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**The current state of play: Awareness, understanding, acceptance,
engagement and utilisation of evidence-based practice in UK policing**

by

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Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

Faculty of Social and Human Sciences
Sociology, Social Policy and Criminology

Doctor of Philosophy

The current state of play: Awareness, understanding, acceptance, engagement and utilisation of evidence-based practice in UK policing

by

Michael Alan Hope

A concentrated attempt to professionalise UK policing commenced in 2011. A key element of the strategy adopted was an aim to make greater use of evidence-based practice (EBP) in policing. The establishment of the College of Policing in 2012 presented opportunities to embed EBP in UK policing. As part of the process, initial police training was restructured to ensure new recruits were degree educated on completion of training. Alongside the new training programme, academic research was made available to serving officers via the College of Policing to establish EBP as routine practice. The aim of this study was to examine how police utilise EBP and to answer the primary research question: ***'To what extent is evidence-based practice currently embedded in UK policing as part of the wider professionalisation process?'***

The methodological approach to the research process was interpretivist and pragmatic. Mixed methods were employed, with a quantitative online questionnaire distributed nationally prior to qualitative case study fieldwork being conducted in three English police forces. Each case study focused on a different policing function (public order, response and neighbourhood). A total of 244 hours of observations took place in multiple settings across the chosen forces. Additionally, 28 hours of semi-structured interviews were conducted with 21 officers who worked in the respective case study functions.

Key findings reveal that EBP is not currently embedded in UK policing as envisaged at the start of the professionalisation process. A lack of organisational capability to embed EBP operationally is evident. The study established a level of receptivity among officers to utilise EBP and a desire for appropriate training and development to support them. The research highlights how the College of Policing faces credibility issues, due in part to a reliance on police forces to effectively implement its EBP-related strategies. The findings identified how structural barriers have limited progress of the professionalisation process and consequently enabled well-documented aspects of police occupational culture to impact on attempts to embed EBP. The thesis complements existing research that examines the professionalisation agenda from a critical perspective. This study makes a unique contribution to policing literature on professionalisation, culture and EBP by providing empirical evidence from within operational policing in the midst of the professionalisation process.

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Research Thesis: Declaration of Authorship

Print name: Michael Alan Hope

Title of thesis: The current state of play: Awareness, understanding, acceptance, engagement and utilisation of evidence-based practice in UK policing.

I declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
7. None of this work has been published before submission
8. Signature: Date: 5th February 2024

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Definitions and Abbreviations

ACC	Assistant Chief Constable
ACE	Adverse Childhood Experience
AFO	Authorised Firearms Officer
APP	Authorised Professional Practice
ASB	Anti-Social Behaviour
BWV.....	Body Worn Video
CCPT	Child Centred Policing Team
CEPOL	European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training
COMPSTAT	Computerized Statistics
COP	Community Oriented Policing
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
DFO.....	Dedicated Football Officer
DHEP.....	Degree Holder Entry Programme
EBP.....	Evidence-Based Practice
EDL.....	English Defence League
ERGO	Ethics and Research Governance Online
ESIM.....	Elaborated Social Identity Model
HMICFRS.....	His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services
IPLDP	Initial Police Learning and Development Programme
LPA.....	Local Policing Area
MOPAC	Mayor's Office for Police and Crime
NCALT	National Centre for Applied Learning Technologies
NDM	National Decision Model

Definitions and Abbreviations

NPCC	National Police Chiefs' Council
NPFTC.....	National Police Firearms Training Curriculum
NTE.....	Night-Time Economy
N8PRP	N8 Policing Research Partnership
OFO	Operational Football Officer
OPCC	Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner
OSU	Operational Support Unit
OU	Open University
PCDA	Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship
PCSO.....	Police Community Support Officer
PEQF.....	Policing Education Qualifications Framework
PJT	Procedural Justice Theory
POP.....	Problem-Oriented Policing
POISA.....	Police Search Adviser
POPSA	Public Order Public Safety Adviser
PPU.....	Public Protection Unit
PSNI.....	Police Service of Northern Ireland
PSPO.....	Public Spaces Protection Order
PST	Personal Safety Training
PSU	Police Support Unit
RCT	Randomised Controlled Trial
RTA.....	Reflexive Thematic Analysis
SEBP	Society of Evidence-Based Policing
SMS	Scientific Methods Scale
SPSS.....	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
TA	Thematic Analysis

TIP.....Trauma-Informed Practice

WWCCRWhat Works Centre for Crime Reduction

YIOYouth Intervention Officer

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Background

UK policing has long been the subject of attempts to reform policy and practice. The changing nature of society requires police to evolve practices to keep pace. Over the last 20 years a number of factors have coalesced to intensify attempts to professionalise UK policing. Among them has been a strategy to make greater use of academic research to inform police practice. The focus of this thesis is the extent to which evidence-based practice (EBP) is embedded in UK policing after 10 years as a key objective of the professionalisation agenda advanced by the College of Policing (the College). EBP has also come to mean evidence-based policing in the context of law enforcement. This thesis takes EBP to signify evidence-based practice unless otherwise indicated.

1.2 Research questions

This thesis analyses progress made towards achieving the goal of EBP becoming routine practice in UK policing. The primary research question is:

‘To what extent is evidence-based practice currently embedded in UK policing as part of the wider professionalisation process?’

The word *embedded* refers to the extent to which EBP forms part of operational working practices and decision-making in various everyday settings. The term embedded acknowledges the complexities of implementing EBP in policing and recognises it is not simply a binary position of utilising or not utilising EBP. The thesis presents a nuanced understanding of where participant forces are on their ‘EBP journey’ and uses a continuum which ranges from awareness through to utilisation of EBP.

The thesis title refers to UK policing to encompass the relationship between the College and Scotland and Northern Ireland. While the College focuses primarily on English and Welsh forces, and Police Scotland and the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) have their own internal training colleges, both forces have links with the College in respect of operational guidance (e.g. public order) and shared practice (College of Policing 2023; College of Policing, 2023a). Police Scotland and PSNI participated in EBP-related research

co-funded by the College (Fleming, et al., 2016) in which the Scottish Institute for Policing Research was an academic partner. Additionally, forces in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland support each other by providing resources when necessary (e.g. large public order commitments) via a process known as mutual aid (College of Policing, 2019). However, as the College has come to predominantly focus on policing in England and Wales, the emphasis of the study is reflective of this situation.

This research started out with a focus on the extent to which EBP was embedded in UK policing. As data gathering progressed it became evident the study had broadened to encompass a variety of issues which underpin the professionalisation agenda. Therefore, in addition to showing EBP has not become embedded as intended, this thesis also highlights the challenges associated with advancing the wider professionalisation process being pursued by the College. As this thesis demonstrates, the primary research also raises a number of further questions. These questions relate to matters such as organisational structure, leadership, cultural barriers, training and the extent to which EBP can be embedded in different roles.

The thesis adopts a multi-method approach to examine the primary research question and uses a quantitative survey, ethnographic observations and semi-structured interviews as data gathering methods. It makes a unique contribution to the literature by presenting empirical evidence of the extent to which police officers understand, accept, implement and utilise EBP as part of the current police professionalisation agenda. Having introduced the research questions, the next section provides some research context.

1.3 Research background

This study does not delve into the role of politics in policing to any great extent as that relationship is already well established (see Fleming, 2015; Roycroft, 2017; Ramshaw, et al., 2019). Whilst acknowledging politics form part of the debate and events can be influenced by political decision-making, this research focuses on explanations relevant to the embedding of EBP which lie elsewhere. However, the thesis does outline the broader political context in which the most recent professionalisation agenda is set.

The establishment of a New Labour government in 1997 saw a greater focus on issues of crime and disorder. In 2001, a government White Paper (Home Office, 2001) laid out the

case for wide-ranging police reform. The paper highlighted the need to modernise working practices and improve police ability to tackle what the government regarded as concerning crime levels. The White Paper identified the need for policing to make the best use of science to improve practice. Such an approach aligned with the emergent New Labour philosophy of using research evidence to establish 'what works' in public policy decision-making (Fleming & Rhodes, 2018).

In 2010, austerity¹ measures applied to UK public services resulted in police budgets being cut by 20% and officer numbers by 15% (National Audit Office, 2018). Alongside these funding reductions, the newly elected Conservative-Liberal Democrat government sought to further reform policing and increase organisational efficiency (Brain & Owens, 2015). In 2010 the Home Secretary, Theresa May, commissioned a strategic review of police leadership and training (Holdaway, 2017). Peter Neyroud (2011), a former Chief Constable and one-time head of the national police training facility at Bramshill², undertook the review. Neyroud proposed the introduction of a professional body, citing a need for the police to *'move from being a service that acts professionally to becoming a professional service'* (p.11).

The notion of police professionalism can be traced back to the early 1900s. US police chief August Vollmer (1933) discussed advances in the professionalisation of policing, with greater emphasis on education as part of training and an increased use of science in matters such as investigation and crime prevention. The professionalisation of UK policing has been slower to advance. Calls for greater professionalisation often stem from scandals where police practice has been found wanting (Holdaway, 2019). For example, Metropolitan Police Commissioner Robert Mark argued for professionalisation in the 1970's in response to systemic corruption issues within detective squads in London (Reiner, 2012; Holdaway, 2017). Police reform advocates regard professionalism as a means of addressing matters such as corruption and poor performance, arguing police skills and knowledge need constant reflection and improvement (Sklansky, 2013).

¹ The period of austerity referred to in this thesis is considered to be 2010-2019

² Bramshill was absorbed into the College of Policing structure before closing in 2015 due to the costs associated with running the site.

Chapter 1

Neyroud's 2011 review supported government resolve to professionalise policing in a way not achieved previously. Neyroud (2011) argued the need for accreditation, ethical standards and governance if policing was to become a recognised profession. Neyroud also stressed the importance of using evidence of 'what works' to both inform his recommendations and police practice more generally. His recommendations were accepted by the Home Secretary and in 2012 the College was established as the professional body (Holdaway, 2019). This decision marked the beginning of an orchestrated move towards professionalising policing in the UK.

Neyroud's assertion that research evidence should inform police practice aligned with the New Labour 'what works' philosophy, often referred to as evidence-based practice (EBP). EBP has its roots in medicine where it formed part of the process Tilley and Laycock (2017) depicted as moving from '*witchcraft to science-based medicine*' (p.12). Over the last 25 years, EBP has become an established term in UK public service management with a presence in the fields of health, education, social care and criminal justice (Nutley, et al., 2013). The underlying ethos of EBP is that public policy decisions should be based on rigorously tested evidence as opposed to common sense or experience, which has traditionally been the position in policing (Fleming & Rhodes, 2018).

EBP is a central component of the wider professionalisation process being driven by the College. Lumsden and Goode (2018) reflect on how the direction of College-developed products will influence police understanding of EBP and which knowledge types will be considered acceptable for use within policing. There have been a number of hierarchies developed (see for example Farrington, et al., 2002; Ratcliffe, 2019) to assess the effectiveness of interventions, with quantitative methods such as the randomised controlled trial (RCT) often considered the most reliable (Bowers, et al., 2017). However, what constitutes valid evidence is not universally agreed upon and there is a debate about the 'hierarchy of evidence' which underpins EBP.

For example, Lumsden (2017b) discusses how the use of a hierarchy of evidence risks marginalising or excluding particular types of evidence (e.g. qualitative) which have a legitimate claim to be considered and may be beneficial for practitioners. Huey et al. (2021) widen the debate and consider evidence hierarchies in respect of both quantitative and qualitative data, arguing that that qualitative research utilising multiple methods is capable of providing rigorous results which constitute valid evidence of

‘what’s very promising’ (p. 56). The current College definition of EBP (College of Policing, 2020a) refers to the use of ‘best available’ evidence. Mitchell (2019) discusses how ‘best available’ evidence widens the scope of what constitutes legitimate evidence beyond that obtained via quantitative methods. Mitchell also observes how a hierarchy which focuses on quantitative data has limited relevance in the context of the College definition of EBP as it cannot rank research which does not seek to establish a causal link via quantitative research. Whilst there is debate about what constitutes valid evidence, that such discussions are taking place should be considered positive progress.

Historically, western policing practices lacked an evidence-based rationale and operated on the premise of random patrols, rapid incident response and reactive investigations (Sherman, 2013). As crime statistics became widely available and police performance was scrutinised by interested parties, concerns were raised about the effectiveness of traditional police methods (Skogan & Frydl, 2004). From the 1990s onwards, policing innovations emerged in countries such as the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the UK. Much of the early work originated in the US and was undertaken by Lawrence Sherman who is widely acknowledged as the facilitator of EBP in policing (Greene, 2014). These innovations included problem-oriented policing (POP) (Goldstein, 1979), CompStat (Computerized Statistics) (Weisburd, et al., 2003) and intelligence-led policing (Ratcliffe, 2002), all of which required greater analysis by police of their operating procedures. Effective use of methods such as POP means police have to adequately understand problems before utilising relevant evidence-based strategies to tackle them. Successfully implementing these processes requires officers to possess relevant knowledge (Fielding, 2018) and EBP formed an important part of the strategy to attain such knowledge (Holdaway, 2019).

In a move designed to strengthen and formalise the EBP concept, the ‘*What Works Centre in Crime Reduction*’ (WWCCR) was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and UK government in 2013. The centre comprised: eight UK universities and the College. The purpose of the academic/practitioner network was to increase levels of research evidence available to public policymakers seeking to improve cost effectiveness during austerity (Fleming & Rhodes, 2018). The newly formed College was chosen to house the *What Works Centre*, one of nine policy centres forming the UK *What Works* network (Gough, et al., 2018). A process to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of research

evidence housed in the crime reduction centre was developed using five different criteria (Effect, Mechanism, Moderators, Implementation and Economic Cost) (Johnson, et al., 2015). In addition, an online crime reduction 'toolkit' was established within the College website to provide officers with research to assist them in tackling operational issues (College of Policing, 2020a). The extent to which operational officers utilise such resources is examined in chapters six and seven.

With these processes in place, the College was tasked by the government to recommend police practices through reviews of scientific research evidence. *'Identifying, developing and promoting practice based on evidence'* became one of five strategic objectives introduced by the College with the aim of EBP becoming a routine element of policing (College of Policing, 2014). A similar aim for EBP to become *'embedded and inform day-to-day policing practice'* was contained in the 2016 National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) report titled *'Policing Vision 2025'* (NPCC, 2016). Other College objectives included the setting of standards of professional practice, supporting the professional development of those involved in policing, supporting forces to protect the public/prevent crime and finally the development of ethics, values and standards of integrity (College of Policing, 2014). It is the EBP-related objective which is the primary focus of this thesis.

The College has employed different methods to increase EBP awareness in policing since its inception. As part of the drive towards becoming a functioning profession akin to medicine or law, officers registered as College members to access their website services in the years immediately after the introduction of the College. The College pledged to provide free membership for the first three years and for as long as possible thereafter (Home Affairs Committee, 2016). However, the College had longer-term aspirations to charge officers for membership services as part of plans to raise revenue (Home Affairs Committee, 2016). To date, no membership fees have been introduced and the College has moved to a position where officers no longer have to register as members and have 'open access' to the College website. Fielding (2018) observes how a reluctance amongst officers to pay membership subscriptions has proved problematic for the College professionalisation agenda and this thesis discusses the challenges the College faces in

establishing credibility with many operational officers. Another avenue pursued by the College to raise awareness of EBP is via evidence champions³.

Those performing the role describe themselves as mediators between the College and their respective force, with their role being to '*embed or normalise the use of research evidence in everyday practice*' (May, et al., 2017: 144). Interviews with evidence champions revealed that EBP was not embedded at force level and the WWCCR toolkit (introduced in 2015) was not perceived to provide officers with solutions capable of addressing/solving operational issues (May, et al., 2017). Champions are people with a research interest and their concerns about the quality of available research illustrate the challenge of winning over officers who are sceptical about EBP in the first place. Other research has also identified problems with the WWCCR.

May et al. (2017) observe how the WWCCR should enable officers to access research which can assist them in their work. However, there are matters which affect whether this happens in practice. Research with officers by Hunter et al. (2019) draws attention to these issues, identifying a need for more research on pressing matters within policing. A review of the WWCCR by Hunter et al. (2017) highlighted the need for the College to ensure research is relevant to officers, both in terms of language used in presentation and the product meeting operational needs. Beyond research quality, officer awareness of the existence of the WWCCR and associated crime reduction toolkit is limited (Sidebottom & Tilley, 2022). Despite these difficulties, the College has continued to develop products intended to help officers improve their practice.

The College has delivered EBP training in the form of evidence master classes and research surgeries (College of Policing, 2020). The College website contains a database of existing research for police officers to utilise along with a research map listing ongoing projects in different forces. In 2020, the College launched '*Going Equipped*', a publication in which police officers and staff author articles about police-related research they are conducting (College of Policing, 2020c). The most recent addition to the College website is the Practice Bank, introduced in 2023. The Practice Bank contains interventions

³ The Evidence Champions Network is an informal group facilitated by the College but owned by its' members who are police officers/staff with an interest in EBP. The role of evidence champions includes the development of EBP strategies, raising EBP awareness within their force and conducting research.

implemented by community safety organisations, including police forces. The premise is to make interventions available for practitioners and encourage officers to make their own practices available to others (College of Policing, 2023). In some respects the concept is similar to the WWCCR toolkit. Since its inception, the College has compiled a broad range of products designed to promote understanding and utilisation of EBP. However, while the College has persevered with research dissemination to assist officers, progress has been slow.

Challenges the College faces in being able to deliver its professionalisation agenda were highlighted in a 2016 Home Affairs Committee report (2016). The Committee acknowledged the difficulties the College faced given 'inherent tensions' between the College role in setting national standards and the lack of consistency across 43 English and Welsh forces. Beyond the wider problem of forces failing to engage with its work, the College also has to contend with getting officers to utilise College material on EBP. The College regarded education as an important part of tackling these issues and sought to ensure that academic research became a routine element of policing (College of Policing, 2014). However, studies indicating police officers do not routinely read academic publications relevant to their role further highlights the difficulties of increasing research use associated with professionalisation (Telep & Lum, 2014; Palmer, et al., 2019). This thesis assesses the extent to which progress has been made towards engagement with EBP material and whether or not operational officers are consulting professional publications as routine practice.

As part of government reform of policing bodies, the College assumed responsibility for training and policy setting (Home Affairs Committee, 2016). With Neyroud (2011) having identified educational qualifications as necessary for police professionalism, the College initiated an overhaul of recruit training. In 2016, the College announced new recruit entry and training requirements for English and Welsh forces, collectively named the Policing Education Qualifications Framework (PEQF). The PEQF was intended to improve officer education levels and increase the use of research evidence in police decision-making (Williams, et al., 2019). The PEQF recruitment and training programme offered applicants three pathways into the organisation, requiring recruits to either have a degree prior to joining or to obtain one during training. Recruits with a degree study for two years on the Degree Holder Entry Programme (DHEP) to achieve a diploma in Professional Policing

Practice. Students without a degree undertake a three-year scheme known as the Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship (PCDA), achieving a degree in Professional Policing Practice at the conclusion. A third pathway is available for recruits who complete a self-funded degree in Professional Policing prior to joining.

The PCDA and DHEP schemes are the most popular routes and both are funded by individual police forces (College of Policing, 2020). Part of the rationale for greater emphasis on education is research suggesting officers with higher education levels increase public satisfaction, use less force and are subject to fewer public complaints (Hallenberg & Cockcroft, 2017). Whilst such evidence suggests increasing police officer education is a positive step, the reality of implementation is complex (see for example Fleming, 2008 for Australian context). The introduction of the PEQF highlights existing tensions over what is perceived by some serving officers as academia being prioritised above craft knowledge and experience (Fleming, et al., 2015; Holdaway, 2019).

One of the challenges the College faces in countering resistance to PEQF and EBP is engaging effectively with serving officers who are not part of the PEQF process. The role of universities in delivering academic aspects of the new courses has, to some extent, passed the onus for embedding EBP onto universities themselves. Universities providing PEQF training face difficulties in establishing credibility among serving officers who underwent what might be viewed as the more 'traditional' police training which preceded the PEQF (Hough & Stanko, 2020). Officers who joined prior to 2020 were trained under programmes such as the Initial Police Learning and Development Programme, which had a more task focused curriculum (Charman, 2017). In contrast, the PEQF places greater emphasis on teaching students about evidence-based research (Martin, 2022; Norman, 2023). There is therefore a perceived need to 'upskill' serving officers given the aim to increase EBP utilisation as part of the professionalisation agenda. However, as this thesis demonstrates, the importance police officers attach to craft knowledge and experience, along with aspects of occupational culture, makes the integration of EBP into practice a challenge. Beyond the concerns of officers, external factors have also impacted negatively on the introduction of the PEQF.

In 2019, in response to falling police numbers, the UK government embarked on a major campaign to recruit 20,000 new officers across England and Wales by the end of March 2023, a programme known as 'The Uplift' (Home Office, 2019). The Uplift saw

unprecedented numbers of recruits joining police forces in a concentrated time frame, placing pressure on force infrastructures (Norman, 2023). The timing of the Uplift scheme coincided with the introduction of the PEQF. This research took place during the height of the Uplift programme and presents data on the challenges of significantly increasing recruit numbers after a period of austerity whilst simultaneously implementing a new degree-level training programme for recruits. Pressures placed on policing by Uplift and the PEQF were compounded by the emergence of the Covid-19 global pandemic in 2020.

Covid-19 lockdowns resulted in police having to operate differently to minimise human contact and reduce virus spread. As a consequence, much police work (beyond response policing) became virtual, with those in non-critical roles often working from home (Fleming & Brown, 2021; Fleming & Brown, 2022). Recruit training also moved online, with lectures delivered remotely by instructors (Halford & Youansamouth, 2022). Whilst formal Covid-19 restrictions had been predominantly lifted by the time the case study fieldwork commenced, the impact of the pandemic was visible and new practices such as 'hybrid' working remained, along with a greater reliance on virtual training. The challenges confronting policing during the research period increased following events which resulted in the Casey Review (Baroness Casey, 2023).

The progress of police professionalisation was brought back into focus in 2023 after publication of the Casey Review (Baroness Casey, 2023). Commissioned after a number of scandals in the Metropolitan Police, most notably the 2021 murder of Sarah Everard by a serving Metropolitan Police officer, the review focused on behavioural standards and organisational culture within the Metropolitan Police. The findings revealed systemic issues across many aspects of the organisation, such as poor management, discrimination and a lack of integrity. The Casey Review suggests that, in the Metropolitan Police at least, the desired levels of professionalism have yet to be achieved over a decade after the current professionalisation agenda commenced.

The opportunity to gather data in different forces using multi-methods enables this study to show that some of the issues identified in the Casey Review (e.g. training and leadership) are not confined to the Metropolitan Police. The research process detailed in this thesis posed numerous challenges due to the extent of the fieldwork. Observing and interviewing multiple police teams/officers in different departments across three forces meant my role in the research process had to continually adapt and evolve. I also had to

contend with the challenge of working as a researcher in environments where I was previously an operational police officer. The following section offers some reflections on my role in the fieldwork process.

1.4 Reflexivity

Reflexivity is described by Armstrong et al. (2014) as a process which recognises that research takes place in the real world and not in isolation. Armstrong et al. (2014) argue there are considerations attached to research in respect of matters such as locations, participants, data and analysis which must be acknowledged and addressed as part of the research process. Others concur with these views (see O'Neill, et al., 2023; Lumsden & Winter, 2014; Dean, 2017; Clemens & Tierney, 2020). Given my biography in relation to the research topic, it is pertinent to discuss reflexivity as part of this study.

I undertook this research as a former police inspector with 23 years operational experience across two forces in roles including public order, firearms command, response, crime investigation and covert policing. Whilst I had previously undertaken fieldwork for my Masters dissertation as a serving officer, I was now undertaking a PhD after formally retiring from policing. I therefore occupied the role of an 'outside insider' (Brown, 1996). I was 'outside' because I had left the police, but I was in possession of 'insider' knowledge when conducting the research. However, as Stockdale (2017) observes, the outside/inside positionality is more nuanced than the term suggests.

Having reflected on the research experience, I regard my position to have been on a continuum. Whilst I occupied the broad status of outside insider, there were times where I felt more outside than inside and vice versa. For example, when conducting fieldwork in the football policing case study (see Chapter five), I was more of an insider due to my knowledge and experience of the subject. Conversely, when observing neighbourhood policing (see Chapter six) I felt more of an outsider as it was not an aspect of policing I had much personal experience of. The same premise also held true regarding surroundings and officers I was familiar with, as opposed to locations and officers unfamiliar to me. Conducting fieldwork as a former officer provided me with much to reflect on in terms of my position in the field and the practicalities of undertaking such research, as the remainder of this chapter demonstrates.

Much has been written about the challenges of researching powerful organisations such as the police (see for example Manning, 2023; Clark-Darby, 2023; Cox, 2020; Fassin, 2013). Although my status as a former officer offered benefits in terms of access and credibility, I still needed to carefully plan how I would approach the fieldwork. Cram (2023) discusses how researcher biography can influence trust levels afforded by police officers. In this respect my status as a former white, male and relatively senior police officer was advantageous because that was the dominant demographic among participants. Police officers are generally thought to be suspicious of outsiders (Reiner, 2012) and police ethnographers often describe the challenge of dealing with officer suspicion in the field (Loftus, 2009; Demaree, et al., 2013; Sausdal, 2023; Cram, 2023). On reflection, I experienced little officer suspicion and was afforded significant levels of trust across the fieldwork. Occasions where I was 'sidelined' were rare. I was generally privy to briefings where intelligence was discussed, able to move around police stations without being constantly chaperoned, and requests about how I wanted to work were usually willingly met. I therefore feel trust was granted from the outset due to my former officer status. I reflected on being fortunate not to experience the access difficulties discussed in much of the literature (see for example Bacon, et al., 2020; Cox, 2020; Manning, 2023; Martin & Hoffman, 2023; Clark-Darby, 2023). However, there were situations which presented access challenges.

During my first observation I was crewed with a van of Operational Support Unit (OSU) officers policing a football match. Such teams are close-knit as they work together every day, often in challenging circumstances. The presence of an 'outsider' in their van can therefore be disruptive. During the initial part of the shift, it was clear officers held reservations about my presence as only one person in the van engaged me in conversation while the rest of the team remained silent. Faced with this situation, I decided to allow rapport to develop organically rather than use my former officer status to 'force' rapport building as I thought this may further alienate me. This method proved effective as conversations slowly opened up and by the end of the observation the atmosphere had changed and the entire team were happy to engage with me.

The importance of building rapport and trust during police ethnography cannot be stressed enough (Sausdal, 2023). I know from my own experience as an officer, and now researcher, that officers talk to each other and will vouch for an 'outsider' if they have had a positive

experience working with them. This proved to be the case for me as I was crewed with a different OSU team on another occasion where some of the officers discussed in the earlier example were present. The atmosphere was markedly different from that encounter and I integrated into the team much quicker, which suggests officers vouched for me from their previous experience. Overall, I encountered little of the tactics Cram (2023) discusses, whereby officers deliberately seek to avoid working with researchers.

Another challenge I faced was adjusting to being in familiar police surroundings as a researcher. The first case study focused on football-related public order, an aspect of policing I had significant experience of as an officer. Early fieldwork left me feeling slightly vulnerable when accompanying officers checking pubs for the presence of football fans, something I had done regularly when in uniform. In the event of disorder, it would be evident to people I was with officers, but I no longer possessed the powers and equipment to protect myself. As Pearson and Werren (2023) point out, ethnographic researchers working in crowd situations can be mistaken for covert police officers. To negate this happening, I sought to physically distance myself from officers in situations where supporter attention became focused on them.

Martin and Graham (2015) discuss the dangers associated with observing public order operations because of the potential for peaceful situations to rapidly become violent. My operational knowledge was beneficial in the football policing case study as I understood how disorder developed. Officers commented that having an observer with such experience was helpful, as I proactively withdrew when tensions increased so they did not have to 'babysit' me (Wakeman, 2014). I was referred to as a 'low maintenance visitor' by an inspector when seeking support to observe a forthcoming match. I interpreted this to mean I did not require support and guidance from officers which might otherwise distract them from their task.

Aware my policing background would affect the field setting, I sought to build rapport while also maintaining distance from participants (Souhami, 2020). Providing sufficient information to demonstrate policing credibility helped gain the trust of officers (Cox, 2020). However, I avoided going through my CV (unless specifically asked) or recounting 'tales of the job,' which would have distracted me from my task (Wakeman, 2014; Clark-Darby, 2023). I was aware of the impact my previous rank (inspector) may have had on officers as there can be a tendency for some officers to show deference to ex-officers of rank. I

therefore avoided reference to my rank, unless directly asked, to minimise the chances of my former status influencing participant responses. Not wearing a uniform was helpful as it distinguished me from the uniformed officers and served as a reminder to me of my role now being that of researcher rather than police officer.

I believe having policing experience was beneficial in helping me adapt to the field (Belur, 2014; Stockdale, 2017). For example, pre-existing knowledge of procedures, such as domestic abuse risk assessments, meant I did not have to seek explanations and could readily evaluate how such issues linked to my research. Knowing what responding to a violent incident on a 'blue-light run' felt like enabled me to retain focus and not suffer what Stockdale (2017) refers to as '*culture shock*' (p.323). In my experience, police stations can seem intimidating and inhospitable places where strangers are often treated with suspicion (Sausdal, 2023). Even as a former officer, I felt a sense of anticipation when visiting a station for the first time. However, familiarity with the environment meant I soon felt more at ease.

My knowledge and experience also presented challenges. I had to resist the temptation to make assumptions about issues based on my knowledge, ensuring that explanations came from participants. Much of the work I observed was mundane which, as other researchers have documented (Rowe & Rowe, 2021; Pearson & Rowe, 2021; Newburn, 2023), is often the reality of policing. Participants themselves often apologised for the 'boring' nature of incidents we attended, assuming I was seeking 'exciting' jobs such as vehicle pursuits or crimes in progress. In such situations I stressed my research was focused on how they, the officers, worked and the nature of incidents was secondary. However, there were occasions where I had to work hard to maintain enthusiasm and concentration having attended such incidents dozens of times myself as an officer. I utilised briefings at the commencement of shifts to ensure officers understood the purpose of my research.

Attending briefings was important for numerous reasons. Doing so enabled me to be 'seen' by the entire team. On my first day with a team I would ask the supervisor if I could introduce myself and briefly explain my research. This approach helped to allay suspicions about me as a 'stranger in civvies'. Until I spoke I was invariably looked at inquisitively by upwards of 20 uniformed officers during a response briefing. Introducing myself also avoided the risk of having my research misrepresented and being undermined at the outset. Informing teams I was not working for the Professional Standards (complaints) department raised a smile and served as an icebreaker. Briefings also enabled me to make

observations about team composition and dynamics and there was usually a subsequent invitation to join the group for coffee before operational deployments commenced. This situation provided me with an excellent opportunity to begin rapport building in an informal environment. My cultural knowledge meant I also knew the benefits of bringing a sufficient supply of cakes and biscuits as a visitor to a police station! Knowing time was limited with each team, maximising my presence was important both to gather data and establish credibility and rapport. Experiencing the entire shift as officers did was therefore necessary, even though my experience could have led me to take 'short cuts'.

I adopted the approach of crewing with officers for the duration of their shift and resisted any temptation to leave early, even if I was tired and not much was happening. Doing so served two purposes. Firstly, from a data gathering perspective the unpredictable nature of policing means that an uneventful shift can instantly become quite different if a serious incident occurs. Secondly, not picking and choosing when I entered and left the field each day demonstrated a level of commitment and interest in what officers actually did. I believe my approach to have worked as intended in at least one setting because, at the conclusion of three shifts with a response team, one officer said *'I can't believe you are going, you are like one of the team'*. I reflected how this comment indicated that, despite only spending three days with their team, I must have developed good levels of rapport and trust which were no doubt underpinned by my own policing experience. In doing so I overcame, here at least, one of the criticisms associated with hit and run ethnography, namely insufficient time in the field (Fleming & Rhodes, 2023).

Police research presents practical challenges and despite my experience, I was not immune from these. Access is the first hurdle, one which was easier for me to negotiate in two forces due to pre-existing relationships with officers. However, whilst I secured access in principle, obtaining access to individual teams was not straightforward (Manning, 2023). For example, on one occasion agreement to observe a football operation was withdrawn at short notice because several police commanders needed to observe the event and there was no longer the capacity to accommodate me. With the majority of fieldwork access negotiated via e-mail, securing agreement was often a lengthy process. I came to understand that whilst the fieldwork was important to me, it was not a priority for the police. I therefore had to be persistent to achieve agreement but needed to avoid harassing people. In my experience, momentum is important in policing and I was aware that if

influential people moved roles it may affect any agreed access. Accordingly, where I had the support of key individuals I began observations as soon as possible.

I learnt the importance of contacting supervisors (usually of sergeant and inspector rank) prior to my arrival for a shift as they were key to ensuring observations were productive for data gathering. On reflection, the only day which proved problematic stemmed from an inspector failing to respond to my correspondence. He was not present on the day in question and nobody else was expecting me. This situation resulted in my least productive day of fieldwork due to arrangements being ad hoc. Accessing police stations proved problematic as some no longer had public enquiry offices and were situated in secure compounds. There were times I was unable to reach my point of contact via phone and had to resort to waiting at the gates to seek assistance in gaining access from officers arriving for work by car. This situation was not ideal and I achieved varying degrees of success given officers' understandable caution in light of current security levels.

Sergeants acted as gatekeepers and made decisions about who I would crew with, thereby influencing what I observed. For instance, crewing with an officer who was not 'blue-light' trained limited the type of incidents I attended (Mac Giollaíbhúí, et al., 2016). I was conscious officers I crewed with may have been selected to present views which were not necessarily reflective of what was actually happening in the organisation (Demaree, et al., 2013; Pearson & Werren, 2023). On reflection I do not believe this transpired, if that was ever the intention, as officers routinely aired critical views about both their own force and policing more generally. Indeed, one sergeant commented how his team had remarked that I provided a safe environment in which to air their views openly and honestly. An advantage of ethnography is that it makes it more difficult for officers to 'stage' activity for the benefit of a researcher over a prolonged period (Cram, 2023).

I found the process of conducting fieldwork with police officers a rewarding and enjoyable experience. Whilst being a former officer was beneficial, there was the potential for that status to be problematic if not carefully managed. Possessing pre-existing knowledge presented challenges that those without such experience would not have faced, such as the temptation to become involved in how an incident was dealt with. As I progressed through the fieldwork I regularly reflected on events to learn from experiences and improve my methods. The final part of this chapter provides an overview of the thesis.

1.5 Thesis overview

This thesis has eight chapters. Chapter two provides an overview of academic literature relevant to professionalism and the utilisation of EBP in UK policing. The chapter discusses aspirations to professionalise UK policing and details the establishment of the College along with methods employed to raise EBP awareness within police organisations. Police training is discussed with a focus on the transition to degree-level education of recruits. The definition of evidence in wider public policymaking is considered and the relationship between EBP and policing examined, along with the notion of policing as a craft. Occupational and organisational culture are discussed in the context of embedding EBP. The relationship between policing and academia is reviewed before the chapter concludes with an international literature overview of the role of EBP within policing.

The methodology chapter (Chapter three) provides the rationale for an interpretivist methodological approach and discusses the use of mixed methods and case studies. The quantitative survey is discussed in respect of design, sampling, data gathering and analysis. The rationale for case study site selection is provided and a qualitative framework in the form of ethnographic observations and semi-structured interviews detailed. Qualitative data recording and analysis is explained before the chapter concludes with a discussion of ethical issues such as informed consent, anonymity, safety and confidentiality.

Chapter four outlines the *raison d'être* of the quantitative survey and reports on its findings. Data relevant to the main research question is presented and demographic participant information used to analyse the findings. The questionnaire was completed by 669 officers and revealed a receptivity towards EBP despite a lack of exposure to the concept. Chapters five, six and seven present the case studies developed through ethnographic observations and semi-structured interviews. Each chapter is devoted to one of the three case studies: football and public order (Chapter five), neighbourhood (Chapter six) and response (Chapter seven). Each chapter analyses the extent to which EBP is embedded in the three forces and policing functions studied.

Chapter five contains ethnographic observations gathered during six football policing operations. The data establishes that even where EBP is understood and engaged with as part of command planning, there are multiple factors which influence the extent to which

Chapter 1

EBP is utilised operationally in football policing. Chapter six comprises of data gathered from observing and interviewing neighbourhood officers on different teams in three separate towns and cities situated in one force. The findings reveal a lack of awareness and engagement with EBP among officers whose role involves problem-solving. Chapter seven contains data from the final case study which focused on response teams policing a large English city. This chapter highlights the challenges of increasing EBP utilisation at an operational level in a time of increased policing demand. Chapter eight summarises the key research findings and provides conclusions and recommendations for further research.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter surveys the literature associated with embedding evidence-based practice (EBP) in UK policing as part of the professionalisation agenda. The first section considers what constitutes professionalism, more broadly and in a policing context. The chapter then focuses on the origins of EBP to provide an understanding of why the concept is advocated as part of police professionalisation. The literature on policing as a craft is also examined. The College of Policing's (the College) role in reforming police education is detailed and different aspects of police culture literature are drawn upon. The chapter then details the role of police and academic relationships in embedding EBP in UK policing before providing an overview of the international literature on policing and EBP. The conclusion establishes the original contribution this research makes to the existing literature. The chapter begins by examining the professionalisation literature.

2.2 Professionalisation

In terms of what constitutes a profession and what it means to be a professional, there is broad agreement that occupations such as health care, law and accountancy are examples of traditional 'pure' professions (Noordergraaf, 2015). Traits associated with practitioners in such professions include an expert body of knowledge, membership, autonomy to practice and adherence to a code of ethics (Andreasson & Natland, 2020). Noordergraaf (2015) observes how professionalism and managerialism combine to create 'hybrid' professions in public services, such as social work and policing. In a hybrid profession the traits highlighted above are deployed within a managerial structure which can restrict practitioner ability to work autonomously. Martin (2022) observes how New Public Management, introduced in the 1990s to make public services more effective, has reduced practitioner autonomy in UK policing. Such a position aligns with the notion of hybrid professionalism and provides some context in which to consider police professionalism itself.

Defining police professionalism is not straightforward. Comparisons with professions such as engineering, medicine and law are frequently made when discussing what policing should aspire to be (see for example Tilley & Laycock, 2017; Neyroud, 2011; Sherman, 2013; Bayley, 2018). There are also differing opinions on components of police professionalism. For example, Sklansky (2013) explains how *'expertise, high standards, self-regulation'* and the presence of *'internalised norms'* (p.344-345) are all relevant to police professionalism. Green and Gates (2014) offer several definitions of professionalism and present a number of characteristics pertinent to policing. These include *'self-regulation, a code of ethics, body of knowledge, higher education and registration'* (p.77). Many of these traits form the founding principles of the College (Neyroud, 2011), with *the body of knowledge* taking the form of EBP. Whilst the above characteristics feature regularly in the policing literature, the concept of police professionalism, as this chapter will show, is contested within academia.

2.2.1 Police professionalism

The literature highlights tensions in the way officers identify with different notions of professionalism, particularly those linked to the College professionalisation agenda itself. There are differences between operational and management views on what professionalism constitutes which, as Martin (2022) points out, may limit the current police professionalisation agenda. Green and Gates (2014) observe the commonly held belief among many serving rank and file officers that they are already professional and do not require additional education or membership of a professional body. Gundhus (2012) encountered such views during ethnographic research with Norwegian police officers who saw themselves as experts in crime-fighting rather than *'knowledge workers or information brokers'* (p. 183). In light of these observations it is likely many police officers would agree with Bittner's (2005) observation that nothing learnt in college is particularly helpful. If police officers are sceptical of the benefits of academia, what do they base their claims to professionalism on?

The discussion of 'thick' and 'thin' professionalism by Gundhus (2012) provides a potential explanation. Gundhus regards thick professionalism to include *'gut feeling, intuition, sudden impulse and colleague loyalty'* (p.183). Gundhus views thin professionalism as being related to *'formal competence, standards, technology use and a*

loyalty to truth and science' (p.183). In these terms, thick professionalism is linked to the notions of craft and experience associated with rank and file officers and discussed later in this chapter. If officers view themselves as professional in the context of thick traits it is likely they regard thin professionalism as being organisational efforts to change their working practices.

Thick and thin professionalism is evident in what Evetts (2009, 2011) refers to as occupational and organisational professionalism. Organisational professionalism involves hierarchical decision-making, standardised working practices and accountability measures such as target-setting and performance review. Lumsden (2017a) suggests some officers regard the College as implementing state notions of professionalism and control designed to manage performance. Many thin and organisational traits are part of the College view of professionalism (Neyroud, 2011; Rogers & Smith, 2018; Lumsden & Goode, 2018). By contrast, occupational professionalism is associated with practitioner autonomy, discretion and strong occupational identity and culture (Gundhus, 2012). If thick attributes are added to occupational professionalism, an alternative vision of the professional police officer emerges, one more akin to the street-cop (Reuss-Ianni, 1983) or the street-level bureaucrat (Lipsky, 2010). This creates a dichotomy in terms of what professionalism represents and may explain the significant amount of literature that discusses officer resistance to reform.

Research highlights emergent tensions in the drive towards professionalisation. Gundhus (2012) shows how new knowledge domains can meet resistance because they threaten to replace what officers perceive as established professional practice. Hough and Stanko (2020) highlight the complexities of achieving professionalisation within policing, citing staff resistance as a factor likely to influence whether desired outcomes are achieved. As EBP is a key part of the professionalisation strategy, it is not difficult to see how it may be viewed negatively.

2.3 What constitutes evidence in EBP?

Whilst the concept of using evidence to inform practice across public services is regarded as a sensible approach (Sanders & Breckon, 2023), what constitutes evidence in the police context is not clear-cut. Evidence can be drawn from social research, policy evaluation

and economic analysis (Bullock, et al., 2020) and several methods of evaluating evidence have been established (Nutley, et al., 2013). For example, the Maryland Scientific Methods Scale (SMS) consists of a five-point scale used to assess the quality of research methodology (Farrington, et al., 2002). In policing, Ratcliffe (2019) uses an adapted version of the SMS. Ratcliffe cautions against reliance on evidence based solely on expert opinion, anecdotes and non-peer reviewed research, all of which he places at the bottom of his evidence hierarchy. Both these hierarchies advocate the randomised controlled trial (RCT) as the 'gold standard' of evidence types. However, Cartwright and Hardie (2012) assert that using rule based RCT's to determine policy leaves little room to utilise professional judgement, arguing that experience matters as well as facts.

The debate widens when considering an observation by Phil Davies, a former Deputy Chief Social Researcher in the UK government (Nutley, et al., 2013). Davies places research evidence below that of 'expert, opinion-based, media and street evidence' (p.21) within an informal hierarchy of evidence which informs policy decisions. Similarly, Sanders and Breckon (2023) ask why policies they refer to as '*zombie policies*' (p.3), those which are not evidence-based, continue to re-emerge. They believe the answer lies in general definitions of what constitutes evidence, with research methods often lacking the rigour to be genuinely evidence-based.

The medical profession is advocated as an example of how to adopt EBP by proponents (Sherman, 1998; Bristow, et al., 2015). However, there is no universal acceptance of EBP within medicine itself. For instance, Gawande (2002), himself a surgeon, expresses regret there is insufficient evidence to standardise treatments when arguing the importance of intuition and experience in medicine:

'possibilities and probabilities are all we have to work with in medicine...the fragile but crystalline opportunity for one's know-how, ability, or just gut instinct to change the course of another's life for the better'. (2002: 251)

Gawande's reflections on the evidence versus experience issue within clinical medicine contribute to a debate which has resulted in calls for an alternative approach. For example, Nevo and Slonim-Nevo (2011) acknowledge the use of evidence in public policy is sensible. However, they challenge a reliance on evidence such as that provided by the RCT, advocating for what they term 'evidence-informed practice'. The authors assert this

proposition is more holistic and 'should be understood as leaving ample room for constructive judgement and practitioner knowledge' (p.1178). The EBP field is contested and the arguments raised have relevance to the embedding of EBP in UK policing, particularly given the emphasis placed on experience and craft knowledge by officers.

2.4 Policing as craft

2.4.1 Origins of craft in policing

As part of the debate about embedding EBP in policing, it is important to examine the role of craft knowledge. Police practice has long been viewed as being reliant on officer experience and informal craft knowledge, what Davies termed as 'street evidence' (Nutley, et al., 2013). In a similar manner to definitions of professionalism, operational officers often contest what constitutes evidence upon which to base their practice. Bittner's ethnographic work (1967) with patrol officers shows how order maintenance involved forming relationships and making decisions based on personal knowledge of people and situations, findings also echoed in more recent work by Wood et al. (2014).

Bittner observed how the same demands were made of long-serving officers and fresh recruits alike. However, the lack of experience and craft knowledge possessed by new officers resulted in them being unable to achieve the same outcomes as more experienced peers. Bayley and Bittner (1984) observe that much police learning takes place on the streets, e.g. developing a street presence, sensing when to lay hands on people during confrontation and deciding what type of tactics to use to restore order to a situation. They argue the reason these matters are not taught in police training schools is because instructors do not know how to teach 'craft'. Similarly, Rowe et al. (2016) assert that some aspects of policing are only learnt through practice, citing stop and search as an example where real-life dynamics cannot be replicated in training scenarios. As well as the craft knowledge they possess, street-level officers have a wealth of experience of what works and why in specific social conditions (Bayley, 2008; Wood, et al., 2014). The challenge lies in how to harness craft knowledge with EBP.

2.4.2 EBP in policing

A greater focus on the role of EBP in UK policing emerged with the introduction of the College in 2012. In respect of policing, the academic position is split by different stances on what constitutes EBP in policing. Sherman (2015) refutes the notion craft cannot benefit from science and regards quantitative evidence (obtained from RCTs) as the basis for EBP policing. Tilley and Laycock (2017) suggest an alternative methodological approach to the RCT. They advocate a form of EBP known as crime science, with researchers from different disciplines working collectively to develop crime reduction solutions (Laycock, 2005). Tilley and Laycock (2016) view the culture of gradual improvement encouraged by crime science as preferable to the more limited pass or fail approach of EBP experiments using RCTs.

The current College definition of EBP refers to a way of working that *'creates, reviews and uses the best available evidence to inform and challenge policies, practices and decisions'* (College of Policing, 2020a). Holdaway (2019) suggests the previous definition was amended in response to criticism of a reliance on RCT-based research. It is also an indication the College has sought to broaden the appeal of EBP (Crawford, 2017). Alongside the College, a more informal network exists to promote EBP in policing. The Society of Evidence-Based Policing (SEBP) was created in the UK in 2010 with other SEBPs subsequently formed in Canada, USA, New Zealand and Australia. Progress has also been made towards establishing research repositories which contribute to the development of a policing body of knowledge. An example lies in the *'Evidence-Based Policing Matrix'*, developed in the US to assess and categorise experimental police research (Lum & Koper, 2022). Whilst EBP research is available to practitioners, little is known about how it is accessed or utilised in UK forces. The following section discusses how craft and EBP may be compatible.

2.4.3 Combining craft and EBP

Academics have cited the importance of acknowledging and utilising craft knowledge as part of the EBP process (see for example Bayley, 2008; van Dijk, et al., 2015; Willis and Mastrofski 2017; Fleming & Rhodes, 2018). Holdaway (2019) argues science should not be used without reference to craft as a means to understand police work. It is challenging to

combine both elements, as the literature shows. Fielding (2023) observes how the knowledge officers acquire over time provides them with a personal evidence-base to consult. Fleming, et al. (2015) detail how officers feel they have much to offer research with their craft knowledge. Whilst the existence of craft knowledge is recognised by academics, the ability to formally collate craft and science is more challenging. To address this issue, policing scholars have advocated for the establishment of knowledge banks to capture craft knowledge and create evidence-based learning environments (Wood, et al., 2014; Willis & Mastrofski, 2017).

Willis and Mastrofski envisage officers receiving feedback from colleagues on their handling of challenging incidents, something which could be enhanced by using body-worn video technology. On this point, Keesman (2023) discusses how officers are using videos of incidents as an informal learning tool. Similarly, Fielding (2023) highlights the benefits of officers ‘pooling’ their knowledge locally so a resource is created which officers with less service can access. Utilising academic researchers able to provide officers with relevant research literature may also contribute to such a learning process. The necessity to provide learning on craft skills is reflected in recent research with *Police Now*⁴ graduate officers who described valuing practical skills training more than academic inputs (Brown, et al., 2020). The College has a mandate to embed EBP into policing and as the literature suggests, merely attaining agreement on what constitutes evidence presents challenges. The following section focuses on police education literature and discusses changes made to training by the College to increase awareness and utilisation of EBP.

2.5 The College of Policing

2.5.1 Police training

Historically, UK policing has taken a behaviourist approach to officer training (Fielding, 2018). This method involves providing recruits with information and is suited to teaching skills and knowledge but does not lend itself well to the teaching of qualities such as problem-solving and judgement (Charman, 2017). Corder (2022a) argues police officers

⁴ *Police Now* is a national graduate leadership scheme designed to provide graduates with the opportunity to become leaders in neighbourhood policing over a two-year period. Candidates complete six weeks of training before joining a neighbourhood team where they are mentored to become competent in operational policing. They also receive additional training, including sessions on EBP, which they are expected to use for problem-solving.

need both education and training. He regards education as the '*what and why*' aspect of learning, while training focuses on *how* to do something (p.202). Implementation issues associated with concepts such as problem-oriented policing have been attributed, in part, to inadequate training (Brown, et al., 2020). Furthermore, the standard of police training and continuous professional development (CPD) has been found wanting in recent reports (Police Foundation, 2022; Baroness Casey, 2023).

Police training can be a casualty of austerity (Fielding, 2018). In recent years much of the delivery of in-service training and CPD has shifted to e-learning courses, a method lacking credibility among officers (Honest, 2020). Using a virtual approach limits learning as, in addition to requiring procedural knowledge, officers must be taught how to deal effectively with complex situations (Bryant, et al., 2013). To better equip officers, numerous scholars have argued for police training to adopt a more scientific approach which encompasses research (Laycock, 2014; May, et al., 2017; Neyroud, 2017; Fyfe, 2017). In response, the College has overhauled initial training to instill in new recruits a level of awareness and understanding of how academic research relates to police practice.

2.5.2 Policing Education Qualifications Framework

One reason the Policing Education Qualifications Framework (PEQF) was introduced was to address the lack of a national educational standard for police officers consistent with that of a profession (College of Policing, 2020b). Research has shown increased levels of education amongst police officers offers improved critical thinking skills and greater understanding of how police activity relates to legitimacy and procedural justice (Norman & Fleming, 2021; Cockcroft & Hallenberg, 2021; Norman, 2023). There is a view that educating officers to a higher standard may increase organisational engagement with research (Kalyal, 2019; Smith, 2022). Police education currently focuses on recruits and senior officers, as part of their career development. The majority of serving officers, referred to as the 'excluded middle' (Bryant, et al., 2013: 383) and 'forgotten ranks' must also be meaningfully included in the process to address misconceptions about education and research in policing (Ratcliffe, 2022: 39).

2.5.3 Indifference within the rank-and-file over PEQF

Honess and Clarke (2023) reflect on a 'cultural indifference' to the PEQF amongst serving officers (p.3) and evidence of a lack of interest in police education can be found in the experiences of officers studying for in-service degrees. Research has established that many officers studying for in-service degrees experience organisational indifference to their academic success, despite statements about the value of higher education (Hallenberg & Cockcroft, 2017; Norman, 2023). Some described receiving negative and even hostile comments from colleagues and managers who regarded policing experience more important than education (Hallenberg & Cockcroft, 2017). A longitudinal study of officers studying for in-service degrees details how little of the research produced by candidates was subsequently used within their organisations (Norman & Fleming, 2021). Charman and Bennett (2022) found that officers with undergraduate degrees who resigned from the service cited a lack of promotion and development opportunities as a significant factor in their decision to leave. Such findings about the experiences of officers who possess degree-level qualifications raises questions about the extent to which education is valued at the heart of police organisations.

Raising officer education levels to increase EBP utilisation may not prove successful if senior or supervising officers are indifferent or negative about the benefits of education in policing (Lum, et al., 2012). The importance attached to experience and craft knowledge suggests new officers will be taught how to police 'properly' by those cynical about the role of education in policing (Sherman, 1982). Where this attitude prevails it is likely efforts by new recruits to utilise EBP will be regarded as the latest 'fad' (May, et al., 2017). The *Police Now* programme provides some indication of how the PEQF may unfold. Interviews with *Police Now* recruits by Hunter and May (2019) revealed the challenges recruits faced in utilising EBP. Only two of thirty interviewees reported a positive practical experience of utilising EBP in line with their training, with the majority describing a 'neutral' situation where EBP was neither encouraged nor discouraged. Some respondents themselves displayed a level of cynicism about the relevance of academic research to routine policing. Despite these challenges, Hunter and May (2019) are optimistic graduate recruits could increase EBP awareness and understanding, if the environment is conducive for them to do so. However, the future of the PEQF programme is uncertain.

In late 2022 the Home Secretary, Suella Braverman, announced that the requirement for police recruits to possess or study for a degree was to be removed (Hamilton, 2022). What the new 'fourth route' will consist of is currently unknown since, at the time of writing (September 2023), the College is developing the new course. In the interim, the Initial Police Learning and Development Programme (IPLDP) scheme has been extended until March 2024. Norman (2023) observes how the IPLDP scheme had previously been declared unfit for purpose by the College. Whilst it is too early to fully understand the impact of this decision, it is likely to affect the professionalisation agenda given the emphasis placed on the benefits of academic study as part of the PEQF (Williams, et al., 2019) Having discussed how the College is using recruit education as part of its strategy to embed EBP in policing, the chapter now considers the influence occupational culture has on the professionalisation agenda.

2.6 Occupational culture

2.6.1 Understanding police culture

Police practice is often viewed as reactive, procedure-based and influenced by tradition and culture (Lum, et al., 2012). The conservative nature of officers is regarded as a factor in resistance to evidence-based approaches (Lum, 2009). Such views are not unique to policing and exist in other public services. For example, occupational culture within the nursing profession is thought to have made the implementation of EBP challenging (Lumsden, 2017b). Kalyal (2019) observes how the strength of police culture can negatively affect new initiatives, making it a factor which needs to be understood in the context of engagement with EBP.

