



## Introduction

1. The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) has approved the adoption of a single National Decision Model (NDM) for the Police Service. The ACPO Ethics Portfolio and the National Risk Coordination Group have developed this values-based tool to provide a simple, logical and evidence-based approach to making policing decisions.
2. Ever since its creation the police service has been making good decisions. Police decision making, however, is often complex; decisions are required in difficult circumstances and they are open to challenge. We must improve our decision making, and where the outcome is not what we wanted, we have to learn. Adopting the NDM is part of a concerted drive to ensure a greater focus on delivering the mission of policing, acting in accordance with our values, enhancing the use of discretion, reducing risk aversion and supporting the appropriate allocation of limited policing resources as the demand for them increases.
3. Understanding and practising the NDM will help police officers and staff develop the professional judgement necessary to make effective policing decisions. It will also help them learn from decisions that have a successful outcomes, as well as the small proportion that do not.
4. Decision makers will receive the support of their organisation in all instances where they can demonstrate that their decisions were assessed and managed reasonably in the circumstances existing at the time. This applies even where harm results from their decisions and actions.

## Application

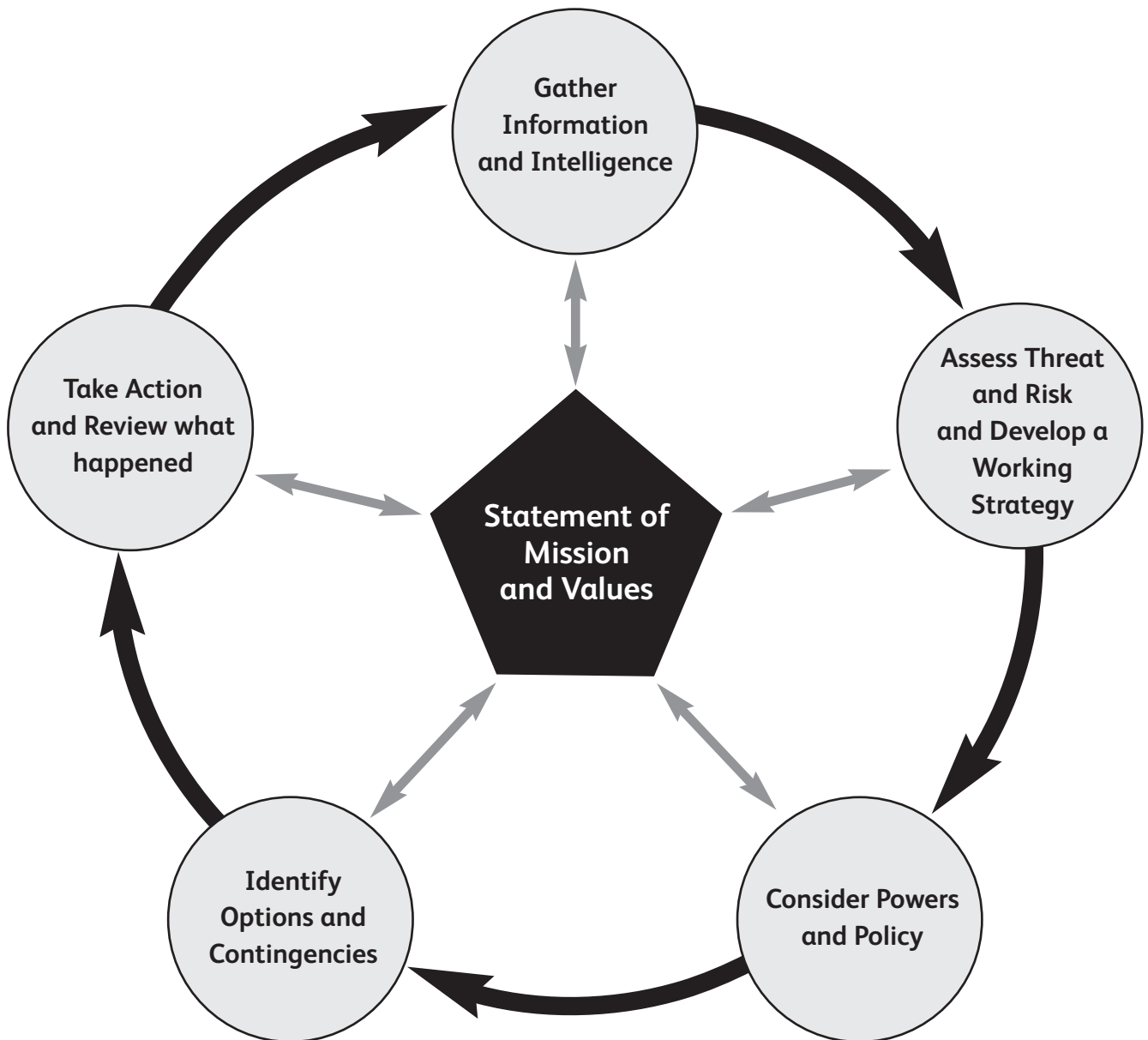
5. The NDM is suitable for all decisions. It can be applied to spontaneous incidents or planned operations, by an individual or teams of people, and to both operational and non-operational situations. Decision makers can use it to structure a rationale of what they did during an incident and why. Managers and others can use it to review decisions and actions taken. The inherent flexibility of the NDM means that it can easily be expanded for specialist areas of policing. In every case, the model stays the same, but users decide for themselves what questions and considerations they apply at each stage.
6. In a fast-moving incident, the Police Service recognises that it may not always be possible to segregate thinking or response according to each phase of the model. In such cases, the main priority of decision makers is to keep in mind their overarching mission.

