Helping the police with their inquiries: improving investigator resilience and capacity in England and Wales

Introduction

Background to the study

In 2016, the oversight body for policing in England and Wales reported a national shortage of qualified detectives and other investigators – assessed as a shortfall of 5,000 staff - as 'a national crisis' (HMIC, 2016 p.52). This paper critically assesses initiatives taken since that time by the Police Service of England and Wales (PSEW), to address that crisis. The project on which this paper is based was commissioned by the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC), which recognised that its efforts to improve its investigative services had not been wholly successful or, at least, had not yet delivered the success it wanted.

Those systemic deficiencies have become apparent to others. For example, a strategic review of policing in England and Wales carried out by an influential think tank (Police Foundation, PF, 2022) reported that police policymakers had been too slow to recognise that deficiencies in investigative skills and technological assets, were at the heart of the police's declining ability to detect crime. The PF argued that the problem was likely to become even more acute. In its view, those deficiencies limit the service's ability to meet future new investigative challenges (presented inter alia by globalisation, societal fragmentation, and technological change).

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS, 2022) also has been critical of police investigative standards and of the service that the PSEW is delivering to victims. Andy Cooke its Chief Inspector, criticised forces for making basic errors in investigation and highlighted that, too often, investigators lack experience in investigation and in case building Ibid.). These views are representative of a wider body of opinion that the police are failing victims and communities. In summary, there is disquiet

both within and without the service about both the capacity and the capability of the investigative force and a fear that without substantial change, detection rates will continue fall, victims will not receive justice and public confidence in the police will decline.

Research question

Concerns about the investigative capacity of the PSEW and the capability of its investigators to deliver an effective service, provided the context for our evaluation, which sought to answer the research question, 'To what extent can fast-track investigator recruitment and training schemes enhance the PSEW's investigative capacity and capability'?

Police Education Qualification Framework (PEQF)

We highlight from the outset that we carried out this commission knowing that the UK College of Policing's (CoP) longstanding plans for standard entry requirements for new officers, in the form of the Police Education Qualification Framework (PEQF), were about to come to fruition. At that time, we (and many in policing) were uncertain how innovative, non-standard, schemes of the kind we had been tasked with evaluating, could continue to operate under the strictures imposed by the new framework. The police decided they could not. Inevitably, there is some reflection here on that decision, but the focus of this paper is on the schemes we evaluated, on the benefits and disbenefits they seemed to have brought to the police forces that employed them and on the extent to which they promised more capable and legitimate workforces.

Adding a complication to this narrative, in November 2022, the Home Secretary announced that though PEQF is to remain, policing must reopen entry routes for those who do not have or want a degree (Jacques, 2022). That also reopens the door for the kinds of schemes we assess in this paper. The PSEW and the CoP currently are formulating their responses to the Home Secretary's demand, so the precise form those entry routes will take

is unknown. In our view, it is too early to unpick the impact of these decisions on investigators' capabilities or on the service's investigative capacity. Thus, we have made little effort to do so here.

Modern detective work in context.

Effective detective work has long been deemed critical to the policing function. Eck and Rossmo (2019) argue that in the USA, even though they are fewer in number than patrol officers, detectives continue to make up for their minority standing thanks to their elite status. In Britain, detectives historically were better paid than their uniform colleagues and were able to supplement their income with a variety of allowances (Metropolitan Police, 2008 cited in James, 2011). They considered themselves to be the policing elite. A commonly expressed view in the early years of the detective force was that the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) viewed itself above and apart from 'ordinary' police (see for example, Royal Commission on Police Powers 1929, cited in Evans, 1974 p.108).

The perception of detectives as the police elite has been fostered by innumerable fictional representations of the work, in all corners of the world. In Britain, detective work was idealised and given human form in the shape of the Scotland Yard detective, whose daring exploits were depicted in news and other print media, in popular radio shows such as Secrets of Scotland Yard (1949-1951) and later in television programmes such as: Fabian of the Yard (1954-1956); Scotland Yard (1960); and New Scotland Yard (1972-74). Today, the realities of detective work for insiders (working long and often unsociable hours with heavy workloads and limited opportunities for advancement) and for outsiders (disappointed by investigative failures and poor performance) have shattered that ideal (James and Mills, 2012). Policing is scrutinised as it never has been before, and it is doubtful that the British detective force is considered elite today. In 2015, during research into detective culture, the

first author found *a priori* that, concerned about the negative connotations of the term, few modern detectives were willing to accept that label.

Detective work has been described variously as an art, a craft, a science, and a combination of all three (Tong and Bowling, 2006). For many years, the work was most obviously akin to a craft. Normatively, detectives used cognitive and psychomotor skills inter alia to manage crime scenes, interpret physical evidence, interview victims and witnesses, collect information, profile suspects, and to oversee the investigative process. Modern day detective work has developed within the field of science through activities such as: offender profiling; forensic science; biometrics, and the use of information technology in a variety of contexts (such as predictive policing) (see Britton, 1997; Canter, 1994; Ericson and Haggerty, 1997; Kaye, 1995; Saferstein, 1995; and Shepherd, 1988).

Demands for better evidence and faster resolution of cases has led to much greater reliance on science and technology and on the scientific method (see Morgan, 1990; Tilley and Ford, 1996). The outcome is that the investigative environment has changed from one that relies on individual effort to one in which success depends upon a team's endeavours. Today's detectives are knowledge workers (Gottschalk et al, 2009; Berg et al, 2008). As such, they are expected to be able to apply theoretical, analytical, and experiential knowledge acquired through formal training and the embracing of professional development opportunities, to interact with other knowledge workers (including those in the fields of technology, science, and law), to build effective cases. The individual detective, the smart individual who once could be relied upon to solve a case on their own, cannot now hope to be successful in fighting new, complex, or organized crime (such as human trafficking and terrorism), on their own (Lampe, 2005).