A wide body of research is devoted to police occupational culture (see for example Chan, 1996; Reiner, 2012; Loftus, 2010; Reuss-Ianni, 1983), much of which has utilised ethnography to observe officers (see for example Bacon, et al., 2020; Fassin, 2013) Ethnography provides access to behind-the-scenes behaviour that advances knowledge of police culture (Holdaway, 1983; Cox, 2020; Fleming & Charman, 2023), of which there are many facets. Holdaway and Charman (2023) argue police work cannot be understood without an appreciation of occupational culture. This section focuses on aspects of police culture regarded as relevant to greater utilisation of EBP.

Numerous attempts have been made to define occupational culture (see for example Van Maanen, 1978; Chan, 1996; Loftus, 2009; Bacon, 2014; Cockcroft, 2020), with common characteristics being the adoption of informal practices and how police regard their work as unique. Additionally, a set of specific personal characteristics (e.g. suspicion, pessimism, cynicism, conservatism) highlighted by Reiner (1985) in his seminal work *The Politics of the Police* continue to endure and have been used to explain much police behaviour. As a result, police culture has often been framed as a set of fixed values by academics who assume that such behaviours exist without question or challenge (Sklansky, 2007; Cockcroft, 2020). However, in recent years understanding of what police culture is (or not) has evolved.

In their ethnography of frontline policing, Pearson and Rowe (2020) argue broad notions of 'police culture' are erroneously used to explain police shortcomings, such as the suggestion that stop search use is disproportionate because of police culture. They contend the situation is more complex with matters such as policy, supervision and resource levels requiring greater examination because the umbrella of 'police culture' provides insufficient explanation. Rowe (2023) suggests it is important to understand the individual characteristics (e.g. cynicism, conservatism, pessimism) rather than labelling them as simply being part of police culture. This thesis builds on Rowe's point and establishes the importance of understanding why characteristics such as cynicism manifest themselves as part of the professionalisation agenda. Loftus (2010) suggests that some elements of police culture remain constant, regardless of the amount of change the organisation undergoes. Fielding (2018) offers an explanation for this situation, suggesting that occupational culture is a way people adapt to cope with their work and as the nature of core policing endures, then so too do aspects of the culture. Particular behaviours associated with police occupational culture may impact on the professionalisation agenda and the embedding of EBP.

Charman (2017) conducted longitudinal research with recruits during the first four years of their service. Charman established how recruit attitudes and behaviours changed during that period. Charman argues that behavioural characteristics regarded as part of occupational culture change over time, with some strengthening (e.g. solidarity, cynicism) and others becoming less prominent (e.g. code of silence). Officer cynicism, relevant to attempts to increase EBP acceptance, increased the longer Charman's participants served

as officers. As part of 'fitting in' with their new team, recruits needed to display cynicism to become accepted and attain the associated benefits, such as colleagues watching your back (Charman, 2017). The role of supervisors is important in setting the cultural tone within teams.

A key position is that of the sergeant. Skogan (2008) observes that they have a strong influence on the day-to-day activities of officers on the streets. Whilst sergeants are regarded as part of management, their proximity to frontline staff results in them developing an allegiance with those officers via a shared understanding of the challenges of working the streets (Brown, 1988). Given this level of rapport or relationship, sergeants have a pivotal role in the development of new recruits subject to colleague influence when 'fitting in' with their new team (Muir, 2008). Pearson and Rowe (2020) contend that despite what the literature says about culture being entrenched, change to frontline practice *is* possible with consistent and effective supervision, particularly at the sergeant rank. Similarly, Reiner (2012) argues police culture is not monolithic and officers do have agency.

2.6.2 Occupational culture and EBP

The College has adopted a number of strategies as part of efforts to embed EBP into policing. The success of these strategies is, in part, governed by College credibility among officers. How officers, particularly those in frontline roles, view the College influences the extent to which they engage with College-led strategies to embed EBP. The PEQF enables new recruits to gain an understanding of EBP which can be utilised in their practice (Brown, et al., 2018). Whilst this aspiration aligns with increased professionalism, the reality of newly qualified officers influencing occupational culture is problematic (Williams & Sondhi, 2022; Norman, 2023). That the PEQF is viewed unfavourably by some officers weakens the ability of new recruits to influence practice with newfound EBP knowledge. The notion of 'time- served' as a measure of experience and knowledge in policing means recruits are likely to prioritise fitting into their teams over attempts to utilise EBP (Charman, 2017). Williams and Sondhi (2022) stress the importance of the existing workforce understanding the new knowledge and skills PEQF recruits can offer to prevent recruits simply adapting to experience-based working practices.

Chan (2003) conducted research in an Australian police organisation with a reform agenda, an updated training programme and well-educated recruits. She established that even in an environment conducive to new practice, recruits succumbed to the established 'time-served' culture and Charman's work (2017) suggests such conformity still exists. With these issues in mind, Fleming (2012) highlights the importance of ensuring those involved in EBP implementation (the College and forces) understand custom and practice to win over frontline staff. EBP literature acknowledges the difficulties associated with making the concept a routine part of police practice. For example, Lum and Koper (2022) recognise that factors such as *'emotion, personal feeling, professional mythology and supervision'* (p.225) will affect the likelihood of evidence-based initiatives being accepted and utilised. Whilst much of the literature highlights the challenges of embedding EBP, there is research which identifies opportunities for EBP implementation.

Kadry (2021) discusses the positive impact of EBP on officers seeking to understand the effect of their work on the community. Fleming and Wingrove (2017) delivered EBP training to officers in one UK force and over 98% of participants agreed research was beneficial following the session. Such findings reveal the importance of effective engagement with frontline staff when introducing new practices and offer some optimism for greater utilisation of EBP. However, wider organisational capability and willingness to embed EBP poses challenges in addition to individual officer attitudes.

2.7 Organisational barriers to the embedding of EBP

Whilst occupational culture has the potential to limit greater utilisation of EBP, there are structural issues, such as leadership, operational demand and discretion, which form part of the discussion. Much of the literature discusses how officers can stifle and subvert new policy and practice. For example, Skogan (2008) cites resistance from lower ranks, mid-level officers, unions and specialist teams as being responsible for the failure of much police reform in the USA. Such a situation demonstrates the difficulties of embedding EBP in policing, which has been described as insular, risk averse and defensive (see for example Kalyal, 2019; Fleming, et al., 2016; Reiner, 2012; Bacon, et al., 2023). The practicalities of operational policing also pose challenges for the embedding of EBP.

Existing research comments on how reform attempts are often made without the involvement of frontline staff. Wood et al. (2014) posit that officers who work the streets are well placed to contribute their views when a form of EBP is proposed. Furthermore, Bayley (2008) contends such officers possess more knowledge about how society functions than any amount of academic researchers. Evidence indicates that if staff are not involved in the planning stages of reform they will not have a stake in making it work (Fleming & Wingrove, 2017). It is not only a lack of staff consultation which explains some reluctance to embrace change.

Policing is regularly required to implement legislative, technological or practice-related changes (see for example Reiss, 1992; Mastrofski & Willis, 2010; Reiner, 2012). A theme within the literature is the effect constant change has on staff. Fleming and Wingrove (2017) observe how their research participants were often unable to view practice changes positively because of the '*saturation of change within policing*' (p.210). Officers can suffer from '*reform fatigue*' as a result of the continuous change cycle, which they come to regard as the same ideas being repeatedly sold to them (van Dijk, et al., 2015, p.17). Where this situation exists, cynicism is likely to emerge. The risk this scenario poses is that *every* proposed change is viewed negatively, regardless of its merits. Whilst many of the reform challenges are located within policing, external factors such as media influence and public opinion play a role.

Huey et al. (2021) show how a trial in Leicestershire established there was minimal value in sending forensic officers to attempted house burglaries. However, the subsequent decision to no longer deploy forensic officers to house burglaries was criticised by the media and public, who lacked understanding of the reasons behind the decision. Policing therefore also needs to engage with external audiences as part of strategies to embed EBP. To achieve this forces could engage with different forms of media to proactively deliver key messages which provide the rationale for evidence-based policy/practice changes and may reduce public/media concerns. Another important aspect of the debate is the role of senior police leaders in driving practice change.

2.7.1 Senior leadership and embedding EBP

Frontline officers are often thought to be the source of resistance when attempts to reform police working practices fail (Skogan, 2008). The reason for this is likely to be a perception that, in a uniformed and hierarchical organisation such as the police, a directive originating from chief officers would be received, understood and acted on in the way intended as it moves vertically down the organisation. However, evidence suggests the situation is more complex, with senior leader support for reform by no means guaranteed. Whilst research identifies some senior officers as more receptive to EBP than junior ranks (Hunter, et al., 2019; May, et al., 2020), the hierarchical nature of policing enables mid-ranking officers with little enthusiasm for research to stifle it (Hunter, et al., 2019).

Worden and McLean (2017) highlighted the influence mid-ranking police officers had on the implementation of a procedural justice plan in a US police department. They reflected that, whilst some senior officers showed active support, others displayed indifference and pessimism towards the plan which affected receptivity among operational officers. Pearson and Rowe (2020) refer to the way policy changes as it works down through organisational middle management as '*vertical fragmentation*' (p.141). The lack of engagement with research by some senior leaders concerns staff further down the hierarchy who talk about needing management '*buy in*' for greater EBP utilisation to become a reality (Fleming et al, 2015; Fleming, et al., 2016, p.71). Promotion is another issue, linked to leadership, that is capable of affecting EBP acceptance.

Demonstrating an ability to implement change has become a component of police promotion processes (Palmer, 2011). Such a situation results in scenarios where change is undertaken purely because of a need to gather evidence for a promotion process. The problem with this position is the impact it has on the credibility of efforts to increase EBP utilisation. Staff often have little faith in reforms they perceive to have been introduced for personal gain (Fleming, 2018, 2019). This has manifested itself in negative views of EBP, with it often being regarded as the latest trend or buzzword (Lumsden, 2017b; May, et al., 2017). Even where officers are receptive to new ideas, their experience tells them changes will be short-lived and things will eventually revert to the status quo (Lum, et al.,

2012; Telep & Lum, 2014). Officers also display cynicism about the way a project is rarely viewed as a failure.

The phrase '*doomed to succeed*' (Fleming, 2019, p.163) is used by officers to explain how all trials are viewed as successful, often without any consultation of those officers required to implement the new practices. Fleming and Wingrove (2017) refer to a lack of formal evaluation of practice changes and Laycock (2014) argues senior officers can be reluctant to accept the failure of projects associated with them. The need for a project to be successful regardless of the result is linked to the career progression of individuals associated with it (Davies, et al., 2020). This point is important when it comes to utilising EBP, as part of the research process involves learning from what did not work (Kalyal, 2019). In addition to matters of promotion and leadership, capacity is often cited as a reason for lack of research engagement.

2.7.2 Effects of operational demand

The effects of austerity on police resources were compounded as demand for police services increased, due to funding cuts to other public services (Brain & Owens, 2015; Bacon, et al., 2023). Consequently, having any time to utilise EBP effectively is a challenge for operational officers (Fleming, 2019; Kalyal, 2019; Huey, et al., 2021). Research by Selby-Fell and Newton (2022) found time constraints to be a concern of officers at all levels, with those at lower ranks expressing the greatest reservations. This position may indicate those seeking to embed EBP do not have a true grasp of the demands placed on frontline officers, who regard EBP as an unwanted burden for which there is no time.

Officer perceptions about projects taking a long time to complete and evaluate can also make police reluctant to engage with research. Emerging crime issues require police to make decisions and respond quickly. Weisburd and Neyroud (2011) contend that academics often fail to understand this reality and therefore produce work which lacks relevance due to the time taken to complete it. In light of this, Crawford (2017) argues for research to be written up swiftly to build trust and confidence in the process. Resource availability can also affect a willingness to engage with EBP (Fleming, et al., 2016), an issue which has become more relevant as demands for policing services have increased.

The ability to meet calls for service remains an overriding police priority and senior officers may be reluctant to commit staff to EBP projects which could adversely impact on service delivery (Kalyal, 2019). Resource allocation presents challenges, but unless practices are tested using evidence, such decisions will continue to be made on the basis of self-interest, ideology and experience (Tilley & Laycock, 2017). Ironically, EBP utilisation is limited partly because of the time and resource capacity issues it seeks to address. The following sections examine discretion-based decision-making, an aspect of policing which straddles both organisational and occupational cultures and can affect attempts to change police practice.

2.7.3 Officer decision-making

Decision-making is a key aspect of operational policing and the way in which incidents unfold means significant decisions are often made dynamically at street level by sergeants and constables (Steinheider & Wuestewald, 2008). In an age where bystanders routinely record police activity, officer decisions can have profound consequences for police legitimacy (Deuchar, et al., 2021). To inform officer decision-making, the College developed Authorised Professional Practice (APP) which is located on the College website. APP is described by the College as *'drawing on the best available evidence of 'what works' to set standards in policing for forces and individuals'* (Home Affairs Committee, 2016: 8). College guidance states *'police officers are expected to have regard to APP in discharging their responsibilities'* (College of Policing, 2022a).

To further assist officers with forming a rationale for their decisions, the College introduced the National Decision Model (NDM) (see Figure 1) (College of Policing, 2021). APP forms part of the model under the heading *'consider powers and policy'*. Neyroud (2019) stresses the need for decisions to be both morally and procedurally just, referring to the Code of Ethics within the NDM as the means via which this is achieved. However, Wood (2020) challenges the notion of adherence to the NDM, arguing it becomes more about compliance with the model as opposed to truly ethical decision-making. When reacting to an incident unfolding in front of them, officers often have to make split second decisions using minimal information (Fielding, 2023). For example, whether to use force and if so, what type and to what extent. Such powers are likely to be exercised by

low-ranking officers in situations where they and others may be in immediate danger (van Dijk, et al., 2015). Whilst the NDM provides officers with a process to assist their decision-making, it does not take into account the many factors they use to make decisions.



Figure 1. National Decision Model-College of Policing (2021)

May et al. (2017) suggest research evidence is a relatively minor factor in police decision-making, with officers focused more on legal obligations, organisational policy requirements and their own professional judgement when making decisions. Where a decision has to be made dynamically, experience is likely to play a dominant role unless the officer has prior knowledge of the matter at hand (Palmer, 2011). There is a body of research examining the importance police place on experience when making decisions (for example Bittner, 2005; Tompson, et al., 2017; Fleming & Rhodes, 2018; Williams & Cockcroft, 2019; Williams, 2021). However, the NDM does not explicitly allow for the use of experience, with the emphasis being placed on adherence to powers and policy. Accountability is also an important component, given the scrutiny which surrounds police decision-making.

The College describe officers as *'professional risk takers'* who are willing to *'make decisions in conditions of uncertainty'* (College of Policing, 2021a), a position which

presents accountability difficulties for officers. Wood (2020) acknowledges the challenges officers face when making decisions about aspects of peoples lives which often lie outside core policing functions. For example, police are routinely relied upon to deal with people suffering a mental health crisis, an area which presents risk and is a subject officers tend not to have expertise in (Boulton, et al., 2017). In such situations, officers are likely to make decisions which reduce risk of criticism (e.g. taking the person to an emergency department) (Heaton, 2010; McDaniel, 2018). McKenna et al. (2015) argue such decisions may not be in the best interests of the person in crisis, raising questions about the extent to which such decisions are evidence-based. Wood (2020) argues police organisations need to become more supportive of officers, accept that mistakes will be made and learn from them. Doing so would help reduce officer fears of what Waddington (1994) refers to as ‘in the job trouble’. This situation is not unique to mental health incidents and can be found in areas such as public order policing (Leach, 2021). Whilst the NDM demonstrates efforts to professionalise police decision-making, discretion can complicate matters.

2.7.4 Role of discretion in decision-making

Cockcroft (2020) defines professional discretion as *‘the power to make decisions, within acceptable parameters, as the situation dictates’* (p.84). Much has been written about police discretion in respect of matters such as police legitimacy, professionalisation and controlling officer decision-making (see for example Martin, 2022; Holdaway, 2019; Hallenberg & Cockcroft, 2017; Waddington & Wright, 2010; Brown, 1988; Sherman, 1984; Bayley & Bittner, 1984; Kleinig, 1996). Discretion enables officers to make decisions which may not be evidence-based. Therefore, how officers use discretion is likely to impact on the embedding of EBP.

The College encourage the use of what they term *‘professional discretion and professional judgement’* (College of Policing, 2022g). Much of day-to-day policing is undertaken by staff who work autonomously and employ significant levels of discretion (van Dijk, et al., 2015). Lipsky (2010) observes how the level of discretion used by police officers is greater than that of staff operating at similar levels within other organisations. However, this situation means officers can deviate from organisational policy (Reiner, 2012). The merits of removing police discretion to address this issue is the subject of ongoing academic debate (see for example Punch, 2015; Sherman, 2015; Cox & Kirby, 2018; Wood, et al.,

2018; Williams & Cockcroft, 2019). The situation is complex because discretion is regarded as both a positive and negative concept. For example, officer discretion is a valuable commodity in achieving community engagement and enhancing legitimacy. Conversely, police management has sought to reduce officer discretion because of concerns over corruption and abuses of authority (Steinheider & Wuestewald, 2008).

Holdaway (1999) argues it is not possible to know how to change policing without understanding how discretion is used. Broader discretionary behaviours highlighted by Pearson and Rowe (2020), such as where to patrol and which incidents to deal with, enable officers to retain an element of control over their work which could potentially hinder EBP initiatives. For example, hot spot policing relies on officers patrolling specific localities at certain times to achieve desired results (Weisburd & Telep, 2014). If officers are not positively engaged with such initiatives, discretion would enable them to legitimately avoid compliance by, for instance, attending a call for service elsewhere (Pearson & Rowe, 2020). Therefore, the extent to which officers support and align with organisational aims (see Myhill & Bradford 2013) is a factor capable of affecting the embedding of EBP. This section has highlighted how systemic organisational barriers, occupational culture and officer discretion are capable of influencing opportunities to embed EBP.

2.8 Police and academic collaborations

2.8.1 Evolvement of collaboration

Strategies to embed EBP in police forces necessitate co-operation between policing and academia. Whilst there is a long history of academic involvement in policing, this has taken different forms and the relationship has not been without challenges. Formal collaboration between the two parties developed in the 1970s after the creation of the Central Planning Unit by the Home Office to co-ordinate police training nationally (Charman, 2017). In 1986, the Home Office commissioned a further review of police training by the University of East Anglia, which was the first undertaken predominantly by academics, and recommended a modular training structure and improvements to tutoring processes (Peacock, 2010). The move toward greater collaboration between policing and academia continued through the 1990s with the introduction of the Police

Research Group in the Home Office. The creation of the Jill Dando Institute (University College, London) in 2001 resulted in academics working with police forces in areas such as crime prevention (Guillaume, et al., 2012). In the intervening years numerous formal relationships have been established between universities and police forces.

The Scottish Institute for Policing Research was founded in 2007 to formalise research partnerships in Scottish policing (Martin & Wooff, 2020). The N8 Policing Research Partnership (N8PRP) was established in 2013 with the aim of overcoming existing barriers between policing and academia (Crawford, 2019). 2013 also saw the launch of the What Works Centre for Crime Reduction (WWCCR), outlined in Chapter one. The WWCCR implementation was led by the College and supported by a consortium of universities, with a central aim being to make evidence use a '*professional norm*' (Hunter, et al., 2017: p.2). It is now the case that most UK forces have some form of relationship with a university. Whilst these alliances are making progress in bridging the divide between policing and academia (Fyfe, 2017), an evaluation of N8PRP progress has highlighted challenges relevant to the embedding of EBP.

A survey conducted amongst junior ranks within N8PRP affiliated forces established that 65% of respondents were unaware of the collaboration (May, et al., 2020). Whilst the response rate was acknowledged as low, the finding is similar to that of other surveys on research knowledge among junior officers (see Telep & Lum, 2014; Kalyal, 2019). Indeed, questionnaire data in this study identified that 52.7% of participants were unaware of formal collaborations between their police force and a university. Although there was general agreement on the benefits of research for advancing police practice in the N8PRP survey, over half of the respondents expressed concerns about a lack of managerial understanding and support for EBP.

2.8.2 Collaboration challenges

Research evidence and craft knowledge are often pitted against each other, with officers becoming defensive if their methods are challenged (Fleming & Rhodes, 2018; Huey, et al., 2021). To compound matters, historically there was a tension between policing and academia, resulting in a general suspicion of academics among officers (Rogers & Smith, 2018). This situation has improved as police interest in using research has increased (Fleming, 2012; Fyfe & Wilson, 2012). The traditional relationship between UK police and

academics has been what Crawford (2017) refers to as that of 'donor and recipient' (p. 202), with police either the subject of research or commissioners of projects. This model is regarded as outdated and ineffective in terms of influencing policing methods (Tompson, et al., 2017). What has begun to emerge are concepts of collaboration and co-production (see for example Fleming, et al., 2016; Bradley and Nixon, 2009; Steinheider and Wuestewald, 2008). Such approaches aim to improve engagement and understanding of cultures within policing and academia (Fleming, et al., 2015). Greater collaboration is an important step towards building trust, given the mutual misunderstanding which has permeated the relationship historically (Tompson, et al., 2017).

Where positive relationships have developed between police and academics, there are signs that police are becoming cognisant of research value (Kalyal, 2019, 2020). It is necessary to create an environment where both parties contribute meaningfully to the relationship. Crawford (2017) explains how co-production requires mutual respect, two-way knowledge flow and recognition of different forms of expertise such as craft knowledge. Advances in developing effective relationships between policing and academia in the UK need to be situated in a wider international context to better understand the degree of progress achieved. Much of the literature and the related issues discussed in this chapter are not unique to the UK. Indeed, some countries face additional difficulties when attempting to increase the utilisation of EBP.

2.9 International reach of EBP

Much of the existing professionalisation and EBP research originates from the UK, USA, Canada and Australasia (see for example Bradley & Nixon, 2009; Fleming, 2013; Fleming, et al., 2016; Huey, et al., 2018; Koper, 1995; Sherman & Rogan, 1995; Tilley & Laycock, 2017; Wood, et al., 2008). In general these countries support the concept of embedding evidence-based practice in their respective police forces. The EBP landscape in mainland Europe is mixed. Fyfe (2017) details advances across Europe in relation to organisations producing police research. Central to these developments is the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL), which facilitates a Europe-wide approach to knowledge sharing via a network of institutes (CEPOL, 2020). Although there is not much literature available on EBP in the European context, French research highlights challenges

in embedding EBP in a country where policing is not viewed as receptive to independent academic research.

Roché (2005) noted the lack of appetite for EBP in France, with the 'what works' concept not yet adopted. He cited the French political structure as an explanation for reluctance to innovate, as any evaluation outside government was viewed as challenging ministerial expertise. Fassin (2013) asserts that French police research has been subjected to censorship, with researcher access refused by senior officers wishing to retain control of knowledge. Fassin observes that conducting ethnography is particularly challenging given the access it requires to police practice.

Recent stop and search research in France and Germany by Oberwittler and Roché (2022) suggests the challenges Roché (2005) described still persist. Oberwittler and Roché conclude French policing remains confrontational, particularly towards youth and minority populations. They contrast this approach with that of police in Germany, where such confrontation does not routinely exist despite similar policing conditions. Whilst EBP is not a routine feature of French policing, other European countries have made progress in exploring the concept, albeit encountering difficulties similar to those experienced by EBP 'pioneers' in countries such as the UK and US. Knutsson (2017) details the introduction of dialogue officers as a tactic at Swedish protests. Despite initial scepticism from officers, they became more supportive once the tactic proved effective. However, the role has not become fully embedded in Swedish policing. Knutsson cites the regular rotation of commanders and an absence of organisational support as reasons. Knutsson concludes that successfully embedding a new practice supported by research evidence is by no means guaranteed. When moving beyond Europe, there are often additional challenges which must be taken into account.

The progress of policing in low income countries is on a different trajectory to that of many Westernised nations. Sklansky (2013) observes that in a country like South Africa, where police use of deadly force and corruption are prevalent issues, professionalisation means something different than it does in the UK where greater scrutiny of police work already exists. In their work on African police legitimacy, Boateng et al. (2022) highlight how policing across much of Africa remains what they term as 'traditional', in that it is reactive with less focus on matters such as community policing. Alemika (2009) discusses how the politicised nature of African policing means researchers are often resented as

they are thought to undermine decisions of those in power. However, Beek et al. (2017) present a series of ethnographies on African policing which they describe as a renaissance due to the lack of academic focus on African policing in recent years. Despite advancements in practice, a return to the pre-apartheid militaristic approach in South Africa has become evident, resulting in question marks over legitimacy and accountability (Hornberger, 2013). This trend shows the challenges of maintaining the momentum of reform in countries where policing remains 'traditional' and politicised.

Brogden and Nijhar (2013) detail how exporting policing strategies, such as community-oriented policing (COP), from Western countries has increased in recent years in an effort to resolve issues in low income countries. They argue that whilst this has become lucrative business for private companies involved in law enforcement, there are few success stories of 'off the shelf' strategies like COP being successfully implemented in low income countries. The economic, political and social differences in these countries present significant challenges to Western concepts such as COP (Alemika, 2009). Barriers associated with embedding EBP in the UK are also evident in efforts to introduce initiatives, such as COP, in low income countries. For example, the introduction of problem-oriented policing in Uruguay had to overcome issues such as a lack of understanding, leadership resistance and insufficient resources (del Castillo, 2018). When looking beyond countries routinely associated with EBP development, the lack of available literature indicates that in the wider world there has been some reluctance to adopt EBP. Where efforts have been made to utilise EBP, many of the the barriers discussed in this chapter have been encountered.

2.10 Chapter summary

This chapter provided an overview of the current position EBP occupies in UK and international policing and examined issues associated with embedding EBP into police practice. The chapter highlighted aspirations to professionalise UK policing and discussed what constitutes evidence in public policy making. Methods employed to increase awareness and understanding of EBP were described and the challenges the College faces in raising EBP awareness outlined. The way in which occupational culture and organisational barriers impact on attempts to embed EBP was explained. The chapter detailed the relationship between policing and academia and concluded with an overview

of how police use EBP in countries beyond those traditionally associated with the concept.

As this literature review demonstrated, there is a proliferation of existing work on topics associated with police professionalisation and use of EBP. This thesis highlights how quickly the policing landscape can change. Existing literature therefore will soon lack current context. Contemporary literature offers many positive suggestions to improve police practice, such as those highlighted in this chapter. What is lacking however is a nuanced understanding of the challenges associated with meaningfully embedding such ideas into operational policing. The timing of this study provided the opportunity to gather data on a multitude of contemporary issues affecting policing such as the PEQF implementation, Uplift and the College professionalisation agenda. There is little literature examining the effectiveness of methods used to increase officer knowledge about EBP. Whilst there is research on officer attitudes to previous reform attempts, there is a lack of empirical data on operational officers' views and experiences of the PEQF, a key component in efforts to embed EBP.

There is little ethnographic research focused on efforts to embed EBP in operational policing as part of the current professionalisation agenda, with much of the current work consisting of interview-based studies. This study uses an original and innovative multi-method approach to examine in detail attempts to embed EBP into different operational policing contexts across multiple police forces. Whilst the literature on EBP and the PEQF has increased in recent years, there is a lack of empirical data obtained from being 'up close and personal' with officers expected to utilise EBP in their work. In addressing the lack of empirical data, this thesis updates and advances the literature in the following ways:

- Revealing the extent to which officers use College EBP resources alongside their craft knowledge.
- Providing an understanding of new knowledge emerging among PEQF recruits, the impact of Uplift on the PEQF scheme and how recruits integrate in response teams with a 'time-served' culture.
- Highlighting structural barriers which impact the embedding of EBP.
- Explaining how officer pessimism and cynicism towards the PEQF and EBP initiatives stems from their experiences of previous practice changes.

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- Increasing understanding of how the current professionalisation agenda is progressing in operational policing functions (public order, neighbourhood and response).
- Highlighting the role of sergeants in embedding EBP and advancing the professionalisation agenda.
- Providing a fresh insight on the extent to which serving officers understand what the PEQF entails.
- Detailing operational examples which utilise EBP and reveal a degree of positivity towards the concept among operational officers.
- Outlining how factors such as Covid-19, the Uplift and the PEQF itself have all impacted on the professionalisation agenda.
- Identifying the challenges of attempting to embed EBP in the face of increased demand by presenting views of those at the heart of the situation - operational officers themselves.
- Analysing how operational decisions are made at a time when officers have an array of organisational resources to support them such as APP and the WWCCR.
- Demonstrating how PEQF implementation issues are jeopardising improved policing/academia relationships and negatively affecting the credibility of education and research in policing.

What emerges in the findings of this thesis is a complex set of interlinked barriers which must be overcome before the professionalisation agenda can be meaningfully advanced. The next chapter provides the methodological rationale for this research and details how a quantitative survey, ethnographic observations and semi-structured interviews were used to gather the data.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out the methodological approach taken in this study and details the methods used. The first section discusses epistemology, theoretical perspective and mixed methods, before detailing aspects of the quantitative questionnaire undertaken. The chapter provides the rationale for adopting a case study approach to qualitative fieldwork and outlines the use of ethnographical observations and semi-structured interviews. Research sites are detailed and field access discussed before the chapter explains data analysis practices and highlights ethical issues.

3.2 Constructivist epistemology

Epistemology is described by Treadwell (2020) as being '*what constitutes valid knowledge and how it can be obtained*' (p.42). Objectivism, constructionism and subjectivism are the three main epistemologies in the social sciences (Crotty, 1998). Crotty (1998) further explains that, in contrast with objectivism and subjectivism, constructivists believe knowledge emerges from the way individuals make sense of interactions in their world and subsequently convey them in a social context. Accordingly, constructivists acknowledge there to be multiple realities which emerge from the experiences of individuals (Doyle, et al., 2009). I chose to approach this research from a predominantly constructivist standpoint. In the context of this study, constructivist epistemology enabled the experiences of individual police officers to further an understanding of the extent to which EBP is currently embedded in UK policing. Having established the epistemological position, the following section establishes the theoretical perspective adopted for this study.

3.3 Interpretivist theoretical perspective

Having set out the epistemology on which this study is founded, attention turns to the theoretical perspective which informs the chosen research methodology. Denscombe (2017) explains how there are, broadly speaking, two research paradigms which inform

theoretical perspectives, namely positivism and interpretivism. A distinct difference between the two perspectives is that the positivist paradigm contends there is a single reality whereas interpretivism adopts a position which argues it is not possible to understand the world objectively (Doyle, et al., 2009).

Within interpretivism, events are viewed subjectively because people have differing perspectives based on individual experience. Interpretivist researchers regard people and their understanding of social life as primary data sources (Mason, 2006). This approach involves obtaining people's perceptions, referred to by Blaikie (2000) as seeking the '*insider view*' as opposed to the researcher imposing an '*outsider view*' (p.115). Interpretivism therefore provided a suitable theoretical perspective from which to consider conducting research within police organisations in order to obtain the '*insider view*'.

Interpretivist methods enable the researcher to work from the '*bottom up*' within an organisation to understand how social practices are created and explain why particular events occur (Rhodes, 2018). Rhodes (2018) argues that gathering participant '*stories*' using interpretivist methods is a valid data gathering method. This study adopted a '*bottom up*' approach and fieldwork was predominantly conducted with operational officers. The purpose of conducting research at the lower levels of police organisations was to examine awareness, understanding, acceptance, engagement and utilisation of evidence-based practice (EBP) in different operational environments. Observing and talking to '*frontline*' officers, those who Rhodes (2018) would describe as the '*silent voices*,' enabled their stories to be told. Interpretivist researchers recognise the importance of acknowledging that they themselves form part of the research and the interpretation of events is influenced by their own experiences and background (Creswell, 2007).

In addition to the qualitative fieldwork which aligned with an interpretivist approach, a quantitative questionnaire formed part of a mixed methods approach. Whilst questionnaires are often associated with a positivist position (Denscombe, 2017), McChesney and Aldridge (2019) show how quantitative data can be situated within an interpretivist approach if participant views and experiences are the focus of a questionnaire. That was the position of this research, with the views of questionnaire respondents used to inform subsequent interviews and fieldwork.

3.4 Mixed methods research

A mixed methods approach is defined as '*research in which the investigator collects and analyses data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in a single study or a program of inquiry*' (Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007: p.4). Adopting a mixed methods approach enables the researcher to utilise the strengths of both disciplines at different stages of the research, requiring the process to be carefully planned (Bachman, et al., 2017). Indeed, Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) suggest mixed methods could be a third paradigm capable of occupying the space between the qualitative and quantitative positions. Mason (2006) discusses how the different methods adopted by the researcher enable them to solve an '*intellectual puzzle*' (p.7) and subsequently provide an explanation of their particular puzzle.

I adopted a mixed methods approach and employed a two-phase sequential design, a process which enabled quantitative data to be probed via the subsequent use of qualitative methods (Creswell & Creswell, 2005). Mason (2006) cautions against relying on different methods to achieve straightforward triangulation of data. Mason argues that triangulation is best viewed as allowing the researcher to answer questions from different angles and obtain a holistic view of their research subject (p.190). The use of qualitative methods provides greater depth to quantitative findings, a process Bryman (2006) refers to as '*putting meat on the bones*' (p.106).

Whilst mixed methods research offers benefits, potential weaknesses remain. These are related to the challenges of designing and implementing different research methods alongside the logistics of undertaking a large volume of data gathering (Ivankova, et al., 2006). The decision to use a mixed methods design may invite criticism from purists who advocate research should only employ a single methodology (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). However, Crotty (1998) cautions against the notion of a 'divide' between quantitative and qualitative methods. Crotty points out that history shows how most qualitative and quantitative methods have been utilised within their 'opposing' paradigm. Whilst the dominant epistemological position in this study is one of constructivism, the following section discusses pragmatism, a concept requiring consideration as part of mixed methods research.

3.5 Pragmatism

Rather than being solely aligned to positivist or constructivist thinking, those employing mixed methods often apply a pragmatic philosophy to their work (Creswell & Creswell, 2005). Patton (2015) asserts how pragmatism enables the researcher to focus on '*practical understandings of real-world issues*' (p.153). Kelly and Cordeiro (2020) argue that by adopting a position which questions ideas and beliefs in respect of their practical application, pragmatism can be regarded as part of the multiple-reality interpretivist theoretical framework. Employing pragmatism was beneficial when researching factors which affect how EBP is understood and utilised in police organisations as it enabled me to employ research methods which maximised the volume of data gathered in the different research settings.

Kelly and Cordeiro (2020) also discuss the benefits offered by pragmatism when researching organisations. They explain how participants are actively involved in the process, with their views and beliefs contributing to understanding of issues the research is designed to focus on. Such an approach was of value to this study as participant views and experiences were relevant in respect of how EBP was (or not) utilised in their organisations. Morgan (2007) notes how pragmatism focuses on the transferability of research to specific settings and contexts rather than becoming involved in debates about the ability to generalize. This point is relevant as the qualitative aspect of this study is situated within three different police organisations, which therefore limits the ability to make wider claims of generalisation. Mason (2006) argues that qualitative results explaining how a process works in a particular setting enable the researcher to understand how what has been learned in that environment can be applied to other similar settings. Having discussed pragmatism, the chapter now focuses on survey research as the quantitative element of the study.

3.6 Survey research

Surveys can take the form of questionnaires, interviews, documentary analysis and observations (Denscombe, 2017). The primary aim of this survey was to obtain the views of UK police officers in different organisations, a specific population with particular knowledge of questions being asked (Denscombe, 2017). The purpose of the survey was

to act as a 'bridge' between what was currently known about the status of EBP in UK policing and the second qualitative phase of the research. The survey results are presented as part of the thesis findings and were also used to inform interview topics and participant observation activity as part of an iterative approach to the research.

A questionnaire can gather information longitudinally over time or as part of a cross-sectional study to capture data at a fixed point in time (Foust, 2014). In this study, the questionnaire was cross-sectional as the focus was on current awareness, understanding, acceptance, engagement and utilisation of EBP in UK policing. Although questionnaires are often associated with a positivist perspective, they can equally be utilised as a valid data gathering method by exponents of the interpretivist approach. The questionnaire was internet-based and self-administered. The following section details this process.

3.6.1 Internet questionnaires

An internet questionnaire (e.g. iSurvey) can be distributed to a large number of respondents across a wide geographical area and is capable of providing a broad overview of the research topic (Crowther-Dowey & Fussey, 2013). Such surveys can be completed at a respondent's convenience and distribution via organisational (e.g. police force) agreement may enhance legitimacy (Foust, 2014). However, there are limitations to questionnaires which merit discussion.

Self-administered questionnaires ask the same questions of all respondents and do not allow for follow-up questions to gather more detailed data, leading to questionnaires being regarded as superficial when dealing with complex topics (Maxfield & Babbie, 2008). Using the questionnaire as part of a mixed methods approach helped to address criticism associated with a lack of quantitative data depth (May, 2011). The issue of 'survey fatigue' was relevant in this research. The use of questionnaires as a police research method has increased markedly in recent years (Nix, et al., 2019). This questionnaire was distributed during the Covid-19 pandemic. The replies I received from some forces to my research request suggested an increase in police research undertaken via the internet during the pandemic. Such activity may have affected response rates because if officers had been inundated with internal surveys to complete they may have been less inclined to complete this questionnaire. However, researcher credibility can help to improve response rates (Muijs, 2011) and in the summary accompanying the

questionnaire link I explained I was a former police officer studying at the University of Southampton.

Another matter to consider is non-response bias, which occurs when some of the target population are more likely to respond than others due to interest in the research topic (Stockemer, 2019). It was explained to participants via the information sheet that the questionnaire related to EBP. It was therefore possible those with an interest in EBP may have been more likely to complete it.

3.6.2 Questionnaire design

A badly designed questionnaire is likely to produce poor quality data which does not answer the research questions (Caulfield & Hill, 2018). It is important to establish whether open or closed questions, or a combination of both, are asked. Closed questions are easier to analyse and allow comparison between respondent answers, whilst open questions provide the participant with greater freedom to express themselves and provide detail (May, 2011). However, open questions require the researcher to interpret answers prior to analysis, which can result in misunderstanding and induce a level of researcher bias (Maxfield & Babbie, 2008). Therefore, the number of questions and their complexity need to be addressed when designing a questionnaire.

This questionnaire consisted of 86 questions, 15 of which related to participant demographics (see Appendix D for list of all questions). Closed questions were predominantly asked as this enabled the data to be prepared for analysis without the need for manual interpretation of answers. I adopted this approach for practical reasons, namely being a lone researcher and having more than one research method via which to gather data. The format consisted of both statements and closed questions. Statements can make a questionnaire more interesting for the respondent (Maxfield & Babbie, 2008) and they were used to establish participant attitudes or views on particular subjects. This questionnaire employed a five-point Likert scale measure. The final question before the demographic section was open and invited respondents to provide any additional comments they wished to on EBP.

Denscombe (2017) refers to '*response burden*' (p.168) as being the time and effort involved in questionnaire completion. Central to this is the length of time that completion

takes and the ease with which questions can be answered. This questionnaire focused on key themes related to the research questions and participants were advised that completion would take approximately 10-12 minutes. The questions were formulated from relevant literature and grouped thematically. Topics included evidence-based practice (EBP), professionalism, occupational culture, experience, decision-making, discretion, leadership and training.

Following a pilot, the questions were reviewed and some re-written prior to distribution to ensure clarity and neutrality. The questionnaire was piloted with approximately 20 police officers in a force I had worked in previously. These participants provided feedback on the question wording, ease of navigation using iSurvey and the time taken to complete the questionnaire. Their comments informed the final design, with some questions amended and changes made to the physical layout of the questionnaire. Having designed the questionnaire, the next step was distribution.

3.6.3 Questionnaire distribution

I needed to establish a suitable sampling method. I opted for a convenience sample, which is a non-probability sample that selects available people from the research population (Withrow, 2016). Convenience samples are useful when seeking an understanding of attitudes towards subjects. However, findings cannot be considered representative of the entire research population (Bachman, et al., 2017). Given the research population was serving UK police officers in any role or rank, a convenience sampling method was appropriate, as officers receiving the questionnaire were available to complete it and also part of the research population.

There are unique challenges associated with surveying police officers who often distrust outsiders and are part of a close-knit community which makes access and research approval difficult (Nix, et al., 2019; Reiner, 2012). Given these issues, distribution was initially undertaken via former police colleagues and academic contacts. The questionnaire link was also circulated via social media platforms and placed on both the College of Policing Knowledge Hub and Research Map (College of Policing, 2021b).

This approach did not provide the expected reach and resulted in a lower response rate than anticipated. Faced with this situation I reassessed the distribution methods. To

generate additional responses, I e-mailed senior officers (Chief Constable or Assistant Chief Constable rank) in every UK force where the questionnaire was not in formal circulation to request their participation. I provided a questionnaire summary and expressed a willingness to share the results should they participate. In addition to increasing responses, this approach enabled me to comment on the willingness of forces to engage in research. I chose not to distribute the questionnaire using bodies such as the College of Policing (the College) or the Police Federation. I took the view some officers may have been less likely to engage with a questionnaire supported by those organisations and wanted to keep the research as 'independent' as possible.

I contacted a total of 46 UK police organisations⁵. Of those, 21 agreed to participate, 18 declined and seven did not provide any response to three separate e-mail requests. Internal processes for distribution varied widely. In some cases the Chief Officer replied directly and provided contact details for a staff member who facilitated distribution. In several instances I was required to complete forms for the request to be formally considered and in one force the questionnaire was presented to an academic research board for approval. The extent of distribution also differed. In some forces the questionnaire was sent directly to all officers, while in others it was sent to specific departments or distributed via electronic newsletters and force Intranets. In respect of forces which declined to participate, eight cited the volume of questionnaires sent to staff as the reason, two forces declined due to high demand levels, six did not provide a reason and two forces stated they did not see any benefits for their organisation.

It was evident from correspondence that the Covid-19 pandemic had resulted in an increase of questionnaires and several forces specifically cited survey fatigue as the reason for declining my request. The responses at senior officer level highlighted a mixed picture across UK policing, both in terms of process and attitude, when it came to engaging in research. The process of questionnaire data analysis is detailed in the following section.

⁵ In addition to the 43 territorial police forces in England and Wales, I also contacted Police Scotland, Police Service of Northern Ireland and British Transport Police.

3.6.4 Analysis

The data was analysed using SPSS computer software. The questionnaire was live from 03/05/21-31/08/21 and 669 completed responses were received from participants in 35 UK forces. Only fully completed questionnaires registered any data. The data was cleaned prior to analysis to ensure it was complete and did not contain any errors which may have distorted findings (Pallant, 2016). Descriptive analysis was undertaken to provide a general overview of the data. More detailed crosstabulation analysis used demographic information consisting of respondent region of work, length of service, age, education level and gender. This level of analysis was sufficient given the questionnaire aims as part of the mixed methods design. 159 respondents provided an answer to the open question about EBP. Their answers were categorised using NVivo. Thematic analysis was employed to analyse the qualitative questionnaire data, a process explained in more detail later in this chapter. During data collection I lost a quantity of data. This issue requires explanation in the interests of transparency.

The first section contained 11 questions on the College of Policing. On 28/06/21 a force contemplating participation requested the questionnaire to be sent in list format for their review. To achieve this I sought to export the questions from iSurvey but inadvertently created several duplicate sets of Section One questions. I deleted what I believed were the duplicate sets. It transpired that one of the deleted sets was the original and had the answers attached. The result was the loss of data for all Section One questions received from previous participants. The University IT department were unable to retrieve any of the deleted information but the data collected in the other nine sections was unaffected.

This issue occurred when the questionnaire was still live, enabling me to obtain further data on the affected questions. I also recovered 79 responses from a backup spreadsheet previously uploaded into SPSS, which contained full data sets for Section One and was attributable to individuals via the participant number. This data loss was frustrating as a pattern had emerged that indicated the Policing Education Qualifications Framework (PEQF) process was not regarded as essential by participants. Having analysed the recovered responses and those received after the data loss this view was still dominant, albeit with reduced statistical significance due to the missing data (266 of 669 responses). Whilst I am unable to provide the full data set to support this position, I regularly checked

the data to monitor this finding once identified. I recorded the following notes on 23/06/21 in preparation for a supervisory meeting, *'still broadly similar. PEQF not well regarded but professionalism still about proficiency, education and formal training'*. Using a mixed methods approach meant the study was not solely reliant on the questionnaire data. I am also able to present qualitative data on officer views of the PEQF which I gathered during observations and interviews. On reflection, the data loss did not prove to be as significant as it felt at the time due to the subsequent amount of survey responses I received, combined with the qualitative data gathered during the fieldwork. Having outlined the quantitative element of the research design, the chapter now discusses the qualitative fieldwork.

3.7 Ethnography

Interpretivism is often associated with ethnography, which utilises methods such as interviewing and observation to gain a detailed understanding of events from the perspective of those who experience them (Manning, 2014). Such an approach is regarded as well suited to policing research as it enables researchers to get close to frontline policing and examine differences between operational practice and strategic organisational aims (Cram, 2023). Ethnography was therefore suitable for this study, which aimed to establish the extent to which College objectives to embed EBP into policing have translated from policy to routine practice. Answering the research questions necessitated acquiring data from frontline officers. O'Neill et al. (2023) show how ethnography provides the opportunity for researchers to experience situations as officers do and understand the challenges they face in their working lives. Furthermore, Fielding (2023) observes how ethnography enables the clarification and validation of events witnessed through interviews with those involved. Due to the benefits ethnography offers, it has long been associated with research in criminal justice settings (Newburn, 2023).

Manning (2014) describes how ethnography played a pivotal role in the establishment of police research as a field of study, with early works providing a body of knowledge. Newburn (2023) refers to academics such as Michael Banton, Egon Bittner and John Van Maanen as significant figures in the advancement of police research through ethnography. Ethnographic findings have therefore become important in advancing our

understanding of modern policing, with contemporary studies regarded as more nuanced versions of the format established in early works (Manning, 2014). Holdaway and Charman (2023) observe that the value of early ethnographic police studies should not be underestimated when tackling current policing challenges, such as the embedding of EBP.

Loftus (2009) asserts that ethnography is the preferable approach for a researcher seeking to penetrate the surface of a police organisation. Answering the research questions in this study involved understanding officer awareness of EBP and the extent to which it was utilised in their work. Employing an ethnographic approach allowed me to observe officers in their working environment to, as Pearson and Rowe (2020) posit, '*understand the world from their perspective*' (p.16). However, there are different types of ethnography and the next section provides the rationale for the approach used in this study.

3.7.1 Hit and run ethnography

Traditional ethnography is considered to involve the researcher spending long periods of time embedded in the field (Rhodes, 2014). However, the discipline has expanded to encompass different ethnographic methods, one of which is referred to as 'hit and run' fieldwork (Rhodes, 2014; Fleming & Rhodes, 2023). This approach enables the researcher to spend short intensive periods of time in the field, resulting in ethnographic snapshots of a specific point in time (Boswell, et al., 2019). The process is referred to as 'yo-yo' fieldwork by Wulff (2002) because the researcher moves in and out of the field at multiple sites.

Whilst working in this way offers the benefits of flexibility and shortened timescales in the field, hit and run ethnography is contested by advocates of '*deep hanging out*' who argue the hit and run approach lacks direction and depth (Rhodes, 2017: p.48). Boswell et al. (2019) challenge this view by asserting that more does not necessarily mean better when it comes to fieldwork as additional data increases the chances of not being able to see '*the wood for the trees*' when conducting analysis (p.61). They advocate 'yo-yoing' in and out of the field until data gathering becomes repetitive and the researcher thinks they can answer their research questions. I experienced data repetition as the observations progressed and whilst further time in the field would have undoubtedly been interesting, I do not feel it would have added significant value to this study.

Bacon et al. (2020) explain how performing shorter-form policing ethnographies can pose additional challenges in terms of building the trust necessary to facilitate the work. My policing background helped me to overcome this issue. Analysis by Fleming and Rhodes (2023) concludes that choosing the appropriate ethnographic approach to answer *your* research question is what matters, rather than adherence to any convention.

Brown (1996) presents four different types of police researcher, each of whom will have a different relationship with the organisation that is likely to influence access levels. As a former police officer I was what Brown terms an '*outside insider*', which offered potential benefits. A career in policing meant I had developed a network of contacts which assisted in negotiations with gatekeepers controlling access to research sites (Neuman, 2011). As a former officer with a wide-ranging operational career it was more likely I would be regarded as credible and become accepted by officers sooner than a researcher without any policing experience, someone who Brown would describe as an '*outside outsider*'. I therefore did not have to spend extended periods of time in the field becoming familiar with the setting, making hit and run a suitable method to employ.

Fleming (2011) describes observation as one of the best methods for gaining an insight into how police officers make sense of their environment. I employed participant observation, an approach which entails observing and talking informally to participants in the research environment (Demaree, et al., 2013; O'Neill, et al., 2023). Using participant observation enabled me to simultaneously engage with officers and gain a visual understanding of their work. As Holdaway and Charman (2023) explain, such an approach provided an insight into officer actions which could not have been obtained using other research methods. Observational fieldwork was also valuable for formulating interview questions and identifying key informants worthy of interview (Marks, 2004). The research process commenced with observation and mapping of the field before interviews were conducted for this reason. Additionally, spending time in the field was likely to enhance subsequent interviews as officers had become familiar with my work (Reiner & Newburn, 2008).

Another matter requiring attention when conducting observations is how naturally participants behave in the presence of the researcher (Cram, 2023). Participants may choose to modify behaviour to either conceal what they do not wish to be observed or behave in a manner they believe the researcher would want them to (Gravelle, 2014;

Loftus, 2009). Reiner and Newburn (2008) argue it is not possible to know whether police officers modify their behaviour in the presence of a researcher. Whilst I do not suggest my experience as a police officer negated this issue, I believe my pre-existing cultural knowledge mitigated the effects to some extent as I was able to question and clarify behaviour I suspected may have been for my benefit. Having explained the ethnographic approach selected for this study, the next section discusses the parameters in which it was deployed.

3.8 Case studies

Using case studies as part of mixed methods research enables a range of qualitative data gathering methods to be employed, which can strengthen findings through the triangulation of different methods (Yin, 2013) and enhance understanding of quantitative data gathered during the research process (Ellinger, et al., 2005). This study uses the instrumental case study approach, which focuses on insight into a single overall issue (Stake, 1994), namely EBP. Berg and Lune (2012) explain how observing and interviewing particular individuals within an organisation provides a unique viewpoint on how the organisation functions, which is a suitable approach when seeking to understand police practice. Berg and Lune (2012) also discuss the skills necessary for case study research. These include being able to respond to unexpected events, possessing a thorough understanding of issues being studied and an ability to interpret the data. In this respect my previous experience as a police officer was beneficial for understanding the research environment and reacting to unexpected events.

Three police forces were selected as individual case study sites. Each study focused on a specific policing function to gather data on awareness, understanding, acceptance, engagement and utilisation of EBP. Berg and Lune (2012) detail how case studies enable an understanding of the way people within organisations receive, interpret and use information, which in this research relates to EBP. The intention to observe events in this study as they occurred meant there was no requirement to impose researcher-led controls, making a case study approach suitable (Denscombe, 2017). Whilst the case study approach has advantages, there are limitations to consider.

Denscombe (2017) discusses the challenges of being able to generalise from a single case because the findings may be considered unique to that particular environment. As these case studies are part of a mixed methods design, they only form one part of Mason's '*intellectual puzzle*' (p.7). I am therefore not solely reliant on them for findings. The parameters for case study research must also be set and Heckenberg (2011) explains how a failure to establish clear boundaries can result in data gathering which loses focus. The issue of boundaries is pertinent to police research as there is potential for observations to deviate into departments and situations beyond the focus of fieldwork. For example, response officers attending an incident constituting a serious crime (e.g. a serious assault) would request detective assistance. In this situation it would be easy to become sidetracked by the work of the detectives. Being cognisant of such issues enabled me to resist fieldwork opportunities which, although interesting, would have diverted from the main research focus. Having outlined the use of cases studies, the chapter now discusses the subject of access to the field.

3.9 Access

Access issues are present in most social research sites and can be more challenging in police settings due to the often controversial nature of police activities resulting in forces being reluctant to participate in academic research (Clark-Darby, 2023; Manning 2023). Access is not merely about obtaining formal permission. It also involves gaining the co-operation of people to conduct observations and interviews, which requires the researcher to gain the trust of officers to secure meaningful participation (Cram, 2023; Soudal, 2023).

Police researchers often describe being subjected to initiation rituals or pressured into becoming involved in police activity to be accepted and trusted (see for example Mac Giollaibhuí, et al., 2016; Loftus, 2009; Cox, 2020; Soudal, 2023). I was not subject to any 'testing' and would suggest my own policing experience may have been a factor. Belur (2014) details how being a former officer can be beneficial for securing access to police organisations and helping to build trust with individual participants, based on a shared understanding of what it is to be a police officer. I have reflected in more detail on my research experiences as a former officer in an earlier chapter.

Reiner and Newburn (2008) discuss how Brown's (1996) '*outside insiders*' may still '*identify with rank-and-file culture after becoming academics, and act as interpreters of this to outsiders*' (p.356). On reflection I regard this description as being representative of my status to some extent. However, whilst I identified with the culture, I also possessed the confidence to examine and challenge it where necessary. Access was complex and logistically challenging as the 'field' comprised of multiple sites across three different English forces. The following section sets out the rationale for the policing functions chosen and how conducting research in these sites contributed to the research aims and objectives.

3.10 The field

There are many policing departments within which EBP research can be conducted and I therefore had to select a small number of functions as sites for the qualitative fieldwork. I identified three functions as being suitable, namely neighbourhood policing, emergency response and football-related public order policing.

The first case study focused on football policing and associated public order operations in a large and predominantly urban force. Conducting research with a police football unit provided the opportunity to assess the extent to which available academic research was understood, accepted and utilised in the planning and delivery of football policing operations. A football event is normally pre-planned and risk assessed by commanders (Pearson & Stott, 2022). There is an established body of EBP literature pertinent to football policing which can inform any potential tactical options, based on the threat and risk posed.

