

IN THE MATTER OF THE MISCONDUCT PROCEEDINGS UNDER THE POLICE (CONDUCT)
REGULATIONS 2020 (AS AMENDED BY THE POLICE (CONDUCT) (AMENDMENT)
REGULATIONS 2024)

BETWEEN

THE COMMISSIONER OF POLICE OF THE METROPOLIS

and

PC Alessia Versino

PANEL FINAL DECISION

(A) Introductions:

1. This is the written final decision in respect of the misconduct hearing for PC Alessia Versino (the Officer). The outline of the Panel decisions on facts and outcome was provided to the Officer during the hearing.
2. The Panel was chaired by Former Commander Katie Lilburn (Chair), with independent members Ms Lesley Stephen and Ms Yvonne Walsh. The Legally Qualified Adviser to the Panel was Ms Olivia Kong.
3. The Appropriate Authority was represented by Ms Jennifer Lanigan (AA's representative). The Officer was represented by Mr Sean Hammond (The Officer's representative). The Officer was also supported by the Federation representative, PS Neil Griffiths.
4. The hearing was held from 15 to 18 September 2026 at Palestra House, 197 Blackfriars Road, SE1 8NJ.
5. At the outset of its determinations, and throughout the hearing, the Panel has remained mindful of the overarching purpose of police misconduct proceedings, namely:
 - i. To maintain public confidence in, and the reputation of, the police service;
 - ii. To uphold high standards of professional conduct and deter misconduct;

- iii. To protect the public.

(B) The Allegations:

- 6. The Panel was referred to a Regulation 30 notice in respect of the Officer containing the allegations and that her conduct amounted to misconduct or gross misconduct, namely:

REGULATION 30 NOTICE

- I. By virtue of the below conduct, PC Alessia Versino is alleged to have breached the Standards of Professional Behaviour Honesty & Integrity and Discreditable Conduct.
- II. On 24 August 2025, PC Versino produced and signed a witness statement for the purposes of criminal charge which contained material inaccuracies or untruths, in particular that she had examined in person a dog of suspected banned breed type. The witness statement went into some detail as to the Officer's attendance at kennels and her method of conducting the assessment.
- III. PC Versino stated the following in her witness statement: At the start of my assessment an appropriate amount of time was given to AW44/25 to relax in my presence and to run out of some energy for me to assess it in his natural movement, appearance and feel his overall body confirmation. 1 8 AW44/25 was of a friendly nature and happy to be stroked. The kennel staff member remained with me throughout my assessment and acted as my handling assistant, allowing me to conduct the examination in the safest way as possible. During my examination, AW44/25 was comfortable with my presence and did not show any behaviour that would give me concerns for my safety. It is important to be mindful, that when completing a full and thorough type assessment, the process can be quite intrusive and potentially stressful for a dog, particularly when conducted by a stranger. It involves being hands on, looking in the mouth, manipulating joints and taking measurements using equipment which may be foreign to the dog. If any part of the assessment appear to cause any form of suffering, including un-due stress, the assessment will stop immediately or alternate methods of assessment will be applied in the interest of the animal's welfare. It should also be noted that any comment I make regarding the dog's behaviour, should only be considered the observations of an experienced layperson; I hold no formal qualifications relating to canine behaviour and at no point have I conducted a formal assessment of the dog's temperament during my examination. None of the above was truthful, as it created the clear impression that PC Versino had conducted an in-person examination and assessment of the animal in question, when she had not.
- IV. Furthermore, PC Versino's witness statement was accompanied by the standard wording statement of truth, viz. "This statement (consisting of 7 page(s) each

signed by me) is true to the best of my knowledge and belief, and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated in it anything which I know to be false, or do not believe to be true.” PC Versino had not honoured this sworn commitment as she had wilfully misstated the position regarding the assessment and examination of the animal in question.

- V. As a result of PC Versino’s statement, the suspect was charged under section 1 of the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991. This case was subsequently discontinued when it was discovered that PC Versino had not assessed the dog in person, contrary to her statement.
- VI. As a result of her production of a misleading statement, PC Versino has failed in her duty as an expert and has compromised her position in respect of future investigations.
- VII. Further, the Appropriate Authority considers that the conduct set out above constitutes gross misconduct, being a breach of the Standard that is so serious as to justify dismissal.

