

Police Uplift Phase Three Final Report

Bringing Together Learning to Inform Workforce Assessment Models

Dr Benjamin Bowles, Dr Laura Knight and Dr Emma Williams

Executive Summary

Assessment processes are fundamental to supporting learning, development and selection of the right people into policing. Properly training, assessing and supporting new officers directly impacts on police performance and service delivery. It also impacts upon confidence in police assessment processes, both internally in relation to perceptions of new recruits, and externally in relation to trust in policing. There are considerable costs attached to recruitment and training, and robust assessment approaches and retention of good officers can save forces millions¹.

This findings report brings together learning from case studies of work-based assessment models in three forces, extensive research with tutor constables and consultation with new recruits about onboarding processes in policing. The findings are summarised into seven key themes:

1. Assessment model

- The adoption of different tutoring delivery models (PDU - where tutoring occurs in a dedicated unit), On shift - (where tutoring is given by tutors who are officers on a normal policing team, usually on a response team), and Hybrid - (which varies in form and usually describes a system where a PDU support tutoring on-shift, with extra resources) can have significant impact on assessment.
- On shift models can put stresses on assessment through the reactive nature of the work, the challenges associated with response work and the fact that operational rather than educational considerations take precedence. These issues were further exacerbated by tutors having to be repeatedly chased to make sure that sufficient and appropriate evidence was submitted to support student statements.
- PDU models in some cases offer a greater degree of support of recruits and control of the learning experience. Assessment practices differ between the pre- and post-IPS phases and assessors usually become more involved in the post-IPS phase. As second year student officers, there are real challenges caused by the need to balance a response team workload, university work and the requirement to evidence occupational competencies. These challenges can lead to assessors undertaking quite a lot of pastoral work during this period.

2. Assessor role and workload

- There has been an increase in assessor workload, including increasingly demanding pastoral roles and a reduction in direct observations. Reducing assessor: student ratios, where possible, leads to better outcomes for student officers.
- There is value in a consistent assessor/student relationship throughout the probationary period. The assessor should be involved through the tutoring and assessment process.
- The number of protected learning days varies from force to force, for example, one force had 10, another had 3, another put them in “as needed”. A minimum number should be agreed and protected for all student officers.
- Assessors differentiated between the formal assessor training provided by the force, and the TAQA (Training, Assessment and Quality Assurance Level 3) qualification. These are complemented by CPD and by NCLT/College Learn packages. Considering established national standards for assessor training and qualification might be worthwhile.

¹ For example, Greater Manchester Police set up a ‘retention unit’ that claims to have saved £15m through the retention of over 300 officers that demonstrated intentions to leave policing.

3. Practicalities of assessment

- Use of BWC footage as evidence has advantages and disadvantages. It can be time-consuming for assessors when students fail to timestamp the relevant periods. BWC should not entirely replace all other forms of evidence. Observations of shifts are important. Other forms of feedback and evidence could be considered as seen in other professions. This might include multi-source feedback provided by different people in different roles connected to an incident or case. This could be facilitated via an app to ensure efficiency.
- Most forces use OneFile, but the few that do not have this technology waste time managing multiple documents and comments. Some assessors are interested in providing voice notes to save time. Using mobile devices and apps to capture and share real time feedback has been effective in other professions.
- Repetition of competencies in OCP can lead to inefficiency, and competencies with minimal opportunities to evidence (e.g. critical incidents). The number of repetitions for specific competencies should be modifiable by assessors.
- Assessors generally feel comfortable with standardisation processes, and there are only a few cases where staff may feel a lack of confidence in assessment results due to subjectivity. Whilst the OCP is considered a reliable and rigorous, there remains widespread support for retaining a non-degree pathway into policing in addition to degree routes and IPLDP remains a well thought of pathway.

4. The impact of assessment on recruits

- Triple workload pressures (OCP, university work, crime caseload) for second year probationers causes problems, particularly when supervisors are not supportive and do not protect learning days and help to manage students' crime workloads.
- Better relationships and more frequent contact between assessors and HEI based trainers are necessary to streamline the assessment process and to ensure both parties fully understand the process. Assessors should be aware of university course content and deadlines.
- Extraction of students to the HEI during their second probationary year has impacts on crime caseload progression.
- There is a lack of knowledge in the forces around the content of university assessments, other than an understanding that students should be gaining the theoretical and legal aspects of their police education with the HEI.

5. Recruitment and retention

- Sub-optimal recruitment practices due to the challenges of Uplift targets may lead to greater workloads for assessors due to unsuitable candidates joining the programme. Ensure robust regulation-12 and -13 procedures are in place to prevent unsuitable recruitment.
- The 'triple pressure' workload is a factor in retention. Protected periods and double-crewing immediately post-IPS should be considered and there should be training given to sergeants on how to protect students in this period from excessive workload pressures. There should be a maximum number of crimes that a new recruit can pick up during this period specified by the force.
- Assessors should be more involved in recruitment events and panels, where they are not already, as they are the officers most familiar with the demands of the probationary period.
- Where assessment pressures are mentioned in exit interviews, this should be reviewed and noted, and kept available for L&D leads, as this data is not always treated systematically and made part of learning.

6. Consistent terminology

- The phrases tutor, coach and mentor are used to mean different roles, and in other forces are used interchangeably. This causes confusion and at the national level there could be greater consistency. Further development of consistent role profiles may also facilitate national consistency and provide a clearer picture of the roles and models used in different forces.
- However, the structure or name of roles is less important than the clear request for ongoing learning support, reducing the 'cliff edge' of ending the tutor period, and providing clear and consistent peer support and feedback.

7. Onboarding processes

- New recruits want to better understand the realities of policing before starting the role, to be introduced to partner agencies and the wider system in which policing operates, and to understand their role in the bigger picture. This may facilitate learning and development, and retention.

Introduction

The Police Uplift Programme seeks to maximise the effectiveness of the police recruitment drive, to improve the scale and diversity of recruitment, and the competence and retention of new recruits.

A key part of the process of developing new recruits is the assessment process. Assessments should promote student learning by providing the student with constructive feedback, aimed at improving their performance, evaluating their knowledge, understanding, abilities or skills, and facilitating a mark or grade that enables a student's level of performance to be established.

The work-based assessment model is quite consistent across forces, utilising assessors to track the progress of the student, and formally assess operational competence and compliance with the academic requirement of the PEQF. The ratio of students to assessors can be between 1:25 and 1:40. In some forces the assessor is a distinct role, undertaken by police officers but also may be undertaken by police staff. In other forces, assessments are undertaken by tutors. Additionally, assessors may undertake a role to verify assessment decisions to ensure they are valid, authentic, current and sufficient. This is referred to as second assessment, verification or IQA (Independent Quality Assessment).

Perceptions of the subjective nature of assessment often sits uncomfortably with assessors. The influence of diverse expectations, assessors' personal experience, and their experience or training in assessing entry-level competence are also factors that influence assessment practice. The increasing demands for practical placement learning experiences, time demands on assessors, discontinuous supervision, diverse and ill-defined standards, and focus on individual competencies rather than competence as a whole, add to the challenges of assessment (Dart et al., 2021).

This review sought to:

1. Draw out relevant learning from phase one and two of research exploring police tutoring models and onboarding of new recruits.
2. Identify the essential and desirable skillsets and attributes of work-based assessors, including examination of the impact of organisational or self-selection of the role of assessor.
3. Examine key features of effective tutoring and work-based assessment delivery models, reflecting on those applied by other professions.
4. Compare and contrast the current assessment models being deployed, considering perceived effectiveness in terms of learner satisfaction, operational performance, links with academic competence assessment and timing of assessments.
5. Highlight any evidence of links between assessment processes and attrition.

