

A LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORK FOR POLICING

Leading Without Fear *or* Favour

Character, knowledge and action: the leadership behaviours that keep policing lawful, fair and trusted, in every role and at every rank and grade.

VERSION 1.0 · 2026 · MAPPED TO THE NATIONAL LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORK

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ABOUT THIS FRAMEWORK

This framework describes the leadership that policing can expect of everyone who works in it: the character leaders bring, the knowledge they apply and the actions they take, shown in observable behaviours at every rank and grade. It is written for every officer, member of police staff, PCSO, special constable and volunteer, and for those who govern and oversee policing, because leadership is not a rank. It is how people conduct themselves and how they enable others, whatever their role, so that the public are served without fear or favour.

It is designed to be used, not filed: in how forces recruit, vet and promote, in supervision and the conversations leaders have about practice and conduct, in the programmes through which they develop leaders, in debriefs and reviews, in the induction of those who hold policing to account, and in the evidence a force gives the public, inspectors and elected representatives that it is well led. Any force or policing body may adopt it as it stands or make it its own; page 43 shows how.

National Leadership Framework®

ALIGNED TO THE NATIONAL LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORK

This framework is mapped, dimension by dimension and competency by competency, to the National Leadership Framework (NLF), a comprehensive, research- and evidence-informed standard for leadership developed from a comparative review of leadership frameworks across sectors, policing among them, and more than a thousand academic and practitioner sources. The NLF encourages organisations to translate its concepts into their own language, values and context while preserving their integrity. That is what this framework does for policing. It complements the College of Policing's Code of Ethics, National Decision Model and Competency and Values Framework; it does not replace them. The NLF's framework, wording and logo are the intellectual property of National Leadership Framework CIC; the alignment annex on page 41 shows the mapping in full.

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How to read the behaviours. Every behaviour in this framework begins with an active verb and describes conduct another person could observe. Where the law, police powers, the Code, policy, data, records or rank appear, the behaviour is always what the leader does as a person in that context: explains, applies the tests, reports, thanks, backs, role-models, intervenes only when. The powers and the processes belong to law and policy; the leadership belongs to the people.

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FOREWORD

Leadership is how policing keeps its promise

Every constable makes the same promise on their first day: to serve with fairness, integrity, diligence and impartiality, without favour or affection, malice or ill will. Every member of police staff, every PCSO, every special constable and every volunteer joins to keep that promise alongside them. The public hand policing extraordinary powers on the strength of it. Leadership is how a force keeps it, shift after shift, when it is hard, when nobody is watching, and when the easier course would be to look away.

The last few years have shown what happens when leadership fails. Independent reviews and inspections found forces where speaking up was not welcome, where loyalty to colleagues outweighed duty to the public, where sergeants and inspectors were asked to lead large numbers of people without the time or the tools, and where scrutiny was met with denial rather than curiosity. None of those failures began in a policy. Each began in the behaviour of people who led, and each was made worse by the behaviour of people who watched. The Police Leadership Commission put it plainly in 2026: leadership in policing is not consistently of a high enough standard.

This framework is an answer in plain words. It sets out the character leaders bring, the knowledge they apply and the actions they take, as behaviours anyone can see, practise and develop, at every rank and grade from the newest constable to the chief officer and from the control room to the custody suite. It puts the Code of Ethics where the National Decision Model puts it, at the centre, and it is mapped to the National Leadership Framework, one of the most rigorous and evidence-informed standards for leadership available, so that policing can be assured against the same standard as every other profession while speaking in its own voice.

It is called Leading Without Fear or Favour because that is what the public ask of policing, and because it is what colleagues are entitled to ask of their leaders: the same fairness in a posting, a review or a misconduct decision that the public are owed in a stop, a search or an arrest. Every officer and member of staff is invited to read it, to find themselves in it, and to hold every leader, at every level, to it.

A FORCE OR POLICING BODY ADOPTING THIS FRAMEWORK MAY REPLACE THIS FOREWORD WITH ITS OWN.

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The public hand policing extraordinary powers on the strength of a promise. Leadership is how a force keeps it: the sergeant who makes it safe to speak up, the constable who explains the search, the chief officer who tells the truth to scrutiny.

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1.0 Purpose of the Framework

This framework gives every officer, member of staff and volunteer in policing a shared language and a clear standard for leadership. It rests on the belief that the quality of leadership decides the culture of a force, that culture decides how the public are treated, and that leadership exists at every level of the organisation, on the street, in the custody suite, in the control room, in the investigation team and in the chief officer's office.

The framework has been shaped by leadership research, by the ethical and professional standards policing works to, and by the public evidence of what has gone wrong where leadership failed. It recognises that leadership in policing is a career-long journey, asking for adaptability, reflection and continuous learning. Each stage brings different demands, shaped by rank, role and an operating environment under constant scrutiny. No two careers are the same, and much of what is described here will already be familiar: leadership begins long before anyone is given a team or a stripe.

At its core, the framework exists to strengthen leadership practice by making clear the values, knowledge and behaviours that enable individuals and teams to lead well. It establishes a shared understanding of what good leadership looks like in policing, and a consistent approach to developing it at every stage of a career, for officers and police staff alike.

At the individual level, it supports growth through reflection, feedback, coaching, mentoring and debriefing. It helps leaders at every stage recognise their strengths, identify areas to develop and strengthen their practice over time.

At the organisational level, it gives a force a deeper understanding of its leadership culture. By identifying strengths, patterns and gaps across the workforce, leaders can target development where it is needed, understand readiness for change, and show the public, inspectors and elected representatives how leadership serves the communities the force exists for.

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THE FRAMEWORK IS INTENDED TO GIVE A FORCE

1 Shared understanding
of effective leadership across every rank, grade, team and function

2 Common values
and expectations, in the same words everywhere, so that culture is strengthened

3 Reflection and growth
through self-assessment, coaching, feedback and debriefing at every career stage

4 Recruitment to succession
informing how forces recruit, promote, supervise, develop and plan for the future

5 Clarity
about the behaviours expected of leaders, and the behaviours that undermine leadership

6 Standards and fairness
shown as leadership conduct, not only as policy, regulation or process

7 Purpose
keeping leadership development aligned to a public served without fear or favour

8 Evidence
for the public, inspectors and those who govern policing, in policing's own language

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1.1 Why Leadership Matters in Policing

British policing works by consent. Its legitimacy does not come from the powers Parliament has given it but from the willingness of the public to be policed, and that willingness is earned or lost in the conduct of the people who police them. Nothing decides that conduct more than the quality of leadership, at every level.

The evidence is consistent. People obey the law and cooperate with the police when they believe they are treated fairly, with respect, and that decisions are explained; the research on procedural justice says so, and so does every public confidence survey. Leadership shapes the culture of a force, and culture shapes everything the public experience: whether a power is explained, whether a victim is believed, whether a colleague's misconduct is reported, whether the data on disproportionality is faced. The most powerful leadership in policing does not take place in headquarters. It takes place in briefings, patrol cars, custody suites and the hundreds of small decisions supervisors make every day about what to notice, what to say and what to expect.

The public are served well when officers and staff are led well. A colleague who is trusted, developed, listened to and treated fairly brings those same things to the people they serve. A colleague who is micromanaged, blamed or ignored cannot, however hard they try. That is why this framework attends as carefully to how leaders treat their teams as to how officers treat the public, and why it names the behaviours that undermine leadership as plainly as those that build it.

Leadership in policing is also a public trust. Forces hold powers no other institution holds, under scrutiny no other institution faces, on behalf of communities that have not all been served equally well. Leading without fear or favour means leading for all of them, and earning consent most carefully where it is least secure.

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1.2 Leadership and the Standards Policing Works To

Policing is held to high public standards because of the powers it holds and the harm it exists to prevent. Every one of those standards is, at root, an expectation about the conduct of people. This framework is how a force meets them through leadership rather than through process alone.

Law, codes, regulations and policy are essential. They are the architecture of lawful and accountable policing. But architecture does not act. People act. The Code of Ethics is only as good as the supervisor who lives it and the colleague who challenges what falls short. The National Decision Model is only as good as the honesty of the person using it. A vetting standard is only as good as the leader who notices what an officer has become since they were vetted. A complaints process is only as good as the culture that decides whether a complaint is welcomed or resented.

That is why this framework keeps leadership distinct from management and from rank. Running a process is management. Holding a power is authority. Explaining why a safeguard exists, modelling it, thanking the colleague who reported a concern, backing a reasonable decision that went wrong, owning the outcome when something fails: that is leadership, and it is what turns a sound code into a trusted force. The standards below are the ones policing in England and Wales works to; page 40 shows, competency by competency, how the behaviours in this framework support them.

Policing by consent

The Peelian principles and the attestation: the police are the public and the public are the police; the test of policing is the absence of crime and disorder, not the visible evidence of action; and every officer serves without favour or affection, malice or ill will.

The Code of Ethics

The College of Policing's Code of Ethics (2024), built on courage, respect and empathy, and public service, with the statutory Code of Practice for Ethical Policing that places duties on chief officers to build an ethical culture and to challenge what falls short.

Standards of Professional Behaviour

The Police (Conduct) Regulations 2020 and the Standards of Professional Behaviour: honesty and integrity, authority, respect and courtesy, equality and diversity, use of force, orders and instructions, duties and responsibilities, confidentiality, fitness for work, discreditable conduct and the duty to challenge and report.

The seven principles of public life

The Nolan Principles apply to every officer and member of staff and to those who govern policing: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

Law and human rights

The Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and its codes, the Human Rights Act 1998, the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty: powers used lawfully, necessarily, proportionately and without discrimination.

Governance and oversight

The Policing Protocol, police and crime plans, the Strategic Policing Requirement, inspection by HMICFRS, the Independent Office for Police Conduct, and the reform set out in From local to national (2026), including a licence to practise and a national performance framework.

Learning from reviews

The Baroness Casey Review (2023), the Angiolini Inquiry (2024 and 2025), the Police Race Action Plan, HMICFRS integrity inspections and the Police Leadership Commission (2026): every one of them found that culture and standards follow leadership.

Decision-making

The National Decision Model, with the Code of Ethics at its centre, and its promise that a reasonable and proportionate decision made in accordance with the Code deserves the support of the supervisor and the organisation.

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1.3 What Leadership Is, and Is Not

Leadership, management and authority are three different functions. Most leaders in policing perform all three, often at the same time, and they support one another. But they are not the same thing, and confusing them, above all confusing rank with leadership, is how a disciplined service loses its way.

Leadership

Influencing people, shaping culture, developing individuals and teams, creating purpose and direction, building commitment and enabling performance. Leadership is shared across the force; leading is the part each person plays.

Management

Planning, organising, coordinating, monitoring and controlling resources and activities. Rosters, budgets, performance data, policies, risk registers and records. Essential, and not what this framework describes.

Authority

The legitimate power to decide and to direct, and the accountability that comes with it: the office of constable, rank, the chain of command, the lawful order. A context in which leadership happens, not a substitute for it.

The rule applied to every line. Powers, processes and rank are contexts in which leadership happens. The leadership is the behaviour of the person in them: how they model their character, and how they influence and enable others, while doing these things. So this framework never says “monitors compliance”, “allocates resources” or “gives orders”. It says “explains why a safeguard exists”, “applies the tests of lawfulness, necessity and proportionality and asks the same of others”, “reports concerns promptly and thanks those who do the same”.

Everyone can lead. Leadership is a function of the whole force, uniting people around a common purpose. It does not depend on rank. The constable who challenges a colleague’s language in the van is leading. The call handler who stays on the line is leading. The police staff investigator who will not let a line of enquiry drop is leading. Excellent followership, contributing to the team’s leadership from within it, is itself a form of leadership this framework names and values.

Leadership is grounded in values and shown in behaviour. It can be seen, discussed, coached and developed. That is why the framework is written as observable behaviours rather than traits, and why development is lifelong and goes well beyond a course.

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2.0 The Definition and the Framework



A DEFINITION OF LEADERSHIP

Leadership is the combination of a leader's character, knowledge and action, shown through everyday behaviours, that inspires others to succeed in serving the public without fear or favour.