Investigative policy in Britain

Patently, crime investigation has always been core business for the police and that is reflected in national policy. Principally, that is operationalised in the CoP's Authorised Professional Practice (APP) and its Professionalising Investigation Programme (PIP). APP was introduced in 2013. It is continuously being updated (to reflect changes in law, policy, and practice) so that it always should be considered the official and most up-to-date source of guidance on professional policing practice (CoP, 2022a). Introduced in 2003 and last updated in 2018, the CoP describes PIP as 'an incremental development pathway that provides a consistent programme of registration, examination, training, workplace assessment and certification to a national standard' (CoP, 2022 p.3). McCrory and Treacy (2012) note that the programme originally was conceived as a learning and development programme but later, investigative learning and development programmes were merged with doctrine, occupational standards, and workplace assessment processes to create rules and requirements for investigators.

PIP provides registration, examination, training, workplace assessment and accreditation to national standards at four levels: level 1 - priority and volume crime investigation; level 2 – serious and complex investigations; level 3 – major crime and serious and organised crime investigations; and level 4 – strategic management of complex investigations (CoP, 2022 and McGrory and Treacy, 2012). All police officers receive basic investigative training to PIP level 1 to prepare them to report crime and take the first steps necessary at the scene of a crime. Dedicated investigators must successfully complete further training and accreditation processes (including the National Investigator's Examination, NIE) so that they are qualified at PIP level 2. Officers are provided with training inter alia in crime scene management, interviewing suspects and witnesses, processing offenders, and case preparation. Most investigators do not progress beyond this level.

Detective recruitment

Britain's detective training programme has undergone many changes over the years. Until recently, the only route to becoming a detective in the PSEW was an informal apprenticeship; only serving police officers could become detective officers (James, 2011). To progress along that path, officers needed to invest considerable time and energy. Once they completed their initial training and their two-year probationary period, if they displayed an aptitude for investigation, officers could apply for secondments to investigation teams (including the CID) where their performance as investigators could be assessed. If it was found that they were suited to the work, they were invited to apply for entry to the CID as a trainee.

Today, detective training is delivered via the CoP-administered Initial Crime Investigation Development Programme (ICIDP) (CoP, 2022). Trainees must complete the programme in its entirety and pass the National Investigator's Exam (NIE). Typically, the process, from appointment as a police constable to completion of ICIDP, takes a minimum of four years. Though this pathway continues to be followed by the majority of those who enter the detective ranks, because of its restriction on entry and its length, the process described here was judged incapable of making up the shortfall in detective numbers quickly enough. Therefore, in conjunction with the CoP, the NPCC mandated its members to open detective recruitment to new joiners and to provide the new detectives with bespoke training packages that would provide them with the skills they needed more quickly than the existing selection and training processes allowed.

Despite the service's identification of the challenges it faced in this context as a crisis, those plans were not welcomed universally. On social media, they attracted adverse comment from the beginning. The Police Federation, representing the police rank and file, argued that fast track schemes were unnecessary; that existing pathways were 'much more likely to create high-quality investigators' (cited in Kirby, 2018). While, in an intervention

that shows how much heat the debate generated, Yardley *et al* argued that the police's plans, risked the employment of 'the wrong kind of investigator; the consumer capitalist detective with a sense of entitlement and a narcissistic streak' (2018 p.1).

Plans for fast-track programmes (which represented most of the schemes introduced) were first announced by the police in 2017; schemes took a variety of forms. Some forces, including the Metropolitan Police and West Yorkshire Police, chose to introduce direct entry, rather than fast-track, schemes. Successful applicants underwent initial police training and then were posted to public protection units or safeguarding teams (units the police judged to be in the greatest need). In 2019, NPCC also authorised Police Now, an independent charity supported by the Home Office, to deliver a two-year national detective programme. We learned during our study that many forces chose fast-track programmes because they allowed them to provide new joiners with the training they needed to be employed safely and lawfully in uniform roles, should the need arise. That was a particularly important consideration for smaller forces.

Turning now to the schemes examined in this paper, the Force A, B and C fast-track programmes share many characteristics. The Force D scheme was an augmented version of the traditional pathway. Each force launched its scheme as a direct response to the decline in investigator numbers, In Forces A, B, and C, recruits completed their initial training then spent a truncated period in uniform in a response role before sitting the NIE and enrolling on the ICIDP. That led to PIP Level 2 accreditation, graduation from the programme and transfer to a detective post.

Methodology

Ethical approval for this research was granted by the Liverpool John Moores University ethics board on 26th April 2019. Between 2019 and 2020, we critically examined four cases in England and Wales. Three were novel fast track programmes for new joiners, introduced

and operated by forces we designated as A, B and C. The fourth case was an investigator resilience programme introduced by Force D. With just a few restrictions, that programme was open to all Force D staff.

During our fieldwork, Force A trainees were further along in their programme than trainees in the other schemes but none had yet been awarded accreditation. All three forces anticipated that their trainees would graduate around two years after their appointment; in half the time it would take an officer following the traditional pathway. The Force D programme allowed individuals to progress into the detective ranks more quickly than the norm. The force wanted to encourage sworn officers and police staff, already in their employ, into investigative roles. Those who had completed or were nearing the end of their probation and wanted to pursue a detective career were invited annually to an internal, scenario-based, assessment centre. Those assessed as suitable were entered for the NIE and on passing that examination, undertook their PIP Level 2 training by attending a suite of training courses and by collecting a portfolio of evidence of practice. Once trainees completed the training programme and their portfolio, they could apply for a detective posting. The scheme has proved attractive; in 2019, 108 officers applied to join it.

