

Workplace Culture by DESIGN

Lynchpin Solutions supported Lincolnshire Police developing workplace culture through effective engagement and interventions across the organisation.

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Key details

Does it work?	Untested – new or innovative
Focus	Organisational
Topic	Diversity and inclusion Ethics and values Leadership, development and learning
Organisation	Lincolnshire Police
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Region	East Midlands
Partners	Police Private sector
Stage of practice	The practice is implemented.
Start date	October 2020
Completion date	March 2024

Key details

Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	Adults Disability LGBT+ Workforce

Aim

The aim of the intervention is to develop a positive workplace culture encouraging all officers and staff to be involved.

Intended outcome

The intended outcomes are as follows:

- improve workplace culture
- improve workforce morale
- improve job satisfaction
- reduce officer and staff turnover

Description

The police force consulted with Lynchpin Solutions and implemented the following six steps:

Step 1: Define

Lynchpin Solutions and Lincolnshire Police conducted a survey across the force, asking the following questions:

- what do you think are the critical cultural characteristics?
- what are the tangible positive habits that Lincolnshire Police would need to focus on?
- what factors need to be managed and embedded to ensure success?

After the survey was conducted, the analysis revealed five cultural characteristics:

- people were cared for and supported
- people were valued
- an environment of trust and transparency existed
- communities and victims were central to the force's thinking
- innovation and learning is encouraged

Step 2: Explore

Once the cultural characteristics had been established, there was a need to identify the current workplace culture. The force conducted another survey, referred to as a 'culture assessment', to understand the gap between the current culture and where the force aspired to be. This assessment provided both qualitative and quantitative data which was used to identify the following themes:

- consistency (or lack of)
- communications (at all levels)
- cynicism (a hurdle to meaningful change and improvement)
- perceived divide (between frontline, middle management and leadership)

These four themes became the focus points for developing the three-year culture strategy.

Step 3: Surface (the unspoken/unwritten rules)

Whilst there are policies and guidelines in place, the force was aware of unspoken or unwritten rules which may influence workplace culture.

Unspoken or unwritten rules are the routines or behaviours that are followed by the majority of the workforce, yet they may not align with the organisational expectations, values, or any codes of ethics or conduct. Answers in the cultural assessment conducted within force were used to understand unwritten rule perceptions in the force and bring them into the open where individual realities can be discussed.

Step 4: Integrate

Within Lincolnshire Police, integrating the cultural aspirations across the key enablers of the organisation is managed through an interlinked governance structure of boards (one of which is culture) each chaired by a member of the chief officer team. This culminates in the force strategic board chaired by the chief constable. This ensures that culture is discussed at all leadership levels when relevant to the board in question.

The first culture assessment provided the catalyst for a reflection on the suitability of the existing force values. This resulted in the number of core values being reduced from five to four and the wording being changed to be more contextually relevant.

The findings of the cultural assessment were sent to all the department in the workforce. They were encouraged to consider how they might change their ways or working to embed the findings. For example, work conducted across the force on violence against women and girls (VAWG) and diversity equality and inclusion (DEI) was aligned. Procedures in the professional standards department, training and development and performance development reviews have been updated to encourage the new workplace culture.

Step 5: Grow your advocacy

Cultural focussed discussions have taken place across the force. The aim of the discussions are to understand how culture and unspoken/unwritten rules influence behaviours and attitudes. To date, the force has trained over 120 volunteers as advocates from all ranks and levels across the force with a mix of police officers and police staff.

The one-day advocacy training covers:

- understanding culture in practical terms
- sub-cultures and micro behaviours
- raising awareness of unspoken/unwritten rules
- facilitating cultural conversations in the workplace with peers

Advocates acted as knowledgeable cultural champions in their teams and contribute to the force cultural working group which is chaired by a superintendent. The group is responsible for the delivery of improvement activities as identified by the culture board and to departmental and command leaders.

Step 6: Normalise

All the governance arrangements are being used to implement an improved workplace culture.