The definition draws on the National Leadership Framework's definition, itself adapted from one proven across the most demanding environments: leadership as the combination of character, knowledge and action that inspires others to succeed. It keeps the three parts and the insistence that leadership is displayed through behaviours, and it names what policing is for: serving the public without fear or favour.

The three domains are deliberately few. Character is what the public and colleagues can rely on: the values leaders live, the standards they uphold and the example they set. Knowledge is what leaders know: themselves, their people and communities, and policing. Action is what leaders do: developing people, building teams and delivering for the public. Three domains were chosen because more would overlap; adding domains for command, operational delivery or governance would blur the line between personal disposition, professional competence and behaviour.

Each domain has three dimensions, nine in all. Beneath them sit 35 competencies and 359 observable behaviours. At the centre of the model, where the National Decision Model places the Code of Ethics, is the purpose of all of it: to inspire others to succeed in serving the public without fear or favour.

EIGHT PRINCIPLES THAT UNDERPIN THE FRAMEWORK

1	Leadership, management and authority are separate, mutually supporting functions.
2	Leadership is shared across the force; leading is individual.
3	Everyone can contribute to leadership, at every level, whatever their rank or grade.
4	Leader development is lifelong, grown through experience, relationships and reflection.
5	Development goes beyond training: it needs practice, feedback and a culture that supports learning.
6	Leadership practice is informed by evidence, evaluation and proportionate assurance.
7	Effective leadership is grounded in values, which guide judgement, behaviour and relationships.
8	Leadership involves character, knowledge and action, expressed through observable behaviours.



WHY WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOUR

The phrase comes from the attestation: to serve without favour or affection, malice or ill will. It is the golden thread of this framework because it describes both halves of the leadership policing needs. Fear is what stops a colleague reporting, a sergeant backing a decision, a chief officer telling scrutiny the truth. Favour is what protects the popular officer, closes ranks, and treats some communities and some colleagues better than others. Each level of leadership in section 6 describes what leading without fear or favour looks like in its sphere.

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THE LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORK

Three domains. Nine dimensions. One purpose.



A Leader's Character

What the public and colleagues can rely on. The values leaders live, the standards they uphold and the example they set.

A Leader's Knowledge

What leaders know. Themselves, their people and communities, and policing. The understanding behind sound judgement.

A Leader's Actions

What leaders do. Developing people, building teams and delivering for the public, lawfully, fairly and well.

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2.1 The Framework and the National Decision Model

Every officer and member of staff knows the National Decision Model. It puts the Code of Ethics at the centre of every decision and surrounds it with five stages. This framework maps onto it stage by stage, because a decision made with the NDM is only as good as the leadership of the people making it.



READING THE TWO TOGETHER

The NDM describes what to think about. This framework describes how the person thinking behaves: whether they admit the gaps in the intelligence, whether the room is safe enough for someone to say the plan is wrong, whether the rationale is recorded honestly, whether the supervisor backs the decision afterwards. The stages on the next page show which competencies carry each part of the model.

The NDM also says something about leadership directly: that a reasonable and proportionate decision made in accordance with the Code deserves the support of the supervisor and the organisation, even when the outcome was not as planned. That one sentence is the antidote to the risk aversion the Police Leadership Commission found across the service, and competency 33, Trusts Professional Judgement, is written to make it a habit.

The model is also the service's shared habit of review. Used after the event, by a supervisor in a debrief or by a panel years later, it asks the same questions in the same order, and the honesty of the answers depends on the culture the leader has built: whether the record was accurate, whether the gaps were admitted, whether the person who made the call expects to be backed or blamed.

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THE NATIONAL DECISION MODEL

Stage by stage: the leadership inside each decision

0 **Code of Ethics** *At the centre of every decision*

The Code sits at the centre of the National Decision Model. In this framework the whole Character domain sits there with it: the values a leader lives, the standards they uphold and the example they set are what make a decision ethical before it is made.

01 Acts with Courage · 02 Acts with Integrity · 03 Shows Respect and Fairness · 05 Serves the Public · 07 Acts Lawfully and Proportionately · 09 Acts Professionally

1 **Gather information and intelligence** *What is known, and what is not*

Gathering is a discipline of judgement as much as of process: distinguishing reliable from unreliable intelligence, noticing what an encounter is telling you, admitting the gaps.

16 Tests Their Own Judgement · 17 Reads People and Situations · 21 Knows the Craft of Policing · 22 Understands Partners and the Local Picture

2 **Assess threat and risk and develop a working strategy** *What could happen, to whom*

Risk is assessed by people with biases and under pressure. Composure, self-awareness and sound reasoning are what keep the assessment honest.

34 Makes Sound, Accountable Decisions · 21 Knows the Craft of Policing · 14 Knows Their Strengths, Limits and Biases · 15 Stays Composed and Resilient

3 **Consider powers and policy** *What may lawfully be done*

Powers and policy are contexts. The leadership is in applying the tests of lawfulness, necessity and proportionality, and in explaining why the safeguards exist.

07 Acts Lawfully and Proportionately · 09 Acts Professionally · 24 Understands How the Force Works · 23 Understands the National and Political Context

4 **Identify options and contingencies** *What could be done instead*

Options are better when the room is safe to challenge them. Inviting dissent before the decision and committing after it is leadership.

34 Makes Sound, Accountable Decisions · 28 Makes It Safe to Speak Up · 29 Builds Shared Leadership · 30 Communicates Clearly

5 **Take action and review what happened** *What was done, and what was learned*

Owning the decision, recording the rationale, backing the colleague who made a reasonable call, and reviewing with humility, including the decisions that went well.

11 Owns Decisions and Outcomes · 33 Trusts Professional Judgement · 16 Tests Their Own Judgement · 26 Provides Support and Challenge · 10 Shows Humility

Review as leadership. The NDM is as useful after the event as before it, and so is this framework. A supervisor who reviews a decision with the model, including the decisions that went well, and who treats the review as coaching rather than only as a check, builds judgement in the team. A supervisor who reaches for the conduct process first teaches the team to decide nothing.

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2.2 Using the Framework

The framework is a developmental tool, not a checklist or a compliance instrument. It supports reflection, feedback, coaching, supervision, debriefing and leadership development over time. Leadership development is not linear: every leader will show different strengths across different dimensions depending on role, experience and context.

3	9	35	359
DOMAINS	DIMENSIONS	COMPETENCIES	BEHAVIOURS
Character, Knowledge, Action	Three within each domain	Each with a one-sentence descriptor	Observable, active, transferable

Mutually reinforcing. Each behaviour sits where it is most strongly evidenced, but behaviours are not meant to be read or applied in isolation. Reflection strengthens decisions, relationships strengthen influence, expertise strengthens credibility. Empathy sits in Character and underpins the whole framework; communication is a competency in its own right and runs through every other. Duplication has been kept to a minimum so the framework stays readable.

Levels. The domains stay constant; their application shifts with responsibility, risk and complexity. Section 6 shows how leadership changes across four levels, from leading yourself to leading the service. Not every behaviour carries equal weight at every level, and misjudging behaviour against context is one of the ways leadership climates turn toxic.

Everyone. The framework applies to every officer, member of staff and volunteer and to those who govern and oversee policing. Police staff are more than a third of the workforce and lead at every level; the framework makes no distinction between the leadership expected of an officer and of a member of staff in the same role.

Alongside the College's tools. The Code of Ethics says what policing stands for; the Competency and Values Framework describes competencies for recruitment and promotion; the National Decision Model structures decisions. This framework sits alongside them as the behavioural description of leadership, mapped to a cross-sector standard, and it is accompanied by practical tools: self-review prompts, multi-source feedback, coaching guides, development pathways and selection questions.

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USING THE FRAMEWORK

The behaviours that undermine leadership

This framework describes the leadership policing wants to see. It also recognises the behaviours that undermine it, and expects every officer, member of staff and overseer to recognise and challenge them. Naming them helps everyone spot the early signs of a toxic climate in any team, station, command or chief officer group.

- Narcissistic
- Authoritarian
- Abusive
- Manipulative
- Arrogance
- Unpredictable
- Intimidating
- Self-serving
- Incompetence (refusing to delegate or learn)
- Micromanagement
- Bullying
- Paranoia
- Favouritism
- Deceitfulness
- Lack of accountability
- Resistance to change
- Lack of empathy
- Isolationism

Every competency in this framework works against at least two of these behaviours, and each competency panel shows which. Four are built to counter the patterns that the public evidence shows most often damage policing: **Makes It Safe to Speak Up** against intimidation, bullying and the culture in which speaking up is unwelcome; **Is Loyal Without Closing Ranks** against favouritism, silence and misplaced loyalty; **Trusts Professional Judgement** against micromanagement and the instinct to add another check after every incident; and **Shows Humility** against arrogance and the belief that the service knows best.

How forces use it. In recruitment, vetting and promotion, in supervision and end-of-year reviews, in the design of leadership programmes at every rank and grade, in debriefs and reviews, in staff surveys and culture reviews, in professional standards intelligence, in the induction of those who govern and oversee policing, and in the evidence given to the public, inspectors and elected representatives. Section 7 sets out these practical uses and the policy statement that sits behind them.

> **A note on judgement.** Not every behaviour is needed in equal measure in every situation. A leader in the middle of a critical incident needs composure and clear decisions more than a development conversation; a leader at the end of a quiet shift should be having that conversation. Reading the moment is itself part of the framework.

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3.0

WHAT THE PUBLIC AND COLLEAGUES CAN RELY ON

A Leader's Character

the standards people can rely on

Character is the foundation of leadership in policing. The office of constable rests on it: the public hand the police extraordinary powers on the understanding that the people who hold them will use them honestly, fairly and in the public interest, most of all when nobody is watching. The Code of Ethics asks for courage, respect and empathy, and public service. Those are matters of character before they are matters of procedure.

Every review of policing in recent years, from the Casey Review to the Angiolini Inquiry, found that where standards failed, the failure was first a failure of character in the people who led: silence about colleagues, denial under scrutiny, loyalty to the group above duty to the public. A Leader's Character describes the values leaders live, the standards they uphold and the example they set, so that the public and colleagues alike know what they can rely on.

- **Lives the Values**
  Courage, integrity, respect and fairness, loyalty without closing ranks, public service, empathy and compassion: the values that hold when it is hard.
- **Upholds the Highest Standards**
  Lawful and proportionate, decent, professional: the non-negotiables that keep the use of power legitimate and keep leaders worthy of trust.
- **Leads by Example**
  Humility, ownership, credibility rather than rank, and putting others first: character made visible, so that others have something to follow.

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3.1 Where the Code of Ethics and the Nolan Principles Sit

The Character domain is anchored on the ethical standards policing has already chosen for itself. Where a force has values of its own, they sit here too, and the table at the foot of the page shows how.

THE CODE OF ETHICS

The College of Policing's Code of Ethics (2024) rests on three ethical policing principles. Each maps directly onto competencies in this framework, and the statutory Code of Practice for Ethical Policing asks chief officers to build the culture in which they are lived.

Courage	Acts with Courage (01), Owns Decisions and Outcomes (11), Makes It Safe to Speak Up (28)
Respect and empathy	Shows Respect and Fairness (03), Shows Empathy and Compassion (06), Reads People and Situations (17)
Public service	Serves the Public (05), Puts Others First (13), Is Loyal Without Closing Ranks (04)

The Code's five expressions of courage, taking responsibility, setting an example, challenging unprofessional behaviour and practice, being honest, open and accountable, and encouraging feedback and scrutiny, are carried across competencies 01, 10, 11, 08 and 28.

THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC LIFE

The Nolan Principles apply to everyone who serves the public, officers, staff and those who govern policing alike. They are carried throughout Lives the Values, Upholds the Highest Standards and Leads by Example.

