



## **Mobilising for Change in Policing Learning and Development Outcome Report, Part 1 of 2 – Use of knowledge from previous collaborative research**

**Knowledge diffusion and use in practice: Ambition meets the change environment**

Richard Harding<sup>1</sup>, Liliana Belkin<sup>2</sup>, Keeley Watts<sup>3</sup>

February 2022

A copy of this report can be obtained electronically from  
[oupc@open.ac.uk](mailto:oupc@open.ac.uk)

The corresponding author for this report is Richard Harding:  
[Richard.Harding@open.ac.uk](mailto:Richard.Harding@open.ac.uk)

---

<sup>1</sup> The Open University

<sup>2</sup> Roehampton University

<sup>3</sup> Greater Manchester Police

All contributing authors were members of a research project team at the Centre for Policing Research and Learning (Open University) at the time the research detailed in this report was conducted.

## Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	2
1 Introduction .....	7
2 Methodology.....	8
2.1 Research Design .....	8
2.2 Sample.....	9
2.3 Analysis.....	10
3 Findings .....	10
3.1 Use and utility of the learning and development models, tools, and products .....	10
3.2 Revisiting the research questions .....	17
3.3 Inhibitors and enablers of organizational change .....	18
4 Discussion and conclusions.....	22
5 Provocations .....	25
6 References .....	26

## Executive Summary

### Background

- This research project was developed to extend earlier research into police learning and development functions in the context of the contemporary emphasis on education and learning within policing in England and Wales. The earlier project, the Implementing the Transformation of Police Learning and Development Programme (ITPLD) (2017-2019) developed a detailed overview of the attitudes and working practices of Learning and Development (L&D) departments and of the challenges of meeting the Policing Vision 2025 strategy (College of Policing, 2016) across policing organizations in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The programme co-developed a range of models, tools and products to support strategic and operational leaders and practitioners and to help them think about and configure their organizational and L&D functions to meet their future challenges. Outcomes and products were made freely available to policing organizations within the UK. More details on these and other products developed during the ITPLD can be obtained here: [Outputs | Centre for Policing Research and Learning \(open.ac.uk\)](#).
- The research questions explored are set out in Table 1 below:

*Table 1 - Research questions*

RQ	Description
1	Are the products of the ITPLD project being used by policing organizations and if so how?
2	What is the experience of practitioners in using the ITPLD Project products?
3	How do the uses of the products align and differ between organizations and what are the macro and micro contexts that affect this alignment?
4	In what ways are the products of the ITPLD supporting or inhibiting the process of organizational change both within L&D functions and more widely?
5 <sup>4</sup>	What are the key influences (barriers and enablers) on the change plans of L&D functions in policing organizations?

---

<sup>4</sup> This report sets out findings on the use and influence of the ITPLD products (RQ1,2,3 &4), whilst a companion report focuses on exploring the nature of the change environments in police L&D functions (RQ5).

- The ITPLD products featured in this research are set out below:

Table 2 - ITPLD products

Product	Description	Intended audience
Strategic Narrative	Sets out a theory of change for police L&D to meet the challenges set out in Vision 2025 drawing on the learning from the programme that was co-produced between the academic research team and policing practitioners.	Strategic and political leadership
For more information see	<a href="https://www.open.ac.uk/centres/policing/sites/www.open.ac.uk.centres.policing/files/files/MOPAC/Strategic%20Narrative%20Final%20Version%20Final%20V1_2.pdf">https://www.open.ac.uk/centres/policing/sites/www.open.ac.uk.centres.policing/files/files/MOPAC/Strategic%20Narrative%20Final%20Version%20Final%20V1_2.pdf</a>	
Destination Map	Provides a model of how L&D functions might be configured (a destination) to meet the challenges facing policing and its L&D functions, both from Vision 2025 and their complex strategic and operational landscapes. It also provides practitioners with details of the conditions considered necessary to achieve the necessary organizational changes.	Strategic and operational leadership
For more information see	<a href="#">Destination Map and Tools Techniques &amp; Resources   Centre for Policing Research and Learning (open.ac.uk)</a>	
Tools, Techniques and Resources	An online resource developed to support L&D professionals to engage the changing landscape of policing and engage and implement the model set out in the Destination Map	Strategic and operational leadership, practitioners
For more information see	<a href="https://www.open.ac.uk/centres/policing/sites/www.open.ac.uk.centres.policing/files/files/Tools%2C%20Techniques%20and%20Resources%20for%20Learning%20and%20Development%20in%20Policing%20%20%20Production%20V1_1.pdf">https://www.open.ac.uk/centres/policing/sites/www.open.ac.uk.centres.policing/files/files/Tools%2C%20Techniques%20and%20Resources%20for%20Learning%20and%20Development%20in%20Policing%20%20%20Production%20V1_1.pdf</a>	

- L&D functions are in potentially pivotal positions to influence wider organizational change, the questions examined in these reports seek to better understand their potential to undertake and support change within their wider organizations.
- Research was conducted within the L&D functions of five policing organisations across England and Wales, four of which had been participants in the earlier ITPLD programme and one of which had subsequently engaged with the research and its outcomes.
- Given that the ITPLD products had been co-produced between academics and practitioners and that the organizations in the study had either participated or subsequently engaged in the use of its outcomes they might be considered to be optimally positioned to translate this knowledge into their operational and strategic approaches and to disseminate, embed, and use it to effect change.

### Key Findings

RQ	Description	Overview of findings
RQ1	Are the products of the ITPLD project being used by policing organizations and if so how?	The ITPLD products have been used to a limited extent by a limited number of organizational actors (n= 9) who occupy organizational positions as strategic leaders or senior managers within L&D. The products have informed personal understandings and to a more limited extent organizational change planning. Noting the small sample size findings suggest that knowledge of the products and therefore their ability to influence thinking and use appeared to be limited outside of this group.
RQ2	What is the experience of practitioners in using the ITPLD Project products?	Amongst the limited number of organizational actors with knowledge of them the ITPLD products described as both useful and functionally applicable in informing their personal and corporate

		approaches to change within L&D. However, there are a number of factors which acted to prevent their effective translation from personal knowledge into embedded organizational knowledge and thus wider action to shape change.
RQ3	How do the uses of the differ between organizations and what are the macro and micro contexts that affect this alignment?	Across organizations similar factors were seen acting to influence the change environment, however, the contexts operating within each organization and its L&D functions meant that these factors acted in different ways the differing contextual environments within the individual organizations.
RQ4	In what ways are the products of the ITPLD supporting or inhibiting the process of organizational change both within L&D functions and more widely?	By being considered to have utility by those with knowledge of them they appear to have influenced individual thinking and to a much more limited extent change within L&D functions.