There were several reasons why I selected the chosen police organisation. Firstly, the force has a football unit with specialist officers whose full-time role involves the planning and policing of football events, providing me with a focal point for fieldwork. The force also employs working practices which are often, in my policing experience, more innovative than those in existence elsewhere. Examples include a diversion scheme to educate young supporters about the risks of associating with groups involved in football violence, and working practices designed to reduce disorder and anti-social behaviour within stadiums. Additionally, as an officer I had worked with members of this unit

occasionally during my service. This pre-existing relationship assisted me with access and proved beneficial for developing trust. A further reason for choosing this unit was the fact it has responsibility for policing at six clubs across different leagues. The leagues have unique characteristics and fixtures which provided opportunities to conduct research in diverse settings and contexts. For example, clubs in the top league, (the Premier League) have much larger fan bases than those in the fourth tier (League 2). As a consequence there is greater media coverage of Premier League fixtures which can influence safety and security decisions.

The second case study concentrated on neighbourhood policing. The rationale for choosing this function was the fact that neighbourhood officers are involved in problem solving issues within communities. Fieldwork in neighbourhood policing would provide data on how officers resolve community issues and what information sources they use to inform their working practices. There is evidence-based research available in tools on the College website such as the What Works Centre for Crime Reduction (College of Policing, 2020a) and the Policing and Crime Reduction Research Map (College of Policing, 2021b). I wanted to gain an understanding of the extent to which this type of information was understood and utilised by neighbourhood officers.

The neighbourhood case study force was selected because it had a well-established neighbourhood policing model. Its size provided the opportunity to undertake research in different command units. Another reason was the force having distributed the questionnaire. I also had links with individuals who were receptive to my research request and able to facilitate access to neighbourhood teams, which influenced my decision. The force geography is a mix of rural and urban areas. I initially planned to situate the research in one Local Policing Area (LPA) which had a combination of towns and more rural locations. However, having commenced fieldwork in the largest town within the LPA I decided the small number of officers working in rural locations would limit data collection. I therefore also undertook fieldwork in two cities on completion of research in the first town. The three chosen sites operated under different commanders and each had dedicated neighbourhood teams. One of the benefits of this decision was the opportunity to compare different approaches to problem-solving.

The final case study was situated in the response function of a large and predominantly urban force. Fieldwork in this setting afforded the opportunity to assess what impact

newly trained recruits, who are taught about EBP as part of the PEQF, have on response teams. Observations would provide data on the extent to which new officers utilised their EBP knowledge in an environment where experience is viewed as important (Hunter & May, 2019).

The chosen force was suitable for a number of reasons. Firstly, the PEQF process is used to train new recruits which enabled data to be gathered on how degree-based learning is influencing practice. The force is also part of a formal police/academic collaboration, which was beneficial for assessing the impact formal collaborations have on EBP awareness and utilisation (May, et al., 2020). Another factor was an organisational willingness to participate in the qualitative fieldwork, having also distributed my online questionnaire. Finally, the volume and variety of incidents dealt with as a large urban force allowed me to assess the impact that demand may have on response officers utilising EBP in their work.

The chosen case study sites were intended to provide some geographical balance to the research. Whilst difficult to achieve widespread representation with only three forces, the choices resulted in fieldwork in the South, North and Midland regions of England. The forces selected were not part of the same regional group, nor were they subject to formal collaboration with each other. The aim of the case studies was to examine awareness, understanding, acceptance, engagement and utilisation of EBP across different policing functions, to understand the extent to which EBP is currently embedded in policing. Situating the research in different functions enabled analysis of the challenges and opportunities for the utilisation of EBP in different roles. The final fieldwork element consisted of interviews with participants from each of the case study forces. The interviews were conducted separately from the ethnographic observations and are discussed in the next section.

3.11 Semi-structured interviews

A benefit of the semi-structured interview approach is that whilst a schedule ensures specific topics are covered, there is sufficient flexibility to probe for further detail (David & Sutton, 2011). Mason (2006) discusses how semi-structured interviewing is appropriate where people's understanding, views and experiences are relevant to the research

questions being answered. Participant views were important in this study to analyse awareness, understanding, acceptance, engagement and utilisation of EBP. Semi-structured interviews enabled a deeper understanding of the questionnaire topics to be gained as survey responses were used to inform questions.

I used the observation phase to enhance my knowledge of the field and develop relationships with key informants to recruit interview participants. This approach was beneficial because, as Marks (2004) highlights, police officers are more willing to be interviewed by a familiar researcher and pre-existing relationships can result in a better understanding of the interview discussion. A total of 19 police officers and two members of police staff were interviewed across the three case study forces (seven per case study). The sample constituted all ranks from constable to superintendent. Whilst police officers were the main focus of the research, two members of police staff were interviewed as they provided relevant data within the neighbourhood function.

I met the majority of interviewees in person during the fieldwork, with only some participants being recruited via e-mail contact after colleague recommendations. I planned to interview officers of different ranks within each setting. This was not an exact science and was, to some extent, dependent on availability and willingness to be interviewed. The process therefore involved an element of convenience sampling (Denscombe, 2017). However, I selected officers from the pool of volunteers who possessed relevant knowledge and experience across different ranks, thus ensuring convenience was not the primary selection method. Overall, I achieved a broad representation across the three case studies with the majority of initial approaches resulting in interviews. The specific ranks and roles of those interviewed are detailed within each case study chapter.

A semi-structured interview schedule of topics was devised for each case study (see Appendix E for an example). There were broad similarities in many of the topics, although some were function specific. Topics were developed using the questionnaire data and subsidiary research questions. For example, questionnaire data suggested the majority of officers had an understanding of EBP. The interviews provided me with the opportunity to probe officer knowledge of EBP and I gathered data to suggest understanding often differed across officers and from the College definition.

The semi-structured approach allowed further discussion of fieldwork incidents I witnessed and enabled interview schedules to be amended as the research progressed and matters worthy of inclusion become apparent (Charman, 2017). However, the interviewer must be knowledgeable enough about the subject to maximise the potential of this interview type (Crow & Semmens, 2008), an issue my policing background addressed.

The benefit derived from semi-structured interviews in terms of gaining a detailed insight into the research topic is linked to potential disadvantages. Adams (2015) discusses how semi-structured interviews are time consuming and resource intensive. Adams suggests it may be more time efficient to conduct a small number of focus groups rather than one to one interviews. Having contemplated their use, focus groups did not form part of this study for numerous reasons.

A challenge with focus groups is to ensure everyone contributes, not only more knowledgeable or experienced group members (Crow & Semmens, 2008). This issue can become more pronounced in a hierarchical organisation such as the police. Officers of rank are likely to influence discussion because more junior participants may be reluctant to speak honestly for fear of deviating from organisational norms (Fleming, 2010). The fact focus groups rely on multiple participants is a challenge if they do not all attend the session (Berg & Lune, 2012), which can be problematic given the unpredictable nature of policing and the shift patterns officers work.

Prior to leaving the police service in 2020, the use of online platforms such as Microsoft Teams was an unfamiliar practice, as meetings I attended were either held in person or via telephone conference. Covid-19 changed that position and since commencing my PhD, I have become familiar with the practicalities of using technology to communicate remotely. Given I was based some distance from many participants, I opted to conduct all interviews online. This approach saved time, reduced costs and offered environmental benefits associated with reduced travel. Using online technology to interview also enabled me to confidently plan fieldwork, regardless of Covid-19 restrictions which may have curtailed face-to-face interviews. Whilst online interviews had logistical benefits, they were not without practical challenges.

During fieldwork I experienced both a short notice cancellation and several participants arriving anything up to 30 minutes late. These occurrences caused me to reflect on whether online interviewing made it subconsciously easier for participants to cancel or arrive late. Everyone I interviewed agreed to do so in duty time. Understandably, the interview was more important to me as the researcher than the participant. The police officers I interviewed were participating in multiple meetings and dealing with operational issues during their shift. I therefore developed a sense of perspective to acknowledge this position, despite the frustration it sometimes caused. Another concern was technical difficulties occurring during interviews, the most common of which was the loss of internet connection. When this happened it disrupted flow and distracted interviewer and interviewee until the connection was re-established. A practical difficulty when this occurred was establishing the point where both participants were still able to hear the conversation.

The flexibility offered by technology resulted in participants being able to choose a preferred interview location. Jenner and Myers (2019) argue the interview setting is more important for data quality than the method (in-person/online). Jenner and Myers (2019) also discuss how participants are more likely to discuss controversial or sensitive topics in private settings. On reflection, participants were comfortable talking negatively about aspects of their organisations, suggesting they were at ease in their chosen interview environment.

Weller (2017) stresses the importance of rapport in qualitative research and highlights the need to consider whether online interviewing reduces rapport levels between researcher and participant. I do not believe rapport levels were adversely affected because of online interviewing. Meeting most participants prior to interview enabled me to begin building rapport and trust. Most interviews were conducted with both interviewer and participant visible. However, in some instances interviews were conducted without the use of cameras, either because the participant did not have access to a camera, or they preferred it to be switched off (an option provided on the consent form). In this situation the interview was more akin to a telephone interview. Audio-only interviews do prevent the interviewer from observing body language and picking up on non-verbal signals (Jenner & Myers, 2019), although I do not regard this factor to have significantly affected data quality.

Whilst there were some challenges in conducting online interviews, the increased flexibility and ability to interview during the Covid-19 pandemic outweighed any difficulties. The interviews produced detailed accounts of matters relevant to the research questions and enabled events witnessed during fieldwork to be discussed in more detail. Having discussed the fieldwork methods, attention now turns to data analysis.

3.12 Data Recording and Analysis

The qualitative data presented in this thesis consists of questionnaire comments, interview transcriptions and notes written during observations. All interviews were assigned a code to preserve participant anonymity. The interviews totalled 29 hours with the shortest being 47 minutes, the longest 150 minutes and the average 84 minutes. The interviews were audio recorded using a digital recorder and securely stored. I transcribed them as soon as practicable after completion and destroyed the recordings. Whilst transcription is time consuming, it enables the researcher to become familiar with the data at an early stage and brings *'the talk to life again'* (Denscombe, 2017: p.307). In contrast to the interview process, recording notes during observations was more challenging.

A total of 244 hours of observations were conducted across the three case studies. Therefore, a significant quantity of data was generated and I developed methods for recording this as fieldwork progressed. Initially, I relied on recording events in a notebook. To ensure transparency I informed participants I would write brief notes to assist me in compiling more detailed accounts subsequently. Doing so did not overly concern people but was difficult to achieve in practice. For example, when having a discussion with officers it was not appropriate to record what was being said as to do so would have interrupted conversational flow, made people self-conscious and even suspicious (Demaree, et al., 2013; Atkinson & Hammersley, 2007). Being in a vehicle with two officers provided the best opportunity to record notes as I would be seated in the rear, meaning my notebook was not prominent. Observing single-crewed officers was problematic as I would be seated in the front passenger seat, making it difficult to write notes for the above reasons. The same challenges arose when inside a house or on foot patrol. In response to this issue I began to use my phone to type notes. Officers recorded

everything on handheld devices (including witness statements), so using my phone did not look out of place. These methods enabled me to subsequently produce more detailed accounts of events and conversations.

The interviews and fieldnotes combined generated 384,915 words of transcription and written notes. The data was analysed using thematic analysis (TA), which Braun and Clarke (2006) describe as *'a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data'* (p.79). However, Braun and Clarke stress TA is not a single approach but one consisting of several variations (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Reflexive TA (RTA) was used to analyse the data in this study. I chose to utilise RTA for several reasons. Firstly, as Braun and Clarke (2021) describe, RTA uses *'approaches that fully embrace qualitative research values and the subjective skills the researcher brings to the process.....Coding is open and organic, with no use of any coding framework. Themes should be the final 'outcome' of data coding and iterative theme development'* (p.333). Therefore, using RTA allowed themes to emerge inductively and enabled my policing experience to form part of the analytical process.

RTA aligns with the interpretive approach to this research and Braun and Clarke (2021) discuss how interpretation is central to the process, the depth of which is reliant on researcher skills. My policing knowledge therefore allowed me to tell what Braun and Clarke (2021) refer to as *'my story about the data'* (p.339) using participants' lived experiences, perspectives and practices (Clarke & Braun, 2017). The flexibility of RTA enabled a detailed and rich account of the data to emerge (Braun & Clarke, 2019), as the multiple case studies analysed in this study provided me with a significant quantity of data to draw on.

Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of RTA were used as a framework to guide analysis. This method consists of data familiarisation, data code identification, the reviewing/naming of themes and the writing up of findings. I used NVivo to store and organise the data. NVivo enables the researcher to manage, visualise, query and report on data. As Bazeley and Jackson (2014) remind us, software such as NVivo exists to assist the researcher with data analysis. NVivo is not a substitute for researcher engagement with their data and instead it provides support for working with data. I created three separate case studies within NVivo to organise the data before commencing analysis.

Codes and themes are key terms in TA. Braun and Clarke (2021) highlight the importance of understanding and using these terms correctly. Within reflexive TA, the code is a tool used to develop themes and generally consists of one aspect of the subject being studied. Conversely, a theme is a multi-dimensional view of the same subject which draws numerous codes together (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Braun and Clarke (2019a) stress themes do not lie dormant in the data waiting to be extracted, but rather they are interpretive 'stories' generated via researcher engagement with the data. Some themes were common across all three case studies and some were specific to an individual study. Data was then selected from NVivo for inclusion in the written findings.

Given the volume of data generated from the fieldwork, only a limited number of extracts could be included in the findings chapters. Denscombe (2017) observes that extracts can rarely be considered to prove a point as they may be out of context when removed from a transcription. Denscombe also discusses how decisions about inclusion involve personal judgment and choice on the part of the researcher. Therefore, extracts were chosen to illustrate themes present within the case studies and support arguments made as part of the analysis (see Appendix G for codebook example). The final section of this chapter discusses ethical issues associated with data gathering.

3.13 Ethics

There were a number of ethical issues pertinent to this study, some of which arose from my policing knowledge and experience. In respect of the observations and interviews, written informed consent was obtained from all principal participants. However, some observations involved members of the public or officers who were not principal participants and I was not always able to inform all parties of my role. To reduce the likelihood of this occurring, I proactively briefed the entire wider team of officers verbally at the start of an observation. Similarly, when officers dealt with members of the public I explained to the person(s) involved what my role was. Exceptions to this were incidents involving confrontation where it was not safe to provide an explanation.

In a number of instances I went to houses with officers while they conducted enquiries. On occasion officers took the decision, for reasons unbeknown to me, to introduce me as a 'colleague.' In such circumstances I felt it necessary to explain my role and ask

occupants for consent to enter their house, ensuring they understood there was no obligation for them to grant access. Whilst it would have been easy for me to remain silent so as not to risk being denied access, to do so would have been unethical and introduced a conscious element of covert research. However, I was not refused access at any point, despite my expectation that this would be likely after explaining my role in situations where officers themselves were not particularly welcome. Conducting fieldwork with operational police officers can expose the researcher to confrontation and incidents of an unpleasant nature (Manning, 2014; Treadwell, 2020). Whilst accepting there is an element of risk involved in police research, it is still necessary to ensure measures are taken to minimise the risks to both researcher and participants. During fieldwork I accompanied officers undertaking their normal working role. Therefore, my research did not directly increase any risk beyond what they would normally experience. However, an observer can complicate situations for officers. I therefore listened to instruction and used my own policing experience to proactively distance myself from situations of physical danger.

My operational background was also relevant, as there were occasions where I possessed greater knowledge and experience of situations than the officers dealing with them. Given that interjecting during incidents could risk disturbing the field unnecessarily (Liebling, 2001; Bacon, et al., 2023), I needed to establish a 'tipping point' for any intervention. As Rowe (2007) notes, the nature of policing is dynamic and makes the anticipation of ethical dilemmas difficult. An example of where such issues can arise is when officers use force. In my experience, when a person resists arrest the situation can often look 'messy' to observers while officers gain control. In such circumstances I had to decide if there was any necessity to assist officers making an arrest. My pre-defined standpoint, that I would only become involved if somebody was at risk of serious injury, was tested in one situation.

During an observation officers detained a suspect who physically resisted, resulting in them calling for emergency assistance from colleagues. Despite them doing this I did not become involved as I did not believe the situation had reached a point where they had lost control. Indeed, they successfully handcuffed the suspect before other officers arrived. However, being a bystander in circumstances I would have previously assisted in was awkward and left me conflicted about not being able to intervene. Interestingly,

when discussing the incident with the officers afterwards, they expressed embarrassment that a former officer had witnessed them struggle to control the suspect.

Another ethical issue relates to the researcher being party to conversations where the content is not necessarily known to others (police officers) in the field (Neuman, 2011). In police research, this can occur if intelligence is shared with the researcher, which it was on occasions during my fieldwork. To manage this issue I did not discuss intelligence outside of the originating environment and did not use any such information as part of the findings.

Anonymity is an important element of research design and the questionnaire was designed to ensure participants remained anonymous. As forces distributed the questionnaire via internal e-mail on my behalf I did not know the identity of those participating. Anonymity was afforded to all participants and forces involved in the qualitative fieldwork. In addition to not including personal details, I removed any background information that may identify individuals, departments or the forces themselves. To ensure participant confidentiality, all electronic research data was securely stored on a password protected University computer. In the case of written notes, these were locked away. Copies of the ethical approval, participant information sheets and consent forms are provided in Appendices A, B and C respectively.

3.14 Chapter summary

The methods chapter detailed the rationale for an interpretive approach to this study and explained why a mixed methods design was utilised. The questionnaire process was discussed, including design, sample, distribution and analysis. The chapter outlined why case studies were chosen for the qualitative research and explained the rationale for the choice of specific policing functions and forces in which to situate the fieldwork. Ethnographic observations and semi-structured interviews were discussed as the qualitative methods used and the subsequent data analysis detailed before the chapter concluded with ethical issues. Having set out the methodological approach, the next chapter presents findings from the quantitative questionnaire.

Chapter 4 Questionnaire findings

This chapter presents the findings from the questionnaire discussed in Chapter 3. The primary aim of this survey was to obtain the views of UK police officers in different organisations. The purpose of the survey was to act as a 'bridge' between what was currently known about the status of EBP in UK policing and the second phase of the research. The survey results are presented as part of the thesis findings but were also used to inform interview topics and participant observation activities as part of an iterative approach to the research.

The data is presented by force region⁶ and enables quantitative findings to be presented alongside the qualitative fieldwork discussed in the three case studies in Chapters 5, 6 and 7. The questionnaire was distributed between 03/05/21-31/08/21. Completed responses were received from 669 participants across 35 forces in all regions. All ranks were represented and broadly reflected the prevalence of each rank within a police organisation, from 56.5% at the constable rank to 0.4% at chief officer level. 65% of participants identified as male and 30% as female, which is just under the current gender split in UK policing (34.7% female) (Home Office, 2023). A broad range of roles were represented with response (19%), neighbourhood (12.9%) and various investigation roles (30%) generating the highest number of responses.

Data was gathered about awareness, understanding, acceptance, engagement and utilisation in respect of evidence-based practice (EBP) in UK policing. The online questionnaire consisted of 86 questions, 15 of which related to participant demographics (see Appendix D for full list of questions). All questions were closed and predominantly employed a 5-point Likert scale, with the exception of one open-ended question asking participants for additional comments about EBP. A total of 159 qualitative responses were provided. The chapter presents data considered most relevant to the issues being analysed in this thesis. Graphs are used to illustrate responses to specific questions and demographic data (region of work, rank, length of service, education level) is utilised to add detail and nuance. Some data is integrated into the findings without the use of

⁶ The questionnaire regions broadly align to the National Police Chiefs' Council model of 11 police regions.

graphs. Where aspects of the demographic data are not discussed, the reader should assume that demographic information did not have any statistical significance in that instance.

Participants were asked for their highest level of educational qualification. References to ‘degree educated’ includes participants who held undergraduate, postgraduate and Doctorate qualifications. The final section presents comments representative of themes identified in the qualitative data. The first section of the questionnaire comprised of questions about the College of Policing (the College).

4.1 College of Policing

Respondents were asked about their awareness of the College role and their engagement with the College website. Questions were also asked about the What Works Centre for Crime Reduction (WWCCR), Authorised Professional Practice (APP) and the College role in professionalising policing. The first section had 403 responses⁷.

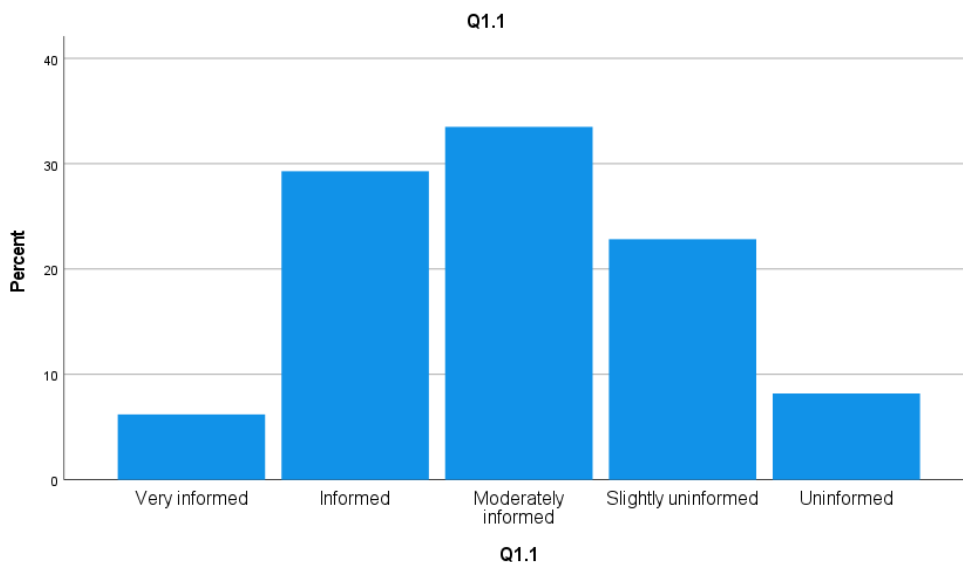


Figure 2. How well informed do you consider yourself to be about the role of the College in UK policing?

Figure 2 shows participant awareness of the College role, with 35.5% considering themselves to be very informed or informed. The remaining participants displayed less

⁷ As discussed in Chapter 3, 266 responses to Section 1 of the questionnaire were lost due to deletion of data.

awareness of the College role to varying extents. Responses suggested rank and education levels were factors in awareness levels. 93.9% of respondents who answered 'uninformed' were officers most likely to undertake operational work, namely constables, sergeants or inspectors. 72% of 'very informed' officers were degree-educated. Participants were then asked what they considered the primary role of the College to be from a list of options provided (see Figure 3).

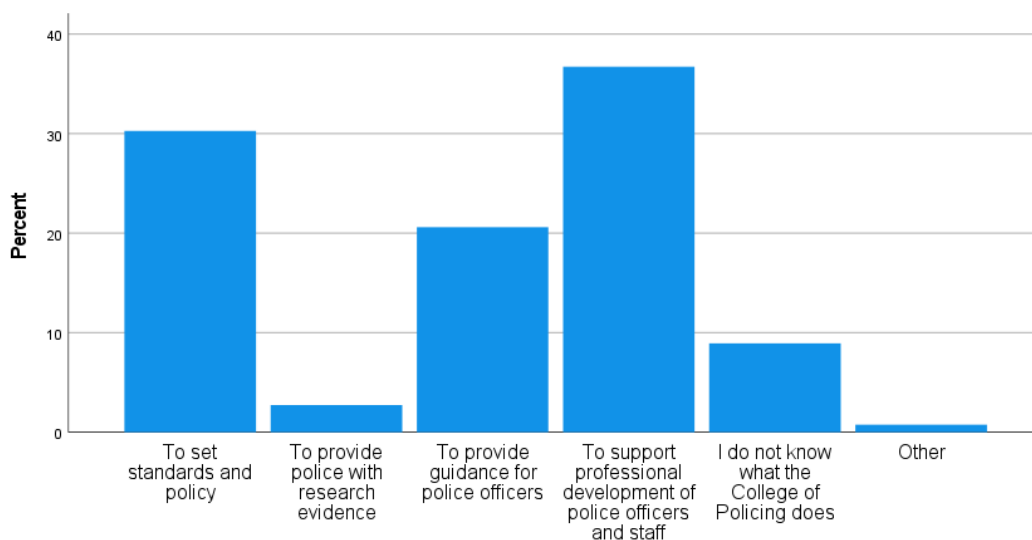


Figure 3. What do you consider the primary role of the College of Policing to be?

The principal answers shown in Figure 3 were the setting of standards and policy and supporting professional development, two of the three primary functions performed by the College (College of Policing, 2022). The third primary function listed by the College is its role in sharing knowledge and good practice, an element of which is research dissemination. Responses to this question suggested a general lack of awareness about the College role in providing specifically evidence-based research. Of note was that 72.8% of those aware the College disseminates research held a degree. Respondents were asked the extent to which they accessed the College website in relation to their role (Figure 4).

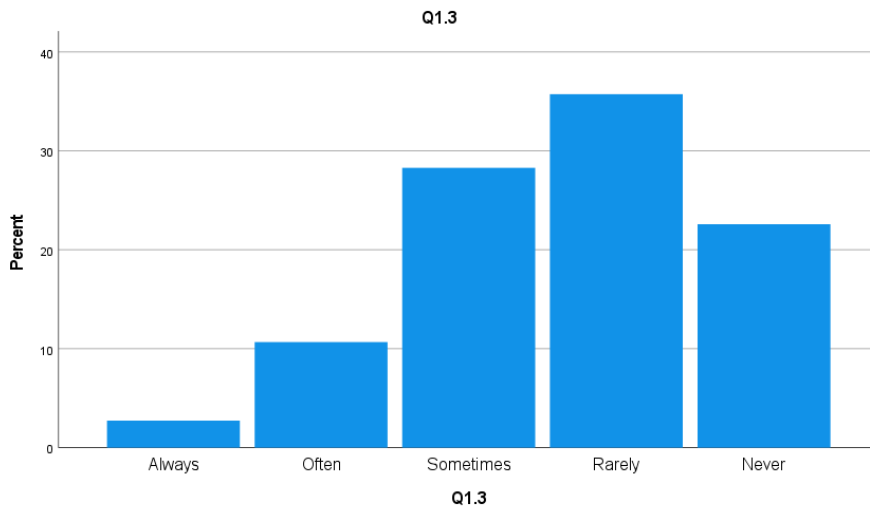


Figure 4. As part of your role do you access the College of Policing website?

The data in Figure 4 indicated use of the College website was not routine. Analysis of response by rank suggests access was more limited amongst operational staff, with 92.3% of ‘never’ and 88.7% of ‘rarely’ responses provided by constables, sergeants and inspectors. In addition to a lack of awareness about the College website, this finding may also be indicative of the lack of time operational officers have to consult the website.

Participants were asked to select the most likely reason they would access the website from a list provided (Figure 5).

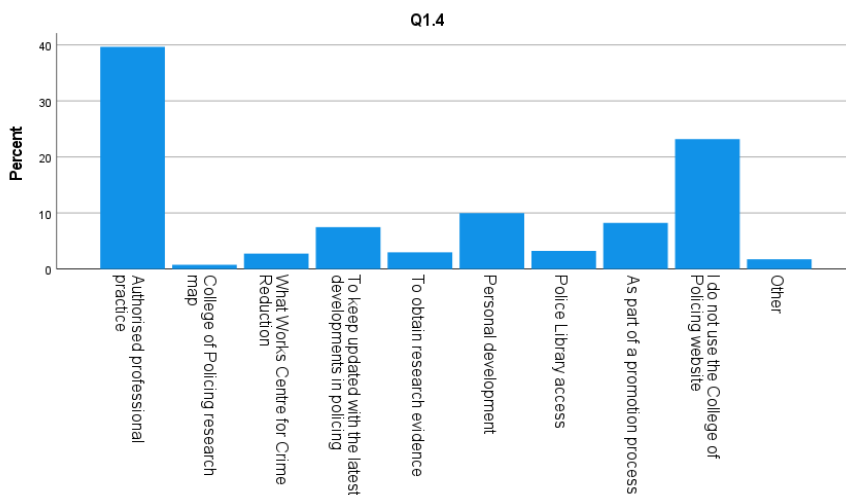


Figure 5. If you were to access the College of Policing website, what would be the most likely reason for doing so?

The highest response related to accessing Authorised Professional Practice (APP). The data highlighted a lack of engagement with research products, such as the College research map (0.7%) and the WWCCR (2.7%), and 3.7% reported using the website to

obtain research evidence. 23.2% of respondents stated they never used the website, a similar figure to the same option in Figure 4 (22.6%). The majority of officers (90.2%) who never used the website were constables, sergeants and inspectors. Officers were asked what they understood APP to be (Figure 6).

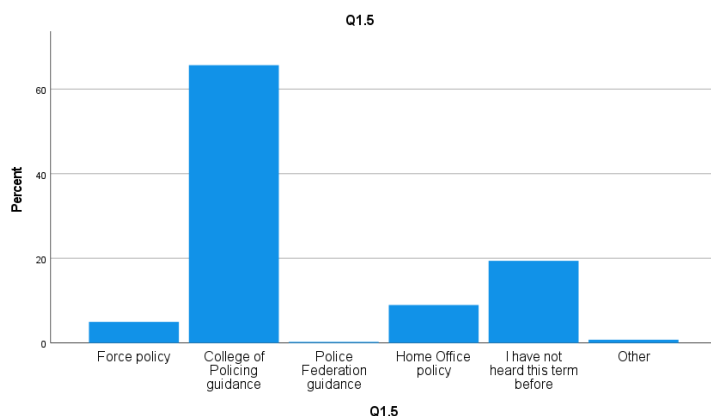


Figure 6. What is Authorised Professional Practice (APP)?

The majority of respondents were aware that APP originates from the College. However 19.4% of respondents had not heard the term APP before. Of those unaware of APP, 94.8% were constables, sergeants and inspectors. Such data indicates an issue regarding the dissemination of policy originating from the College, particularly at ranks most likely to be engaged in operational policing. A follow-up question asked about APP consultation in practice (see Figure 7).

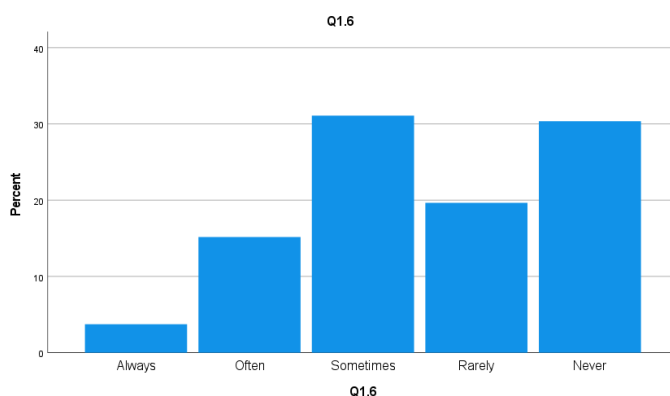


Figure 7. Do you consult Authorised Professional Practice to assist you in your work?

Whilst two thirds of respondents were aware APP originated from the College, Figure 7 shows that the extent to which they utilised APP belied that figure with 49.7% stating they rarely/never used APP. Demographic information provided further detail about how APP is utilised.

Police region 3⁸ accounted for 28.9% of the always/often responses in respect of APP consultation and was higher than other regions (the next highest was region 1⁹ with 17.1%). Whilst regions 1 and 3 did not have formal academic collaborations, the majority of forces (4 out of 5 region 1; 5 out of 6 region 3) were part of the Open University Centre for Policing Research and Learning. 73.3% of respondents who stated they always consulted APP were constables. However, this figure only accounted for 4.9% of all constables, 52.4% of whom stated they never/rarely consulted APP. 0% of sergeants stated they always used APP and 54.1% said they rarely/never used APP. The responses did not vary significantly as rank increased.

Across all respondents, 56.5% who always/often consulted APP were degree educated. In terms of length of service, 19.7% of officers with 0-5 years in service responded they always/often consulted APP, a similar response to those with greater service. These figures suggest the Policing Education Qualifications Framework (PEQF) (which commenced for recruits in September 2018) has not meaningfully increased APP use beyond that of longer-serving officers. The questionnaire indicates routine utilisation of APP is limited across ranks and officers lack understanding of the importance attached to APP by the College.

Officers were then asked about their use of the WWCCR, located within the College website (Figure 8).

⁸ Region 3 consists of Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, Essex, Cambridgeshire, Suffolk and Norfolk Constabularies

⁹ Region 1 consists of Devon and Cornwall, Avon and Somerset, Dorset, Wiltshire and Gloucestershire Constabularies

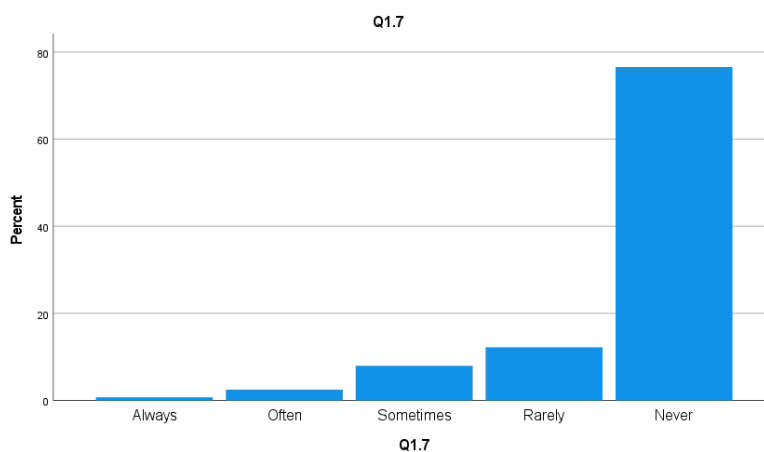


Figure 8. Do you consult the College of Policing What Works Centre for Crime Reduction to help you with your role?

The responses in Figure 8 indicated little engagement with the WWCCR, with the majority (88.6%) rarely/never using the resource. The data did not identify any region or rank where use of the WWCCR appeared routine and 88.8% of all constables and sergeants reported rarely/never using the WWCCR. Officers with 0-5 years of service, more likely to be on PEQF pathways, reported similar levels of WWCCR use (always/often) to those with greater service at 2.4%. Whilst numbers who always/often consulted the WWCCR were low across all respondents (3.2%), 76.9% who did so were degree educated. The data on awareness/engagement with WWCCR suggests the majority of officers most likely to be engaged in problem-solving activity (constables and sergeants) rarely/never utilise the WWCCR.

The questions then focused on professionalism. Officers were asked whether they were aware the College was aiming to professionalise policing. 70.4% of respondents reported being aware of the College professionalisation agenda. The next question asked participants to select from a list all the factors they associated with professionalism, in a policing context. A total of 1619 responses were provided across the 10 options (see Figure 9).

The two most frequently selected characteristics were proficiency in role (320 responses) and formal training (300). Experience was the third most selected (233) followed by both education (195) and operational tradecraft (195). Proficiency in role, formal training and education are characteristics which often feature in discussion on what constitutes professionalism in policing (see for example Fleming, 2013; Martin, 2022; Wood, et al., 2018). It is of interest these three characteristics featured so prominently given that

current literature discusses officer resistance to the professionalisation agenda (Cockcroft & Hallenberg, 2021; Hallenberg & Cockcroft, 2017). It may be the case that any officer resistance stems from how the professionalisation agenda is being implemented rather than the principles underpinning the concept itself.

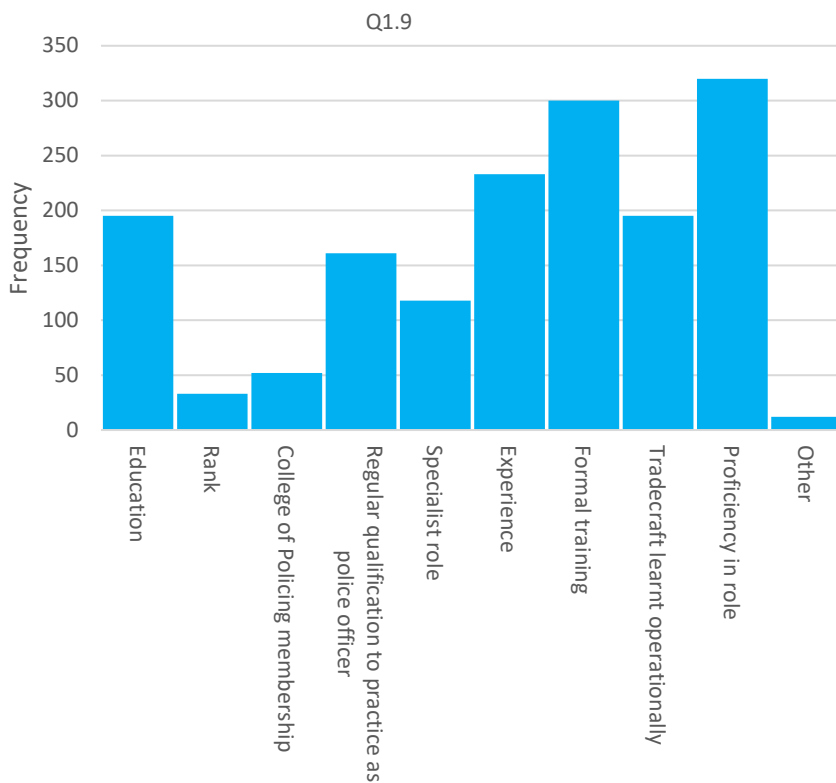


Figure 9. What do you consider to be elements of ‘professionalism’ in the context of policing?

The other two most selected answers, experience and operational tradecraft, form part of the debate on the extent to which EBP should inform police practice (see for example Fleming & Rhodes, 2018; Hunter, et al., 2019; Pease & Roach, 2017; Selby-Fell & Newton, 2022). Whilst these two characteristics were viewed as relevant to professionalism, both were felt to be less important than proficiency in role and training. Also of note is how membership of the College was not regarded as a strong characteristic (52 responses).

The data on professional characteristics suggests officers to be receptive, in principle at least, to training and education in similar measure to experience and tradecraft. However, the College itself does not appear to be associated with professionalism. Similarly, the

PEQF is not regarded positively despite being introduced by the College to improve educational standards amongst officers (Williams, et al., 2019), something officers regarded as relevant to professionalism. The final question on the College asked whether the PEQF was regarded as crucial for the improvement of policing (Figure 10).

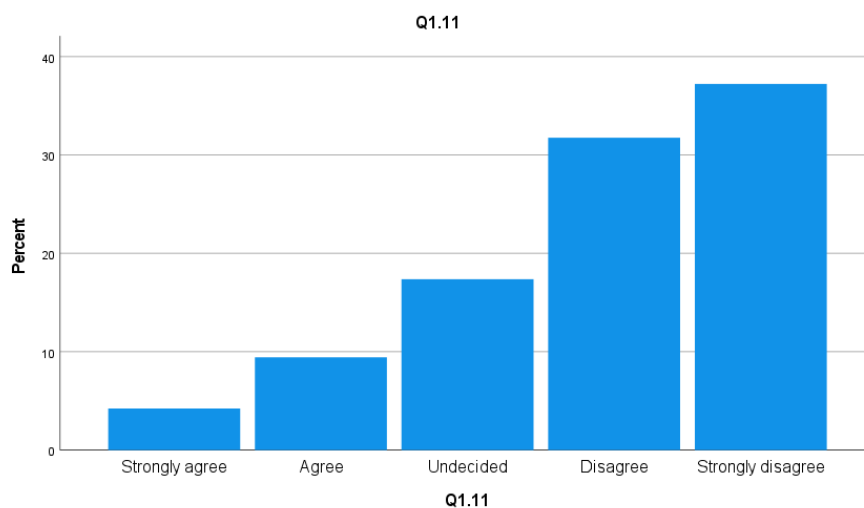


Figure 10. The PEQF is crucial for the improvement of policing

Responses suggested the PEQF is not regarded positively. 69% of respondents disagreed/strongly disagreed with the statement in Figure 10. Geographically, the greatest support for PEQF was in region 3 which accounted for 33.3% of strongly agree/agree responses. Whilst there is no data to suggest the size of a force has any bearing on EBP engagement, it is worthy of note that region 3 is generally comprised of smaller police organisations. Support for the PEQF scheme was greatest among more operational ranks and those with degree level education. The questionnaire data indicates the PEQF, which has an increased emphasis on academic learning, is not viewed as beneficial by officers.

The data in this section highlighted a lack of awareness among operational officers about the College role and associated resources such as APP and WWCCR. The questionnaire revealed negative views about the importance of the PEQF, although degree educated officers were more likely to utilise research and understand the benefits of the PEQF scheme. The next section focuses on awareness, understanding and utilisation of EBP. The remaining questions comprise the full sample of 669 responses.

4.2 Organisational awareness and engagement with EBP

Participants were provided with the College definition of EBP and asked whether they were aware of the EBP concept in their role. Responses indicated a high level of awareness with 73.4% answering positively. Regions 1 (22.5%) and 3 (21.9%) had the highest awareness levels geographically. However, whilst participants reported high awareness levels, the case studies will demonstrate that understanding of EBP often does not align with the College definition. 89% of those with 0-5 years of service were aware of EBP. This group showed the greatest awareness of EBP and may indicate the PEQF is increasing EBP knowledge. Respondents were then asked how they became aware of EBP (see Figure 11).

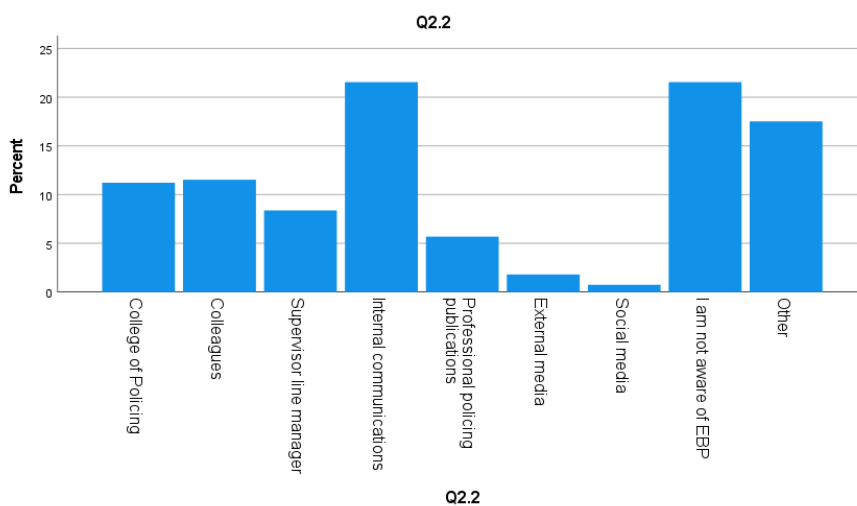


Figure 11. How did you become aware of EBP?

Internal communication was the most likely source for learning about EBP and 11.2% of respondents became aware of EBP via the College, a figure which further suggests the College is not a direct source of information for officers. Within the 'other' category (17.5% of total responses), 53% of participants became aware of EBP from academic study. This study tended to take the form of the PEQF, in-service Masters courses or degree-level education prior to joining the police. 87.8% of those in the 'other' category were constables, sergeants and inspectors, with 74.7% of the 'other' group being degree educated. Such responses suggest the PEQF provides an opportunity to increase EBP awareness amongst recruits.

The UK Society of Evidence-Based Policing (SEBP) was established to improve awareness and utilisation of EBP. When asked whether they were aware of the SEBP, 28.6% of

participants answered yes, suggesting the impact of the SEBP in advancing EBP remains limited. SEBP awareness increased with each rank, rising from 17.4% of all constables through to 87.5% of all superintendents. 79.8% of those aware of the SEBP were degree-educated. Figure 12 shows the extent to which supervisors advocate the utilisation of EBP.

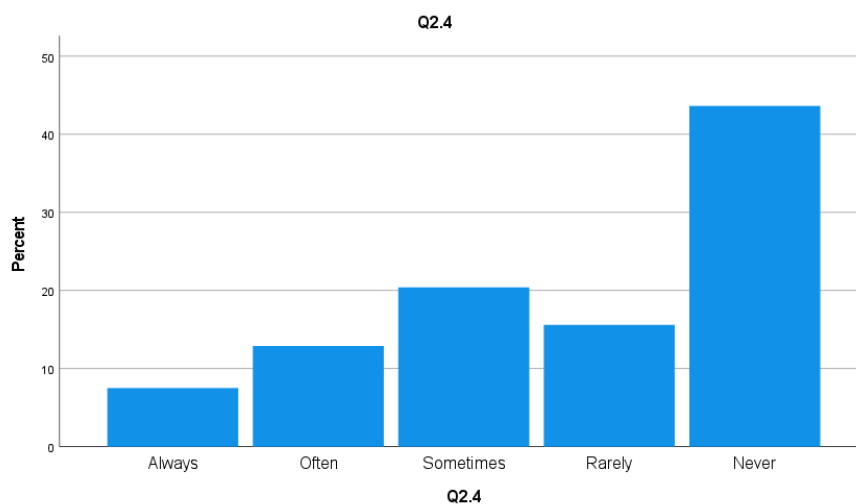


Figure 12. Does your supervisor/line manager advocate the use of EBP?

20.4% of respondents stated supervisors and line managers always/often advocated utilising EBP. Of the 20.4%, these responses decreased with rank, from 49.2% at constable level to 0.74% at the rank of superintendent. The data indicated little routine advocacy of EBP nationally. However, officers from region 3 accounted for 29.6% of all always/often responses. Participants were asked about the role of training in raising EBP awareness and understanding (Figure 13).

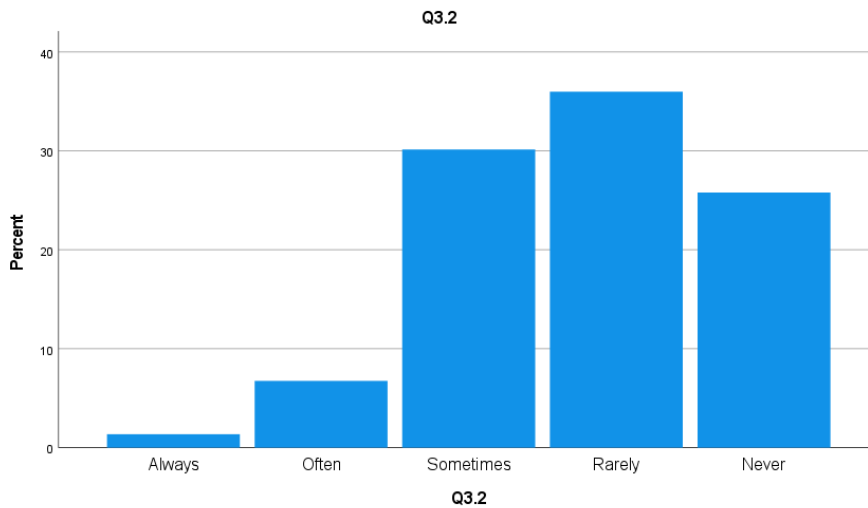


Figure 13. Does the training you receive include any explanation of how academic theories relate to police practices?

Responses in Figure 13 suggested training did not regularly include academic theory. Officers with 0-5 years of service accounted for 37% of always/often responses, a further indication the PEQF may be increasing EBP knowledge through training delivery. 27.1% of participants stated they had received specific training on EBP from their police organisation. Geographically, 33.1% of those who had received EBP training were in region 3. Officers with 0-5 years of service accounted for the largest proportion of those who had received EBP training (40%) and 62.5% of those who had received EBP training were degree educated. 28.8% of participants reported attending training where EBP was promoted as a way forward.

When asked whether their police force had a formal relationship with a university which facilitated teaching and/or research, 52.7% of participants did not know if such an arrangement existed. The lack of awareness of whether formal relationships existed decreased with rank from 62.3% of all constables who answered 'don't know' to 13.3% of superintendents who did not know. Of participants who knew about formal academic relationships, 70.1% were degree-educated. Regionally, knowledge levels were highest in region 1 (21.1%) and region 8¹⁰ (21.5%). All forces in region 8 were part of the N8 Policing Research Partnership. Awareness of academic partnerships was also highest amongst those with the least service (43% of 0-5yrs), suggesting the PEQF may be increasing knowledge about academic collaboration.

¹⁰ Region 8 consists of Northumbria, Durham, Cleveland, North Yorkshire, West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire and Humberside Constabularies

The data suggests training was not routinely used as a method of advancing understanding and acceptance of EBP amongst participants. However, results among officers with 0-5 years of service indicate the PEQF may be increasing EBP awareness and understanding. Data on how officers learnt about EBP indicates that education, whether via PEQF or degrees attained prior to joining the police, was a factor in increased EBP knowledge levels. The questionnaire indicated the lack of a coherent organisational structure surrounding EBP, with awareness of formal relationships between police forces and universities limited amongst operational officers. The fact supervisors did not routinely advocate EBP is likely to stifle greater utilisation of the concept.

4.3 Operational utilisation of EBP

Participants were asked which sources of information they would use to inform decision-making on an operational issue such as anti-social behaviour. The results highlighted the importance of experience in officer decision-making, with 84.3% drawing on their own experience and 81.3% using colleague experience. Resources such as the College website (25.4%), analysts (41.1%) and academic research (23.8%) were less likely to be used. Of those who considered academic research, 80.3% were degree educated. Participants who used academic research were most likely to consult academic journals when doing so. To establish the extent to which officers used academic journals, participants were asked whether they had access to such resources (Figure 14).

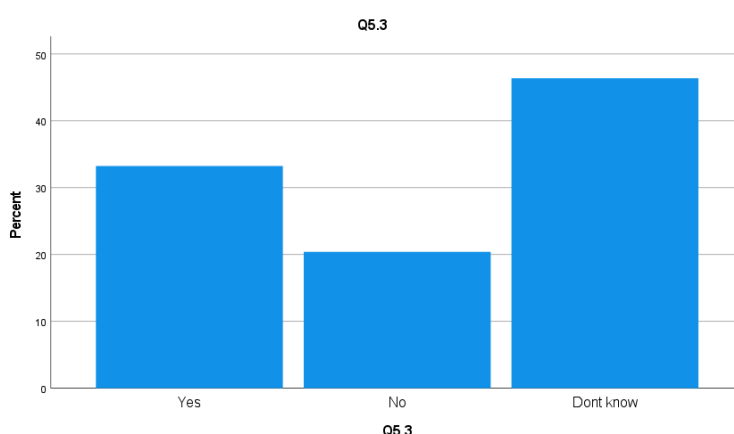


Figure 14. In your workplace can you access academic articles relevant to your role?

Responses to this question suggested a lack of awareness about the availability of journal articles. Of those who knew they could access academic articles, 65.7% were degree-

educated. Geographically, greatest awareness of access existed in region 1 forces, which accounted for 28.2% of responses, with region 3 the next highest (16.8%). A further question asked officers whether they read professional policing publications (Figure 15).

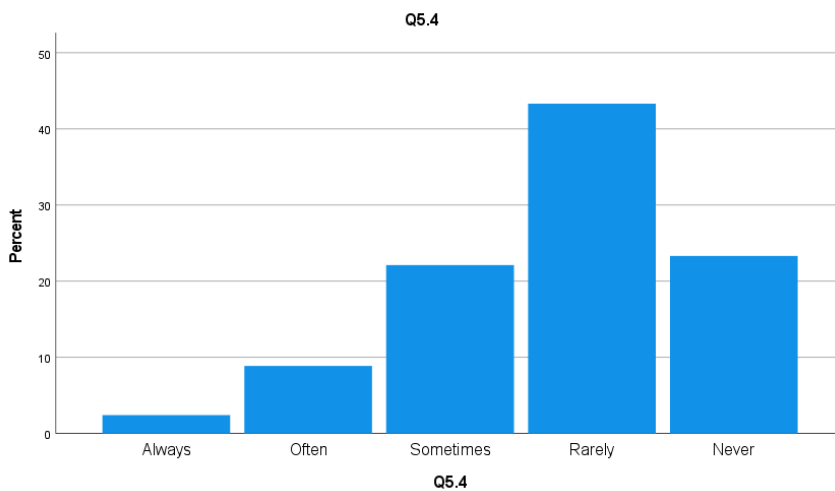


Figure 15. Do you read professional police-related publications?

Data in Figure 15 shows that participants did not routinely read professional publications. 73.9% of all constables reported rarely/never reading professional publications. Of those who always/often read publications, 72% were degree educated. This total gradually decreased up the rank hierarchy, with 46% of all superintendents rarely/never reading professional publications. 16 superintendents participated in this questionnaire and 13 (81.25%) were degree-educated to at least Masters level. The data therefore suggests that officers of sufficient rank (superintendent) to influence EBP utilisation often do not routinely engage with professional publications, even when degree educated. When asked whether they utilised academic research in their work, 28.2% of all participants stated they did, a figure which continued the theme of EBP not being routinely engaged with or utilised. Constables accounted for 43% of those who would utilise academic research, with the percentage decreasing up the rank hierarchy. Similarly, education levels were higher amongst officers who would utilise research, with 70.9% possessing degrees. Such a finding again indicates the benefits of increasing recruit educational standards, if there is an aim to increase EBP utilisation.

Participants who did not use academic research were asked to select reasons for not doing so. The central reasons provided were lack of access to research (28.1%) and time constraints (41.6%). The majority of respondents providing these reasons were

constables, sergeants and inspectors. 16.3% of all respondents did not regard academic research as relevant to their role, with 95.3% of those responses at the ranks of constable, sergeant and inspector. The majority of respondees who cited time as a limiting factor were operational officers. The questionnaire data highlights the practical challenges of creating space for EBP engagement at a time when officers are operating in an environment of high demand for policing services (Newiss, et al., 2021).

Participants were asked whether academic research could improve how they performed their role. The responses shown in Figure 16 suggested a willingness to accept and engage with EBP as 44.3% of participants stated academic research would definitely or probably improve how they performed their role.

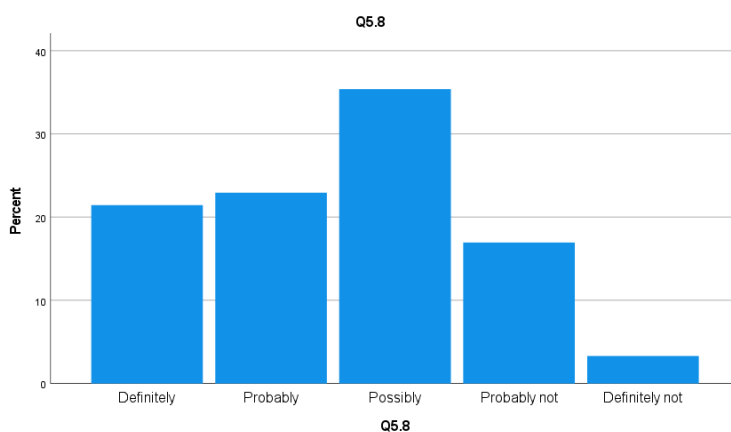


Figure 16. Do you think academic research could improve how you perform your role?

