

# Home Office Police Front Line Review: Workshops with police officers and police Staff - Summary report

Peter Betts and Clare Farmer  
Office for National Statistics  
July 2019



# Contents

- 1 Introduction ..... 2**
  - 1.1 Background ..... 2
  - 1.2 Methodology ..... 2
- 2 Wellbeing ..... 3**
  - 2.1 Challenge stressors ..... 3
  - 2.2 Hindrance stressors ..... 7
  - 2.3 Organisational climate and culture ..... 9
  - 2.4 Wellbeing support services ..... 12
- 3 Professional development ..... 15**
  - 3.1 Recruitment and initial training ..... 15
  - 3.2 Continuing professional development ..... 16
  - 3.3 Promotion and leadership development ..... 19
  - 3.4 Quality and methods of training, and ability to access it ..... 22
- 4 Leadership ..... 23**
  - 4.1 Expectations of qualities and behaviours force leaders should demonstrate ... 23
  - 4.2 Senior leaders' understanding of the front line ..... 24
  - 4.3 Setting direction and the purpose of policing ..... 25
  - 4.4 Public support by police leaders and government ..... 27
- 5 Innovation ..... 28**
  - 5.1 Innovation and sharing good practice ..... 28
  - 5.2 Consultation and user testing ..... 30
  - 5.3 More collaborative approaches to policing ..... 30

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

In 2018 the Home Office initiated the Front Line Review of Policing<sup>1</sup> (subsequently referred to as the Review), to provide police officers, police staff and Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) throughout England and Wales an opportunity to share their ideas for change and improvement in policing. The Review's research and engagement activities included a series of workshops with frontline police officers and staff from all police forces in England and Wales, conducted by the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

The workshop objectives were to explore views and experiences relating to four pillars - wellbeing, professional development, leadership and innovation - and gather suggestions for changes to improve the working lives of officers and staff. The findings would be used by the Home Office and wider policing partners to develop policy recommendations. Topics not in the scope of the Review included pay and resourcing, with other work being done to address these issues.

This summary report provides a high level overview of the workshop participants' experiences, views and suggestions for change relating to the themes discussed. The full report<sup>2</sup> provides comprehensive details of the findings.

## 1.2 Methodology

Twenty-eight workshops were conducted across England and Wales between November 2018 and January 2019. In total 244 officers and members of police staff participated. A purposive sampling strategy was used, to include participants reflecting the diversity of the workforce and capture a broad range of opinions and experiences. Note that qualitative research using purposive sampling does not aim for statistical representation of the study population and it is not possible to draw statistical inferences.

Several sampling criteria were used, as follows. All 43 forces were in scope, as were police officers and police staff from a variety of frontline or public-facing roles. In each of twelve regions one workshop was held with constables and sergeants and another with police staff including PCSOs. A further three workshops were held with inspectors/chief

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/front-line-policing-review/front-line-policing-review>

<sup>2</sup> Home Office Police Front Line Review: Workshops with police officers and police staff, ONS

inspectors and one workshop with superintendents/chief superintendents. Members of the workforce with different lengths of service, from across the age range, of both genders, of different ethnic groups and with and without health conditions/disabilities were included. The Home Office asked forces to disseminate information about the workshops. Interested people were asked to contact ONS directly. ONS then selected and invited participants.

During the workshops participants were presented with high level findings relating to the four review pillars, arising from digital engagement conducted by the Home Office prior to the workshops and were invited to reflect on them. Probes were used to further explore each pillar and elicit participants' suggestions for changes and examples of good practice.

The workshops were audio recorded and transcribed. Data was then analysed using a thematic framework approach.

This report summarises and presents participants' experiences, opinions and suggestions for change. The report does not seek to offer any evaluation or assess the accuracy of their perceptions or opinions. Nor does it reflect any views of the ONS or wider police service and policing partners. Numerous themes were identified, many repeatedly. In this summary, themes that arose at several or many groups are often described by words such as 'widespread', 'repeated' or 'recurring'. It cannot be known how representative participants were of the front line as a whole but the report reflects individual lived experiences and views.

This report provides a high level summary of the issues that were identified, the solutions and suggestions proposed by participants and the examples of good practice they thought existed in their forces. The material is organised by the four pillars of the Review. Much of the detail and complexity of the findings is not reflected, but is presented in the full report, with the relevant sections signposted.

See the Appendices in the full report for details of the recruitment process, achieved sample and workshop material.

## 2 Wellbeing

### 2.1 Challenge stressors

This section presents findings relating to the perceived impact of 'challenge stressors' on the front line. This includes the effect of organisational structures, operating models

and organisational change on workloads, roles, work patterns, the ability to decompress and safety matters, which impact upon wellbeing.

## 2.1.1 Organisational structures, operating models and individual roles

Participants offered many examples of how they felt that organisational changes had affected operating models, resources, workloads, team and individual roles, with negative consequences for operational effectiveness and workforce wellbeing. Issues included feelings of overload and sustained pressure, a greater number of less experienced members of the workforce, being less able to serve the public, and increasing mental health problems and sick absence.

Examples of effective change perceived by participants included one force changing its Intelligence Bureau from being predominately police officers to predominantly police staff, to free-up officers, and a reduction in the demand on response teams by allocating more crimes directly to specialist units where possible, such as domestic abuse, drugs and sexual offences. (More detail in the full report, section 3.2.1).

### **Participants' suggestions for change or improvement**

- Make the response officer role more attractive such as by treating it as a specialism.
- Redesign and simplify structures and operating models.
- Increase collaboration and knowledge sharing across teams.
- Rebalance the numbers of police staff and officers, and consider what work currently done by officers, but not requiring a warrant, could be taken over by police staff.
- Provide additional training to deal with changes to nature of crime.
- Conduct more proactive community policing and intelligence gathering, rather than reactive responses.
- Increase and develop specialist roles and mixed teams, rather than expect omnicompetence (the demonstration of a variety of competences in a single role).

