

POLICE OFFICER ACTING RANKS

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1. Introduction and Background

1.1 Introduction

Performing the duty of a higher police rank (referred to universally as 'acting') is a common practice within the force. Provision for additional temporary salary to those who undertake acting roles is laid down in Police Regulations (Reg. 40).

This policy paper does not seek to deal with acting at ACPO level nor the closely associated matter of nominating a Deputy Chief Constable (designate), both of which are, and will continue to remain, the preserve of the Chief Constable.

1.2 Background

The table below shows the number of acting approvals for the financial year 1997/1998 *. This was the first year of devolved salary budgets and the devolved management of acting ranks.

Acting Sergeant Approvals	Acting Inspector Approvals	Acting Chief Inspector Approvals	Superintendent and above
265	83	8	9

* Source (Polpers)

Although the national OSPRE package does not mention acting as a necessity between Part's I and II, there is undoubtedly a common perception amongst officers that acting (or at the very least 'shadowing' experience) between the tests is desirable. This in turn has led to pressure (and indeed a growing assumption) that officers in these circumstances should receive the opportunity to act beyond others.

The resourcing of acting usually takes place *within* Units although occasionally officers from specialist Departments (such as the Protection Group, Traffic and Support Group) do - with the support of their managers - seek and sometimes gain, acting opportunities outside their own Department, usually on Police Areas.

Infrequently, officers do still act without holding either the old qualification or OSPRE (Part I and II). This is usually in circumstances where such is the expertise of the acting role that 'in-filling' from within the Unit is usually the only way in which successful continuity can be achieved. Managers do also see the offering of acting in such circumstances as a way to sometimes galvanise an officer with potential to reach for promotion (something which the officer may have otherwise thought unattainable).

The opportunity to act varies considerably over time, place and circumstance (both individual and organisational). Some Police Areas have more officers seeking acting than opportunities; whilst for others it is the reverse. Moreover, some officers find themselves in circumstances that effectively rule them out of acting e.g. highly specialised roles which cannot easily be back-filled. It is also apparent that some Police Areas find it difficult - because of critical staffing levels - to resource acting from within. In these circumstances, officers from specialist departments do obtain the opportunity to act, by way of invitation.

2. Policy Guidelines

2.1 General Principals

The following principals apply when considering the “case” for authorising an acting rank at any rank.

- So long as the payment of acting salary is retained centrally, the criteria for acting be maintain as now i.e.:
 - Acting should only be authorised in circumstances of prolonged absence (‘prolonged’ being defined as of *more* than 14 days).
 - Acting should *not* be authorised simply because an officer is away but because the Unit cannot function effectively without the post being filled by a (temporary) replacement.
 - Acting should not normally be authorised to cover for absences due to annual leave or short-term illness.

2.2 Delegated Authority

- The authority to approve acting ranks up to and including Chief Inspectors rest with the Area/Department Commanders at a local level. This authority may be devolved further at the discretion of the Commander to nominated representatives according to the local policy.
- The authority to act at Superintendent rank (not being an Area Commander or Departmental Head post) rests with Head of Personnel.
- The authority to approve an **acting Area Commander/Departmental Head** shall be referred to the **Head of Personnel** who will liaise with the Director of Personnel, Finance and Services over selection.
- Notwithstanding the devolved authority above, the **Head of HQ Personnel** also retains the right - in certain circumstances - to determine an acting position which is at **Chief Inspector level or below**. This right will only be exercised on *organisational* and *specific career development grounds* (see Note for Guidance below).

3. Selection Guidelines

Acting opportunities should be openly advertised within the unit in which they arise. Local Personnel Managers are responsible for ensuring that the process of communication and selection is both open and fair.

3.1 In assessing those suitable for acting police supervisory positions, local managers may consider *any* officer (provided they are not still within their probationary period):

- holding the full qualification for the next rank;
- part-qualified; or
- non qualified.

3.2 The selection process will consider the following:

- a) Would the operational effectiveness of the Police Area/Department be adversely affected by acting arrangements contemplated.
- b) The applicants abilities and skills to complete the acting period set against the specified requirements.
- c) Is the individual being considered likely to use the experience for a bid for promotion (in the near future)?

It is the deliberate intention of the new criteria that opportunities to act should favour those officers who are intending to seek promotion *in the immediate or near future*.

e.g. Two officer are bidding for acting experience. PC A has three years service, and has successfully passed Part I OSPRE, but has made it clear that he intends to pursue a career in CID **before** seeking promotion.

DC B has seven years experience. She has also passed Part I, but intends to seek promotion at the next available opportunity (should she be successful in Part II).

On this factor, DC B's application would be weighted higher, on the basis that it is more immediately relevant to her career aspirations.

It should be noted that the opportunity criteria does *not* specifically lend a bias to part (OSPRES) qualified officers. This is because acting should not be viewed and used solely as a device to assist officer's in their (personal) goal of achieving the national promotion qualification. Police Areas will thus be able to continue to choose strategically who they wish to act whatever the status of the officer, non-qualified, part-qualified or fully qualified. Local Personnel Manager should, however, realise that some pressure (and expectation) will arise during the 'OSPRES season' (for Constable's usually between **April - October** each year and for Sergeant's, **October - April**) to allow part qualified officer's the opportunity to act.