## The Model

7. The National Decision Model has six key elements. Each component provides the user with an area for focus and consideration (see **Figure 1**).

# The National Decision Model

Figure 1: The National Decision Model



## The National Decision Model

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8. The pentagon at the centre of the NDM contains the **Statement of Mission and Values** (ACPO, July 2011) for the Police Service.

The mission of the police is to make communities safer by upholding the law fairly and firmly; preventing crime and antisocial behaviour; keeping the peace; protecting and reassuring communities; investigating crime and bringing offenders to justice.

We will act with integrity, compassion, courtesy and patience, showing neither fear nor favour in what we do. We will be sensitive to the needs and dignity of victims and demonstrate respect for the human rights of all.

We will use discretion, professional judgement and common sense to guide us and will be accountable for our decisions and actions. We will respond to well-founded criticism with a willingness to learn and change.

We will work with communities and partners, listening to their views, building their trust and confidence, making every effort to understand and meet their needs.

We will not be distracted from our mission through fear of being criticised. In identifying and managing risk, we will seek to achieve successful outcomes and to reduce the risk of harm to individuals and communities.

In the face of violence we will be professional, calm and restrained and will apply only that force which is necessary to accomplish our lawful duty.

Our commitment is to deliver a service that we and those we serve can be proud of and which keeps our communities safe.

9. It is the need to keep this statement of mission and values – with its integral recognition of the necessity to take risks and protect human rights – at the heart of every decision that differentiates the NDM from other decision-making models. This is also why it now replaces all models previously used by the Police Service, including the Conflict Management Model (CMM).
10. The corners of the values pentagon connect to and support the five stages of the decision-making process. One step logically follows another, but the model allows for continual re-assessment of a situation and the return to former steps when necessary.

### Explaining the NDM

11. The pentagon at the centre of the NDM reminds police officers and staff to keep the police mission and values at the heart of the decision-making process.
12. The following table gives examples of the types of questions and considerations that decision makers should think about, but they are not the only ones for every situation. They are a prompt or aid only. It would not be helpful to be more specific; decision makers must be free to interpret the NDM for themselves, reasonably and according to the circumstances facing them at any given time.

# The National Decision Model

## Central Pentagon: VALUES

## Statement of Mission and Values

Throughout the situation, you could ask yourself:

- Is what I'm considering consistent with the Statement of Mission and Values?  
(You are wanting to ensure that decisions reflect an understanding of the police duty to act with integrity, be willing to take risks and protect the human rights of all.)
- What would the Police Service expect of me in this situation?
- What would any victim(s), the affected community and the wider public expect of me in this situation?

## Stage 1: INFORMATION

## Gather Information and Intelligence

During this stage the decision maker defines the situation (ie, defines what is happening or has happened) and clarifies matters relating to any initial information and intelligence.

- What is happening?
- What do I know so far?
- What further information (or intelligence) do I want/need?

## Stage 2: ASSESSMENT

## Assess Threat and Risk and Develop a Working Strategy

This stage involves assessing the situation, including any specific threat, the risk of harm and the potential for benefits.

- Do I need to take action immediately?
- Do I need to seek more information?
- What could go wrong? (and what could go well?)
- How probable is the risk of harm?
- How serious would it be?
- Is that level of risk acceptable?
- Is this a situation for the police alone to deal with?
- Am I the appropriate person to deal with this?

