



Home Office

The Front Line Review Recommendation report

July 2019

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Foreword

From the Home Secretary



As one of my first acts as Home Secretary in May 2018, I announced the launch of the Front Line Review at the Police Federation Annual Conference. The Review was designed to seek feedback and learn what the front line really think about the job they do and what can improve. I called for this Review acknowledging that no-one knows more about policing than them.

Supported by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) we have, for the first time, captured views and ideas for change directly from officers and staff from across the country. The independence of the ONS ensured that the lived operational experiences of those on the front line are evidenced and captured in a frank and honest fashion.

There was a fantastic level of interest in the workshops and online engagement activity. Officers and staff from all 43 forces in England and Wales proactively engaged showing that the front line is passionate about policing and care deeply about the service they provide to the public.

It is now essential that we support them by reflecting on the findings and deliver changes which must make a tangible impact. The Home Office and all policing partners have committed to delivering on the Front Line Review and we will ensure that the front line is involved in future change and development – because those who deliver policing should also be part of changing and improving policing today and into the future.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Javid'.

RT HON SAJID JAVID MP
Home Secretary

Foreword

From the Minister of State for Policing and the Fire Service



This was a unique Review and the first time the Home Office has engaged with the front line in such a way, enabling those delivering policing on a daily basis to influence national change.

I recognise that the officers and staff who contributed to the Review are the real experts in front line policing. I wanted to understand, better than ever before, their perspectives on how they are managed, the support they receive towards wellbeing and professional development and their innovative ideas for change.

The Front Line Review Team included serving police officers and staff who were invaluable in guiding the discussions and ensuring the Review was informed by operational expertise at all stages. I wish to specifically thank Kent, Essex, Humberside and Avon and Somerset police forces for the officers and staff who worked on this Review, challenging the Home Office to think differently about how we communicate to and with the front line. I would also like to thank the Office for National Statistics and academic contributors to this Review in addition to the Steering Group for their ongoing advisory support.

It is fantastic that so many officers and staff came forward with great insights and innovative suggestions; now the onus is on me as Policing Minister, the Home Secretary and the Home Office to deliver positive change based on your feedback.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nick Hurd". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

RT HON NICK HURD MP
Minister of State for Policing and the Fire Service

Introduction

The Front Line Review is a Home Office initiative launched by the Home Secretary, the Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP, at the Police Federation Conference in May 2018. The Review was designed to capture ideas for improvements and change directly from the front line - from constable to superintending ranks, police staff, community support officers and members of the special constabulary.

Sponsored by the Policing Minister, the Rt Hon Nick Hurd MP, the Front Line Review initially used digital communication channels to engage with the front line. The Review then partnered with the Office for National Statistics who facilitated 28 workshops across England and Wales involving all 43 forces. Academic contributions from Dr Les Graham and his team from Durham University Business School and from Dr Laura Knight and her team at the Institute for Public Safety, Crime and Justice, University of Northampton, were also incorporated into the evidence base in addition to documentation provided by organisations representing police officers and staff.

Summary of key issues

The Front Line Review gathered evidence on a wide range of issues impacting the working lives of officers and staff from forces across in England and Wales. The key themes included wellbeing, professional development, leadership and innovation. Issues and solutions were explored with an emphasis on individual and organisational resilience, removing unnecessary barriers and creating an environment to succeed.

The message from the front line is clear about the areas and need for changes as well as the complexity of the issues they face daily. The Review has evidenced a wide range of concerns and issues including:

- a feeling that demand is increasing while capacity is decreasing
- a general feeling that frontline officers and staff feel undervalued by the wider policing system
- a feeling of disconnect between the front line and senior / national decision makers
- a profound scepticism about the ability of the front line to inform change and improvement
- frustrations caused by unnecessary demands on time seen to get in the way of core policing, including:
 - internally generated demands on time, such as disproportionate administration, overly bureaucratic processes, ineffective IT and difficulties in sharing best practice and learning
 - externally generated demands on time driven by other public agencies relying on the police to provide out of hours cover – for example mental health and social services-related demands on policing
- scepticism about the authenticity of the emerging wellbeing agenda and desire to see it embedded in a consistent way with a lasting impact
- a feeling that the front line is not afforded sufficient time or space for activities that positively impact on their wellbeing, such as:
 - time for decompression
 - adequate debriefing
 - discussions with colleagues
 - training and development

