KPMG

THE POLICE FOUNDATION

The UK's policing think tank

Performance management

Police Policy Dinner
June 2019

Background

Performance management in policing has undergone significant changes in recent years. Awareness of flaws in the old 'top-down' target culture, alongside a shift in focus away from volume crime outcomes and towards 'demand management', has meant that many of the old methods of measuring and managing police performance have fallen out of favour. In their place, police forces have been developing their own ways of measuring what they are doing well and identifying where they need to improve. While Force Management Statements will, over time, have a significant impact on police business processes, there is currently no single performance management approach or paradigm being adopted and there is a need to share learning from different methods being used around the country.

In June 2019 the Police Foundation and KPMG held the sixth in a series of police policy dinners, bringing together senior police officers, Police and Crime Commissioners, academics and government officials to address three questions:

- How do we manage police performance without top down target setting?

- What does a successful performance management system look like?

- How do we go about achieving it on a local and national level?

This report provides a summary of the issues raised during the discussion. Individual contributions have not been attributed, however attendees are listed at the end of the report.

Introduction – Policing's Tale of Two Cities moment

The discussion opened with a comparison of the current state of policing to the opening of the Dickens's Tale of Two Cities: "It was the best of times; it was the worst of times". The speaker said we were entering a summer of uncertainty, ahead of an autumn of chaos as police forces prepare for the Comprehensive Spending Review. To best face this challenge it was said that the police need to answer three fundamental questions. The first relates to the challenge of understanding and forming a public consensus about the police purpose and mission and what its priorities should be. It was suggested that some crimes, such as bilking (driving off without paying for petrol), have very little impact, whereas the impact of some 'non-crime' police matters, such as missing people, can be severe. Some forces have announced they will no longer deal with minor crimes, yet the police are unable to have these conversations without causing controversy. This was contrasted with the NHS, which seems able to discuss whether, for example, to prioritise hip operations for many patients rather than rare cancer treatments for a few, with greater openness.

The second question surrounds data collection and how the police know they are delivering a good service. Google has access to data which enables users to determine where, for example, the nearest Polish restaurant is in a couple of seconds. In contrast it would take the police several weeks and repeated requests to gain information on the numbers of Polish speaking officers in each force. Moving from the current 'data silos' to data streams, similar to those in which high tech businesses operate, could, it was suggested, greatly facilitate the means by which policing measures performance.

The largest, and perhaps most difficult question, is how the police see their role in a digital world. Until recently the world of policing was merely physical. Police officers know what to do when someone gets abused in the street; however they are less certain what to do when someone gets abused on Facebook where millions may see it and the message is indelible. Online crime represents a new and additional domain of demand which policing has to meet in addition to meeting its more traditional obligations. Police forces will fail in their duty to the public if they are unable to understand these new challenges, set priorities and effectively measure their ability to meet them.

What is performance management?

The participants agreed that there was a need to accurately define what performance management actually means in a policing context and standardise the language used. Questions that need to be answered include: What are 'outcomes'? What is 'performance'? What do 'effectiveness' and 'efficiency' mean?

Debate centred on performance management as a set of practices for measuring how well police forces are doing, based on compliance with established outcomes or standards, to ensure they are giving the best service to the public. It was generally agreed that there needed to be some benchmarks to offer as a goal to aim towards as it is difficult to measure productivity without knowing what the product is. The main crux of the debate lay in what those benchmarks or priorities would be, who would set them, how they would be set and how to use them to measure progress to ensure forces were working in the most effective and efficient way possible. One attendee offered an alternative perspective, suggesting that the above approach to performance management measured compliance rather than performance. In counterpoint, it was suggested that, in order to improve the culture of an organisation – and thus its 'performance' – it was necessary to create a continuous performance management system that focused primarily on improving and developing employees to ensure they have the skills and motivation to work effectively. This approach required investment in leadership and people.

