

Stay interviews for staff and officer retention

GMP created a physiological safe space to conduct “stay interviews” by independent officers with similar experiences, designed to target and retain officers who are considering leaving policing.

First published

20 May 2025

Key details

Stage of practice	Untested
Purpose	Organisational
Topic	Leadership, development and learning Wellbeing
Organisation	Greater Manchester Police
HMICFRS report	PEEL 2023–25 Police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy: An inspection of Greater Manchester Police
Contact	Shaun Hunter
Email address	shaun.hunter@gmp.police.uk
Region	North West
Partners	Police
Stage of implementation	The practice is implemented.

Key details

Start date	September 2022
Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	Workforce

Aim

A stay interview is conducted to:

- better understand the reason why members of the workforce are considering leaving the force
- understand the reasons for leaving and if it relates to their protected characteristics
- enable comparison with their rank and/or length of service and place within the organisation
- meet the Home Office's target for the uplift programme

The longer term aim is to provide targeted intervention to prevent common reasons for leaving and create a better work environment for the whole workforce.

Intended outcome

The intended outcomes of stay interviews are to:

- improve the retention of the whole workforce
- improve the workforce's morale and wellbeing
- enable a reduction in recruitment, training, and equipping costs

Description

Greater Manchester Police (GMP) recognised that student retention was decreasing and mid-service officers either resigning or transferring from the service was increasing. During exit interviews there was nowhere for officers to discuss why they were leaving in a psychological safe space with an independent person.

Designing stay interviews

A roadmap was created outlining how officers and staff can request for a stay interview identifying the following:

- officers and staff who are eligible
- issues disclosed in the interview and check for any breaches of the code of ethics.

Stay interviews can be conducted in person, over the telephone or on a Teams call. The interviews usually last for 60 minutes but can be much longer or shorter depending on the experiences of the officer and how much they want to disclose. The interview begins with the individual being asked structured question such as their name, role and length of service. The interview then progresses to open questions from the interviewer such as:

- why do you want to leave?
- what specifically is making you unhappy in the role?

The interviews take place in the occupational health services building to ensure confidentiality.

GMP means test cases by tracking participants at one, three, six and 12 months to check if they have remained in force. The stay team also record diversity equality and inclusion (DEI) data from participants who have shared their personal characteristics that they had not previously disclosed to the force. The team can then provide bespoke feedback to units or department to support commanders with solving retention issues.

A framework has been put in place to solve issues disclosed in the interview relating to crime, misconduct, or safeguarding. The framework means cases are escalated to an appropriate authority for investigation.

Communication framework has been developed for the following internal stakeholders:

- head of human resources (HR)
- district commanders
- positive action team
- force leadership team
- director of people
- tutor units

The framework enables each HR business partner to deliver the outcomes from the stay interview. The intention is to demonstrate to the senior leadership team (SLT) the benefits of retaining officers and staff by involving other internal stakeholders.

Training

A briefing and training package was created for all frontline sergeants and inspectors. The training provides identification strategies to spot the early sign of an officer or staff member struggling and how to support them. A separate briefing has also provided to commanders and SLT on the governance process to adopt in their regions and command areas.

Communication strategy

Stay interviews are advertised by the team visiting districts and branches, internal internet articles, district wide emails and posters in stations. The advertisement includes what the interview is and how to apply.

Evaluation

In September 2023 an internal data review was conducted which looked at who was most likely to leave the force and for what reason. The following data was collected:

- diversity equality and inclusion (DEI) factors
- entry routes
- location of officer postings
- stage of officer resignation

Following the data collection the force are able to predict to a degree who was most likely to resign, where they would be based, and at what stage in their career.

A detailed breakdown of the results was presented to the force and district commanders. The force has improved its understanding and put strategies in place for officers who struggle and are thinking of resigning as a result of these findings

The evaluation revealed:

- in 30% of interviews officers and staff wanted to leave due to lack of line manager support

- in 22% of interviews workload demand was cited as a reason for leaving
- in 21% of interviews officers and staff stated dissatisfaction as a reason for their resignation

The GMP stay team has conducted over 460 stay interviews and retained 308 officers in service achieving a retention rate of nearly 70%.

Overall impact

The stay team have seen a positive cultural change within GMP. The force have worked at local levels in consultation with sergeants and inspectors checking what they have at their disposal in order to support officers and provide a psychological safe space.

Feedback from officers has been positive and detailed how it helped mental health. Officers with children have stated their work-life balance as both parent and officer improved. They were supported with a flexible working plan and a role in the force crime management unit (FCMU) that allowed working from home (WFH) at agreed periods during their weekly shifts.

Learning

- Introducing positive cultural change is essential. The force has worked to change sink or swim mentality through the provision of workshops for all sergeants and inspectors and established strong relationships with HR and SLT.
- It is important to establish a positive relationship with the SLT, and then work through the ranks. Officers need to understand that being supportive and empathetic is just as important as addressing the crime queue.
- Recruiting the correct staff to conduct stay interviews is critical to the success of the initiative. Shared experiences with the interviewee is key to them feeling confident with the interview process for them to open and share their problems, only then could positive intervention be taken to tackle the source of the retention issue.
- GMP has hosted two national conferences on retention attended by policing forces, military, and law enforcement agencies. Knowledge sharing by the force at these conferences have been positively received and pivotal in tackling the wider National policing retention issues.

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.