Rebooting the PC

Using innovation to drive smart policing

Martin Innes
Edited by Max Chambers

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Policy Exchange

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Executive Summary

Why we need greater innovation in policing

When Neighbourhood Policing was first introduced in England and Wales, many senior police leaders and experts publicly dismissed the idea, arguing that providing reassurance and focusing on the public's crime priorities would not cut crime or improve public confidence – with some adding that the policy was conceived by people who had no real knowledge about the front-line.

Now that it has helped to sustain record reductions in crime and is held up as a beacon of best practice around the world, the Neighbourhood Policing model is fiercely protected and promoted by senior officers, ACPO, the Home Office and all major political parties. It is, perhaps, the best example of a successful innovation in British policing.

The journey from conception to world-famous innovation (in policing circles, at least) was not an easy one, made harder by an institutional resistance to change and a cop culture that often sees promising ideas rejected because they were 'not invented here'.

This conservatism is understandable. The police often deal with situations and issues which can result in serious harm to victims, and so they can be understandably risk averse. And police officers are highly pragmatic, practical people who solve problems creatively every day – meaning that they are often happy to 'satisfice' with processes, kit or technology that are just good enough to do the job. This is best summed-up by the oft-repeated policing phrase, "we're not trying to build a Rolls Royce, we only need a Mini".

Innovation involves risk. In fact, it often requires it. So we should expect a degree of resistance from an organisation like the police. But with the growing social and financial challenges facing the

country's forces, there is no part of policing that can be immune from a re-examination of what has hitherto simply been received wisdom or accepted practice.

The focus of this report

This report is all about how to hardwire innovation into the structures and cultures of policing. It examines why policing can be culturally and institutionally resistant to innovation, identifies the 'engines of innovation' which can sometimes break through this inertia, demonstrates why embedding processes of innovation should be a deliberate goal of policy, and calls for the creation of new collaborative networks specifically designed to foster innovation.

Authored by police science expert Professor Martin Innes, the report also sets out why the time for focusing on police innovation is now – especially as the kaleidoscope of the police landscape has been shaken, with Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) getting to grips with their new roles, the Home Office taking much more of a strategic back seat and the new College of Policing about to begin its important work of spreading best practice and professionalising the service.

The kind of innovation we need

To provide examples of the kind of change we envisage, the report sets out a vision for developing Neighbourhood Policing during this challenging financial climate. Whilst some are raising the prospect of simply abandoning the policy because it has become unaffordable, we set out how policing should already be moving with the times and adapting a model which is now ten years old.

We imagine and recommend innovations to provide greater police visibility and availability, especially through taking a new approach to managing the police estate. The steps we outline would reflect the

changing nature of public interactions with the police – given that most crime is now reported by phone or increasingly online, many police stations are old and expensive to maintain, and stations are often located in the wrong places, away from key population centres.

Specifically, to bring about 'Neighbourhood Policing 2.0' we propose:

The introduction of single officer patrols in all but exceptional circumstances. This has been recommended by those designing the Neighbourhood Policing innovation for a decade, but has yet to properly materialise.

The introduction of the 'Australian model' of police stations, which would see a greater number of smaller stations, often co-located with shops on the high street. This might include organisations with the network, footprint and capacity of the Post Office, which can handle transactions hitherto reserved for Police Counters.

The possible introduction of a modern version of the Tardis police box, made famous by Dr Who. These would be technologically-enabled police contact points, featuring two-way audio-visual technology so that members of the public could communicate directly with police staff. They could be used to report crime, provide witness statements, discuss concerns and priorities, and access information.

Expanding the remit of neighbourhood policing teams beyond local priority crime and disorder issues. While a strategic decision was made when Neighbourhood Policing was introduced to ring-fence teams for local crime issues, this should be revisited. Officers should be far more effectively and seamlessly with officers focused upon other specialist issues to provide for a more joined-up, multi-disciplinary intervention. For example, this would mean Neighbourhood Policing Teams becoming more involved with tackling against more serious, organised and specialised crime.

Encouraging neighbourhood teams to co-produce community solutions with different groups of people, including in fighting radicalisation and terrorism.

Making it happen

There is an expectation that the new Police and Crime Commissioners will stimulate many small, local experiments in policing. But there is a notable gap in the national landscape for an apparatus with the capacity to help PCCs to identify the genuinely novel challenges, as opposed to solutions which have already been devised and tested.

We recommend the establishment of a set of 'Hubs for Innovation in Policing' (or HIPs), pursuing a different agenda from the College of Policing. They would occupy a different space from that of 'evidence-based policing' which is more directly concerned with testing the potential of innovations to go 'to scale'.

This small network of HIPs would lie outside of current organisational structures, such as the College of Policing, to 'cut through' bureaucracy, proceduralism and cultural resistance. Each HIP would be made up of research-intensive universities, several local police forces and their Police and Crime Commissioners, commercial suppliers to the policing sector, social entrepreneurs and voluntary sector agencies relevant to the wider police mission.

The mission of the HIPs would be to:

- Identify problems and challenges where innovative thinking and solutions are required;
- Design practical innovations to these problems and challenges;
- 'Talent spot' new innovations with potential for wider application;
- Conduct initial 'proof of concept' tests in respect of new innovations, to establish they are 'doing what they say'.

The hubs would be based in research intensive universities, providing a basic infrastructure to support research and development activity. These could be regionally based, at perhaps 3 or 4 universities with track records in supporting police reform, with multiple local police forces collaborating with each university. Basic levels of funding would be secured from three sources:

- The participating police forces would each make a financial contribution of the equivalent of one PCSO. So for example, that would give a core fund of approximately £150,000 per hub, assuming a five-force collaboration.
- The commercial partners would make a contribution to fund research activity, data from which could inform ongoing product developments. The academics would seek to draw down further funding from the research councils and European Commission sources;
- Each hub would generate additional income streams from the commercialisation of the knowledge and products that they generate. This might also include revenue from training activities.

1. Making the Case for More Innovation in Policing

"Doing more with less" has become a mantra for senior police leaders as they seek to reform their police forces as part of a broader response to reduced public sector spending. However, the problem with this way of thinking about policing in the age of austerity is it implies that police can respond to the economic challenges simply by 'sweating' their resources a bit more than they have done previously. It also suggests that what is being done at the current time cannot be improved upon, and all that is needed is simply 'more' of it.

If we invert this mantra though, and start to think seriously about 'doing less with more', a more creative and radical response can be crafted. That is, are there ways that police could respond less frequently to individual incidents, but with more impact? For instance, by preventing them from occurring in the first place. Likewise, if there are to be less police officers in the future, can we make them more effective and more skilled at dealing with crime and disorder? This involves moving beyond doing simply what we have done in the past, to smarter thinking about the police role. It requires innovation.

A case study of effective police innovation: repeat and vulnerable victims of anti-social behaviour

It is precisely the kind of thinking outlined above that drove an important recent innovation in the policing of anti-social behaviour. In 2012 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) assessed

the progress made by all of the police forces in England and Wales in terms of improving their response to victims of anti-social behaviour (ASB). They concluded "…there is no doubt that the police service has improved its responsiveness to victims of ASB since HMIC last reported on this issue in 2010, with progress made in every forces. The survey results confirm that victims have noticed these improvements."[1]

This finding is important: because it evidences a large-scale, cross cutting improvement, across all 43 forces; and because; ASB is a highly prevalent problem, causing a lot of distress and anxiety to the public, and consuming a lot of police resource (it is estimated that there are about 2.4 million ASB incidents recorded by police each year in England and Wales; and that only about one-third of incidents are actually reported). So improvements in this area of policing have the potential to positively affect the quality of life of a lot of people and produce significant productivity gains.

These improvements in the quality of policing to the public were initially triggered by an earlier report published by HMIC in 2010 that drew upon collaborative research between the Inspectorate and the Universities' Police Science Institute (UPSI) at Cardiff University. The University team conducted a detailed analysis of police data, HMIC inspection assessments of individual police forces, and survey data from a large number of ASB victims.[2] The UPSI research provided compelling evidence to support three major changes to the policing of ASB:

1. A shift from focusing almost exclusively upon the perpetrators of ASB, to considering the needs of victims, and 'bending' services towards them.
2. The adoption of a 'harm' based approach, focusing in particular upon repeat and vulnerable victims.
3. Identifying 'what works' in terms of improving ASB victim satisfaction and making sure all police forces used these strategies and tactics.

