

Preparing UK policing for Generation Alpha: Developing a generational leadership readiness model for workforce attraction and retention

An organisational leadership model to explain how policing can adapt leadership practice and organisational systems to improve recruitment and retention among future Generation Alpha entrants.

Key details

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Police region	West Midlands
Collaboration and partnership	This project was supported by the College of Policing bursary scheme.
Level of research	Masters
Project start date	January 2026

Research context

While generational labels are frequently used to interpret workforce change, evidence from generational cohort theory and age-period-cohort research suggests that workforce expectations are shaped more strongly by wider social and organisational change than by fixed cohort characteristics. The study therefore reframes Generation Alpha preparedness as an organisational leadership challenge rather than a cohort-specific management issue.

Drawing on an integrative review of literature across generational theory, future-of-work research, leadership theory and motivation and retention theory, the dissertation identifies the organisational mechanisms most likely to influence attraction and early-career retention within policing. In particular, employee value proposition, psychological contract fulfilment, perceived organisational support, organisational justice, leader-member exchange relationships and public service motivation are identified as key influences on workforce sustainability.

The study proposes a Generational Leadership Readiness Model linking workforce expectations, leadership translation processes, employee experience, and retention outcomes. The findings suggest that preparing for Generation Alpha is less about developing cohort-specific strategies and more about strengthening supervisory practice and organisational alignment with evolving workforce expectations ahead of labour-market transition in the early 2030s.

Research methodology

This study adopted a theory-building methodological design based on secondary data through an integrative literature review. Integrative reviews synthesise a variety of theoretical and empirical perspectives to generate new conceptual frameworks, making them particularly suitable when a research field is incomplete or emerging (Snyder 2019, Torraco 2005). Rather than testing hypotheses through primary data collection, this study systematically reviewed, critiqued and integrated existing research to develop an original organisational leadership model addressing workforce attraction and retention in UK policing.

Summary of findings

This project was completed in July 2026.

[Read report in National Police Library](#)

References

Snyder H. (2019). [Literature review as a research methodology: An overview and guidelines](#). Journal of Business Research, volume 104, pages 333–339.

Torraco RJ. (2005). [Writing integrative literature reviews: Guidelines and examples](#). Human Resource Development Review, volume 4, issue 3, pages 356–367.