## 2.1.2 Change management

There was repeated criticism of the amount of change the service is subject to and how change is managed. The impetus for organisational change was frequently perceived to be the need for managers to demonstrate change to support the case for promotion, rather than reflecting genuine need.

Examples were given appreciatively of change management teams perceived to have long term aims and systematic approaches to reviewing processes which identify, resource and manage change effectively. (Full report section 3.2.2).

### **Participants' suggestions for change or improvement**

- Conduct more consultation and user testing with the front line in advance of implementation of changes.
- Reduce the emphasis given to the demonstration of leading change in the promotion process.
- Consider more carefully the benefits and costs of making change.
- Learn from others in force, in other forces and outside policing when possible, rather than invent in isolation.

## **2.1.3 Hours, shifts, rest days, leave, breaks and commuting**

Difficulties were highlighted around shifts patterns/working hours, rest days/leave and breaks. Working patterns and the ability to take time off and have breaks were identified as being designed around business needs, often reactively, but do not consider individual needs, such as for decompression, time with managers for briefings and feedback, professional development, and impact on wellbeing.

Examples given of perceived good practice included a change to six shifts on then four off in one force, which was said to have resulted in a great improvement in wellbeing. Other examples were of local managers in a force having discretion to quickly approve flexible working patterns temporarily while approval by a management group was ongoing and an automated leave planning system that showed if leave dates were available meaning time off could more easily be planned and booked. (Full report section 3.2.3).

### **Participants' suggestions for change or improvement**

- Build time for decompression, wellbeing, training and administration into work patterns.
- Consider the benefits of a national shift pattern, although preferences vary and perhaps no single solution is possible.
- Better planning of rest days/leave, particularly around known busy periods and events.
- Supervisors to take responsibility for ensuring breaks are taken.

## 2.1.4 '24/7' culture and work life balance

Issues were identified over detachment from work and the difficulty the workforce sometimes had in demarcating work from home life. A culture of long hours and pressure to take work home was seen as unhealthy, causing tiredness and anxiety. (Full report section 3.2.4).

### **Participants' suggestions for change or improvement**

- Develop policies to better promote work-life balance; including use of mobile devices and email and ensuring better handover of work and safeguarding risks at the end of the working day and between shifts.

## 2.1.5 Decompression, socialising, support networks and maintaining physical health

A lack of, or reduced, opportunity and inadequate facilities for day-to-day decompression, socialising, building team support networks and maintaining physical health were repeatedly identified. For some participants this included feelings of isolation or having infrequent contact with supervisors and colleagues.

Examples given of existing good practice included time for teams to exercise together that are built into shift patterns, such as during handover, and internal social media forums as a good means for officers to interact. (Full report sections 3.2.5 and 3.2.6).

### **Participants' suggestions for change or improvement**

- Create more opportunities for day-to-day decompression, interaction between individuals and team bonding built into work patterns and the daily routine.
- Provide more and better physical facilities (accommodation, equipment, physical recreation) across the service (not just in headquarters or other central buildings).

## 2.1.6 Safety issues

Safety concerns were raised by some participants, due to reduced workforce numbers, more inexperienced officers, more lone working, coverage of large areas, inadequate safety equipment/training, and a lack of visual distinction of PCSOs and uniformed police staff from officers. (Full report section 3.2.7).

### **Participants' suggestions for change or improvement**

- More consideration of crewing and people management. Some calls for wider issuing of Taser and body worn video to officers.
- More safety equipment, more distinct uniform and training for PCSOs and some police staff; and review of their role and powers.

- More recognition of risks associated with driving when tired and/or responding to emergency calls.

## 2.2 Hindrance stressors

This section reports on the 'hindrance stressors', that is constraints to performance such as bureaucracy and inadequate tools, that can impact on workloads and wellbeing.

### 2.2.1 External demand and the relationship with partner agencies

Many participants expressed frustration with the fact the police were having to absorb demand which should be the responsibility of other agencies (such as those working in health or social services fields). This was seen as a major barrier to freeing police time and adds to workforce wellbeing issues. Various examples were given of forces trying to address the issue but there was frustration that previous efforts have not had the desired results.

Examples of effective practice identified included mental health triage staff being present in the control rooms, and police and other agencies co-locating and attending calls together. There were forces which benefit from meeting with partner agencies to explore reasons for demand and how it can be reduced. (Full report section 3.3.1).

#### **Participants' suggestions for change or improvement**

- More stringent guidance around which requests for assistance police should be able to decline.
- Greater high level cross-government action to engage other departments to encourage greater responsibility.
- Increase collaborative working with agencies.

### 2.2.2 Bureaucracy and procedural inefficiencies

Participants frequently identified what were seen as disproportionate information and administrative requirements, inflexible systems, loss of individual discretion, financial inefficiencies, and inefficiencies due to the current 43 force structure. (Full report section 3.3.2).

#### **Participants' suggestions for change or improvement**

- Reduce information requirements, cut bureaucracy and reduce replication of effort.
- Ensure all people involved in a process are aware of the requirements for them specifically and how they fit into the overall process.
- Increase the amount of national policy, approaches and standardisation.

- Have more police staff to free up officers' time for meeting core demand.

### 2.2.3 Statutory and legislative requirements

A need to review some statutory and legislative requirements was identified. This included authorisation requirements and rank levels, consideration of changes to resources and working practices since pieces of legislation were introduced, and some lack of standardisation. Examples related to the Police and Criminal Evidence Act, the Bail Act, Domestic Violence Prevention Notices, the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act, and PCSO and other police staff powers. Some issues relating to working with the Crown Prosecution Service and court service were raised. (Full report section 3.3.3).

#### **Participants' suggestions for change or improvement**

- Review legislation, statutory requirements and powers.

### 2.2.4 Targets and performance measures

Criticisms were made of a perceived culture of targets and performance measures in some forces, resulting from increased scrutiny and politicisation of policing. The use of local targets was felt to increase pressure on officers and staff, and to impact on wellbeing and on operational effectiveness. Home Office Counting Rules to record all reported crimes were seen to have created additional work, reduced discretion and added to stress.

