

## **Police Federation's Annual Pay and Morale Survey (2017) – taking an in-depth look at the qualitative data**

**Canterbury Centre for Policing Research (CCPR)**

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The following report was commissioned by the PFEW. The PFEW has proactively gathered data regarding a number of initiatives that are underway in policing, some of which are driven by the College of Policing (CoP), via its yearly Pay and Morale survey. The PFEW wanted an independent and impartial analysis of the qualitative data, and as such commissioned CCU to undertake that task.

The PFEW will use this report to help inform its policy, as part of its evidence based approach to policy making.

# The Police Federation's Annual Pay and Morale Survey (2017)

## – taking an in-depth look at the qualitative data

### Executive Summary

- 1: This paper is based on the analysis of 3626 free-text responses from the PFEW Annual Pay and Morale Survey (2017).
- 2: The aim of the research was to further understand practitioners' perceptions of College of Policing initiatives. These included the Direct Entry scheme; the assessment and recognition of competence initiative; the licence to practice and the national register for police officers.
- 3: Whilst there were specific issues relating to each of the above schemes there were generic factors which crossed over them all. These related to the lack of effective communication from the College of Policing (CoP); the impact on officer morale; individual professionalism and issues of fairness for serving officers.
- 4: **Direct Entry (DE):** Overall, this scheme was the most commented on by respondents. Officers did not feel there was a sufficient evidence base to justify the DE scheme. In addition, there was strong negativity and a lack of support towards the scheme. Reasons varied from: officers' concerns about the lack of operational experience and the role of craft knowledge; officers feeling they had to provide the extra operational resilience as a result; frustration about the lack of recognition for this provision of support, even through the formal performance structures; a sense that the scheme inhibited serving officers' career opportunities. Therefore, they felt demoralised and disincentivised in the workplace.
- 5: **The assessment and recognition of competence (ARC):** Officers were sceptical of this process and believed that it would result in increased bureaucracy. This compounds issues with DE as it conflicts with the notion of officers entering the job without proof of such competencies. The process undermined their individual sense of professionalism and value within the job.
- 6: **Licence to practice (L2P):** Those that commented on the L2P felt that this process was unnecessary given they hold a warrant card. There was a perceived lack of communications leading to added frustration with the College and the scheme.
- 7: **National register for police officers:** This initiative was the least commented on but it was deemed as counterproductive and there were concerns over officers' privacy being potentially compromised.
- 8: As a result of this analysis the recommendations focused on communications and for the College to develop a clear strategy for the existing workforce when they implement reforms that affect them.

- 9: The College need to make transparent the evidence base that informs their reform agendas, especially given the evidence based policing agenda and the link this has to professionalisation.
- 10: The findings from this study should inform the national five-year evaluation, due to report to the Home Office. This should form part of the evidence base moving forward as it provides the voice of the practitioner.

## 1. Background and methods

The Police Federation's Annual Pay and Morale Survey (2017) gathered responses from 30,209 officers between the ranks of Constable and Chief Inspector in England and Wales. The purpose of this survey is to obtain the views of federated rank members on a range of issues related to their terms and conditions, as well as their attitudinal response to the police service including their morale, engagement and perceptions of organisational justice. Whilst the majority of questions asked comprised structured answer formats, respondents were also invited to put forward their reasons for their answers relating to their views on College of Policing initiatives. This was an open-ended comment box allowing for free-text input from the respondents.

Anecdotally there has been much disillusionment about a number of the College of Policing proposals – particularly the Police Education Qualification Framework (PEQF) and the Direct Entry Scheme. Small scale research studies such as Norman and Williams (2017) have highlighted some of this discontent, particularly in relation to how disconnected practitioners feel the College are with the reality of front line policing and how areas of the College professionalisation agenda can undermine officers' personal sense of professionalism as an officer. Previous research by the Police Federation has also shown that changes such as Direct Entry were associated with a reduction in morale for a large majority of officers (Boag-Munroe, 2015). However, there is yet to be any research exploring the specific issues officers have with particular initiatives the College are developing. The Police Federation therefore included questions within their annual Pay and Morale survey to be able to gather research data to contribute to fair, impartial and robust assessment of these initiatives.

The survey this paper is based on received 3626 qualitative responses<sup>1</sup>. These were coded and thematically analysed using NVivo. These findings are based on 2626 responses as saturation point in the analysis had been reached after reviewing these responses. This report summarises the top-level findings identified through the analysis of the data presented in section two. Section three provides a top-level discussion and reflection on the main findings with recommendations presented in the final section.

