



# Evaluation of the Police Now National Detective Programme Pilot (2019-2021)

## Final Report

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## OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

### *1. Police Now successfully attracted, recruited, and retained a diverse and talented cohort of detectives*

Police Now's National Detective Programme (NDP) attracted intelligent participants who would not have been otherwise attracted to policing, helping recruit a more visibly diverse cohort of participants into policing than traditional recruitment methods. Through a highly rigorous and competitive recruitment process, 93 participants were selected from a total of 3,995 applicants and demonstrated a very high level of talent and quality from the beginning of the programme. Additionally, views from police forces suggest that Police Now's detective participants are of high quality in their willingness to learn, their problem-solving mindset and motivation to provide an excellent public service. This has contributed to heightened confidence levels of the NDP participants by the end of the programme in which the majority leaving the programme were confident in their abilities to fulfil the role of PIP level 2 qualified detective. Adding to the success is the high retention of this cohort, which stood at 97% at the end of the programme with 96% stating that they intend to remain in policing beyond the programme. Against the backdrop of a national shortage of detectives, resulting in high demand, workload, and work-life balance challenges, this demonstrates real achievement in the quality of participants who have shown they are driven, motivated and resilient detectives.

### *2. Police Now's NDP represents an innovative response to the national shortage of detectives, and continues to develop in response to learning and feedback*

Police Now's NDP represents a ground-breaking and innovative programme, developed as a new route into detective work. The programme incorporates innovative teaching, supporting and coaching of participants within the early years of their career, which were appreciated and valued by participants. Being the first programme of its kind, it is not surprising that there are learning opportunities for Police Now, and the wider sector, which have been identified both through this evaluation, and participant and police service feedback. This feedback has culminated in changes for subsequent NDP cohorts after careful consideration of findings and recommendations by Police Now. As a result, measures have been put in place, where appropriate, to address them and ensure a cycle of continuous improvement.

### *3. Police Now's NDP was designed and delivered at pace to address the national shortage of detectives, becoming the first PEQF compliant detective entry route*

Police Now's NDP was created within a short time frame and had several requirements placed upon its design by the College of Policing and timescales set due to Home Office funding. Higher education partners also produced the Graduate Diploma in Professional Policing quickly, as it was essential to be ready (as part of the NDP) for participants without a relevant professional policing degree. The timelines to produce a qualified detective were set at two years, one-year shorter than the proposed new DHEP programme designed and delivered as another route into policing. The NDP was a huge programme to install so quickly, and all parties involved (Police Now, HE provider, and relevant police services) must be congratulated for doing so against a challenging backdrop.

### *4. Effective communication is essential for the management of expectations regarding the readiness, capability and experience of participants entering force, as well as implementation of the programme more generally*

Effective communication of the length, depth and breadth of the programme is essential to ensure that NDP participants and their colleagues are clear on the process, as well as the expectations of them. The link between Police Now, partner police services and the university provider need to be seamless, with better communication and management of expectations of all parties involved. Police Now have since taken steps to communicate more programme detail to participants and police services in advance, although respondents were keen to point out that clear messaging about the nature of the programme should be given to ensure that participants do not think they will be qualified as a detective as soon as they leave the

Academy. The tensions between workloads, expectations, and detective development were particularly highlighted by the university aspect of the programme.

*5. Participants deserve consistent support and development throughout the whole of the two-year programme, with provider's roles and responsibilities clearly set out*

Policing has entered a new era in the recruitment and development of detectives. The traditional route has been supplemented with new detective entry routes including the DDHEP and the Police Now NDP. In essence, the NDP has been a new development for the police to adjust to, and therefore systems and processes relating to detective development within police services need to be attuned to the needs of programme participants. This requires clear explanations of support roles and responsibilities, a consistent approach to support which recognises wider programme commitments and provides protected time for this. There is evidence that some police services were attuned to the need to develop NDP participants once they arrived operationally. However some police services were not as attuned to those needs. Respondents throughout have made clear that there is willingness to assist them operationally, but often supervisors, managers, and coaches are themselves working to capacity and have limited time to devote to the process.

## INTRODUCTION

### Police Now

Police Now contributes positively to the recruitment of neighbourhood and detective officers throughout the country, following the launch of the National Graduate Leadership Programme in 2015 and the National Detective Programme in 2019. Police Now has worked with 34 partner forces to recruit and train over 2,100 officers since 2015, with a focus on community and workforce transformation, crime reduction and public confidence. These form the basis of their mission which is to “transform communities, reduce crime and anti-social behaviour, and increase the public’s confidence in the police service by recruiting, developing and inspiring outstanding and diverse individuals to be leaders in society and on the policing frontline.” (Police Now, 2021<sup>1</sup>).