(C) The Panel’s Approach

- 7. The Panel reminded itself of its core responsibilities:
 - a. To assess the facts of the case and make findings in relation to each allegation;
 - b. To determine whether those findings amount to a breach of the relevant Standards of Professional Behaviour;
 - c. To decide whether the conduct found proven constitutes misconduct or gross misconduct.
- 8. The Panel remained mindful that the burden of proof rests with the Appropriate Authority throughout the proceedings. The applicable standard is the balance of probabilities, that is, whether the alleged conduct is more likely than not to have occurred.
- 9. In reaching its decisions, the Panel considered the purpose and nature of police misconduct proceedings. The primary aim is not to punish the Officer, but to uphold public confidence in the police service and protect its reputation by ensuring accountability and making clear that improper conduct will not be tolerated. A secondary aim is to affirm and promote high professional standards. A further purpose is to protect the public, the Complainant, and police staff by preventing recurrence of similar misconduct. In doing so, the Panel had regard to the principles established in *Bolton v Law Society* [1994] 1 WLR 512; *Chief*

Constable of Dorset v PAT, Salter (Interested Party) [2011] EWHC 3366 (Admin); and *R (Williams) v PAT* [2016] EWHC 2708 (Admin).

10. The Panel also considered the relevant regulatory framework and guidance, including:
- a. The Police (Conduct) (Amendment) Regulations 2024 (“the Regulations”), particularly the Standards of Professional Behaviour set out in Schedule 2;
 - b. The 2018 Home Office Guidance (“HOG”), with specific reference to Chapter 1, which summarises the Standards;
 - c. The definition of misconduct under Regulation 3(1): “a breach of the Standards of Professional Behaviour”;
 - d. The definition of gross misconduct under Regulation 3(1): “a breach of the Standards of Professional Behaviour so serious that dismissal would be justified”.
11. The Panel listened carefully to all oral evidence and thoroughly reviewed the documentary evidence. It considered the totality of the evidence and submissions. While it does not propose to address every individual point raised, the Panel sets out its principal findings and conclusions.

(D) Evidence

12. The Panel had been provided with the following documents:
- a. Final Bundle (including Regulation 30 notice) consisting of 161 pages;
 - b. Appropriate Authority’s opening note consisting of 15 pages;
 - c. The Officer’s Regulation 31 response consisting of 5 pages;
 - d. The Officer’s character evidence of 11 pages.
13. The Panel also heard from the following live witnesses:
- a. PC Bond
 - b. PS Hills
 - c. PS Wilkinson

d. PC Esterson

e. The Officer

(E) Case Summary

14. On 24 August 2025, a male(the prisoner) was arrested for unrelated offences of shoplifting and battery. A dog, recorded as reference AW44, was in his possession at the time of arrest. The dog was seized and transported to the kennels in the London Borough of Waltham Forest between 17:00 and 18:00 hours that afternoon.
15. Later that day, the Officer, a Dog Legislation Officer (DLO) and expert witness within the Dog Status Unit, assessed AW44 and concluded that it was a prohibited fighting dog contrary to Section 1 of the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991. At 18:50 hours, she uploaded an expert Level 1 statement to the case report, dated 24 August 2025, recording her assessment. She signed the statement and the declaration on the statement, confirming that the contents were true to the best of her knowledge and belief.
16. The prisoner was charged at 07:43 hours on 25 August 2025 with the two original offences and with possession of AW44 as a prohibited fighting dog. Later that day, at approximately 17:30 hours, the Officer attended the kennels and carried out a physical examination of AW44, again concluding that it was a Pitbull terrier.
17. The Officer's expert statement dated 24 August 2025 included the assertion that AW44 was "of a friendly nature and happy to be stroked" and that a kennel staff member "remained with me throughout my assessment and acted as my handling assistant." This account was inaccurate, the Officer had not attended the kennels on 24 August 2025, and therefore could not have conducted the examination described in her statement.

(F) Assessment of evidence

18. The Panel considered the closing submissions advanced by Counsel for both the Appropriate Authority and the Officer, together with the legal advice provided. The Panel followed that advice throughout and remained mindful that the burden of proof rests with the Appropriate Authority. The applicable standard is the balance of probabilities.
19. The final hearing bundle was agreed by both parties. The Panel has considered all of the evidence contained within it. The Panel heard live evidence from five witnesses: PC Bond, PS Wilkinson, PS Hills, PC Esterson and the Officer.