1 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (2012) A Step in the Right Direction: The Policing of Anti-social Behaviour. London: HMIC.

2 Innes, M and N. Weston (2010) Re-thinking the Policing of Anti-social Behaviour, available at ww.upsi.org.uk/publications/.

Overall then, what the HMIC – Cardiff collaboration provided was a 'conceptual innovation' for the policing of ASB. It set out new ideas and a new framework in terms of how police could approach and manage a large-scale problem. Importantly, it did so on the basis of sophisticated and rigorous data analysis.

The scope of this report

It is examples such as this that help make the case for why innovation in policing is critically important in the current economic climate. In this report, we explore the current capacity and capability for police innovation, engaging with three main questions:

- How have recent key innovations in policing policy and practice come about, and what can we learn from these examples?
- What potential for future innovations in policing are there?
- What is required to nurture and support a more strategic approach to police innovation in the future?

It is our view that whilst there have been several important innovations in policing in recent years, current and future opportunities are being limited by the lack of an explicit strategy or process for encouraging innovative thinking, and a defined channel for the translation of these ideas into concrete practices 'at scale'. The report sets out what needs to be done to ensure that policing is transformed into a service that continuously innovates and improves.

Police innovation in context

The drive to increase the appetite for innovation within the police is coherent with a number of other reforms taking place to the structures and processes of policing. For example, the introduction

of Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) in late 2012 was envisioned as being a way to ensure that the delivery of policing services becomes better targeted to local public needs and problems, as opposed to being micro-managed by central government performance measures. It is anticipated that, through their ability to commission local services, PCCs will be able to bring forward and test new ideas and approaches.

At the same time, the National Policing Improvement Agency has been abolished and replaced by the new College of Policing. One of the critical differences between the two bodies is the emphasis that the College is placing upon developing 'evidence-based' policy and practice. This is both welcome and overdue. Its implementation will undoubtedly support greater innovation, but it is important to recognise that the approach the College is developing will not in and of itself provide the engine for increased innovation.

As will be discussed in more detail in subsequent chapters of this report, it is a mistake to see innovation as a mere corollary of evidence-based policing. This is because the defining question for evidence-based policing is 'what works?', whereas for innovation it is 'what's possible?'. As such, the infrastructure for supporting and propagating new ideas (the focus of innovation policy), and for systematically testing these (the focus of evidence-based evaluation) are different. This is clarified by the working definition of innovation set out in the textbox below.

So whilst there are these very significant changes to the institutional landscape of policing, it is notable that there is no explicit strategy for police innovation. The College for example, states on its website that it will: "Understand needs in policing; Identify 'what works' in policing; Share knowledge and enable its use; Develop, maintain and test standards; and Enable professional development." Meanwhile, PCCs are focused primarily upon local areas and needs. The danger is that between

these two positions, without specific interventions, innovation falls somewhere in between them and there is therefore a clear danger that police innovation will be hampered at a time when it is badly needed.

A working definition of innovation

For the purposes of this report, innovation is defined as possessing three key qualities:

- **'Change'** – involving some alteration to methods, delivery or outcomes;
- **'Original'** – possessing some element of 'newness' in terms of the change introduced;
- **'Programmed'** – being purposeful with a defined objective.

In this respect, innovation is differentiated from, and positioned somewhere between, the related notions of adaptation, reform and reconstruction. Reconstruction involves a more wholesale and far-reaching change than is implied by an innovation. An innovation is more specific and defined in terms of the scale of change it induces. Likewise, innovation is distinct from 'reform' inasmuch as it suggests greater newness and originality to the change that is being introduced. Reform can happen by introducing an innovation from elsewhere, but it is then no longer genuinely innovative. To clarify, the purpose of innovation is to generate reform, but not all reforms depend upon innovation. To innovate is also rather different to the more passive notion of 'adaptation'. Policing organisations continually adapt and change as they respond to changes in the prevailing social, political, economic and cultural environment. But they also innovate when they are far more purposeful and deliberative in seeking to engineer a change in a particular aspect of how they perform.

In writing this pamphlet it is our contention that UK policing can and should act as a crucible for innovations in police practice and policy, and more can be done to encourage this. The nature of the emergent financial and social challenges that British society faces over the next decade mean the police service needs a step-change in its approach. For example, David Weisburd and Anthony Braga's case studies of innovation in American policing show how getting an innovative idea to alter practice, with a degree of permanence, 'at scale', is more complex than it might first appear.[3] It is also notable that Weisburd and Braga's book focuses exclusively upon 'grand' strategic visions of policing. It leaves untapped the potential gains that could be accrued from innovating in other areas, such as the out-sourcing of back-office functions, thinking about 'the police estate', or the implications of applying new technologies.

“UK policing can and should act as a crucible for innovations in police practice and policy, and more can be done to encourage this”

Arguing for more innovation does not mean that there have not been some important and significant innovations in policing recently – there plainly have. But our point is that the police institution has not got a systematic and strategic approach to innovation. For example, whilst the College of Policing has a clear commitment to establish 'what works', there is no unit with an express remit to encourage innovation in policing by coherently challenging established practice, or looking across other public services and industries to identify what new ideas, technologies or practices are being developed that might be adapted by the police.

So the purpose of this pamphlet is to stimulate a public conversation about the value of innovation in policing and what needs to happen for it to be main-streamed into the ways that policing reforms and develops itself in the future. Our analysis suggests the step-change that is required depends upon: a

3 Weisburd, D. and A. Braga (2006) Police Innovation: Contrasting Perspectives. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

deliberate and defined innovation strategy; inter-disciplinary, cross-sector units charged with developing innovations; and the shift to an 'R&D' culture within policing.

2. Engines for and Inhibitors of Police Innovation

This chapter examines the necessary and sufficient conditions for successful police innovation and identifies the 'lessons' to be learned from recent attempts in this area. It starts by defining the key 'engines for innovation' that generate creative problem-solving. This is followed by an examination of what inhibits such processes.

Engines for innovation

The evidence about fostering innovation, from both within and outside of policing, makes clear that there are several key ingredients that either support and enable greater organisational innovativeness, or 'kill' it.

'Skunkworks' – Learning from Lockheed-Martin

Arguably the most famous example of transformative innovation is Lockheed-Martin's 'Skunkworks'. This was the official alias for their 'Advanced Development Programs' unit that in the 1940s was responsible for developing the first jet fighter airplanes for the US Army Air Force. Since this time the unit has been responsible for a number of ground-breaking aircraft designs such as the U-2 spy-plane. The skunkworks reputation has been built upon rapid turnaround projects that resolve difficult challenges through the implementation of unconventional solutions. It originally got it's name from being sited in an area away from the main factory site, that was polluted by strong industrial odours.

However, the skunkworks concept also suited a particular way of working that prioritised outcome over procedure. Although sophisticated in its orientation, rather than being highly theoretically driven, it was about an essentially 'grounded' approach, and 'getting down and dirty' to grapple with the practicalities of a particular problem.

Skunkworks shows that an effective strategy for encouraging innovation depends upon getting both organisational structures and organisational culture right. Lockheed-Martin took the decision that, to solve problems differently, they needed to 'cut through' their standard operating procedures. This involved placing the team responsible outside of the company's usual processes and working practices, which was aided by establishing a degree of physical separation as well.

The emphasis upon culture is especially important. It is well documented that police occupational culture is quite conservative (with a small 'c'), but there are specific stimuli that can 'puncture' this resistance to change and create a 'space' where innovative ideas and practices are brought forward. Looking across some of the principal changes that have occurred in policing in recent decades it is possible to detect several major engines for innovation:

- Scandal and crisis;
- Policy initiatives;
- Practice entrepreneurship;
- Technologically enabled;
- Co-production.

We will briefly discuss each of these in turn.

Scandal and crisis

Quite possibly the key driver of reform and innovation in policing has been crisis and scandal. High profile visible failures have been a potent trigger for inducing change. For example, Savage (2007:12) concludes that: "Put simply, 'things going wrong' are forces for change and reform in policing."[4]

Police history possesses a distinct pattern wherein some of the most dramatic changes in police practice were preceded by mistakes, errors and misdemeanours. Cases such as the racist murder of Stephen Lawrence and the failings of the police investigation stimulated innovations in respect of Family Liaison Officers, as well as Independent Advisory Groups. This response to crisis as a cause of innovative thinking is also identified more generally by Professor Lawrence Sherman,

> *"Scandal is a mighty weapon…It can tarnish the reputation of an entire profession… . But it can also be an agent of change."*[5]

This tendency to 'reform by crisis' reflects how, as an inherently conservative institution, policing periodically struggles to adjust to changes in the prevailing social and cultural norms. Scandals and crises often arise when the standards of policing are demonstrably out-of-kilter with society at large.