The previous reviews and consultations in the Uplift Programme, 'Phase One', building the evidence base for effective tutoring of police recruits, and a literature reviewing exploring the implications of the changing age and service profile of police officers for the ways in which policing operates. 'Phase Two', national consultation of tutors in policing, and a review and consultation about new recruits' experiences of onboarding in policing. Key insights from these reviews are identified to inform this review of work-based assessments.

Phase 1 Report: Building the Evidence Base for Effective Tutoring of Police Recruits

Dr Tom Cockcroft, Dr Ben Bowles, Dr Holly Taylor-Dunn, Dr Emma Williams

Key findings

The findings of the Phase 1 Report examining the role of tutoring in policing provided the following insights related to work-based assessment models currently in place:

- There is a need to address diversity issues through the tutor role. In particular, there may be scope for tutoring to play a positive role in supporting retention of officers recruited from under-represented groups. This applies to assessors too, where diverse representation of identities is fundamental to reflecting those going through the assessment process.
- The consultation findings demonstrate that forces vary in which roles formally assess new recruits. In some the tutor is responsible for gathering and assessing the evidence. In others the role is split, with an assessor, separate to the tutor, joining the process to undertake assessments.
- In all forces tutors help students to build evidence for their portfolio towards IPS. In some limited cases, tutoring goes on past IPS towards FOC. The literature review and interview data suggest that there needs to be further consideration given to the possible tensions between the tutor and assessor role.
- Responses showed that tutors on shift typically have their own sergeants as line managers. Assessors tend to be line managed in the PDU or centrally. The number of meetings with assessors/CPD opportunities varies considerably.
- Close and mutually reinforcing relationships between the three key parties: the higher education qualification provider, the police organisation, and the tutor, lead to more effective tutoring. This is most likely to be true for effective assessment practice too, where many assessors are also tutors.

Force models for work-based assessments

The Phase 1 project also gathered organisational data from police forces and conducted interviews with relevant roles in policing, to build understanding about how assessment models work across forces. The data revealed different arrangements across the forces. In respect of describing the stage at which assessment occurs within a new entrant's professional development, a majority of forces (72% n=31) described it occurring throughout officers' journey towards Independent Patrol Status (IPS) and Full Occupational Competency (FOC). Responses revealed that some variation occurs in terms of who is responsible for the assessment. A significant number (47% n=20) stated that assessment is undertaken by an officer fitting both the tutor and assessor role descriptor. A smaller number (35% n=15) suggested that it was undertaken by an assessor role only. One force reported that this role was undertaken by tutors only, and three forces described different arrangements altogether.

Two general patterns were identified. Either, tutors will take students to IPS and assess them, then a separate group of trained assessors will take over towards FOC, or tutors do not assess and there is an assessment team that takes over at the end of the tutoring process and assesses students for their IPS. Free text responses show that assessment responsibilities of tutors fall into one of three categories:

1. Tutors have no formal assessment role.
2. Most commonly, tutors assess for IPS based upon the College of Policing's 10 Occupational Standards.

3. On occasion, tutors have a role after IPS as the tutee moves towards FOC (although tutoring after IPS tends to be conducted by specialist trained assessor/tutors called mentors or with some other title).

Range of evidence

The data showed a range of evidence types used for assessment. These can include tutor observations, conversations, body worn camera footage, interviews, and witness statements. One response summarised this as '*a range of naturally occurring evidence*'. Another referred to the use of a '*professional discussion*' to fill gaps in portfolio evidence, which one interviewee stated had resulted in some evaluation of students by tutors being a '*tick box exercise*' rather than really testing students' competencies. Responses from nearly two-thirds of forces (65% n=28) indicated that tutor evidence can lead to the termination of a recruit's employment, although in nine forces (21% n=9) respondents suggested that this would not happen.

Balancing mentoring and assessment

Two research participants suggested there can be tension balancing the role of supportive mentor and objective assessor. The assessment process can work against the supportive goals of the tutoring role. One noted that when tutors are coerced into taking the role there can be a reluctance not to sign off underperforming students because they will be required to work with them for longer. The other suggested that, ideally, someone different to the tutor would assess students.

Reviewing or assessing tutors

It is noted that often tutors are monitored by assessors as well as students, who can flag underperforming tutors. Some forces state that they do not assess competence of tutors beyond the stage at which they are recruited. More formalised assessment of tutors is undertaken through performance review, tutor courses, CPD events, student feedback, and performance review, or quarterly RAG grading. Some forces also 'dip check' assessments and score them. More informally, examples of quality processes include the tutors of students who do not achieve occupational competency status being subject to assessment. In other forces, there is no review process with one force suggesting the reason for this was that tutoring had the status of '*additional responsibility*'. Likewise, another stated '*there is no consistency or formal process*' in respect of reviewing tutors.

Phase 1: Reviewing younger in age and service police officers: What are the implications?

Dr Emma Williams, Dr Holly Taylor-Dunn

The UK have recognised, through the PEQF and subsequent curriculum, the need for officers coming into policing to be upskilled in critical thinking, community awareness and communications and problem solving. However, this review of research literature highlights further work policing needs to undertake to maximise retention of younger police officers.

The research indicates that officers have a commitment to public service, maybe more 'liberal' in their views at the point of entry into the police and have a desire to understand and communicate more effectively within diverse community settings. More broadly, given the current climate and the narrative about policing aligning itself more with public health, public value, early intervention and recognising where to divert people from the criminal justice system, this drive needs to be nurtured. This approach can be linked to wider developments in the HR literature that suggest in

order to recruit a younger workforce there is a need to engage with a 'story' (e.g narrative), purpose (bottom-up approaches) and 'activities' that illustrate the culture of an organization (Pritchard, 2018). Moreover, the findings suggest that enhancements to recruitment can be made to minimize wastage throughout the process. This can link to the wider human resourcing literature that suggests diverse personality types amongst younger people are engaged through differential recruitment channels (Linnehan & Blau, 1998).

The review provides clear recommendations for policing:

Addressing cultural considerations: Where the old meets the new

1: A commitment to Continuous Development – Iterative and continuous learning is essential for motivation and valuing new staff. There are various formal and informal methods that may facilitate this process and create an enhanced learning environment more generally within the organisation for current and new officers, including mentoring, reflection workshops, debriefs, case reviews and opportunities to review learning and discuss topics with experts.

2: Upskilling of tutor constables – given the cultural tensions identified in these findings there is a clear risk attached to the loss of recruits educational learning if tutors lack an understanding of the role and aim of different knowledge being introduced through the PCDA and PEQF. Whilst this is a risk to new officers being able embed their learning at a practical level there are additional risks around fairness and development for the tutors themselves. This could be done in the first instance by making content from the PCDA university partners accessible for the workforce if this can be negotiated.

3: Consider methods to share and manage current knowledge – retention is not simply about retaining people but also retaining the expertise and knowledge they bring to the workplace. Capture learning through debriefs / reviews / evaluations and create a repository for this institutional knowledge to be captured and shared. This should be owned by learning and development departments.

4: Ensure a transparent and fair approach to the use of social media – The younger generation are more likely to be users of social media. There needs to be a national strategy for officers' use of social media including Twitter which is clearly articulated to all staff. Individual force policies and procedures for social media are confusing for new officers. Disciplinary action as a result of social media usage needs to be understood and considered in context.

Harness the changes the new recruits present to the police organisation

1: Encourage and support local police force areas to develop an organisational people strategy that covers wellbeing, reward, recognition, mentoring plans and development. Within this strategy clear details for flexible working options should be outlined. There are opportunities to learn from the flexibility that resulted from the pandemic to identify potential options for flexible working practices in different roles.