- The research identified that the ITPLD products are being used, to variable extent, almost exclusively by senior leaders within L&D functions to support change planning and delivery.
- The experience of their use by those with knowledge of them was positive.
- Knowledge of both the ITPLD products and the ways in which they might be applied to organizational problems was fragile; it resided with a few individuals, not organizational systems, processes and approaches, and these findings suggest that it was therefore vulnerable to degradation or loss if those individuals exited their roles or their organizations. The gap between individual and organizational learning and knowledge had not been successfully bridged.
- The ability to successfully use the ITPLD products by organizational actors and their ability to successfully plan and enact change was mediated through the actions and interactions of

factors that shaped the change environments of their policing organizations and L&D functions.

- These change environments appear to influence and shape the use of knowledge and the planning and delivery of change within L&D functions by organizational actors.
- A key feature of these change environments is the frequent need to focus on and reorientate activity towards short term tactical activity drivers which are often constituted as crises. This appears to inhibit the use of knowledge which supports longer term, more strategic change planning and the delivery of sustained strategic change.
- The resultant change environments both inhibit and support the ability of organizational actors, and through them their functions and organizations, to effectively engage and use externally generated, or co-produced knowledge, in the context of this research the ITPLD products.
- The prevailing demand and change landscapes, and their frequent shifts, appear to act on L&D functions and the actors within them to inhibit the effective use of externally generated, or co-produced knowledge.
- The prevailing demand and change landscapes, and their frequent shifts, appear to act on L&D functions and the actors within them appear to inhibit their ability to understand, plan and sustain change.

## 1 Introduction

This research project was developed to extend earlier research into police learning and development functions in the context of the contemporary emphasis on education and learning within policing in England and Wales. The earlier project, the Implementing the Transformation of Police Learning and Development Programme (ITPLD) (2017-2019) developed a detailed overview of the attitudes and working practices of Learning and Development (L&D) departments and of the challenges of meeting the Policing Vision 2025 strategy (College of Policing, 2016) across policing organizations in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The programme co-developed a range of models, tools and products to support strategic and operational leaders and practitioners and to help them think about and configure their organizational and L&D functions to meet their future challenges. Outcomes and products were made freely available to policing organizations within the UK. More details on these and other products developed during the ITPLD can be obtained here: [Outputs | Centre for Policing Research and Learning \(open.ac.uk\)](https://open.ac.uk/research/outputs).

This research project sought to explore how the models, tools, and products developed in the earlier research were being used or were influencing change and delivery activity in policing, and to explore the nature of the change landscape in police learning and development (L&D) functions.

The research questions explored are set out below:

*Table 3 - Research questions*

RQ	Description
1	Are the products of the ITPLD project being used by policing organizations and if so how?
2	What is the experience of practitioners in using the ITPLD Project products?
3	How do the uses of the products align and differ between organizations and what are the macro and micro contexts that affect this alignment?
4	In what ways are the products of the ITPLD supporting or inhibiting the process of organizational change both within L&D functions and more widely?
5 <sup>5</sup>	What are the key influences (barriers and enablers) on the change plans of L&D functions in policing organizations?

---

<sup>5</sup> This report sets out findings on the use and influence of the ITPLD products (RQ1,2,3 &4), whilst a companion report focuses on exploring the nature of the change environments in police L&D functions (RQ5).



To examine these questions, we conducted research within the L&D functions of five policing organizations across England and Wales, four of whom had been participants in the earlier ITPLD programme.

Whilst these questions guided our research approaches, the data and insights obtained from the research shed light on them and wider issues. This report therefore seeks to reflect both the specific and wider inferences derived from the research.

## 2 Methodology

### 2.1 Research Design

The primary aims of this research were to understand the use of the ITPLD products by policing L&D functions and the strategic change landscape in which they were implemented. It was recognised that the answers to these questions were likely to be influenced by internal and external contextual differences over a range of scales, from the micro to the macro. To meet these challenges the research design drew on three different influences:

- **Realist evaluation (Pawson and Tilley, 1997)** which suggests approaches that are sensitive to contextual and contingent influences
- **Learning from action research approaches** as the research was conducted collaboratively with practice partners and the intention was to provide iterative support to their practice and planning (see for instance: Lewin, 1997; Coughlan and Coughlan, 2002; Reason and Bradbury, 2008)
- **Implementation Science approaches**, specifically the Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (CFIR) which draws together a number of theories of organizational change from the implementation science literature into a single overarching theory to provide a 'practical guide for systematically assessing potential barriers and facilitators in preparation for implementing an innovation' ([cfirguide.org](http://cfirguide.org)), in this case the use of the ITPLD products. The CFIR helped to differentiate between internal and external factors that might impact on change.

These frameworks shaped the development of research approach and the design of the semi-structured interview questions, which were used to gather the data. To accommodate the breadth

of questions a two-interview protocol was developed for all participants with the exception of senior executive team members (NPCC member or civilian equivalent), who for reasons of availability and access were interviewed once using a modified interview protocol focussing on their strategic role. Interview protocol one focused on the use of the ITPLD products and internal change drivers and inhibitors whilst interview protocol two focussed on external change drivers and inhibitors. The senior executive teams interview tool drew on the content of the two protocols to create a single interview tool which focussed on internal and external change from a strategic perspective. Due to COVID 19 restrictions all interviews were conducted remotely using MS Teams. The research was granted ethical approval and all participants appropriately consented.

## 2.2 Sample

Policing organizations operating in areas in England and Wales who had previously participated in or indicated their desire to adopt the models, tools, and products developed under the ITPLD were the focus of this research. The sample derived from this consisted of five policing organizations, varying in size and complexity from small to large, and operating with both local and national remits across rural and urban areas across England and Wales. These represented a range of organizational histories, sizes, structures, and approaches generally and in relation to L&D. Two of these organizations shared a single collaborated L&D function but differences in organizational approach to L&D and change were discernible between the partnered organizations. As noted, four of these organizations had participated in the earlier ITPLD research project and one had subsequently engaged with CPRL regarding the use of the ITPLD research products. Since exploring the use of the ITPLD products was a primary aim the project a purposeful sampling strategy was employed to recruit organizational and individual participants from specific organizations and functions (L&D) across a range of hierarchical roles. In total N61 valid interviews were conducted with n31 participants. Data was obtained from police officers and staff across roles and ranks reflecting tactical and strategic positions within or having responsibility for L&D functions in each participating organization as detailed in Table 3 below.

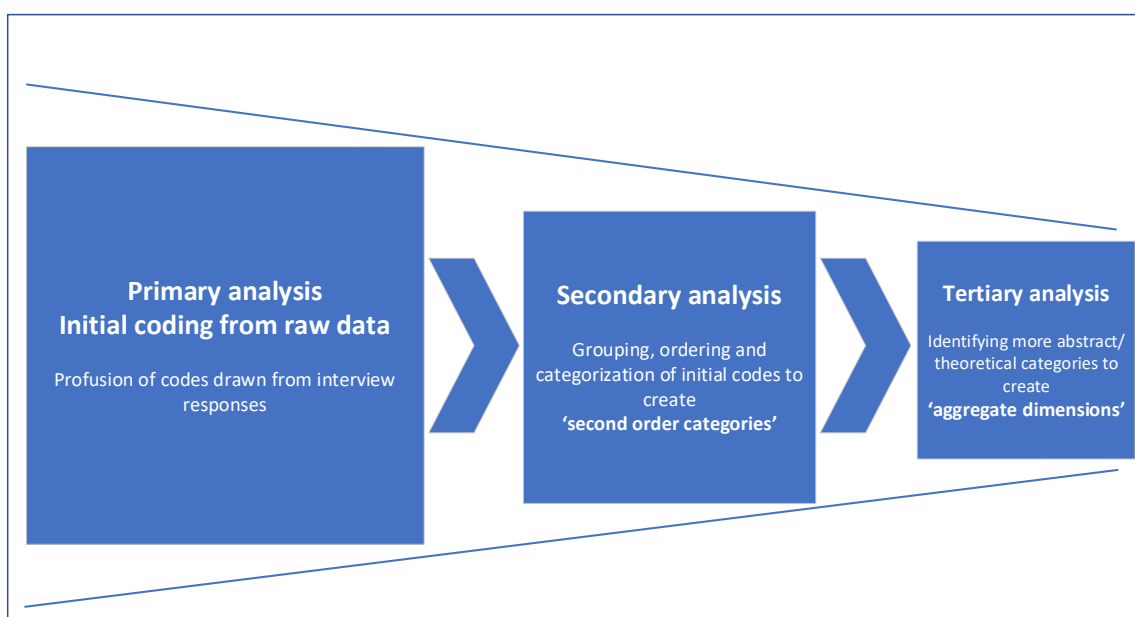
Table 45- Study Participants

<b>Participant</b>	<b>n</b>
Senior executive team members	4
Strategic leaders	4
Senior managers within L&D	5
Mangers and practitioners within L&D	18

## 2.3 Analysis

Interview data was pseudo-anonymised, transcribed and thematically analysed using NVIVO (a data analysis software package). Thematic analysis followed a recognised approach developed by Gioia *et al.* (2013). This methodology starts with the analysis of respondents' perspectives which are then used to underpin and inform the development of categorical and then more abstract theoretical aggregate dimensions (Gioia *et al.*, 2013), see figure 1. Both the thematic analysis of respondent data and the aggregate dimensions which were developed are used to inform the results of this research.

Figure 1- Data analysis following Gioia *et al.* (2013)



## 3 Findings

In this section we provide an overview of findings in relation to the research questions 1,2,3, and 4. On the principal of showing answers not workings out and for reasons of brevity and relevance the focus of the reporting of findings here is drawn from the outcome of the entire analytical cycle (the tertiary analysis stage) since this provides the reader with the final product of the analysis, rather than details of the intermediary stages.

### 3.1 Use and utility of the learning and development models, tools, and products

Knowledge might be acquired or transferred into policing from external sources, such as academia. However, there are a number of challenges to the successful translation and use of academic knowledge in both general and policing organizations. In this research setting the majority of the organizations participating had actively participated in the previous research which had created the ITPLD models, tools and products, whilst the remaining organization had adopted them as a model

to inform their change approaches. In these circumstances the participating organizations, and those actors within them who had been involved in the previous research over its 2-year lifecycle, or had subsequently engaged with it, might be considered optimally positioned to be aware of, understand, access and utilise the outcomes from the ITPLD programme.

Despite this 'optimal' knowledge of the previous research and its products appeared to be vested in a limited number of organizational actors who had had close engagement with the previous project either during or after its lifetime (n9). These individuals almost exclusively occupied organizational positions as strategic leaders or senior managers within L&D, operating between senior strategic leadership/ executive and managerial/practitioner level within their organizations. Strong evidence that knowledge of the ITPLD programme and its products had moved from the personal knowledge of those individuals into more organizational knowledge, institutionalised in systems, policies or practices was identified in only one case (discussed below). Outside of this limited group of knowledgeable group respondents, at both senior executive team or functional levels, displayed no knowledge of the ITPLD programme or its products.

*'Truthfully, no, but that may be because I see them branded as something differently. But truthfully, no.'* (830)

*'Well, I'll be honest, that's the first time I've first time I heard those terms.'* (921)

Whilst this means that the understanding of the utility and use of the ITPLD products is based on a small subset of the participant views (those that had knowledge of them) they provided a rich picture of their views and perspectives. The fact that this knowledge, that they, as leaders in their organizations, generally considered to be practical and useful in respect of transforming L&D functions to be more fit for their future challenges, was so little disseminated or used is in itself an interesting finding.