Policy initiatives (aka the 'trickle down' model)

Policy-based innovation is a 'top-down' approach to change, often led by politicians and/or senior police leaders. A comprehensive account of the key policy initiatives in UK policing over the past three decades is provided by Steve Savage (2007) in his book on police reform. It emphasises how policy-based innovations frequently induce secondary innovations in behaviour and practice. A pertinent example being how officers 'gamed' police performance indicators around priority crimes, with officers focusing upon the

4 Savage, S. (2007) Police Reform. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

5 Sherman, L. (1978) Scandal and Reform: Controlling Police Corruption. Berkeley, Ca.: University of California Press, p. xv.

easier-to-solve crimes in order to keep their 'sanctioned detection rates' up, rather than concentrating their efforts upon the cases involving most harm to victims.

Perhaps the best example of a contemporary policy innovation in policing is the election of Police and Crime Commissioners. It is a measure that involves deliberate change and is original in its orientation, despite the claim that it has been imported from the United States. It is also a reform which is intended to foster secondary innovations.

Practice entrepreneurship

Policy innovations are often visible and high profile. But in terms of overall influence upon producing changes in policing, they are matched by a more 'bottom-up' form of 'practice entrepreneurship'. This refers to how police at ground level, can often derive original solutions to specific and situated problems which then go on to acquire greater traction. Practice entrepreneurship based innovation involves highly localised attempts to resolve a particular situation, being transferred and diffused more widely. It is the inverse of the policy initiative. As implied by the name, the defining quality of practice entrepreneurship is it is practically oriented, rather than being derived from abstract concepts and theories.

Technologically driven

Technology has become an increasingly important driver for change in policing. Across recent police history, the introduction of technologies such as the personal radio and patrol car are credited with having induced significant and wide-ranging alterations to the delivery of police services to the public. These are important examples because they also had several unintended consequences. For whilst they allowed a more flexible and responsive style of policing, they also increased the 'distance' between the police and 'the policed' – negative consequences that have only recently

been counteracted by the roll-out of Neighbourhood Policing. The overarching lesson about technology as an engine for innovation in policing then is that it has complex effects upon the wider policing system, often a mix of positive and negative.

A second concern with the role of technology in policing is the extent to which its potential benefits are not being realised. Forty years ago police technologies provided front-line officers with a real competitive advantage compared with the criminals that they were opposed to. This is often no longer the case.

Case study: The HOLMES system for murder investigations

Much police technology is dated, cumbersome and lacking in functionality compared with devices available in the consumer market. A case in point is the Home Office Large Major Enquiry System (HOLMES). HOLMES was originally developed and introduced in the wake of the failures identified by Lord Byford with the police investigation of the murders committed by Peter Sutcliffe, the Yorkshire Ripper. In effect, it is a set of linked databases that facilitate 'the investigation management' (tasking detectives with lines of enquiry and co-ordinating their activities) and 'information management' (storing and processing the results of these taskings) functions of large police crime investigations. Whilst up-dates and improvements have been introduced to the basic system, it is some way behind the state-of-the-art. Indeed, it is viewed as so cumbersome and resource intensive (and hence costly) to operate that many murder squads try to avoid using it for their investigations if they can.

Of course, not all innovative police technologies fit this profile. Some do work well and produce significant benefits. But the point is not all do, and police need to develop a better strategy for identifying useful technological developments, implementing them and managing their consequences.

'SatNav' policing

South Wales Police have been using the 'IR3' system to improve their command and control strategy, and deployment decisions. IR3 works by 'geo-tagging' officers and cars so that you can see where they are on a map, and therefore dynamically task them in relation to different kinds of problems and issues. Through implementing this technology South Wales perceive that they are accruing a range of benefits, including: a capacity for senior officers to know where all their front-line assets are on a 'real-time' basis; an ability to direct officers to set 'waymarkers' at strategically important locations such as crime hotspots; increased transparency in terms of when, where and for how long officers are visibility patrolling; and, when there are complaints from the public, being able to check where officers actually were. Steering and directing police assets on-the-ground, and layering a range of geo-coded data into the system, provides a good example of how harnessing new technologies can facilitate smarter policing, and to target resources to where they are most needed at the point in time when they are most impactive for the public.

Co-production

The final engine of innovation is based upon co-production. It involves police and non-police partners in co-defining, co-designing and co-delivering new ways of doing things. This could include other public services, the private sector or academia. Reflecting upon some of the 'big' new ideas in American policing, David Bayley (2008) posits that most of these have involved inputs from outsiders, rather than coming solely from within the police.[6] He identifies three essential ingredients to American police innovation: the harnessing of science and robust empirical evaluations; a focus on studying police behaviour, rather than legal frameworks and rules;

6 Bayley, D. (2008) 'Police reform: who done it?', Policing and Society 18/1: 7–17.

and the involvement of outsiders to construct a view of what needs to change, rather than relying upon internal police perspectives. Crucially for Bayley, senior police are enablers of innovation, but rarely the source of the new ideas, practices or technologies.

'Inhibitors' of innovation

The above are some of the conditions needed for generating innovations, but it is equally important to identify those factors inhibiting their development, diffusion and implementation. We have already highlighted one such inhibitor – the conservatism of police culture – but there are others.

In identifying inhibitors it is important to clarify precisely what is of concern. Given the nature of the police function, there are appropriate and justifiable constraints upon the appetite for innovation. Innovation involves risk. But policing often deals with problems and issues possessing a potential for serious harm to a victim, and as such police display an understandable risk aversion. This does not mean innovations cannot or should not be introduced in relation to such sensitive, complex and challenging areas of police work. Merely, that there are legitimate 'dampeners' upon the willingness to trial new approaches. In other words, not all areas of police work are equally suited to innovating.

"Given the nature of the police function, there are appropriate and justifiable constraints upon the appetite for innovation. Innovation involves risk"

Attending to the role of inhibitors engages a rather different set of issues though. Most obviously, there has to be a 'need' for doing things differently. In policing this often derives from crisis or failure, but can also arise out of industry innovation that creates a belief that reform is both possible and desirable. But it remains the case that there are many good ideas that do not go to scale – why is this? Wes Skogan (2008) identifies several causes: resistance from middle and

senior management; resistance from front-line supervisors and rank and file officers; resistance by specialist units and police 'unions'; competing demands and expectations; inability to 'measure what matters'; failure of interagency cooperation; public unresponsiveness; misconduct diverting pubic and leadership attention; reform failing to survive leadership transition.[7] This is a list that can be condensed into three key inhibitors: police occupational culture; the politics of diffusion; and lack of robust evaluation and evidence.

Police occupational culture

The lack of a culture of innovation or innovation strategy for policing is principally attributable to some of the fundamental tenets of the police institution. As Robert Reiner (2010), an incisive commentator on policing, has noted, being charged with the preservation and protection of the social order, the police service tends towards a form of conservatism.[8] This disposition has been repeatedly documented across a number of domains and results in a general risk aversion. Given that getting things wrong in policing often has fateful consequences in terms of doing harm to vulnerable people, there is an established preference for relying on 'tried and tested' interventions and practices.

The risk aversion of the police organisation is reinforced by some of the key values and norms of the police occupational culture. Research on 'cop culture' has noted it induces a general resistance to change and a scepticism that anyone but those with their 'feet on the street' can really comprehend what is required to deliver effective policing.[9] This is despite the previously noted evidence that many of the most important innovations in modern policing have involved an 'outside-to-inside' model of co-production.

The politics of diffusion

A different 'brake' upon innovation results from the tendency towards 'satisficing'. Police officers are highly practical and pragmatic

7 Skogan, W. (2008) 'Why reforms fail', Policing and Society, 18/1: 23–34.

8 Reiner, R. (2010) The Politics of the Police (5th edn.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

9 See for example, Loftus, B. (2009) Police Culture in a Changing World. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

in their outlook. As a consequence, there is a tendency to accept what is 'good enough' in their day-to-day work and a belief that 'if it ain't broke don't fix it'. However, in an age of austerity, relentlessly challenging established practice to see if it can be improved needs to be a key component of police professionalism.