A further 35.4% answered possibly, indicating the majority of respondents were open to considering academic research. Receptivity to research increased with rank, rising from 35.6% of constables answering definitely/probably to 75% at chief superintendent level. 69.3% of all those answering definitely/probably were degree educated. This questionnaire data suggests some optimism regarding police willingness to consider research. However, the lower levels of positivity amongst constables again highlights the importance of engaging with officers at all levels of the organisation.

A College aim was for EBP to become an established element of appraisal and promotion processes by 2020 (College of Policing, 2014). Participants were asked if they had encountered EBP in these settings. The first question asked whether EBP formed part of participant appraisal processes (see Figure 17).

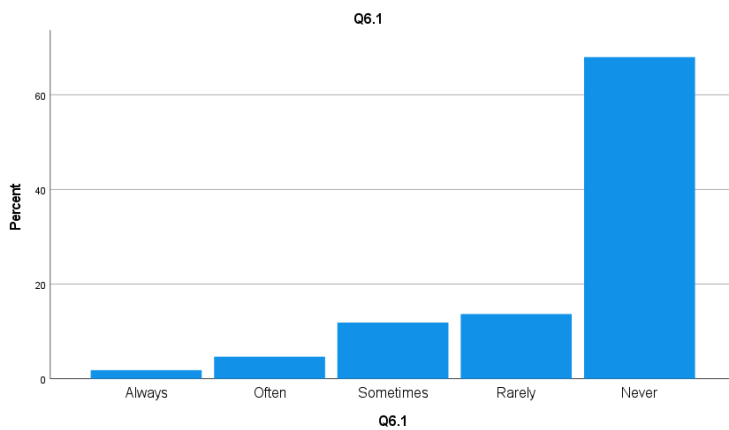


Figure 17. Does EBP form part of your annual appraisal process?

The results revealed that EBP did not routinely form part of appraisals in any police region. In respect of promotion, officers were asked what they regarded as the most important element of a promotion process (see Figure 18). Experience was the dominant choice of participants (42.9%). The importance of experience in a promotion interview declined as rank increased, from 48.5% of all constables down to 25% of all superintendents. 38% of degree educated officers (58.06% of respondents) cited experience as being most important element. Participation in high profile activity towards promotion (3.8%) and commitment to the professionalization agenda (3.9%) were viewed as being less important.

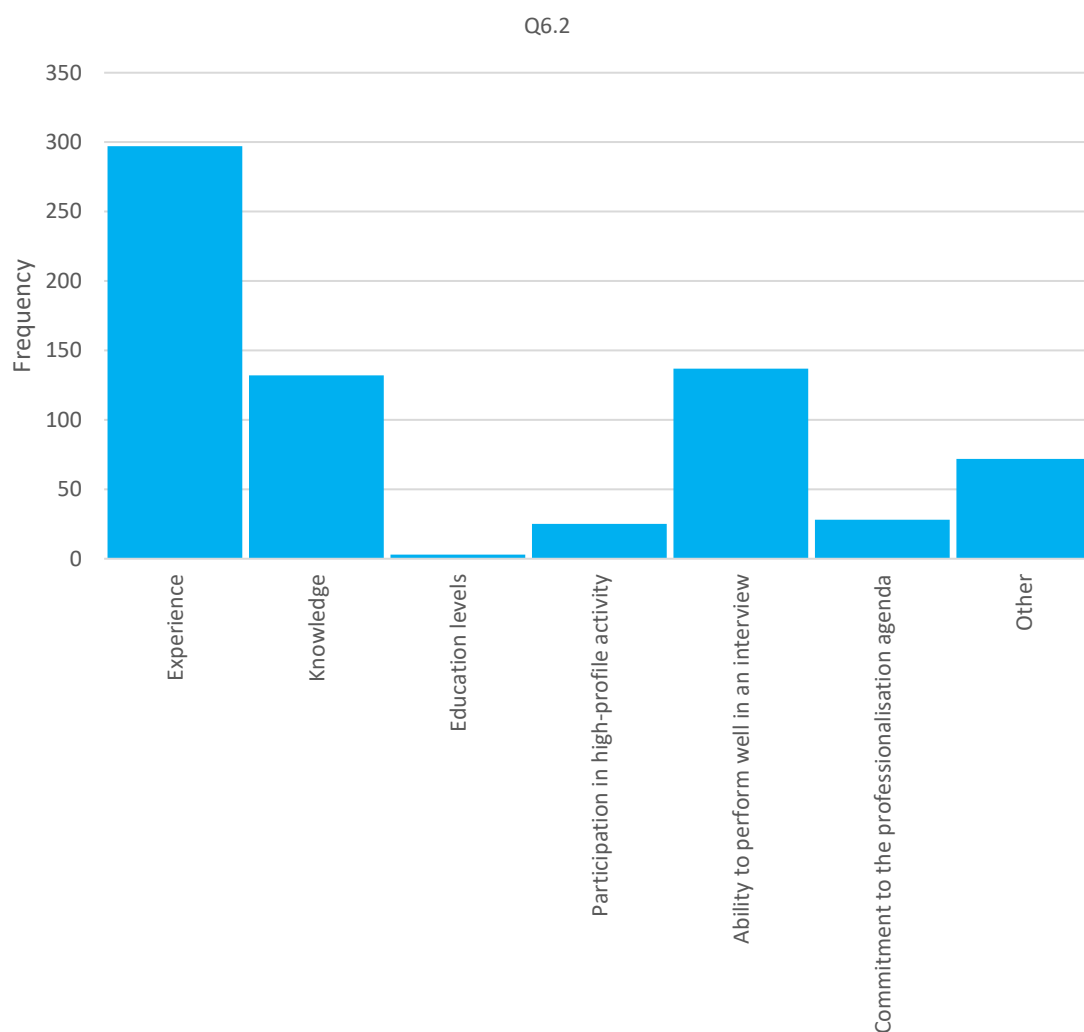


Figure 18. What do you think is the most important requirement for a successful promotion process?

Of respondents who had undergone a promotion in the preceding year, 13.4% stated EBP had formed part of the process. The data did not identify any regions where EBP was routinely used in promotion processes. The final question in this section asked participants what would motivate them to become more involved with EBP (Figure 19).

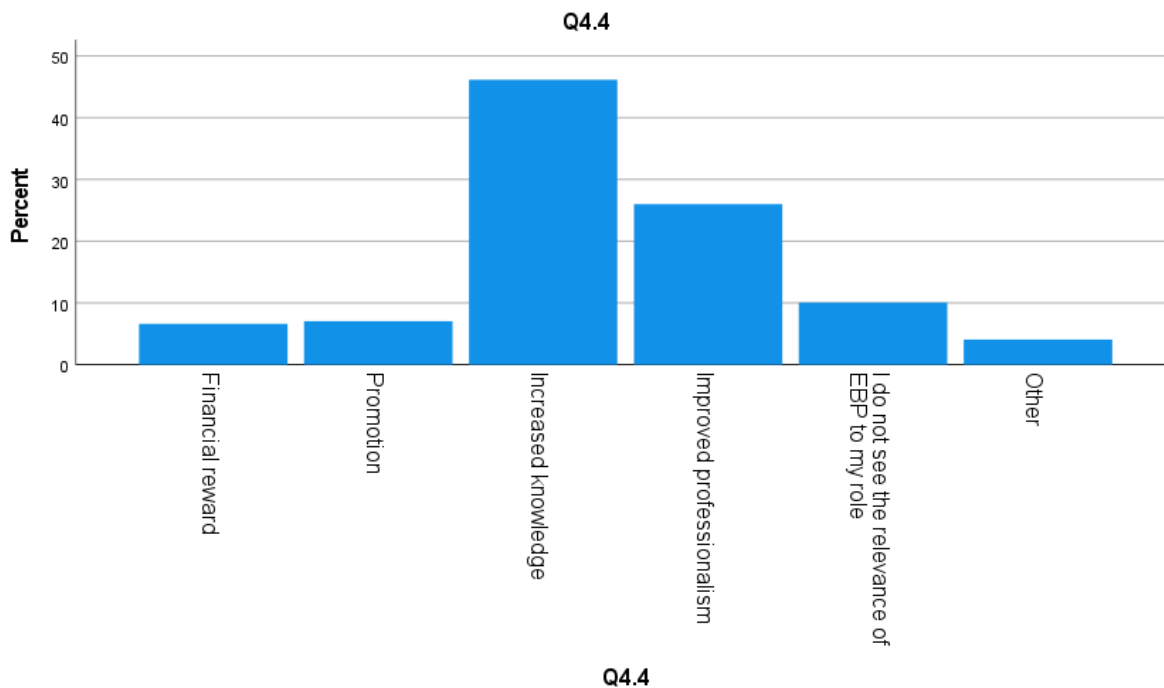


Figure 19. What would be your main motivation for becoming more involved with evidence-based practice?

Figure 19 shows that officers would become more involved with EBP to increase their knowledge and improve professionalism. The desire to increase knowledge was consistent across ranks. Reform (and therefore potentially EBP) is often viewed cynically by officers who believe changes are only implemented as part of personal promotion aspirations (Fleming, et al., 2016; Fleming, 2019). However, only 7.1% of officers listed promotion as their reason for becoming more involved with EBP, suggesting officer cynicism about motivations for changing practice may be misplaced. Also of note, only 10.1% of respondents did not view EBP as being relevant to their role.

This section suggests experience remains important to officers when dealing with operational issues and as part of promotion processes, with resources such as the College website and academic research having less value attached to them. However, again, use of research was higher amongst degree-educated officers. Time and lack of access to academic material were cited as structural barriers to using research, particularly amongst operational ranks. However, the majority of respondents indicated that research could improve their role. Clearly, experience remains an integral element of police practice. The final section of quantitative data focuses on experience.

4.4 Experience and evidence

Participants were asked about the role of experience in resolving incidents, with the results illustrated in Figure 20.

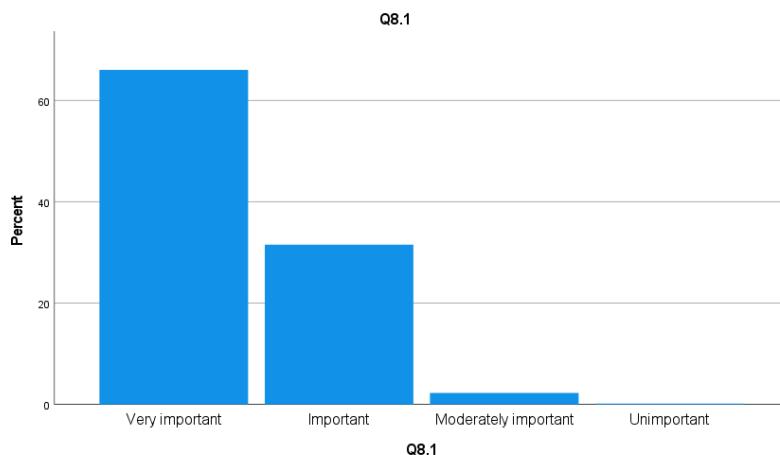


Figure 20. How important do you consider your experience to be when resolving an incident?

When participants were asked how much they used experience in their day-to-day role, 98.2% answered always/often. Experience was important to participants, regardless of region, rank, length of service and education levels. A theme of the questionnaire was the importance officers attached to their experience, whether it related to problem-solving specific issues, forming part of promotion processes or as part of their day-to-day role.

In response to a question about whether people who had not been a police officer could effectively understand the role, 70.5% of participants answered no, a further indication of the value attached to policing experience. This view was most prevalent amongst constables (77.4%) and sergeants (73.3%) and declined as rank increased. Senior ranks were more likely to think people outside policing could understand the role. The majority of degree-educated officers answered no to this question (67%).

Participants were asked to consider a statement on the benefits of officers possessing academic knowledge (see Figure 21).

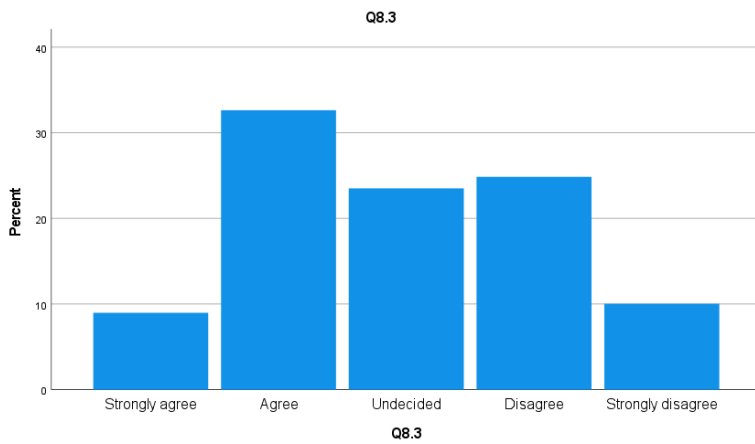


Figure 21. It is beneficial for police officers to possess academic knowledge to effectively perform their role

41.6% of participants strongly agreed/agreed, with almost a quarter (23.5%) undecided. A lack of awareness or understanding about research may be a factor in the response of the latter. Such a finding brings into focus the effectiveness of methods used to increase EBP understanding among serving officers.

The proportion of officers answering strongly agree/agree increased with rank, from 36.9% of all constables to 81.2% of all superintendents. 49.7% of degree educated officers responded strongly agree/agree, compared to 26.2% of non-degree educated officers, further suggesting education is a factor in understanding the benefits of academic research. Regionally, respondents who answered strongly agree/ agree were greatest in Region 1 (22.38% of all strongly agree/agree responses), region 3 (17.32%) and region 8 (17.32%). It is worthy of note that these same 3 regions provided the most collective positive responses across a number of questions.

When participants were asked if they would use tactics suggested by an academic researcher, the results indicated a willingness to consider using research (see Figure 22).

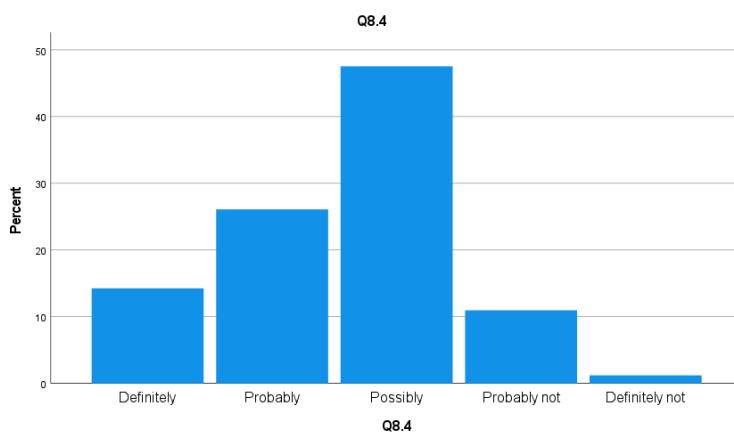


Figure 22. Would you consider different operational tactics/methods if they suggested by an academic researcher?

A willingness to consider methods suggested by an academic researcher was evident across all ranks and regions. Answers of definitely/probably/possibly ranged between 84.4% (of all constables) and 100% (of all chief inspectors). Of respondents who answered 'definitely', 71.6% were degree educated. Participants were asked if academic research would limit their use of discretion (Figure 23).

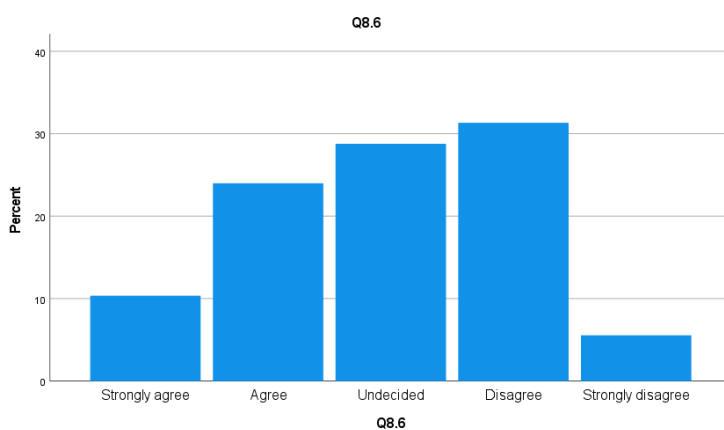


Figure 23. Using evidence from academic research in police decision-making would limit the use of my own discretion

Those who agreed and disagreed did so in similar measure. However, approaching one third of respondents were undecided. Again, a lack of awareness and understanding of EBP may have been a factor here. The view that discretion would be restricted by using research was most prominent amongst constables, with 42.8% of all constables answering strongly agree/agree. The perception of research restricting discretion reduced as rank increased. The final question asked whether research has a role to play in developing police practices (Figure 24).

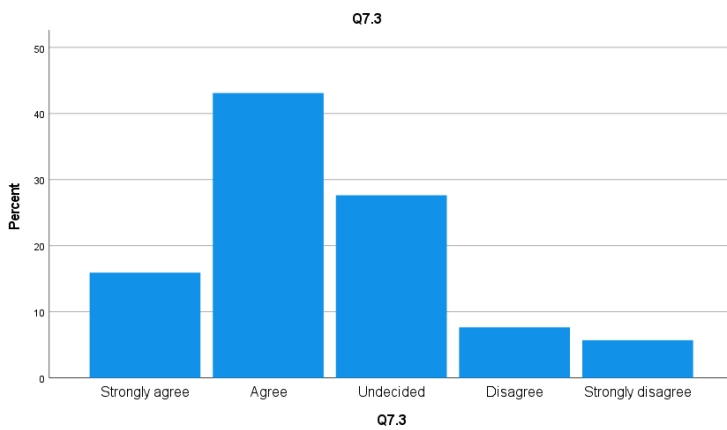


Figure 24. Academic research has a role to play in developing policing practices

The results shown in Figure 24 suggest participants are open-minded about academic research. In keeping with previous questions about the role of research in policing, 27.6% were undecided. Support for research existed across all ranks and increased with rank. That 51.8% of all constables and 58.5% of all sergeants answered strongly agree/agree indicated support for research at an operational level. 70.1% of degree educated officers answered strongly agree/agree in comparison with 42.1% of non-degree educated officers. The data therefore suggests those with a greater understanding of research were more likely to view it as beneficial for improving police practice.

The data in this section demonstrated that experience remains important across all ranks. Approximately a quarter of respondents were undecided about the benefits of officers possessing academic knowledge and the role of research in developing practice, suggesting a lack of understanding about research and EBP among officers. Responses indicated support for academic research increased with rank and was higher amongst officers possessing a degree. The data suggested a broad willingness to use research to varying degrees, although concern about research restricting officer discretion was evident among operational ranks. Having examined the quantitative data, the final section discusses the qualitative comments provided by respondents.

4.5 Qualitative comments on EBP

The demographics section contained one question which stated:

'If you have any additional comments you would like to make in relation to EBP please use the space below'.

159 participants from all regions left comments. This represented 23.7% of all respondents and provided a valuable quantity of additional data for analysis and presentation. The number of comments made by each rank were constable (72), sergeant (39), inspector (29), chief inspector (8), superintendent (4) and chief superintendent (1). Six comments were provided which did not have a rank attached. A number of themes were established in the qualitative comments which build on data already presented in this chapter. This section presents a snapshot of the comments to illustrate the themes, which are discussed in later chapters.

4.5.1 EBP receptivity

49 comments broadly acknowledged EBP as being beneficial for police practice. However, whilst being receptive to the concept of EBP some officers also expressed reservations about the extent to which academic research should form part of policing. Such responses took two forms. Firstly, concerns were expressed by 14 respondents about EBP being utilised at the expense of officer experience:

*I understand that considering academic study and research as part of a problem-solving process has some value. I am increasingly uncomfortable with the greater value placed on academic qualification over experience and knowledge. Both have to be considered as valuable.
(Sergeant Operations and Event Planning NW 31-35yrs)*

Questionnaire data suggested that EBP acceptance levels may be affected by the extent to which EBP is perceived by officers to exclude their experiential knowledge. A number of participants themselves stated they would prefer to combine research with professional judgment and experience to resolve issues. A rationale provided for this suggestion by officers was that policing is too complex for a 'one size fits all' approach and research could not be applied to every instance of a particular problem.

The second concern about academia raised by some participants centred on the requirement for all new officers to be degree educated. There were two main issues in respect of the PEQF. The first of these was how officers described degree requirements as restricting recruit diversity, a point made in 10 comments:

In relation to the requirement to be educated to degree level to join the police I think that there is a massive group of people, and often those that would make the best officers, who may be put off. If you are in your late twenties [or older] with some life experience but didn't have a degree, you may be put off applying to the police. (Inspector Neighbourhood NW 11-15yrs)

Nine responses referenced a perceived younger recruit demographic and a reduction in second career applicants who were not willing to study for a degree. Such comments also revealed how officers regarded general life experience as valuable, in addition to operational policing experience. The second concern about the PEQF was the perception that academic study was being prioritised at the expense of operational knowledge.

The current degree scheme does not work. The PCDA (Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship) students say all the learning they do at university is not relevant to the role on the street. Therefore I believe knowledge and experience is crucial, not EBP. (Constable Response SW 6-10yrs)

In keeping with the importance participants attached to experience in earlier questions, some comments from constables and sergeants highlighted the need for recruits to learn practical skills. Wood (2018) discusses the importance of ensuring the PEQF does not focus on academic aspects of learning (e.g. police literature, referencing) at the expense of student officers being able to link theory and practice. A number of respondents held explicitly negative views about the role of academic research in policing.

Such comments focused on the credibility of those presenting the research (academics and the College), rather than the quality of the product itself, along with the view research was primarily used for career advancement. A total of 18 comments referenced these issues. Some officers described academics as lacking an understanding of policing:

The idea that a researcher who spent years in a bubble looking at studies can have the authority to educate an officer, who has stood in a dark alley surrounded by a pack of menacing people intent on violence and criminality, and profess to understand their world is offensive and belittling in equal measure. (Sergeant Firearms East 16-20yrs)

Such a comment supports observations by Fleming and Wingrove (2017) of the need for credible people to promote EBP. Fielding (2023) asserts that ethnography is a form of investigative practice similar to policing which enables researchers to prove their 'operational credentials' to officers. Police ethnographers routinely report having to overcome officer scepticism to gain acceptance in the field (see Clark-Darby, 2023; Cram, 2023; Sausdal, 2023). Although trust and respect is often hard earned by researchers, these accounts demonstrate police and academics can collaborate effectively.

The role of the College in advancing EBP was also discussed in negative terms by some participants:

EBP and the College are both extremely remote concepts for operational officers in my force and have severe reputational deficits. This is extremely frustrating as many EBP concepts and much of the College work would greatly and directly improve the work we do and officers' enjoyment of it but they [officers] can't get over the credibility gap. It seems as though the College is vastly underestimating the effect this has on its own reputation. (Constable Proactive crime investigation 0-5yrs)

Concepts advocated by the College, such as EBP, may be disregarded by officers purely because they originate from the College, regardless of any merit. Several participants also viewed EBP as being linked to promotion aspirations:

Yet another scheme [EBP] which will divert officers attention from their core roles in order to take part in something which will mostly benefit the promotion chances of whichever senior officer came up with it. (Constable Neighbourhood NE 16-20yrs)

The continuous cycle of change in policing leads officers to become cynical about the reasons for reform, which is often associated with promotion aspirations of senior

officers (Fleming, 2019). Enduring cynicism about issues such as the College and reasons for reform demonstrates the challenges policing faces in advancing practice and successfully embedding EBP. Officers also commented on barriers which limited the reach of EBP in their forces.

4.5.2 Barriers to utilising EBP

Within a number of the comments broadly supportive of EBP, further issues were raised which fell broadly under the theme of structural barriers preventing wider utilisation of EBP. Some comments described EBP understanding as being limited in their forces, with greater investment required to raise awareness levels:

EBP has been brought to my force through one superintendent's vision. The force is supporting myself and 10 colleagues to study an apprenticeship in it. Other than the other 10 aforementioned people there is little to no knowledge in the organisation and a strong culture resisting it. I work constantly to break this down, recognising the difficulties in influencing police culture. (Sergeant Fast Track PC to Sergeant scheme NE 16-20yrs)

The above comment illustrates the challenges of embedding EBP. Whilst individuals may support the concept, without wider organisational investment it is likely to remain the preserve of a minority of officers. The importance of organisational capacity for EBP was further evident in responses describing a lack of EBP awareness and understanding among operational officers:

EBP needs promoting to response officers/lower ranks to encourage use and understanding. New recruits are taught it and it will be years until they dominate the workforce. Current officers need the training too. (Sergeant Learning and Development 26-30yrs)

Comments suggested operational officers were not routinely receiving EBP training. Hunter and May (2019) highlight the importance of serving officers undergoing such training to supplement progress made by the PEQF programme towards embedding EBP. Participants also described practical challenges they faced.

17 comments cited time and operational demand as issues preventing greater utilisation of EBP. Participants highlighted how pressures officers faced in their everyday roles precluded them from learning about and engaging with research:

This [EBP] would be great if officers and managers had time. Making time for people to want to develop without worrying about work piling up while they take on development activity is vital. Taking on additional academic activity without their work being reduced will be counterproductive. (Inspector Neighbourhood East 11-15yrs)

Another issue raised was research access. Several responses highlighted the need for officers to have greater access to academic resources/support to increase EBP understanding and utilisation:

Frontline officers on neighbourhood policing and response teams simply do not have the time, speaking from my policing area, to trawl through studies and papers on why course of action A has had X effect. A concise library with easy-to-read practical advice or options is needed that can be accessed while out and about. (Constable Response East 0-5yrs)

The officer suggestion of a 'library' already exists in the form of the WWCCR. Such a response highlights a lack of awareness about College resources, an issue which links to the lack of EBP training discussed earlier.

Whilst the qualitative data suggested a level of acceptance of EBP in policing, comments reflected the absence of widespread EBP utilisation present in the questionnaire data. Officers described an absence of organisational processes to support the embedding of EBP, with structural barriers such as time and a lack of resources also highlighted. The PEQF was thought to restrict diversity and concerns were expressed too much emphasis was placed on academic learning within the PEQF. Some participants disagreed completely with EBP and spoke negatively about the College. Whilst providing some optimism concerning overall acceptance of EBP, the qualitative data highlighted challenges which must be overcome to embed EBP in policing.

4.6 Chapter summary

This chapter presented results from the questionnaire completed by officers. Whilst the data gathered contributes to the aims of the thesis, it is recognised there are limitations associated with survey research which mean findings should be treated with caution. Whilst a benefit of this study was that the questionnaire data was only one element of the data gathering, meaning I was not solely reliant on it for my findings, it is important to consider limitations which may have impacted on the data presented in this chapter.

Survey data can lack detail or depth, particularly when participants are not provided with the opportunity to expand on their answers (Denscombe, 2017). I sought to mitigate this by providing participants with an open question at the end of the survey. I recognise this may not have fully captured their views/opinions. Low response rates are also an issue with surveys (Caulfield & Hill, 2018). Whilst this survey had a good number of responses (669), given the reach of the survey (21 forces formally engaged and responses came from 35 forces) it could be argued the response rate was low. However, it was difficult to determine the response rate as distribution methods in each force differed widely.

Participant concerns about privacy and data security can also affect the likelihood of survey completion (Foust, 2014). Although I provided assurances of participant anonymity, the fact the questionnaire was unsolicited and sent electronically without face-to-face explanation may have influenced decisions to complete it. Whilst acknowledging the issues associated with survey research, I believe this questionnaire has made a valid contribution to the overall findings of this multi-method study.

Responses indicated a lack of engagement with College resources such as APP/WWCCR. The PEQF was not regarded as important for the improvement of policing, although demographic data did suggest the PEQF may be raising EBP awareness levels among young in-service officers. The questionnaire established that experience was valued by respondents both in terms of operational practice and when seeking promotion. A lack of access to academic resources and time constraints were cited as barriers to greater utilisation of EBP, particularly amongst operational officers.

Whilst the quantitative data indicated a willingness to consider academic research among officers, the results did not suggest widespread utilisation of EBP. Answers to a number of questions about the benefits of research showed approximately a quarter of participants

to be undecided on their view. A reason for this position could be a lack of awareness about EBP upon which to base a decision. The data regularly highlighted degree educated officers as expressing greater awareness, understanding, engagement, acceptance and utilisation of EBP. Such results suggest the PEQF does represent an opportunity to increase EBP knowledge. Qualitative comments highlighted concerns that academic research would be prioritised over officer experience and there were views that too much emphasis was placed on academic learning within the PEQF process. Some participants challenged the role of academics in policing and described the College as lacking credibility and relevance.

Overall the questionnaire confirmed existing literature with regards to matters such as the importance of experience and structural barriers preventing research use (e.g. time/resources). The data revealed a widespread lack of awareness and understanding about EBP and associated College resources such as APP on a scale greater than I had anticipated. Given these issues, a somewhat surprising finding was the level of receptivity among participants to consider academic research in their work. The questionnaire was also valuable for suggesting a link between understanding of EBP and education levels, in view of the current debate on the merits of the PEQF. On reflection, I am satisfied the questionnaire achieved the intended aim of providing data on the position of EBP in UK policing to both inform the fieldwork and meaningfully contribute to the findings.

Having presented the questionnaire data, the qualitative case studies expand on the structural and cultural factors which influence EBP utilisation in differing operational contexts. The next chapter focuses on how EBP is utilised within public order policing, specifically in the context of football matches.

Chapter 5 Case study 1: Football policing

Football policing is often reliant on police public order tactics, a position which can prove controversial and result in concerns being raised about the way football supporters are policed (Pearson, 2012; Pearson & Stott, 2022). There is a body of research devoted to crowd theory and football policing methods available to inform police practice (see for example Stead & Rookwood, 2007; Stott, et al., 2011; Stott, et al., 2019; Hope, et al., 2023). Conducting research with a police football unit provided the opportunity to assess the extent to which evidence-based practice (EBP) was understood, accepted and utilised in the planning and delivery of football policing operations.

The fieldwork was conducted in a large and predominantly urban English police force with responsibility for the policing of six clubs across different Leagues. The Leagues have unique characteristics and fixtures which provided opportunities to conduct research in diverse settings and contexts. For example, differences in crowd size, different club rivalries and the impact of geography and infrastructure on policing operations. The football case study consisted of both observations and semi-structured interviews.

I observed the policing of six football events, shadowing a team of officers during their operational deployment at each match. In two instances I was located with a van of officers working as part of a Police Support Unit (PSU)¹¹. These officers worked in the Operational Support Unit (OSU) and were regularly involved in public order policing. On all other occasions I worked with Dedicated Football Officers (DFO) and Operational Football Officers (OFO) whose match day role consists of supporter engagement and intelligence/evidence gathering in respect of football-related offences (College of Policing, 2023b). In total I spent 54 hours immersed in the world of operational football policing and was present for the entire deployment at all six fixtures. For two of the matches I also attended online planning meetings held in the weeks preceding the events.

¹¹ A Police Support Unit (PSU) is a formation of police officers trained to use force to maintain and restore public order. A PSU consists of 3 vans, each containing a driver, 6 police constables and a sergeant. Every officer is equipped with 'protective equipment' or 'riot gear' including a shield, baton, helmet, overalls, and padding. The 3 vans are commanded by one inspector and each van of a sergeant and 6 police constables is known as a 'serial'.

In addition, I interviewed seven police officers involved in the policing of football in the case study force, with the interviews totalling 7 ½ hours. The interviews were conducted online on non-match days and participants were constables (2), sergeants (2), inspectors (2) and a chief inspector. Interviewee roles were that of OSU officer, OFO/DFO, POPSA (Public Order Public Safety Advisor) and Bronze and Silver public order commanders¹². Some interviewees performed more than one of these roles e.g. DFO and POPSA.

5.1 EBP awareness and understanding

Participants were asked in interviews and during observations if they were aware of the term EBP and if so, what they understood EBP to mean. Most interviewees described having heard of EBP, a finding similar to the high levels of EBP awareness reported by questionnaire participants. However, when it came to explaining what EBP was, understanding differed. Some officers acknowledged academic research as a component while others talked about 'evidence' being the use of data to inform tactics and resource deployments:

It's an approach to place your resources. So the appropriate location backed up by a bit of data is the way I interpret it [EBP]. For example, night-time economy as we call it. You know at certain venues between two in the morning and five in the morning there's always reports of disorder. You put your resources there to tackle it because that's the evidence and data that's presented¹³. (Sergeant OSU FB02)

I believe [EBP] is looking at why things happen as a result of looking back at why we are doing things in policing. So it's backing up why we're doing it with some form of evidence from a practical or an academic view. (Constable DFO FB07)

When asked whether EBP utilisation was widespread across their force, several interviewees suggested it was, although this was based on their personal understanding

¹² The Gold public order commander sets strategic aims, the Silver commander co-ordinates tactical plans and the Bronze commander is the operational commander on the ground delivering the tactical plan.

¹³ Interview data in the case chapters is italicised with the rank/role denoted in brackets.

of EBP which often differed from the College of Policing's (the College) definition discussed in Chapter two, with data often regarded as evidence:

So there's a big driving force to act in a precise manner with the precision driven by data.... The Chief [Constable] is really clear to say that you've got to police in a precise manner, you've got to use data.....This data lab is churning out information.....based on a number of factors, this location on a Wednesday afternoon is more likely to have robbery than these five locations so you need to police there. (Inspector Bronze commander FB03)

A common theme across all three case studies was the existence of what were regarded as Force level evidence-based approaches, with strategic aims similar to those described above led by the Chief Constable and other senior officers. Such a position reflects findings by Evans (2020), who identified the existence of EBP strategies at Chief Officer level in the forces he researched. In this case study the use of data to inform resource deployment was viewed as an evidence-based approach by officers.

Although interviewees suggested there was a wider culture of EBP utilisation in their force, none of them mentioned the existence of EBP champions linked to the College (May, et al., 2017). Explanations of EBP which acknowledged the use of academic research were provided by participants who were degree educated or specialist officers within the football unit who had engaged in role related continuous professional development (CPD) opportunities provided by a local university. Data presented in Chapter four also identified higher levels of EBP awareness amongst degree-educated officers. However, a general lack of EBP awareness amongst frontline operational officers was acknowledged by several participants:

If you speak to officers on the frontline and say 'do you understand evidence-based practice?' I don't think you'll get that widespread acknowledgement of what it is. (Chief Inspector Silver commander FB06)

During observations, PSU officers and OFOs at constable rank often lacked an awareness or understanding of the term EBP itself. When asked what they thought it was, several constables thought the 'evidence' component was what they gathered as part of criminal

investigations, an explanation also provided to Fleming (2019) during focus group research with officers. Awareness of EBP amongst frontline officers is examined further in Chapters six and seven.

One of the interview participants was a sergeant from the OSU who also performed the role of Police Search Advisor (PoISA). One of the requirements of the PoISA role is to support missing person investigations (College of Policing, 2022b). The sergeant explained the role research data played in their work as a PoISA:

Being a search advisor as well I'm forever having to justify and evidence and put a rationale to my work. I can't just do it on a hunch. You can give a general opinion but if I'm calling the helicopter, if I'm potentially getting some police officers in on overtime I need to have some statistics [research data] to back it up. (Sergeant OSU, FB02)

The above comment indicates the sergeant understands the need to use research data to support a search rationale, particularly when having to justify the deployment of additional resources. The sergeant also explained how the PoISA role was one where research data was readily accepted, compared with other frontline roles where officers were more reliant on experience or even 'hunches':

And what you've touched on there is how cops are. They will work on a hunch. 'I'm going to go look over here.' Well actually, no because if you apply a rationale [search strategy] you can't go wrong. You stick to it because you know that if there's an audit further down the line or coroners [court] and they say 'Why did you do what you did, what was your thought process?', I can then refer to the science, refer to the stats in the absence of any other information. (Sergeant OSU, FB02)

This account suggests the PoISA role is one where officers with specialist training utilise research to inform missing person investigations. Such a position is in contrast with that of officers without such knowledge who are more likely to rely on their own experience to shape search activity (Williams & Cockcroft, 2019). The importance of experience to officers was also a finding in Chapter four, with 97.6% of all participants reporting their

experience as being very important/important when resolving incidents. The sergeant also demonstrates an awareness of the need to be prepared to explain and justify his actions in the event of any subsequent inquiry or investigation. Such thinking suggests that in addition to using research statistics to locate missing people, officers also view data as being important for accountability reasons.

Participant views reflected existing research that EBP awareness is not widespread among most frontline officers in policing organisations (see for example Lumsden, 2017b; Hunter & May, 2019; Telep & Lum, 2014). Whilst interviewees in more specialist roles (e.g. DFO and public order command) generally possessed an awareness of the term EBP, some described evidence as data rather than research. Hunter and May (2019) note how EBP is viewed as a specialist topic as opposed to being a routine part of police activity. To better understand the reasons why, it is necessary to discuss the training and CPD provided for officers in respect of football policing.

5.2 Training and Continuous Professional Development

Organisational opportunities to increase officer understanding and engagement with EBP are provided by training and CPD sessions (Selby-Fell & Newton, 2022). The roles and responsibilities for officers who police football are laid out in Authorised Professional Practice (APP) (College of Policing, 2023b). Officers in command and DFO/OFO roles must be appropriately trained to perform their duties and are required to complete regular CPD to maintain accreditation. There was a general acknowledgment amongst interviewees that such specialist roles provided access to bespoke training relevant to policing football:

I think the biggest thing once you get to command ranks is the opportunity for CPD. (Chief Inspector Silver commander FB06)

However, the focus of public order training aimed the bulk of officers who police football as part of PSUs was questioned by all interviewees. After completing an initial course to become a PSU officer, standard Level two public order 'refresher' training is two days per year in this particular force (OSU officers undergo additional training days to give them a more qualified Level one status). Interviewees described how officers were refreshed in

tactics mostly relevant to urban disorder and protest policing as part of a syllabus set by the College, a situation participants challenged:

I understand there is a desire nationally to make sure that we can obviously respond to a disorder involving petrol but I've never had a petrol bomb thrown at me in 27 years. But I've policed 500 games of football, so yeah I would rather be taught about engagement at football and [football] legislation. Those are things that concern me. (Inspector Bronze commander FB03)

Officers questioned the need to regularly undergo training to prepare for urban disorder (which officers described as occurring rarely) at the expense of training in football policing which they regarded as routine public order policing. One interviewee expressed concerns about the amount of public order training delivered to officers in comparison with their firearms counterparts:

I think we should do more. I think it's a really high-risk area of business [public order]. Firearms do a huge amount of training. In public order we're quite happy with two days a year. Other forces do four days minimum a year, but that went beyond the minimum standards. This force doesn't [do that]. (Chief Inspector Silver commander FB06)

Participants in both the neighbourhood and response chapters made similar observations about the lack of training they received compared with firearms officers. Concerns about the high-risk nature of public order policing are not without foundation, particularly in respect of football policing. High-profile incidents have occurred in recent decades, from Hillsborough (Scraton, 2016) in 1989 to the scenes witnessed at Wembley during the European Championship final in 2021 which caused Baroness Casey (2021) to reflect how 'we were close to fatalities and/or life-changing injuries for some, potentially many, in attendance' (p.6). Therefore, all officers who police football need to be adequately trained. However, most interviewees explained how this was not being achieved in their view:

The reason we needed to put bespoke [training] on was because actually the bulk of public order is coming from football, so staff do

*need that additional knowledge and understanding around it.
(Sergeant OFO FB04).*

Staff from the football unit described proactively developing a training package for delivery to OSU teams (who regularly police fixtures) to compensate for the lack of football specific training within the national curriculum. The DFOs thought such training was beneficial because it enabled them, as subject matter experts, to explain to Level 1 OSU officers how academic research on matters such as engagement was relevant to football policing. However, one DFO explained there was still a knowledge gap as Level 2 PSU officers did not receive this training due to an inability to accommodate it within the schedule:

*We have asked if we could go into public order training to deliver it as part of the Level 2 training, but that's been rejected at the moment because they haven't got enough time to add us into the day. So when we do have a large deployment, response officers are utilised as Level 2. They haven't had the football training.
(Constable DFO FB07)*

As highlighted at the beginning of this chapter, there is an established body of academic research on the policing of football crowds, much of which is relevant to PSU officers 'on the ground.' Indeed, the need to make use of such research in police training generally has been highlighted in recent years (Laycock, 2014; Neyroud, 2017). However, the data in this case study suggests this has not been adequately achieved in respect of football policing, beyond those performing specialist public order roles. The lack of training provision for large numbers of PSU officers who police football means those officers are likely to continue utilising public order methods more reliant on the use of force, a position at odds with academic research (Pearson & Stott, 2022). Such a position is likely to restrict any evidence-based approach, as without knowledge of advances in football-related research officers are unlikely to understand, accept and utilise EBP. Data in Chapter four also highlighted similar issues, as the majority of participants (61.8%) stated their training rarely/never included any explanation of how academic theories related to practice.

In the absence of relevant knowledge officers are likely to make decisions based on their own experience which may be at odds with EBP. For example, research has established

the importance of police employing meaningful engagement strategies with football supporters (see for example Hoggett & West, 2018; Pearson & Stott, 2022; Hope, et al., 2023). Failure by officers to understand the importance of such engagement strategies can result in situations where tension and disorder develops between fans and police, a contributing factor in the often challenging ongoing relationships between police and football supporters (see for example Stott, et al., 2011; Pearson, 2012; Stott, et al., 2018). The following section examines officers' understanding and utilisation of engagement with supporters in the case study setting.

5.3 Utilising EBP in football policing: Engagement

The manner in which officers police football supporters can affect the likelihood of disorder and there is evidence to support engagement focused approaches offering benefits over more traditional coercive crowd control methods (Stott, et al., 2007; Pearson, 2012). However, despite the existence of this research, the widespread adoption of such methods by police remains a challenge. One of the key issues is how a command strategy to prioritise engagement is delivered operationally (Stott, et al., 2019).

Every briefing I attended featured slides informing officers of the need to engage with supporters, and commanders who stressed the importance of dialogue to reduce tensions. This activity demonstrated an awareness of research advocating such an approach amongst commanders, although they did not explicitly explain to officers there was academic research detailing the importance of engagement. One commander explained to me that doing so would result in officers 'switching off'.

However, despite the importance of engagement being stressed by commanders, some interviewees acknowledged the lack of consistency with which engagement was delivered operationally by officers:

I think it depends on the resources you've got. So I think my OSU, they'll get involved and they've got the confidence because of their experience to go and engage and go and talk. I don't think that's the same for all of the officers, so I think you get a mixed response in terms of what you actually get on the ground. (Chief Inspector Silver Commander FB06)

The above comment suggests officer experience can be a factor in levels of engagement, with OSU officers perceived as more capable because of regular exposure to football crowds. An incident during an observation supported this view:

Away supporters became angry after the home team goalkeeper made what they regarded as an offensive hand gesture towards them. A number of fans made their way to the front of the stand and the situation became tense. Six OSU officers were present amongst the away fans and they engaged in prolonged dialogue with a number of verbally aggressive fans to de-escalate what felt to me to be a volatile situation. Officers appeared comfortable operating in a non-confrontational manner in a hostile environment where they were vastly outnumbered by fans. When we spoke about the incident afterwards, the officers laughed about the situation as they still struggled to understand how people could become so aggressive over a football match, despite having seen it happen many times¹⁴. (fieldnotes League 2 match 230422)

In this situation, the ability of experienced officers to remain calm was instrumental in ensuring the situation did not escalate further. Given the verbal hostility being shown, it was not difficult to envisage inexperienced PSU officers in the same situation using force to resolve the situation without first attempting to de-escalate using dialogue.

However, whilst I witnessed engagement by PSU officers across the observations, it was not universal. Officers often stood in groups talking to each other in situations where there were opportunities to engage with supporters, an issue raised by a DFO:

[laughs] We have a real problem with getting cops to engage with fans. Every briefing I've ever gone to since 2007 has always asked the cops to engage with fans and talk to fans and not stand in huddles talking to each other. But it hasn't worked and it doesn't work. I don't know what it is.....It's as if once they get the public order kit on and they get with their colleagues, they just lose that ability to communicate. (Constable DFO FB07).

¹⁴ All fieldnote data in the case study chapters is italicised with the event and date denoted in brackets.

OFOs (also referred to as 'spotters') displayed higher levels of engagement with fans across the observations and research has highlighted the engagement benefits officers working in the OFO role can provide (Stott, et al., 2008; Stott, et al., 2019; Hope, et al., 2023). The data suggests that officer knowledge and experience of football policing were factors in efforts to engage effectively with fans, as the following incident demonstrates:

Disorder occurred between rival fans entering a railway station close to the stadium after a local derby fixture. As a result, the station entrance was closed whilst officers inside restored order and supporters queueing outside started to express frustration at having to wait. Despite there being a number of PSU officers present, none of them engaged with supporters to explain what was happening. As frustration grew, the crowd began to push forwards which increased tensions with officers at the station doors who were preventing entry to the station. At this point a DFO arrived and engaged with the crowd, explaining the position and calming a situation which was escalating towards police use of force. When I spoke to the same DFO afterwards, he expressed visible frustration when discussing how other officers did not speak to fans to reduce the likelihood of such a situation escalating into disorder. (Fieldnotes from Championship derby match 15/10/21)

Incidents of disorder I witnessed were often spontaneous and chaotic. The ability to accurately interpret such events and respond appropriately was important. It was evident across the observations that DFOs and OFOs possessed a greater understanding of fan behaviour, enabling them to intervene in situations and engage with supporters in an appropriate manner. This approach was effective in a situation where 'risk' supporters¹⁵ were seeking to confront a rival group:

We arrived outside the pub where a group of 25-30 away risk supporters, some wearing facemasks, were shouting abuse at home fans inside the pub. Some were trying to force their way into what was the home risk supporters' pub and it was evident they wanted to attack those inside. OFOs were dynamic in dealing with the group to prevent them entering

¹⁵ Police officers use the term 'risk supporter' in reference to fans who pose a threat to public order at football events. Current College terminology defines four supporter risk categories: unknown risk, low risk, medium risk and high risk.

the pub and attacking home fans. Some OFOs drew their batons and shouted at the away risk group in order to dominate the situation, despite being heavily outnumbered. After a short standoff, the efforts of the 6-8 OFOs prevented the away risk supporters entering the pub and the group walked away. The OFOs followed and stopped the same away risk group further down the road. The OFOs then engaged with the group to calm them down and obtain their co-operation until additional resources arrived to escort the risk supporters to the stadium. The OFOs talked amongst themselves about the incident afterwards, emphasising their role in events and teasing other OFOs who were unable to respond to the incident quickly enough. They were clearly comfortable dealing with such confrontations and also satisfied with their role in preventing any violence. (fieldnotes from FA cup fixture 08/01/22)

The above extract demonstrates how OFOs are able to communicate effectively on different levels dependent on the circumstances. Having engaged quite forcefully with risk supporters to prevent disorder, the OFOs were able to calm the situation and gain the co-operation of the same group to prevent further disorder. Such incidents highlight the benefits of officers being able to engage meaningfully with fans and the necessity to understand fan behaviour. However, participants questioned the ability of their organisation to increase understanding about engagement among PSU officers:

I don't think officers necessarily get some of the science behind it [engagement]. But again a lot of that training might come to ourselves as commanders or go to the football unit. How we get that across our entire establishment I think is a challenge and something we could probably be better at. (Chief Inspector Silver Commander FB06)

The acknowledgement that non-specialist PSU officers may not fully understand the benefits of engagement means they are less likely to utilise such an approach, increasing the likelihood of disorder in some situations. This position highlights the importance of organisational structures having the capacity to effectively deliver role-relevant training to all officers who would benefit from it.

The data suggests the issue of engagement is complex. At command level, the utilisation of an evidence-based approach was visible and engagement was a central feature of the work of OFOs and DFOs. However, the picture was mixed amongst PSU officers (who represent the bulk of officers deployed on football operations), presenting a challenge in delivering the policing approach desired by commanders. Such a position highlights how even when research evidence is utilised to inform practice, operational delivery is not straightforward. There are a multitude of factors at play at which mean is EBP is unlikely to ever provide a single 'gold-standard' solution. A lack of training, lack of experience, briefing style and 'van culture' were offered as explanations for the difference in engagement levels amongst officers.

Another issue linked to engagement and the 'style and tone' of a football policing operation is the appearance of officers in terms of the type of uniform they are deployed in. The following section examines how research informs the dress code of officers policing football matches.

5.4 Utilising EBP in football policing: Dress code

When policing football, PSU officers are equipped with protective equipment including leg and arm pads along with visored helmets (commonly referred to as 'NATO' helmets). Officers can also be issued with long batons and shields if necessary. The PSU model also acts as a framework for mobilising resources and has a specific command structure using the Gold, Silver and Bronze model.

Public order dress code and tactics have been the subject of academic debate. Indeed, in a series of articles Tony Jefferson and Peter Waddington contested these issues when debating what they termed 'paramilitary' policing. Waddington (1987, 1993) asserted that police merely reacted to situations of disorder and were entitled to be equipped appropriately to avoid sustaining injuries in the event of violence. This theory was challenged by Jefferson (1987, 1993) who argued that officers wearing riot kit increased the likelihood of disorder between officers and the crowds they were policing (e.g. protestors, football supporters). Jefferson referred to this situation as the 'amplification' of disorder (1987: 52).

In respect of football today, there is evidence to suggest the level of protective equipment PSU officers deploy in can impact on tension levels between police and supporters. For example, Stott et al. (2007) established how disorder involving England fans during Euro 2004 occurred in Albufeira where Portuguese police deployed in full public order kit and engaged in 'high-profile' public order policing. This position contrasted with cities such as Lisbon where officers deployed in normal uniform and which saw lower levels of disorder between police and England fans.

The subject of dress code was an interesting feature of the case study as it brought a number of issues to the fore. As with engagement, there was an understanding among commanders about the impact dress code can have on supporters:

Yeah, I think they [commanders] follow evidence, I mean they generally follow advice which is good and I think when they don't sometimes it can go wrong. I think we always try and make sure that we do dress in the most engaging way, albeit the most practical way in terms of a risk assessment because they've obviously got to factor in the welfare of staff. But generally, things like NATO helmets aren't worn, you know [we wear] normal street helmets. We try and stick to normal policing as much as possible. That's always reflected in style and tone. (Sergeant OFO, FB04).

Decisions about dress code are linked to match categorisation. Fixtures are graded as low, medium or high-risk dependent on the likelihood of disorder. Intelligence about issues such as anticipated numbers of risk supporters, their propensity for violence, use of weapons and likelihood of missiles being thrown inform the risk assessment.

In every planning meeting I attended there was a discussion about ensuring dress code was proportionate to the available intelligence:

Having reviewed the high-risk grading and the relevant intelligence about the potential for disorder, the match commander decided proportionate dress code would be PSU overalls with normal headwear. Officers were issued safety glasses for eye protection, rather than deploying with NATO helmets. The commander's rationale was that disorder was not pre-destined as most fans attending the match were there to enjoy the occasion and there was a need to focus on that as

opposed to 'an outright war'. (Fieldnotes of planning meeting for high-risk Premier League fixture 10/03/22)

Stead and Rookwood (2007) highlighted how fans believed officers in 'full riot gear' created a more aggressive atmosphere. Pearson (2012) also argued that officers wearing riot kit increased tensions between police and fans on a match day. Data in Chapter four indicated a willingness among participants to consider academic research in their work. That was evident at a command level in the football case study, with officer dress code an example of academic theory being utilised in operational planning.

However, despite there being an awareness among commanders of the impact dress code can have on fans, the data suggests other factors also influence decisions:

I've persuaded Silver commanders that [normal] street uniform is appropriate. It still affords a level of protection but again maybe some junior Silver commanders are a bit more risk averse and don't want to be criticised should an officer suffer a minor injury that could have been avoidable should they have been in the full 'Robocop' outfit in the first place. (Inspector Bronze Commander FB01)

As the above commander describes, some interviewees suggested risk aversion among less experienced commanders may result in a dress code disproportionate to the threat officers were likely to face. However, PSU officers themselves offered different views as a conversation between OSU officers demonstrates:

A conversation took place in the van about the relevance of dress code. One officer was very animated and adamant commanders would not put officers into the appropriate kit even if the intelligence existed to support it as they did not want officers to look aggressive. Another constable was cynical about the relevance of dress code, questioning the existence and validity of research which found that dress code influenced fan behaviour. He was sceptical about whether fans were actually asked their views. The officer felt it would be beneficial for them to view such research to understand why decisions were made which may be at odds with their own [officer] views on safety. (fieldnotes from League 2 match 23/04/22)

These comments suggest the issue of dress code is viewed differently by constables who do not believe they are always suitably protected in terms of the kit they are able to wear to police football. Their primary concern is personal safety, which they prioritise in the absence of knowledge about how dress code can influence the likelihood of disorder. Waddington (1987, 1993) argued for officers to be equipped so as to prevent the likelihood of injury. However, the OSU officer views were contradicted by other DFO participants who felt there was too much protection afforded to officers without the requisite intelligence to justify it. Indeed, one DFO felt the default position was often one of public order kit regardless of the actual threat and offered a comparison with night-time economy (NTE) policing:

We've got far more officers receiving injuries in the night-time economy than we ever have at football. They're in normal street uniform. So they're [commanders] happy to send them out, despite the risks they're going to face in the night-time economy, in normal street uniform. Yet at the football match when I've told you [commander] it's low or medium risk, you still want them in protective uniform. I just don't understand it, I really don't and like we've already said I do think uniform guides the style and tone of officers' as well. I think as soon as they get that public order kit on their mindset changes as well. (Constable DFO FB07)

The above extract highlights the difference in approach to policing the NTE. Football policing utilises the PSU model for command and control and officer deployment, providing different dress code options. In contrast, NTE policing operations are conducted by officers in normal street uniform who do not work as part of a PSU, despite dealing with public order incidents of varying degrees. Such a position raises the possibility that operating in a PSU mode can result in a disproportionate dress code simply because of the availability of additional protective kit, particularly if commanders are inclined to be risk averse.

