

Recruitment and onboarding of force contact, crime and operations centre (FCCO) resources

The FCCO redesigned and implemented a new recruitment process to address issues associated with attraction, pace and volume of quality candidates.

First published

20 May 2025

Key details

Stage of practice	Untested
Purpose	Organisational
Topic	Contact management Leadership, development and learning Wellbeing
Organisation	Greater Manchester Police
HMICFRS report	PEEL 2023–25 Police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy: An inspection of Greater Manchester Police
Contact	Martine Craven
Email address	martine.craven@GMP.police.uk
Region	North West
Partners	Police

Key details

Stage of implementation	The practice is implemented.
Start date	April 2022
Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	Workforce

Aim

The new way of recruiting was implemented as the traditional way was found to be restrictive. Examples of limitations found with the traditional way of recruiting were:

- limited attraction
- outdated adverts
- delays in processing applications both pre and post shortlisting
- significant time investment required to conduct 1-2-1 interviews
- difficulty arranging pre-employment checks as applicants were sporadically entered into the process depending on the progress of their application
- applicants securing employment elsewhere due to length of application process, particularly delays between interviews
- difficult relationship with enabling partners due to uncertainty around exact candidate numbers
- high levels of uncertainty about what the role actually entailed amongst candidates
- sustained poor communication with applicants

The redesign of the process has a significant number of benefits such as:

- swift process with a high number of candidates recruited in each session
- improved process of communication, including better informed candidates (both organisationally and departmentally)
- better planning for certainty in enabling services such as force vetting units and occupational health leading to improved relationships

- skills and behaviour tested throughout various assessments rather than solely during 1-2-1 interviews improving the calibre of new starters

Intended outcome

To increase the process of recruiting call handlers, dispatchers and crime recorders and address pay parity following approved funding in 2021/22 for an uplift in the total numbers of call handlers, dispatchers and crime recorders.

Increase support in for call handlers, dispatchers and crime recorders.

Description

To meet the objective of recruiting the uplifted numbers at pace, the FCCO designed and implemented recruitment assessment centres with a sole view of recruiting quality candidates swiftly and at volume.

The FCCO traditionally recruited applicants via 1-2-1 interview and assessment. This way of recruiting significantly extended the amount time it took to onboard applicants. From April 2022, the concept of replacing traditional recruitment processes with the newly designed assessment centres was trialled in call handling.

Following a period of evaluation, the testing of this new concept was complete, and it was agreed that the new and innovative way of recruiting would become business as usual. It was also agreed that potential candidates for dispatch and crime recording would be assessed via this type of assessment centre as opposed to traditional recruitment. The assessment material was adjusted to ensure it was more reflective of the respective areas of business.

Due to the nature of the roles, attraction and recruitment details, key dates were agreed upon in advance. The FCCO have worked in partnership with enabling partners and produced a recruitment plan that has been viewed and signed off by the FCCO senior leadership (SLT) and force leadership team (FLT). The plan articulates key details associated with attraction and recruitment and is based on establishment data and forecasted attrition. The assessment centre dates are published in addition to pre-employment period, training start date and mentoring start date.

GMP's recruitment team publish adverts with sufficient notice to attract potential candidates and allow adequate time to receive details of assessment centre and confirm attendance. The advert link was refreshed with the support of GMP's corporate communications branch offering potential candidates improved details of roles, rather than sharing the link to the original job description and person specification.

More recently the Force has reintroduced in-depth short listing as opposed to pre-application reviews so additional time is required. Adverts are generally opened around four weeks in advance of pre-planned assessment centre (in April 2024 it was agreed to keep call handler adverts open). Applications are sent to departmental managers for shortlisting and those that demonstrate the required level of skill and/or experience are invited to attend the upcoming assessment centre.

The material used at assessment centres varies, but the general running principles are very similar. The assessments are facilitated at GMP's training school, Sedgley Park in the force command module. There is a manager and plethora of others ranging from operational to first line management supported by established FCCO colleagues.

There are up to 12 volunteers that support the running of the event. Volunteers are sought from the area of business being recruited in to provide the opportunity for subject matter experts to share personal experience of roles. Operated assessment centres with volunteers from alternative areas of business are available when required.

In advance of the sessions, preparation includes general admin type duties (name cards, lists etc) and the groups are split into four. The sessions are opened with a welcome, health and safety (H&S) overview and insight into Greater Manchester (GM), GMP and FCCO. The opening section concludes with information regarding the assessment centre and general rules. Candidates rotate around four assessments which test a combination of the following skills and behaviours:

- communication skills
- spelling, grammar and typing
- attention to detail
- working under pressure
- risk assessment
- teamwork

At the end of the assessment period candidates return to their original seats. A call or radio transmission is played while the scores are input and those that fail are escorted out after being offered feedback. Those that pass remain and they are offered in-depth information relating to the recruitment process (pre-employment), training and mentoring. They are issued with conditional offers and are contacted via recruitment in the following days with links to vetting forms and medical questionnaires.

All candidates are encouraged to engage with pre-employment checks to avoid further delays. Once confirmed as successful in pre-employment, candidates are sent unconditional offers outlining terms of contracts, start state and workplace location in addition to training details. Resources required are:

- FCCO coordinate recruitment plan, facilitate assessment centres,
- business lead people and central support
- hub manager
- training and recruitment coordinator
- administrators
- resource management unit and Establishment officers
- departmental tactical managers
- volunteers to support facilitation

Recruitment:

- recruitment manager
- recruitment assistants

Vetting

- vetting manager
- vetting officer

Occupational Health and Wellbeing Unit (OHWU) (all applicants that enter into pre-employment are required undergo a medical)

- OHWU officers
- people and development (training for FCCO role is delivered by GMP)

- FCCO training SV
- FCCO trainers

The assessment centres have now embedded and have become business as usual.

