Police Onboarding in England and Wales

Consultation Findings

1. Introduction

The Police Uplift Programme seeks to improve onboarding in policing to support successful delivery of the recruitment drive, and to improve retention of new recruits.

'Onboarding' is an umbrella term for the full period of a new recruit applying to and joining an organisation, including day one through to the new recruit being fully settled in role. For some individuals and types of roles this can be as little as 8 weeks, for others it can be a full twelve months. The full process includes 'pre-boarding' – everything up to day one, induction and orientation – the first few days and weeks in role, and integration – becoming fully settled.
The onboarding process includes induction and orientation, as early activities. Inductions might include introduction to colleagues, presentations about various departments and teams, assigning a 'buddy' or mentor and receiving relevant information, data and reports. Orientation is focussed on the new recruit complying with organisational policies and procedures, including for example IT set up, health and safety policies, using systems and processes for reporting absences or booking leave.

Onboarding activities often fall into the following four categories:

- **Organisational** – administration, documentation, policies and procedures, career aspirations, probation planning
- **Functional** – training, goal setting, performance and progress reviews, capturing individual needs, making connections between studies/HEI/apprenticeship and practicalities of the role
- **Social** – connection building, introductions, mentoring
- **Cultural** – expectation setting, purpose and vision of force and team, stakeholder/partner engagement

1.1. Aims and objectives

This consultation forms part of a wider project with the Police Uplift Programme. The aims outlined in blue are addressed in this consultation:

- Understand effective onboarding models in policing and elsewhere
- **Understand expectations and experiences of those going through onboarding processes**
- **Define 'onboarding' in the policing context**
- Delivery of an onboarding map
- Recommendations for how the map can be delivered to forces
- Recommendations for how the map could be evaluated in forces

1.2. Methods

A mixed-methods approach to gathering information about onboarding experiences was used, including:
- An online survey for new recruits and officers with 2-3 years' service.
  - 422 responses gathered, across 14 police forces.

- Two focus groups with new recruits and officers with 2-3 years' service.
  - 8 participants in total, with a range of a few months in role, to two years in role.

1.3. Participation in the survey

A breakdown of gender representation in survey participants showed that 38% were women, 57% were men, 5% preferred not to say and 1 participant preferred to self-describe.

Participation by age followed the anticipated spread, where 85% of participants were aged 35 or under.

Age group	Number of participants	Percentage of participants
18-25	164	39%
26-30	118	28%
31-35	74	18%
36-40	32	8%
41-50	31	7%
Total	419	99%

Participation by ethnicity showed that 92% of participants were White British, 4% from any other White background and 3.5% from Black, Asian, Arab or multiple ethnic backgrounds (15 participants).

Length of service	Number of participants	Percentage of participants
0 – 3 months	50	12%
3 – 6 months	54	13%
6 – 12 months	132	31%
12 – 24 months	165	39%
24 months or longer	21	5%
Total	422	100%

Participants represented 14 police forces, including: Avon and Somerset Police, Cumbria Constabulary, Derbyshire Constabulary, Devon and Cornwall Police, Dyfed-Powys Police, Gwent Police, Hampshire Constabulary, Leicestershire Police, Merseyside Police, North Wales Police, Northumbria Police, Surrey Police, Sussex Police, Wiltshire Police.

This breakdown of survey participation demonstrates that the findings cannot reliably represent the full range of perceptions and experiences of new recruits across 43 police forces in England and Wales. This is particularly so in terms of understanding the role of ethnicity in experience, and the practices and cultures of the 32 police forces not represented in this survey.
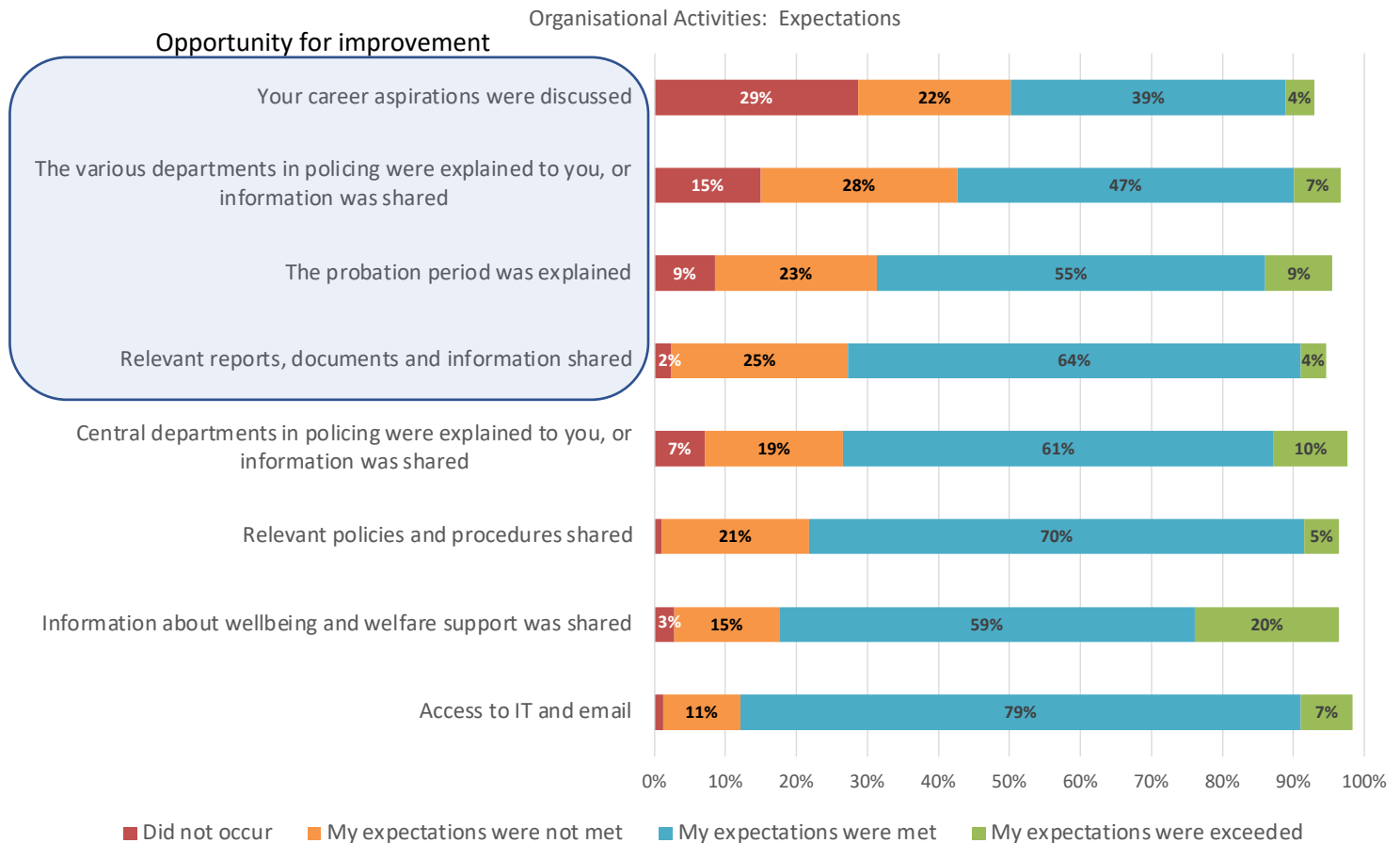
2. Findings

2.1. Organisational Activities

Under 'organisational activities', eight items were included from the literature that represent best practice in this area of the onboarding experience. An average of 4% of participants could not remember whether these activities had taken place, and the graph below presents those that stated each activity 'did not occur', or to what extent it met their expectations.