## 2. Findings

This section of the report presents the top-level findings based on a thematic review of the qualitative data described above. The initiatives raised by the respondents fall into the following areas:

- **The Direct Entry Scheme was considered to impact negatively on policing;**

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<sup>1</sup> A full demographic breakdown is available in appendix 1.

- **The Assessment and Recognition of Competence Initiative: Respondents were frustrated and sceptical about the process and what it achieved;**
- **The Licence to Practice was not understood and was perceived as a waste of resources;**
- **A National Register for Police Officers was seen as unnecessary and risky.**

An important message from this analysis is how the perceptions about these initiatives have impacted on morale and officers' sense of individual professionalism. This has reinforced a sense of cynicism and frustration with the governing professional body – the College of Policing.

## **2.1 Perceptions about the initiatives being developed by the CoP**

### **2.1.1 DIRECT ENTRY SCHEME**

The majority of the qualitative responses related to the Direct Entry Scheme. Analysis revealed a strong sense of negativity and a lack of support from the respondents. Officers questioned from where the concept of direct entrants had been derived; and the current evidence base around its implementation in policing. Given the drive for evidence based policing outlined in the College of Policing's professionalisation agenda, this finding is important.

#### **Direct Entry: The evidence base**

It was perceived by respondents that the current drive for evidence based policing by the College has not been adopted in the introduction of Direct Entry. Participants felt that there was a lack of evidence around why the scheme was introduced:

*"...We constantly hear phrases like "what works" and "evidenced based". I have seen no evidence to show that direct entry at any rank works or has an evidence base. Until this is the case I do not see why an earth it is even being considered. All it does is undermine those who have spent years trying to get promoted, for someone with less experience to jump ahead. How to destroy morale and policing..."*

Participants wanted to have 'evidence' to inform their opinion:

*"...I would need empirical evidence to determine the effects of direct entry schemes..."*

*"...I have no specific issue with direct entry, but am not informed enough on the pros and cons to particularly comment..."*

There were also a number of participants who expressed that they had no knowledge of direct entry and other initiatives being introduced by the College. In order for participants to fill this gap, they

often used their knowledge of other schemes introduced in different professions to formulate their opinion (about the perceived failings) of DE. This is addressed further, later in the report:

*“...in relation to direct entry have you not learnt anything from the mistakes of the NHS and direct none qualified nurse managers look at the mess the NHS is in and for student nurses another disaster...”*

### **Direct entrants making decisions about operational practice with no practical police experience**

The majority of concerns reported by respondents in relation to the Direct Entry Scheme related to their emphasis on operational experience as a requirement of good police work and effective decision-making. Respondents felt the scheme devalued experience and professionalism and this therefore compromised leadership decisions made by direct entrants. Reasons for this were varied but began with concerns about the direct entrants making decisions about operational practice with no practical police experience.

*“...Understanding of the demands of a police officer can only be gained from job experience. To manage an organisation, the individual needs to have a full understanding for the people and their roles. Policing is a complex area of work in which experience, knowledge and understanding is built over an officer’s service....”*

*“...Though direct entry from senior corporate management from another company to high ranks is considered desirable, there is no way of comparison between a senior say high ranking engineer and that of a senior police officer who has skills earned and learned through policing, fixing an "" engineering"" problem or a HR problem is not the same as resolving issues and problems within the police or the public...”*

This was linked with views that policing has a unique function in society and that the ‘craft of policing’ cannot be learnt in fast-time. There was also a perception that the skill set required for operational policing is not naturally aligned with skills obtained from the private sector. These findings are very much in line with other research which has explored the question of what constitutes police knowledge, what type of knowledge is valued and how it is gained. Experiential learning is described as the long term embedding of informal, ‘tacit’ knowledge compared to ‘codified’ knowledge which is taught off the shelf (Eraut, 2000).

Respondents reported that the scheme could undermine the traditional style of British Policing with a move away from the rank-and-file form of hierarchy. There were perceptions that the scheme did not recognise the unique nature of policing.

*“...You MUST serve in each and every role to understand the complexities of policing and the unique job that you do as a police officer....”*

*“...You can't learn policing from a book. It is inherently dangerous to allocate persons to senior policing positions without them learning their craft first. Totally folly...”*

These quotes exemplify the respondents' feelings about the importance of experience, and how direct entry undermines this relevance.

### **Policing has a unique function in society - the 'craft of policing' cannot be learnt in fast-time**

There was a strong sense from the respondents that policing should not be run like a business and that the direct entry scheme might ultimately damage the unique nature of policing. The perception around learning the craft of the job through gaining operational experience through the ranks was not to be underestimated. Respondents suggested that policing extends beyond the skillset learnt from the private sector.

