

Financial awareness session for senior leaders

Financial awareness sessions were created by Northumbria Police to enhance the budget management skills of senior leaders.

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Key details

Does it work?	Untested – new or innovative
Focus	Organisational
Topic	Leadership, development and learning
Organisation	Northumbria Police
HMICFRS report	PEEL 2023–25 Police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy: An inspection of Northumbria Police
Contact	Sarah Goodman
Email address	sarah.goodman@northumbria.police.uk
Region	North East
Partners	Police
Stage of practice	The practice is implemented.

Key details

Start date	June 2018
Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	Workforce

Aim

The aim of the financial awareness training is to:

- enhance financial acumen among senior and aspiring leaders, equipping them with budget management skills and a deeper understanding of budget interdependencies
- provide an insight into funding distribution and strategic priorities, empowering leaders to make informed decisions that drive operational delivery

Intended outcome

The intended outcomes of the financial awareness training are to:

- improve senior leaders understanding of managing finances, personnel, and materials
- emphasise the importance of commercial acumen in balancing competing demands and delivering efficiencies within budget
- improve the force's efficiency planning approach, by ensuring that senior leaders have the financial acumen needed to drive strategic priorities forward

Description

Initially, a draft presentation was developed by Northumbria Police's senior accountants and finance leads. The presentation was delivered to the head of finance and chief financial officer. In recent years, the training has been aligned to the force's leadership development training. Discussions were held with the People Development department to determine the level of

information to deliver to delegates and the training was developed internally by the finance department.

The chief financial officer and senior members of the finance department deliver two-hour face-to-face sessions to various workforce groups. The session is not just for officers and staff responsible for budgets; it is available to those looking to develop/progress in the organisation. The content of the sessions has been designed to meet the specific needs of each group, covering short-term budget considerations and medium-term financial strategy. The contents of the session include:

- ice breaker finance awareness quiz
- force funding overview
- how budgets are divided and what they are spent on
- annual financial cycle and financial planning
- overview of current revenue and capital budgets
- financial concepts and considerations
- future plans and priorities

The interactive presentations assess the delegates' understanding of the force's funding and budgets. This enables the trainers to gauge their final competency and adjust the delivery style and content accordingly.

The session is included in the force's leadership development course and has been rolled out as mandatory annual continued professional development (CPD) to all heads of department and their senior leadership team. This ensures any moves across departments or changes in leadership will receive an input and retain the understanding needed to deliver at that level. Additional sessions are arranged for delegates who are unable to attend.

The finance department deliver the sessions to any teams who put in a request. Newly appointed assistant chief constables and chief superintendents are offered the session when they take on a new portfolio area as a refresher on strategic finance.

The sessions are delivered internally and there is no additional cost to the plan or deliver the training.

Overall impact

This initiative has not been formally evaluated. Northumbria Police do track and report on the delivery of the cashable efficiencies. These are reported to the strategic resourcing board to provide an overview of any variance against the original plans, such as overspending or proposals that can no longer be delivered.

There has been a greater understanding of financial issues by senior leaders, and this has been reflected in their decisions on budgets and the availability of funding. The force has identified significant cashable savings across departments and have also seen an improvement in the quality of business cases. Positive feedback has been received from delegates who have commented on not being previously aware of the difference between capital and revenue spend, and the impact capital has on revenue funds.

As a result, the force executive team have asked for a mandatory annual session with all heads of department and their senior leadership team.

Learning

As the initiative rolled out, it became clear that finance information needed to be tailored to specific organisational levels. Feedback from the initial sessions highlighted that the content was too generic. Therefore, the content was reviewed and redesigned to focus on aspects such as:

- budget management
- decision-making
- business case submissions:
 - revenue
 - investments
 - return on investments

This is a relatively simple initiative to implement if you have the buy-in from chief officers and heads of department. Initially this training was more informal and was not mandatory. However when it was aligned to the leadership development training, it demonstrated the importance of the sessions which have since become mandatory annual sessions for department leads.

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