



## Devon and Cornwall Police Ethics Committee

Meeting held on Tuesday 23 June 2026

Via Teams and commenced 10.02am

### Attendance

Ryan Doyle (Superintendent, Local Policing, East and Mid Devon) (Chair)  
Guy Blackford (Chief Inspector, Review and Inspections)  
Daniel Tamblyn (Chief Inspector, Performance and Innovation)  
Emma Fox (Inspector, Criminal Justice, Custody and ID)  
Jonathan Ross (Federation Sergeant)  
Beth Holmes (HR Manager, Corporate Support)  
Teresa Berridge (Corporate Equality & Diversity and Human Rights Officer)  
Eve Salthouse (Independent Advisor)  
Jane Makewell (Specialist Support Coordinator)

Ian Thompson (Superintendent, Local Policing West Cornwall)  
Sarah Price  
(Detective Chief Inspector, Public Protection Unit)  
Adele Pritchard (Inspector, Alliance Firearms Team)  
Rupert Engley (Inspector, Intelligence Manager)  
Robin Wheeler (Head of Finance)  
Ruth Lee (Police Constable, Diverse Communities Team)  
Layla Astley  
(Senior Category Buyer)  
Clive Harfield (Independent Advisor)  
Danielle Pearce (Specialist Support Coordinator)

### Guests

Alex Doughty (Superintendent, Alliance Professional Standards) (for minute reference 04/26/ 25a)  
Ben Woolvin (Head of Communications and Public Affairs, OPCC)

Fiona Miller (Regional Forensic Quality Manager) (for minute reference 04/26/ 25b)

### Apologies

Mike Stamp (Director of Legal, Reputation and Risk)  
Sophie Hanson (Detective Constable, Public Protection Unit Local Safeguarding Investigation Team)  
Harriet Harper (Sergeant, Neighbourhood Team Leader)  
Simon Pimley (Deputy Force Operational Security Officer)  
Samuel Davies (Patrol Sergeant)  
Ann Reddrop (Independent Advisor)

Benjamin Chadwick (Neighbourhood Beat Manager)  
Lucy Skinner (Inspector, Vulnerability Coordinator, SWROCU)  
Gary Bunn (COG Specialist Support Officer, Immigration and Asylum)  
Steve Brownlow (Force Operational Security Officer)  
Morgan Witzel (Independent Advisor)  
Tee Sliwinska (Independent Advisor)

## 04/26/21 Opening and Declaration of Interests [FOIA Open]

Ryan Doyle opened the meeting, welcoming members, guests and noting apologies. There were no declarations of interest, equality or Health and Safety concerns raised.

#### **04/26/22 Minutes from previous meeting 26 May 2026 [FOIA Open]**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on Tuesday 26 May 2026 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

#### **04/26/23 Action Log [FOIA Open]**

- a. **Action 264 Dilemma for discussion - Awards for Submission (previous minute references 02/26/10a and 06/25/33c)**  
Activity completed. This action could be discussed at the Ethic Committee meeting on 28 July 2026 should further clarification be required.  
**Action closed.**
- b. **Action 273 Dilemmas for discussion - Rapid Relief Team (RRT) (previous minute reference 03/26/19a)**  
Actions 273 and 273a were combined and activity had been completed.  
**Action closed.**
- c. **Action 275 Dilemmas for discussion – Letter of Comfort for Drug and Alcohol Treatment prevention (previous minute reference 03/26/19c)**  
Activity completed.  
**Action closed.**

#### **04/26/24 Urgent Ethical Dilemmas [FOIA Open]**

No urgent ethical dilemmas were raised.

Robin Wheeler, Daniel Tamblyn and Alex Doughty joined the meeting.

#### **04/26/25 Dilemmas for Discussion [FOIA Open unless exemption specified below]**

- a. **Use of Terminology when Performing Stop and Search**

[This paragraph has been redacted under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, s.31].

A further issue identified was a potential gender divide, with “mate” more commonly used when addressing males than females.

Members noted that this issue had arisen previously and acknowledged that the term “mate”, while perceived by some as neutral, could feel gendered and inappropriate. Its use could suggest undue familiarity, potentially leading to misinterpretation or criticism, particularly given that police officers are not in a personal relationship with those they engage. While the term might be intended to build rapport or de-escalate situations, it risked misgendering individuals and creating unnecessary complications.

Jane Makewell joined and Danielle Pearce left the meeting.

The Committee discussed the importance of context, noting that officers should take cues from individuals and balance approachability with professionalism. Members recognised the need to build rapport, particularly in communities where policing had been perceived as unapproachable, while also acknowledging the difficulty of training this balance and the influence of an embedded culture of informal language.

Members agreed that, although such language was often well intentioned, it could be perceived as unprofessional and potentially undermine interactions. However, the Committee cautioned against an overly prescriptive approach, noting that excessive restriction could create uncertainty and negatively affect officers’ confidence. Broader organisational discussion was recommended.

The Committee highlighted that this issue required careful judgement, with tone being a key factor in how language was received. Members supported using individuals’ names where possible to promote respect, while recognising that overuse could appear artificial. It was noted that appropriate language and tone would follow from a positive organisational culture, and that officers should remain mindful of how communication might be interpreted, particularly in tense situations or where formality could create barriers.