### Police Now’s NDP pilot

Police Now’s NDP was a new pathway for the recruitment of detectives in England and Wales (NPCC, 2018<sup>2</sup>). The pilot programme, which commenced in 2019, represented the first PEQF compliant detective entry programme and was designed to assist police services with recruitment, training, and development of new recruits to detective qualification in the face of a national shortage of detectives. This shortage was recognised as an ongoing problem, although workforce transformation was also an important driver for the police service (Tong and O’Neill, 2020<sup>3</sup>). Funded by the Home Office, the NDP was innovative, and was developed at a time of uncertainty around the appropriate ways to train detectives in a shorter time than previously. After the new programme had been in operation for nearly two years, the Home Office (2021, p.12)<sup>4</sup> demonstrated its commitment to the NDP as an innovative recruitment route, and its importance to the police service:

*We welcome the action forces are taking to ensure they have sufficient numbers of detectives. This is also why we have continued to fund the Police Now National Detective Programme, aiming to help bridge the gap in detective numbers.*

In 2019, Police Now commissioned the Canterbury Centre for Policing Research (CCPR) to undertake an independent evaluation of the first cohort on the programme (Cohort 1. This cohort comprised 93

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<sup>1</sup> Police Now (2021) Impact and Insights report 2020/21. Available at: <https://www.policenow.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/POLICE-NOW-IMPACT-AND-INSIGHTS-REPORT-20202021.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> NPCC (2018) Investigator Resilience Programme, Newsletter, Autumn 2018.

<sup>3</sup> Tong, S. & O’Neill, M. (2020) Professionalizing criminal investigation—an examination of an early attempt to support specialization in criminal investigation. *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice*, 14(2), pp.337-348.

<sup>4</sup> Home Office (2021) Evidence to the Police Remuneration Review Body 2021/22 pay round. London: Home Office. Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/960610/Home\\_Office\\_evidence\\_to\\_the\\_PRRB\\_2021\\_22.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/960610/Home_Office_evidence_to_the_PRRB_2021_22.pdf)

participants, representing eight different police services throughout the country. Females represented 61% of the cohort, and males 39%. 10% of the cohort identified as being from an ethnic minority background (Police Now, 2021<sup>5</sup>). There were a higher number of female and ethnic minority participants recruited to the first cohort than were in the police workforce in England and Wales. The latest statistics show a distribution of 31% identifying as female and 7.3% as from an ethnic minority background (Home Office, 2022<sup>6</sup>). Furthermore, application and recruitment to the Police Now programmes have increased year on year with Police Now's award winning brand recognised as a leading recruiter of graduates in the UK (Police Now, 2021<sup>7</sup>). Since the launch of the NDP, Police Now have recruited two further cohorts, with Cohort 3 beginning in 2022. Within Cohort 3, diversity has increased with 63% of participants identifying as women and 13% identifying as from an ethnic minority background.

### **Police Now's NDP strategy and objectives**

Police Now have developed a clear strategy complete with key objectives in response to independent evaluation findings, and participant and customer feedback. Driving these developments is a focus on delivering an exceptional, national talent pipeline of individuals who otherwise would not have considered a policing career. This means delivering something different to what forces deliver.

This is reflected in Police Now's recruitment and marketing strategy and eligibility requirements which are set to ensure quality and differentiation of participants from the outset. This includes:

- Evolved applicant targeting with a focus on visible diversity and professional experience.
- 100% hold at least on Level 3 qualification (e.g., A Level, BTEC National).
- 100% hold a First or 2.1 undergraduate degree.
- 100% have never made a previous application to policing.
- High assessment centre benchmark (37% pass mark for NDP Cohort 3 applicants).

Through a strategy focused on quality and differentiation, the NDP has undergone developments to provide participants and partner forces within a distinct and valuable experience. This includes:

- Rigorous and intensive training at the Police Now Academy, taught by high performing syndicate leads and external experts.
- Expert coaching for leadership and impact, involving innovative methods which aim to develop excellence in operational, evidence-based policing and leadership skills over the two-year programme. All to enable achievement of key deployment milestones at the earliest possible stage: i.e. Independent Patrol Status in 4 months, NIE pass in 2 months, PIP2 deployment in 9 months.
- Participants are regularly held to account through a variety of means to demonstrate the impact they have delivered in their communities, with assessment linked to outstanding operational delivery and impact in communities and policing.

Guiding this strategy are four key objectives which have been devised to provide a benchmark in which to assess the success of the Police Now NDP for every cohort:

- Drive increases in victim satisfaction.
- Reduce the chances of reoffending through outstanding risk management.
- Bring a problem-solving mindset to the detective arena.
- Be a detective talent pipeline for your force and the police service.

### **Evaluation research objectives**

The objectives guiding the evaluation include:

- 1) Examine biographical characteristics and perceptions of Police Now detective cohorts in relation to role, performance, retention training and practice.

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<sup>5</sup> Police Now (2021) Impact and Insights report 2020/21.