To provide officers with adequate eye protection from missiles such as coins, the force had invested in safety glasses for officers policing football matches. Such an approach demonstrates the utilisation of EBP in respect of dress code by providing an alternative option to the NATO helmet. I witnessed the use of glasses by officers on several occasions

when missiles such as coins were thrown between opposing fans adjacent to the segregation area inside stadiums. Their use was more discreet than the wearing of a NATO helmet and did not outwardly change officer appearance or increase tensions. Some participants acknowledged how putting on a NATO helmet represented a visible change in appearance which could influence how police were viewed by fans:

There's no point in me standing on the divide between the home and away [fans] with my NATO helmet on and carrying a shield because what am I saying to the rest of the crowd? The rest of the crowd are saying, 'Well, he's up for a fight he is'. That's the perception. (Sergeant OSU FB02)

The data from this case study suggested awareness and engagement with EBP amongst commanders in respect of the need for dress code to be proportionate to any threat. However, command experience and risk aversion were factors which influenced the extent to which this was achieved. In a similar manner to engagement, the data also indicated that the need for an evidence-based approach to dress code was not sufficiently understood and accepted by all officers involved in football policing operations.

The chapter has so far focused on the role of research in informing practice. However, police officers place significant importance on the experience they develop and use in their work, a position which challenges greater utilisation of EBP. The following section examines the value and extent of officer experience in the policing of football in the case study setting.

5.5 Reliance on experience

Whilst interviewees acknowledged the benefits of having an awareness of public order research, officer experience was also viewed as important when policing football:

Massive [importance of experience]. I mean I could go out filled with the knowledge of Elaborated Social Identity [Model] (ESIM) but how do I know who the A's are, who are the B's and who are

the C's?¹⁶ Only by experience do I get to know how to differentiate that group really. So only by the experience of working over the years do I know. (Constable DFO FB07)

In the above extract a DFO refers to ESIM (Stott, et al., 2011), academic theory which highlights the importance of differentiating between fan groups to ensure any use of police tactics and powers is targeted. The DFO argues that effective use of research can only be achieved in conjunction with experience gained over time. Such a view echoes Bittner (1967) who argued how order maintenance involved officers making decisions based on their personal knowledge of people. Bittner further suggested that newer officers are unable to achieve the same results as more experienced colleagues, a point echoed by several interviewees in relation to dealing with football disorder. Events in the UK during the research period exacerbated the issue of officers gaining experience of disorder.

The 2020 Covid-19 pandemic resulted in the nationwide shutdown of football matches (with supporters in the stadium) and NTE venues in the UK. Football and NTE regularly expose police officers to public order situations, enabling them to develop experience of dealing with confrontation. These unprecedented events coincided with the Uplift campaign to recruit 20,000 additional police officers in England and Wales (House of Commons Public Accounts Committee, 2022).

Consequently, when full capacity crowds returned at the start of the 2021-22 season, policing found itself in a situation where large numbers of recently recruited officers had received minimal training. Those officers also lacked operational exposure to the confrontation and disorder experienced in public order situations. This position was compounded by an increase in football-related disorder in the post-covid era (Mann, 2022). My research took place during this period and the challenges regarding officer experience were highlighted by a number of participants:

Public order trained staff who are policing football this season, if they were young in service they might not have ever policed

¹⁶ Category A, B and C were terms previously used by police officers to identify the level of risk fans posed. Cat A = low risk Cat B = medium risk and Cat C = high risk. Current terminology defines supporter risk categories as unknown risk, low risk, medium risk and high risk

football. They joined during Covid-19 times, they've never dealt with pub fights, they've never dealt with night-time economy and suddenly you put them into this fairly visceral context of policing football matches. (Chief Inspector Silver Commander FB06)

During my fieldwork I observed disorder between opposing supporters at a train station which required intervention by PSU officers. The OSU officers I was accompanying responded as they were in the vicinity. The team sergeant later reflected on the incident:

I mean you were there at that train station. There were a lot of officers there that had never been involved in that before and were left floundering a little bit and we had to go and bolster it and try and sort that situation out.....there was a bit of experience lacking there, from what I could see. (Sergeant OSU FB01)

Such reflections were typical of how participants discussed the lack of experience they observed when policing football. The importance officers place in practical experience is well-documented (see for example Bayley & Bittner, 1984; Fleming, et al., 2015; Fleming & Rhodes, 2018; Williams & Cockcroft, 2019) and was evident in both the response and neighbourhood case studies along with the questionnaire data. Rowe et al. (2016) suggest some police roles/activities can only be learnt through practical experience and the data in this study suggests public order falls into this category. However, whilst there was an emphasis on the value of experience, interviewees generally expressed a willingness to innovate and adopt new practices.

5.6 Changing practice

The football industry continues to evolve to improve both spectator safety and the fan experience. For example, safe standing is currently being introduced in the top English leagues after decades of all-seater stadiums introduced after the 1989 Hillsborough tragedy (Pearson & Stott, 2022). There was an acknowledgement by officers of the need to employ an innovative approach within football policing:

Football is ever-changing, you've got to change with it. I think if people think we are policing football like we did five years ago, certainly 10 years ago, [we're] certainly not policing it like we did in

the 90s when a lot of this legislation was in its heyday. So you've got to adapt to it in order to survive and continue to improve.
(Sergeant OFO FB04)

Police reform literature suggests new practices can fail because many frontline officers are reluctant to change the way they work (Skogan, 2008; Loftus, 2010; Kalyal, 2019). However, in this case study, operational participants demonstrated an appetite for change and innovation. Such a position aligns with research arguing new practices are more likely to be accepted if frontline officers are involved in the process (Bayley, 2008; Wood, et al., 2008; Wood & Watson, 2017). A willingness to consider new approaches and tactics was also evident in Chapter four questionnaire data, which suggests officers are willing to innovate. Indeed, there was evidence of a collective approach to innovation within the case study football unit.

Innovation often revolves around particular leaders, making sustainability a challenge when that person moves roles (Fleming, et al., 2016). Participants suggested this was not the case within their unit because they worked as a team to innovate, rather than innovation being a 'top down' approach as is often the case (Toch, 2008):

I think this ethos has been here since the [football unit] inception and it was the bringing together of like-minded people who were happy to take on that innovation and run with it. So it's not just the supervision that we've had. It's always been here since the inception of the football unit as a whole. (Constable DFO, FB07)

There was also an acknowledgement of the contribution academic research has made towards the policing of football:

I think all the academic stuff that sits behind that does assist us in terms of understanding why people behave in the way they do, how we can influence that behaviour. It also makes it tangible and has some evidence-based process as opposed to somebody saying 'I have a feeling if we did this, this would happen.'
(Sergeant OFO FB04)

I think those impacts around style and tone, how your dress code can impact on that, and the benefits of that early engagement

piece, I think most commanders are quite well briefed on now. I know historically there's been a lot of work through Keele University. (Chief Inspector Silver Commander FB06)

Such an awareness and understanding of EBP relevant to public order policing among practitioners and commanders suggests effective change is possible. However, as Skogan (2008) highlights, even where there is an appetite to use EBP, achieving widespread reform within policing presents challenges. In this case study, risk aversion emerged as an issue which hindered greater utilisation of EBP.

5.7 Risk aversion

Police have traditionally been regarded as conservative and risk averse generally (Crawford & Cunningham, 2015). Concerns about scrutiny of command decisions in the event of a serious incident occurring is a factor in risk aversion (Heaton, 2010).

Waddington (1994: 382) explains risk in public order policing in terms of '*on the job*' and '*in the job*' trouble. Waddington refers to '*on the job*' trouble as being operational matters such as disorder and disruption. He regards '*in the job*' trouble as the consequences arising from any disorder or disruption, such as scrutiny of operational command and associated decision-making. Therefore, commanders utilising evidence-based research may expose themselves to '*in the job*' trouble unless there is widespread organisational support for innovation.

Contemporary crowd theory research suggests police use an engagement and dialogue focused approach to policing crowds, rather than one reliant on significant resources which use coercion and force (Stott, et al., 2019). Whilst advances have been made regarding greater use of dialogue in UK protest policing, such progress in football policing remains limited (Pearson & Stott, 2022). Accordingly, risk aversion is a factor which may limit the use of a dialogue focused approach in football policing, despite the benefits it may offer. As Leach (2021) highlights, there is little incentive for individual commanders to break with the orthodox approach of deploying large numbers of police resources and move to an approach which utilises dialogue and lower profile policing. Data in this case study supports the notion there are risks associated with commanders adopting new practices:

If I was asked to deploy some different tactics within a football arena based on evidence-based work or educational-based research, I would do it with confidence because my reputation in force is quite strong within the world of public order. Others with less experience might be uncomfortable because actually they haven't built up their own confidence yet, let alone their reputation and other Bronze commanders who maybe have got a good reputation wouldn't wish to tarnish that with untried and untested ways of working. (Inspector Bronze Commander FB03)

This response suggests commanders may, for various reasons, feel a need to 'protect' their personal standing within public order command (Gundhus, 2012; Pearson & Stott, 2022). Several interviewees highlighted career development as a reason why commanders sought to 'protect' their reputation:

I think people are too afraid of making mistakes, of the career impact it might have particularly as you start getting rank behind you. Do I want to change something drastically different as a Silver if it's going to impact on me getting to superintendent in the next couple years? Well, that's a powerful motivator and yeah, I do think that culture's there. (Chief Inspector Silver Commander FB06)

The above view reflects research by Cronin and Reicher (2009) who argue that public order commanders are aware of the impact negative outcomes can have on their future career. It is therefore not surprising commanders seek to minimise any reputational risk when navigating the world of public order command as part of aspirations for promotion or a specialist role. This situation is not unique to public order policing and research by Fleming et al. (2016) highlights the wider link between risk aversion and career development in policing.

Leach (2021) notes how Waddington's notion of 'in the job' trouble is likely to be felt most acutely by senior public order commanders who have the greatest accountability attached to their decision-making. A consequence of this can be defensive decision-making designed to minimise the risk of issues arising:

100%, [it is] risk aversion from the Silver commanders. They tend to be policing the immediate history as opposed to what actual intelligence exists and quite often there is no active intelligence that disorder will take place at a fixture, yet it's still high risk. 'Let's go maximum with the number of officers, maximum with the dress code and maximum risk rating' because of that fear of failure. (Inspector Bronze Commander FB01)

The issue of over-inflated risk assessments based on the reputation of supporter groups and historical disorder is a feature of football policing research (see for example Hoggett & Stott, 2010; Stott, et al., 2019; Pearson & Stott, 2022). As the Bronze commander above highlights, the consequences of such decision-making can be the over-resourcing of football operations 'just in case.' During one observation a sergeant commented how resource levels often grew within public order policing operations to provide commanders with a 'comfort blanket.' They felt this was in contrast with firearms incidents where resource levels were dictated by specific intelligence surrounding the incident. However, one participant also suggested the professional background of a commander may influence their appetite for risk:

If you have a Silver commander that's got no POPSA background, say they come in from child PPU (Public Protection Unit), they're looking at threat and risk in respect of the death of a child. They're not looking at it from someone having a fight in the street so they're quite comfortable taking a little bit more risk around what's ultimately going to happen. (Sergeant DFO FB04)

Officers discussed the impact of decision-making on the personal reputation of commanders and some also noted that organisational reputation was another factor in risk aversion. They attributed this to the high-profile nature of football policing and the attention large-scale disorder would attract from stakeholders, the public and the media:

It's just having the confidence to change how we do it because you've got key stakeholders like the club, the football community, the public at large, the media who will criticise us if something goes wrong and I think the biggest challenge will be about reputational risk. It's having the confidence to go 'actually, on a

high-risk fixture, we are going to fundamentally change the way we police this because academic study says there is a better way of doing it.' I think that's where we too often go back to the status quo. (Chief Inspector Silver Commander FB06)

Such a view reflects the scrutiny police officers face generally in terms of their decision-making (van Dijk, et al., 2015). Therefore, external interest from the media and public in football and the associated 'hooliganism' issues (Poulton, 2007; Frosdick & Marsh, 2011) is a factor which may influence command decisions to utilise EBP. The case study data suggests that even where understanding, acceptance and willingness to engage with EBP exist, widespread utilisation is more complex with various factors potentially limiting opportunities to innovate. Debriefing and evaluation are also important elements in establishing what works, particularly where new practices have been trialled.

5.8 Evaluation and debriefing

Huey et al. (2021) argue that effective utilisation of EBP relies on continuous learning about what does and does not work. A reluctance to admit to mistakes among senior officers makes it difficult for police to learn from experience via effective debriefs of operational tactics and strategies (Huey, et al., 2021), a point made by one officer:

I think there is still a bit of a blame culture in policing. No one wants to make a mistake and we get quite defensive when we do. And it's quite interesting. You can recognise that quite often, whenever there's a debrief. So right away, people don't necessarily open themselves up and go 'I think I did that wrong or I could have done better'. Everyone wants to be on their 'A' game. (Chief Inspector, Silver Commander FB07)

The 'blame culture' highlighted above does not create an environment conducive to admitting mistakes, likely due in part to the prospect of investigation by Professional Standards departments or the Independent Office for Police Conduct (Rowe, 2020). Rowe (2020) observes how such investigations are regarded as disciplinary focused by officers, despite efforts to frame them as learning opportunities. However, Fleming et al. (2016) argue that policing also lacks an organisational structure which effectively captures learning, with the approach being to deal with an issue and move on. Furthermore, Davis

and Silvestri (2020) discuss how critical self-reflection must form part of routine working practice if forces are to become learning organisations, whilst also acknowledging the challenges policing hierarchy poses for this concept.

The fear of failure and embarrassment amongst senior officers has long been an issue within policing (Graef, 1989). Whilst Fleming (2019) highlights how this situation is not unique to policing, the fact it remains an issue is likely to stifle efforts to advance practice through greater utilisation of EBP. However, the data in this case study suggests officers lower down the rank structure may embrace scrutiny of their practice more positively than senior commanders:

Also, if we can prove what we're doing is good because we can ask for some tangible research around it. You know, it's all well and good me saying, 'I think we're a really good football unit and I think we do things well nationally' but unless I've got something tangible to show people, then it's just me blowing my own trumpet isn't it? (Sergeant OFO FB04)

That constables and sergeants expressed such views may be partly because they did not have to worry about negative feedback in the same way as more senior officers would. I sensed a level of professional pride in their performance amongst sergeants and constables and a desire to improve performance through the use of feedback. During observations I witnessed several conversations between DFOs about issues which emerged during operations and how practices could be improved:

Some minor disorder occurred just outside the stadium at the end of the match. The position of several police vans outside the away supporter turnstiles exacerbated the situation because they slowed crowd egress. At the conclusion of the operation, the DFOs and their sergeant conducted a 'hot' debrief to establish whether resource levels were sufficient and why the police vans were parked in such a position (they should have been moved prior to the end of the match). The DFO who planned the fixture was visibly deflated there had been any disorder and was very self-critical about whether the operational plan was effective. (fieldnotes from Premier League match 16/10/21)

Examples such as this highlighted how DFOs and OFOs, who are predominantly constables, are often the best placed officers to evaluate the effectiveness of police tactics. Their role means they witness significant events during a football operation, enabling them to identify issues with tactical plans. However, their status as constables in a hierarchical organisation means their views are not always welcomed by more senior officers, a point illustrated by one commander during a discussion on conducting debriefs with POPSAs:

There's often a disparity in rank there.....Some of the newer ones [POPSAs], they will probably just be like, 'Oh yeah, so everything was fine'. They might not necessarily think that, but I think it's important for commanders to [be willing to] open themselves up to that criticism because you only get better from having that learning. (Chief Inspector, Silver Commander FB07)

Research has established that police do not routinely evaluate or reflect on the effectiveness of their methods (Fleming & Wingrove, 2017). Huey et al. (2021) observe how working practices often exist for years without any formal evaluation so acknowledgement of the need to evaluate was positive as it demonstrated a desire to improve practice. However, a further challenge to effective evaluation was highlighted:

It's about giving it that period of time so you're taking in all the variables and you've monitored it and assessed it over all the variables. That for me is the challenge really for evidence-based policing, to ensure that you get the bigger picture and the clearer picture. (Constable DFO FB07)

Such a view acknowledges how the dynamic nature of policing and regularly changing priorities can make long-term research and evaluation unappealing to police organisations who often require instant solutions to emerging issues (Hunter, et al., 2019; Brown, et al., 2020). Additionally, the type of evaluation spoken about by officers usually related to internal debriefing of incidents/operations as opposed to any formal academic evaluation.

The case study suggests a number of factors affect police ability to advance EBP through reflection and evaluation of operational tactics/strategies. The existence of a 'blame

culture' and fear of failure among commanders can limit efforts to establish 'what works', although the data suggests junior officers (in rank) are more open to such evaluation and debriefing. While constables are often the best placed officers to provide feedback, the dynamics of rank can pose difficulties. The time necessary to properly assess operational innovations also poses challenges as policing often requires instant solutions. The College is responsible for developing effective guidance applicable to football policing and the next section examines officers engagement with the College about such guidance.

5.9 Engagement with the College of Policing

In keeping with other policing functions, operational guidance for public order is contained within APP, with a specific section focused on football policing. Participants were aware of public order APP and described it as beneficial for their role:

*I think it's really important that we've got APP because it gives us standardisation nationally, or at least a best practice expectation.
(Sergeant OFO FB04)*

Awareness and utilisation of APP was greater amongst participants in this case study than it was those in the neighbourhood and response case studies. Furthermore, the findings in Chapter four indicate that routine use of APP among operational officers is limited as 49.7% of all respondents reported rarely/never using APP. Collectively, the findings suggest that APP is used more by officers with specialist public order training. The additional training and CPD such officers receive may offer some explanation for this finding. Whilst the data suggests APP was regarded as a useful reference tool by public order commanders and DFOs, a concern was raised as to how current and relevant it was:

I think the challenge at the moment is APP football and public order are both being rewritten and I don't think it's an up-to-date document or one reflective of modern policing within football or the world of public order. (Chief Inspector Silver Commander FB06)

Such a comment indicates the difficulty the College faces in keeping pace with the dynamic nature of policing. The view was expressed that rather than leading policing, the College often had to play 'catch up' with operational policing trends. With regard to EBP, the time taken by the College to commission and produce research may not be

compatible with the police need for swift solutions (Hunter, et al., 2019; Brown, et al., 2020). Similar comments about relevancy were made in relation to some of the training provided by the College:

They've only just changed the POPSA things from an EDL (English Defence League) march. I mean how long ago did we have an EDL march? You know, some of these groups no longer exist and we're still using them as training accreditation for POPSAs. I think a lot of the initial accreditation is quite old and I think some of the training is based on some very old tactics and stuff that we would never do.
(Sergeant DFO FB04)

Concern about APP guidance and training is similar to reservations expressed by officers about the What Works Centre for Crime Reduction online toolkit (Hunter, et al., 2017) in respect of the available research being relevant to operational officers. Whilst participants were positive about how APP informed public order decision-making, the data suggested many frontline officers remained unaware of what APP is, as one commander pointed out:

For officers working this weekend's football fixtures, constables and supervisors, if you were to ask them individually 'do you know what APP stands for?' I don't think they'd have any idea at all.
(Inspector Bronze Commander FB01)

Such a position raises questions about the extent to which officers engage with the College and vice versa, given the relevance of APP to *all* policing activity. This research suggests that whilst specialist public order officers have a greater level of involvement with the College, engagement remains less common amongst the majority of officers, as the questionnaire data and case studies demonstrate.

When the College was introduced, it was intended to be a wider professional body which registered officers as practitioners rather than a training organisation like its predecessors (Neyroud, 2017). Indeed, a Home Affairs Committee report (2016) outlined the intention for serving officers to become engaged with the College and gain recognised qualifications reflective of their role. However, as also noted in the questionnaire data,

participant views indicate officers in the football case study force do not currently have sufficient understanding of the College role to achieve such an aim:

I think officers probably don't engage with it [the College] because it doesn't really affect their day-to-day lives. (Sergeant DFO FB04)

I know very little about the College of Policing, I know that it's somewhere down around the middle of England. And that's really about it. (Constable OFO FB05)

The above comments reflect participant views that the College was not regarded as relevant by frontline officers, beyond any public order training they may undergo. May et al. (2017) observe how, as part of professionalisation, the College aim was for evidence-based decision-making to become the norm for officers. It is difficult to see how EBP can become embedded in policing if, as the data suggests, officers do not engage with the College beyond specialist roles such as those examined in this case study. A similar picture emerged regarding APP being associated more with specialist roles, despite the College stating all officers should be aware of APP. Moving beyond engagement with the College, participants also expressed views on the College-led Policing Education Qualifications Framework (PEQF) programme.

5.10 Raising EBP awareness: The PEQF

During conversations about EBP and academic research, participants invariably spoke about matters encompassing the PEQF and new recruits, suggesting EBP as a concept had become conflated with the PEQF, degree education and student officers. Similar to the findings in this thesis, the PEQF was not regarded positively by officers I encountered during football policing fieldwork. The following section focuses on concerns expressed about PEQF-related subjects which broadly questioned the benefits of the scheme for operational policing.

One aim of the PEQF programme is to provide new recruits with an increased awareness and understanding of EBP via academic study during their initial training (Hunter, et al., 2017). However, as Norman and Fleming (2021) highlight in their paper on degree level study by police officers, there is some scepticism among serving officers about the PEQF programme requiring new recruits to possess or obtain a degree. The majority of officers I

encountered during this case study had joined the police prior to the introduction of the PEQF. Participants shared their views on perceived PEQF implications, firstly about the necessity for the programme:

We just care that they're working towards a degree or they've got a degree, which for me is totally the wrong attitude and wrong way to go. I'd rather somebody who's had a job for the last few years, no qualifications but could talk himself [sic] out of a fight. He for me would make a far better police officer than somebody who's got a degree in criminal psychology. (Constable DFO FB07)

The above comment was typical of responses to questions about the degree programme, with officers often passionately challenging the notion that possessing a degree would make someone a better police officer. Many participants described PEQF recruits as being younger than in previous years, as the following notes from a conversation between OSU officers illustrate:

Whilst we were in the van awaiting deployment, there was a conversation within the team about student officers. Several anecdotes were swapped about parents ringing up saying they [a student officer] hadn't had a chance to eat their lunch or questioning why the student was late finishing work. These anecdotes induced amusement, incredulity and frustration among the officers. The collective view of the team was that a lot of the students were naïve and that standards and respect had been lowered in recent years. They commented on students being much younger now and how people such as former military personnel were more likely to be excluded due to the degree requirements. (fieldnotes League 2 match 23/04/22)

Such views indicated participants regarded what they described as 'life experience' to be lacking amongst students. Concerns tended to centre on the high volume of student-age recruits and how the College drive to increase educational standards via the PEQF was reducing the number of officers with significant life experience in operational departments such as response and public order.

For example, interviewees commented about student officers who had never been into a pub before joining the police due to their age and others who had not yet passed their

driving test and had to be picked up from work by their parents. Some participants suggested a lack of such life skills and experience could pose difficulties in public order situations:

Do they have life experience and understanding or are they lacking in that? I can't say for all of them but we're certainly seeing some that are lacking the emotional intelligence and awareness of the need for strong positive intervention [in public order situations] and the benefits that can have. That is something as commanders we have to be really conscious of. (Inspector Bronze Commander FB01)

The data from this research suggests that in addition to policing experience, officers also regard more general life experience as a valuable attribute. Similar perceptions about the PEQF reducing recruit life experience were expressed in participant comments in the questionnaire. For instance, a female superintendent commented 'PEQF is a barrier to diversity, it limits those applying and those coming into policing have very limited diversity of life experience'. Reservations about the ability of new recruits to deal with confrontation are also discussed in relation to response policing in Chapter seven. The fieldwork highlighted that serving officers had concerns about the impact PEQF was having on the age profile of student officers. The issue of recruits being younger was magnified by the sheer volume of student officers being recruited as part of the Uplift. In addition to recruitment age, some participants suggested the PEQF programme may restrict recruit diversity:

I think you block out a whole raft of people who potentially would be very good at the job and very reflective of communities but, because they haven't had those socioeconomic opportunities, they are never going to be able to get that degree or get the 'A' levels to get in and do that apprenticeship. From what I see, we are bringing through a less diverse element within the police force. It tends to be white people in their 20's. (Sergeant OFO FB04)

Concerns were also expressed about the 'Uplift' generation of officers being underprepared for operational policing as a result of their training:

I think that's the problem with it. When the academic side is too much of a focus, you don't get that actual practical sense and policing is still very much a practical job. There's a lot of academia behind it, there are some really good thoughts and processes but ultimately, at three in the morning, you might still be the first one turning up to a really nasty domestic and having to go hands on with someone. I don't think we prepare our officers for that side enough. And I think that [lack of preparation] carries over into football policing to a certain degree. (Chief Inspector Silver Commander FB06)

The above extract was representative of comments from several case study participants who depicted an imbalance between the academic and practical aspects of the training. This scenario presented challenges in respect of students being resilient enough to cope with conflict and hostility. The online training conducted in the wake of the pandemic was thought to have contributed to this situation by interviewees. Concerns about the balance between theory and practice within the PEQF were also evident in qualitative comments presented in Chapter four. For example, a female sergeant commented that *'the translation of research into practice is always hard let alone in a sector that makes life or death decisions'*. The importance of ensuring theory and practice are blended effectively as part of the PEQF has been recognised in academic literature examining the introduction of the programme (Hough & Stanko, 2020; Watkinson-Miley, et al., 2021; Wood, 2018).

This case study suggests there is a general feeling among experienced officers across the ranks that new recruits are more likely to lack understanding of what policing involves and the resilience needed to cope with the demands of 'the job.' Such views mostly related to age and life experience and officers told me numerous anecdotes about matters such as officers unable to work alone due to anxiety, officers not realising they had to work nights and others who resigned after experiencing busy weekend shifts. I was provided with similar accounts by officers across all three case studies.

Whilst the vast majority of these anecdotes were third hand and could be classed as locker room gossip, they were a regular feature of the case study fieldwork when student officers were discussed. When challenged about the extent to which these stories were

genuine and representative of new recruits, participants were of the opinion that whilst they only applied to a minority of students, such scenarios did exist and occurred more frequently than in the past. If the prevalence of such issues has increased since the introduction of the PEQF and the Uplift, it raises questions as to whether the desire to raise educational standards of officers and increase EBP awareness comes at a cost, due in part to the lack of life experience among new recruits.

Overall, officers expressed little in the way of support for the PEQF programme in its current form. While interviewees displayed an awareness of the benefits of using academic research in their own role, they questioned the need for new recruits to undergo degree level study and whether such requirements would limit recruit diversity. There was a view among experienced officers that new recruits were younger and lacking in life experience, a situation which could affect their ability to deal with the demands of operational policing, particularly in public order situations.

5.11 Chapter Summary

This case study has examined the awareness, understanding, acceptance, engagement and utilisation of EBP as part of football policing. A number of themes emerged from the data which suggest that even when there is an awareness and desire to utilise EBP, reaching a position where EBP is embedded is problematic.

Participants had some awareness of the term EBP, although their understanding of what it meant differed. Some officers made the link with academic research while others stated EBP related to how data and information was used to inform the deployment of police tactics and resources. Although there was an awareness of EBP to varying degrees among participants, their views suggested the majority of frontline officers would not be aware of the term EBP. The data suggests that, in relation to football policing at least, this may be due in part to the additional training and CPD more specialist officers receive.

The chapter highlighted research which argues issues such as dress code and officer engagement levels can affect the likelihood of disorder at football events. The data provided evidence to support an awareness among commanders of utilising such factors as part of operational planning and briefing. The role experience plays in football policing

was also explored and evidence emerged to suggest that when EBP was utilised, officer experience was also necessary to 'operationalise' theory.

Whilst experience was regarded as important to officers involved in football policing, they also expressed a willingness to innovate. However, risk aversion in various guises was a factor in any decision to adopt different practices. The data suggested that engagement with the College and APP guidance was largely confined to public order commanders and those in specialist roles. It was evident across the interviews and observations that serving officers had reservations about the PEQF programme and associated degree requirements.

Overall, this case study suggests an awareness of EBP and an understanding of the benefits of utilising research among football policing specialists. However, there are a myriad of factors influencing the extent to which EBP is more widely understood, accepted and utilised by PSU officers charged with operational delivery. Whilst this case study offers evidence of EBP utilisation in football policing, awareness and understanding of EBP was not commonplace among officers, suggesting the concept is not yet embedded in public order policing.

Chapter six presents a case study set around neighbourhood policing and examines issues pertinent to the utilisation of EBP in the neighbourhood environment.

Chapter 6 Case study 2: Neighbourhood policing

Neighbourhood policing operates on a principle of partnership working to solve problems in local communities (Fleming, 2009). To support this approach, academic research provides police with evidence of strategies and methods to utilise when tackling different issues (see for example Lum, et al., 2011; Ekblom, 2013; Weisburd & Telep, 2014; Koper, 1995; Tilley & Laycock, 2013; Neyroud, 2022; Gimenez-Santana, et al., 2022). To further assist officers, research on a range of topics has been assessed by the College of Policing (the College) for effectiveness against particular criteria (Fleming, et al., 2016; May, et al., 2017). This research is accessible to officers via the College website (College of Policing, 2020a). The availability of research which informs approaches to tackling community issues therefore makes neighbourhood policing a suitable research site in which to assess the use of evidence-based practice (EBP).

Neighbourhood policing allows officers time to engage with communities and problem-solve while uniformed response colleagues are assigned to deal with emergency calls from the public round the clock. Neighbourhood teams take ownership of long-term issues (e.g. neighbour disputes, anti-social behaviour) and response teams are dynamic and primarily deal with live incidents (e.g. assaults, traffic collisions). Work assigned to neighbourhood officers often requires complex solutions (Innes, et al., 2020). However, during the austerity years post 2010, neighbourhood policing became fragmented in many forces as staff cuts meant prioritising the provision of effective emergency response policing (Fielding, 2018). The current government Uplift recruitment campaign has enabled forces to begin strengthening neighbourhood teams. The case study force had defined neighbourhood teams in each policing area. The teams comprised police officers and Police Community Support Officers¹⁷ (PCSO) assigned to focus primarily on community policing issues.

The fieldwork consisted of both observations and semi-structured interviews. I spent 92 hours observing seven different neighbourhood teams across four research sites, both

¹⁷ PCSOs are uniformed officers who work alongside police officers within neighbourhood teams. Their role is primarily one of community engagement. PCSOs possess some police powers but should not be utilised to deal with confrontation and do not have the power of arrest.

within stations and on patrol. The majority of officers I accompanied on patrol were constables and PCSOs. I conducted seven interviews of approximately 10 hours total duration. Four interviewees were police officers involved in neighbourhood policing at the rank of constable, sergeant, inspector and superintendent. I also interviewed a problem-solver¹⁸ and a manager from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC)¹⁹. A final interview was conducted with a sergeant who supervised the development of student officers, some of whom worked in neighbourhood roles.

6.1 EBP awareness and understanding

The majority of constables, sergeants and PCSOs I observed operationally were not aware of the term EBP as defined by the College and some had not heard the term before. When asked what they thought EBP was, there were different responses. Some participants described it as evidence of their activity when dealing with an incident and one officer believed it referred to evidence in their training portfolio. However, the most common response from officers in the neighbourhood teams was that EBP was about data which informed their activity:

Obviously we get a lot of input from the community, whether that's through e-mails, telephone calls telling us about the issues and what's going on. And then with that information, as a neighbourhood team, we can then use utilise our computer systems looking at incidents of note to see if it's been recorded elsewhere. And then that prioritises our patrols. (Sergeant NH01)

Similar explanations regarding EBP as the use of data to inform resource deployments were provided in all three case studies. Scott (2017) discusses the concepts of EBP and Problem-Oriented Policing (POP), arguing for greater integration of these approaches because both are beneficial for policing. The EBP explanations provided by participants referring to using data to identify and resolve issues could be argued to fall within the parameters of POP. Goldstein (2018) argued that in using POP, police should identify

¹⁸ Problem-solvers are police staff whose primary role is to work with neighbourhood teams and partner agencies to develop solutions that address issues using data and research evidence.

¹⁹ Police and Crime Commissioners (PCC) are elected officials who ensure the police meets community needs in the force the PCC is responsible for. PCCs are also responsible for police budgets and appointing and dismissing their respective Chief Constable.

specific problems, understand them in detail, consider solutions beyond the punitive, implement a plan and assess it for effectiveness and fairness. To varying degrees, operational officers displayed a greater awareness of these principles than those associated with EBP. However, nobody referred to POP during the fieldwork and what they spoke about referred more to the nature of their role than a specific approach they had been taught to use. Such data suggests that while officers work in ways which may, to some extent, be underpinned by academic research, they do so without formal awareness of the relevant research and theory.

In contrast to the lack of knowledge among constables and sergeants, interviewees of rank/seniority offered explanations of EBP closer to the College definition:

I interpret evidence-based practice as understanding or delivering a piece of work that is based on some form of research, some form of academia that has shown that activity has worked previously so there's an evidence-based reason for doing something. (Manager OPCC NH06)

Research by Telep and Somers (2019) shows that police leaders tend to be aware of EBP but understanding among officers working at street level is more limited. The data suggests this to be the position in the neighbourhood case study. Whilst the majority of constables were unaware of EBP being associated with research, the Policing Education Qualifications Framework (PEQF) student officers I encountered did have an awareness of EBP, often explaining they had written essays on the subject at university.

When I explained EBP to participants unaware of the term, they mostly viewed it positively and saw potential benefits for their role. Questionnaire data also found respondents willing to engage with academic research. For example, 87.8% of respondents reported, to varying extents, being open to considering methods suggested by an academic researcher. Given my position as a researcher and my enquiries about EBP, it was important to assess whether people may have simply been telling me what I wanted to hear in this respect. Having reflected, I do not believe this to be the case generally, as participants were often outspoken on policing issues and I do not believe their views on EBP would have been any different. On the contrary, they may have been happy to discuss issues openly with me because I was an ex-officer who could relate to

their situation. A conversation with two constables reflected participant receptivity to using research:

Once I had explained what EBP was, the officers spoke enthusiastically and talked about the benefits of using academic research in policing, discussing between themselves how it could be viewed as a third party looking at what they did. They also acknowledged they might not always know the best way to do things and felt there was value in someone independent looking at what police do. They regarded the role of academics as being to inform police why there was a need to do something. However, they thought that police experience should also be used to decide what action to take, alongside any research. (fieldnotes 140322)

Such thinking aligns with research advocating for the term 'evidence-informed' rather than evidence-based (see for example Fleming, et al., 2016; Rogers & Smith, 2018; Brown, et al., 2020). It has been argued some forms of EBP restrict the use of professional judgement in decision-making (Fleming & Rhodes, 2018; Holdaway, 2019), whereas 'informed' broadens options and allows for the inclusion of officer experience alongside relevant evidence (May, et al., 2017). Similarly, Fielding (2018) highlights the need for officers to use their own knowledge to put research into context and decide whether the evidence is appropriate to resolve a particular issue.

Within the neighbourhood force, as with the football and response case studies, there was a strategic awareness and understanding of EBP. An EBP board existed at senior management level to discuss EBP work and an academic from a local university was embedded within the force to focus on EBP issues. A superintendent prominent within the Society of Evidence Based Policing was the nominated force lead on EBP matters. However, organisational reliance on individuals to drive EBP utilisation led one participant to question whether such activity could be maintained in their absence:

I only get involved with very high-level stuff [EBP]. However, I think if I wasn't there to drive that [EBP activity], I don't know who would do it because nobody would have the capability to be able to undertake that activity. (Problem-Solver NH02)

The lack of wider awareness and understanding among staff means strategic aims to increase EBP utilisation are likely to be hampered when key individuals are absent. Such a position reflects the findings of Hunter and May (2019) who observed that EBP was a 'niche' activity confined to a minority of officers.

Some interviewees acknowledged the broader EBP focus of the force but questioned how that translated to operational officers at street level:

I think there's a massive gap between what strategically the Chief Officer group want to accomplish, to it [EBP] getting all the way down to the 'boots on the ground' because all they [neighbourhood officers] do is come in and they just want to get through the jobs, to get home and I think it's just because they don't feel they've got the time to focus on anything else. (Sergeant NH01)

The data suggests a strategic aim to utilise EBP exists in the case study force. However, officer responses indicate EBP is not yet embedded and awareness and utilisation of EBP is limited within operational neighbourhood teams. The view that data was evidence which informed patrol activity has some alignment with POP principles. The data suggests that the promotion of EBP is reliant on key individuals which poses a capacity and resilience issue. Given the general lack of EBP awareness among neighbourhood officers, the following section examines how officers learn to perform their role to assess if EBP forms part of staff training.

6.2 Training and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) Provision

A number of participants argued neighbourhood policing was a specialist role, although they conceded it was not currently treated as such. This point was made by a sergeant during an observation:

The sergeant spoke passionately about neighbourhood being a specialist role and how officers carry risk in their work which often involves vulnerable people and needs to be dealt with properly. The sergeant expressed frustration that neighbourhood officers were not 'protected' and they also had to do response and investigation work although

nobody else did their neighbourhood work. There was an air of resignation when he said neighbourhood policing was still viewed as the 'jack of all trades'. (fieldnotes 090322)

Those advocating for neighbourhood policing to be a specialist department regarded their lack of training as an issue. Such views reflect work by Fielding (2018) who discusses the need for neighbourhood officers to learn skills such as negotiation, cultural sensitivity and problem-solving. Fielding also observes how '*communication skills alone are insufficient*' (p.97) for effective contemporary community policing.

Problem-solving is a key function of neighbourhood policing and training/CPD provides an ideal opportunity to increase EBP understanding within neighbourhood teams, given the breadth of academic research relevant to crime prevention and problem-solving. However, officers described receiving no initial training for the neighbourhood role, with them having to 'learn on the job':

You're not given any input of 'this is where you can get documents to help you,' you're not signposted to the College of Policing [where] you can get research papers, you can use toolkits. You're not given any sort of handbook to work through to familiarise yourself with the role. It's literally you come in and you learn as you go. (Sergeant NH01)

The lack of initial training provided to neighbourhood officers was in contrast to the experience of a dedicated problem-solver in the same organisation:

When we started our role we did one or two weeks, I can't remember now. But we spent quite a lot of time kind of working through the methodologies, working through what models we wanted to use, looking at the College of Policing, looking at the knowledge hub. I've been to all of the national problem-solving conferences and that's like that's a really good CPD opportunity. (Problem-Solver NH02)

Whilst the existence of such training for the problem-solver role is positive, the absence of any structured training for staff joining neighbourhood teams is likely to stifle greater

utilisation of EBP in neighbourhood policing. However, the presence of problem-solvers presents an opportunity to increase EBP awareness within neighbourhood teams.

In several observation sites officers talked about problem-solvers as being valuable resources of knowledge who assisted them. These problem-solvers tended to have additional policing experience, often as Special Constables or formerly as PCSOs. However, in one station none of the neighbourhood officers I spoke to had any engagement with, or support from, their problem-solver. An inspector reflected on the possible reason for this situation:

A sergeant and inspector were reviewing some crime data. The inspector talked about some data showing that [location] had a high number of offenders who came from outside of the city. The inspector inquired if I was looking at problem-solvers saying he said he knew there were some good ones across the force. The conversation caused him to reflect that the one in [location] was not very good. He spoke somewhat dismissively of the problem-solver's contribution to the neighbourhood team, saying they lacked contextual understanding of policing. (fieldnotes 310322)

Hunter et al. (2017) assert that evidence does not speak for itself and requires professional judgement to be applied. As the above comment suggests, having some form of operational policing experience may be beneficial for problem-solvers as it provides them with contextual knowledge when using research evidence and data to solve issues.

Participants also discussed a lack of regular CPD. There were examples of CPD provided by officers, some of which were organised by partner agencies and attended by neighbourhood officers. A neighbourhood policing conference held several years ago was referenced by several officers as being beneficial and evidence of investment in neighbourhood policing. There have been no further events, although the Covid-19 pandemic was thought to have contributed to the lack of available CPD.

Opportunities which did arise often relied on the commitment of individual supervisors to organise them, as two officers explained during a patrol:

The officers discussed a lack of structured CPD and how there was no training to be a neighbourhood beat manager (a constable role). Training was also dependent on your supervisor. They described being

lucky in this respect and talked positively about their sergeant organising sessions where people would come in and talk about different subjects such as counterterrorism, intelligence, prostitution and the management of violent offenders. They were aware this situation was not replicated across all teams. They recognised the potential benefits of the training and sharing information and good practice across teams. One officer talked about 'knowledge being power'. (fieldnotes 140322)

The data established that a lack of structured training and CPD existed for neighbourhood staff across the three neighbourhood research sites. However, whilst there was generally a negative view among participants about the amount and quality of training provided, there was some evidence of a desire to learn and develop knowledge:

I think the majority would welcome it. There are always a few that are set in their ways and, you know, not interested in bettering themselves and that's fine. They're probably 20 odd years in, I understand that. But yeah, I think it would be very beneficial and there would be a lot of officers that would bite your hand off for it. (Constable NH03)

Another constable highlighted how the firearms department was configured to provide regular CPD, suggesting it would be beneficial if neighbourhood could be structured in a similar manner. One of the themes evident across the three case studies was a marked difference between the levels of training officers described as being available for specialists, such as firearms officers, and that available in larger functions like neighbourhood policing.

However, a superintendent questioned the way officers relied on information being provided to them via training:

So I think there is something about a level of personal responsibility. When the law changes everyone expects the new training course. Well no, we're professionals. I'll tell you where to find the information, but there's a degree of 'we're grown-ups here' and I think sometimes we disempower people and they sit there waiting to be spoon-fed. (Superintendent NH07)

Cordner (2022) expresses a similar view, arguing that too much emphasis is placed on training to solve issues within policing. However, such a view was at odds with the majority of participants, who regarded the organisation as bearing responsibility for providing them with the necessary training and learning. I encountered very few officers who thought it was their responsibility to learn independently and in the handful of cases I did find, this was only done because they believed the organisation had failed to provide them with sufficient training.

The same superintendent also acknowledged the challenges policing faces in moving to a position where staff take greater responsibility for their own learning:

*I think if you look at the medical profession and other places that we try and base some of this on [EBP], their professional development is their own responsibility, you know? But yes, they are able to carve time out in order to then fulfil that responsibility. And so it is tricky, it is a real challenge for policing.
(Superintendent NH07)*

Occupations such as medicine are often referenced when arguments for police professionalisation are made (Tilley & Laycock, 2017; Holdaway, 2019). In these established professions, a greater responsibility is placed on the individual for their development than that generally seen in policing (Evetts, 2009).

The current levels of training provided in policing led one sergeant to question the extent of any organisational commitment to professionalisation:

*I think it's just something to publicly say we've professionalised policing and for me personally that's just a way to say we've ticked a box and it makes it sound good.... If you want to professionalise then you've got to invest in the training. So it's all well and good saying we're going to professionalise it. But actually, what does that mean, because ultimately I will never be given 6-8 weeks per year to keep myself updated with all the skills and knowledge necessary with all the changes. So I think it's setting it up to fail.
(Sergeant NH01)*

The above comment indicates a level of cynicism as to whether policing is actually becoming a profession, in respect of matters such as CPD, beyond College aspirations and strategy. Given that CPD is a feature of other professions, e.g. medicine (Davis & McMahon, 2018), the data indicates such a position has not yet been achieved in this case study setting. However, the ability of police to increase training provision amidst increased demand is questionable. Indeed, time and service demands were often cited as barriers to training provision:

It's having protected learning time and taking them [officers] out, not while they are sitting in training thinking 'my to do list is getting bigger and bigger' because then they switch off. So some dedicated, ring-fenced in-person training time, not death by NCALT (e-learning), and engaging [training]. (Manager OPCC NH06)

So that CPD day, which should be, 'here's your training day, you know, this is what the inspector and sergeants have pencilled in for you'. It's not being done because of the demand. SMT (senior management teams) make the decision and go 'well actually we need to provide a service to the public'. (Sergeant NH01)

Specialist roles such as those in public order, search or firearms have mandated training requirements. That neighbourhood officers are not designated specialists in the same way means there is little training required to maintain competence, beyond generic officer safety and first aid requalification. In an era when austerity has shrunk police resources and demand for police services has increased, non-mandatory training is likely to suffer. Providing large numbers of frontline staff with regular protected learning time whilst also meeting operational demand is challenging (Fielding, 2018).

To address this situation, there has been an increased reliance on the use of e-learning packages by English and Welsh forces. These courses were previously administered by the National Centre for Applied Learning Technologies (NCALT). In 2021 NCALT was replaced with a new e-learning system known as College Learn, administered by the College (College of Policing, 2021c). Despite the rebrand of e-learning, participants referred to it generically as NCALT and e-learning was not thought to be an effective method of learning:

And I think to be honest, the way in which all forces do their CPD needs to be looked at because I mean, how many hours in your career did you spend behind blooming NCALT and it driving you nuts and almost getting to the point of throwing your computer out of the window? You know, it just doesn't really work that well anymore. (Problem-solver NH02)

As a broad concept, e-learning offers flexibility, wide-reaching delivery, consistency of training content and cost-effectiveness (Martin, et al., 2014). However, research suggests the use of e-learning in policing is problematic. Honess (2020) argues that e-learning has become the primary method through which mandatory training is delivered and highlights how officers do not engage positively with e-learning they believe lacks relevance to their role. Participants in both this and the response case study spoke about e-learning being a 'tick-box' process. Indeed, one neighbourhood sergeant explained how an officer on restricted duties completed their entire teams' e-learning as it needed to be done but was perceived by officers as having no learning value.

Research on police cybercrime training by Hadlington et al. (2018) established that NCALT was an ineffective method of training delivery in the eyes of officers who described how their lack of enthusiasm for NCALT resulted in limited learning. Gilmour (2021) found that officers who viewed NCALT negatively believed in-person learning to be a more effective mode of learning. Similar points were made by a number of participants in this case study. An overhaul of e-learning has been advocated to improve police training (Honess, 2020; Jones & Rienties, 2022). However, views expressed in this case study suggest substantive changes have not yet been made and e-learning is still perceived to be ineffective and lacking in credibility among operational officers. In the context of providing staff with EBP training, this research suggests that attempts to do so via e-learning are unlikely to be successful.

The data indicates training and CPD is not a routine element of neighbourhood policing, thereby limiting the advancement of EBP awareness and understanding as part of any strategy to embed EBP. However, the existence of problem-solvers provides a more informal opportunity to increase EBP engagement and participants did express a desire to learn and develop their knowledge. The data also suggested officers do not routinely undertake independent learning and are reliant on their organisation to provide them

with training. There are however also opportunities for staff to develop their EBP knowledge via the College website.

6.3 Engagement with the College of Policing

Academic research exists which is directly relevant to neighbourhood officers, given their centrality to community problem-solving (Greig-Midlane, 2019; Innes, et al., 2020). The What Works Centre for Crime Reduction (WWCCR) housed within the College website is available to neighbourhood officers and enables them to draw upon systematically reviewed research (Sidebottom & Tilley, 2022). An emergent theme in this case study was a lack of engagement with the College website and the WWCCR among participants.

During observational fieldwork, the College was not referenced at all by neighbourhood officers. The vast majority of constables and PCSOs stated they did not use the College website. For the most part this resulted from a lack of awareness about the College and how it was relevant to them. A similar theme was evident in the response case study and questionnaire data, where 58.3% of respondents stated they rarely/never accessed the College website. College engagement among neighbourhood officers I spoke with was limited to mandatory e-learning packages accessed via the website. A sergeant expressed views typical of many participants:

The sergeant explained she had no time to engage with the College, a view which she thought was likely to be typical of most people in the office. She didn't regard the College as relevant and her only engagement was with mandatory training they sent out. (fieldnotes 100222)

Whilst I encountered sergeants and inspectors in neighbourhood teams who did have greater awareness and engagement with the College, they were in the minority. Such a lack of engagement is likely to hinder the embedding of EBP because, as Pearson and Rowe (2020) discuss, the role of sergeants and inspectors is important in promoting organisational change. Therefore, where College awareness and engagement is low among supervisors, similar findings are likely among their staff because they will often take their lead from sergeants (Pearson & Rowe, 2020). Even in instances where sergeants did have an awareness of the College website and knew about the research it

contained, they did not seem to have promoted the potential benefits to their teams in any formal way.

During the fieldwork, a picture emerged of how using the College website was an individual choice as opposed to being organisationally driven. A number of sergeants and inspectors linked College engagement to periods when they were seeking promotion, as did a Superintendent:

The leadership hub stuff, actually if you go in there and you're somebody that's trying to progress, you're a College of Policing member, actually there's some really good stuff on that. It's quite helpful and there's lots of free things they have been rolling out. Online stuff has massively helped them [the College] become more connected. I've done loads of webinars with them over the past couple of years, particularly targeted at Superintendents granted. (Superintendent NH07)

The neighbourhood observations and interviews indicated the College was not a 'day-to-day' resource and was viewed as mainly relevant to officers seeking promotion. During the research period, the College published a review which found that it (the College) lacked relevance among frontline officers (College of Policing, 2022c). One participant suggested why that may be:

The College of Policing stuff felt like it was done to policing as opposed to with policing I think, by people that are not police officers. So I think it's not necessarily them [officers] feeling a particular way about academia but them feeling like "these people think they know how to tell us how to do our jobs, but who are they, what right do they have?" wrapped up in all the College of Policing kind of baggage. (Superintendent NH07)

The above extract suggests the College origins still present a credibility issue, having been established in the austerity era, amid controversial staff reductions and changes to pay and pensions (Holdaway, 2019). Another interviewee suggested College guidance on operational matters such as stop and search was at odds with the views of frontline officers:

I guess sometimes what the College of Policing expect and the reality of policing is very different. Does that make sense? So for example, I think they've said haven't they, the smell of cannabis isn't enough for a stop search? And I know in isolation that's fine but if you're stood next to someone in the [town] centre (laughs) and they're absolutely stinking of cannabis, you're not just going to let them walk away. (Constable NH03)

Whilst reasons such as this were offered for the lack of relevance to frontline officers, data in this study suggests another factor is simply a lack of understanding among officers about the College role and website content. This was evident when discussing the WWCCR with participants. Most constables and PCSOs across the research sites had no awareness of the existence of the WWCCR and did not refer to it in their work. Having established this as the position, I directed a number of participants to the online research toolkit contained within the WWCCR.

Those I showed the WWCCR website to were generally positive about having access to a database of research which may be useful to them:

In one instance a constable scanning through the research studies on the WWCCR saw research on the use of lighting to combat anti-social behaviour. The officer explained how he had recently submitted a funding bid for enhanced lighting in the neighbourhood he worked in. He expressed frustration he did not know about the online toolkit as he thought the research evidence on the effectiveness of lighting would have strengthened his funding bid. He also spoke enthusiastically about how using this type of research knowledge would strengthen his position when discussing problems with partner agencies. (fieldnotes 140322)

Whilst research has questioned how current and relevant research in the online toolkit is (May, et al., 2017), if neighbourhood officers do not know of its existence they cannot decide whether it is useful. May et al. (2017) observed how a central aim of the WWCCR was to change organisational culture in policing and make the use of research commonplace. The lack of awareness I encountered in respect of the WWCCR suggests this aim has not been achieved. In a number of cases I sensed a degree of professional embarrassment on the part of officers who felt they ought to know about the WWCCR. A

lack of engagement with the WWCCR was not confined to the neighbourhood case study. Very few officers (2.7%) who completed the questionnaire reported consulting the WWCCR to assist them in their role.

A lack of officer knowledge about research was also evident during a meeting between police, partner agencies and members of the public to discuss ongoing damage being caused by trespassers on farmland:

Neighbourhood officers provided practical policing suggestions in the form of proactive patrols but discussion about researching solutions which had worked elsewhere to address similar situations was confidently led by councillors. I established with the neighbourhood officers present at the meeting that neither were aware of the WWCCR or similar research. (fieldnotes 200422)

At a time when police resources are finite, neighbourhood officers would benefit from an awareness of evidence-based research which could provide tactical options beyond the simple deployment of officers suggested in this example. It was also interesting that councillors in the meeting demonstrated an awareness of ‘what works’ research in a way the police officers did not.

In addition to the WWCCR, the force had also created an EBP ‘microsite’ on their internal ‘Intranet’ system with EBP information and links to related sites. Awareness about the existence of this site was low and participants spoke about not having the time to look at research:

I think it's just down to time. You come in, you focus on what you do and stuff like the College of Policing and any sort of research, academic work, you need to put time into it to read it and I don't think during the day-to-day shift officers are given the time to try and look at things like that... You know, you literally come in, you start, you're given your jobs, you go and do them. (Sergeant NH01)

Time has often been regarded as a barrier in the use of EBP (Kalyal, 2019; Fleming, 2019) and the data in this study suggests that remains the case. The response case study also highlights lack of time and operational demand as potential barriers to increased EBP

utilisation. Similarly, time constraints were viewed as a barrier to utilising EBP by 41.6% of questionnaire participants - the most dominant response. It is somewhat ironic that research which may help officers reduce demand and resourcing requirements is not utilised, in part, because of insufficient time available to officers. Within the case study setting, College products such as the WWCCR were not an everyday aspect of neighbourhood policing. This point is made in the literature when discussing broader police use of the WWCCR (Bowers, et al., 2017; Bullock, et al., 2022).

Engagement with the College was generally low among participants in this case study. Supervisors lacked knowledge about the College website, which is likely to reduce opportunities to raise EBP awareness among teams. Whilst much of the data has highlighted challenges around EBP awareness and utilisation in the case study setting, I did observe several examples of EBP-related activity.

6.4 Utilising EBP in Neighbourhood Policing: Hot spot policing

Hot spot policing is a concept in which police patrol specific localities with high crime rates. Hot spot research provides evidence that focused policing can be an effective method of reducing crime (Weisburd & Telep, 2014). To illustrate this, Braga et al. (2019) conducted a systematic review of 65 studies and concluded the approach produced '*statistically significant small reductions in overall crime and disorder in areas where the strategy is implemented*' (p.1). Reductions were noted in crime categories including drugs, disorder and violence. During fieldwork I gathered data on two hot spot-type initiatives being conducted independently in separate locations.

