

IN THE MATTER OF THE POLICE (CONDUCT) REGULATIONS 2020 (AS AMENDED)
AND IN THE MATTER OF
POLICE CONSTABLE RAFAEL EDWARDS

OUTCOME REPORT

Introduction

1. The misconduct hearing for Police Constable Rafael Edwards (the Officer) was held in public between 15 and 19 June 2026 at Force Headquarters, Kent Police, and a Notice was published to that effect in accordance with Regulation 36(1) of the Police (Conduct) Regulations 2020 (the 2020 Regulations). The Regulation 30 Notice served on the Officer by the Appropriate Authority (the AA) alleged that the Officer had behaved in a manner which amounted to Gross Misconduct.
2. In brief, it was alleged that, during his initial police training and in his first few months of service in 2022, the officer had continued to act in an overtly sexualised manner towards his police colleagues. Having joined Kent Police on 17 January 2022, incidents which the AA deemed to be inappropriate were said to have begun occurring on 18 February 2022 and continued through to 1 November 2022. Some of these occurred in a classroom setting, some were during social occasions, and others took place in an operational environment.
3. Details of these various incidents are set out below in the section on the Panel's assessment of the disputed facts in the case. One allegation that had been included in the Regulation 30 Notice (concerning an alleged comment made by the Officer about a fellow officer in the Investigative Development Module (IDM) office) was withdrawn by the AA during the course of the hearing. Accordingly, the Panel disregarded that allegation.
4. The AA alleged that the Officer's conduct amounted to breaches of the Standards of Professional Behaviour (SPBs) relating to "Authority, Respect and Courtesy" and "Discreditable Conduct". These breaches were so serious that the dismissal of the Officer from Kent Police would be justified, and his behaviour amounted to Gross Misconduct.

5. The Officer gave detailed accounts to Investigators on three separate occasions, namely 6 November 2022, 12 May 2023 and 17 October 2025.
6. The Officer served a Regulation 31 response on 22 April 2026, setting out his position in respect of the various allegations made. The Officer did not accept that his actions breached any of the SPBs, nor that they amount to Gross Misconduct.
7. At the start of the hearing, the Chair made a direction under Regulation 39(3)(c) of the 2020 Regulations, prohibiting the publication of any matter that may lead directly or indirectly to four officers who were witnesses in the case. These officers were to be known as PC A, PC B, PC C, and PC D respectively.
8. The burden was on the AA to prove on the balance of probabilities that the Officer had behaved in the manners alleged and in doing so that he had breached the relevant SPBs. Further, the AA was required to satisfy the Panel to the same standard that the manner of the breach was of such a nature or degree that it amounted to Misconduct or Gross Misconduct.
9. The Panel took note of the established principle that the more serious the allegation, the more persuasive the evidence would need to be to meet that standard.
10. The Panel approached its task in the following stages:
 - i) Were any of the facts admitted?
 - ii) What facts had been proved by the AA on the balance of probabilities?
 - iii) Of the admitted or proved facts, had the AA satisfied the Panel on the balance of probabilities that the relevant SPBs had been breached?
 - iv) If so, had the AA satisfied the Panel on the balance of probabilities that it was Misconduct or Gross Misconduct?
11. The Panel read and carefully considered all the documentation that was submitted in advance of, and during the hearing.

Witnesses who gave evidence at the Hearing and the Panel's assessment of them

12. At a pre-hearing held on 18 May 2026, a direction was made for a number of witnesses to attend the hearing and give evidence. This was on the basis that it was in the interests of justice that these witnesses attend, either to provide wider context to their accounts or to give evidence in respect of disputed issues in the case. The Officer also chose to give evidence during the hearing.

13. The Panel assessed the evidence of the witnesses as follows:

PC A

14. The Panel considered this witness to be measured and to have been telling the truth as best he could. There were certain parts of his evidence where he was not especially clear on the details, but it was acknowledged that the events in question went back to 2022.

15. He was prepared to make certain concessions under questioning, although at other times he did appear to want to maintain an absolute position, even where independent witnesses may have shown him to have been mistaken. Insofar as there were any inconsistencies in his evidence, the Panel was of the view that these arose due to him misremembering the detail rather than him seeking to change his position.

PC B

16. This witness presented himself well in the Panel's view, and overall, he was plausible in the evidence he gave. His evidence was regarded as being generally credible and reliable, albeit there were parts of his testimony that were more vague and contained less certainty than his statement would suggest.

