

# Selling Research to Police Leaders

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# Presentation

- What Works in Crime Reduction
- Project outline
- Focus Groups/Pilot Training
- 'Buy in' - Leadership
- Leadership and Evidence-based policing
- View from the Top
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# What Works Network

- A key driver of contemporary police reform in the UK is evidence-based policing.
- The '*What Works Centre for Crime Reduction*. It is funded by the ESRC and the College of Policing and seeks to enhance the development, dissemination and application of EBP across police organisations in the UK.
- It is assisted in this process through a collaboration between the College and a commissioned consortium comprising eight universities.

# Project Outline

Across four UK police organisations - design, deliver and evaluate a pilot training programme to:

- develop officers' theoretical and practical understanding of evidence-informed approaches;
- equip officers with the skills required to use evidence to inform their decision making
- Support officers to appraise evidence and develop evaluation strategies to monitor their own practice

# Focus Groups

Held across four UK police organisations in May-July 2014  
160 officers of all ranks. Objectives:

- To better understand police officers' attitudes, understanding and value of Evidence-based research generally
- To better understand the extent to which research/evaluation is currently pursued in police organisations
- To better understand the challenges and perceived risks and barriers to greater evidence use
- To gauge what would be perceived as a useful training tool/programme in order to 'instruct' officers in the value/use of Evidence-based research

# Focus Groups - Overall findings

- A significant number of officers across all ranks were not well informed about the concept of evidence-based practice
- None of the organisations reported any extensive use of research and/or evaluation practices in their organisations
- Perceived challenges included 'buy in' from senior officers; police culture; scarce resources, performance frameworks, financial climate
- Training - argued for hands on, interactive training, face-to-face - no E-Learning.

The starting point is the buy in right from the top (Inspector)

It's getting the buy in from senior officers that's important (Inspector)

And because of that we won't often buy into it because you can't see an immediate outcome, from a preventative point of view (Chief Supt.)

If you're looking for organisational buy in, without a Chief, without a sponsor, you're stuffed because it just won't get legs within the organisation (Superintendent)

It's for the rank structure to make the policies and procedures and that's what we follow, that's what we do' (Constable)

Win over the 'doing ranks' [*Sergeants and Inspectors*] and that will help embed this on the frontline (Sergeant)

# Pilot Training

- To what extent do police officers/staff respond positively to EBP?
- To what extent do participants believe the training programme was appropriate?
- To what extent do police officers/staff believe EBP training will enhance their role?
- To what extent do police officers/staff believe that their organisation will value the role of EBP in their organisation

# Findings/1

- Enthusiasm about EBP was linked to a higher level of education
- Prior to training strong, positive beliefs about relevance & value of evidence informing practice and organisations generally
- Significant positive feedback about training and learning outcomes
- Level of positivity reduced in a small but statistically significant way following the training

# Findings/2

## Need for:

- Improved organisational structures, autonomy & resources
- New performance management frameworks
- 'Buy in' and commitment from senior officers
- An environment within which officers/staff can develop a more active involvement in the practical aspects of EBP

# Leadership & Evidence Based Policing

- Leadership Review (COP)
- Professionalization Agenda
- Changing the Culture
- Take responsibility for Training /In-house evaluations
- Allocate discretionary budgets to use for research
- Take ownership of police science

# View from the Top

- It's a philosophy of the Policing College which basically states that if you are going to utilize expensive public resources you should be using ways which are likely to achieve success rather than relying on instinctive ways of doing things - I don't think we should be thinking it's the only way we do business - and to think about a criteria based solution before we do anything - we should not be ignoring what we know and we have known in the British Police tradition for some time - we don't want to be throwing the baby out with the bath water (Deputy Chief Constable).
- An application of an empirical basis for police practice and approaches and drawing on my 25 years of experience - the latest generation of fad (Assistant Chief Constable)

# View from the Top

- What's important to the chief officers is important to the force ... the questions you ask at interviews start with the culture of the organisation. So if you ask value led questions (when have you shown courage?), that starts becoming the conversation of the organisation. If you ask operational led questions, that starts taking control, and so if we said could you tell me when you've turned a piece of research into reality, you could start shifting it. ... So what the chief cares about matters (Chief Constable).

# View from the Top

- So almost always comes back to if the Chief is interested then the organisation's interested (Chief Constable)
- I think start with the chief, or a chief officer, it doesn't have to be 'the' chief because if the chief officer hasn't got it then, I hate to say it but, you haven't got the sponsorship in place or the interest to make it credible, and that's key for any number of reasons (Chief Superintendent).
- If you're looking for organisational buy in, without a chief, without a sponsor, you're stuffed because it just won't get legs within the organisation (Assistant Chief Constable).

# View from the Top

- So I think evidence based, academia, research, whatever the terminology, is not in our veins from day one. If anything, if you arrive with a bit of it, it's driven out of you in order to fit with the crowd that you start with (Chief Constable).
- I guess there's something that is steeped in the culture of policing ...that however steeped you are in academia when you come through the door ... we all tend towards the norm to accommodate our surroundings (Deputy Chief Constable).

# View from the Top

- I have already touched on the cultural challenge and we will need to address that incrementally - cultural weaning is always a challenge ... How do we reconcile professional instinct, local context, competence with what the evidence tells us 'works'? (Deputy Chief Constable)
- What the public want is an important variable - its not always about what evidence is there for this (Assistant Chief Constable).
- Yes. It doesn't take into account the professional instinct - so it might suggest asset deployment and what might be required but it doesn't take into account what the public wants and what the public might be looking for (Chief Superintendent).

# View from the Top

- I think the challenges are exclusively cultural ... police are task A focused - they are not good at reflecting and theorizing - they just want to get the job done (Chief Constable).
- If you want to get behaviour changed the Chief Constable can make that happen with a word or directive. If you want to change their thinking it's the Sergeants and Inspectors that will really sponsor it for you (Chief Superintendent).
- You kind of need your stars to align, so you need your sergeant who gets it with your inspector who gets it, with your chief inspector who gets it with your super who gets it, so you've got an aligned model there and you've got a whole environment where you can take the risks ... and you can trial stuff. Is that going to happen? (Assistant Chief Constable)

# Conclusions

- Professionalization agenda and police reform driving the evidence-based policing movement
- Focus Groups' /Trainees' attitudes
- Onus of responsibility on senior leadership to take the movement forward
- View from the Top - not so rationale, much more complex, nuanced than some may believe

# Questions?

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