Our study was qualitative and interpretive in nature. We reviewed the literature on investigative policy and detective work. We reviewed internal evaluations of their schemes completed by Forces A, B, and C. We interviewed respondents (n=82) and supplemented our interview data with survey data (n=45; N=127); we analysed the data thematically and reviewed our findings in the context of the literature. The major themes identified by our analysis were: marketing and recruitment; attrition and progression; acceptance of the trainees; training; and trainees' welfare and well-being.

We gathered a range of views on the utility of the programmes, and on investigator resilience, from research respondents who could be expected to have deep understanding of those subjects. Our findings represent a snapshot of the research environment that may

be vulnerable to a host of influences and to human error, but we have endeavoured to account for as many situational and temporal conditions as practicable and to represent respondents' views as faithfully and as objectively as possible. As far as possible, we allowed respondents to speak for themselves. In this paper, participants' contributions are identified by case and role.

We saw that the fast-track schemes had been system disruptors; in terms of forces' training; investigative; and human resource processes. We also saw that though internally there was not the heat in the debate over fast-track entry that some (such as the Police Federation) had forecast, the socio-cultural divide between the 'police family (as one respondent termed it) and the incomers, certainly was present in some situations. Therefore, we organised the discussion of our findings using the lenses of systems thinking and social identity theory.

Systems thinking is a framework for seeing the interconnections in complex systems and for understanding the entire system (see Arnold and Wade, 2015; Guilfoyle, 2013; and Pearce and Fortune, 1996 for examples in policing). Social identity theory acknowledges that groups occupy distinct levels in a hierarchy of status and power; intergroup behaviour is driven by 'people's ability to be critical of, and to see alternatives to, the status quo' (Hornsey, 2008 p.207). Building on the work of Tajfel (1971), Maykel Verkuyten notes that SIT's focus is on 'the processes involved in making group distinctions and the ways in which people define themselves and others as members of social groups (2021 p.312). He argues that:

> Group identity is founded on 'shared meanings… enshrined in… rules, regulations, symbols, collective representations and cultural narratives. (Ibid.) … Group identity is what makes group behaviour possible because it fundamentally changes and transforms people's psychology and behaviour … Group identities provide a sense of ingroup belonging… Because of their need for a positive group self, people tend to show ingroup bias.

In Force B, trainees had been working in investigative roles for a year. Whereas in Forces A and C trainees were moving into those roles while we were undertaking fieldwork. Naturally, that limited what respondents outside of Force B could say about trainees' performance and, by extension, our ability to compare across the cases. We collected rich data on recruitment, selection and training processes in each of the forces. In respect of the Force D programme, we collected data that explained more traditional recruitment methods for investigators, which provided useful context for our evaluation of the other cases.

Research findings

Our analysis identified five major themes. These were: marketing and recruitment; attrition and progression; credibility of the trainees; training; and trainees' welfare and well-being.

Marketing and recruitment

All three fast-track schemes were marketed innovatively; with more organisational energy than was the norm. Forces reported that they attracted high-quality candidates, and, in each case, the force achieved the targets it set itself. Many trainees brought new (in some cases, complementary) skills. Trainees (variously) had professional experience in engineering; midwifery; legal practice; probation; teaching, and the natural sciences.

Managers in each of the fast-track cases reported that they were successful in attracting applicants from more minority community groups than they would expect from standard recruitment campaigns. None of the schemes were open to serving officers; though members of police staff could apply to join and many did. In each case, Trainees were informed of their posting before they were appointed. New recruits were posted into safeguarding and main CID offices, which the forces had identified as the areas of greatest need. Managers and mentors made direct contact with trainees during their training.

Trainees were given an early opportunity to visit their new workplaces and to meet their future workmates.

In Force B, which proved to be the most successful of the fast-track schemes, the programme was marketed by a dedicated communications lead, via social media (which included an online question and answer session); traditional mass media (primarily newspapers); and a radio campaign fronted by the force's head of crime. The lead for the Force B campaign stated that its most essential element was an open evening for prospective applicants. Led by the head of crime, supported by a 'cross-section 'of detectives from various parts of the organisation, candidates received 'on-the-ground perspective of what the job's really like'. to candidates. The event also allowed current staff the opportunity 'to see for themselves, the calibre of candidates that were interested', which later proved valuable in assessing trainees' needs.

Table 1 – Applications and appointments HERE

As Table 1 shows, each programme attracted great interest and that was converted into high numbers of applications to the scheme. Of the three fast-track cases, respondents in Force B (trainees and existing staff alike) were most enthusiastic about their scheme. Detective 1/B said that the force counted the scheme a success and the key to it was the speed with which trainees moved into the investigative arena. They said that they wanted them to be 'true detectives.. [quickly] aligned to a detective, actually exposed to detective work and exploiting the skills and experience of detectives, the better'.

Trainees were complimentary about the way that the fast-track initiatives added to the diversity of the investigative workforce. Trainee 1/B said that the force had selected

people who ‘would be able to transfer a lot of their skills’. Trainee 2/B said that the programme was opening up the CID to a wider range of applicants so that the service had become younger and more dynamic and had a better gender balance. Two other trainees, 3/B and 4/B were keen to recommend their programme to others, even though it represented ‘a massive learning curve’ (Trainee 4/B). Trainee 5/B said that the programme was ‘challenging but exciting’.

Overall, internal criticism of the programmes was muted. In Force B, there was almost none, with a single trainee (6/B) commenting that their employer did not always recognise the ‘additional pressures’ that trainees had been under. In Forces A and C, it was clear that staff had faced more challenges in implementing the programmes. Trainer 1/A argued that its experimental nature meant that the programme was bound to have teething problems. Those problems were exacerbated by the fact that trainees had to complete their basic training in half the time available to patrol officers so that they could move on to the detective training.