Examples of perceived effective practice included greater autonomy for call handlers in a force, resulting in more effective handlings of calls, better victim focus and positive impacts on staff wellbeing, and another force collaborating with an online company on use of analytics and being solutions-driven. (Full report section 3.3.4).

#### **Participants' suggestions for change or improvement**

- Have more meaningful measures, relating to quality not quantity.
- Collect measures for management use but not to pressurise the workforce.
- Ensure measures keep up to date, in line with policy priorities.
- Have more consistent measures across forces.
- Increase use of more predictive, solutions-driven data collection.

### 2.2.5 IT systems/equipment, uniforms, vehicles, other equipment and services

Participants repeatedly emphasised the importance of having the right systems, equipment, tools, accommodation and services. Perceived inadequacies with many of

these were identified (relating to quality and the quantity and timing of supply), impacting significantly on ability to work effectively and on wellbeing. This particularly related to information technology (IT) software, systems and equipment (such as mobile devices); it also included vehicles, uniform, buildings, furniture and office equipment.

Examples of perceived existing good practice included: a force that had invested in IT experts and an IT department to develop systems with positive results; forces that provide officers with good quality mobile devices and the ability to use them while working outside to access systems - such as to check information about individuals, addresses and warning markers, or to upload information - or to communicate with supervisors, e.g. via Facetime, for guidance; and a force's use of a central dial-in translation service to assist with an increased requirement for translators. (Full report section 3.3.5).

### **Participants' suggestions for change or improvement**

- Improve IT systems, software and equipment to work more efficiently and be better integrated or linked.
- Provide more effective and timely training in using IT systems and equipment.
- Provide more adequate (regarding both quality and quantity) vehicles, uniform, accommodation and furniture, other equipment and services.
- Have more effective development processes, consultation and testing with end users and learning from good practice.
- Employ more experts to have responsibility for non-core police work – such as IT, procurement – rather than senior officers having responsibility but lacking expertise.
- Increase national or collaborative strategies for specification, development and procurement.

## **2.3 Organisational climate and culture**

This section reports on the findings relating to organisational culture, including the role of managers, force leadership and policies

### **2.3.1 Culture of risk aversion and blame**

There were participants who perceived that there was a culture of risk aversion and blame. Risk aversion was in part due to the perceived constraining effect of the Independent Office for Police Conduct under which people feel under scrutiny and anxious (particularly middle managers and supervisors). Concerns included that issues the workforce raise can be dismissed, or individuals are perceived as troublemakers, so they can fear raising concerns or criticism.

Examples given of perceived effective practice included Chief Constables and a Professional Standards Department who promoted the importance of learning from mistakes rather than blame culture. (Full report section 3.4.1).

#### **Participants' suggestions for change or improvement**

- Senior leaders to more proactively promote a culture of learning from mistakes.
- Creation of a safe to challenge culture so managers are empowered and can better support their teams.

### **2.3.2 Culture between warranted officers and police staff including PCSOs**

Issues were identified in some relationships between officers and police staff including PCSOs with staff feeling less valued compared to officers and sometimes being subject to differential treatment.

Examples of perceived good practice included effective collaborative working and recognition by officers of the important roles police staff play and scope for increasing their use in specialist roles. (Full report section 3.4.2).

#### **Participants' suggestions for change or improvement**

- More recognition and appreciation by police leaders and government of the vital role staff play; less focus on officer numbers.
- Better understanding by officers of staff conditions and issues.
- More equal treatment and opportunities for police staff and greater representation at senior levels.

### **2.3.3 Culture of stigma around mental ill-health**

Some improvement was acknowledged in the way the service tackled stigma around mental ill-health, but it was also felt there was further to go. Officers and staff can still fear consequences of admitting to mental health issues and feel guilt at taking sick leave due to this. It was thought not all sick absence for mental ill health will be recorded as such. (Full report section 3.4.3).

#### **Participants' suggestions for change or improvement**

- More supportive colleagues and line managers and role modelling by senior leaders.

### **2.3.4 Role of line managers/supervisors in wellbeing**

The pivotal role that line managers and supervisors play in supporting staff wellbeing was repeatedly mentioned by participants. However, a range of experiences were

reflected. It was highlighted that not all managers were felt to have the necessary qualities to be supportive around wellbeing issues. Managers themselves need time and support to be able to look after wellbeing and can experience stress in not being able to.

Examples of perceived existing good practice included: personal contact between supervisors and staff, such as making a point of weekly face-to-face contact in an informal setting; a force's shift system that provides cover to allow supervisors and staff to talk; a confidential support network for advice and help in escalating issues was identified for staff experiencing poor management; a programme of courses for supervisors on how to recognise wellbeing issues with staff; and a leadership programme focused on 'people skills.' (Full report section 3.4.4).

### **Participants' suggestions for change or improvement**

- Leaders should put greater value on the importance of the appropriate behaviours and competencies that managers at all levels require to lead and support their staff, and in there being more consistency over time for individuals in who their line manager is.
- Managers should be given more time and training to identify and support wellbeing issues in their staff and have greater awareness of the policies and services available.
- Some participants made a case for wellbeing management to be the responsibility of welfare or human resource departments not line managers.

## **2.3.5 Role of senior leadership in wellbeing**

There were mixed views about support for wellbeing at the organisational level. Some forces were acknowledged to be doing good work in looking after wellbeing. Those members of the workforce who do not feel supported will have negative feelings and their work will be affected. The credibility of some forces' support was questioned, and examples of inauthenticity and lack of support were given. (Full report section 3.4.5; see also Wellbeing support services below).

### **Participants' suggestions for change or improvement**

- A need for coordination and consistency in wellbeing service provision across forces, supported by government, was identified.
- Participants put weight on leaders showing genuine concern for the wellbeing of the workforce. The benefits of supporting wellbeing and being more open about issues should become more embedded throughout the organisation.