A brief history of performance management

The discussion moved on to the history of performance management and the previous culture of using targets to determine what was 'working' and what wasn't. One speaker outlined how the target culture arose under New Labour in the 1990s. Tony Blair's government was investing huge sums in policing and other public services, and wanted targets to ensure that this investment led to improved performance outcomes and that the public were getting value for money. Public Service Agreements were introduced to measure how effectively resources were being used and whether services were delivering the outcomes that made a difference to people's lives. The speaker indicated that the narrow focus on hitting defined targets worked for some things, such as driving down NHS waiting lists. However, within policing this model of performance management led to a form of 'myopia' as police chiefs and politicians focused too narrowly on meeting targets and missed the point of why they were pursuing them. For example, if a target of low crime and high detection rates was met, that was considered a success. However, this failed to acknowledge that crime rates were linked to poverty and socio-economic factors, rather than just the actions of the police, and that the responsibility for cutting crime should be shared more widely.

In 2010 the Conservative party ran on a bureaucracy-cutting, 'anti-target' ticket, which saw the abolition of centralised performance measures. The new system moved away from centrally set targets to local accountability with the Home Office taking a hands-off approach. Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) set local priorities on which forces concentrated their resources. If the public did not like what the PCC was doing they could simply elect another one. The College of Policing set standards and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and the Independent Police Complaints Commission were there to provide scrutiny and hold them to account.

However there was general consensus among those attending that this vision of 'self-regulation', had not proved very effective and, coupled with austerity and changing crime patterns, had made priority setting incredibly difficult. One attendee said that without a service contract, in which police forces set out the terms and scope of their work, police forces are at risk of doing what is 'in vogue' at the time and changing directions with each Police and Crime Commissioner – which might prevent long term improvement. Another stated that there was a lack of consistency as victims could get different levels of service depending on whether the crime they suffered was a priority or not. Everyone agreed that centrally set targets were the wrong incentive, but their departure had left a vacuum which needed to be filled.

Policing, it was argued, has no desire to go back to old target-based model but it needs a way of determining what priorities it cares about most in order to fulfil its contract with the public and meet their expectations. One speaker indicated that the Home Office was beginning to show a willingness to 'lean in' and perform a more active role in guiding priorities. There was a general consensus that, while the police service has no wish for the Home Office to be over-prescriptive, there is now an appetite for it to set a clearer agreed statement of national priorities, within which local performance could be managed. However, what that would entail and how it would impact bodies such as the National Police Chiefs' Council, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary Fire and Rescue Services and the College of Policing remained to be seen.

Priority setting and public accountability

There was a clear consensus that, in a time of limited resources and increased demands, police forces need to be able to know where to concentrate their efforts. One participant put the dilemma succinctly: "You cannot meet 100 per cent of demand with only 70 per cent of what it costs". Given this funding shortfall, urgent

questions need to be raised about how police forces allocate their limited resources in the best interests of the public. How do forces determine their core priorities and ensure they are being achieved efficiently and effectively? All agreed that the current system means that focusing resources becomes incredibly difficult as local police leaders do not know whether they are doing well or not, and if they are concentrating their resources in the right place. They need to know 'what good looks like' in order to achieve this. The prospect of increased funding in the future was raised but it was agreed that measures needed to be put in place to ensure that new money was used efficiently, and not wasted. The police had to have a means of demonstrating it was accountable to the public and was using public funds for the greatest public good.

The danger of setting priorities based on public opinion alone, one speaker indicated, is that the agenda is set by perceived demands and not what they actually are, based on the evidence. At the moment, some crimes such as child abuse and domestic violence, which previously received less attention because they happened behind closed doors, are becoming more widely talked about and thus given higher priority. In contrast there is very little debate around fraud, despite recent increases, simply because the public cares less about it. PCCs' priorities, it was suggested, can reflect political 'hot topics' while issues that are not talked about are neglected and left to worsen, until they get so bad that police and politicians are forced to take notice, and the whole cycle begins again.