A phrase often used by senior police when considering reform and one that epitomises what is wrong with many police attempts at innovation is "we're not trying to build a Rolls Royce, we only need a Mini." This conveys that they do not want to invest more than is necessary to get the task done. However, what actually tends to happen is that a 'patch' gets applied to the problem they are trying to solve, rather than thinking whether a lasting solution could be constructed that is transferable to other similar situations. The problem with 'patching' and arriving at inelegant solutions is that they tend to put the burden on the people. Policing is a people based business, and if an innovation isn't easy to use, then it will quickly be ignored, worked around or discarded.

A related issue in the politics of diffusion and scaling-up is what British police refer to as 'the not invented here syndrome'. This refers to how, individual police forces, but also sometimes different units within the same force, will resist taking on an innovation primarily because it is not locally 'grown'. It explains why the participation of outsiders is so important to innovation – they provide a way of cutting through local rivalries.

Testing and Evaluation

A final dampener on progress is the frequent failure to invest in rigorous testing and evaluation of promising innovations. Robust independent evaluation of measures with initial promise is often little more than an after thought in policing. This is unfortunate in that it can be critical in establishing whether the reform in question has wider applicability, or whether it is an innovation that does not 'travel' in terms of only being suited to a limited setting. It is a

mistake though to presume that good evidence in and of itself is sufficient for an innovation being taken on by others.

The difficulties in getting innovations to 'scale-up' and 'roll-out' is compounded by a broader failure to establish a compelling story of what needs to change and how the innovation in question will accomplish this. On first glance this is perhaps a relatively 'soft' and imprecise suggestion, but it is important. Police culture depends upon stories. In telling stories to each other about challenging cases and feats of bravery, officers are engaged in channelling an understanding about what attributes and acts are collectively valued. Providing a good narrative for a new innovation significantly increases its chances of diffusion.

"There are multiple challenges to be overcome, not least in thinking about how the occupational culture of the police might inhibit creative and original thinking"

Overall then, there are multiple challenges to be overcome, not least in thinking about how the occupational culture of the police might inhibit creative and original thinking. But this should not be a 'counsel of despair'. For in their day-to-day work police are problem-solvers. They are 'street corner politicians' finding ways to practically resolve conflicts and tensions between citizens. If we could channel this same ethos of problem-solving towards organisational design then that would provide the basis for police culture supporting innovation, rather than seemingly being opposed to it much of the time.

Modelling innovation

So, what is the process for getting a new concept, practice or technology into action? Successful innovations in police organisations tend to shift through three key phases of revolution, evolution and involution.

Differentiating between these three key phases helps map out the key elements of the innovation process. But what it does not

do is clarify the substantive type of innovations that are important for police reform. Based upon the review of the research literature conducted in support of this report, we suggest there are three principal forms of police innovation:

- ***Conceptual*** – a conceptual innovation changes how people think about and perceive the world around them. Changing the terms of debate by establishing new ideas and new 'ways of seeing' is perhaps one of the most impactful ways of innovating, but also the hardest to do;
- ***Social*** – social innovations effect change by re-ordering organisational practices or processes in some fashion;
- ***Technological*** – is where a new technology affords new capacities or capabilities, or significantly enhances existing ones in some fashion. In effect, the technology is an enabler of new ways of working.

In the next part of the report, we show how each of these types of innovation is involved in transforming the delivery of Neighbourhood Policing.

Summary

This chapter has identified the key engines and inhibitors of innovation in policing. Original thinking and problem-solving can and does happen in different ways across the policing landscape. In terms of the future agenda, we see particular prospects in relation to the 'co-production' of innovation. By partnering and collaborating more systematically with the private sector and with research-intensive universities, we believe there are opportunities to accelerate and amplify how innovative ideas are brought forward. The importance of these co-productive approaches to innovation and the reasons why they have a greater chance of success, is that

they can feed in fresh thinking, rigour and different perspectives to challenge some of the established modes of thinking of people embedded within the police service.

Three key phases of police innovation

- **Revolution** – the first requirement is to clarify the space for change and to define it. This is about the politics of reform and providing a narrative for change. In complex organisations, if an alteration is to gain traction, then it is vital to be clear about what it is that is to change. But preaching revolution is also important in being clear that the change is to be permanent and not 'undone'. If officers on-the-ground detect any trace that this is a whim or something that will not last, then they simply will not follow it through.
- **Evolution** – at the same time though, the process of implementation is aided by connecting any innovation with an established direction of travel. There is good research evidence that reforms that 'go against the grain' of police culture are more likely to struggle than those that connect with the base dispositions of operational cops. Establishing a sense of evolution with other more established practices increases the likelihood that an innovation will be accepted and gain traction.
- **Involution** – less well known than its conceptual cousins, the idea of involution refers to a process of increasing internal detail and complexity. The relevance of this to thinking about the process of police innovation is that it acknowledges the importance of allowing any initiative to be tailored to local needs and circumstances. Trying to micro-manage an innovation and ensure it is implemented in exactly the same form in all areas will reduce its overall efficacy. Successful innovation requires a degree of 'bending' and 'moulding' to local circumstances, whilst maintaining fidelity to the essence of the reform.

3. Opportunities for Innovation: Neighbourhood Policing v2.0

Neighbourhood Policing (NP) is an example of how innovations can go to scale and fundamentally change the delivery of policing services to the public. In under five years, NP went from a local experiment focusing on developing a more systematic Community Policing methodology, to providing a national platform for the delivery of local policing across England and Wales.

Notwithstanding this success, the current state of NP also evidences some of the problems with the current state of innovation in the police that have been rehearsed above – in particular, the lack of an 'R&D' culture to systematically underpin and field test innovations. The result is that some of the basic processes and systems originally introduced as part of NP have not been adapted to take account of a changed economic context. There is a consequent danger that a temptation arises to 'ditch' NP on the grounds that it cannot be afforded, rather than thinking about opportunities for its 'smarter' delivery.

In this chapter we identify several ways in which specific innovations could be introduced into the standard operating procedures of NP to enhance its contribution to neighbourhood security and community well-being. The focus is upon:

1. Police visibility and police stations.
2. Using Neighbourhood Policing assets to tackle a wider range of problems.
3. Developing community co-production of social control.

These three opportunities for innovation also capture the conceptual, social and technological modes of innovating identified previously. The chapter starts by briefly describing NP's key processes. This is followed by an analysis of each of the opportunities for innovation, together with the issues they address.

Neighbourhood policing: the story of a successful innovation

Neighbourhood Policing is a variant of community policing. Its key innovation compared with earlier versions of community policing was to develop a more structured and systematic approach to community engagement and delivering local policing services, reflecting a significant body of research critiquing the community policing tradition for its 'loose' conceptual and operational formulation.[10]

Most of the key processes and systems associated with NP were originally designed and tested as part of the National Reassurance Policing Programme (NRPP). The NRPP was originally conceived as a response to the identification of what was labelled 'the reassurance gap'. This gap reflected how, although recorded crime had been falling since around 1995, research showed public perceptions were not tracking these changes. Reflecting a long held view within British policing (traceable back to Robert Peel's founding principles) that public perceptions and attitudes matter, it was decided to launch a major programme to try and do something about this issue. Importantly, in light of the analysis in the previous chapter, this was a co-produced programme involving researchers and police in direct collaboration.

The initial work in two wards in Surrey and South London, involved a small team of researchers and police officers interviewing residents about their experiences and perceptions of crime, disorder and policing. This demonstrated that the issues animating the public were not the police's typical priorities. The research evidence was

10 For example, see Herbert, S. (2006) Citizens, Cops and Power: Recognising the Limits of Community. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

used to configure an alternative operational model, informed also by elements of the Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy.

The results of the Surrey/Met pilot were sufficiently promising that a decision was taken by the Association of Chief Police Officers and the Home Office to launch a major programme across 16 wards in 8 police force areas. This included significant research investment to design a structured and systematic approach to delivering policing services, pivoting around three key principles:

- Visible, accessible, familiar and effective police presence;
- Regular and structured community engagement to identify the signal crimes and disorders in the area that were changing how local people, thought, felt and acted in relation to their neighbourhood security;
- Seeking to co-produce solutions to publicly defined problems with statutory partners and communities themselves.

The Home Office evaluation established that implementing this approach reduced fear of crime and crime victimisation.[11] Based upon this evidence of impact, a decision was taken by the then Labour government to roll-out Neighbourhood Policing to all areas of England and Wales. This was achieved by 2008.