2: The implementation of a social contract would operationalise the people strategy. The contracts should be managed via human resources and would serve to align the expectations and obligations of the organisation and the employer. Broadly this agreement could include details of the organisation's mission or values that the new officer is signing up to and subsequently, the factors that the organisation will put in place to ensure the officer can deliver on this mission. This includes: the offer of manager/supervisor support; access to wellbeing processes; the process of learning and development for the officer and details on the opportunities for flexible working which are clear and fairly distributed. This would need to be developed through dialogue rather than

being controlled by the line manager in order to give the officer a 'voice' within that process. Centrally, the provision of an implementation team could assist with the development and delivery of these contracts.

Leadership

1: Check your organisational health via the staff survey results and ensure visibility when listening to and actioning the findings from the surveys – Surveys can inform leaders about culture, staff satisfaction and staff 'buy-in' and commitment to the organisation. Training or input for leaders on organisational justice would enable more reflection on the findings and encourage the production of action plans to ensure officers understand that their voice is being listened to and heard.

2: Ensure that interviews are conducted with leavers and identify themes – this knowledge is key to understanding the organisation and where strategies and action plans need review based on the evidence. This illustrates to officers that their voices are being heard and valued.

3: Create a feedback / communication strategy to inform the workforce of what you are doing about the issues raised including face to face input from the leadership team.

Phase 2: National consultation on experiences of tutors in policing Dr Tom Cockcroft, Dr Ben Bowles, Dr Holly Taylor-Dunn, Dr Emma Williams

A summary of the key findings from interviews with tutors across forces, related to assessment:

Assessor training

Assessors differentiated between the formal assessor training provided by the force, and the TAQA (Training, Assessment and Quality Assurance Level 3) qualification. These are complemented by CPD and by NCLT/College Learn packages.

One assessor described feeling that the force basic training was insufficient for the role, and that it did not adequately prepare them for what they were faced with. Furthermore, she stated that it gave them the confidence to challenge some practices which she did not consider authentic. She went on to advocate that such qualifications are crucial as they give confidence to assessors as well as authenticity and credibility.

Assessor workload

Assessors reported challenges of workload and stress in their roles caused by long hours, with one stating that they perceived their role as more stressful than that of the tutors due to their role extending beyond assessment.

This view was countered by an assessor in a different force who described assessor workload as 'feast or famine' and characterised it as periods of intense activity balanced with quieter periods.

Assessors as support and quality assurance

Assessors were viewed as a means of support of both tutors and students. In terms of the former, some assessors operated an open-door policy. In respect of student support, support is often formalised through specific workshop events to support practice around, for example, file building or statements. That said, one respondent suggested that assessor provision of pastoral support for students could be more visible, for example in respect of providing a duty roster for student drop ins to ensure consistent provision of support.

The use of Regulation 13 procedures to achieve the exit from the force of an underperforming recruit was increasingly seen as a positive development. Some forces have substantially increased the rate of Regulation 13 removals and part of the reason for this was a greater confidence within the force of articulating their expected levels of professionalism under PEQF. It was suggested that PEQF had substantially raised standards since IPLDP. However, it was also suggested that failing, extending or re-coursing recruits did create more work for those involved in tutoring.

There continue to be concerns, however, about the possibility of poor students passing the period of tutorship. Concerns centre around the possibility that tutors work hard to ensure that struggling students complete their tutorship but without ever knowing whether the student's supervisors consider them sufficiently good practitioners. There is -a challenge in identifying an 'all round poor performer'.

Variations in Assessment

There are a number of ways in which assessment practices vary between forces.

New officers are generally allocated to a tutor who works with them and who provides evidence to support a claim that particular criteria, based on an evidence matrix, have been met. This is uploaded onto the OneFile system.

This process occurs up until Independent Patrol Status (IPS) and the assessor role is generally limited to that of dip checking signed off work submitted as evidence of meeting criteria to ensure that a) criteria is met, and b) appropriate evidence has been provided to support the claim. Where needed, Action Plans and Development Plans can be implemented to support future progress.

Observation of officers by assessors is generally quite limited until officers proceed beyond IPS towards Full Occupational Competency (FOC). During this second stage assessors may also go out with recruits and may visit them at police stations to undertake professional discussions which can be of use, for example, with dyslexic students.

Assessors may give both formal and informal feedback and initiate Regulation 13 (Discharge of a Probationer) processes if required.

The adoption of different tutoring delivery models (PDU, On shift and Hybrid) can have quite significant impacts for assessment.

- On shift models can put stresses on assessment through the reactive nature of the work, the challenges associated with response work and the fact that operational rather than educational considerations take precedence. These issues were further exacerbated by tutors having to be repeatedly chased to make sure that sufficient and appropriate evidence was submitted to support student statements. One reason for this is that tutors working in On shift models might be less attuned than PDU colleagues to the evidential requirements of the curriculum the recruit is being assessed under.
- PDU models were viewed by respondents as offering a greater degree of support of recruits and control of the learning experience. Assessment practices differ between the pre and post IPS phases and assessors usually become more involved in the post IPS phase. As second year student officers, there are real challenges caused by the need to balance a response team workload, university work and the requirement to evidence

occupational competencies. These challenges may often lead to assessors having to undertake quite a lot of pastoral work during this period.

Whilst the research literature from comparator professions identifies potential problems with combining assessment and pastoral elements within a single role, our respondents generally saw this drawing together of formal and informal roles as unproblematic and, in some cases, unavoidable.

Assessor Satisfaction

Assessors were generally positive about the role, highlighting, for example, the pleasure of seeing recruits progress, the lack of conflict between pastoral and assessment roles and the positive impact of introducing tutors to the evidence matrix during tutor training.

They also identified some negatives with the role. The role could be repetitive and monotonous especially in those forces where the role is largely desk-based.

Assessors also noted that they deal with a range of recruits who all have different approaches to their work and to the timeliness with which they submit statements and evidence. The large volume of students caused by Uplift has seen a corresponding increase in paperwork which can reduce the quality of assessor's work.

Similarly, the ways in which classroom learning and operational practice are structured during the recruit's learning journey can cause imbalances in assessor workload during the year. Finally, there was some evidence to suggest that assessors feel that the confidence and credibility of their role would be enhanced by further qualifications.

Phase 2: Onboarding in Policing in England and Wales

Dr Laura Knight, Dr Emma Williams

'Onboarding' is an umbrella term for the full period of a new recruit applying to and joining an organisation, including day one through to the new recruit being fully settled in role. For some individuals and types of roles this can be as little as 8 weeks, for others it can be a full twelve months. The full process includes 'pre-boarding' – everything up to day one, induction and orientation – the first few days and weeks in role, and integration – becoming fully settled.

The onboarding process includes induction and orientation, as early activities. Inductions might include introduction to colleagues, presentations about various departments and teams, assigning a 'buddy' or mentor and receiving relevant information, data and reports. Orientation is focused on the new recruit complying with organisational policies and procedures, including for example IT set up, health and safety policies, using systems and processes for reporting absences or booking leave. There are also additional onboarding activities that take place between the Higher Education Institutions that are delivering the Police Education Qualifications Framework (PEQF), including the Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship (PCDA).

Onboarding activities often fall into the following four categories:

- Organisational – administration, documentation, policies and procedures, career aspirations, probation planning
- Functional – training, goal setting, performance and progress reviews, capturing individual needs, making connections between studies/HEI/apprenticeship and practicalities of the role
- Social – connection building, introductions, mentoring
- Cultural – expectation setting, purpose and vision of force and team, stakeholder/partner engagement

The aim of this consultation was to understand expectations and experiences of those going through onboarding processes and to define 'onboarding' in the policing context. A mixed-methods approach to gathering information about onboarding experiences was used, including: an online survey for new recruits and officers with 2-3 years' service in which 422 responses were gathered, across 14 police forces. Two focus groups with new recruits and officers with 2-3 years' service, involving 8 participants in total, with a range of a few months in role, to two years in role.

