IN THE POLICE CONDUCT PANEL

IN THE MATTER OF THE POLICE ACT 1996

AND IN THE MATTER OF THE POLICE (CONDUCT) REGULATIONS 2020 AS AMENDED

BETWEEN:

THE CHIEF CONSTABLE OF THE THAMES VALLEY POLICE

The Appropriate Authority

AND

OFFICER B

The Officer

REPORT AND PANEL DECISION

Introduction

1. This case proceeded under the amended version of the 2020 regulations and the hearing took place between 26 and 29 October 2026 before ACC Dennis Murray (Chair) sitting with Susannah Dengate and Steve Buckeridge (Independent Members). The writing of this report was delegated to Derek Marshall LLB MCIArb (Independent Legally Qualified Advisor - ILQA) but all the Panel members have contributed to and approved the report. The report confirms their findings and decisions.

2. The AA was represented by Amy Clarke and the Officer was represented by Colin Banham.

Preliminary issues

3. There were two preliminary issues. Counsel for the AA asked the purpose for which the documents in the defence bundle were being introduced and an explanation was given which led to the Chair directing that they should remain before the Panel. A further issue was that the Panel itself asked (having read the hearing bundle) whether this case was being pursued on the basis that the Officer had abused his position by engaging in a sexual relationship with PC A. Counsel for the AA said that this was not being alleged and was not part of her case.

4. The allegations were then read into the record and Counsel for the AA confirmed that the way in which the case was being put was that allegations 1 and 4 concerned alleged dishonesty whilst allegations 2 and 3 were about an alleged lapse of integrity.

Legal Framework

5. The statutory and regulatory basis of the Panel lies in Section 51 of the Police Act 1996 and the Police (Conduct) Regulations 2020 ("the Regulations"). In addition the Panel is to have proper regard to the Statutory Guidance on Professional Standards, Performance and Integrity in Policing Issued by the Home Office also issued in 2020, known as the "HOG", which states at paragraph 1.4:

> *The procedures described in this guidance are designed to accord with the principles of natural justice and the basic principles of fairness. The*

process and procedures covered by this guidance, along with the accompanying legal framework, should be administered accordingly and applied fairly and consistently to everyone. The guidance on the individual procedures is designed to further the aims of being fair to the individual who is subject to the process, as well as all parties involved. It is intended to assist with arriving at a correct assessment of the matter in question and providing public and policing confidence in the system.

……..

The persons conducting misconduct hearings will consider the facts of the case and will decide the facts (on the balance of probabilities) and whether the officer's conduct amounted to misconduct, gross misconduct or neither

6. The aim of misconduct proceedings is not primarily punitive although they can have that effect on the officer concerned. The overriding objective is to set and maintain the highest standards of professional integrity, to ensure public confidence in the Police, to deter wrongdoing and for the public to see that these things are done in a fair, open and transparent manner.

The allegations

The standards of professional behaviour engaged in this case were as follows:

Discreditable Conduct – Police officers behave in a manner which does not discredit the police service or undermine public confidence, whether on or off duty. Allegations 1-4

Authority, Respect & Courtesy – Police officers act with self-control and tolerance, treating members of the public and colleagues with respect and courtesy. Police officers do not abuse their powers or authority and respect the rights of all individuals. Allegation 1

Honesty & Integrity – Police officers are honest, act with integrity and do not compromise or abuse their position. Allegations 1-4 (see para 4 above)

The factual foundation for these alleged breaches was as follows

(1) At all material times you were a married 42-year-old Detective Sergeant in the Thames Valley Police, where you had served for approximately 12 years after transferring from Essex Police.

(2) Around late July 2024 you commenced a personal and intimate relationship with a female officer, 'PC A'.

(3) At that time 'PC A' was 24 years old, had been a student officer for 15 months and was engaged to be married

(4) Your personal relationship with 'PC A' ended around the early part of September 2024.

All of these matters were accepted by the Officer. The allegations were therefore as follows:

Allegation 1 – Bogus Military Service

(1) On one occasion, on a date unknown when 'PC A' was trying to end the affair, you started

crying and told her that you had PTSD because you had served in the army before joining the police and your best friend had been shot and killed 100 metres from you when you were on duty together. This was untrue as you have never served in the army and your lies to 'PC A' made her feel guilty and responsible for you.

(2) On other dates unknown you lied to 'PC A' about your military service and showed her photographs purporting to show you and your army colleagues.