20. It is not in dispute that the Officer made the statement and signed the declaration. What is in dispute is whether she wilfully misstated the position regarding her assessment and examination of the dog in question.
21. In reaching its decision, the Panel has applied the civil standard of proof - namely, the balance of probabilities, and has kept firmly in mind that the burden of proof rests with the Appropriate Authority.

Assessment of the evidence of PC Bond

22. The Panel carefully considered the evidence of PC Bond, which was accepted in full as broadly consistent with his written statement and supported by his oral testimony. His account was detailed and broadly coherent, and the Panel was satisfied as to his overall truthfulness and reliability.
23. PC Bond explained that he collected a prisoner's dog from Charing Cross police station for transport to kennels as directed by the Officer, who was Duty DLO. Upon viewing the dog he formed the view that it was a Pitbull type dog. He sent booking photographs to the Officer and telephoned her to report his suspicion. Shortly afterwards, the Officer informed him that the dog had previously come to police attention in February 2025, when PC Bond himself had assessed it and had not typed it as a banned breed. He stated that this discrepancy caused him concern, as any inconsistency could be challenged by the defence in future proceedings. The Officer responded by saying she would complete the Level 1 statement instead.
24. He stated that he called PS Hills to inform her of his earlier assessment, and PS Hills told him to prepare a statement explaining both his actions on the day and his previous interaction with the dog, reassuring him that it would be justifiable. PC Bond then called back the Officer and reiterated what he had been advised by PS Hills to which the Officer replied that she had "already done a statement".
25. PC Bond accepted that DLOs may produce remote assessment for Level 1 statements based on photographs, but emphasised that good practice is to view the dog in person because mobile-phone images can distort appearance. He did not pursue writing his own statement, believing it would duplicate the Officer's evidence, particularly as she was also an expert witness.
26. The Panel found PC Bond to be a truthful witness. Although his evidence was broadly consistent, he displayed some uncertainty regarding the chronology of events. The Panel considered that this likely arose from his initial concern about the February 2025 incident, which appears to have caused him to conflate aspects of the timeline with information he later came to know. This confusion about sequencing does not undermine the core reliability of his account. Importantly, he was clear in his evidence that, in his view, the Officer's decision to produce a Level 1 statement was made with genuine intention rather than any malicious purpose.

Assessment of the evidence of PS Hills

27. The Panel carefully considered the evidence of PS Hills, which was adopted in full from her written statement and supported by her oral testimony. Her account was clear, measured and broadly consistent.
28. PS Hills has been the Officer's line manager since March 2025. She stated that on 24 August 2025 she received a telephone call from PC Bond, who informed her that the Officer intended to complete a Level 1 statement confirming the dog's breed. PS Hills advised PC Bond that, as he had seen the dog, he should complete the Level 1 statement to support a potential section 1 offence and provide it to the officer in the case (OIC) while the detainee remained in custody, thereby avoiding the need for a later re-interview. She noted that PC Bond appeared hesitant, given that he had previously assessed the dog as not conforming to the standard. Later, PC Bond informed her that the Officer would be completing the statement instead.
29. PS Hills stated that she did not ask whether the Officer had seen the dog before producing the statement, but she assumed that she had, as she would ordinarily expect a DLO to examine the dog in person. She explained that DLO training lasts two weeks and involves physical examination of dogs throughout. She accepted that examining the dog in person is good practice rather than formal policy. She described Level 1 statements as brief documents, with each DLO using their own template and CV. Typing the dog is essential, and although DLOs generally describe how they assessed the dog, this is not strictly required in a Level 1 statement. She also noted that kennelling costs £45 per day and that dogs should not be kept longer than necessary.
30. In describing the Officer's working style, PS Hills stated that the Officer is keen, helpful and sometimes tries to do too much, which can lead to administrative errors such as uploading photographs without checking. She emphasised that she would not describe the Officer as dishonest, lacking integrity or engaging in discreditable conduct. She stated that the Officer loves her job and the dogs, and that offering to complete the statement herself was entirely consistent with her usual approach. She confirmed that the declaration on the statement template does not change when photographs are used, and she saw no possible gain for the Officer in providing misleading information.
31. The Panel found PS Hills to be an honest and balanced witness. She provided a fair and nuanced account of the Officer's strengths and areas for development, supporting her observations with practical examples. Her evidence portrayed the Officer as enthusiastic and well intentioned, albeit sometimes prone to rushing and overlooking administrative detail. Importantly, PS Hills was clear that, in her view, the Officer is not dishonest.

