

**GLOUCESTERSHIRE CONSTABULARY
OUTCOME OF SPECIAL CASE HEARING**

NOTICE under Regulation 63 of the Police (Conduct) Regulations 2020

Date of Hearing:	Friday 25 September 2026
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Persons Present

Former Officer Subject of Proceedings:	PC 255624 Callum Buckingham (officer present)
Chief Constable Hearing the Case:	Maggie Blyth
Other Person(s) Present:	Darren Stewart, Legal Adviser to the Chair Zander Goss, Counsel for the delegated Appropriate Authority PC Tania Kirby, Police Federation Representative DC Aimee Batt, Investigating Officer

Rationale for Finding(s):

1. Assessing the seriousness of the misconduct:

(the officer's culpability for the misconduct; the harm caused by the misconduct; the existence of any aggravating factors and the existence of any mitigating factors)

This is my finding on whether the conduct of PC Buckingham amounts to gross misconduct. I have been advised on the law by Mr Stewart in open session, and both parties had the opportunity to address me on that advice. I have had regard to it. The finding and the reasons are mine alone.

At the outset of the hearing I ruled, as a preliminary question of law, that the act complained of, the acceptance of a caution in this case, is conduct of a police officer to which the Regulations do apply. This finding is made on that conduct alone.

The facts

The facts are admitted and I find them proved. On 17 November 2024 the officer was arrested and interviewed in relation to an allegation that, on or about 16 November 2024, he had wilfully neglected his children in a manner likely to cause them unnecessary suffering or injury to health, contrary to section 1 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933. He does not challenge the allegations or circumstances that led to his arrest. He was attested as a constable on 25 March 2025. On 9 December 2025, while a serving officer, he accepted a conditional caution for that offence. In doing so he admitted the offence that I have referred to, was informed of the effect of the caution, and signed the document recording his admission and consent (Bundle, pages 27 to 28). The caution is recorded on the Police National Computer.

The Standard alleged

The notice alleges a breach of the standard of Discreditable Conduct in Schedule 2 to the Regulations: police officers behave in a manner which does not discredit the police service

or undermine public confidence in it, whether on or off duty, and report any action taken against them for a criminal offence. The question is whether the officer's conduct, as a serving constable and in admitting an offence of child neglect and accepting a conditional caution for it, discredited the police service or undermined public confidence in it. The burden is on the Appropriate Authority and the standard is the balance of probabilities.

Breach

I find that it did. The office of constable carries powers and responsibilities for the protection of children that are exercised on behalf of the public every day. A constable who, while holding that office, formally admits wilfully neglecting a child in his care and accepts a criminal justice disposal for it places himself in a position plainly inconsistent with the trust the public is entitled to place in him. The Standard itself contemplates criminal action against serving officers and requires it to be reported; the Regulations do not treat a criminal disposal against a serving officer as a matter of indifference to the service. Accepting a caution is, in one sense, a responsible act, but it does not alter what the caution records or the position in which PC Buckingham has, by his own admission, placed himself and the force.

I have considered whether the discredit flows from the offence rather than from the caution, so that this finding reaches pre-attestation conduct by another route. I rejected that argument at the preliminary stage and I reject it on the facts. The conduct before me is the officer's own act, while serving, of admitting a criminal offence and accepting a criminal record for it. Its consequence, that a serving constable of this force holds a caution for child neglect, is a matter of the present, not the past.

Misconduct or gross misconduct

Having found that the Standard has been breached I turn my attention to whether the breach constitutes either gross misconduct or misconduct. Gross misconduct is a breach of the Standards so serious as to justify dismissal; misconduct is a breach so serious as to justify disciplinary action. I have applied the structured approach in the College of Policing Guidance on Outcomes, assessing seriousness by reference to culpability, harm, and aggravating and mitigating features, and keeping in mind that the purpose of these proceedings is to maintain public confidence in and the reputation of the police service, to uphold standards and deter misconduct, and to protect the public, not to punish the officer. I have considered only mitigation that goes to the conduct; personal mitigation, record and character are for the outcome stage.

Culpability

Culpability in my view is high. The officer was a serving constable when he accepted the caution. He knew from the Standards and his training what the public expects of those who hold the office in relation to the protection of children. He had the opportunity to take legal advice, and he accepted the caution knowing its effect, including that it would be recorded and disclosable.

I give weight to the fact that the offence pre-dated his attestation, that he did not abuse the office or any power attaching to it, and that he was not then bound by the Standards. Those features reduce the culpability of the underlying offending and distinguish this case from one in which a serving officer neglects a child. They do not reduce the culpability of the conduct I am assessing: the act of a serving officer in admitting that offence and accepting a criminal disposal for it.

Harm

The harm is to public confidence and the reputation of the service in my view is serious. The public is entitled to expect that officers who attend their homes and exercise powers of protection over their children are not themselves the subject of a criminal record for neglecting a child. A member of the public who learned that a serving constable had admitted wilful neglect of a child and accepted a caution for it would be gravely concerned, and that concern would attach to the force as well as the officer.

There is also real operational harm. An officer holding a caution for child neglect cannot realistically be deployed in a role involving the safeguarding of children and may face difficulty giving evidence where his record is disclosable. The Appropriate Authority's submission on that point, albeit by way of analogy, is well founded in my view.

Aggravating and mitigating features

The aggravating features are the vulnerability and ages of the children concerned, the nature and duration of the neglect, and the officer's position of trust in relation to the children. I do not treat his contesting the characterisation of the conduct, essentially his view on whether it was gross misconduct or misconduct as an aggravating feature; he was entitled to do so.

The mitigating features are that the offence pre-dated attestation and involved no abuse of office; that accepting the caution was an acceptance of responsibility that avoided a prosecution; that the conditions were complied with; and that the matter was a single episode. I give those features due weight, but they go to the offence and to how the officer dealt with its consequences, not to the position in which he has placed himself and the force. I have listened to the officer's submissions but remind myself that these go to personal mitigation, not to mitigation regarding the conduct itself.

Weighing those matters against the purpose of the misconduct regime, I have asked whether this breach of the standard of Discreditable Conduct is so serious that dismissal may be justified. It finds that it is. A serving constable who admits wilful neglect of his children and accepts a criminal caution for it has placed himself in a position fundamentally inconsistent with the office he holds and the trust the public places in it. Public confidence in the service's ability to protect children is of the first importance, and dismissal is in principle a justified response. This is a finding about the category of the conduct, not a decision on outcome, which is a separate question on which I will hear the parties and receive further advice.

I therefore find that PC Buckingham's conduct, in accepting a conditional caution for an offence of child neglect while a serving constable of this force, was a breach of the standard of Discreditable Conduct so serious as to justify dismissal. It amounts to gross misconduct.

Having found gross misconduct, I must impose disciplinary action under regulation 62. I have heard from the Appropriate Authority and from PC Buckingham's representative, and I have had regard to his record of service. I have considered everything put before me and to everything said in mitigation, including his acceptance of responsibility, remorse and personal circumstances.

2. The purpose for which sanctions are imposed:

(The purpose of the police misconduct regime is threefold: to maintain public confidence in and the reputation of the police service; to uphold high standards in policing and deter misconduct; to protect the public)

Regulation 62, as amended, provides that where a finding of gross misconduct is made disciplinary action to be imposed is dismissal without notice unless I am satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances which justify a final written warning; reduction in rank in this case not being a sanction available. I note that there is no formal guidance as to what may constitute 'exceptionality' but have referred to the statutory wording under the Regulations and the College of Policing Guidance on Outcomes in Police Misconduct Proceedings to assist me. The burden at this stage is with the officer to demonstrate that there are exceptional reasons that should be considered. On his behalf of I have heard submissions from PC Kirby.

I remind myself that the purpose of the outcome is not to punish the officer but to maintain public confidence in and the reputation of the police service, to uphold standards and deter misconduct, and to protect the public. I also remind myself that the weight personal mitigation can bear diminishes as the seriousness of the conduct and its effect on public confidence increase.

The matters advanced on the officer's behalf are real, and I have given them proper weight; but they are, in my view and substance, the mitigation that is present in many cases of this kind, and none of them, alone or together, takes this case outside the ordinary run of cases in which gross misconduct has been found. I have referred to the College of Policing Guidance on Outcomes in Police Misconduct Proceedings and have referred to Part 5, paragraph 5.3 where reference is made to exceptionality. Whilst I acknowledge it is in the context of operational dishonesty, which does not apply in these circumstances, it provides assistance in my deliberations in any event. At paragraph 5.3 guidance is given in the following terms:

'...In concluding that the case is exceptional, the decision maker must identify the features of the circumstances of the misconduct which support a different conclusion, recognising that the number of such cases would be very small. The decision maker would take account of personal mitigation, but must recognise its limited impact in this area...'

