

Operation Catalyst – improving investigation standards

The implementation of a 10 point plan to improve the standard of investigations and deliver positive victim outcomes.

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Key details

Stage of practice	Untested
Purpose	Organisational
Topic	Investigation
Organisation	Nottinghamshire Police
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Region	East Midlands
Partners	Police Criminal justice (includes prisons, probation services)
Stage of implementation	The practice is implemented.
Start date	April 2024
Scale of initiative	Local

Key details

Target group	General public Workforce
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Aim

The aim of Operation Catalyst is to:

- deliver on force priorities such as improving victim outcomes and developing a robust workforce
- support the workforce in their role as investigators, particularly those younger in service
- reinforce the importance of the victim code of practice (VCOP) and victim needs assessment (VNA)
- encourage the workforce to use force management systems to manage crimes and their workloads
- encourage the use of investigation plans and supervisor reviews

Intended outcome

The intended outcomes of Operation Catalyst are to:

- improve victim outcomes and safeguarding
- improve the quality of investigations by enhancing investigation plans and supervisor oversight
- improve public trust and confidence in the police

Description

In 2024 Nottinghamshire Police was placed into Engage, following the His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspection. The report highlighted that the force did not always carry out investigations promptly, and victims were not always provided with regular developments for their case. Following the force's review of the victim service assessment, a new team was created to improve the standard of investigations.

The team consisted of a detective superintendent (head of custody) and three detective chief inspectors (crime managers).

Planning Operation Catalyst

Nottinghamshire Police conducted a review to assess if the force was compliant with VCOP. The review was undertaken by several teams to ensure the force had a better understanding of compliance across all crime types.

The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) held a meeting to discuss the implementation of Operation Catalyst.

Operation Catalyst – 10 point plan

Operation Catalysts consists of the following 10 points:

The three why's:

- force priorities
- understanding vulnerability – know it, spot it and stop it
- Code of Ethics

The what – every officer and staff is an investigator

The six how's:

- using Power BI and Niche to record and monitor investigations
- understanding the VCOP and VNA
- creating initial and ongoing investigation plans
- conducting regular supervisor reviews
- managing suspects
- recording crimes and outcomes

To support the implementation of the 10 point plan, a briefing package was developed and delivered to the whole of the workforce. The in-person briefing took place during briefings over a six week period. A register and survey was completed by all attendees to ensure everyone was briefed. A SharePoint page was created to host the guidance documents and resources covered in the briefing package.

A mandatory College Learn e-learning package was also developed to inform all officers and staff about the 10 point plan and their responsibilities. The package was completed with assistance from the Learning and Development Team. Additionally, the Learning and Development Team delivered a three hour training session to every sergeant, to provide more information on the requirements of the supervisory reviews.

For initial investigations, new occurrence enquiry log (OEL) templates were designed and are located on Niche. The new templates replaced the numerous existing OEL templates. Officers are required to complete one OEL form per crime. The force's IT systems were streamlined to remove duplications, as officers were being required to complete multiple initial investigation plans when recording a crime.

Quality assurance thematic testing (QATT) was introduced in order to assess the qualitative improvements of investigations. The process of QATT is underpinned by training, guidance, moderation, standardisation and governance. Further governance meetings have been introduced to ensure that Operation Catalysts meets each of the 10 points.

Feedback loops have also been introduced. A detective sergeant will complete a Microsoft Form when receiving a handover. The contents of the form include:

- qualitative checks of OEL entries
- quality assurance thematic testing (QATT),
- data from the Power BI dashboard
- feedback from the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and governance meeting

All actions and innovations are recorded on an action tracker and discussed at Force Boards, including Gold and Silver groups.

Operation Catalyst is supported by a communication strategy which provides fortnightly updates and new guidance documents being shared via the force's intranet.

There has been no cost for the planning an implementation of Operation Catalyst.

Evaluation

An evaluation is ongoing and being led by Nottinghamshire Police. The evaluation is looking at the impact Operation Catalyst has on the quality of investigations.

A detective inspector is using QATT, Power BI, the handover feedback form and the OEL entries to determine whether there have been improvements to the quality of investigations.

Overall impact

In 2025 the force were reinspected by HMICFRS, and a further victim service assessment was conducted which identified significant improvements in the quality of investigations, victim care, suspect management and supervisory oversight.

The number of positive outcomes have increased, and the force has maintained a compliance rate of 97% for victim contact, investigation plans and supervisor reviews.

Compliance of the workforce has significantly improved, and performance is tracked using a Power BI dashboard. Operation Catalyst has received positive feedback from workforce and victims who have welcomed the improved standard of investigations.

Learning

There has been initial resistance from the workforce, who viewed Operation Catalyst as extra work. The force has encouraged buy-in by:

- delivering in-person briefings have been delivered to the workforce
- providing regular updates to the workforce
- streamlining the Operation Catalyst process
- sharing consistent messages from senior leaders

Nottinghamshire Police shared the planning and implementation process with Derbyshire Constabulary and Northamptonshire Police.

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