

Outcome

In the matter of the Police (Conduct) Regulations 2020 and in the matter of

Former Police Sergeant Ian Lester

Decision of Stephen Watson, Chief Constable

17th February 2026

Preliminary matters

1. I have today conducted an accelerated misconduct hearing at Unit A, GMP Force Headquarters, and have given consideration to various breaches of the standards of professional behaviour as pertain to former PS Ian Lester.
2. Mr Lester was not in attendance nor was he otherwise represented. Mr Lester in his Reg 54 response accepts that he has misconducted himself by accessing police systems without authority. He further accepts that his admitted misconduct amounts to gross misconduct. I, having heard the evidence have determined that the breaches alleged are proven and that they do amount to gross misconduct.
3. Mr Lester resigned from the service with effect from the 13th February 2026.
4. In coming to a determination as to the most appropriate outcome, I have taken cognisance of the submissions of the appropriate authority as contained within the bundle of evidence submitted to me prior to this hearing, with elements of the same being amplified in invited verbal submissions by the representative of the appropriate authority, Ms Dzikira.

5. In assessing the seriousness of the misconduct found, it is a matter of fact that Mr Lester accessed police systems without a lawful policing purpose on 15th and 26th October 2024. Such access related to crimes which had been recorded by the force in respect of a person, known to him personally, who was recorded as a victim in these reports.

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6. In considering the appropriate disciplinary action to be imposed, I received written and verbal submissions from the AA that the appropriate disciplinary outcome in this case had the officer not resigned would have been dismissal without notice together with his details being entered onto the College of Policing's Barred List.
7. In determining the appropriate disciplinary action, I have had regard to the relevant provisions of the College of Policing's Guidance on Outcomes in Misconduct Proceedings. I do recognise that it does not automatically follow that where breaches of the code of conduct are found to be so serious as to justify dismissal, that dismissal can be the only sanction implied. Nevertheless, it remains very powerfully the case that the principal objective in the conduct of these hearings must be to preserve public confidence in the police service.
8. At the forefront of my mind has been the purpose of misconduct proceedings – these are expressly set out in the College of Policing's Guidance.
9. My approach has been to "adopt" the "3 stage approach" referred to in the same Guidance.
10. I have assessed the seriousness of the conduct. I consider that Mr Lester's culpability must be regarded as significant. His actions were deliberate and carried out in circumstances which he knew, or ought to have known, were clearly unlawful and indefensible. Mr Lester accessed police systems unlawfully and there is evidence to show that the information obtained was similarly unlawfully disseminated to a third party.

11. With regard to the aggravating factors set out in the College of Policing's Guidance, I repeat my comments as to the fact that Mr Lester's actions were deliberate and unforced. Mr Lester, then holding the rank of sergeant, failed to uphold the level of responsibility reposed in him. This misconduct was repeated and involved a deliberate breach of policy, procedure and instructions which make it abundantly clear to officers and staff that care and respect should always be afforded to information on police systems.
12. In respect of harm, the potential of harm to the reputation and standing of the service is self-evidently clearly established. The force legitimately holds vast amounts of personal and sensitive data upon its systems. This implies a reasonable expectation amongst our public; that the police can be trusted to respect the integrity of the same data. That an element of public trust and confidence in policing is likely to be lost as a consequence of this matter, constitutes a clear and regrettable harm.
13. With regard to mitigating circumstances set out in the College of Policing's Guidance, I take into account Mr Lester's record of service. I note that the former officer has stated that the incidents of admitted misconduct occurred during a traumatic and worrying period in his personal life. I have no reason to doubt the officer's sincerity in this regard nor the veracity of what I consider to be a genuine apology and a clear statement of remorse. It is to the officer's credit that he has accepted personal accountability for his actions.
14. I have given due regard to an impressive range of personal testimonies provided by trusted colleagues. These speak convincingly to the fact that Mr Lester had performed at a consistently high level of effectiveness and professionalism over a long career. Whilst these character references do not amount to compelling mitigation per se; they do point to the fact that the misconduct under consideration is not reflective of the general standards of professional behaviour which appear more typical of Mr Lester's true self.
15. I reiterate the point that the core purpose of these proceedings is to sustain public confidence in the police. There can be no doubt that the facts of this case have the grave potential to diminish public confidence in the police. In conclusion, I consider that the level of seriousness in this case must be high.

16. Mr Lester's offending behaviour was simply unacceptable. His accessing confidential police data is a tangible manifestation of a distinct lack of judgement, discipline and common sense which puts him at odds with that expected of the office of constable. In many respects, this matter marks the very significant consequences which can stem from even momentary and rare lapses in core professional judgement. To that extent, and notwithstanding Mr Lester's personal culpability, it gives me no pleasure to note all that has befallen this former officer following what has hitherto been a long and otherwise commendable career. By definition however, any such regret must be firmly subordinated to the importance of sustaining public confidence in the force.
17. Had Mr Lester not resigned, I would have dismissed him from the service with immediate effect.
18. I order that Mr Lester's name be added to the College of Policing's Barred List.
19. This concludes today's hearing.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'S. Watson', with a large, sweeping flourish above it.

Sir Stephen Watson QPM
Chief Constable