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Assessing the real purpose of the police code of ethics

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OVERVIEW OF PRESENTATION

- Background to the study
- The research question
- The research findings
- Taking the research further
BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

- Code of Ethics = A Code of Practice for the Principles and Standards of Professional Behaviour for the Policing Profession
- Issues about disclosure → police more intrusive into the lives of suspects, victims and witnesses
- Recent-high profile cases have been the result of poor practice by investigators → the Allan case (2017)
DISCLOSURE

- INTERPRETATIVE DISCLOSURE
- IMPLICATORY DISCLOSURE
- CULTURAL DISCLOSURE
- OFFICIAL DISCLOSURE
THE RESEARCH QUESTION

- What is the real purpose of the Police Code of Ethics?
- Disclosing versus not disclosing: is it ethical?
- Do police officers need a Code of Ethics?
THE STUDY

- Small sample but comprehensive of all ranks
- From detective constable to Assistant Chief Constable
- 4 focus groups → 14 police officers → 5 females 9 males
THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

- Although CoE is a benchmark no many officers aware of all the principles, nonetheless they all adhere to the principles in their profession.
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
- Conduct
- Challenging and reporting improper conduct
THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

- CoE is not on the back of officers’ mind when conducting any investigation
  
  **BUT**

- Officers of all ranks know to conduct themselves and follow the CoE without “thinking” because they follow their common-sense
COMMON-SENSE

- Acting with integrity
- Acting with honesty
THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

- CoE is not always relevant
- BUT
- is the best possible guide
- CoE appears to be fit for purpose
TAKE THE RESEARCH FURTHER

- Demand for digital investigation is outstripping resources
- It is not sustainable to keep increasing resources
- Greater consistency is required in policing
ANY QUESTIONS?