(3) Your behaviour **breached the following Standards** of the Standards of Professional Behaviour:

a. 'Honesty and Integrity', because you acted dishonestly when you told 'PC A' that you had served in the military;

b. 'Honesty and Integrity', because you lacked integrity by using these lies to dissuade 'PC A' from ending the affair;

c. 'Authority, Respect and Courtesy', because you failed to treat 'PC A' with courtesy and respect when you lied to her and sought to use those lies to dissuade her from ending the affair; and

d. 'Discreditable Conduct', because lying about military service, and using those lies to put pressure on 'PC A', was likely to bring discredit upon the police service.

Allegation 2 – Sexual Activity on Police Premises

(1) On a date unknown you were off duty with 'PC A' in the gym at a Thames Valley Police Station when you engaged in sexual activity with 'PC A'.

(2) Your behaviour **breached the following Standards** of the Standards of Professional Behaviour:

a) 'Honesty and Integrity, because you lacked integrity by engaging in sexual activity with 'PC A' whilst on police premises; and
b) 'Discreditable Conduct', because engaging in sexual activity with 'PC A' on police premises was likely to bring discredit upon the police service.

Allegation 3 – Conflict of Interest

1. You failed to disclose your relationship with 'PC A' to Thames Valley Police, meaning a conflict of interest was created generally, and in particular when:

a) On or about 30th July 2024 you filed one of 'PC A's investigations (NICHE occurrence 43230456579), or drafted the basis for the investigation to be filed, when she did not want it to be filed;

b) On or about 14th August 2024 you assisted 'PC A' by tasking Custody to raise bail forms in one of her ongoing investigations (NICHE occurrence 43240217941) when she thought she had missed the bail date; and

c) On 2nd September 2024, when acting as Duty Inspector for Buckinghamshire LCU, you decided to base yourself at a specific Police Station so that (at least in part) you could see 'PC A' whilst you were on duty.

2. Your behaviour **breached the following Standards** of the Standards of Professional

Behaviour:

a. 'Honesty and Integrity, because you lacked integrity by failing to disclose your intimate relationship with 'PC A' to Thames Valley Police, creating a clear conflict of interest; and

b) 'Discreditable Conduct', because failing to disclose a conflict of interest and making policing decisions relating to 'PC A' was likely to bring discredit upon the police service.

Allegation 4 – False Allegation of Assault

1. After your relationship with 'PC A' had ended you falsely accused her of assaulting you and on 17th October 2024 you provided a statement in which you falsely alleged that 'PC A' had assaulted you on two occasions.

2. Your behaviour in providing a false statement **breached the following Standards** of the Standards of Professional Behaviour:

a. ‘Honesty and Integrity’, because you acted dishonestly when you accused ‘PC A’ of assaulting you; and

b. ‘Discreditable Conduct’, because providing a false statement was likely to bring discredit upon the police service.

It was the AA’s case that individually and/or cumulatively the Officer’s breaches of the Standards of Professional Behaviour were so serious that they amounted to gross misconduct. In response, the Officer (through his Counsel) denied all of the allegations save that he admitted that he had not declared the relationship with PC A. He disputed that this amounted to a breach of professional standards.

The evidence

7. PC A attended the hearing and gave evidence in person. Her statement is at page 40 of the bundle and she was taken through the document on the main points, which she confirmed in her oral evidence. PC A is now in a new relationship and has recently had a baby. She has moved away from the local area where she was previously living. She explained to the hearing how her relationship with the Officer commenced and how at the time she was a regular user of the police gym in a specified station because she was trying to get fit. She said that the relationship began as a friendship and developed into a romantic one with the couple texting each other every day. It became a sexual relationship and they had sex in various places including hotels. On one occasion (she said) they had oral sex at the specified police gym, and she described the place in the gym where this occurred.

8. By the end of August 2024 (said PC A) the relationship was coming to an end. This was the time when the Officer had told her that he had undertaken several jobs in the past

including working in the military, which she understood to mean that he had been a soldier. He had shown her a photograph of himself with comrades although no-one in the picture actually looked like him and she had queried this. He said that one of his friends had been killed and that he (the Officer) was suffering from PTSD and was struggling with his mental health. She had felt sad for him and thought that he needed her support. It made her feel responsible for him.

9. Turning back to July 2024, PC A said that she had felt overwhelmed by her workload and that the Officer had offered to help her. He was not her line manager but he reviewed some of her jobs and had filed one of her reports even though she had not asked him to. She also had an issue over a bail form which she thought she had overlooked but the Officer told her that he had resolved this for her by delivering it to the person's house himself.

10. By early September 2024 PC A said that she believed the relationship to be over. They had originally planned to go away to a hotel on 4 September but by this time, her then partner had found out about the relationship with the Officer and she had admitted it to him. She then started to receive a number of angry text messages from the Officer including pictures from a hospital, although he was also asking if they could still be friends. He told her that he had friends in PSD and two other officers and she became distrustful of them as a result, which is why she did not initially disclose the full extent of her relationship with him when she was first asked about it by senior management.

11. PC A was then asked about two allegations made against her by the Officer, namely of assaulting him by stamping on his foot and (on another occasion) of hurting his cheek. She became very upset and told the hearing that she denied both of these allegations. She wouldn't do something like this, she said.

12. In cross examination she was asked again about the allegation that she had assaulted the Officer and she confirmed that she was upset that these allegations had been made against her. She confirmed that she knew all about the alleged bad behaviour of the Officer before she was interviewed about the matter and gave her statement in May 2025. She said that she believed that the Officer had been in the army even though she had concerns as to how he would have been able to fit in all his other careers into his life and still be in his early 40's. She had not found out that he had not been a soldier until her sergeant had told her so. She agreed that she had not disclosed the allegation of oral sexual activity in the police gym when first asked about it and that she had not mentioned it until May 2025 despite having been spoken to several times by senior officers and PSD before then. She had only said that she did not want to talk about their sexual activity in detail because it was a private matter.

13. PC A was then asked about a debrief with DI Platt which took place the day after the Officer had been admitted to hospital and was taken to the notes of the meeting at D17[1] . She had attended at the police station to discuss the matter. She agreed that this was the day after the Officer had made a suicide attempt and had been voluntarily sectioned under the Mental Health Act. She had spoken to the Officer afterwards and had put the phone down on him, saying that she didn't care. PC A agreed that this was likely to have been damaging to the Officer and that it was unhelpful to him although she generally tries to help people, but said that she was upset at the time. It was not supportive of the Officer. At the time of her debrief with DI Platt she did not disclose the allegation of oral sex in the gym although she had said that the relationship involved kissing and touching. She had

[1] Pages with "D" reference are to defence bundle

been specifically asked if there had been sexual activity on police premises and had replied "No" although could not remember whether she had been asked about specific sexual activity. She agreed that the messaging at D15 was different to her account of what she was now saying took place and said that she had been embarrassed and ashamed about what had happened.

14. After the Panel had adjourned for lunch a legal issue arose which required some direction. Counsel for the AA contended that part of PC A's redacted statement had been cross-examined into evidence by the Officer's Counsel and should be disclosed now. This was opposed by Counsel for the Officer. The ILQA advised that as a professional panel the only way to resolve the issue was for them to look at it and decide on its relevance, which the Panel resolved to do. There was then a brief adjournment whilst the unredacted relevant paragraphs of her statement was read and the hearing was then resumed. The Chair told the hearing that having read these paragraphs the Panel had concluded that they did not find the previously unredacted passages to be particularly helpful either way and invited Counsel to proceed with the case. The Panel also took the view that there was no new information in this which had not already appeared in the defence bundle.

15. PC A then continued her evidence, explaining how after the relationship had ended she had first blocked then unblocked the Officer from contacting her. She was asked further questions about the alleged assault by her on the Officer and she told the hearing that she did not initially know that this allegation had been made against her. The report of the alleged assault had been made by the Officer on 19 September 2024. She was asked who else she had made disclosures to about her relationship with the Officer and mentioned DI Cassie, to whom she had spoken on 24 September 2024 and she agreed that she could and

should have made full disclosure to this officer but she had not done so. She was naive and stupid not to have done so, she said.

16. PC A returned to the hearing for a second day of evidence and told the Panel that she had a conversation with her new line manager on 9 November 2024 after she had herself received a r17 notice. By this time the Officer had made allegations of assault against her. She denied the suggestion that this would have given her cause to retaliate against the Officer and said that she had told her new line manager all about the relationship with the Officer. Her evidence was that she told her new line manager nothing new and that everything she said later appeared in her statement. She was also taken to D15 and it was put to her that the alleged assaults had been raised by the Officer on 9 September 2024 a few days after the relationship had ended. At that point there was no need to investigate further (it was suggested) and it was put to her that this is what led to her making counter-allegations, but she denied that suggestion.

17. PC A was asked detailed questions about the Officer filing some of her cases and she said that apart from one occasion mentioned in her statement at p40 when he had reviewed a priority crime, this had not happened before. The Officer was friendly with PC A's immediate line manager. Questioned about meeting the Officer at the gym, PC A said that this was not by pre-arrangement and that she used to go there after her shifts. Most of the messaging between herself and the Officer was by WhatsApp but they had mutually agreed to delete these. Their first romantic kiss had been after a visit to Costa Coffee on 31 July and it had quickly become an intense relationship with a lot of messages passing between them. They would respond to each other's messages and the Officer had never changed his mind about her. In July or early August the relationship had become a sexual one. There

were two occasions on which they had visited hotels and she thought that the first was on 19 August when they stayed for only a short while in the afternoon, the second being at the end of that month. They had also had sex outdoors and she described a field on a main road where they had stopped the car for this purpose.