The following quotes demonstrate that policing is distinct from other industries and involves a deep understanding of the complexities of policing, knowledge of risk and danger, and how experience is key to the acquisition of police craft:

*“...With reference to direct entry I believe policing is a unique vocation / career and it is essential to have the necessary experience to be able to empathise and understand the viewpoint of the officers of lower ranks in order to make balanced and correct decisions...”*

*“...You cannot beat experience, managing police is not like managing Tesco...”*

*“...The fact the government believes anyone can perform any role within the Police without any prior experiencing or training devalues the training and experience of our officers. We are a specialist service provider...”*

Due to the importance respondents placed on the uniqueness of learning from experience within the role, operational resilience is perceived to be reliant (in terms of training and support for direct entry employees) on frontline staff. This is discussed in the next section.

### **Working with officers involved in direct entry**

The overwhelming views of Direct Entry were negative. However, where positive views existed they related to the recognition of it as an innovative approach to modernising the police. There was some appreciation that direct entrants would bring new ideas and implement further procedures to the workforce. However, within the positive views of Direct Entry were statements about current disillusionment with current work practices. Therefore, this demonstrated support for the scheme on the one hand, but only as a result of unfavourable views of their current work environment. These quotes exemplify this:

*“...They can't do any worse than those already in position...”*

*“...new blood is required in the police force to change the piss poor decisions being made daily. Direct entry I believe will resolve this especially at Chief level...”*

Where participants recognised the benefits of bringing in independent, outside experience through the scheme, they did not necessarily feel that the roles of direct entrants were appropriately aligned. These participants recognised and welcomed the value that Direct Entrants can bring to the organisation, particularly in the context of business skills but rather than naturally aligning them to the operational police function, they felt that direct entrants should join the civilian structure within management, such as Human Resources and finance roles.

*“...People in senior ranks do not need to be police officers. They spend money but don't understand how or where to spend it. People from the private sector who are used to managing large budgets would be able to bring in more efficiencies, which in turn would reduce the budget of the constabulary. However, people like this are highly unlikely to want to work for the pay that is received. If they are as good as they sound they would earn much more in the private sector, have less responsibility than a senior officer and not be held to account as these current officers are. I believe it is a red herring that will not work and I have yet to see any in our force stay longer than a few months...”*

The above quote illustrates another issue that emerged from the data in relation to recruitment and retention. Regardless of positivity or negativity about the scheme, there were concerns about attracting the ‘right’ candidates and issues with retention. This related to other competitive salaries being in reach in the private sector for ‘good people’. They related this to the demanding nature of the role.

*“...Private/ public service experience does not transfer to the police. The salary offered would get you mostly low achieving candidates...”*

*“...Using Superintendent direct entry as an example - a Supers’ role is highly demanding, highly stressful and holds huge accountability. In another industry, this level of responsibility and stress would demand a much higher salary. Therefore, the best candidates will apply for roles in another industry and we are left with the mediocrity for Superintendents’ direct entry...”*

Of the positive views that existed in relation to the scheme, a minority held very strong views in relation to the scheme being a positive for the police organisation. However, this was linked to negative personal perceptions of the current 'state of policing'.

*“...Perhaps DE at higher ranks when officers fail to be police officers and become managers will have a positive impact as these people will bring fresh ideas and might even stop nepotism...!”*

Generally, however, the majority of participants who shared personal experiences of working with direct entrants were negative. This largely related to a lack of clarity about the value added by the scheme, rather than the individual. The analysis showed that the negativity surrounding the process can foster unconstructive views. Positive personal qualities of individual direct entrants were recognised by some. However, in the majority of cases, direct entrants were not perceived as positive. This related to a lack of understanding of the value they brought as a collective to the service. The following quote summarises a number of points that illustrate the concern in the scheme:

*“...I do not agree with Direct entry - I have worked with officers brought in, they are mentored and developed by officers who want promotion themselves and haven't been able to get through the process. They move around quickly to see different departments, they show no commitment to the response team that they work alongside as they only want to get an overview and then move on. They get very little experience and there is no substitute for experience and understanding, in relation to both criminal investigations and supporting staff in their roles. Understanding the pressures / risks to staff / work involved sometimes in what seems like a small task, eg interview, DASH risk assessments, statements etc. I appreciate that new skills are always useful and this can sometimes be helpful when we need to work differently to achieve goals, however I believe we have enough excellent staff within our ranks that with development / support and training would be able to outclass direct entry candidates. This would give better morale and support the skills of current staff we have...”*

