

HIGH PERFORMANCE POLICING

Challenges and solutions for a
service under pressure

November 2023

LEAPWISE



POLICING AT A CROSSROADS

A service under pressure

Policing's leaders today are under intense pressure, facing stretched resources alongside growing pains, increasing demand and real performance pressures, and are navigating all at the same time.

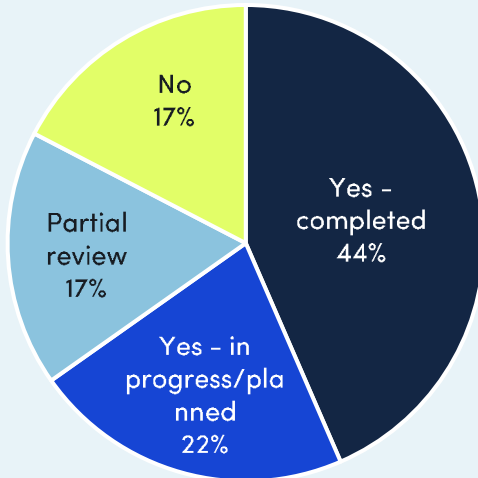
Stretched resources

Police officer numbers are at an all-time high, with 34 more officers in March 2023 than at the previous 2010 officer number peak. However, overall service strength (including PCSOs and staff) is down 1,344 and both officer numbers (4% lower per capita) and total service strength (11% lower per capita) have fallen in real terms since 2010. The spending outlook for policing is also bleak. Against an inflationary backdrop, expenditure in non-protected departments (including the Home Office) is forecast to fall in real terms under the fiscal plans of both Labour and the Conservatives.

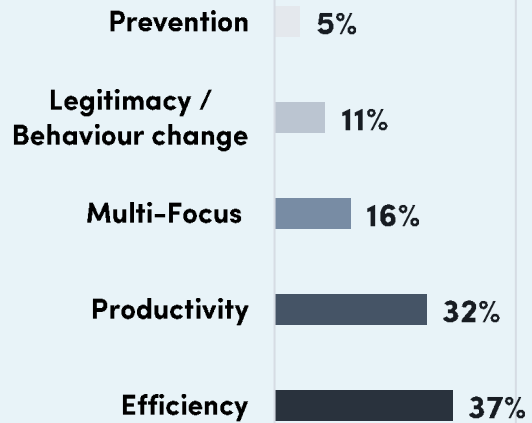
Police reserves have dwindled since the last wave of austerity in 2010, so savings initiatives are back on the agenda. Leapwise's recent survey showed four in five forces in England and Wales have conducted or are planning some form of force review – typically focused on driving efficiency or productivity. Forces must maintain officer numbers or face significant financial penalties, which means that most are seeking to make savings from staff functions and contracted spend. One perverse consequence is so-called 'reverse civilianisation': forces are putting sworn officers with the powers of arrest in roles that are currently performed by equally – or more – capable staff at lower cost. Forces will need to find ways to secure more funding nationally or from Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) or make intelligent spending reductions, which is easier said than done.

A time of change

Is your force currently undertaking or do you have plans for a force-wide review?



What is the primary focus?



Leapwise survey of HR leads across 43 police forces, N=21

Growing pains

In 2023, after the rapid recruitment drive for the Police Uplift Programme, 38% of officers have less than 5 years of service - creating two difficult jobs for leaders. The first is simply to maintain uplift. Attrition is always highest in the early years of police service and last year's mid-service resignations (at 4,575) exceeded end of service exits for the first time ever. The second job is to ensure that the talent of the new workforce is properly harnessed. This will require excellent leadership from sergeants and their staff equivalents - many of whom are newly promoted and have historically not been provided with the leadership development support merited by their influence. It will also need all new officers to have received the training, technology and daily feedback that enables them to thrive.

