



Strategic Narrative for Learning and Development

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September 2019

‘By 2025 policing will be a profession with a more representative workforce that will align the right skills, powers and experience to meet challenging requirements.’ⁱ

This is one of several products developed by the Implementing Transformation in Police Learning and Development Project, a collaboration between MOPAC and The Open University, under the Home Office's Police Transformation Fund. Other documents and products can be found here:

<https://www.open.ac.uk/centres/policing/implementing-transformation-police-ld/outputs>

Dealing with increasingly complex environments in policing requires different ways of doing things which involves the generation of new knowledge and skills. **Embedding Learning and Development (L&D) within Policing** is therefore critical in order to ensure that the service has the capacity and capability to effectively manage this change. Policing Vision 2025 sets out the challenges that the police service will face up to and beyond this point and suggests that in order to meet these there is a necessity for workforce development. **Focusing on workforce development will enable the service** to engage in effective planning and organisational change required to implement Vision 2025. It will also ensure that the uplift in numbers of new recruits who will be entering the service imminently and over the coming years will be given the correct support and knowledge, so that they are equipped to undertake their role as front-line officers. It will also create the environment to ensure that the rest of the workforce can progress and grow within the service. It is imperative with this uplift that police services take the opportunity to embed new L and D processes to ensure longer term change.

[Towards enhancing Organisational Learning](#)

In order to achieve the changes required, embedding Learning and Development at the core of the organisation is essential. Organisations can inhibit or support the learning processⁱⁱ. L&D has often been viewed as the volume or availability of *training*, whereas it should be focused on **building the capacity of the organisation** to have **an enhanced ability to learn and change**.

“you can rearrange your deckchairs however many times you want, but if you haven’t got the right people with the right skills on message and supported through that change process then you won’t bring about the change that you’re trying to deliver (quote from Senior Manager, Collaborative Deep Dives).

In a recent review front-line staff emphasised the lack of time, opportunity and support to properly develop their skills and knowledge to do the job.ⁱⁱⁱ This is not just about encouraging individuals to take responsibility for their own learning or CPD it is also about making certain that policing organisations develop the aptitude to use that learning effectively to enable the effective management of current and future challenges as well as build capacity to deliver a high-quality service that keeps communities safe.

Findings from the research project (Appendix 1) and elsewhere suggest some key attributes need to be embedded within the organisation to ensure this occurs.^{iv}

1. **Embedding Evidence-Informed practice-** Previous research by MOPAC^v highlights the importance of using evidence to support police practice and it is recognised as a critical activity to support service delivery in most professions. What needs to be recognised is that evidence can be generated in a number of ways (using a variety of methods) and can

be drawn from a variety of sources (both academic and non-academic)^{vi}. We need to encourage staff to think about how they use available knowledge and how this impacts upon their own service delivery and role.

2. **Learning within organisations is critically important for organisational learning to occur**- support is required to develop individual, group and organisational skills and abilities, which in turn will contribute to the creation of new knowledge and confidence within and across the organisation.
3. **Learning between organisations is critically important for organisational learning to happen**^{vii}- For policing this could include other blue light services and external partners, industry or commercial partners. Developing strong relationships with Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) is critically important to ensure that as policing becomes a graduate profession, and that HEIs and police work collaboratively to ensure new entrants to the service are being equipped with the knowledge required to undertake the role. Additionally, fostering these relationships can help develop longer-term opportunities for staff across the organisations.^{viii}
4. **Organisational Learning can be better supported by systems and processes that support its growth. This includes developing appropriate internal or external systems.** A good example here (we found from our research) was that police forces often felt that learning and development products were designed or driven by external organisations such as the HMICFRS to try and resolve an identified problem. However, the solution was often one of correcting a mistake rather than considering and addressing why the mistake had happened and applying a more systematic approach to prevent its reoccurrence.
5. **While we learn from errors and adapt as a result of a process known as single loop learning, policing organisations need to encourage double loop learning**^{ix}- where rather than adapt behaviours, thought needs to be given to redesigning the way we approach a problem or issue. Moving from an environment where we concentrate on what works to what matters in policing. This will take thinking beyond the 'usual' solutions^x.
6. **Transferring knowledge quickly and efficiently throughout the organisation**-creating different ways to transfer knowledge that move away from traditional training models. Often classroom training has dominated police L&D delivery, however this method of transferring knowledge is unsustainable given the plans for an uplift in entrants and the need to transfer knowledge across organisational spaces efficiently. This means finding new ways of quickly and effectively creating both learning content and access opportunities. This approach supports both new and existing staff who may have less time to devote to Learning and Development opportunities; and support the police to maximise resources.

7. **Appreciating the length of the Journey-** One critical lesson emerging from the **Learning from Other Professions** work was the length of the journey to embed core attributes associated with the further professional development process. From examining Nursing, Paramedics and other similar public service organisations, it is clear this is a longer-term goal that may take quite a number of years. However, small and incremental change can support this process. (<https://www.open.ac.uk/centres/policing/implementing-transformation-police-ld/outputs>)
8. **Shared Leadership is key-** Effective leadership is often seen as critical to ensure change. But leadership needs to be conceptualised not as an individual endeavour, but rather as a collective action to cultivate shared learning and supported to develop the learning of others within the organisation. For this, there is a need to move away from hierarchical structures and processes and create environments that encourage individual progression^{xi}; where progression is both professional and personal, as well as lateral and vertical.^{xii} This type of spiral progression was seen as critical to workforce development in other professions like Nursing and Paramedics. In this context the close alignment of organisational and learning strategies is an important factor.

Drawing on these ideas and to support this process of embedding Learning and Development as core to policing organisations, we have developed the **Destination Map**, an ambitious model for L&D functions within forces (<https://www.open.ac.uk/centres/policing/implementing-transformation-police-ld/destination-map-l-and-d>).

This emphasises the value of learning and development in supporting and creating public, organisational and individual value within an organisation through explicitly linking activity and outcomes across these three areas. The Destination Map was developed from an understanding of the attributes or elements that policing organisations and L&D functions require to be capable of meeting the challenges of Vision 2025.

[Readiness for Change](#)

Through a baseline survey and a follow-up endline survey police services across England and Wales were assessed on their readiness for change and their ability to meet the Learning and Development ambitions set out in Vision 2025. This provided us with some critical markers of the journey police services across the country are already on (<https://www.open.ac.uk/centres/policing/implementing-transformation-police-ld/outputs>). Progress has been made between the baseline and endline surveys where there was a willingness to make changes required to meet obligations set out in Vision 2025, but it also indicated that the police service is still on a journey. Key highlights from the survey demonstrate a greater feeling of preparedness and a willingness of L&D staff to upskill. They also had a greater feeling of being supported by the organisation to make changes take place.

Our current position

From the research work completed on the Implementing Transformation in Police Learning and Development Project (ITPLDP) (see Appendix) we identified a range of indicators that might inhibit progress in creating an environment where organisational learning can be encouraged in policing. These are outlined below.

Lack of Awareness of Workforce Capability

We found a wealth of experience in the police service, people entering the service come from a range of backgrounds and with a variety of skills and capabilities. However, there is often a lack of awareness across the organisation about what skills and capabilities exist and how these can be maintained and applied for the benefit of the organisation.

Resources

Staff

Several forces have also faced a loss of experienced personnel in recent years. This has several implications both for those left in the organisation and those entering. Those remaining feel more pressure and feel the loss of peer support and learning they receive from working with colleagues who may have had similar experiences. New entrants potentially do not come with the valuable knowledge and experience that has built up in the organisation over time.

Costs

The impact of austerity and the ongoing challenges of declining financial resources was viewed as being a consistent challenge and has meant a decline in investment specifically within the L&D function in the vast majority of forces. This was identified in our financial baseline report on L&D activity, where we found that between the period of 2011/12 and 2017/18, 33 of the 43 forces reduced their budgeted spending on training in real terms by a greater percentage than their overall reduction in spending. Despite recent uplifts in funding, in some cases it is considered likely that given the increased demand, a significant gap will continue to exist between funding and demand in a number of cases.

Reactive Pressures

At times policing needs to be pragmatic and able to move fast. External pressure comes from the media, politics and inspection and scrutiny bodies. They must address the needs of the local communities as well as national crime demands. This can create an environment where the organisation is in a position where they must make quick decisions to resolve identified problems. A recent example of this was the need to train officers around disclosure where an HMICFRS report identified poor performance in adequately assessing available evidence. As a result, it was determined that police officers must be better trained in the rules around disclosure. This approach to training often takes what is referred to as a 'sheep dip' approach; policing identifies a problem, then trains everyone in a bid to resolve it. This does not necessarily lead to better or improved performance.

