

Student officer oversight and progression framework

Changing approaches to wellbeing at work for student officers using the Cambridge Crime Harm Index (CCHI).

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Key details

Does it work?	Untested – new or innovative
Focus	Organisational
Topic	Leadership, development and learning Operational policing Organisation including workforce
Organisation	Cumbria Constabulary
Contact	Paul Platt
Email address	paul.platt@cumbria.police.uk
Region	North West
Partners	Police
Stage of practice	The practice is implemented.
Start date	August 2022
Scale of initiative	Local

Key details

Target group	Adults Workforce
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Aim

To create an approach to reduce the likelihood that officers would become stressed due to the competing demands of police operational work and student study work, related to policing education quality framework (PEQF).

Objectives of the student officer safeguarding oversight and progression framework (SOPF):

- to ensure the sharing of information about student police officers on all initial programmes between the higher education institution and police workforce
- to ensure the appropriate safeguarding and wellbeing of student police officers by oversight by a designated lead officer
- to ensure a tasking and action process around student officers of concern
- to ensure a data-led approach to oversight of student workload by use of Power-BI products
- to ensure appropriate co-ordination of information submitted by the student officer support (SOS: Heads-Up) – our referral mechanism primarily designed for student police officers and their colleagues to either anonymously refer people or teams about whom they have a concern, to the professional development unit

Intended outcome

The initiative intends to:

- decrease the rate and number of intended resignations from the force
- decrease the number of those seeking the services of external counselling through the force occupational health unit

Description

The policing education quality framework (PEQF) provides two entry routes into policing: the police constable degree apprenticeship (PCDA) and degree holder entry programme (DHEP). Both routes required working with a higher education institution and practical work within a police force to complete the work.

Prior to this initiative, Cumbria Constabulary didn't have a standard structure on how to support student officers with their academic and practical workload. There were concerns regarding student officers' resignations and the practicalities of balancing police and academic workloads.

In July 2022 Cumbria had six student officers who all wanted to resign due to high volume of work with both investigations and the degree. The officers felt unsupported and overwhelmed by the experience of being a new police officer. Once this was identified, Cumbria Constabulary designed and installed a series of meetings within a structure called the student officer oversight and progression framework (SOPF). On a weekly basis, all student officers would have their crimes and cases reviewed by the probation delivery unit (PDU) sergeants.

Two metrics are now used to monitor the welfare of student officers at weekly meetings.

- Crime Count – Cumbria Constabulary created a threshold of 15 crimes that a newly qualified could carry at any time. Any officer carrying more than 15 crimes was put on a 'red list', and the PDU sergeants of these officers must justify why their officers are over the threshold at the weekly PDU meeting.
- The Cambridge Crime Harm Index as a wellbeing tool – the constabulary identified that the impact of workload on student officers is dependent on both the volume of investigations carried and the complexity of each case. Part of this process involved attempting to quantify how many crimes student officers were carrying, as well as the harm contained within each crime. To analyse the harm associated with handling specific crimes, Cumbria Constabulary used the Cambridge Crime Harm Index (CCHI).
- The CCHI values are calculated by looking at the number of days in prison (suggested in England and Wales sentencing guidelines). For example, of Burglary CCHI score 730, Stalking 252, GBH 4380.
- Student officers who carry an individual crime with a CCHI score of more the 2000, will get assistance from the PDU with a review of that crime and will look to provide additional support such as asking a detective to review the case with the officer in charge.

- Once an officer has been identified as on the red list they have a meeting with a PDU sergeant where a decision is made about whether an intervention is required.

Intervention included

- Removing them from the line of duty. In serious cases where an officer is carrying a high workload it can be decided that they step back from the frontline if it is in the best interest of their wellbeing.
- Protected time. This involves giving the officer some time off whilst ensuring they retain frontline duties.
- Buddy system. Officers can also be given a buddy to help them manage their workload without needing to take time off work.

Monthly SOPF meeting

In the monthly student officer oversight and progression framework (SOPF) meetings Cumbria Constabulary shares information with the higher education institution (HEI) relevant to the student officer to unify the approach to student support at all levels. This meeting ensures there is a sharing of relevant information around complaints, performance, academic work, and police work. This enables a better focus on retention of new officers particularly those who were undertaking the police constable degree apprenticeship (PCDA).

The PDU inspector (lead responsible student safeguarding officer), learning manager, area PDU inspector, HEI workplace co-ordinator, professional standards prevention officer, HEI senior lecturer responsible for HEI programmes and student safeguarding all attend these monthly SOPF teams meetings to ensure the sharing of relevant information for the benefit of student officers. The PDU inspector also invites representatives from professional standards, the partner higher education provider, occupational health and the diversity and inclusion team.