## 2.3.6 Sick absence management/policies

Sickness absence policies were repeatedly said to have an adverse impact on wellbeing. Some members of the workforce feel guilt at taking sick leave due to workload and obligations to their colleagues and the public. They fear the consequences of triggering sick absence measures and sometimes they do not take sick leave or they return to work before they should. Attendance management processes were considered bureaucratic. (Full report section 3.4.6).

### **Participants' suggestions for change or improvement**

- More manager discretion and flexibility in managing sick absence.

## 2.4 Wellbeing support services

This section presents findings relating to the provision and adequacy of wellbeing support services, in preventing wellbeing issues arising and reacting to them once they do arise.

### 2.4.1 Raising awareness of wellbeing and wellbeing promotional activity

There were mixed views on forces' wellbeing awareness and promotion initiatives. In some forces information about wellbeing support needs to be better promoted and more easily accessed. Some wellbeing promotional activities and initiatives were appreciated but others were perceived as insincere or to just patch over issues.

Examples given of perceived effective practice included signposting to wellbeing support services through information and promotional material presented on posters and intranet, a 2-day mental health workshop and initiatives in various forces where flu jabs, health checks, speakers and wellbeing days were offered. (Full report section 3.5.1).

### **Participants' suggestions for change or improvement**

- Wellbeing support information, activities and mental health awareness training should be accessible to all frontline workers, particularly those who have great need for them but have difficulty attending central locations or certain timings.

### 2.4.2 Routine mental health support to prevent accumulated 'drip-drip' effect

Routine mental health support was thought important, helping reduce the risk of gradual build-up of mental ill health in members of the workforce. Early identification and

intervention were urged but there can be difficulty for a manager and jobholder in finding time and opportunity to have regular wellbeing discussions.

Examples given of perceived good practice in forces included supervisors taking responsibility after training for identifying signs of ill-health, talking to staff after incidents and making referrals where necessary; open door sessions to allow officers to talk about worrying issues; and a mental health support network including periodic meetings for peer support. (Full report section 3.5.2).

#### **Participants' suggestions for change or improvement**

- Facilitation of regular and routine wellbeing discussions with a manager, peer support network or mental health professionals.

### **2.4.3 Debriefing of specific incidents/experiences**

Debriefing after specific traumatic or critical incidents was also considered important in preventing mental ill health. Varied experiences were reported regarding whether debriefings occurred and how effective they were.

An example given of perceived existing good practice was of constables and PCSOs involved in the same incident all sitting down to discuss it immediately after with a Trauma Risk Management (TRiM) practitioner. (Full report section 3.5.3).

#### **Participants' suggestions for change or improvement**

- Debriefings for those involved in incidents should be held soon afterwards, but views varied as to how they should be conducted and by whom.

### **2.4.4 Volunteer/non-professional wellbeing services**

Various examples of volunteer and non-professional wellbeing services within forces were given, such as TRiM and Blue Light Champions. They were considered a good way to raise awareness and help prevent build-up of mental health issues and some good experiences were reported. However, their effectiveness could be compromised by the volunteers' need for more time, support and training to provide the service. (Full report section 3.5.4).

#### **Participants' suggestions for change or improvement**

- Forces to provide the necessary time and infrastructure to support volunteer services.
- Services should be available to all and better advertised.

## 2.4.5 Reactive services (welfare departments, occupational health, counselling)

Participants who had direct experience of professional wellbeing services - such as welfare departments, occupational health and counselling - were sometimes critical of the service provided. Their main concerns related to their accessibility, timing, level of provision and availability of appropriate practitioners. Concerns were expressed that the weakness of service provision contributed to the level and length of sick absences.

An example given of perceived existing good practice was a force's employee assistance programme said to provide good telephone support to help individuals identify and, sometimes, resolve their issues without need for services such as counselling. (Full report section 3.5.5).

### **Participants' suggestions for change or improvement**

- Properly resourced, professional and easily accessible internal service provision, that better understands the conditions under which the front line works.
- Faster and more easily accessible provision of external services such as counselling, to prevent conditions worsening. Personal contact and consideration of cases on an individual basis were thought important.
- A desire for a more nationally consistent service, specifically tailored to the policing context.
- Investment in wellbeing services (both preventative, as in sections above, and reactive) would have benefits and save money in the long term.

## 2.4.6 Physical health promotion and support

Promotion of physical health was seen as important in its own right and beneficial to mental health. Some participants spoke of forces that provide gyms or other recreational facilities that can be accessed by all staff, which was supportive of maintaining physical wellbeing, while others said they did not have such opportunities. (Full report section 3.5.6).

### **Participants' suggestions for change or improvement**

- Physical health should be supported by building it into the daily routine and providing facilities.

## 3 Professional development

### 3.1 Recruitment and initial training

#### 3.1.1 Recruitment

A common concern of participants was that new recruits are not prepared for the realities of policing. The application process was not considered effective at selecting the best candidates for the role and feedback for those who failed recruitment boards was felt to be lacking. There was also discussion regarding the need for a diverse workforce representative of the local community.

An example given of perceived existing good practice was the involvement of frontline police constables in the interviewing process for new recruits. (Full report section 4.1.1).

#### **Participants' suggestions for change or improvement**

- Greater focus on applicants' qualities and experiences rather than just assessing them against a set process.

#### 3.1.2 Initial training

Some participants felt that initial training given to officers and police staff was often inadequate. A lack of mentoring and on-the-job support for new recruits after their initial training was repeatedly raised as an issue. There were mixed views on the usefulness of probationer portfolios and diplomas.

An example given of perceived existing good practice was a formalised probationer pathway course which exposed new recruits to street duties, the criminal investigation department (CID) and a safer neighbourhood team attachment. This gave recruits core skills and knowledge and an insight into frontline policing. (Full report section 4.1.2).