Organisational activities that **generally met or exceeded expectations** include:

1. **Access to IT and email**: as anticipated, this is a core requirement to undertake the role and for 86% of participants this part of the process worked. For the 11% that said their expectations were not met, their comments suggested they had difficulty accessing or using systems.
2. **Information about wellbeing and welfare:** for 20% of participants this exceeded their expectations. For the 18% that said this did not occur or did not meet their expectations, they suggested that the onus was on them to find out what support was available, that they had made requests for support that had not been responded to, or that no wellbeing or welfare support was related to the University side of their development and workload which was often causing stress and anxiety.
3. **Relevant policies and procedures:** for the majority of participants, 75%, this met or exceeded their expectations, for the remaining participants they felt there were gaps related to HR policies, including sickness and absence and information related to their probation period.

Organisational Activities: Expectations

Opportunity for improvement

Activity	Did not occur	My expectations were not met	My expectations were met	My expectations were exceeded
Your career aspirations were discussed	29%	22%	39%	4%
The various departments in policing were explained to you, or information was shared	15%	28%	47%	7%
The probation period was explained	9%	23%	55%	9%
Relevant reports, documents and information shared	2%	25%	64%	4%
Central departments in policing were explained to you, or information was shared	7%	19%	61%	10%
Relevant policies and procedures shared		21%	70%	5%
Information about wellbeing and welfare support was shared	3%	15%	59%	20%
Access to IT and email		11%	79%	7%

■ Did not occur ■ My expectations were not met ■ My expectations were met ■ My expectations were exceeded
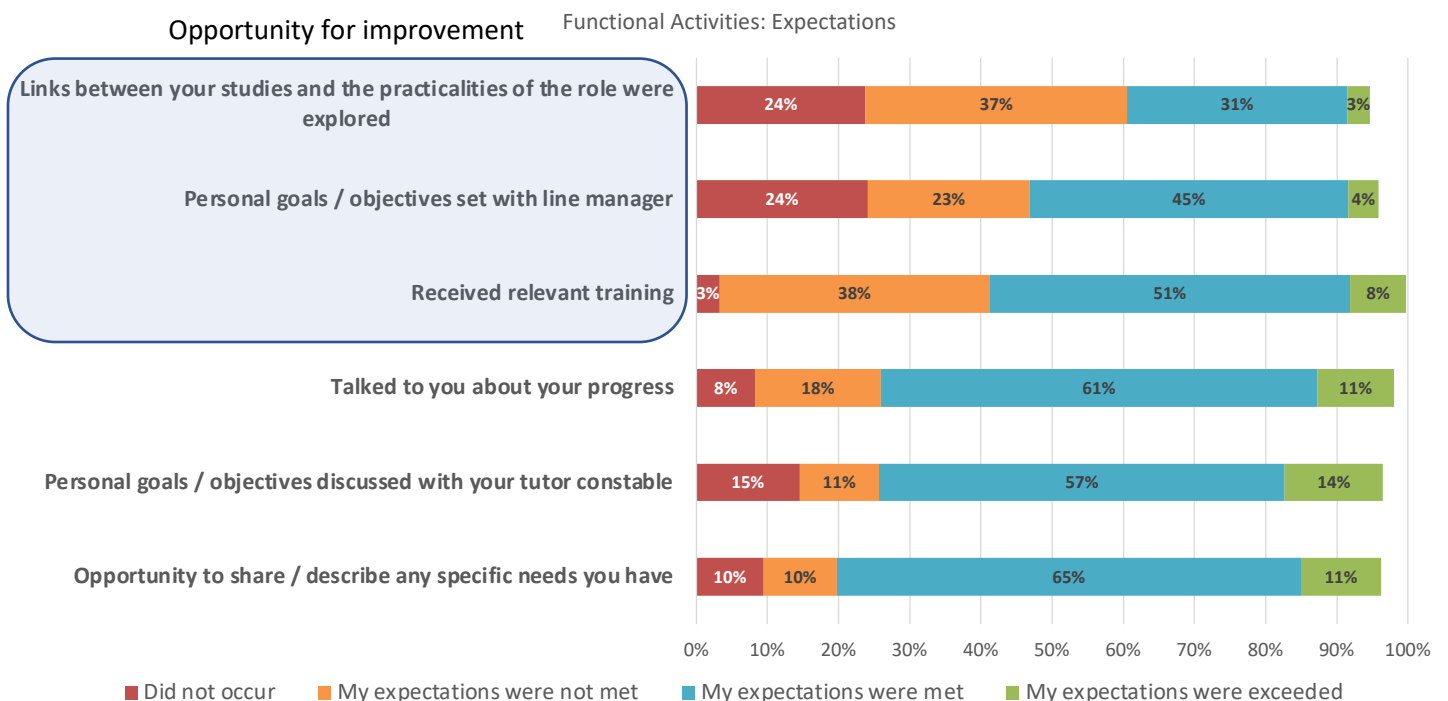
Organisational activities there were **least likely** to have occurred or to meet expectations included:

1. **Career aspirations:** just over half, 51% of participants, said this did not occur or did not meet their expectations, and many comments suggested this was important to them. This included requests for discussions about the career pathways available to them, being able to share their preferences about which department or specialism they are interested in and discussing the different roles and responsibilities across ranks.
2. **Departments across policing:** 43% of participants said that explanations of the various departments across policing did not occur or did not meet their expectations. This was highlighted as a gap by many new recruits, who felt they didn't understand the full picture of policing, didn't know what to expect when landing in new attachments, and didn't know what was expected of them in relation to engaging with other departments.
3. **Probation period explained:** Nearly one-third, 31%, of participants said the probation period was not explained to them, or it did not meet their expectations. Several participants noted that they didn't know how long the probation period was, the rate of progress or goals that were expected of them, and who to go to if they had concerns about progress.

2.2. Functional Activities

Under 'functional activities', six items were included from the literature that represent best practice in this area of the onboarding experience. An average of 3% of participants could not remember whether these activities had taken place, and the graph below presents those that stated each activity 'did not occur', or to what extent it met their expectations.