Objectives of the monthly meetings:

- to ensure the sharing of information about student police officers on all initial programmes between the HEI and police workforce
- to ensure the appropriate safeguarding and wellbeing of student police officers by oversight of a designated lead officer
- to ensure a tasking and action process around student officers of concern
- to ensure a data led approach to oversight of student workload by use of Power-BI products

- to ensure appropriate co-ordination of information submitted by the student officer support (SOS: Heads Up)

The SOS: Heads Up

- Heads-Up is a referral mechanism which recognises that sometimes it is difficult to reach out for support during the initial stages of a police career.
- The referral process is checked weekly using the weekly meetings of the headquarters professional development unit. This feeds into the SOPF which is led by the two PDU inspectors
- The PDU SOPF is a structure of weekly and monthly meetings where student workload and academic commitment alongside other factors that impact student wellbeing
- Sergeant weekly meeting – SOS is a set agenda item regarding student welfare and identifying officers of concern to allow support to be put in place. Support can include removal from frontline duties to work in the PDU with support from sergeants and tutors to reduce workloads and offer practical advice and support. There is also a dedicated agenda item for sergeant's workload to ensure burnout/stress red flags are identified at the earliest opportunity and to allow appropriate support and re-distribution of workloads.

Weekly PDU pace setting meetings

The SOS Head Up approach has been developed providing an anonymous referral system for student officers to identify anyone who is struggling so that appropriate support can be put in place.

Weekly reviews of student officers to manage wellbeing and development are used to highlight any student officers referred as part of the SOS Heads Up referral scheme. Additionally, in the weekly PDU meetings the workload of the student officer, the PDU tutors and the PDU sergeants is examined to ensure that the workload is not disproportionate amongst officers and tutors.

The PDU sergeant, learning manager, PDU central training delivery staff including crime and specialist trainers, HEI lecturing staff, HEI workplace co-ordinator, HEI senior lecturer in charge of co-ordination, area PDU Inspector if available, first aid, taser manager, personal safety training, taser staff attend the Teams meeting.

Objectives:

- to ensure the sharing of information about classrooms and trainer or lecturer allocation to lessons is appropriate
- to ensure the provision of adequate oversight by first line managers within the LDC Training Team (PDU/Crime/PPST)
- to ensure the provision of workload oversight of attending probationary constables to courses and training by those delivering the lessons
- to share information about the safeguarding and wellbeing of officers and staff attending programmes is shared effectively

The maintenance of the student officer dashboard is undertaken by the forces performance unit who collate and use PowerBI for the data. The approach considered and included the use of fair passport flagging for colleagues with reasonable adjustments and neurodiversity.

Overall impact

- The intervention has seen a decline in the rate of intended or actual resignations in the force. From 17 resignations (from 148 students) between March 2022 and September 2022 to 8 resignations (from 237 students) between October 2022 and March 2023.
- As of March 2023, 8 out of 237 student officers were carrying more than 15 crimes, in comparison to 36 out of 148 student officers in 2022.
- There has been some decline in the use of occupational health services for the purposes of issues around workload management.
- There is a better partnership between the police and high educational institutions delivering PEQF and this is assessed against the number of complaints which had formerly been made between the students' academic journey and their journey as a police officer operationally.
- The model was presented at the evidence-based policing conference by Police Sergeant Paul Platt and since then has received recognition from forces in England and Wales but also from New Zealand Police, who contacted him to discuss the model with them.
- Student officers have stated that they now feel their voices are being heard and they have the support required to complete their course.

Learning

Cumbria took a reformed approach to the examination of regulation 13. They also changed the way they approach regulation 13 to be more considered, staged, and led by the idea of managing the

individual's wellbeing in work. Regulation 13 is the process of dispensing a student officer during a probationary period due to the officer being not fitted, physically or mentally, to perform their duties.

Additionally, there have been several sessions with managers and staff to inform how some of the changes impact staff at work. Some of the barriers identified have been around attitudes towards the PEQF's demands of officer's academic commitments and this has been balanced and overcome through information sharing at briefings.

Those who are not in learning and development or the professional development unit, had limited knowledge or understanding about what PEQF meant in terms of additional work such as assignments and deadlines, reflective learning journals, operational competency portfolio, dissertation and the number of abstractions required. The shift sergeants and inspectors priority on response are the incidents and crimes that are ongoing there and then, and not what additional degree work the student officers were facing. Through information sharing with sergeants and inspectors, we were able to break down the degree programme in terms of work required and the support that was required by all.

The weakness of this initiative was around the testing of the pilot to ensure a full evaluation. To explain further the intervention was undertaken rapidly to address student issues and this did not allow for a fully considered methodology on the approach.

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