



Accelerated Misconduct Hearing

PRESIDING OFFICER'S ACCOUNT REGULATION 63

Name of person conducting the hearing	Chief Constable Paul Gibson
Officer concerned	Insp Andrew Price
Date of hearing	5 th August 2026

The decision of the hearing

Allegation number	
Allegation breach (as per Reg 51 notice)	Facts 1.1. At all relevant times, you were employed by Lincolnshire Police, having commenced employment on 24th October 2004. 1.2. During the course of your employment, you met Person A, a vulnerable male who was known to the police as a result of his criminal conduct. 1.3. Between 15 December 2022 and 3 December 2023 you 1.3.1. Were in contact with Person A using your personal mobile telephone; and /or 1.3.2. Met Person A; and/or 1.3.3. Purchased and gave Person A a birthday present; and/or 1.3.4. Purchased shopping and/or food for Person A; and or/ 1.3.5. Gave Person A money to pay a <i>drug debt</i> and/or advised Person A not to inform the police about the demands in respect of that drug debt. 1.4. This contact with Person A was inappropriate as you had met Person A during the course of your duties and/ or you were aware Person A was vulnerable and/ or you engaged in contact with the aim of forming an emotional relationship with Person A. 1.5. You knew and/or ought to have known that the contact with Person A was inappropriate.

	1.6. You did not notify the force as to your relationship with Person A, as required to do so by Lincolnshire Police's Notifiable Association policy. 1.7. At all relevant times, you were subjected to Lincolnshire Police's Operational use of CapTor2 irritant spray Policy and in particular Appendix A which states: 1.7.1. <i>All CapTor2 canisters MUST be stored in locked facilities when the Officer is off duty. This can be personal lockers, locked office drawers or specific irritant spray lockers.</i> 1.7.2. <i>Irritant sprays are defined as a prohibited weapon under S.5 (1) (b) of the Firearms Act 1968. As such an irritant spray MUST NOT be kept or stored in Officers' personal homes as this may constitute a criminal offence in certain circumstances, causes unnecessary risk, and may cause issues with personal insurance.</i> 1.7.3. <i>In a similar vein, irritant sprays should not be carried in Officers' personal vehicles as this may also constitute a criminal offence on certain circumstances, causes unnecessary risk, and may cause issues with personal insurance.</i> 1.8. You were at work on 14 September 2024 before entering a period of leave until 28 September 2024. 1.9. When you left work on 14 September 2024, knowing that you were entering a period of leave, you failed to store your PAVA Spray securely on work premises. 1.10. Further, and/ or in the alternative, between 14 September and 27 September 2024, you 1.10.1. Carries your PAVA spray in your personal vehicle; and/ or 1.10.2. Stored your PAVA spray in your personal vehicle; and/ or 1.10.3. Stored your PAVA spray at your home address. 1.11. On 5 May 2026, you were charged with one offence that being on the 27 September 2024, you were in possession of a weapon designed or adapted for discharge of a noxious liquid, namely PAVA Spray, contrary to section 5(1)(b) and schedule 6 of Firearms Act 1968. 1.12. On 26 May 2026 at Nottingham Crown Court, you pleaded guilty to that offence. You were made subject to a conditional order for 6 months and ordered to pay costs to Crown Prosecution Service of £85 and a victim surcharge of £26. 2. Particulars of Misconduct 2.1 Your conduct at paragraphs 1.3 and/ or 1.4 and/ or 1.5 2.1.1. Lacked integrity as it was an abuse of your position 2.1.2. Lacked respect and courtesy for a vulnerable member of the public. 2.1.3. Would undermine public confidence in the police. 2.2. Your conduct a paragraph 1.6. 2.2.1. Was a breach of force policy
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	2.2.2. Would undermine public confidence in the police. 2.3 Your conduct at paragraph 1.8 and/ or 1.9 and/ or 1.10 and/ or 1.11 would undermine public confidence in the police service. 2.4 Your conduct at paragraphs 1.8 and/or 1.9 amounts to a breach of force policy. 3. The conduct if proved amounts to gross misconduct for the following reasons: 3.1. Your conduct amounted to a criminal conduct 3.2. Your conduct was towards a vulnerable individual 6 3.3. Your conduct was repeated and sustained 3.4. Your conduct would undermine trust and confidence in you as a police officer and the police service as a whole 4. Standards of Professional Behaviour engaged 4.1 Honesty and Integrity (Integrity Only) 4.2 Discreditable Conduct 4.3 Authority Respect and Courtesy 4.4 Orders and Instructions
Officer's response	The Officer admitted that he had contact which was inappropriate on grounds of the prolonged engagement with Person A, but denied that he had acted with the intention of forming an emotional relationship, or that one had been formed. The Officer denied breaching the Notifiable Association policy. The Officer denied the particulars of misconduct The Officer denied that the conduct amounted to gross misconduct.
Finding	The particulars of the allegation were proved: In respect of 1.3 to 1.6, save for the allegation in 1.5 that the officer engaged in the contact with the aim of forming an emotional relationship In respect of 1.7 to 1.12 in full. That the following standards of professional behaviour were breached: 1. Honesty and Integrity (Integrity Only) 2. Discreditable Conduct 3. Orders and Instructions That the conduct amounted to gross misconduct

Rationale For Findings

I am asked to answer the questions:

1. What has the AA proved on the balance of probabilities or has been admitted?
2. What standards of professional behaviour are engaged?
3. Does the conduct amount to misconduct, gross misconduct, or neither?

What has the AA proved on the balance of probabilities or has been admitted?

The contents of the regulation 51 notice is admitted save for the allegations:

- Inspector Price engaged in contact with aim of forming an emotional relationship with Person A.
- That he knew or ought to have known that the contact with A was inappropriate (albeit that he accepts that the prolonged engagement was inappropriate)
- that this amounted to a breach of the Notifiable Association Policy

It appears to be denied that any of the conduct in respect of person A was a breach of the standards of professional behaviour.

There was a lawful basis for the initial interaction between Inspector Price and Person A. As time went on Inspector Price provided his own time, money and resources to Person A over an extended period. He resolved issues in Person A's life, including issues relating to money, food, and personal crises including owing individuals money for drugs. This went well beyond the expectations of any police officer, and had the effect of compromising Inspector Price. This is evidenced in the fact that when Person A reported that he owed money for drugs and that his dog had been taken, Inspector Price's resolution was to provide money so that the debt could be paid off. Inspector Price stated that he did not consider the information that he was being given on this occasion was truthful. I found that inconsistent with Inspector Price's behaviour on other occasions where he was quick to act and provide support because of his concerns about Person A's vulnerability and potential to be exploited. I considered his explanation in respect of that incident to be unconvincing and convenient. There was no plausible reason to disbelieve what Person A was saying, and the provision of money to resolve it suggested that he did take it seriously. At that point, if not before, this should have been recorded and escalated to a supervisor. This was a situation which had the potential, and indeed, the effect, of compromising Inspector Price.

Accordingly, this was a matter which should have reported as a notifiable association in accordance with the policy at the relevant time.

Inspector Price exceeded his professional responsibilities in respect of Person A. He went considerably further than was appropriate. Other professionals' views were reported to Person A indicating that Inspector Price should not be involved to this extent. It should have been obvious to him that he was too involved with Person A and the extent to which he was providing support was not appropriate.

I am not persuaded that Inspector Price abused his position for an improper purpose. I do believe that this started as a valid interaction for safeguarding purposes, but I believe that it developed into a personal association which went well beyond professional boundaries, rather than just blurring them.

It was put to Inspector Price by the AA that he was acting as a friend to Person A. I believe from the response given that Inspector Price saw himself as a “saviour” and became entrenched in supporting Person A. I believe that he lost sight of professional boundaries and in so doing acted without integrity in respect of the incident with the dog. I believe that from that point records were not sufficiently detailed and the extent of his contact was minimised or kept vague because he realised that he was too involved, and that providing accurate information was likely to result in criticism that he had gone too far.

The remaining conduct is admitted. It is asserted that the retention of the PAVA spray was not intentional. Again, Inspector Price should have reported this when he realised that he had taken his kit home. It was not appropriate to keep it at home or to keep it in his car. Irrespective of him being on leave, he was under an obligation to return it to the police station, and given how committed he was to other aspects of his duties it is highly surprising that he did not do so.

What standards of professional behaviour are engaged?

Honesty and Integrity; specifically a breach of integrity, in respect of the failure to report the circumstances of the drug debt which ought to have been seen as an alleged offence; and the failure to report the extent of his relationship with Person A which I believe he minimised or kept vague with his supervisors.

Discreditable conduct: in respect of the fact that it would damage public confidence in Lincolnshire Police if the public were aware of the extent to which Inspector Price crossed professional boundaries with Person A and by reason of the criminal conviction

Orders and Instructions; in respect of the failure to comply with the Notifiable Association Policy and the policy relating to CapTor 2 Irritant Spray policy.

Does it amount to misconduct, gross misconduct, or neither?

The conduct amounts to gross misconduct both in respect of aspects of the conduct connected to Person A, and the criminal conviction.

College of Policing (para 4.17) states that police officers are sworn to uphold the law, not to break it. Therefore a finding of guilt for any offence is a serious issue.

The finding of a breach of standards relating to integrity is also a serious issue, particularly in respect of the failure to make records relating to information suggesting a criminal offence had been committed.