Assessment of the Evidence of PS Wilkinson

32. The Panel carefully considered the evidence of PS Wilkinson, which was adopted in full from his written statement and supported by his oral testimony. His account was clear and broadly consistent.
33. PS Wilkinson stated that examinations for typing dogs should ordinarily be carried out in person, although photographs can be used where necessary, albeit this is not best practice. He explained that he first became aware of the incident on Sunday 24 August 2025 while at Notting Hill Carnival, when PS Hills, who was with him at the time, received a telephone call from PC Bond and instructed him to assess the dog. He heard nothing further until Wednesday 27 August 2025, when PC Esterson contacted him regarding an email from DOTS about the dog.
34. PS Wilkinson stated that PC Esterson had identified an error in the Officer's Level 1 statement while reviewing upcoming court cases, specifically that the date of the examination appeared to be incorrect. It was agreed that PS Wilkinson would raise this with the Officer, as he believed the examination had taken place on 25 August 2025 and that the statement would need to be amended. When he later spoke to the Officer, she confirmed that she had written the statement on 24 August 2025 based solely on the photographs. Following this conversation, PS Wilkinson discussed the matter with PS Hills and PC Esterson, confirming that the Officer had stated she completed the assessment from photographs.
35. PS Wilkinson stated if an assessment is carried out remotely, he would expect this to be expressly stated in the Level 1 statement. He explained that, in general, he would expect a dog to be physically examined within approximately two weeks for the purposes of a Level 1 assessment. He noted that kennelling costs are a secondary consideration; the primary issue is whether the dog is ultimately returned home or not.
36. The Panel found PS Wilkinson to be a truthful witness who provided helpful background information regarding DLO practice and expectations. However, his evidence did not materially assist in determining the Officer's intention when producing the Level 1 statement.

Assessment of the Evidence of PC Esterson

37. The Panel carefully considered the evidence of PC Esterson, which was adopted in full from his written statement and supported by his oral testimony. His account was clear and broadly consistent.
38. PC Esterson explained that concerns were first raised after a DOTS email suggested the dog had previously been returned to its owner in February without

being assessed as dangerous. There was an initial suggestion that the Officer might have typed the dog as a pit bull based only on photographs, which he regarded as poor practice.

39. He stated that during discussions on 27 August, PC Bond was unsure whether the Officer had attended the kennels on either the Sunday or the Monday. PC Esterson spoke with PS Wilkinson, who later indicated that the Officer had attended on Monday 25 August and that the issue appeared to be an incorrect date.
40. PC Esterson said he spoke with the Officer later that day, during which the date discrepancy was briefly addressed. He also referred to a text exchange concerning the dog's earlier assessment by PC Bond and the potential difficulty of both officers providing statements.
41. The Panel found PC Esterson to be a truthful witness who provided helpful background information. However, his evidence did not materially assist in determining the Officer's intention when producing the Level 1 statement.

Assessment of the Evidence of the Officer

42. The Panel carefully considered the evidence of the Officer, which was adopted in full from her written statement and supported by her oral testimony. Her account was clear, detailed and broadly consistent.
43. The Officer described a demanding workload as a DLO, often working under significant time pressure. Her duties include attending kennels, assessing dogs, and completing electronic "Book 3" records containing background information. She accepted PS Hills' description of her working style, she is keen to assist colleagues, sometimes takes on too much, and can make administrative mistakes when rushing. She explained that the DLO acts as an expert witness and that, although there is no policy requiring physical examination, best practice is to assess dogs in person. She estimated that only 1 or 2% of assessments in the Met are conducted remotely and acknowledged that remote assessment is not best practice, though she believes she must be able to justify her opinion if challenged in court.
44. In relation to incident, the Officer stated that she tasked her colleague, PC Bond, a qualified DLO to attend the kennels collect the dog and assess it. She chose PC Bond over two other drivers because he was a qualified DLO and this would expedite 'typing' the dog. She said that, having seen photographs and discussed the dog with him via phone and video call, she had no doubt the dog conformed to the standard of a section 1 prohibited breed, specifically a Pitbull type dog. She explained that she could not leave the station because she was the duty DLO, performing a pan London role and it was the Sunday of the Notting Hill Carnival weekend. She was entirely confident that the dog was of a Pitbull breed and felt assured to make a remote assessment in these circumstances. After

running microchip checks, she discovered the dog had been seen by PC Bond six months earlier (February 2025) and he did not think then that it was a Pitbull type dog.