Growing demands

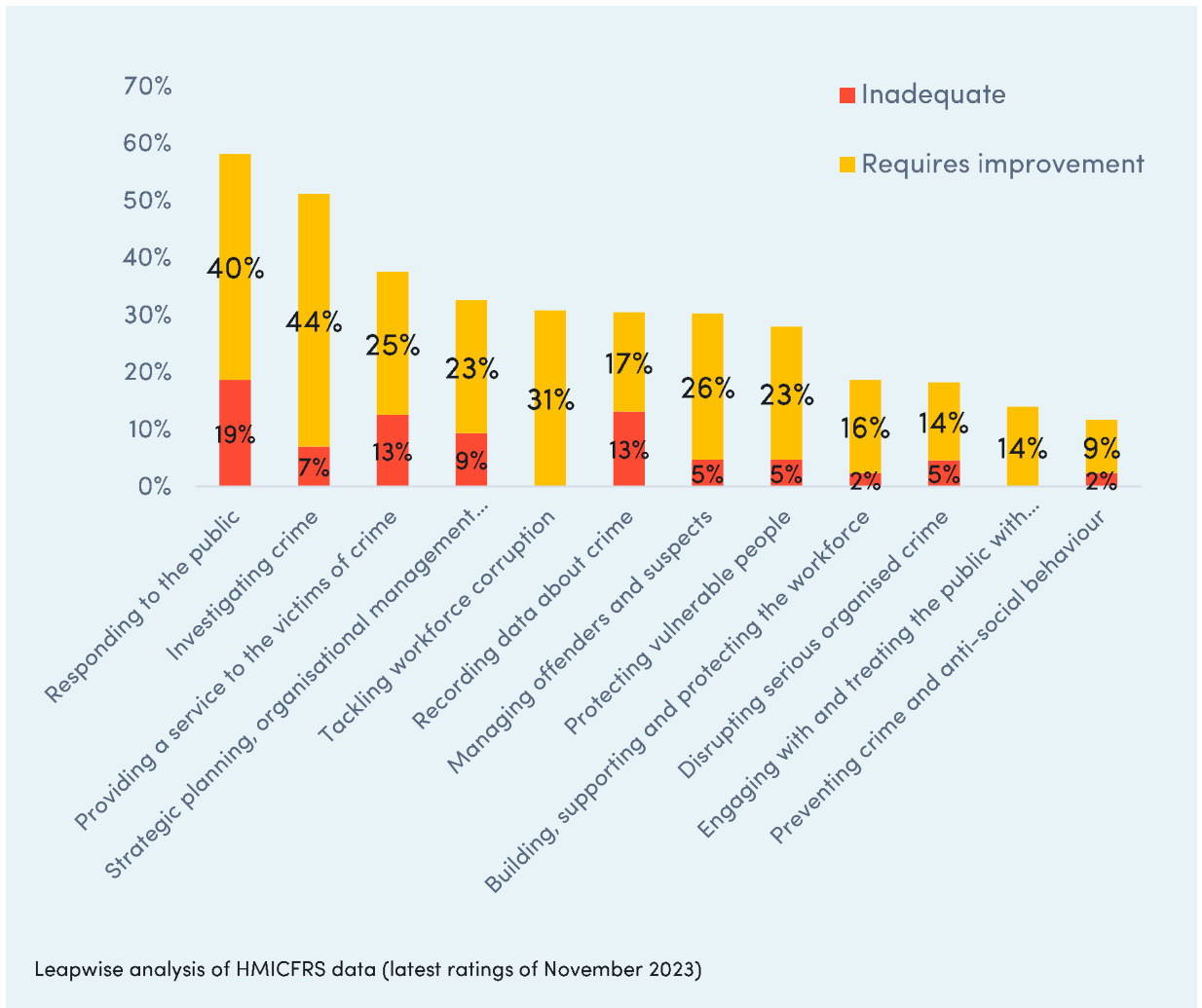
Most of the data shows that policing is facing a painful paradox. Crime - according to the most reliable sources such as victim's surveys - is generally down, but demand is up. Having until the 1990s focused overwhelmingly on crimes in the public sphere, policing is now firmly operating across three domains: public, private and virtual. Government is increasingly calling for a more thorough response to the so-called 'volume' crime of the public sphere at the same time as reporting and recording of sexual offences is dramatically increased and driving a huge, complex investigative workload. Fraud is now the crime people are most likely to experience and is rising up the public concern list.

Growing demand has left the front-door of policing creaking: public contact is now, on average, the worst rated category in HMICFRS inspections. But there is also pressure on investigation teams, who are also afflicted by a new era of backlogs. For many forces, this involves significant case backlogs in investigations as well as historic investigations. It means a backlog in system upgrades that are needed but have not been funded. And it means working with a criminal justice system with lengthy Crown Court backlogs, unmanageable probation caseloads, and overcrowded prisons.

Performance pressures

Faced with growing demands, police performance, by many measures, is not what the public would like. An increasingly activist HMICFRS has placed more forces into the Engage (special measures) process than ever before, but problems are not isolated to specific forces. Nearly two thirds of forces are judged by the inspectorate to be sub-par in responding to the public and more than half are underperforming on crime investigation (see graph below). Many forces are caught between a raft of competing pressures from the Home Office, PCCs and the Inspectorate, and under an intense media microscope.