#### **Participants' suggestions for change or improvement**

- Training that is currently felt to be delivered well in some forces should be replicated across all policing.
- New recruits should be better prepared for what they will experience, for example, street duties, and training should be up-to-date.
- Ensure new recruits have adequate support for development in the first two years.
- More practically based probationer diplomas or portfolios to upskill officers for their role.

## 3.2 Continuing professional development

### 3.2.1 Building skills and expertise in current role

Many participants felt that there were insufficient opportunities to build skills and expertise within their current role, and to update them particularly when demands and therefore the nature of the role change (for example, the increase in online crime). Time for peer-to-peer knowledge sharing and support from management to enable this were thought to be lacking.

Examples given of perceived existing good practice included forces that recognise and disseminate good practices to ensure expertise is built and shared effectively and provide shadowing opportunities which increase knowledge and broaden experience. (Full report section 4.2.1).

#### **Participants' suggestions for change or improvement**

- Greater use of a national continuing professional development framework including protected training time.
- Encourage individuals to build expertise in, and perhaps become force leads for, certain areas of policing.
- Create time and opportunity for more peer-to-peer knowledge sharing, such as team briefings, training days, shadowing opportunities and attachments to other departments.

### 3.2.2 Lateral development and career progression

The lack of clear career pathways available to officers and police staff was repeatedly mentioned. Few opportunities were felt to be available for those not looking for promotion. The benefits of secondments and job shadowing were not felt to be recognised enough by forces. Officers and police staff often struggle to be released for opportunities. The lack of cross-force recognition of training and qualifications was repeatedly mentioned.

Examples given of perceived existing good practice included a force's formal fast track programme for training and accreditation as a detective, and secondment schemes. The 'Develop You' scheme delivered in certain forces was spoken of highly as a formalised, fair structure for applying for attachments to different departments. (Full report section 4.2.2).

### **Participants' suggestions for change or improvement**

- Better signposting of roles including which ranks are able to apply. Suggestions for doing this included an annual careers fair, a force mentoring scheme, specific career advisors, and bringing back the 'Orders and Instructions' booklet.
- Encourage more secondments.
- Create a senior police constable role for experienced constables not looking for promotion.
- Consider the introduction of a national approach to career pathways and development.

### **3.2.3 Barriers to development**

Various barriers to development that police officers and staff faced were discussed. Particular constraints faced those individuals who wanted to move from positions subject to shortages. Concerns were raised over limited lateral and promotion opportunities for police staff including PCSOs.

Examples given of perceived existing good practice included one force that increased lateral development opportunities by multi-skilling staff so they can perform each other's roles and gain wider experience, and forces that have introduced supervisor or coordinator roles for PCSOs. (Full report 4.2.3).

### **Participants' suggestions for change or improvement**

- Improve the process of negotiation among managers/leaders around release of officers to move between divisions and roles.
- Create more opportunities for police staff including PCSOs such as by opening up roles currently only available to warranted officers.

### **3.2.4 The role of the Professional Development Review in supporting development**

There were varying views of the effectiveness of the Professional Development Review (PDR). Three main issues were identified. The process for completion was felt to have become bureaucratic. Not enough time was given over to completing it. Little value was attached to the output. The process was also felt to be inflexible rather than tailored to individual goals and aspirations.

Examples given of perceived existing good practice included a force that had moved to less formal reviews with a focus on regular one-to-one development conversations between line managers and staff. Another had introduced a PDR system which allowed

for different pathways related to individual career aspirations which allowed for a more personalised approach to career development. (Full report section 4.2.4).

### **Participants' suggestions for change or improvement**

- Give more value to the PDR process, for example by linking it to training opportunities.
- Give people time to complete their PDRs during work hours.
- Have a more tailored approach for those not looking for promotion, training or lateral moves.

## **3.2.5 The line manager's role in supporting development**

Lack of time was repeatedly mentioned as an issue in line managers' ability to provide the ongoing support they would like to those they manage. A lack of consistency between managers in the amount of support they provide was identified. Meanwhile development plans were not viewed by some jobholders as a positive step in developing potential.

An example of perceived existing good practice in this regard was a force's introduction of a split-shift system that had provided more opportunities for managers to focus on professional development. (Full report section 4.2.5).

### **Participants' suggestions for change or improvement**

- Amend shift patterns or organisational structures to provide line managers more time to manage the professional development of those they supervise.
- Encourage and support managers to have more honest, difficult conversations with their staff.
- Have a separate, independent department in each force responsible for promoting and delivering learning and development.

## **3.2.6 The force or organisational role in supporting development**

Many participants felt that the learning culture within policing was poorly developed and could be strengthened. This was also an area where the absence of nationally consistent approaches was raised, as was the need for inclusivity and diversity in the workforce.

Examples given of perceived existing good practice included talent grids and online portfolios, reported to have helped identify individuals' skills, talents and suitability for specific roles, and build expertise. (Full report section 4.2.6).

### **Participants' suggestions for change or improvement**

- Incorporate training and development time into shift patterns.
- Improve the system by which skills are recognised within the police workforce (such as through the use of talent grids).
- Have a more uniform approach to professional development so everyone receives the same support, including national role profiles, career pathways, and training schemes.

## **3.3 Promotion and leadership development**

### **3.3.1 Identifying potential and readiness for promotion**

Some participants were critical of the service's ability to identify potential and the readiness of individuals for promotion. It was thought that forces often promote people into first line supervisor positions too early in their service, with some then being posted into roles that they are unfamiliar with.

An example given of perceived existing good practice was a force's use of a talent development programme to identify those with leadership potential. (Full report section 4.3.1).

### **Participants' suggestions for change or improvement**

- Forces should seek to identify potential early on in people's careers and develop them into leaders.
- Greater support should be provided for individuals entering an unfamiliar role.

### **3.3.2 Promotion processes**

The promotion process was not seen to be effective at selecting the best leaders due to its focus on interview performance and exams rather than looking at skills and experience. The focus on acquiring evidence of creating change or performing in multiple roles to support the case for promotion was repeatedly questioned. It was felt to lead to frequent, unnecessary change and a lack of consistency in management roles and short term ownership of problems.