45. The Officer stated that when she raised this with PC Bond, he expressed concern about being challenged in court and said he did not feel able to complete the Level 1 statement. She explained that the detainee was in custody and she wished to ensure the matter could be dealt with while he was in custody. She was also concerned that the dog might be released if the Level 1 statement was not uploaded promptly. She was aware that the responsibility for the case progression in relation to this seized dog would fall to her in her daily DLO role, as she had geographic responsibility for the Charing Cross area. She described PC Bond's concern about the discrepancy between his earlier February assessment and the current assessment and therefore offered to complete the statement herself based on the photographs, believing the dog was correctly typed. She recalled telling PC Bond she had already completed the statement after he later reported that he had called PS Hills and she had asked him to do it.
46. The Officer explained that she used a previous assessment statement as a template for her Level 1 statement. She stated that Level 1 statements are brief and intended simply to confirm the dog's type, and that it is not mandatory to set out the method of assessment. She scanned the document for the reference and microchip number to replace these, and that the other amendment she made was to insert the description of the dog (ie colour etc). She estimated that these alterations to an existing statement took her about 2 minutes to complete. She accepted she had not considered any other wording nor reread the statement or declaration after completing it. She confirmed she had completed hundreds of Level 1 statements but had never previously drafted one following a remote assessment. She noted that the electronic signature is embedded in the template and that she only needed to change the date.
47. The Officer told the Panel that she only knew about the inclusion errors after she was served a misconduct notice and placed on restrictions and then it was too late to correct it. She said she was shocked that the issue had not been identified earlier and described the situation as "unreal". She stated that, following this incident, she now intends to read her statements carefully before submission, take more time over her work, and hopes to continue her career as a dog handler.
48. The Panel found the Officer to be a truthful witness. Her evidence demonstrated enthusiasm, commitment and passion for her role. She appeared hardworking, often undertaking overtime and working during holidays. Her account was consistent with other witnesses' descriptions of her work style, diligent, helpful, but prone to rushing and occasional administrative oversight. She was open about her mistake and candid in her testimony.

(G) Finding of facts

49. In assessing the evidence, the Panel first reminded itself of the good character direction applicable to the Officer. The central question was whether the Officer's Level 1 statement dated 24 August 2025 resulted from an honest mistake made in haste, or whether it was a deliberate attempt to provide false information.
50. The Panel considered the contextual backdrop of the shift, which objectively contributed to a sense of haste. The date in question, 24 August 2025, was Notting Hill Carnival, an exceptionally busy operational day for the MPS. The Officer had additional pan London responsibilities and was required to remain office based. This environment contributed to her perception that the assessment of the dog was a straightforward task that could be undertaken remotely. She was in no doubt that the dog was a prohibited Pitbull type dog, having completed hundreds of assessments previously and considering the dog to be a clear specimen. Although she had not previously completed a remote Level 1 assessment, she felt confident in her conclusion based on photographs and her discussion with another qualified DLO.
51. The detainee was in police custody, and the Officer believed there were operational benefits in progressing the case expeditiously. Intelligence checks indicated the detainee had a history of being wanted and difficult to locate, and she suspected the dog might not belong to him, making a timely interview advantageous. She also referred to kennel cost pressures, which had been discussed in team meetings, and although not determinative, this formed part of her wider sense of needing to move matters forward promptly. Her decision to send PC Bond, another qualified DLO, to the kennels reflected her desire to expedite the assessment while remaining at her post. These factors collectively created a subjective sense of haste, increasing the likelihood of careless drafting errors.
52. The Panel also accepted that the Officer was motivated by a desire to assist a colleague in a difficult professional position. PC Bond had previously assessed the same dog in February 2025 and reached a different conclusion. He expressed concern about being challenged in court for changing his assessment. The Officer, who had not been involved in the February assessment, was therefore in a position to provide an independent expert view based solely on the dog's presentation on 24 August. This gave legitimacy to her explanation that she wished to support her colleague and avoid placing him in a professionally uncomfortable position. Importantly, she proactively told PC Bond that she had already completed the Level 1 statement. PC Bond knew she had not attended the kennels. If the Officer had intentionally produced a false statement, it is inherently unlikely she would have drawn attention to it in this way, knowing that

he could immediately identify any inaccuracies. Her actions demonstrated transparency rather than concealment.