- d) Is the individual being considered for acting likely to use the acting experience for other forms of career progression/development in the *near future*?
- e) In the case of an officer partly qualified, to what degree does the individual feel that their chances of being successful in OSPRES II will be enhanced by the acting experience?
- f) Recording acting policy and grounds for selection

Personnel Managers should maintain an **Acting Register** recording the following information:

- Name of officer acting and in whose place he/she acted.
- Period of acting (and any extensions).
- Age of officer.
- Sex of officer.
- Ethnic origin of officer.

Additionally Personnel Managers should maintain an **Acting File** in which details of the grounds for selection and how the above criteria was applied, should be recorded.

Both documents to be maintained for **7 years**.

Local Area Management Teams are responsible for ensuring that the policy is openly available and that when an officer indicates some discontent at his/her failure to secure an acting position or seeks feedback, the reasons for the choice should be fully explained.

4. Acting Ranks outside of an officers home Area/Department

4.1 The practice of permitting acting outside a home Police Area/Department occurs quite frequently in the force and the policies here reinforce this as desirable. Allowing 'peripatetic acting' has a number of positive benefits:

- a) It provides opportunities particularly for officers in departments who, because of the specialist nature of their role, might otherwise rarely get the chance to act.
- b) It assists those Police Areas/Departments who may have *more* opportunities than officers willing/able to act (in this sense it is an antidote to the problem of uneven opportunity). It also provides some temporary relief to the Police Areas/Departments who may be suffering chronic staff shortages for they do not have to resource the acting from within their own strength.

4.2 Officer initiated

Where an officer finds difficulties in obtaining an opportunity to act within their own Police Area/Department or feels that acting outside of his/her present home Area/Department would be beneficial in career development terms, then he/she will be permitted to approach another Police Area or Department to seek such an acting opportunity.

An arrangement of this kind must, however, only be done with the *prior* knowledge and support of that officer's line manager *and* Personnel Manager and be part of his/her personal development plan.

This policy shall not be construed as a **right** to act on another Police Area/Department and an Area Commander or Departmental Head may refuse such a request if the temporary loss of that officer would be detrimental to operational effectiveness.

4.3 Area Commander/Departmental Head initiated

Area Commanders and Departmental Heads shall also be able to consider officers from *outside* his/her own Area/Department when contemplating an acting appointment.

Any approach to select an officer in these circumstances must, however, be conducted through the 'providing' Police Area/Department's Personnel Manager and it remains entirely at that Police Area/Department as to whether the officer is released for these purposes.

5. **Centrally Initiated Opportunities**

The Head of HQ Personnel may determine an acting position at Chief Inspector level or below. This power is only expected to be exercised sparingly and where it is necessary to provide an officer with specific career development experiences which may not, or can not, be met locally. A typical example here might be an urgent acting opportunity for an officer selected for the APC where that experience is necessary prior to the officer's departure to Bramshill.

6. **Exceptions**

The acting policies contained in this paper do not affect the following:

6.1 **PACE Cover - Acting Superintendent**

The ability of a Superintendent to authorise a *Chief Inspector* to perform the (PACE) duties of a Superintendent in his/her absence (see Section 107, PACE 1984 as amended by Section 38(2)(b) of the Police & Magistrates Act 1994). Thus, an Area Commander would *not* be required to consult with the Head of HQ Personnel in circumstances where he/she wished a Chief Inspector to undertake *PACE cover* during an evening or weekend. A Chief Inspector performing such duties would *not* be recognised as 'Acting' in the sense that this paper addresses.

6.2 **Chief Inspector ad hoc Incident Management**

Chief Inspectors do, on an ad hoc basis, also undertake other duties of a Superintendent (e.g. management of firearms incidents and other policing incidents). This issue is to be raised with the ACC Territorial Policing and other interested parties, however, at the time of writing such circumstances would *not* be recognised as falling within the scope of the policies detailed in this paper.

7. **Acting Links to Promotion Boards**

A Promotion Board will be allowed to (continue) to draw inference from the performance of an officer who has undertaken a relevant period of acting prior to appearance on the Board. However, Board members should be reminded in doing so that the opportunity to act remains uneven around the Force and that this should be borne in mind when weighting the acting period as part of their overall assessment of the candidate.

8. **Administration Process**

All associated administration connected with the selection ,approval and appointment of acting ranks falls to the Area/Department initiating the acting rank.

The exception to this is for Centrally initiated acting ranks or for those acting for the rank of Superintendent.

The requirements are listed below and set out in the flow chart on Page 9.

- Notification of opportunities.
- Selection process.
- Check with HQ Complaints and Discipline Department (suitability enquiry check).
- Acting Register.
- Acting file.
- Feedback (where applicable).
- Notification of HQ Finance of the officers acting rank and period.
- Regular and prompt updating of Polpers [Page 3 (a)] with acting duties.
NB Failure to do so can effect payment to an officer of the acting salary.
- Notification to that officer of entitlement of higher salary.
- Notification to Force Stores (Aylesbury) so that the acting rank insignia can be forwarded).
- Ensure that the follow up report is completed on performance whilst acting and that relevant documentation is secured on the officers Personal file.
- Ensuring that the above actions are also completed when an extension is granted to an acting period.

Administrative Process Chart