This is a success story, and there is good reason to believe that NP has made an important contribution to ongoing reductions in crime and increased public confidence in the police in recent years. However, what has not been commented upon is that key components of the model of NP rolled out nationally were less disciplined, systematic and weaker than its quasi-experimental forerunner, particularly in respect of community engagement processes.

This reflects police 'satisficing'. It also highlights the value of co-production, as it introduces ways of doing things that would not be naturally selected by police themselves (as we will discuss

11 Tuffin, R., et al. (2006) The National Reassurance Policing Programme: A six site evaluation. London: Home Office.

in more detail later). But what it does mean is that not all the benefits potentially accruable through the implementation of a national system of Neighbourhood Policing have been realised. As a consequence, there remain significant opportunities to innovate within the broad framework provided by NP.

Police visibility and police stations

Reassurance Policing demonstrated conclusively that police visibility matters to the public. The research provided robust evidence that public confidence in the police is strongly influenced by levels of uniformed police presence. Informed by this evidence, the NRPP research team advocated as early as 2003 that, except in exceptional circumstances, all forces should move to a policy of single officer patrols – albeit it seems to have taken several years for this to be picked up. Given that the evidence for the importance of police visibility is so strong, it is perhaps surprising that similar logics have not been applied more widely.

For example, around the country there has been uproar whenever Chief Constables or PCCs suggest they might want to close some police stations, because: many are not visited very much by the public (most crime is reported by phone); many stations are now getting old and increasingly expensive to maintain; and that they are often located in the wrong places, away from key population centres. Local people, however, tend to remain unswayed by these kinds of arguments. For them, the suggestion that their local police station might be closed is interpreted as a signal they will receive less policing.

In the current financial climate, it is clear that Police and Crime Commissioners will not be able to duck these issues. PCCs will be concerned with making the police more user-friendly, whilst balancing the books. Managing the police estate in a 'smarter' fashion will undoubtedly feature in this. So rather than just thinking

about 'closing' police stations, it might be more productive to engage local people in conversations about replacing out-dated police stations with more local police offices. This would be in keeping with the general trajectory of development of NP and these offices could even serve as operational bases for local Neighbourhood Policing teams.

So how should they proceed? One possibility might be by importing an Australian innovation where they have a network of police offices spread throughout towns and cities. These look a lot like the local shops that they are co-located with and provide contact points for the public in terms of accessing policing services. So rather than the British approach of having a small number of relatively large police stations, the Australian system is predicated on lots of smaller police offices. This is similar to the approach about to be trialled by the Metropolitan Police, which is planning to put a number of services (especially front counter services) into Post Offices in a number of London boroughs.

"Rather than just 'closing' police stations, it might be more productive to engage local people in conversations about replacing out-dated stations with more local police offices"

Moves to put front counter services into local shops and offices reflect the changing nature of public/police engagement. Reporting a crime is one of a few things that can be done at a front counter and in London, this accounts for just 11 per cent of all visits. According to the same survey, the most common reason for visiting a front counter was to report or hand in lost property which is nearly 20 per cent of activity at front counters. 12 per cent of people visit front counters to seek general information or simply to ask directions. Over a third of visitors have been generated by the police or the criminal justice system, such as those responding to bail or providing documents.

The dramatic decline in front counter use means that some of them see fewer than 7 visitors every day.

Case study: Embedding front counter police services into local Post Offices

The Post Office is in discussion with around 10 police forces, including the Metropolitan Police, concerning taking on high volume, administrative front office counter tasks. Back office processing would still be done by the force involved, with police staff or officers making key decisions (e.g. evaluating a firearm licence application).

Post Office branches undertake a range of transactions on behalf of government departments and agencies encompassing identity verification, application processing and payments (in-bound and out-bound). For example, they process applications for vehicle road licenses, driving licence renewals, passports and enrolment for biometric residence permits.

Many of the transactions undertaken at police front counters are similar to those already undertaken over Post Office counters. For example, vehicle prohibition checks require MOT and insurance documents to be checked; firearm licence applications require a photograph to be provided as well as a fee to be taken. Several transactions, such as subject access requests, require verification of identity (something routinely undertaken at many Post Office branches).

The interest being shown by various police forces in using the Post Office is driven by the opportunity to both significantly reduce costs and increase access. Post Office branches are visited by around 20m people every week, making its 'per transaction' cost far lower than police stations. At the same time, the customer journey is improved – with 99% of the public living within 3 miles of a Post Office branch (rising to 1 mile in urban deprived areas), using the Post Office will mean the public has far less distance to travel in order to do the higher volume, more routine tasks they'd normally have to do at a police front counter.

There are a number of advantages with the Australian approach – not least because it is a way of increasing visibility and making the police more accessible. Police services can be located in the places and spaces that the public actually use today – such as shopping centres or on the high street.

Case study: Contact points in London

The Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) recently published a strategy for increasing public access to the police in London.[12]

One part of the strategy is the commitment to open 94 new Contact Points – locations for non-urgent face-to-face contact, where the public meet members of their local safer neighbourhood teams. They will be open at regular, advertised times, with a minimum core offer of 3 hours a week, although local officers will be free to extend these hours if they think there is demand in the community.

Many of these Contact Points will be in existing police buildings, such as safer neighbourhood bases or police stations, but MOPAC has also been working with boroughs and other services to identify options where they can co-locate. For example, in Hounslow, Southwark and Westminster we are planning to open Contact Points at local libraries, and in Enfield, Richmond and Wandsworth talks are taking place with local supermarkets.

This line of thinking could be extended to the possibility of re-introducing a modern version of the 'Tardis' police box made famous by Dr Who. These could be technologically enabled police contact points, featuring two-way audio-visual technology that would allow people to communicate directly with police staff online, without having to be physically co-present. These would be used to report crime and anti-social behaviour, to provide witness statements, discuss local concerns and priorities, and access information.

12 Policing and Public Access in London, Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime, March 2013 http://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Policing%26PublicAccess%20UPLOAD.pdf.

They could be sited in shopping centres, hospitals, even large office blocks, and any other locations where the public spend a lot of time. Rotterdam Police Force already uses modern, technology-enabled contact points, complete with 3D 'virtual police officers' for engaging with the public.

Going one-step even further, police could experiment with developing 'online police stations'. That is, rather than the corporate services type web-sites most police forces currently have, moving to a web-presence that replicates the functions provided at a proper police station.

Police and Crime Commissioners are going to want to make the police more user-friendly, whilst balancing the books. Managing the police estate in a 'smarter' fashion will undoubtedly feature in this. So rather than just thinking about 'closing' police stations, it might be more productive to engage local people in a conversation about replacing out-dated police stations with more locally-embedded police offices and services. This would be in keeping with the general trajectory of development of NP and these offices could serve as operational bases for local Neighbourhood Policing teams.

Community intelligence-led policing: using NP more widely

When establishing the neighbourhood based approach, a strategic policy decision was taken to 'ring-fence' NP officers to ensure they maintained a focus upon local public priorities and local policing issues. The fear amongst senior officers was, that without this, it would be too easy for NP teams to be 'extracted' to deal with other situations and emergencies. This would corrode the opportunities for establishing a consistent local policing presence upon which the public could rely. The problem is however, that things have not moved on. Whilst the original reasons for establishing this approach were undoubtedly valid, in terms of the future of NP, it is now an

appropriate point at which to revisit this approach. In particular, it seems important to explore the opportunities for applying the knowledge and skills of NP teams against a wider range of problems than has previously been the case.

In Cardiff, some interesting work exploring the connectivity between neighbourhood problems and serious organised crime has been undertaken, which suggests ways that the 'street-level' knowledge built up NP teams can be usefully harnessed by policing teams concerned with other issues.

During 2008 and 2009, the Cardiff NP teams were engaged in a community engagement process designed to identify public priorities for local policing. This was enabled by a technological innovation that allowed officers to collect detailed knowledge and perception data from members of the public in such a way that it could be rapidly aggregated to produce a view of the collective risks and threats in a local area. During the course of one series of face-to-face engagements, community intelligence was elicited from members of the public about the signs of drug use and drugs markets in a particular neighbourhood. When this community intelligence was passed to the Detective Inspector (DI) he tasked an analyst to check what was known about drugs in this area on the police's intelligence databases. This revealed that police were not aware of any drugs market in that part of the city, despite the concerns expressed by local citizens via their engagements with the NPT.