One of the reasons ascribed for this limited awareness of or engagement with the ITPLD research or products beyond the small group in leadership roles was due to those leaders' assessment of the relevance and complexity of the knowledge. Here they appeared to apply a knowledge relevance or 'goldilocks' test to determine who knowledge was 'just right' for. In the case of the ITPLD products it was generally felt that the products and associated knowledge were too complex and lacked specific role relevancy for either senior executive team or frontline delivery audiences. As such these 'knowledge holders' saw themselves as the 'just right' repositories for the knowledge and as responsible for holding and translating it both upwards and downwards.

One of the most immediate and common challenges to wider dissemination and use highlighted by respondents was the impact of repeated responses to major external change drivers which

manifested over differing time periods. This theme of reactivity to external change stimuli or crisis creating, often rapid, switches of focus was a common theme in the data. Such switches of focus and activity within L&D functions might be precipitated by the action of external, and to a lesser extent internal, change drivers such as the introduction of Police Education Qualification Framework (PEQF), managing the impact of the police uplift programme<sup>6</sup>, as well as reacting to such things as HMICFRS reporting, public enquiries (often constituted as crises) and changes of strategic and operational leadership direction amongst others. For instance, the COVID 19 pandemic had necessitated bringing the majority of learning approaches online, at a time when policing and its L&D functions were poorly structurally and technically equipped to meet such a change. There was a perception amongst respondents that the succession of change stimuli and crises effecting their change landscape was often, to a greater or lesser extent, both continuous and contiguous. Individually and in combination these factors appeared to inhibit the dissemination and use of knowledge, particularly that which might inform longer term strategic approaches, since, of necessity, focus was often on the resolution of more immediate and tactical challenges.

*'I have a lot of respect for pretty much every head of L&D that I've ever met. One of the things they all have in common is they're very reactive creatures, they operate in an environment where it isn't so much about what does tomorrow look like? It's what are you doing today, and how can we have more of them, and more of these, and more of these? And can you save me some money?'* (672)

This had a tendency to create a context where activity, from change to operational planning and delivery was reactive rather than planned.

*'We are still transforming, but we're transforming out of necessity and out and being reactive rather than being proactive and looking at the destination map and the things that we do.'* (949)

A further challenge identified to knowledge use was the issue of knowledge loss through knowledge holders organizational exit or movement from L&D. This was highlighted as one of the reasons that knowledge of the ITPLD programme was so concentrated and had not been more widely disseminated or utilised:

---

<sup>6</sup> The requirement to recruit twenty thousand additional officers into policing in England and Wales set by the Home Office

*'I've had quite a high change over in some of my managers who weren't part of that work [the ITPLD programme], and I notice a distinct difference in those that were with us at the time, and the new ones that have come on board.'* (949)

This effect appeared more pervasive, operating in other areas where knowledge of corporate change and approaches appeared to reside within individual memory rather than corporate memory, systems, policies and processes, as illustrated by this observation from a supervisor responsible for designing and delivering the PEQF:

*'I said to my boss, when I leave next year.....there will be no one who has any corporate memory of how we made all these decisions, and how we sorted that out, and how we did this.'* (716)

In respect of the ITPLD models, tools and products this effect was particularly felt in one organization where the head of L&D, who had led that organization's involvement in the ITPLD programme, had taken up a role outside the organization. Here their personal knowledge did not appear to have been translated or embedded into corporate knowledge, practice, or policy. In this case the newly appointed senior executive team member with strategic responsibility for L&D could not effectively access the former head of L&D's knowledge of the ITPLD programme. In these circumstances the knowledge of it, its products, their potential utility and the organizational investment in their creation was not available to either the new role holder or the wider organization. Indeed, the absence of awareness or knowledge of the ITPLD programme and the organizations participation and investment in it within the organization likely precluded any likelihood of curiosity about it. This change of personnel created a knowledge dis-continuity in relation to the ITPLD programme and its products across the leadership transition. This, combined with changes in L & D organizational priorities meant that knowledge of and the ability to utilise the ITPLD products appeared significantly degraded. It also had the effect of strongly inhibiting those remaining senior managers in L&D with knowledge of the ITPLD products who had been seeking to implement change based on them under the previous leadership from continuing on this path, since their strategic direction was now being constructed absent this knowledge. This highlights two factors that appear to represent significant underpinnings of knowledge management and use in the L&D functions of the organizations studied, firstly that knowledge does not appear to be transferred from implicit individual understanding to explicit, institutionalised systems, policies and processes effectively, and secondly that as a result knowledge is often fragile, in that it is subject to loss or degradation as it resides within individual memories rather than institutional ones.

More broadly the factors outlined above suggest that knowledge utility and applicability in respect of the ITPLD products appeared to be linked to the fidelity and fragility of individual memory but also, and perhaps more saliently, to the immediacy of the utility of that knowledge. Often knowledge that supports longer term, strategic thinking, planning, or doing may get 'parked' whilst more immediate problems are engaged. Just such an effect was reported by respondents in relation to their desired use of the ITPLD learning and products as they responded to the crisis precipitated by COVID 19. Given the reportedly continuous nature and often short-term focus of change imperatives this appears to make longer term, strategically applicable, knowledge more vulnerable to remaining 'parked', being lost by the exit of those holding it, simply not being used, or being no longer relevant to, for instance, post leadership transition or crisis landscapes. These effects may be accentuated where strategic leadership change occurs and knowledge continuity and change planning is not maintained.

In one organization studied a core group of strategic leaders and senior managers who had participated in the ITPLD research remained in post within the L&D function, and thus there was a degree of continuity of knowledge, experience, familiarity and approach. Critically continuity of the strategic leadership and individual memory appeared to play a key role in their ability to attempt to translate the ITPLD products into use. In addition, given their positions in the hierarchy of their organization they had the authority to set direction and signal what knowledge and which approaches might be considered valid. In this case they appeared to have begun to integrate and leverage the knowledge acquired not only from the outputs of the ITPLD project but also their experiences of participating in the research process, into strategic change planning. However, whilst they had begun to transfer their personal knowledge into organizational knowledge through plans and policies these had not been finalised, formally adopted or enacted as their plans had been disrupted by the crisis occasioned by COVID 19.