18. In relation to the allegation of oral sex in the police gym PC A agreed that this was a risky thing to have done because someone could have entered the gym quite quickly. She also agreed that her statement about this matter was not very detailed and that she could not remember whether by this time the Officer had been promoted. The encounter had taken place in the evening. She had said in interview that it had taken place near to the fire exit doors and was closely questioned upon this sentence in her statement:

> *There were no other people around on any of these occasions and except for one time in a field; it was always late at night.*

The suggestion being put was that this was inconsistent with her oral evidence that there was never a time when there was anyone else around, by reference to the position of the semi-colon in the sentence above, but the Panel disagreed. The sentence is ambiguous but should properly be read in such a way as to be entirely consistent with her oral evidence, they concluded. The punctuation is not hers but the meaning is that apart from one occasion sexual activity took place late at night, not that there was ever anyone else around.

19. The second hotel visit was to a place in Gloucestershire but this was not (said PC A) the occasion on which she told the Officer that she loved him. That had happened previously whilst on a walk in Walton on the Marsh. He had responded in the same way. There were two occasions on which she had become cross with him, the first being when she thought

that he was staring at her across the room whilst they were at a work event referred to as "OST" (which made her feel uncomfortable because she thought that it might betray their relationship to others) and the second was when he had spoken sternly to another PC for being noisy in a quiet area. She agreed that the other officer was being noisy but it was the way the Officer had spoken to him that she objected to. At no time (said PC A) had she threatened to tell his wife about the affair. She was not jealous and had actually wanted to end the relationship because she knew that it was wrong. When she tried to do this he had said that he would "give you no shit" but would then go on to say that no-one really cared for him. PC A agreed that the Officer had not tried to make her feel guilty for ending the relationship but that she had nevertheless felt sorry for him and wanted to support him.

20. It was at the time the relationship was coming to an end that the Officer had shown her a photo of four men in army uniform and camouflage paint and had told her that one of them was his friend who had been killed. It was on the anniversary of his death. (It should be noted that this is not the picture in the bundle). She thought that this had been in Afghanistan. Asked about the photo of three men in a bar at p12 she disputed that the Officer had told her that these were people he had worked with whilst employed in the Immigration Service. In relation to the filing of PWIT forms by the Officer she said that she did not know if he had done anything wrong in this but she thought it to be inappropriate. She believed that her PS had reviewed her jobs.

21. In re-examination, PC A reiterated that the Officer had made her feel guilty about ending the relationship but said that it takes two to make a relationship and that she had felt responsible for him. Asked by the Panel to clarify the timeline of the relationship with the Officer, PC A confirmed that they had first started talking in a friendly way on about 22

July and had met for coffee at Costa some days later. She disputed the suggestion made by the Officer that there were two versions of her and in answer to the Chair gave further evidenced about the two occasions on which she had been frustrated by the Officer's behaviour mentioned earlier, namely at the OST work event and when he had spoken to another PC.

22. The Panel's impression of PC A was that she was not a wholly reliable witness. Her memory of key events was fallible in a number of ways, in particular in that there was only a sketchy account of the sexual encounter in the police gym and this account was inconsistent with the text message she sent to the Officer at D13 sent at 22.07 on or about 13 September 2024 (in which she mentioned that she had been called to a meeting at work and had mentioned the kissing and touching in the gym). It was also inconsistent with her debrief with DI Platt and in her having told her DS all about the relationship with nothing missing that was not set out in her statement. The Panel did not think that PC A had attended the hearing with the intention of misleading them or of telling deliberate untruths but for the reasons set out, they did not feel that they could be completely confident in the accuracy of her recollections, particularly taking into account the emotional strain she was clearly suffering.

23. PS (redacted) was the second witness. He confirmed the accuracy of his statement at p59 and told the hearing that he was PC A's line manager at the material time. He and his team were very overworked in 2024 and a management procedure called Operation Joy had been put into place to help them, with other officers being brought in to share the workload. He had worked with and trusted and respected the Officer, who at one time had been his (PS) line manager, and he had spoken with him about PC A's work and her filing occurrences.

One particular case of PC A's that was important to him was referred to as PWIT and the witness was taken through the documents at p65 to explain the filing history. The case had been reviewed and re-opened by the Officer but was later reviewed again by PS and it was he (PS) who had checked and completed the final filing. PS said that he was appreciative of the help and support the Officer had provided and confirmed that this was helping to take the pressure off him and his team. There was nothing wrong with the Officer doing this and it was within his gift to do so.

