



**Competency Framework
for
Members
of
Police Authorities
in
England and Wales**

**Produced by the Association of Police Authorities
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This competency framework sets out the skills, abilities and personal qualities expected of a police authority member. It includes introductory information about the role of police authorities and the expectations of police authority members.

It is intended to assist all those involved in the selection or appointment of members to serve on police authorities.

The framework contains the following sections:

Section A: Introduction

Section B: Summary of Police Authority Relationships

Section C: Key Requirements

Section D: Skills and Personal Qualities

Section E: Standard job profile for a police authority member

Section F: Summary of police authority role and responsibilities

Section A: Introduction

Each police authority is an independent, corporate body. Although membership is drawn from three different groups — councillors, magistrates and independent members — all members are collectively responsible for discharging a range of statutory duties and require similar skills and qualities.

In keeping with the corporate status of police authorities, all members are expected to represent the whole police area and the diverse local communities within it, not particular localities or political/sectional interests (although individual members of the authority may be asked to develop particular roles or take lead responsibility for a specific aspect of policing or area of the force).

A primary role for police authorities is to represent the interests of people who live in, work in, or visit the police authority area. It is therefore critically important that the membership of each authority should be drawn from as wide a range of backgrounds as possible and reflects the diversity of the communities within the area. Both the APA nationally and police authorities locally have worked hard in recent years to improve the number of police authority members from under-represented groups, including women, black and minority ethnic communities and young people. Whilst some good progress has been made, there is still a considerable way to go.

This competency framework, prepared by the Association of Police Authorities, is intended to assist all those involved in the selection and appointment of police authority members including:

- Selection panels for independent and magistrate members
- Councillor and magistrate members involved in the selection of independent members
- Councillor and independent members involved in the selection of magistrate members
- Local Councils or Joint Committees of Local Councils

The framework also aims to help police authority members and staff identify training or development needs for members.

Further information can be obtained from:

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Section B: Key Police Authority Relationships

To be effective, police authorities must retain their independence while engaging in a series of constructive partnerships to secure the effective and efficient delivery of the right police service for their area. These partnerships are with:

- **local communities** — through a range of consultation processes, to engage with local communities and ensure that the diverse needs of all groups are properly reflected in local strategies and policing plans and that decisions reached on policing priorities are reported back to the communities
- **the police themselves** — to develop police authority members' awareness and understanding of the pressures and challenges they face, without compromising the authority's statutory duty to maintain effective, independent scrutiny and oversight
- **the Secretary of State** — the Home Secretary together with police authorities and chief officers of police forms the tripartite relationship responsible for the governance of policing in England and Wales. Much of the interface with the Home Office on issues facing police authorities will be mediated through the APA, but the Home Secretary's statutory responsibilities do impact directly on individual police authorities through for example, the national policing plan; allocation of police grant, the crime fighting fund and approval of the appointment of senior officers. Police authorities provide the Home Office with information, advice and views on issues that impact upon their locality as well as through the APA.
- **local authorities and health authorities** — particularly in relation to local crime and disorder reduction partnerships and the development of strategies and audits to reduce crime and fear of crime
- **criminal justice agencies, such as the courts, probation service and CPS** – to ensure that the police play an effective role in bringing offenders to justice and protecting the rights of suspects, victims and witnesses and within Local Criminal Justice Boards
- **Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary** — which provides professional advice and support not only to the Home Secretary and police forces but to police authorities as well, by promoting good practice and offering advice on the appointment of chief officers
- **The Audit Commission and local auditors** — who promote good practice in policing by encouraging economy, efficiency and effectiveness in both the management and delivery of services.

Section C: Key Requirements

Given the diverse range and complexity of police authorities' functions, newly appointed members are not expected to have all the requisite skills from the outset. But there are three essential requirements:

- A **commitment to policing and to the delivery of a fair and non-discriminatory police service to all members of local communities** — this involves an ability to engage with a wide range of people by seeking out and listening to their views. Members have to demonstrate integrity and be committed to upholding human rights and promoting equality of opportunity and good race relations.
- **Availability** — members must be prepared to devote about 7 to 10 hours each week to police authority work. They will be expected to attend all meetings of the police authority and to participate effectively as a member of any committee, panel or other forum to which they are appointed as well as undertaking preparatory work and attending appropriate training courses and seminars. Police authority members are entitled to reasonable time off work to carry out their duties.
- A **balanced approach** — to promote good policing, authority members need to establish and maintain constructive partnerships with their police force and other organisations, without compromising their core responsibility of providing effective, independent oversight and scrutiny.