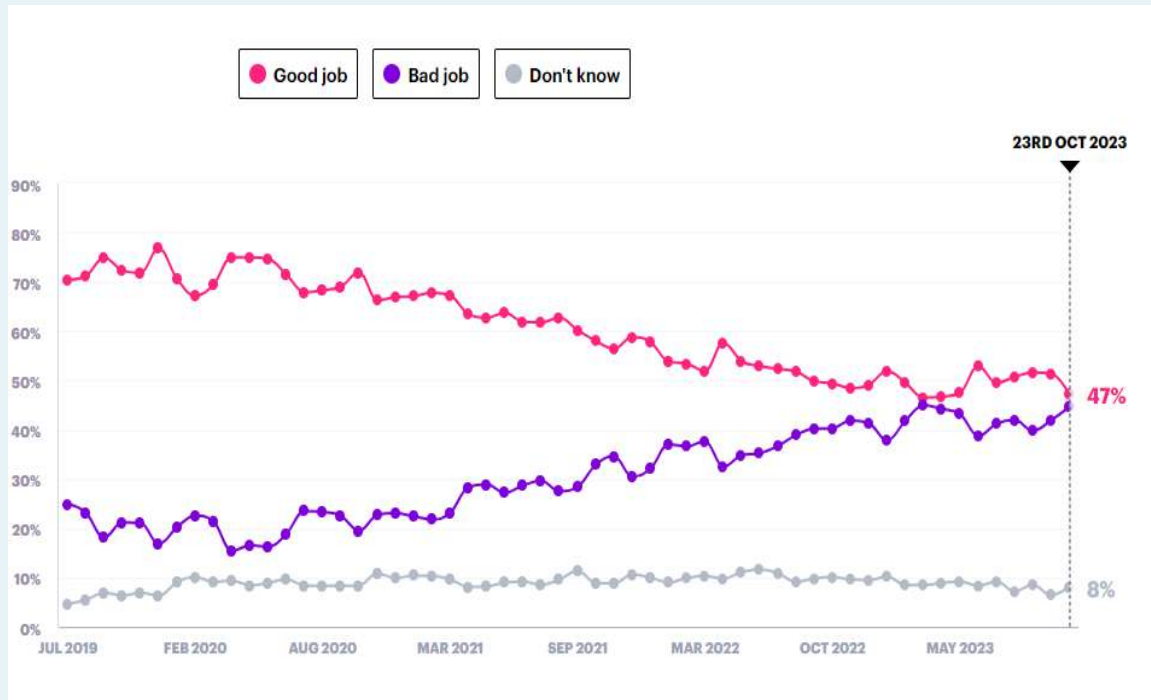
% of forces receiving adverse inspections in key areas



A crisis of confidence

There is no escaping the crisis of public confidence in policing, and specifically in certain forces. This stems from the high-profile cases of criminal behaviour from specific officers, but also a broader mistrust and sense that police performance and protection can no longer be taken for granted by society. Black British communities have long had lower trust than other groups and this acute challenge remains, but the problem is now generalised. As of September 2023, [YouGov reports](#) that 42% say the police are doing a bad job, up from 2019; 51% say doing a good job, down from over 70% 4 years ago.

Are the police doing a good job?



While these are common challenges, each area faces a unique set of circumstances. The vagaries of the funding formula and the strength of local tax bases have left specific forces in a much more precarious financial position. Demand profiles and PCC priorities vary across geographies – for example, with tourist hotspots facing huge surges in summer demand. There are common problems, but one-size-fits all solutions are rarely appropriate.

New opportunities

It is tempting to think that in face of these challenges policing will spend the next five years simply 'coping'. But forces across the country are already showing it is possible to be ambitious and seize the opportunities to improve performance and confidence in policing.

There are, after all, significant opportunities - though new thinking will be required.

A new workforce

Many forces are using Uplift officers to build back vital public-facing policing functions. The clock is ticking but this new workforce provides a once in a generation opportunity to build the inclusive high-performance culture most forces are seeking. Forces like Avon and Somerset are implementing radically revised training for first line leaders to support the new workforce, building on cross-force work on inclusive leadership over a number of years.