The first of these took place in a town and was initiated after complaints from local councillors and business owners about a rise in drug use and anti-social behaviour (ASB) in the town centre. A recent crime survey had also highlighted the town as having the highest crime rate in the local area. A specific operation had been developed and the OPCC provided funding to ensure there were sufficient officers to staff the patrols. One participant explained how data was used to inform patrol activity:

So we pulled in all the incident data for the town centre over the past three years to cover off the changes in Covid-19 and things like that. So we've looked at the days, the times, the locations and

also the types of incidents that we're having at that time so that we can really drive and inform our resources. (Problem-solver NH02)

Although the activity was place-focused in respect of the town centre, there was a core group of people involved in the ASB and drug activity being targeted. A number of the group were homeless and one of the challenges was the fact their support services were situated in the town centre, meaning the group naturally congregated there during the day. While there was an enforcement aspect to the operation, there was also an understanding among officers that simply arresting people with substance issues for minor crimes would not solve the issues. There was an acknowledgement of the need to involve other agencies to address the root causes of offending, a point illustrated when I observed officers interviewing a man about offences in which basic food items were stolen:

I accompanied officers to interview a shoplifter with a history of offending. He outlined an unfortunate set of circumstances which included being a former heroin/crack addict and having a partner with health issues who was a recovering alcoholic. He described having been in prison for violence last year and how, on release, he was unable to access the counselling and medication he needed. He explained how the Probation Service were not aware of his counselling needs and it had taken him seven weeks to get the medication he required. He was still unable to access a mental health assessment. There was both frustration and desperation in his voice as he relayed his story. The officers knew him and had a good rapport with him. They spoke sympathetically about his plight and offered to contact his GP about a mental health assessment and also told him about a phone app which told you where to get food which was being sold cheaply. It seemed like he wanted to turn his life around but losing his job recently and being unable to access benefits resulted in him stealing. I formed the opinion this man was living on the edge, doing what he felt he needed to in order to survive because support to address his complex issues was lacking. (fieldnotes 080222)

This example was typical of crimes neighbourhood officers talked about dealing with. Many suspects had underlying social and health issues which were factors in their

offending. Such complexities highlight the benefits of neighbourhood officers understanding evidence-based interventions which they can utilise in an attempt to reduce recidivism.

Despite the plan to address root causes of individual behaviour, some officers expressed scepticism about the initiative, as a conversation with a constable illustrates:

The officer seemed somewhat resigned to the initiative failing when saying 'We've been here before, it will just displace the street community out into residential areas where residents don't have a voice like councillors and retail owners in the town centre. It's a political issue and who can shout the loudest gets the ear of the police bosses'. It was clear to me he lacked faith in the motivation for the operation and regarded it as being driven by the interests of those with power, something he had seen happen before. (fieldnotes of conversation with constable 100222)

From conversations with officers, this operation appeared to stem from the need for high-profile police activity after pressure from prominent local individuals over rising crime rates. Whilst police were being proactive in tackling emerging crime, it could equally be argued their approach was reactive to longstanding community issues which had not been effectively dealt with by police and partner agencies. Participants suggested a reduced town centre police presence caused by neighbourhood officers having to cover response shifts was a factor in the situation worsening. There was also a degree of cynicism among participants about the likelihood of a long-term improvement in the situation beyond the three-month operation.

Despite these issues, there was evidence of a hot spot approach being applied through the use of data to identify specific locations for police activity. However, with the exception of the problem-solver I interviewed, none of the participants used the term hot spot policing. To them it was an operation to reduce crime in the town centre through regular high visibility patrols. This position suggests that whilst officers may utilise methods supported by an evidence base they do so inadvertently, a view expressed by one interviewee:

I think they [officers] do it. I think they just don't realise they do it and I think when it comes to kind of asking those questions and

calling it evidence-based practice, they think 'oh, that's not something we do'. (Problem-solver NH02)

The operation had elements of hot spot policing within it but did not involve officers spending specific amounts of time in a location, an aspect of hot spot policing. Building on the premise of targeted activity, research by Koper (1995) established how, after a point in time, police presence in a location has a diminishing return. The optimum time in a location was established to be 15 minutes and has come to be known as the '*Koper Curve*'. Patrols I observed lacked awareness of the impact time had on the benefits of officer presence, with officers using individual discretion to patrol the town centre as they saw fit. However, another example of hot spot policing I witnessed did make greater use of hot spot research on patrol times.

The second example of hot spot policing focused on reducing street violence and was located in a city in the case study force. Data from the preceding 12-month period was used to identify the 10 city streets with the highest number of violent incidents. The data was used to establish the times offences were committed and inform patrol activity. Officers were made aware of the operation via briefings and there was an expectation that staff from departments such as neighbourhood, response and crime investigation (uniformed staff) would conduct 15 minute patrols in the hot spots. Officers were required to update an electronic tasking sheet after their patrols to enable those leading the initiative to track police activity.

The role of leadership in delivering a hot spot initiative requiring specific patrols was described as important by officers planning the operation, particularly the way in which EBP is presented. A superintendent reflected how some leaders spoke about EBP in a way unlikely to enthuse and engage frontline officers:

This is where evidence-based policing I think often falls down because the leaders that tend to be attracted to it tend to be the more analytical ones amongst us. You know those academic, data driven people [even] I don't understand a word they say. If you try and deliver that stuff [EBP] with those leadership skills it doesn't deliver. People follow people don't they? (Superintendent NH07)

The above extract highlights the need for leaders to engage meaningfully with officers to get them to 'buy-in' to initiatives such as hot spot policing. (Lumsden, 2017b; Kalyal, 2019). The same superintendent discussed how the operation had been presented to officers:

You have to call it a policing operation. You use police language they understand. You badge it up, you give them an op (operational) order, a few different things that aren't about evidence-based policing, that are familiar to them so it bridges that gap. (Superintendent NH07)

As Telep and Lum (2014) observe, hot spot policing is likely to require a change in officer routine so it is important to ensure officers are well-informed. The data in this study would suggest there is a need to 'bridge the gap' in officer knowledge of hot spot policing as it was not a readily used term among participants. Therefore, explaining the concept in a way officers related to would appear to be a practical method of gaining their support for the initiative.

Participants also discussed the wider role leadership played in getting the hot spot initiative 'off the ground'. Support from officers at chief inspector and inspector rank was important and one officer described how key individuals not being engaged posed an issue:

So you know that concept of the 'frozen middle' in leadership. You know, no matter what you say here, it gets stuck. There is something really, really important from my perspective about the chief inspector and inspector rank because they'll block it all, they'll stop it all. If they think this is bollocks, they are not going to do it. So rank can only get you so far because it can get stuck. (Superintendent NH07)

Research has shown how a lack of support from senior officers can be a barrier to the successful implementation of EBP (Lumsden, 2017b; Fleming & Wingrove, 2017). May et al. (2017) also noted a lack of consistency in the knowledge of senior officers which can negatively influence the use of research to inform practice. The data identified what

might be termed as 'passive' and 'active' support among senior officers in the different departments contributing to the hot spot initiative:

I haven't heard any whisper of SMT (Senior Management Team) in conflict with each other around it. But naturally, people have different areas of focus don't they? So you know, your DCI (Detective Chief Inspector) might have a different view, if they've got heavy workloads, to a response chief inspector. So whereas yes, they will certainly say 'we support it,' whether they actively do and those messages are really clear to their teams, that's another matter. (Inspector NH05)

Views expressed about middle-managers demonstrate the challenges of ensuring messages remain consistent as they travel down the organisation, an issue also highlighted by Pearson and Rowe (2020). As the above quotation suggests, it is possible for chief inspectors to appear publicly supportive of an initiative but not actively encourage their own staff to engage in the process.

The second example of hot spot policing had a greater focus on specific locations and patrol times. Consequently, achieving compliance required greater work by those undertaking the implementation:

It's down to me and [name of chief inspector] and the commander to constantly say, 'let me just remind you this is a priority and we need to be contributing to it'. So it doesn't just come with one quick message and email, does it? It needs to be pushed. (Inspector NH05)

In this respect, participants reflected on how the activity required to implement the hot spot operation was undertaken in addition to existing workloads. Given that traditional patrol models rely on officers using discretion without much guidance from senior officers (Pearson & Rowe, 2020), the additional time and effort required to undertake EBP initiatives such as hot spot policing is likely to be a factor in whether they are employed:

This is going to sound really awful, so forgive my use of language here. How much you give a shit, you know. This [hot spot initiative] is extra work and you lay this onto lots of other extra

work that already goes on. It's also how much of a willingness do you have to just do a little bit more at work? (Superintendent NH07)

Participant comments suggested the extra work required to implement EBP initiatives is most likely to be undertaken by committed officers seeking career development. Such a position links to opinions that new working practices are associated with officers seeking promotion, a point recognised by the inspector implementing the hot spot initiative:

What I didn't want to do was create this concept and say, 'this is a concept that gets someone promoted and you're going to do it, regardless of whether it works or not'. This was absolutely about does it work. (Inspector NH05)

The requirement for candidates to showcase evidence of implementing change has become a part of police promotion processes (Palmer, 2011; Fleming, 2019). The phrase 're-inventing the wheel' was used by a number of participants during the fieldwork and two PCSOs I spoke to discussed change routinely being linked to promotion:

I explained I had been told that a change in the promotion process meant evidence of change was no longer necessary. Despite this, both PCSOs were adamant that neighbourhood policing was still used by officers to gather evidence of change for promotion. One of the PCSOs had 15 years-service and reflected, with a degree of frustration, how during that period he had been supervised by 15 different sergeants who regularly came and went having sought 'development'. The PCSOs described feeling demoralised with the changes each sergeant made because the PCSOs linked it to promotion and said they were never consulted, despite their knowledge and experience. It was clear this process left them feeling undervalued. They gave an example of a sergeant who introduced a process where a form was completed to establish the role of alcohol in offending. Once the sergeant got promoted the process stopped and in their opinion that meant it was done purely for promotion, whether that was actually the case or not. (fieldnotes 090322)

Regardless of whether the promotion process had changed, there was still a view that new working practices were introduced by officers seeking promotion. The notion that cynicism is a characteristic of police officers is well documented in research literature (see for example Demaree, et al., 2013; Reiner, 2012; Hunter & May, 2019). It is likely that staff, such as the PCSOs above, may be cynical about engaging with any EBP initiative if their experience suggests it is primarily for personal development. Such thinking among a large group of staff, like that required to successfully implement a hot spot initiative, presents those responsible for operational delivery with a difficult task.

The evaluation of EBP initiatives was discussed with participants and some described a reluctance to review new tactics or practices amongst senior officers which was thought to be linked to promotion aspirations:

One of the things is, people in the police decide 'right, we've got a problem, we're going to do this'. But then no one ever actually evaluates it properly to see what has actually worked. You hear of new [policy and think] 'Oh, they must be going for promotion' and then you never hear of it being properly evaluated. (Constable NH03)

In addition to scepticism aligned to the 'doomed to succeed' approach discussed by Fleming (2019: 163), there was acknowledgement of the need to review new initiatives:

So there is something about making sure we do that [evaluation]. So I feel pressure for that because it's the right thing to do and also I want to know what's working and I want to know how we can tweak it and I want to make sure that we can then dial it up to deliver it in the purest sense. (Superintendent NH06)

As with EBP itself, awareness and understanding about evaluation was inconsistent among officers. The data reflected existing literature to some extent with regards to a reluctance to evaluate (Fleming & Wingrove, 2017; Laycock, 2014). It was also acknowledged that even when there was evaluation, officers would effectively be 'marking their own homework' without independent evaluation. However, the violent crime hot spot initiative had engaged the services of a local university to formally evaluate the operation, although they had not been engaged in the initial design of the

project. Sherman (2015) highlights the importance of employing neutrality in evaluation, arguing how *'in science we must let chips fall where they may'* (p.20). Understanding the importance of independent evaluation was limited to those with greater knowledge and interest in EBP who had utilised academic support.

EBP in the form of hot spot policing was utilised in this case study and the data suggests officers undertake evidence-based activity but do not associate it with the term EBP. Data was used to inform patrol activity and deal with offenders suffering from mental health or addiction issues, where officers recognised the need to engage other agencies. However, scepticism was expressed about the ability of the ASB-focused hot spot initiative to achieve positive results which would extend beyond its three-month duration.

The fieldwork highlighted the importance of effective leadership, both in terms of engaging staff in EBP by using language they could relate to and in respect of the need for leaders to actively support and persistently drive EBP initiatives. Participants also highlighted how EBP involved additional work, making it more likely to only appeal to motivated officers seeking development. The data suggests staff think EBP initiatives are linked to personal development and promotion processes, making them cynical about the benefits of changes to working practices. The need for independent evaluation of EBP initiatives was recognised by those with a good understanding of EBP itself. In addition to examples of hot spot policing, I also encountered another form of EBP, trauma-informed practice, which was gathering momentum in the case study force.

6.5 Utilising EBP in Neighbourhood Policing: Trauma-informed practice

Trauma-informed practice (TIP) is an emerging approach within health and human services. It seeks to recognise the signs and symptoms of trauma and acknowledge the impact it can have on individuals (Hickle, 2016). From a police perspective this includes understanding ways in which the criminal justice system impacts individuals affected by traumatic experiences (Hickle, 2016). Research has established that young people regularly exposed to violence can develop complex trauma, increasing the risk of them engaging in criminality due to imbalances in emotions such as fear and anger (Bath, 2008). A factor which informs the TIP approach is the adverse childhood experience (ACE). For instance, individuals with four or more ACEs are 15 times more likely to commit

violence against another person and 20 times more likely to be imprisoned within their lifetime (Ashton, et al., 2016). Bateson (2020) discusses how adopting a trauma-informed approach enables professionals to move from the position of asking people ‘*what’s wrong with you?*’ to one where they ask ‘*what has happened to you?*’ (p.133). In a policing context, understanding ACEs provides an opportunity to identify vulnerable young people and support them at an earlier stage in their lives, with the aim of reducing the likelihood of offending (Bateson, 2020).

In the neighbourhood case study force, TIP was introduced in some areas. In one city, a dedicated Child Centred Policing Team (CCPT) had been established which was predominantly staffed by police officers. The team consisted of four Youth Intervention Officers (YIOs), a Youth Offending Team officer, a dedicated investigator, a missing from home officer and a youth worker (a council employee co-located with police officers). The team was led by an inspector and a sergeant.

The aim of the CCPT was to identify vulnerable young people with a history of ACEs and work to reduce the likelihood of them engaging in criminality. In a neighbourhood team in a different town, one of the sergeants spoke about being trained in TIP on a course delivered by a partner agency. The existence of a dedicated team and such training demonstrates an EBP approach. However, in keeping with other examples of EBP I encountered, awareness, understanding and acceptance of TIP was mixed, posing challenges to greater utilisation of TIP within neighbourhood policing.

Officers from the CCPT I spoke to possessed an understanding of the link between ACEs and offending behaviour. They were keen to develop relationships with vulnerable young people in an effort to develop trust and create opportunities to reduce the risk of offending. The YIOs often visited young people at home to undertake this work. I accompanied a YIO on one such visit to the home of a 14- year-old youth:

The youth had been classed as vulnerable due to escalating behaviour, culminating in being in possession of a knife on his way to an organised fight between rival groups. The YIO explained how the youth’s home life was problematic. He had been excluded from school and was using drugs. After much discussion, the youth agreed to engage with a mentor to work on the challenges he faced. I reflected on how time consuming

the process was and the YIO passionately explained how many young people would benefit from a trauma-informed approach, while also expressing disappointment there were insufficient resources available to support them all. (fieldnotes 300322)

Beyond the CCPT, the neighbourhood sergeant undergoing TIP training also recognised the benefits of tackling the root causes of behaviour among young people:

Historically, we look at [the fact] someone's stolen and we need to get them within the criminal justice system and send them to prison. But it's about having that time and that reflection of what is causing them to do that. Especially in this day and age, as there's so many different support services out there. (Sergeant NH01)

However, awareness of TIP was limited among neighbourhood officers and most had not heard of the concept. There was also little evidence of any widespread formal training. As already mentioned, one sergeant from a neighbourhood team was undertaking TIP training organised by another agency. This took the form of one four-hour online session per month for 10 months. The sergeant reflected how there was too much time between sessions, meaning he would forget what had been covered in the last session by the time the next one arrived. I asked if there were plans for the remainder of his team to receive similar training. He suggested the plan was for supervisors to 'cascade' their training to other officers, which was an approach he viewed as problematic:

I think that's what this trauma-informed practice is all about. It's about changing your mindset and being able to think [differently]. Unless the officers have that training they're just going to have to take the snippets that I pass on because I'm not going to be able to deliver this training as well as the organisers are. (Sergeant NH01)

Skogan (2008) suggests that police organisations seek to find cheaper ways to implement reform as formal training is expensive, both financially and in terms of abstracting staff from operational duties. It could be argued that informal 'cascade' training, where a small number of officers pass their new found knowledge on to colleagues, is an example of what Skogan describes. Tong and Hallenberg (2018) also highlight the role austerity has

played in the reduction of training resources within forces and the implications this has for the delivery of consistent training.

Whilst there may be valid reasons for the lack of formal training, such as austerity, the question has to be asked as to how realistic it is for a variety of supervisors across an organisation to deliver TIP training to the level of a subject matter expert. TIP would seem to represent an example of EBP which offers benefits to policing and the community in terms of reducing crime and harm levels. However, the lack of training provided to officers on TIP has resulted in an absence of knowledge and understanding among operational officers. This situation creates difficulties for officers who use the TIP approach because they aim to deal with young people differently.

Despite the reality of much of their role involving work which is not focused on criminality, research suggests some officers working the streets still regard themselves as 'crime fighters/warriors' (Reiner, 2012; Charman, 2017; Deuchar, et al., 2021). Reiner (2012) discusses what he describes as a sense of mission among police officers and Chan (1996) refers to officers believing they have '*a mandate to wage war against crime*' (p.122). Deuchar et al. (2021) discuss how the warrior approach to street policing is associated with a more aggressive, zero-tolerance attitude amongst officers. In contrast, TIP takes a different approach and seeks to understand the reasons why people offend. TIP aligns with the notion of police as 'guardians' who protect the public and show greater empathy and understanding towards people they deal with (Wood & Watson, 2017). Such thinking may be at odds with traditional views among warrior-type officers of offenders as simply being 'bad people'. The data indicated a tension between response officers who displayed warrior traits and CCPT officers who took a guardian approach to their work.

It is not difficult to understand why TIP, which seeks to establish reasons for offending, may be regarded unfavourably by response officers who identify with warrior policing principles. Whilst TIP may be viewed as a 'soft option', one of the benefits of the approach, where successful, would be a reduction in demands on police resources, which is ironically a routine concern of officers. The benefits of response officers possessing a good understanding of TIP was illustrated during a conversation with a former response constable now working as an investigator within the CCPT:

The officer explained he was formerly what he termed an 'old school' response officer who regarded young offenders as simply being 'bad kids'. He was animated in describing how his views had shifted significantly after joining the team and learning about the role of trauma in the behaviour of some young people. To demonstrate his newfound thinking, he talked me through a list of young people on the office wall, explaining family circumstances which involved issues such as domestic abuse, violence and drug supply. He commented that given their home lives, it was not surprising these kids had issues and got involved in crime. He admitted this was not a viewpoint he had considered as a response officer. (fieldnotes 300322)

The above extract serves as an example of the benefits of providing officers with knowledge of academic theories such as TIP. Debautt and De Kimpe (2023) discuss how police training could be used to educate officers and broaden their professional identity to accommodate notions of social mediation alongside those of crime-fighting (p.699). Debautt and De Kimpe argue that doing so would improve officer attitudes during interactions with the public and enhance police legitimacy.

In many respects TIP is aligned with community-style policing, which some officers do not view as 'real' police work (Skogan, 2008; Herbert, 2006). In contrast to their method of building relationships with young people, officers from the CCPT described their response colleagues as often having a more 'hands on' confrontational approach during street encounters with young people. CCPT officers explained how the confrontational approach of response officers had implications for CCPT work. I was provided with more than one example where a negative encounter with response officers had resulted in young people withdrawing from engagement with CCPT officers:

The CCPT constable was visibly annoyed when describing how a young person they were working with had been involved in two separate incidents of stop and search with response officers. As a result of what they regarded as unfair treatment, the young person no longer trusted the CCPT officer and their job became harder. The officer stressed the importance of police treating young people with respect to encourage them to trust and engage with officers. It was clear from her demeanour

this officer strongly believed in both the importance and benefits of her work. (fieldnotes 300322)

In another example of informal 'cascade' learning, CCPT officers described attending response team briefings to explain their role and the principles of TIP. However, the same officers expressed frustration about the fact their own workload levels prevented them from doing so more regularly, as they regarded such briefings as beneficial for raising awareness and understanding of TIP. CCPT staff acknowledged training had been provided for response officers previously, but none had been offered more recently which was an issue given the high turnover of response officers. I sensed frustration amongst CCPT staff about how a lack of wider understanding of their role and TIP stifled efforts to embed an evidence-based concept into working practices. Such frustrations were evident when CCPT staff talked about the use of response officers during an operation to tackle anti-social behaviour by groups of young people:

Officers spoke candidly about how response constables were paid overtime for the work but they tended to have little knowledge of the people involved and showed a lack of interest in dealing meaningfully with issues which arose, often not even getting out of their vehicles to engage with groups. The officers strongly argued it was a waste of time using response staff who did not understand what they were supposed to be trying to achieve. (fieldnotes 300322)

Furthermore, CCPT officers also questioned how much TIP training was provided to PEQF student officers and YIOs also explained that very little formal training was provided for their own role. One officer described purchasing books on TIP and following experts on social media in an effort to improve their knowledge on relevant subjects. The data suggests the organisation is reliant on informal cascading and briefing within existing structures to increase knowledge. Informal training being provided to officers in the absence of structured programmes was also a theme in both the response and football case studies. Selby-Fell and Newton (2022) refer to this approach as 'EBP by osmosis' (p. 14) and argue it is not an effective method of increasing EBP awareness and understanding more widely across a police organisation.

Similar to hot spot policing, the use of TIP demonstrates the benefits EBP can bring to police practice. However, as with other examples of EBP throughout this thesis, the

challenge comes in being able to embed such practices across the wider organisation. Officers with an understanding of TIP described how it was beneficial for their work with young people. However, there were tensions with response officers who employed a more traditional enforcement-led approach and thought TIP was a 'soft option'. A lack of formal training also hampered efforts to increase officer engagement with TIP. If officers are not provided with training about research developments such as TIP which can positively impact their role, it is necessary to consider what knowledge they rely on. The following section focuses on how neighbourhood officers utilise operational experience in their work.

6.6 Reliance on operational experience

As the literature suggests, experience is valued by police officers and this case study reflected that position. Experience was important to neighbourhood officers, particularly in situations where there was an absence of formal training and knowledge:

It's peer development. So it's talking to people who've done the role. It's being aware of past experiences within the organisation. And then yes, it's just getting through and learning from what's around you really. Sitting in partner meetings and asking questions. (Sergeant NH01)

Many of the neighbourhood officers I spoke with explained how they would refer to their own experience or consult others within their team when deciding how to deal with an issue. Qualitative data in Chapter four also established a reliance on officer experience to deal with operational issues, a point illustrated in a comment from a sergeant: '*there is no substitute for experience gained on the front line*'. However, some neighbourhood officers reflected such an approach could be problematic, as one constable explained during an observation:

The officer provided an example of a situation where another officer had decided it would be useful to conduct house-to-house enquiries in the vicinity of addresses where victims of domestic abuse lived. The practice was subsequently halted as other officers thought it likely to increase the risk to victims. The officer I was talking to suggested this was an example of police activity based on an individual's experience and

opinion which could prove harmful, as opposed to activity which was evidence-based and proven to work. (fieldnotes 140322)

This example highlights the risks of officers being routinely reliant on their own experience if the methods they use have not been subject to any form of evaluation. Policing continues to evolve and practices which may have historically been appropriate might no longer be suitable to employ (Mitchell & Lewis, 2017).

In addition to the issue of experiential knowledge not remaining current, other participants described how relying on experience meant they were limited to the sphere of knowledge within their collective team:

I discussed experience while on patrol with two constables. The officers spoke about how you learn from others in the office and they explained how they did not have any way of knowing about a particular operational tactic/method unless someone else had relevant experience. They gave an example of working with someone who had a surveillance background and gave them advice on using covert tactics to deal with car crime. They said they would not have known about such tactics without that individual being in their team. (fieldnotes 140222)

There was a sense that the practical experience officers developed through dealing with these issues was sufficient to self-validate their ability to perform their role. Such a position reflects the work of Charman (2017) which discusses how police recruits thought 'learning by doing' (p.224) was the most effective method of learning how to become a police officer. This view was reflected in a conversation with a constable who, having never heard of the WWCCR, subsequently described the potential benefit of having such a resource to refer to:

I like to think I'd know how to do it [from experience] but I guess it might be good to see what other options there are. (fieldnotes 310322)

There is a body of literature which argues that police officers consciously value experience over academic research and knowledge (see for example Lum, et al., 2012; Palmer, 2011; Reuss-Ianni, 1983; Williams & Cockcroft, 2019). However, the data in both this case study and the questionnaire findings suggests a lack of awareness and understanding of EBP and databases such as the WWCCR may leave officers with little

choice but to rely on their own experience and that of colleagues. The fieldwork highlighted that a lack of knowledge about EBP was more prevalent among neighbourhood constables and sergeants who had not undergone PEQF training. The response case study also revealed similar findings.

In contrast, officers I encountered on the PEQF programme did have an awareness of EBP and understood how EBP related to operational policing. Data in Chapter four also indicated an increased awareness of EBP among PEQF trained officers, with 89% of officers with 0-5 years of service reporting EBP awareness. An incident I witnessed on patrol with two neighbourhood constables, one a student and the other a more experienced officer (non-PEQF trained) reflects these findings:

A group behaving anti-socially were dispersed. The more experienced officer said the PSPO (Public Spaces Protection Order) was a really good tool as people engaging in anti-social behaviour had to leave the city centre. It didn't concern the experienced officer too much where they went. The student officer later spoke to me about EBP and he demonstrated a more nuanced understanding of the use of dispersal powers. He reflected on the importance of reviewing and evaluating practices for effectiveness and questioned whether the PSPO was working as intended or were they (police) just displacing people to cause issues elsewhere? (fieldnotes 310322)

The above incident suggests PEQF students are bringing new knowledge into the workplace. I rarely encountered a non-PEQF trained constable who discussed EBP or the need to evaluate practice. The College therefore has to find ways to 'upskill' the existing workforce with the type of EBP knowledge PEQF officers possess. It could be argued that one way to tackle this knowledge gap is to place student officers with EBP knowledge into existing neighbourhood teams. However, the challenges associated with such an approach were evident when discussing EBP with two experienced neighbourhood sergeants during an observation:

The sergeants explained that PEQF student officers came to their team after completing their initial training. Neither sergeant was aware of EBP when I asked them about the term. I explained what EBP is and that students I spoke to did have some degree of understanding about EBP.

The sergeants acknowledged the benefits research could offer and seemed somewhat bemused as to why they had not been told about it before through training/CPD. They conceded that if you don't know about research you will just go with your own or colleague experience when you are working out what to do in a given situation. (fieldnotes 200422)

I reflected on the above conversation and how the lack of EBP knowledge possessed by the sergeants presented two issues. Firstly, student officers had greater levels of knowledge about current police practice than the supervisors guiding and supporting them. Secondly, if a student went to one of these sergeants and suggested utilising EBP, the sergeant's lack of knowledge could cause the student to question the relevance of EBP in operational policing. The role of the sergeant is important in shaping the approach officers take to their work and Pearson and Rowe (2020) discuss how officers are likely take their lead from their sergeant. Research by Norman (2023) with serving officers undertaking degree-level study supports this position. Norman identified a lack of supervisory acknowledgement of the benefits such degrees could offer in the workplace. Longitudinal police recruit research by Charman (2017) highlighted the influence officers on a team had on recruits who described a need to 'fit in' with their new colleagues. Consequently, student officers may lack the confidence to introduce ideas such as EBP which are not familiar to their newfound colleagues, a point made by a sergeant responsible for the tutoring of students:

Just looking around you can see they [students] are younger, they are younger than before as a whole. We go back to that experience-based policing and the way we're putting these students out. Obviously, putting a 21-year-old on a section, they're not going to speak up. So yeah absolutely, they will conform. (Sergeant NH04)

The sergeant suggested age may be a factor in student officers deferring to the experience-based culture likely to exist in the absence of EBP awareness. In addition to recruit age, there is also a tendency within policing for 'time served' to be regarded by officers as a measure of knowledge and competence. Such a position is far too simplistic given the multiple roles and factors involved in policing. Indeed, Bayley and Bittner (1984)

argue that were such a premise true, the best police officers would simply be the oldest and those with the most service. However, it is the experience which comes with time served which ensures such a view remains valid because, as data throughout this thesis shows, experience is valued highly by police officers (Gundhus, 2012). Furthermore, the hierarchical nature of rank-oriented organisations such as policing can prevent those at the lower echelons of the organisation from making decisions which may be at odds with rank-based orthodoxy (Hallenberg & Cockcroft, 2017).

The experiences of one interviewee who joined under the *Police Now* scheme (see Chapter two) highlight how deference to the 'time served' notion can happen in practice. The constable had been in the force for 3 ½ years having completed the *Police Now* graduate programme, during which they received specific training on utilising EBP. However, the officer explained that in their role as a neighbourhood officer they no longer used research methods taught in training:

To be honest I speak to colleagues, especially more experienced ones or those who have perhaps dealt with a similar situation. I will ask them what they did, how they did it and whether it worked.
(Constable NH03)

The explanation for this shift in working practice suggested that a lack of EBP awareness among the officer's colleagues influenced their decision to become reliant on the experience of other officers:

*I thought that evidence-based practice would be a massive part of that team and I would be enhancing and helping out with that.....
I guess I thought at the time it [EBP] would be way more ingrained in our everyday policing, whereas it wasn't.* (Constable NH03)

The views of this *Police Now* officer are reflective of wider research on the scheme which established how very few *Police Now* recruits thought the reality of EBP in their force matched expectations they had on completion of training (Hunter & May, 2019). In light of their personal experiences I asked the *Police Now* officer whether current recruits were likely to utilise EBP knowledge gained via PEQF training or become reliant on experience:

The police culture is really strong and I'm just thinking, because I've never reflected on why I don't do the traditional research. I

know how to research and I don't necessarily not enjoy it. I have a strong feeling that they [students] will do what I've done and go to that traditional route of just speaking to and liaising with colleagues. (Constable NH03)

The case study data suggests the importance placed on experience among longer-serving officers, in the absence of any EBP understanding, is likely to minimise student utilisation of EBP. Tilley and Laycock (2017) make a similar point when discussing the need for student officers to seek the advice of tutors or sergeants about using relevant evidence in decision-making. Tilley and Laycock remark how a student's senior colleagues often place greater emphasis on experience than academic evidence.

Within this case study, efforts to embed EBP into day-to-day practice often appeared to stem from committed individuals with a personal interest in the application of EBP. In the main, working practices relied on what might be described as tried and tested officer experience:

I see it [EBP] as an individual thing at the moment, but as an organisation I think we still fundamentally do it the way we've always done it, off those old practices. (Sergeant NH04)

The data in this case study reflects existing literature highlighting the importance officers place on their experience. However, the utilisation of TIP in the neighbourhood setting illustrated that research can inform police practice if the environment is conducive to doing so.

Participants described learning from the experience of others although some did reflect on whether the experiences they learned from were current and relevant. There was also an acknowledgement that a reliance on colleague experience limited the amount of knowledge an officer was exposed to. The observations established that students are bringing EBP knowledge into the workplace but their ability to utilise it is likely to be hindered by a lack of similar knowledge amongst colleagues, particularly at the sergeant level. Norman (2023) highlights a similar lack of opportunity to utilise learning among serving officers studying for in-service degrees. A situation where knowledge about EBP is restricted to particular sections of the workforce is likely to limit efforts to embed EBP organisation-wide.

6.7 Chapter Summary

The purpose of this case study was to examine awareness, understanding, acceptance, engagement and utilisation of EBP within neighbourhood policing, a role where research can add value to the problem-solving process.

At a strategic organisational level EBP was recognised and there was an aspiration for greater utilisation of EBP. However, officers held the view that any strategic aspiration had not yet become a routine part of practice. Whilst there was a general lack of awareness about EBP among participants, once it was explained many accepted the benefits it could offer alongside their own knowledge and experience.

Data highlighted a lack of structured training being provided to neighbourhood officers. Participants indicated a desire to learn and develop but did not feel the organisation provided them with sufficient training and CPD. Such a situation is likely to restrict efforts to increase the utilisation of EBP in everyday practices. There was a lack of awareness about the College role and use of their products (e.g. WWCCR) among neighbourhood staff. Very few constables and sergeants knew of the existence of the online research toolkit. However, when directed to the website they thought it would be useful as part of their role.

Despite the overall lack of awareness about EBP, there were two operational examples of EBP being used, to varying extents, in a hot spot policing context. The concept of TIP was another example of EBP being utilised in the case study force. Analysis of the use of a TIP approach highlighted the difficulties of implementing a new practice when knowledge is confined to small numbers of officers. Such a position can result in tensions between different departments, who in some respects work against each other because they adopt different approaches to dealing with young people.

The TIP approach differs from traditional enforcement-led policing and requires officers to have a detailed understanding of the potential benefits to help persuade them to change their policing style where necessary. The case study data suggests the PEQF system has shifted the landscape and may help address this situation. New recruits possessed knowledge about subjects such as EBP and POP their longer-serving colleagues often lacked. Whilst this is a positive step, the data suggests student ability to utilise this

knowledge and introduce alternative ways of problem-solving is limited. Overall, despite evidence of EBP initiatives and some of awareness of the concept among individual participants, the data gathered suggests EBP was not embedded in the neighbourhood case study setting.

This chapter focused on EBP in neighbourhood policing, one of two core roles predominantly performed by uniformed staff working at street level. The next chapter examines EBP in the other such role; emergency response policing.

Chapter 7 Case study 3: Response policing

The previous case study focused on evidence-based practice (EBP) within neighbourhood policing. Whilst operational examples of EBP utilisation were evident, awareness and understanding of EBP were not widespread among the majority of participants. A lack of regular organisational-led training and continuous professional development (CPD) for neighbourhood officers was highlighted. Engagement with the College of Policing website and awareness and utilisation of EBP in the What Works Centre for Crime Reduction was limited. Data indicated the Policing Education Qualifications Framework (PEQF) is providing new recruits with an understanding and awareness of EBP. Many longer-serving officers lack such knowledge which can result in new officers deferring to the experience-based culture which is evident in neighbourhood policing. This chapter develops some of these themes in the setting of response policing.

The response policing case study was situated in a busy urban English force with approximately 4,000 officers policing a population in excess of 1.5 million people. The force currently has a crime rate above the 92.6 crimes per 1,000 people national average (Office for National Statistics, 2023) and has to deal with the type of criminality and violence present in many UK cities (Crocker, et al., 2019; Harding, 2020; Densley, et al., 2020).

Emergency response policing, often referred to by officers as response or patrol, is a core function of policing (Carter & Mozier, 2011). The response function provides a 24-hour response to incidents. Emergency calls to police vary widely in type and are triaged and prioritised based on levels of threat, risk and harm (Carter & Mozier, 2011). Response officers require a wide range of skills and knowledge to be effective. Response teams deal with dynamic incidents in the initial stages and in many cases they will resolve the incident. Officers can request appropriate support from specialist resources as an incident develops (e.g. traffic officers, detectives).

The focus of policing has gradually shifted from what would be deemed traditionally as 'crimefighting'. The 1998 *Crime and Disorder Act* introduced statutory 'multi-agency' arrangements between police and local authorities and the advent of reassurance policing in the early 2000s saw police and their partners work together to tackle complex

community concerns and reduce the fear of crime (Herrington & Millie, 2006; Innes, 2006). Police had a greater role in safeguarding vulnerable people, a position which became problematic when government-led spending cuts were applied to public services after the financial crisis of 2008 (Brain & Owens, 2015).

Additional policing demand emerged during austerity due to reduced government funding of agencies such as health and social services, a position compounded by reductions in police officer numbers (Brain & Owens, 2015). Officers subsequently found themselves unable to refuse requests for help from vulnerable people, despite the issue often being health-related (Solar & Smith, 2022). At the forefront of daily demands on police resources are response officers.

Alongside neighbourhood or community policing teams, response departments are usually the largest uniformed units within a police force. Response is often the starting point for recruits after their initial training, with officers learning their trade before going on to 'specialise' in other departments (Carter & Mozier, 2011). The response workforce is populated by a blend of young in service, and therefore inexperienced, officers who learn the role alongside more experienced colleagues. The proportion of inexperienced officers in response policing has increased in recent years for two reasons. Firstly, intensive recruiting as part of the government led 'Uplift' programme to recruit 20,000 officers (House of Commons Public Accounts Committee, 2022) has significantly increased the number of recruits. Secondly, there has been a rise in voluntary resignations among officers since 2020, leading to concerns about the retention of knowledge and experience in policing (Charman & Bennett, 2022).

The College of Policing (the College) requires all police officers joining the service in England and Wales to possess a degree as part of the PEQF. Given the changing landscape of policing demand and requirements for officer training, response policing therefore provides an appropriate setting in which to assess the use of EBP. Observing officers was beneficial for evaluating the extent to which EBP has become embedded in response policing. Whilst existing literature discusses the challenges around the PEQF as a concept, there is little data on the practical impact of the scheme in operational policing (although see Norman & Fleming, 2021; Watkinson-Miley, et al., 2021). Fieldwork in the response function also provided data on the extent to which response officers utilised research available within the College website (College of Policing, 2020a).

The response case study consisted of both observational fieldwork and semi-structured interviews. The fieldwork comprised a combination of 'day' (7am-5pm) and 'late' (2pm-midnight) shifts observing officers both in police stations and on patrol at two different response 'hub' locations. The majority of participants I observed were constables. I also attended an EBP event at the force headquarters and spent a day at a local university observing problem-solving training being delivered to student officers as part of the PEQF programme. A total of 98 hours were spent conducting observations across seven different response teams. In addition, six officers from the response function were interviewed, namely two constables, two sergeants, an inspector and a chief inspector. An officer from the force Problem-Solving Team²⁰ was also interviewed. The seven interviews totalled approximately 11 hours in duration.

7.1 EBP awareness and understanding

There was evidence of an organisational awareness and understanding of EBP. For example, the force had an EBP co-ordinator role and a problem-solving team which had responsibility for raising EBP awareness. Formal research was being undertaken in the case study force, an example being a randomised controlled trial conducted in force crime hot spots. There was also an acknowledgement that senior officers sought to advance the EBP concept:

*I think the top bosses get it [EBP], I think they try and push it down or advertise it and put it on our internal intranet and fly the flag.
(Sergeant RP01)*

Despite the existence of some staff dedicated to EBP and active use of research, wider staff engagement in EBP activity appeared more limited. An EBP seminar held during the fieldwork provided evidence of this position. At this event, research projects conducted within the force were presented by the staff and academics involved in them. The event was addressed by an Assistant Chief Constable (ACC) who advocated for the development of police and academic collaborations. However, the ACC acknowledged EBP was not

²⁰ The case study force had a Problem-Solving Team consisting of police officers whose primary role was to support operational staff by providing solutions and guidance to deal with operational challenges e.g. anti-social behaviour, emerging crime trends. The team also sought to raise EBP awareness across the force.

embedded across the wider organisation and officers did not routinely consult available evidence-based research when problem-solving. The event was attended by approximately 50 people in total (in person and online) and one of the organisers expressed a level of frustration when commenting on attendance at the event:

We're trying to re-energise EBP within the force but there weren't that many people here given the size of the organisation. (Fieldnotes 250422)

One officer commented on the make-up of the audience:

I felt like again, the people that were there were only there because they're actually interested. Well, we need the people that aren't interested. We need the people that don't get it, even if we're like forcing them to go, you know what I mean? That's the audience, isn't it? (Sergeant RP02)

Such a view reflected existing research which argues EBP is confined to a minority of officers with a personal interest (Hunter & May, 2019). A similar position was also evident within neighbourhood policing in Chapter six. Several constables from the Problem-Solving Team also provided their views on the wider awareness of EBP in the force during a discussion I had with them:

During the EBP event I discussed EBP with four constables from the Problem-Solving Team. They described how neighbourhood officers often didn't understand what was going on in certain locations or how to resolve long-term issues. They felt there was a need to raise awareness of EBP more widely and spoke about how some people were more receptive than others to EBP. They described how officers often viewed EBP as more work requiring additional paperwork because they had to complete a problem-solving plan. The problem-solvers also thought response officers were very process and policy driven and not able to use EBP properly. (fieldnotes 250422)

That some officers viewed EBP as additional work reflects similar observations by Fielding (2018). In terms of response officer awareness of EBP, the data provided some evidence of understanding among supervisors which resembled the College definition:

So the way I understand it is that we look at the best available evidence to help us in our day-to-day business and how we can improve what we do and how we innovate as a police force and move forward essentially. (Inspector RP03)

However, among constables there was a notable difference in EBP awareness which appeared to be related to training. On numerous occasions I observed two officers working together, one being a PEQF student and the other longer serving and non- PEQF trained:

I asked the two officers if they had heard of EBP. The non-PEQF officer hadn't heard of EBP before. When I explained what EBP was, he spoke dismissively of the concept being useful to him because on response he just moved from one job to the next with no time to deal with things properly. The PEQF trained officer knew about EBP from his university study, having written an essay about it. However, he spoke negatively about academic research and didn't think he would use EBP on response, explaining how he placed more importance on learning how to do things from colleagues on his shift. (fieldnotes 240422)

Longer-serving constables who considered themselves to be aware of EBP provided different explanations of what it meant. As with the other case studies, some described EBP as using data and intelligence to inform resource deployments while one officer believed it to be evidence of an offence as opposed to research evidence. Officers did not refer to academic research during observations, other than when I introduced the subject or we spoke about the PEQF process. That PEQF officers were aware of EBP, in contrast to colleagues not undergoing PEQF, highlights that the PEQF is providing officers with new knowledge. However, there remains a gap in the understanding of EBP among the existing workforce, a finding which also emerged from the quantitative and neighbourhood case study data.

In respect of response policing, the case study data indicated some awareness and understanding of EBP among supervisors and PEQF-trained officers. EBP awareness was sporadic among non-PEQF response constables, reflecting literature highlighting the lack of EBP knowledge among frontline officers (Hunter & May, 2019). Having discussed the

levels of EBP awareness and understanding in the Force, the next section focuses on EBP utilisation within response policing.

7.2 Utilising EBP in response policing

Response policing is primarily driven by public demand for policing services. Policing demand has increased in recent years, due in part to the impact of austerity measures on other public agencies (Bacon, et al., 2023). The fieldwork reflected this position, with officers constantly going from one call to the next throughout a shift. Response policing involves dealing with immediate issues reported to police. Officers often commented on attending repeat incidents:

The officers responded to yet another emergency call at a house where a 14-year-old girl with behavioural issues was being aggressive to her parents. One of the officers audibly groaned as he recognised the address and recalled dealing with the same issue before. It took the two officers some time to establish the facts and after the girl's dad decided not to make a criminal complaint, the focus switched to safeguarding. Her parents explained to the officers how they felt they had to ring police to both de-escalate and report these situations because there were child protection concerns about the family. Afterwards, the officers passionately expressed their frustrations at having to attend this type of incident regularly, saying they couldn't solve the issues and response were just keeping the peace in the short-term. Officers did not believe it was in anybody's interest for police to be involved but they were resigned to the fact they had no option but to continue responding to incidents like this. (fieldnotes 160522)

The officers acknowledged they were only able to deal with what happened on a particular occasion and did not possess the capability or capacity to address the underlying causes of the situation by utilising EBP. Officers contrasted their role with the problem-solving approach of neighbourhood officers. Indeed, when the premise of EBP was explained, there was a strong consensus amongst participants that such an approach was not compatible with the response role and was better suited to neighbourhood policing. Beyond any lack of knowledge, data emerged to offer an explanation as to why

officers held this opinion. Firstly, officers routinely described how response policing was prescriptive, with force policy limiting the options for incident resolution:

It's around crime recording standards and minimum standards and what you've got to gather when you go to the job. So you go to that sudden death job, you're expected to fill in this form and there's a process to go through in terms of notifying through line management, it's all set there for you. There would be no reason for a response officer to go 'I wonder if another force is doing something differently around that'? It would be good if you did but you're probably not of the mindset to do that. (Chief Inspector RP02)

There are times where discretion can be used, but if we're just going to use domestics for example, that is clear cut. There is no opinion involved in that, it's gradually been taken away from officers over the years because there is just no discussion. If someone needs arresting, they need arresting. So yes, I'd agree things are set in stone really on response. (Sergeant RP06)

Being required to follow force policy limits the opportunity for response officers to utilise EBP. Knutsson and Tompson (2017) discuss how the hierarchical nature of traditional policing models results in frontline officers following mandated processes in many situations, rather than being able to use discretion. The authors further suggest this position is reflected in the prioritisation of procedural knowledge over critical thinking skills among police officers. However, when discussing professionalisation, Hunter et al. (2017) stress the need for frontline officers to employ discretion when making complex decisions. As Martin (2022) observes, the role of discretion reflects how police professionalisation struggles with decisions about whether to promote or restrict practitioner autonomy.

The response case study established that discretion is constrained in response policing by policy adherence. However, reliance on 'one size fits all' policies can be problematic because situational circumstances differ, as one incident illustrated:

Police were contacted by a 15-year-old youth being blackmailed by an adult over his (the youth's) sexuality, with a threat being made to 'out'

the youth on social media unless they gave money to the offender. Force policy dictated a young person must be spoken to in the presence of an appropriate adult, often their parents. This posed a risk as the youth's parents were unaware of his sexuality and he was adamant that must not be disclosed to them. The youth was unable to suggest another adult who could be present which presented the officers with a significant issue. One of the constables was visibly annoyed by the policy requirement and questioned the necessity to inform the youth's parents. The officer challenged the policy via the duty detective inspector, who maintained policy should be adhered to. The constable re-iterated this was not the appropriate way to address the issue and, not willing to take no for an answer, consulted a social worker instead. After consultation with the social worker, a decision was made that having been seen 'safe and well', the youth would be seen by police with a social worker the following day at school, thereby negating the need to inform his parents at this stage. (fieldnotes 240422)

On reflection the outcome achieved by the officer seemed appropriate in the circumstances as consideration was given to any necessary safeguarding. The young person also did not have to explain their sexuality to their parents, something likely to have negatively impacted on their mental health. After the incident, I discussed the challenges with the attending officers:

The constable who objected to following organisational policy explained having a background in youth work which allowed them to draw on relevant knowledge to inform their decision-making. Coupled with their level of policing experience, this officer described being confident in their ability to challenge the policy because they genuinely did not believe it was the right course of action to take in those circumstances. In contrast the second officer, who was a student, reflected how their own lack of knowledge and experience meant they would not have had the confidence to challenge the decision of a more senior officer. They felt they would simply have had no choice but to follow force policy in these circumstances. (fieldnotes 240422)

Such an example highlights how a policy which is well-intentioned may not be appropriate in all circumstances. Officers may possess knowledge and experience which could positively influence an incident but attempting to do so may put them at odds with supervisors. In such a situation, officer willingness to challenge a supervisory decision is a factor in seeking to achieve a different outcome. The data indicates that incidents like the one detailed above are the exception, with most officers following policy:

I think you've got individuals that are just responding to that need [to do certain things], literally reacting to it. 'I need to go there because the control room has told me to and I need to fill this form in because I'll get a bollocking if I don't'. You know that sort of 'I need to follow this process and you know, I'll get a bollocking if I don't do that'. (Sergeant RP01)

Officers described having to record incidents to comply with policy in circumstances where their own professional judgement was that events did not reflect what was initially reported to police. For example, officers explained having to record crimes based on what an initial call log reported when there was often no evidence to support the specific allegation once they had attended the scene. In these situations officers felt it was easier to take the path of least resistance and adhere to policy rather than battle with supervisors to achieve a different outcome. Therefore, the ability to utilise EBP within the response function was likely to be limited in the face of such a reliance on policy.

Having established policy adherence as a theme in the case study force, I focused on whether officers understood why policies were introduced and whether EBP underpinned any explanations. The data indicated officers did not have a routine understanding of why policies existed and nor were changes to practice explained adequately:

Nothing really gets explained. We just get told we have to do it and the consequences of not doing it really. (Sergeant RP05)

What we're probably not very good at, and probably particularly so in response policing, is the explanation as to why that [policy] changed. So when a new document is brought in that the officers have got to fill in for a particular job, we tell them what the minimum standards are for that form. Do we tell them why it's

coming and why we're asking them to do that? We don't do that very well at all. (Chief Inspector RP02)

Although there was a lack of explanation, participants saw the benefits of understanding rationales behind policies:

I think it's always helpful to see how it's come about or the research behind it. I think people are a lot more likely to get on board with it [policy] if they've got a little bit of an idea of where it's come from or if it can be evidenced that it's shown to work.I think it's probably something that we don't tend to do a lot either. (Inspector RP03)

I think it definitely would be beneficial, [to explain] why we do certain things, because when the sergeant explains to you the importance of doing something in a certain way, you take it more seriously. (Constable RP04)

One officer questioned the extent to which policies governing response policing were evidence-based and fit for purpose:

It's more based on tradition rather than evidence it seems and what might have been relevant, say 5-10 years ago might not be now. But it doesn't seem to be reviewed. We still do things in the same way, which is one of the frustrations really, especially on response. You do things in exactly the same way even though you know it's not going to change anything. (Constable RP07)

The data highlights an appetite among response officers to become more engaged in how they (officers) work. Bryant et al. (2013) argue that to change knowledge perception in policing there needs to be significantly more engagement with the majority of staff. Greater explanation of policy would help achieve this position and also increase EBP awareness. Data in the questionnaire chapter highlighted that training officers received did not routinely include any explanation of relevant academic theory. Providing officers with greater knowledge of reasons behind policy and practice may also counter the cynicism some officers expressed about change:

There's no reasoning behind it [policy change] is there? Because it just gets put out there, 'this is what you'll do' and if there's no reason then the general go to is 'oh someone's getting promoted on the back of this'. I think if you did explain things more and give some reasoning behind it I think you're more likely to get people on board. People also might not be so suspicious about the reasons why [things change]. (Sergeant RP05)

The above view reflects literature which discusses how research and reform has become linked to police promotion processes (Fleming, 2018, 2019). One inspector discussed the need for promotion candidates to report positively on practice changes:

Yeah definitely. They [promotion candidate] wouldn't dig too deep into an evaluation and I think even then, they would write it up a certain way (laughs), so they would write it up creatively. I think they definitely wouldn't write it up in terms of it hasn't worked out or there was negative feedback. I don't think you would risk presenting it in that way because I think it would look bad in your promotion process. (Inspector RP03)

In their work on EBP implementation, Fleming and Wingrove (2017) reflected on a lack of organisational value placed in evaluation being linked, in part, to a need to present practice change positively when used as promotion evidence. Fleming and Wingrove discuss how such an approach leads to changes becoming '*doomed to succeed*' (p.210).

The second reason officers did not regard EBP as compatible with response policing was the issue of time to use research. Time has often been viewed as a barrier to greater utilisation of EBP (see for example Fleming, 2019; Kalyal, 2019; Hunter & May, 2019) and, in respect of response policing, it appears to remain a factor. Similarly, time constraints were highlighted as the most prominent factor preventing research use amongst questionnaire respondents.

Bayley and Bittner (1984) argued that patrol officers do not have the time to permanently resolve issues and doing their best to restore order in the short-term is the most that can be expected of them. Participants reflected this view:

What can I actually do about it if you think about it? We are just responding to that address. We know it's a hot spot for domestics. We know this is the couple who always argue, there are always police there you know. We do everything the initial responder can do and we refer them, that's all we can do really. But yeah as I said, if we did have more time for research, I'm sure a lot of people would use it. (Constable RP04)

'Keeping a lid on things' was regarded as the main function of response policing and a view expressed by numerous participants:

On response you are just putting a sticking plaster on things. There is no time or ownership of an area to do things. (fieldnotes of conversation with constable 150522)

The opportunity to use EBP and undertake long-term problem-solving was described by participants as something more applicable to neighbourhood officers:

When I've been on neighbourhood, we looked at things in a different light and I think it was probably more to do with the differences in the jobs that we dealt with. They were more long term and slow-paced jobs, you know where you've got anti-social behaviour hot spots or you've got long-term neighbour disputes. Situations like that give you the time to sit back and assess it. But I think on response we're just fast paced. It's very similar jobs all the time and we just do it how we've always done it, without thinking outside the box so to speak. (Sergeant RP05)

Participants described response policing as process driven, with a focus on policy adherence limiting options for incident resolution. Response officers perceived EBP to be better suited to neighbourhood officers with more time. However, in Chapter six, neighbourhood officers themselves also cited lack of time as a reason why research was not utilised more often in the neighbourhood role.

Officers regularly described not understanding the rationale underpinning policies they had to adhere to. Whilst the case study highlighted a lack of EBP utilisation in response

policing, the prevalence of student officers within response teams enabled assessment of the impact PEQF training is having as part of attempts to embed EBP in response policing.

7.3 PEQF programme

Much has been written about the potential benefits of increasing police officer education standards (see for example Jaschke, 2010; Fleming, 2013; Hallenberg & Cockcroft, 2017; Rogers & Smith, 2018). Despite this position, students talked negatively about their degree-level training on both the Degree Holder Entry Programme (DHEP) and Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship (PCDA) pathways. It was also evident PEQF students were learning about academic research and their understanding of EBP was often notably greater than that of response colleagues who had participated in training models which preceded the PEQF. For example, students described writing academic essays on topics such as EBP, criminal use of the roads, terrorism and disclosure. However, an emergent theme was students questioning the relevance of academic work to their role as police officers:

I mentioned to you before about lectures that we had during previous modules, quite a few of them were not very relevant. You know, it was on criminology. That's for criminology, you know, we're not criminologists. We don't have time as first responders to go and explore what sort of personality constitutes a psychopath. (DHEP Constable RP04)

There was a view among students that the degree aspect of their training was something of a 'tick box' exercise. They regarded it as something they had to do in order to become a police officer and not an integral part of learning *how* to be a police officer:

The [degree is a] tick box. My class all feel the same, there's only a few people who would disagree with me. (DHEP Constable RP04)

A similar view was expressed by response supervisors:

I just think they [students] see the degree as 'that's the way we have to do it. We're part of this cohort, we've got to get that box ticked and at the end of it, we get a degree'. (Sergeant RP05)

Hough and Stanko (2020) stress the need for serving officers to support the academic aspects of the PEQF scheme to avoid them merely being a 'bolt-on' which becomes disregarded by students once they transition into operational policing. The data in this study suggests such support among serving officers has not been achieved. The degree not being valued as part of student learning was linked to a wider issue discussed by participants. There was a consensus among interviewees that the PEQF process had resulted in a disconnect between the academic and practical elements of learning to be a police officer:

Just from speaking to a small number of people, there is that disconnect between the two things. It is almost seen as the university side of it is getting in the way of, you know, 'actually getting on with doing the job that I'm employed to do'. Yeah, that's probably a shame really but I think that's the reality of it. (Chief Inspector RP02)

Some participants described three different ways of learning during student training. Different approaches were taken by the university, the police training school and also by officers 'on shift'. Students found this confusing and counterproductive for their learning. In the event of having to choose who to believe, university learning was likely to be discarded in favour of either learning from the police training school or colleagues 'on shift'. Research with PCDA students by Watkinson-Miley et al. (2021) highlights how once officers have undergone operational tutoring they often disregard their academic learning. The fieldwork offered an explanation for this situation.