As part of the direct entry scheme, entrants are expected to work in different areas to provide them with a range of experiences when initially in post. As a result of this working pattern and the short term nature of placements, there is not enough time of direct entrants to establish meaningful relationships with teams, nor to gain an established understanding of the requirements and needs of the team. These are perhaps indirect consequences of the scheme itself, but this negativity can be apportioned to the individual entrant themselves. In addition, officers voiced concerns about direct entrants making a detrimental decision. Some who had experience of working with direct entrants reported they had witnessed mistakes in post, at times, resulting in breaches of regulations. For example:

*“...people have spent years gaining knowledge and experience to get to the ranks they have. The direct entry system is laughable. I know of a supt who came in direct entry. In the first year they have lost property and breached a number of regulations that a PC would have been kicked out the job for. They still hold this rank today...”*

### **Providing resilience and peer support: compounding frustrations**

As a result of their concerns about experience, the respondents voiced feeling vulnerable and at risk when on duty with direct entry officers. They felt, therefore, that they needed to support direct

entrants to feel more confident in decisions made. This specifically related to their trust in operational decision making and the negative impact this subsequently had on levels of respect the frontline have for these officers. Therefore, respondents felt that the onus was placed on them as more experienced frontline staff to support direct entrants in providing operational resilience.

Respondents perceived that there was an onus on frontline staff to support direct entrants in their role due to a lack of knowledge and experience at an operational level.

*"...Worst idea ever to put someone with no policing experience in a senior position. All officers who have put time, heart and hard work into progressing their careers will be pushed aside for someone who does not have a clue what it is like to work on the front line. I would not respect them or want to be directed by them in a riot or serious incident...."*

*"...with regards to persons coming in and going straight in to senior ranking jobs due to experience in management is completely different to that of senior management within the police force. The inexperience of not knowing how to react to certain incidents would place officers on the ground in danger..."*

This led to feelings of frustration, particularly in terms of them feeling personally valued or recognised for assisting in this supporting role. Respondents described feeling demoralised, and not being incentivised, therefore, to continue this support. Such issues were compounded by the perception that the direct entry scheme can block career progression opportunities and that the existing internal performance development reviews and promotion processes were meaningless.

*"...It amazes me that despite their frequent mistakes and their changes (which often make things considerably worse - see the education sector) - that they then seek to impose this absurd notion of little to no experience in a role makes you a suitable leader. I see no benefit whatsoever of taking people with no experience of policing and dumping them into command positions - it's people like me who'll be bailing them out when they can't make a decision due to lack of knowledge and experience...."*

The quote above illustrates the perceived gap around a lack of experience. Officers' concerns about direct entrants' lack of knowledge and the impact this might have on potentially dangerous decisions being made meant that some bridged this void by 'bailing-out direct entrants' and providing resilience in relation to decision-making.

This resilience provision leads to more frustration, and respondents questioned why they should support direct entrants in this way, for example:

*"...Why should a constable teach a new Direct entrant anything whilst being paid a lot less..."*

The analysis above indicates a growing narrative in relation to the negative impact of the Direct Entry Scheme. Respondents feel that leadership roles should be taken by people with the experience of policing, working up the ranks. Without this practical learning the perception amongst the frontline is

a lack of understanding about the complexities that officers face. The lack of craft knowledge is perceived as having a detrimental impact on operational decision making.

All of these factors collectively impact negatively on levels of morale. Moreover, there was a sense that the scheme has had a divisive impact on the workforce. Given that research (Boag-Munroe, 2016) suggests that morale in policing is currently very low and that one of the reasons for this is because officers feel so disengaged from strategic decisions and change (Hoggart, 2014) this is a very important finding. Furthermore, such factors are linked to well-being, levels of productivity and discretionary effort (Hesketh and Williams, 2017). This is detailed in the following section, which outlines a further contributor to this narrative, due to a lack of progression opportunities being presented and people being promoted above them and a lack of internal processes to recognise and reward frontline staff.

### **Respondents reported feeling demoralised and dis-incentivised in their role and directly linked this to the Direct Entry Scheme**

There is a key theme arising from the data concerning the impact these issues have on morale amongst officers. This is related largely to their own sense of the commitment they have invested in their role and professional development over time. Many viewed this as an 'insult' or 'patronising' and viewed this as creating a divisive two-tier system.