*'We have a learning transformation business case to transform the way that [Organization Name] deliver learning to the organization and the principles and the elements of that business case were pulled together probably 18 months ago was based on a lot of the work that we did [in the ITPLD].... I've got to be honest; the past year has thrown all of that completely out of the window' (949)*

Whilst the knowledge of, rationale for, and content of these plans and policies appeared to remain largely as personal knowledge within this core group the knowledge created by participation in the original research informed their thinking on change more generally and was seen a personally valuable.

*'By being involved in that project to start off, and now having access to those tools, and having used some of them, we've got a rich foundation for anything that we then want to go on and do.'* (672)

This suggests three things; firstly, that the experience of participation in the research, the utility of the ITPLD products themselves and continuity of knowledge and experience were factors supporting the use of the products in this case; secondly, that since the knowledge of the plans which utilised their implicit participatory knowledge and the ITPLD products resided exclusively within this core group it remained vulnerable to loss or degradation. This risk appears particularly acute if key senior knowledge holders who both held the knowledge and the organizational authority to set or influence direction, were to exit or move roles. Such a situation is illustrated by the contrast between those organizations where strategic leadership remained stable and those where it had not. Thirdly, that the maintenance of the strategic leadership and signalling of knowledge validity play a role in both individual and organizational knowledge translation, use and currency. Here currency refers to both its value and current validity.

Irrespective of the issues of fragility and currency it was apparent that demand and the finite individual and organizational capacity to meet it both amongst those who possessed knowledge of the ITPLD products and the resources they could access to enact change based on it often played a significant part in inhibiting knowledge translation, dissemination, and use. The action of these factors appears to work to constrain individuals' time, capacity, and space to think and plan were a common theme in these findings.

*'Honestly, you know I'm meant to be a strategic leader. For me, strategic leadership is about gathering information and understanding your landscape and thinking and visioning and strategizing, and the only way you can do that is if you've got time. Can I do that? Overnight in my own time, you know, in the shower, when I'm walking the dog, we all do that anyway, but that's the only time I get to do it..... it's a real struggle.'* (915)

Beyond these challenges to the dissemination and use of knowledge from the ITPLD programme there was also evidence that in some cases strategic leaders kept knowledge to themselves as a strategy to justifying their actions if challenged on plans or activities, and as a result had not disseminated it further.

*'The destination map is something that I have to hang my hat on. If anybody challenges, why are you doing this? I can say, well, I have it [ITPLD Products] in my back pocket. Now I have it too much in my back pocket at the moment..... in terms of people being receptive to it, there's nothing to be receptive to, 'cause I haven't socialized it.'* (915)



Whilst all of the strategic leaders and senior managers with knowledge of the ITPLD research and outcomes spoke positively of the potential benefits of and their desire to use the knowledge and products it had provided them with, this was more often expressed as an aspiration rather than as a function of actually having done so successfully, and it was clear that individuals understood the impact of the factors which inhibited their ambition.

*'Just having that aspiration [to use the products] doesn't necessarily translate into something purposeful, you know, something meaningful.'* (489)

*'I think we would be in a space, now, where I genuinely do think we would be in a space where we were using them, if we hadn't got kiboshed, March last year, with the pandemic.'* (672)

All of these factors combine to limit knowledge translation and diffusion by knowledge owners, in this case about the ITPLD products, across their teams and their wider organizations. This provides some insights into the limitations placed on the availability of sources of valid knowledge that organizational actors (in different roles and positions) have access to and/or have the capability or capacity to leverage to inform their understandings of change and action.

### **Key points**

- Despite 'optimal' positioning of individuals and organizations, knowledge of the previous research and its products appeared to be vested in a small number of L&D strategic leaders/senior managers who had had close engagement with the previous project.
- Despite these leaders considering the ITPLD products to be practical and useful senior executive team and functional actors outside this group reported no knowledge of the ITPLD programme or its products.
- One of the reasons for the lack of dissemination was that knowledge holders applied a knowledge relevancy or 'goldilocks' test to determine who knowledge was 'just right' for. It was not considered 'just right' for the majority of strategic or tactical operators and thus it remained within that small group.
- One of the most common challenges identified to wider knowledge dissemination and use was the impact of responding to the repeated effects of major external change drivers and crises. These tended to constrain activity, from change to operational planning and delivery, into short term reactive, tactical effort rather than longer term, planned strategic effort.

- Knowledge applicable to more strategic, longer-term problem solving and change is often ‘parked’ as actors deal with the immediate challenges they face. In these circumstances knowledge may not get ‘unparked’ or lost to the organization when knowledge holders exit their roles or organizations.
- Knowledge does not appear to be transferred from implicit individual understanding to explicit, institutionalised systems, policies and processes effectively, and is therefore often fragile, and subject to organizational loss, as it resides within individual memories rather than institutional ones.
- Even where attempts are made to translate implicit individual understanding to explicit, institutionalised systems, policies and processes the action of frequent external and internal change drivers as well reacting to crises appears to significantly inhibit the ability of organizational actors to do so successfully.
- Finite individual and organizational capacity amongst those who possess relevant knowledge and the resources they can access to enact change based on it often played a significant part in inhibiting knowledge translation, dissemination, and use.
- Some strategic leaders may hold knowledge to themselves as a means of justifying action if challenged.

### 3.2 Revisiting the research questions

These findings suggest that both the experience of participation in and the ITPLD programme products themselves are being used, by a limited number of organizational actors (n9) who occupy organizational positions as strategic leaders or senior managers within L&D functions. They appear to have informed personal understandings of change and to a more limited extent organizational change planning. However, knowledge of the ITPLD products and therefore their ability to influence thinking, and to inform change more widely are significantly limited outside of this group (RQ1), although the experience of their use by those organizational actors with knowledge of them appears positive. Indeed, they are seen as accessible and as having utility in planning change to reconfigure L&D functions to meet future requirements in policing (RQ2). There appear, however, to be often significant, functional, structural and actor created inhibitors to the wider translation, dissemination, embedding and use of the knowledge that the ITPLD products provide organizational actors with.