<sup>6</sup> Home Office (2022) Police Workforce, England and Wales, 31st March 2021, updated 30 March 2022, London: Home Office. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-workforce-england-and-wales-31-march-2021/police-workforce-england-and-wales-31-march-2021#headline-workforce-figures>

<sup>7</sup> Police Now (2021) Impact and Insights report 2020/21.

- 2) Collect the perceptions and experiences of participants and stakeholders of the Police Now Detective programme.
- 3) Provide staged assessment of the Police Now detective programme from participants and stakeholders in relation to aims and objectives.
- 4) Explore examples of innovation with the potential to impact on policing and communities.
- 5) Analyse relevant literature relating to entry routes into policing.

### Evaluation research strategy

The research strategy aimed at monitoring Cohort 1 using a mixture of interviews, surveys, and observations across three phases: firstly, at the Academy; secondly, once the cohort had been working in an operational environment for approximately 12 months; and thirdly, at the end of the programme as participants were preparing to graduate from the programme. The full details of data collection and analysis for each phase of the research are presented in Table 1 in which the activity, completion date and response rates (where applicable) in all three phases are given. An overview of the interim findings report can be read in full [here](#).

**Table: 1 Research Timetable (Phases 1-3)**

Research Timetable		
Activity	Completion date	Response rate
<b>Phase One</b>		
Start of Academy surveys	September 2019	87/93 (93%)
Start of Academy focus group (participants)	September 2019	N/A
Start of Academy observations	September 2019	N/A
End of Academy surveys	December 2019	87/93 (93%)
End of Academy focus groups (participants)	December 2019	N/A
End of Academy focus groups (Syndicate Leads)	December 2019	N/A
End of Academy observations	December 2019	N/A
Presentation of initial findings	March 2020	N/A
<b>Phase Two</b>		
In force survey	October 2020	19/95 (20%)
In force focus groups	October 2020	N/A
Interim Findings Report	November 2020	N/A
<b>Phase Three</b>		
End of programme survey	January 2022	25/90 (27%)
End of programme focus group	January 2022	N/A
Interviews strategic leads*	January 2022	(4/8) 50%
Interviews line managers/supervisors*	January 2022	N/A
Interview Police Now Director of Programmes	October 2021	N/A

### PHASE THREE FINDINGS

The final phase of the research undertook interviews with police service strategic leads for the programme, supervisors and managers, and surveys and focus groups with participants from Cohort 1. In addition, an interview was conducted with Kurtis Christoforides, Director of Programmes at Police Now. The results will firstly consider Cohort 1 reflections on the Academy and post-Academy.

### Participant Reflections on the Programme

#### *Quality of training*

Participants were given the opportunity to reflect upon Academy training having reached the two-year mark of the programme in which they are in a better position to judge the quality of training received. Overall, 32% of participants (N=8) were satisfied with the quality of training they received during the programme, whilst a combined 48% (N=12) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. Further, 20% (N=5) of participants were neutral, meaning that 52% (N=13) were either neutral or agreed that the quality of the training they received was adequate.

Consistent with findings from phases 1 and 2, issues such as lack of practicals within the Academy, and the need for more input on significant issues such as case files, disclosure of unused material, investigative interviewing and court were raised. These topics have been carefully considered and implemented in the curriculum of subsequent Academies for Cohort 2 and 3. For example, the D3 Academy consists of six inputs dedicated to investigative interviewing over the course of the 13-week Academy, alongside separate practise sessions and assessments which cover suspects, victims, and witnesses, respectively. These changes seem to have led to positive overall satisfaction, with 88% (N=127) of Cohort 3 NDP participants stating that they are satisfied with the quality of training provided at the 2022 NDP Academy.

Some reflected on Police Now's 'situation carousels' which are short one-minute scenarios designed to assist participants in exploring the unknowing in a challenging, but structured and safe environment<sup>8</sup>. Situation carousels highlight the innovative training methods utilised by Police Now in the training of their participants which highlights gaps in knowledge and understanding in real-time. Participants had originally felt that they were not particularly useful to them whilst at the Academy but later reflected on their positive aspects. Example positive comments are listed below:

*Carousels. We did practical courses every Thursday. At the time they were a bit of a pain but, looking back, they served a purpose and I think they were actually quite good. I actually quite liked them and if I were designing the programme, I would include them.*

*It made you think on your feet and deal with the situation in front of you. And also, I know people found it really hard to be watched because you...had to take it in turns and after you've done it you sit and watch everyone else do it...Learning from each other like that is really good.*

#### *Communication and expectations of the NDP*

Interesting issues that appeared to be consistent throughout the findings relate to communication and expectations. Participants felt that it was important to communicate clearly to the cohorts what the Academy was intended to do, and how quickly they could expect to develop into the role of detective. There were anecdotal stories of individuals who seemingly felt they would be fully qualified as soon as the Academy phase was completed:

*...There needs to be a bit of reality injected into the process that "At the end of the scheme you'll be doing ten weeks on response and then you'll be going into some form of investigation role but you're not going to be perfect, you're not going to be anywhere near it".*

There was clear feedback to improve line manager understanding and engagement with the NDP. 16% (N=4) of participants stated that their line managers were unaware of the programme or the work expectations of the Police Now cohorts, and some had unrealistic expectations about the incoming detectives and their ability to investigate crime. Some participants put this down to poor communication between their force and Police Now. For example:

*As it was a new programme it was difficult for my line manager to understand what was expected of us. Poor communication to sergeants, only to inspectors or sergeants not attached to my team.*

The last reflection here highlights a learning for the sector in that line manager knowledge and support of the training of new recruits, regardless of their entry route into force, is fundamental to the experience and support provided to trainee detectives, as well as their longer-term retention and progression. Faced with the reality of high line manager turnover and workload, it is important that information is filtered through

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<sup>8</sup> In the context of the Academy, Situation Carousels are used as a learning tool as participants watch their peers take part in the exercise, all of whom receive instant feedback from their Syndicate Leads. Typical scenarios are based on practical theory and challenges faced by previous participants, this includes challenging unprofessional behaviour, communicating with colleagues and the public, and engaging with domestic abuse victims.

to participant's line managers about opportunities to learn more about Police Now and the NDP, i.e., through visitor days at the Academy and line manager briefings held by Police Now's Force Partnerships Team.

Finally, given the current trend for police services to develop in-house detective training, it was interesting to hear that participants felt that their training benefitted from the national perspectives and networks offered by Police Now and the NDP. This is an important learning for the sector given that regional forces are increasingly experiencing policing challenges which exist on a national scale. The cooperation, insight and innovation generated through inter-force training, as with Police Now's NDP, can bring real value to local teams within the detective arena if adopted more broadly across policing.

*It feels like there are huge benefits to all of us being in Academy together...meeting people from different forces, getting all that different knowledge from different sergeants, different inspectors from all over the country, but that can only be beneficial as long as you then actually make it useful to your area as well.*

*I think the Police Now Academy, the one thing that was good is drawing on experiences from all different forces and having those guest speakers from all different places...I mean, no major incidents I can ever recall of like massive things happening in North Wales, for example...so, to get someone to come in to talk about some terrorism attack or something that happened, that's really good for us because you get a good understanding of what's happened. So doing it in force I just don't think would work and everyone's too local and...you don't bring in people from different backgrounds and experiences either.*

Finally, although there are apparent discrepancies in communication of the programme, when asked to what extent the NDP met participants expectations, the majority (68%, N=17) stated that their experience did in fact meet expectations. This compares with 32% (N=8) of participants who felt that it did not. Given the speed at which the programme was implemented, this can be considered a positive result, with work ongoing by Police Now to create further alignment across the participant journey and programmatic experience.

#### *Perceptions of support throughout the NDP*

The final phase of the evaluation asked participants to reflect upon the support they received throughout the programme. Overall, 60% (N=15) of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they had received good support from their Leadership Development Officer (LDO), whilst 36% (N=9) were neutral and 4% (N=1) disagreed. As found in phase 2 of the evaluation, there were some very positive comments about the LDOs' knowledge, support, and coaching skills. However, some suggested that, at times, this help was limited by a perceived lack of organisational and operational knowledge<sup>9</sup>.

Furthermore, support in-force was well received with a large percentage (92%, N=23) agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement: "I received good support from my line manager". Qualitative responses also demonstrated positivity to line manager support:

*I have received support from my line manager and division throughout the process. They have provided rotations (to) different departments as well as time to work on portfolios, etc.*

*My sergeant has been excellent since I've joined CID. He has been very supportive and interested in the Police Now process. My team had also been excellent and have been very supportive and patient.*

Previous findings from phase 2 of the research indicated dissatisfaction with the university component of the programme through participants completed a Graduate Diploma in Professional Policing Practice. When asked to rate the quality of support received from their Personal Academic Tutor, 24% (N=6) agreed or strongly agreed that they received good support from their Personal Academic Tutor (PAT), whilst 16% (N=4)

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<sup>9</sup> It should be noted here that the LDO role has now been replaced with a new Professional Development Coach (PDC) role, with clear differences in duties and responsibilities.



were neutral. However, 58% (N= 14) either disagreed or strongly disagreed. Qualitative responses suggest that there was variation in participant engagement with their PAT, with 56% (N=14) reporting no contact at all. Of these participants, a high number knew they had a tutor but did not make use of them, although they also reported that there was little engagement from their PAT.

