

ACCOUNTABILITY AND GOVERNANCE BOARD

28th January 2025

Supporting the Workforce
Presented by: Peter Gillett

Cover Report

1. Police and Crime Plan

This paper provides an overview of information and performance data pertaining to our continuous commitment to and progress of supporting the workforce and creating a police force that represents the best of the West Midlands.

2. Achievements and Challenges

Achievements

- In the 12 months up to the 1st October 2024 we have seen a 0.85% increase in officers and staff from Ethnic Minority Backgrounds, the total headcount increased by 135.
- 13% of all officers promoted to Sgt in the recent process were from an Ethnic Minority background. This is a slightly greater percentage than the percentage of current Sergeants from Ethnic Minority Backgrounds (12%)

Challenges

- Although there have been improvements in all person types and the overall proportion of the workforce from ethnic minority groups we have not yet achieved the target of recruiting 1,000 officers from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups.
- Despite improved numbers of applications from Ethnic Minority, particularly Black and Black Heritage candidates we are not seeing proportional increases in new starters. We need to more fully understand the reasons why these candidates are not successful; key to this work will be better utilisation of the reporting functionality of the new recruitment system.

3. Actions undertaken

The Current Workforce including Positive Action in Recruitment, Retention & Progression

A Gold group meets on a fortnightly basis to develop further initiatives to enable the force to attract both the volume of applicants to maintain our Police Officer Uplift and to continue to increase the diversity of the force, working towards the Police and Crime Commissioner's aspiration of recruiting 1,000 new Police Officers from an ethnic minority background by the end of March 2025.

Overall, force representation continues to increase, this has been the trend since 2019 with an increase of 4.4% over the period. This can be seen in the table below:

Staff Type	Ethnic Minority Group %						
	Nov-24	Dec-23	Jan-23	Jan-22	Jan-21	Jan-20	Jan-19
Police Officer	14.2%	13.9%	13.7%	12.9%	11.9%	11.0%	10.5%
Police Staff	19.8%	18.3%	17.7%	17.1%	16.0%	15.3%	13.7%
PCSO	14.4%	12.9%	11.8%	11.1%	12.2%	13.6%	13.7%
Specials	30.7%	31.0%	29.2%	27.2%	30.0%	29.1%	27.0%
Force Total	16.3%	15.6%	15.3%	14.6%	13.7%	12.9%	11.9%

West Midlands Police want to ensure that we can support ethnic minorities and females to feel empowered to apply for all roles.

This begins at the attraction stages of recruiting staff. All recruitment adverts are reviewed to ensure appropriate language is used in order to reach a diverse range of candidates. The force ensures that positive journeys and experiences of ethnic minorities and females who have joined the force are showcased through the recruitment content that is used. This includes videos, case studies and statements.

The force has also begun using a broader range of social media platform including TikTok to increase the awareness of careers at the force. We are currently testing which of the social media platforms perform the best and which are most relevant for the people we want to attract to the force.

We have recently launched a new attraction campaign targeted specifically at promoting careers in West Midlands Police to Black and Black Heritage communities. It is too early to assess the impact of this but we will be closely monitoring applications and success rates.

The force advertises both police officer and police staff vacancies on a wide range of job boards to attract the widest range of applicants from all communities.

Extensive research shows that male applicants apply for a role if they meet less than two thirds of the essential and desirable criteria, whereas women only tend to apply if they meet them all or are very close to them all. Therefore, the force ensures that job criteria for the roles is succinct and avoids any exhaustive list of 'must haves'.

The force's approach to recruitment outreach is focused on building and maintaining long term relationships with different communities throughout the West Midlands. As part of this work, the Outreach Team are engaged with schools, college and universities across the West Midlands, particularly targeting those that we have identified via census data to have highly diverse communities reflective of the communities that we serve.

In order to support a wider range of applicants into West Midlands Police the force is embedding its "Opportunities for Military Personnel" scheme. This scheme is open to both regular and reservists. Initial individuals apply by demonstrating the skills and experience they have gained whilst serving in the armed forces. They will then be supported in applying for one of the career opportunities available that match their existing skills and experience.