*"Direct entry to ranks is a kick in the teeth to good officers who already have degrees and relevant training who would like to seek promotion but are put back due to direct entry. Policing is often about learning through experience and common sense not just about what qualifications you have. Also direct entry may work in the short term but these officers are likely to become despondent with the role quickly and seek to move on to the private sector to earn more money."*

*"...The government is sending out mixed messages. On the one hand they state that they are trying to professionalise the service and on the other they are parachuting people into senior ranks. It is a bit like making someone a senior surgeon when they have no medical experience or a judge without legal experience...."*

Officers viewed the Direct Entry Scheme as unfair. Those who expressed concern over the scheme felt so because there was an immediate barrier that compromised them to progress, with career opportunities being taken from them, and given to successful DE candidates. This contributed to respondents feeling dis-incentivised in relation to their career options. This impacted negatively on their morale. For example:

*"...There are plenty of officers with wasted skills and knowledge who are ready for promotion in forces, but are blocked by the stolid culture of negative attitudes and poor people development in force. HR do not develop people and the PDR process does not recognize those ripe for development. Introducing external candidates at middle management levels further blocks development opportunities and closes doors for promotion in force. Unfortunately,*

*skills other than Police-trained skills are not recognized as being of value and individuals therefore stagnate and feel undervalued leading to low morale...."*

The qualitative data indicated that a small proportion of respondents recognised some skills bought in by direct entrants could transfer and be applied to managerial or civilianised roles, but placing direct entry employees in warranted roles led to frustration amongst officers who had worked hard and were committed to their role and progression over their career. They felt the Scheme overlooked their skill set and many reported that this frustration led to a divide in the workforce, which impacted on levels of morale.

Myhill and Bradford (2013) have written extensively about the concept of organisational justice in policing. They argue that a sense of procedural fairness from both individual supervisors and the organisation more widely is critical for officers to identify with their organisation's values and priorities. The outcomes of perceived fairness are beneficial to the organisation and to the individual officer as they link to officer productivity and a personal sense of empowerment. Given this, it is likely that officers not only perceive the process for direct entry and access to promotion as unfair internally but the lack of engagement and knowledge provision about the scheme from the College of Policing itself is likely to undermine officers' commitment to their wider proposals.

***Existing internal processes are perceived as meaningless and this can compromise a sense of individual professionalism***

Respondents' feelings about the direct entry scheme being unfair further related to the application of existing internal processes in place within their workforce, and how the Performance Development Review (PDR) process and promotion process become meaningless in the context of this scheme. Respondents perceived that existing talents and skills within the workforce are overlooked. For example, the following two quotes relate to the current promotion process, and how this should focus on internal promotion, rather than recruiting externally:

*"...There are enough people already in the police service who aspire to rising up the ranks. Why should people with no experience be able to have direct entry at a level above that of Sgt? There are already a large number of officers (myself included) who have plenty of management experience from previous employment. Why not look at what you already have first rather than employ people who know nothing/have no experience of policing ??..."*

*"...The service has the wrong promotion process in place as it fails to promote good leaders who care for and work towards improving the service to the public. If this were changed there would be no need to employ persons from outside the service in higher ranks. Change the promotion process to one which attracts and promotes good leaders who care for their staff and the public not getting onto the next rung of the ladder..."*

In addition, there were also concerns raised about existing PDR process and how this could become more effective at recognising individual skills with a focus on development and promotion, as well as identifying weak performance that needs addressing and support.

*"...The service need to focus hard on personal development. These systems create have and have nots. It is a sticking plaster. Focus on staff individually. ...There is a very substantial pot of talented knowledgeable professionals to take promotion at every rank. No one has ever explained a tangible benefit for direct entry that stands up to scrutiny???? Practical experience says a bad idea and unfair..."*

*"...You should be able to show competence in your role and have a PDR system that accurately reflects your capability. If you aren't performing action should be taken. No action seems to be taken with lazy officers / inefficient officers in my Force, we just let them carry on or recommend them for a job to move the problem elsewhere..."*

This would allow talent from within police organisations to be recognised, as well as those underperforming to be challenged. The PDR process was perceived to be defunct and consequently ineffective. Should effort be put into making this system more meaningful, then this would serve as a recognition of all staff and the skills they offer, based on their experience and commitment to their professional development. The new initiatives being developed override and devalue the PDR system which is seen as overlooking existing talents within police organisations.

*"There is a wealth of diverse talent in the police service who would be capable of performing exceptionally at all ranks should the relevant training be available. "*

This links to the second College of Policing proposal raised by the officers. The Assessment and Recognition of Competence Initiative (ARC).

### **2.1.2 The Assessment and Recognition of Competence Initiative (ARC)**

The Assessment and Recognition of Competence process comprises of a number of elements. The main purpose is to ensure that officers' skills, knowledge, and behaviours relating to their core roles are retained. The assessment in relation to the ARC confirms the competency of a constable in their core role and can therefore be deployed to any relevant operational role within a force/or to other forces in England and Wales. Respondents from the survey voiced much frustration about this process and felt it would introduce more layers of bureaucracy, duplication and would ultimately result in officers having to 'jump through more hoops' to prove themselves and to evidence a pay rise.

