

Improvement and innovation portal (IIP)

The improvement and innovation portal (IIP) allows officers and staff in West Midlands Police (WMP) to submit suggestions to shape how force change activity is developed and delivered.

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Key details

Stage of practice	Untested
Purpose	Organisational
Topic	Leadership, development and learning Training and professional development
Organisation	West Midlands Police
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Region	West Midlands
Partners	Police
Stage of implementation	The practice is implemented.
Start date	July 2023
Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	Workforce

Aim

Officers and staff can submit suggestions to the portal ranging from introducing a new approach or way of working, to improving existing processes or capabilities.

The aims of the WMP IIP are to:

- provide a channel to capture ideas and innovation from across the force, promoting engagement in change and continuous improvement
- encourage a problem-solving mindset, enabling officers and staff to play a role in force improvement
- create a central repository of ideas and improvements for the force, strengthening corporate memory and providing insights to support future decision-making
- align WMP improvement and change activity with the wider force vision, mission and values

Intended outcome

- Increase in ideas submitted through the portal.
- Increase in officers and staff submitting ideas to the portal to support diversity and representation in the department, function, location, seniority, and roles of submitters. The portal allows for analysis of submissions by category and by executive portfolio and the team can also determine how many changes are related to certain topics.
- Increase in the number of ideas taken forward/actioned to help improve WMP service delivery.
- Improved compliance with the service level agreement responding to individuals with an update within two months of submitting via the portal. (In most cases the window for response and update is significantly less than two months. Some ideas are cross-cutting and have interdependencies or have multiple stakeholders. The two month maximum timeframe allows for more complex ideas to be fully explored and assessed).
- Increase in support of a wider organisational drive towards a formalised benefits realisation approach. Depending on the scale of the change, for significant activity the associated benefits will be identified and tracked by the WMP corporate change team, and the activity added to the force change portfolio.

Description

The core aim of the IIP is to capture ideas and innovation at an operational level. The initial version served as a proof of concept to gauge whether officers and staff were willing to engage in improvement and innovation activity and submit ideas through the portal.

The IIP is accessed through a dedicated homepage on the force intranet. It features:

- details of previous submissions
- guidance on submitting suggestions
- practical frequently asked questions (FAQs) for accessibility
- contact information for the administrative team
- a feedback form for additional support

A robust governance framework oversees the timely and effective review of suggestions and platform configuration, which built using Microsoft 365 SharePoint Lists. Accessible user guides have also been developed for business leads responsible for reviewing submissions (known as IIP SPOCs).

Development and delivery approach

The IIP was developed in-house and is managed by the WMP corporate change team. It forms part of a wider change community across the force, which includes a network of 170 volunteer change agents who advocate for the use of the portal.

The WMP portfolio management office (PMO):

- triages submission suggestions
- administers the portal and maintains its configuration
- ensures the intranet content and guidance documents remain up to date
- prepares monthly reporting for the WMP design and delivery board to support updates from IIP business leads

Accessibility and diversity, equality and inclusion (DEI)

The IIP is central to force-wide change activities and is intentionally inclusive, ensuring everyone can be involved.

The portal gives staff across the organisation a voice and opportunity to submit ideas, many of which include a DEI perspective. Examples include:

- raising awareness and understanding of neurodiversity
- initiatives to improve wellbeing and health
- community engagement ideas
- tailored support for officers working with vulnerable members of the public

At an organisational level, the IIP supports the goal of becoming an 'employer of choice' – one of the key pillars forming the vision for the force. The processes and governance approach that support the assessment and progression of ideas incorporate the WMP DEI policy and practice. For ideas that are taken forward, these standards help to inform how the change is delivered.

Initial design and development

The IIP was developed iteratively. The first version used Microsoft Forms to feed data into Excel, aimed at proving concept viability. Once interest was confirmed with over 20 submissions per month, it became clear that Excel was not a scalable solution.

A review of this approach and a requirements-setting exercise informed the next development phase. Refined through stakeholder consultations, the platform was upgraded to Microsoft 365 using SharePoint lists and workflows to deliver a flexible, accessible, and future-proof one-stop-shop for users and administrators.

Staffing and resources

The IIP is managed and administered by a team of three within the WMP corporate change function. Led by the business owner, they manage the portal and its supporting processes alongside their usual responsibilities. No additional costs or funding were identified for its development, implementation, or ongoing management.

Ideas escalation, supporting and resourcing change activity

If a submitted idea is viable but complex, high-impact, or requires resource or funding, it is escalated through WMP's established change governance process for consideration around delivery, timeline, and budget.

The portal can also support targeted campaigns focused on specific themes (e.g. artificial Intelligence), helping unlock new ideas, for example, generating potential STAR proposals.