Responding to these community concerns, the DI and his colleagues established 'Operation Michigan'. In the first phase of work, covert police assets were deployed to gather intelligence on drugs activity in the local area. When it was established that there was a fairly open drugs market in operation, specialist 'Test Purchase' officers with cameras were placed in the local area to map the market dynamics and dealers. The particularly innovative aspect of this Operation was what happened next. The footage from the

cameras was then presented to the local neighbourhood policing officers who, using their street knowledge, named many of the individuals concerned.

The police operation subsequently entered an enforcement phase resulting in:

- 184 individuals arrested for Class A drug supply. 110 were identified from the covert deployments at a cost of approximately £2,000 per dealer. The other 74 arrests came from overt disruptions and community intelligence.
- Prison sentences totalling 200 years were set by the courts;
- Six kilos of heroin, crack and cocaine were seized;
- A 36 per cent reduction in serious acquisitive crime in the target areas;
- 25% reduction in anti-social behaviour.[13]

In addition, more informal feedback from local communities provided important insights into the potential benefits of these ways of working. Some of the individuals arrested and sentenced were previously seen as 'untouchable' and beyond reach. The fact that police were seen to have tackled these prominent individuals is credited as supplying a boost to public confidence.

Building upon this success, during 2011, South Wales repeated the approach with the community intelligence generated resulting in: a further 8 positive arrest warrants; a male with a significant criminal career arrested for intent to supply Cannabis; £7000 worth of Cannabis seized in other arrests; man arrested in possession of £2000 cash and substantial amounts of Cannabis and Cocaine. The intelligence generated underpinning these results was derived from an investment of 220 hours of PCSO time spent interviewing and engaging with members of the public. This compares favourably with the levels of expenditure involved in more established forms of covert intelligence gathering.

13 All figures supplied from South Wales Police's 'results analysis'.

Operation Michigan illuminates the untapped potential within NP. Moreover, it demonstrates how connecting neighbourhood policing and more specialist policing assets can deliver interventions with an impact multiplier effect. So much of the good work that police do in tackling serious and organised crime remains comparatively hidden from public view, with the consequence that it does little to shape public confidence. Michigan shows how a structured engagement process of working with the local community can identify public problems, and how carefully using specialist policing assets can enhance the impact of police action in ways that are visible and meaningful to citizens. This builds public confidence and can reduce street crime. It is an important example in challenging two conventions that are fairly prevalent in some sections of the police: that serious organised crime problems can only be tackled in a 'top-down' way; and the public don't really care about serious organised crime (SOC) issues. The Michigan approach shows the public pick up on the symptoms of SOC and if police can diagnose the correct cause, then by localising assets, it is possible to impact upon SOC in a way that also improves public confidence.

Using police assets locally in this way appears to have been missing from the toolkit applied by the Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA). At the moment it remains an isolated innovation with potential for much wider application.

Developing community co-production of social control

In Birmingham, counter-terrorist officers delivering the prevent programme, have appropriated techniques originally developed for NP and employed them to challenge Al-Qaeda inspired extremist groups in the area. The innovative aspect of their approach is the use of interventions that are co-produced between the police and local Muslim communities. In particular, during a fieldwork based study

commissioned by ACPO, several examples of police mobilising local community groups to take the lead in opposing and challenging extremists were observed.[14]

Traditionally, counter-terrorism work has been conducted in a clandestine fashion. In Birmingham they re-thought this. Rather than working in plain-clothes, the prevent teams were re-cast as uniformed officers and were told to be open with the public about their counter-terrorism role. The logic being that the work was legitimate police business and as a consequence it should be publicly presented as such. They also sought to ensure that ongoing processes and structures of engagement were put in place to avoid the perception within the community that the Counter-Terrorism Officers would just get what they needed and then fade into the background again. What the local officers did was to build a web of contacts, managed in a deliberate and careful way, as described by a female officer who was pivotal in its inception,

“The police established a channel of communication that local communities could use if they had any concerns or suspicions, rather than just going in brazenly asking for intelligence”

> *“We never ask any of our contacts to give us intelligence, we'd never task them…however if you have something…”* (Police, 2659-15)

In effect, the police established a channel of communication that local communities could use if they had any concerns or suspicions, rather than just going in brazenly asking for intelligence.

Over time, this approach improved community perceptions and attitudes. It would be misleading to over-state what it achieved – no better than grudging acceptance within the Muslim communities that this was a necessary aspect of police activity. But this was better than open hostility and was sufficient to result in some innovative interventions being implemented when police

14 A full account of the research and its findings is available in Innes et al. (2011) Assessing the Effects of Prevent Policing. London: ACPO.

intelligence identified a group of known extremists operating in the area trying to radicalise vulnerable young people.

The essence of the problem from the police's point of view was that, although the actions of the group were undesirable and likely harmful, it was not clear that they were breaking any law. As such, any formal move against the group risked providing them with propaganda about heavy-handed policing and the 'oxygen' of publicity. Consequently, as described by one of the senior police officers involved, by mutual agreement the police and local community groups arrived at a co-produced solution,

> *The community was saying we are going to 'front' this guy and our line was we'll support you. Because by that time we had explored the prosecution option and there was nothing really on the table."* (Police, 451)

At the same time, the police, with the agreement and help of the community, began disrupting the venues where the leader of the group planned to give evening talks,

> *"The community was telling the venues he was booking under different names. We disrupted the first one on the night dynamically, but then phoned round all the others and without any pressure from us they cancelled. So not only was he being approached on the street, he was turning up at venues and being told, look here's your money back. We haven't seen him for months."* (Police, 451)

This provides a good example of social innovation in practice. The police altered their way of working to harness the informal social control capacity present within the community, enabling design of a smarter solution.

The latter quotation in particular describes a social innovation that could have much wider applicability. For example, in an area with high levels of anti-social behaviour related to young people

being drunk and disorderly, it would seem entirely appropriate for the local community to work together with the police to identify the local shops who are supplying the alcohol, and reminding the proprietors of their responsibility to the local community, with a sanction of withdrawing their custom if compliance is not forthcoming.

More generally, the case study of prevent policing demonstrates the value of being willing to question and challenge received orthodoxies. Traditionally, specialist policing tasks such as counter-terrorism have been assumed to require covert approaches, and there will undoubtedly always be aspects of such work that have to be kept in the shadows. But for the purposes of public confidence, public accountability and transparency it does seem beneficial to try and minimise such clandestine practices to where they are absolutely necessary, as opposed to simply being preferred or easier. Taken together with the example from Cardiff of tackling serious organised crime from the bottom-up, there does appear to be some potential for thinking about how some aspects of policing could be delivered rather differently in future.

Summary

Neighbourhood Policing exemplifies the benefits of innovative thinking and the willingness to act upon original concepts, practices and technologies. However, it also illustrates the need to institutionalise a culture of innovation within the police. For without this ongoing sense of challenge, progress has a tendency to stultify and fixed patterns of thought and action arise that can be hard to shift. This is effectively what seems to have happened with NP – the original processes and systems that were needed to get NP established have not been moved on and progress has stalled as a result. The discussion in this chapter has identified several opportunities where this could happen.

Arguably though, the key lesson of NP is how vital it is to develop an infrastructure to support innovation. Although today it is widely regarded as the pre-eminent example of successful innovation in British policing, and it is hard to find anyone who does not publicly support it, this was not how NP was initially received. When first proposed a number of senior police officers and leading academic commentators publicly dismissed the idea. Still others proposed alternative schemes. Had it not been for the commitment of a small number of key individuals, and some good fortune in terms of positive results early on from the research, there is a good chance that NP would have been killed off prematurely.

In the final two chapters we turn to examine what is needed to develop a more strategic culture of innovating in policing, to ensure that other good ideas are not being lost without being properly developed or tested.

4. Landscaping for Police Innovation

"It is necessary to be clear-eyed about the difficulties of innovating in police organizations…it is hard, the political risks involved are considerable, and efforts to change the police often fall far short or fail."[15]

We now turn to investigate what needs to change to see more innovation of the sort outlined in relation to Neighbourhood Policing, but across all areas of the police service. In so doing, we heed Skogan's warning above. Configuring a landscape that supports and nurtures innovation will require interventions directed at both the police occupational culture and the organisational structures of the police.

Organisational infrastructure is an important yet neglected aspect of police innovation and reform, both in determining how innovative the police service is, and in how easily innovation can spread within it.