In Force A, without exception, trainees saw themselves as detectives first and police officers second. Trainee 1/A said that they would not have joined as a uniform officer. Trainee 2/A said that applicants to the programme were given the option of being considered for a uniform role if the detective route did not pan out but the vast majority rejected it. Trainee 3/A said that ‘the beat’ didn’t interest them; the traditional pathway to detective work always had put them off applying to the police.

In Force C, trainees seemed content with the programme detectives were concerned that it was asking more of the trainees than should be expected. For example, Detective 1/C said they were concerned for anyone entering the service on a fast-track programme from outside of the ‘police family’. Could the trainees be expected to learn an such an ‘incredibly intense role’? Detective 1/C felt that a better use of force resources would be supporting individuals on the traditional route. They were not against the scheme in principle but

questions whether ‘there might be better ways of achieving the same end. Detective 2/C was concerned about the competence of the new detectives and their ability to manage the pressures of the job. They feared for the force if the result was ‘a load of complaints and people bringing civil cases’ and for the trainees ‘because, there is nothing worse than feeling like you're drowning and unsupported’.

The Force D scheme appealed to a wide range of staff. We recorded many favourable comments about its inclusivity and transparency. Detective 1/D valued the ‘access to experienced detectives’, as mentors. Trainee 1/D felt that the Academy would open up more development opportunities for them in the force. Detective 2/D said that the scheme was ‘more transparent and open to any applicant’. In the same vein, Trainee 2/D said that under the previous system it was a question of ‘who you know’, whereas the new scheme had introduced formal processes that were fairer and transparent. Trainee 3/D said that the process of joining the programme was ‘user friendly’. Trainee 4/D said that the scheme provided a good way of assessing if officers had ‘the right skills’. Several respondents in Force D commented positively upon the delivery of their detective training via discrete modules (rather than as an uninterrupted programme). That allowed them to complete their training with the minimum disruption to their operational duties.

Attrition and progression

When we completed our fieldwork in 2020, of the 32 trainees recruited by Force A, one had resigned; 21 had passed the NIE; and 10 were yet to take the exam. In Force B, of the 20 trainees who passed the detective selection assessment; 16 remained on the programme. Those who remained had passed the NIE and completed the classroom element of detective training and were collecting evidence for their PIP2 portfolio. Two recruits elected to continue on the standard pathway at the interview stage; and one failed the medical

assessment. In Force D, there was zero attrition from the scheme. Though of course this scheme is not strictly comparable with the other three.

Attrition was highest in Force C. For example, 50% of the first cohort (seven trainees) left the program. That figure may be skewed by the fact that unlike the other fast-track cases, the force allowed trainees to leave the programme and to continue their police careers as response officers without sanction. Trainee 6/C said that: 'It shouldn't have been so easy to drop out. Because we'd taken spaces of other people that desperately wanted'.

Trainee 8/C said that they and colleagues felt like 'guinea pigs' (a term also used by two other interviewees). They had found it difficult to keep up with the course and had asked for more time in uniform. Initially, their request was rejected but after the intervention of an inspector it was acceded to. The experience left a bitter taste.

Detective 6/C said that some of the trainees 'loved the uniform role so much, they didn't want to leave it or leave it so soon'. Generally, trainees felt that the move to investigation came 'too early'. Detective 2/C said that trainees were dropping out of the detective programme because they had not 'exhausted all the delights that uniform policing has to offer' and also a feeling they were 'getting less' than those on the standard pathway. Trainee 6/C felt that if the force had been less accommodating of individual students' needs then attrition might have been lower.

We did not find evidence of similar behaviour in Force B but it was in issue in Force A. Trainee 5/A told us that there had been at least two incidents in which trainees had elected to remain in uniform because 'they enjoyed R&P (uniform) too much'. Detective 9/A said that they suspected that trainees would prefer to stay longer in the R&P world; partly, because of the appeal of the work and partly because trainees felt under pressure to pass the NIE. Detective 10/A said that they suspected that some had failed the NIE deliberately. They said: that some of the trainees had used the programme as an entry into the police because they did not know if there was going to be a new recruitment in the future.. They

said that if the trainees' aim was to remain in R&P then it was frustrated; the force did not allow it. Detective 10/A said that trainees would be obliged to become an investigator but would have to work in uniform until they passed their exams. Trainee 5/A confirmed that the force had stipulated that trainees had to move into investigations after a year. This was a source of frustration for several of the trainees we interviewed in Force A.

Acceptance of the trainees

Broadly, trainees were received more positively in Force B than in the other two forces that introduced fast-track schemes. Most detectives supported the programme in principle. Detective 1/B described it as 'a good option' and a 'worthwhile experiment' but they felt it might be difficult to evaluate its success until trainees had graduated. Detective 2/B described it as a 'great process that has value'. Detective 2/B said that they were working with two trainees who were 'fantastic' but noted that it still was 'very early days for them to see how they can cope with the general stress of the role... the slow burn PTSD … we suffer'.

In Forces A and C, reservations about the programmes and their trainees were expressed more frequently. In Force A, Detective 3/A said that some trainees were more capable than others. They attributed that to individual capacity and motivation. In their view, previous police experience (as a police community support officer, PCSO, or as civil staff) was a significant indicator of success. Trainer 2/A said that trainees were encouraged to have unrealistic expectations. Some trainees said that their ability to perform the role of a detective had been questioned by peers. Trainee 1/A said that 'old school' detectives were 'not impressed'. Trainee 2/A said that from the outset, rumours were circulating (we infer because of the attrition from the course) that none of the trainees really wanted to be detectives.