Strategic Direction in Learning and Development

Forces are directed by Police and Crime Plans set by Police and Crime Commissioners. These plans inform the strategic direction of the forces. Forces also develop their own strategies and plans. However, Police and Crime Plans may well not include L&D, while our survey indicated a growing number of forces have developed a specific L and D Strategy, although this was not the case across the whole country. A lack of strategic direction in this area makes it challenging to identify need, and gaps in learning, and how best to support staff in their professional development. Importantly this also prevents alignment between organisational and learning strategies.

A Digital World

Most forces have recognised the challenges brought about by new technology in relation to crime as well as the potential for new approaches to policing. Digital technologies have also altered the way that learning happens. For new generations of recruits, owning and using digital devices is the norm, and people interact and communicate via social media platforms as a daily activity. However, use of technology in police learning is underdeveloped and not always viewed positively, or as innovative.

How can we Change the Learning and Development Landscape?

Here we focus on some key considerations that are of critical importance in achieving these improvement goals:

Assessing Cost

There is a need to be aware of the costs of Learning and Development delivery and of the PEQF. Work is ongoing to support forces to understand costs. The L&D Improvement Toolkit (<https://sway.office.com/5vqu6EksUqyZJ1uY?ref=Link>; under Essential Delivery Criteria 5) for forces includes a Financial Costing Tool to support Learning and Development teams to support this process. In the longer-term, Learning and Development needs to be viewed as an investment and not as abstraction, or a drain on resources. While the return on investment can be difficult to calculate, this can be assessed by looking a range of different outcomes. If staff feel invested in and part of an organisation where their organisational development is supported, there is more likely to be staff satisfaction, lower staff turnover, better staff well-being^{xiii} and higher retention rates. Other organisational measures might be increases in public confidence and satisfaction. These will be influenced by other internal and external factors, and a combination of different outcomes would need to be examined holistically.

Assessing and Enabling workforce capabilities

Forces need to be able to understand what expertise they have within their service and the best way to utilise existing resources and expertise. There is also a need to identify what capabilities are required now and in the future. There have been examples in the past where the police service has failed to recognise a potential loss of expertise (for example; skilled detectives) or the gaps in skills (for example; technology). Being able to understand what the skills and capabilities of the workforce are, and what they might need to be in the short, medium and longer term will help to resolve this.

Developing a Core Learning and Development Strategy

Formulating a planned approach to Learning and Development is essential moving forwards. Whilst we recognise that some forces have started to develop L and D strategies (please see the end line report [here](#) on this topic) it is essential that these strategies are focused on changing demands and risks faced, and enabling the enhancement of officer and staff skills and capabilities. A clear strategy can help police forces implement the most appropriate learning practices and infrastructure, and counter the reactive and ad hoc solutions currently applied. It will also send a clear signal to the workforce that they will be invested in and in turn help to improve retention and morale. Linking the L&D strategy to the organisation's strategy and measuring outcomes through appropriate performance measures supports the use of L&D functions to deliver against organisational objectives.

Using Technology for Effective Learning

Technology is now a key part of life, and it has changed the ways in which we learn and where we can learn. There are different social media platforms that can be used as team support, to share ideas. Using technology and updating the infrastructure also allows for more flexible working which can enable staff more choice and freedom about how, when and where they work and learn. Technology can also enable systems that support and capture learning activity. There are numerous ways that this can be achieved through creating more opportunities for digitally enabled learning and building systems that effectively capture and manage data.

Sharing Promising Practice

Often, we do not make the most of promising practice, even though it is only through sharing different approaches and ideas that we can enhance practice. Looking at what other forces, professions and sectors are doing is important, as we can always learn from others through shared experiences. Numerous examples of promising practice in Learning and Development were identified in the research: for example; the use of virtual reality to enable new recruits to learn to deal with real life scenarios. Promising practice can be shared through internal forums, or externally through networking, both formally and informally. Sharing promising practice nationally is facilitated through various mechanisms including the College of Policing, who offer extensive access to a range of resources to support policing and workforce development more broadly. The newly created National Learning Network for L&D practitioners, led by the NPCC, will also help facilitate this.