24. PS first became aware of the relationship between the Officer and PC A when he was told about it by the Officer. He gave the clear impression to the Panel that he felt caught between the two of them because the Officer was a trusted friend and sometime manager and PC A was a member of his own team. However, if he had considered that there was anything that raised concerns about the relationship then he would have reported it to senior management but there was not. He thought highly of both the Officer and PC A but there were no matters of concern being raised with him.

25. The Panel was extremely impressed by PS, who they regarded as a reliable, meticulous and careful witness in whom they could place complete confidence. He listened to the questions and gave complete and direct answers. He did not speculate and presented his evidence with calmness and clarity. The Panel also thought that he was the sort of person in whom junior officers would and could place their trust.

26. The Officer gave his evidence on the third day of the hearing. He was taken carefully through the contents of his r31 response, which he confirmed as being true and accurate and specifically denied each of the allegations against him. He confirmed that he had never been PC A's line manager so that in his mind there was never a conflict of interest giving

rise to any breach of professional standards. He agreed that by the time he filed PC A's reports (the subject of allegation 3) they were exchanging flirty messages but disputed that he had done anything wrong. He also said that his own allegations against PC A had been completed with a Statement of Truth at the end and that it had been an honest account. When he had given his account he had not thought that there were going to be proceedings against him. He was struggling with his mental health at the time. The Officer became visibly upset when giving this part of his evidence.

27. The Officer then provided a summary of his career in the police service and said that he had been promoted to his current rank in August 2024, during the course of his affair with PC A. He had become very seriously unwell at this time and had tried to take his own life.

28. Turning to the commencement of his relationship with PC A the Officer said that this had started off as a friendship and a professional relationship. He had previously reviewed one of her cases, the robbery case she mentioned in her own evidence. She was a member of Team 2 and he was assigned to help this team under Operation Joy which commenced in January 2024. He was not PC A's line manager and she was one of a large number of officers whose work he might need to review as part of the operation. He confirmed their first professional encounter that year was the incident in which he had taken over the care of a child in the police station and said that he would sometimes see her at a specified gym where they both trained. He first started speaking to her at the gym on 22 July and over the next few days they exchanged messages which he later explained became flirty and personal. They had talked about their respective partners and shared confidences. They had also discussed a training course which they were both due to attend ("OST") and arranged to lift share to the venue.

29. The messaging had very quickly snowballed into an intense romantic one and the Officer and PC A arranged to meet on 31 July. They had coffee in Costa and ended up kissing in the car. They saw each other again over the next two days and by 2 August were engaged in a "whirlwind romance". The following week he had gone away on a family holiday and they had continued messaging whilst he was abroad. He referred to jealous messages she had sent and he had been asked by PC A to delete the phone number of another female officer from his phone. The Officer returned from holiday a week later and he met with PC A the same day (10 August) and they went for a walk together in Gloucester. There had been some conversation in which PC A said that she loved him and that he had not initially reciprocated.

30. The following week both PC A and the Officer attended the OST course (on 12 August). They travelled to and from the venue together but were assigned to different groups. He had been looking in a particular direction for some part of the day and PC A had told him on the journey home that she was upset by this because she thought that he was staring at her. They had an argument about it and she threatened to tell his wife about the affair but he ended up apologising and they went for dinner together. According to the Officer there were two other occasions when PC A threatened to tell his wife about their relationship. There had been hundreds of messages between himself and PC A he told the Panel, but they had mutually agreed to delete them.

31. The Officer was asked about helping PC A with her work. He accepted that he had reviewed her filing and told custody to issue copy bail forms but denied delivering the bail forms personally to the suspect. He said that the telematics on his vehicle could very easily confirm this. The Officer came back to this subject later in his evidence when he was taken

to p65 and explained that he had reviewed the incidents and checked them but this was an administrative matter which did not take him very long.

32. Asked about the day of the alleged assault on him in the gym by PC A the Officer said that he could not be sure but by reference to the sign-in sheets for the gym it was probably 17 August. He was taken to p95 and said that he thought that he had signed in at 20.25 (not 18.25 – he meant 8.25pm) and that PC A signed in at 20.48. A PC unconnected to the investigation had also been in the gym listening to heavy rock music at loud volume until he left at 20.40 and a second PC unconnected to the investigation, who signed in at 20.35 and left at 21.48 was the response officer he had mentioned in his statement. In the period in which he had been alone with PC A they had had a disagreement and she had stamped on his foot.