In Force C, Trainee 7/C said there was 'a bit of a stigma' attached to the programme and the trainees. The programme was seen 'not cheater's way in, but…'. Trainee 9/C said

that though they had been made welcome by colleagues in their own area, peers' views in other areas were negative. Trainer 1/C confirmed that there was a negative view of the programme in their force and that this was a source of tension. They said that peers questioned how trainees had managed to get through their training so easily (as critics saw it). Trainer 1/C warned their trainees to surround themselves with 'people that are supportive, positive about it. Ignore any negativity'.

An issue that was raised repeatedly in interviews and survey responses in all three of the fast-track cases was the notion that the trainees were being afforded special treatment. Of course, in the context of the unique approach the PSEW was taking to address its crisis in investigative capacity, the trainees were special, the programmes were exceptional and distinctive, but some seemed to interpret that exceptionalism and distinctiveness as superiority. Trainer 1/A said, 'You've got to be mindful of telling people that they're something special when really, they are individuals who have been afforded an opportunity'. Detective 4/A said that trainees were led to believe they were 'a little bit special'. They conceded that was unhelpful because it set up the trainees to fail.

Trainee 1/B said that on their first day the trainees were told 'you're not special and you're not different'. This was confirmed by Trainee 2/B (a member of a separate cohort). Trainee 1/B said this seemed to set up a stigma around the whole programme so that it was not unusual to hear the programme described as the 'defective (*sic*) fast track'. Trainees rejected the 'special' label unequivocally. Trainee 2/A said that peers had voiced the fact that they were not out to cause trouble or to be better than anyone else but other cohorts (on the standard pathway) were saying, 'Who does this group think they are'? That manifested itself in 'whispers in the canteen or little comments' (Trainee 2/A).

Trainee 4/B said that they and their fellow trainees understood that they were just the same as everyone else and were careful not to give the impression that they wanted to be treated any differently. Trainee 2/C said that receiving bespoke training inputs was not

special treatment. It was simply designed to ensure that they were prepared for the detective role.

Training

In each case, recruits were trained to be omnicompetent and not limited to the investigator role. Many respondents said this was an important consideration for any force outside of the larger metropolitan areas. Forces needed to be able to redeploy their detectives in uniform if the need arose. A significant theme that emerged, was that respondents wanted greater CID involvement in training delivery and design. They felt that would better prepare them for their new roles. Some respondents saw the need for greater differentiation between trainees with no policing background and those who joined from the wider police family (with experience as a member of civilian staff, as a PCSO and so on).

The training delivered by Force A received the greatest amount of criticism from trainees. Trainee 2/A was critical of both their training and the training staff. They said that training was 'dull … the worst 15 weeks of my … The trainers are really out-of-date. [For example] when it came to doing case files, they didn't know what they were doing'. Trainee 2/A said that the situation did not improve when they returned to the training centre for their skills development training. They said it was 'awful.... People are going to get a shock when they get to investigations … They don't know how to carry a workload or anything. They don't know what's coming for them'. Trainee 5/A said that their trainers did not seem able to handle the disparity between the fast-track trainees and those on the standard pathway. Trainee 3/A was disappointed that their training was not 'detective-led'. Trainee 6/A said that the trainers 'try and almost break you. To know if you've got what it takes'.

In Force B, opinions on training quality were mixed. Some trainees felt that the training provided was sufficient. For example, Trainee 2/B said that they had 'really enjoyed'

training that was ‘suitable and equipped us well enough for going into the real world’. Others, such as Trainee 5/B, 6/B and 3/B felt that the training was insufficient. Trainee 5/B said, I don’t think it was as good as it could have been’. Trainee 6/B said that 10 weeks was ‘a really short period of time to fit in what needed to be fitted in’. Trainee 3/B said it was ‘completely insufficient’ and did not prepare them for the detective role well enough. Others were dissatisfied with the learning style (Trainee 2/B) and the school-like learning environment (Trainee 7/B). Echoing Trainee 3/A’s concerns, Trainee 1/B said that the training programme was too obviously geared to the uniform role and did not promote detective work enough. Detective 2/B said that eventually the force recognised that its training had ‘exposed a bit of a weakness’ and took steps to ensure that trainees received more assistance in the form of mentoring and support from officers with a detective background.

Trainees in Force C valued CID input into their training. Trainee 6/C said that had been delivered through their (uniformed) trainer’s excellent contacts with detectives. Trainee 6/C said that trainees were ‘lucky we had him.’ The trainer was able to bring into the classroom ‘many guest speakers... who had done major cases, a lot a lot of things, and quite senior people from our force as well, and they would just come in and give great talks about their route as a detective’. They also said that a detective trainer visited the class weekly, in a pastoral role, to make sure that the trainees were ‘okay and [to] give us an idea of our path as best [they] could’. Trainee 3/C said that the training had been pitched at the right level. As a former special constable, they felt it provided a ‘good recap’ on their previous training and ‘very new stuff’ that they would need in their new role. Trainee 7/C believed that they had benefitted from having someone with a CID background as lead trainer.

In Force D, PIP Level 2 training was provided in modules. Rather than attending a course of study as the trainees in the fast-track cases had done, trainees completed discrete

training packages under the supervision of force trainers. In this way, they could fit study into their regular work patterns (Trainees 1/D and 2/D).

Trainees' welfare and well-being

In Force A, all 32 successful candidates were assigned a detective mentor who acted as a point of contact between them and the world of investigation. Interviewees told us support that mentors provided across the cohort was 'patchy'. Detective 6/A said there was supposed to be regular meetings with all of the students to keep them on board with the programme. They said, 'I think that kind of slipped by the wayside a little bit... Mentor-wise, I think they're all allocated mentors, but I don't think there's been any particular contact before them joining'.

