

Increasing Accountability

Driver – Political, Economic, Social, Legal

Related Drivers – Neighbourhood Policing, Reducing Bureaucracy, Collection and Storage of Personal Information, Conservative Party Policing Reform, Productivity & Efficiency, Public Perceptions of the Police, Public Perceptions of Crime, Police Powers

Background

Much like the drivers ‘*Reducing Bureaucracy in Policing*’ and ‘*Neighbourhood Policing*’ making the police service accountable to the communities it serves has been a reoccurring theme in recent publications from local authorities, police service and independent think tanks.^{1,2,3,4,5,6}

In the case of this particular driver, accountability can be viewed from two perspectives; accountability of the police service to public (**local accountability**) and officer accountability (**professional discretion**).

It is important to note that professional discretion is discussed alongside bureaucracy in the Policing Green Paper and Flanagan Review. The suggestion from these reports is that bureaucracy (through the introduction of red tape, form filing and prescriptive processes) drives the decrease in professional discretion and effective personal accountability. In the case of this analysis bureaucracy and accountability are being presented as two separate cross cutting themes. While these themes are interrelated, the skills needed to meet the future requirements placed on the workforce by increased accountability bare highlighting on their own.

Political Context

Local accountability

The following government lead policing reforms place an emphasis on improving local accountability in the police service:

- Forces are to move away from central targets, to setting their **own individual targets** and holding themselves locally to account
- Roll-out of the Policing Pledge which allows the public to hold neighbourhood policing teams to account for tackling local priorities
- Focus on deployment to match demand will be an important element of 2010 HMIC inspections. Police authorities are to hold forces to account for this as a key part of delivering an efficient and effective service to the public.^{3,4}

Professional accountability

In the Policing Green Paper both the Government and the Police Service commit to returning discretion and judgment to police officers so they can focus on the issues that matter to local people.

Economic Context

Local accountability

The Home Office is to support the use of participatory budgeting; ensuring views of the local community are built into decision-making processes to direct the use of resources. Pilots of these **Community Safety Participatory Budgets** took place in a few forces in 2008; these in turn will inform a wider roll out in 2009.

Professional discretion

As mentioned in the [Economic Context of Reducing Bureaucracy](#), The Efficiency and Productivity Strategy for the Police Service for 2008-11, sets targets for efficiency and productivity improvements, and creates a framework for the service making better use of resources a core responsibility for all involved in policing. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) and the Audit Commission will jointly inspect the capability of the police authorities and the police forces to secure value for money. They will publish the results of the inspection yearly.

Accountability is a key factor introduced by the Chief Inspector to aid increased productivity and efficiency in the police service. Addressing these issues places a need for **increased professional discretion** and **effective accountability** at the heart of this change. Officers and staff will have to use greater professional judgement alongside the knowledge that they have the support of their force through clear and consistent standards.⁷

With increased discretion comes a greater emphasis on **active supervision**. Line managers at all levels will need the necessary skills both to support and challenge the staff they are responsible for. This is a particular skill need for sergeants where a focus is placed on managing performance and the managerial powers they have.

Legal Context

The Policing Green Paper³ (published July 2008) has paved the way for further legislation through the Policing & Crime Reduction Bill⁸ in the 2008/09 Draft Legislative Programme.

Part one of the Bill includes a number of measures on police reform including collaboration, accountability and effectiveness. As of beginning of June 2009 the Bill is due to have its second reading in the House of Lords.

Potential Skills Needs

Change management skills – to support staff with the changes taking place to limit bureaucracy

Communication skills – to engage with local communities and with fellow officers and staff

Community policing skills – to discuss and set local priorities and encourage more people to become involved in crime reduction alongside operational policing tasks

Contact management skills – ensure a consistent high quality service especially with victims and witnesses at all stages of the criminal justice process

Customer service skills – ensure a consistent high quality service

Decision making skills – in regard to using professional discretion as well as setting local priorities

Financial management skills - in the use of participatory budgets

Information sharing skills – to provide effective information to partner agencies

Joint problem-solving skills – establish effective and appropriate solutions to problems through joint working

Management and leadership skills – to support staff and challenge staff

Multi-agency working skills - to provide strategic and local management of issues

Partnership working skills – to work effectively with agencies to common goals and standards

Performance management skills – to manage performance against targets

Risk assessment skills – ensure consistent and effective resourcing and delivery of policing

Risk management skills – manage and mitigate risk

Strategic leadership skills – to provide a clear vision and sense of purpose

Supervision skills – hold others to account, in particular for sergeants

Victim and witness care skills – to make appropriate arrangements and treat victims and witnesses appropriately and sensitively

¹ [Local Government Association \(2008\) *Answering to you: Policing in the 21st century*. London: Local Government Association.](#)

² [Casey, Louise \(2008\) *Engaging Communities in Fighting Crime: A review by Louise Casey*. London: Cabinet Office.](#)

³ [Home Office \(2008\) *From the Neighbourhood to the National: Policing our communities together*. Cm 7448, London: The Stationery Office Ltd.](#)

⁴ [Flanagan, Sir Ronnie \(2008\) *The Review of Policing: Final Report*. London: Home Office.](#)

⁵ [House of Commons Home Affairs Select Committee \(2008\) *Policing in the 21st Century*. Seventh Report of the 2007-08 Session. HC 364-I, London: The Stationery Office Ltd.](#)

⁶ [Berry, Jan \(2009\) *Reducing Bureaucracy in Policing: Interim Report*. London: HMIC.](#)

⁷ [Flanagan, Sir Ronnie \(2007\) *Independent Review of Policing: Interim Report*. London: Home Office.](#)

⁸ [Policing and Crime Reduction Bill \(England & Wales\).](#)