Selflessness	Serves the Public (05), Puts Others First (13)
Integrity	Acts with Integrity (02), Acts Professionally (09)
Objectivity	Shows Respect and Fairness (03), Makes Sound, Accountable Decisions (34)
Accountability	Owns Decisions and Outcomes (11), Shows Humility (10)
Openness	Communicates Clearly (30), Acts with Integrity (02)
Honesty	Acts with Integrity (02), Acts with Courage (01)
Leadership	The whole of Leads by Example (10 to 13)

WHERE A FORCE HAS ITS OWN VALUES, THEY SIT HERE

Many forces hold three to six values of their own, alongside the Code. They do not need a separate framework; each maps onto the competencies that make it observable. Write each value in a box with the competencies that carry it, so that colleagues see the connection every time they use the framework. Two worked examples are shown.

Example: Fairness
Shows Respect and Fairness (03), Acts Lawfully and Proportionately (07), Makes Sound, Accountable Decisions (34)

Example: Compassion
Shows Empathy and Compassion (06), Puts Others First (13), Provides Support and Challenge (26)

Your value
Competencies that carry it

Your value
Competencies that carry it

Your value
Competencies that carry it

Your value
Competencies that carry it

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3.2 Lives the Values

A LEADER'S CHARACTER · CARRIES NLF DIMENSION VALUES-DRIVEN

Values are the moral basis of how leaders lead. They anchor choices in principles a leader could explain to a victim, a detainee or a misconduct panel, and they hold when it would be easier to let them slip. Values-led leadership gives colleagues and the public consistency of character, and from that consistency comes trust.

> *In policing these values are the ones the Code of Ethics names, courage, respect and empathy, and public service, alongside the seven principles of public life and the attestation every constable makes to serve without favour or affection, malice or ill will.*

01 Acts with Courage

NLF: MORAL COURAGE

Does the right thing when it is hard, resists improper pressure and stands against anything that would bring policing into disrepute.

- Exercises sound moral judgement and chooses the ethically grounded course of action
- Makes difficult, principled decisions, including unpopular ones, and explains them
- Resists pressure, temptation or rationalisation when facing an ethical dilemma, from whatever direction it comes
- Challenges unethical, unfair or unjust behaviour in others, whatever their rank or standing
- Reports a colleague's wrongdoing, on or off duty, and backs others who do
- Amplifies the voices of victims, members of the public and colleagues who face injustice or unfair treatment
- Challenges practices and systems that produce unfair outcomes for some communities or some colleagues
- Says plainly what the evidence shows about disproportionality or poor service, even when it is uncomfortable for the force
- Acts despite personal fear when ethical action carries personal risk
- Encourages and enables moral courage in others through support and personal example

WORKS AGAINST: DECEITFULNESS, SELF-SERVING, INTIMIDATING

02 Acts with Integrity

NLF: INTEGRITY

Is honest and consistent in word and deed, on and off duty, so that colleagues and the public can take them at their word.

- Deals truthfully and honestly in every interaction with the public, colleagues, partners and the courts
- Does what is right even when no one is watching, on duty and off
- Holds themselves to the same standards they expect of colleagues, whatever their rank
- Honours commitments and follows through on promises made to victims, communities and colleagues
- Communicates decisions openly, explaining the rationale with clarity and transparency
- Gives a full and candid account when something goes wrong, including to investigations, inquests and inquiries
- Aligns personal conduct with the Code of Ethics and the force's values
- Upholds personal integrity when faced with competing interests, pressures or loyalties
- Reinforces a culture of honesty through clear expectations and personal example

WORKS AGAINST: DECEITFULNESS, MANIPULATIVE, LACK OF ACCOUNTABILITY

03 Shows Respect and Fairness

NLF: RESPECT FOR OTHERS

Treats every person with dignity, fairness and impartiality, whatever their background or the circumstances of the encounter.

- Treats every person with respect and courtesy, including suspects, detainees and those who are hostile
- Acts reasonably and judiciously, assuming good intent in colleagues and the public
- Explains the reason for a stop, a search or the use of a power so that the person understands it, whatever the outcome
- Applies fairness, impartiality and transparency in decisions that affect people, including postings, opportunity, recognition and discipline
- Ensures equitable access to development, opportunity and advancement for officers and staff alike
- Promotes voice, participation and belonging for colleagues and communities across every group
- Values individuality and diversity of perspective, background and experience
- Addresses behaviour that belittles, dismisses, marginalises or undermines others
- Cultivates inclusive and respectful conduct within their sphere of influence

WORKS AGAINST: FAVOURITISM, BULLYING, LACK OF EMPATHY

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3.2 Lives the Values *continued*

A LEADER'S CHARACTER · CARRIES NLF DIMENSION VALUES-DRIVEN

04 Is Loyal Without Closing Ranks

NLF: LOYALTY

Commits to colleagues and to the mission, and refuses the misplaced loyalty that shields poor conduct.

- Displays consistent commitment to the force's purpose, values and people
- Advocates for colleagues' interests and wellbeing, including when they are not in the room
- Supports colleagues' ideas and contributions appropriately in wider forums
- Offers constructive and responsible challenge to colleagues and senior officers when necessary, putting the public first
- Balances loyalty to individuals with duty to the public, the law and the force
- Reconciles competing loyalties by putting the collective purpose first
- Refuses to close ranks, putting the public and the standards of the office above protecting a colleague
- Rejects blind or misguided loyalty that would compromise integrity or standards
- Commits fully to a decision once it is properly made, even when they argued for another course

WORKS AGAINST: DECEITFULNESS, PARANOIA, ISOLATIONISM

05 Serves the Public

NLF: SERVICE

Puts the public interest before personal status or convenience and stewards the force's resources and reputation.

- Prioritises the public interest and the collective purpose above personal status, benefit, convenience or short-term self-interest
- Stewards public money, police time and people responsibly, balancing effectiveness with restraint and long-term sustainability
- Protects the force's interests and integrity against competing or misaligned agendas
- Enhances the reputation of policing through ethical, values-driven conduct in every public and external setting
- Promotes sustainable practices that preserve social, environmental and institutional resources
- Invests in others' development to strengthen the force's long-term capacity and resilience
- Supports initiatives that contribute positively to the communities the force serves
- Privileges long-term public benefit over short-term gain, expediency or a quick result

WORKS AGAINST: SELF-SERVING, NARCISSISTIC

06 Shows Empathy and Compassion

NLF: HUMANITY AND COMPASSION

Recognises the physical, mental and emotional challenges that colleagues and the public face, and responds with care.

- Listens attentively and responds with empathy to others' feelings, needs and perspectives
- Shows kindness and appreciation beyond formal courtesy or role obligation
- Offers support proactively when a colleague or a member of the public is experiencing difficulty or strain
- Recognises signs of distress, trauma or vulnerability in colleagues and the public, and responds with care and sensitivity
- Treats victims, witnesses, suspects and detainees with compassion and dignity, including those who have caused harm
- Looks out for colleagues exposed to trauma and makes it normal to ask for help
- Communicates in language and tone that is constructive, encouraging and free of victim-blaming
- Shows patience and tolerance toward differing experiences, views and emotional responses
- Responds to honest mistakes with understanding, focusing on learning rather than blame
- Fosters a climate of care and compassion within their sphere of influence

WORKS AGAINST: LACK OF EMPATHY, ABUSIVE, BULLYING

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3.3 Upholds the Highest Standards

A LEADER'S CHARACTER · CARRIES NLF DIMENSION UPHOLDS THE HIGHEST STANDARDS

Leaders are custodians of standards that are not theirs to lower. They use powers lawfully, necessarily and proportionately, behave with decency on and off duty, and uphold the Standards of Professional Behaviour and the dignity of the office. Living these standards, and helping others own them rather than merely comply, is what gives leadership its legitimacy.

> *The Standards of Professional Behaviour, the statutory Code of Practice for Ethical Policing and the Code of Ethics all describe conduct, and conduct is leadership: it is what the public and colleagues see officers and staff do.*

07 Acts Lawfully and Proportionately

NLF: LAWFULNESS

Uses powers and authority lawfully, necessarily and proportionately, and helps others understand why the law and policy require what they do.

- Acts within the law, the Code of Ethics and force policy, making the expectations clear to others
- Applies the tests of lawfulness, necessity and proportionality to their own use of powers, and asks the same of others
- Explains why a legal safeguard, policy or procedure exists, so that colleagues understand and own it rather than merely comply
- Promotes respect for the law, human rights and regulatory requirements through personal example
- Challenges unlawful or non-compliant behaviour through appropriate and proportionate channels
- Reports concerns about conduct to professional standards promptly and thanks colleagues who do the same
- Promotes safeguarding, equality and inclusion obligations as matters of conduct, not only of policy
- Models accurate, transparent and diligent record-keeping, including the rationale for decisions, so that others can trust them and the courts can rely on them

WORKS AGAINST: DECEITFULNESS, LACK OF ACCOUNTABILITY, SELF-SERVING

08 Acts with Decency

NLF: APPROPRIATENESS

Behaves with decency in every setting, on and off duty, and challenges language and conduct that fall below it, however it is dressed up.

- Adjusts personal conduct to suit the context, audience and setting, on the street, in custody, in the station, online and off duty
- Considers the impact of personal conduct on the public, on colleagues and on confidence in policing
- Refrains from undue assumptions, judgement or criticism of others
- Challenges inappropriate and unacceptable language and behaviour
- Challenges "banter", messages and group content that demean others, however they are excused
- Intervenes to prevent or stop the mistreatment of others, including by colleagues
- Uses position and voice to include marginalised or underrepresented views
- Protects the confidentiality and dignity of victims, witnesses, detainees and colleagues in every conversation and channel

WORKS AGAINST: ABUSIVE, INTIMIDATING, UNPREDICTABLE

09 Acts Professionally

NLF: PROFESSIONALISM

Upholds the Standards of Professional Behaviour and the dignity of the office, free from bias, favouritism or improper influence.

- Aligns decisions and conduct with the Standards of Professional Behaviour and the force's values
- Consistently upholds professional codes of conduct and disciplinary standards, on and off duty
- Maintains personal and professional boundaries, especially with vulnerable people met through their role, avoiding over-familiarity and conflicts of interest
- Declares interests, associations and relationships that could compromise or appear to compromise their impartiality
- Ensures impartial decisions, free from bias, favouritism or improper influence
- Models a professional demeanour in tone, conduct, communication, dress and personal bearing
- Represents the force responsibly, safeguarding public confidence and credibility
- Promotes and encourages adherence to professional expectations and standards in others

WORKS AGAINST: ARROGANCE, FAVOURITISM, UNPREDICTABLE

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3.4 Leads by Example

A LEADER'S CHARACTER · CARRIES NLF DIMENSION MODELS EXEMPLARY BEHAVIOURS

Leaders are judged by what they do as much as by what they say. Leading by example means admitting what they do not know and welcoming scrutiny, owning decisions and their outcomes, earning commitment through credibility rather than rank, and putting others first. It is how character becomes visible, and how it becomes something others want to emulate.

> *Rank gives a leader the authority to direct. It does not give them the respect of the team or the confidence of the public; those are earned by example, every shift.*

10 Shows Humility

NLF: HUMILITY

Acknowledges limits and mistakes, invites scrutiny and learns from it, rather than assuming the service knows best.

- Openly acknowledges their own limitations and mistakes, building trust and rapport
- Conscientiously seeks feedback and applies it to learn and improve
- Listens and engages attentively, valuing others' ideas, perspectives and experience
- Willingly seeks and accepts assistance, harnessing the strengths of others
- Welcomes independent scrutiny, inspection and community challenge as a source of learning rather than a threat
- Offers authentic gratitude and appreciation for the support of others
- Creates space for others' voices, encouraging input, challenge and participation
- Remains modest, avoiding self-promotion, arrogance or ego-driven behaviour

WORKS AGAINST: NARCISSISTIC, ARROGANCE, INCOMPETENCE (REFUSING TO LEARN)

11 Owns Decisions and Outcomes

NLF: ACCOUNTABILITY

Takes responsibility for decisions and their consequences, their own and their team's, and explains them openly.