#### *Programme completion and beyond*

Participants who responded to the final survey were asked to indicate whether they intended to remain in policing now that they had completed training. 96% (N=24) of participants indicated yes, with 4% (N=1) indicating no. Although a small sample, this demonstrates a very positive result for the retention of trainee detectives, especially considering that many participants had no prior experience of policing, nor had they considered a career in policing before hearing about Police Now. Regarding intentions to remain in CID 83% (N=20) indicated their preference to do so, whilst 16% (N=4) indicated they would wish to move away from CID. This is a positive indication bearing in mind some comments about the difficulties of the programme, excessive workloads, and issues with work-life balance.

This demonstrates the success of the recruitment process in selecting participants with the resilience and motivation to continue on their chosen career path, despite the challenges currently facing detectives across forces and units. Additionally, although graduates, all participants had spent two years or more working in careers and professional environments outside of policing. Therefore, it may be that the transition of diverse skills, experiences and work ethics to the detective arena assisted in their entry into investigative work, allowing them to build resilience at an enhanced rate.

#### **Supervisor and Line Manager Reflections on the Programme**

Five supervisors or managers from five different partner police services were interviewed to provide a snapshot of their perceptions of the NDP. This small sample has limitations for related findings however, some interesting themes emerged, some of which were consistent with findings from the cohort surveys and focus groups previously discussed.

#### *Quality of training*

In qualitative responses, supervisors and line managers reflected upon the quality of the participants and what they felt was lacking in their training once they arrived operationally. Some had their own opinions about the deficits in training, whilst others gleaned their observations as a result of what they were told by the participants. In their observations often respondents would reflect upon what they perceived as extra training that had to be provided to participants beyond what the Academy taught them. Below are some example comments regarding perceived issues with Academy training.

*They did a week suspect interview course and a week witness course, which really should be part of...the initial training.*

*They didn't really touch on disclosure at the Academy...disclosure is such a huge, huge part of things now actually we need to be giving them a base...or if we're not going to give them a foundation in disclosure now, we need to have scheduled in during the two year development a week where they are trained in disclosure.*

These findings are consistent with some of the participant feedback regarding Academy content. Moreover, as already discussed, following feedback and interim findings, Police Now have changed the content to incorporate more practical sessions, more interviewing, disclosure and case file preparation for subsequent cohorts.

#### *Quality of participants*

Comments relating to the quality of recruits tended to either focus upon their individual qualities (for example, intelligence, ability to learn, motivation and enthusiasm) or the perceived level of knowledge and understanding they had. Previous experience prior to joining the police was also considered valuable to

becoming a detective. Interestingly, some made comparisons between Police Now NDP participants and new recruits on the Degree Holder Entry Programme (DHEP), feeling that those on the NDP had more life experience due to their status as career changers. Example comments included:

*...the good thing about Police Now and the (Old) ICIDP route is that at least both of them...want to become a detective...so at least you know you've got the motivation and the enthusiasm there which is almost a starting point isn't it from a supervisory point of view. So that's really great.*

*I have on the whole been really impressed with the people that we've got through. I can only speak for (X police service) because that's where I cover, but the 5 that we received in the Reactive CID Office...have on the whole been really, really good people in terms of I can see how their previous life experience would make them suitable for being a detective.*

At the two-year mark, supervisors and managers were asked whether they felt confident in the abilities of the NDP participants, resulting in positive reflections on their capabilities for and performance in the role. Example comments included:

*Now I do, as in now they've had two years...I wouldn't have confidence in them when they land because they wouldn't have confidence in themselves. But once they've done their two years, they are very competent.*

*They brought a skill set that, a life experience, and abilities that a lot of people don't have that actually are really useful especially in frontline response policing. And I think for detective work actually the Police Now programme does get people with the distilled skills we need in a lot of ways.*

#### *Communication and expectations of the NDP*

Many supervisors and line managers interviewed stated they had received little to no internal communication about the programme or arrival of NDP participants. They appeared to have been told that participants would be capable of investigating upon arrival, and were not told about the programme or participant commitments required to complete it (i.e. university requirements). Qualitative data from this sample imply that communication and expectations of the police services were mismanaged in relation to the extent of experience, abilities, and knowledge that participants would have upon arrival in respective units. One respondent commented:

*I had no contact with them. There was no discussion with us, with any of the leads. We were just basically told they're starting with you next week, and that was it...There were no conversations. Like I said, the only correspondence I had was to tell me a month before the assignments had to be in that I had to review them all.*

Despite the perceived deficiencies of experience and knowledge, one police service recognised that continued development of NDP participants were a responsibility of the force and took measures to support them accordingly:

*There was a suggestion that you were going to get these ready-made, open the box and you had a PC ready to go, just hit the floor running. Actually what we said was, these are people that are still training, you'll have a detective at the end of the two years. We were really keen to message that across the organisation and then make sure the supervisors supported them and realised that they weren't coming to them to take on big jobs, but I think that's outside of Police Now, there's Police Now but you've really got to get (police) organisations...to message that correctly and to support them properly.*