53. The Panel further considered the inherent improbability of intentional wrongdoing. The Officer was described by multiple witnesses as enthusiastic, committed, hardworking and passionate about her role. She was one of the most experienced DLOs and regarded the SDU as a career ambition. It was inherently unlikely that she would intentionally jeopardise her professional standing by wilfully falsifying a routine Level 1 assessment, particularly when there was no material benefit to doing so. She attended the kennels the very next day, further reducing any conceivable motive for deception.
54. The nature of the incorrect wording in the statement also supported the conclusion that the errors were accidental. The incorrect passages were deletion oversight errors arising from her failure to remove previously used paragraphs. They did not involve the insertion of new, fabricated information. The statement contained obvious and easily verifiable inaccuracies, such as incorrect gender references of the dog and mention of a kennel staff member being present. If the Officer had intended to mislead, it is more likely she would have removed or altered such details to avoid detection. All police witnesses agreed that Level 1 statements require minimal detail, and the Officer could simply have stated the dog's type without elaboration. The presence of unnecessary template text supports the conclusion that the errors were careless rather than deliberate.
55. Finally, the Officer's actions and comments after submitting the statement were consistent with an honest mistake. After 24 August, she repeatedly stated to colleagues that she had conducted her assessment on the Sunday. If she had intentionally lied, it would have been more probable for her to claim she had simply recorded the wrong date and that the assessment occurred on Monday 25 August, when she did attend the kennels. Her continued certainty that the assessment was made on Sunday indicates she believed her statement accurately reflected the assessment she had carried out. She displayed no hesitation or evasiveness, and her confidence in her recollection was consistent with an honest mistake rather than a deliberate falsehood.
56. Having considered all the evidence, the Panel was satisfied that the Officer's actual state of knowledge and belief at the time she completed the Level 1 statement was that she had carried out a legitimate assessment of the dog on 24 August 2025. She believed the dog was clearly a Pitbull type based on the photographs, her discussion with another qualified DLO, and her extensive experience. She also believed she was acting appropriately in completing the statement herself, given the detainee was in custody, the operational benefits of progressing the case promptly, and PC Bond's reluctance to complete the statement due to his earlier assessment in February. The Officer did not appreciate that the template paragraphs she failed to remove created a misleading impression of a physical examination. Her evidence demonstrated that she considered the statement to be an accurate reflection of the

assessment she had made and that she did not intend to mislead or provide false information.

57. Turning to the second limb of the test, the Panel considered whether the Officer's conduct was dishonest by the standards of ordinary decent people. The Panel found that it was not. Ordinary decent people would recognise that the Officer was working under significant operational pressure, believed she was assisting both the investigation and a colleague, and was confident in her expert assessment of the dog's type. Her mistake arose from carelessness and haste, not from any intention to deceive. The misleading wording resulted from a failure to remove standard template paragraphs rather than any deliberate insertion of false information. Her subsequent conduct, openly telling colleagues she had completed the statement, consistently maintaining that her assessment was carried out on the Sunday, and expressing genuine shock when the error was later identified, was wholly inconsistent with a person acting dishonestly.
58. Accordingly, the Panel concluded that the Officer's actual belief was that she was providing a truthful and accurate statement, and that her conduct, although careless, was not dishonest by the standards of ordinary decent people.
59. Having found that the Officer did not act dishonestly, the Panel next considered whether the production of a misleading Level 1 statement nonetheless amounted to a failure in her duty as an expert witness, and whether this failure had the potential to compromise her position in future investigations. The Panel concluded that it did.
60. The Officer's role as a DLO carries significant responsibility. She is an expert witness whose assessments and statements are relied upon by investigators, prosecutors and the courts to determine whether a dog is of a prohibited type. Accuracy, clarity and truthfulness are fundamental requirements of expert evidence. The purpose of a Level 1 statement is to assist the court in establishing whether a dog is dangerous or prohibited; it is therefore essential that such statements contain only information that is correct and capable of being relied upon. By including inaccurate information, specifically template paragraphs implying a physical examination that did not occur the Officer failed to meet the standard of care expected of an expert witness. Her carelessness cast doubt on the reliability of the document and, by extension, on the reliability of her professional output.
61. The Panel accepted that the errors were not deliberate. However, expert evidence must be capable of withstanding scrutiny regardless of intention. The Officer's failure to remove inapplicable paragraphs, her failure to reread the statement before submission, and her failure to appreciate the significance of the misleading wording all demonstrate a lapse in professional judgment. Expert witnesses must be meticulous; the Officer's approach on this occasion fell materially below that standard.