Opportunity for improvement

Functional Activities: Expectations

Activity	Did not occur	My expectations were not met	My expectations were met	My expectations were exceeded
Links between your studies and the practicalities of the role were explored	24%	37%	31%	3%
Personal goals / objectives set with line manager	24%	23%	45%	4%
Received relevant training	3%	38%	51%	8%
Talked to you about your progress	8%	18%	61%	11%
Personal goals / objectives discussed with your tutor constable	15%	11%	57%	14%
Opportunity to share / describe any specific needs you have	10%	10%	65%	11%

■ Did not occur   ■ My expectations were not met   ■ My expectations were met   ■ My expectations were exceeded

Functional activities that were **most likely** to have occurred and to have met expectations included:

1. **Opportunity to share specific needs:** Three-quarters, 76%, of participants said their expectations were met or exceeded in relation to opportunities to share any specific needs. The majority of comments pointed to the process or trainers supporting identification and response to dyslexia or dyspraxia, and more broadly new recruits felt that informal conversations with their tutor, coach, mentor or Sergeant provided them with the opportunity to share.
2. **Personal goals discussed with tutor**: 71% of participants had their expectations met or exceeded when discussing their personal goals with their tutor constable. For the remaining quarter of participants, 26%, they suggested that their tutoring was in a pod of 3 and provided little time to focus on individual goals, or that they didn't have a tutor, or a consistent tutor.
3. **Discussions about progress**: 72% of participants stated their expectations were met or exceeded in relation to having discussions about their progress. As above, this tended to be new recruits with a consistent, and actively engaged tutor. For the 26% for whom this did not occur or did not meet their expectations, they made comments about tutors being less engaged or interested in new recruits development, inconsistent tutors, or very limited time with tutors or Sergeants.

Functional activities that were **least likely** to have occurred or to have met expectations included:

1. **Links between academic study and practicalities of policing:** Nearly one-quarter of participants said this did not occur, 24%, and over one-third said this did not meet their expectations. Put together, this means 61% of participants were not satisfied with the linkup between their academic studies and the policing role. Hundreds of comments in the survey expanded on this, stating that the themes and topics covered in the academic study and assignments were too theoretical and not relevant to the day-to-day role of a police officer, and did not help them to learn about policing or to settle into the role.
2. **Personal goals and objectives set with line manager:** One-quarter of participants said this did not occur, 24%, and 23% said their expectations were not met. Together this is nearly half of participants, 47%, that expected more in relation to setting personal goals and objectives with their line manager. Participants comments suggested that this was related to the lack of clarity about the probation period, the level of progress that is expected, discussing anything other than ticking off the IPS requirements, and feeling unclear about expectations in the role of police officer more generally.
3. **Received relevant training:** 41% of participants stated that relevant training did not occur or did not meet their expectations. Participants suggested that the training provided to new recruits in policing needs to include more practical training, more role playing and scenarios, to enable them to feel prepared for the role.
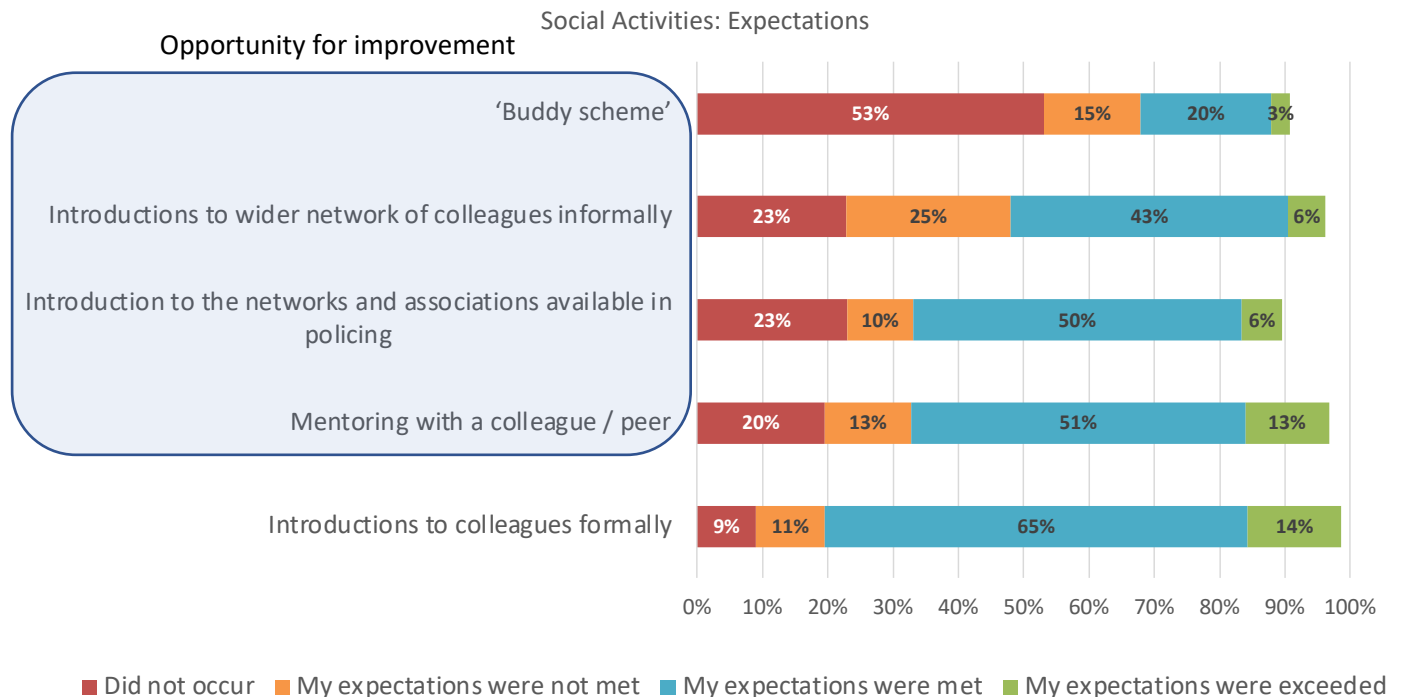
2.3. Social Activities

Under 'social activities', six items were included from the literature that represent best practice in this area of the onboarding experience. An average of 6% of participants could not remember whether these activities had taken place, and the graph below presents those that stated each activity 'did not occur', or to what extent it met their expectations.

Social activities that were **most likely** to have occurred and to have met expectations included:

1. **Introductions to colleagues:** the majority of participants, 79%, were introduced formally to colleagues on their team, shift or rota. For those where this did not meet their expectations

or didn't happen, they described no prior meetings or introductions with colleagues before or during their first shift.

Social Activities: Expectations

Opportunity for improvement

	Did not occur	My expectations were not met	My expectations were met	My expectations were exceeded
'Buddy scheme'	53%	15%	20%	3%
Introductions to wider network of colleagues informally	23%	25%	43%	6%
Introduction to the networks and associations available in policing	23%	10%	50%	6%
Mentoring with a colleague / peer	20%	13%	51%	13%
Introductions to colleagues formally	9%	11%	65%	14%

■ Did not occur ■ My expectations were not met ■ My expectations were met ■ My expectations were exceeded

Social activities there were **least likely** to have occurred or to meet expectations included:

1. **'Buddy scheme':** Over half of participants, 53%, said their force didn't have a buddy scheme in place, and a further 15% said their expectations were not met. In total 68% of participants did not have their expectations met, and many commented that a buddy scheme would have helped them to learn, to settle into the role, to develop their confidence and to know who to go to with questions. Some participants suggested that their forces have buddy schemes but there are not enough for everyone to have one, or they were not allocated one, or that they never heard from their buddy.

2. **Introductions to wider colleagues:** Nearly half, 48%, of participants stated that they were not introduced to a wider network of colleagues outside of their team, or that this social activity did not meet their expectations. Several commented that they didn't know enough about other departments in policing, and the only relationships they had were colleagues in their training cohort or on their shift. Many felt it would be beneficial to have contacts in different departments to help to answer questions and relieve the burden placed on tutors.

3. **Introductions to networks and associations:** 23% stated that it did not happen. Overall, for one-third, 33%, this could have been improved, and a small number of comments suggested that these networks and associations in policing could support new recruits to develop relationships and confidence.

4. **Mentoring:** One-third, 33%, of participants, said they did not receive mentoring with a colleague or peer, or that it did not meet their expectations. Many comments demonstrated confusion about the difference between trainers, tutors and mentors, and for those that answered this question positively – they tended to reference the good qualities of their tutor constable.
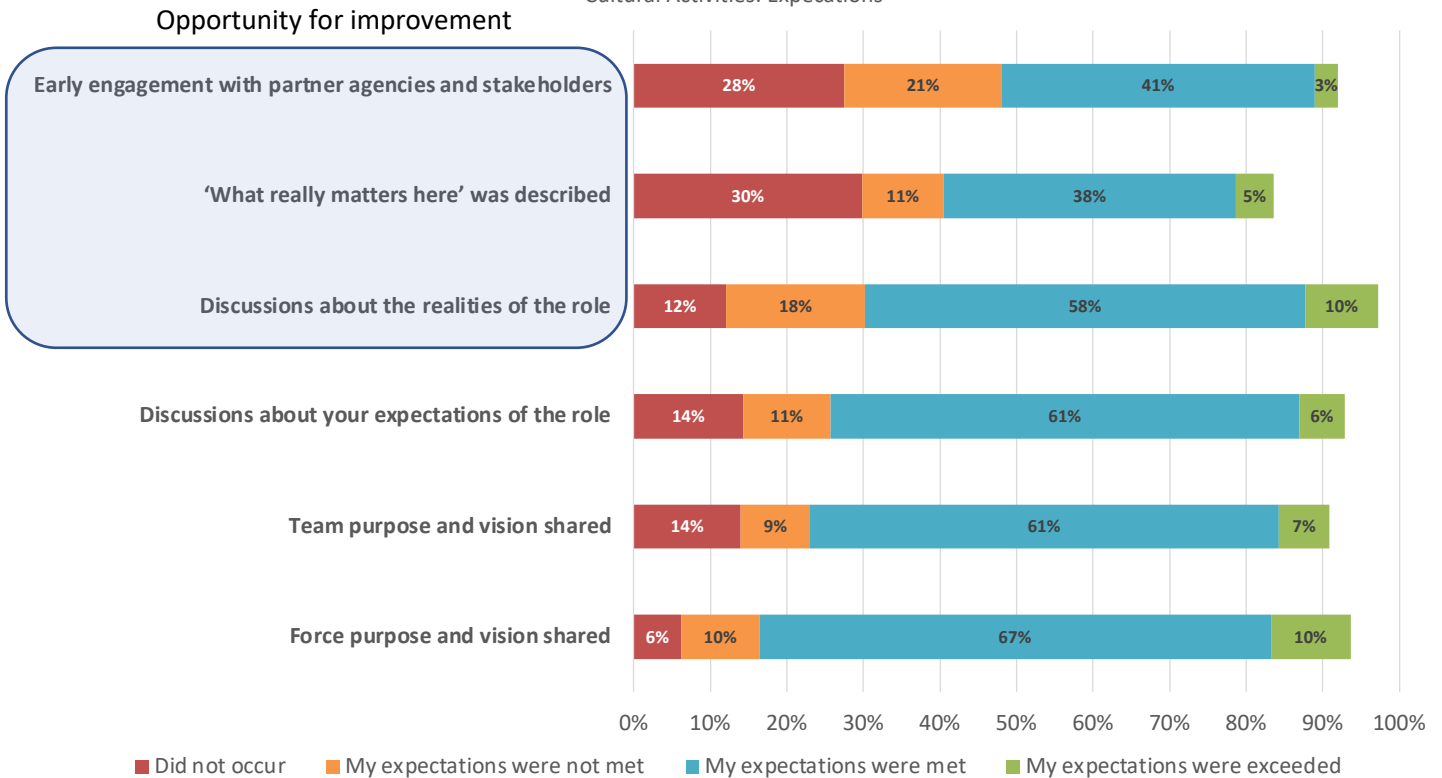
2.4. Cultural Activities

Under 'cultural activities', six items were included from the literature that represent best practice in this area of the onboarding experience. An average of 8% of participants could not remember whether these activities had taken place, higher than the other sections, and the graph overleaf presents those that stated each activity 'did not occur', or to what extent it met their expectations.

Cultural activities that were **most likely** to have occurred and to have met expectations included:

1. **Force purpose and vision shared**: for over three-quarters of participants, 77%, the force purpose and vision was shared and met or exceeded their expectations. Some participants commented that this was a focus of the pre-employment sessions and inductions into training school.
2. **Team purpose and vision shared**: for two-thirds of participants, 67%, the team purpose and vision was shared and met or exceeded their expectations. Very few participants made comments related to this, instead sharing broader views related to feeling unprepared or unclear when joining a new team or rotation, and that often what was expected of them was unclear.

Cultural Activities: Expecations

Opportunity for improvement

Activity	Did not occur	Expectations not met	Expectations met	Expectations exceeded
Early engagement with partner agencies and stakeholders	28%	21%	41%	3%
'What really matters here' was described	30%	11%	38%	5%
Discussions about the realities of the role	12%	18%	58%	10%
Discussions about your expectations of the role	14%	11%	61%	6%
Team purpose and vision shared	14%	9%	61%	7%
Force purpose and vision shared	6%	10%	67%	10%

■ Did not occur ■ My expectations were not met ■ My expectations were met ■ My expectations were exceeded

Cultural activities there were **least likely** to have occurred or to meet expectations included:

1. **Engagement with partner agencies**: Nearly half, 49%, of participants said that early engagement with partner agencies and stakeholders didn't occur or didn't meet their expectations. Some comments suggested this would be helpful to better understand key issues related to mental health.
2. **'What really matters here'**: 41% of participants stated that this did not occur or did not meet their expectations. Some participants made comments about the need for greater

clarity about expectations of new recruits in their contribution to policing, and several highlighted the gap between academic study and what 'really matters' in policing.

3. **Discussions about the realities of the role**: 30% of participants stated that they did not have discussions about the realities of the police officer role, or that if they did it not meet their expectations. Many comments referenced the lack of description or explanation about what policing really entails, what the majority of the role is like, the different demands of different teams, the realities of shift pattern working, and the big differences between the scenario training and how policing is really conducted.