Moreover, responses occasionally revealed examples of creative practice by a NDP officer which made a difference to a CID office practice, as well as the information provided to victims of crime:

*An example I can give was he dealt with a victim who didn't want to engage, as in she told us what had happened to her but didn't want to pursue it. And he (the NDP officer) came to me and said, "Where can I give her a pamphlet on where all the...support agencies numbers and contact details would be?" And I said, "There isn't any. She would have to Google. She would have to go online." And it didn't sit right with him. So...he created his own. He researched it. He got all the local support charity numbers. And I said, "Print that off and we'll all have that because that's something we can give to all our victims." And I just thought that he didn't have to do that, but I think because he was doing such a good job, he wanted to do that.*

This is an example of the type of behaviour that speaks to the very heart of Police Now's mission and strategic objectives of the NDP: to provide the sector with detectives who can think creatively about real world problems and solve them, thereby enhancing their service to communities and improving public confidence. This particular creativity and innovation impacted the whole department who used the materials provided to enhance the service to victims.

#### *Perceptions of participant support throughout the NDP*

Supervisors and line managers perceived that participants on the NDP had some support where resources allowed. Some attempted to assign a mentor to participants where possible, something which they suggested was not an opportunity that every developing detective had. Some commented upon the support received by university tutors, indicating that this was sometimes lacking, and that there was a constant change of personnel. They also suggested that some NDP participants did not engage with their university PATs despite their availability. In terms of general support, one manager commented upon the lack of resources and the reality that the NDP are faced with:

*Doing the direct entry detective process, coming in when we were in a perfect situation would be tough but at the moment the demands and the lack of resources, and the pressures they're under are huge.*

There was a sense that supervisors and managers had a high turnover, which in turn could explain why some officers said they had not been briefed about the NDP programme. Whilst Police Now undertook in-force briefings to enhance understanding of the programme, they do accept that this aspect of communication could have been consistently and persistently undertaken to a wider audience. On a final note, interviewees considered that line managers and supervisors were the best situated to be able to support and develop the NDP officer once in an operational setting. Where the need for extra support was apparent, they suggested that support was put in place.

#### **Strategic Lead Reflections on the Programme**

Four strategic leads<sup>10</sup> from the eight participating police services were interviewed. Below reports some of the main themes identified.

#### *Quality of participants*

In terms of the quality of NDP participants, there were some very positive comments about the quality of participants recruited into forces. Examples included:

*They are definitely the right candidate, without a doubt. They've got the fizz, they've got the optimism, they've got the drive, they really want to make something of it.*

*They're all of a good standard, they're all similar standard, slightly different age ranges and experiences, but I think that that really helps. They're quite mature for their ages. Whilst there is a difference in age, their outlook is slightly different and I think that has helped them settle in really well.*

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<sup>10</sup> Strategic lead is a term encompassing those whose role it was to ensure that the programme was implemented in the respective police service. Interestingly the rank of the individual with the designated position varied from sergeant to chief superintendent.

Some also commented upon the fact that the quality and motivation of the participants also changed internal perspectives and opinions about the NDP:

*(X colleague) walked in there, after...about four weeks, in one of the briefings, and he came up to me and said, "You know what," he said. "This is just phenomenal. I've just seen them deal with this, and how they dealt with that was just really great. It's just opened my eyes." I said, "Well, there you go." And he was quite influential thereafter in marketing them.*

#### *Communication and expectations of the NDP*

Strategic leads also identified issues with both communication and expectations. Some identified poor internal communication and management of expectations of staff regarding the stage of development of new NDP participants. For instance, one remarked:

*...there needs to be a better thought-out way internally as to how we communicate with our staff internally about what they can and can't do and what the expectations of the candidates are.*

As a result, and reiterating participant reflections, they stated that units gave serious and complex crime cases to participants to manage which were beyond their capabilities at the time:

*I've still got horror stories of some of them turning up on the first day and being given these huge complex serious investigations because my teams thought they were the full ticket when they landed -- because that's what the programme made them think. So there's how I stipulated and started to reference internally what they could and should do versus what everyone thought they could and should do and versus what the programme might have said.*

*When they landed with CID, the expectation...(was)...that these officers had been in training for 15 weeks...and they were going to come back as superheroes. And when they landed and were first presented, "Right, we've got an offender in the traps for", let's say for instance arson to endanger life, "can you crack on?" The reply was, "Well, what do I do, what do I need to do?"*

The sense one gets is that because the programme was new, no one knew what to expect. In addition, it has been a steep learning curve for all involved in the process. One respondent offered a more realistic assessment of the situation:

*They are doing as you would expect of bright intelligent individuals...with good work ethic, and a decent training programme behind them. They're at the level that you would expect, you know, they're not at a level where they're flying on their own, managing their own caseloads independently. They're still needing to be mentored, tutored, and given lots of guidance, but I wouldn't expect anything else given the limited...experience that they've got at the moment.*

#### *Definitions of success for the NDP*

Strategic leads were asked what they perceived to be success of the programme. In response to the question, interviewees were frank; that in many cases they were unsure of the criteria. Some answers to the question of what success looks like identified retention, diversity of thought, background and experience, exam performance, and evident application of theory to practice as key indicators of success. However, it is clear that there was no consistent understanding and, in many cases, it had not been defined in force at all.