If individuals want to become a Police Officer and have served for 4 years or more, they can apply without a Level 3 qualification as we recognise the skills and experience gained from a career in the military. After completing their initial training and probation, West Midlands Police looks to move individuals with specialist skills to our specialist departments.

More generally, we also allow individuals that have previously been a Police Community Support Officer or Special Constable to apply to become a Police Officer without a Level 3 qualification as we recognise the skills and experience gained from their previous roles.

Success rates are monitored through all promotion processes, in the past 12 months officers being promoted were representative of the overall workforce.

In the 2024 Inspector process, 32% of all officers promoted to Inspector were female and 11% were from an Ethnic Minority Group. The success rates for females was 67%, which was significantly above the average success rate of 53%; the success rates for ethnic minority groups was 50% which was slightly lower than the average success rate of 53%.

In the 2024 Sergeant process, 40% of all officers promoted to Sergeant were female and 13% were from an Ethnic Minority Group.

Attendance Rates

Between the 1st Nov 2024 to 30th October 2024 the force lost 156,685 working days to sickness absence. Psychological Disorders made up 38.6% of all days lost to sickness and totalled 60,416 days.

In comparison to October 2023, there were 16.7% fewer days lost to psychological disorders in October 2024, a decrease of just over 950 working days.

There has been a significant focus on improving attendance over the past 6 months; sickness reporting has been improved over the past 6 months to identify officers and staff that have hit sickness triggers and ensuring that Attendance Support Meetings take place and that attendance is proactively managed. This will be strengthened further with the implementation of the Local HR function within People Services. This investment will increase the capacity for HR advisory support to all departments across force.

Due to the high level of days lost to psychological disorders it is important that we provide varied support that meets the very different needs of our officers and staff. There are a variety of police specific services that support colleagues in financial difficulty which very much meets the needs of some who are facing hardship due to the economic climate. These services support individuals to plan, understand and achieve better financial stability. The Wellbeing Resource directory signposts staff and managers to where the support and advice can be accessed.

Monitor Referrals into Occupational Health

The monthly People Service governance board and the HMIC assurance board both receive and track information on KPIs relating to OH referrals, which demonstrate an average monthly figure of 231 referrals to the clinical team with less than 50% being suitable to be seen by the OH team. Work is taking place to identify how to provide education and signposting for managers and the HR professional supporting them to have the confidence to utilise the OH service appropriately.

The KPIs that are monitored show that there are on average 117 incidents of non-attendance at OH appointments on a monthly basis. With the cost of FMA time being high and the need for specialist nurse advice increasing these incidents require improved monitoring at a local level and should feed into the overall management of cases. Work will be carried out to make best use of the localised HR model going forwards to get a tighter grip on non-attendance.

Since the POD review a key priority has been to fill vacancies within the OH establishment. This will assist with reducing the average referral to appointment time that currently sits at an average of 32 days. In addition to this, the OH department need to be confident they are providing reports as promptly as possible for decision making to take place. A review of the consent process is taking place with the new Head of Service to re-establish more robust management of cases and more timely communication to the business.

Finally, continued encouragement to use the Forces' Employee Assistance Programme (Vivup) will also help to drive down the number of incorrect referrals into Occupational Health, it is a great source of preventative support for mental health, life events and financial support. This is one of the significant number of resources available to police colleagues, all of which are available on the wellbeing pages of the Force intranet. Education and signposting for departments on what is available is a further improvement which will be driven by local HR teams over the coming months. This will be of particular use to high risk areas of the Force such as Force Contact, PPU and the Major Crime Unit.

Monitor Wellbeing

The Vivup service also continues to provide financial advice, support and tools for colleagues in addition to counselling for those experiencing difficulties both at work or at home. We have recently started to publish the uptake of these services to start to understand how they may be impacting on attendance levels and allow colleagues to remain in the workplace.

The force is taking effective action to address any wellbeing challenges it has identified. It provides a good range of preventative and supportive measures, including enhanced support for those experiencing potentially traumatic incidents. Annual screening for those colleagues that are more likely to be exposed to trauma in their day-to-day duties continues alongside our inhouse provision for trauma-based therapy and contact with an external provider for a range of services through our Employee Assistance Programme.