These effects appear consistent across and between organizations. However, within organizations the ability to utilise the ITPLD products and extent of their use, along with other knowledge to inform and enact change, appears to be mediated by the change environment operating within that

specific organization and its L&D functions. Importantly having organizational actors with knowledge and understanding of, and a desire to utilise the ITPLD products appears to be insufficient in and of itself to allow for their translation, dissemination, embedding and use in organizational settings and memory. Factors such as the stability or otherwise of strategic leadership and direction, operating environment, individual and corporate memory, as well as sufficiency of human capital, structural and policy enablers interact to create contingent change environments which might by turns support or inhibit the translation, dissemination, embedding and use of knowledge, in this case the ITPLD products (RQ3).

As noted the difficulties of dissemination, wider embedding and use of the ITPLD products appeared to originate from causes which were both a function of the effect of the wider change environment operating within a particular L&D function or their wider organization; for example actors with knowledge often lacked the capacity to use or socialise the ITPLD products more widely, but also intentional, as, for example, they often appeared to apply a relevancy or 'goldilocks' test to it; and thus in both cases their personally held knowledge was not effectively translated, disseminated, embedded and used in their wider organizational settings or memory.

Only one concrete example of the use of the knowledge derived from the ITPLD Programme to formally inform organizational change was identified. However even in this case attempts to do so had been significantly disrupted by the requirement to respond to the latest existential crisis shaping the attention and change agendas within L&D functions and their wider policing organizations. The ITPLD products appear to have the potential to support organizational change within L&D functions and their wider organizational settings, however, the ability of organizational actors to use them appears highly contingent upon the change environment that they operate and seek to enact change within. In the case of the ITPD products this change landscape appears to have largely functioned to inhibit their more widespread and effective use. The answer to RQ4 must therefore remain equivocal, since insufficient evidence of its effective use was identified to speak with confidence to this question.

### 3.3 Inhibitors and enablers of organizational change

Translation from personal to the organizational memory, dissemination and embedding are challenges faced by organizational actors wishing to use knowledge in organizational settings. Even where all of the challenges that might influence these processes are overcome there also appears to be further major influences on organizational actors' ability to operationalise the knowledge and products from the ITPLD programme. This relates to what this research has termed their 'change environment', which is the action of the factors that shape their understandings and abilities to acquire and use knowledge and which support or inhibit particular change or changes at a particular

time. Respondents across organizational role and hierarchy identified a number of common factors that supported and/or inhibited their and their organization’s desire or capability to use specific knowledge in particular ways to enact change, or indeed to plan or enact change per se.

An overview of the factors identified in this research that appear to inhibit or support change in police L&D functions and their wider organizations is provided at Table 5. Whilst these speak to answering RQ 5 they are relevant here as they also appear to act to influence how knowledge is valued, and used, accordingly this report would be incomplete without their inclusion.<sup>7</sup>

It should be noted that the effect of these inhibitors and enablers appeared to be contingent on circumstance and perspective (framing) which act to influence whether and to what extent a particular factor or combination of factors was seen as inhibiting or supporting the planning and delivery of change, and how in some cases, they might do both simultaneously. COVID for example, was viewed as both an enabler and/or an inhibitor depending on circumstance and framing<sup>8</sup>. In addition, particular effects were seen as potentially operating over differing timescales, with some acting to inhibit or support immediately whilst others created longer term and/or more tangential effects. Some of these factors are strongly related to factors seen to influence knowledge use and utility, particularly of the ITPLD products.

*Table 57 - Overview of inhibitors and enablers of knowledge use and organizational and functional change in police L&D function and their wider organizations*

<b>Inhibitor/ Enabler</b>	<b>Overview</b>
<b>Technology</b>	Respondents, from the strategic to the tactical, spoke of the challenges and barriers technology created to delivering change. In particular the complexity and slowness of procurement and change in policing technology (at a local, regional, and national level), that the often ageing and fragmented police IT systems were not compatible with newer software and technology solutions, and the lack of functionality created by the application of security policies.

<sup>7</sup> See the companion report which provides more detail on the methodology, analysis and findings in relation to RQ5.

<sup>8</sup> COVID created a crisis which lowered the usual organizational inhibitors to change, and it precipitated the adoption of online learning more rapidly than would otherwise have been the case and thus supported change aspirations. However, at the same time focussing on this crisis negatively impacted other change plans and the health restrictions created practical restraints on change activity. In the longer term the costs to the exchequer were seen as increasing the likelihood of further austerity in the future which would adversely impact L&D functions which would inhibit the ability to change in the future.

<p><b>Technology Policies</b></p>	<p>IT physical and information security policies were frequently highlighted as significant inhibitors to change and delivery, since they often prohibit and/or disable certain types of connectivity or functionality in policing IT systems. This impacts both the adoption of new ways of working, such as using online meeting platforms (e.g., Zoom or MS Teams), and the ability to use the capabilities of available technology effectively or in new ways. L&amp;D practitioners spoke of the need to use workarounds to get what was expected of them done, often using personal IT, in contravention of the organizational security policies.</p>
<p><b>Project Failures</b></p>	<p>Respondents highlighted the negative impacts of the failures of projects to deliver supporting technologies critical to L&amp;D change planning (e.g., learning management systems), either altogether or where the promised/ planned capability wasn't realised. A range of factors were identified from outright project failure, to anticipated L&amp;D related capabilities being deprioritised from wider projects during their lifetime, particularly learning management systems. In one case after successfully delivering a multi-year change and IT implementation project it was discovered that the planned technology wasn't compatible with the organization's wider IT infrastructure. This speaks to the wider challenges policing appears to have with delivering IT or infrastructure projects across a range of scales but also, and more specifically, to the priority placed upon L&amp;D functions when decisions are made regarding project change and scope narrowing.</p>
<p><b>Finance</b></p>	<p>The effects of finance arrangements and provision also featured prominently in study participant's views on supporters and inhibitors to change. Respondents acknowledged that proper funding supported their change aspirations, e.g., by supporting the provision of adequate resourcing, technology provision and training to upskill L&amp;D actors. However, they predominantly spoke of finance as a barrier to their change plans, both in absolute terms, they often felt they didn't have the funds to enact the change they were required to, needed to or wanted to do, and as a disrupter to planned or ongoing change, due to unpredictability and challenges in the arrangements for financial settlement and allocation in policing.</p>
<p><b>Human Capital</b></p>	<p>A range of factors, particularly the impacts of financial constraint and the relative prioritisation and perceptions of the value of L&amp;D impact on the levels of people, knowledge and skill resources, collectively 'human capital', available within and to L&amp;D functions. The availability and mix of this human capital was seen as creating</p>