*I guess this has been the biggest sort of question that I've been...raising and asking...From my perspective, and I think from the force perspective, it is, when the programme concludes, to have effective, competent detective officers. So, that takes a while because the nature of being a detective officer takes a while to get fully trained and fully up to speed, and how do you actually measure that? Is that a PDR process? Is it a process of peer review? Is it an evaluation such as that you're doing that says it it's a success or not? And I think that's the biggest area that we're, sort of, scratching*

*our heads around, at what point can we say, yes, this has worked, we've got eight effective detectives out of this, or not?*

*We haven't really defined it as such. I think the manner in which we have tested it so far has been the sort of obvious indicators in terms of those at early progress through the policing Academy, the passing of the NIE exam. I think from the Academy nine out of our twelve passed the exam within the Academy, three passed it quickly on a retake. There's certainly no definition of what good looks like for us*

Police Now have since redefined the success criteria through the establishment of the quality and differentiation strategy, and introduction of the programme objectives (please refer to pages 4-5). These metrics are measured through internal methods of monitoring participant development and performance which include a Participant Experience Survey and Feedback Survey completed by line managers and colleagues.

## REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### *1. Police Now successfully attracted, recruited, and retained a diverse and talented cohort of detectives*

Police Now has a proven track record in attracting and recruiting diverse cohorts into policing through the National Graduate Leadership Programme, the process of which was lauded by participants who saw them as professionally administered and relevant to the sector. The popularity and competitiveness of the programme, a pilot no less, is evidenced by the high number of applicants (3,995) with only 2% (93) being accepted onto the programme<sup>11</sup>. Despite this small cohort, there is a larger ethnic minority and gender representation than the national statistics relating to the police workforce. There is also evidence that the level of intelligence and general quality of the participants is very high. In the first Academy, 84.6% of Cohort 1 passed the NIE, which exceeded the national average by 22%. Despite some concerns around operational competence, views from the workplace suggest that participants are of high quality in their willingness to learn and problem-solving mindset. The NDP attracted many talented participants who would not have been otherwise attracted to policing and has helped recruit a more diverse range of participants into policing than traditional recruitment methods.

Strategic leads and line managers/supervisors noted that NDP participants are a welcome addition to the detective role because they have entered investigative work voluntarily. There was positivity around the life experience and skills these recruits brought to policing too, and some compared the participants favourably against DHEP recruits. Participant line managers were confident in the capabilities of the NDP participants at the two-year mark, resulting in positive reflections on their performance in the role. This echoes the increase in participant confidence levels over the course of the programme with the majority leaving the programme feeling that they have a good knowledge of the law, are able to undertake serious and complex crime investigations, and interview victims, witnesses, and suspects.

Adding to the success is the retention of this cohort which is very high post the two-year period, with 97% of participants still in post. This is reflected in the sentiments of those that took part in the final survey as the vast majority indicated an intention to remain in policing (96%), and the majority of those wanting to remain in the detective world (83%). Against the backdrop of a national shortage of detectives, resulting in high demand, excessive workload, and work-life balance challenges, this demonstrates real achievement by Police Now in collaboration with their partner forces, in the quality of participants who have shown they are driven, motivated and resilient detectives.

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<sup>11</sup> This has continued in recruitment statistics for subsequent NDP cohorts (8,321 applications and 224 places for the 2020 cohort (Cohort 2) and is an aspect of Police Now's activities that sets it apart as an organisation attracting high quality participants from diverse backgrounds.

*2. Police Now's NDP represents an innovative response to the national shortage of detectives, and continues to develop in response to learning and feedback*

Undoubtedly, Police Now's NDP was ground-breaking and innovative, developed to contribute a new route into detective work. At the point of programme inception, there were no routes directly into CID roles (aside from the MPS Direct Entry Detective Scheme which began in 2018), and this became an important consideration given that there were reports of a national shortage of detectives in England and Wales. The programme itself incorporates innovative mechanisms of teaching, supporting and coaching participants within the early years of their career, which were appreciated and valued by participants. This includes innovative learning techniques such as Situation Carousels, Skills Sessions, and Impact Events (not considered within the remit of this report), and key individuals such as Syndicate Leads and Leadership Development Officers.