- Accepts responsibility for their own decisions and actions, including the use of powers
- Takes accountability for team decisions and outcomes, including outcomes for victims and communities
- Delivers on agreed decisions and commitments
- Owns and addresses mistakes, failures and consequences, capturing the lessons
- Gives an honest account of a decision to the public and to scrutiny bodies, including when the outcome was poor
- Communicates outcomes transparently, owning successes as much as failures
- Fosters a positive culture of accountability and ownership in others
- Clarifies responsibilities and accountability expectations for others

WORKS AGAINST: LACK OF ACCOUNTABILITY, MANIPULATIVE

12 Leads by Credibility, Not Rank

NLF: INFLUENCE

Inspires and persuades through example, calm conviction and trust, not through the authority of rank alone.

- Projects confidence and conviction through calm, clear and reassuring communication
- Inspires confidence through assertive and decisive action, with measured self-assurance
- Persuades others ethically, building consensus around shared goals rather than relying on rank
- Inspires optimism, reframing setbacks as opportunities for growth and improvement
- Achieves buy-in by involving others in shaping decisions
- Earns the confidence of communities and partners as the face of the force, building trust through collaboration
- Builds support for ideas and initiatives through relationships and networks

WORKS AGAINST: AUTHORITARIAN, MANIPULATIVE, INTIMIDATING

13 Puts Others First

NLF: SELFLESSNESS

Gives time, credit and protection to others, sharing the burden without neglecting their own wellbeing.

- Offers time generously and proactively to support others, without expecting a return
- Willingly shares burdens to reduce pressure on others, accepting the impact on themselves
- Protects the efforts and wellbeing of others, even at personal cost
- Balances support for others with sustainable self-care, avoiding harmful self-sacrifice
- Models looking after their own wellbeing, so that others feel able to do the same
- Places collective success above self-recognition, redirecting praise to others
- Shares credit publicly, highlighting the contributions of others
- Steps back in success to let others' efforts shine

WORKS AGAINST: SELF-SERVING, NARCISSISTIC

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4.0

WHAT LEADERS KNOW

A Leader's Knowledge

the understanding behind sound judgement

Leading a team, a command or a force takes more than operational expertise alone. It takes the self-awareness to know how one lands on others and where one's own biases lie, the insight to understand the people and communities one serves and leads, and the professional and contextual knowledge to make sound decisions in a complex, scrutinised and changing environment.

Knowledge is developmental, not fixed. It grows through learning, reflection, feedback, debriefing and experience. When leaders deepen their understanding of themselves, of their people and communities, and of policing, they lead with greater credibility and insight, and they make the judgements on which public confidence depends.

Knows Themselves
Self-awareness, composure and resilience, and the habit of testing one's own judgement: the inner work that makes everything else possible.

Knows Their People and Communities
Reading people and situations, understanding the team, repairing trust, and understanding communities and cultures: the insight behind legitimacy.

Knows Policing
The craft and the evidence, partners and the local picture, the national and political context, and how the force works: professional knowledge put to use.

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4.1 Knows Themselves

A LEADER'S KNOWLEDGE · CARRIES NLF DIMENSION KNOWS THEMSELF

Leadership begins with understanding how one's own values, emotions, habits and biases shape how one decides and how one treats people. Leaders learn to recognise their triggers and regulate their responses, to recover from setbacks and sustain themselves through a career of exposure to harm, and to think about their own thinking so that their judgement improves over time.

> *Policing asks a great deal of composure: the volatile encounter, the custody suite at three in the morning, the critical incident, the inquiry years later. Self-knowledge is what lets a leader stay steady, fair and humane when it counts.*

14 Knows Their Strengths, Limits and Biases

NLF: SELF-AWARENESS

Understands their values, triggers, biases and impact on others, and seeks evidence of it.

- Identifies the personal values, ambitions, motivators and demotivators that shape their behaviour and decisions
- Analyses their strengths and limitations against the expectations of their role and their aspirations
- Evaluates their stress patterns, triggers, unhelpful habits and the effect of their emotional responses on others
- Recognises their own feelings, emotions and biases as they influence judgement and self-talk in the moment
- Examines how their own assumptions and biases could shape decisions about people, risk, vulnerability and the use of powers
- Seeks, integrates and reflects on feedback to evaluate the impact of their leadership on others
- Identifies blind spots in their leadership to prioritise areas for development
- Reflects on past experiences and interactions, drawing lessons to adjust future practice
- Distinguishes the impact they intended from the impact they actually had
- Uses assessment tools and multi-source feedback to build objective self-knowledge

WORKS AGAINST: ARROGANCE, UNPREDICTABLE, NARCISSISTIC

15 Stays Composed and Resilient

NLF: SELF-MANAGEMENT AND RESILIENCE

Regulates their response under pressure, recovers from setbacks and sustains their own wellbeing across a career of exposure to harm.

- Thinks before responding, regulating impulses to avoid emotionally reactive or destructive behaviour
- Anticipates how stress escalates from triggers, regulating their response to minimise the impact on colleagues and the public
- Reframes their own mistakes, setbacks and self-criticism as opportunities to learn, recover and grow
- Practises self-compassion to sustain confidence, self-efficacy and a positive self-narrative
- Moves forward constructively and with determination amid uncertainty, ambiguity or incomplete information
- Adapts their thinking and behaviour flexibly to new, changing or unexpected demands
- Sustains effort with optimism, humour and perseverance through challenge and adversity
- Recognises the cumulative effect of exposure to trauma and seeks support before it affects judgement or conduct
- Seeks support from relationships and networks when demands exceed their emotional capacity

WORKS AGAINST: UNPREDICTABLE, ABUSIVE, INTIMIDATING

16 Tests Their Own Judgement

NLF: METACOGNITION AND REFLECTIVE THINKING

Thinks about how they are thinking, questions assumptions and evidence, and reviews decisions to improve the next one.

- Identifies the cognitive processes and systematic biases shaping their reactions and the quality of their reasoning
- Monitors how changing context influences their assumptions, problem-framing and judgement
- Sustains attention and focus under pressure through deliberate cognitive control
- Distinguishes material factors from noise when analysing complex information and intelligence
- Interrogates data, intelligence and evidence to challenge assumptions and inform reasoning
- Critically reviews decisions and their underlying logic to improve future judgement
- Uses the National Decision Model to review their own decisions after the event, including those that went well
- Judges when to rely on intuition, stable assumptions or analysis of data, and calibrates accordingly
- Evaluates others' ideas critically, deliberately integrating challenge and diverse perspectives
- Synthesises information from multiple sources into coherent understanding and conclusions
- Redirects unproductive rumination toward constructive analysis of next steps

WORKS AGAINST: ARROGANCE, INCOMPETENCE, PARANOIA

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4.2 Knows Their People and Communities

A LEADER'S KNOWLEDGE · CARRIES NLF DIMENSION KNOWS OTHERS

A leader's people are their colleagues and the communities they serve. Knowing them means noticing what people feel and what they leave unsaid, understanding what motivates and constrains each member of a team, recognising when trust is wearing thin, inside the force or outside it, and understanding how history, identity and culture shape the way communities see the police.

> *Peel's principle that the police are the public and the public are the police is a statement about knowledge: a leader who does not understand the communities the force serves, including those it has served least well, cannot police them by consent.*

17 Reads People and Situations

NLF: SOCIAL AWARENESS

Picks up the emotional and social cues in a team, a briefing or an encounter, and adjusts their approach.

- Distinguishes others' emotions from verbal and non-verbal cues, adjusting their own response
- Interprets observed social cues and anticipates their effect on team dynamics and climate
- Detects misalignment between words, tone and body language
- Notices signs of fear, vulnerability, intoxication or crisis in an encounter and adjusts their approach to de-escalate
- Notices silence, hesitation or withdrawal as potential signs of withheld views or discomfort
- Recognises when the collective mood changes across a team, a shift or a command, affecting interactions or performance
- Identifies informal patterns of influence that shape decision-making and participation
- Identifies whose contributions are ignored or marginalised, detecting missing perspectives
- Infers underlying concerns from recurring emotional patterns and tensions
- Considers others' perspectives before forming judgements in emotionally charged situations

WORKS AGAINST: LACK OF EMPATHY, ISOLATIONISM

18 Understands the Team

NLF: TEAM DYNAMICS

Knows each person's strengths, pressures and motivations and how the team works together, and where it does not.

- Identifies individual strengths, weaknesses and potential within the team
- Identifies individual motivators, demotivators and biases affecting contribution and engagement
- Identifies how different colleagues respond to different stresses and pressures, including shift work, cancelled rest days and exposure to harm
- Assesses role demands against individual strengths to align fit and contribution
- Identifies patterns of constructive and unproductive interaction affecting team effectiveness
- Identifies the team norms that shape challenge, accountability and information sharing
- Analyses how roles interact to identify gaps, overlaps and collective blind spots
- Recognises individual workload or wellbeing factors constraining the team's performance
- Evaluates team climate, participation and cohesion to diagnose barriers to performance
- Identifies how differences in perspective shape participation, challenge and decision quality

WORKS AGAINST: FAVOURITISM, MICROMANAGEMENT

19 Builds and Repairs Trust

NLF: RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

Spots tension and eroding trust early and works to restore respectful, effective relationships.

- Identifies areas of task, relationship or process conflict to manage tensions proactively
- Explores sources of tension affecting perceptions of fairness, equality and mutual respect
- Identifies tensions between individual needs and collective team objectives
- Identifies early warning signs of trust erosion, within the team and with communities, and explores effective remedies
- Identifies individual biases that could affect trust, respect and relationship quality
- Listens attentively and without judgement to concerns raised in interpersonal exchanges
- Identifies and builds on common ground to strengthen rapport and alignment
- Communicates with tact and diplomacy, promoting reciprocity and mutual respect
- Repairs trust with a community or a colleague after an incident by listening before explaining
- Applies emotional and social awareness to strengthen empathy, rapport and relational trust

WORKS AGAINST: PARANOIA, MANIPULATIVE, ISOLATIONISM

20 Understands Communities and Cultures

NLF: CULTURAL AWARENESS

Understands the communities the force serves and the cultures within it, and adapts how they engage.

- Identifies how societal, community, organisational and team cultures shape conduct, dynamics and performance
- Seeks to understand the history between the police and the communities they serve, and how it shapes trust today
- Analyses differences in inter-generational needs and expectations among colleagues and the public
- Identifies verbal and non-verbal differences and adapts their communication accordingly
- Identifies how cultural norms influence emotional expression and interpretation
- Reviews assumptions and suspends judgement when working across cultural differences
- Adapts interaction norms to align with the cultural expectations of the communities the force serves
- Seeks to deepen knowledge of the communities, faiths, languages and cultures in the force area
- Identifies how team and specialist sub-cultures within the force shape what is tolerated and what is challenged
- Anticipates cultural tensions and evaluates their impact on inclusion, dynamics and legitimacy
- Analyses how diverse cultural perspectives enhance problem-solving and organisational learning
- Demonstrates confidence, composure and humility in culturally diverse interactions

WORKS AGAINST: LACK OF EMPATHY, ARROGANCE

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4.3 Knows Policing

A LEADER'S KNOWLEDGE · CARRIES NLF DIMENSION KNOWS THEIR PROFESSION

Trust and credibility are built on professional competence. Leaders bring real expertise to their roles, whether on response, in investigation, in a control room or in a corporate function, and they keep it current. They understand the needs of victims, communities and partners, read the national and political picture for what it means locally, and understand how the force works well enough to improve it.

> *Evidence-based practice, the voice of victims and community scrutiny, inspection findings, the police and crime plan, national reform and the political context of policing all shape what a force needs its leaders to know.*

21 Knows the Craft of Policing

NLF: PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL EXPERTISE

Holds the professional knowledge, evidence and judgement their role demands, and keeps it current.

- Demonstrates the breadth and depth of expertise their role demands, to underpin professional credibility
- Applies professional expertise with sound judgement in complex, fast-moving or high-accountability situations
- Maintains professional currency through continuous learning and awareness of emerging law, research, methods and technology
- Synthesises research evidence, "what works" findings and peer expertise to inform judgement and contribute to best practice
- Distinguishes reliable from unreliable evidence and intelligence, recognising bias and limitation before acting on it
- Aligns professional decisions with the force's standards, goals and ethical expectations
- Evaluates how legal, policy and regulatory requirements must be integrated into plans for their area
- Interprets performance and outcome data to inform evidence-based improvement
- Anticipates the implications of legal, policy and regulatory change for practice and delivery
- Sustains professional credibility through consistent, competent and ethical conduct

WORKS AGAINST: INCOMPETENCE, ARROGANCE

22 Understands Partners and the Local Picture

NLF: EXTERNAL CONTEXT AND STAKEHOLDERS

Understands the needs of communities, victims and partners, the governance and inspection landscape, and the pressures on the local area.

