

The Hard Yards – Police to police collaboration

This PEEL Spotlight report examined the effectiveness of police collaborations across England and Wales. HMICFRS assessed six police collaborations, investigating the process from agreement onwards. These varied in scope and scale of strategic collaborations between three, four and seven forces and the All Wales collaboration, to more focused, specific projects. None of the collaborations inspected involved Devon and Cornwall Police.

HMICFRS make two recommendations with one that applies to Chief Constables.

The report was published on 21st July 2020, a response is due by 15th September.

The full report can be viewed here

<https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/peel-spotlight-report-the-hard-yards-police-to-police-collaboration.pdf>

Key findings

The report followed HMICFRS' 2012 study which found that all forces intended to make savings from collaborations but that the quality of the financial cases that forces made needed to improve. Inspectors found that in 2018/19 some collaborations had ceased or were currently having difficulties, with many of the problems identified in 2012 remaining unresolved.

Purpose: collaborations must demonstrate a benefit to the public

- It is essential that collaborations have a clear objective. This helps forces to show the public the benefits of the collaboration. When the purpose of a collaboration is clearly set out and understood by all forces involved, it determines collaborative activity between all parties.
- It is particularly important that all parties have the same appetite for risk: it means that decision making is more predictable and less bureaucratic.

Benefits and cost analysis: some forces aren't tracking the benefits of collaboration and fail to think beyond savings

- Forces need to understand how and where they are achieving benefits through collaboration. Benefits such as saving money and using resources more effectively can change over time as costs increase or financial contexts change.
- Tracking benefits is crucial, both to retaining support for the collaboration and to determining where it may be underperforming



Trust is an essential element of good leadership and governance

- Collaborations between forces are also collaborations between leaders, many of whom will have competing demands and varying pressures.
- The current structure of PCC and chief constable, and the legal framework within which they operate, has the potential to conflict with police-to-police collaborative projects. Their respective priorities and responsibilities do not always align.

Some forces are continually failing to use their resources effectively and exchange learning

- Forces need to recognise the complex and specialist nature of collaboration. It is a highly skilled change-management process that needs good relationship building, financial management, political skills and creativity.
- Staff allocated to collaborated functions tend to be operational, so they are technically competent in the collaborated area of policing – for example, firearms or roads policing – but not specifically trained to strategically manage collaboration or innovate.
- Putting the right people with the right skills in place leads to success and improves the efficiency and effectiveness of the programme.

Chief Constable's response

The Chief Constable welcomes the HMICFRS report, the Force responds to the recommendation as follows

The implementation of Benefits Management commenced in 2009. Since that time, the strategy has been continually reviewed and revised to take account of learning and continue developing benefits maturity across the organisations.

Benefit identification, review and management is incorporated into every project that is initiated and co-ordinated through the Alliance Business Change Department. Once the project is finished, benefit monitoring is handed over to the business areas to manage. Established governance is in place for this, whereby financial benefits are tracked on a monthly basis within each Force at the Resource Control and Executive Boards. Non-financial benefits are tracked and monitored via the performance monitoring arrangements in each force via Performance Boards. However, not all organisational change is initiated and management via the Alliance Business Change Department and we are therefore not as well sighted in these cases with regard to how benefit delivery is governed. This is also true for areas of collaboration.

There have been a number of blue light collaborations that have been initiated and managed within the operational setting, outside of the formal project and business change environment. We are therefore not sighted on the realisation or management of benefits in these cases. However, one area that Alliance Business Change was heavily involved in was the Strategic Alliance of the Two Forces, which is described below:

Strategic Alliance between Devon & Cornwall Police and Dorset Police

The Phase 1 (scoping) activity for the Strategic Alliance between Devon & Cornwall and Dorset Police informed the identification of the benefits.

Benefits deliverables were articulated in Phase 2 PID which included development of a Benefits Management Strategy, Benefits Logic Map and Benefit Profiles and Realisation Plans.

Programme Benefits were aligned to the Alliance objectives (outcomes both internally within the organisation and externally for the public) and the overarching programme aims. Individual Business area benefits were then aligned to the programme benefits.

An Alliance Benefits Management Strategy was approved (October 2014) which set out 7 key benefits for the programme of work and included one benefit categorised as economic (cashable savings), one categorised as efficiency (non-cashable savings) and five effectiveness benefits.

The benefits were tracked and reported through governance during programme for both financial and non-financial benefits through a standardised cost model and series of focus groups.

The benefits reporting ceased once the programme closed, cashable savings encompassed within BAU budget monitoring processes. Non-financial benefits are the responsibility of each Alliance business area to monitor, respond and sustain following Post Implementation Reviews.

There is a wealth of additional information and detail which is available upon request.

Police and Crime Commissioner's response

This report sets out some useful learning from across the country into police collaboration. Policing is becoming increasingly complex. Police and Crime Commissioners are under duty to ensure value for money and efficiency in all

policing services and partnerships and collaborations is an area in which it needs to develop.

Police and Crime Commissioners have brought an added level of scrutiny and transparency to this work – with Commissioners working at regional level to monitor the performance of cross-Force collaborated units and hold chief officers to account.

The Commissioner says

“The report unveils some of the challenges faced by Forces as they look to improve efficiency and productivity. Collaboration can often be an effective approach, but it requires skills and concerted effort from all to shared goals. Most collaborations in our force area are with other partners not just other forces. Our low crime rate is achieved through collaborations with local authorities, fire, probation, prisons, the private sector and the community and voluntary sector.”

“Devon and Cornwall Police has been in a Strategic Alliance with Dorset Police since 2015. This has helped both Forces reduce cost overheads and improve in efficiency in some areas. It has also taught the Force much about the way it works in practice rather than as set out in the pages of a business case. Collaboration does bring with it challenges that extend beyond core police work and which require particular change management skills to optimise results that are not always found in the workforce in sufficient quantity”

“The report is entitled The Hard Yards. Hard decisions are also required from leaders, as was demonstrated in autumn 2018, when I took the decision to withdraw from the potential merger of Devon and Cornwall Police with Dorset Police as I was not convinced this would be in the best interests of the public of Devon and Cornwall. A decision supported by the Police and Crime Panel”

Alison Hernandez
Police and Crime Commissioner
Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly