

# Operation Talla

## What every police employee should know

### What it was (public-facing):

Operation Talla was the NPCC-co-ordinated policing response to COVID-19 across the UK. It set national rhythm, Gold/Silver/Bronze command and emphasised the “4Es” approach (Engage, Explain, Encourage, Enforce). The NPCC also centralised COVID-related FOI handling and used a pre-announced publication strategy under section 22 of the FOI Act to control timing of releases. Police issued and processed COVID Fixed Penalty Notices under this framework.

### What was less visible:

**FOI control:** NPCC required forces to refer COVID-related FOIs to the NPCC FOI & Data Protection Unit and explicitly planned to rely on s.22 “intention to publish” to delay disclosure until a chosen publication point.

Scotland’s CVI logging: Police Scotland built the Coronavirus Intervention (CVI) system to log COVID interactions for analysis by an Independent Advisory Group. This data underpinned Talla oversight but wasn’t widely understood outside command/policy circles.

## **How a “suppression” element came to light:**

FOI material shows that on 25 January 2022, ACC Alan Speirs (then Talla Silver, Police Scotland) circulated a statement about vaccine-related intimidation which, as described in subsequent FOI correspondence, instructed officers not to accept certain public reports about the COVID-19 vaccine programme and to route entries via intelligence/CVI systems instead.

## **Status today:**

Requests and correspondence in mid-2025 still cite the 25 Jan 2022 directive and seek force records tied to Talla/Norden logging-indicating the effects of those instructions may still be operating unless formally withdrawn.

## **Why this matters to you (personal risk):**

**Crime recording & “refusing reports”:** Where members of the public attempt to report alleged criminality, blanket refusal or re-routing that prevents recording may breach crime-recording rules.

**CPIA duties:** Once a criminal investigation is underway, officers must record, retain and reveal material that may

be relevant. Any practice that sidelines or deletes relevant material risks breaching the CPIA Code of Practice.

**CPIA Code of Practice (2015):**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/criminal-procedure-and-investigations-act-code-of-practice>

**CPIA 1996**

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/25/contents>

**Ethical duties & whistleblowing:** The College of Policing Code of Ethics applies to all police personnel; protected-disclosure routes exist if you are instructed to act unlawfully.

**College of Policing Code of Ethics:**

<https://www.college.police.uk/ethics/code-of-ethics>

**Immediate, practical steps for officers & staff (including civilian staff):**

1. Check current orders in writing. Locate any local policy/Gold/Silver orders still in force regarding vaccine-related reports and Talla/Norden/CVI entries. Keep copies.

2. Record first, escalate fast. Where a member of the public alleges an offence, ensure the matter is properly recorded under your force's crime-recording standard before any onward routing.

3. Preserve material. If an investigation starts, apply CPIA: retain notes, CAD logs, emails and any submitted evidence; do not delete or divert.

**CPIA Code:**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/criminal-procedure-and-investigations-act-code-of-practice>

4. Seek independent advice. If an instruction appears to block lawful recording/investigation, seek independent legal/union/Police Federation advice and consider protected-disclosure routes.

5. Act within the Code of Ethics. Decisions should be objectively justifiable and capable of audit (integrity/openness/accountability).

**College of Policing Code:**

<https://www.college.police.uk/ethics/code-of-ethics>

**The Bottom Line**

Operation Talla formalised COVID policing and comms; however, FOI-evidenced instructions, particularly the 25 Jan 2022 Scotland directive, created a real risk that some vaccine-related complaints were not treated as crime reports. If such practices persist, command-level policy may place individual employees at legal and disciplinary risk. Take steps now to ensure your actions comply with crime-recording standards, CPIA and the Code of Ethics and obtain independent advice if in doubt.

***Ian Clayton***

***Lead Investigator***

***Ethical Approach UK***

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