Examples given of perceived existing good practice included one force having moved away from focusing on innovation and more on ability to manage a team, and of forces moving toward greater emphasis on evidence of performance and experience from PDRs. (Full report section 4.3.2).

### **Participants' suggestions for change or improvement**

- Promotion should be based on merit and experience rather than performance in an exam or ability to answer questions in a specific way within an interview.
- Greater value should be placed on the experience of temporary promotions and work-based assessments when assessing suitability for promotion.
- Change should not be linked with promotion so that organisational changes are not introduced simply to generate evidence for this competency.
- Promotion criteria should place less emphasis on performing multiple roles and focus more on the individual's skills and knowledge.

### **3.3.3 Fairness of promotion processes**

Participants had different views on whether it was appropriate for an individual's relationship with their manager(s) to influence access to opportunities for promotion and acting up. There were some who felt this was the correct approach, but others felt it was a potentially unfair block on progression. In addition, participants repeatedly raised concerns over people acting up for an extended period after failing to achieve a promotion.

Examples given of perceived existing good practice included forces that allow people in different ranks to feed back their opinions on candidates - for example, through the PDR system or people's panels - or who have introduced mock sergeants' boards for making the process of selecting people to act up fairer. (Full report section 4.3.3).

### **Participants' suggestions for change or improvement**

- Have greater transparency in promotion processes and give consideration to the composition of boards to ensure that they are independent and fair to all applicants.
- Give personnel departments responsibility for the promotion process rather than the decisions being made by supervisors and managers, to strengthen the perceived independence of boards.
- Improve the transparency of the temporary promotion process
- Provide more feedback to people who fail promotion boards to support development.

### **3.3.4 Direct Entry and fast tracking**

There were mixed opinions of Direct Entry and fast-tracking schemes. There were concerns about people lacking experience and knowledge of the front line. On the other hand, it was thought they can bring expertise and different perspectives to the organisation. The fairness of the schemes, both for people who did not enter on them and for the direct entrants themselves, was also discussed. (Full report section 4.3.4).

### **Participants' suggestions for change or improvement**

- Recruit those on Direct Entry schemes into non-operational roles where they can bring in expertise rather than to perform a frontline role.
- Have a programme to support direct entrants which includes at least two years' probation on the front line and additional work-based training.
- Consider increased use of rank skipping for those already within the force having the right attributes.

### **3.3.5 Training and development of supervisors and leaders**

Training was perceived to happen too late for many newly promoted supervisors. Those in acting or temporary promotions were said to often receive no support. There were mixed opinions on the content of the leadership courses in different forces. Generic management courses were felt to be of little relevance to the operational policing context. The relevance and benefit of the National Police Promotion Framework (NPPF) was questioned. Continuous coaching or mentoring of supervisors was felt to be underdeveloped. It was felt that policing should do more to learn from good leadership practice externally, particularly when it comes to the business acumen.

Examples given of perceived existing good practice included leadership development days held in a force, which are open to all ranks and roles irrespective of whether promotion is being considered or not, and certain forces' leadership programmes that were specifically designed for policing. (Full report section 4.3.5).

### **Participants' suggestions for change or improvement**

- Management and leadership training of supervisors should take place soon after the appointment and should also be provided to those in acting or temporary positions.
- Line managers need more training on wellbeing and HR policies, and to be better informed about the conditions of police staff employment.
- Greater importance should be attached to the provision of mentoring across all ranks.
- There should be standardisation of leadership training across forces to ensure more consistency.
- Secondments of leaders to partner agencies and businesses outside of policing could be beneficial.

## 3.4 Quality and methods of training, and ability to access it

### 3.4.1 Methods of training

E-learning was widely seen as ineffective. Its suitability was thought to depend on whether the trainees would benefit from being able to ask questions. In-person training days were not implemented in all forces and those that did occur were not always considered effective. (Full report section 4.4.1).

#### **Participants' suggestions for change or improvement**

- Training should be user friendly and interactive with the opportunity to ask questions. For example, delivering training via video conference was suggested if face to face training is not possible.
- If e-learning is to continue people need the time, space and equipment to focus on it rather than trying to fit it between their other duties.
- Replace some training days with other activities, for example team-building days or short shadowing opportunities.

### 3.4.2 Accessing training

The desire to minimise staff abstractions and pressures of workload were widely felt to be constraints in accessing training. The availability, dissemination, time, location and allocation of training opportunities were also found to be issues for some. An example given of perceived existing good practice was the development by one force of shorter CPD sessions rather than day long training courses. (Full report section 4.4.2).

#### **Participants' suggestions for change or improvement**

- Incorporate training days into shift patterns.
- Reduce the tendency for training to be delivered at headquarters.
- Have shorter training sessions to reduce difficulties with abstraction.
- Improve the dissemination of information about training opportunities.
- Have a more proactive approach to deciding who would benefit from training opportunities and is most suitable for them. For example, by looking at interests that people have identified in their PDR.

### 3.4.3 Quality of training and trainers

The quality of training provided to officers and police staff was repeatedly raised as a concern. A repeatedly cited concern was that training was out of date and did not match the realities of frontline policing. An example given of perceived existing good practice

was a force that identifies volunteers to become upskilled so they can train others in their area of expertise. (Full report section 4.4.3).

### **Participants' suggestions for change or improvement**

- Build in time for updating course materials and make them more interactive and scenario-based.
- Bring in topic experts to deliver high-quality and engaging face-to-face training.
- Provide more external training courses in topic areas when there is not the expertise within force.
- Proactively identify people to be trainers rather than ask for applications.

