

Paedophile on-line investigation team (POLIT) recruitment

A bespoke recruitment process for officers joining the paedophile on-line investigation team (POLIT) team.

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10 September 2025

Key details

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| Does it work? | Untested – new or innovative |
| Focus | Organisational |
| Topic | Child sexual exploitation and abuse |
| Organisation | Dorset Police |
| HMICFRS report | PEEL 2023–25 Police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy: An inspection of Dorset Police |
| Contact | Mark Fursman |
| Email address | mark.fursman@dorset.pnn.police.uk |
| Region | South East |
| Partners | Police |
| Stage of practice | The practice is implemented. |

Key details

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| Start date | June 2024 |
| Scale of initiative | Local |
| Target group | Workforce |

Aim

The aim of the POLIT recruitment process is to:

- recruit and retain officers and members of police staff into the team
- ensure officers understand the sensitivity of work
- monitor newly recruited officers' wellbeing when they are exposed to child sexual abuse material (CSAM)

Intended outcome

The intended outcomes of the POLIT recruitment process are to:

- improve staffing levels
- improve the retention of officers and staff
- reduce the number of staff placed on restricted duties due to the challenging nature of the POLIT work
- reduce the workload of staff and officers

Description

The POLIT recruitment process was implemented due to several vacancies becoming available because of several officers and police staff leaving due to the impact of being exposed to CSAM. The recruitment process was designed by consulting the POLIT team, Human Resources (HR), wellbeing, and an independent counsellor.

The lead inspector and detective inspector manage the competency and value framework (CVF) application. Applicants are asked to fill out an application form and a welfare questionnaire which is then submitted to HR. Successful candidates then complete POLIT training, with the results assessed by the inspector and HR.

The recruitment process is as follows:

- Stage one – individuals applying for roles within the POLIT team complete a health monitoring questionnaire which is managed by welfare officers. Individuals will also need to evidence competencies from the CVF. The highest scoring candidate(s) are then identified and progressed to stage two. If two posts are available, then only two officers are selected for stage two to minimise the impact on applicants and the cost of the independent counsellor of stage three.
- Stage two – successful candidate(s) from stage one are invited to POLIT recruitment sessions to undertake graded training by the force's child abuse image database (CAID) image trainers.
- Stage three – the applicant(s), following the grading process, attend an appointment with the force's independent councillor to make sure there are no triggers or issues likely to occur due to the sensitive nature and exposure of the work.
- Stage four – upon receipt of passing the grading training and a positive report by independent councillor, the candidate is then offered a role in POLIT. This process ensures that the sensitive work is less likely to adversely affect the applicant(s) and allows the individual to understand the work involved and the sensitivity and nature of the POLIT. It also supports the force by making sure that they place the right personnel, both committed and resilient into the role.

There are no costs to the initiative aside from the £60 to hire an independent counsellor for each session.

Overall impact

As a result, the POLIT has become more productive and efficient, better able to meet the ongoing demands while maintaining the well-being of staff. The retention and reduction in staff sickness has outweighed the additional costs of the independent health monitoring cost.

The impact has seen a more resilient workforce to the sensitive nature and exposure of material within the role in POLIT.

This recruitment process has seen a decrease in staff sickness, creating greater efficiency to manage the demand placed upon the team. It has also seen a reduction in turnover of staff, ensuring increased experience and knowledge is retained within the team.

A total of 225 days were lost through staff sickness in 2022, and 171 days in 2023. In 2024 since implementation of this updated recruitment process, this reduced to 43 days.

Learning

The only challenge was the cost to the force for the health monitoring appointments. The initial barrier came from welfare who oversee the budget for the independent councillor. Welfare have now seen the benefits of the additional cost to the force.

There were no barriers or challenges from HR or Recruitment. HR wanted reassurance around the impartiality of the process. The process is explained within the advert to ensure that applicants applying are fully aware of the expectations placed upon them. HR being part of and having observed the process raised no objections.

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