- Evaluates legal and regulatory governance requirements, including inspection, oversight and assurance findings
- Assesses local and regional policy shifts and priorities, including the police and crime plan, to align the force's work
- Assesses community and stakeholder needs and expectations, influencing the force's priorities
- Listens to victims, community scrutiny groups and independent advisers and weighs what they say in judgements about service
- Assesses the practice of other forces, sector leaders and trends to identify threats and opportunities
- Assesses alignment with policing's regulatory, inspection and governance models
- Assesses volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity in the environment to inform adaptive judgement and risk awareness
- Evaluates partnerships and operational dependencies, including with health, local authorities, the criminal justice system and the voluntary sector
- Assesses workforce, funding and supply constraints affecting resilience and continuity
- Monitors environmental and sustainability obligations shaping the force's practice

WORKS AGAINST: ISOLATIONISM, RESISTANCE TO CHANGE

23 Understands the National and Political Context

NLF: STRATEGIC AND NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Reads the national policy, political, legal and societal context in which policing operates and its implications for legitimacy.

- Evaluates political, economic and funding developments shaping long-term priorities
- Scans geopolitical, demographic, societal and technological trends for strategic implications and opportunities
- Analyses power, authority and influence across government, oversight bodies, partners and the public
- Evaluates the networks of forces, national bodies, agencies and partners that shape the national system of policing
- Evaluates alignment with national priorities, the strategic policing requirement and public-value commitments
- Engages elected representatives and the public without partisanship, protecting the operational independence of policing
- Applies strategic frameworks and concepts to evaluate the force's choices and trade-offs
- Integrates historical lessons, public inquiries and comparative cases into strategic judgement
- Evaluates emerging technologies, data and innovation for strategic disruption, opportunity and risk
- Assesses the force's strategic narrative and sources of reputational risk
- Stress-tests the resilience of strategy and plans against plausible future scenarios

WORKS AGAINST: RESISTANCE TO CHANGE, ISOLATIONISM, ARROGANCE

24 Understands How the Force Works

NLF: ORGANISATIONAL SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES

Understands how the force's structures, processes, governance and data shape outcomes, and where they help or hinder.

- Evaluates the force's structures and interdependencies that enhance or constrain delivery
- Analyses formal and informal decision-making processes shaping outcomes
- Evaluates how governance, assurance and accountability systems sustain trust and legitimacy
- Evaluates the force's risk frameworks, strengthening the capacity to anticipate and mitigate disruption
- Evaluates how resource and demand allocation processes influence sustainability and effectiveness
- Interprets performance indicators and measures of effectiveness to identify systemic improvement
- Interprets data on outcomes, disproportionality and workforce experience to find where the force's systems produce unequal results
- Critiques internal processes to identify inefficiencies, unnecessary bureaucracy and operating constraints
- Evaluates the level of stakeholder influence and support affecting the force's ecosystem
- Assesses how policy and procedural requirements shape operating effectiveness
- Evaluates the learning and feedback loops embedded in systems to support continuous improvement

WORKS AGAINST: INCOMPETENCE, MICROMANAGEMENT

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5.0

WHAT LEADERS DO

A Leader's Actions

how people, teams and outcomes for the public are delivered

The most visible part of leadership is what leaders do: the actions, decisions and behaviours that shape the experience of those they lead and those they serve. A leader's actions set the culture of a team, a station and a force, and they are what others observe, learn from and copy.

Drawing on action-centred leadership, leaders hold three needs in balance: the individual, the team and the task. They develop people so that they grow in confidence, capability and judgement; they build teams in which people feel safe to speak up and committed to one another; and they deliver outcomes for the public that are lawful, fair and effective. Sustainable improvement comes from attending to all three, not from pursuing results at the expense of the people who deliver them.

Develops People
A leader's own growth, support with challenge, and belief in others' potential: leaders who build the next generation of leaders.

Builds Teams
Safety to speak up, shared leadership, and listening before telling: the conditions in which a team does its best work for the public.

Delivers for the Public
Sustained high performance, clear intent, trusted professional judgement, sound decisions and partnership: turning purpose into outcomes the public can feel.

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5.1 Develops People

A LEADER'S ACTIONS · CARRIES NLF DIMENSION DEVELOPS INDIVIDUALS

Leaders build other leaders, and they never stop building themselves. Through deliberate practice, feedback, coaching and balanced support and challenge, they help every officer and member of staff grow in confidence, skill and judgement, and they model the curiosity and humility that make learning a career-long habit rather than a course attended once.

> *The Police Leadership Commission found that leadership development in policing is inconsistent and that the sergeant, more than any other role, makes or breaks the team. Developing people is where that finding is answered.*

25 Develops Themselves

NLF: DEVELOPING THEMSELVES

Takes ownership of their own learning, reflection and wellbeing across their career.

- Sets specific development goals linked to personal growth and leadership impact
- Diagnoses the priority knowledge and skill gaps affecting their effectiveness
- Creates purposeful development plans and routines to sustain personal learning
- Takes ownership of their development through self-motivation and accountability for continuous growth
- Applies new learning deliberately to improve day-to-day practice
- Learns from reviews, inquiries, inspection reports and misconduct outcomes beyond their own force
- Seeks targeted coaching, mentoring and peer support to guide ongoing development
- Seeks multi-source feedback on their impact and integrates the insights
- Reflects critically on conduct, feedback and experience to identify areas for improvement
- Transfers learning across contexts, adapting behaviour after success, failure or change
- Maintains physical, mental and emotional routines for sustained health, wellbeing and performance
- Balances ambition with reality to sustain focus, energy and performance over time

WORKS AGAINST: INCOMPETENCE (REFUSING TO LEARN), ARROGANCE, RESISTANCE TO CHANGE

26 Provides Support and Challenge

NLF: PROVIDING SUPPORT AND CHALLENGE

Gives the feedback, coaching, reassurance and honest challenge that help each person perform and grow.

- Guides colleagues to translate needs and aspirations into actionable goals, plans and learning priorities
- Provides reassurance and steadiness during uncertainty, sustaining confidence and focus
- Provides timely, constructive feedback that reinforces strengths and promotes learning and growth
- Sets stretch objectives that link personal growth to collective goals
- Facilitates reflection on past experience to enhance learning and improvement
- Uses the review of an incident, a decision or body-worn footage as a coaching conversation, not only a check
- Explores collaboratively how best to support others' growth and development
- Guides recovery and learning after a setback, a complaint or a failure, rebuilding confidence and adaptive performance
- Guides problem-solving to overcome obstacles and sustain performance under pressure
- Promotes physical, mental and emotional wellbeing to sustain energy and resilience
- Recognises others' effort, contribution and impact, strengthening confidence, motivation and self-efficacy
- Addresses poor performance early and honestly through conversation, rather than letting it drift into a conduct matter
- Reviews development progress continually, adjusting the balance of guidance, support and challenge
- Balances time on their own tasks with visible presence alongside the team

WORKS AGAINST: MICROMANAGEMENT, LACK OF EMPATHY, BULLYING

27 Inspires and Enables Others

NLF: INSPIRING AND ENABLING OTHERS

Grows the next generation of leaders by expressing belief in people, giving them responsibility and opening opportunity fairly.

- Expresses belief in others' abilities and potential through sustained trust, time and encouragement
- Provides progressive responsibility and exposure that develops confidence and decision-making
- Provides mentoring and guidance that builds autonomy, independent confidence and professional judgement
- Creates meaningful opportunities for others to learn, broaden their skills and progress
- Aligns emerging talent with opportunities to maximise growth and contribution
- Identifies emerging strengths and development needs to inform long-term growth planning
- Develops others' habits of self-reflection to sustain independent, continuous learning
- Addresses under-performance through constructive dialogue and structured development planning
- Affirms growth and progress positively, clarifying next steps and opportunities to build self-belief
- Opens access to courses, acting-up, specialist postings and mentoring on transparent criteria, across ranks, grades and backgrounds
- Encourages strategic, bigger-picture thinking to broaden understanding, perspective and ambition

WORKS AGAINST: FAVOURITISM, MICROMANAGEMENT, SELF-SERVING

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5.2 Builds Teams

A LEADER'S ACTIONS · CARRIES NLF DIMENSION BUILDS TEAMS

Leaders build cohesive, inclusive teams in which people feel safe to raise concerns, report wrongdoing, try things and learn from mistakes. Leadership in a team is shared: leaders invite colleagues to lead within their expertise, defer to them when that serves the public, and listen before they speak. High intellectual friction and low social friction is the mark of a team that is working.

> *A response team, a neighbourhood team, an investigation team or a control room is where the culture of a force is actually made. What happened to the last person who raised a concern tells everyone whether it is safe to do so.*

28 Makes It Safe to Speak Up

NLF: CREATING PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

Builds a team where people raise concerns, admit mistakes and challenge ideas without fear of consequence.

- Establishes clear and respectful norms that prevent belittlement, ridicule and exclusion
- Invites informed, constructive challenge of ideas and assumptions, reducing fear of consequences
- Responds with composure and tolerance when mistakes, risks or unwelcome information are raised
- Thanks and visibly protects colleagues who report wrongdoing or raise a concern, so that speaking up is seen to be rewarded
- Treats a near miss or an honest mistake as learning, and distinguishes it clearly from misconduct
- Invites candid discussion and shared learning once assumptions, freedoms and constraints are understood
- Examines ideas critically and respectfully, keeping debate on issues rather than individuals
- Gives fair, reasoned and courteous explanations when disagreeing or declining a suggestion
- Encourages inquisitive questioning to identify gaps in knowledge and build shared understanding
- Facilitates curiosity-led dialogue that supports creativity, critical thinking and collaborative problem-solving
- Creates a safe-to-fail environment that enables purposeful experimentation, initiative and learning
- Actively seeks underrepresented perspectives and incorporates them into discussion
- Ensures decisions reflect reasoned contributions from collective participation before moving forward

WORKS AGAINST: INTIMIDATING, BULLYING, AUTHORITARIAN, PARANOIA

29 Builds Shared Leadership

NLF: CULTIVATING TEAMSHIP

Treats leadership as shared, inviting challenge before decisions and securing commitment after them.

- Affirms leadership as a shared endeavour with interdependent roles and responsibilities, whatever the rank
- Clarifies decision authority and accountability to set role expectations and reduce ambiguity
- Enables colleagues' agency, autonomy and influence in addressing shared leadership challenges
- Invites constructive dissent, feedback and independent, critical thought
- Willingly defers to others when their expertise best serves the team and the public
- Balances rank and authority with openness, encouraging participation and challenge before decisions are taken
- Builds consensus, commitment and shared ownership around collectively agreed decisions
- Recognises and celebrates cooperation and co-creation that contributes to collective success
- Creates opportunities for others, including police staff, PCSOs and volunteers, to lead within their areas of expertise
- Encourages peer-to-peer accountability for upholding shared values and standards
- Facilitates collective reflection and debriefing to strengthen leader and follower effectiveness over time
- Secures commitment once decisions are made, distinguishing destructive dissent from constructive criticism

WORKS AGAINST: AUTHORITARIAN, MICROMANAGEMENT, NARCISSISTIC

30 Communicates Clearly

NLF: COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY

Listens first, speaks plainly and explains the reasons, so that colleagues and the public understand and can act.

