

Have you got what it takes?

Working with the Reducing Bureaucracy Programme

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Important facts

Feedback from frontline police officers has identified unnecessary bureaucracy (needless procedures and paperwork) as one of the top frustrations for both officers and staff. That is why forces, with the support of the Government, are in the process of removing unnecessary paperwork and processes.

Successful policing is about using common sense and experience to sort out a situation, rather than endless form filling or going through time-consuming, unnecessary processes. We want to move away from a culture in which officers are unwilling to take common-sense risks and move towards one which will allow them to exercise their professional judgement, even in high-risk situations, without fear of reprisals.

By stripping out bureaucratic processes, officers can be freed up to do the job they joined the force to do – fighting crime and protecting the public.

Police and crime commissioners (PCCs) may want to become involved in the Reducing Bureaucracy Programme.

From November 2012, the Reducing Bureaucracy Programme will also monitor the introduction of PCCs. We hope that at an early stage the PCC and chief constable will agree on a way to work together that avoids any extra bureaucracy .

Background

Reducing bureaucracy can:

- **improve public protection by better targeted police resources and increased visibility of frontline officers;**
- **improve the morale and professionalism of the police service; and**
- **increase police productivity.**

The Home Secretary has announced a package of policies that will cut police red tape, saving up to 4.5 million police hours per year. She has also challenged leaders of the service to take responsibility for keeping bureaucracy to a minimum.

The Reducing Bureaucracy programme is overseen by a joint Home Office and Association of Chief Police Officers Reducing Bureaucracy Programme Board. This is chaired by a chief constable and has a membership of the main policing partners, including Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, the National Policing Improvement Agency and (currently) the Association of Police Authorities. It provides regular progress updates to the policing minister. This board is also given advice by the Reducing Bureaucracy Practitioners' Group. This is a group made up of frontline police officers with operational experience from around half of all police forces.

The Programme Board also makes sure that we do not place more bureaucratic burdens on the police.

Won't cutting bureaucracy in some important areas of policing also cut police accountability and put people's lives at risk?

We recognise the importance of the balance between accountability and bureaucracy in improving the quality of policing. We are introducing PCCs so that police forces can be held to account by local people. We want to encourage the police to use their professional judgement and manage risk effectively. That is why we are working with the police to make sure that we are targeting unnecessary bureaucracy while promoting good management of risk.

Won't introducing police and crime commissioners make for more layers of bureaucracy?

No, in fact these directly elected commissioners will help release chief officers from bureaucracy and make forces accountable to the right people – the public.

More information

There is a wide range of work taking place across police forces as a result of the Reducing Bureaucracy Programme. Some of the achievements so far at a national level include:

- **scrapping central targets, which frees the police from being controlled by the Government;**
- **removing needless management of performance by central government, for example, by abolishing the Assessment of Policing and Community Safety;**
- **returning charging decisions for certain offences to the police to encourage officers to use their professional discretion;**
- **scrapping the Stop and Account form and reducing the burden of 'stop and search' procedures;**
- **publishing new guidance to support officers who do the right thing by using common sense when it comes to health-and-safety rules; and**
- **scrapping targets for all forces to test for drug use at least 95% of those arrested for a trigger offence (an offence such as burglary or robbery).**

Forces are also taking action at a local level to reduce unnecessary bureaucracy.

There is a vast range of work taking place within forces. Here are just a few examples of changes that are making a real difference by freeing up frontline officers.

Mobile data terminals – Hampshire

Hampshire Constabulary has installed 'Toughbooks' software in its response vehicles. This allows officers full access to all of their individual desktop applications while on the move. It is fully compatible with the force's system for managing records and allows officers to complete paperwork away from the station. It also allows officers to fill in a form once which can then be used throughout the entire criminal justice process.

This saves considerable time, by allowing officers to stay out on patrol for longer, with no need to return to the station to do their paperwork. The process also allows the information to be used by police and criminal justice partners, saving officers time that in the past was spent scanning, photocopying and arranging to transfer paper documents.

Missing persons – Greater Manchester and West Midlands

Greater Manchester and West Midlands Police have been trialling an amended process for managing reports on missing persons. Individuals are now classed as either 'absent' or 'missing', based on a risk assessment of immediate harm. The aim of both trials is to improve the protection of children and vulnerable adults through a more targeted approach to managing incidents of missing persons. The 'absent' category will be used for individuals who often go missing and may not need an immediate frontline response. Anyone in the 'absent' category can be moved into the 'missing' category if circumstances change and they have still not been found.

By moving away from a 'one size fits all' approach, this new process allows police resources to be targeted most appropriately. A thorough risk assessment is carried out in each case to decide the level of resources which should be allocated to it. The trial is not about downgrading the response to missing people – it is about working to target it more accurately.

For more information, visit <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/police/reducing-police-bureaucracy/>