**Principles of investigation**

There are a number of investigative principles which are widely accepted within the police service. The principles are underpinned by the recognition that policing works best where it has the support and cooperation of the community.

These principles propose that:

* the **exercise of legal powers** should not be oppressive and should be proportionate to the crime under investigation
* as far as is operationally practical and having regard to an individual’s **right to confidentiality**,
* **investigations should be carried out as transparently as possible** – victims, witnesses and suspects should be kept up to date with developments in the case
* investigators should take all reasonable steps to understand the particular needs of individuals, including, but not limited to, any protected characteristics they may have, in order to comply with the provisions of the **Equality.**
* investigators should have particular **regard for vulnerable people and children**
* investigators should respect the **professional ethics of others**. This is particularly important when working with those whose role it is to support suspects.

These principles, the investigation process, and an investigative mindset provide a structure to support quality investigations.

**Ethics**

The activities and processes of criminal investigation can attract considerable attention, partly due to media coverage of crime and criminal behaviour, but also because of the impact crime has on individuals and communities.To build and maintain public confidence, the police have a responsibility to ensure that investigations are carried out professionally, [ethically](http://www.college.police.uk/What-we-do/Ethics/Documents/Code_of_Ethics.pdf), and to an agreed standard.

The success of an investigation relies on the goodwill and cooperation of victims, witnesses and the community. Investigators should be aware that:

* investigations should be conducted with **integrity**, **common sense and sound judgement**
* **discriminatory or disproportionate actions** risk losing cooperation and any future criminal proceedings
* effective investigators **maintain a balance** that recognises the concerns of all the parties involved
* **understanding the response** to crime assists investigators to build this relationship
* a **professional approach** to investigations benefits the victim, the public and  
  the police.

**Investigative skills**

Investigators need to be skilled in the following areas:

* the **planning** required to conduct an investigation and the investigative process
* decision making and how it can be improved by applying the **investigative mindset**
* **investigative and evidential evaluation** (which can assist the investigator to determine the value of material gathered during the investigation)
* **creative thinking**
* **challenging experts**
* **victim and witness care**.

**Benefits**

Every investigation provides the individual investigator and the police service with a **unique opportunity** to recognise and understand the impact of criminality on a community. This **knowledge can be used to set local priorities.**

Conducting ethical investigations helps to **ensure that individuals and communities have confidence in the effectiveness of the police service** and in the fairness of the processes and techniques they use.

Gaining the support and confidence of communities also helps to cultivate sources of intelligence for the future and reduce the fear of crime.

Investigators should remember that **offenders are members of communities too and can influence others about the police**. **Offenders may become victims and witnesses** themselves. If they believe that they have been treated ethically during an investigation, they are **less likely to form, and communicate a negative view of the police to others**, and are more likely to cooperate with investigations in the future.

**Information sources**

The following may help the investigator make decisions:

* colleagues and supervisors
* LEAs
* experts (eg, crime scene investigators (CSI), fingerprint experts, forensic scientists, forensic psychologists,)
* crime and criminal intelligence databases (local, force, national)
* other databases (NADRA)
* local and national media
* police journals
* Home Office science, research and statistics documents
* seminars
* briefings
* internal reviews

**Response to crime**

Investigators must understand the ways in which victims, witnesses and offenders are likely to respond when a crime is committed and how best to obtain material from them. This requires knowledge of:

* potential intelligence sources, both overt and covert, eg, open source and covert human intelligence sources (CHIS), that are available within a community and are capable of providing material
* the range of communities in their local area (‘community’ includes occupational groups, social groups and others who may meet infrequently due to a shared interest or a shared use of an area or facility)
* persistent and problematic offenders within the area and their networks of associates who may also be involved in their criminal behaviour, eg, the disposal of stolen goods
* the personal and social needs of witnesses and offenders, bearing in mind the duty to provide reasonable adjustments, which may be relevant when investigating crime. The police service is committed to providing services that respond to the needs of different communities, and to protecting all communities (particularly those most vulnerable) from harm or threat.

Investigators should acquire detailed knowledge of the modus operandi employed by offenders in their area.

**Modus operandi**

Being aware of an offender’s modus operandi (MO) helps the investigator to:

* understand how a particular crime has been committed, the type of material that may have been generated in the commission of the offence and how or where this material might be recovered
* identify linked series of crimes committed with the same methods, (pooling material from a linked series of crimes can be a highly effective way of progressing an investigation)
* identify links between crimes and known offenders who use the same MO
* predict future offending patterns, which may enable preventive or protective measures to be taken
* predict future offending patterns, which may enable offenders to be caught red-handed
* identify likely disposal routes and markets for stolen or illicit property, eg, drugs.