



# Reflective practice review process - summary report

# Introduction

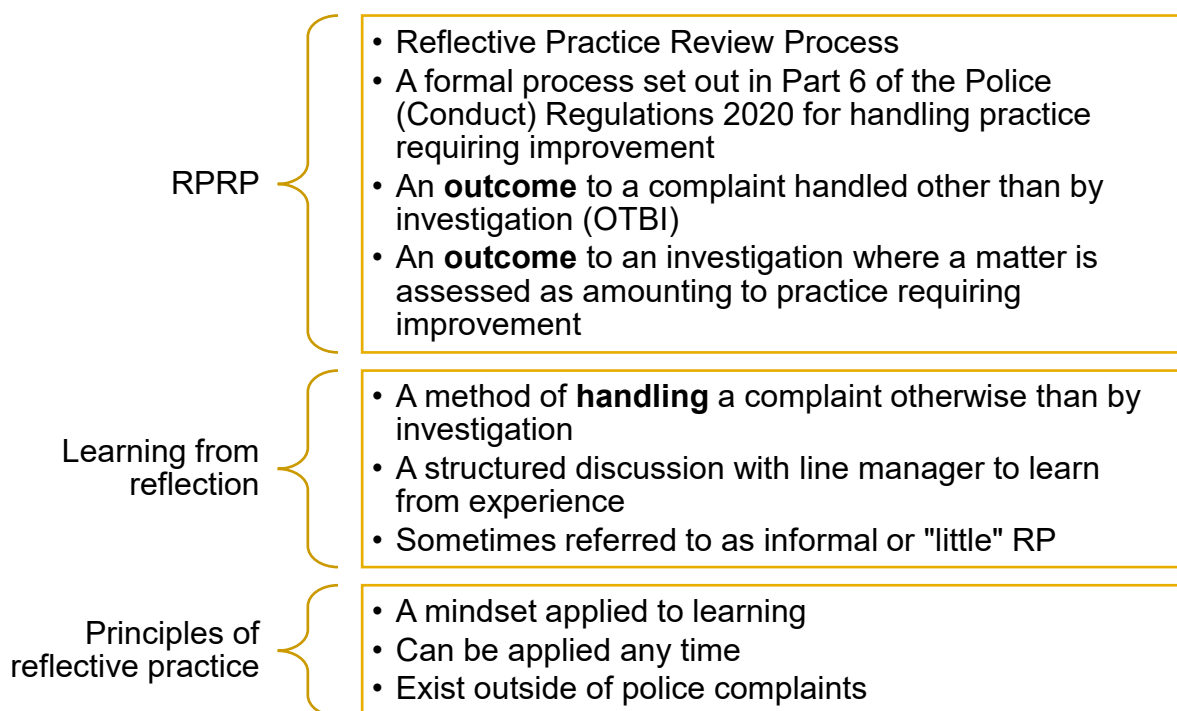
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As a part of our oversight of the police complaints system, we monitor issues raised by forces and our colleagues to look for trends and recurring topics. We found that forces had varying levels of understanding of what the Reflective Practice Review Process (RPRP) was, how and when to use it and how to record what they were doing. This report sets out the steps we took to better understand the situation, what we found and what we will do next.

## What is Reflective Practice?

Reforms to the police complaints system introduced in February 2020 were designed to shift the focus of the police complaints process away from blame and punishment and towards resolution and solutions through learning. RPRP was created as part of that change and should be used to give officers a chance to learn from and reflect on what could have been done better.

RPRP is not the only place in police complaints where the principles of reflective practice can be used. The overlapping terms used to describe the different types of reflective practice are confusing and unclear. Please refer to these definitions:

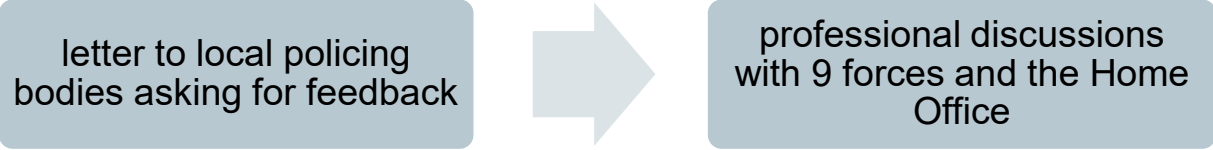


## Intervention

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We wanted to understand how RPRP was being used, why some forces were using it more than others, and how, learning from reflection was being used, if at all.

The intervention followed two steps:



## Letter to local policing bodies

We sent out a letter to local policing bodies to get their opinions on how they felt RPRP was working in their respective forces. We received seven responses of which six provided answers. The findings were mixed.



- positive feedback from local sergeants
- when it is used, it is positive
- initial teething problems but now working
- well implemented with a program by PSD to embed prior to and in support of the phased implementation of reforms



- viewed as a sanction
- missed opportunities to use RPRP when it would have had a positive outcome
- workloads have prevented training on it

## Professional discussions

The professional discussions were structured conversations to find out how confident forces were in using all forms of reflective practice, how it was received by officers and how it was recorded. We also sought the Home Office’s views on how reflective practice was embedding, following their earlier research into it.

### Findings

#### Learning from reflection

We found that there was a lack of understanding of how to use reflective practice as a method of handling a complaint, caused in part by the terminology used to describe it in guidance. Learning from reflection was not consistently recorded in an auditable way and the line between RPRP and learning from reflection was not clear.

