

Forces of Change:

Innovation and Engagement in UK Policing



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About this report

This report was supported and funded by a consortium of Police Forces across the UK which also served as case studies for the research. Case studies were undertaken at Cheshire Constabulary, Cumbria Constabulary, Dyfed Powys Police, Greater Manchester Police, Lincolnshire Police, Police Service of Northern Ireland, Surrey Police and Sussex Police. Financial support for the project was also received from North Wales Police.

This final report is based on 40 interviews with senior officers and police staff, including three Chief Constables and six Deputy or Assistant Chief Constables and one Chief Officer of Special Constabulary. In addition we conducted 22 focus groups with frontline officers and police staff, making a total of 166 police officers and staff who were interviewed as part of this project. We also interviewed Rachel Tuffin, Director of Knowledge, Research and Education at the College of Policing. We are grateful to all of the participating forces and individuals for the time they committed to this research, to Liz Riding at Lancashire Constabulary for helping to set up this project and also to Meghan Grant at IPA for all her work in assisting with this research.

In each force's case study, we looked at one or several of the recent change programmes that they had undertaken. These represented a wide variety of different types of innovation; some technological, some structural and some involving changes to organisational culture or processes. A summary of all the case studies are listed in the appendix at the end.

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1. Foreword – Chief Constable Andy Rhodes

Engagement and wellbeing are two sides of one coin; neither can exist nor thrive without the other. The benefit of having an engaged workforce is well evidenced in the private and public sectors; an engaged workforce is a happy, healthy and efficient one that delivers a high quality of service that is aligned to your organisational priorities. Who, in policing, would say that we don't want that?

But how much focus do we put on truly engaging with our staff? How do we unlock the innovation that is often kept unseen and unheard due to our culture of hierarchy and command and control? How do we move from being transactional to truly transformational?

Through times of huge change and increased complexity of demand in policing, against a backdrop of austerity and cuts to budgets and numbers, it is perhaps understandable that we haven't yet harnessed the power of engagement and unlocked the full potential of the one resource we have; our people.

By opening up the culture and creating trust, based on openness and transparency, by encouraging staff to try and fail, and to learn and try again we will start to feel the tangible benefits across our police forces.

In Lancashire Constabulary, we have prioritised staff engagement strategically for the past six years. Only now are we starting to reap the rewards of this sustained effort; we have a workforce that is fiercely proud, that is more motivated and inspired than ever before, and one that, on balance, would recommend us as a great place to work to their family and friends. Not only that, we are seeing an improved picture in respect of sickness absence in areas where staff have been previously disengaged,

and an improvement in performance where staff have been able to influence the change around them.

I know other forces are exploring and developing their own approach to engagement and the results we are experiencing in Lancashire clearly

evidences the tangible benefits that can be realised from this work.

This research is the first of its kind in UK policing. I am proud to support and sponsor such a thorough piece of work and recommend that senior officers and police staff across UK policing take note of the findings. The research is also available via the National Police Wellbeing Service www.oscarkilo.org.uk where you can learn more about how to support your staff and improve wellbeing through challenging times.

If we prioritise listening, and then acting, and continue to break down hierarchies to enable suggestions to come through and be developed, it is not only policing that will benefit. Our communities will do so as well. That has to be something worth working towards.

Andy Rhodes

Chief Constable, Lancashire Constabulary

National Police Chiefs Council Lead for Wellbeing and Organisational Development



2. Executive Summary

All UK Police Forces have been through major cuts as a result of government austerity over recent years, with consequent knock-on effects on levels of engagement and morale, which in some cases have suffered significantly. The key enablers of engagement are: **a strategic narrative, engaging managers, employee voice and organisational integrity.**

Those forces with more visible Chief Officer groups, a strong focus on wellbeing, a listening culture on the part of leaders at all levels (particularly in the middle ranks) and clear and effective multi-channel communication systems generally have weathered this period much better. These forces have also succeeded in implementing major change programmes to help cope with increased demand and reduced resources. The key determinants of a successful change programme have been:

- A clear strategic objective, communicated to all officers and staff.
- Honesty and transparency in approach, including when and why decisions are made and what other options were considered.
- Clear project ownership by an enthusiastic central team who are visible, accessible to answer questions and include representatives across all ranks as change champions.
- An early focus on securing buy-in from mid-level leaders.
- An effective communications strategy, with a major focus on in-person briefings at the team level and roadshows by strategic leaders, minimizing the use of force-wide email.

In terms of barriers to and enablers of innovation more generally there are common factors that forces have to grapple with. The nature of policing as a hierarchical system makes it naturally difficult for

people to challenge and raise ideas with their superiors and means that innovative ideas often have to go through many levels of ranks for approval before they can be adopted by the whole force. Having a good system for bypassing this chain of command to allow officers to submit ideas and suggestions directly to a central team or group seems effective for those few forces that have such a working system. More generally having a culture that welcomes challenges and ideas from people equally, regardless of rank, is a big enabler of innovation. On the other hand, systems which encourage mid-ranking officers to begin new change initiatives in their units 'for the sake of it' in order to burnish their CVs, and then move on without seeing through their changes to completion, leads to change fatigue and widespread disillusionment among the rank and file.

Levels of risk aversion are naturally high across all forces, but a few have gone to considerable lengths to challenge this, with consistent messages from senior leaders that officers will be supported if they try new things that don't pan out, as long as intentions have been correct and decisions duly documented. This is essential if officers are to have the confidence to try new things. Finally, the ability for officers, particularly at Sergeant and Inspector level, to be given occasional time away from their overwhelming burden of day-to-day duties to sit down and think about how their jobs could be done better, is a major enabler of both grassroots innovation and organisational resilience. Even a small amount of time set aside each month within teams or departments for strategic reflection and thinking about how things could be done better would make a big difference.

3. Introduction

Policing in the UK has faced a very turbulent period since 2010. There has been significant downward pressure on budgets since the austerity programme began, leading to redundancies, pay freezes and the need for all forces to identify major cost savings in their budgets.

There have been major changes to demand, to public expectations and to criminal behaviours which policing has had to adapt to. Crime patterns are constantly evolving, but the last decade in particular has seen a major increase in new types of crime, from cyber-stalking to online frauds, hacking or other digital crimes. The public no longer necessarily expect police officers to show up in person at their door when they report crimes, but they do expect to be able to access policing services online and to still receive a high quality of service.

Technology has also opened up new opportunities for police forces and given them capabilities that they could previously only dreamed of, if only they can find ways to properly adopt and implement it. New data analytics can allow for far more intelligent policing strategies, body-worn cameras provide a new level of accountability and mobile devices can enable far more efficient and flexible reporting and on-the-ground accessing of information.

To adapt to all of these circumstances, however, has required forces to change and will require them to change even more over the coming years. Change programmes in any large organizations are always challenging and the police service is no different. To change successfully requires a clear plan, strong leadership, good communication and a strong focus on employee engagement and consultation. While planning and leadership are natural strengths in the police service, communication and consultation are often challenges in organisations that are strongly hierarchical and where officers are used to giving and following orders. A number of organisations also faced unique challenges, such as at the Police Service of Northern Ireland which finds itself unable to move forward with major change so long as the political leadership of the Northern Ireland Assembly remains suspended.

To maintain the engagement of the workforce throughout any major change and restructuring is

always challenging. To do so under a situation of budget cuts, pay freezes and redundancies is especially so. Yet the right approach remains to focus strongly on the four enablers of engagement: strategic narrative, engaging managers, employee voice and integrity. As we show throughout this report, where forces have stuck to these principles they have tended to succeed despite all the challenges. Where they deviate from this approach and attempt to impose a top-down, command-and-control approach to change management, things have tended to come unstuck.

This report is arranged in three broad parts. First we look at the general engagement levels in UK policing, how they have fared over recent years and the key factors that have helped or hindered engagement in the police service; in particular the need for effective leadership at both a senior and intermediate level and the difficulties in communications strategies across such a large and time-poor workforce.

The second part of the report looks at factors which enable or inhibit innovation in general. Bottom-up innovation is particularly hard in hierarchical organisations and forces have experimented with various ways to get around this and promote fresh thinking among their officers and staff. Forces have also faced the need to find time for strategic thinking among their busy workforces and learn to take risks in order to innovate.

The final part of the report looks at the change management of major transformation programmes. For these to succeed requires buy-in from officers and staff, which in turn relies on having an enthusiastic project team, clearly communicated objectives and an early and honest approach to communication and consultation through effective channels.

4. Part 1 – Engagement in UK Police Forces

Engagement levels

Policing is a profession that in many ways embodies the concept of public service. There was a strong sense throughout the project that most officers had been motivated to join the police, at least in part, by a desire to serve the public and the vast majority of officers spoken to for this research, regardless of rank or force, said that they were *“proud to work as a police officer.”* Having such a strong sense of purpose is clearly a major help in maintaining employee engagement.

Nevertheless, police forces have been through a serious period of stress in recent years and there is evidence that engagement has suffered as a result. Between 2010/2011 and 2018/19 overall funding to police forces across England and Wales fell by 19% in real terms, including a 30% fall in direct funding from central government. Police numbers over this period fell by over 20,000 (Full Fact, 2018). These cuts have placed significant pressures on remaining officers to continue to provide quality policing service to the public with far fewer officers and resources.

At the same time, change programmes themselves, many of them necessary to deal with the new fiscal environment, are usually stressful processes for many of the officers and staff affected. With all this happening coupled with a series of pay freezes, it is no surprise that the last decade has been a challenging one for engagement in UK policing.

One senior officer in Sussex Police emotionally described for us the effect this difficult national environment had had on officers under their command, saying *“they’re feeling undervalued nationally, and they’re getting hit in the pocket and haven’t had a pay rise or whatever... there’s officers going to foodbanks and stuff...”* Similar sentiments were echoed at other forces.