33. The Officer said that there had been only two occasions on which he and PC A had sexual intercourse. These had both involved visits to hotels. The first occasion was on 19 August at a place quite near to where they both live, the second was on either 26 or 27 August when they had stayed overnight. He referred to his records of Viagra prescription and said that he needed medication for both oral and penetrative sex. Both these occasions had been pre-arranged and he had found a pretext to discretely take medication beforehand. PC A had not known that he used Viagra. He was asked about the date on which PC A alleged that oral sex had taken place and by reference to the gym sign-in sheets said that this was probably 25 August. He had met PC A at the gym but they had not engaged in oral sex. It would not have been possible anyway, he said, since he had not taken medication, and the risk of being seen by other people coming and leaving the gym would have been incredibly high. They would very easily have been seen.

34. The relationship ended on 2 September 2024. The Officer agreed that he had posted himself to a specific police station that evening and he attended for work early so that he could see PC A. He agreed that this was part of his reason for being there but said that this was why he went to work early that day. He could have posted himself anywhere on his region and in fact he was very busy that evening and only saw PC A briefly on his breaks. PC A was cross with him for not talking to him and it was on that evening that she had assaulted him by squeezing his cheek.

35. The Officer was then asked about the allegation of pretending to have been in the military in order to persuade PC A not to end their relationship. He explained that he had never been in the army and denied telling PC A that he had been. He had worked as a holiday representative and in the Immigration Service before joining the police. He said that having been a police officer for many years at the specified police station and being well known to other officers it would have been stupid to have pretended to have been a soldier since he would easily have been found out had she mentioned it to anyone else.

36. The Officer was cross-examined about his evidence by Counsel for the AA and began by accepting that there was "learning" to be had from the matters before the Panel. However it emerged that what he meant by this was learning about his own mental health condition, not the matters referred to in the allegations he was facing. It was put to him that his relationship with PC A was a pleasant one for him and he agreed that it had been intense, full on and at full speed but that they had had disagreements including over being found out. He maintained that PC A had threatened to tell his wife about the affair although agreed that she did not in fact do so and denied that he was making up the allegation of threats being made by her.

37. The Officer was taken through his Viagra prescription documents and it was suggested to him that he and PC A had sex in several different places including outdoors but he denied this. He agreed that he had never served in the military and denied ever claiming to have done so and he positively asserted that PC A was lying about this. He agreed that he did send her a photo of three men drinking in a bar but had not said they were army friends. He had not sent any picture of men in army uniforms. The Officer agreed that there was planned sex in a hotel in August 2024 but again disputed that anything had ever taken place in the gym at the specified police station.

38. The Officer was asked detailed questions about the breakdown of the relationship. He said that he had accepted PC A's decision to end it but she did not want to do so by text. By early September she had disclosed the relationship to her partner and he had spoken to his wife, although he had not told his wife the full extent of what had happened. He confirmed that he had not disclosed the full extent of his relationship with PC A to his wife at that time but said that he had told her about the alleged assault. He became very emotional in his evidence at this point and said that he had been in hospital, initially without access to his phone. When PC A got back in touch she had accused him of sending messages to her partner and had hung up on the phone call between them.

39. There was then a series of messages between the Officer and PC A and he was taken through these. The Officer agreed that his messages had swung between pleasant and offensive very quickly, and he had said "fuck you" to PC A. His explanation was that he found it very difficult to disengage from PC A. He disputed that the photo he sent of his hospital room was intended to give a false impression that he was still there (he was actually on home leave from hospital when he sent it) and said that the room was still available to

him. He could not explain why he sent it other than to prove something to PC A. The Officer said that he had never made any negative comments to PC A about his wife although when taken to his message in which he stated that "I probably overplayed how bad she (meaning his wife) was" he agreed that this gave a different impression of what he had been telling PC A.

40. The Officer was asked when he first mentioned the alleged assaults and he told the Panel that this was over the weekend when he was in hospital. However, he was taken to p74 and agreed that he had not told Inspector Pauldon about it and claimed not to remember what he had said to this officer. He had first raised this with Inspector Hewitt but emphasised that he was not at that time raising it as a criminal complaint. It was only later that he had decided to pursue it as a criminal matter. He did report that there had been multiple text messages from PC A after the matter had come to the attention of senior management and he denied that he had invented the allegations of assault because he was frustrated with PC A over these messages. He said that he thought that the AA was being very unfair to him for criticising him for things he had said and done when he was very ill.

41. In answer to questions from the Panel the Officer said that he had not reported his relationship with PC A to senior management during the course of that relationship because he did not have line management responsibility for her. He had disclosed it as soon as he could after it had ended.