#### **Frustration and scepticism about ARC process**

Perceptions in relation to the ARC process were mainly negative. Respondents felt the completion of assessments is / would be time consuming in an already pressurised role and there was a view that

this simply duplicates the current PDR process with additional bureaucratic requirements to justify a pay-rise for the work and commitment they already put into their role:

*“...We don't have time for assessments, it's a joke. Just give us a fair wage from the off and stop trying to fiddle the numbers and make it look like people are being rewarded. We don't want to be rewarded, we just want a fair day's wage for the horrendous stuff we see and do. We don't have time or the appetite for completely stupid assessments that everyone bar the completely inept are going to pass. Those that don't pass will already be under the UPP/PDR process for development so bin the daft assessments...”*

Respondents also were sceptical in relation to who would manage the assessment processes and felt that this would be likely to be a line manager. They felt that this process would be open to abuse and could lead to nepotism which is exactly what the College and the professionalisation agenda is seeking to remove.

*“...The police service is very poor at operating any initiative which involves 'rewards' based on an assessment. Nepotism and favouritism are rife; the service is not competent to operate these schemes in a fair and equitable manner....”*

Respondents perceived the ARC process as a constant need to ‘prove themselves’ or validate their professional competence which made them question the direct entry scheme.

### **ARC reinforces the two-tier system – jumping through hoops to prove competence when someone from the outside is parachuted in**

There was evidence from the analysis in relation to the DE Scheme that a two-tier system is believed to exist between the direct entrants and the wider operational work force. This is further reinforced with the ARC process in that there are expectations that the frontline has to pass assessments (using their experience of being a police officer) when someone is then given a leadership role over them (without experience or proof of the type of evidence required via the ARC process). For example:

*“...Why should Officers be expected to pass Policing assessments to work up pay scales yet there are possibilities of direct entry for higher ranks who have management experience yet have no experience as a Police Officer and what being a Police Officer is about? Surely they would not understand the role unless they have been a Police Officer themselves at some point throughout their Policing career...”*

This links with the issues around procedural and distributive fairness in policing and, further, officers’ perceptions of degrees and drive for increasing an academic input within policing. The notion and perception of policing being taught in a classroom as opposed to knowledge being built up through experience was mirrored in comments about degree level qualifications.

#### **2.1.3 The use of different types of knowledge: Devaluing experience**

Whilst respondents' comments about degree level qualifications are related to the Police Education Qualifications Framework (PEQF), this section refers more to the use of different types of taught, codified knowledge in policing and how this might undermine the value of experience. Indeed, this is likely to compound the issues outlined above regarding direct entry and the undermining of experience perceived through that process. There is also a risk that the section of the PEQF which focuses on the value of previous experience and learning might be negated as a result of these perceptions. The comments concerning academic knowledge indicate that officers' understanding of the process to drive different forms of knowledge in policing is incorrect, and therefore the vacuum left through the lack of communication they have from the College has been filled by speculation and officer opinion. These quotes highlight how officers currently perceive the PEQF issue and exemplify the lack of understanding and frustration about the proposals.

*"...Why does the college of policing feel the need to turn everyone into academics? If I attend a report of disorder, who would I prefer to attend with...an academic who will work out the force & trajectory of a punch or someone with life experience. In order to gain these licences/certificates when will the revision take place? Not at work if you're front line, so will we be expected to revise at home on top of the other stresses that work entails, a prime example being shift work? At the present time it's good to know that senior officers have at least some form of experience & knowledge of policing instead of some person who can talk the talk but cannot walk the walk!! Maybe the college of policing could produce badges & Top Trump cards of what certificates we could get..."*

*"...The role of police officer requires people skills and is not an 'academic' profession. The vast majority of these suggestions rely, for example, on officers' ability to write a good report and sell themselves in an academic process. It has no bearing on their ability to actually do the job..."*

*"...This can't be learnt from books or any other job outside the police force. Knowledge of law and process is only a small part of the job..."*

Whilst these quotes again reflect the onus officers place on learning through experience, there are other implications of these messages on professionalism and the police identity. As Fleming and Wingrove (2017) argue, change can be perceived as imposed on officers by outside influences, with no explanation of the aims or reasons for the proposed reforms. This can, paradoxically, result in officers defending their own craft practice and knowledge more and rejecting the classroom based contextual knowledge further. Indeed, as Norman and Williams (2017) found, officers in service who had made a personal decision to undertake degrees did feel more professional personally but when attempting to use the knowledge inside alongside their experience it was often ignored, undermined and berated by others, depending on their rank in the organisation.