	<p>inhibitors and enablers to change. For the L&amp;D functions in this study human capital had undoubtedly, and largely negatively, been impacted by the effect of austerity in terms of resourcing and finance.</p>
<b>Structural Fragility</b>	<p>Reductions of human capital have tended to leave L&amp;D functions structurally fragile, in that key knowledge tended to reside with individuals, and could be lost if the exited the function or organization. When initiating change organisations often appeared to rely on a few key individuals to ‘know’ what ‘the plan’ was and were therefore vulnerable to the loss or redeployment of those who understood or had corporate memory of those change initiatives or the underpinning knowledge. This fragility extends to the leadership of change, where with some exceptions, the change programmes, and initiatives encountered were largely conceived and driven by individuals rather than being embedded in the wider organizational, systems, processes or memory.</p>
<b>Leadership</b>	<p>Leadership at all levels exerts both direct and more subtle influences over the change environment of L&amp;D functions. Firstly, in order to be able to enact change most respondents considered it useful to gain the support of leadership, to both allow change to happen and signal its legitimacy. The more significant the change proposed the more important the creation, and seniority, of such support is considered. Support might be relatively local, the understanding of a line manager of what is being done, through to the engagement of formal project and oversight apparatus and the need to engage the executive level strategic leaders at a more organizational level. The explicit support and permission of leaders to contemplate and engage in change was seen as an important supporter of change ambitions. Leadership and its application are not however fixed quantities.</p> <p>Leadership activity was perceived as contextual and contingent; one person’s clear and appropriate leadership was another’s micro-management and disempowerment. Leaders’ leadership preferences and choices of style has effect and affect on those they lead.</p> <p>The level of human capital of L&amp;D functions was also often subject to another effect, the variable views of senior leaders in policing as to the relative merits and worth of L&amp;D as a function. Their differing perspectives and their resultant strategic and tactical decisions drive increases or reductions in L&amp;D resource and human capital over both longer and shorter time periods.</p>

## 4 Discussion and conclusions

Whilst the sample size is relatively small in this study the findings are consistent across the five participating organizations and with those from the previous, larger ITPLD programme, and thus some confidence in them appears warranted. The circumstances that were observed in the participating organizations suggest that their L&D functions have, are, and indeed seem likely to continue to exist within complex and contextually sensitive change environments.

These change landscapes appear to simultaneously support and impede organizational actors' abilities to translate, disseminate, embed and use knowledge to inform and undertake planned change at a range of scales from the routine to the transformational. Simultaneously, they also appear to impede the ability of knowledge holding organizational actors to successfully transfer their personal knowledge into organizationally embedded systems, processes, and policies and thus into organizational knowledge.

In the case of this research the knowledge in question had been created by co-research activity undertaken between academic and practice participants, and with the specific goal of having practice utility, indeed they had to be assessed as such to be signed off as outputs from the project. The ITPLD models, tools and products had informed policing's national strategic policy on L&D and each of the participating organizations had joined the research partnership and invested resource and effort into the delivery of the research programme. A number of actors from within those organizations had been active participants in that research and the creation of its models, tools and products. Thus, organizations and their actors had both access to and external and internal strategic 'permission' to use this knowledge. In many ways then this knowledge and the landscape it existed within might be considered highly optimally configured to allow for its successful use and translation from the personal knowledge of those who had first-hand experience of it to more permanent organizational memory.

However, the findings from this research suggest that these factors did not appear to materially influence the effect of the change environment in mediating the use of this knowledge. The consistency of the picture across the organizations studied suggests that these insights may be more generalisable, and more research to explore this possibility would be useful in testing this hypothesis.

The literature suggests that change in policing often originates from outside individual policing organisations, and clear evidence of this was seen in this study. For example the evidence

of the impacts on L&D functions of events and circumstances as diverse as austerity, force funding arrangements, COVID19, the imposition of the new police entry qualification requirements, and the perceived crisis around evidential disclosure practice align with the literature's view of change in policing being 'driven from the top-down and outside-in' (Hoggett *et al.*, 2013: 8), and by 'political cycles and politics' (Carter, 2016; Mastrofski and Willis, 2010), legislative changes, governmental reports and initiatives (Rogers and Gravelle, 2012), concerns about expenditure and funding limitations, and concerns about public safety and responsiveness from community stakeholders (Carter, 2016; Schafer and Varano, 2017; Duxbury *et al.*, 2018). However, evidence of change drivers originating within these policing organizations, notably changes in management and leadership at functional or strategic levels was equally clear. New incumbents in positions of authority, perhaps unsurprisingly, lacked the innate knowledge held by their predecessors and notwithstanding might be appointed to pursue different agendas and focuses.

More potential barriers to knowledge translation, embedding and use were identified than supporters. Noting that the strength of influence of a factor rather than mere numbers is the important calculus, here we saw that factor's inhibitory influence was often stronger than their supporting one, although, as noted, in combination the overall change environment acted in situationally contingent ways. Numerous structural, technological and functional impediments to utilising knowledge to realise successful planned change were seen to operate within and on L&D functions. In particular the challenges faced by policing in general to effectively deliver larger enabling technology projects was noted as a significant inhibitor, in particular to the creation of knowledge management systems and thus the capture and use of knowledge to inform change.

Respondents in this study felt that communication within their policing organisations was often 'siloes' which impeded the wider 'understanding' of change efforts by practitioners, as identified in previous studies (e.g., Fyfe, 2018; Abrahamson and Goodman-Delahunty, 2014; Kalyal, 2019) an effect that appeared, at least partly, to be related to the lack of time organizational actors had to communicate effectively as a result of the change and demand pressures they operated under. These reduced their overall communication bandwidth and meant they often had to prioritise what to communicate and to whom. In addition, particularly in the case of external knowledge, in making those prioritisation decisions they also appeared to apply a 'Goldilocks' tests of relevancy to choose whether and/or with whom to communicate or share or disseminate knowledge. We did see limited examples of the 'knowledge is power' (Seba and Rowley, 2010) effect, but broadly respondents spoke of their desire to communicate more effectively in an operating environment that inhibited their ability to do so. Even where valid knowledge was available, in the form of the ITPLD products



for instance, the change and demand environments appeared to act to mitigate against its effective use and dissemination.