Meanwhile, a new 'bot' workforce is slowly building: robotic process automation is already reducing the workload of firearms licensing officers (in Northern Ireland), vetting teams (Avon and Somerset) and traffic teams (Essex). Again, bots must be using good data, and trained and managed well to ensure performance and address accidental bias in decision-making, but the potential to improve productivity is clear.

In our strategy work, we often highlight the importance of harnessing resources beyond policing. While public sector partners are all feeling the fiscal squeeze, better cross-agency co-ordination and problem solving plays a huge role in improving outcomes for victims. And there remains huge potential for the private sector, charities and communities themselves to contribute to public safety. The UK spends around £4-£9bn on the private security sector, there are over [200,000](#) private security guards in the UK and many billions are spent each year on improving product security, improving public spaces and strengthening safeguarding of vulnerable groups.

Prevention and demand management

While demand on policing is high, forces are mobilising to better manage demand in a range of ways. This includes ensuring demands that are better dealt with by other agencies are dealt with accordingly, as in the Right Care Right Person initiative pioneered by Humberside Police. It includes effective 'channel shift' to ensure that emergency response is reserved for urgent issues. But it also includes effective crime prevention, with forces such as Hertfordshire and Merseyside basing their strategies and plans increasingly around effort to prevent crime and harm. There is growing evidence on 'What Works', from initiatives such as Open University Centre for Policing Research and Learning and the College of Policing's catalogue of promising practice. These range from Durham's recent 'WIDE' burglary prevention programme through to more general hotspot policing initiatives – and resourcing 'what works' will prevent victimisation and allow the victims who remain to receive a better service.

New insights on performance

Projects such as Operation Soteria (focused on better policing responses to Rape and Serious Sexual Offences) are building an exceptional bank of insights and effective practice. Rapid Video Response, originating in Kent but increasingly utilised across the country, are driving both a more efficient and effective response services. And a range of techniques are being used to free up officer time – from process redesign, to deployment of more user-friendly technologies. With fields such as behavioural science providing ways of understanding what makes the workforce and the public tick, forces can learn from effective practices across the sector and far beyond.



Collaboration and solutions at scale

The national policing landscape is, in our view, fragmented and under-powered. But the arrival of a new parliament by February 2025 at the latest offers a generational opportunity to build national capabilities that can solve problems more efficiently and effectively. It is bizarre that most forces have their own vetting teams, each involved in fractionally different, mostly manual vetting processes, when vetting could easily be standardised, semi-automated and delivered at scale nationally or regionally. Mature collaborations such as that between Norfolk and Suffolk Police show the potential to improve back-office efficiency without national level work. So there is opportunity even without a significant shift in national structures and governance.



THE IMPORTANCE OF BUILDING HIGH PERFORMANCE ORGANISATIONS

At Leapwise, we are passionate about identifying effective ways to prevent crime, deliver justice and build the confidence of victims and communities. A clear-sighted focus on these core policing goals is vital to high performance.

But our view is that policing leaders must focus equally relentlessly on the question of how to create high performance organisations. Creating endless lists of all the things that policing could and should do is relatively easy. Better solutions to specific problems are often known or at least relatively easily discoverable with careful thought and analysis. With unlimited resources, we know that policing could deliver much better outcomes and services.

The greater challenge is therefore how to create an organisation capable of:

- Navigating a sea of competing demands and pressures
- Identifying which new solutions to prioritise with limited resources
- Building operating models – systems, processes, structures, systems and routines – that support high performance and continuous improvement across the organisation
- Managing both operational and reputational risk proportionately

At the highest levels, policing leaders need to be focused on this challenge: the job of effectively leading and managing their organisation in a sensitive, high risk operational environment with limited resources.

ROUTES TO PROGRESS

Building high performance

The best police forces achieve true strategic clarity: they know ‘what they want to be the best at’ and what level of service is achievable with available resources. They make tough choices and have concrete plans, based on evidence, for how they will improve services within budget constraints – focusing activity and investments where they will achieve most for the public.

The best forces can get things done fast, but also make them stick. Initiatives are relatively easy to kick-off but if they aren’t designed intelligently and sustained, neither the workforce or the public will notice the difference. Leaders in policing today need to be able to manage complex changes, motivating a changing workforce and enabling their people to perform.

The best forces can provide assurance: to political leaders, the inspectorate and to the public. They know – based on data and a strong connection to lived experience – when their plans are robust, and understand which changes are working and which are not. And they can evidence and communicate the impact they are having with public funds.

Our services are all focused on these critical building blocks of high performance: helping forces to aim for, accelerate and assure their success.