Several participants agreed that the current mantra of 'Threat, Risk and Harm' was of limited use as a mechanism for allocating resources. Despite tools such as the Cambridge High Harm Index, Threat, Risk and Harm meant very different things in different contexts, which made it very hard to build up a general consensus. One speaker put the current failure to set viable priorities down to the fact that police were habitually tactical rather than strategic thinkers. It was suggested that using Threat, Risk and Harm was "tactical thinking masquerading as strategy".

How to have targets without having targets?

Debate was divided between those who thought that targets derived using scientific measures and solid data should have a place in police performance management and those who did not. Those in favour argued that public service targets had been shown to work in relation to hospital waiting lists and could 'concentrate the mind', as they had done with asylum seeker numbers for example in the Blair years. One participant stated that targets worked as a means of incentivising improvement as, if one force, department or unit did some things well, not only did those particular things improve, but they set a tone for the rest. These included targets that police had to fulfil, such as response times. Another speaker agreed there was a need to be financially literate and to start with costed standards, as targets worked to pull everyone up.

In contrast some speakers suggested breaking away from numerical targets and measures as a way of managing performance. One dismissed scientific measures to assess performance as the "holy grail" which we would be forever grasping towards, but would never arrive at. Another raised the point that accountability and performance are two different things, which should not be conflated, and that looking at performance in terms of 'products' loses the subtlety of reality. Instead narrative rather than numbers should be used to assess performance. Targets, as another speaker posited, could be 'fiddled' in order to make practitioners look good. Instead performance should be based on overall value judgements, as is the case for HMICFRS's PEEL assessment of how well forces keep people safe and reduce crime (effectiveness), whether they are getting the best outcomes from their resources (efficiency), and how well forces ensure they have the confidence of their communities (legitimacy).

A scientific method

Across the different viewpoints described above, the general consensus was that rather than having targets as such, there was a need for

tough quantitative measures of performance based on solid outcomes. These would be linked to minimum standards which the public had a right to see fulfilled. They would be based on up-to-date intelligence and information to prevent them from becoming too much like motivational targets. One speaker suggested that embracing big data held the key to managing performance effectively. Police forces have access to a huge wealth of data on the many different demands on resources; however this was not being properly explored or utilised by practitioners. It was pointed out that, had the data been analysed properly, cybercrime would have been spotted as an emerging trend and acted upon many years ago, rather than coming as a surprise. Big data could enable police forces to predict what expertise they would need in the future and work towards acquiring it. It was widely agreed that data collection in the police was not fit for purpose. One participant pointed out that police chiefs and PCCs do have access to a lot of data on which to base priorities and performance measures, however it was up to them if or how they used it. Another indicated that police forces are currently measuring lots of different things and that there is no consistency across forces. A third added there were 43 forces in England and Wales and 43 different ways of doing things, leaving systems open to gross inefficiency. One speaker said that data that was collected was too often 'trapped in siloes' and asked for changes in computer systems which enabled this data to be shared across forces. Another speaker said that instead of getting the systems of 43 forces to communicate with each other, a new national information technology system should be designed from scratch. This system would be fuelled by the collection of completely new data on key performance indicators with old data archived for future use. An alternative viewpoint given was that there was no need for one data route at all; instead the answer was to look at the data as it is moving through the separate systems. An additional speaker said that arguments over data and computer systems could persist for the next ten years without coming to a conclusion and instead what was needed were 'core standards'.

Who sets the standards?

While the majority agreed on the need for consistent performance measurement across forces, there was much discussion about who should set those standards and how these would interact at a local and national level. Several speakers posited a move towards a national planning process with a performance framework built around it, which would drive cultural change and reinforce good performance. One suggested learning from the NHS, whose NHS Outcomes Framework (NHS OF) indicators provide national level accountability for the outcomes the NHS delivers. Another proposed a centralised model based on that used by Police Scotland with clear standards and consistent policy. Any national framework, it was suggested, could be populated from the Force Management Statements so that there were clear national standards by which to judge local performance. One speaker said that as well as learning from the NHS, the police should work with it and other services, in place-based whole systems.