These effects contribute to the challenge of translating individually held knowledge into more explicit and embedded organizational knowledge. However, that we saw knowledge of both practice and planning residing in a limited pool of key organizational actors suggests that, as a number of our respondents were clear, in their absence no one would know what they had done, why they had done it or how they intended it to be done.

Even without these barriers to knowledge acquisition, sharing and use, the evidence from this study accords with the view in the literature, that the limited extent of clear knowledge management (KM) strategies or policies in L&D functions and their wider policing organizations negatively impacts knowledge sharing capabilities (Seba and Rowley, 2010), but evidence from this study further suggests that they also severely impact the ability of policing organizations to become learning organizations (Blackman *et al.*, 2004) since they have limited means, beyond individual memory, to retain, institutionalise and leverage what knowledge they do possess in the future. The failure to implement and/or the absence of effective learning management systems in the organizations studied is emblematic of this issue.

Despite the challenges noted it would be remiss not to reflect upon the determination and desire expressed by organizational actors within L&D to effectively use external knowledge to inform and enact effective change to improve their students and organizations capacity and capability and the effect and affect delivered to the communities they serve; this was a strong signal in our data. Against the challenges of the uncertain change environments described in this report they do 'successfully' enact organizational change, as evidenced by their frequent resolution of the myriad of change requirements thrust upon them by their complex change environments. That this change is often reactive and focussed on immediate problem solving rather than longer term, strategic and evidence informed change is perhaps the critical point and suggests that the definition of 'success' needs to be considered. In these circumstances organizational actor's planned longer term change efforts might be likened to a small vessel in a storm trying to head for port, they are tossed and turned by the turbulent environment they find themselves navigating, it may be impossible to steer a direct course, and in some cases they may end up at another destination altogether or might be dashed on rocks or swamped. The determination and enthusiasm to enact effective change, despite the often-clear understanding of the challenges seen in this study suggests that in different circumstances the delta between L&D actor's desire to translate their individual knowledge into embedded and effective organizational knowledge and their ability to leverage it to inform and enact effective change might be lower than is currently suggested by this research.

## 5 Provocations

Based on the findings of this research we pose the following questions with the intent that they stimulate reflection, debate and, hopefully, action to improve knowledge translation and use and change planning and delivery in policing L&D functions, and perhaps more widely in their organizations:

- How might you develop more effective knowledge diffusion and management systems, processes and strategies that are not reliant on individuals but are embedded and common across function/ organization?
- How might you develop systems, strategies and processes to maintain continuity of knowledge and change leadership to sustain change through personnel transitions?
- How might you develop systems, strategies and processes to maintain continuity of knowledge and change leadership to sustain change in turbulent operational and delivery environments?
- How might you ensure that potentially useful external knowledge is identified, assessed for utility, appropriately adapted, used and its impacts assessed effectively?
- How might you better recognise value of L&D as a critical organizational function and capacity and capability enabler?
- How might you better focus and leverage organizational actors' potential engagement and enthusiasm for organizational change to greater effect.

## 6 References

- Abrahamson DE and Goodman-Delahunty J. (2014) Impediments to Information and Knowledge Sharing Within Policing: A Study of Three Canadian Policing Organizations. *SAGE open* 4: 215824401351936.
- Blackman D, Connelly J and Henderson S. (2004) The Learning Organization Emerald Article: Does double loop learning create reliable knowledge? *The Learning Organization* 11: 11-27.
- Carter JG. (2016) Institutional Pressures and Isomorphism: The Impact on Intelligence-Led Policing Adoption. *Police Quarterly* 19: 435-460.
- Coughlan P and Coughlan D. (2002) Action research for operations management. *International Journal of Operations & Production Management* 22: 220-240.
- Duxbury L, Bennell C, Halinski M and Murphy S. (2018) Change or be changed: Diagnosing the readiness to change in the Canadian police sector. *Police journal (Chichester)* 91: 316-338.
- Fyfe NR. (2018) Police Research, Evidence-Based Policing and Police-Academic Partnerships in National Jurisdictions. In: Boer Md (ed) *Comparative Policing from a Legal Perspective*. Cheltenham: UK: Elgar Publishing.
- Gioia DA, Corley KG and Hamilton AL. (2013) Seeking Qualitative Rigor in Inductive Research: Notes on the Gioia Methodology. *Organizational research methods* 16: 15-31.
- Hoggett J, Redford P, Toher D and White P. (2013) Police identity in a time of rapid organizational, social and political change: A pilot report, Avon and Somerset Constabulary. University of the West of England, Bristol.
- Kalyal HJ. (2019) Factors Affecting Resistance and Receptivity to Evidence-Based Policing Practices in Canada. <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/etd/6022>: The University of Western Ontario.
- Lewin K. (1997) Action Research and Minority Problems (1946). Washington: Washington: American Psychological Association, 143-152.
- Mastrofski SD and Willis JJ. (2010) Police Organization Continuity and Change: Into the Twenty-first Century. *Crime and Justice* 39: 55-144.
- Pawson R and Tilley N. (1997) An Introduction to Scientific Realist Evaluation. In: Chelmsky E and Shadish WR (eds) *Evaluation for the 21st century : a handbook*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Thousand Oaks, Calif. : SAGE.
- Reason P and Bradbury H. (2008) *The Sage Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice*, Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Rogers C and Gravelle J. (2012) UK Policing and Change: Reflections for Policing Worldwide. *Review of European studies* 4.
- Schafer JA and Varano SP. (2017) Change in Police Organizations: Perceptions, Experiences, and the Failure to Launch. *Journal of contemporary criminal justice* 33: 392-410.
- Seba I and Rowley J. (2010) Knowledge management in UK police forces. *Journal of knowledge management* 14: 611-626.