42. The Panel's impression of the Officer was that like PC A, he was not a wholly reliable witness. In particular it seemed to the Panel that he had not learned the right lessons from his relationship with PC A and did not seem to understand the importance of disclosing it to senior management even when the conflict was only a potential one rather than manifest.

The report will come back to this. Some of his evidence was also emotionally charged and not wholly reliable although the Panel took into account his mental health and the fact that at the time he had said some of the things he was asked about, he had recently been very unwell. However, they found him to be generally a more reliable witness than PC A when it came to dates and times of key events and the Panel agreed with Mr Banham (Counsel) that his account was generally consistent with the written materials.

43. Closing submissions from both Counsel were received by the Panel as helpful and informative. They both made the central submission that much of this case depends upon one person's word against the other and the inherent probability or improbability of the competing accounts being true but for the Officer, Mr Banham emphasised the importance of considering documentary evidence first having regard to the fallibility of human memory and the difficulty of emotionally charged witnesses being wholly objective in their recollection.

44. The ILQA reminded the Panel of the burden and standard of proof and illustrated the section in the HOG which repeats the common law position that whilst the standard of proof is the same in all civil cases, some things are nevertheless more likely than others by telling them about Lord Hoffman's famous analogy of the lioness and the Alsatian.[2] During the course of their deliberations it was not necessary for him to give any further advice.

45. The Panel retired to consider the matter.

Resolution of the facts and alleged breaches of the required professional standards

46. The panel was aware of their responsibilities, which are:

[2] Secretary of State for the Home Office v Rehman [2001] UKHL 47

a. to maintain public confidence and reputation of the police service,

b. to uphold high standards in policing and to deter misconduct

c. to protect the public

This is why they spent time in deliberating the evidence and considering the seriousness of the underlying facts. Many of the core facts were not seriously in dispute. The issues the Panel had to resolve arose out of a brief and intense affair between the Officer and PC A which began in late July 2024 and ended in early September that year.

Bogus military service:

47. The Panel did not find the factual basis of this allegation proved to their satisfaction on the balance of probability. They noted that PC A did not actually say that the Officer had used his claimed military service with her in order to try to make her feel guilty about ending the relationship, although she had in fact felt sad and responsible for him. In their judgment the Officer did not try to persuade her into feeling sorry for him even though this may have been how she felt at the time or the effect of what he was saying. There was insufficient evidence to satisfy the Panel that he had claimed to be one of the people shown in a photo of men in uniform serving in the military. The only picture in the bundle is of three men in a bar in civilian clothes and this was insufficient in the Panel's view to persuade them that there had been another photo which made out this allegation or that this in itself was used in the deceptive way alleged.

48. The Panel was unsatisfied that there was sufficient material to establish that the Officer claimed to have been a serving soldier or that his friend had been killed whilst serving.

Although the Officer denied it, the Panel agreed it was a strange thing for PC A to have made up but they were not prepared to speculate and decided this matter on the basis of the balance of probability.

Sexual activity on police premises:

49. The Panel was also unpersuaded on the balance of probability that the AA had established the factual basis of their case under this allegation. They thought it possible that some sort of kissing and touching in the gym may have taken place as mentioned in PC A's own message to the Officer but what form this took, and the degree to which it amounted to overt sexual activity, they were unable to say. In their view it was less than probable that oral sex had taken place at the time and place alleged, having regard to the risk that this would have involved of someone else entering the gym.

50. In answer to questions from the Panel about the gym sign-in sheets for the likely date upon which the alleged assault could have happened (p95) it emerged from the Officer's evidence and the documents that there would have been a window of only about 12 minutes whilst the Officer and PC A were alone in the room on that occasion, assuming that the times on the sign-in sheets had been completed correctly. This is consistent with the evidence that people come and go into this room with regularity and that there would often be only short periods of time when the Officer and PC A would be completely alone in the gym. It was the unchallenged evidence of the Officer that he needed to use Viagra in order to take part in oral sex as well as for penetrative sex and that this medication takes about half an hour to become effective. It was also the evidence of both the Officer and PC A that their meetings at the gym were not pre-planned. It follows that it is less than probable

that oral sex actually took place in the gym, in the judgment of the Panel.

51. The Panel also took into account the fact that PC A did not disclose this allegation until her statement in May 2025 about 9 months later. They were extremely mindful of the fact that PC A was embarrassed and ashamed of the relationship and that there are often very compelling reasons why a person may not immediately make disclosures of sexual activity, but they were surprised that this officer did not say something sooner to anyone else at work and that she did not mention it to the Officer in her message to him in September after he had been admitted to hospital. She was also clear that she told her PS all about the relationship, but he told the Panel that he did not feel that he needed to take any action on the basis of what he knew. He would obviously have acted differently had he been told that PC A and the Officer had engaged in sexual activity on police premises. The r30 allegation was only one of "sexual activity" but the way in which the case was presented was specifically that oral sex had taken place in the gym and the Panel were not therefore satisfied that this case had been made out on the basis of the evidence.