In terms of trauma support, the Force has adapted a new two-pronged approach of becoming a trauma informed organisation. As People Services embeds a more localised model of service delivery, the OH and HR service leads can work effectively together to provide education and support that focuses on the diverse requirements of our departments. All resources are available for colleagues through the wellbeing portal and the newly launched Go-to Guides.

The force understands the specific challenges faced by new recruits. It makes sure that their wellbeing and development needs are prioritised and monitored by effective and supportive supervisors and tutors. From their very first day in West Midlands Police probationary officers are greeted by dedicated welfare officers, who will handle all concerns throughout their initial training period. Following this, they are supported by experienced tutors and line managers during their dependent patrol period.

We are able to provide bespoke training through our Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) such as group clinical supervision and supervisory training, available on request, provide mindfulness courses, personal resilience programmes and a more clinical approach for trauma through Occupational Health (Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing (EMDR), Cognitive Behavioural Therapy/counselling).

Our Welfare Liaison Officers continue to work alongside colleagues under a Professional Standards investigation, to act as wellbeing Single Point of Contact's (SPOC's) for those who opt for somebody impartial to help them with their welfare.

We are currently scoping options for our next Staff survey, following Durham University removing the planned wellbeing survey this year which WMP was going to take part in. We are also feeding into the College of Policing's work around the future of wellbeing/employee engagement surveys and how they should look in the future.

Monitor Incidents of Police officer assaults on duty

Our in-house wellbeing offer goes above and beyond the support offered through Op Hampshire to those who are physically and emotionally impacted by violence. This includes a robust and credible trauma management service, Chaplaincy support for pastoral care and trauma support and a pending pilot for PTEC (Police Trauma Exposure Checklist) supported by Staff Assault Gold and the Trauma Informed Policing Board.

Supervisors are also given training around staff welfare and the impact staff assaults/violence can have, this includes: Oscar Kilo Supervisor training, Dealing with Stress and Trauma, and Op Hampshire (along with the wellbeing offering). This is covered in the Operational Excellence programme for newly promoted supervisors in addition to ad hoc wellbeing events and inputs.

We also have a retirement package that ensures support is still available to those who have suffered an injury whilst at work, and since left the Force. The Police Covenant was set up to acknowledge the sacrifice police officers and staff make during the course of their career. This means that a lot of our services are now extended to the immediate family of our staff, including Oscar Kilo Family Life, and Police Federation Care First Counselling line. We also offer support to the family of those colleagues who are repeatedly assaulted, especially children, having purchased "The Wolf was Not Sleeping" book ensure they know their parents are safe at work.

4. Future Work

Retention conversations will be refocused from January 2025 to target officers and staff before they resign. Any officer or member of police staff thinking about leaving the force will be able to refer themselves for a 'Say and Stay' conversation with an independent person. The aim of the conversation is to understand their reasons for considering leaving the force and to put interventions in place to improve retention.

In late 2023 we implemented a new recruitment system. We have recently finalised much more detail reporting from the system that will allow us to track candidates through the recruitment process in greater detail, with additional segmentation of candidates by a range of protected characteristics. We will shortly be analysing data from the past 12 months to identify areas in the recruitment process where candidates from ethnic minority backgrounds drop out at disproportionate rates. We will then, where possible, target our Positive Action activity to better support these candidates and improve success rates.

One focus for 2025 within the recruitment and outreach team to ensure we strengthen our recruitment ambassador programme and to utilise the opportunities for colleagues across force to promote careers within West Midlands Police. This will be supported by the recruitment team to ensure that every Police Officer and member of Police Staff has the resources needed to attract people within the communities they served, to join the force in either one of our careers or to undertake volunteering opportunities

5. Financial Implications

There are no extra-ordinary financial implications that are not accounted for as part of BAU budgeting.

6. Legal Implications

There are no specific Legal implications as a direct link to this update.

7. Equality Implications

All of our policies and strategies are subject to Equality impact assessments in order that we comply with our Public sector equality duties.

Background

Monitor disproportionality within the West Midlands Police Force, with a view to increase the representativeness of the force

Over the past 2 years 22% of all new starters and 23% of new Police Officers have been from Ethnic Minority groups. This compares to 16% of the whole workforce and 17.4% of our Police Officer workforce.

Monitor the attendance rates within West Midlands Police and in particular absences due to mental ill health

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