2.5. Other onboarding activities

Participants described other onboarding activities that were not listed in the four sections above, across organisational, function, social or cultural activities. In order of volume of times mentioned, the following activities were identified:

1. Informal meet and greet with the team you're joining
2. Practical training and roleplays
3. Team building and group activities, including ice-breakers to get to know people
4. Having a good trainer and/or tutor supports the full onboarding experience
5. Supportive colleagues, that are willing to answer questions and help with learning
6. Opportunities to develop bonds with peers, including socialising outside of work
7. Hearing real-life experiences of tutors and officers
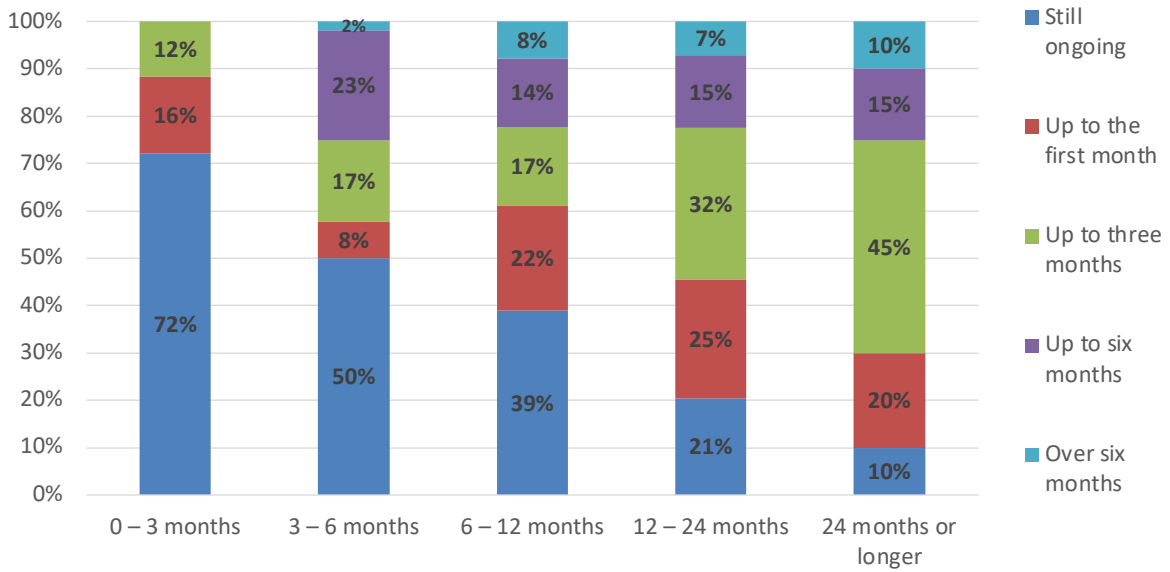8. Station tours, often held alongside informal meet and greets

In reference to the wide range of onboarding activities outlined above, participants gave a rough estimate about how long these activities were in place for. The graph shows the result, demonstrating that for one-fifth of participants these activities were in place for up to one month, for a quarter they were in place for up to three months, and for one-fifth they were in place for six months or more.

Roughly how long were supportive onboarding activities in place for?
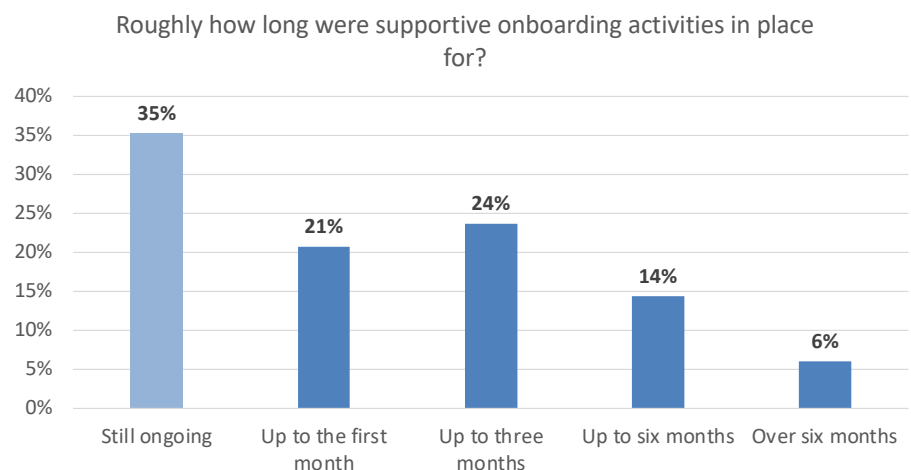
Wider literature points to onboarding activities being in place until employees feel 'settled' in their role, and for this type of frontline work, this is anticipated to be between 6 months and 18 months.

Recognising that participants of this survey were new recruits with varying lengths of time in role, the graph below brings together length of service with how long onboarding activities were in place. As anticipated, for nearly three-quarters of participants that are in their first 3 months, their onboarding activities are still in place.
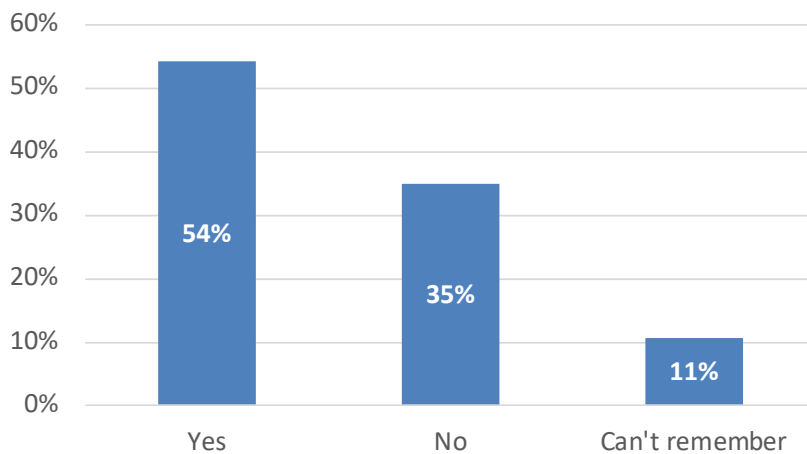
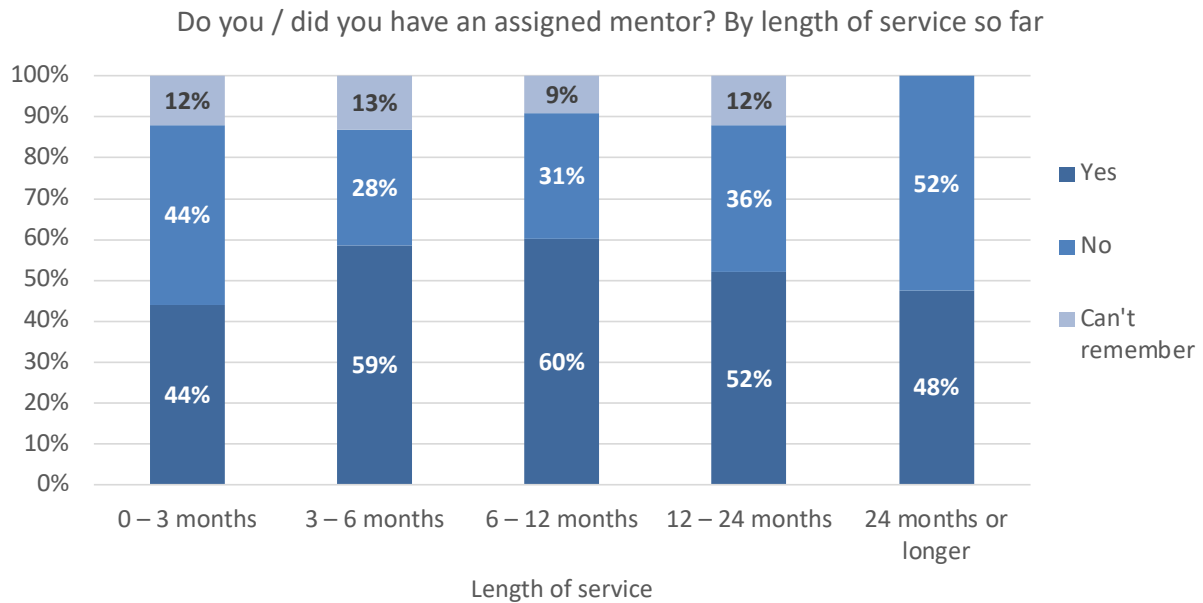**Roughly how long were supportive onboarding activities in place for? By length of service**