17. The Panel was also concerned over this witness not acknowledging the likely meaning of the 'cat emoji' in a message he had sent. On this point, the Panel found the witness to be a little evasive and worried about incriminating himself.

PC C

18. This witness presented herself well overall in the Panel's view. She was articulate and answered questions in full.

19. PC C could be a little defensive at times – for example in responding to the suggestion that the Officer felt ostracised by his fellow new recruits – and on certain points in her evidence (as set out in her witness statement) she should have given wider contextual detail.

20. Nevertheless, the Panel assessed the evidence of this witness as being credible and strong.

PC Hoodless

21. This witness gave his evidence in a straightforward and professional manner in the Panel's view. He answered all questions as best he could and did his best to give clear and impartial evidence of events back in 2022.

PC Pell

22. This witness was clearly professional and competent in the Panel's view, but it did not regard all of the answers he gave to questions to have been convincing. He came across as being defensive at times, and the Panel was concerned by his acceptance of the fact that he had not given any meaningful response in 2022 to the Officer's comment about feeling ostracised. The Panel also felt that an experienced and respected trainer such as PC Pell ought to have demonstrated a greater sensitivity towards diversity and inclusion issues, his approach coming across as "box-ticking" at times.

The Officer

23. The Panel felt that the Officer was consistent in the evidence he gave, albeit this came across as feeling a little "scripted" at times. It was acknowledged however that he had been through a long and stressful process to bring him to this Misconduct Hearing.

24. Although confident, the Officer did present himself as something of a challenging character at times. Whilst there were a number of areas where the Panel accepted his evidence, there were others – as detailed below – where his evidence was not considered to be credible or reliable.

Character of the Officer

25. In coming to its overall findings in this matter, the Panel took into account the fact that the Officer had never previously been subject to any previous findings of misconduct or gross misconduct. In addition, the evidence of the three-character witnesses submitted on behalf of the Officer was noted.
26. What the Panel was told about the character of the Officer was taken into account when assessing the credibility of his explanations and his propensity to act in the ways alleged.

The Admitted Facts

27. There were some areas where facts were admitted by the Officer. In respect of certain sexualised comments he was alleged to have made for example, the Officer either admitted making them or conceded that he may well have done.
28. The Officer was in many instances disputing the interpretation that the AA was inviting the Panel to place upon the matters that he had accepted as having happened. For other matters, he fully disputed that they had occurred in the manner alleged by the AA.
29. Accordingly, the Panel carefully assessed both the facts and the context of each of the incidents particularised by the AA in its Regulation 30 Notice. In doing so however, the Panel did not endeavour to reach a view on each and every area of dispute that had arisen in the case, only those which it considered necessary to do so for the purpose of making its overall findings.

The Panel's Findings on the Disputed Facts

30. As indicated, there were a number of facts as put forward by the AA that were either disputed or, in accordance with the Officer's case, which needed to be viewed in a different context to that which the AA was claiming existed.
31. The Panel reached the conclusions that follow on the balance of probabilities, having carefully considered all the material in the case and assessed the evidence of the witnesses.

32. Before addressing the specific disputed facts as set out in the Regulation 30 Notice, the Panel wished to record that, as a preliminary issue, in its view the Officer was experiencing an element of isolation and exclusion in the early stages of his training with Kent Police and it was fair for him to raise this. The Panel would have expected his fellow new recruits to address this more than they did - they appeared to just discuss matters amongst themselves, in some cases reacting somewhat defensively, and spoke with their trainers. None of the recruits appeared to have approached the Officer himself to gain a better understanding as to how he was feeling in those early stages.
33. Having said this, it was clear to the Panel that as time went by the Officer became far more integrated into the group, as evidenced by the way he could freely (and at times somewhat coarsely) engage with his relatively new colleagues.
34. Turning to the various factual allegations in the order set out in the Regulation 30 Notice, the Panel's findings were as follows:
- i) *The incident with PC B in the urinals in August 2022*
35. Here the allegation was that, during a social evening at a public house in Canterbury, the Officer had been in the male toilets at the same time as PC B. Having finished before PC B, the Officer was alleged to have looked over PC B's shoulder, viewed PC B's penis, and said words to the effect of "*not too bad*" as he laughingly left the toilets.
36. It appeared to be common ground that, on the evening in question, the Officer, PC B and a third officer (PC Pharo) all went to the toilets at the same time. The Officer and PC A used the urinal trough whilst PC Pharo used the cubicle.
37. The Panel was of the view that there was no reason for PC B to invent the incident, and that he raised it as he was asked to do so in the context of the wider investigation. His evidence was also corroborated to a certain extent by the fact that he provided contemporaneous disclosure to PC C when he left the toilets and returned to the bar. He had said that he felt very embarrassed by what had just happened and indeed had responded instantly to the Officer by saying "*come on Rafael, that's too far*".

38. On the other hand, the Panel found the Officer's explanation that he remembered going into the toilets at the same time as PC B and PC Pharo but that nothing happened to be unconvincing.
39. Although in his witness statement PC B had described the Officer looking over his shoulder and at his penis whilst he was urinating, PC B appeared more equivocal about this in his evidence. He described having what he believed was an awareness of the Officer behind him, that he did not see the Officer directly, and that he identified it as being the Officer through recognition of his voice.
40. On this basis, the Panel could not be satisfied on the balance of probabilities that the Officer actually looked at PC B's penis. However, given that the Panel found PC B to be a credible witness overall, it was more likely than not that the Officer did say words to the effect of "*not too bad*"; that this was said with a view to implying he had seen PC B's penis, and that this was done to shock and embarrass PC B.
- ii) *After printing a document for PC B, the Officer replied "sex" when PC B asked what he owed him for the favour*
41. The fact that this exchange took place at Kent Police College did not appear to be in dispute, but its context and how the Officer's conduct should be interpreted was the subject of differing views. The AA suggested that this needed to be looked at alongside the other inappropriate conduct of the Officer during that time. The Officer, whilst not recalling the remark, accepted that he may have said this as the type of throwaway joke that would not have been out of place with normal interactions at the time.
42. The Panel's view was that the comment was made as a joke, and whilst it was inappropriate in the context of ongoing sexualised behaviour by the Officer, this was the type of comment that others in the Officer's peer group may well have said themselves given the culture and environment at the time. In coming to this view, the Panel had regard to screenshots of WhatsApp messages sent amongst the group throughout 2022, in which the making of sexualised remarks was clearly commonplace.
- iii) *Comment made to PC C - "Don't waste that good dick, I'll have it if you don't want it"*

43. The Panel was satisfied that it was more likely than not that the Officer made this comment in the Premier Inn in Maidstone on a date between January 2022 and August 2022. It was said to have happened when the group were getting ready for a night out. The comment was said to be a reference to the fact that PC C was sharing a room that night with a male officer with whom she was in a relationship.
44. PC C gave clear evidence about the making of this comment, albeit the Panel would have expected PC C to have put the incident in its wider context, as set out below. Whilst the Officer stated that he did not recall making the specific comment, he did accept that he may have made a joke along the lines suggested by PC C.
45. In reaching this conclusion, the Panel noted that the Officer was at the relevant time applying make up to his face in a room with PC C and other females. This was in preparation for a social evening ahead during which he was going to attend in “drag”.
46. The Panel accepted the Officer’s explanation that, although he did not remember the exact words, he would have made such a comment, and that this would have been in character in keeping with the “drag” persona that he was adopting for the evening. Such acts are commonly known to seek to make people cringe and feel embarrassed in a generally harmless way for comic effect. Indeed, the Officer’s evidence that the comment was received in good humour and with laughter by those in the room was not challenged and was therefore accepted by the Panel.
47. The Panel was of the view that the making of such a crude, sexualised, comical remark was consistent with the manner in which this group of new recruits commonly communicated amongst each other, as has been observed.
- iv) Bringing up the sexual practice known as “Soupeur” during a lesson, and sharing a link about the practice via the class Teams facility*
48. This was said to have occurred in April 2022, during a class at Kent Police College about sexual offences. PC C had suggested in her witness statement that the Officer would inappropriately raise fetishes he had in class in the course of sometimes talking about his sex life and sexuality. Although PC C had appeared to say that the Officer would bring up such matters generally, it was clear from the statement of PC Pell that the Officer brought up the example of “Soupeur” during a class discussion on when sexual fetishes might amount to sexual offences. The Officer had confirmed

that he brought the practice up to exemplify the point under discussion, and that his classmates were instantly intrigued about it as it was not something they had encountered previously.

49. Assessing all of the evidence taken together, the Panel was of the view that it was more likely than not that the practice of “Soupeur”, although distasteful, was a proper topic for the Officer to bring up in the context of a class discussing the inter-relation between sexual fetishes and sexual offences.

50. The Panel accepted that, as corroborated by PC Pell, the Officer was simply giving an example of a sexual fetish, and not talking of his own personal experience (as suggested by PC C in her witness statement). In terms of the website link relating to “Soupeur”, the Panel considered that it was more likely than not that the Officer had posted this on Teams following a request from his classmates for further information, and that when PC Pell told him to delete the link he did so.

v) *Identifying PC D in the classroom by referencing his sexuality*

51. The Officer accepted that he referenced the sexuality of PC D when handed the written work of PC D to peer-mark on 9 March 2022. Whether the words used were “*ah, the homosexual*” (as described by PC Pell), “*ah, the other gay*” (as stated by PC D) or “*the gay one*” (as per the Officer’s evidence) was not a matter the Panel felt that it needed to resolve given the broadly common meaning. The Officer had explained that, with him and PC D both being openly gay, they would commonly laugh and joke with each other, and that the use of such language was a form of empowerment and a means of celebrating their identity.

52. In the Panel’s view, the Officer should have been sensitive to the impact that his words may have had on others in the class. Although PC D had stated that he was not offended by the comment, there was the potential for others to have been. The Panel considered that the circumstances in which the comment was made were inappropriate, and that the class trainer PC Pell had been right to call this out and to explain to the Officer why it was not appropriate to speak in such terms in the classroom setting.

vi) *November 2022 – the Officer placing his hand on the knee of PC A, and the related conversations about sexuality that took place that day*

53. The Panel found this to be a difficult factual issue to decide because of the various conflicting accounts that could not be reconciled.
54. On certain aspects, there was common ground between the AA and the Officer. It was accepted, for example, that there had been a time at which the Officer had placed his hand on PC A's knee when PC A was driving in connection with a police matter and the Officer was his front seat passenger. It was also accepted that the Officer's hand was left on PC A's knee for several seconds, and that at an early stage of the incident the Officer had apologised for an accidental touch to PC A's knee, saying he did not like it when people touched his (the Officer's) knee.
55. There were conflicting accounts in respect of other aspects of the incident, and in determining these the Panel carefully took all available evidence and information into account.
56. Whilst nothing could be concluded with certainty, the Panel decided the following on the balance of probabilities:
- a) Although there were variations in some parts of the accounts that PC A had provided to colleagues after the incident (to PC Parmenter, PC Bullen, and former PC Bayley-Cook) this was probably down to these colleagues misremembering the accounts they had been given, and / or being inadvertently influenced by discussions they were having collectively as a group, rather than attempts by PC A to embellish his allegation.
 - b) PC A had referred to his autism when giving evidence. This may or may not have had an impact on how PC A reacted at the time of the incident, but no medical evidence was put forward during the course of the case, so the Panel was not in a position to reach any view on this issue.
 - c) In the light of the evidence given at the hearing by PC Hoodless, the episode during which the Officer placed his hand on PC A's name **took place on the journey from North Kent Police Station to Medway** at around midday on 1 November 2022, rather than on the return journey after 6pm that day. PC Hoodless' independent evidence, which was regarded as being credible albeit he did not see all of the incident, was clear and unequivocal in terms of him having been a passenger in the rear seat only on the journey to Medway. The Panel

regarded PC A as having been mistaken on this point, somehow having conflated the events that took place on the initial and return journeys.

- d) Although he was mistaken in terms of time and location, PC A provided a credible and reliable account when saying that **the Officer had placed his hand on his knee on three separate occasions, for several seconds each time**. The Officer's account of simply demonstrating what he meant by the placing of a hand on a knee was regarded as being implausible. The Panel noted that PC Hoodless only described the Officer's hand being put on PC A's knee on only one occasion. This may have been because he only saw the end of the incident, having been looking at his phone and out of the window beforehand.
- e) The questions that the Officer asked PC A about **whether or not he liked his ears and/or neck being touched took place on the midday journey from North Kent Police Station to Medway**, and these arose in the context of the touching of PC A's knee.
- f) The **conversation about PC A's sexuality and his preferred sexual practices took place on the journey back from Medway to North Kent Police Station** and after the Officer and PC A had arrived at that destination. The Panel was persuaded that, had this conversation taken place on the way to Medway, PC Hoodless would have been more likely than not to hear this. However, PC Hoodless' evidence was that, after the Officer had put his hand on PC A's knee, there was an awkward atmosphere for the remainder of the journey. This was only broken by what PC Hoodless described as "small talk" between himself and the Officer.
- g) When putting his hand on the knee of PC A on three separate occasions, the Officer's **most likely purpose was to flirt with PC A**, to "test the waters" in terms of assessing how PC A would react.
- h) The **later questions about PC A's sexuality were a resumption of this flirting**. It was not the intention of the Officer, during the course of this conversation, to make PC A feel uncomfortable. However, it was clear to the Panel that the cumulative effect of the Officer's actions did adversely affect PC A to the extent that he spoke to his unofficial mentor and colleagues a short time after, and then proceeded to report the matter. He also, as a result, undertook a series of therapy sessions with a counsellor.

Standards of Professional Behaviour (SPBs)

57. Taking its findings as set out above cumulatively, the Panel considered whether there had been a breach of the SPBs. In coming to its decisions, the Panel regarded the placing of the Officer's hand on PC A's knee and the deliberate embarrassment of PC B as being the most significant incidents.
58. There were elements of the Officer harassing his colleagues with his offensive and sexualised comments. The placing of his hand on PC A's knee involved unwanted conduct from the Officer which clearly made PC A feel uncomfortable. In so acting, the Officer failed to act with the self-control that was expected in those circumstances.
59. The comment made by the officer, to PC B in the toilets violated his dignity, was degrading, and had the potential to humiliate him.
60. Taken together, the Panel concluded that the SPB relating to Authority, Respect and Courtesy had been breached.
61. The Panel went on to consider the wider impact of the Officer's conduct. Acting in the ways he did have the potential to undermine good order and discipline in Kent Police. Public confidence in policing would also be undermined were such conduct to become more widely known.
62. The Panel therefore determined that the SPB relating to Discreditable Conduct had also been breached.

Misconduct or Gross Misconduct

63. Having determined that two SPBs had been breached, the Panel went on to consider whether the Officer's conduct amounted to Misconduct, Gross Misconduct, or neither. When making this determination, the Panel reminded itself of the definitions of Misconduct and Gross Misconduct in section 2(1) of the 2020 Regulations. The Panel also considered the College of Policing Outcome Guidance when assessing the overall seriousness of the conduct.

64. In assessing the overall seriousness of the Officer's conduct, the Panel noted Regulation 4(9) of the 2020 Regulations that provides:

"Where an appropriate authority is considering more than one allegation in relation to the same police officer, or person in relation to whom these Regulations apply by virtue of paragraph (2), the allegations may be taken together and treated as a single allegation for the purposes of any provision of these Regulations which requires a person to make an assessment, finding, determination or decision in connection with conduct which is the subject matter of an allegation."

65. The Panel reminded itself that the purpose of the police misconduct regime is to: maintain public confidence in and the reputation of the police service; uphold high standards in policing and deter misconduct; and to protect the public.

66. Taking into account the matters that had been proved, the Panel was firmly of the view that the Officer's conduct was so serious as to justify disciplinary action. The Panel was significantly concerned by the Officer's conduct, his considering that it was appropriate to act in the manner he did during the first few months of his policing career.

67. Accordingly, the Panel concluded that the Officer's conduct and his breaches of the SPBs amounted to **Misconduct**.

Outcome Decision

68. Having come to the view that the Officer's conduct amounted to Misconduct, the Panel went on to determine the appropriate outcome in terms of disciplinary action.

69. The Panel carefully considered all matters brought to its attention and was provided with the Officer's service history which showed no previous findings of Misconduct or Gross Misconduct.

70. The Panel applied the principles set out in *R (on the application of the Chief Constable of Greater Manchester Police) v Police Misconduct Panel* [2018] 11 WL UK 822 and *R (on the application of Chief Constable West Midlands Police) v Panel Chair, Police Misconduct Panel v Officer "A" – Interested Party* [2020] EWHC 1400 (Admin) which emphasise the importance of following the structured approach as set out in the College of Policing (CoP) Guidance on Outcomes in Police Misconduct

Proceedings. This approach – and the need to follow it rather than simply to purport to follow it – has been endorsed in a number of subsequent authorities.

71. In summary, the Panel:

- (i) Assessed the seriousness of the conduct and behaviour of the Officer
- (ii) Reminded itself of the purpose of imposing sanctions, namely:
 - Maintaining public confidence in and the reputation of the police service;
 - Upholding high standards in policing and deterring misconduct;
 - and
 - Protecting the public.
- (iii) Arrived at an Outcome which most appropriately fulfilled the purpose of imposing sanctions in the light of the seriousness of the Officer's conduct.

Seriousness of the Conduct and Behaviour

72. In considering the appropriate sanction, the Panel considered the following factors in line with the guidance on assessing seriousness in the CoP Guidance on Outcomes:

- The culpability borne by the Officer for his actions
- The harm caused by the Officer's actions
- The existence of any aggravating factors
- The existence of any mitigating factors

Culpability

73. Whilst he may have been operating in a certain culture and environment as the Panel noted when handing down its findings earlier, his actions were his and his alone, and he had a choice as to how he conducted himself.

74. The Panel regarded the Officer's conduct to have been clearly deliberate in terms of his actions towards PC A and PC B. Furthermore, he had acted intentionally on both occasions, albeit that whilst he may have intended to shock and embarrass PC B, he had not intended to make PC A feel uncomfortable.

75. These factors increased the Officer's blameworthiness in the Panel's view. Taking all of the above matters into account, the Panel took the view that this was a case in which there was a medium level of blameworthiness.

Harm

76. The Panel considered the harm that the Officer's actions may have caused or risked to others, along with the harm that was or risked being caused to the confidence of the public in policing.

77. There was evidence of the Officer having caused psychological distress to PC A, and this may have been foreseeable albeit the Officer was not aware of certain medical matters that PC A had raised in the course of his evidence.

78. The Officer's actions had also had a negative impact on PC B. Whilst his various comments were mostly made in jest, he should have realised that not all his colleagues could have been expected to respond in the same way. As the College of Policing guidance on Ethical Policing Principles puts the matter:

"We recognise that everyone may respond to the same situation in different ways, so we always seek to consider how others are thinking, feeling or behaving."

79. The Panel went on to consider the harm caused to the wider community. In considering this issue, the Panel took into account paragraph 4.60 of the CoP Guidance which states that *"how such behaviour would be or has been perceived by the public will be relevant, whether or not the behaviour was known about at the time."*

80. A proportion of the public would rightly be concerned about such behaviour, it being not befitting of someone acting in the office of a police constable.

81. There is also wider public concern about so-called sexual banter amongst police colleagues, and the impact that this may have on the conduct of their policing duties.

82. Taking all of this into account, there was a medium level of harm arising from the Officer's actions in this case.

Aggravating Factors

83. The Panel gave consideration to the list of potential aggravating factors set out in paragraph 4.75 of the CoP Guidance which worsened or increased the seriousness

of the misconduct in this case. A number of aggravating factors were found to be present, albeit the Panel took care not to double-count any factors that had already been taken into account when assessing the levels of culpability and harm. These included the taking of deliberate actions, and the national concerns over how police officers conducted themselves amongst each other.

84. There were, however, a number of additional factors that increased the seriousness of the conduct in the Panel's view.

85. It was evident that the Officer's behaviour was repeated, sexualised behaviour over a period of several months in 2022, reaching the stage whereby a concerning pattern began to develop.

86. There were multiple proven allegations in the case, and two of the SPBs had been breached.

87. In respect of the multiple proven allegations, the Panel had regard to Regulations 42(3) and (6) of the 2020 Conduct Regulations that provides that Dismissal without Notice is an available sanction:

"where it is decided at misconduct proceedings that the officer's conduct amounts to misconduct and the decision is based on the officer's conduct arising from more than one incident and those incidents are not closely factually connected."

Mitigating factors

88. The Panel found none of the mitigating factors set out in paragraph 4.81 of the CoP guidance to be present.

89. The Panel did take account however of the fact that the incidents involved took place during the very early stages of the Officer's policing career, and as noted by the Panel, he might reasonably have expected to have been better supported over the difficulties he was experiencing and legitimately raising. This to a small extent reduced the seriousness of the misconduct.

Personal Mitigation

90. Having assessed the seriousness of the Misconduct found proven, the Panel then went on to consider the personal mitigation on behalf of the Officer.