62. The Panel also considered the potential consequences of such an error. Even a single misleading expert statement can have repercussions for future investigations. Expert witnesses are expected to declare previous errors when giving evidence, and this incident may cast a shadow over her credibility in subsequent cases. Although the Panel did not consider that this isolated mistake was likely to undermine her long term prospects, it nonetheless represents a proven failure in her expert function and carries the risk of compromising her position in future proceedings, particularly if similar issues were to arise again.
63. In summary, while the Officer did not act dishonestly, her conduct amounted to a failure in her duty as an expert witness. The misleading content of the statement, though accidental, undermined the accuracy and reliability required of expert evidence and created a risk, albeit limited, of compromising her credibility in future investigations.
64. In considering the wording of the allegations, the Panel assessed the essence of the wording of allegation 2, 3 and 4 was on the “wilful intent” to produce a misleading or untruthful statement. The panel found this not proved on the basis that the Officer’s conduct was not found to be wilful or intentional, despite it being unequivocally an inaccurate and false statement.
65. Allegations 5 is a factual narrative paragraph which was accepted by the Officer.
66. Allegation 6 was found proven on the balance of probabilities.

(H) Breach of the Standards

67. In light of the above findings, the Panel concluded that the Officer’s conduct engaged the Standards of Professional Behaviour relating to Honesty and Integrity, and Discreditable Conduct.

Honesty and Integrity

68. The standard of Honesty and Integrity requires police officers to be honest, act with integrity and do not compromise or abuse their positions.
69. The Panel found that, although the Officer did not act dishonestly, her conduct nonetheless amounted to a breach of the Standard of Integrity. Integrity requires an officer to be accurate, transparent and meticulous in the information they provide, particularly when acting in an expert capacity. The Officer submitted a Level 1 statement containing wording that implied a physical examination which she knew had not taken place. The Panel accepted that this arose from carelessness rather than deceit, the inclusion of materially inaccurate information in a formal evidential document falls below the standard of professional integrity expected of a DLO. Expert evidence must be capable of being relied upon without qualification; it must be precise, truthful and free from

ambiguity. By failing to remove inapplicable template paragraphs, failing to reread the statement before submission, and failing to appreciate the significance of the misleading wording, the Officer compromised the accuracy of a document intended to assist the court. This lapse undermined the reliability of her expert output and created a risk, however unintended, that future decision-makers could be misled. In these circumstances, her conduct represented a failure to uphold the integrity required of an expert witness and of a police officer.

Discreditable Conduct

70. The standard of Discreditable Conduct requires police officers to behave in a manner which does not discredit the police service or undermine public confidence in the police service.
71. As a DLO and expert witness, she holds a position of particular responsibility, her assessments directly inform criminal investigations, charging decisions and judicial outcomes under the Dangerous Dogs Act. By producing a Level 1 statement containing materially inaccurate information, albeit inadvertently, she risked undermining confidence in the police service and the reliability of expert evidence presented to the courts. Even careless inaccuracies in an expert statement can have a ripple effect across the criminal justice process, potentially affecting interview strategy, prosecutorial decision making, and judicial trust in police expertise. The Panel concluded that, in failing to ensure the accuracy of a formal evidential document, the Officer's conduct was liable to bring discredit on the service and therefore breached the Standard of Discreditable Conduct.

(I) Provisional assessment of seriousness

Assessment of Culpability

72. The Officer's culpability is assessed as medium, based on the following factors:
73. The Officer could reasonably have foreseen the risk of harm if she had properly read her own statement before signing it and submitting into the evidential chain.
74. The Officer was acting in a specialist capacity as the DLO, with responsibility for providing expert evidence to assist the court in determining a dog's type.
75. The panel concluded the Officer's culpability was medium.

Assessment of Harm

76. The Officer's conduct caused reputational harm, specifically:
77. The Officer's accidental inclusion of misleading information in an expert statement risked undermining public confidence in her professional reliability and, by extension, the reputation of the police service.
78. The panel concluded that the level of harm was medium.

Aggravating Factors

79. None

Mitigating Factors

80. The misconduct was confined to a single episode
81. The Officer was acting in good faith and had a genuine belief that she was providing a genuine statement.