Evaluation

The newly introduced way to attract and recruit applicants into FCCO roles was agreed from April 2022. The concept was tested throughout the spring and summer month and was evaluated in November 2022.

The evaluation meeting was chaired by the FCCO chief superintendent and attended by key stakeholders and were all encouraged to participate. Information presented throughout the meeting ranged from data highlighting numbers of applicants attracted, attended and pass rates in addition to holistic detail from the running of the assessment centres including feedback obtained from candidates.

The cost of this new and improved way of recruiting was compared with the cost of traditional recruitment and we were able to demonstrate significant savings. The evaluation concluded that the quality of candidate was much improved, the volume of recruited applicants was high, the general running and feedback was positive, the planned, structured approach benefited enabling services and efficiencies could be evidenced. The concept had been tested and successful and was therefore signed off as business as usual.

This way of working has attracted national attention with many other forces adopting the process. Colleagues from GMPs Custody department have replicated the process when they recruit into police staff positions and they have welcomed the new way of recruiting and have the same positive views and results that the FCCO have experienced.

Overall impact

The FCCO have recruited a high volume of quality new starters at pace during a time where the labour market was tight and internal vacancy factors were high. It was evident that demand outweighed resources and so with additional funding agreed through Greater Manchester Combined Authority, GMP were required to recruit a high number of individuals within a relatively short period of time. The assessment centres enabled that complemented by the collective buy-in

from enabling services. The design of the assessment centres professionalised the process and attracted a wide demographic of perspective candidates.

This process has yielded many positive elements above and beyond those listed above. Candidates are offered in-depth insight into the organisation and department in addition to streamlining all process associated with attraction and recruitment. The assessment centres offer an ideal opportunity to showcase GMP and the control room while also sharing expectations of candidates including, shift work, uniform roles, high pressure, high standards. Control room colleagues support the facilitation of the assessments and so are able to offer direct personal experience to all candidates. The force have noted growth in confidence of those that volunteered to support assessment centres many of whom have used the experience and opportunity to further develop and progress into other roles.

GMP have harnessed opportunities to further develop the process and have learned:

- job roles generally come with enhancements due to shift work element. Adverts were updated to offer the reality of pay inclusive of shift allowance
- advert publication was widened beyond GMPs web job board with the best platform being found to be social media
- seeking collective buy in from all enabling services is critical
- devising a structured recruitment plan that highlights every touchpoint from advert and assessment through to pre-employment checks. Offering course start date, and mentoring start date, ensuring that adequate time is built-in and the plan is well communicated with all stakeholders
- the assessment centres started at six hours and was reduced to four with improved preparation. This enabled two assessment centres in one day with potential to issue up to 64 conditional offers
- it took GMP a little while to develop new tasks for the assessment centre – some candidates who previously failed the process reapplied and were invited to an assessment centre where the tasks hadn't changed

Feedback from new starters that have joined GMP through this process is extremely positive. They recall the experience as being positive albeit challenging. Feedback from unsuccessful candidates has been equally as positive with many of them reapplying when appropriate.

Learning

During planning stages, strong influential skills and sound working relationships were critical. The FCCO were faced with a number of challenges centred around HR. For instance, immediately issuing of a conditional offer to candidates that passed.

Recruitment colleagues felt the move from 1-2-1 interviewing could have a detrimental impact on process and there was some reluctance from a pre-employment stage perspective with some enabling services concerned about the volume of requests in a short period of time. Throughout the planning stages, colleagues from enabling services were able to actively contribute to the build of the new process and collective buy in was agreed upon. Concerns were mitigated and the positives associated with the change superseded apprehensions. This was achieved by:

- force leadership team support
- clear direction and support from a senior level
- investment of time to build relationships and understand respective areas of business
- reliable and flexible leadership leading the design and implementation
- accountable and responsible leadership
- collective support and effective communication at every level

The design of the tasks moved GMP away from technical knowledge. Should the candidates be successful, they will be taught the necessary skills in training and mentoring. The focus was on behaviour and skills and so the tasks were designed after a scoping exercise which clearly articulated the skills and behaviours we wanted to attract.

The assessment centre allows for introduction during which point the group are offered insight into the city region, the organisation and the department. The introduction is interactive where possible for example the group are asked to share what skills and qualities they think we are looking for after hearing details about the control room. The assessment tasks see the group split in to four and the group are observed while undertaking the tasks. A recommendation is to ensure that candidates that disclose disability or neurodiverse conditions arrive to reasonable adjustments.

Feedback is offered to those that don't pass on the day in real time. Those that do pass, remain at the assessment centre and more details regarding the role and force policy are shared in addition to pre-employment checks whereby candidates are encouraged to engage in full and pace.

Copyright

The copyright in this shared practice example is not owned or managed by the College of Policing and is therefore not available for re-use under the terms of the Non-Commercial College Licence. You will need to seek permission from the copyright owner to reproduce their works.

Legal disclaimer

Disclaimer: The views, information or opinions expressed in this shared practice example are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or views of the College of Policing or the organisations involved.