Conclusion

One speaker summed up the problem of building models and frameworks very succinctly: there are a thousand possible interactions between the public and the police, from missing people to murder victims, which makes any system very difficult to design. However the discussion did clearly identify the key problems with current models and draw out some suggestions on how performance could be managed more effectively going forward. There was consensus that performance measures needed to be based on priorities that were formed, not by political whims or expediency, but a core contract between the public and the police. Without that service contract there can be no consistency. Police forces need to set a vision of what they are aiming for and how to work together with others to get there. These priorities had to be set as part of a 'data rich' exercise – statistics have to be used in order to judge what matters most and to ensure police forces are following through on their promises.

While none of the participants wished for the Home Office to be overly prescriptive, there was a strong appetite for a clearer agreed statement of national priorities, within which local performance could be managed. Attendees posited the establishment of a national framework that forces should abide by, guided by the Home Office, the National Police Chiefs' Council, HMICFRS and the College of Policing. While there should not be a return to the target setting culture, attendees agreed that there needed to be a structure in place to ensure that policing in England and Wales gets its priorities right, and the public receive the best possible service. Further discussion could be had on how this is translated into the creation of continuous performance management systems that ensure individual officers are managed and developed effectively.

Ruth Halkon, Research Officer, The Police Foundation

Attendees

Sir Bill Jeffrey KCB (chair)	Chair of Trustees, The Police Foundation
James Bottomley	Head of Governance and Risk, Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime
Michelle Crotty	Director, Strategy, National Crime Agency
Mike Cunningham	Chief Executive Officer, College of Policing
Jeff Farrar	Former Chief Constable, Gwent Police
Tom Gash	Managing Director, Leapwise
Martin Hewitt	Chair, National Police Chiefs' Council
Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe	Former Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service
Keith Hunter	Police and Crime Commissioner for Humberside
Peter Langmead-Jones	Head of External Relations and Performance, Greater Manchester Police
Alison Kinnaird	Senior Manager, Policing & Government, KPMG
Trevor Lawry	Head of Performance, Metropolitan Police Service
Andy Lea	Director, Justice and Security, KPMG
Rory Leyne	Senior Manager, Policing, KPMG
Sophie Linden	Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime, London
David Page	Deputy Chief Officer, Police Scotland
Bill Skelly	Chief Constable, Lincolnshire Police & Chair of NPCC Performance Management Committee
Professor Betsy Stanko	Chair of Data, Evidence and Science Board, Ministry of Justice
Rachel Watson	Acting Policing Director, Home Office
Sir Tom Winsor	Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary
Ruth Halkon (notes)	Research Officer, The Police Foundation

About the Police Foundation

The Police Foundation was founded in 1979 and is the only independent charity focused entirely on influencing policing policy and practice (and related issues) through research, policy analysis and training/consultancy. Its core aim is to challenge the police service and government to improve policing for the benefit of the public. Since its inception, the Police Foundation has become an influential think tank on a wide range of police-related issues, working closely with external funders and other third sector organisations.

About KPMG

KPMG's policing team offers practical advice and experience to help enable clients design, deliver and implement real change. We have worked with over 30 police forces in the UK on their most strategic challenges, from the design and implementation of new operating models and implementation of new technologies, to the creation of platforms for sharing information. Our knowledgeable team uses data to prioritise improvements. They bring well-established techniques to improve frontline performance, enhance customer centricity and increase efficiency. Most importantly, our team help police forces develop these skills so that our work is not a one-off, but helps empower our clients to continue to adapt and improve outcomes. We offer insight from, and access to, our global network to give a different perspective on how other countries and sectors are managing similar complex challenges.

Reports from previous Police Foundation/KPMG policy dinners can be found at
http://www.police-foundation.org.uk/events/police-policy-dinners/