Members recognised risks relating to age, gender, and cultural sensitivities, with some terms potentially perceived as sarcastic or ageist. Less experienced officers might adopt informal language such as “mate” or “buddy” when attempting to build rapport, which could be inappropriate if not used carefully. The Committee questioned whether this area received sufficient emphasis in formal training or was primarily learned informally from peers, with the suggestion that this was something that a student officer may pick up as part of the culture.

While acknowledging that such language reflected wider societal norms, particularly in male-dominated environments, the Committee emphasised the importance of context, tone, and non-verbal communication. Members highlighted the value of acknowledging mistakes and asking individuals how they preferred to be addressed. They cautioned against drawing direct links to specific incidents and stressed the need for guidance rather than prescriptive rules, enabling officers to apply professional judgement.

Ruth Lee joined the meeting.

Members emphasised avoiding overly scripted language, which could make interactions feel impersonal or awkward. Instead, they highlighted the importance of situational awareness, judgement, and adapting communication to context. While training and guidance from senior officers was helpful, it should not be overly restrictive, and officers should be trusted to respond appropriately.

Adele Pritchard left the meeting.

It was noted that language choices were often influenced by regional and cultural backgrounds, with colloquial terms sometimes used to build rapport or maintain control, particularly when names were unknown. However, feedback from the Community Scrutiny Panel reinforced that such language could be perceived negatively by some audiences.

Members reflected on the value of ongoing discussion around ethical dilemmas and communication, recognising its role in encouraging reflection and improving practice. They also highlighted the importance of being aware of personal bias when providing guidance and ensuring that frontline officers felt supported in exercising professional judgement.

Adele Pritchard rejoined the meeting.

The Committee noted that while informal terms might occasionally help diffuse situations, particularly where a person's name was not known, it was generally preferable to use an individual's first name. Members agreed that no single approach would suit every situation and that communication must remain flexible. It was suggested that, in most cases, members of the public would provide their name, enabling more personalised communication. Where this did not occur, officers should continue the interaction without hindrance. The Committee concluded that professionalism and courtesy were paramount, and that effective communication depended on context, judgement, and confidence rather than rigid rules.

Alex Doughty left and Fiona Miller joined the meeting.

The Committee broke at 11.02am and reconvened at 11.10am.

## **b. Taking of Fingerprints from Cadavers**

**[This paragraph has been redacted under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, s.31].**

The Committee was advised that fingerprints taken from cadavers were anonymised and identified only by number. It was acknowledged that the proposal would involve using the prints beyond their original purpose. In the long term, it was hoped that a national database of cadaver fingerprints would be established for training purposes.

Members noted that while the prints themselves did not differ between living and deceased individuals, the recovery techniques varied depending on the condition of the body, including decomposition and specialist methods such as casting. These techniques required specific expertise, which could not be developed using live donors alone, and offered wider training opportunities.

The Committee raised questions regarding consent, particularly whether permission from next of kin was sought once individuals had been identified. It was explained that forensic teams did not have access to next of kin information and were typically only involved once no other method of identification was available. Constraints related to time due to the regulatory deadline of 2 October 2026 made retrospective consent impractical.

Members queried practices in other regions and were advised that a similar approach was being considered elsewhere. It was noted that other forces had also referred the issue to their respective Ethics Committees to explore the implications and appropriateness of the approach. Members recognised that this reflected a wider national challenge, with no consistent or established position in place.

Members reflected that there had been uncertainty and differing views nationally on this issue, notably within the Forensic Capability Network across the United Kingdom (UK). While the need for accreditation was understood and would be ideal, achieving compliance without using existing materials presented challenges and could result in a declaration of non-compliance, which would potentially undermine confidence in forensic processes.

**[This paragraph has been redacted under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, s.31].**

Members emphasised that, where identification had been made and families located, it would be desirable that consent should be requested and any request for the destruction of fingerprints should be complied with. This was confirmed as consistent with existing practice for both deceased individuals and live donors.

**[This paragraph has been redacted under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, s.31].**

The Committee considered whether it was preferable to seek consent in advance or proceed with the existing approach and respond only if challenged. Members noted the potential for legal challenge, particularly if the practice became widely known, and expressed concern that reliance on lack of public awareness did not constitute a robust safeguard. It was suggested that consent could be sought from next of kin once identification had been confirmed, which might be positively received given the benefit of identifying the deceased. While this approach was supported in principle, it was acknowledged that it would take time to implement and would not meet immediate accreditation requirements.

Members considered the option of developing a formal position statement and transitioning over time to a consent-based model. It was noted that existing prints could potentially be replaced gradually with those obtained with consent, although this would not address the immediate need. The Committee recognised the ethical balance between individual autonomy and the wider public interest, particularly the need to ensure trained and competent staff. It was suggested that an interim approach could be justified where the risk of not having appropriately trained personnel outweighed the ethical concerns, pending development of a more robust process.

Members agreed that this was a complex and sensitive issue involving both legal and ethical considerations. The interim proposal was acknowledged as pragmatic but uncomfortable, and the importance of progressing towards a consent-based approach was emphasised. It was confirmed that a submission would be made to inspectors by 2 October 2026 to declare accreditation status, and that an update would be provided to the Committee in due course.

Fiona Miller left the meeting.

## **04/26/26 Summary of Actions [FOIA Open]**

No actions were created during the meeting.

## **Date, Time, and Location of Next Meeting**

There being no other business the meeting closed at 11.46am. The next Ethics Committee meeting will be held on Tuesday 28 July 2026, commencing at 10.00pm via Microsoft Teams.