Our service areas

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1. Strategy, Planning and Investment

Strategy is about both goal setting and finding breakthrough insights that allow you to outperform. And planning is about ensuring you can translate this intent and insight into reality. Too often we see forces either list out a few high-level goals (without specific objectives) and call this a 'strategy'; or (perhaps worse) a laundry list of aspirations and projects, with little insight on whether they are deliverable and little certainty about the performance changes that will result.

1.1 Our point of view

Not all decisions are equal. Invest time and effort on the big decisions about goals, budget allocation, major projects and culture-setting initiatives.

Effective policing strategy includes a focus on prevention and demand management: this is the best way to free up resources to improve service standards across the board.

Where savings of more than five percent of budgets are required, resist the easy options of salami slicing and 'vacancy management'. Aim higher than required on savings – so you can reinvest in process improvement, automation and critical capabilities that will allow sustained and improved performance.

Strategy is a collective activity. Ensure strategic intent is understood and visibly supported by key individuals, or risk seeing changes morph and dilute through the organisation.



1.2 How we can help

We help forces agree objectives, plan resources and set up for transformation through:

Strategy Away Days

For chief officer groups, senior leadership teams and Office of Police and Crime Commissioner teams, we design away days to make tangible progress on your strategic agenda and bring data and external perspectives into your conversation to support better decisions. These can be preceded by an independent, data-driven diagnostic of force strengths and improvement opportunities.

Workforce Demand and Capacity Modelling

We forecast the demands facing your organisation, then assess your ability to achieve target performance across key functions based on your existing resourcing plans and ways of working. This allows informed, evidence-based budget decisions – minimising gaming – and creates a strong, evidence-based analysis for any PCC investment case.

Efficiency identification

We use a range of tools to identify potential efficiencies through prevention, demand management, process redesign, digital transformation, automation and collaboration. We do not do work that is focused blindly on savings: any savings we identify together will include estimates on potential performance impacts or risks involved in realisation.

Business Case and Impact Analysis

Big decisions merit genuine rigour. Our business cases have attracted millions (or more) pounds of public investment to support better services across the criminal justice system. And we're proud to be advising the Home Office and others on business case simplification and good practice for the sector.

Prevention and Demand Management

We are passionate about prevention, but believe a 'hard-edged' approach is required to assessing costs and benefits and embedding changes across the organisation.



PDS strategic delivery plan

"It was clearly evident from the off, that the team understood policing but using their skills and techniques were able to offer credible, constructive challenge and enable a greater range of thought leadership in tackling complex strategic issues."

ALEX BOWEN, CHIEF DDAT OFFICER, POLICE DIGITAL SERVICE

Surrey Police senior leadership away day

"Leapwise bring energy, enthusiasm and focus to helping us develop our long-term plans."

CC GAVIN STEPHENS, SURREY POLICE (NOW NPCC CHAIR)

1.3 Where we have had success

- We helped a force to develop a clear strategic plan, then accelerated progress against priority initiatives – contributing to their exit from 'Engaged' status.
- We worked with Hertfordshire Police to embed their Prevention First strategy, developing a roadmap for change and new approaches to measuring prevention of crime and waste.
- We helped a force understand the % of demand they could deal with adequately across their key departments, and identified ways to improve performance through a range of long and short-term change projects.

2. Leadership and Organisation Development

Policing faces urgent leadership challenges at all levels. Sergeants and staff equivalents are on average newer in post than previously and managing much more junior teams who require additional guidance. These leaders are also at the frontline of driving culture change and inclusion across policing – not easy in the face of daily performance pressures, but ultimately a key part of creating high performance. Senior leaders are equally stretched, providing both operational and organisational leadership to forces that are in many ways more complex and sophisticated than ever before.

2.1 Our point of view

Police forces have to move beyond generic ‘good leadership’ statements and define the critical leadership behaviours that will drive organisational success, how they vary for different levels of the organisation and how they will measure leadership effectiveness.

Leadership at all levels of the organization is connected – it is hard to instil new norms and behaviours in first line leaders if senior leaders are not exhibiting these behaviours.

Training alone is not enough. It is vital to build the daily routines and working practices that support effective leadership – be that by working out how to do 1-to-1s in a busy response environment, ensuring debriefs and other learning moments are actually carried out, or ensuring promotion is tied to leaders’ demonstrated skill in leading their teams.

