

Apprenticeship reform: Assessing skills, knowledge and behaviours

The Initial Police Learning and Development Programme

Introduction

A police officer must be skilled to a high level, have an extensive base of knowledge and display a set of identifiable behaviours. While still in training, student officers provide a visible presence on the street and must demonstrate a strong public service ethos. There are also specialised frontline roles, so student officers must be capable of developing expertise as neighbourhood officers, response officers, investigators and other roles that are important to maintaining public safety.

The National Policing Curriculum comprises the learning outcomes approved by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) for adoption by the police service, and relevant to most police roles. It includes sections dedicated to **Initial police learning**, operational and specialist roles, and leadership development and is defined by a series of learning outcomes (standards) covering content across a range of distinct, but interconnected areas of learning.

The curriculum for the Initial Police Learning and Development Programme (IPLDP) defines the requisite knowledge, understanding and competence that student officers for the Police Service of England and Wales must demonstrate before they can be confirmed in rank as a Regular Police Constable. The IPLDP is known to student officers as their probationary period.

Why is the IPLDP a case study for Apprenticeship reform?

Although the training for a police constable is not delivered within an Apprenticeship in England (there is one for Wales), the IPLDP is a strong example of a rigorous and valid training assessment process. Its key elements are:

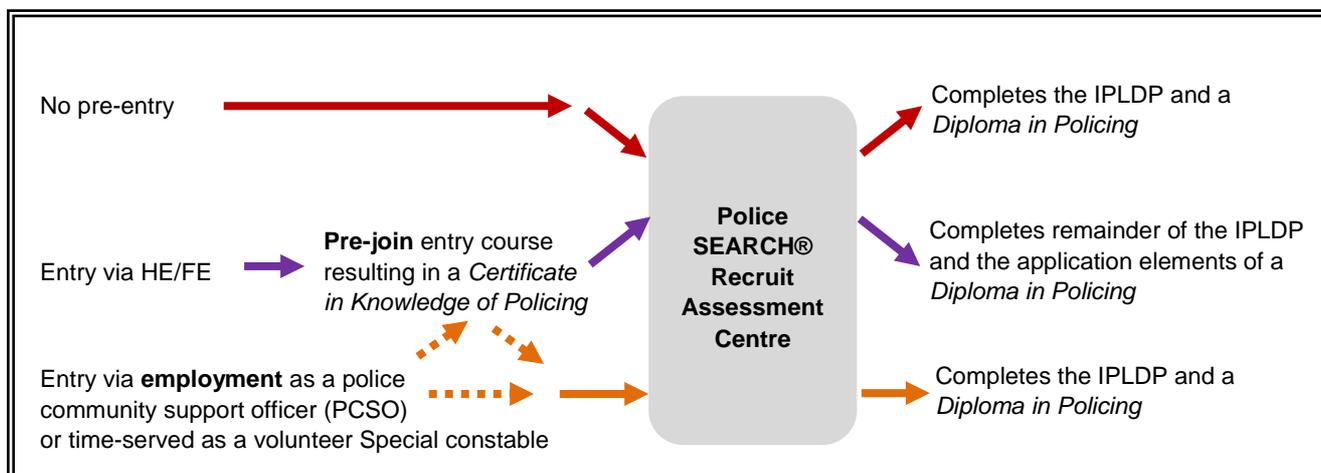
- an integrated learning and assessment programme that covers knowledge, skills and behaviours;
- a mixed mode of assessment components that have been extensively field-tested with a well-developed evaluative framework;
- assessment within a high-risk environment, with a well-defined stakeholder and quality assurance scaffold.

Note: End testing is not included in the assessment process for the IPLDP.

The IPLDP

Entry routes into the IPLDP

Assessment of skills, knowledge and behaviours is a key part of every entry route into the police force even before entrants start the IPLDP.



The **Police SEARCH® Recruit Assessment Centre** is the national minimum entry requirement for all police officers entering the service. Even if candidates have successfully completed a Pre-Join programme, they are required to demonstrate the minimum entry standard at the Police SEARCH® assessment centre prior to recruitment as a Police Officer. The assessment centre:

- tests a candidate across the range of personal qualities within the Policing Professional Framework to assess their aptitude to perform effectively in the role of Police Constable;
- covers the areas of working with others, numerical ability, written and oral communication through a combination of interactive exercises, written exercises, psychometric tests, and a competency-based structured interview.

