

# Being on secondment at the College of Policing

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Inspector Tonya Cook shares her experience of working as a frontline policing advisor

News 5 mins read

Tonya Cook is an inspector seconded to the College of Policing. She works within the local policing team in the role of frontline policing advisor.

Tonya was first attracted to the idea of doing a secondment when working as a response sergeant. She wanted to share learnings with her own force, but also leave a legacy to improve policing practices nationally.

*I wanted to just take that step further and come to the College and say, well, these were the gaps in policing. How can I actually help improve policing?*

Tonya believes that bringing police officers and staff into the College on secondment is beneficial for everyone.

*I'm able to bring my experience of operational policing to people in the College who haven't got that background and really explain that and try to break the barriers down and the preconceptions about what the College does. So, it's been a two-way process really, is to say the College does certain things really well, certain things it can improve on.*

Since being at the College, Tonya has attended focus groups and published national documentation – something she feels she wouldn't have achieved without coming to the College.

*I've been involved in some of the focus groups about transforming our College just to make sure that what the College is providing to the police service is exactly what it needs to.*

Her influence on policing has also extended further afield, having attended some international conferences as a guest speaker.

*I've actually made those real good international connections that haven't just been within policing. It's been with academics, and it's been with like-minded people who want to improve policing.*

Tonya says she would recommend a secondment to others, to help ensure that forces are sharing knowledge and providing the best service they can.

*I would say to anybody considering a secondment, you have got access to learning for yourself, but there's lots of opportunities to take the learning from the College back to your own police force and to share that learning quite quickly.*

#### Video Transcript

It's quite an exciting prospect meeting other academics and researchers and subject matter experts in loads of different policing areas. Just really invigorates what you love about policing and wanting to learn more to improve policing and what we all do.

I wanted to look at going on a secondment because it's not a jump to a role. It's to look at other forces to see what they do. So, when I went on my secondment to HMIC, I was a response sergeant at the time. So, I didn't have any opportunity to look outside my police force and I wanted to learn from others and I wanted to think differently about policing and actually look at what is required of policing now and in the future and how could I be part of that? And to share that good practice back to my own force. But like I say, I wanted to just take that step further and come to the College and say, well, these were the gaps in policing. How can I actually help improve policing? And I genuinely want to leave a legacy of when I leave the secondment in another two years that I've produced this and this has actually been tangible, and that police forces have felt that they have been supported by me and the team at the College to really improve the areas that they need to.

I'm able to bring my experience of operational policing to people in the College who haven't got that background and really explain that and try to break the barriers down and the preconceptions about

what the College does. So, it's been a two-way process really, is to say the College does certain things really well, certain things it can improve on. So, I've been involved in some of the focus groups about Transforming our College, just to make sure that what the College is providing to the police service is exactly what it needs to. And it's just having that ability to influence national policing, which again in my force as an inspector would be able to influence within my force. But this is actually nationally. So, I've done courses about courageous conversations have taken place in the College. So just to give me as a manager the strength to have difficult conversations with staff, colleagues and even partners I'm working with.

I've also published some national documentation. So, I've written a chapter in the landscape review, the police and health consensus landscape review. That was something I never would have achieved in force or even in policing without coming to the College. I've also been a guest speaker at some international conferences which, due to COVID, have taken place from my home. But I've actually made those real good international connections. So it hasn't just been in policing, it's been with academics and it's been with like-minded people who want to improve policing.

It was about being objective. So, if we're looking at things that are emerging, good practice. It's like saying, well, hang on, how can we test that? How could that be translatable to another force? And I think, given my operational experience, my experience at HMIC I'm able to just sort of really think that through. But also, if we're looking at trying to get people to think differently, my personal skills, ability to help partners and stakeholders, is really quite important.

I would say to anybody considering a secondment, you have got access to learning for yourself, but there's lots of opportunities to take the learning from the College back to your own police force and to share that learning quite quickly. So, I can say that I've been to another force and they've done something really well and I can speak to my force and say we might want to look at that to improve what we do to make sure that the service that we provide is the best that we possibly can.

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