Knowledge Through to Practice

Through examining Learning and Development in the police service, the research programme has established the current state of L and D in policing and outlined through its Destination Map and this Strategic Narrative the journey policing needs to undertake in order to meet the challenges ahead. Here we have outlined the changes that need to be embedded within forces to facilitate this shift. In order to support this process, the project has developed a series of bespoke products, case studies, and tools, techniques and resources to help policing achieve this. These include:

- **Baseline** of the current state of L&D in Policing (April 2018)
- **Learning from other Professions** – Literature review and interviews covering Paramedics, Nursing, Teaching and Law
- **Collaborative Deep Dives** with 5 forces and **Case Studies** specifically PSNI
- A **Destination Map which outlines the Essential Criteria and Attributes for a Police Learning and Development Function**
- A **Toolkit** for practitioners designed to support the implementation of the essential criteria and attributes linked to the Destination Map.
- **Endline** Survey (September 2019)

Should you wish to see these, they can be accessed at:

<https://www.open.ac.uk/centres/policing/transformation-police-ld/outputs#>

Appendix

The Implementing Transformation in Police Learning and Development Project 2017 to 2019

The Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) with The Open University's Centre for Policing Research and Learning received a 2-year grant from the Home Office Police Transformation Fund to work with all police forces in England and Wales to support the transformation of training and development.

Through the use of action research the project aimed to provide research and organisational support to enable the organisational development needed across all police forces to enact the revised training standards, to foster greater strategic contribution from L and D into organisational strategy, continuous improvement in police learning and development functions, and strengthen learning and development provision through a greater engagement in evidence-based teaching and learning. To achieve these aims the team have engaged in several research and networking activities.

Working together

Collaboration is the key to action research, and in ensuring that we meet the needs of the police service in learning and development we have engaged with practitioners and key stakeholders from the start of the project. We did this by:

- Having Learning and Development professionals who work in police organisations involved from the beginning of the project, advising us during regular working group and project board meetings.
- Co-researchers from police forces across England and Wales to gain research skills and then come and work with the OU research team to conduct the research in the 5 Collaborative Deep Dives.
- Organising a series of National Learning Network Events examining different elements of Learning and Development.

ⁱ Policing Vision 2025, NPCC and APCC, <https://www.npcc.police.uk/documents/Policing%20Vision.pdf>, Accessed 12/08/2019.

ⁱⁱ Nutley, S.M. and Davies, H.T., 2001. Developing organizational learning in the NHS. *Medical education*, 35(1), pp.35-42.

ⁱⁱⁱ ONS (2019) Home Office Police Front Line Review: Workshops with police officers and police staff. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/815103/flr-workshops-with-police-officers-and-staff-full-report.pdf, Accessed 23/09/2019.

^{iv} For this section we have drawn on a range of literature that outlines important factors to enhance organisational learning. Herrington, V., 2017, December. The Success of Failure: Can We Really Build Learning Organizations in Policing? In *The 45th James Smart Memorial Lecture, Scottish International Policing Conference*. Watkins, K.E. and Marsick, V.J., 1993. *Sculpting the learning organization: Lessons in the art and science of systemic change*. Jossey-Bass Inc., 350 Sansome Street, San Francisco, CA 94104-1310.

^v Hough and Stanko (2018) Developing an evidence based police degree-holder entry programme Final Report, https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/debpdhp_pages_5.6.18.pdf. Accessed 2/9/2019.

^{vi} There are a number of sources produced that are not necessarily created through academic research that can also be useful to understand and gain knowledge for example research by the third sector, policy briefings and other grey literature.

^{vii} Rashman, L. and Hartley, J. (2002). Leading and learning? Knowledge transfer in the Beacon Council Scheme. *Public Administration*, **80**, 523–543.

^{viii} There are numerous examples of successful police/academic partnerships including the Centre for Police Research and Policing at the OU.

^{ix} Argyris C, Schön DA. *Organizational learning*. London: Addison-Wesley, 1978.

^x Herrington, V. The success of failure: can we really build learning organisations in policing? (2017) http://www.sipr.ac.uk/archive/pdf/TRANSCRIPT_%20VH_The%20success_of_failure.pdf. Accessed 2/9/2019.

^{xi} Flynn, Edward A. and Victoria Herrington, Toward a Profession of Police Leadership. New Perspectives in Policing Bulletin. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, 2015. NCJ 248573

^{xii} Flynn, Edward A. and Victoria Herrington, Toward a Profession of Police Leadership. New Perspectives in Policing Bulletin. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, 2015. NCJ 248573

^{xiii} The Recent Review of Front-line Policing suggests that better well-being is achieved when officers feel they are being supported in their professional development. For access to the frontline review documents access link <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/front-line-policing-review>