The IPLDP knowledge-based **Pre-Join** programme:

- consists of the knowledge and understanding learning outcomes of the majority of the Initial Learning Curriculum and can be delivered as a discrete course in its own right or as part of a wider programme e.g. Foundation/Honours Degree.
- can be assessed through a mixture of methods including tests, open- and closed-book assignments and evidenced professional discussion.
- is accredited through a Level 3 *Certificate in Knowledge of Policing* (a QCF qualification or a Higher Education equivalent) which can be submitted as evidence of the knowledge and understanding components of the *Diploma in Policing*, allowing certificated candidates to undertake a shorter period of on-the-job training and assessment that is more focused on the acquisition of skills and the development of desired behaviours.

Entrants who are already **employed** as a PCSO or as a volunteer Special constable will have followed a training programme that has some commonality with the IPLDP. In some forces, PCSOs and Specials are required to achieve the *Certificate in Knowledge of Policing*.

IPLDP learning and assessment

- The learning programme covers knowledge, skills and behaviours identified by the wider Policing Professional Framework, which was developed jointly with Skills for Justice and provides profiles for all officer ranks and police staff based on National Occupational Standards (NOS).
- Delivery of learning utilises a blend of methods where student officers experience learning in the classroom and the workplace, as well as involving the people and communities they will be serving through local community placement and engagement.
- The learning experience is supported by a variety of learning methodologies including: case studies and scenarios, student notes, e-learning, facilitated group discussions, individual and group exercises, practical exercises, presentations, workplace coaching/mentoring and supported role plays.
- Assessment is carried out by assessors within the employing police force, supported by testimonials from professional witnesses and other colleagues who observe the student officer in workplace activity. A mixed mode of formative and summative assessment is employed that covers skills, knowledge and behaviours and that includes evidence from investigation case files, written assignments and knowledge checks, observations and simulations.
- Physical fitness is tested throughout the IPLDP as this is an important element of a police constable's performance.
- If concerns are identified regarding a student officer's performance, they are given an appropriate level of support and an action plan. Should performance continue to be unsatisfactory, the student may be deemed "*not fitted, mentally or physically, to perform the duties of their office or that they are unlikely to become an efficient or well conducted officer*" and their probationary period terminated in accordance with Police Regulation 13 (2003).

Successful completion of the IPLDP results in the student officer being awarded the *Diploma in Policing*, a regulated qualification under the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF). This is the national minimum professional qualification and demonstrates the knowledge and understanding required as well as competent operational application in the workplace.

The IPLDP structure

Every police force follows the national IPLDP curriculum and delivers the four phases shown below, but local forces adapt it to take account of local needs.

2 year programme				
Training	Foundation	Phase 2: Community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to the local community • Community placement(s) • Further knowledge elements delivered 	Phase 3: Core learning (Classroom/workplace tutoring) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workplace practice supported by class-based learning, dealing with simulated and real-life incidents • Continuation of community placement(s) • Further skills and knowledge training to develop operational skills 	Phase 4: Independent patrol <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expected to achieve competence in a range of activities and operational duties • Protected learning time for further classroom based training • Independent and distance learning
	Phase 1: Induction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primarily classroom based • Introduction to police service • Focus on attitudes, behaviours, ethics and values • Knowledge elements delivered 			
<p>A Student Officer Learning and Assessment Portfolio (SOLAP) is maintained by the student officer throughout the IPLDP both as a training diary and to record assessment reports and witness testimonies, examples of good performance, and areas for development. All assessment records form part of the evidence towards the <i>Diploma in Policing</i>. The SOLAP diary is regularly submitted to the trainer for monitoring, feedback and, where necessary, action plans to meet any identified development needs.</p>				
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required to successfully complete a number of written knowledge checks/examinations, project work and assessed practical application of the skills learnt through role-play scenario exercises • Final written knowledge test to establish that the student officer has the requisite level of knowledge to carry out accompanied patrol under the guidance of a Tutor Constable (phase 3). Should a student officer fail the final knowledge check, they are given one further opportunity to retake it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workplace assessment commences and continues into the independent patrol phase. • Assessed competent in 100% of Police Action Checklist (PACs). The PACs list a number of actions in which an officer needs to show competence across a variety of areas. • Demonstrates competency on one occasion across 6 defined units of the <i>Diploma in Policing</i>. • Suitability for independent patrol is assessed throughout this phase. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance continually assessed in terms of knowledge and understanding, competency, skills, attitudes and behaviours. • Demonstration of competency against units of the Diploma. • Independent Patrol Status acquired through completion of a Student Officer Record of Competence and a performance development review recommendation. • <i>Diploma in Policing</i> completed in accordance with requirements of awarding body. 	

Quality assurance of the training and assessment process

The College of Policing is the professional body for policing. Whilst noting that the IPLDP scheme is jointly owned by key stakeholders, the College's mandate is to set standards in professional development, training, skills and qualifications, including codes of practice and regulations, to ensure consistency across the 43 forces in England and Wales. The College:

- holds the intellectual property rights for the whole Initial Learning Curriculum that underpins the IPLDP including the Pre-Join programme;
- undertakes to hold the latest version of the curriculum and maintain its currency with changes in legislation or changes in practice guidance;

Note: The online learning environment, National Centre for Applied Learning Technologies (NCALT), which is managed by the College is used to communicate curriculum changes to all UK police forces. All Initial Learning materials are maintained and uploaded on a weekly basis and are improved in response to feedback from forces, legislative changes, doctrine development, best practice, strategic directives and other environmental scanning.

Centrally developed learning programmes and assessments are rigorously tested to ensure that they both educationally sound and relevant to the working environment. Changes or adaptations are tested through pilots with a number of forces.

- licenses the IPLDP to individual police forces to deliver, and monitors delivery through the Police Service Quality Assurance Scheme (PSQA) for Training, Learning and Development.

Note: Forces are required to carry out an online self-assessment of their training provision and outline how they will maintain their strengths, and progress improvements. Prior to signing off the self-assessment, it is subjected to a form of peer review which allows forces to share best practice.

- provides guidance on such matters as the training of assessors and how to conduct assessment;
- operates the Approved Provider Scheme which is used to endorse commercial providers who deliver the Certificate in Knowledge of Policing as outsourced training. This scheme assures forces of the quality of pre-join learning provided by approved bodies.
- oversees the selection of awarding organisations for the *Diploma in Policing* qualification. These in turn work to an Assessment Strategy which is maintained by Skills for Justice (the sector skills council) working with the College.

Key considerations for Trailblazers

Lessons learned from the IPLDP

- As a public service, the risk element in police training is fairly high with regard to aspects of the skills and behaviours requirements. The reputation of the Police in being a trained and monitored service is therefore a critical issue in considering how training is delivered and assessed.
- There is a consistent professional entry framework, co-produced in partnership between the College of Policing, police forces, universities, colleges, private sector providers, Skills for Justice and awarding organisations.

- Standardised learning and assessment delivered nationally whether in a policing or external environment offers greater transferability between forces.
- A single, standardised, national curriculum and assessment strategy is administered by police forces, awarding organisations, and some HE/FE providers.
- The College of Policing develops standardised assessments for forces to use that test the student officer in a live environment using a number of scenarios and potential operations.
- The IPLDP uses several modes of assessment, which is judged as the best way to produce occupationally competent police officers.
- Although there is no end testing (required by the Apprenticeship reform), assessment is conducted throughout probationary training with a series of assessments at the end of each phase, which relate to occupational milestones.
- The College of Policing acts an independent assessment body working with the sector skills council, the police forces, the awarding organisations and commercial providers to quality assure all aspects of the IPLDP, including Pre-Join learning.

Questions for Trailblazers when developing training and assessment models for their Apprenticeship standard

- What are the potential entry pathways to the full Apprenticeship?
- What are the training and assessment milestones?
- What are the key elements required of the training programme?
- How does the training programme impact on the assessment requirements?
- What assessment methods will be the most effective for the skills, knowledge and behaviours required by the standard? How can these be tested for validity and robustness?
- Is there a risk that any of the assessment methods will act as a barrier to the progression of an otherwise capable apprentice (e.g. a competent apprentice who struggles to pass a written exam)? How can you mitigate such risk?
- Who will refine and update the training and assessment model in the long term?
- Who will act as the steward for quality assurance?