### **2.1.3 Licence to Practice (L2P) is not understood and seen as a waste of resources**

The majority of respondents who commented on the Licence to Practice (L2P) felt that this was unnecessary and that the holding of a warrant card surpasses the need for such an initiative. Consequently, the L2P was seen as a waste of resources both for the individual and for police forces in terms of the administration and the required training.

Respondents were concerned from an individual perspective about the extra level of work they would need to do to fulfil a L2P and the financial cost would fall to them personally to pay for the licence. They linked this to already stretched resources and the impact this would have on their workload and their stress levels.

### **A lack of understanding in relation to the L2P**

It is perceived that there has been a lack of communication about the development of the L2P following the College of Policing Conference in 2016 when the idea was muted by Amber Rudd in the context of dealing with vulnerable people. Indeed, this again highlights how a lack of follow up or information from the College can build frustration and result in incorrect assumptions about what the licence might be or how it might be achieved. These quotes reflect this:

*"...Not enough information has been given concerning Licence to practice/register & Assessment and Recognition of Competence. Without further information I am unable to give an opinion..."*

*"... am concerned about what a licence to practice will mean to an officer. Will it mean that when certain departments i.e CAIU are really struggling resources wise they can't get assistance from other departments because those officers don't hold the appropriate licence so can't deal with that element i.e talk to children. Will it mean that people can't gain attachments in specialist departments to see if it is a role they would like to progress to without gaining a licence beforehand therefore meaning people are put off going to certain departments. Does having a licence put an officer at more personal risk if something was to go wrong with a case? How will it be managed and will you be paid more to hold a licence..?"*

### **The L2P was perceived to be a waste of resources in relation to both the officer to prove their 'worth' and to administer the process**

The majority of perceptions in relation to the L2P were views put forward that being issued with a warrant card is surely the licence that validates whether an officer is competent and trained appropriately to practice. As a result, there were strong views that the L2P is a waste of time and money and is an attempt to duplicate the meaning of the warrant card.

*"...All of these licences/ assessments for practise require more time away from the public & victims who are getting a poor response from the Police as it stands anyway..."*

There were concerns evident from respondents that this would be another exercise where they had to prove their worth, and they believed the cost of such licences would fall to them to pay for.

Whilst most of the views in relation to the L2P were negative, there was some recognition that the licence might result in more appropriate training, but again this was seen as a cost that would be incurred by the officer. For example:

*“...Perhaps if there was a requirement to have a licence to practice there may be some chance of getting some meaningful training, however I would suggest that the College of Policing would state that it would be an individual requirement to complete and at an individual’s expense. The college of policing would no doubt offer the training.....at a cost...”*

### **A National Register for Police Officers seen as unnecessary and risky**

The final proposal raised by officers in the survey was the national register, which, whilst there is limited information on this idea, was raised around the same time as the L2P issue. Whilst this attracted less commentary than some of the schemes, it created other issues for officers concerning identify and privacy.

The National Register for police officers attracted very few comments from respondents in comparison to the other COP initiatives. However, those who did comment felt a National Register is unnecessary, and importantly, there were concerns over risk to their privacy, should their names be published on a register. The following quotes demonstrate this:

*“...Publishing serving officers’ names on a national register is an intrusion of privacy and a security risk to those officers and their families...”*

*“... A national register would allow criminals to identify who you are and aid them identifying where you live etc...”*

Without the information and knowledge available to explain and reassure officers about their concerns it is likely that concerns will grow, and perceptions about a lack of engagement from the College of Policing become further embedded.

## **3. Discussion**

Whilst the survey raised some key issues relating to specific College initiatives and proposals, there are key themes arising from all of the points raised that impact beyond the detail of individual concepts. The clear sense of a lack of engagement and understanding of the proposals had resulted in officers filling these gaps with assumed knowledge and frustrations. This particularly relates to the evidence base behind the programme. Communication is the most important facilitator of change and more notably engagement in the change (Willis and Mastrofski, 2016). Information travels fast in policing both through informal methods and more formally. Plus, social media is a forum used by many officers to exchange thoughts and frustrations (Hesketh and Williams, 2017). It would also be worthwhile for

the College to consider tailoring the messages and the way they are communicated to the audience so they hit the mark.

The negativity this lack of understanding and perceived unfairness results in is impacting on officer morale, a sense of identification with their organisation and indeed the College of Policing itself. As Myhill and Bradford (2013) indicate, officers will not commit to and identify with organisational values unless they feel engaged in processes of change and reform that concern them. Therefore, these findings have many implications for the successful implementation of any College initiative.