Key messages from these findings include:

Organisationally, policing is doing fairly well at managing IT, email access, policies and procedures, and could improve engaging with new recruits about their career aspirations and understanding different departments in policing.

- 43% of participants said that explanations of the various departments across policing did not occur or did not meet their expectations. This was highlighted as a gap by many new recruits, who felt they didn't understand the full picture of policing, didn't know what to expect when landing in new attachments, and didn't know what was expected of them in relation to engaging with other departments.

Functionally, there is strong feedback to make changes to training and the relationship between studies (both apprenticeship and degree pathways) and the demands of the policing role. Line

managers could play a bigger role in the support and development of new recruits, through providing clarity in relation to probation, goals and objectives.

- Nearly one-third, 31%, of participants said the probation period was not explained to them, or it did not meet their expectations. Several participants noted that they didn't know how long the probation period was, the rate of progress or goals that were expected of them, and who to go to if they had concerns about progress.
- In addition, three-quarters, 76%, of participants said their expectations were met or exceeded in relation to opportunities to share any specific needs. The majority of comments pointed to the process or trainers supporting identification and response to dyslexia or dyspraxia, and more broadly new recruits felt that informal conversations with their tutor, coach, mentor or Sergeant provided them with the opportunity to share.
- Nearly three-quarters, 72%, of participants stated their expectations were met or exceeded in relation to having discussions about their progress. As above, this tended to be new recruits with a consistent, and actively engaged tutor. For the 26% for whom this did not occur or did not meet their expectations, they made comments about tutors being less engaged or interested in new recruits development, inconsistent tutors, or very limited time with tutors or Sergeants.
- 41% of participants stated that relevant training did not occur or did not meet their expectations. Participants suggested that the training provided to new recruits in policing needs to include more practical training, more role playing and scenarios, to enable them to feel prepared for the role.

Socially, there are inconsistencies in the terminology of tutor, mentor, coach and buddy – but the structure or name of the programme is less important than the clear request for ongoing learning support whilst in the role, reducing the 'cliff edge' of ending the tutor period, and providing clear and consistent peer support.

- One-third, 33%, of participants, said they did not receive mentoring with a colleague or peer, or that it did not meet their expectations. Many comments demonstrated confusion about the difference between trainers, tutors and mentors, and for those that answered this question positively – they tended to reference the good qualities of their tutor constable.

Culturally, new recruits want to better understand the realities of policing before starting the role, to be introduced to partner agencies and the wider system in which policing operates, and to understand their role in the bigger picture.

- 30% of participants stated that they did not have discussions about the realities of the police officer role, or that if they did it not meet their expectations. Many comments referenced the lack of description or explanation about what policing really entails, what the majority of the role is like, the different demands of different teams, the realities of shift pattern working, and the big differences between the scenario training and how policing is really conducted.

Work-Based Assessment Models – Literature Review

This literature review search strategy involved the retrieval of peer-reviewed and grey literature including relevant policy documents such as College of Policing and Home Office publications and reports from public services. Search terms and sift criteria for literature align with the research questions, to identify insights related to effective work-based assessment policies and practice. Abstracts and grey literature were critically appraised to identify papers to read in full. Insights from papers read in full were pragmatically themed to produce this short paper.

The literature review used the following search terms: work-based assessment, work-based assessment + police, work-based assessment + public safety, work-based assessment + frontline, work-based assessment + emergency services, work-based assessment + law enforcement, work-based assessment + nursing, work-based assessment + probation, work-based assessment + social workers, work-based assessment + paramedics, work-based assessment + prison officers. Papers needed to be published between 2013 and 2023.

The initial search identified 225 outputs. All 225 titles and abstracts were read and rated for relevance to the study of high, medium or low. 31 outputs were rated 'high', 20 were rated 'medium' and 174 were rated low. Those rated 'low' were excluded from this review. 51 papers informed this literature review.

Findings

The majority of research exploring work-based assessment examines practices in health settings. Six papers were identified that discussed work-based assessments in policing, but none of these provided an evaluation of effectiveness. Instead they critically examined the approach and some provided feedback and views from police officers going through the process. The three key findings from the police-relevant literature are shared below.

Across the literature on work-based assessments, there are similarities in the aims for improvements in assessments of 'frontline' roles:

- Ensuring the assessment process adds value to students and to the organisation – capturing and sharing individual and organisational learning.
- Reducing the emotional burden experienced by both assessors and students, in the form of challenges to building strong relationships, balancing provision of support and assessment, and stress-related to on-the-job assessment by peers.
- Earlier identification of students that may be struggling.
- Increasing levels of confidence in the assessment results.
- Formalising training on work-based assessment processes, for both assessors and students, so that everybody knows the process and how to use the relevant forms, software or apps.
- Reducing the time that assessment takes.

Police-specific themes

- **Interchangeable roles of assessor, tutor and mentor**

In the model of assessment in which tutors also play the role of assessor, research suggests that this can create challenges for both students and assessors, and these challenges replicate across professions (Peiser et al., 2018). For tutors that have developed a good relationship with their student, they may not feel able to fail students, recognising their role in the development of the student and wanting to maintain a positive relationship. The role of tutor often includes mentoring, coaching and for some it includes pastoral care for students. These roles require open communication and trust, and this facilitates learning and development. For students, they may not feel they can be honest with their tutor and share concerns or limitations in their knowledge or confidence in different aspects of the role, where they know the tutor may also be their assessor (Peiser et al., 2018).

- **Curriculum knowledge and respect for the curriculum / assessment process**

Research on policing in Sweden suggests that some tutors in policing have little knowledge of their tutees curriculum (Bergman, 2017). While others suggest tutors devalue academy training, perceiving it as inadequate and not focused enough on practical skills (Chan, 2003). A tension between assessment and mentoring has also been highlighted, with Bergman finding that some officers expressed concern that a 'probationer's future in the police force may depend on the opinions of an officer who has limited knowledge of what to assess and how to report it' (Bergman, 2017, p.83). Chan (2003) found that some officers did not like being involved in assessment as they did not want to be critical of new recruits. Pressures of time and the emergency nature of policing have also been identified as challenges for the mentoring relationship (Tyler and Mckenzie, 2014). This is particularly important given the role of the tutor in helping tutees to reflect and debrief on their experiences, yet in an emergency context this can be challenging and may limit learning opportunities.

- **Work-based learning accreditation in PSNI**

In 2004 a collaboration between the Work-Based Learning unit in the School of Education at Queens University, Belfast and the Police Service Northern Ireland (PSNI) created a new scheme to enable probationary officers to develop new skills by means of an Advanced Diploma in Work-Based Learning (Nikolou-Walker and Meaklim, 2010). The diploma enabled student officers to develop new skills within a working context, with particular emphasis on the student's capacity to engage successfully in reflective practice as part of their learning. Its objective was to enable students to reflect on their own work-related experience, develop their understanding of appropriate research approaches and methods, and identify and design a work-based project. It is structured to develop study skills, communication skills, reflective learning, project management, data analysis, and presentation skills. The Advanced Diploma was assessed using a portfolio of a project dissertation and report, and a critically reflective essay. It was completed over a 12-week period while the student was engaged in operational training at the Police College of Northern Ireland.

A brief review of students experiences of the work-based learning diploma found that they developed creative and critical thinking skills, and were better able to use problem-oriented policing approaches (Nikolou-Walker and Meaklim, 2010). The participants were provided with a 'map' of what was expected through the course, but completion was their individual responsibility.