Misconduct or Gross Misconduct

82. Under the *Guidance on outcomes in police misconduct proceedings*, misconduct is defined as:
"A breach of the Standards of Professional Behaviour that is so serious as to justify disciplinary action."
83. Gross misconduct is defined as:
"A breach of the Standards of Professional Behaviour that is so serious as to justify dismissal."
84. The Panel carefully considered the threshold between Misconduct and Gross Misconduct with reference to the above assessment on seriousness. The Panel determined that the Officer's conduct meets the threshold for Misconduct only for the following reason:
85. Whilst the Officer's approach to the completion and submission of her expert statement was careless on this occasion in the minimal attention to detail she took. The Panel accepted that it was a genuine mistake and an isolated incident due to the operational pressures on that day.
86. The Panel therefore finds that the Officer's conduct constitutes misconduct.

(J) Decision on Outcome

87. The panel reminded ourselves of the 3 stages to determining outcome; namely:-
- a. To assess the seriousness
 - b. Keep in mind the purpose of imposing the sanctions
 - c. Choose the sanction that most appropriately fulfils that purpose for the seriousness of the conduct in question

Stage 1: Overall Assessment of Seriousness

Culpability

88. The Panel assessed the officer's culpability on the basis of her proven carelessness. She was solely responsible for the inaccuracies in the expert statement, and the Panel accepted that her conduct was not targeted, deliberate or planned. This placed her culpability at a medium level, the lapse arose from a failure to exercise the care and precision required of an expert witness, in circumstances where the risk of error was plainly foreseeable given the importance of her role. There is an absence of this conduct falling into the especially serious category as in the College of Policing guidance on outcomes .

Harm

89. The harm was also assessed as medium. The misleading content had the potential to affect the reliability of expert evidence placed before the criminal courts and carried a ripple effect for past and future cases in which her expertise might be relied upon. Although no actual injustice occurred, the risk created was significant and engaged the wider public interest in maintaining confidence in specialist police evidence.

Aggravating factors

90. None

Mitigating factors

91. When looking at mitigation, the officer demonstrated some insight, acknowledging that she must take greater care in future. However, the Panel considered that she did not fully appreciate the gravity of the reputational harm she caused by submitting a careless expert statement, nor the implications this could have for her credibility in subsequent investigations.

Stage 2: The purpose of imposing sanctions

92. The Panel have taken into account the threefold purpose for imposing outcomes in police misconduct proceedings (maintaining public confidence in and the reputation of the police service; upholding the high standards in policing and deterring misconduct; and protecting the public).

Stage 3: Appropriate sanction

93. The Panel is mindful that the most important purpose of imposing disciplinary sanctions is to maintain public confidence in, and the reputation of, the policing profession as a whole.
94. Considering the lower sanction first, the Panel had determined that a written warning is not sufficient in this case because the officer's lapse goes beyond a minor breach of care and strikes at the core obligations of an officer acting in a specialist expert evidence role. The production of a Level 1 statement containing materially misleading information undermined the reliability of evidence placed before the criminal courts. Conduct of that seriousness cannot properly be marked by the lowest available sanction.
95. The Panel determined a final written warning is the most appropriate outcome to fulfil the 3 fold purpose of the misconduct regime because the officer's actions amounted to a serious failure in a role where accuracy, precision and professional judgment directly affect criminal justice outcomes. Although the Panel accepted that the mistake was careless rather than deliberate, the creation of a misleading expert statement carries significant consequences and warrants a sanction more serious than a written warning. The officer's good character, strong performance history and absence of previous misconduct provide meaningful mitigation, but they do not outweigh the gravity of the breach or the public interest in maintaining confidence in the integrity of expert police evidence.
96. The seriousness of the error, the specialist nature of her responsibilities, and the potential ripple effect on future investigations require a sustained period of monitoring and assurance. The imposition of a five year warning ensures continued improvement, reflects the gravity of the lapse, and remains proportionate given her otherwise unblemished record. The maximum duration of five years is justified.
97. The panel orders publication pursuant to regulation 43 (6) of The Police (Conduct) Regulations 2020.

(K) Right of Appeal

98. In accordance with Regulation 43(2), the Appropriate Authority shall provide the Officer with a copy of this report and a notice of the right of appeal. The Officer is reminded he has a right to appeal to the Police Appeals Tribunal (PAT). The PAT may increase or decrease any penalty or overturn this decision.

Former Commander Katie Lilburn

18 September 2026