Legend:
- Still ongoing
- Up to the first month
- Up to three months
- Up to six months
- Over six months

	0 – 3 months	3 – 6 months	6 – 12 months	12 – 24 months	24 months or longer
Still ongoing	72%	50%	39%	21%	10%
Up to the first month	16%	8%	22%	25%	20%
Up to three months	12%	17%	17%	32%	45%
Up to six months		23%	14%	15%	15%
Over six months		2%	8%	7%	10%

2.6. Mentors

Of the 420 new recruits that answered the question, 54% had or currently have a mentor, 35% do not and 11% could not remember. Several participants made comments about being confused about the difference between a tutor and a mentor, and whilst many of these fall into the 'can't remember' category, it means some will have said yes when they actually had a tutor.

Do you / did you have an assigned mentor?

Yes	No	Can't remember
54%	35%	11%

Do you / did you have an assigned mentor? By length of service so far

Length of service	Yes	No	Can't remember
0 – 3 months	44%	44%	12%
3 – 6 months	59%	28%	13%
6 – 12 months	60%	31%	9%
12 – 24 months	52%	36%	12%
24 months or longer	48%	52%	

Feedback about the experience of mentoring

For those that had a mentor, the vast majority made comments about this being a positive experience, having someone to go to with questions following the end of their tutor period. Many highlighted the 'cliff edge' of the end of tutorship and being 'out there on your own' and having a mentor to debrief with and ask questions with made a significant difference to their confidence in role.

Comments about experiences of mentoring were themed and ranked in order of volume of comments:

1. **Consistency of mentor (and tutor):** participants used 'mentor' and 'tutor' interchangeably in some comments, highlighting the different experiences that new recruits have. Where there changes to the tutor or mentor, participants suggested this had an impact on their learning, development of confidence, and conversations about progress and improvement.

   "I received various tutors and never felt like I was truly being mentored."

   "My mentor changed throughout my training, and at one point, I was without one. I found this a bit hard, because I felt I had no one to turn to, or ask questions."

2. **1-1 mentoring (and tutoring) rather than 2-1:** this was a common request, to remove 2-1 tutor relationships or tutor pods, and provide 1-1 mentoring and/or tutoring to maximise opportunities for participants to check their learning, to ask questions, to discuss their individual needs and to discuss their progress.

3. **Active, engaged, positive, well-trained mentors:** many participants praised their mentors that were genuinely interested in the development of new recruits, were positive about policing and the role, took the time to explain processes and decision-making, and actively supported new recruits to learn. However, some participants suggested that some mentors, and tutors, were not suited to the role, lacking the attitude, enthusiasm and willingness to coach and support learning and development. Training was suggested for mentors, to ensure they are aware of the different pathways in police recruitment and the demands of academic work alongside training.

"Contact with this person was weak in the early stages but has increased in value over the last few months. A more personable relationship may have been beneficial, discussing personal strengths, weaknesses, expectation setting, coping techniques, workload management."

"The quality of some of the dedicated coaching unit staff needs to be addressed. It appears that officers join the team for an easier life, rather than a passion for the job. New probationer Police Officers should be met with an enthusiastic and encouraging coach that is prepared to adapt the way they teach for each probationer. The coaches should be working with their probationers showing them gold standard practices which I did not experience."

"At the time, my tutor and tutorship period really helped, it's the least stressful way of learning the ropes I can think of. As a caveat, this buddy role wasn't perfect, not long enough and by tutor didn't know about a lot of things due to lack of practise. A proper buddy system for longer would be good but there needs to be mindfulness of the weakness of relying on one person for majority of knowledge."

4. **Longer period with tutor and/or mentor:** again, many participants overlapped the roles of tutor and mentor, however the feedback consistently pointed to 8 or 12 weeks being too short a period with a dedicated tutor to cover everything. Some participants suggested that a mentor programme following on from the tutor period could provide a middle-ground buffer for development.

"The mentoring phase could be longer as the 3 month time period is too short to cover everything and I've been finding that I have to constantly ask tutor constables and work colleagues about something that should of been covered either in my own tutorship or training. The Tutor pod was really good and I feel a longer stint in here before going out on tutorship covering vital force systems and processes would be really beneficial to building confidence before going out on to tutorship and furthermore going independent."

"I had a mentor for 4 shifts, perhaps it could of been longer."

"Mentoring past initial 12 weeks tutorship to allow for a smoother transition due to the variety of jobs you face within the role. Feels like you finish tutorship and are left to sink or swim."

5. **Mixed mentors / tutors / experiences:** Many participants highlighted the importance of hearing real-life experiences from tutors, mentors and colleagues in policing, and having opportunities to learn from different people with different experiences. In relation to mentoring, participants suggested having mentors form different backgrounds or departments to their tutors, or multiple mentors to support faster development.

"For the detective DHEP route it would have been good to get a detective mentor from the beginning as at the start the focus seems to be on the response period you have to do first but it would have been good to have more contact with the detective element from the start."

"I like my mentor as he is an experienced officer with a sense of calmness in him. I also like having various officers tutoring me as I can learn from their different styles."

"I would maybe suggest having 2 different mentors for this process as everyone works differently and my tutor for example liked to carry out vehicle stops so that would be what we

did for a vast majority of my time in DCU whereas I may have got other things signed off quicker with another tutor who didn't just focus on vehicle stops mostly."

"Response I had an assigned mentor which worked really well. Crime I did not have an assigned mentor, apart from a couple of shifts, and because everyone is busy with their own workloads I felt awkward asking questions all the time. With the introduction of the 'crime academy' which has come in recently, I hope this has addressed this issue. The mentoring issue is not individual staff fault, there is just not enough mentors/staff as a whole to make it work."