Stage 2

I have formed my assessment of seriousness based on the guidance provided by the College of Policing, and bear in mind the purposes of police misconduct proceedings, namely

- Protect the public
- Maintain public confidence
- Maintain high standards of professionalism

Culpability

Inspector Price breached standards by carrying out the conduct described in paragraph 1.3, 1.5 and 1.6. The officer failed to maintain a professional boundary and did not comply with the Notifiable Association Policy. In respect of paragraph 1.3.5, Inspector Price behaved in a way which breached the standard of integrity.

In respect of paragraph 1.9 – 1.12, the officer failed to comply with the Force policy relating to PAVA spray, which resulted in him being found guilty of a criminal offence under s.5 Firearms Act 1968.

The conduct in both instances was deliberate and intentional. Inspector Price's rank means that he is expected to set an example and should know better. In respect of the misuse of the PAVA spray, this is serious enough to attract criminal liability. Although the Court imposed a conditional discharge, the College of Policing Guidance notes that a sentence imposed in Court proceedings may not reflect the seriousness of the breach of standards caught by the conduct.

The officer may not have intended to take the spray home, but clearly was under an obligation to return it when he realised. He did not do so, and for at least one night left the canister vulnerable in his car.

Accordingly, I find that culpability in this case is high.

Harm

I note that Person A is described as vulnerable. In my opinion, it is not clear that Inspector Price exploited his relationship with Person A; rather, the contrary appears true. It is reflected in the facts of the case, however, that Inspector Price was compromised by the extent to which he involved himself in Person A's life and circumstances. This ultimately created a conflict of interest and at the crucial point, Inspector Price chose to advise Person A not to report a matter to the Police and instead paid Person A money to settle a drug debt.

I believe that such conduct would substantially undermine public confidence in Lincolnshire Police.

The public would also be dismayed to know that a senior police officer mishandled an article which constitutes a firearm in the manner described in the papers. The potential loss of the PAVA spray through the failure to comply with policy would have a serious impact on public confidence and could have resulted in further harm. The criminal conviction of a police officer always does harm to the reputation of policing.

Accordingly I find that harm, and potential harm, is high.

Aggravating features

The behaviour occurred over an extended period. This is a case where I have found gross misconduct to have been committed in respect of two separate sets of facts. I take care not to double count matters arising in respect of culpability and harm.

Mitigating features

I take into account that the officer asserts that he was burned out and suffering from stress at the relevant time. I temper this with the fact that the officer was acting in respect of Person A outside of work hours and his professional remit for much of the later stages of his contact with him.

I balance my assessment of these criteria against the following:

- Record of Service
- Credit for remorse
- Character Testimony
- Personal mitigation

I recognise that Inspector Price has been a high performing officer who is well thought of by many of his colleagues. His character references are impressive. I believe that his expressions of regret over the conduct are sincere. I can allow him partial credit for his admissions albeit that there aspects of his testimony that I have not found credible today.

I recognise that there is information to suggest that Inspector Price has traits consistent with ADHD and/or autism. I do not have detailed medical information to enable me to fully understand how this may affect his decision making; he has anecdotally indicated that he believes this is a contributing factor to an obsessive approach to aspects of his work. I bear in mind that this is a possibility, but still have to look at the effect of the conduct.

I therefore have to consider what is the lowest sanction I can impose to maintain public confidence in the Police Service.

In my opinion a final written warning would not maintain public confidence given the serious aggravating factors and the findings that I have made in this case.

I have given serious thought to whether I could reduce Inspector Price in rank. I have been advised of the effect of paragraph 11.135 of the Home Office Guidance.

“Reduction in rank should only be used where circumstances warrant it. It should not be an outcome as a 'softer option' or simply where there is sympathy for the officer concerned. It is available as a sanction where there are questions of poor leadership related to the specific responsibilities of senior ranks in the police force where there may be different expectations of behaviour. ...”

This is a case where Inspector Price assumed responsibility for Person A, a vulnerable person. He failed to maintain professional boundaries with him, resulting in him providing money, food, birthday gift and in one instance, paid money to satisfy a drug debt and advised Person A not to report it to the Police. He minimised the extent of his involvement with Person A to his superiors. In a separate case, he failed to comply with secure handling of a weapon to a serious degree, even leaving it overnight in his car. I do not see that these findings are specific to a question of poor leadership. Moreover, a finding of integrity does

serious damage to Lincolnshire Police's ability to deploy Inspector Price in an evidential role.

Accordingly, it is with significant regret that I find that the only outcome in this case which would meet public confidence is one of dismissal without notice.

Anonymity

The AA made an application prior to the commencement of the hearing that person A's details should be anonymized and should not be reported in any publication relating to this case.