As for police staff, their departments have often borne the brunt of staffing reductions and redundancies; many of the remaining staff as a result have been repeatedly put on temporary contracts and expressed fears that the present period of anxiety over their risk of job losses would never end.

In general community policing officers tended to fare the worst on engagement, followed closely by

police staff, while specialist officers and more senior officers tended to fare much better. Those officers who had been allocated to newly created teams and were at the heart of ongoing innovation projects, such as the newly created ICAT team at Dyfed Powys Police, were among the most engaged of all the officers studied, showing how positive being part of innovation can be when handled well.

While the national reductions in policing budgets formed a common background to the current issues with disengagement, however, this was not the whole picture. Officers across all case studies reported a sense that the police were not being ‘valued’ nationally, but differed significantly in how ‘valued’ they said they felt by their own force leadership. In some of the case studies, officers reported that they felt the force leadership valued and respected them, and that they felt a strong sense of connection with their force, its values and organisational culture. In other case studies, all or almost all of the community policing officers interviewed said that they did not feel valued by the force leadership, saying things such as *“I’m proud to serve the public, but not to work for [Force]”*, or that *“I’m engaged with my team and our local objectives, but feel no loyalty to the organisation as a whole.”*

Other marks of disengagement included officers describing their work as *“just a job”* that they felt treated like *“just a number”*, or that common topics of conversation included *“how long have you got left [till you can retire/leave]?”* Such attitudes have obvious implications for officer turnover and retention, as well as knock-on effects on absenteeism, productivity, innovation and quality of service.

In evidence of these effects, figures show mental health related absences from work have risen almost continuously since 2010. In 2017 9,672 officers took sick leave related to anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder and depression – around 6% all UK police officers (Ford, 2018). As one officer described, summing up the mood of many, *“stress, anxiety is a growing trend in absence and those absences are becoming longer term.”*

Engagement problems are particularly dangerous when relying on additional discretionary effort of already overworked officers to make up for low

staffing levels – a major risk to organisational resilience. Officers at most forces studied for this project repeated some variation that *“the force is relying heavily on people’s goodwill”* in order to continue to meet the needs of the communities it serves. Anything that erodes that sense of goodwill would pose a significant threat to the ability of UK police forces to continue to protect those communities, and there were signs of this already beginning to come under strain in some of the larger forces.

Among federated officer ranks, 90% in 2018 reported that they generally don’t have enough officers to manage the demand level faced by their team or unit; a five point increase on the 2016 figures (Police Federation, 2018). 72% meanwhile in 2018 reported a workload which they categorised as *“too high”* – again an increase on the 2016 figures and much higher than the equivalent figure in comparable professions such as the armed forces. This was also the number one reason cited as the cause of work-related psychological difficulties.

The Four Enablers of Engagement

There is no law of management, however, which states that organisations under budgetary pressure must inevitably have low engagement levels. Indeed, some forces have demonstrated their ability

to maintain engagement levels despite the challenges they face. Of those studied for this report, Lincolnshire and Dyfed Powys Police appeared particularly successful in this regard, though still not without challenges of their own. What really sets apart the organisations that are able to maintain engagement is the degree to which they can demonstrate the Four Enablers of Engagement, as identified by Nita Clarke and David MacLeod. (Clarke & MacLeod, 2009), (see box).

Most forces naturally have a strong strategic narrative, around the principles of public service, the national Competency and Values Framework Guidance (CVF) issued by the College of Policing, supplemented by the force’s own values and vision. While forces that change their official ‘vision’ too often may lose focus on this as a result, usually this was something that was pretty well articulated and embedded.

In terms of engaging managers, these varied across and within forces but, on the whole, a clear majority of officers interviewed across the forces had confidence in both their direct line manager and in the Chief Constable of their force; the two most important relationships for engagement. Most forces had good leadership programmes in place and well-liked Chief Officer Groups, though occasional exceptions showed the problems that could occur where this wasn’t the case (see **Leadership** section below.)

A strategic narrative

Provided by senior leaders which has widespread ownership and commitment from managers and employees at all levels. The narrative is a clearly expressed story about what the purpose of an organisation is, why it has the broad vision it has, and how an individual contributes to that purpose.

Engaging managers

Are at the heart of this organisational culture– they facilitate and empower rather than control or restrict their staff; they treat their staff with appreciation and respect and show commitment to developing, increasing and rewarding the capabilities of those they manage.

Employee voice

An effective and empowered employee voice – employees’ views are sought out; they are listened to and see that their opinions count and make a difference. They speak out and challenge when appropriate. A strong sense of listening and of responsiveness permeates the organisation, enabled by effective communication.

Organisational integrity

Behaviour throughout the organisation is consistent with stated values, leading to trust and a sense of integrity.

The other two enablers were, however, more challenging from a policing perspective. Allowing for an informed voice for frontline officers and police staff to be heard at senior levels is difficult within such an inherently hierarchical organisation as the police. While the Police Federation exists to represent frontline officers and can act as a conduit for information to and from senior decision makers, in practice this is mostly limited to cases of grievance or issues such as pay and conditions. It plays little role in facilitating either day-to-day voice about issues affecting frontline work, or a more strategic voice for the workforce around major change and innovation programmes.

What alternative means of voice are available in the police? Staff surveys can, in the right hands, be one of the more powerful options – a good survey should act as an enabler as well as a measure of engagement, though this depends on the responses being swiftly acted upon and seen to be done so. At Greater Manchester Police a recent staff survey had indicated concerns for instance about the sickness policy and perceived unfairness in the promotions process. The senior leadership had taken this fully on-board and reformed processes over the following year to address these concerns. As a result, these issues no longer appeared to be a concern in the force in the focus groups we conducted. However, the force could perhaps have done more to publicise the fact they were making these changes directly as a result of listening to feedback from officers.

Voice could also be facilitated by staff forums, or online discussion spaces such as Chief Constables' blogs. These varied greatly in their effectiveness from force to force, depending on:

Awareness among officers

How much senior officers engaged constructively with what was written in them

The rules and processes which governed who could post what and whether anonymous posting was possible.

In particular, forums where officers and staff could post anonymously tended to be viewed as much more effective than those where officers had to identify themselves publicly to raise issues. Where people had to identify themselves, there could be a reluctance to post about problems or raise controversial ideas.

"We've been in meetings where at the end you hear, 'oh have you seen what Dave's put on the forum', and there is that undertone of 'you're a moaner' or 'you're weak'... The mechanisms are there for making it more acceptable and to not have the stigma. But the people who do are criticised for it."

Specialist crime staff member at Surrey Police

Similarly at Dyfed Powys, their 'Ask the Chief' function was generally very positive in encouraging direct interaction and questioning of the Chief Constable, but illustrated a common obstacle to voice mechanisms when the surrounding culture includes resistance to challenging authority – in this case "one officer had a reply from an Inspector basically telling him 'why did you ask that on the blog?' ... They're always going to know who it is". Such a response might discourage future attempts to speak up.

For voice to be effective, therefore organisations also need to demonstrate the final enabler – integrity. This ought to be a strong point for police forces; after all acting with 'Honesty and Integrity' is listed as the very first principle in the national Code of Ethics which all officers are trained to abide by. What integrity really boils down to, however, is trust. And there was evidence across a number of the forces that frontline community policing officers and junior police staff did not have a great deal of trust in certain aspects of how they were treated by the organisation. In particular the various engagement surveys of police forces undertaken by Durham University have consistently shown that 'Procedural Fairness' rates among the bottom of the various engagement measures for officers.

This lack of trust was particularly displayed towards mid-ranking officers such as Chief Inspectors through Chief Superintendents, demonstrated for instance through second-hand anecdotes circulating among those at the frontline that there had been incidents where more senior officers had been "let off" for indiscretions that would have led to dismissal among more junior officers and a corresponding sense that the Code of Ethics was only fully applied to the lower ranks. Tackling procedural fairness must be a top priority for forces seeking to repair trust and boost their engagement.

Leadership

Having a visible force leadership, accessible and open to challenge was one of the most important factors observed in improving engagement. Many UK businesses have learned in recent years to move away from a top-down, command and control management style in order to improve staff engagement, but such a change is particularly difficult for organisations like the police which are naturally strongly hierarchical and where orders are expected to be obeyed. Nevertheless, it is possible for police leadership teams to retain their *authority*, while not being *authoritarian*. One leader we spoke with made clear their goal to be “an organisation where questioning is OK,” and a healthy attitude to leadership combines respect with this openness to questioning.

The leadership culture of any organisation starts from the top and, in this respect, Chief Officers and Chief Constables in particular have a crucial role to play. What the vast majority of frontline officers wanted, at every force, was to see and hear more from their Chief Constable and it is clear that communications from the Chief Constable have symbolic as well as practical value in boosting engagement.

Most forces use regular roadshows to boost the visibility of Chief Officers and give them a chance to connect with those on the frontline. There were often imbalances in which officers got to see the Chief, however, with officers stationed further away from HQ often feeling neglected. This was particularly challenging in those forces with more dispersed rural geographies, such as Dyfed Powys where some parts of the force are stationed several hours drive from HQ. Nevertheless it was impressive what some forces had managed to achieve in terms of this outreach and visibility.

While it could also be very time consuming for Chief Officers to meet all serving officers in person, particularly in larger forces, there was a strong sense from those forces that did manage it that it was extremely worthwhile. In Durham Constabulary the Chief Constable has personally led half-day problem solving workshops for all officers and staff in small mixed groups, to considerable praise from the College of Policing:

“It just sends such an incredibly strong signal. Development matters, it matters so much that the Chief Constable does it. He is so interested in you that he comes and does it with you and problem solving is so important that it’s done by the Chief. So it’s hugely symbolic.”