Section D: Skills, Abilities and Personal Qualities

This section sets out the **skills, abilities and personal qualities** which are particularly relevant to the work undertaken by police authority members.

There is no expectation that all police authority members will be able to be fully effective immediately. All police authority members can make a valuable contribution to the work of the authority from the start, drawing on their background and expertise gained in their working life, their involvement in the community, voluntary work or other experiences. But they must be willing to extend their knowledge and skills in order to play a full part in the wide range of duties for which police authorities are responsible.

Skills

- **analytical skills** the ability to interpret and question complex written material — including financial information and other data such as performance measures — and identify the salient points
- **scrutiny skills** be able to rigorously scrutinise and exercise effective oversight of all aspects of force performance, using appropriate data and resources
- **strategic thinking** breadth of vision — the ability to rise above detail and to see problems and issues from a wider, forward-looking perspective
- **judgement** to take a balanced, open-minded and objective approach — for example, in evaluating policing priorities, assessing candidates for top level appointments or considering complaints against officers — and to develop an understanding of the challenges officers face in their day-to-day work
- **communication** to explain policing issues clearly — sometimes in public meetings with the media present — and to engage in constructive dialogue with local communities, the police (including representatives of their staff associations) and other key partners and agencies
- **time management** be able to identify priorities and make the most productive use of own and others time

Personal Qualities

- **team working** plays an effective role in committees and other partnerships through listening, persuading and showing respect for the views of others
- **self confidence** challenges accepted views constructively, without becoming confrontational
- **enthusiasm/drive** is pro-active in seeking out learning and developmental opportunities to enhance knowledge and understanding — for example on financial matters and statutory requirements.
- **respect for others** treats all people fairly and with respect; values diversity and responds sensitively to differences
- **integrity** embraces high standards of conduct and ethics and is committed to upholding human rights and equality of opportunity for all
- **leadership** leads by example, establishes clear goals and objectives and builds support and commitment within the authority and force as well as the wider community and with partner agencies
- **community engagement** actively engages and participates in local community activities

Section E: Standard Job Profile for a Police Authority Member

Role

- To ensure that there is an effective and efficient police force for the area
- To ensure that local communities receive best value in local policing services
- To set the strategic direction for the force and exercise effective oversight of force performance
- To secure continuous improvements in force performance and ensure delivery of the highest standards of policing. To represent the interests of all those who live in, work in, or visit the police authority area and to ensure that the views of local people are reflected in the nature and style of local policing
- To ensure that policing services are provided fairly and in a way which does not discriminate against any group or individual
- To participate constructively in the good governance of both the authority and the force

Responsibilities

- to carry out collectively all statutory and locally determined requirements of a police authority member, including participation in the formulation of policy, decision-making and other activities of the full authority (such as determining the budget and precept, determining local policing priorities, agreeing the annual policing/best value plan and other strategies).
- to participate effectively as a member of any committee, panel, taskgroup or other authority forum to which the member is appointed
- to participate in best value reviews, as nominated by the authority
- to comply with all relevant codes of conduct and maintain the highest standards of conduct and ethics
- to maintain an up-to-date knowledge and awareness of national and local policing issues
- to maintain a good working knowledge of force policies and practices and to establish good working relationships with officers of both the authority and the force
- to rigorously scrutinise, challenge and monitor all aspects of force performance
- to participate fully in local consultative arrangements and actively engage in communication and dialogue with local people about local policing services
- to represent the views of the police authority within local communities and the views of local communities to the authority
- to participate actively in any outside body or forum on which the member is appointed to represent the authority
- to be involved in the appointment, discipline or dismissal of senior officers, as appropriate
- to monitor the way in which complaints are dealt with by the force and deal with complaints against chief officers

- to promote equality of opportunity and work to eliminate unlawful discrimination both internally within the authority and force and in the provision of policing services
- to attend local, regional and national conferences/seminars/briefings, if nominated by the authority
- to answer questions at council meetings, if nominated to do so by the authority
- to ensure that an effective Independent Custody Visiting Scheme is maintained
- to participate in inspections and audits of the force and authority

Section F: Summary of police authority roles and responsibilities

Local police authorities, together with chief officers and the Home Secretary make up the **tripartite relationship** responsible for governance of policing in England and Wales.