Learning from medicine, healthcare and other professions

Assessment and learning run in parallel in many parts of medicine and healthcare training and professional development. Assessments can be 'formative', meaning they provide reflection, identification of areas for further development, and guide the learning process. Or they can be 'summative', which means they serve as a 'pass/fail' assessment process.

Commonly used types of work-based assessments in medicine and healthcare professions include case-based discussions, direct observations of procedural skills, mini-clinical evaluation exercises, multisource feedback, procedure-based assessments, and mini peer assessment tools. Most of these approaches require only one assessor to complete the assessment.

- **Case-based discussion**

Usually using a specific patient case, this involves a discussion between the assessor and the medical student to review either the full case, or a part of a case, including clinical assessment, diagnosis, management and the follow-up plan. This includes evaluation of non-clinical skills, such as communication, leadership, teamwork and reflection. In case-based discussions, generally the focus is on the provision of constructive feedback as a part of formative assessment. This means there is no 'pass/fail' element involved.

A study of the use of case-based discussions in a UK hospital found that 19% of assessments were pre-planned, which means the student selected the case for discussion prior to assessment. On average, the assessment took between six and 10 minutes, and the duration of feedback provided by the assessor took less than five minutes. The study reported that 76% of trainees used feedback from the case-based discussion assessment to address their educational and professional development (Mohanaruban et al, 2018). Despite finding that most assessments took 15 minutes or less, focus group discussions with students and assessors identified that time constraints limited the number of case-based discussions that took place.

Similar results were reported in a study involving 32 paediatric trainees in the UK. Mehta *et al.* (2013) found that trainees described case-based discussions as educationally valuable, helped reflective learning, improved decision-making skills and improved practice. The feedback they received through assessments was perceived to be more valuable from assessors who had a positive attitude towards the use of case-based discussions, most likely because they understood the process and had experience in this type of assessment. Time constraints or lacking a private space for discussion had a negative impact on perceptions of how valuable the feedback was. More challenging cases generally resulted in more useful feedback.

Alazzawi and Berstock (2019) summarise two main shortfalls with the use of case-based discussions. First, the recommended time to perform one case-based discussion is 20–30 minutes, but in practice no time is formally allocated to undertaking assessments, so this often ends up being a five-minute discussion. Second, how valuable the case-based discussion is for education and professional development depends on the student. Where students choose the cases to be reviewed, and actively use the feedback they receive, the educational value is significantly.

This method may be useful in policing for supporting reflective practice and normalising police recruits taking structured opportunities to reflect on their behaviours.

- **Direct observation of procedural skills and procedure-based assessment**

Direct observation of procedural skills and procedure-based assessments are mandatory in the development and assessment of surgical trainees in the UK. They include a set of procedure-specific items to be assessed, alongside global skills, such as communication, preparation and post-operative care. There are generally five domains of items, and items are rated by the assessor as 'not assessed', 'development required' or 'satisfactory'. Trainees may request assessments on as many procedures as possible with a range of different assessors. Assessors observe the trainee undertaking the procedure in the normal course of workplace activity. 'Given the priority of patient care, the assessor must choose the appropriate level of supervision depending on the trainee's stage of training. Trainees will carry out the procedure, explaining what they intend to do throughout. The assessor will provide verbal prompts, if required, and intervene if patient safety is at risk' (Intercollegiate Surgical Curriculum Programme, 2023). These observations of procedures by medical students are undertaken in real circumstances, which makes them a reliable and valid assessment of student performance (Awad et al, 2015).

This method may prove useful in policing for helping recruits to develop 'softer skills' and for addressing issues around procedural justice and improving communications and interactions with communities.

- **Use of an app for tutors to provide feedback to students**

Time constraints are a major factor in most tutoring and work-based assessment programmes. The design of workplace-based assessment (WBA) tools in various professions have sought to make assessment processes as efficient as possible.

One way to manage time pressure and to promote constructive feedback is to assist tutors by providing pre-written content to address the most common competency gaps. A research study at Keele University School of Medicine monitored the usage of a workplace assessor app amongst Year 3 to 5 medical students (Lefoy et al., 2017). They found that the app enhanced the content of feedback for students, compared to bespoke comments produced during the assessment. However, they also found that students valued this feedback less, because it felt less personal than dedicated comments that took more time and effort by tutors. The use of the app during verbal feedback sessions also distracted conversation and interrupted important social interactions between assessors and students. The authors concluded that app-based feedback systems can reduce the time it takes to provide detailed feedback, but students need to be engaged with the process for the feedback to have a positive impact on learning and development.

- **Mobile learning, or 'm-learning'**

A research study was conducted to examine the impact of delivering competency-based assessment through mobile personal digital assistants (PDAs), amongst a group of final year undergraduate medical students. The study was conducted by Leeds University School of Medicine & Assessment and Learning in Practical Settings Centre of Excellence. The PDA used the Mini-CEX (Mini-Clinical Evaluation Exercise), which is a validated generic tool used to undertake assessment of core competencies within health care professions such as communication, physical examination, reasoning and practical skills. The student identifies an opportunity to conduct an assessment with a clinical supervisor. The evaluation is conducted using a form comprising of rater scales (1–9) to assess competence in various skills such as organisation, professionalism and clinical reasoning, followed by an overall global competence

rating. A free text box at the end of the form allows comments and action planning. Mini-CEX aims to allow the student to identify areas of weakness and improve by undergoing assessment and receiving feedback on their performance.

As described above, the use of an app to provide pre-scripted feedback has been shown to create a barrier between student and assessor, reducing social interaction and conversation. However, Coulby et al., (2011) found the opposite in examining the use of PDAs amongst medical students and assessors. They found that the PDA facilitated students contacting tutors and assessors when moving into a new clinical placement and working with an unfamiliar team. Students reported that the mobile PDA was easy to use, and they would like to access relevant resources and handbooks through the device, to facilitate further development.

The study found that the use of the PDA increased the provision of immediate feedback for students and encouraged them to be more 'goal orientated'. Students also felt an ownership of their device and feeling much more aware of the self-directed nature of their learning experience and the opportunity for personalised learning (Coulby, et al. 2011).

Analysis of the PDA showed the median time for a mini-CEX assessment was 15 minutes for observation and 8 minutes for feedback. Assessors provided free text feedback in two-thirds of assessments. Analysis of the assessment scores and feedback demonstrates 'incremental improvement from each student as they progressed through the placement, echoing the students' own feelings of progression' (Coulby, et al., 2011).

Inputting free text comments could have been resolved by the use of the audio function of the device. For future studies this was suggested as the most practical way of collecting feedback.

- **Programmatic, or modular, assessment**

Programmatic assessment involves a series of interdependent elements of learning and assessment methods that are connected to build upon each other. Instead of focusing on assessment of isolated skills, it encompasses assessment of competence, defined by competency standards, as a whole. Using multiple pieces of assessment, evidence is drawn across all separate tasks and decisions are made about an attribute, for example a specific skill or attitude, such as communication. Assessment is a continuous process and becomes normalised. Programmatic assessment uses a team approach, increasing the validity of assessments by drawing upon multiple perspectives and using multiple assessment tools, rather than on single instruments or single time points of assessment.

Dart, et al. (2021) conducted a small, qualitative evaluation of a programmatic assessment approach in an Australian university. They found that this approach encouraged assessors to teach more holistically and learners to learn more holistically. Assessors reported confidence that the variety of assessment tasks provided was sufficient to capture all aspects of competence, including 'difficult-to-assess aspects such as professionalism and critical thinking'. They felt confident that all students had been given an equal opportunity to demonstrate their learning, regardless of learning style, personality, learning interests, or cultural background. Assessors also described that each individual assessment contributed to building an accurate picture of a student's competence over time, which generated confidence in the accuracy of assessment.