Many trainees said they needed the consistent support because they did not have sufficient police or life experience to fall back upon. Overall, mentoring coverage can best be described as patchy. From our interactions with supervisors in Force A, it was obvious that they recognised its importance but Detective 10/A highlighted that the force did not have the infrastructure in place (in the form of trained coaches and mentors and a system to support those individuals tasked with those responsibilities). Instead trainees were supported, from a distance, by tutors and also were 'given a DS to keep in touch with'. Trainer 3/A was confident that the trainees would succeed 'as long as they have the right exposure... because these are bright people'. However, a cautionary note was sounded by Trainer 2/A who told us that (during our fieldwork) 10 of the 32 trainees were being 'performance managed'. They attributed that (variously) to a desire on the part of some trainees to stay in R&P; the rigours of shift work for individuals who were not yet prepared for it; and the demands of working and studying at the same time.

Trainer 3/A said that the programme also put huge pressure on mentors. The force just did not have the capacity to support its trainees as well as it would have like. They said

that the tutor and mentoring phase was 'a numbers game'. Trainer 3/A recognised the dangers of over-burdening mentors. They said 'You can't keep … saying "Mentor this person. Mentor this person" because you'll break them'. In the same vein, Trainer 4/A said that the programme put 'logistical pressure' on the training team. Detective 11/A said that Force always had planned to allocate named mentors to trainees but that 'had not come to fruition'.

Force B trainees reported that their mentoring arrangements were adequate but the mentors interviewed said they did not feel prepared for the role. Detective 7/B said, 'the way I became a mentor - I was asked to go on an assessor's course… turned up … and was told "you're all here as volunteers for the fast-track programme"'. Detective 5/B received just one day's training. They said that there had been only one meeting of the mentors but that had highlighted the differences in the way that mentors and mentees were interacting. Mentees in busy offices were receiving much less attention because staff were 'busy, busy, busy and [there were] lots of abstractions'. Detective 2/B said that the process should be standardised so that mentors were not 'making it up … as we go along'.

We were unable to interview any mentors in Force C. Trainees were still in their initial training phase and had not yet met with mentors so were unable to comment on the arrangements. Force D trainees experienced the same issues as trainees in the other schemes. Detective 3/D said that the force wanted to ease people into the role by providing mentors and managing the trainees' caseload. However, the reality was 'very hit and miss'. Their experience was that though they had a nominated mentor, they received 'zero coaching whatsoever'. Instead, they just 'cracked on with the role'. They stressed that this was not because the coach was unwilling to help. It was because coaches had 'their own workload and they're struggling to fight their own stuff'. Trainee 1/D agreed that support could be patchy. They said that together with their colleagues on the programme, they had received some support in the form of a briefing for the NIE, study guides provided free of

charge by the force, and time set aside to study. However, because of their heavy workload, they were not able to take the opportunity to study in duty time. The official line was that time would be made available but in practice, operational demand often prevented its use.

Discussion

The cases analysed in this paper represent well-intentioned efforts by the PSEW and individual forces, to address what undoubtedly is a crisis in modern policing; a shortage of skilled investigators that is having real impact on the service that forces provide to victims and communities (HMICFRS, 2022). The shortfall in detective numbers was so large and the crises in investigative capacity and capability perceived to be so great that something needed to be done quickly to address the issues. Speed was also considered important; officers needed to achieve PIP Level 2 accreditation and to move much more quickly from uniform roles to detective departments. That was an important consideration for any innovative approach that might be employed.

The fast-track schemes we assessed here, represented a revolution in detective recruitment, which fundamentally had changed little in 100 years. This was a characteristically pragmatic response by the police to an identified problem that is consistent with the utilitarian institutional narrative with which it always has been associated. All four cases evidenced a significant departure from traditional methods. Previously, officers who aspired to join the CID, completed a lengthy apprenticeship via a series of secondments that allowed them to prove their worth as a detective before they assumed the role.

We evaluated four experiments (a point reinforced by several trainees who self-mockingly, referred to themselves as ‘guinea pigs’). In the context of systems thinking, we explain those schemes as system disruptors. Each strained other elements of the organisation (particularly, the detective, training, and human resource departments) in

which it was delivered. We noted that two cases, B and D, that (for quite distinct reasons) caused the least disruption to pre-existing systems, were perceived by their architects and stakeholders to be successful. Whereas in cases A and C, where disruption to existing systems was much greater, forces were frustrated with the programmes and disappointed with the outcomes they achieved. We argue that there is a correlation between the degrees of disruption and the successes, or otherwise, of the schemes that needs to be acknowledged in future policy.

Force B's approach was just as radical as the other fast-track cases but it had significant institutional buy-in and a sustained commitment to its architects' plans. Respondents told us that the programme, and the marketing campaign that accompanied it, were overseen by a high-status individual (the Force's Head of Crime) who had the power and the budget to harness force's resources and to force through change. The force strictly adhered to the plans it had set out, in terms of training and mentoring. Though neither of those elements met trainees needs completely, both were commented upon more positively than in the other fast-track cases. Trainees' needs were met without disrupting other processes (as for example, when the force supplemented its training department with detectives to meet a skills deficit the former identified).

Significantly, Force B trainees seem to have understood from the outset that they had been recruited for the detective programme and no other. No matter how much they enjoyed their time in R&P, continuing in the uniform department once they had completed their training, would not be countenanced by the force. That meant that trainees stayed on the programme and the force avoided the interdepartmental stresses experienced in the other fast-track cases.