Develop a **working strategy** to guide subsequent stages by asking yourself:

- What am I trying to achieve?  
(Amongst other things consider discrimination, good relations and equal opportunities.)

## Stage 3: POWERS AND POLICY

## Consider Policy and Powers

This stage involves considering what powers, policies and legislation might be applicable in this particular situation.

- What police powers might be required?
- Is there any national guidance covering this type of situation?
- Do any local organisational policies or guidelines apply?
- What legislation might apply?

**As long as there is a good rationale for doing so, it may be reasonable to act outside policy.**

## The National Decision Model

### Stage 4: OPTIONS

#### Identify Options and Contingencies

This stage involves considering the different ways to make a particular decision (or resolve a situation) with the least risk of harm.

#### Options

- What options are open to me? Consider the immediacy of any threat; the limits of information to hand; the amount of time available; available resources and support; your own knowledge, experience and skills; the impact of potential actions on the situation and the public.

If you have to account for your decision, will you be able to say it was:

- Proportionate, legitimate, necessary and ethical?
- Reasonable in the circumstances facing you at the time?

#### Contingencies

- What will I do if things do not happen as I anticipate?

### Stage 5: ACTION and REVIEW

#### Take Action and Review What Happened

This stage requires decision makers to make and implement appropriate decisions. It also requires decision makers, once an incident is over, to review what happened.

#### Action

- Respond
- Implement the option you have selected;
  - Does anyone else need to know what you have decided?
- Record:
- If you think it appropriate, record what you did and why.
- Monitor:
- What happened as a result of your decision?
  - Was it what you wanted or expected to happen?

**If the incident is continuing**, go through the NDM again as necessary

#### Review

**If the incident is over**, review your decisions, using the NDM

- What lessons can you take from how things turned out?
- What might you do differently next time?

### Recording What Was Done and Why

- Decision-makers are accountable for their decisions and must be prepared to provide a rationale for what they did and why. In some circumstances the need to document decisions is prescribed by statute, required by organisational strategies, policies or local practices, or left to the decision-maker's discretion.
- Whatever the circumstances, the Police Service recognises that it is impossible to record every single decision and that not all decisions need to be recorded. In most instances professional judgement should guide whether or not to record the rationale, as well as the nature and extent of any explanation. The record should be proportionate to the seriousness of the situation or incident, particularly if this involves a risk of harm to a person.
- In addition to using the NDM to determine their actions, decision makers may also find it useful for structuring the rationale behind their decisions.

# The National Decision Model

**The mnemonic VIAPOAR will help users remember the key elements of the NDM.**

|          |                           |
|----------|---------------------------|
| <b>V</b> | <b>V</b> alues            |
| <b>I</b> | <b>I</b> nformation       |
| <b>A</b> | <b>A</b> ssessment        |
| <b>P</b> | <b>P</b> owers and policy |
| <b>O</b> | <b>O</b> ptions           |
| <b>A</b> | <b>A</b> ction            |
| <b>R</b> | <b>R</b> evue             |

## REVIEWS/DEBRIEFS

The NDM is ideal for examining decisions made and action taken, whether by a supervisor, an informal investigation or a formal inquiry. Examples of questions and considerations are:

### Values

- How were the police mission and values, risk, and the protection of human rights kept in mind during the situation?

### Information

- What information/intelligence was available?

### Assessment

- What factors (potential benefits and harms) were assessed?
- What threat assessment methods were used (if any)?
- Was a working strategy implemented? Was it appropriate?

### Powers and policy

- Were there any powers, policies and legislation that should have been considered?
- If policy was not followed, was this reasonable in the circumstances?

### Options

- How were feasible options identified and assessed?

### Action and Review

- Were decisions proportionate, legitimate, necessary and ethical?
- Were decisions reasonable in the circumstances facing the decision maker?
- Were decisions communicated effectively?
- Were decisions and the rationale for them recorded as appropriate?
- Were decisions monitored and reassessed where necessary?
- What lessons can be taken from the outcomes and how the decisions were made?

### For Supervisors

- Did you recognise and acknowledge instances of initiative or good decisions (were they passed to managers where appropriate)?
- Did you recognise and challenge instances of poor decisions?

Even where the outcome was not what was hoped for, if the decision taken by your staff was reasonable given the circumstances, they deserve your support and that of the organisation.