2.7. Identification of Needs

Of the 421 new recruits that answered the question, 44% said they were able to share any specific needs or preferences, 29% said no, and 27% could not remember.

The majority of comments related to the identification of needs highlighted the fast identification and support provided for diagnoses of dyslexia, and for a few, dyspraxia. Participants suggested this was identified as part of the process, related to training and to the academic side of the recruitment journey.

Were you able to share any specific needs or preferences that you had, in starting this new role?
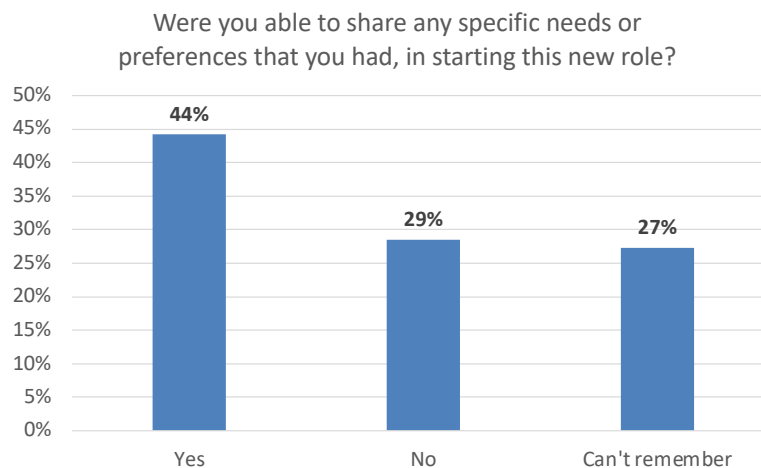
The majority of participants pointed to their tutors, mentors and Sergeants as their point of call to discuss any specific needs or preferences they had and said there were many opportunities for informal discussions about needs. Participants made suggestions for improvement assessment and identification of specific needs, including:

1. **1-1 discussions with tutors, trainers and/or Sergeants early in the process**, and to include discussions about progress and career planning, in relation to addressing any learning needs or issues**.**
2. **Training for tutors and mentors,** to improve their recognition of different learning styles and individual needs.
3. **Better link between university and police training,** to improve communication, recognition of needs and preferences and to provide consistent support.
4. **Buddy programme with pastoral role,** to pick up wider welfare and wellbeing needs.

"All students were tested for any additional learning needs. Opportunities were given to me to disclose my personal learning needs and all follow up requirements were met."

"As a single parent, the early access to future weekly schedules were given. Also, given the long commute to work, realistic start times were given."

"Force has been able to assist with me with learning difficulties however university has not assisted at all."

"We were allowed to talk to staff whenever. However they were often very busy and these discussions were far from private. I would have liked some sort of appointment system to get actual time to sit and discuss something important to me."

"It would have been good to have a personal mentor whose job it was to look after my welfare and wellbeing/aspirations on the team"

2.8. What helped you the most to settle in?

Participants answered this open question about what helped them most to settle into the role of police officer. Overwhelmingly, having a 'good team' and a 'good' tutor' were identified as the top two factors in their settling in period. Following on from this, 'supportive colleagues' was a wider description that involved officers and staff generally being open, helpful and willing to answer questions and provide support to new recruits when needed.

1. **Good team**
2. **Good tutor**
3. **Supportive colleagues**
4. **Peer support,** generally from the same intake/cohort
5. **Good trainers**
6. **Doing the job,** getting experience in the role
7. **Prior knowledge**, as a Special Constable or civilian

"I found the use of tutor pod and post tutor stage most beneficial in my development and confidence building. Good colleagues on my shift and good supervisors who were aware of the demand being placed on me in terms of university studies."

"I was lucky in that I had a good tutor who took the time to explain why we did/ didn't do things a certain way rather than just say "do this do that". As a result, it has made my decision making far more effective as I can rationalise why we are taking this course of action."

"My shift, they were really supportive. Without them I would have quit."

"The people on shift were extremely supportive. The staff wanted to help and teach you. If the staff have the morale and focus to help then it makes it much easier."

The focus group discussion raised the importance of feedback and recognition during the onboarding period, related both to police training and academic study. However it was also noted that feedback was inconsistent, and that some new recruits 'scrape through', whilst others work very hard to learn and improve. This raised questions for some focus group participants about the recruitment process, and whether they set consistent standards.

2.9. What was missing from your onboarding experience?

Overwhelmingly, participants pointed to gaps in training as the main issue affecting their onboarding experience into policing. This included the quality of the training, the amount of practical training and practice, and the types of training related to the tasks they found themselves delivering once in role. The list below outlines the comments made by participants, ranked by volume of comments made:

1. **Quality training, and practical training**
Including coverage of legislation, forms and basic tasks such as MG11s, VPNs, VPRF1s reporting missing persons or sudden death. Practical training, including role plays, scenarios and shadowing, to build confidence and readiness for day one. Focus group participants experience ranged from 8-week training school to a 20-week training programme. Both ends of this timeframe still point to the need for more practical training during this time. A specific mention was made to the uniform in both the focus groups and surveys, as many new recruits have never worn a uniform of this kind before, and needed help learning how to 'assemble' it.

"Any real training, Recruits were given a short two day input into legislation and one role play throughout the entirety of initial training, the rest was self-taught from Blackstone's or online learning and this was not explained to recruits when joining. The whole degree was sold as being integrated as part of the role but is actually a whole separate entity to the job."

"Case file training. it existed but was very minimal and not when needed (too early). Time to work on casefiles was missing. Time to study for NIE was missing"

"We were not explained any forms or paperwork during training that would need to be completed (PPN, etc.) The initial training focused on theoretical and legislation and barely touched on practical. This was not beneficial to me during my coaching phase."

"Felt that i did not leave training fully equipped to do the job, I was not allowed to drive, could not pull a car over for 5 months, was no intox trained or drug wipe trained, nor was I trained to use speed camera, all basic stuff that should be taught in basic training"

"From the initial 9 weeks - ALOT was missing. I was out on the streets after doing 1 mock arrest and stop search. I felt vastly underprepared and did not fully know how to use any powers. This was not helped by the way the training school drill into you that 1 slip up and you'll lose your job."

"Actual on-board, practical day to day functional operational training. We were totally reliant on tutors to teach basic skills, forms and checks. I understand everyone needs to learn somewhere, however, being tutored drink drive, traffic forms, c57 documents, c12, all these day-to-day functions as a three is impractical. I feel like a week on practicing some scenarios in training centre will at least give us the basic skills so we can look semi-professional when applying these skills. I think the actual practical training was inadequate and absent. Not enough PLT days to support university work and no real reward for academic achievements in university work."

2. **Expectation setting - realities of the policing role, and of the university work**
Including the realities of the types of tasks, what the majority of the work is, shift patterns and what this means for lifestyle changes. In addition, many felt very surprised by the amount of university work involved, and how theoretical this work is, which feels misaligned to the policing role.