Rachel Tuffin, Director of Knowledge, Research and Education at the College of Policing

Force emails, blogs and other social media communications were also used to varying degrees of success, but the Chief Officers themselves agreed that the most effective means they had of boosting staff engagement was “Going out. Being visible. Talking to people. Without doubt.” Actually serving shifts on the frontline alongside regular community policing officers was also a very effective way of boosting engagement, particularly when this was publicised so that the whole force was aware of it. The quote below shows the impact on attitudes that this approach could have:

“The credibility of that Chief Officer went through the roof for me. He’s getting out and about and dealing with people the same as I. He obviously was not there to arrest people. But he was out there finding out what happened on the frontline. I fully respect for him for that.”

Frontline officer at Lincolnshire Police

On the other hand, resentment could develop among officers if Chief Officers were perceived to be “out of touch” as at least one or two were in around half of the forces studied. This could manifest particularly where decisions were being made to change shift patterns by those higher up who had not worked a shift pattern themselves for many years – attempts to implement changes in these cases met with far more resistance from officers who felt their leaders didn’t understand the difficulties they faced.

The difference that an approachable and in-touch Chief Constable and Chief Officer Group can make was starkly illustrated at Dyfed Powys Police where a change in the leadership group in recent years had led to a rapid and marked improvement in the force-wide culture of challenge and listening. A previous leadership group had not been visible, avoided much personal contact with those at the frontline and were felt to have imposed an authoritarian approach to management, saying for

example that gossiping was a “disciplinary offence”. In contrast the new leadership team was regularly praised for efforts to “lead from the top” and “make themselves accessible to the whole workforce, not only the senior managers”, via face-to-face meetings, roadshows during which they took Q&As, seminars, informal visits and discussions with officers, an open door policy and an active and interactive social media approach including videos and a very active ‘Ask the Chief’ blog, where comments and suggestions were regularly responded to and acted upon. The new Chief Constable was felt to be approachable enough that PCs could arrange to go and see him in person – an important change for the force.

“The other day a PC had an issue, he made an appointment to see the Chief [Constable]; and he went to see the Chief. Well, you wouldn’t have had that before would you?”

Frontline officer at Dyfed Powys Police

Despite the importance of Chief Officers, it was often middle grades – Chief Inspectors through Chief Superintendents – where leadership issues were particularly important, as these were the most senior grades that most officers would ever regularly come into contact with. Empowering middle managers to make decisions and use their initiative well was therefore hugely important for engagement. Surrey Police had been running a force-wide ‘leading from the middle’ initiative in recognition of precisely this point, making sure as the DCC at Surrey put it, that managers “feel like they can make decisions that affect their day to day lives is really important for us and important trusting them to do that.”

Middle grades, however, often seemed to suffer from high turnover, leading to frequent changes of direction and ‘visions’. Those at the frontline in the majority of forces expressed complaints about excessive ‘politics’ in the middle ranks getting in the way of the strategic narrative being passed down from the Chief Officer group. There were widespread perceptions, fair or not, that those in these middle ranks were more interested in “furthering their career” than helping solve problems, with the result that they were regularly introducing new ideas and objectives “for the sake of it” in an attempt to burnish their CVs. How accurate these perceptions are is difficult to judge, but senior officers would do well to

be aware of these perceptions and work to improve relations and trust between this group and those beneath them.

Sometimes the simplest changes can have very big impacts. One of the biggest differences that was observed in trust in this group of middle leaders was in areas where divisional leaders knew officers serving two or three grades below them by name and would stop and say hello and talk to them in corridors, lifts or break areas, compared with areas where those nearer the frontline felt that divisional leaders didn’t know any of their names and “don’t talk to anyone.” Clearly developing a personal relationship with everyone under your command becomes harder the higher up an organisation you go, but those who made a real effort in this area were rated as far more effective leaders than those who did not.

The importance of building relationships between first and second line managers and their officers is a vital element of engagement and should not be seen as incompatible with a rank-based hierarchy such as the police. One mid ranking officer at Sussex Police explained their approach to developing these better relationships;

“It’s not about ‘Ma’am’, ‘Sir’ and traditional barriers that people write about; it’s actually around having – not too informal relationships, but having relationships of sort... people you first and second line manage you should know enough about to have those kind of icebreaker conversations – everyone’s got a story to tell. Get that story out the way and then they feel more confident about being able to speak to you.”

Chief Inspector at Sussex Police

Finally, the crucial role of Sergeants should not be neglected – these were after all the direct leaders for the majority of police officers and often the relationship with their Sergeant was the strongest and most important bond that most officers had with the wider organisation, being one of the two cornerstones of engaging management, alongside the Chief Constable. Leadership should not be seen as something that is the preserve of senior officers, nor should leadership training be restricted to acquiring the skills needed to progress to the next rank, but is a quality to be nurtured and encouraged across the whole organisation from top to bottom.

Communication

One of the most important aspects of engaging with the workforce, particularly when conducting far-reaching change programmes, is the quality and consistency of the communication channels between leaders and frontline officers and staff; between those driving the changes and those implementing them and experiencing them on the ground. Similarly, while the importance of frontline officers having a meaningful voice is something that

is stressed throughout this paper, it's not possible for any officers to express meaningful and relevant ideas and views unless they have first been properly informed about the issues the force is facing.

Most forces, however, have significant difficulties when it comes to communicating with their officers. The table below summarizes the key means of communications forces have often tried to rely on, and the problems encountered with each:

Method of Communication	Advantages	Difficulties
Force-wide emails.	Maximum reach, can ensure the message is delivered exactly as intended. Some opportunity for officers to reply and ask questions.	Officers bombarded with too many messages, learn to "just click delete." Evidence suggests these often go unread or partly read at best.
Roadshows and other direct communication from Chief Officers.	No chance message is lost, very good for engagement. Genuine two way communication – officers can ask questions directly of senior leaders.	Very time consuming for small number of Chief Officers to reach all frontline staff in person.
Information cascades resulting in officer briefings from Sergeants and Inspectors.	In person briefings from someone who has a personal relationship with the officer in question makes them more likely to be receptive. Dialogue allows officers to reply and ask questions, though not necessarily to refer them back up the chain of command.	Time pressures on Sergeants and Inspectors mean these can be cut very short. Information can be lost or distorted during the cascade.
Information placed on force intranet.	Can fit on a lot of information; officers can look up as much information as they feel they need at their own convenience.	Intranets often poorly designed, hard to navigate and important information can be buried amid irrelevant information. Easy to miss if officers not logging on often. Mostly one-way communication.
Posters and other material placed on billboards and walls around stations and HQ.	Officers can be exposed regularly to the same information, even if not seeking it out.	Research suggests officers rarely stop to read them, won't take in more than can be gleaned from passing glance at a headline. Only one-way communication.
Social media, Chief Officer blogs or vlogs.	Can reach all officers directly with minimal time commitment from Chief Officers.	Difficult to ensure officers see it. Can be hard to distil difficult or complex issues down for social media. Mostly one-way communication.

In particular many forces have tended to rely heavily on force-wide emails in the past for conveying important information about change programmes. By far the biggest issue faced is that the volume of communications itself can fast become overwhelming, taxing the attention spans of already overworked officers to their limits. Most officers interviewed admitted that they rarely had time on duty to log on and read all of the emails they had received, giving most a cursory glance at best. The content often didn't help, as some officers reported that a significant volume of the communications they received were simply *"emails of waffle"* they conveyed little useful information. This further encouraged what was widely described as a *"just click delete"* attitude, leading them to ignore and disregard future communications that might actually have had more useful information in them.

At Cumbria Police, the change programme which we studied looked at addressing specifically these issues, in particular reducing the volume of communications and force-wide emails, which had begun to reach problematic levels, to the point where *"One person wanted to send something about their car keys being lost! If officers get bombarded with that all the time you can see why they stop listening."*

Leaders at Cumbria felt that they needed to take a hands on approach. There were three main elements to this change; limiting access to force-wide emails, restructuring the intranet into 'need to know' and 'nice to know' sections and running different single-issue educational campaigns each month to inform officers about important issues and changes to modern policing such as modern slavery, child sexual exploitation or cybercrime. Restricting these educational campaigns to a single issue at a time increased the chances that the information would actually get through and be picked up.

The impact of these changes had been felt immediately by those at the frontline:

"They have changed the emails so not everyone can send them and that has made a difference, it saves you block deleting emails because you don't get as many. [Before] you had so many emails and thought 'I couldn't be bothered'."

Frontline officer at Cumbria Police

Intranets in several forces were cited as antiquated

and in need of complete redesign. Common complaints included being hard to navigate, having a confusing user interface, no effective search functions to help find the information needed, and too much outdated or useless information that was never removed, leading to further confusion. Useful information was generally felt to be on the intranets *"somewhere"* but this is little comfort if it is not quick and easy to pull up for busy officers.

In person briefings, whether via roadshows from senior leaders, or short regular briefings from line managers, were seen as by far the most effective forms of communication by senior and frontline officers alike; not least because they are genuinely two-way forms of communication, allowing opportunities for feedback, questioning and challenges and providing a meaningful opportunity for voice. However, these are obviously also time consuming. Several forces had adopted some variant of a 'seven minute briefing' cascaded via line managers, which made the most of the benefits of face-to-face communication in a condensed time, which was further enhanced by having the content designed by the subject matter experts to contain the most important information in a concise format:

"Seven minute briefings have been really useful, you know this information is what you need to know on this subject and has come from subject matter experts. It is a quick way of briefing out important information quickly and efficiently."