Students spoke about the credibility of trainers delivering their programmes:

So if they [operational officers] tell you 'you're going to do this' and you say, 'well that doesn't make sense, why don't we do this?' they'd be able to evidence that and tell you the reasons why. Whereas in [training school] it is the way it is and in the university it is the way they're [academics] told. So they've never experienced it, they're purely going off what they've learned from academics who have learned from other academics. So I think the credibility of trainers makes a massive difference in the training. (PCDA Constable RP07)

Such views were aired about trainers in both the training school and university setting. With importance attached to learning from people with policing experience, university lecturers with no direct policing experience were regarded as the least credible in an informal hierarchy. I discussed these issues with a group of PCDA students during a training session delivered by police officers from the force Problem-Solving Team:

The session involved students working through a scenario to reduce anti-social behaviour in a park. The group expressed enthusiasm about the input, describing how they were learning about problem-solving approaches. There was group consensus it was better to have the session delivered by police officers because they had operational experience. Their views were markedly less positive when discussing the academic parts of their PCDA training. None of them could see much benefit in the university side of the course because the academic inputs were too theory based. The group expressed a clear preference for the more practical police-led sessions. The students described what they felt was a lack of connection between the theoretical and practical elements of their training, and much of what they had learned at university was deemed irrelevant when they went out operationally. (fieldnotes 060722)

The importance of training being delivered by credible individuals has been highlighted previously (Fleming, et al., 2016; Cox & Kirby, 2018) and this case study indicates it remains a pertinent issue. Comments from some questionnaire participants challenged the right of academics, who were perceived to lack operational experience, to influence police practice via their research.

Academic theory is regarded as a central component of changing organisational culture and advancing practice as part of the wider professionalisation agenda (Cox & Kirby, 2018; Tong & Hallenberg, 2018; Hunter & May, 2019). Student responses indicated there was a greater academic focus on matters such as EBP as part of their initial training. However, the benefits of such academic knowledge were not recognised by students who attached greater value to practical aspects of training. Indeed, such views are not new. Charman (2017) observed similar attitudes in her research with officers undergoing training which preceded the PEQF, namely the Initial Police Learning and Development

Programme (IPLDP). Therefore, improving recruit receptivity to classroom-based learning appears to remain an issue.

In contrast to the negative views of academic study expressed by students in this study, Norman (2023) reported more positive views of academic study among serving officers studying for role-related in-service degrees. An inspector provided a possible explanation for this difference in attitude:

So I do think the academic side of it is helping them [students] in ways they don't appreciate right now because they just want to be police officers. They just want to drive fast cars and lock people up (laughs). They just don't fully appreciate the benefits that they're getting from it [academic study]. (Inspector RP03)

The difference in findings between this study and that of Norman (2023) may be due, in part, to recruits believing policing to be the crime-fighting role often portrayed in occupational culture (Reiner, 2012; Demaree, et al., 2013). That some serving officers subsequently express a desire to study for degrees may be influenced by their experiences of policing gained over time. In her research with recruits, Charman (2017) reported that students considered 'crime-fighting' to become less central to their role as their experience of policing increased.

The case study data finds that despite improvements in the academic quality of recruit training, there are difficulties in making classroom knowledge relevant to operational policing and ensuring those delivering training are deemed credible by students. An example of the challenges policing faces in reforming practice despite improved recruit training can be found in stop and search.

7.4 The difference between theory and practice: Stop and Search

Stop and search remains a problematic aspect of operational policing, impacting disproportionately on some communities and therefore affecting public trust and confidence in policing (see for example van Dijk, et al., 2015; Bowling, et al., 2019; Pearson & Rowe, 2020). Community tensions over disproportionate levels of stop and search were cited as a contributing factor in the 2011 urban disorders witnessed across England (Hallsworth & Brotherton, 2011). Stop and search powers are utilised in a variety

of operational roles, one of those being response. Students within response policing discussed learning about stop and search:

The university view was solely 'you shouldn't be stop searching people, it's oppressive. Here are all the cases where it's been shown to be oppressive. Here are these people saying it's oppressive, this is the repercussion of litigation' and (training school name) was very much the same. They wanted you to see a knife in somebody's hand before you searched them..... that's not something you can say as a trainer who's never done a stop search, you can't really give a concrete opinion on it. (PCDA Constable RP07)

A response supervisor discussed reasons for what they thought was a decline in stop and search rates:

An inspector in the office felt stop and search on response had almost stopped as new officers didn't seem to have the skills and confidence to use their stop and search powers. She spoke negatively about the training school, expressing the opinion that training focused too much on the threat of litigation which made new recruits reluctant to use stop and search. The inspector believed officers should be able to find legitimate grounds to use stop and search in the appropriate circumstances. (fieldnotes 250422)

The case study data identified that how stop and search training was delivered by the university and police training school may have created situations where new recruits lacked confidence to use stop and search powers. Evidence emerged to indicate students subsequently learnt how to perform stop and search from more experienced colleagues, as one constable explained:

Training scares you about doing stop and search. When you come to the 'shift', people tell you 'we will teach you how to police properly now'. It sounds like they are doing things wrong when they say that but they aren't. It's about learning your craft and learning how to form grounds out on the street. If you see a group of lads at 3am with hoods up in a burglary area, students might say 'we can't search them' but you speak

to them and if they don't give reasonable answers then your suspicion goes up and you form the grounds. (fieldnotes 260422)

The above comment about 'teaching you how to police properly' echo's Sherman's work some forty years ago when describing how training officers said, '*forget everything they taught you in the academy, kid; I'll show you how police work is really done*' (Sherman, 1982, p.13). The above extract indicates this practice is still active, despite advancements in police training via the PEQF. Experienced officers teaching students how to perform stop and search is an example of officers sharing their experience and craft knowledge (Fleming, et al., 2015; Crawford, 2017; Holdaway, 2019). Indeed, Rowe et al. (2016) argue that procedures like stop and search can only be learnt on the streets. I encountered one response team whose supervisors provided stop and search training for young-in-service officers:

There were two main issues. One was a lack of knowledge and one was confidence. So the two came hand in hand because my favourite phrase in the world is 'knowledge is power.'.... So I made a PowerPoint and did an hour and a half CPD session on stop search. Here's the dos, here's the don'ts. (Sergeant RP06)

An Inspector from the same team described the impact of this training:

We noticed a huge increase after we did that input. We spoke to a lot of people individually, giving them feedback. As a team we went from a handful of stop searches a month, one of the worst performing teams, to one of the best and we were doing 150 a month, so a massive increase. (Inspector RP03)

This stop and search input was initiated by the response team supervisors and not part of any wider organisational-led training package. Such training could be regarded as an example of what Bayley (2018) refers to as '*cop-led learning*' (p.125). Bayley submits that a benefit of cop-led learning is how it enables officers to learn from their patrol colleagues, those who have '*walked the walk,*' rather than people detached from operational policing. The case study highlights how officers who want to improve standards and develop their skills (and those of colleagues) are often reliant on their own knowledge and experience to do so in the absence of organisation-led training.

The data did not identify anything inappropriate about how student officers were taught stop and search by colleagues and supervisors on their teams. The research does raise questions as to why evidence-based learning as part of the PEQF does not appear to give officers the confidence and knowledge to use stop and search powers. One answer may lie in the disconnect between theory and practice discussed earlier. In these circumstances, officers on 'shift' bridge the gap and pass their knowledge and experience on to new recruits. This more informal learning can take the form of continuous CPD, such as that described above, or as part of tutoring or mentoring periods (Charman, 2017; Fielding, 2018).

Difficulties can arise because whilst officers on the 'shift' may possess good practical street skills (Bayley & Bittner, 1984), their knowledge of theory around stop and search issues may be limited if they have not been exposed to PEQF or evidence-based research. For instance, Procedural Justice Theory (PJT) explains that *how* police officers treat people during encounters can have a greater bearing on police legitimacy than the actual outcome of the process itself (Jackson, et al., 2012). Therefore, even if someone is arrested they may regard the action as legitimate if they have been dealt with fairly. The majority of response officers I spoke to about PJT had not heard of the concept:

I asked the two officers about PJT. Neither had heard of it but agreed it made sense when I explained what PJT was. They said this was a form of EBP which would be useful for all officers to know about and understand. (fieldnotes 250422)

The absence of awareness about matters such as PJT indicates longer-serving officers lack academic knowledge to harness with their experience in the way student officers lack experience to combine with the academic knowledge they gain in training. Such a position would indicate EBP is not well-embedded in routine practices in the case study force.

Research literature consistently refers to the importance officers place on experience (Bayley & Bittner, 1984; Lum, et al., 2012; Fleming & Rhodes, 2018; Williams & Cockcroft, 2019). One aim of the PEQF programme was to address the dominance of officer experience in police practice (May, et al., 2017; Smith, 2022). Given the enduring importance of officer experience, the extent to which practices such as stop and search

can be reformed is open to debate, despite greater emphasis on research and EBP in student training. Fielding (2018: 184) discusses such a challenge, noting how the police organisation is likely to shape recruits, rather than them be able to influence the organisation despite having newly acquired knowledge to offer.

With an increased volume of students possessing academic knowledge and entering response policing, the following section examines the wider influence of the PEQF on existing occupational culture as part of any strategy to embed EBP.

7.5 Changing occupational culture

Data in both the response case study and the questionnaire indicates the PEQF programme provides new recruits with a greater level of theoretical knowledge than pre-PEQF trained officers. In respect of efforts to embed EBP in policing, this is a positive position. However, the question of how to provide such academic knowledge to serving officers is one that remains unanswered. The College operates a bursary scheme which provides funding towards academic study by serving officers and staff, with the scheme funding 440 individuals since 2016 (College of Policing, 2022d). This number represents approximately 0.3% of all UK police officers (listed as 147,430 full-time equivalents in March 2023) (Home Office, 2023), thereby highlighting the scale of the challenge.

The response case study afforded the opportunity to assess whether practice is changing to any extent due to students being able to ‘cascade’ their EBP knowledge to more experienced colleagues:

*Absolutely not. It would be comical to think that a load of new sprogs (recruits) are going to come to the shift and change the senior cops' opinions, absolutely never going to happen. Whether that's right or wrong, that's just not going to happen. And I'd go so far as to say if a probationer started spouting on about degrees and evidence-based practice, they'd be shot down straight away.
(Sergeant RP06)*

An experienced sergeant identified with the challenges students faced:

As a sergeant with an academic background, I choose my discussions well with a Chief Superintendent or [other senior

ranks].....If I'm thinking here we go, you know, with maybe sometimes a lack of confidence how do they [students] feel? I mean, it's like a rabbit in the headlights isn't it? (Sergeant RP01)

Similarly, students described the challenges they faced when attempting to do things differently:

You can never persuade, being a sprog, somebody with ten, even two years of experience. So somebody who has a little bit more experience than you will always think more highly of themselves. I'm not speaking for everyone because there are people who will [listen], but the majority of the culture is narrow minded like that. They will learn some things but they will think 'look this is what we've done for the last 10 years and nobody said anything'. It's that kind of attitude. (DHEP Constable RP04)

A student officer also reflected on how more senior colleagues viewed students:

Students are already seen as being really crap so you aren't going to tell anyone else how to do things. (fieldnotes 170522)

Participant responses highlighted an informal hierarchy within response policing with length of service, and therefore experience, a factor in determining an officer's standing. As with the neighbourhood case study, participants described how the 'time-served' notion (Bayley & Bittner, 1984; Charman, 2017) was a feature of response policing. It was evident from the way students were referred to as 'sprog' during fieldwork that their recruit status meant they lacked credibility. Such a situation makes it difficult for students to influence culture and practice with their newfound learning. The views of officers who had not completed the PEQF programme support such an observation:

No, I honestly don't see any difference at all. As I say, if you were sat in a room, you wouldn't know which cohort they [students] came from, because I don't think there's anything new coming through. I'm not really sure what they [students] are being taught and what they're not, but I don't think whatever they're being taught is getting used on a day-to-day practical basis. It's certainly

not coming through operationally here while they're on response with us. (Sergeant RP05)

They [students] learn the same way I did, from the same people. (Constable fieldnotes 270422)

The views expressed above were indicative of responses about the lack of difference in the approach of PEQF officers. Given the absence of understanding, particularly among response supervisors, about what new students learn and the importance attached to length of service (Tilley & Laycock, 2017; Williams & Cockcroft, 2019), it is unsurprising new officers lack the confidence to share their learning. Serving officers suggested new recruits blended into the existing culture, a theme also evident in the neighbourhood case study. Students gave similar accounts of 'fitting-in':

When discussing the degree aspect of PEQF training with an officer who possessed two degrees, they did not hesitate to admit they regarded someone with operational experience as being better qualified to do the job than them, saying 'I'd rather be out with a more experienced officer who knows how to deal with things. I might have two degrees but they will always be better at this job than me. They may not have a degree but they know how to talk to people and deal with things'. (fieldnotes 140522)

Such views reflect the findings of Charman (2017) in her research with recruits. Charman observed how recruits are expected to conform to group norms to gain acceptance within their teams and are therefore likely to maintain the status quo regarding established practices.

The response case study indicates that any increased understanding of EBP is likely to become marginalised when students transition to an environment where established colleagues do not possess such knowledge. Policing has been grappling with the same issue for some time, with Reuss-Ianni (1983) describing recruits having to choose between using formal academy learning or the practical wisdom of their new colleagues. The PEQF represents a significant change to police training, designed to introduce new knowledge and increase professionalism (College of Policing, 2022e). The data in this

study suggests the PEQF may currently have limited value as part of strategies to embed EBP into policing.

A reliance on experience by longer-serving officers often appeared due, in part at least, to a lack of awareness and understanding about EBP rather than any resistance to academic research. Indeed, a number of participants recognised the benefits of utilising academic research in policing:

I think there's definitely a place for it. So I did a degree and then I did a foundation degree in policing as well. So it's something that I'm interested in and I do think it helps in terms of being open to ideas and how we move forward.....I think it's got a place, but I think the day-to-day role and the experience will always take precedence and that's something I don't think we should lose sight of because that's important. That's got just as much value if not more value than academia. (Inspector RP03)

Officers felt research should not be utilised at the expense of officer experience, a view also expressed by some questionnaire participants. The importance officers attach to operational experience was evident across the response case study, from recruit status through to the credibility of police trainers, university lecturers and as highlighted above, academic researchers. Indeed, the value of experience was a theme across all three case studies and the questionnaire. The data therefore reflects literature which argues that introducing EBP alongside experience is more likely to be successful than attempting to minimise or remove experience (Fleming, et al., 2016; Hunter, et al., 2017; Norman, 2023).

Whilst there was evidence of increased EBP awareness among student officers, the observations did not establish such knowledge was being routinely used by the students or shared with their response colleagues. In light of this position, the next section discusses how PEQF implementation has impacted on attempts to increase EBP awareness.

7.6 PEQF credibility

Officers in the response case study discussed a number of PEQF implementation issues relevant to wider organisational attempts to embed EBP into policing. Firstly, participants expressed concerns about the speed of recruitment:

Everything feels a rush. They're coming in, the numbers are big and it's a big rush. We've got to get them through because we've got to achieve this uplift and it all feels a bit of a rush. (Chief Inspector RP02)

The data in this study indicates the March 2023 deadline imposed by the government for 'Uplift' recruitment was problematic due to the large volume of officers having to be recruited prior to the deadline (after which funding is withdrawn). The impact of high student numbers was linked to concerns about tutoring:

Organisationally, I think it must be a really tricky thing to manage [tutoring] because as you say they're coming through in volumes, but I definitely don't think the infrastructure is there, you know. We're forcing people with three years-service to be tutors because we haven't got anyone who wants to be a tutor or we haven't got the quantity of tutors available, which is obviously surely going to have an impact on the learning, potentially, of the new students. (Sergeant RP05)

In her work on police socialisation, Charman (2017) highlights the importance of tutor constables in the development of student officers. Charman established that students copy tutor behaviours, a practice which may be problematic if tutors are not volunteers and suitable for the role. The National Audit Office (Davies, 2022) recently acknowledged the importance of tutoring as part of student training and raised concerns about additional burdens placed on tutors by the current scale of recruitment. This case study indicates matters such as those discussed by Charman remain and may have been exacerbated by Uplift recruitment. Tutoring was not the only topic thought to be affecting student development:

While on patrol with two constables (one being a student), the officers spoke about needing to have body-worn video (BWV) activated at

domestic incidents to comply with force policy. They explained there were not currently enough BWVs for students due to the Uplift numbers. They also spoke about how BWVs needed to be switched on for stop and search or the stop would fail an audit when reviewed. This was a concern for the student who did not have access to a BWV and was worried they would fail an audit through no fault of their own. They expressed frustration about a shortage of vehicles, mobile data terminals and tutors. (fieldnotes 240422)

Situations such as that described above were common throughout the response fieldwork. Participants pointed out that force infrastructures were unable to cope with the demands of equipping so many students. Not having the right equipment left students reliant on colleagues to complete tasks:

So what you're doing is you're sending a student officer onto a team with a tutor who doesn't want to be a tutor. They [student] can't put the body camera on because they haven't got one. They can't search for any information or get any details about the incident because they've not got a mobile data terminal. It's quite intimidating going on to a team for the first time and saying I can't do x, y and z because I've not been given it [equipment] or have not been trained to do it. (PCDA Constable RP07)

Students spoke about struggling to become accepted on a response team due to their lack of organisational experience. Therefore, implementation issues such as a lack of well-trained tutors and equipment to enable them to perform their role are only likely to increase negative perceptions of student officers undergoing the PEQF process.

A further issue highlighted was that response supervisors had little understanding of what the PEQF entailed:

We've restructured how we bring people into the organisation and how they qualify and train. What we haven't done particularly well in my opinion is the infrastructure around that for the leadership, the line management to come along on that journey. You know, we've given them [supervisors] inputs but we haven't trained them, we haven't explained to them what it involves and what they

[students] might need help with. We haven't done that, so that culture shift hits a brick wall straight away, doesn't it? (Chief Inspector RP02)

I wouldn't know, I couldn't tell you genuinely one thing about it. (Sergeant RP06)

Williams and Sondhi (2022) stress the importance of supervisors enabling students to put their academic learning into practice. A lack of awareness about what the PEQF programme entails among response supervisors is likely to mean the rationale for academic elements of the course are not properly understood. Therefore, the increased emphasis on students learning and writing about matters such as EBP may not be valued:

A group of PCDA students explained how their sergeants and inspectors had little understanding of what they [students] needed to evidence as part of the assessment process. The students discussed the protected learning time they were supposed to have to complete their development portfolios. The students described how sergeants would laugh when they requested time to work on their portfolios because policing demand and a shortage of staff on response meant they were required operationally. One officer said that even if he was allocated time in advance, when it came to it he would invariably end up covering scene guards or other incidents. The students' view was that protected learning existed in theory but in reality it was rarely available to them and they seemed to have accepted that as being the default position. (fieldnotes 060722)

This case study highlights how the PEQF is competing with operational policing demands for the necessary time and space to enable students to learn effectively. The Casey Review (2023) identified similar issues, with protected learning time allocated for Metropolitan Police student officers often cancelled for operational reasons. Failure to implement aspects of the programme, such as protected learning, is likely to limit opportunities to embed EBP into police practices. The age of PEQF recruits was also regarded as problematic by some participants.

Officers discussed how in their opinion the PEQF process was attracting younger cohorts of recruits than those seen under previous training programmes. More experienced officers often spoke about matters they associated with younger recruits and the PEQF

process, a theme also present in the public order case study. One such issue was young student officers struggling to cope with the confrontation they faced as a response officer:

It doesn't matter what degree you have and how good at it [academia] you are if you can't hold your own in the city centre with a group intent on committing crime. (fieldnotes from conversation with sergeant 160522)

I don't see how the degree helps you. You might have written 3,000 words on evidence-based policing but that counts for nothing when you're facing up to a 6ft coke head. (fieldnotes from conversation with constable 150522)

Response officers described how their role involved confrontation and there was an implicit expectation officers must be able to 'handle' themselves when dealing with violent incidents. Such views reflect the findings of Loftus (2010) who, in her work on police culture, established that the ability to deal with physical confrontation was respected by uniformed officers. Concerns about student officer ability to deal with confrontation were also expressed in Chapter five in respect of public order policing. This case study indicates it remains necessary for student officers to demonstrate competence in 'street skills' to gain credibility with their colleagues, with the inference being that PEQF training leaves students unprepared for operational policing.

The PEQF programme is a key element of College attempts to embed EBP within policing (May, et al., 2017; Williams, et al., 2019). It is therefore important serving officers and students alike have faith in the scheme and see the benefits it offers. There was little in the way of positive comment about the PEQF across this case study:

I'm not just being anti-degree. I cannot think of one positive out of this process [PEQF]. I haven't seen one as a supervisor, I haven't seen one as an operational officer and I haven't seen one in terms of skills, abilities and training. What I have seen are significant negatives. (Sergeant RP06)

A lack of PEQF credibility emerged as a theme in all three case studies, with the majority of participants questioning the benefits of the scheme. The PEQF was also regarded negatively in the questionnaire data.

Despite there being numerous explanations for students being unprepared, such as tutor capacity, officers often focused on increased academic learning as the reason. Such views may have broader consequences for College aims to increase EBP awareness amongst serving officers if issues with student officers are viewed as the result of academic learning. Negative views of the PEQF were not confined to serving officers, with recruits also questioning the academic aspects of the scheme.

The Uplift programme has impacted on the timescales for the PEQF scheme being introduced in every force. The College planned to fully replace the IPLDP training scheme with the PEQF by December 2019. However, not all forces were able to adopt the PEQF by that date and IPLDP licences were extended until March 2023 to coincide with the Uplift conclusion (House of Commons Public Accounts Committee, 2022). Within the case study force, some officers hoped the IPLDP scheme would be re-introduced. Such a position is no longer hypothetical following the Home Secretary's announcement in November 2022 (Hamilton, 2022) concerning the introduction of a fourth, non-degree, entry route. When students were asked which scheme they would prefer (based on their knowledge of both), the overwhelming answer was the IPLDP:

I think I would choose IPLDP because what we are doing now is a portfolio and that's probably enough. So you gather all your evidence you know, it's a similar idea and I'm going to get paid anyway. I just don't need to do that university stuff, half of which I think is useless and ups my stress. (DHEP Constable RP04)

A recent House of Commons Public Accounts Committee report (2022) questioned whether PEQF training requirements were working as intended. The Home Office responded that the PEQF was *'not about spending a lot of time in the classroom [or] writing theoretical essays but about providing relevant on-the-job training'* (p.11). Students I spoke to expressed views contrary to the Home Office response, often citing excessive time in the classroom and essay writing as negative aspects of their training. Students also felt they were not receiving on-the-job training relevant to their role.

The data identifies that PEQF implementation in the case study force has been problematic on two levels. Firstly, the scheme itself does not seem to have been well-received by students or serving officers, particularly supervisors. Secondly, the situation has been compounded by the Uplift programme placing a strain on organisational ability to provide students with the necessary operational learning and development they require. Whilst the PEQF is a key component of the College strategy to increase EBP utilisation and improve professionalism, it is not the only method for doing so. The next section therefore assesses the wider influence of the College on response officers.

7.7 Engagement with The College of Policing

Awareness of the College and engagement with the College website was limited amongst response officers, a finding also evident in both the questionnaire and neighbourhood data. The College was not something response officers referenced or discussed. Officers lacked an understanding of what the role of the College was:

If I'm honest, if I collared a member of my staff in the corridor and said do you know what's available from the College of Policing, I think the answer is probably no. Now, whether that's a force issue in terms of we don't promote it, or a College issue in terms of they don't promote what's available, it's probably a mixture of the two really. (Chief Inspector RP02)

Some officers described the College as only beneficial for those seeking promotion and others questioned the College's relevance to operational policing:

It's almost got this bad name. I think you know it's probably associated with the Winsor²¹ [report] and things like that. Things that people feel have gone against us uniformed officers. And I think [officers] just feel like there's a complete disconnect between ourselves and the College. So they will think 'what's the College going to tell me you know, as they don't know anything about what

²¹ Sir Tom Winsor was instructed by the government to complete a wide-ranging review of policing. The review was published in 2012 and included recommendations that restructured pay/pension arrangements which were viewed negatively by officers.

we do on a day-to-day basis and they don't appreciate what we do'. So I think people would definitely have the viewpoint that there's nothing there [the College] that's going to help me (laughs). (Inspector RP03)

Such views are consistent with observations by Reuss-Ianni (1983) when describing how street cops viewed management cops introducing practices which did not take into account the practicalities of street-level policing. The above comment suggests the College remains contentious among officers. Recent research by the College also acknowledges a struggle to become relevant to frontline officers (College of Policing, 2022c).

From conversations with students, it was evident they were unaware of the historical issues which resulted in the College being viewed negatively by some officers. The PEQF programme therefore provides an opportunity for College material and resources to be explained in detail to students who are 'blank canvases'. The response case study indicates this opportunity has not been maximised. Students also described a lack of engagement with the College website, other than to locate references for their essays and complete e-learning:

We have training [located] on it [College website] that we have to complete, so mandatory training, e-learning and stuff. But apart from that, it's not like I go on there every day if I need to find some information. I'm not really sure even what sort of resources they've got on there. (DHEP Constable RP04)

Authorised Professional Practice (APP) is directly relevant to response officers given their wide-ranging remit. For example, there is APP guidance on stop and search, mental health, managing critical incidents and risk management. APP therefore provides officers with evidence-based guidance which they are expected to be aware of when dealing with incidents.

However, the response fieldwork highlighted a lack of awareness and use of APP among the majority of response officers including supervisors:

Again, I don't think I've ever seen a frontline sergeant or constable go on to the APP [site]. (Sergeant RP06)

No, I don't think it's something we really look at, I guess because we just deal more with the day-to-day live incidents. So we're really just coming in and managing what's going on right now today. (Inspector RP03)

I showed some students the APP page on the College website. They were not aware of APP but commented it would be useful to learn from and use as an operational guide. An officer familiar with APP had spent a number of years in a specialist department, namely firearms policing:

In firearms it was a bit of a bible, the APP for armed policing.....I'm sure some [response officers] do [refer to APP], but that culture doesn't exist everywhere does it, whereas it does in firearms.....It's bizarre, but that's got to be a College of Policing push hasn't it? There's a cultural issue there, this document [APP] exists that ultimately is a guide to policing that's not being used as it was designed. (Chief Inspector RP02)

The case studies indicate officers in specialist departments are more likely to be aware of APP and use it in their role. In contrast, response officers seldom used APP despite it being relevant to their role, a position also reflected in the questionnaire data.

Participants did use guidance to assist them in their work. A number of officers described using a commercial smartphone application (app) called *Pocket Sergeant*. This app contains legislation and a wide range of other guidance. For example, one document details the Home Office and College of Policing endorsed *Best Use of Stop and Search* scheme. The app requires users to pay a subscription in contrast with the College website, which is a free resource the majority of participants seemed unaware of.

The response fieldwork highlighted a lack awareness about the College role. Participant views indicated the College is not regarded as operationally credible. There was also a lack of APP awareness and use amongst response officers, suggesting evidence-based approaches were not embedded in the response case study. Having discussed response officers' relationship with the College, the concluding section examines role-specific training and CPD as part of efforts to embed EBP.

7.8 Training and CPD Provision

Whilst regular CPD is regarded as part of the professionalisation process (Fielding, 2018; Martin, 2022), participants described a lack of organised CPD and training within response policing:

I'm told, because the force is under review again now that we've come out of that era [austerity], it is being looked at in terms of improving that picture [training]. For at least six years I would say, CPD, evidence-based policing and knowledge improvement has been really lacking in response because austerity cut the number of officers. It made us change how the force operates into the current structure, which squeezed every last minute really of every response officer in terms of actually doing the job of answering calls for service and didn't allow for anything else. (Chief Inspector RP05)

Research discusses the challenges policing faces in maintaining officer development in times of austerity (Fleming, et al., 2015; Martin, 2022). The impact of austerity was evident in the response case study as officers described the difficulties they faced gaining access to training they believed was necessary for their role. Courses enabling officers to become response drivers (allowing them to respond to incidents at high speed when necessary) were described as being in short supply, as was Taser²² training. A lack of such training can impact on an officer's ability to do their job. Officers also equated the level of training they received with the notion of working in a 'specialist' department:

They [response officers] don't feel like specialists at all, but they absolutely should do and should be treated as such as well. I would say we're [response] the most underspent department in the force. We don't get any good training courses and we don't get advanced training courses. We get the worst vehicles, we have

²² Taser is a Conducted Energy Device (CED). It is a less lethal weapon system designed to temporarily incapacitate a person through use of an electrical current that temporarily interferes with the body's neuromuscular system and produces a sensation of intense pain (College of Policing, 2022).

the worst shift pattern and we have the worst equipment.

Nothing's changed. (Sergeant RP06)

The literature reminds us the College was introduced as part of a strategy to professionalise policing (Fleming, et al., 2016; Fielding, 2018; Martin, 2022). However, participants did not think there had been any discernable moves towards a more professional 'look and feel' to response policing, as one constable with 10 years-service explained:

What can we be professional in? We don't deal with much crime. It's all mental health, counselling and being a social worker. We don't get any training in any of that. He was sceptical about whether professionalism was being achieved, stating there needed to be more training to increase professionalism. He also spoke negatively about e-learning inputs being used in training, describing them as being insufficient for improving officer knowledge. (fieldnotes 180522)

E-learning has become an established element of officer CPD (Honest, 2020) and was regarded negatively by officers in the neighbourhood case study. Response staff were equally sceptical about the value of e-learning as a mechanism for training. However, they did regard training as a component of professionalism, a finding also reported by questionnaire participants. E-learning was thought to be more about compliance than learning:

Box ticking yeah (laughs). Yeah, it is [e-learning]. It's 'we've told you about this and on this date you've pressed play and it's been completed'. Therefore, it's something they can go back to, isn't it, if officers fall foul.... It's a way of the organisation saying that we've trained 4,000 people in domestic abuse, but they haven't. Where's the actual learning? (Sergeant RP05)

Fielding (2018) argues that police training has often struggled to meet the requirements of various professionalisation agendas and this case study indicates similar issues remain. Whilst response officers described a lack of training in comparison to other specialist departments, their role (response) was thought to carry significant risks:

If you actually look at the day-to-day threat, harm and risk, there's more risk with response officers getting it wrong than there is with a firearms officer. So it is disjointed, it should be on a par with armed policing. But as you know our armed response policing is a specialism, it's tightly nationally controlled in terms of your licensing etc. and that model doesn't look similar in response policing.....we [response] have to do the best we can with what we've got but that hasn't lent itself to professionalising the role.
(Chief Inspector RP02)

Response policing encompasses a broad range of incidents and response officers are often first at the scene of serious crimes such as murder and sexual offences. The training response officers receive should reflect the nature of incidents they may have to attend. However, Manning (2005) observes how patrol officers receive little training yet occupy key positions in the organisation in terms of operational decision-making.

An emergent theme during response observations was the large volume of incidents response officers attended where mental health was a factor. Examples included people threatening suicide, missing persons, youths attacking their parents and child neglect. When discussing CPD with officers, a number commented on the lack of training they received in mental health:

If someone's feeling suicidal, then the mental health team should be speaking to them, not a police officer who's completely unequipped to deal with any serious mental health issues.
(Constable RP07)

During one observation, I attended an incident of the sort officers viewed as routine in respect of mental health:

A 14-year-old with mental health issues had attacked his father at home. The boy's parents described regularly calling police to deal with his behaviour. They were clearly upset and frustrated at the situation they were in. The boy's mother recognised police were not the most appropriate agency to deal with the situation but she felt there was no other option given the lack of available support from social care agencies. Given the regularity with which police attended such incidents,

the parents argued there should be more mental health training for officers. They described how some officers dealt with the situation proportionately and effectively but others were 'hyped up and ready to use Taser' because the call indicated violence. The parents expressed concerns that officers lacked the skills and knowledge to deal with such situations. After a lengthy period spent resolving the incident, the officers described being ill-equipped to effectively such situations and also felt quite strongly that they were not the most appropriate agency to deal with mental health issues. The officers were resigned to the fact that, having been there before, this would not be their last visit to this address to deal with similar incidents. (fieldnotes 180522)

Participants acknowledged that mental health incidents can be complex and involve levels of risk which may leave them exposed to investigation in the event of the wrong decision being made (see Brain and Owens, 2015). One officer explained how a lack of knowledge and confidence about mental health issues may result in officers making risk averse decisions to detain someone using police powers as it was the 'safest' option for the officer:

We're quite risk averse as an organisation I think. Like we had a mental health job that I went to and he was smiling, laughing and happy but he said he was going to kill himself. I tried all the options and said, 'can I take you to hospital voluntarily'? He said, 'you can do, but I'll throw myself in the river'. I said, 'can I take you home to family'? And he said, 'you can do, but I'll hang myself at home'. And he just looked at me and said, 'your only option is to sit with me in the hospital.' And he's a frequent 136²³ that's brought in every other day. And that was unavoidable. So myself, I know he's not going to do anything, 99.9% he wouldn't go and harm himself. He is just doing it because he's lonely, which has been documented after previous incidents. But myself, the sergeant and inspector all agreed that the only option was to 136

²³ Section 136 *Mental Health Act* allows a police officer to remove to a place of safety (or keep them there), a person suffering from a mental disorder who is in immediate need of care and control.

just in case he was to go and kill himself on that one occasion, and it would be my responsibility. (Constable RP07)

Whilst the debate about whether police should deal with mental health related calls is outside the scope of this research, the fact remains they routinely respond to such incidents (see McKenna, et al., 2015; Boulton, et al., 2017; Lane, 2019). Officers are less likely to make evidence-based decisions around mental health risks. Instead, they take decisions which are risk averse, may result in the use of force, and commit resources to lengthy mental health assessments which may be unnecessary. McDaniel (2018) observes that mental health specialists are likely to be less risk averse than police officers who are often poorly trained in mental health.

Vitale (2021) argues that their lack of training in mental health issues make police officers unsuitable as the initial response to incidents primarily related to mental health. Vitale discusses how police can escalate tensions at such incidents due to their standard officer training requiring them to dominate situations and gain control of people, using force if necessary. Such an approach often goes against strategies to deal with people suffering mental health episodes. McDaniel (2018) discusses how APP contains information to assist officers in dealing with mental health related incidents. However, this case study and questionnaire data suggests awareness and use of APP is limited among operational officers.

The PEQF provides the opportunity to raise awareness about mental health issues among students, who one tutor constable described as often worrying about complaints and litigation in respect of mental health incidents. However, a student explained how their cohort had received six hours training on health and safety and only two hours on dealing with mental health. Students had to register complaints with the police training school to receive a full day of mental health training. One sergeant described organising CPD for their team to address some of these issues:

Our team was sectioning way more people than anyone else and it was a problem. So by actually discussing our powers, our Section 136's hit the floor and that's because we were using alternative disposals, dealing with outpatient services etc. (Sergeant RP06)

All three case studies, along with questionnaire data, highlighted that officers have an appetite for relevant role-specific training and CPD delivered in appropriate formats. Current organisational structures restrict capacity for such activity within response policing. The Strategic Review of Policing (Police Foundation, 2022) highlighted a lack of CPD for officers nationally and recommended greater investment in training by forces, with officers allocated a minimum number of hours per year for CPD. The Strategic Review also recommended a 'license to practice' for police officers. The proposal is for an officer's licence to be renewed every five years if the officer demonstrates personal development in the form of qualifications, an interview or portfolio completion. Response participants were sceptical about such a scheme:

You know, you're just asking people to go out and do the job day in, day out aren't you with very little substance to what they're doing. They are just going out and they do what they always do. So I think it'd be harsh then every five years to then come at them with, 'you're not doing this right, you're not doing that right' without anything to back it up, without any sort of training or guidance.
(Sergeant RP05)

They wouldn't be able to get rid of loads of officers, they would just get around it and sign everyone off. (constable fieldnotes 140522)

None of the officers I spoke to about the licensing proposal thought it was a positive idea, with most citing a lack of CPD as a barrier to any such scheme. Similarly, the notion of a licence to practice was not deemed to be one of the more important characteristics of professionalism within the questionnaire data. Whilst licensing exists in other professions such as medicine (Archer, et al., 2015) it does not apply to policing other than some role-specific training e.g. licensed search training. However, firearms policing does provide an example of officers effectively being licensed through the completion of regular training and CPD:

Certainly in this force I think every sixth week is a [firearms] training week so you know it's coming, you know why it exists. It's that's why again isn't it, why are we doing this? We're doing it because we're AFOs (authorised firearms officer) and it keeps us in license and it's knowledge that we will use practically when we

deploy.....Firearms policing is tightly and professionally controlled in terms of training and licensing. A lot of that has come from previous evidence-based policing that's fed through nationally around armed policing. (Chief Inspector RP02)

Given the potentially lethal consequences of the police discharging a firearm, it is important officers undergo regular training to deal with incidents requiring a firearms deployment. Response officers are also likely to encounter violent people regularly. For example, during fieldwork officers attended an incident where a man had been attacked with a hammer and participants described routinely dealing with incidents involving knives. In contrast to AFOs training every six weeks, levels of annual response officer personal safety training (PST) were regarded as insufficient by participants:

We do refreshers for first aid every year. You know, basic things like that and self-defence which I think they are improving now. I think it's going to be two days next year but I don't think that's enough really. (Constable RP04)

A chief inspector with experience of both AFO and PST training reflected on the quality of response PST training:

Everybody I think sees it [PST] as, it's a bit crap. It's a bit half-arsed. It's a minimum standard that we've got to do.....They can't associate it with what they actually do day-to-day in their role. Whereas firearms officers can and their training is specific to the tactics they implement. (Chief Inspector RP02)

The requirement for response officers to deal with violent people on a routine basis means the amount and quality of safety training they receive should be similar to that of their armed colleagues. That is without taking account of the expanse of knowledge they are required to possess to deal with a multitude of situations. A current lack of CPD for aspects of their role highlights difficulties in providing the requisite time for officers to increase their understanding of EBP:

I can't imagine a response officer being told 'you have two hours on a Friday afternoon to do some CPD. Let's learn about EBP'. You know what I mean? It's a case of, when are they going to do

that in reality versus what you'd love them to do and how do we meet in the middle? (Sergeant RP01)

Firearms training and development is regulated by the National Police Firearms Training Curriculum (NPFTC). APP states the NPFTC provides officers *'with continued professional development, the basis of a professional register for practitioners and managers and a vehicle for promulgating good practice in response to lessons learnt'* (College of Policing, 2022f). With such a framework, firearms policing serves as an example of a professional and evidence-based department utilising regular role-related CPD. This case study identified that response policing does not operate in a similar manner, a point further illustrated by the post-PEQF experiences of students.

Both the response case study and questionnaire data illustrate how students possess a greater awareness of concepts such as EBP having participated in degree-level learning. Therefore, the current position will see these officers go from intensive learning as part of their training to one where there is minimal CPD, much of which is via e-learning:

I think there will be an attrition rate you know of this Uplift generation in a few years and I've got to say, I can't blame them to a degree, particularly if they do go through this whole thing, come out the other end with a degree and then it just stops. You know, there's no evidence-based learning beyond that, there's little CPD, it becomes a little bit stagnant. You've got to almost carry that on, haven't you? (Chief Inspector RP02)

The above extract encapsulates what the data in this study highlights as a barrier to embedding EBP into policing. Whilst significant investment has been made in the PEQF process, there is little evidence of any such investment taking place in the wider organisation (Norman, 2023). The questionnaire findings on EBP as a feature of appraisal and promotion processes indicate the lack of any organisational framework within which to embed EBP, an observation also made by Norman (2023) in her research with in-service degree students.

Professional development is a key pillar of the professionalisation drive (Rogers & Smith, 2018). This case study highlights the challenges of moving from what Fielding (2018) refers to as the *'rhetoric of professionalisation'* (p.224) to a position where a model such

as that used in firearms policing is implemented in response policing. Doing so would provide opportunities to embed EBP in policing as part of the professionalisation agenda.

7.9 Chapter summary

This chapter examined EBP awareness and utilisation within the response policing function, the primary police resource for dealing with emergency calls requiring immediate action.

The fieldwork established an awareness of EBP at a strategic level and among response supervisors. There was a distinction at constable level between PEQF officers who understood EBP and non-PEQF trained officers unaware of the term. The chapter discussed the impact of PEQF training. Students regarded operational credibility as being important and attached greater value to what they learnt from trainers with relevant policing experience.

Practical challenges emerged from the data in respect of PEQF implementation, with supervisors admitting to having very little knowledge of what the PEQF entailed and students reporting a lack of protected learning time. The findings highlight how the government Uplift programme has resulted in logistical difficulties for the training of new response recruits. Collectively, these issues challenge PEQF credibility, a programme which is a central feature of aims to embed EBP in policing.

Awareness of the College role among participants was low and very few officers reported using the College website. The College was not regarded as relevant to what operational officers dealt with on a daily basis and there was an associated lack of engagement with APP. Officers reported having to comply with force policy and process in a way that would prevent them from routinely considering EBP in their work. Therefore, the response case study produced little in the way of evidence to support EBP being utilised by officers and EBP could not be considered to be embedded in the response function.

The fieldwork established that response officers do not have access to the regular training and CPD they associate with professionalism. Austerity was viewed as a factor in the lack of training. A comparison between response and firearms policing highlighted that officers can face similar levels of threat and risk in both roles. While firearms policing advocates the routine utilisation of EBP to improve practice via regular CPD, response

policing currently lacks the capacity to deliver a similar model. The final chapter discusses the overall research findings and provides conclusions along with recommendations for policy and further research.

Chapter 8 Conclusion

This concluding chapter draws the findings of the thesis together and provides potential recommendations going forward. This research has shown that evidence-based practice (EBP) has not become embedded in UK policing in the way envisaged as part of the professionalisation agenda put forward by the College of Policing (the College) (College of Policing, 2014). This thesis makes a unique contribution to the literature and continuing debate about professionalisation, EBP and education in policing. An original research methodology was devised to gather a broad range of data from multiple sources to answer the primary research question:

‘To what extent is evidence-based practice currently embedded in UK policing as part of the wider professionalisation process?’

Mixed methods were utilised and the quantitative data gathered during the first phase served the purposes of both informing the subsequent qualitative fieldwork and being of sufficient depth to be presented as a standalone chapter in the research findings. The qualitative aspect of the fieldwork was designed to gather data in different operational settings and from a broad range of actors in the chosen environments. The decision to situate each case study in a different force provided the opportunity to analyse themes evident across multiple police organisations. The diverse range of methods employed extended the scope of the research beyond the embedding of EBP and enabled data to be gathered on a broad range of topics which form part of the wider professionalisation agenda currently being pursued in UK policing.

The qualitative fieldwork took place in the midst of the Uplift recruitment campaign and during the initial stages of the Policing Education Qualifications Framework (PEQF). The ethnographic and interview data from the case studies provides a rich insider view of operational policing in the midst of these significant events, which are central components of the professionalisation process. The findings further demonstrate the need to develop effective strategies to take the entire workforce on the professionalisation ‘journey’, not just new recruits. The empirical evidence gathered also complements existing work which examines the police professionalisation agenda from a critical perspective.

On reflection I consider the themes apparent in the questionnaire to broadly align with those in the case studies. There were no significant contradictions evident between the quantitative and qualitative data, a position which strengthens the overall findings. The thesis demonstrates that there have been significant barriers to the implementation and utilisation of EBP. This work establishes there are also issues relating to awareness, understanding, acceptance and engagement with EBP. The thesis has used the terms awareness, understanding, acceptance, engagement and utilisation when discussing and analysing data on EBP to enable more nuanced discussion about the extent to which EBP is embedded in UK policing. What emerged from the data are the challenges and complexity associated with embedding EBP.

A multitude of factors affect the ability of police forces to embed EBP. Whilst the PEQF is increasing awareness of EBP among new recruits, there are structural barriers limiting the likelihood of this approach being successful and embedded in the workplace. A fundamental issue is the lack of investment in educating serving officers about EBP as part of the wider professionalisation agenda. Not raising awareness and access to EBP among the workforce means the experience-based culture continues to prevail because officers lack alternative options in practice. Despite the challenges, the data offers optimism that officer attitudes towards research and academia are not as universally and negatively entrenched as some literature suggests (Bradley & Nixon, 2009; van Dijk, et al., 2015; Tompson, et al., 2017). The research findings in this chapter are presented and grouped as four central themes:

1. College of Policing credibility
2. Receptivity to EBP
3. Implementation - Structural barriers
4. Implementation - Cultural barriers

The chapter discusses each of these themes, beginning with the credibility of the College.

8.1 College of Policing credibility

The College was established to implement the government accepted Neyroud recommendations and drive the police professionalisation agenda. Strategies the College sought to employ to advance professionalism included Authorised Professional Practice (APP), the PEQF and the What Works Centre for Crime Reduction (WWCCR). All of these

mechanisms embraced EBP and provided opportunities to embed the concept in policing. What emerged from all strands of the research was evidence of how the College has struggled to progress the professionalisation agenda, with College credibility being a central theme.

The College was established in 2012, a time when austerity was taking effect in terms of reduced policing budgets and officer numbers. Some officers subsequently and very quickly associated the College with the impact of austerity on policing (Hoggett, et al., 2014). This research established such views still exist, as some participants suggested the circumstances in which the College was created affects current levels of officer engagement with the College. In some respects, it was unfortunate timing that the College was established as austerity began to bite because the association has dogged the College in subsequent years. Another challenge for the College is the fact many officers do not regard the College as relevant to them.

The early idea of registration and officers paying a subscription to become College members in a similar way to other professions was not popular among officers and has yet to be introduced (Fielding, 2018). While the College is still portrayed as the professional body for police officers, the data in this study shows rank-and-file officers lack an awareness of the College being their professional body and do not view themselves as formally affiliated to the College. Membership was not deemed to be an important element of professionalism by questionnaire participants. Exceptions in the fieldwork were often senior officers seeking career development/promotion or those in specialist command roles e.g. public order.

Whilst the College was designed to move beyond the specialist training and career development focus of previous police training organisations, this study suggests the majority of officers have observed little evidence of a change of direction. A neighbourhood superintendent summarised the current position well: *'I'm somebody that if you take a look at my profile, I ought to be loving the College. If they [the College] can't bring me on board, they haven't got a bloody chance, have they?'*

Operational guidance and training material was a point of discussion among participants and the College was thought to be 'out of touch' with the realities of operational policing by officers. For example, operational guidance around matters such as reasonable

grounds for stop and search was considered ineffective and unhelpful by response officers. In this study College staff were regarded by officers as being detached from the streets, similar to the management cops in Reuss-Ianni's work (1983). This point was made by a response sergeant: *'Some of the things they [College staff] say that we should do and say are just not things that would happen in reality. When was the last time those people actually did an operational policing shift?'* Such views illustrate the difficulties the College faces in gaining credibility among frontline staff.

The ability of the College to keep pace with operational trends was a further issue. Officers in the football case study often described training and guidance provided by the College as outdated due to the time taken to produce it. In one instance, College training material still referred to a protest group (the English Defence League) which no longer existed in any substantive form. A chief inspector spoke about the challenge of making APP 'more of a living and relevant document' when discussing how a recent report from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) on climate protests offered current practical guidance for commanders. The chief inspector felt the HMICFRS guidance conflicted with what APP detailed as best practice. It is recognised that the College task of keeping operational guidance current and relevant is a sizeable one. However, practitioners in this research expressed concern that current methods used by the College struggled to maintain relevance to emergent operational challenges. Training was also the subject of debate when discussing recent proposals to licence officers to practice.

The Strategic Review of Policing (Police Foundation, 2022) revived the original proposal to register officers, with a recommendation that police officers should be licenced to practice every five years in a College managed process. Participants disagreed with this idea and a number cited the lack of training they received as a fundamental reason why such a scheme would not work. A response sergeant aptly reflected this view: *'It would be harsh every five years to come at them [officers] with 'you are not doing this right' without any sort of training or guidance'*. The general view was that the licensing of officers by the College would be a 'tick box' exercise and forces would find ways to sign everybody off as competent.

As highlighted in Chapter seven, firearms policing is effectively licensed through regular training and assessment. Officers in the neighbourhood and response case studies spoke

positively about the amount of training firearms officers received. This study shows how the credibility of suggestions that officers become registered/licensed to practice is affected by officer views on training and guidance. A form of registration/licence to practice in a department (e.g. firearms) with sufficient training is regarded as normal but in departments with little training (e.g. response), being licensed to practice is viewed negatively. Therefore, a College administered scheme to register/licence officers every five years is likely to be viewed cynically as another 'good idea', which lacks credibility because the infrastructure does not exist in forces to meaningfully support it in mainstream policing.

The final and arguably most prominent topic relating to College credibility is the PEQF programme. The relationship between policing and academia has not always been positive and the introduction of degree-level education in police forces reliant on experience and craft knowledge was likely to pose challenges. The College has faced criticism about the PEQF since the programme was announced in 2016. Norman (2023) explains how the scheme was met with scorn by serving officers, due in part to an implied suggestion that serving officers were not professional if they did not possess a degree. A similar position among serving officers was evident in this study.

Many participants challenged the notion of the degree process equipping students for the practicalities of operational policing. The comments of a sergeant reflected concerns about the ability of new recruits to deal with confrontation: *'You've recruited someone who may be really good academically but come back to me when you've had a fight or a big argument and talked your way out of it'*. The current study highlighted how officers view the College as being responsible for the PEQF programme. The lack of positive comment about any aspect of the PEQF among participants, including student officers, at the time this research took place brings College credibility into question. Recent developments and suggestions to remove mandatory degree requirements are likely to compound the lack of College credibility.

The PEQF was a key feature of the professionalisation agenda in March 2020. However, at the time of writing (September 2023) the future of the PEQF is uncertain. The proposed new fourth non-degree route is currently being designed although the degree pathways remain active. Part of the College rationale for degree-level qualification was to recognise the level at which police officers operate (College of Policing, 2020). The current direction

of travel away from degree education has implications for notions of police professionalism associated with the College, as both the professional body for policing and the architect of the PEQF. The removal of mandatory degree requirements so heavily championed as necessary for the professionalisation of policing (Neyroud, 2011; College of Policing, 2020) leaves the College facing questions about how such a situation has arisen five years after the PEQF commenced.

This research has identified how the matters discussed above have left the College with a credibility issue among police officers, particularly the rank-and-file. Such a situation becomes problematic in the context of embedding EBP given that important EBP resources, such as APP and the What Works information, are located on the College website. If officers do not regard the College as credible in principle, they are less likely to proactively engage with resources the College has developed to help embed EBP.

However, an important point this thesis adds to the literature is that whilst much of the negativity expressed by research participants was directed towards the College, the ability of the College to directly influence the extent to which forces embrace EBP only goes so far. Whilst many of the policies discussed in this thesis originate from the College, the success or failure of them is largely dependent on how much individual forces engage with the process as the College is powerless to enforce individual policies. The College is likely to be viewed as culpable for failings (which may well be beyond their control) by people who lack a nuanced understanding, further affecting College credibility. Taking the view that the College is wholly responsible for shortcomings in the embedding of EBP does not account for the role of individual forces in the process. This is because, as this research demonstrates, forces are routinely missing opportunities to use College-provided resources (e.g. APP/WWCCR) to raise EBP awareness. The following section looks at officer attitudes towards EBP.

8.2 Receptivity to EBP

Although this study highlights barriers to embedding EBP, it identified an appetite among officers to engage with it. As a former officer, this finding surprised me somewhat given the literature discussing negative police attitudes towards academia (May, et al., 2017;

Tompson, et al., 2017) and the lack of EBP visibility I experienced during my service. Positive attitudes towards EBP, whilst not unconditional, were evident across the data.

The questionnaire data established a willingness among officers to consider utilising academic research/EBP, with only a minority reporting research as not relevant to their role. Many officers in the neighbourhood case study were unaware of the WWCCR online toolkit. Once I had explained the premise of EBP and shown them where the toolkit was located, they were generally enthusiastic about it as a resource to consult. Fleming and Wingrove (2017) also observed more positive officer attitudes upon completion of EBP training. Officers in both the response and neighbourhood case studies reported using commercial smartphone apps for guidance. Whilst officers regarded their experience and craft knowledge as important, this thesis established that officers did seek some form of operational guidance. Although officers expressed a willingness to engage with EBP, they felt it should complement their operational experience rather than replace it.

The importance officers attach to their craft knowledge and experience, evident both within existing literature (Willis & Mastrofski, 2018; Fleming & Rhodes, 2018; Holdaway, 2019) and this study, suggests it would be difficult to achieve a position where officer decisions were made solely on the basis of EBP. For example, in the football case study a Dedicated Football Officer emphasised the importance of combining his knowledge and experience of supporters with crowd theory research to risk assess fan groups effectively. The notion of evidence-informed practice has been proffered by policing scholars as a concept which combines academic research with officer craft knowledge and experience (Fleming, et al., 2016; Hunter, et al., 2019). This study offers optimism such an approach would gain traction, because in the questionnaire officers reported proficiency in role, training, experience, education and operational tradecraft as the most important elements of professionalism. However, the structural barriers discussed later in this chapter would still have to be addressed.