Conflict of interest.

52. The Officer has always admitted that he failed to make an early report of the relationship with PC A although he denied that this was a breach of the required professional standards. The Panel disagreed with his approach. In their judgment the relationship with PC A was sufficiently well developed that he could and should have reported it to senior management in August 2024 and not after 9 September when the investigation had begun. Relationships between senior and junior officers should be reported straight away so as to avoid any suggestion of preferential or adverse treatment and to protect them both from external

pressure or even blackmail. The potential conflict is enough to trigger the duty, in the Panel's opinion.

53. However, that is not the way in which the AA had chosen to put its case. Counsel for the AA made it very clear to the hearing that the allegation was not merely of failing to disclose the relationship without more but was predicated upon establishing the specific "parasitic" allegations of an actual or manifest conflict of interest. It was therefore necessary to consider each of these in turn.

54. In the opinion of the Panel, the Officer did not do anything wrong by filing one of PC A's reports even though this took place after they had started to exchange flirty messages. These were proper policing activities and formed part of his duties under Operation Joy to assist other overworked officers. Accordingly, whilst the facts were established this did not amount to a breach of professional standards.

55. The Panel was also unpersuaded that the Officer had done anything wrong by resolving the problem PC A had over a bail matter by tasking custody to deal with the matter. He may have been partly motivated by his relationship with A although Counsel for the AA told the Panel that no reliance was placed upon "motivation" and in the Panel's judgment, the actual thing he did was not wrong. He had a good policing reason to help out PC A by asking custody to send out a copy of the bail form and nothing more.

56. The evidence does not support the contention that he actually drove to the suspect's house himself to deliver the bail forms. As he says, this would have been tracked by police telematics and would easily have been detected. In practice neither of these allegations survive the evidence of PS, who said that there was nothing untoward about what the Officer had done and that he had been grateful for the help. Accordingly, whilst the facts

were established this did not amount to a breach of professional standards.

57. The Panel also did not think that the allegation of the Officer basing himself at a particular police station was made out. This was not very seriously pursued on the evidence and rightly so. The Officer could have based himself anywhere in his area and there was no suggestion that he had neglected his duties in any way. He admitted that he had wanted to see PC A that day but this is why he went into work early, not that he wanted to avoid other duties. Accordingly, whilst the facts were established this did not amount to a breach of professional standards. It follows that the whole of this allegation must fail.

False allegation of assault:

58. In the Panel's judgment there was little or no evidence that the alleged assault in the gym did or did not happen and they could not make any judgment either way. At best these would have been assaults of a minor kind but in the Panel's view there was insufficient evidence to show that the alleged assaults did take place but also insufficient evidence to show that they did not. In answer to questions from the Panel about the gym sign-in sheets for the likely date upon which this could have happened (p95) it emerged from the Officer's evidence and the documents that there would have been a window of only about 12 minutes whilst the Officer and PC A were alone in the room, assuming that the times on the sign-in sheets had been completed correctly. This is consistent with the Officer's account of being in the gym although not decisive as the incident could have happened although it could only have happened within a very small time window.

59. Similarly there was little or no evidence either way as to whether the alleged assault on the Officer's cheek did or did not happen apart from the parties' word. In the Panel's view it

is impossible to conclude that this incident did happen and equally impossible to conclude that it did not. This was a case of one emotionally vulnerable person's word against another at the end of a short and intense relationship. The AA had not tipped the scales so as to show that one account was more probable than the other. The Panel was therefore unable to find the factual basis of these allegations against the Officer proven.

Conclusion

60. It follows that none of the allegations against the Officer were made out on the facts save for allegation 3 which is established on the facts but did not amount to a breach of professional standards on the case as presented by the AA. This case is therefore dismissed.

Learning and Recommendations

61. The Panel was concerned that the first part of allegation 3 was not presented as a stand-alone matter of failing to disclose the relationship between the Officer and PC A. The conflict of interest was not manifest but it was potential having regard to the disparity in rank, and the public and the Panel would have expected it to be treated as such. On the facts of this case, had the matter been advanced by the AA as it ought to have been the Panel would have taken no action against the Officer since there was only a relatively short period when the relationship continued without having been disclosed and the Panel accepted that there was never any actual conflict, but that is not the point. The Panel was also concerned that the Officer himself did not see this and there will be some internal feedback to him about the matter.