The lack of experience in the detective ranks and in the PSEW has been commented upon by HMICFRS (2022). The police recognise this is an issue across the service; it is one that these fast-track schemes were intended to address. HMICFRS acknowledges that the

lack of experience in investigations poses significant challenges for policing. It notes that many newly trained detectives 'carry out high volumes of investigations without any experience in making arrests, building casefiles or attending court' (2022 p.16). We found ample evidence in our study to support HMICFRS' view that mentoring poses a particular challenge for the PSEW because often it 'detracts from how well [supervisors] … can supervise investigations (Ibid.). For example, Force B's ability to mentor and support its trainees once they were in post was limited by the lack of experienced mentors among its detectives. That meant that trainees often carried their own caseloads; they were being asked to run before they had shown that they could walk. Arguably, that put even more stress on detective departments.

In Force D, there was not the same degree of disruption to the organisation as the fast-track cases. This is unsurprising because the programme complemented the traditional pathway. Therefore, it did not demand the same level of institutional change as the others. However, as in the other cases, Force D struggled to provide mentors to trainees because it lacked investigative capacity and, just like those in the other cases, trainees told us that they struggled to balance the demands of work, family life and study. The challenge of juggling those demands in Britain is exacerbated by high caseloads (HMICFRS, 2022 and Smith, 2021) but this is not exclusively a British issue. The same challenges have been documented around the world. For example, they have been reported in South Africa (Motsepe, 2022), the USA (Lancaster, 2022) and Canada (Liederbach *et al*, 2011), which suggests that the root causes are to be found in systems and budgets (more accurately, budgetary constraints) rather than in law or in culture.

In Forces A and C, there did not appear to be the same level of institutional commitment to the programme as we witnessed in Force B. That was evidenced by changes in the force leads and repeated variations in the programmes. Force A respondents were extremely critical of the training with which they were provided. Words used to explain the

experience included ‘dull’ and ‘awful.’ The major complaint was that training was not detective-led. HMICFRS (2022) has expressed its concern that trainees do not receive enough training and are ‘so overwhelmed’ they are leaving their jobs (HMICFRS, Ibid.). The evidence from Force A suggests that the expertise of the staff delivering the training and the content of that training may be just as significant as the amount of training delivered.

Without being able to point to any specific evidence, we sensed from our interactions with respondents during our fieldwork in Forces A and C that the imminent arrival of PEQF was having an unsettling effect, diminishing their commitment to their programmes. That seemed to be born out of a tacit understanding that the schemes would be time limited and soon would be replaced. *A priori*, our sense is that there was a correlation between the diminishing of Forces’ A and C’s commitment to their schemes, and the introduction of a Detective Degree Holder Programme (DDHEP); one element of the PEQF. Changes that perhaps could have been made to the programmes, were not made because the forces knew that they would end the schemes and adopt the DDHEP at the first opportunity.

Trainees saw themselves as detectives first and police officers second. Some believed they were ill-prepared for the role in which they were to be employed. Some attempted to leave the programme and switch to the uniform pathway. Detectives in Force A attributed this to trainees’ comfort with R&P and the demands of juggling different responsibilities. At first, the force permitted officers to switch but it soon became clear that its overarching plan to supplement the detective force could be undermined unless it could stem the flow of departures. To discourage further attempts to leave the programme, it stipulated that trainees stay in uniform was limited to one year. That too was a source of dissension among the trainees.

Attrition was greatest in Force C. Its detectives attributed that to the same reasons described above but with the added factor that the force accommodated trainees’ requests

to remain in the uniform role. Simply, if trainees wanted to deviate from the detective pathway and remain in R&P, they were allowed to do so. Of course, that also meant that fewer graduated from the programme and the force was unable to make up the shortfall in its detective ranks. Largely, training received positive feedback from respondents in Force C. Trainees attributed that to the involvement of detectives in the training programme. The content of the programme was praised by trainees but there was significant disruption to it as trainees left it or failed to progress as quickly as they should have and that caused logistical issues for the force's training and human resources departments.

So far, this discussion has focused on the formal structures and processes that forces established to manage their programmes. It now turns to the trainees' experiences as incomers to the PSEW. Respondents in the three fast-track cases told us of the efforts that their forces had made to attract high quality applicants to their programmes. That led to the perception by some serving officers that trainees were being afforded special privileges.

For some of our respondents, the epithet 'fast-track' implicitly was exclusive. Arguably, favouring certain groups (in this study; newcomers to policing, judged especially talented and skilled by their recruiters) is as antithetical to the police ethos as managers' overturning of 100 years of police history. We infer that those kinds of sentiments were the root of serving officers' comments about trainees 'unrealistic expectations' and the fact that the latter 'should work harder' to become detectives, that they were not 'something special' (as their selection via a competitive process for the fast-track programme had implied) but they simply had been 'afforded an opportunity.'

Social identity theory (Tajfel, 1971), particularly in its focus on group identity and on ingroup bias, can shine a light on some of the attitudes and behaviours witnessed by the trainees. Verkuyten argues that group identity is founded on 'shared meanings… enshrined in… rules, regulations, symbols, collective representations, and cultural narratives' (2021 p.312). Those are highly significant and influential phenomena in policing. Verkuyten (Ibid.)

argues that those shared meanings are the foundation of group identity. It follows that those who have not yet been socialised into the group or institution have not yet had an opportunity to learn the rules, symbols, and so on, and must remain outside the group until they do so. Ingroup bias, the tendency to favour members of the ingroup over others, is commonly seen to be the outcome (Brewer, 2007; Spears *et al*, 2001). It seems to have been a significant factor in our study.