91. Given the purpose of police misconduct hearings, the Panel kept in mind the fact that personal mitigation will carry limited weight and less than it might do in a different context [as explained by Holroyde J as he then was in *The Queen (on the application of Williams) v Police Appeals Tribunal* [2016] EWHC 2708 (QB)].
92. Nevertheless, the Panel did take account of the content of the Officer's service history, which showed that he had not been the subject of any formal disciplinary findings in the short period since he joined Kent Police.
93. The Panel also took into account of evidence of the Officer's three-character witnesses, who highlighted what they regarded as being his positive qualities.

Outcome

94. The Panel then went on to consider the outcome which would most appropriately fulfil the purposes of imposing sanctions in the light of the seriousness of the Officer's conduct.
95. Whilst some weight was accorded to the mitigation put forward by the Officer, the Panel also gave proper emphasis to the strong public interest in the maintenance of public confidence in policing in reaching its conclusion on outcome. The Panel kept in mind the declaratory purpose of any decision made in terms of maintaining high professional standards, and for prevention and protection purposes.
96. The Panel considered all the available outcomes, starting with the least serious.
97. The Panel considered whether a Written Warning would be appropriate in this case or whether the seriousness of the case required a greater sanction.
98. Having considered what the outcome should be, the Panel determined that a Written Warning would not adequately satisfy the purpose of the proceedings given the nature and number of matters that the Panel had found proven against the Officer.
99. The Panel, after careful consideration, considered that a Final Written Warning would meet the purposes of police misconduct proceedings, in particular around upholding public confidence, maintaining high standards, and deterring others from such conduct.

100. Accordingly, the sanction imposed in this case was a Final Written Warning for a period of two years.

101. Given the Panel's decision, it was not considered necessary to come to a settled view as to whether Regulations 42 (3) and (6) were engaged in the case.

Right of Appeal

102. The Panel notified the Officer that he has a right of appeal to the Police Appeals Tribunal. The AA shall provide a notice as to the procedure to be followed in that regard.

Publication of Outcome

103. In accordance with Regulations 43(1) and (6) of the 2020 Regulations, the AA shall publish a report of the outcome of these proceedings on its website for a period of not less than 28 days.

Organisational Learning

104. Having conducted the hearing and arrived at the above outcome, the Panel also identified two areas of organisational learning that Kent Police is encouraged to reflect upon. These are:

- i) The Panel considered that the Kent Police College (KPC) insufficiently addressed issues of inclusion raised by the Officer early on in his time at KPC, and that trainers felt the need to make entries regarding challenges he made about class content and the way it was being presented, but which the panel assessed as legitimate challenges. Whilst the panel accepted that the witnesses were all acting in good faith, potential unconscious biases were apparent within the witness evidence heard that suggest that some of the contributions and concerns being raised by PC Edwards were considered as problematic and needed addressing as such. The Panel believed instead it would have been preferable to make greater effort to understand the perspective of an officer, who as an overtly gay, black officer was evidently very different to the wider cohort.

The Panel does balance this view with the understanding that the Police Service is and should be an ordered environment that requires a high degree of conformity to standards, obedience and discipline. The training environment

needs to be a place where this is instilled but it also needs to be an environment where there is flexibility and encouragement to question, challenge and learn.

The Panel accepts that it is basing this view upon very limited evidence of PC Edwards' time at the KPC, and a greater analysis and holistic understanding of that experience by both the Officer and KPC would allow some rich learning to improve inclusivity for all officers entering the KPC. The Officer was clear in his position that he did not have a positive experience in terms of there not being a full understanding by those at KPC of the importance of diversity and inclusion issues. He also stated that he did not experience such concerns in his short time within Local Policing after finishing his initial training at KPC.

- ii) The investigation in this case was primarily focused upon the matters reported by PC A and PC B. Through the gathering of evidence into these matters, additional matters were surfaced that later were included by the AA as allegations. It was apparent through the witness statements that those were intended to provide context rather than as allegations in their own right. The extent of the investigation surrounding those appeared to the Panel to be far more limited as a result and failed to unpack detail or develop lines of enquiry that may have put them in the proper context or may have identified witnesses who may have provided a greater understanding of each incident.

This gave a tendency to dilute the AA's case as, when examined in context at the hearing, some of these matters were considered either minor, dealt with at the time as a training issue, or simply incorrect. If such matters are to be included as allegations, the investigation should properly examine those through relevant lines of enquiry.



ACO Andy Pritchard – Chair

Ms Rachel Forster – Independent Panel Member

Mr Seán McHugh – Independent Panel Member

25 June 2026