- Listens actively and attentively to understand perspectives before responding or deciding
- Uses effective questioning to confirm and deepen understanding
- Confirms the intent of a communication and the needs of the audience before delivering key messages
- Uses clear, concise and unambiguous language, free of jargon, to convey key messages to colleagues and the public
- Adapts language, tone and style to suit victims, communities, colleagues, partners and the media
- Provides relevant context to aid understanding and alignment with the force's objectives
- Explains decisions and rationale honestly and transparently, including unwelcome ones
- Briefs clearly before an operation or a shift, confirming that intent and constraints are understood
- Invites questions and feedback to confirm and reinforce shared understanding
- Integrates verbal and non-verbal cues to reinforce meaning and authenticity
- Chooses delivery method and timing to match audience, message complexity and sensitivity
- Communicates with positivity, conviction and optimism to inspire collective support

WORKS AGAINST: MANIPULATIVE, DECEITFULNESS, ISOLATIONISM

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5.3 Delivers for the Public

A LEADER'S ACTIONS · CARRIES NLF DIMENSION ACHIEVES OUTCOMES

Leaders turn intent into purposeful, coordinated action and enduring results. They set clear purpose and connect everyday work to it, sustain high performance through clear expectations and belonging, trust professional judgement within clear boundaries, decide soundly and in good time, and work in partnership beyond the force so that the public get more than any one organisation can give them.

> *Outcomes for the public include crimes prevented and solved and offenders brought to justice, but also victims who feel believed, powers used fairly, communities who trust the force, and a workforce that is well led.*

31 Builds and Sustains High Performance

NLF: BUILDING AND SUSTAINING HIGH PERFORMANCE

Sets clear expectations and disciplined standards, and keeps the team focused and energised through pressure.

- Clarifies roles, responsibilities and expectations in line with knowledge, skill, experience and specialism
- Defines and agrees shared values and standards of behaviour with the team to promote collective accountability
- Establishes a healthy, competitive team spirit that stretches capability and sustains high standards
- Builds collective identity, belonging and community grounded in mutual respect and shared values
- Builds cohesion and shared belief through collaborative problem-solving and celebrating success
- Agrees consistent routines with the team that sustain performance, focus and momentum, reviewing them together as needs change
- Keeps the team focused on outcomes for the public rather than activity or numbers for their own sake
- Facilitates high intellectual friction through respectful challenge and evidence-informed debate
- Reduces social friction by focusing on the problem, not the person
- Draws on collective insight to identify opportunities to improve effectiveness
- Encourages bold but disciplined risk-taking and innovation to drive improvement
- Adapts their leadership approach dynamically to sustain performance through challenge or change
- Energises teams under pressure by reinforcing shared purpose, resilience and mutual support

WORKS AGAINST: MICROMANAGEMENT, FAVOURITISM, AUTHORITARIAN

32 Sets Clear Purpose and Intent

NLF: DEFINING AND ALIGNING PURPOSE

Gives people a clear intent and priorities, connected to keeping people safe, so that effort is coherent and everyone knows why.

- Articulates a compelling purpose for the team's work from which shared commitment can be built
- Communicates intent, objectives and priorities to clarify individual and collective focus
- Integrates ends, ways and means to keep strategy coherent and effort aligned
- Translates intent into achievable objectives and meaningful outcomes that sustain motivation and momentum
- Engages others in co-creating goals and outcomes, strengthening shared ownership and accountability
- Reinforces the purpose regularly by connecting everyday work to preventing crime, keeping people safe and public confidence
- Reconciles routine choices and decisions with real progress toward the collective purpose
- Frames barriers and challenges accurately, discerning their causes and their effects on outcomes
- Balances ambition with reality when prioritising under constraint, demand or uncertainty
- Reviews and adjusts priorities as context shifts to keep purpose relevant and achievable

WORKS AGAINST: UNPREDICTABLE, SELF-SERVING

33 Trusts Professional Judgement

NLF: EMPOWERING OTHERS

Delegates real responsibility within clear boundaries and backs people's discretion, intervening only when standards or safety demand it.

- Clarifies delegated freedoms, operating constraints, decision rights and risk tolerance
- Confirms understanding of intent, tasks and outcomes, giving room for clarifying questions
- Delegates meaningful responsibility matched to individual competence and context
- Determines which decisions can be delegated, shared or retained, and explains why
- Entrusts delegated responsibilities with clear ownership and accountability for outcomes
- Provides the information and context needed for effective independent decision-making
- Demonstrates faith in others' judgement through proportionate oversight and support
- Backs a reasonable decision made in accordance with the Code of Ethics and the National Decision Model, even when the outcome was poor, and says so
- Intervenes only when deviation threatens the public, the law, shared purpose, standards or the force's integrity
- Resists the instinct to add another check after an incident, asking first whether the failing lay in judgement or in the system
- Promotes bold, innovative and resourceful initiative within agreed freedoms and boundaries
- Credits sound judgement exercised within delegated authority, reinforcing confidence and trust
- Recalibrates delegated authority as competence, confidence and context evolve

WORKS AGAINST: MICROMANAGEMENT, AUTHORITARIAN, PARANOIA

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5.3 Delivers for the Public *continued*

A LEADER'S ACTIONS · CARRIES NLF DIMENSION ACHIEVES OUTCOMES

34 Makes Sound, Accountable Decisions

NLF: MAKING EFFECTIVE DECISIONS

Gathers information, weighs threat, risk, powers and options, decides in good time and reviews what happened.

- Frames problems collaboratively, integrating diverse sources of information, intelligence, experience and feedback
- Distils complexity and ambiguity into clear, intent-aligned options
- Identifies areas of uncertainty, assumptions and information gaps that could undermine the analysis
- Balances data, intelligence and evidence with intuition and experience when forming judgements
- Evaluates the feasibility, lawfulness, proportionality, risk and resource implications of options
- Generates and evaluates alternative courses of action and contingencies, weighing trade-offs and consequences
- Tests reasoning and assumptions independently to reduce bias and groupthink
- Applies creative and analytical thinking to design adaptive and innovative solutions
- Makes timely, reasoned and proportionate decisions, avoiding emotional or ego-driven reactions and undue risk aversion
- Records the rationale for a decision at the time, so that it can be explained, scrutinised and learned from
- Monitors evolving situations, adapting decisions as conditions, information and risk change
- Reviews progress and emerging outcomes to confirm the decision remains valid
- Integrates feedback from diverse sources to improve future judgement and decisions

WORKS AGAINST: UNPREDICTABLE, ARROGANCE, AUTHORITARIAN

35 Works in Partnership

NLF: CULTIVATING COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

Builds trusted working across forces, agencies and communities, sharing information and credit to achieve shared outcomes.

- Aligns purpose, priorities and values across forces, agencies and partners to achieve shared outcomes for the public
- Anticipates risks and system interdependencies to align joint planning and problem-solving
- Co-designs governance, roles and decision rights to enable coordinated delivery
- Creates cross-boundary psychological safety so partners raise concerns early
- Builds trusted networks across policing, local authorities, health, criminal justice, the voluntary sector and communities through honesty, reciprocity and consistency
- Ensures fairness, equity and transparency in shared decisions and the allocation of resources
- Shares timely, accurate and relevant information, lawfully and proactively, to protect people and enable collective understanding
- Involves communities in the scrutiny of how powers are used and in shaping local priorities
- Resolves partnership conflicts constructively while safeguarding shared principles
- Acknowledges partner contributions and shares credit for collective achievements
- Leverages diversity across organisations to generate innovation and shared learning
- Reviews partnership outcomes and adapts agreements as conditions evolve

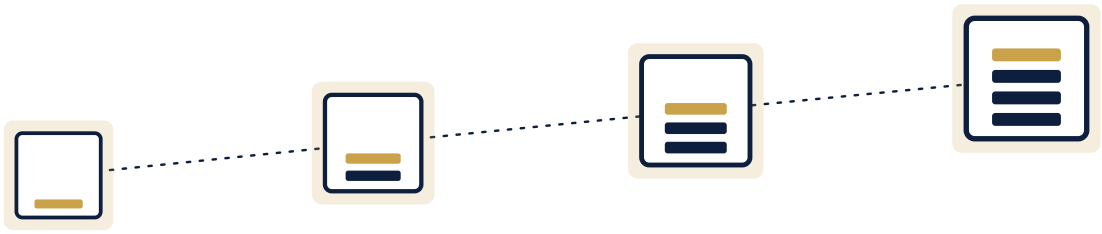
WORKS AGAINST: ISOLATIONISM, SELF-SERVING, PARANOIA

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6.0 Levels of Leadership

Leadership grows as responsibility, risk and complexity grow. The domains stay the same; what changes is how they are applied. The four levels show the expanding sphere of a leader's influence, from personal conduct to shaping the service. Ranks and grades are shown as a guide, not a gate: a constable can lead at the second level and a superintendent must still lead at the first.



Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Leading Yourself	Leading Teams	Leading the Command	Leading the Service
NLF: Self	NLF: Team	NLF: Organisation	NLF: Strategic

LEVEL 1 · PERSONAL IMPACT

Leading Yourself

Constables and detective constables, student officers, PCSOs, special constables, police staff practitioners, volunteers, and anyone new to leading

Your own conduct, judgement and relationships with the public and colleagues

LEVEL 2 · TEAM IMPACT

Leading Teams

Sergeants and detective sergeants, inspectors and detective inspectors, police staff first-line and middle managers, control room and custody supervisors, tutor constables and team leaders in every function

Creating the conditions in which a team can do its best work for the public

LEVEL 3 · COMMAND IMPACT

Leading the Command

Chief inspectors, superintendents and chief superintendents, BCU and departmental commanders, senior police staff heads of department and function

A team of teams: culture, alignment and standards across a whole command, department or function

LEVEL 4 · SERVICE IMPACT

Leading the Service

Chief constables, deputy and assistant chief constables, commanders and above in the Metropolitan Police, chief officer-equivalent police staff directors, and leaders of national policing bodies

Purpose, legitimacy and long-range judgement across the force, its partners and the wider system

The levels are not a hierarchy of worth. Leading yourself well is the foundation on which every other level stands, and the most senior leaders continue to model it. With each level comes a wider sphere of influence, greater complexity and heavier consequences, and therefore the need for more sophisticated judgement, strategic thinking and accountability for outcomes. Leadership is fluid: an officer or member of staff may lead mainly at one level in their daily habits while leading at others when they tutor a probationer, run an operation or speak for the force in the community.

Police staff lead at every level, and the Police Leadership Commission asked for staff structures to be aligned with officer ranks and for staff to have equal access to leadership development. The framework takes that as read: the roles listed at each level include staff equivalents, and the behaviours are the same. Page 38 describes the leadership expected of those who govern and oversee policing.

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6.1 Leading Yourself



TYPICAL ROLES	SPHERE OF INFLUENCE	PRIMARY IMPACT
Constables and detective constables, student officers, PCSOs, special constables, police staff practitioners, volunteers, and anyone new to leading	Your own conduct, judgement and relationships with the public and colleagues	Personal impact

Leading yourself is the foundation on which every other level stands. It is shown in self-awareness, integrity, personal accountability and a commitment to keep improving. Leaders at this level build credibility through their daily conduct, their decisions and their relationships, and every officer and member of staff leads here, whatever their rank or grade. The most senior leaders never stop.

KEY PILLARS

Integrity
Acting consistently with the Code of Ethics and the Standards of Professional Behaviour, so that colleagues, the courts and the public can take you at your word.

Courage
Doing what is right when it is hard, reporting what should be reported, and speaking up when something is not right.

Personal accountability
Owning your decisions, your use of powers, your records and your growth, and the small daily choices that add up to a culture.

LEADERSHIP PRIORITIES AT THIS LEVEL

CHARACTER
- Lives the Code in every encounter, on duty and off
- Uses powers lawfully and proportionately and explains why
- Reports wrongdoing and owns mistakes in the open

KNOWLEDGE
- Builds self-awareness: knows their triggers, their biases and their impact
- Learns the people, the communities and the history of the area they serve
- Knows the law, the powers and the craft of their role

ACTION
- Practises their craft deliberately and seeks feedback
- Contributes to the team: listens, helps, speaks up, follows well
- Reviews their own decisions with the National Decision Model

COMPETENCIES MOST IN FOCUS AT THIS LEVEL

02 Acts with Integrity | **01** Acts with Courage | **07** Acts Lawfully and Proportionately | **14** Knows Their Strengths, Limits and Biases | **15** Stays Composed and Resilient | **25** Develops Themselves | **29** Builds Shared Leadership

HOW LEADERS DEVELOP AT THIS LEVEL

Initial training and the probationary period; tutoring and street duties; supervision that coaches as well as checks; reflective debriefs after incidents; the Code of Ethics and the National Decision Model as daily habits; and the simplest development of all, watching good leaders closely and asking them why.

WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOUR

Without fear or favour at this level means the same conduct on duty and off, the same courtesy to everyone, and the courage to say what is wrong when it would be easier to look away.

Progression As expertise, confidence and credibility grow, influence extends beyond personal practice to colleagues and teams. The move to Leading Teams is a change of focus, not a promotion out of leading yourself.

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6.2 Leading Teams



TYPICAL ROLES
Sergeants and detective sergeants, inspectors and detective inspectors, police staff first-line and middle managers, control room and custody supervisors, tutor constables and team leaders in every function

SPHERE OF INFLUENCE
Creating the conditions in which a team can do its best work for the public

PRIMARY IMPACT
Team impact

Leading teams means creating the conditions in which individuals and teams can thrive. Leaders at this level build trust, make it safe to speak up, clarify what the team is for, back professional judgement and share the leadership of the team. Their influence runs through relationships, briefings, debriefs and the small routines that make a team cohesive. The sergeant and the first-line staff manager hold the most important leadership role in policing.

KEY PILLARS

Safety to speak up
A team in which people raise concerns, report wrongdoing, ask questions and admit mistakes without fear.

Support and challenge
Coaching, honest feedback and early conversations about performance, so that nothing drifts into a conduct matter that a conversation could have fixed.

Backing judgement
Trusting discretion within clear boundaries, and standing behind a reasonable decision made under the Code even when the outcome was poor.

LEADERSHIP PRIORITIES AT THIS LEVEL

CHARACTER
- Builds trust through fairness, consistency and compassion
- Advocates for the team and offers loyal challenge upward
- Sets the example of humility and ownership the team will copy

KNOWLEDGE
- Reads the team: strengths, pressures, shift fatigue and the mood of the room
- Understands how trust breaks and mends, in the team and with the community
- Knows how the team's work fits the force's purpose and systems

ACTION
- Supports and challenges every officer and member of staff, including probationers
- Makes it safe to speak up and shares leadership across the team
- Backs professional judgement and reviews incidents as coaching

COMPETENCIES MOST IN FOCUS AT THIS LEVEL

28 Makes It Safe to Speak Up | **26** Provides Support and Challenge | **33** Trusts Professional Judgement | **30** Communicates Clearly | **18** Understands the Team | **31** Builds and Sustains High Performance | **06** Shows Empathy and Compassion

HOW LEADERS DEVELOP AT THIS LEVEL

Promotion processes that assess leadership rather than only knowledge of the law; first-line leadership programmes before or at the point of promotion, not years later; coaching and mentoring; leading a problem-solving initiative or an operation; and honest feedback from the team itself.

WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOUR
Without fear or favour at this level means the team sees the same fairness in postings, praise and discipline as the public sees in the use of powers, and nobody is protected because they are liked.

Progression As influence widens beyond a single team, leaders begin to shape the culture, systems and alignment of a whole command or department, and to develop other leaders rather than only colleagues.

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6.3 The first-line leader

A note on the role that makes or breaks the team

The Police Leadership Commission reported in 2026 that only 13 percent of constables felt they worked in a well led and managed organisation, that most new sergeants had acted up before they were promoted, that the promotion process was out of date and that a fifth of new sergeants and inspectors had received no formal leadership training two years into the role. The Casey Review had found sergeants and inspectors expected to lead very large numbers of people without the time or the tools to do it. Every force knows the finding. The sergeant, and the police staff manager who holds the equivalent role, is the leader most of the workforce actually experience.

This framework is written with that role in mind. Leading Teams is where the behaviours that answer the sector's hardest findings sit: making it safe to speak up, thanking and protecting the colleague who reports, addressing poor performance early so that it never drifts into a conduct matter, backing a reasonable decision under the Code even when it went wrong, and using the review of an incident as coaching rather than only as a check. None of these is a course. They are habits, and they are learned from the leader above.

WHAT THE FRAMEWORK ASKS OF A FORCE FOR ITS FIRST-LINE LEADERS

Before promotion

Assess the leadership behaviours in this framework, not only knowledge of the law, and give candidates development before the first day in the role, not years later.

In the first year

Pair every new sergeant and first-line manager with a credible mentor; protect time for one-to-ones, debriefs and development conversations; and ask the team how it is going.

Every year after

Make the review of leadership behaviour part of the annual conversation, feed it into the force's record of development, and use it to decide who leads next.

From above

Inspectors and commanders model the same behaviours upward. A sergeant who is micromanaged, blamed or ignored cannot lead a team that is safe to speak up in, however hard they try.

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6.4 Leading the Command

TYPICAL ROLES	SPHERE OF INFLUENCE	PRIMARY IMPACT
Chief inspectors, superintendents and chief superintendents, BCU and departmental commanders, senior police staff heads of department and function	A team of teams: culture, alignment and standards across a whole command, department or function	Command impact

Leading the command means shaping culture, setting direction and creating the conditions for sustained performance across a team of teams. Leaders at this level work through others, aligning people, systems and resources around a shared purpose, reinforcing standards through the way policy is explained and lived, resisting the pull to centralise after an incident, and developing the next generation of leaders.

KEY PILLARS

Purpose and alignment
A clear, compelling intent for the command, and the coherence that connects every shift's work to it.

Judgement and decisions
Real delegation within clear freedoms, sound and timely decisions that people understand, and the resilience to hold a reasonable decision under scrutiny.

Culture and standards
A command in which the highest standards are explained, owned and modelled rather than merely enforced, and in which speaking up is visibly safe.

LEADERSHIP PRIORITIES AT THIS LEVEL

CHARACTER
- Shapes culture through visible commitment to the Code and to the public
- Makes lawful, proportionate and fair practice something people believe in
- Stays composed and candid through critical incidents, inquiries and change

KNOWLEDGE
- Understands the community, partners, scrutiny and inspection findings
- Understands how the force works, and where bureaucracy crowds out judgement
- Reads the command as a system of teams, relationships and sub-cultures

ACTION
- Develops leaders across the command and plans succession fairly
- Trusts professional judgement and resists the extra check
- Sets intent, decides soundly and sustains performance across the command

COMPETENCIES MOST IN FOCUS AT THIS LEVEL

32 Sets Clear Purpose and Intent | **33** Trusts Professional Judgement | **34** Makes Sound, Accountable Decisions | **07** Acts Lawfully and Proportionately | **24** Understands How the Force Works | **27** Inspires and Enables Others | **22** Understands Partners and the Local Picture

HOW LEADERS DEVELOP AT THIS LEVEL

Senior leadership programmes; executive coaching; command of critical incidents and public order operations; leading change across a command; partnership and community engagement responsibilities; and exposure to inspection, oversight and governance.

WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOUR

Without fear or favour at this level means scrutiny is welcomed rather than managed, the data on disproportionality is faced rather than explained away, and standards are owned across the command rather than enforced from above.

Progression As influence extends beyond a single command, leaders begin to shape partnerships, contribute to the wider system and take responsibility for the long-term legitimacy of the force.

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6.5 Leading the Service



TYPICAL ROLES

Chief constables, deputy and assistant chief constables, commanders and above in the Metropolitan Police, chief officer-equivalent police staff directors, and leaders of national policing bodies

SPHERE OF INFLUENCE

Purpose, legitimacy and long-range judgement across the force, its partners and the wider system

PRIMARY IMPACT

Service impact

Leading the service means shaping the future through influence, partnership and long-range thinking. Leaders at this level work beyond the boundaries of a single command, aligning diverse partners around shared outcomes for the public, stewarding public money and the reputation of policing, reading the national and political picture, and making judicious decisions under uncertainty whose consequences for public confidence last for years.

KEY PILLARS

Strategic perspective

Reading national reform, the political and legal context, demographic and technological change for what they mean over the long term, and testing plans against it.

Partnership and legitimacy

Working across forces, agencies and communities so that the public get more than any one organisation can give, and earning consent from the communities the force has served least well.

Stewardship and candour

Protecting the public trust, resources and reputation on which the future of policing depends, and telling the truth about the force to the public and to oversight.

LEADERSHIP PRIORITIES AT THIS LEVEL

CHARACTER

- Serves the public and stewards public money with care
- Models loyal challenge in chief officer and partnership forums, and invites it
- Represents the force with integrity and candour in public and to oversight

KNOWLEDGE

- Understands the national and political context and the direction of reform
- Understands the networks, institutions and politics of the system
- Understands how the force works across many commands and functions

ACTION

- Builds partnerships beyond the force and the sector
- Sets a coherent purpose across the force and keeps it relevant
- Develops leadership capacity and a representative pipeline across the service

COMPETENCIES MOST IN FOCUS AT THIS LEVEL

23 Understands the National and Political Context | **35** Works in Partnership | **05** Serves the Public | **04** Is Loyal Without Closing Ranks | **32** Sets Clear Purpose and Intent | **34** Makes Sound, Accountable Decisions | **12** Leads by Credibility, Not Rank

HOW LEADERS DEVELOP AT THIS LEVEL

The strategic command course and chief officer development; ongoing professional development and annual review at chief officer level; executive coaching; national and regional roles; secondments outside policing; research and policy engagement; and structured learning from inquiries and inspections across the service.

WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOUR

Without fear or favour at this level means operational independence exercised with candour towards elected representatives and the public, loyalty to the service that never shields its failures, and judgement that puts long-term legitimacy before short-term reputation.

Continuing This is the widest sphere of the framework. Leaders here keep modelling the foundations of every earlier level, and their most lasting contribution is the leadership they leave behind in others.

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6.6 Governance and Oversight

Policing is governed as well as led. Police and crime commissioners, mayors, policing and crime boards, police and crime panels, the Home Secretary, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services and the Independent Office for Police Conduct all hold the police to account. The framework does not describe their statutory functions; it describes the leadership they bring to them, and the leadership they are entitled to expect of the force.

Holding to account

Elected and appointed overseers lead mainly at Leading the Service. They model Lives the Values and Upholds the Highest Standards, apply Understands the National and Political Context and Understands Partners and the Local Picture, and support and challenge chief officers through loyal challenge, courage and sound decisions, respecting operational independence as the Policing Protocol frames it.

Inspection and oversight

Inspectors and investigators lead by example too: candour, humility, respect for the people they examine and a focus on learning rather than blame are leadership behaviours, and the framework can be read against them.

What the force owes its overseers

Candour, accurate records, early warning of problems, a welcome for scrutiny and the courage to say what the evidence shows. Competencies 02, 07, 10 and 11 describe it.

What overseers owe the force

Fairness, evidence over anecdote, support for a reasonable decision made under the Code, and challenge that is loyal to the public interest rather than to the news cycle. Competencies 03, 04, 26 and 34 describe it.

Across the United Kingdom. This framework is written for the policing of England and Wales, where the white paper From local to national (January 2026) proposes a National Police Service, a licence to practise and the replacement of police and crime commissioners from 2028. Police Scotland, the Police Service of Northern Ireland and the non-territorial forces should read their own codes of ethics, governance arrangements and oversight bodies in place of those named here; the leadership behaviours are the same.

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7.0 Leadership in Practice

A framework is only as good as its use. These are the places where this one is designed to do its work, so that a force's policies, programmes and everyday conversations all reinforce the same behaviours in the same words.

Recruitment, vetting and selection

Values-based interview questions and assessment exercises drawn from the behaviours, so that forces recruit and promote for character and leadership as well as for knowledge of the law.

Promotion and the licence to practise

Evidence of leadership behaviour, not only examination results, at every promotion gate, and a record of leadership development that follows the individual through their career.

Supervision and performance conversations

Prompts for one-to-ones, end-of-year reviews and development conversations, used developmentally rather than as a checklist, for officers and staff alike.

Debriefs, reviews and learning

The National Decision Model and the framework read together after incidents, complaints and near misses, so that review builds judgement rather than fear.