The variety of assessments also increased assessor's confidence in the defensibility of student outcomes, where previously concerns about subjective assessment led to poor confidence in

outcome accuracy. Some assessors found it difficult to shift their approach to incorporate programmatic assessment, emphasising the need for assessor training (Dart et al., 2021).

The McMaster Modular Assessment Program (McMAP), implemented in McMaster University's Royal College Emergency Medicine residency program in 2011–2012, is a programmatic assessment system that collects and aggregates data from 42 work-based assessment instruments aligned with emergency medicine tasks and mapped to a competency framework. These instruments include task specific checklists, behaviours, global performance ratings, and written comments. They are completed by faculty members following direct observation of residents during shifts. Data is aggregated to produce an end-of-rotation report for each resident in the form of a qualitative global assessment of performance.

A research study by Chan et al., (2015), found that McMAP improved the quality of reporting clinical evaluation ratings. The authors suggest this is because the end-of-rotation reports are based on robust documentation of performance by multiple raters throughout a rotation, rather than relying on a single faculty member's recall at rotation's end, as was the case in the previous assessment system. The research also suggests that McMAP has normalised daily feedback.

- **Entrustable Professional Activities**

Entrustable Professional Activities (EPAs) describe activities that students or new professionals are able to perform independently. EPAs are widely used in medicine and nursing due to the need to define the work of entry-level professionals, to improve patient safety and help improve assessment of competencies in the work-place (Bramley and McKenna, 2021). A study testing the use of EPAs in Australian urban and rural hospitals used a design model incorporating multiple rounds of user feedback to create an e-portfolio with the EPAs embedded (Bramley et al., 2021). Students and supervisors completed anonymous online surveys to evaluate the tool. A total of 37 EPAs were developed with an accompanying 'entrustment scale' to measure performance. This scale uses four points to measure entrustment: 'knows', 'knows how', 'shows', and 'does' (Epstein and Hundert, 2002). Repeated assessment against the same activities provides opportunity for assessment for learning and providing feedback about progress. This builds a picture of areas of competency and areas for development, in the period up to competency assessment.

Informed by results of the exploratory study in the field of dietetics (Bramley et al., 2021), a new work-based assessment tool using an e-portfolio was designed and created using Pebblepad®. The new e-portfolio design incorporated the following features:

1. The use of EPAs to measure student performance in a work-based setting.
2. Incorporation of student self-assessment.
3. Opportunity for formative and summative feedback (assessment for and of learning).
4. Ability to generate educational data to inform teaching.
5. Easy to navigate and use.
6. A structure that reinforces the provision of dietetic care.
7. An ability to allow communication of students' preferred learning styles in advance of placement.

Each Entrustable Professional Activity invited input from student self-assessment, supervisor assessment and provided upload fields for evidence of learning and practice. Students were assessed at a mid-point and endpoint, on each of their three clinical placements. Supervisor fields were unlocked when the student self-assessment field had been completed and included free-text boxes for further feedback. The e-portfolio allowed reporting on student performance at any time,

facilitating real-time tracking of progress that could be used to adjust curriculum content where needed. The study suggested that the tool supported students to use reflective practice through self-assessment activities, and by providing a curricular map that linked work-based activities to competencies (Bramley et al., 2021). Feedback from students and supervisors suggested the tool was easy to use and the results were reliable. Minimal training was required because the tool was intuitively designed and the competencies were familiar to supervisors. The authors summarised that the Entrustable Professional Activity work-based assessment tool 'effectively supports student skill development on placement, assesses performance and provides evidence of achievement of competency standards in a work-based setting that can be incorporated in programmatic assessment' (Bramley et al., 2021).

- **Multi-source feedback**

Multi-source feedback (MSF), also known as 360-degree feedback or peer review, is a method of obtaining feedback from co-workers, often across a range of categories or areas of competency.

Evidence from research on the use of MSF suggests that MSF is a valid and reliable method of assessment (Patel et al., 2011). Others suggest that, despite positive attitudes from trainees, assessors and supervisors, the perceived effectiveness of the tools is low because MSF rarely leads to changes in the practical performance of a student (Brown et al., 2014). MSF does, however, provide an opportunity to capture other healthcare practitioners' views on students, which is not possible through other, more traditional assessment methods. The University of Leeds extended the capture of feedback to include service users (Muir et al., 2012). They designed four assessment tools to provide health and social care students with multi-sourced, interprofessional and service user feedback. Completed assessments were then sent to the university where service users and carers worked with university tutors to give further feedback and comment on the overall development of students. They found that the combination of personal and professional feedback helped to bridge the gap between feedback based on practice and feedback from university-based tutors.

One study compared Specialist Trainees' (STs) hand-selected multi-source feedback (MSF) scores with those made by their clinical supervisors and explored perceptions of both those being assessed and those assessing (Brown et al., 2014). The study found a systematic difference in the assessment scores for trainees in MSF between clinical supervisors and hand-chosen assessors, where clinical supervisors scored trainees less positively. The researchers summarised that grading was open to interpretation, which reduced confidence in the results and may have contributed to the results having a minimal impact on trainee development or practice improvement.

Key lessons and ideas for policing

- Nominated assessors provide more favourable assessments than randomly selected assessors, but as part of a 'multi-source' or '360' feedback approach – they can provide valuable insights to encourage learning, and can help to nurture and solidify relationships between new recruits and various staff members.
- App-based feedback forms and evidence capture can save considerable time, provided relevant training is provided.

- Working in ‘real time’, capturing areas of competency can mean allowing greater responsibility or solo-working in some areas, whilst others require support. This could also enable identification of key individuals in cohorts that could lead or support others in their development.
- Discussions about specific cases, involving specific feedback from supervisors and other present colleagues, can be developmental – but only where the time is provided to discuss, reflect and learn. This can be facilitated by mobile or app-based feedback by other colleagues involved in the same job.

Thematic Analysis from Case Studies

Three case studies were undertaken, leading to a total of 15 interviews with Assessors and students, one focus group with a number of students undertaking different pathways, and two force visits (including opportunities to observe assessment in action). One force was a large metropolitan force that tutors ‘on shift’; another was a small predominantly rural force that runs a PDU; and the third was another small predominantly rural force (also covering one sizeable city) that tutors on shift with a significant amount of support from a force-wide assessment unit and that characterises itself as ‘hybrid’ in its tutor model. All three forces were in England, but were geographically dispersed.

The three case studies were tagged, coded and subjected to a thematic analysis. The findings have been grouped into four major thematic areas. Each is discussed point by point below. Direct quotations from interviews are used to illuminate the points and are included in blue text boxes under each item. Main learnings and considerations for practice are included at the conclusion of each theme.

Theme 1: The changing assessment role and pressures on assessment

- Assessor workload is increasing due to high student numbers, resulting from Uplift recruitment coming after a long period of low recruitment levels. This, and the move to Body Worn Video (BWV) as the most common form of accepted evidence in assessment, is causing increased distance between assessors and students in the assessment process. Assessors and students are meeting less frequently, and assessors are spending less time with each student, although student numbers do vary by force.

“I obviously think, less numbers, better service. I think we sometimes we shoot ourselves in the foot, because we are managing.”

- Assessors value the opportunity for direct observation of students through “obs shifts”. These are described as providing more subtle forms of evidence and a more realistic picture of a student’s practice than viewing only “work product”, such as BWV footage, and are appreciated by students and assessors. However, these are typically becoming rarer due to work pressures and increased student numbers.