Superintendent at Cumbria Police

To amplify the voice of the Chief Officer group, most forces had also been relying more in recent years on a social media presence, including blogs, vlogs 'Ask the Chief' functions, or other social media. These varied greatly in their effectiveness depending on how personally committed the Chief Officers in question were to them. Those who posted regularly and approached these with a focus on transparency and straight talking tended to receive far higher viewing/reading figures than those who were felt to simply regurgitate *"corporate"* talking points and slogans. Similarly, making the social media into an interactive two way conversation, where officers could post comments or questions with a reasonable expectation of getting a reply from the Chief, was a huge boost to the effectiveness of this kind of communication.

There was a danger identified, however, in relying on publically visible media channels to make announcements about things that had not been previously been announced internally in the force. Some officers complained that their Chief had given media interviews on topics before they told officers, potentially giving an impression of being disrespectful, as some officers were led to conclude that the leadership cared more about its media presence than it did about them.

Finally, information about the force's performance and progress towards hitting the force's targets and objectives is certainly an important element of a communication strategy. For officers to be engaged they need to know how the organisation as a whole is performing and so how their work is contributing towards that. However, one issue that came up repeatedly was an over-emphasis of negative versus positive feedback. Whilst hearing where a force may be falling down relative to its peers can be a huge spur to improvement in some cases, this can only work well where:

- The criticism comes with a clear and actionable roadmap towards improvement;

- Avoids the impression that senior leaders are 'blaming' the frontline for the failure; and

- Is counterbalanced by regular positive feedback on areas where the force is doing well and celebrating its achievements.

Many leaders were aware this was an area where their force could do better and were making considerable efforts to improve this; *"I make sure that when we get positive feedback that that is relayed... I think that sometimes we [as a force] can be poor at praising, quick to criticise."*

Other Factors Affecting Engagement

Wellbeing Programmes

Recent years have seen a hugely increased focus on wellbeing programmes across almost all forces, with the introduction of mental health advocates, increased access to counselling and other support for officers. This was something that all forces felt had improved over recent years and, in particular, that the social stigma of mental health was being reduced.

Occasionally, however, there were concerns that money might be misspent in the name of doing nice things for officers or staff, such as building *"a roof terrace on our new Police Station, which no-one is going to have time to use"* at the same time as telling officers there is no money to buy coats or fleeces to keep warm in winter or toasters for the kitchen – the important message being that often the simpler and less exciting things are those which actually contribute more to officer wellbeing.

Cuts to Support Functions

Other areas, however, have seen less investment in recent years. HR and IT functions have often been among the first to be targeted for budget reductions; most of the forces studied had either cut, consolidated, or outsourced their HR and IT functions since 2010.

While it may seem an easier and less painful way to cut budgets than reducing frontline officers, cuts to these services in practice have actually often proved quite damaging to the rest of the force's morale and functioning. This was particularly the case when many HR responsibilities were then simply transferred to line managers, adding further to already substantial time pressures on them. A widespread concern was that most line managers at Sergeant or Inspector rank were ill equipped to handle these additional responsibilities, as they did not have the right skills and most line managers felt they had not received any adequate additional training in how to handle HR-related tasks at the point when HR responsibilities were handed over to them. Offices at several forces complained that the results were *"a shambles"* and *"contributing to bad morale."*

Even in the small sample group of officers who participated in focus groups for this report, there were first hand stories in almost every force of HR processes that had gone wrong and caused major stress and anxiety as a result. Officers reported being mispaid for 12 months, failures to approve leave, failures to properly consider flexible working requests, long delays in processing recruitment or transfers and a number of other issues, all of which had a large hidden cost in the form of wasted time from officers trying to get their problems resolved. Similarly problems with IT, in those forces that had

reduced IT support, not only hindered the ability of forces to smoothly roll-out change programmes involving new technology, but also were a major contributor to lost time and disengagement for officers and staff.

Respect, Reward and Recognition

Some parts of the police service also have engagement problems that come from being looked down on and not respected by other parts of the organisation. In particular this seemed to affect police staff and the Special Constabulary, who were the focus of the case studies at Cheshire. Police Staff at several of the forces reported feeling that *"we're low down the pecking order,"* while a Supervisor in the Special Constabulary in Cheshire reported that *"it can be very frustrating at times... we sort of feel like Specials end up right at the bottom of the pile in terms of priorities."*

Nevertheless on the whole the Special Constabulary demonstrated quite high levels of engagement, partly resulting from their volunteer nature, in that those who weren't highly engaged either wouldn't have volunteered in the first place or would simply have left the force due to their ease of exit. There was also an ironic twist that the same period of austerity that had so worsened engagement for regular officers, through cuts in officer numbers, pay freezes etc., had actually improved engagement for some Special Officers by making their vital voluntary contributions feel more valued by the force.

On a more positive note, reward and recognition schemes could often be huge boosts to engagement. There was a definite boost to engagement in those forces which made an effort to heavily publicise both official awards ceremonies and also less formal showcasing and recognition of good work by individual officers and their achievements on a regular basis.

5. Part 2 – Innovation in UK Police Force

The need for change

Police forces across the UK have had to undergo periods of intense reform before, sometimes followed by several years of relative calm that could be described either as necessary bedding in, or as harmful stagnation, depending on one's point of view. However, there are signs that taking long breaks between change programmes is a luxury that forces can no longer really afford.

The speed of technological advancement is continuing to increase, with a wave of new technologies heralded as the Fourth Industrial Revolution, from big data and AI, to blockchain and the internet of things, that are threatening to transform workplaces around the world (Acas, 2017). Policing is unlikely to be immune from these changes; as consumers and criminals adapt to this new emerging world, the police will have to do so as well if it wants to stay ahead of the game. New technologies create new digital areas of life that require policing just as much as the physical world. At the same time, however, they offer new opportunities for crime detection and prevention via powerful data collection and analytics. Much of this potential, even with existing technology, still remains untapped:

"Where would they be if all of them were exploiting all the opportunities that are there? I don't think that it's anything particularly sexy if you like, I'm not talking about big machine learning or artificial intelligence stuff, I'm just talking about the things that they could do now if their data was clean and they had people or systems that were able to do the right kind of analysis."

Rachel Tuffin, Director of Knowledge, Research and Education at the College of Policing

At the same time, we are unlikely to return to a pre-austerity era when budgets were not under serious constraint; forces will have to learn to adapt to these circumstances through being smart rather than throwing money at the problems. There is therefore a need for police forces across the UK to move from seeing change as a discrete event, to an open-ended process, to a way of life.

Doing this requires a cultural shift within organisations to adopt a permanent 'change

culture'. Most serving police officers and staff seem, in principle, quite receptive to this concept, being well aware that change is *"good and needed"* and that *"objections must be overcome"* if the forces are to succeed. There is always, however, a risk of change fatigue setting in and this is something forces will need to guard against carefully.

To minimize this risk of change fatigue it is vital that change is always done, and seen to be done, for the right reasons. The change management process itself is explored in more detail in Part 3 of this report; the next few sections instead focus on structural factors that can enable or inhibit innovation in general within policing.

Towards a continuous improvement culture

Change fatigue was a common complaint from officers and police staff across many of the forces studied for this report. Yet the things which they described as the most 'fatiguing' were not always the large-scale change programmes implemented by the force leadership, particularly where those had been well communicated and implemented over a number of years. Rather it was often the more local change programmes being implemented by middle-management that were the source of much of this disillusionment. Officers reported numerous occasions where they had seen changes started by leaders who wanted to *"shake things up"* and began office reorganisations, restructuring of teams or changes in team vision, objectives, policies or processes, only to have the leader in question move on to another post before the changes were completed, leaving them incomplete and ready to be changed again by the next person.

There was a widely-expressed view that having led a change programme in some form was seen as a necessary CV point in order for some middle officers to secure promotion to the next rank; hence the proliferation of change *"for the sake of it."* If they want to avoid unnecessary change fatigue then forces will have to work to disincentivise such unnecessary change. Likewise leaders should take

care to avoid additional change programmes if there is not the money, time or political capital to support them and see them through to completion – half-finished change programmes that are then abandoned contribute far more to disillusionment with the change process than anything else.

In order to achieve a culture of innovation and continuous improvement, however, forces also need to take care to avoid the opposite mistake of falling into a culture of pessimism and belief that change is not possible or affordable. This is particularly a risk after such a prolonged period of budget constraint, where officers – both frontline and line managers – might assume that new ideas are not worth pursuing because there won't be any money available to fund them. An interesting example of an idea facing this problem was raised at Lincolnshire Police, which only succeeded because in this case the officer with the idea wrote directly to the Chief Constable:

"What we have now is an 'ask the Chief' email address... For body worn video someone put a question 'could we have a bracket in the van so that when the prisoner is in the back we can video what they're doing', because people bang their head on the door and say we punched them and it's a good idea, not going to cost a lot, so an officer has said 'I've got this idea' and the Chief has said 'yeah that's a good idea.' But if it had come to me as an Inspector I would have said, 'I don't think we'd get the money for it'."

Inspector at Lincolnshire Police

The Deputy Chief Constable at Lincolnshire Police was also very aware of this risk that change could be stifled because officers might not feel confident about whether funding could be made available for new ideas. They were keen, however, to challenge this attitude and make clear that, regardless of austerity, money would always be made available for ideas that genuinely deserved it and promised to deliver real improvements:

"Because we've had so little money for so long people accept that we don't have a lot of money so they will put up with things more than they should. Part of my job is to change that culture – if it needs changing let's change it. If it needs money then we'll find the money. But if it's the right thing to do we'll go and do it."

Deputy Chief Constable, Lincolnshire Police

Innovation from below

Good change, however, is not something which can only come from above. While there are many examples from the forces we studied of successful change programmes led and delivered top-down, there were also examples of where change had come from the initiative of frontline officers, to then be rolled out across the entire force or even nationwide.

One good example was how frontline officers at Greater Manchester Police had, of their own initiative, been working on a project to develop a sex offender management app. However, the view was that they had had to fight very hard to get approval to work on developing this idea.