The fact that the offence pre-dated attestation has already been weighed in reaching the finding of gross misconduct and does not, of itself, amount to an exceptional circumstance in my view. That the caution represents an early acknowledgement and contrition on the part of the officer is also noted, but it does not appear to me to be something that elevates it from personal mitigation into the territory of 'exceptionality'. There are no other points raised that cause me to conclude otherwise. I do not find the points raised in submissions, or put to before me in evidence, are exceptional in nature.

3. The sanction which most appropriately fulfils that purpose in light of the seriousness of the conduct:

I have asked myself whether a final written warning could meet the purposes of the regime in a case in which a serving constable holds a caution for the wilful neglect of his own children, and I am satisfied that it could not: the public could not have confidence in an officer in that position continuing to exercise the powers of the office, and the reputation of the service would be damaged by his retention.

I therefore find that there are no exceptional circumstances, and the disciplinary action I impose is dismissal without notice, which takes effect from today.

Disciplinary Outcome: Dismissal without notice

I have asked myself whether a final written warning could meet the purposes of the regime in a case in which a serving constable holds a caution for the wilful neglect of his own children, and I am satisfied that it could not: the public could not have confidence in an officer in that position continuing to exercise the powers of the office, and the reputation of the service would be damaged by his retention.

Representations by the Chair as to Publication on the Police Barred List

Insert any representations:

Chairs have a role to play in making representations at the conclusion of misconduct proceedings as to publication of the information set out in the Barred List Regulations. As part of their remarks at the conclusion of the proceedings, they may make reference to whether any of the following factors are likely to apply:

- a) Would be against the interests of national security;
- b) Might prejudice the investigation or other criminal or civil proceedings;
- c) Would result in significant risk of harm to any individual, including the officer themselves.

The relevant authority will then include these representations in their report to the College of Policing.

Signature of Chief Constable: *Moghe Singh*

Date: 02/10/2026

I acknowledge that I have been served with this Notice. I have read and had the document explained to me.

Signature:

Date:

Right of Appeal

- 1 You may appeal to a police appeals tribunal against:-
 - (a) The finding; or
 - (b) The disciplinary action, if any, imposed in consequence of that finding; or
 - (c) Both.
- 2 A police officer may not appeal to a tribunal against a finding where that finding was made following acceptance by the officer that his conduct amounted to misconduct or gross misconduct.
- 3 The grounds of appeal are:-

- (a) That the finding or disciplinary action imposed was unreasonable; or
- (b) That there is evidence that could not reasonably have been considered at the original special case hearing which could have materially affected the finding or decision on disciplinary action; or
- (c) That there was a breach of the procedures or other unfairness which could have materially affected the finding or decision on disciplinary action.

- 4 If you wish to appeal, you must give notice of the appeal before the end of 10 working days beginning with the first working day after the day on which you are supplied with a written copy of the relevant decision.
- 5 The notice of appeal shall be given in writing to the relevant local policing body.
- 6 You may request a transcript of the proceedings (or part of the proceedings) at the original hearing in your notice of appeal.
- 7 This rule applies where a police officer who wishes to appeal to a tribunal wishes to give notice of the appeal after the end of the period mentioned in paragraph 4 above. A police officer may give notice of the appeal within a reasonable time after the end of such period, and the notice shall be accompanied by the reasons why it was not served within such period and the reasons for the officer's view that it has been served within a reasonable time after such period.
- 8 Upon receipt, the relevant local policing body shall supply a copy of the notice and the reasons to the chair who shall determine:-
 - (a) Whether it was reasonably practicable for the notice to be given within the period mentioned in paragraph 4 above; and
 - (b) Whether the notice has been given within a reasonable time after the end of such period.
- 9 If the chair determines either that it was reasonably practicable for the notice to be given within such period or that the notice has not been given within a reasonable time after the end of such period, the appeal shall be dismissed.
- 10 Where the appeal is not dismissed under paragraph 9 above, the appeal shall proceed and the chair shall give directions for the application of the rules to the appeal.

Your appeal should be given in writing to the Chief Executive of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner in accordance with the Police Appeals Tribunals Rules 2020

(Postal Address: The Chief Executive, The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, No.1 Waterwells, Waterwells Drive, Quedgeley, Gloucester, GL2 2AN.)