“[Taking on] more students would be bad at the moment. I think there has got to be a breaking point. And it’s okay to say that we’re managing. We are managing. But that is at the detriment of

observations for instance. Like you say, they are few and far between now. It would be nice to get back to an even keel, where it's half and half. And I think that definitely assists the student in, they love it, you go out for the day. They love it, look at me. What I can do. I'm super cop."

- Assessors and students value protected learning days where assessors can support students with the OCP, but these are often under pressure due to the student and assessor workload. Protected learning day numbers vary from force to force (one force had 10, another had 3, the third put them in "as needed"), but most assessors mentioned that there is often flexibility around the use of protected learning days.

"It's going to be away from their workplace so there isn't that distraction. It's twofold. The first thing is they're away from the distraction, and the second thing is that even if you're not with your own assessor, there'll be others... It gives that additional level of support, it takes them away from the distraction, and it shows that they're protected."

- There is a value to a consistent assessor/student relationship throughout the probationary period; including the opportunity for assessors to meet with students during the tutor phase rather than simply confirming IPS and the tutorship as complete. An ongoing role in the student's journey and consistency of the assessor through tutoring (as the external assessor of the portfolio) into the OCP period is spoken of as being valuable.

"So, they know that we're their assessor from the very beginning. So, obviously, we're on that journey straightaway. And then, normally, we'll have that final review with them [at the end of the tutor period], and we'll discuss with them, like, right, you're on your own now. Go and find your feel. And we will contact you in a few weeks."

- Assessors have an increasingly pastoral role, where they are approached by students to support their development and their mental health rather than simply assessing work project. They tend to have an ambivalence towards their increasing pastoral responsibilities. They tend to value the ability they have to lend support to students, but see this as difficult to balance with their workload and high student numbers.

"So, students are struggling. Students' that have issues that actually don't relate to anything work related, but because we're independent to the shift and supervisors, they knock on the door, and they want to speak to you. "

- It is important to protect assessors from deployment as they can be, like Tutors, extracted as a resource where senior managers are less supportive of L&D and do not value the importance of training and assessment processes.

"It would be ideal that we were seen as a protected pool, because we're too often seen as an easy win, to take people away. Assessors, we're seen as an available resource, and the reason we're an available resource is because we're all operation officers as opposed to perhaps somebody who may be, say, sat in headquarters without their kit on."

Suggestions for practice

Better assessor: student ratios (self-evidently) tend to lead to better outcomes as assessors can give more individual attention to student officers. However, where this is not possible: 1. assessor involvement throughout the tutoring and assessment process, including meetings throughout tutor period; 2. As many protected learning days as practicable; and 3. observation shifts, all lead to

assessors and students having better and more supported relationships. Protecting these features of the assessor role is of primary importance. This is more easily achieved in a PDU, or a hybrid model where a PDU thoroughly structures and supports tutoring on-shift and allows students and tutors to have protected learning time and protected non-deployable periods.

Theme 2: Practicalities of assessment (including IQA and specifics of the OCP)

- BWV has simplified the process of evidencing competencies, but also has led to fewer observation shifts being deemed necessary, which is not popular with assessors or students (see Theme 1). BWV makes it easier to evidence competencies, but there are also disadvantages. BWV can be time consuming to assess unless clearly time stamped by students. It can also be switched off and on so as to only record those parts of an action that the student wishes the assessor to see.

“Words can be sort of manipulated. Whereas the assessor is seeing on body worn is definitely a good way to try and gauge if you accurately hit what you needed to do. Because everyone can write an essay about how he did it, X and Y.”

- The OCP contains some areas of repetition that were deemed unnecessary by the interviewees and where some discretion around the number of repetitions of a competency would be appreciated in specific circumstances. There are some requirements that are hard to address in policing and certain competencies are hard to evidence when the recruit is on probation on particular teams. Specific hard to meet area of the OCP include:
 - Conflict situations, especially when students are on Safer Neighbourhood Teams.
 - Critical incidents, which may not occur in the frequency required in the OCP.
 - Neighbourhood engagement skills, when the student is on response teams.
 - Many criteria across the board proved difficult for direct-entry detective students to hit on their brief rotations on uniform teams.
 - Searches, including vehicle searches, stop searches and open area searches.

“So, the majority of [competencies] are quite simple [to meet], but we've got the four units which are enhanced at the end which have to be two, three times. One of them is critical incident. Now, they're quite rare, and I don't... And then to get three critical... If you look at the College of Policing definition of critical incident, they'd be hard pushed to get that three times.”

- The IQA processes and standardisation are spoken about positively, whether this is by those internal or external to the assessors' team, and whether this is completed by police officers or by police staff. Assessors feel in control of their assessment decisions and supported in their assessment role. In one force there was concern that assessment decisions could have a subjective quality and that one Assessor may approve a competency that another would not, and there were reports in the same force that IQA from civilian police staff had led to issues, but this view was not widespread.

“We've had a little bit, not distrust, but we have had issues we've had to work through, when my work is IQAd by a civilian. And what we have to do there is understand that we're... That a civilian. So a police officer, if I write a report, a police officer knows to get from point A to point C, they've had to go through B, it's a no-brainer. A civilian doesn't always know that. So what we have to do when we're writing our reports is, make sure that it's written in such a way that the civilian who reads that can see the evidence for point B.”

- The change to the PEQF overall has mixed feedback, including the common criticisms of whether it is necessary to professionalise police training and the value of the degree component. However, the OCP itself is typically seen as rigorous and valuable. There is widespread support amongst assessors for a vocational/non-degree bearing route into policing to remain open, and broad support for the IPLDP process.

“I’m a big advocate, that actually this has got a real place in going forward, the PCDA. I think where we’ve hit the problem is that policing is on its knees and that the utopia of giving officers enough time to study, enough time to reflect, to learn, we’re not there.”

Suggestion for practice

There are small changes that could be made through reviewing the OCP that would make it more useful and practical for students to complete when working on response. These are not national, but rather reflect specific forces’ concerns, particularly where the teams on which they deploy students are different and meet different types of incident. Forces should be able to apply to modify the OCP and reduce number of repetitions required for evidencing particular criteria, as well as to add criteria where they wish to.

Overall, despite the importance of BWV, this method of evidence should not be allowed to entirely replace other forms of evidence, including observation shifts, which are efficient evidence gathering opportunities.

Theme 3: The impact of assessment on recruits

- The second year of probation is, for recruits, experienced as a highly pressured year due to what they describe as a “triple workload” of 1. work for their university 2. work on the OCP for their assessor and 3. a growing crime caseload (on most teams) that they pick up as an individual officer and are required to progress. This has retention and wellbeing implications (see Theme 4). Some of the students in the sample had experienced a drop off in the quality of their university work during their second probationary year as the workload and demands of their policing role became greater and they came to see this policing work as their primary concern.

“They seem to have a lot of essays, assignments, university stuff going on, as well as juggling all the actual policing they’re trying to learn as well. It’s more so for them [the PCDA’s], but it is the same for DHEP students as well. They are flitting backwards and forwards on assignments, lots of theory stuff to do. I think it’s a hard enough job to try and learn as it is, never mind about all the [assessment].”

- We found evidence of poor communication between HEIs and police forces around deadlines and requirements for university work. Students often had to inform assessors individually, rather than through an official mechanism, of upcoming deadlines and workload pressure points. Assessors typically expressed that more information on the form, timing and content of assessments would be useful for protecting their students at times of intense workload and providing better pastoral care. One force in the sample had a liaison officer dedicated to liaising between the force and the university who had successfully improved this process.

“I guess, it just needs some level of understanding and a synergy really between the police, and

the uni. Sometimes it's difficult. It's a relatively new process. So, it's teething issues. So, I think it's just a matter of working on that synergy between the two. And the police understand that they are going to have these items in for this time period."