- the Home Secretary produces an annual national policing plan and sets national priorities for policing
- the local police authority provides independent local oversight of police and holds the chief officer to account for policing services delivered
- the chief officer is responsible for direction and control of police force

The primary purpose of a police authority is to provide strategic direction and oversight of its police force. The authority's fundamental statutory duties are:

- to maintain an efficient and effective police force
- to secure best value in local policing services
- to make arrangements for obtaining the views of local people about the policing of their area

The responsibility for operational activities and the day-to-day management of the force rests with the chief constable.

To meet the statutory duties placed on police authority members are responsible — collectively — for the following functions:

Engaging with Local People

A key role of police authorities is to ensure that local people have a say in how they are policed and that their views are reflected in the nature and style of local policing. Police authorities are required to consult with local communities to ascertain their views on policing and to elicit their support and co-operation for the police. Engaging in an effective and ongoing dialogue with local people and being transparent and accountable to them is therefore critical to the work that authorities do.

Scrutinising and monitoring police performance

It is the police authority's job to hold the chief constable and force to account, on behalf of local people, for the policing services delivered. Accordingly, one of the police authority's most important duties is to set standards and targets to improve local policing services; to closely monitor and scrutinise all aspects of force performance against those targets and standards and ensure that action is taken to remedy weak or poor performance.

Producing a three-year strategic plan

Police authorities are responsible for producing three-year strategic plans which set out the authority's medium and long-term strategies for the policing of the area. The plan is drafted by the chief officer of the force following consultation with local communities and submitted to the authority for approval. Ownership of the plan rests with the police authority. The three-year plan should be consistent with the National Policing Plan which is issued by the Home Secretary.

Publishing an Annual Policing /Best Value Performance Plan

The Annual Policing/Best Value performance plan sets out how the community will be policed in the year ahead and how performance will be improved over a five-year period. As with the three year strategic plan, this is drafted by the chief constable and the authority must consult him/her about any changes to the draft. But public accountability requires that ownership of the plan rests with the police authority. To inform this process police authorities are required to:

- engage with local communities about their policing concerns and priorities — this is a wide ranging and on-going process
- set key objectives, performance measures and targets both for local priorities and those set by the Home Secretary
- manage the best value process and become involved in best value reviews
- fully understand the business of policing

Setting the Annual Budget

Police authorities are responsible for setting the police budget and priorities for policing in the force area, and then holding the chief constable to account for how the budget is spent. Police authorities receive approximately 85% of funding via central government grants, and set a precept on the council tax according to locally determined need. It therefore follows that police authority members must be ready to acquire an understanding of how the funding systems operates and who is responsible for what. The chief constable is responsible for managing the financial resources allocated in the budget, although authority members will be involved in agreeing large contracts and capital expenditure.

Publishing an Annual Report

The police authority is responsible for producing a report at the end of each financial year reporting back to the community on the extent to which the Annual Policing/Best Value performance plan has been achieved.

Participating in local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships

Police authorities, along with chief constables, local authorities, health authorities and the probation service all contribute to local crime and disorder reduction partnerships. The partnerships are responsible for producing a three year strategy to tackle local crime and drugs issues. The local strategies contribute to the development of the wider local policing plan.

Other Statutory Functions

In addition, police authorities have a wide range of statutory functions. The most important of these include:

- appointing the chief constable and assistant chief constables
- monitoring the handling by the police force of complaints from the general public
- agreeing annual costed human resource plans for the force and monitoring progress against these plans during the year
- considering any complaints against the chief and assistant chief constables
- acting as the disciplinary authority for the chief and assistant chief constables
- meeting the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 to:
 - eliminate unlawful racial discrimination
 - promote equality of opportunity
 - promote good race relations between people of different racial groups
- operating an Independent Custody Visiting scheme to provide a check on persons detained in police cells

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