

Evaluation of the neighbourhood policing programme (NPP) career pathway pilot

Executive summary of the neighbourhood policing programme (NPP) career pathway pilot evaluation report

4 mins read

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Background

Changes in crime patterns, technology and expectations show that our communities are evolving. These changes mean that policing – in particular, neighbourhood policing – needs to adapt to meet these complex new challenges.

Police officers and police community support officers (PCSOs) who work in neighbourhood teams play a crucial role in keeping communities safe. They are the voice of the community within wider policing and are critical in making the places where they live and work better.

The [Neighbourhood policing evidence review](#) tells us that when delivered effectively, community-based approaches can [improve public confidence](#) and trust in the police. Yet, in recent years, the focus on neighbourhood policing has dwindled. At the same time, trust and public confidence in the police service have dropped to some of their lowest levels. Meanwhile, a study by the National Police Chiefs' Council found that many neighbourhood officers believe they lack the skills and confidence to perform their roles effectively.

The government announced its [Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee](#) in December 2024. Alongside a new framework to measure performance, the guarantee aims to ensure that every community benefits from having neighbourhood police officers trained to consistent, high standards.

A first for neighbourhood policing

The College of Policing has developed a new neighbourhood policing programme (NPP) career pathway. This sits at the heart of delivering our mission of trusted and effective policing that cuts crime and keeps people safe.

It is the first national training developed for this area of policing and establishes neighbourhood policing as a recognised specialism, similar to firearms or investigations. It provides evidence-based training for officers and staff, and aims to equip them with the specialist knowledge and skills they need to:

- make communities safer
- prevent crime and anti-social behaviour
- solve local problems
- build and improve relationships with communities

Piloting the training

We piloted the first three modules of our [new evidence-based training for neighbourhood policing](#) in 11 forces across England and Wales from June 2024 to May 2025. The trials aimed to ensure that the training provides officers and staff with the skills, knowledge and support they need to deliver consistent, high-quality neighbourhood policing. We also sought feedback to identify and make improvements to the training, before beginning a [national rollout to all forces in June 2025](#).

The pilot introduced new evidence-based learning that covers:

- community engagement
- problem solving
- tackling anti-social behaviour (ASB)

These three modules have been delivered through both online and classroom learning for all neighbourhood officers and staff, with additional classroom learning for sergeants and inspectors.

Research method

The evaluation aimed to find out whether the new learning increased knowledge and skills, how the programme was implemented and how it was perceived by those taking part.

The evaluation involved:

- surveys with learners at three points – on the first and last days of classroom learning, and again two months after

- surveys with supervisors at the end of their classroom learning
- interviews with learners, trainers and senior leaders in selected pilot forces
- analysis of online learning assessment data

Findings

Improvements in self-reported knowledge and skills

Learners reported significant improvements in their knowledge and skills across all three modules:

- community engagement
- problem solving
- ASB

These improvements were often large and were usually maintained two months after training. All ranks and lengths of service saw benefits, though inspectors showed slightly less improvement.

Positive attitudes towards neighbourhood policing

After completing the training, respondents were more positive about working in neighbourhood policing, and this sentiment was maintained over time. The biggest improvements were seen among PCSOs, constables and those with 2 to 5 years of experience.

Many interviewees spoke enthusiastically about their roles, though some senior officers noted that neighbourhood policing was not always prioritised and faced resourcing constraints.

Positive feedback about the learning with suggested improvements

Online learning led to higher assessment scores and was seen as relevant, though some found it time-consuming. Classroom learning was rated highly, especially when delivered by trainers with neighbourhood policing experience or when a subject matter expert was present.

Learners felt that the training was more suited to those new in role and suggested that it could be made more challenging and less repetitive.

Implementation challenges

Delivering the programme required significant staffing and resources, and the pace of delivery was a challenge for some forces. Abstraction – where officers are pulled away from their core role to cover unexpected or urgent duties elsewhere – was a concern for both attending training and applying learning in practice.

Portfolio assessment created new demands, which forces were managing by using dedicated assessors or by providing training to supervisors.

Conclusion and implications

The evaluation found that the NPP pilot led to clear improvements in self-reported knowledge, skills and attitudes among officers and staff.

The programme was well received, especially the classroom learning, and is seen as a positive step towards professionalising and standardising neighbourhood policing.

As we continue to develop the programme, we are using this – and other valuable feedback – to improve the training and to clarify guidance for delivery.

- [**Go to the full NPP career pathway pilot evaluation**](#)

Tags

Neighbourhood policing