- The extraction of students to the HEI during their second probationary year has crime caseload impacts, as they are returning from the university with cases that have not been progressed and have begun to "mount up." Often extraction to the university is seen as an inconvenience or a disruption by assessors and supervisors, rather than an important part of the student's learning process.

"And bear it in mind with that as well, the shifts. So if it is you're on nights, you're not going to be able to do anything on victims. So all you've got is, if, when you go back, you've got lates and earlies, and you're not run ragged on response, you've then got to try and deal with your crimes."

- There is a general lack of knowledge in the forces around the content of university assessments, other than an understanding that students should be gaining the theoretical and legal aspects of their police education with the university. Often doubt is expressed as to the quality of the training at the HEI, as students' knowledge of key skills, such as file building, is characterised as poor by the time the student reaches the force. There is a belief that university assignments could be better integrated into students' work on the force and their daily practice and made more relevant to day-to-day policing, but more knowledge of the content of assignments would be required first.

"I don't have any involvement with the work they have to produce for the university. I don't need to. I've never been through university myself, so I probably wouldn't know exactly what they wanted to know. If they came to me and asked for help with something, and I was legally allowed to do that, I don't see why I couldn't. No one ever has done. I'm aware they've got support for that, anyway."

- Assessors spoke about a need to protect students in their early post-IPS period. This period is particularly intense as it is the beginning of the "triple burden" and is also the time when the student is adjusting to being a single-crewed unit and is learning all of the informal aspects of socialisation onto a policing team. One force allowed a 4-6 week grace period before introducing newly post-IPS officers to the OCP. It was suggested that selective double crewing would be helpful, and that supervisors should help to limit the crime workload that student officers can pick up in this early period.

"I think it would be good if the students, when they go on, go out to the big wide world of independent policing, in the ideal world it'd be nice if we had more protection for them. So that there, perhaps, is a limit to the amount of incidents, and crimes, and cases, they can hold."

Suggestions for practice

Better relationships and more frequent contact between assessors and HEI based trainers are necessary to streamline the assessment process. Opportunities for assessors (and tutors) to visit HEIs, during initial training and then throughout further time that the student spends at the HEI, is invaluable.

As a minimum, assessors should be made clearly aware of university deadlines and the content of university assessments. Ideally, these assessments could be creatively integrated with students' other responsibilities, including their caseload and their OCP, to reduce unnecessary repetitions.

Supervisors (usually shift Sergeants) are the most important node in the process. If they are not supportive of the needs of probationary officers and are not willing to respect protected learning days, the requirements of the assessors, and the requirements of the HEI, then students will experience a buildup of pressure and workload. It is important to train Sergeants on response teams on how best to support the learning and development of new recruits, to appoint Sergeants to these roles who are supportive of L&D, and to where possible explore ways of enforcing a minimum amount of protected learning time and a maximum number of crimes assigned to each new officers' workload.

Theme 4: Recruitment and retention

- Sub-optimal recruitment practices, led by the current fast rate of recruitment and also by a lack of face to face testing since the Covid-19 pandemic, are frequently mentioned as creating an experience gap (a number of younger and inexperienced officers especially on response teams) a quality gap (a generally lower standard of new recruit), and an expectation gap (new recruits do not have realistic expectations of policing) on teams. Such officers do not necessarily exit during their first probationary year, and many are able to pass IPS through the extension of the tutor period, despite not suitable to be fully competent officers.

“But we just have to work with what we’ve got. As in, we can keep trying to protect the tutors and the students to get the best environment for them to learn in. But there’s no magic wand for that. But I honestly think that somewhere recruitment, that’s where the change needs to happen. And get the right people through.”

- Pressures around assessment are recognised as affecting retention and there is evidence from exit interviews that recruits are leaving due to assessment pressures. Anecdotal evidence from the sample suggests that a number of potentially good officers are exiting during the second probationary year due to workload pressures, including the “triple burden” in the assessment period (see Theme 3).

“We’ve lost two on my intake, one was PCDA, which is apprenticeship and one is BTEC, which is the degree holders, from just basically the stress. Unfortunately, one of them didn’t feel supported the way that some of us have. Everyone’s got a different experience. Everyone feels that they’ve got support, and some feel like they don’t. It is really stressful. And to be honest it doesn’t surprise me that people have been leaving, just because of how stressful it is it’s easy for people to say switch off and go home. But you literally can’t, because you’ll be worrying. Even on your rest days you can’t rest because it’s like, right, I’m due back at uni. What are we going to learn? Right, what about that crime. Right I have to do that when I go in next set.”

- However, whenever retention was mentioned, issues with retention were more frequently spoken about as being due to poor quality recruits leaving, rather than recruits with potential being forced out (although both of these do occur). Assessors report issues with poor recruits gaining entry through recruitment processes that are not as selective as they were in the past, gaining IPS, and requiring exiting in second probationary year through regulation 12 and regulation 13 processes.

“For us, there has been a massive turnaround. So, previously you’d probably have a Regulation 13

for maybe two students a year. Recently we've had six in a period of four months."

- Assessors were clear on the message that retention is not always desirable and that there is a need to improve processes of recruitment and expectation management, from the earliest interactions with prospective officers, through the initial training and tutoring process, in order that assessors are spending their time on developing students that will become good competent officers and make a contribution back to the force.

"Doing recruitment interviews myself, I think we've lost a bit of quality, but I think that's just due to numbers. I don't think it's anything to do with the PEQF. I think some students have struggled with the amount of work that they are asked to do. Even those that are determined and even those students that just get it and have no trouble with doing the job and are quite eloquent in their writing and are well supported by their sergeants, even they, at some point, do feel a little bit bogged down.

So, the worrying thing then is for those students that aren't highly academic that are coming into a world where they need to learn the job as well as do a uni course, as well as do a portfolio on top of that. It's easy to say recruitment is slacking or recruitment has dipped, but that's out of our hands and the numbers ruled what we were looking for and who got in."

Suggestions for practice

Where assessment pressures are mentioned in exit interviews, this should be reviewed and noted, and kept available for L&D leads, as this data is not always treated systematically and made part of learning.

In forces in the sample, potentially good officers are exiting programmes due to the "triple pressure" of the second probationary year. In order to prevent this, a protected period and double-crewing immediately post-IPS should be considered and there should be training given to sergeants on how to protect students in this period from excessive workload pressures. There should be a maximum number of crimes that a new recruit can pick up during this period specified by the force.

However, there is also a need to keep robust reg-12 and reg-13 procedures due to the unsuitable nature of many recruits passing IPS. Better recruitment procedures and improvements in tutoring (see phase 1 and phase 2 reports) will start to solve these issues.

Assessors should also be more involved in recruitment events and panels, where they are not already, as they are the officers most familiar with the demands of the probationary period.

A return to face-to-face recruitment events, with scenario testing, and a return to more rigorous selection of recruits is necessary in order to take pressure off the tutoring and assessment role and save time and resources further into the process.

There is also a more general need to move, whilst these issues exist, from seeing low retention as necessarily a failure, to a condition where the specific conditions of the force where retention is a challenge are taken into account.

Next Steps

A workshop, to be held between the researchers, Uplift partners, contributors to the report, and other stakeholders is scheduled for 9th May 2023. We aim to bring together findings from CPRL onboarding research and all three phases of the Tutor Constable research to develop a way of putting our growing knowledge of issues pertaining to police professional socialisation into practice. Police professional socialisation remains a vital route to increasing trust in policing and repairing the legitimacy of policing in the UK. Findings from across these pieces of work need to be brought together to provide maximum benefit.

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