Culture and climate

Staff surveys, workforce data and professional standards intelligence that ask about the behaviours the force wants to see and the ones it does not, so that leaders can act early.

Governance and policy

Induction for those who govern and oversee policing, and the review of people, professional standards, wellbeing and governance policies so that they reinforce the same behaviours.

A MODEL LEADERSHIP POLICY STATEMENT

The force defines leadership as the combination of a leader's character, knowledge and action, shown through everyday behaviours, that inspires others to succeed in serving the public without fear or favour. Leadership is a shared function of the whole force, distinct from management and from rank, and everyone can contribute to it, officers, staff and volunteers alike. Leaders at every level are expected to live the Code of Ethics and the force's values, to uphold the highest standards and to lead by example. The force will review its people, professional standards, wellbeing and governance policies so that they reinforce this framework, and will develop leaders at every rank and grade through practice, feedback and reflection, not training alone.

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7.1 How Leadership Supports the Standards Policing Works To

Inspectors, oversight bodies, elected representatives and the public expect certain things of a force's culture. None of them is delivered by a code or a process alone. This page shows which leadership competencies most directly support each expectation, so that a head of professional standards, a people director, a police and crime commissioner or an inspector can see the linkage at a glance. The behaviours remain leadership behaviours: attitudes, role-modelling and the way leaders approach their duties, not the duties themselves, which belong to law and policy.

WHAT IS EXPECTED OF POLICING	WHAT IT RESTS ON	COMPETENCIES THAT MOST DIRECTLY SUPPORT IT
An ethical culture	The Code of Ethics and the statutory Code of Practice for Ethical Policing expect chief officers to build an ethical culture and every leader to challenge and report conduct that falls short.	01 Acts with Courage 02 Acts with Integrity 08 Acts with Decency 28 Makes It Safe to Speak Up 10 Shows Humility
Lawful, proportionate and fair use of powers	PACE and its codes, the Human Rights Act, the Equality Act and the public's confidence in stop and search, use of force and custody expect powers used lawfully, necessarily, proportionately and explained.	07 Acts Lawfully and Proportionately 03 Shows Respect and Fairness 34 Makes Sound, Accountable Decisions 16 Tests Their Own Judgement 20 Understands Communities and Cultures
Standards of Professional Behaviour and integrity	The Conduct Regulations, vetting standards and HMICFRS integrity inspections expect honesty, proper boundaries, the reporting of wrongdoing and a culture that does not close ranks.	09 Acts Professionally 02 Acts with Integrity 04 Is Loyal Without Closing Ranks 01 Acts with Courage 11 Owns Decisions and Outcomes
Victims and vulnerable people	The Victims' Code, safeguarding duties and the reviews of rape, domestic abuse and missing person investigations expect compassion, belief, thoroughness and investigative curiosity.	06 Shows Empathy and Compassion 17 Reads People and Situations 21 Knows the Craft of Policing 03 Shows Respect and Fairness 26 Provides Support and Challenge
Inclusion, race and legitimacy	The Public Sector Equality Duty, the Police Race Action Plan and the inclusion strategies of individual forces expect leaders who create inclusive environments, make fair decisions, face disproportionality and challenge inappropriate behaviour.	03 Shows Respect and Fairness 20 Understands Communities and Cultures 27 Inspires and Enables Others 24 Understands How the Force Works 19 Builds and Repairs Trust
Workforce wellbeing and speaking up	The duty of care to officers and staff, the Angiolini Inquiry's findings on reporting colleagues and the evidence on trauma expect leaders who look after people and make reporting safe.	13 Puts Others First 06 Shows Empathy and Compassion 15 Stays Composed and Resilient 28 Makes It Safe to Speak Up 26 Provides Support and Challenge
Leadership standards and development	The Police Leadership Commission, the Competency and Values Framework and the proposed licence to practise expect consistent leadership standards, development at every rank and grade, and fair promotion.	25 Develops Themselves 26 Provides Support and Challenge 27 Inspires and Enables Others 31 Builds and Sustains High Performance 29 Builds Shared Leadership
Governance, performance and accountability	The Policing Protocol, police and crime plans, the national performance framework and HMICFRS inspection expect clear purpose, sound decisions, candour and stewardship of public money.	32 Sets Clear Purpose and Intent 34 Makes Sound, Accountable Decisions 11 Owns Decisions and Outcomes 05 Serves the Public 22 Understands Partners and the Local Picture
Partnership and community	Statutory partnerships, community scrutiny of powers and the reform of neighbourhood policing expect leaders who work across boundaries and involve the public in how they are policed.	35 Works in Partnership 22 Understands Partners and the Local Picture 30 Communicates Clearly 12 Leads by Credibility, Not Rank 19 Builds and Repairs Trust

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7.2 Alignment to the National Leadership Framework

The National Leadership Framework (NLF) sets out three domains, nine dimensions, 35 competencies and 323 observable behaviours, applied across four levels of leadership (Self, Team, Organisation, Strategic). This framework carries every NLF dimension and every NLF competency, one to one, in the language of policing, with the NLF's behaviours considered and translated and 30 behaviours added for the policing context. Its four levels map directly to the NLF's four. This table is the mapping an NLF award assessor would use.

DOMAIN	NLF DIMENSION	THIS FRAMEWORK	COMPETENCIES (NLF COMPETENCY CARRIED)
CHARACTER	Values-Driven	**Lives the Values**	01 Acts with Courage *(Moral Courage)* 02 Acts with Integrity *(Integrity)* 03 Shows Respect and Fairness *(Respect for Others)* 04 Is Loyal Without Closing Ranks *(Loyalty)* 05 Serves the Public *(Service)* 06 Shows Empathy and Compassion *(Humanity and Compassion)*
CHARACTER	Upholds the Highest Standards	**Upholds the Highest Standards**	07 Acts Lawfully and Proportionately *(Lawfulness)* 08 Acts with Decency *(Appropriateness)* 09 Acts Professionally *(Professionalism)*
CHARACTER	Models Exemplary Behaviours	**Leads by Example**	10 Shows Humility *(Humility)* 11 Owns Decisions and Outcomes *(Accountability)* 12 Leads by Credibility, Not Rank *(Influence)* 13 Puts Others First *(Selflessness)*
KNOWLEDGE	Knows Themself	**Knows Themselves**	14 Knows Their Strengths, Limits and Biases *(Self-Awareness)* 15 Stays Composed and Resilient *(Self-Management and Resilience)* 16 Tests Their Own Judgement *(Metacognition and Reflective Thinking)*
KNOWLEDGE	Knows Others	**Knows Their People and Communities**	17 Reads People and Situations *(Social Awareness)* 18 Understands the Team *(Team Dynamics)* 19 Builds and Repairs Trust *(Relationship Management)* 20 Understands Communities and Cultures *(Cultural Awareness)*
KNOWLEDGE	Knows Their Profession	**Knows Policing**	21 Knows the Craft of Policing *(Professional and Technical Expertise)* 22 Understands Partners and the Local Picture *(External Context and Stakeholders)* 23 Understands the National and Political Context *(Strategic and National Perspective)* 24 Understands How the Force Works *(Organisational Systems and Processes)*
ACTION	Develops Individuals	**Develops People**	25 Develops Themselves *(Developing Themselves)* 26 Provides Support and Challenge *(Providing Support and Challenge)* 27 Inspires and Enables Others *(Inspiring and Enabling Others)*
ACTION	Builds Teams	**Builds Teams**	28 Makes It Safe to Speak Up *(Creating Psychological Safety)* 29 Builds Shared Leadership *(Cultivating Teamship)* 30 Communicates Clearly *(Communicating Effectively)*
ACTION	Achieves Outcomes	**Delivers for the Public**	31 Builds and Sustains High Performance *(Building and Sustaining High Performance)* 32 Sets Clear Purpose and Intent *(Defining and Aligning Purpose)* 33 Trusts Professional Judgement *(Empowering Others)* 34 Makes Sound, Accountable Decisions *(Making Effective Decisions)* 35 Works in Partnership *(Cultivating Collaboration and Partnerships)*

Levels. Leading Yourself = Self · Leading Teams = Team · Leading the Command = Organisation · Leading the Service = Strategic.

Coverage. Nine of nine dimensions and 35 of 35 competencies fully carried; 322 NLF behaviours carried as their own line and one carried in concept within the same competency ("addresses regulatory and legal breaches promptly", carried by the reporting line in 07); no gaps identified.

Acknowledgement. The National Leadership Framework, its wording and its logo are the intellectual property of National Leadership Framework CIC and are used with acknowledgement. This framework is NLF-informed work in the voice of policing; where NLF concepts are carried they are translated under the NLF's encouragement to adapt emphasis and language to context while preserving the integrity of its core concepts. The Code of Ethics, the National Decision Model and the Competency and Values Framework are the College of Policing's.

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8.0 Sources and Acknowledgements

This framework is informed by the research base of the National Leadership Framework, by the ethical and professional standards policing in England and Wales works to, and by the public reviews, inquiries, inspections and commissions that have examined police leadership and culture since 2023. The sources below are those that most directly shaped it.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This framework was developed by National Leadership Framework CIC for the policing sector as an example of how the NLF translates into a profession's own language. It draws on the public work of the College of Policing, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services, the Police Leadership Commission, the Baroness Casey Review and the Angiolini Inquiry, and on the published inclusion strategy of the Metropolitan Police Service, whose candour about leadership as a system of reform is an example to the whole service. Any force or policing body may adopt it, adapt it and make it its own; page 43 shows how.

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9.0 Making This Framework Your Own

This framework is written so that any force or policing body can pick it up and use it. It is not branded to any force, and it is deliberately yours to adapt. Six steps make it your own without losing the alignment that gives it its rigour.

1 Add your name, vision and voice

Name your force on the cover, add your own foreword and vision, and, if you wish, rewrite the framework in the first person ("we", "our") so that it reads as your own. The structure and the behaviours stay the same.

2 Place your values

Use the table on page 18 to show how each of your values is carried by the competencies. Keep the competencies as they are; your values become the lens through which colleagues read them.

3 Translate the ranks and grades

The typical roles at each level are a guide. Replace them with your own ranks, staff grades and structures, including your governance arrangements, so that every officer and member of staff can find themselves in a level.

4 Adopt the policy statement

Take the leadership policy statement on page 39 to your chief officer group and those who hold you to account, adopt it, and review your people, professional standards, wellbeing and governance policies against the eight principles, keeping a record of what you found and changed.

5 Build the tools

Turn the behaviours into selection and promotion questions, supervision and review prompts, self-review and multi-source feedback, debrief guides and development pathways at each level. Use them developmentally, never as a checklist.

6 Keep what gives it rigour

Keep the three domains, nine dimensions and 35 competencies, keep the behaviours observable, and keep the acknowledgement that the framework is mapped to the National Leadership Framework. Everything else, from photographs to colours to the words on the cover, is yours to change.

National Leadership Framework

FROM FRAMEWORK TO PRACTICE

A framework alone does not make good leaders. People do.

This document describes the leadership a force can ask of its people. What turns it into leadership the public feel is the way an organisation brings it to life through its people processes: how it recruits, vets and promotes, how it supervises and has conversations about practice, how it develops and coaches, how it recognises, how it governs and how it learns from what goes wrong. That work belongs to the organisation. Supporting, guiding and assuring it is what the National Leadership Framework exists to do.

The NLF is an independent, not-for-profit standards body. It helps organisations review their leadership policy and framework against the NLF's principles, align their people processes so that they reinforce the same behaviours, and evidence the result. The NLF Awards, at Bronze, Silver and Gold, give organisations an independent, third-party assurance that their leadership framework and its implementation are sound, and a recognised mark of that commitment.

Interested in an NLF Award, or in adopting this framework?

Speak to the NLF: **www.nlf.org.uk**

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Leading Without Fear *or* Favour

A LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORK FOR POLICING · VERSION 1.0 · 2026

> *Leadership is the combination of a leader's character, knowledge and action, shown through everyday behaviours, that inspires others to succeed in serving the public without fear or favour.*

National Leadership Framework

MAPPED TO THE NATIONAL LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORK
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