## **4 Leadership**

### **4.1 Expectations of qualities and behaviours force leaders should demonstrate**

#### **4.1.1 General views on leadership and expected qualities and behaviours**

Good leadership, at all levels and in all roles, was considered very important to the workforce, having a positive impact on wellbeing, motivation and performance. Views about the quality of leadership across policing varied. It was felt that leadership style within each force was strongly influenced by the Chief Constable and the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC). Numerous expectations of leadership competencies and behaviours were stated, relating to: care for the workforce; being inspirational; being part of and supporting teams; recognising good work; trusting, empowering and enabling people; role modelling; being decisive; being honest; taking feedback; treating people equally; and dealing with poor performance.

Examples given of perceived existing good practice included 360-degree feedback that provided valuable advice to leaders about their performance and development needs, and of leaders recognising and rewarding good performance, which was seen as effective in boosting morale. (Full report sections 5.1.1 and 5.1.2).

### **Participants' suggestions for change or improvement**

- Ensure that all police leaders should follow and reflect the College of Policing's Competency and Values Framework and Code of Ethics.
- Review how Chief Constables are evaluated, developed and guided.

## 4.2 Senior leaders' understanding of the front line

### 4.2.1 Visibility and engagement with the front line

Participants were strongly of the view that senior leaders need a good understanding of frontline work and conditions. They should be visible and engage regularly with the workforce, accompany them on duty, be approachable, and be aware of the rank and file's views and ideas. Good leaders were identified as individuals who could break down barriers, see the impact of decisions and engage authentically.

Examples were given of well received engagement including chief officers regularly visiting the workforce around their forces, spending time on duty with officers and police staff, and of Chief Constables using online communications and social media to enable contact without physical engagement. (Full report section 5.2.1).

#### **Participants' suggestions for change or improvement**

- Regular visits from chief officers to the workforce around their force: attend meetings, hold roadshows, spend time with officers and police staff on duty, in all units and locations. In addition, they should use other means of communication, such as video calling, email, online and social media.

### 4.2.2 Experience of the front line

Participants highlighted the importance of senior leaders having wide experience of front line roles. Leaders need knowledge and experience of the area and work they supervise and should not move too quickly from role to role. Chief Officers who had worked up through the ranks in their force were viewed positively. They should understand their own force area dynamics well. Direct entrants should spend time experiencing a variety of roles. However, there were perceived risks that senior officers can have extensive experience but be out of touch with current conditions, and there was some discussion of the relative merits of slower and more rapid progression. (Full report section 5.2.2).

#### **Participants' suggestions for change or improvement**

- Suggestions were made for having a minimum tenure in a post.

## 4.3 Setting direction and the purpose of policing

### 4.3.1 Force policies and priorities

There were various views as to whether the police service as a whole or individual forces were clear about the fundamental purpose of policing, what direction should be followed and what the priorities were. There were views that police were not concentrating on the things that matter to the public.

Examples were given of forces who were perceived to be clear about objectives and expectations, of senior officers who hold regular divisional leadership team meetings to set out expectations, and of a force that proactively allows the front line to feed into strategy and policy decisions (Full report section 5.3.1).

#### **Participants' suggestions for change or improvement**

- Leaders should provide greater national clarity and consistency, and longer-term strategy. They should give greater consideration to balancing the range of demands made of policing against resource constraints.
- Direction, expectations and priorities should be meaningful and achievable.
- The front line should be involved in setting direction.
- The levels of community policing should be increased.

### 4.3.2 Effectiveness of forces' methods of communication with the front line

Discussions about the effectiveness of forces' communication with the front line indicated that they were felt to have mixed degrees of success. There were views that leaders' messages do not always permeate. The workforce face information saturation. Visions and missions can take years to become embedded. Messages are not always consistent. Communications can be diluted, reinterpreted or blocked, going both down and up the hierarchy. Some messages may have unintentional negative impacts on the workforce. Numerous examples of good and bad communication practices were given, both in general terms and about specific communication channels (including email, face to face, intranets).

Examples were given of perceived existing good practice, including: a force that promotes its values and priorities at events, public engagements and on the Force website; forces that hold 'culture boards' where the front line can directly meet senior leaders; a Chief Constable who tours stations to set out the force's priorities and aims, which are then cascaded to all; and a Chief Constable who explained the reasons for a difficult decision to close services directly to those affected. (Full report section 5.3.2).

### **Participants' suggestions for change or improvement**

- Short summaries of key messages should be provided to increase likelihood of being read by the workforce.
- Advise the workforce as to how stated aims/actions should be achieved, in addition to what they are.
- Leaders should gauge the front line's understanding of messages and whether they are put into practice.
- Communication should be in both directions - leaders should listen too.
- Bad news should be communicated openly, quickly and directly by leaders.

### **4.3.3 Leadership versus management cultures and rank structure**

There were varied views as to whether forces had leadership or management cultures and whether senior officers and staff, and lower level line managers/ supervisors, are, should or can be both leaders or managers. Repeatedly views were expressed that true leaders, who inspire and set a good example, were uncommon, rather there are people who manage systems, finance, numbers, and targets. It was thought such managers do not necessarily need to have front line experience. Force cultures and individuals were said to differ in whether they rely on rank to give authority, as opposed to leaders' qualities, abilities, decision making and trust in their staff. There were repeated views that leadership is not about rank but whether an individual is the best candidate to lead the work in a particular area. Staff at any level were thought to have potential to be leaders.

Examples given of perceived existing good practice included senior officers allowing a constable to lead an investigation, due to having greater understanding of a specific type of crime, which resulted in a reduction in that crime, and forces that had flattened structures and removed or reduced numbers in certain officer ranks. (Full report section 5.3.3).

### **Participants' suggestions for change or improvement**

- People should be encouraged to enhance and use their skills, ability or knowledge to be a leader.
- People should be encouraged to make their own decisions and learn from mistakes.
- Force hierarchies and command structures could be flatter and various ranks reduced in size. Consequently, frontline officer or police staff numbers could be boosted. Certain frontline roles could be enhanced, for example by introducing senior sergeants or constables.

- There was a view that police staff need an equivalent ‘rank’ structure, to improve the weight that their leaders carry and increase staff representation at the chief officer level.