Often the hierarchical nature of policing can be a problem when it comes to encouraging those at the bottom to think creatively and take the initiative, when they are more used to simply taking orders and having ideas come from above. Frontline officers usually feel they need approval from their supervisors to do anything new; Sergeants and Inspectors in turn forward these ideas up to their own managers for approval rather than risk making a decision themselves, and so forth.

Having a system that allows good ideas to bypass this chain of command is essential if forces are to harness their full potential for innovation. Too many officers across multiple forces reported having ideas that seemed promising forwarded up the chain of command until eventually they happened to reach a mid-ranking officer who disliked the idea and shut it down, with short-sighted comments such as that working on innovative projects would *"distract from their day-to-day duties"*. If ideas have to win the approval of every line manager in a chain from Sergeant all the way through to the Chief Constable in order to move forward, it only takes a single disapproving officer at some point in that chain to close down the entire project. Means of bypassing this chain are therefore essential.

When promising ideas are blocked, shut down or ignored without good reason or explanation it can be extremely disheartening for the officers who came up with and supported the original proposal and can quickly discourage any future attempts at innovation. Even when ideas are actually unhelpful or unworkable and need to be rejected, it's

important that leaders do so in a way that provides proper feedback, is respectful and doesn't discourage or disincentivise officers to try again in the future.

"If people are taking time to put stuff in, then they deserve feedback. If it's something we're not going to do then say we're not going to do it and tell them why. Say we considered that before and these are the reasons we didn't do it, but thanks for your input."

Superintendent at Cumbria Police

Unfortunately, officers in some forces had experienced their ideas be simply ignored and not even given a response one way or the other; the conclusion they drew was that *"no matter what you send, you never see anything come backwards,"* and that it was therefore pointless to try.

"We have a disconnect here between the mantra... tell us your ideas!... I think the reality of it is that our officers don't like making suggestions for change. Some of that I think is because they've probably tried in the past and it wasn't listened to and so they've lost confidence."

Chief Superintendent at Cheshire Constabulary

The key is therefore in having a culture that welcomes challenge, suggestions and ideas on their own merits, regardless of rank. A system that rewards those who come up with ideas is one good way of encouraging this, and would help avoid the perception some officers have that *"line managers either shut down ideas, or steal them."* Most forces already have some kind of awards system in place to recognise innovation, but these could perhaps be publicized better and often they were felt to involve too much bureaucracy to nominate officers for, discouraging busy officers to take the time to file nominations even for very worthy colleagues; this could be an easy thing to fix to encourage more innovation. Similarly, few officers had the time or knowledge of how to apply to the National Police Transformation Fund – a potential resource which could be better used if more officers were aware of it.

Creating dedicated individuals or Behavioural Change Teams who were specifically tasked with collecting, developing and disseminating promising innovations was another way of doing this. Dyfed Powys Police had appointed continuous improvement champions among their police staff who reported very positive experiences of driving

change, saying that *"any changes or any suggestions that we had were welcomed, you were never stopped."* However, these were primarily for police staff rather than officers, and most serving officers were unaware of them or their work.

Almost all forces studied had, at one time or another, a formal suggestion scheme of some form for frontline officers and staff to put forward ideas. However, with a few exceptions, these schemes had either been formally discontinued, or had simply lapsed into inactivity and been largely forgotten by the majority of the force, sometimes very soon after their introduction. Even where they were sometimes used, awareness was low and ideas submitted were only erratically responded to or adopted. A typical conversation among officers went as follows:

"Officer 1: There's a suggestion scheme, but I emailed once and didn't get anything back..."

Officer 2: I got a mug and £50.

Officer 3: I didn't know there was one."

Focus group of frontline officers at Cumbria Police

Some senior officers complained that the reasons schemes had been discontinued was that the quality of ideas being put forward was low and they were of little value. This, however, reflects more on the quality of information and communication across the force than it does on the creative potential of frontline officers. This is a common problem organisations experience with employee voice – if downward communication about the issues the force leadership is grappling with is not good enough, suggestion schemes will only produce ideas that the leadership perceives as uninformed, unhelpful or irrelevant to the matters at hand. Only informed employees or officers are able to contribute constructively to important discussions.

When the culture of speaking up is in place, the exact mechanisms via which people do so don't matter so much and indeed having a multiplicity of formal and informal routes for ideas to take can be a positive thing, rather than trying to channel all innovation through a single team or scheme. Dyfed Powys Police was one force with a particular sense that *"there has been a lot of bottom-up change,"* largely because, as one officer put it, *"I*

think people do feel empowered to have a say and then it is taken seriously." Because officers felt their input was welcomed and tended to be acted upon, *"people are not afraid to have an opinion."* Suggestions for bottom-up changes at Dyfed Powys had come through their line managers, through the staff survey, via continuous improvement champions, directly to the Ethics Committee (on changing the policy on tattooed officers), via the 'Ask the Chief' blog and one suggestion that came directly from an informal discussion with the Chief Constable at one of his roadshows, when an officer mentioned they would really benefit from having mobile ANPR cameras in some local rural vehicles – as a result *"the Chief has done that and we're rolling that out now."*

Risk aversion

For understandable reasons, most police forces are naturally quite risk averse organisations. This is true both of the institutional structure and policies of the force, and of the personalities of most individual officers serving within it. Officers are tightly bound by the Code of Ethics and various other rules and policies which they must abide by at all times. When things go wrong in policing, there is the potential for very serious consequences both legally for the individuals concerned and reputationally for the force and the service as a whole.

Innovation, however, by its nature involves trying something new, with uncertain consequences. It therefore necessarily entails a certain level of risk. These two principles – a desire to minimize risk and a desire to innovate – can often therefore come into conflict. Most senior officers interviewed for this research expressed a view that their force had to get better at managing risk and encouraging a healthy level of risk taking within the confines of the Code of Ethics and other core values, and to move away from the view that *"the sense of discipline means there's no license to innovate, even if it's with the best of intentions."*

As part of this change in approach, the College of Policing has been working to create a 'High Risk Pilot Register' to enable forces to attempt riskier innovation with national support in case things go wrong:

"Essentially it will be to help Forces if they want to do something that goes against current guidance or contradicts an HMIC recommendation or is something that the media might get quite scandalised or sort of excited about or think it's very controversial, we've said we will provide Forces with support to peer review their evaluation plan for it, so for them to have an evaluation plan we will put it on a register and therefore be prepared to say to anybody who asks, yes that's been registered with the College we think it's a sensible test, they are doing what they can to manage the risk."

Rachel Tuffin, Director of Knowledge, Research and Education at the College of Policing

While this is a very welcome development in helping support forces to innovate, it still requires a cultural shift among officers concerned. At present, there are concerns among many serving officers that they won't be supported by their own leaders if they try new things that go wrong; the fear is always that *"if it hits the media, you are hung out to dry."* Such fears are deeply ingrained and even one or two cases in recent memory, where officers were seen to suffer the consequences of trying to do new things that went wrong, is enough to put off a whole generation of police officers from trying to do the same. The key, as one Deputy Chief Constable put it, is to make clear to all officers that, so long as intentions are right and the Code of Ethics is abided by, then *"you will be supported"* even if things don't work out.

"We're trying to say we're a learning organisation.... If something's gone wrong, I'm very much saying that's an organisational learning issue or that's a performance issue, that's not a discipline issue."

Deputy Chief Constable of Dyfed Powys Police

Another kind of psychological risk aversion comes from the fear of officers being mocked by their colleagues for speaking up, a sense that *"I don't want to put myself forward in case I'm wrong, in case they laugh at me."* Combatting these fears similarly relies on encouragement from above to support and reward innovation and to treat even bad or unworkable ideas with respect and politeness when responding to them, rather than doing so in a mocking or disparaging way.

Having the skills

In many ways the police service is a model sector when it comes to training and personal development. There are very good national and force-specific development and learning programmes available, with the only caveat that many officers are too busy and overworked to spare the time to enrol on them as much as they might like.

To fully embrace the potential offered by new technology often, however, requires quite specialist technical skills that might be in short supply. As mentioned above, many forces have outsourced or cut back IT functions in recent years which can make it difficult to find the necessary skills to make use of big data, analytics or other powerful digital tools. Bringing in outside contractors to help with these issues is obviously one solution, but runs into a common problem in the public sector; organisations attempting to buy in complex technology without the necessary in-house skills to really know what they need, understand enough about the technology to properly supervise or evaluate the work provided by contractors or know whether they are being charged a fair price. Those forces that did have that internal capacity, to some extent, seemed to fare a lot better:

"Durham is an outstanding Force anyway but they've got their own in-house IT and they seem to be able to just harness it better and use it more appropriately than some other Forces... West Midlands have done something similar, they have got a team of internal data whizzes and they are helping them to build their predictive approaches... it's one of those things where I think you can outsource to a certain extent if you know what you are buying. It's much harder to do when... you are not really sure what you are after yet."

Rachel Tuffin, Director of Knowledge, Research and Education at the College of Policing

One of the lessons from the case study at Cheshire Constabulary was that the Special Constabulary often bring many valuable specialist skills from their day jobs, which forces could make much more use of than they currently do. If forces were to maintain a proper database of the specialist skills that their Special Constables possessed, officers and police staff in need of support during change programmes would be able to quickly and easily see if there was someone with a matching skillset who could be brought in to work on that project team.

Making time for innovation

A real problem faced by all forces when it comes to innovation, is the struggle to give officers time to 'look up' from their day-to-day duties in order to think strategically about issues facing the force and how they might do their jobs better. The problem lies in the fact that policing is such important work that day-to-day duties cannot simply be put on hold for the entire force to focus on something else. Whereas a business or even some other public sector organisations might be able to shut down for a day to have an entire company away-day and focus on innovation, strategy or development, that is simply not an option for a police force which has to offer 24/7 protection for the communities it serves.