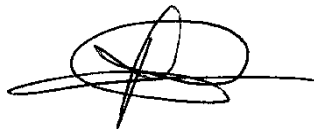
The application was not opposed.

I recognise the principle of open justice applies to police misconduct proceedings and that the principle should be derogated from in exceptional circumstances.

I also recognise the force of the submissions that there is a strong public interest in not identifying person A. This decision does not impact the officer's ability to have a fair hearing. The officer knows person A's identity and can respond to the allegations.

It is inevitable that the content of the proceedings will touch upon information about person A's circumstances and life that would reveal personal data, special category data, and criminal offence data. That is unavoidable. I need to be satisfied that it is necessary to then disclose person A's details for the purposes of these proceedings. I am not satisfied that it is necessary. I also note the reference to the legal basis for A to have anonymity which relates to A being a person that has made allegations of a sexual offence. That principle should not be undermined by publications in respect of police misconduct proceedings.

Accordingly, I direct that person A should be referred to throughout proceedings and in any publication relating to proceedings as 'person A', and that no information should be released which would tend to identify person A in the reporting of this matter.



Signature of Chair...

Date.....

Signature of Officer.....

Date.....

The Police (Conduct) Regulations 2020

Regulation 62 - outcome of accelerated misconduct hearing

(1) Where the person or persons conducting or chairing the accelerated misconduct hearing finds that the conduct of the officer concerned amounts to gross misconduct, they must impose disciplinary action, which, subject to the provisions of this regulation, may be--

- (a) a final written warning,
- (b) reduction in rank, or
- (c) dismissal without notice.

(2) The disciplinary action has effect from the date on which it is notified to the officer concerned.

(3) Where, on the date of the severity assessment under regulation 14(1) of these Regulations or under regulation 16 of the Complaints and Misconduct Regulations, the officer concerned had a final written warning in force, a final written warning must not be given.

(4) Where a final written warning is given, that warning remains in force for—

- (a) a period of 2 years beginning with the day on which it was notified to the officer concerned, or
- (b) such longer period as the person or persons considering the question of disciplinary action determine, up to a maximum of 5 years from the day on which it was notified to the officer.

(5) The reference to a period in paragraph (4)(a) and (b) does not include any time when the officer concerned is taking a career break (under regulation 33(12) of the Police Regulations (leave) and the determination of the Secretary of State made under that regulation).

(6) Reduction in rank may only be imposed under this regulation where the person or persons imposing the disciplinary action consider this is an appropriate sanction, taking into account the views of the appropriate authority, including in relation to the likely operational impact.

(7) Where, on the date of the severity assessment under regulation 14(1) of these Regulations or under regulation 16 of the Complaints and Misconduct Regulations, the officer concerned had been reduced in rank under the Police (Conduct) Regulations 2004 or under these Regulations, a reduction in rank may not be imposed.

(8) Where the person conducting or chairing the accelerated misconduct hearing finds that the conduct of the officer concerned does not amount to gross misconduct, they may—

- (a) dismiss the case, or
- (b) return the case to the appropriate authority to deal with in accordance with Part 4.

(9) Where the case is returned to the appropriate authority under paragraph (8)(b), the appropriate authority must proceed in accordance with Part 4, subject to regulation 23(1) being read as if the words “Subject to regulation 49, on receipt of the investigator’s report under regulation 21(1),” were omitted.

(10) Where the question of disciplinary action is being considered, the person or persons considering it—

- (a) must have regard to the record of police service of the officer concerned as shown on the officer’s personal record;

- (b) may consider such documentary evidence as would, in their opinion, assist them in determining the question;

- (c) must give—

- (i) the officer;

- (ii) if the officer is legally represented, the officer’s relevant lawyer or, where the officer is not legally represented, the officer’s police friend;

- (iii) the appropriate authority or the person appointed to represent such authority in accordance with regulation 8(5), and

- (iv) the Director General or the Director General’s relevant lawyer, where the Director General presented the case on behalf of the appropriate authority,

an opportunity to make oral or written representations before any such question is determined, including on the appropriate level of disciplinary action, and

- (d) where representations are received in relation to mitigating circumstances—

- (i) must consider whether those circumstances have been mentioned at an earlier stage in the proceedings and, if they have not been so mentioned, whether the officer could reasonably have been expected to so mention them, and

- (ii) in the light of their conclusions under paragraph (i), may determine that it is appropriate to place less weight on those circumstances.

(11) Paragraph (12) applies where an officer is dismissed at an accelerated misconduct hearing.

(12) The person conducting or chairing the accelerated misconduct hearing must provide any information to the appropriate authority that the person considers ought to be included by virtue of regulation 3(2)(l) of the Police Barred List and Police Advisory List Regulations 2017 in the barred list report relating to the officer concerned (information relating to whether exemptions to requirement to publish the barred list entry apply).