- counselling
- physical activity
- a feeling that the front line is not afforded sufficient time with line managers for support, personal development and performance reviews
- a feeling that there is a lack of awareness and transparency in the national learning and development offer for the front line
- a view that the current approach to recruiting and developing talent is not fit for purpose with particular criticism of the performance review system and online learning methods

Home Office response to findings

Whilst many of the issues raised by the Review are areas where significant work is already being developed across the landscape, the Review evidences the need to ensure the front line are aware of national work and benefit from the improvements being made. It also evidences the need to engage the front line in policing change and development in a more robust and systematic way. This will require a concerted and determined response from across the Home Office, College of Policing, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services and National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) and wider policing sector. All senior policing leaders have been represented on the FLR Steering Group. They have supported the Review throughout the year and have reviewed the ONS findings and recommendations. All members of the Steering Group have signed a public commitment to deliver on the FLR.

Whilst resourcing was not specifically part of the Review, it is important to acknowledge that funding and changing demands are key factors impacting how the front line deliver public outcomes. A clear message being received from the front line is that there are not enough officers and staff, limiting time and opportunities for proper supervision and important activities such as continuing professional development. We recognise demand on the police is changing and that is why police funding is increasing by more than £1 billion this year, including council tax and serious violence funding. The Home Secretary has been clear that police funding is being prioritised at the Spending Review to ensure the police service is equipped to tackle modern crime and modern demands. However, although many problems and frustrations would be eased with greater capacity, many of the issues raised through the Review cannot be solved by increasing numbers alone. This is why the evidence captured in the FLR needs to drive further changes, to ensure the policing workforce receive the right level of support and development they need to deliver the best for the public.

Recommendations

We are committed to embedding wellbeing at the heart of policing and freeing up frontline time for core policing activities. Many of the issues raised in the Review require a longer-term response and co-ordinated activity across the policing sector and wider agencies to make sustained improvements. The following recommendations are the primary, immediate actions that the Home Office and policing partners will take in response to the Review.

1. **The Front Line Innovation Project:** We will create a space for the front line to directly influence innovation and improvement. Mirroring successful working conducted in other sectors (and working with NHS Horizons in particular) we will ensure a national infrastructure is in place to support the co-creation of solutions with the front line and embed this process into policing.
2. **Ensuring the operational system achieves the right balance between meeting demands and supporting the individual:** A Ministerial challenge to Chiefs to consider essential time for core activities within working patterns that positively impact on frontline wellbeing and support.
3. **Management of External Demand:** A Ministerial commitment to provide good practice guidance to enable policing to manage more effectively cases that should not involve the police; commencing with better guidance on 'safe and well checks'.
4. **Management of Internal Demand:** A Ministerial challenge to Chiefs to identify and address unnecessary internally generated demand within their forces and with national support to tackle systemic issues from the Home Office and other partners.
5. **Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) activity on Police Wellbeing:** HMICFRS has committed to review the way that it inspects the extent to which wellbeing is embedded within day to day policing so that inspections reflect the findings from the FLR.
6. **Providing a National Evaluation Mechanism for Wellbeing Provision:** A Ministerial commitment to provide the front line with a direct means to evaluate national and local progress on wellbeing working with police staff associations.

We recognise the FLR touched on all aspects of policing and a longer term co-ordinated approach is needed to ensure the findings are impacting on work and systemic issues across the sector. We will therefore monitor change and development through a 'one year on' FLR stocktake review. This will provide oversight of progress made across the sector on the above recommendations and the wider findings evidenced in the Review.