While policing is therefore extremely good at responding to crises, critical incidents and dealing with day-to-day problems as they emerge, it is understandable that it finds long term, strategic change more difficult:

"I think where policing finds it more difficult, because they are so good at doing [critical incident response] they are always sucking resources from one thing to another thing, and then the overall long term, strategic change is much harder to achieve because the resource that would have been supporting that long term strategic change is constantly having to leap around to different priorities"

Rachel Tuffin, Director of Knowledge, Research and Education at the College of Policing

The main opportunities which officers and staff have to find time for strategic thinking and innovation come in the form of away days, development days and workshops. Senior leaders receive these fairly regularly; most forces offered strategic days away from daily responsibilities to those of Chief Inspector rank and above. Some forces also extended this opportunity to Inspectors or even Sergeants, while others restricted those ranks to a single away day per year (which was often taken up with personal development rather than thinking about innovation). Frontline officers reported that their more regular 'divisional days' were usually taken up catching up on day-to-day work that they had fallen behind on and therefore did not provide opportunities for wider reflection.

However, some forces had been working to give more strategic days each year to Sergeants and Inspectors as well as senior leaders. While costly on the face of it in terms of working hours, it seems likely this would be a worthwhile investment, given the critical nature of these two ranks as the direct line managers to the majority of what happens in the force and their excellent understanding of the challenges frontline policing officers face on the ground.

Other forces had different schemes that could allow time for officers and staff to participate in innovation. Dyfed Powys Police ran, as part of their leadership development programme, the Llywio [Steering] scheme, which a new cohort of frontline officers and police staff could apply to join every two years. These talented and promising individuals were then deployed to work on more long-term strategic projects away from their usual area.

One department at Sussex Police had considered in 2017 introducing weekly team sessions *“where they would take maybe half a dozen people into a meeting room; ‘let’s talk about ideas, what’s wrong with the department, what could be improved?’”* But in the end they decided they were *“too busy”* and abandoned the idea. As one frustrated staff member put it, *“that was something that really could have raised morale and really brought out some new ideas for the department.”* On reflection, staff agreed perhaps there wasn’t enough time to do something like this weekly, but perhaps many departments could afford a monthly session of this kind which would still bring major benefits for innovation if staff could be supported in making time for it.

Innovation is only useful insofar as people across the police service are aware of it and adopt it. A single police officer could come up with a revolutionary approach to a specific issue with potential to hugely improve outcomes or save money, but if nobody else hears about it then the innovation is confined to its inventor and almost all the potential is lost.

Often forces rely on specialists or those at higher rank to pull ideas out and disseminate them, often by the suggestion schemes or other means discussed under ‘Innovation from below’ above. Similarly the award schemes discussed above are a good way to showcase achievements and innovations and the College of Policing performs this function by collecting learning at a national level.

There is still, however, a sense that forces could do better in this area. The Prospero system on the intranet at one force, designed to share best practice, was not felt to be as good as it could be – Prospero was described as *“very confusing”* and *“not designed for operational use.”* Innovate forums were felt to be better, but in general intranet and other digital forums were not the most effective way of convincing officers to change practice.

Policing as a profession was described as still having a very *“oral culture”* and therefore often people needed to hear stories in person in order to really be convinced of the benefits of new ideas. Exchanges, roundtables, conferences, awards and other such opportunities for in person storytelling were therefore among the most powerful means of sharing innovation available.

Sharing learning

“The general consensus appears to be that people don’t necessarily value the innovation that they’ve got, so they do it and think it’s good for what they’ve got in front of them, but they don’t necessarily think ‘someone else could try this, perhaps I’ve discovered something here’. There seems to be a lack of awareness of what they’ve just achieved... they assume that because they’ve done it, everybody else can do it so ‘why would I tell them what they already know?’ So there is something about getting people to have courage to put their hands up and say ‘I’ve got an idea’.”

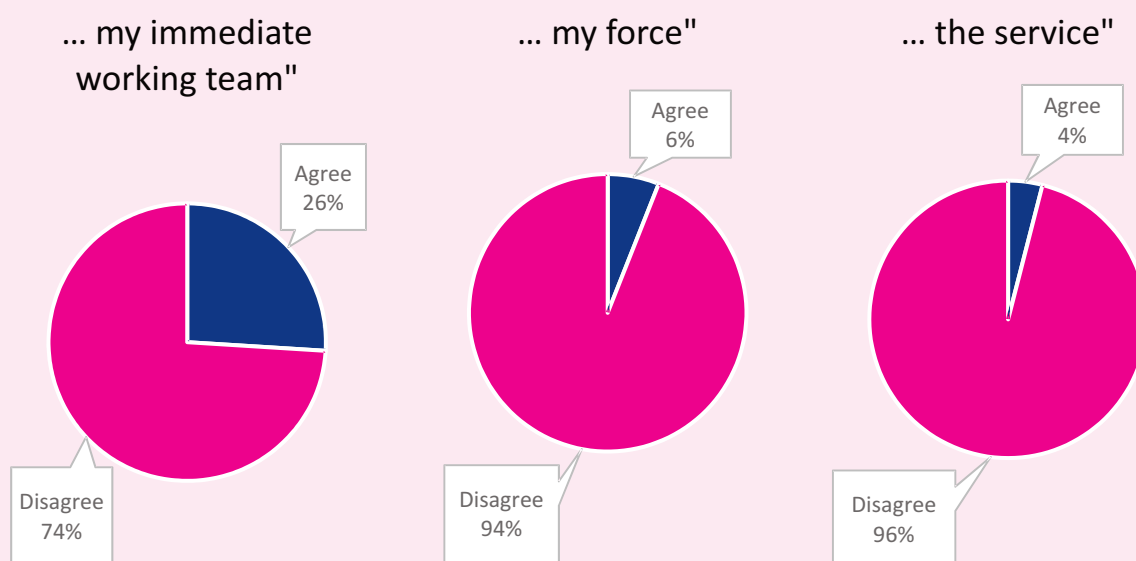
Chief Superintendent at Cheshire Constabulary

6. Part 3 – The change management process

Despite all the possibilities of bottom-up innovation, most major change is and will continue to be achieved through large-scale top-down change programmes. The way in which these are handled, however, can have hugely variable impacts on employee engagement and on the success or failure of the innovation. There is also considerable evidence that change management is closely linked with employee health outcomes (Bordia, 2004).

However, there was a great deal of frustration from many, though not all, of the officers interviewed for this research with how change management was often dealt with in the police service. As shown from the charts below, change – particularly strategic force-wide change – is not felt to be well managed by the overwhelming majority of officers.

Percentage respondents saying “Change is managed well in...



Source: PFEW Demand, Capacity and Welfare Survey 2018

Securing buy-in

For change to succeed, the workforce has to be fully on-board with what the force is trying to do. When change is seen as being imposed or “done to us” by those on the frontline, rather than a collaborative project that all staff and officers are involved in doing together, there will be resistance, lack of cooperation and a major hit to engagement and wellbeing.

The vast majority of police officers are well aware of the need for change in general and understand the imperatives driving change discussed in the introduction to this report – austerity, new technology and the need to adapt to changing criminal behaviours and public expectations. However, the specific reasons for individual change programmes were sometimes much less well explained and appreciated in many of the forces studied.

The first important element in any successful change management is therefore in explaining the purpose of the change and ensuring that those on the frontline are committed to helping the leadership achieve that objective.

Police officers are naturally motivated by an ethos of public service, which in normal circumstances is an enormous strength. However, this ethos also means that change programmes solely or primarily thought to be about saving money, rather than improving service, can provoke instinctive hostility and opposition from the workforce. Forces should therefore take care that their messaging and narrative around change reflects the intrinsic public service motivation of the workforce – rather than speaking only about saving money.

While purely cost saving objectives can therefore be

unpopular, in reality many of the change programmes studied were not *solely* cost saving measures but also had other objectives around improving service delivery and better meeting public demand alongside them. However, many officers were often not aware of these other objectives and therefore assumed the objectives of major restructurings to be purely financial, making it harder to secure buy-in as a result. Where forces were able to combine financial aims with performance related aims, it was generally easier to win over officers and staff:

"The rationale was actually quite good, the reasons for changing were made very clear, it's financial and we have got a workforce that is currently not doing the job that it needs to do and that's affecting our performance, our ability to manage risk; I think the vast majority of people actually got it, that was a bit of a winner to start with."

Chief Inspector at Surrey Police

The second step to securing buy-in is to ensure that the change project is being led by a well-coordinated and dedicated team who have real passion and commitment for the project. Often where the change leaders were particularly enthusiastic this energy and positivity could bleed through to the rest of the force:

"The project team have been on it almost 24/7. I've even called them out of hours directly to sort something out...it probably is not appreciated as much as it should be. You don't get paid for it, but you know it makes everyone's life a lot better."

Frontline officer at Lincolnshire Police

On the other hand, where project leadership was divided among several teams or managed by people for whom it was only a secondary priority alongside other aspects of their job, it was far more likely that the projects would run into difficulties. It was also often particularly challenging for forces when project leadership changed part way through a project, or resources were being added or withdrawn due to changing priorities:

"Consistency, which is almost impossible to get in people and resources that are being used for change programmes, is a really big issue and it's a massive challenge and very rarely are we able to actually do it well."

Rachel Tuffin, Director of Knowledge, Research and Education at the College of Policing

Managing expectations

One of the best ways to generate enthusiasm for proposed change is by clearly describing the benefits the change will bring to people, both officers and the public. Some forces could clearly have done a better job of disseminating this information to prevent complaints such as that *"there's been no info over how the tech will make people's jobs easier or better or allow us to give better service."* When these benefits were clearly spelled out, officers tended to be very positive about forthcoming change, at least to begin with.

