

Investigation surgeries

Face-to-face conversations with sergeants in all districts explaining force priorities and the impact of changes, to improve trust, confidence and motivation.

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Key details

Does it work?	Promising
Focus	Organisational
Topic	Intelligence and investigation Operational policing
Organisation	Greater Manchester Police
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Region	North West
Partners	Police
Stage of practice	The practice is implemented.
Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	Workforce

Aim

The surgeries aim to:

- bridge an identified communications gap between senior and frontline workforce
- develop insight, understanding and buy-in to force priorities across the workforce in terms of investigations
- improve the quality of investigations being carried out across the force by changing supervisor mindset, empowering them to effectively manage their workloads and provide quality supervision to their reports

Intended outcome

This initiative intends to:

- ensure all crimes will be investigated (as per the chief constable's public promise)
- improve the quality of investigations. Greater Manchester Police (GMP) has introduced quality assurance auditing, which measures the quality of specific areas, supervisory intervention, the Victims' Code of Practice, suspect management and safeguarding
- increase compliance with the Victims' Code of Practice, in accordance with minimum standards and victim wishes. This is measured by extensive auditing
- improve supervisor intervention and direction

Description

Following the chief's public commitment to investigate all lines of enquiry for all crimes, GMP identified a disconnect between senior and frontline staff. The force set out to hold face-to-face surgeries with all response sergeants and community policing teams across all districts. The districts performing most poorly were identified using extensive performance information, which tracked performance to individual teams and districts shown through heat maps.

The team conducting this practice included:

- two detective chief inspectors
- a detective inspector
- a detective sergeant
- a senior leadership team equivalent civilian staff member
- agency staff at inspector level

Initial surgeries consulted with sergeants, most of whom were inexperienced. Sergeants were uncertain about which cases to progress and the appropriate point at which to halt an investigation.

An experienced detective chief inspector leads the surgeries to reduce cynicism and increase confidence. They set out the rationale behind the force priorities and the recent change to GMP's approach.

Crime surgeries are for all response teams, including sergeants and inspectors.

Examples of content include using failed investigation case studies and discussion about the consequences and impact of these on individuals and wider public confidence. Case studies can be used to highlight the importance of, for example, compliance with the Victims' Code of Practice.

How crime surgeries are run

Crime surgeries are held face-to-face with officers in case (OICs). Together they work through individual crimes, assisting them to identify appropriate lines of enquiry and balance solvability factors with reasonable actions.

The aim is to:

- build confidence of OICs to recognise that the investigation has reached a reasonable conclusion and can be closed
- work with the OIC to identify suspect and safeguarding strategies
- support understanding of the importance of compliance with the Victims' Code of Practice

For sergeants, the surgeries are also face-to-face. Together they review the supervisory input, focusing on the importance of early supervisory input to set critical actions and manage the direction and timeliness of progress.

For inspectors, any learning themes from above are drawn out, so inspectors know where supervisors need the most support.

'Carrot' approach

A key part of the success of the surgeries is the 'carrot' approach adopted to communicate with districts. Colleagues are generally overwhelmed with the volume of crime and resistant to what they

see as additional work. The communications focused on how much easier crimes would be to manage once they were in good order and managed in a timely way, as this would undoubtedly reduce ongoing workload making sustainable improvements. Communications staff acknowledged frustrations, workload pressures and good work. They highlighted how an initial difficult period would result in longer-term benefits and reduced stress. The focus was on winning trust, offering support and improving faith in the process.

Ongoing support

All sergeants have now been visited twice to check progress, offer continued support and ensure new practices are adopted. Support is offered where districts have high workloads and backlogs, to get them into a good place to start from.

Finally, the team sits on the district crime governance boards and observes the processes to see the local drivers, tone, priorities and how these are set. Where these are found to be ineffective, support is offered through in-person feedback to identify improvements and areas to focus on.

The team has documented each visit, support, guidance and coaching offered and revisit. The document is a rolling summary of interventions, areas identified for improvement and good practice identified for sharing. This enables district senior leadership teams to intervene and make it a performance matter if change is not monitored.

Overall impact

Auditing shows:

- improved compliance with the crime management processes and the Victims' Code of Practice
- improved supervisor intervention and direction across districts following the surgeries
- supervisor intervention results in clearer direction to inexperienced first-line officers who require the most guidance
- direction with target dates is improving the quality of crime investigation

Learning

- Success has been dependent on clear messaging from the senior leadership team to frontline practitioners – supporting understanding of priorities and appreciating the difficulties of demand versus resources, while setting clear expectations.

- Consistent crime governance processes have underpinned the improvements. Regular auditing has enabled targeted support for those individuals, teams or districts that were performing poorly.
- Subject matter experts are required with time to commit to the surgeries.
- GMP experienced significant pushback at all ranks due to the perception that they were being asked to do more. Careful communications are needed to ensure colleagues understand the need for improvements, as well as the reduction in workload that improvements will bring in the long term.

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