

Professional Conversations mentoring scheme evaluation

An evaluation of Professional Conversations, a mentoring scheme being piloted where black executives from the public or private sector mentor white chief officers.

Key details

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| Lead institution | College of Policing |
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| Police region | West Midlands |
| Level of research | Professional/work based |
| Project start date | November 2023 |

Research context

Professional Conversations is a mentoring scheme for white chief officers and black executives being piloted over 12 months as part of the not under-protected workstream of the [Police Race Action Plan \(PRAP\)](#). Chief officers are mentored by executives from the public or private sector, who act as independent 'critical friends' to the chief officers, offering skills, perspectives, advice and their own experience.

The scheme intends to provide chief officers with more diverse networks and an understanding of black people's lived experience. It is anticipated that this will subsequently enable chief officers to think critically about their policing practice, view this from different perspectives and use this insight to improve their decision making. The scheme also aims to increase executives' opportunity for contact with the police and understanding of policing.

The College of Policing have committed to evaluating the Professional Conversations pilot to understand chief officers' and executives' experiences of participation and implications for the

upscaling of the scheme.

Research methodology

The evaluation of Professional Conversations will draw upon qualitative methods including reflective diaries, interviews and a focus group. The research design consists of two stages:

Stage one: Reflective diaries

All chief officers and executives will be asked to complete a reflective diary throughout the pilot. The purpose of the diary is to understand engagement levels, participants' thoughts and opinions on what they learn during meetings, how they apply their learning and any challenges the meetings highlight.

Stage two: Interviews and focus groups

At the end of the pilot, all chief officers will be invited to take part in an interview, and all executives will be invited to a focus group. The aim is to gain a more in-depth understanding about the following areas:

- their experiences of taking part in the scheme
- their reasons for participation
- what they gained from their participation
- the running of the scheme

As part of understanding gain from participation, any change in chief officers' awareness and understanding of black people's lived experiences will be explored, in addition to any change in executives' understanding and perceptions of policing.

Data analysis

Thematic analysis will be used to analyse data from the reflective diaries and transcripts from the interviews and focus group. Key themes, trends and observations in the data will be explored to understand chief officers' and executives' experiences. Analysis of the reflective diaries will be used to explore differences in chief officers' and executives' experiences over time. Analysis of the interviews and focus group will be used to explore chief officers' and executives' thoughts and

reflections on their experiences of participating the pilot. Data from the three sources will be triangulated by looking for similar themes across all the data collected.

Findings

This project was completed in January 2026. For more information on the findings, go to the [full report in the National Police Library](#).

Additional resources

National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) and College of Policing (2022). [Police Race Action Plan: Improving policing for black people](#).