2.2 How we can help

We don’t provide operational training, instead focusing on how to drive high performance through better leadership and organisational development. We help by:

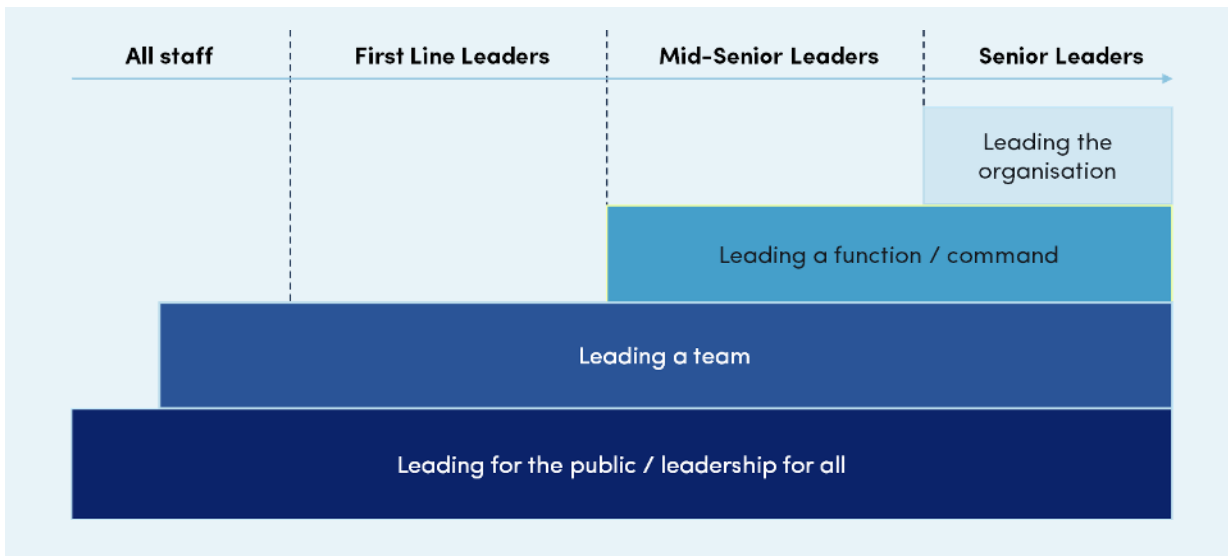
Defining Target Leadership Models, we build clear frameworks to articulate the competencies and behaviours you want to see in the organisation, using simple language and with examples of what good looks like. These make clear the very different leadership and management skills required by different levels of the organisation (see figure overleaf).

Developing leadership development curricula, we design bespoke training programmes to support leaders, favouring blended learning models that mix in person, on-demand and self-serve training and support.



Amber Mullins
Leapwise Senior Manager

“We can’t just load on the pressure and expect leaders to deliver results. We need to equip leaders properly to fulfil their potential – motivating change, shifting culture and unlocking performance”



Developing senior leaders, we provide executive leadership development to equip senior leaders with the skills they need to build a high-performance organisation – including developing strategy, running major programmes, and enabling culture change.

Workforce planning solutions, we help you understand the root causes of your recruitment, retention, wellbeing and development challenges – allowing you to plan effectively and ensure you don't face major skills and capacity gaps in the years to come.



College of Policing Support

"We made more progress than in six weeks than we might have made in six months otherwise."

RACHEL TUFFIN, DIRECTOR OF KNOWLEDGE AND INNOVATION, COLLEGE OF POLICING

PCC Induction: APCC Ignite Programme

"We selected them because of their track record in policing and public sector transformation and they more than delivered. They brought together a really fresh and engaging programme and challenged us in a good way to think outside of the box."

SUSANNAH HANCOCK, CEO ASSOCIATION OF POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONERS

2.3 Where we have had success

- Working with Avon and Somerset Police, we identified the learning needs for first line leaders, developed the business case, and co-designed the new curriculum that is being piloted to drive culture change and performance across the organisation.
- We worked with the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners to design the first ever professional development induction programme for new PCCs.
- Our chief officer away days have delivered tangible outcomes, such as new delivery roadmaps, major shifts in strategic direction, and new ways of working for leadership teams.

3. Programme Acceleration and Assurance

Policing is undergoing a range of change and transformation programmes. Managing a hefty portfolio of change alongside business as usual, and making sure that complex programmes deliver their intended benefits on time and at cost, is a challenge in any environment. In policing, this is exacerbated by often having few resources to dedicate to change and relying on seconding officers into change roles.

