

Professional development and action learning sets (PeDALS)

Targeted programme for underrepresented workforce groups to improve retention and support personal development.

First published

27 March 2023

Updated

22 April 2025

Key details

Does it work?	Untested – new or innovative
Focus	Organisational
Topic	Diversity and inclusion Leadership, development and learning
Organisation	Merseyside Police
Contact	Michelle Cunningham
Email address	michelle.cunningham@merseyside.police.uk
Region	North West
Stage of practice	The practice is implemented.
Start date	July 2022
Scale of initiative	Local

Key details

Target group	Workforce
---------------------	-----------

Aim

The aim of the PeDALS programme is to provide a support and development opportunity for those with protected characteristics who are underrepresented in our force.

PeDALS is a comprehensive bespoke training programme. It includes workshops, action learning sets and a mentoring programme.

Its overall aim is to develop and maximise the candidate's potential and ensure they achieve their own personal developmental goals.

Intended outcome

The intended outcome is that candidates achieve their own personal goals while developing their:

- self-esteem
- confidence
- resilience
- emotional intelligence
- values
- presentation skills
- coaching and mentoring
- understanding of unconscious bias
- giving feedback

Personal goals are identified in the early stages of the programme. Candidates are matched with trained mentors in their specific development field to enable them to achieve their goals.

By providing bespoke development opportunities for those from underrepresented groups, we are creating a more inclusive environment within the organisation.

Description

The development programme is run internally. It is aimed at underrepresented groups in our force at:

- constable to sergeant rank
- police staff grades A to E

PeDALS is a national National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) initiative, but this Merseyside programme is locally developed.

The candidates receive classroom development training, which includes seven sessions over a 12-month period. All candidates are asked to identify their development goals for the following 12 months and are allocated mentors with specific experience in their required areas to support their development.

Mentors then set timed action plans to achieve required goals.

- Number of trainers – one (same throughout - looking to expand to 2).
- Resources used – classroom (size 16 capacity), PowerPoint facility, breakout rooms, one-to-one mentoring (mentoring contract or conditions, monthly catch ups), force evaluation form.
- Class size – maximum 16 and minimum 12, but preferable to be below 12.
- Costs – not known.

Itinerary

Day one

- Introduction and overview of the programme.
- Needs, concerns and expectations of the programme.
- Values.
- Emotional Intelligence.

Day two

- Coaching and CPD.
- Work for next session – using the skills taught students to develop an action plan for next 12 months as part of the personal development review (PDR) process and for allocation of mentors.

Day three

Resilience, self-esteem, and confidence

Day four

- Giving feedback.
- Action learning sets.

Day five

- Mentoring.

Day six

- Presentation and briefing skills – all day.

Day seven

- Unconscious bias.
- Action learning sets.
- Closure and de-brief of the course.
- Senior officer to close.

Previously PeDALS was solely for underrepresented groups in our force. Now as we move more towards inclusion as a force we have opened PeDALS to all but we still target underrepresented groups and aim for 70% underrepresented.

Evaluation

The before and after evaluation has been led by Merseyside Police. It focuses on how PeDALS was implemented and its impact. It was based on a feedback survey and trainer follow ups and checks on achievements linked to personal and professional goals.

The survey was completed by 15 candidates. These candidates were not from the same cohort but were combined from the first two cohorts.

Survey findings

- 15 of 15 respondents stated that they would recommend the programme to colleagues.
- 13 of 14 respondents felt that they had achieved their personal goals set out in the programme.
- 14 of 15 stated that they had grown in confidence since the beginning of the programme.

- 11 of 14 respondent felt that they received sufficient support and guidance from their mentor.

Overall impact

We have run three cohorts and the feedback has been positive. Most candidates have achieved their personal goals.

Candidates were either very satisfied or satisfied with the programme. Generally they stated that they had grown in confidence during the programme.

Qualitative responses highlighted satisfaction with the training, mentoring and networking, and the safe environment that supported them to feel comfortable and open.

One area identified for improvement was ensuring that the mentoring process works effectively and the candidates receive support from mentors to achieve their goals. There were occasions when consistency of access to mentoring needed to be addressed, due to work pressures of the mentor and lack of response by mentees.

The success of the PeDALS programme has meant an increase in demand and subsequently further cohorts being delivered this year. Two cohorts have recently finished the programme and below is some of the feedback received:

- 90% of the candidates rated the programme as excellent and 10% as good
- 95% felt that their confidence had increased during the programme and 5% thought maybe it had
- 100% of candidates felt that they had developed other skills during the programme
- 33% of candidates felt that they had achieved their goals set out at the start of the programme, 67% stated they were ongoing due to processes

An Army Leadership day has been incorporated into the programme, this involves scenario based exercises where candidates can apply some of the knowledge & skills developed during the programme. The feedback received showed that 78% of candidates thought the day was excellent. 22% thought it was good.

100% of candidates stated that they would recommend the programme to other colleagues.

Learning

The learning we have gained over the last 12 months is how to manage the interest and impact of the success of the programme. We will need to consider in advance the application process in more depth. Also, appreciating that due to the start dates for our courses and the promotion processes it is not always possible to achieve promotion within the programme timescale.

Mentors

Assessment of the availability of mentors was difficult initially. We advertised across the force for people from underrepresented groups to pass on their knowledge, skills and experience as a mentor to candidates on PeDALS. We then trained a cohort of mentors, ensuring that quality and processes were standardised.

As part of the programme the candidates also receive coaching and mentoring training to enable them to use these skills to mentor future PeDALS programme candidates – increasing the diversity, capacity, and quantity of mentors.

Trainer

The trainer must be passionate and highly motivated in developing people and passionate about diversity, equality and inclusion.

Organisational support

The programme requires:

- buy in and support from the organisation
- commitment from candidates and mentors to attend and support the process throughout.

The organisation committed to allowing candidates and mentors time to attend training and mentoring sessions.

There is a need to develop resilience in the number and capacity of trainers.

Copyright

The copyright in this shared practice example is not owned or managed by the College of Policing and is therefore not available for re-use under the terms of the Non-Commercial College Licence.

You will need to seek permission from the copyright owner to reproduce their works.

Legal disclaimer

Disclaimer: The views, information or opinions expressed in this shared practice example are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or views of the College of Policing or the organisations involved.

Tags

Leadership development Underrepresented groups