



Home Office

The Front Line Review

Technical Report

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1 The Front Line Review

1.1 Introduction

Whilst policing is developing a good understanding of the challenges and barriers facing police leaders – as well as forces as a whole – there is much more to do to understand the lived, operational experience on the front line. This need has been highlighted in recent Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspections. The 2018 Leadership Inspection recognised the importance of mechanisms for harvesting and implementing ideas from the front line and impact of effective support to the front line.

Work being led by the College of Policing, Chief Constables and other senior policing stakeholders has taken significant strides in supporting and developing the policing profession. However, Government recognises that there is more work to be done. The Front Line Review was commissioned to support and bolster this work and ensure the front line are embedded at the heart of policing reform.

1.2 Brief

The Front Line Review provided an opportunity to capture feedback from frontline police officers and staff on their lived experience of operational policing under two complementary aims:

- To harvest new ideas for change directly from the frontline, identifying systemic issues and barriers impacting practice to influence police strategy;
- To improve access, availability and experience of support on wellbeing, leadership, professional development and innovation.

We set out to achieve these aims by:

- **Reviewing existing evidence** – drawing together Government and sector-based reviews, surveys and relevant inspections examining frontline operational lived experience;
- **Seeking views from the front line** – ensuring frontline officers and staff in every force throughout England and Wales were able to contribute through a mixture of face-to-face and digital engagement, to maximise participation.

In doing so, we aimed to:

- **Bolster sector-led efforts to ensure frontline operational policing is as effective and efficient as possible** – enabling a police force that is lean and agile in its capacity for keeping the public safe, a strategic Home Office interest
- **Ensure operational decision-making and Government policy continues to be informed by the day-to-day lived operational experience** – positioning frontline officers and staff as central “agents of change” in ongoing workforce and sector transformation

The Review sought participation from the frontline workforce of all 43 forces in England and Wales. Every frontline member of the police workforce (including officers up to the rank of chief superintendent, police staff of equivalent ranks, PCSOs and volunteers) were eligible to take part.

The Review Recommendations Report identifies a series of next steps and policy recommendations for Government, policing agencies, representative associations and forces at national level and local levels. Implementation of these recommendations will be supported and monitored by the Home Office.

1.3 Scope

The Review was scoped around four themes guiding evidence collection:

Wellbeing: This Government is committed to ensuring officers and staff are adequately supported to perform their daily roles in keeping the public safe. This includes identifying opportunities to put frontline wellbeing first and proactively embed a welfare culture in policing giving officers and staff the time and space to voice concerns, decompress or seek professional help where necessary.

Professional Development: Exploring officer and staff experiences of frontline performance and development support, paying particular attention to how career aspirations are supported.

Leadership: Having clear goals and effective communication are critical to successful policing. The Review wants to hear officer and staff experiences of both immediate line managers, and of senior leaders setting the strategic direction at Chief Officer ranks. We want to understand how force priorities are communicated to the frontline.

Innovation: This Government is committed to ensuring frontline operational experience continues to inform change and drive progress across the sector. The Review wants to understand how and where officers and staff can be heard and share ideas, and this can be better supported.

The Review did not address pay, resourcing or demand – separate work is already ongoing to address such matters – including that led by the NPCC and its partners.

1.4 Sponsor

The Review was sponsored by the Minister for Policing and the Fire Service, Rt Hon Nick Hurd MP, who oversaw the strategic direction and communication of the findings and recommendations.

1.5 Steering Group

The Minister was supported by an advisory Steering Group of specialists and experts from within policing and beyond who considered the Review direction, data collection and policy development. The Group continued to meet throughout the Review.

Steering Group membership:

- Mike Cunningham QPM – College of Policing (Chair)
- John Apter – Police Federation of England and Wales

- Gavin Thomas/ Paul Griffiths – Police Superintendents Association
- CC Andy Rhodes (Lancashire Constabulary) – National Police Chiefs’ Council, National Lead for Wellbeing
- PCC Mark Burns-Williamson – Association of Police and Crime Commissioners
- Richard Leicester – Director of Human Resources, Kent and Essex Police
- HMI Wendy Williams – Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services
- Ian Miller – Association of Special Constabulary Officers
- Ben Priestly – UNISON
- Dr Helen Bevan OBE – NHS Horizons
- Dr Laura Knight – Institute for Public Safety, Crime and Justice at Northampton University
- Dr Les Graham – Durham University Business School
- Ret. C/Super John Sutherland – Author of *Blue: A Memoir* and advocate for mental health and wellbeing in policing

Steering Group responsibilities were to:

- Advise on methodology including frontline engagement
- Consider evidence collected from frontline engagement
- Advise on the formulation of Review recommendations
- Endorse recommendations prior to publication
- Represent the interest of project partners and policing stakeholders, wherever possible encouraging and strengthening the Review’s links and relevance to the target workforce
- Maximise Review engagement, using existing organisational networks to bolster interest and workforce participation.