The concept of socialising new recruits into military or police life through processes of role-modelling and conditioning is well understood (see for example, Van Maanen, 1975). It has long been a feature of police training in the UK. However, it also has been recognised that new recruits can face socialisation problems; including those caused by their shock at the gap between pre-entry expectation and reality (Sato, 2003). That certainly was a factor in two of the cases where encouragement to trainees to submerge aspects of their individuality for the benefit of the force unsettled the trainees and was counterproductive.

Conclusions

Our purpose in carrying out this study was to critically assess the extent to which investigator recruitment and training schemes introduced by the PSEW can enhance its investigative capacity and capability. Since we began our research the landscape of detective work has changed and changed again. Initially, forces were obliged, by the PEQF, to discontinue fast-track schemes but the Home Secretary's recent announcement (of an end to the degree entry requirement) means that forces, once again, will have the flexibility to introduce bespoke schemes like the ones analysed in this paper.

This study provides significant insights into organisations, systems, and human behaviour that are generalisable both to policing and other institutions. Given, the concerns about detective caseloads expressed in literature emanating from South Africa, the USA and Canada, our findings will be of interest to scholars and policymakers in Britain and around

the world. In terms of the recruitment of detectives and other specialist staff, police forces could look to the cases examined in this paper as they formulate their new strategies; there is much that can be learned from these forces' experiences.

For the reasons we outlined in our discussion, the fast-track schemes we assessed, were not as successful as they might have been in all facets. The Force B scheme was the most successful and, in our view, provides an ideal type of fast-track programme. We infer that the reasons for its success were: its relatively small size; the clarity of purpose with which the scheme was operated; consistent executive buy-in; selection of high calibre candidates; and the support it was able to offer to trainees, continuing on to their posting as detectives. The Force D scheme is notable; it was less disruptive than the others because it relied on an adaptation of an existing, mature, programme. It made fewer demands of the system and did not challenge historical and cultural norms. Though it should be noted that its trainees' success was mitigated by the same lack of support and the challenges of managing competing priorities as was witnessed in the other schemes.

The introduction of each scheme was a pragmatic, institutionally consistent response to a pressing problem; the crisis in detective capacity and capability. They were well-intended, innovative and timely. We were hugely impressed by the forces' commitment to their trainees and also by the trainees themselves who possessed a wide range of professional and life skills (we interviewed trainees with professional backgrounds in: engineering; midwifery; legal practice; probation; teaching, and the natural sciences). We saw that schemes made competing demands, on both forces and individual trainees, that they found difficult to balance.

The calibre of the individuals recruited (in terms of their experiential knowledge, education, motivation, and enthusiasm) promised much but though one force (B) achieved greater success than others (a higher percentage of its trainees graduated as detectives and, internally, the scheme is seen as a success), the forces' systems did not support them well

enough. A significant proportion of trainees in Forces A and C did not complete the programmes. Though some coped better than others (previous professional experience and life experience seemed to be important factors in that regard), many of those who graduated as detectives found that the support and guidance they had been promised was lacking.

The role of the mentor is absolutely critical to the success of trainees. In all of the cases, mentors often were ill-prepared for the role, having received only limited training in coaching, mentoring and assessment. Though we saw no lack of enthusiasm for the role, those designated as mentors were the most experienced in the detective ranks. As such, they already carried a heavy caseload. Mentoring duties added to the burden of those carrying the heaviest workloads. Our evidence confirms HMICFRS' (2022) belief that there simply is not enough knowledge, skill, and experience in the current detective workforce to go around; there are not enough experienced, capable, detectives to provide the leadership and mentorship that new joiners need.

Group dynamics always are important in organisations. Suboptimal internal marketing of the fast-track schemes was a significant factor in trainees' struggles for acceptance by the ingroup. Acceptance can mitigate unwanted phenomena such as group stereotyping and prejudice but it is particularly desirable in this context because of the promise of change, the injection of ideas and new ways of thinking about old problems, that may accompany the group's reconfiguration. Earlier in this paper, we described the fast-track schemes as system disruptors. Certainly, the introduction of the programmes led to disruption but they also provided a vehicle for changing traditional behaviours and ways of working. In reality, the trainees seemed overwhelmed by the demands of their role and seemed unprepared for that extra responsibility. We acknowledge that ceding power to newly arrived incomers in that way, probably would have been unprecedented in the

history of the rational-legal, hierarchical bureaucracy that is the PSEW. Nonetheless, if real change is to be stimulated, opportunities need to be recognised and exploited better.

In summary, the evidence suggests that for all the organisational energy forces put into establishing and managing the fast-track schemes, which was considerable, their approaches needed greater cohesion. A whole systems approach would have encouraged greater consideration of their impact on other elements of the forces; that also could be expected to play significant roles in the fast-track experiments. That some forces did not recognise well enough or soon enough, the extra demands that would be placed *inter alia* on training, human resource and detective departments, put considerable strain on their systems and on many staff, and that limited their success. By collective agreement, external marketing of the schemes attracted high calibre, highly motivated applicants in all cases. Better internal marketing was needed to ameliorate the tensions that emerged around trainee identity, to provide better support for trainees to help them understand and to cope better with the ingroup/incomer dynamic, to help them to succeed as detectives and to reshape both the detective workforce and detective work.

Without straying too far into a much bigger debate that is outside the scope of this paper, a final note on PEQF. Notwithstanding its merits, PEQF's introduction prevented forces from utilising bespoke, local solutions to address the national crisis in investigative capacity. The Home Secretary's instruction to the police institution to review is entry requirements reopens the door to local schemes that, if established and operated using a whole system approach, can be truly reflexive and inclusive. As one of our respondents, a senior detective, put it, to continue to operate systems that exclude excellent candidates from the service is 'a luxury the police cannot afford'.

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