According to Willis and Mastrofski (2011) there are two essential challenges that have to be overcome for innovations to acquire operational traction.[16] The first concerns an increasingly decentralised policing landscape. Although they are focusing mainly on the North American context where there are thousands of local police forces, and hence this problem is particularly acute, it is still relevant to England and Wales. The shift towards greater local accountability through Police and Crime Commissioners, and a decentralisation of police governance, raise challenges of communicating the results of innovations to those who might want to use them. The second challenge is ensuring good ideas don't get

15 Skogan (2008) 'Why reforms fail', Policing and Society, 18/1: 23–34

16 Willis, J. and Mastrofski, S. (2011) 'Innovations in policing: Meanings, structures and processes', Annual Review of Law and Social Science, 7: 309–34.

lost because they are not coming from those in positions of power and influence.

However, structural reforms are a necessary but not sufficient condition for greater police innovation. Effort and attention also needs to be directed to cop culture. Otherwise, there is a risk that the willingness of officers to experiment, challenge received wisdom, and to try and do things differently, will be limited.

Research on policing should provide a stimulus and basis for innovation. Current policy does not identify a clear line of sight between research and innovation. The vast majority of police related research currently being conducted is descriptive. There are evaluative studies, but typically these employ research to measure inputs, outputs and outcomes associated with the policy or practice innovation, rather than configuring the innovation itself. What is being proposed here then is something rather different to the existing police research paradigm – using research evidence to design and test innovative solutions to practical policing problems. A relevant analogy would be with the work of engineers. An engineer researches a problem seeking to understand its make-up and form, and then uses their research evidence base to propose a way of solving it. This is what we need more of in the police.

Supporting this approach requires a different sort of research. There are important insights about this in David Thacher's analysis of why so much research on front-line policing practice achieves such limited purchase. He argues that police research has been better directed towards the requirements of policy makers, than the kinds of concrete and situated knowledge valued by front-line operational staff. In effect, there is frequent misalignment between the priorities of researchers and the needs of officers on-the-ground. Researchers gravitate towards 'decontextualised' and generalisable accounts in order that their insights can be transferred across social situations. On the other hand, police officers are looking for highly situated knowledge.[17]

17 Thacher, D. (2008) 'Research for the front lines', Policing and Society, 18/1: 35–45.

A not dissimilar point is made by Harvard's Malcolm Sparrow in his critical commentary upon the growing evidence-based policing movement. He argues that the current predilection for randomised control trials is limiting the impact of research upon reform within police organisations. As Sparrow describes it, the overly and overtly technical way in which the results of formal experiments are reported does little to encourage police to attend to any findings. Moreover, he maintains that the very formal and disciplined approach adopted by experimentalists means they fail to capture the complexities and situational ambiguities that police routinely have to confront in deciding how to act.[18]

This is not to dismiss the value of randomised control trials or experimental methods, but rather it is about recognising that different research 'tools' are needed to perform different jobs. A robust and strategic approach to innovation in policing does not presume that a proposed change is necessarily superior to established practice. Rather, this is a proposition to be tested and that is something that experimental research designs are suited for. Likewise, other research designs and methodological techniques appear more suited to generating new innovations themselves.

Clarifying these points is important given the current manoeuvres to establish the new College of Policing and the emphasis being placed on developing evidence and knowledge to increase the professionalism of the police. There is a difference between using applied social research to determine 'what works' and for asking 'what's possible' in terms of engineering innovative solutions to practical policing problem.

A pivotal problem in policing and research on policing is a tendency to over-complicate matters. In many ways, complexity is the enemy of innovation. If a new process or procedure is hard to do, or a new technology is not user friendly, then front-line cops will not adopt it. In conducting research for this report, one senior officer told a story of how, in support of their force's mobile data

18 Sparrow, M. (2011) Governing Science. Available via http://www.hks.harvard.edu/ criminaljustice/ executive_sessions/policing.htm.

strategy that was trying to get improved situational intelligence out to officers in communities, they had purchased and issued officers with mobile handsets. Although not a market-leading brand, the force was congratulating itself because the deal for the handsets had been done at a competitive price. But when these were issued to front-line officers they refused to use them. The feedback provided was that the handsets were difficult to use and cumbersome – the last thing officers wanted when out in the field dealing with calls from members of the public.

> "A pivotal problem in policing is a tendency to over-complicate matters"

In thinking about supporting increased levels of police innovation in the future there are important lessons that can be gleaned from studying companies such as Apple. Apple is a company that has succeeded because it understands the process of innovation. Repeatedly, it has demonstrated an ability to get large numbers of people to adopt innovative technologies, where other ostensibly similar companies with fairly similar 'offers' have failed. There are now many books deconstructing the Apple philosophy in order to isolate the ingredients of Apple's success. Three of the most striking are:

- **Simplification** – Steve Jobs was allegedly obsessed with simplification. He would be relentless in requiring his designers to drive out all 'redundancies' in any new product. Simplicity provides elegance, but also increases the chances that a good idea will be adopted and used. Policing has a talent for making things very complex, and the take-up of potential innovations is inhibited by them being too complex for potential users.
- **Fusing form and function** – it is not uncommon to hear police officers say, when they are considering introducing a new way of doing things that 'form should follow function'. This is not the Apple way. The Apple approach is based upon a recognition that the way in which one achieves an outcome, shapes the likelihood of whether users will seek that outcome in the first place.

- ***User-centred design*** – the previous point reflects the importance placed upon understanding user behaviour. Importantly, this is not just about describing how users behave currently when performing a task, but how they might be persuaded to behave in the future to perform that same task more efficiently. By fusing form with function, Apple has demonstrated an almost unparalleled capacity to change social behaviour.

The importance of being user-centred and adopting a behavioural perspective is worth elaborating, particularly in respect of the role of technology in police innovation. There is now a catalogue of examples where new technological innovations have been introduced into police organisations and failed to deliver a transformative impact. There are several reasons for this. Within the upper echelons of the police and amongst suppliers, there is a failure to understand that successful technologically driven innovation is often intertwined with a process of social innovation. Assuming that a new technology can be 'dropped in' and that on-the ground police practice will 'bend' to fit with the requirements of the technology is naive. Forty years of research suggests this rarely happens.

The 'satisficing' tendency evident in policing is certainly contrary to the approach Apple have taken with their drive to simplify new technologies as far as possible. Technological innovations should start by understanding how cops work in the field, under contact with the public, rather than relying upon developing new devices in 'clean room' situations. Too much of the kit supplied to police just doesn't function when stress-tested in the field – and the cops understandably abandon it as a result.

This reinforces the importance of developing a research capacity to support innovations in police practice and policy. It also highlights police occupational culture's pragmatic and parsimonious dispositions. Police are practical people. They want

to solve problems and they want 'solutions' to solve problems. As such, what is needed is an approach that engineers solutions informed by empirical research knowledge. This was precisely the approach that provided the basis for Neighbourhood Policing, arguably the most successful example of policing innovation in England and Wales for many years in terms of its transformative impacts.

This kind of approach requires an ability and willingness to challenge received wisdom and orthodoxies of practice. It is probably best achieved through possession of a deep understanding of the work of policing, but from a perspective outside of police structures. It also requires the technical skills involved in being able to identify problems, research these and produce evidence that can be used to engineer a practically deliverable solution.

On this basis we advocate the setting up of a small number of networked units specialising in the design of forward-looking strategic innovations in policing. Acting as hubs for creative, exploratory and visionary research and thinking, they would be sited at 'arms-length' from the police, civil service and government. Their role would be to work collaboratively with police organisations, local and national policy-makers, academics, the third sector, social entrepreneurs and industry to design and pilot innovative strategies and tactics, across the range of policing disciplines.

Hubs for innovating in policing science

We recommend the establishment of a set of 'Hubs for Innovation in Policing' (or HIPs), pursuing a rather different agenda from the College of Policing. They would occupy a different space from that of 'evidence-based policing' which is more directly concerned with testing the potential of innovations to go 'to scale'.

The HIPs could play an important role in supporting the work of Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs). There is an expectation

that PCCs will stimulate many small, local experiments in policing. But there is a notable gap in the national landscape for an apparatus with the capacity to help PCCs to identify the genuinely novel challenges, as opposed to solutions which have already been devised and tested.

In this context, we suggest that a national strategy for police innovation would be based upon an arrangement involving several components, as depicted in Figure 1.