#### 4.3.4 Business versus public service models

Repeated comments were made about policing being treated more as a business, or forces describing themselves as such, rather than as a public service. Views included that this has had a detrimental effect on the service and that some people who run the police service have lost focus on fundamental principles of looking after the community and victims. Having to run the force like a business was given as a reason for senior officers having difficulty or lacking time to be leaders. (Full report section 5.3.4).

##### **Participants’ suggestions for change or improvement**

- Policing should be more service driven and victim led, less focused on performance indicators and achieving targets.
- Some aspects of managing a force were thought possible to be dealt with like a business, such as procurement of IT, uniforms and stationery.

#### 4.3.5 Need for specialists in non-core police roles

A recurring theme was the need for specialists to perform various non-core policing functions, to ensure money is well spent, make savings and relieve burden on senior officers, who do not always have the required expertise in, for example finance, IT and procurement. (Full report section 5.3.5).

##### **Participants’ suggestions for change or improvement**

- Business development, IT, procurement and other non-police roles should be the task of specialist police staff employees or consultants.
- Increase joined-up working across forces, including procurement strategy at regional or national level, to address the need for expertise and to obtain value for money by taking advantage of economies of scale.

### 4.4 Public support by police leaders and government

#### 4.4.1 Police leaders’ public support for the front line

Opinions were expressed that forces’ leaders do not support the workforce enough in public. Mixed opinions were held as to whether Chief Constables did enough to voice their concerns and some speculated that senior officers may be constrained by political factors. (Full report section 5.4.1).

### **Participants' suggestions for change or improvement**

- Police leaders should publicly support the front line more strongly.
- Leaders should be honest with the public and media about the problems faced by the service and generate realistic expectations about what it can do in the current financial climate.
- Leaders should protect and support officers for their decisions.
- Leaders should represent the service better within government.

## **4.4.2 Government support for the front line**

Desires were expressed repeatedly for greater support for policing by the government, to help officers and staff feel appreciated for the job they do and improve the morale and productivity of the workforce. The scope of the Front Line Review did not include resources. However, among the participants in the workshops there were widespread views that a need for greater resources underpinned many of the issues discussed in the four themes. (Full report section 5.4.2).

### **Participants' suggestions for change or improvement**

- The government should be more open about the demands on the police service and the constraints it faces, judge the police service less and impose fewer changes on it.

# **5 Innovation**

## **5.1 Innovation and sharing good practice**

### **5.1.1 Innovation and idea sharing schemes within forces**

Many different schemes for encouraging innovation and gathering ideas were said to exist within forces. There were varied views on the effectiveness of these platforms. Examples were given of perceived existing good practice including various forces having effective ways of engaging with the workforce with regard to innovation, such as online or face to face forums, 'Dragon's Den' schemes, culture boards, public whiteboards, innovation departments and giving responsibility to an individual for assessing and implementing ideas generated and providing feedback on progress. (Full report section 6.1.1).

### **Participants' suggestions for change or improvement**

- Innovation should be encouraged from all ranks and roles.
- Systems for sharing ideas should be as simple and accessible as possible.
- There should be greater reward and recognition of good ideas.
- A system should be in place for implementing the ideas suggested and providing feedback.

## **5.1.2 Sharing of good practice within forces**

Some participants felt that there was not as much sharing of good practice *within* forces as there should be. Those in different divisions or teams sometimes thought not to communicate with each other about this topic. (Full report section 6.1.2).

### **Participants' suggestions for change or improvement**

- Forces could have a monthly newsletter, a good practice sharing section on their intranets, locally based inspections to identify and share good practice, and employ someone to disseminate, manage and champion a system for sharing good practice.

## **5.1.3 Sharing of good practice between forces**

Sharing of good practice *between* forces was seen as inadequate. There was also a view that policing in England and Wales should learn from good practice in other countries. An example given of perceived existing good practice was the creation of national groups hosted online or via apps whereby individuals can share good practice. (Full report section 6.1.3).

### **Participants' suggestions for change or improvement**

- Encourage more sharing across forces by means of, for example, an online national sharing platform, regional workshops, more involvement of the front line in existing national forums and chief officers becoming national leads for particular topics.
- Increase the sharing of good practice in policing internationally.

## **5.1.4 Learning from organisations outside of policing**

The potential benefit of learning from organisations outside policing was discussed. An example given of perceived existing good practice was a force working with an IT corporation and with other emergency services to bring in external expertise, discuss matters of common interest and develop solutions. (Full report section 6.1.4).

### **Participants' suggestions for change or improvement**

- Policing can benefit from increased collaboration with external organisations and learning from wider experiences.

## **5.2 Consultation and user testing**

There were repeated views that new systems and changes are brought in without adequate consultation or user testing by the front line. Examples were given where officers and police staff had been consulted but were dismissed as being negative for highlighting concerns. An example given of perceived existing good practice was a force that designed a new policing model with workforce engagement; officers were informed about plans and focus groups were held to obtain feedback on the proposal. (Full report section 6.2).

### **Participants' suggestions for change or improvement**

- Forces should listen to, and act upon, feedback given by the front line.
- Forces should test things like software and systems with users before they are purchased or implemented.

## **5.3 More collaborative approaches to policing**

A theme raised repeatedly by participants was that the current structure of 43 different forces was not fully effective. Having a more collaborative approach to policing was suggested as a solution to a number of issues raised within the workshops. (Full report section 6.3).

### **Participants' suggestions for change or improvement**

- A more unified approach within the current structure. For example, in terms of:
  - the standardisation of equipment and procedures
  - more open communication and sharing of intelligence
  - increased sharing of services and facilities between forces
  - national procurement
  - cross-force recognition of roles, skills and qualifications.
- Increase force collaborations, merge forces regionally or create a national police force.

# Contact

Peter Betts

[dcm@ons.gov.uk](mailto:dcm@ons.gov.uk)

Methodology Division

Office for National Statistics

2<sup>nd</sup> Floor

1 Drummond Gate

London

SW1V 2QQ