**“Little RP is a terrible term.”**

We were told that the use of the term “little RP” or “small RP” was unhelpful. It was seen to diminish the role of informal reflective practice and devalue it.

**“There is nothing in place to record informal RP.”**

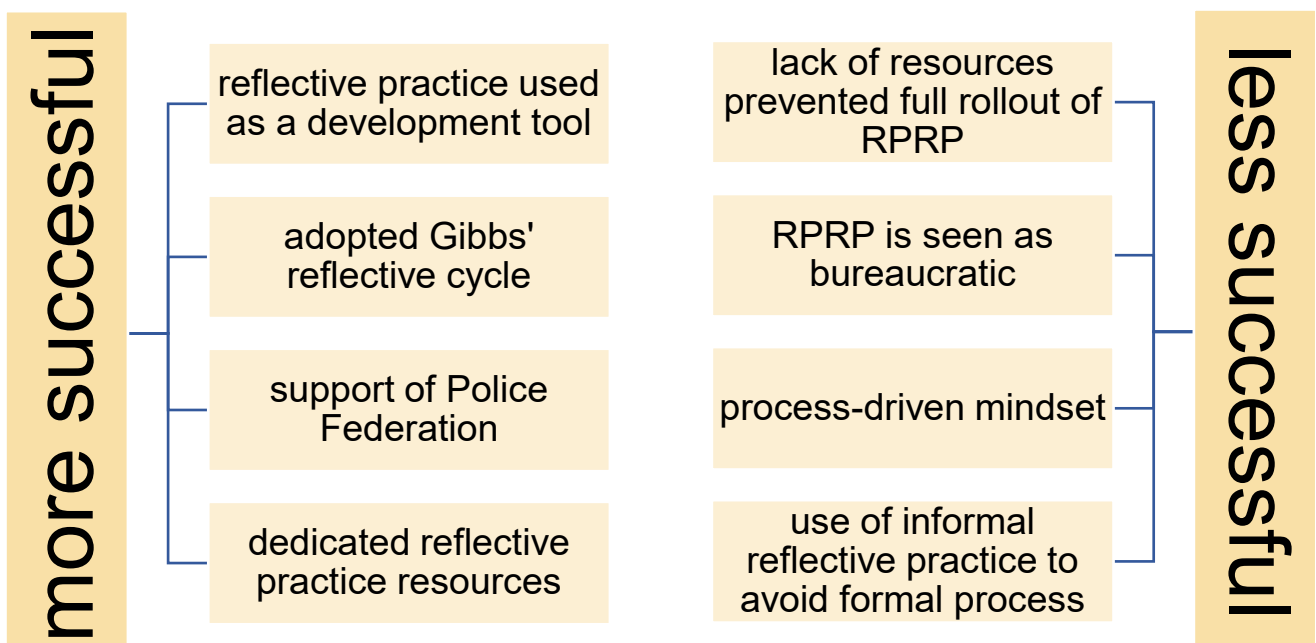
Learning from reflection was dealt with outside of the professional standards departments for most forces. Each force developed their own ways to use and record learning from reflection. There was no standardised way to record learning from reflection and, in some cases, a resistance to adding more forms to fill in for something which was dealt with informally.

**“...there are forms for both so...why would a force choose to do little RP instead of RPRP?”**

The line between when a matter could be dealt with by learning from reflection and RPRP is not clear. Forces expressed confusion around previous guidance on when it was appropriate to use RPRP as an outcome versus reflective practice as a method of handling.

### Culture change

We found some forces positively embraced the principles of reflective practice and used them preventatively, as a tool for debriefs after incidents and as part of the performance development reviews and career progression processes. Other forces struggled with the change, coming as it did with all of the other changes to the police complaints system. Below are some of the hallmarks of forces who have successfully implemented it as well as some obstacles faced by those who haven't.



### Practice

We found some areas where the implementation of RPRP and principles of reflective practice were not what we would have expected. These were both positive and negative. There are some practicalities of using RPRP that need better guidance from us and other stakeholders, and some creative ideas that should be shared with other forces.

Some key findings – force practice
It isn't always clear who is responsible for speaking with the complainant or when the contact should happen.
Forces use RPRP more in conduct cases than they do in complaints.
A small number of officers do not engage in RPRP and there is no real pathway for getting them to engage.
Some forces are successfully incorporating the principles of reflective practice outside of the realm of police complaints such as within career development and group debriefings following deaths and serious injuries.

## Next steps

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We will be continuing to work with forces on all forms of reflective practice. We particularly want to speak to officers who have been through the process to better understand the impact and to look for good practice as well as areas which can be improved upon. Email [oversight@policeconduct.gov.uk](mailto:oversight@policeconduct.gov.uk) if you are interested in sharing your experiences with us.

We have been working with the Home Office and College of Policing to draft a specific issue of [Focus](#) on reflective practice. We want it to be a guidance document that will promote effective practices and encourage forces to fully embrace the techniques and ethos that reflective practice has been designed for. In addition to the procedural and case study approach we normally take, we want to share initiatives some forces have introduced to improve the culture around RPRP, and the use of reflective practice outside of the police complaints and conduct arena.

This issue of Focus will be published in December 2022 and will be available on our website.

Following the publication of Focus, we will be using our monthly Newsletter to highlight good examples and to share some of the creative ways forces are using reflective practice.

Published December 2022

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