Steering Group members adopted the 2011 HMIC definition of the front line used in *Demanding Times – The Frontline and Police Visibility - the police front line comprises those who are in everyday contact with the public and who directly intervene to keep people safe and enforce the law*. HMICFRS (2011) estimate that this definition considers two-thirds of the workforce to be frontline.

The following roles were within scope:

- Visible roles (e.g. call responders and neighbourhood policing teams)
- Specialist roles (e.g. crime investigation departments, scenes of crime)
- Middle office process management roles with operational overlap (i.e. police standards, custody and local commanders).

1.6 Staffing

Whilst the Front Line Review is a Home Office initiative, police officers and staff were seconded into the Team throughout to help ensure that the methods and terminology were informed by frontline perspectives on an ongoing basis. The Home Office is grateful to Humberside, Kent, Essex and Avon and Somerset Police for the officers and staff they made available.

2 Methodology

2.1 General Approach

The Review harnessed a combination of both established and newer channels for engaging the frontline policing workforce to maximise reach, engagement and participation across all 43 forces. The methodology and approach outlined below was agreed by Steering Group members.

2.2 Existing Evidence Review

A literature review was undertaken to understand frontline perspectives, operational experience and best practice from existing evidence sources across the four key areas of the scope. Home Office analysts gathered and reviewed evidence from relevant literature, surveys and inspections, producing the report *Leadership, Wellbeing, Professional Development and Innovation for the Police Front-line: an evidence review*.

2.3 Steering Group member contributions

Academic Steering Group members Dr Laura Knight and Dr Les Graham also provided academic insight. These studies were used to guide the further development of the review.

2.4 Digital

The Front Line Review used a combination of digital channels to facilitate debate and gather initial ideas from the front line commencing in autumn 2018. This maximised early engagement and interest in the Review, providing channels for frontline colleagues to begin to raise issues and share early ideas. The issues were further explored in subsequent face-to-face workshops conducted by the Office for National Statistics. Digital engagement ensured that officers and staff throughout the country were given the opportunity to engage and contribute perspectives.

2.4.1 POLKA

The College of Policing *Police OnLine Knowledge Area* (POLKA) enables officers and staff to discuss challenges, collaborate and innovate. Between 20 August and 16 September 2018, the Review posed three different questions to the POLKA community, focused on a different review theme. It was made clear that the question was being posed by the Home Office, aimed at operational, public facing frontline officers and staff.

2.4.2 #WeCops

@WeCops is a professional peer Twitter network enabling the exchange of ideas and best practice. The account is run by volunteers with the aim of helping to deliver excellent policing. The Front Line Review undertook four initial #WeCops tweet-chats in Autumn 2018 on key review themes. Each Twitter chat was an hour long with a question being automatically launched at 20-

minute intervals from 21:00 hrs every other Wednesday via the @WeCops platform. Those participating in the chat follow the hashtag #WeCops to respond to peers.

2.4.3 Force-Based Channels

Force channels were used to address each Review theme throughout September 2018. Several forces have established platforms to collect ideas from their workforce facilitating direct engagement. A number of forces supported the Review through these platforms. In other forces, communication teams promoted Review theme questions via intranet pages allowing participants to reply directly to the Front Line Review inbox.

Where technological capacity allowed, questions were posed through force channels which were issued in the Minister’s name. Force communication teams then returned ideas for analysis by Home Office officials.

2.5 Superintendents Association

Members of the project team attended Superintendents Association district meetings during November 2018 to capture the voice of the Superintending ranks nationally. This feedback was collated with the existing digital feedback and that from the visits to forces. Being often classed as the ‘middle management’ of policing, these officers gave insight into the daily routine of a leader with direct links to the front line.