Being the first of its kind, it is perhaps not surprising that there are several points of learning which have been identified both through this evaluation, and participant and force feedback. Feedback regarding the Academy content and timetable, the role of the LDO and the university have culminated in changes for subsequent NDP cohorts through careful consideration. As a result, measures have been put in place by Police Now and partner forces, where appropriate, to address them and ensure a cycle of continuous improvement.

*3. Police Now's NDP was designed and delivered at pace to address the national shortage of detectives, becoming the first PEQF compliant detective entry route*

The NDP was created within a short time frame and had several constraints placed upon its design. Firstly, it had to be approved by the College of Policing and there were obvious tensions with requirements to teach core policing skills to new recruits in addition to criminal investigation matters. Timescales were short due to specific Home Office funding requirements and again this impacted upon the design and delivery of the first ever programme, which had to be delivered 'at pace' (Police Now, 2021). The NDP timelines to produce a qualified detective were set at two years, one-year shorter than the proposed new DHEP programme designed and delivered as another route into policing. The programme is therefore vastly distinct from the traditional routes into CID which, at their fastest, take at least four years for trainee detectives to reach qualification. Higher education partners also produced the Graduate Diploma in Professional Policing quickly, because it was essential to be ready as part of the NDP for participants without a relevant professional policing degree. In addition, the recruitment drive went outside policing and targeted graduates with two years' work experience.

The NDP was a huge programme to install so quickly, and all parties involved (Police Now, HE provider, and relevant police services) must be congratulated for doing so against the backdrop described above. Police Now must also be congratulated for creating the programme as a means to develop a new detective pathway whilst at the same time commissioning independent researchers to evaluate the programme in its entirety. However, the most important people are the participants who have experienced the programme in its entirety. Below sets out some positive aspects of the programme, together with some areas which need addressing and can be characterised as learning for the sector.

*4. Communication is essential for the management of expectations regarding the readiness, capability and experience of participants entering force, as well as the programme more generally*

Effective communication of the length, depth and breadth of the programme is essential to ensure that NDP participants and their colleagues are clear on the process, as well as the expectations of them. The link between Police Now, the police services and the university provider need to be seamless, with better communication and management of expectations of all parties involved. There were suggestions that the communication about the programme was either inaccurate or absent with some participants and force colleagues unclear about the detail of the programme. Seeing the participants as developing to become qualified detectives after the full two-year programme is an important message and expectation that needs



to be managed. As indicated by one service, this highlights the responsibility of partner forces in ensuring the effective implementation and understanding of the programme.

Moreover, a question generated from the research is: when does an NDP participant become qualified? Whilst the majority of Cohort 1 participants qualified on all three accounts at the end of the two-years (70%), a small minority did not qualify as detectives because their police services felt further proof of competence and extra training was required. For the cohort this was a cause of concern. Once again, clearer communication of the process to participants and police services is required to ensure the same criteria are used to determine qualification. This leads to a further point, relating to the success of the programme and what this looks like. This is an area that requires more explicit criteria for strategic leads and line managers. Respondent police services stated that they had not explicitly considered what success of the programme looked like.

Police Now have since taken steps to communicate more programme detail to participants and forces in advance, as well as developing a key success criteria through the Quality and Differentiation Strategy and programme objectives (please refer to pages 4-5) in consideration of what successful outcomes of Academy and the programme look like overall. What is required is a clear definition that Police Now and participating police services agree upon which can be communicated widely to forces, strategic leads, participants, line managers and supervisors and other interested parties.

#### *5. Participants deserve consistent support and development throughout the whole of the two-year programme, with provider's roles and responsibilities clearly set out*

Policing has entered a new era in the recruitment and development of detectives. In essence, the NDP has been a new development for the police to adjust to, and they will need in future to have dedicated development units or sources of support that recognise the multiple routes to becoming a detective and have the capability to support participants to reach qualification whatever route they are on. NDP participants need, and deserve, support, structured introduction into the workplace, workload management, and above all good mentoring, coaching, supervision, and line management. Systems and processes of development within police services need to be attuned to the needs of the participant (and any other officer on a detective pathway). This requires: (i) a clear explanation of who takes primacy over support and development of the officer and at what point; (ii) a consistent approach to support and development that recognises the need to allocate workloads gradually and (iii) provision of protected learning time to allow participants the space to complete their programme whilst contributing operationally.

There is evidence that some police services were attuned to the need to develop NDP participants once they arrived operationally. These forces did not allocate them a full workload as soon as they became operational, provided support and guidance through a mentor and/or coach, ensured protected time was supported, and generally had a clear development process to ensure investigative development and capability toward final qualification. Some police services were not as attuned to those needs. Respondents throughout have made clear that there is willingness to assist them operationally, but often supervisors, managers, and coaches are themselves working to capacity and have limited time to devote to the process.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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