While emphasising the benefits of technology and other change is essential to securing buy-in, however, there is a risk of over-selling. This research uncovered several examples of new technology in particular being *"overhyped"*, with the result that initial enthusiasm was quickly replaced with disillusionment when it failed to live up to unrealistic expectations. One of the biggest pitfalls in this area appeared to be promising officers a certain amount of 'time saved' from changes, be it from use of mobile devices or new systems or processes.

At Dyfed Powys for instance, the introduction of the ICAT team was designed to save time overall by better triaging incoming crime reports and having a dedicated team to process issues which did not require an in-person response. While this was clearly a net time saver for officers, it was hard for frontline officers to notice these effects, as demand was simultaneously increasing, officers were having to spend some time dealing with new processes as part of the change and crime recording process were changing at the same time, adding to confusion about metrics:

"Culturally it's been difficult for the frontend officers to realise that the ICAT team is there to benefit them; initially they felt it is adding to their work because many officers are being asked to look at things that they see maybe as something of a new task to them – but in reality it is resolving lots of issues that weren't being dealt with before.... It's slow for them to see that impact."

Assistant Director at Dyfed Powys Police

While project leaders might be able to calculate net hours saved by such changes, in reality it's not always advantageous to present this to the frontline officers in terms of 'time saved' as this might feel

very far from their daily experiences. Given the huge volume of work facing most police officers, any time that is saved in one area will quickly be given over to catching up on a backlog of work somewhere else:

"We had some data that showed how much time we're saving for frontline officers; the Chief in his roadshows went out and said 'right, what are you doing with your spare time'... that was a bit of an own goal in reality as in fact that they weren't feeling that they had any spare time."

Assistant Director at Dyfed Powys Police

Similarly, almost all forces had undergone a rollout of mobile devices in recent years and at the national level there was considerable discussion around quantifying the benefits of these, which came down to "an hour a day" gained per officer. While a useful way of looking at the technology from the point of view of strategic decision makers, this was again not often a helpful way to talk about it with those on the frontline, who were unlikely to end up with an hour of spare time each day.

A better approach might be that pursued at Cheshire Constabulary, where change managers would talk about how the devices enabled officers to do other things – made it easier to access training, send out information, unlock the estate, work in the community etc. This approach was felt to be a more effective way of communicating the benefits of the devices to officers than a simple focus on a time saved metric:

"20 years ago we didn't have any measures at all... we went through a phase of trying to measure everything... I think we've now got a lot more mature and realised that such measures, while easy and quick are actually quite lazy, and they usually drive quite perverse behaviour."

Chief Superintendent at Cheshire Constabulary

There was therefore a move away from talking about having to measure the success of tablets in numbers, a change which "makes us more vulnerable but also more enlightened." The previous approach had, according to one of the project leaders, meant "I'd spend more than an hour a day trying to prove we'd saved an hour a day," while at least one other force had reportedly tried asking officers to fill in activity analysis sheets trying to prove the time saved, which were themselves heavily time consuming – a sure recipe for disillusionment.

Consultations

As evidence has long shown, "many organisations have learned that they can create a vision of the future which has more credibility and force if they involve staff in creating that vision." (CIPD, 2012) Consultations with officers and staff are therefore a vital part of the change management process.

As IPA have long argued, however, one of the keys to an effective approach to employee voice is that it must be *informed* voice in order to facilitate a meaningful discussion – without this, consultations can devolve into 'moan sessions' and an opportunity for staff to vent their feelings, rather than contribute constructive ideas.

There seemed to be evidence of this having happened with some of the consultations in this report – senior officers had in some cases approached consultations by demanding positivity and constructive ideas from the frontline about how to deal with changes, which frontline staff were not informed enough or psychologically prepared to contribute, resulting in "friction" and frustration on both sides. Similarly consultations will typically be regarded by officers, as some were, as "totally pointless" if those running the consultation sessions don't themselves have necessary information to hand to answer reasonable questions.

The key to a successful consultation is ensuring that it is meaningful, and approached with honesty, transparency and good faith, not merely as an exercise in box-ticking:

"Making sure that people have a voice and that they don't get cynical because they see the leaders actually really meaning what they say, that when they engage, they are going to use what they are told to inform the direction of travel"

Rachel Tuffin, Director of Knowledge, Research and Education at the College of Policing

A proper consultation should be a two-way process of dialogue, not just a single event of seeking input from officers and then sending nothing back. It should begin with information about the issues the force is seeking to address, options being considered, then solicit views, then respond to any questions or suggestions raised and continue possibly for several rounds of dialogue if there are outstanding issues to resolve.

In cases where suggestions put forward by officers receive no response, either positive or negative, people will invariably lose confidence in the process. On the other hand, a good response to suggestions looks like a situation where *“some were implemented, some weren’t, but a rationale was given when they weren’t.”* Where proper explanations and responses to ideas are given, this can increase confidence from the frontline even when their ideas are being rejected:

“The consultation is very good, I remember them asking for any ideas that you have for it; not everything gets taken up because there’s a lot of ideas, but you still get feedback and where they can they incorporate that into the system.”

Frontline officer at Lincolnshire Police

When it comes to change involving technology, it is particularly important to ensure a practical level of testing and feedback from those who are going to be using the technology, before during and after the implementation. This ensures that the technology chosen is well suited to user needs – something that might appear obvious but is often overlooked by organisations in practice due to project managers assuming they know best:

“I honestly think if we hadn’t spoken to the officers to see what they’re doing – the fact that they’re often working on their devices – we wouldn’t have gone down that route. Officers were saying ‘just tell me what I need to know; we’re officers, we’re in a rank structure just tell us what we need to do.’”

Marketing Manager at Cumbria Police

While technology rollouts offer many opportunities for those at the frontline to be closely involved in designing and guiding the process, however, this can be much more difficult when it comes to organisational restructuring and changes that might negatively impact on officers and staff, particularly where redundancies might be involved. Talking with the workforce about change involving organisational restructuring is often very difficult – *“what you need to focus on there is why it has to be done and what the choices are.”* Some team leaders felt that in these cases, *“sometimes there’s no point giving staff options because there are no options.”*

However, this is to miss the point of what consultations are for. The IPA model of Option Based Consultation suggests that the key is to be transparent about all options that have been or could be considered in meeting the business objective, even those which were swiftly rejected. No responsible leadership team reaches important decisions about organisational change without considering multiple options – it’s therefore disingenuous to suggest to officers and staff that only one option was ever on the table. Even if there is only one option that is realistic and viable it is vital to show how that conclusion was arrived at and be prepared to answer questions from officers and staff about it. Communication then needs to continue over residual issues that those at the frontline might have which they feel remain unresolved, even if the leadership think the consultation is over and want to move on to implementation.

These residual issues can include perceptions of unfairness within the change process. Recruitment for newly created specialist teams and units, for example, may be quite sought after positions. In some cases, these teams had been recruited without fully transparent recruitment processes and without job interviews, leading to perceptions from other officers not selected that it had been a *“very unfair process.”* One such example was the creation of the new ICAT team at Dyfed Powys:

“I remember an email came out [about recruiting officers for the new ICAT team]; a PC on my team asked about it for more information and you couldn’t find out any more information about it apart from this very basic email... saying to contact the DCI, which a number of people did. Nobody that I know of had a response, yet all of a sudden this handful of people were selected to work in that department.”

Police Sergeant at Dyfed Powys Police

While it might be too late to correct the initial communications and process used in cases like this, it is still important for project leaders to engage with staff over this kind of concern to reassure them that their complaints have been heard and that lessons have been learned for the future.

When to inform people

One of the key questions that arose throughout the case studies was over when and how much to tell people about forthcoming changes.

"It's all about making sure that you don't make people anxious which has implications for their wellbeing when they don't need to be, but making sure that you are not progressing a massive piece of work without them having any kind of clue about it; there's always a tension between those two things obviously."

Rachel Tuffin, Director of Knowledge, Research and Education at the College of Policing

On the one hand, there is an acute awareness that "the service is very guilty of information overload", and a feeling among some leaders that "what motivates people is what directly impacts on them... do they really need to know and unpick the whys and wherefores of that?" Clearly bombarding people with constant information about the minutiae of every forthcoming change is distracting and telling people about possible changes long before decisions have been made could lead to unnecessary anxiety and prompt questions that leaders are unable to answer.

On the other hand, failing to tell people about possible changes can lead to a sense of betrayal when the announcements are finally sprung on them; "it isn't as simple as saying 'next week that's happening' – cos what people will do is they'll go disengaged, grumpy, 'why do I want to do that? Nobody spoke to me about that'." Furthermore, not providing early information simply leads to rumours taking hold and change leaders completely abdicating control of the narrative among the workforce. It is naïve to imagine in any large organisation, even one as disciplined as the police, that it is possible to plan and prepare for organisational change in a sealed environment without leaks or rumours spreading.

On balance, then, despite the tension between these two aims, it is better to be as transparent as possible, even if final decisions haven't been made and even if there's nothing officers can do about the forthcoming changes at this stage:

"...So you have told them but they will then put it in a box, marked 'I'm parking that for now because there is nothing I can do about it' but at least they know and as you say you don't get the opposite problem which is a disaster in that it starts to leak out of a project team

and everybody goes, 'what's this all about – I've heard they are going to take away our analysts, that's outrageous, nobody asked us'."

