



John Giblin, Secretary of the Professional Development Sub-Committee

PDR process has to be reviewed

In April 2003, when forces adopted the Personal Development Review system which is based on the National Competency Framework, it was seen as a fresh start in terms of monitoring staff performance.

The Home Office circular announcing the new system stated that PDRs should not be just a review of a person's past performance, but should also consider their future development. It also said forces would have to have the right mechanisms in place to monitor the quality of PDRs across the organisation to ensure they were operating effectively. From our perspective that hasn't been the case.

The problem is that PDR's are far too complex, over engineered, bureaucratic, undervalued and remote from the HR and IT processes to hold any real intrinsic value.

It has come to our attention that there is far too much misunderstanding and lack of confidence by front line officers in the PDR process, which has little credibility and is seen by many as nothing more than an annual quantitative process that achieves very little.

When I asked an officer about them, he told me they were a complete waste of time. The biggest problem is that there is rarely any developmental element to them. In his view, they were a joke because, as he said: "We only ever write nice things about how good we are."

Another officer from a different force told me that he and his colleagues put large amounts of 'evidence' in their PDR, which, on average, took them each two shifts to complete. This acted as a kind of insurance policy to offset any negative comments that could be added by supervisors who might not like them.

PDR's should be the bedrock on which we build our skills, recognition and development, which in turn promotes professional competence. To do this they must

be effective, efficient and robust. These are an essential part of mapping out an officers' learning and skills needs which will support their progress and enhance their performance; not just for them, but for their shift, section, BCU, force and, ultimately, the public we serve.

If we are to value learning and adopt a process of improvement through recognised skills programming for officers, the PDR is the golden thread that binds everything together.

The Home Office circular 14/2003 represented a good start in trying to address this issue, but sadly not much notice has been taken of that.

The problem is that PDR's are far too complex, over engineered, bureaucratic, undervalued and remote from the HR and IT processes to hold any real intrinsic value.

So, what are we going to do about it? At what point will someone begin to take notice, get a grip and accept the leadership challenge this is crying out for?

A 'root and branch' review of what a standardised, meaningful and beneficial, but above all, simple PDR process linked to HR and IT looks like, that the service can all sign up to, is urgently needed. When that has been achieved, let us work to have one single acceptable method adopted for all police officers that really does mean something to them.

The Police Federation's latest research into the PDR system will be published in next month's Police magazine

**What do you think? Is the PDR system failing officers?
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