The portal can also act as a vehicle for campaigns relating to a particular challenge or initiative for example, AI. If there is a call for ideas with a specific focus this can be effective in unlocking opportunities, for example to identify potential STAR proposal ideas which are funded by the Office of the Police Chief Scientific Adviser.

Overall impact

The IIP has increased awareness and elevated the profile of change and continuous improvement within WMP. It has been a catalyst for engagement across the force, evidenced by the number and breadth of submissions and the subsequent engagement generated.

A total of 736 ideas have been submitted through the portal since its inception. These ideas have been generated from all portfolios across the organisation.

The status of these 736 ideas (at June 2025) is:

- approved – 131 (17.8%)
- deferred – 56 (7.6%)
- declined (in progress already) – 117 (15.9%)
- declined (already exists) – 93 (12.3%)
- declined (duplicate) – 29 (3.9%)
- declined (not viable) – 242 (32.9%)
- withdrawn – 4 (0.6%)
- business assessment – 64 (8.7%)

Compliance with the service level agreement responding to individuals with an update within two months of submitting via the portal is at 61%. A newly introduced process is expected to boost response rates by accommodating multi-portfolio idea assessments and complex submissions.

The IIP embodies WMP's commitment to engaging the workforce, listening, and acting on ideas for improvement. It fosters a continuous improvement culture and actively contributes to the personal development for officers and staff. The supporting process is geared towards inclusivity and ensures the appropriate level of seniority in the triage and assessment stages.

At a strategic level, the IIP platform allows reporting by portfolio or area of focus, which allows leaders to see the volume, nature and subjects of ideas and suggestions for their area.

A key outcome of the IIP has been a shift from basic feasibility reviews to a more thoughtful root cause analysis. Assessors are now asked to interrogate:

- what is the problem behind the idea?
- what fundamental issues, processes, or systems are implicated?

This approach deepens understanding and leads to more impactful improvements.

Example

Streamlining St Giles referrals for Bloxwich and Wolverhampton custody. Submitted by – Sergeant, Criminal Justice Services.

The St Giles reachable teachable moment service targets serious youth violence and offers one to one mentorship for people aged 11 – 25 years. When individuals enter custody, they are offered help from staff with lived experience.

- Challenge – Referrals to St Giles required manual phone calls by custody staff, creating gaps in service when facilities were busy.
- Solution – An automated referral trigger was built into the WMP records system. When a young person enters custody for an eligible offence, the system initiates a referral to St Giles.
- Benefit – Since launch in September 2024, 44 referrals have been received across expanded custody blocks – reaching individuals who would otherwise have been missed.

St Giles workers are physically based in Perry Barr and Oldbury custody blocks and now travel to other WMP custody blocks when an automated referral comes in.

Learning

Continuous improvements is key

A vital learning point from the development and implementation of the IIP is the importance of ongoing review and a flexible approach to meet the evolving needs of the organisation. This was clearly demonstrated in the re-launch of the portal following its initial rollout. A business analyst-led

review made the portal more user-friendly, effective, and accessible.

The IIP team itself adopts a continuous improvement mindset in managing the portal. Regular reviews are conducted to identify areas for enhancement. One such improvement involved aligning ideas and innovations with a host department or portfolio, meaning every idea now needs to be sponsored by its relevant owning department. This refinement has led to clearer operational insight and accountability.

Resourcing/demand management

One of the main challenges involves managing fluctuating demand, as IIP processes run alongside business-as-usual activity. For example, a surge in submissions, such as those generated by targeted campaign requires:

- timely review
- allocation to appropriate leads
- monitoring against the service level agreement and committed timeframes

This affects resource needs not just within the IIP team, but also for the designated idea owners. The team has had to remain adaptable in response to shifting capacity requirements. Continuous engagement with stakeholders is also key and is managed within existing resources.

Supporting processes and communications

In its initial phase, the platform faced challenges around corporate memory, specifically, retaining and tracking deferred ideas that could become actionable later. These were at risk of being 'lost'. The updated portal now allows tracking of idea progress from submission to outcome, improving transparency and traceability for stakeholders.

Another challenge was closing the communication loop. Time lapses between submission and action sometimes left contributors feeling disconnected from outcomes. To resolve this, regular updates are now shared across the organisation e.g. via the internal Newsbeat channel, using a "you said, we did" approach. Contributors are recognised when their ideas are delivered.

Senior level advocacy and support

A key driver of IIP's success has been active support from the Assistant Chief Constable (ACC). Having a member of the force executive team champion the portal, encourage its use, and act as an escalation route has been pivotal.

The earlier version of the IIP struggled with engagement, largely due to a lack of visible senior sponsorship. WMP is uniquely positioned with an ACC leading on Change and providing strategic backing for the IIP. For other forces considering a similar initiative, securing executive-level advocacy is strongly recommended to ensure adoption and traction.

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