Rachel Tuffin, Director of Knowledge, Research and Education at the College of Policing

Of course, in some cases there are serious obstacles to this desired level of transparency. It can be difficult for example where plans are rapidly changing or evolving throughout the process and this can be confusing for people if there are frequent contradictory updates about what the plans are. Other problems can include legal difficulties with consultations where redundancies are involved, as people can't be forewarned about the possibilities without triggering formal redundancy consultations. Nevertheless, even in these tricky cases the best course of action is to be as honest and transparent as it is legally possible to be, as failures to do so can lead to a loss of trust that is then difficult to repair:

"One of the big challenges is how do you tell people what's going without breaching legal obligations, while being as open and transparent as you can be. And because I think we didn't get that right in the first place, when we were then open and transparent people didn't necessarily believe you."

Assistant Chief Constable at Sussex Police

What is especially important is to make sure that mid-level managers are engaged and brought on-board as early as possible in any change process. The support and cooperation of Inspectors and Chief Inspectors is vital to change within policing as they will be the local leaders responsible for ensuring that any changes are implemented in their areas, even though "you're asking supervisors and leaders to manage the change even when they're affected by the change, which can be quite difficult." If Inspectors and Chief Inspectors appear unenthusiastic, disengaged or disgruntled about changes, there is very little hope that the rest of the workforce will be won over. Similarly, they need to be issued with information as early as possible, so that when questions inevitably start to arise from frontline officers who've heard rumours of changes, these can be countered with official facts. If an Inspector has to say 'I don't know' when asked by their officers if rumours about possible changes are true, the force hierarchy will no longer be trusted by those at the frontline who will rely more on alternative sources of information.

How to inform people

The final question when it comes to information about change is what methods of disseminating information work best. The relative advantages of different forms of communication with officers and staff have already been discussed in detail above, but when it comes to change programmes in particular it is clear that direct in-person briefings are the most powerful tool available.

Over-reliance on direct messaging such as emails from a very senior level is a mistake – such messages about important changes that could have major effects on officers' working lives can feel very remote and tend to imply communication is a one-way street, as there are few opportunities to respond or engage in a dialogue. Face-to-face discussions with line managers, on the other hand, can be much more meaningful opportunities to calm fears, address questions and win hearts and minds. Of course, in order to do this the line managers themselves need to be fully brought on-board early:

"I think leaders didn't play a big enough role at an early stage... A lot of the communication was coming from me and Chief Superintendents. That was the wrong level. I think it needed to be coming from the Chief Inspectors and the Inspectors, buying them in, because they're the ones who see the teams on a daily basis, they can pick up the concerns and have those conversations on a one-to-one basis."

Assistant Chief Constable at Sussex Police

These mid-ranking officers sit at the key point in the force hierarchy, to transform general change objectives into local ones and turn high-level concerns about strategy into practical questions about how frontline officers will be affected. One very successful local leader at Sussex Police explained their approach to managing change for their teams, involving:

"A two day training/workshop which I fronted and got some external speaker from the partnership and made it feel very local... that was probably the lightbulb trigger moment when everything started to make sense [to officers], because actually they moved away from [general concerns] to 'have I got a locker', 'what's the fleet look like', 'who am I going to work with', 'who's my supervisor going to be'; it's at that point you know

things are moving in the right direction because it's just the detail they want to know as opposed to the why the what and the how."

Chief Inspector at Sussex Police

However, direct interaction between frontline officers and senior force leaders or project leaders is also extremely valuable in winning hearts and minds. Logistically, it is always going to be very difficult for a Chief Constable to personally visit and speak to all officers across an entire force, even in large groups. Nevertheless, roadshows where Chief Officers tour the force speaking about change programmes were considered one of the most valuable and impactful forms of communication about change across the forces and projects we looked at, as they really impress upon officers and staff the importance of the changes, their connection to the force's strategic objectives and provide a reassuring sense of leadership. As an example, the Chief Officers' roadshows at Dyfed Powys managed to address in-person around 500 out of a total workforce of around 2,000 over the period of their introduction of ICAT:

"what's most powerful is if you've been out and somebody has said something to you about a particular problem... I write little notes in my notebook, people have then said, 'thank you for taking the time and writing it down', which gives you the impression in the past when they've had the opportunity to say something, they've not really felt anyone was listening. And then if they can see something happening as a result of that and you can go back and say 'by the way, we've now introduced this', it starts to create I think a momentum of its own."

Deputy Chief Constable at Dyfed Powys Police

The use of change champions or super users has also proved very effective for many of the forces we looked at – leveraging those high engagement individuals to bring the rest of the force with them. Many forces that had done Mobile Data Terminals rollouts had used this super user approach, embedding them within each team, to ensure all officers had a local and trusted peer who they could address questions to and could help them out.

Often it is much more effective to have this peer-to-peer communication through a system that is both

formalised but still feels authentic, rather than top-down communication which can feel corporate and distrusted alongside informal rumourmongering from the peer group:

"If one officer says 'it doesn't work', another cop can say, 'no you don't know what you're talking about, this is what you do', and be more direct as a peer. Whereas the project team would have to be a bit more corporate but a peer can just go straight in there and say it how it is."

Inspector at Lincolnshire Police

Of course, this approach only works when the change champions themselves are fully on-board. One force ran into difficulties when they failed to keep their change champions up to date with plans for the changes – as a result, while *"they were enthusiastic to begin with"* that then collapsed when they didn't know what was going on, with knock-on effects on support from the rest of the force. It is therefore vitally important to keep change champions fully informed and engaged throughout the process.

7. Appendix – Summary of all case studies

Cheshire Constabulary

At Cheshire Police the case study look at two change programmes; the transition to Local Policing Units (LPUs), a major geographical restructuring, and the Digital Policing Programme (DPP) that involved the rollout of mobile devices. However, we also focused this case study specifically on looking at the impact on the Special Constabulary rather than regular officers. Both programmes had been well communicated to officers and successfully secured buy-in by convincing officers of the benefits, though the way in which the Special Constabulary had been treated caused some friction, as specials often felt they were treated as afterthoughts by the wider force. Engagement generally from specials was fundamentally strong, as a volunteer force, but occasionally undermined by individual incidents in which they were treated as 'second class' and struggled to make their voice heard within the wider organisation.

Cumbria Police

The case study at Cumbria revolved around the streamlining of internal communications across the force and an update to their Force Net online portal. In particular they involved a limitation on the use of force-wide emails and monthly education campaigns on specific issues. Thanks to a thorough process of consultation with officers, the changes were designed in a way that met officers' needs and were well suited to winning the support of the frontline. Coupled with a heavy focus on in-person 7 minute briefings to inform people about ongoing changes, they succeeded in a smooth rollout with a well-informed officer base and little resistance.

Dyfed Powys Police

This case study examined the formation of the Incident and Crime Allocation Team (ICAT) as a new means of triaging incoming crime reports and dealing with those crimes for which an in-person officer response is no longer considered necessary – a major departure for Dyfed Powys as one of the last forces in the UK to previously send an in-person response to all reported crimes. Consultations had been thorough and the new team themselves worked well, but there were issues with not having properly prepared expectations on the part of many frontline officers about how these changes would interact with other simultaneous changes to how crimes were recorded and how much time it would save them. General engagement levels at Dyfed Powys had improved significantly in recent years thanks to a new senior leadership team who were much more visible and actively listening to those at the frontline.

Greater Manchester Police

At GMP the study focused on the rollout of the new Target Operating Model over the previous two years. This was an attempt to change the culture, practice and expectations of GMP in order to adapt to recent budget reductions and better meet public demand and expectations. Awareness of the Target Operating Model among frontline officers at the time of fieldwork was low across the board and a number of communications issues, including difficulties with the force intranet and reliance on email communications that officers had no time to read, had prevented the message from reaching the frontline. Project leaders were aware of these problems and were working hard on developing alternative communication approaches for a reboot of the project's messaging.

Lincolnshire Police

The Lincolnshire Police case study looked at the rollout of Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs) to frontline officers – smartphone like devices which allowed officers to process information relating to their work while on the scene. This particular innovation was something many UK forces were doing at the same time and Lincolnshire appeared to have managed this project very successfully, using an enthusiastic project team to engage with frontline officers through both formal and informal channels and effective deployment of super users. This helped ensure that awareness and buy-in were high and the technology was rolled out in controlled stages according to a strategic plan.

Police Service of Northern Ireland

At PSNI we aimed to study the shift to a system of Priority Based Resourcing (PBR), a large change programme that would affect the way the service was structured and resources allocated. The service had been quick off the mark at engagement with the workforce, with a series of thorough consultations and in-person briefings by senior programme leaders and a clear focus on the four pillars of employee engagement. Parallel to this, over the past four years there has been a significant body of internal communication and engagement work undertaken to drive the service's 'Policing with the Community' culture and ethos forward. This work has helped the service to fully explain and get buy-in from the workforce around their organisational priorities. This has also acted as a good precursor to further change work as, by understanding and buying into the organisation's direction, police officers and staff have a better understanding of change programmes delivered to help them achieve their aims.

Surrey Police

At Surrey we examined their new Policing in Your Neighbourhood (PIYN) programme, giving officers ownership of individual jobs 'from cradle to grave' and avoiding handovers of investigations between multiple officers, and also the Policing Together programme with the sharing of operational units with Sussex Police. While the PIYN was felt to be a good idea in principle, many officers did not feel the consultation process had been meaningful and the programme faced an uphill struggle against resource shortages. The Policing Together work was a variable success, depending largely on the uneven degree of collaboration between different teams. Full integration was also challenged by the need for compatible support systems and technologies.

Sussex Police

The major change programme at Sussex Police was the Local Policing Programme, a major reform of neighbourhood policing, response, investigations and public protection work designed to achieve major cost savings and meet the force's budget reductions. Like many of the other forces' change work this was driven by national budget cuts, though unlike at other forces the financial motive for the change was more openly acknowledged by the force to its officers. The changes ran into some resistance where mid-level leaders were not brought on-board early enough and their teams felt that all the changes were being directed from a very distant senior level.

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