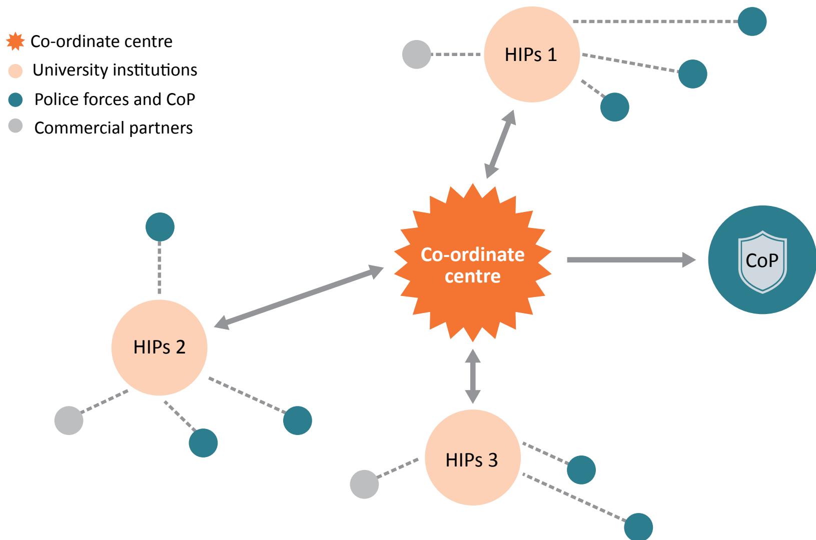
There are several different ways of defining the HIPs mission and role. Undoubtedly they would be regionally based collaborations bringing together research intensive universities, several local police forces and their Police and Crime Commissioners, commercial suppliers to the policing sector, social entrepreneurs and voluntary sector agencies relevant to the wider police mission. This collection of actors would meld together a mix of skills, perspectives and understandings that could then be applied to finding solutions to pressing policing problems. The mission of the HIPs would be to:

- Identify problems and challenges where innovative thinking and solutions are required;
- Design practical innovations to these problems and challenges;
- 'Talent spot' new innovations with potential for wider application;
- Conduct initial 'proof of concept' tests in respect of new innovations, to establish they are 'doing what they say'.

There would be different ways of organising and co-ordinating the work of the HIPs network. It might be that individual hubs act as regional leads. Alternatively, particular hubs might elect to specialise in particular forms of innovation (i.e. conceptual vs technological), or in particular areas of policing. Either way, the local footprints would need to be augmented with a 'light-touch' central co-ordination function drawing together the work of the

Figure 1: A future landscape for police innovation

Key question	Answer
Who	• University police research institutes; • Regional forces and their PCCs; • Commercial Partners.
What	• Unis provide conceptual & evidence rigour; • Thought-lead for possible solutions to problems; • Take ideas and get them into a delivery format.
Where	• Central hub provides national co-ordination; • Regional provides scale but connectivity; • Local forces ‘real world’ R&D sites
Why	• Need ‘light-touch’ national function; • Regional provides economies of scale; • Real world innovation enhances usefulness.
When	• HIPs develop new ideas; • Also, take innovative ideas from others and test; • Pass on to other for ‘what works’ evaluations.
How	• Identify problems that need solutions; • Use data to suggest possible solutions; • Develop and test possible solutions.



regionally based hubs. The hubs would be 'where the action is', and the centre would facilitate their work. The latter would definitely not involve determining or distributing funding. The purpose of the central unit would be to share learning from the regionally based HIPs and to match skills to needs in terms of drawing upon the expertise distributed across the regions. The central co-ordinator would also provide the link to the College of Policing, in terms of identifying where innovative solutions might be required, but also in passing on details of local examples of innovation that might warrant full evaluation. This evaluation function would be performed by the College, reflecting its role in championing evidence-based policing.

Summary

Positioned in this way the HIPs would have a 'reach down' into local forces in order to be able to identify 'real' local problems requiring solutions. But this regional position would also provide sufficient economies of scale to render them financially viable, whilst also ensuring that the membership of the HIPs involved genuine thought-leaders and innovative thinkers.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

This report has made the case for increased innovation in policing to provide a more effective and efficient service in the context of ongoing reductions in police funding. To enable and support this, three things have to happen:

1. A police innovation strategy should be developed. Its purpose should be to establish, in light of the new landscape, where the onus for innovative thinking lies. This strategy should be informed by a recognition of those factors that support and enable innovative approaches, and those inhibiting them.
2. New inter-disciplinary 'Hubs for Innovating in Policing (HIPs) should be established to bring together teams from within and outside of the police, with the combination of skills to creatively respond to the big policing challenges. Importantly, this small network of HIPs should lie outside of current organisational structures, such as the College of Policing, to 'cut through' bureaucracy, proceduralism and inertia.
3. This new approach should start by examining how new ideas and practices could be introduced into Neighbourhood Policing to revitalise it at a time when it is looking vulnerable to being cut.

Fundamentally, the argument that has been advanced about establishing a strategic approach to police innovation can be summarised as pivoting around three key questions: What's possible? What works? And, what's useful?

The first question is the one that, from the point of view of an innovation strategy for the police service, is the most important. It is important to distinguish this question from that of 'what works', which is animating the emergent evidence-based policing movement. The final question is the critical one for the police service. It is the application of this test about what is practically useful to them, in terms of service delivery, that should be the fundamental test of how police apply the outputs from research and development.

> "The argument can be summarised as pivoting around three key questions: What's possible? What works? And, what's useful?"

The proposal to set up an independent network of innovation hubs obviously raises a question about how this would be financed. By basing the hubs in research intensive universities there would be a basic infrastructure to support research and development activity. These could be regionally based, at perhaps 3 or 4 universities with track records in supporting police reform, with multiple local police forces collaborating with each university. Basic levels of funding would be secured from three sources:

- The participating police forces would each make a financial contribution of the equivalent of one PCSO. So for example, that would give a core fund of approximately £150,000 per hub, assuming a five-force collaboration.
- The commercial partners would make a contribution to fund research activity, data from which could inform ongoing product developments. The academics would seek to draw down further funding from the research councils and European Commission sources;
- Each hub would generate additional income streams from the commercialisation of the knowledge and products that they generate. This might also include revenue from training activities.

Through these combined funding streams, several reasonably sized, yet flexible and dynamic units could be established, focused upon promoting data-driven innovation. We are also confident that, given the nature of their mission, they would rapidly leverage additional funding from other sources such as the European Commission and UK Research Councils.

By way of summary then, this pamphlet makes a number of key recommendations:

1. Given the challenging future funding environment, the police service of England and Wales should develop and implement a strategy and infrastructure to facilitate innovation.
2. In so doing, they should seek to learn from other sectors, but also previous examples of where innovations in police practice have successfully transformed delivery of services to the public.
3. This initiative should be situated 'outside' of the police, civil service and government, to circumvent cultural, bureaucratic and regulatory inhibitors that might otherwise stifle creative problem solving.
4. The network of innovation hubs should be connected to, but separate from, the new College of Policing. The latter should focus upon developing evidence-based policing, whilst the Hubs for Innovation in Policing should be directed towards the design of new and creative solutions to real world problems.
5. The HIPs should adopt an inter-disciplinary approach, combining inputs from universities, social entrepreneurs, police practitioners, and the commercial sector.
6. As hubs, they could be regionally based working with a number of local forces, seeking to draw upon and channel local expertise from across the area.
7. Funding for this initiative should be drawn from a variety of sources, in order to provide a degree of sustainability, but also flexibility.

8. The mission of the HIPs will be to: spot policing problems that need solutions; design creative ways of dealing with these problems; and ‘reality testing’ new ideas and initiatives.

This report is all about how to hardwire innovation into the structures and cultures of policing. It examines why policing can be culturally and institutionally resistant to innovation, identifies the 'engines of innovation' which can sometimes break through this inertia, demonstrates why embedding processes of innovation should be a deliberate goal of policy, and calls for the creation of new collaborative networks specifically designed to foster innovation.

Authored by police science expert Professor Martin Innes, the report also sets out why the time for focusing on police innovation is now – especially as the kaleidoscope of the police landscape has been shaken, with Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) getting to grips with their new roles, the Home Office taking much more of a strategic back seat and the new College of Policing about to begin its important work of spreading best practice and professionalising the service.

To provide examples of the kind of change we envisage, the report sets out a vision for developing Neighbourhood Policing during this challenging financial climate. We imagine innovations to provide greater police visibility and availability, especially through taking a new approach to managing the police estate.

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