2.6 Workshops with the Office for National Statistics

At the start of the Review, officials from the Home Office made contact with the Office for National Statistics (ONS) for advice on a questionnaire that was an early proposal as a method of engagement. However, this advice evolved into methodological support and delivery of an independent research package as part of the Front Line Review.

It was proposed to the steering group in September 2018 that the ONS would support the Home Office in carrying out face-to-face engagement activity. 28 workshops were held across England and Wales over 13 days, with representation from all target ranks and roles. The workshops involved a mix of people to broadly reflect the relative proportions within the police workforce nationally, which resulted in:

- 12 workshops for constables and sergeants
- 12 workshops for police staff and PCSOs
- 3 workshops for inspectors and chief inspectors
- 1 workshop for superintending ranks

Group	Date	Location	Attending forces	Attending members of frontline
1	06/11/2018	Home Office	Metropolitan Police	Superintendents & above
2			City of London	Inspectors & chief inspectors
3	07/11/2018	Home Office	Metropolitan Police	Constables and sergeants
4			City of London	Police staff and PCSOs
5	12/11/2018	Thames Valley	Thames Valley Bedfordshire	Constables and sergeants

Group	Date	Location	Attending forces	Attending members of frontline
6			Hertfordshire Northamptonshire	Police staff and PCSOs
7	13/11/2018	Kent	Kent Sussex Surrey Hampshire	Inspectors & chief inspectors
8				Constables and sergeants
9				Police staff and PCSOs
10	20/11/2018	Suffolk	Norfolk Cambridgeshire Essex Suffolk	Constables and sergeants
11				Police staff and PCSOs
12	21/11/2018	Lincolnshire	Leicestershire Lincolnshire Derbyshire Nottinghamshire	Constables and sergeants
13				Police staff and PCSOs
14	27/11/2018	Devon and Cornwall	Devon and Cornwall Avon and Somerset Wiltshire Dorset	Constables and sergeants
15				Police staff and PCSOs
16	28/11/2018	Gwent	South Wales Gwent Gloucestershire	Constables and sergeants
17				Police staff and PCSOs
18	04/12/2018	Staffordshire	Staffordshire West Midlands Warwickshire	Constables and sergeants
19				Police staff and PCSOs
20	05/12/2018	North Wales	North Wales Dyfed-Powys West Mercia	Constables and sergeants
21				Police staff and PCSOs
22	11/12/2018	West Yorkshire	North Yorkshire South Yorkshire West Yorkshire Humberside	Constables and sergeants
23				Police staff and PCSOs
24	12/12/2018	Lancashire	Lancashire Merseyside Cheshire Greater Manchester	Inspectors & chief inspectors
25				Constables and sergeants
26				Police staff and PCSOs
27	08/01/2019	Cleveland	Cleveland Durham Northumbria Cumbria	Constables and sergeants
28				Police staff and PCSOs

The data collected during the digital engagement activity of the review was used in partnership by the ONS and Home Office Crime and Policing Analysis Unit (CPAU) to design scripts which were deployed during the workshop.

Following the last workshop in Cleveland the ONS had the transcripts from the sessions typed, totalling over 2,500 pages and then commenced the writing of their report.

So that the Review team could make an early start with policy recommendations the ONS provided the team high level findings from the moderator's notes prior to the first draft of the report being received in April 2019.

2.7 Continued engagement

Following the workshops, the Review team started working on the recommendations at an early stage based on the high-level findings.

Two Chief Officer Working Groups were established in January 2019 to capture the organisational implications of the proposed product workstreams and consult with senior leaders. One group was created for Chief Constables and a second was for Deputy/Assistant Chief Constables and Chief Officers/Directors.

The remit of these groups was to consider the evidence and emerging findings, to give advice on the design and delivery of proposed recommendations and to provide an organisational perspective to supplement the evidence captured from frontline practitioners as part of the Review. The feedback from these groups allowed the Review team to continue to work towards recommendations that were suitable for not only the front line, but the senior leaders who run the forces across the country.

In order to continue engagement with frontline officers and staff the Review team organised a Front Line Working Group to afford those likely to be most affected by the recommendations of the Review a chance to give their opinions on the proposed outcomes. Two Front Line Working Groups were held in May 2019 where participants were informed of high level findings, the conclusions being drawn and the emerging recommendations. The group were positive about a number of recommendations in principle but remained sceptical until they see a tangible change as a result – reinforcing that the delivery of any recommendations is key to supporting the front line.