3.1 Our point of view

Policing is famously ready to roll up its sleeves to get work done, but when applied to major programmes this can-do attitude can create risks. Major programmes of change need careful work up-front in setting right goals, identifying the right strategic solution, and setting up the programme delivery model intelligently. It is right for a proportion of the total benefits expected to be invested in the programme up front.

We often see programmes that carry significant risk and reward being managed by senior officers alongside busy day jobs, which is only tenable with exceptionally strong support. For particularly ambitious programmes such as force reviews, there needs to be a strong grip and assurance. There are real risks of not realising benefits quickly or programmes drifting from their original purpose.

The success factors for major programmes are known – if hard to achieve! – so it is worth taking stock of what works at the start, and regularly checking these success factors are in place.



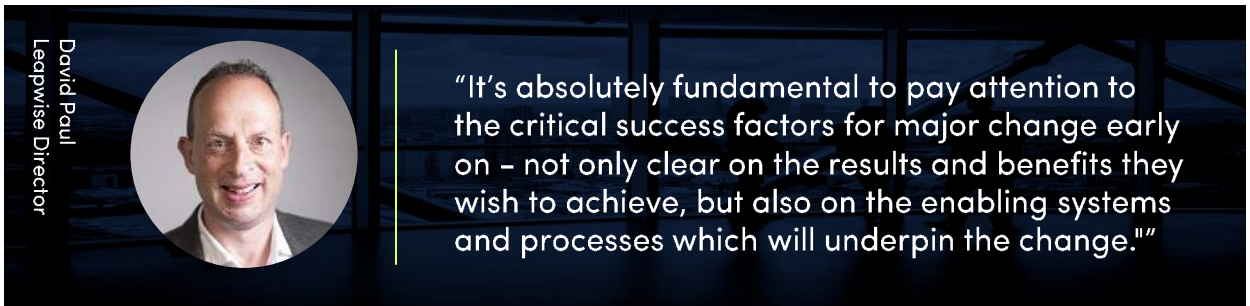
3.2 How we can help

We help programmes and change portfolios succeed through:

Change portfolio reviews, to cut through the complex change environment and make strategic choices on which change efforts to be prioritising and when, within your capacity constraints.

Programme acceleration, to get an appropriate delivery mechanism up and running, either from launch or to accelerate progress for a troubled programme already in flight.

Programme and project assurance, for senior leaders to quickly get to grip with their programmes and understand what is holding them back from reaching their full potential.



David Paul
Leapwise Director

"It's absolutely fundamental to pay attention to the critical success factors for major change early on - not only clear on the results and benefits they wish to achieve, but also on the enabling systems and processes which will underpin the change."

3.3 Where we have had success

- We supported Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service to better identify and manage benefits for a major transformation, facilitating team stock-takes, strengthening plans and creating benefits management and tracking tools.
- We rapidly assured a major force restructure programme in four weeks, providing assurance that many aspects of the programme were set up for success, and identifying clear, actionable improvement opportunities.



Home Office governance programme acceleration

"We were hugely impressed with the work of the team, who cultivated a constructive and collaborative working relationship with us. Leapwise were fully engaged with our team and were responsive to the evolving requirements of internal and external stakeholders."

KAYLEIGH CHAPMAN, HEAD OF POLICE STRATEGY AND REFORM UNIT

One HMPPS programme acceleration

"Leapwise worked alongside the programme team to achieve a clear line of sight between programme objectives and activity. What worked particularly well was the flexible and embedded approach that Leapwise took... I would look forward to working with Leapwise again."

JIM BARTON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, HMPPS CHANGE

4. Governance and Decision Making

We routinely help organisations get individual strategic choices right – but investing in the architecture and culture to do decision making well, consistently, sets an organisation apart in what it can achieve over the long run. In our view, strategic decision-making and governance processes are an essential capability for a police service facing extremely difficult choices.

Today, many police forces are making substantial investments of senior leadership time in governance processes that do not deliver the results that they need. The symptoms we often see are long meetings, data overwhelm rather than focus, and decisions characterised by a lack of collective confidence.

4.1 Our point of view

While many forces will be tempted to try to solve this by moving underperforming governance meetings around, we recommend taking a behavior-first approach. New meeting structures by themselves are rarely more effective unless underlying behaviours and capabilities have also been addressed.

We also recommend work on governance comes after work on strategy setting. Strategic clarity will allow governance work to service a clear vision and bring out particular challenges, such as missing performance or change boards, systems, processes, or capabilities, that can be addressed efficiently.