Morale also features heavily in these findings and this has both more personal implications for officers and for the organisation where they work. Low morale can have negative consequences on productivity and well-being and given the drive from many forces to focus on staff mental health, following research conducted by the Police Dependents' Trust in 2016 highlighting the extent to which officers are struggling, this is an important finding. Low morale can lead to individual ill health and can also affect the health of the organisation in terms of productivity and commitment to change (Hesketh and Williams, 2017).

Finally, these findings indicate that professionalism, rather than being bolstered and supported by College of Policing proposals, at an individual level, is being undermined. Professional identity is being threatened by perceptions about direct entry schemes, unfair promotion process, and ignorance of talent inside the organisation and the concept of off the shelf training. Paradoxically the message about recognising existing learning and experience as professional within the PEQF is lost currently through the current situation with these schemes. The condoning of more 'taught, systematic knowledge in policing (Gundhus, 2012) undermines officers' occupational professional knowledge and has left serving officers feeling less professional by the College plans. This is exacerbated by the lack of explanation and available information about certain aspects of their work.

#### **4. Recommendations:**

These recommendations are integral to all of the proposal concerns raised by the officers in this survey and relate mainly to effective communication and recognition of their concerns by the College of Policing.

- We recommend that the College recognises the concerns raised by the officers, acknowledge them and consider an effective communications strategy to deal with them. Without this

morale issues will potentially worsen and the successful implementation of College proposals potentially be inhibited.

- We recommend that the College need to be far clearer in communicating to the existing workforce what plans they have to recognise existing talent and skill. For example, the officers raised nothing about the recognition of prior learning and experience strand of the PEQF which is entirely focused on recognising and accrediting current officers and staff.
- We recommend that the College needs to consider the concept of organisational justice in their strategies – fairness is key, and without a sense of justice and equity officers are likely to further reject new proposals coming out of the College.
- The College could more effectively engage with the PFEW to assist with communication with the frontline. These survey findings are key to exploring officers’ perceptions and moving forward with recommendations to deal with the issues raised.
- The College might want to consider holding sessions at every force to impart knowledge about their initiatives and outline what they mean to ‘you’ as an officer as opposed to simply what they are. This may serve to counter balance the negativity if information on direct entry schemes etc. is presented alongside issues about what is being done for the existing workforce at the same time.
- We recommend that the College should use exit interviews with direct entrants and understand what might be driving decisions amongst those that leave the police.
- We suggest that when new options are presented at conferences or in the media there should be a follow up for the frontline: otherwise news stories will be added to by assumption and incorrect information that will reinforce many of the concerns and issues outlined in this report.
- The findings from this study should inform the national five-year evaluation, due to report to the Home Office.

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## Appendix 1

Breakdown of participants who responded to the free text option

| Gender | No. of participants |
|--------|---------------------|
| Male   | 2654                |
| Female | 861                 |
| Blank  | 111                 |

| Age         | No. of participants |
|-------------|---------------------|
| 18-25 years | 57                  |
| 26-35 years | 722                 |
| 36-45 years | 1463                |
| 46-55 years | 1283                |
| Over 55     | 63                  |
| Blanks      | 38                  |

| BME   | No. of participants |
|-------|---------------------|
| Yes   | 156                 |
| No    | 3267                |
| Blank | 203                 |

| Service Length (years) | No. of participants |
|------------------------|---------------------|
| 0-2 years              | 82                  |
| 3-5 years              | 210                 |
| 6-10 years             | 497                 |
| 11-15 years            | 957                 |
| 16-20 years            | 784                 |
| 21-25 years            | 634                 |
| 26-30 years            | 440                 |
| 30+ years              | 19                  |
| Blanks                 | 3                   |

| Role                   | No. of participants |
|------------------------|---------------------|
| Response               | 934                 |
| Intelligence           | 240                 |
| Other Function         | 314                 |
| Investigations         | 1041                |
| Road Policing          | 80                  |
| Neighbourhood Policing | 390                 |
| Training               | 169                 |
| Administrative Support | 21                  |

|                             |                            |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Central Communications Unit | 54                         |
| Criminal Justice            | 38                         |
| Custody                     | 93                         |
| National Policing           | 21                         |
| Operational Support         | 223                        |
| Blanks                      | 8                          |
| <b>Rank</b>                 | <b>No. of participants</b> |
| Chief Inspector             | 42                         |
| Inspector                   | 240                        |
| Sergeant                    | 725                        |
| Constable                   | 2619                       |