"A simple explanation of what to expect in the upcoming 2 years. Also, I would have appreciated some guidance on uniform and its assembly."

"More clarity regarding the PCDA course. It was in no way explained that I would be removed from response in my final year and placed in a job role I do not want. This is counter-productive and comes across as job mis advertisement."

"Putting new officers into level 1 investigations ruins morale and makes people want to leave the job as they joined for more active policing roles whilst they are young in service. As level 1 is a high-volume low-level crime desk-based role with minimal opportunities to use skills learnt in our 10 week tutor phase or Basic training."

"During the initial learning phase the link to the university work was clear and relevant with the exams. However, when on shift and having to complete the assignments there is no real link or connection. It feels like two very separate requirements - performing within work and then completing the university work and it does not feel like they correlate. The remote university teaching does not enable students to perform at their best and as a consequence me and my peers often find ourselves confused with the work and feel like it does not correlate with our day to day work as a PC. It makes the probation period very stressful to complete."

3. Clarity, structure and timetables

From application to recruitment and training, for example providing an information pack with departments, contact details, key policies and how to access further information. Several participants referenced the time taken between application and joining training, often being 12 to 18 months.

"A summary sheet with brief information of all relevant links, names, emails etc. I felt completely overwhelmed by the amount of info we were given. This included too many names, email addresses, log in details etc. It all seemed very fragmented."

"Clarity around the probation period, including dates / expectations of evidencing competencies at different points - we were given conflicting information and there were organisational issues, however this was the first course of its kind run in this constabulary so there have been teething issues."

4. Description and introduction to different policing departments

Learning about different departments in policing, including the opportunity to expand their network, to develop career pathways and to better understand the bigger picture of policing.

"An overview of different teams and what they actually do. E.g., the difference between response and neighbourhood, and what I will be expected to do."

"An overview of the force, how it's made up, departments etc would have been good to get to grips with how everyone fits into the police family. Arguably that's part of the learning, but knowing what departments make up the force and what they look after, and geographically would help understand the role as a frontline officer better. (Especially those that are external). There is a culture of expectation to know things already, which doesn't help during induction and onboarding."

"More information of different departments. Would be a good idea to shadow a shift with CTC and FCR."

5. **Tutor programme**
   For those that didn't have a tutor, or had a poor experience, they requested to have a reliable tutor, as early in the process as possible, and for the tutor to be consistent throughout their learning period.

"Guidance. Previous officers tell tales of having tutors and guidance for months in a specific field. we get very little and have to forge our own path and not have the same opportunities as previous officers to develop."

"A tutor as promised, we shouldn't be told we'll get a tutor from the start when they know this isn't the case for all stations/shifts."

"I only got my tutors contact details very late on so felt very confused as to what I was doing and when I was coming in."

6. **Team building, opportunities to meet, face-to-face where possible**
   This was affected somewhat by Covid-19, but new recruits request more emphasis on team building, facilitating the development of relationships and to get to know colleagues in more informal environments. This was connected to building peer-support networks, and finding it builds confidence to work closely with fellow new-recruits and to have opportunities to debrief with people in similar situations.

"Meeting colleagues in less formal manner, to understand them better in less stressful situations."

7. **Buddy system or mentoring programme**
   For those that didn't have a buddy or mentor, they requested either programme, including an emphasis on personal welfare check ins, and the opportunity to debrief and ask questions to facilitate learning. During the focus groups, participants emphasised that they can't 'bother the Sergeant' or be 'brave enough to take the time of a Sergeant or Inspector' with questions they feel they should already have the answers to.

"It was a massive jump from going from being tutored to starting by myself on my response section, and I would've benefited from more conversations about what would help me with the transition."

8. **Balance between police training and university work**
   Including increasing awareness in policing, amongst tutors, officers and Sergeants, about the level of university work involved and protection of time to undertake it. Some felt the 'reflections' exercises were too frequent and unhelpful.

"I felt the whole process lacked support to learners. Protected learning for university element was grossly under provided resulting in rest days / evenings etc being used up to complete essential university work - meaning poor rest, recuperation and added stresses."

"The clash between the Force and the university was very disruptive and there was often a lack of clarity about what was expected from me and how to achieve this. My course is too fast-track and there is too much to complete in the allocated time. There is a fundamental lack of foundation knowledge due to the speed I have moved through departments and I feel as though I am set up to fail."

9. Longer rotations

During the focus group discussions, participants described the length of rotations with different departments, and highlighted the varied experiences across forces. For several participants they felt their rotations were too short, with some spending only two weeks with each department, whilst the average seemed to be 8 weeks. For many, across the focus groups and survey responses, these rotations could be 12 weeks or longer, to allow relationships to develop, to consolidate learning and to build confidence.

2.10. Overview analysis

Looking at the results by 'clusters', those that are generally 'satisfied', where their expectations were generally met, those with 'mixed responses' about different aspects of the onboarding process, and those generally 'dissatisfied', where expectations were not met, or onboarding activities did not happen.

By length of service
- New recruits with less than 6 months service were more likely to be 'satisfied', whereas those in role for 12 months or more tended to be more dissatisfied or give mixed responses.

By 'satisfied' new recruits
- 'Satisfied' new recruits, and those giving generally mixed responses, were more likely to have a mentor, and have had the opportunity to share any specific needs or preferences.
- Men were more likely to be 'satisfied' overall, whereas women were more likely to give mixed responses or dissatisfied responses.

By age
- Younger officers, aged 18-25, were more likely to be 'satisfied' or to give mixed responses, whilst officers aged 26-35 were more likely to be dissatisfied. Older officers, those aged over 36, were slightly more likely to be satisfied overall.

3. Conclusions and next steps

The consultation findings explored in this paper will inform the development of an 'Onboarding Map', to facilitate and improve the delivery of onboarding activities in policing.

Key messages from these findings include:
- Organisationally, policing is doing fairly well at managing IT, email access, policies and procedures, and could improve engaging with new recruits about their career aspirations and understanding different departments in policing.
- Functionally, there is strong feedback to make changes to training and the relationship between studies (both apprenticeship and degree pathways) and the demands of the policing role. Line managers could play a bigger role in the support and development of new recruits, through providing clarity in relation to probation, goals and objectives.
- Socially, there are inconsistencies in the terminology of tutor, mentor, coach and buddy – but the structure or name of the programme is less important than the clear request for ongoing learning support whilst in the role, reducing the 'cliff edge' of ending the tutor period, and providing clear and consistent peer support.
- Culturally, new recruits want to better understand the realities of policing before starting the role, to be introduced to partner agencies and the wider system in which policing operates, and to understand their role in the bigger picture.

The 'Onboarding Map' needs to include:
- Clarity about the activities that 'onboarding' includes
- Who is responsible for coordinating and delivering the activities
- When during the onboarding period these activities take will usually take place
- The different pathways for PCDA, DHEP and detective direct entry
- The different pathways, or opportunities, for those with specific or additional needs
- Sensitivity to the different experiences and expectations of new recruits, facilitating access to relevant support networks and peer support, for example to support women and people from minority ethnic backgrounds