and how it behaves to make sure that it is treating all members of the public and sections of the community in ways which are fair and transparent.

How did we go about the review?

Detective Superintendent Colin Mattinson, Head of the Force's Professional Standards Department came to our meeting in April 2021 and gave us a presentation. He told us about the work being done to get people across the Force to think about ethics and standards of behaviour as a core part of their work. He provided information on how the Force was responding to issues raised by a national inspection report into Staffordshire in 2019. In October 2021 Detective Chief Inspector Tracy Foster, currently covering the Head of Department role, gave us a detailed update on progress over the last six months.

What did we find?

We found that the Force:

- Is implementing a communication plan 'What would you do?' to encourage people to respond to ethical dilemmas. Feedback has been limited so the dilemmas are now being sent directly to the Directorate leads to distribute and discuss at staff briefings.
- Has up its own internal Ethics Panel with a membership of 15 volunteers from across all areas of the Force. It has an independent Chair who is a retired Professor from Keele University. The purpose of the panel is to drive up standards and to examine the culture in place at the Force, advising on best practice and influencing human resource policies and practices. It is also anticipated that panel members will be 'Ethical Champions' around the Force.
- Is using additional funds to appoint two Detective Constables to focus on professional standards.
- Provides all new recruits with the professional code and runs training for them and 'refresher' training for other people.
- Has some further work to do to make sure that its counter-fraud and corruption unit has the right level of IT to fully monitor all of its computer systems, including mobile data, to spot any computer misuse and keep data secure.

What comments/questions do we have?

We have a good understanding of what the Force is doing to put ethical standards at the heart of policing in Staffordshire. Our questions are:

1. How and when will the Force judge the impact of the steps it is taking?
2. How will the Force provide information to the public in a transparent way on behaviours/actions which fall short of the standards expected and the processes in place for dealing with those?

Response	<p>1. How and when will the force judge the impact of the steps it is taking? This is a difficult aspect to measure. We do however have our analysts that provide statistics around complaint and conduct data which will identify any trends or patterns in types and volumes of complaints/conduct matters.</p> <p>2. How will the Force provide information to the public in a transparent way on behaviours/actions which fall short of the standards expected and the processes in place for dealing with those? The Commissioner’s Office will be publishing the IOPC complaint data on their website to inform the public of the Force’s performance. Any officers subject to Gross Misconduct hearings are dealt with by way of Public Hearings and our Communications Department report on these proactively. We do work closely with communications to ensure we are open and transparent with the public around police conduct allegations.</p>
Follow-up actions	<p>Craig Brown, ETAP member, to attend a future meeting of the Force Ethics Panel as an observer.</p> <p>Ongoing discussion to identify areas which would lend themselves to further ETAP scrutiny/review – e.g. proposed implementation of a new whistleblowing policy.</p>
Date for further review/checking on completion	<p>ERP meeting in May 2022</p>