

Chief Constables' Council

Peer Support Accreditation

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Portfolio: NPCC Well Being, Engagement and Organisational Development

1. Recommendation

- 1.1 To establish i) an accredited standard for developmental peer support, ii) clear processes for both the initial diagnostic and on-going support from peers and iii) a wider peer support community of practice that can help forces meet current and future challenges.

2. Developing Peer Support

- 2.1 Peer support is a tried and tested approach currently used by the service to draw on expertise from practitioners, the College and wider policing family. Nicolini *et al*¹ referred to it as "*the structured, managed, and collaborative process whereby reputable others are invited into an organisation to provide feedback and offer guidance on organisational change and improvement.*" It is a key aspect of continuous improvement and is valued by senior leadership teams who recognise the benefits of

¹ Nicolini, D; Hartley, J; Stansfield, A; Hurcombe, J. "Through the eyes of others. Using developmental peer reviews to promote reflection and change in organizations." *Journal of Organizational Change Management* Vol. 24 (2) pp 211-228

sharing subject matter expertise and promising practice across a wide range of activity.

- 2.2 However, the remit for peer support has been too broad, resulting in demand frequently outstripping supply. Those undertaking peer review are selected on an ad hoc basis and the benefits of their engagement in terms of personal CPD are not formally recognised. The focus of future work must be risk-based, subject to continuous refinement and informed by the '*what works*' and '*what doesn't work*' evidence bases.
- 2.3 The College of Policing Organisational Development faculty has designed an evidence-based transformational change framework, co-opting expertise from the OU consortia (Professor Jean Hartley), the CIPD Police Forum (Dr Steve Chase), HMIC and the APCC. We now propose to establish an accredited standard for the diagnostic phase of peer support that is informed by this framework.

3. Stages of Peer Support

- 3.1 Initial Review: The first stage of peer support is to agree a terms of reference with the commissioning body (usually the Chief Constable and/or PCC), and undertake a diagnostic phase involving site visits, interviews, observations and document reviews. This needs to be done with consistency, adherence to the evidence base and to a high quality standard by people who have the credibility that accreditation will bring.
- 3.2 By raising the standard of the initial diagnostic phase we will identify the key organisational issues that are influencing operational delivery with greater clarity and precision. It is not uncommon for peer support reports to be subject to FOI, and it is incumbent upon the service to ensure the highest professional standards in producing and quality-assuring reports.
- 3.3 It is possible that the peer review has been requested as a result of an HMIC inspection or IPCC investigation. Peer support should not seek to replicate inspection processes but complement them. It is essential that the peer review team have a clear understanding of the concerns raised by other organisations, and the opportunity to test their validity through the diagnostic phase.
- 3.4 By setting a standard for the diagnostic phase the service aims to add value in terms of precision and clarity to the current state of the subject force. This is required to assess a force's maturity and readiness for transformational change. As both PEEL and recent staff surveys (e.g. the PSAEW PPU resilience survey) clearly illustrate, it is the strategic capability of the force to manage change that is often the most important in terms of outcomes.

- 3.5 **On-going Support:** Once the initial diagnostic phase has been conducted it will be important to consider how on-going expert support can be provided to forces as changes are implemented. This on-going support should increase the ability of forces to continue to refer back to experts as they adapt potential solutions to fit local conditions and deliver change. The support does not need to be full-time, and bespoke peer support in priority areas can be drawn from a College Peer Support Network, NPCC portfolios, and Communities of Practice, in negotiation with the host Chief Constable. People joining the Communities of Practice will be a blend of operationally competent and academically qualified practitioners.

4. Benefits of Peer Support

- 4.1 The wider benefits of accreditation relate to the exposure of current and emerging leaders (both officers and staff) to a vital ingredient of strategic change, and it is envisaged that it will become part of Senior Leadership development, in a similar way to current operational accreditation such as AO, Firearms and Public Order; perhaps the equivalent of a PIP4 level for Organisational Development? Crucially it means these individuals gain experience in not just identifying issues, but also delivering solutions in another force. It also demonstrates clearly that the police service is agile and able to come together to support each other and deliver meaningful change, as well as developing a professional cadre of experts to do so; congruent with other professional services.

5. Development of Accreditation

- 5.1 The proposal is to translate the OD evidence base and College of Policing maturity matrix into a standard, with a short course aimed at emerging and senior leaders. The accreditation could be considered as a pre-requisite for senior command as well as integrated into Senior Leadership Development.

- 5.2 The course may include the following elements:

- Sensitivity and Political Astuteness
- Wellbeing
- Emotional Agility
- Conducting Snap-shot Analysis
- Strategic Thinking
- Assessing Operational Capability and Capacity
- Managing Short Peer Support Projects
- Appreciative Enquiry
- Professional Report Writing

- 5.3 The course could be delivered through an Open University Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) or a Badged Open Course (BOC). These typically cost in the region of £35-55K and typically take about 4 months to produce.
- 5.4 The peer support community of practice can then be grown from [CoP] members completing the accredited courses, to build the necessary capacity and capability to resource developmental peer support moving forward.
- 5.5 A further development option would include extending the accreditation to partnership work with other emergency services, and the public sector at large; presenting the College of Policing with an opportunity for income generation.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 Developmental peer support is an effective approach to providing cross service expertise in mature organisations. It can deliver organisational learning and transformation, clear structure and focus. Accrediting individuals to carry out such work will enable us to professionalise change, respond to CPMG calls for peer support and develop leadership capability for the future.

7. DECISIONS REQUIRED

- 7.1 For information and update.

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Organisational Development**