For example, an internal communication strategy was put in place, to tackle a lack of perceived communication and understanding between the different departments in the force. A planned internal communications strategy was pivotal and aimed to keep the force aspirational culture at the heart of the conversation through personal insights and shared experiences that re-enforce and create new positive perceptions. This included adding staff stories from people officers and staff in different teams to the force intranet homepage and targeted communication themes each month. The unspoken/unwritten rules identified were also used to inform communications.

Other changes made following the cultural assessments included improvements in the management of performance include:

- looking at different staff recognition strategies
- reducing cynicism within the work force.

Cultural assessments are now an annual in the force. These are used analysed by advocates, and the whole force is encouraged to analyse the insights and determine whether any changes are needed.

Evaluation

Lincolnshire Police is evaluating the impacts of the intervention through multiple methods.

Internally, the force utilises the following methods:

- annual internal culture assessment
- a separate engagement survey
- elements of the annual Police Federation Pay and Morale surveys
- comments noted during His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) assessments as conducted.

Internally, the culture assessment continually seeks to gather workforce perceptions about behaviours linked to the previously identified critical cultural characteristics and tangible habits.

The annual police federation pay and morale survey classifies where Lincolnshire Police rank against other forces with regard to:

- proportion of respondents saying their morale is low or very low
- proportion of respondents who intend to leave the police service
- proportion of respondents who would recommend policing to others
- proportion of respondents what are being fairly treated

According to the evaluation the intervention appears to have a positive impact.

Overall impact

Below are the results of the federations' pay and morale surveys during the three-year period 2021 - 2023. They will now be measured at each subsequent annual survey. The overall impact of the deployment of the 'Culture by DESIGN' approach has been seen an annual positive movement in the standing of Lincolnshire force compared to other forces:

- proportion of respondents saying their morale is low or very low: 26th Best (2021) 12th Best (2022) 2nd Best (2023)
- proportion of respondents who intend to leave the police service: 24th Best (2021) 13th Best (2022) 2nd Best (2023)
- proportion of respondents who would recommend policing to others: 12th (2021) Best 6th Best (2022) 4th Best (2023)
- proportion who are being fairly treated 18th Best (2021) 4th Best (2022) Best (2023)

The force has received positive feedback from officers and staff following the introduction of the Culture by DESIGN scheme.

In a recent HMICFRS assessment of Lincolnshire (2021/22), the reported highlighted the culture work (extract below):

'Since early 2021, Lincolnshire Police have put a strong focus on improving the culture of the force and the force has worked with an external company to help it understand the behaviours, attitudes and priorities of the workforce.'

The workforce is feeling positive about the changes they are seeing. Analysis of survey results shows an improving picture, with staff and officers saying the culture of the force has improved. This is further supported by the positive morale outcomes within the police federation national survey results, which have improved greatly over the past three years. This was also reflected within inspection activity.

In addition, the force told us the external company has trained 100 cultural advocates to promote and support cultural improvement. These advocates offer support to the workforce by working with colleagues, peers and managers to help put the importance of culture at the heart of the organisation. Advocates explore and uncover the things that happen 'beneath the surface', that are out of sight but affect what people see, hear and feel about their working environment.'

These improvements correlate with the five intended outcomes outlined at the beginning of the process.

Learning

The approach has to be deployed recognising, and factoring in, the sub cultures that exist within the force based on geography, role and demographics. Culture cannot be a one size fits all approach. The advocates provide direct links to their peers and colleagues within any given team, department, command or geographical area. Advocates, who are ideally volunteers for this and not simply instructed to take on this work, must also form part of the leadership, management and working groups.

For the purpose of force ownership and to negate cynicism, resistance and to avoid potential positive bias by leadership, the 'Culture by DESIGN' approach ideally should be deployed and conducted completely by force personnel at every level. This should be done with the committed support of the senior leadership. Other than oversight from an external perspective, methodology and training interventions conducted, partnership arrangements worked very well for Lincolnshire with Lynchpin Solutions. Their role as 'critical friend' added value and opinions that were visible to those within the force as un-biased with no hidden agendas.

The Culture by DESIGN approach was easy to implement in the Lincolnshire. However, changing workforce culture is not something that happens quickly and requires continual management. Force leadership was prepared to see improvements but not radical change overnight, which helped the force implements the approach and see good long-term results.

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