4.2 How we can help

We help you improve strategic governance and decision making through:

Independent governance reviews, which provide an evidence-based understanding of the current governance arrangements, behaviours, and investments and clear recommendations to enable both behaviour and structural change, as required.

Board Deep Dives, which focus on a particular board (for example, performance or change). We work closely with the Chair to refine the purpose, strategy, and the enabling infrastructure that allows it to perform its functions most effectively.

Partnership board acceleration, with a focus on driving effective collective action in forums where partners are choosing to collaborate and are not required to commit resources.

4.3 Where we have had success

- We worked with Hertfordshire police to strengthen two key strategic board meetings, saving £80,000 p.a. in senior time and achieving a 30+% improvement in clarity of board meeting purpose and clarity of outcomes.
- We worked with criminal justice boards of large metropolitan and mid-sized areas, to define outcomes frameworks and action plans that partners now actively support.



Hertfordshire decision making project

"We were hugely impressed with the work of the team, who cultivated a constructive and collaborative working relationship with us. Leapwise were fully engaged with our team and were responsive to the evolving requirements of internal and external stakeholders."

CC CHARLIE HALL, HERTFORDSHIRE CONSTABULARY

Kent performance board acceleration

"The Leapwise team provided a crisp and insightful analysis of how we could develop our approach to decision-making in our performance management board."

DCC TONY BLAKER, KENT POLICE

Dr Tanvi Bhaktal
Leapwise Consultant



"Evidence-based decision making is critical to navigating the complex challenges and competing priorities facing policing today. Having a strong evidence base for both the problems and potential solutions allows boards to commit resources more confidently"

5. National and Collaborated Solutions

Policing can achieve more when it works in collaboration. There are huge opportunities to better prevent crime, drive efficiency and support effectiveness through work nationally and regionally – and with public and private sector partners in criminal justice, health and beyond.

Collaborative working is often difficult, however. In a system that is often fragmented and can contain conflicting objectives and strong personalities, it can sometimes feel impossible to drive meaningful cross-system change. This can be made even harder where system leaders who are able to effect change are not close enough to the concerns at hand. We understand the interplay between national and local organisations and can act as an honest broker, finding evidence-based solutions, and supporting partners to identify and capture benefits for the public.

5.1 Our point of view



While it is tempting to rely on good personal relationships or default to ‘pointing out the flaws’ in partners to drive action, we find that the best results come from building a shared, data-informed understanding and identifying tangible areas where collaboration will drive results. Independent analysis can overcome inertia and opposing viewpoints – and this is particularly important if partners are used to challenging the underlying data or there is (often unjustified) criticism of bias in existing reports.

Data and analysis provide an objective basis for discussion. But collaboration also relies on trust and investment in individual and institutional relationships. We believe that the way to build this is by working together on real issues, but with time and space provided to understand the pressures that partners are under and why certain types of collaboration are less likely to succeed than others.

National action can be a highly efficient and effective way to drive improved policing outcomes. However, national programmes will under-deliver if there is insufficient involvement or appreciation of on-the-ground pressures – and the current national governance architecture is working against effective national action and needs to be reformed.

5.2 How we can help

Bespoke problem-solving sessions for inter-agency problems, which build shared decision making, problem solving, or resource commitment around an agreed set of facts.

Research and system analysis, to rapidly find issues, identify drivers, and spot opportunities in problem spaces that go beyond the bounds of any individual agency.

System design and improvement, to conceptualise and design 'a better way' for the system to operate, both from a research basis and through collaborative working with stakeholders.

We also work nationally and on a cross-system basis to strengthen governance, support development of system leaders, accelerate national programmes and develop strategy.



5.3 Where we have had success

- We led a successful feasibility study for an innovative new model of secure care and custody in the West Midlands region, achieving support from DfE, HMPPS, 14 local authorities and 3 OPCCs.
- We worked with the NPCC Performance Co-ordinating Committee to define their new Business Plan, and with the College of Policing on their work on Future Operating Model 2040.
- We are currently working with the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners to support decision-making for PCCs interested in taking a greater role in Fire and Rescue Services.

IMPROVING TOGETHER

You can be confident in us; we have or are working with 11 UK police forces and 5 national policing bodies. We have repeat work and/or recommendations from every client partner.

We aren't intimidated by difficult problems.

We are proud of our ability to support and craft strategic **away days**. This is a good way to get to know how we work and the value we can bring, while making progress on your leadership agenda or specific organisational challenges.

BOOK A CALL



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ADVISORY