The most recent annual report on police performance by HMICFRS (2023) highlighted that the police workforce is increasingly under-skilled, due in part to the large influx of Uplift recruits. This thesis evidences how a lack of training for frontline officers contributes to this situation. HMICFRS recommended that *'forces need to make sure that officers receive the appropriate levels of training, guidance and supervision'* (p.22). This study established that many officers are frustrated at the lack of training available to support their learning

and development, a situation summarised by a chief inspector: *'It's quite ad hoc at the minute but hopefully we'll get into a position where we can professionalise response with CPD and bespoke training days'*.

There was an expectation among officers that their organisation would provide them with learning opportunities. The majority of questionnaire participants reported not routinely reading any role-related professional publications. For example, 73.9% of constables reported rarely/never reading professional policing publications. 46% of superintendents (81.25% of whom were educated to Masters level) provided the same answer. This finding in the questionnaire highlights that in policing, increased education levels do not appear to have created the culture of self-development associated with professions such as medicine. Hough and Stanko (2020) observe that one trait of professionalism is how individuals take responsibility for keeping themselves updated with relevant knowledge. There was little evidence across the case studies of officers undertaking self-initiated learning.

In addition to evidence of positive attitudes towards EBP, this research gathered data on examples of EBP being utilised operationally, for example the hot-spot and trauma-informed practice (TIP) initiatives discussed in Chapter six. At the centre of these examples were individual officers who possessed both understanding of and commitment to an EBP ethos. Officers I encountered in the case studies with detailed EBP knowledge were the exception rather than the rule, highlighting that EBP remains confined to a small number of officers (Hunter & May, 2019). The challenge is how to move the status of EBP beyond the confines of a minority of officers.

The way in which EBP is 'sold' to officers by leaders could increase receptivity to EBP initiatives. A superintendent described how explaining concepts in familiar operational language was preferable to using a data-focused approach likely to disengage officers. The importance of leadership to get officers positively engaged with EBP initiatives was evident within this study. Questionnaire data highlighted that EBP was not routinely advocated by supervisors, particularly at rank-and-file level. The neighbourhood case study identified passive and active leadership in relation to a hot spot policing initiative.

Passive leaders supported the EBP initiative in principle but did not actively ensure their staff fully participated. A lack of consistency among leaders made the delivery of the hot

spot initiative more challenging, as one inspector explained: *'If an inspector doesn't want to do something with their team, then that will trickle down and the team will know that it's not a priority for that inspector. They'll work a way round, just paying lip service but not doing it properly'*. One senior officer referred to 'the frozen middle' of leadership as being officers at inspector and chief inspector rank who are capable of blocking the implementation of an EBP initiative, even if introduced by a more senior officer: *'I had a chief inspector previously who worked for me and he wasn't on board [with EBP]. He made out that he was but I know he wasn't because the reality was not being delivered'*. This study highlights the difficulties of achieving consistent leadership support for EBP, even within the same department.

This thesis also raises the question of whether some policing functions are better suited to utilising EBP than others. The three case studies provided data about how EBP is (or not) used in varying contexts across different forces. Football policing operations are pre-planned and it was evident public order commanders were cognisant of the public order evidence-base when devising operational plans. However, as noted when discussing matters such as fan engagement and dress code there are a multitude of factors (e.g. experience, training, risk aversion) which influence the extent to which EBP forms part of an operation. Whilst the public order case study contained evidence of EBP utilisation, the lack of wider awareness and understanding among staff of how the concept informed operational decisions often limited its benefits.

In the neighbourhood study, the problem-solving aspect of the role lent itself to the utilisation of EBP. However, the lack of EBP knowledge among neighbourhood officers meant they were not able to routinely engage with EBP in their work. The College website was rarely used at all by neighbourhood officers, as a *Police Now* constable explained: *'I don't think of the College of Policing every day. I know they exist and give us guidance and expectations, but I can't remember the last time I went on their website'*. Therefore, simply improving awareness of available College resources among officers may increase the likelihood of EBP utilisation in neighbourhood policing. The response fieldwork provided a different perspective.

At an operational level, opportunities to utilise EBP were limited in the response case study force. In addition to issues associated with operational demand, officers often had to comply with force policy to resolve an incident. Participants described how their ability

to use discretion was limited and they were often unable to resolve incidents in a way they felt was appropriate in the circumstances. For example, one incident involving a vulnerable youth saw an officer having to argue their case with supervisors and step outside force policy to achieve what they regarded as the appropriate outcome.

Regardless of knowledge levels, such situations suggest response policing in its current form does not lend itself to practitioner use of EBP. Restricting officer discretion highlights the difficulties of establishing what police professionalism means because, as Martin (2022) points out, practitioner autonomy is often cited as a characteristic of professionalism.

Having considered officer receptivity to EBP, the next two sections discuss the role of police forces in embedding EBP within their organisations. The issues identified in these sections relate to implementation and fall broadly under two themes, structural and cultural barriers. Structural barriers which, as demonstrated, influence cultural barriers.

8.3 Implementation: Structural barriers

This section identifies and discusses the following structural barriers affecting the embedding of EBP:

1. Lack of capability to operationalise EBP
2. Training and Continuous Professional Development (CPD)
3. Impact of the Uplift scheme
4. The effects of austerity.

8.3.1 Lack of capability to operationalise EBP

The national oversight role of the College means individual police forces take responsibility for embedding EBP in their organisations by utilising College resources such as APP and WWCCR. Evidence emerged in all three case studies that strategies to utilise EBP existed within each force at a senior level. EBP boards, Problem-Solving Teams and an 'EBP co-ordinator' role were examples of approaches forces adopted. Furthermore, the case study forces were all part of police/academic collaboration arrangements with universities (to varying degrees). Whilst these measures demonstrate tangible evidence of responsibility transitioning from the College to individual forces, beyond them the situation becomes complex, as one inspector illustrated: *'While we have an EBP board,*

the operational staff would never know this to be the case! Our force has yet to move from a theoretical appreciation of the need to include EBP in its operational planning’.

This study extends literature on EBP uptake in forces (Evans, 2020) by examining the extent to which such strategies translate into operational practice. The data established a number of challenges affecting the extent to which EBP becomes embedded in a force.

Awareness and understanding of EBP amongst officers is necessary for the concept to become embedded in a police force. Whilst questionnaire data identified high levels of awareness of the term EBP, the case studies found that understanding of EBP often differed from the formal College definition. Officers interviewed regularly defined the use of crime data to inform resource deployment as being EBP. This research therefore suggests the relationship between EBP and academic research is not well understood, a point evident in questionnaire data showing that only 3.7% of respondents accessed the College website to utilise academic research. The data identified a lack of organisational signposting/training as a barrier to raising officer awareness about College resources, such as the WWCCR and APP. As discussed above, College credibility is a factor in the extent to which officers engage with the College website. Additionally, very few participants in the case study forces displayed an awareness of any collaboration between their force and a university. Forces need to acknowledge these issues and adopt proactive strategies to engage with officers and help them understand the merits of EBP and the associated resources available to them.

Having established via the questionnaire data that few participants used the WWCCR (2.7%), the case studies provided opportunities to explore this point. The most common explanation was that officers did not know the WWCCR or online toolkit existed as opposed to any resistance to academic research. The overall situation was similar in respect of APP, with almost half of all questionnaire participants reporting rarely/never using APP. There was also a lack of awareness and utilisation of APP among response case study officers. Such figures are particularly concerning given APP is regarded by the College as the primary reference source for frontline officers as part of their role and provides justification for operational decision-making. Little is currently known about officer engagement with APP and this study highlights that APP is not routinely being used by officers as anticipated by the College. This research exposes how existing

processes are not being used to increase the utilisation of evidence-based research such as that contained within APP.

One element of the College professionalisation strategy was to make EBP a routine part of police promotion and appraisal processes by 2020 (College of Policing, 2014). This thesis highlights how promotion and appraisal processes are not being used to embed EBP across policing. Norman (2023) also observed how in-service degrees attained by her research participants were not viewed as valid components of promotion and appraisal processes by managers. Not using existing processes more effectively to embed EBP is a missed opportunity and is, as Norman asserts, likely to de-motivate officers developing themselves academically. Furthermore, forces not using these processes to recognise education sends a message to staff that education is not a valued commodity in policing. Achieving the objective of making EBP part of promotion/appraisal processes is, to a significant extent, beyond the control of the College because it is reliant on forces to embed the policy. Barriers within forces which have prevented adoption of the policy mean an important element of the College professionalisation strategy is not routine practice.

The issues discussed above highlight barriers in forces which mean EBP awareness remains limited. The College website provides a range of resources to support forces in embedding EBP. This study has established that whilst such resources are important, their existence alone is not sufficient to provide frontline officers with the necessary awareness and understanding of EBP. Effective strategies to embed EBP require proactive programmes of work to ensure officers understand what resources are available and how to utilise them. The lack of force structures through which to raise EBP awareness exposes the College's current lack of capability to deliver on its professionalisation agenda.

This research has revealed wider issues about how forces and the College engage (or not) with frontline staff. A recent homicide prevention report by HMICFRS (2023a) identified that recommendations from homicides were often not effectively communicated to frontline staff. This research provides a number of explanations as to why this situation occurs. If processes do not exist to ensure lessons from serious crimes such as homicide are effectively communicated to frontline staff, it is unlikely that information about EBP will reach them. As this study established through the case studies, there is a marked

difference between information being available on the College website, and officers being proactively signposted to it and then given the time and support to understand how to use it in their role. Moving beyond the lack of processes to raise awareness of EBP, the next section focuses on barriers pertinent to training.

8.3.2 Training and Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

Regular training and CPD are crucial components of professionalism (Hough & Stanko, 2020; Martin, 2022) and were identified as necessary to develop skills and knowledge in frontline roles by Neyroud (2011). This research highlights the impact of austerity on officer training in frontline roles such as response and neighbourhood policing. The response case study in particular showed how the necessity to meet operational demands had resulted in training days being removed from response shift patterns. Reductions in training are a barrier to raising awareness and understanding of EBP. At a basic level, CPD sessions could be used to 'advertise' the College resources discussed above. More fundamentally, the lack of training detracts from the broader professionalisation process as officers reported not being able to access training directly relevant to their daily role, a point made by a neighbourhood sergeant: *'the five days a year which we can fit in isn't enough if you want to professionalise policing'*. Looking beyond the general lack of training provided for officers, both the content and method of delivery are relevant parts of efforts to embed EBP.

When discussing police training in the context of professionalisation, Holdaway (2018) stresses the importance of providing officers with an understanding of how theory and research can be applied in specific circumstances (p.213). This research suggests training is not being used effectively to embed EBP. Whilst the football case study demonstrates that regular access to training and CPD raises EBP awareness among specialist officers, questionnaire data highlighted that the training officers received more generally did not routinely contain explanations of academic theory. The response case study established differences in training content, with PEQF officers possessing greater EBP awareness than many of their longer-serving colleagues. This research exposes a flaw in the professionalisation process because EBP training focuses on new recruits as part of the PEQF, with seemingly little attention paid to the need to provide similar training to serving officers.

New recruits are provided with training in both university and training school settings which demonstrates a significant level of investment. This contrasts with the delivery of much in-service training. The case studies highlight how the credibility of police training has been negatively affected by a reliance on e-learning, which is not viewed as an effective learning tool in a policing context (see Hadlington, et al., 2018; Honess, 2020; Gilmour, 2021). A response constable aptly summarised the views of participants: *'E-learning packages are not fit for purpose because nobody has 40 minutes to sit and listen to a video they're not going to take anything from'*. Officers also regarded e-learning as being more about organisational compliance than a beneficial training method. Recent research on police learning and development (MOPAC/OU, 2020) stresses the importance of embedding learning and development processes alongside the Uplift to ensure longer term change beyond initial recruit training. However, the data in this thesis suggests this position has not yet been meaningfully and systemically achieved and existing structural barriers will make doing so difficult.

In the wider context of professionalisation, the research revealed the lack of a professional 'look and feel' to in-service training for response and neighbourhood teams. Much of the in-person training was self-initiated by a minority of team supervisors. Such an ad hoc approach lacks consistency of content, which is dependent on the knowledge, experience and views of individual supervisors. It is difficult for officers to be positive about the professionalisation process when their training predominantly consists of e-learning or inputs from their sergeant which are 'fitted-in' as and when operational demand allows. The findings suggest that officers in specialist teams (e.g. public order, firearms) do receive more regular training and CPD opportunities. Other research has also highlighted the existence of regular training within specialist units, advocating that effective CPD opportunities should be available to the wider organisation and not confined to such teams (MOPAC/OU, 2020). Whilst highly aspirational, this thesis suggests current in-service training, volume, content and delivery are barriers to the provision of effective organisation wide CPD, a factor likely to further limit opportunities to embed EBP. The quality of in-service training is also likely to have an impact on the long-term benefits of the PEQF process.

One aim of the PEQF programme is to increase officer education standards (College of Policing, 2020b). This study highlights how the reduction in quantity and quality of in-

service training is likely to undermine the long-term effectiveness of the PEQF. New recruits study at degree level in a university environment for the duration of their training. This research suggests that opportunities for meaningful CPD appear limited once students have completed their degree, due to a reliance on e-learning which frontline officers disparagingly regard 'as the norm'. A response chief inspector pointed out that, if post-PEQF training opportunities lack EBP content, students are likely to question the relevance and benefits of their previously learnt academic theory. In an environment where experience informs practice, this approach presents a risk to the long-term educational benefits of the PEQF. The Uplift recruitment programme has created an additional structural barrier to the success of the PEQF programme.

8.3.3 Impact of the Uplift scheme

The fieldwork in this study took place in the midst of the Uplift campaign and was uniquely situated to observe how force infrastructures struggled to cope with the influx of recruits while the government sought to meet its target of recruiting 20,000 additional officers. The case studies revealed shortages of suitably qualified/experienced tutors and a lack of equipment (e.g. body-worn video, hand-held data terminals) available for students to use as part of their learning. The view from participants was that the Uplift was primarily focused on the quantity of recruits rather than quality. Of note is that if forces failed to meet their recruitment targets they would be subject to a financial penalty. My own reflection on this period was that the situation felt like it was about pushing through as many recruits as possible to reach the target number and avoid any financial penalty. Whilst this is understandable given the squeeze on police budgets, it raises concerns about the quality of initial training officers are being provided with.

The tutor constable plays a key role in the development of student officers (Charman, 2017). It was evident in both the response and neighbourhood case studies that the ability to provide high quality tutoring had been compromised by the Uplift. Officers described how pressure to tutor large volumes of students had resulted in officers being mandated to tutor when they did not wish to and students being tutored by colleagues with only 2-3 years' service, which are factors likely to impact the quality of tutoring. The speed of the recruitment process left forces with little choice other than to make the best use of resources at their disposal. However, in the context of the professionalisation

agenda it was ironic that Uplift recruits often received less tutoring, in terms of time and quality, than their predecessors. The age of Uplift recruits was also a point of discussion among participants.

A largescale recruitment campaign requiring student officers to study for a degree resulted in many young recruits who had joined the police instead of going to university upon leaving school. Conducting fieldwork in policing at a time when large numbers of recruits were young people enabled this study to establish that well respected experience was not confined to that gained operationally, with wider life experience also regarded as important by officers. The lack of life experience among young recruits has resulted in anecdotes about issues (e.g. lone-working anxiety, an inability to cope with busy shifts) routinely circulating among serving officers. This situation has resulted in a narrative developing among serving officers that portrays the wider Uplift cohort of recruits as sub-standard.

Uplift pressure created structural barriers that led to longer-serving officers questioning the benefits of the PEQF scheme itself. Officers often considered the academic content of the course to be the problem rather than the matters described above. At a time when the College aim is to increase awareness and acceptance of EBP, issues created by the Uplift risk negatively affecting officer perceptions of EBP benefits. The final structural barrier to discuss is austerity.

8.3.4 The effects of austerity

External structural factors have also impacted on the extent to which EBP has become embedded in policing. Demand for policing increased as other public services suffered similar budget cuts and staff reductions during the austerity period (Brain & Owens, 2015). In addition to reducing levels of training discussed earlier, increased demand has reduced opportunities for officers to utilise research. A lack of time was cited as the main barrier to officers consulting research within questionnaire data and the case studies revealed high levels of operational demand.

The response case study demonstrated how increased operational demand has left little opportunity for officers to do anything other than respond to calls for service. Participants described not having time to learn basic aspects of their role and were dismissive of

having time to engage with EBP. Similar sentiments were expressed by neighbourhood officers who bemoaned having to ‘backfill’ response to meet demand, leaving them unable to perform their core neighbourhood role. Time and operational demand have often been cited as barriers preventing greater police use of research (Bayley, 2008; Fleming, 2019; Kalyal, 2019). This thesis indicates that position has not improved and may have been worsened by austerity. With serving officers heavily focused on operational demand, there is little capacity and energy left to engage with EBP either formally or informally. Attention now turns to the role of occupational culture in this context.

8.4 Implementation: Cultural barriers

Traditional characteristics associated with police occupational culture (e.g. conservatism, cynicism, pessimism and reliance on experience) (Reiner, 2012) were exhibited by officers during the case study fieldwork. Such characteristics are capable of impacting changes of policy and practice. Norman (2023) argues UK policing is entering ‘*de-professionalisation*’ (p.198) as a result of the recent decision to move away from degree entry requirements. If Norman’s assertion is correct, one might expect traditional notions of officer resistance to reform to be considered as the reason for any move towards ‘*de-professionalisation*’. However, this thesis found the position to be more complex, with the structural barriers discussed earlier also influencing officer attitudes towards the professionalisation agenda and attempts to embed EBP into practice.

This study found there to be a lack of understanding about EBP among officers, particularly the rank-and-file. Additionally, data throughout the thesis supports the assertion that experience is important in officer decision-making (Palmer, 2011; Fleming & Rhodes, 2018). The questionnaire highlighted how 97.6% of participants regarded experience as very important/important when resolving incidents. The case studies echoed these findings, revealing how officers utilise experience much of the time. This study identifies that a lack of awareness and understanding about EBP leaves officers with little option but to rely on their experience.

Cynicism and pessimism are traits associated with police officers (Reiner, 2012) which potentially make the reform of practice difficult. Cynicism was expressed by case study participants when discussing how policy and practice changes were linked to career

progression and implemented without consulting those charged with delivering them. Such an example was evident in the neighbourhood case study, where some participants' experiences led them to conclude neighbourhood policing was a role some officers used primarily to gather promotion evidence. This issue is highlighted in existing research (Palmer, 2011; Fleming, 2019). Whilst there was some evidence in the questionnaire to suggest the relationship between promotion and change is weakening, officers in the case studies remained cynical. This study establishes that officers have their own 'evidence-base' of previous attempts to change practice which they draw on when reform is proposed. The phrase 'tick-box' was often used cynically by participants when discussing professionalisation-related issues such as the PEQF, e-learning and the licensing of officers to practice. To counter officer cynicism, attempts to embed EBP need to be meaningful and sustainable, moving away from a 'revolving door' approach to policy and practice change.

Having detailed some of the structural issues associated with PEQF implementation earlier in this chapter, I now consider the PEQF and student officers in the context of occupational culture. Cynical views about the merits of the PEQF were routinely expressed in all three case studies and the questionnaire comments. A degree-educated constable expressed a view held by many participants: *'A degree does not make a good police officer. The degree for new entrants just overloads them with too much'*. Some negative comments were associated with the implementation issues discussed above. This thesis advances literature on the recruitment of younger officers (Williams & Sondhi, 2022) by providing empirical evidence revealing the consequences of a lack of investment to ensure response supervisors fully understand the PEQF scheme. Response sergeants openly admitted they lacked knowledge of what student officers learnt on the PEQF programme. The absence of coherent understanding about the PEQF among supervisors, coupled with implementation issues, creates an environment for cynicism and negativity to spread.

This study highlights that students are likely to be discouraged from sharing their learning if knowledge about the academic element of the PEQF is not visible among their supervisors or within the wider organisation. The fieldwork revealed that academic research lacked emphasis and relevance among the majority of frontline staff. Promotion and appraisal processes do not routinely encompass EBP and the PEQF scheme has been

derided by a number of police chiefs (Honest & Clarke, 2023). Such a situation is likely to leave PEQF recruits feeling uncertain about the value of their training and status in an organisation where being a new joiner is challenging under normal circumstances.

The time-served culture in policing (Charman, 2017) often means recruits have little credibility when it comes to influencing practice. This notion was particularly evident in the response case study. Response supervisors refuted the idea of recruits changing practice and recruits recognised that their lack of service put them at the bottom of an informal hierarchy. One response sergeant reflected: *'They [recruits] are never going to be able to introduce something or [say] 'this should be looked at' because officers with 15-20 years of service just won't listen'*. A linked theme evident across all three case studies was issues experienced officers associated with PEQF recruits, such as a lack of ability to deal with confrontation and cope with the demands of 'the job'. In keeping with the time-served notion, recruits viewed as young and naïve will be unlikely to influence existing practice using their recently acquired EBP knowledge.

Risk aversion is another characteristic, and was evident in the football case study. Public order commanders described how innovating with evidence-based approaches presented a risk to individual reputations in the event of disorder. Risk aversion featured in discussions about the impact of dress code on football supporters, an issue with a solid evidence-base (Pearson, 2012; Pearson & Stott, 2022). Participants described how some commanders instructed officers to wear full protective kit, despite a lack of supporting intelligence regarding threat/risk, to avoid criticism if an officer suffered an injury. These risk-averse decisions suggest commanders operate in an environment which exposes them to Waddington's (1994: 382) *'in the job'* trouble. In these circumstances, there is little incentive to innovate and commanders are likely to maintain the status quo. To encourage greater use of EBP, organisations need to lead evidence-based innovation and actively support individual commanders who trial new practices, particularly in the event of issues leading to *'in the job'* trouble.

The final aspect of occupational culture discussed here is that some officers still perceive themselves as crime-fighters or warriors, both enduring characteristics in the literature (Van Maanen, 1978; Waddington, 1999; Reiner, 2012; Deuchar, et al., 2021). In policing terms, the warrior mentality is associated with an increased use of force and often lacks an understanding of the effects such an approach can have on police-community

relations (Deuchar, et al., 2021). The crime-fighter/warrior notion is at odds with much evidence-based research. For example, Chapter six saw specialist Youth Intervention Officers (YIO) express frustrations about some response and neighbourhood colleagues. These frustrations arose because other officers lacked knowledge about the TIP approach of YIOs and instead adopted a crime-fighter/warrior mentality when dealing with young people. Doing so damaged trust between young people and police which the YIOs had worked hard to develop. In one instance the YIOs discussed refusing to visit young people with a neighbourhood constable they described as '*a sheriff with a zero-tolerance policy*'. This example highlights the importance of ensuring EBP knowledge extends beyond a small core of officers, such as YIOs, to embed evidence-based approaches such as TIP.

This section has highlighted cultural barriers affecting the implementation of EBP. Occupational culture is often cited as being responsible for officer resistance to police reform and practice change (Skogan, 2008; Pearson & Rowe, 2020; Hough & Stanko, 2020). However, it is too simplistic to blame officer culture without also considering flawed aspects of the professionalisation agenda such as the PEQF and EBP. As this research demonstrates, the situation is more complex; culture becomes entrenched because officers are not provided with the requisite knowledge and understanding to engage with EBP more positively. What I encountered during the fieldwork was not a coordinated effort by serving officers to resist the professionalisation agenda and embedding of EBP. Rather, it was predominantly the case that officers had little understanding of EBP, how it was used elsewhere and how it could be of use to them. As this study ends, there are opportunities for further research in respect of police professionalisation and the role of EBP in that process.

8.5 Research opportunities

The multi-method strategy employed in this study facilitated UK-wide data gathering via the questionnaire and case studies situated in three forces in different police regions across England. I gathered data from multiple sources to achieve the sort of holistic view advocated by Mason (2006: 190). However, the practical limitations associated with a single researcher conducting research of this nature means there are knowledge gaps which present future research opportunities in relation to professionalising policing and embedding EBP.

For capacity reasons, I selected three policing functions in which to situate the case studies. However, there are a multitude of other roles which would benefit from research to establish the extent to which EBP is embedded within them. An example would be firearms policing which, as I have observed here, provides opportunities to learn how EBP can be embedded effectively within operational policing. Beyond uniformed roles, there are many investigative departments which offer research opportunities. Equally, there are a multitude of police forces in the UK in which similar studies could be situated. Further empirical research in additional forces would help to establish whether the issues highlighted in this work are systemic and may also identify matters not evident in this study.

I imposed boundaries on the case study research to ensure data gathering remained focused on the chosen operational policing functions. The thesis identified the lack of an EBP 'thread' running through police organisations from a strategic level down to operational delivery. Whilst it was beyond the scope of this study to do so, conducting research with senior police leaders would further an understanding of why this situation occurs. Similarly, there remains a gap in understanding about how police forces and the College interface at a strategic level to assign responsibility and deliver strategies to increase EBP utilisation.

This study broadened from focusing on the embedding of EBP at the outset to consider topics central to the wider professionalisation process, a key aspect of which is police training and education. The data presented has highlighted some of the challenges associated with the effective delivery of both in-service and recruit training and education, with the role of higher education in policing evolving at pace during the period of this study. However, these matters would benefit from further research as they were not the central focus of this work. Once introduced, the new non-degree recruit pathway will require research to understand how the scheme aligns to College and National Police Chiefs' Council aims to embed EBP, and what impact it will have on the PEQF as the academic route to police professionalisation. The provision of in-service training for police officers would also benefit from further study to identify ways to improve the delivery of meaningful and relevant training and CPD. Having outlined opportunities for further research, the following section provides a summary in the context of the main research question.

8.6 The current status of EBP in UK policing

History suggests that the path to police professionalisation is difficult, with many barriers identified in the literature. Given these challenges, successfully implementing a far-reaching police professionalisation programme at a time when public services were enduring a decade of austerity was likely to be very difficult. In answering the question ***'To what extent is evidence-based practice currently embedded in UK policing as part of the wider professionalisation process?'*** this work finds that progress of the professionalisation agenda has been limited to date. Whilst the quantitative study provided evidence of officer willingness to consider EBP, it also revealed regular gaps in awareness, understanding and utilisation of EBP. Neither was EBP embedded in the case study forces. As evidenced in the findings chapters, there were examples of EBP being utilised operationally and some awareness of how academic theory related to operational practice. However, these instances existed in isolation and forces lacked a 'thread' connecting strategic EBP aspirations to street-level operational policing.

I presented the findings as four themes to assist with analysis and discussion. However, the themes do not exist in isolation and in many cases they overlap. For example, receptivity to EBP among officers was influenced by College credibility and an organisational inertia within forces which prevented EBP awareness being raised effectively. Similarly, aspects of the PEQF sit within different themes. The PEQF represents a central part of the professionalisation process. However, the scheme is linked to the College and has suffered credibility issues as a result. Structural barriers associated with the Uplift programme have also affected PEQF credibility, with serving officers expressing cynicism about the benefits of degree-level education for police officers.

Whilst the literature often describes police officers as resistant to reform and academic research, this study established that participants were receptive to engaging with EBP and developing themselves through relevant training and education. This thesis highlights structural barriers which limit opportunities to capitalise on officer enthusiasm and advance the embedding of EBP. Occupational culture has also played a role in this process. A lack of organisational frameworks capable of equipping officers with the knowledge necessary to embed EBP enable cynical attitudes and a reliance on experience

to dominate the space. The failure of previous attempts to reform police practice, education and training (Wood, 2018) means cynical officers have 'seen it all before' and await a return to the status quo and new senior leadership.

The likelihood of returning to that status quo has moved a step closer with the imminent introduction of a new non-degree route into policing. Some forces are recruiting for non-degree training programmes. Others are offering officers currently on the PEQF scheme the opportunity to switch to a non-degree programme. One Chief Constable commented in the media how they wanted recruits '*learning how to investigate crime from experienced officers rather than writing essays*' (Hamilton, 2023). This comment neatly encapsulates a narrative which has created a binary discourse of education versus experience among elements of policing, media and the public. Despite evidence of receptivity to academic research in this thesis, the requirement to possess a degree to become a police officer has been contentious since the announcement of the PEQF (Norman, 2023).

There will be an element of 'we told you so' among police officers opposed to the PEQF in light of the removal of degree requirements. It remains to be seen what effect any non-degree pathway will have on the future of the PEQF and the wider professionalisation agenda. However, the most recent PEQF recruit survey by the College (College of Policing, 2022h) listed many of the same issues identified in this research. Beyond implications for the programme itself, there are wider issues to consider. The financial costs of the PEQF being 'kicked into the long grass' would be substantial at a time when uncertainty surrounds police budgets in light of the current financial climate. Furthermore, universities have invested significantly in supporting the long-term vision of higher education playing a central role in police professionalisation. The emerging failure of the PEQF scheme is likely to adversely affect the credibility of academia, and therefore EBP, among police officers.

The PEQF represents a principal element of College aims to professionalise policing and make EBP routine practice. Whilst police leaders continue to debate how the PEQF will continue in its current form, the views of students suggest future recruits are likely to opt for the non-degree route. The PEQF is therefore at risk of becoming marginalised as forces return to what might be regarded as more 'traditional' police training methods. Such a situation risks sacrificing the EBP knowledge gained by new recruits and those who

undertake in-service degrees, unless a way is found to effectively combine academic and practical knowledge as part of the professionalisation process.

This thesis demonstrates that officers with higher levels of education are more likely to understand the benefits of utilising EBP in police practice. Decisions about the future direction of police education should also be considered in light of the Casey Review (Baroness Casey, 2023) which highlighted the training issues visible in the case study forces. If the latest attempt at professionalisation is abandoned, any future iterations of education-focused professionalisation will encounter experience-based officer cynicism and the cycle will likely repeat itself. The following section contains some recommendations from the findings of this research.

8.7 Recommendations

The purpose of these recommendations is to assist police forces and the College with embedding EBP in forces, a process which has so far proved problematic for the reasons discussed in this thesis.

1. Forces need to ensure learning and development teams are integral to change processes and have sufficient capacity to deliver training/CPD for frontline officers which shifts from being regarded as an inconvenient abstraction to a position where it is embraced as the norm, something successfully achieved in specialist teams such as firearms.
2. The College and police forces need to capitalise on officer enthusiasm for development via greater investment in good quality, role-related training/CPD for serving officers which includes relevant academic theory. Doing so would address the EBP knowledge gap between new recruits and serving officers.
3. Police forces need to develop proactive strategies to ensure officers routinely utilise College-developed resources such as APP/WWCCR. This is particularly important in relation to APP, which is best-practice guidance officers should use as part of daily business.
4. The College and police forces have to identify ways to make EBP a greater priority if it is to become embedded in forces. Operational demand and a lack of resources mean there is currently no capacity or desire to focus on EBP in departments such as response and neighbourhood.

5. The College and police forces need to identify ways to improve understanding of what the PEQF programme entails among frontline supervisors to enable them to effectively support and develop student officers.
6. Police forces should consider how to develop and embed consistent and active leadership networks between senior leaders and frontline officers to assist in translating EBP strategies into operational practice.
7. Police forces should encourage leaders to trial evidence-based innovations and actively support them when issues arise to give leaders confidence and reduce risk aversion.
8. Police forces should ensure promotion/appraisal processes feature EBP to make the concept part of daily business and recognise officers who have developed their knowledge through higher education.

Having provided a number of recommendations, this thesis ends with some concluding remarks on the position of the professionalisation agenda and attempts to embed EBP in policing.

8.8 Concluding remarks

This study suggests the College and police forces have underestimated the task of implementing the professionalisation agenda and embedding EBP. The challenge is whether forces are willing, and able, to do what is necessary to effectively embed EBP in their organisations. Occupational culture is frequently used as a reason why police reform fails but, as this thesis has shown, traits such as pessimism and cynicism are the symptomatic response of officers to their lived experiences. Until such time as greater efforts are made to address the root causes (e.g. reducing demand and increasing training), attempts to professionalise policing and embed EBP will encounter similar challenges.

The implementation issues associated with the PEQF distract from the fact that the College-led programme is contributing to the professionalisation agenda by instilling new forms of knowledge in recruits. However, the PEQF represents only one aspect of the professionalisation equation. Beyond investment in recruit training, attempts to professionalise policing functions such as response and neighbourhood appear to be superficial 'window-dressing' which lack the capability to meaningfully change practice

Chapter 8

and attitudes. In summary, over ten years on from the beginning of the current iteration of professionalisation there is little evidence of significant organisational progress beyond the investment in recruit education, which is itself now under threat. It is therefore important UK policing reflects on the professionalisation journey to date and learns from both the past and present to make greater use of EBP in future police practice.

Appendix A Ethical approval

Approved by Faculty Ethics Committee - ERGO II 63953.A4

UNIVERSITY OF
Southampton

ERGO II – Ethics and Research Governance Online <https://www.ergo2.soton.ac.uk>

Submission ID: 63953.A4

Submission Title: To what extent is evidence-based practice currently embedded in UK policing (Amendment 4)

Submitter Name: Michael Hope

Your submission has now been approved by the Faculty Ethics Committee. You can begin your research unless you are still awaiting any other reviews or conditions of your approval.

Comments:

-
- Thank you for your carefully prepared revised documents, addressing all of the issues raised by the reviewers and for highlighting and summarizing all the changes. I am happy to approve this part of your study.
Good luck with your research.
- Thank you for making the changes necessary and set out by reviewers.

Just to note the **Ethics form**

Q.11 While 'police officers' and 'staff' are mentioned in the answer to Q.9, only 'police officers' are mentioned here. Mention of 'officers' but not 'staff' also features in the Gatekeeper letter seeking access. It is therefore to be understood that no interviewing of police 'staff' will go ahead. If this changes, an amendment would be necessary.

Other

Box 1 of the Interview consent form template is missing the word 'April'

Appendix B Example participant information sheet

Participant Information Sheet-Observations

Study Title: To what extent is evidence-based practice currently embedded in UK policing?

Researcher: Mike Hope

ERGO number: 63953

You are being invited to take part in the above research study. To help you decide whether you would like to take part or not, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the information below carefully and ask questions if anything is not clear or you would like more information before you decide to take part in this research. You may like to discuss it with others but it is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you are happy to participate you will be asked to sign a consent form.

What is the research about?

My name is Mike Hope and I am a retired police Inspector currently studying for a PhD at the University of Southampton. My research is being funded by the Economic and Social Research Council. I am conducting research on the subject of evidence-based practice (EBP) in UK policing. The aim of the study is to establish the extent to which EBP is currently a part of UK policing. This research has been authorised by senior officers in your force but my research is independent.

As part of the research process I am undertaking observations of police activity to gain an understanding of how EBP is used in police practice. It is my intention to observe officers in their workplace to gather data on what methods they use to deal with incidents and issues they face and what information sources they draw upon to assist them.

As a participant in this study I wish to capture your understanding and experience of evidence-based practice in your workplace. I am also interested in your knowledge and experience of related matters such as the College of Policing, professionalisation, police training and academic research.

Why have I been asked to participate?

You have been asked to participate because you are involved in neighbourhood policing, which is where this observational activity will take place.

What will happen to me if I take part?

Participation in this study will involve observing officers and staff who work in a neighbourhood policing role. I intend to observe participants in their normal working environments, which will predominantly be the police station where they are based and the community they are assigned to patrol. The purpose of these observations is to gain an understanding of how officers undertake their role to allow me to establish the extent to which evidence-based practice is a consideration in their work.

I anticipate this observation would take the form of shadowing you and it would be my intention to observe you both in the police station and when on patrol. I would accompany you in vehicles and on foot. The observations will be primarily passive but there would be occasions where I will ask questions to understand events or discuss a situation with you. I would anticipate spending 4-5 shifts observing you over the course of a month. There may also be opportunities to attend training sessions undertaken by you. Again in these situations I would be a predominantly passive observer.

On some occasions I will take notes. The purpose of this is to assist me in accurately recording events of relevance as they occur. I do not intend to audio or video record activity during the observational phase. I aim to ensure my presence does not interrupt your work and I will only take the opportunity to ask questions or discuss things when it is appropriate to do so as I do not wish to distract you from your work. You have the right to withdraw your involvement in the study at any stage prior to or during the observations and up to 6 weeks after completion of the observations. The data gathered will be anonymised and your identity will be kept confidential.

Are there any benefits in my taking part?

There is no direct benefit to taking part in this research. However, the observational data will form part of my research findings, which will improve understanding of the issues affecting UK police officers and may indirectly benefit officers in the future.

Are there any risks involved?

I will be observing you in your place of work so I do not anticipate there will be any increased risk beyond what you normally experience in your role. I am aware that my presence could increase tensions when you are dealing with an incident as people may not understand who I am. If such a situation were to occur I would withdraw as I do not wish to increase the risks you face.

What data will be collected?

All the observations will be conducted by myself. I will collect data which enables me to analyse police practice and procedure and how officers and staff perform their work. This will be supplemented by conversational data in the form of notes taken when I have sought to clarify or understand details of a particular situation. No personal data will be collected outside of the required information necessary to complete consent forms. These will not form part of the research data.

Will my participation be confidential?

Your participation and the information I collect about you during the research will be kept strictly confidential.

Only members of the research team and responsible members of the University of Southampton may be given access to data about you for monitoring purposes and/or to

carry out an audit of the study to ensure that the research is complying with applicable regulations. Individuals from regulatory authorities (people who check that we are carrying out the study correctly) may require access to your data. All of these people have a duty to keep your information, as a research participant, strictly confidential.

All data obtained during the research will be stored securely either on a University computer or in the case of written notes, under lock and key. All primary participants who are observed or interviewed will be assigned a pseudonym comprising of letters and numbers. None of the participants will be identifiable. To ensure this I will need to consider not using information about the role of a participant or the location where they work which would enable them to be identified. You police force will not be identified either. Participants will be aware that I will make notes of observations and that these may form part of the thesis provided there is nothing contained within them which may identify a participant. The data will be pseudonymised at the earliest opportunity. Should I observe discussion of intelligence during planning meetings or briefings for operations, none of this would be shared in any detail in the writing up of the data. I would only refer to it in general terms provided your force were happy for me to do so. This is to ensure that sources of information are not disclosed.

Do I have to take part?

No, it is entirely up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide you want to take part, you will need to sign a consent form to show you have agreed to take part.

What happens if I change my mind?

You have the right to change your mind and withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without your participant rights being affected. If you wish to withdraw your consent to be part of the research process please inform me, either in person if I am conducting observations or via e-mail at m.a.hope@soton.ac.uk. You will be able to withdraw from the process up to 6 weeks after the observations conclude. Any data gathered which is relevant to you will be destroyed if you withdraw from the research. Beyond the 6-week period post observations, the data will have been uploaded for analysis and will not be in a format to retrieve as it will not be attributable to you.

What will happen to the results of the research?

Your personal details will remain strictly confidential. Research findings made available in any reports or publications will not include information that can directly identify you without your specific consent.

The data I gather will form part of my analysis and elements of it will be included in my thesis and submitted to my University as part of my PhD. Once the thesis is completed, a summary of the key findings and, when possible, a completed version of the thesis will be made available to your force. Should you wish for an individual copy of either of these, please contact me. It is then hoped that elements of the project will be written up as articles for academic journals. The research data will be securely stored for a minimum of 10 years as per University policy.

Where can I get more information?

If you have a concern/query about any aspect of this study, please email me at m.a.hope@soton.ac.uk and I will answer your questions.

What happens if there is a problem?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, you should contact myself (Mike Hope) at the e-mail provided and I will do my best to answer your questions. If you have a complaint about any aspect of this study, please contact in the first instance, my supervisor, Professor Jenny Fleming, j.fleming@soton.ac.uk. If you remain unhappy or have a complaint about any aspect of this study, please contact the University of Southampton Research Integrity and Governance Manager (023 8059 5058, rgoinfo@soton.ac.uk).

Data Protection Privacy Notice

The University of Southampton conducts research to the highest standards of research integrity. As a publicly funded organisation, the University has to ensure that it is in the public interest when we use personally identifiable information about people who have agreed to take part in research. This means that when you agree to take part in a research study, we will use information about you in the ways needed, and for the purposes specified, to conduct and complete the research project. Under data protection law, 'Personal data' means any information that relates to and is capable of identifying a living individual. The University's data protection policy governing the use of personal data by the University can be found on its website (<https://www.southampton.ac.uk/legalservices/what-we-do/data-protection-and-foi.page>).

This Participant Information Sheet tells you what data will be collected for this project and whether this includes any personal data. Please ask the research team if you have any questions or are unclear what data is being collected about you.

Our privacy notice for research participants provides more information on how the University of Southampton collects and uses your personal data when you take part in one of our research projects and can be found at <http://www.southampton.ac.uk/assets/sharepoint/intranet/Is/Public/Research%20and%20Integrity%20Privacy%20Notice/Privacy%20Notice%20for%20Research%20Participants.pdf>

Any personal data we collect in this study will be used only for the purposes of carrying out our research and will be handled according to the University's policies in line with data protection law. If any personal data is used from which you can be identified directly, it will not be disclosed to anyone else without your consent unless the University of Southampton is required by law to disclose it.

Data protection law requires us to have a valid legal reason ('lawful basis') to process and use your Personal data. The lawful basis for processing personal information in this research study is for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest. Personal data collected for research will not be used for any other purpose.

For the purposes of data protection law, the University of Southampton is the 'Data Controller' for this study, which means that we are responsible for looking after your information and using it properly. The University of Southampton will keep identifiable information about you for 10 years after the study has finished after which time any link between you and your information will be removed.

To safeguard your rights, we will use the minimum personal data necessary to achieve our research study objectives. Your data protection rights – such as to access, change, or transfer such information - may be limited, however, in order for the research output to be reliable and accurate. The University will not do anything with your personal data that you would not reasonably expect.

If you have any questions about how your personal data is used, or wish to exercise any of your rights, please consult the University's data protection webpage (<https://www.southampton.ac.uk/legalservices/what-we-do/data-protection-and-foi.page>) where you can make a request using our online form. If you need further assistance, please contact the University's Data Protection Officer (data.protection@soton.ac.uk).

All personal data will be pseudonymised. Data that has been pseudonymised through key-coding and removal of personal identifiers still falls within the scope of the GDPR. This is because the data that allows identification of that person still exists, just not all in one place. Pseudonymised data can help reduce privacy risks by making it more difficult to identify individuals, but it is still personal data. Your personal details will be replaced with a pseudonym at the earliest opportunity and only myself as the researcher will be able to access the information which identifies an individual.

Thank you.

Thank the individual for taking the time to read the information sheet and considering taking part in my research.

Appendix C Example consent form

CONSENT FORM-Interviews

Study title: To what extent is evidence-based practice currently embedded in UK policing?

Researcher name: Mike Hope

ERGO number: 63953

Participant Identification Number (if applicable):

Please initial the box(es) if you agree with the statement(s):

I have read and understood the information sheet (dated 9 th November 2021 version) and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.	
I agree to take part in this research project and agree for my data to be used for the purpose of this study.	
I understand my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw (at any time) for any reason without my participation rights being affected. I understand I may also withdraw within 6 weeks of the interview being completed.	
I consent to the interview being audio recorded would prefer that cameras remain off/on (please delete appropriate) during an online interview	
I understand that should I withdraw from the study then the information collected about me up to this point will be destroyed.	
I understand that I may be quoted directly in reports of the research but that I will not be directly or indirectly identified (e.g. that my name will not be used).	

Appendix C

I understand that personal information collected about me will not be shared beyond the study team.	

Name of participant (print name).....

Signature of participant.....

Date.....

Name of researcher (print name) Mike Hope.....

Signature of researcher

Date.....
.....

Appendix D Survey questionnaire

Survey questions

1.College of Policing

Participant

1.1 (1) How well informed do you consider yourself to be about the role of the College of Policing in UK policing?

1 Very informed

2 Informed

3 Moderately informed

4 Slightly informed

5 Uninformed

1.2 (2) What do you consider the primary role of the College of Policing to be?

1 To set standards and policy

2 To provide police with research evidence

3 To provide guidance for police officers

4 To support professional development of police officers and staff

5 I do not know what the College of Policing does

6 Other

1.3 (3) As part of your role do you access the College of Policing website?

1 Always

2 Often

3 Sometimes

4 Rarely

5 Never

1.4 If you were to access the College of Policing website, what would be the most likely reason for doing so?

- 1 Authorised professional practice**
- 2 College of Policing research map**
- 3 What Works Centre for Crime Reduction**
- 4 To keep updated with the latest developments in policing**
- 5 To obtain research evidence**
- 6 Personal development**
- 7 Police Library access**
- 8 As part of a promotion process**
- 9 I do not use the College of Policing website**
- 10 Other**

1.5 (3) What is Authorised Professional Practice (APP)?

- 1 Force policy**
- 2 College of Policing guidance**
- 3 Police Federation guidance**
- 4 Home Office policy**
- 5 I have not heard this term before**
- 6 Other**

(4) Answers for other

1.6 (6) Do you consult Authorised Professional Practice to assist you in your work?

- 1 Always**
- 2 Often**
- 3 Sometimes**
- 4 Rarely**
- 5 Never**

1.7 (7) Do you consult the College of Policing What Works Centre for Crime Reduction to help you with your role?

1 Always

2 Often

3 Sometimes

4 Rarely

5 Never

1.8 (8) Are you aware that the College of Policing is seeking to professionalise UK policing?

1 Yes 2 No

1.9 (9) What do you consider to be 'professionalism' in the context of policing?

10 Education

11 Rank

12 Membership of the College of Policing

13 Regular qualification to practice as a police officer

14 Specialist role

15 Experience

16 Formal training

17 Tradecraft learnt operationally

18 Proficiency in role

19 Other-please specify:

20-Answer to other

1.10 (21) Statement: The increased levels of professionalism sought by the College of Policing will help to improve UK policing.

1 Strongly Agree

2 Agree

3 Undecided

4 Disagree

5 Strongly Disagree

1.10 (22) The Policing Education Qualification Framework (PEQF) requires new recruits to be educated to degree level, encourages serving officers to improve their academic accreditation and advocates the use of research evidence.

Please respond to the following statement: The PEQF is crucial for the improvement of policing.

1 Strongly Agree

2 Agree

3 Undecided

4 Disagree

5 Strongly Disagree

EBP organisational practice

2.1 (23) Are you familiar with the concept of evidence-based practice (EBP) in your role?

1 Yes 2 No

2.2 How did you become aware of EBP?

College of Policing

Colleagues

Supervisor/line manager

Internal communications

Professional policing publications

External media

Social media

I am not aware of EBP

Other

2.3 (24) Have you heard of the UK Society of Evidence Based Policing (SEBP)?

1 Yes 2 No

2.4 (25) Does your supervisor/line manager advocate the use of EBP?

1 Always

2 Often

3 Sometimes

4 Rarely

5 Never

2.5 (26) Which of the following activity is routine within your team?

1 Use of APP

2 Keeping updated with legislation changes

3 Consulting the College of Policing research map

4 Consulting specialist departments for advice

5 Referring to the College of Policing What Works Centre for Crime Reduction

6 Making use of evidence champions in your organisation

7 None of the above

8 Other-please specify

2.5 (36) Are you aware of whether your organisation is actively involved with EBP projects?

1 Yes 2 No

Training

3.1 (39) Statement: Sufficient training is provided to enable me to maintain competency in my role.

1 Strongly Agree

2 Agree

3 Undecided

4 Disagree

5 Strongly Disagree

3.2 (40) Does police training you receive include any explanation of how academic theories relate to police practices?

1 Always

2 Often

3 Sometimes

4 Rarely

5 Never

3.3 (41) Have you received any training on EBP from your police organisation?

1 Yes 2 No

3.4 (42) If yes to previous question what did it consist of?

1 E-learning

2 Police trainer delivery

3 External trainer delivery

4 Other-please specify

43-Answers to other

3.5 (44) Have you attended a training session where EBP has been promoted as a way forward?

1 Yes 2 No

3.6 (45) Where EBP was promoted as a way forward, who was the training provided by?

1 Police personnel

2 College of Policing

3 External academics/researchers

4 Other

(46) Answers to other

3.7 (47) Where EBP was promoted as a way forward please specify what the training session was about:

Police personnel participation

4.1 (48) Are staff in your department able to contribute ideas or opinions to improve operational practice?

1 Always

2 Often

3 Sometimes

4 Rarely

5 Never

4.2 (49) Are staff in your department able to contribute ideas or opinions to improve NON-OPERATIONAL practice?

1 Always

2 Often

3 Sometimes

4 Rarely

5 Never

4.3 (50) When changes (legislation, policy) are introduced which affect how you perform your role are they adequately explained to you?

1 Always

2 Often

3 Sometimes

4 Rarely

5 Never

4.4 (51) What would motivate you to become more involved with evidence-based practice?

1 Financial reward

2 Promotion

3 Increased knowledge

4 Improved professionalism

5 I do not see the relevance of EBP to my role

6 Other please specify:

(52) Answers for other

Participant role

5.1 (55) When you are trying to address an operational issue, for example anti-social behaviour, what information sources would you consult to inform your decision-making and tactical options? Please select all which apply.

1 College of Policing website

2 Colleagues

3 Other police organisations

4 Analysts

5 Academic research

6 Own experience

7 Other-please specify

63 Answers to other

5.2 (64) If you selected academic research as an answer to the above question, please specify what form this would take:

1 Personal contact with academic researcher

2 Academic book

3 Academic journal

4 College of Policing research map

5 Other-please specify

70 Answers to other

5.3 (71) In your workplace can you access academic articles relevant to your role?

1 Yes 2 No 3 Don't know

5.4 (72) Do you read professional police related publications?

1 Always

2 Often

3 Sometimes

4 Rarely

5 Never

5.5 (73) If you answered Always Often or Sometimes to the above question please note below which publication/s you read:

5.6 (74) Do you use academic research as part of your role?

1 Yes 2 No

5.7 (75) If you answered no to the above question which of the following factors influence your decision not to use research evidence as part of your role?

1 Lack of research knowledge

2 Lack of experience of using research evidence

3 Lack of access to academic research

4 Time

5 I do not consider research evidence to be useful/relevant to my role

6 Other-please specify:

82 Answers to other

5.8 (83) Do you think academic research could improve how you perform your role?

1 Definitely

2 Probably

3 Possibly

4 Probably Not

5 Definitely Not

Personal development

6.1 (84) Does EBP form part of your annual appraisal process?

1 Always

2 Often

3 Sometimes

4 Rarely

5 Never

6.2 (85) What do you think is the most important requirement for a successful promotion process?

1 Experience

2 Knowledge

3 Education levels

4 Participation in high-profile activity

5 Ability to perform well in an interview

6 Commitment to the professionalization agenda

7 Other

86 Answers to other

6.3 (87) Have you participated in a promotion process within the last 12 months?

1 Yes 2 No

6.4 (88) If yes did EBP form any part of that process?

1 Yes 2 No

6.5 (89) Have you completed the National Police Promotion Framework (NPPF) as part of a promotion process?

1 Yes 2 No

6.6 (90) Did you find the academic research and writing part of the NPPF process beneficial for your development?

1 Yes 2 NoViews on academic research

7.1 (91) Does your police organisation have a formal relationship with a university which facilitates teaching and/or research, (for example the N8 Collaboration or the Open University)?

1 Yes 2 No 3 Don't know

7.2 (92) Do you work with academic researchers in your role?

1 Always

2 Often

3 Sometimes

4 Rarely

5 Never

7.3 (94) Academic research has a role to play in developing police practices.

1 Strongly Agree

2 Agree

3 Undecided

4 Disagree

5 Strongly Disagree

Experience and evidence

8.1 (97) Please respond to the following statement: How important do you consider your experience as a police officer to be when resolving an incident?

1 Very Important

2 Important

3 Moderately Important

4 Slightly Important

5 Unimportant

8.2 (98) How often do you consider you use your experience in your everyday role?

1 Always

2 Often

3 Sometimes

4 Rarely

5 Never

8.3 (99) Statement: It is beneficial for a police officer to possess academic knowledge to effectively perform their role.

1 Strongly Agree

2 Agree

3 Undecided

4 Disagree

5 Strongly Disagree

8.4 (100) Would you consider using different operational tactics or methods if they were suggested by an academic researcher?

1 Definitely

2 Probably

3 Possibly

4 Probably Not

5 Definitely Not

8.5 (101) Do you think people who have not been police officers are able to effectively understand the role?

1 Yes 2 No 3 Don't know

8.6 (102) Statement: A move towards using evidence resulting from academic research in police decision-making would limit the use of my own discretion.

1 Strongly Agree

2 Agree

3 Undecided

4 Disagree

5 Strongly Disagree

Improving academic qualifications

9.1 (105) If you do not hold a degree would you consider working to obtain a degree using credits awarded by the College of Policing for your current levels of experience and learning?

1 Yes 2 No

9.2 (106) If you do not hold a degree and do not wish to study for one would you consider any form of course to increase your academic accreditation?

1 Yes 2 No 3 N/A

9.3 What would be your main motivation for improving your academic qualifications?

1 Role-related personal development

2 To assist with promotion

3 Preparing for leaving the police organisation

4 Personal achievement

5 I do not wish to improve my qualifications

6 Other

9.4 (107) If you have indicated you do not wish to undertake any additional study to increase your academic accreditation what is the main reason for this?

- 1 Time constraints**
- 2 Family commitments**
- 3 Working shifts**
- 4 consider myself adequately qualified for my role**
- 5 Lack of knowledge about studying**
- 6 Lack of confidence in my ability to study**
- 7 I am not interested in studying**
- 8 Not applicable**
- 9 Other**
- 108 Answers to other**

10.1 (109) Open question to finish:

If you have any additional comments you would like to make in relation to the subjects in this survey please use the space below:

10.2 (110) Where do you see yourself being in 5 years' time?

- 1 In the same role**
- 2 In a different role within the same department**
- 3 In a new role in a different department**
- 4 Having been promoted**
- 5 Having left the service prior to retirement**
- 6 Retired**
- 7 Other please specify:**
- 111 Answers to other**

10.3 (112) How old are you?

1 18-24

2 25-34

3 35-45

4 Over 45

10.4 (113) What gender do you identify as?

1 Male

2 Female

3 Other

10.5 (114) Which police organisation do you work for?

If you prefer not to say please specify which region you work in.

10.6 (115) Which of the below options best describes the area you police:

1 Rural

2 Urban

3 Mix of both

10.7 (117) What is your rank?

1 Constable

2 Sergeant

3 Inspector

4 Chief Inspector

5 Superintendent

6 Chief Superintendent

7 Assistant Chief Constable (or equivalent)

8 Deputy Chief Constable (or equivalent)

9 Chief Constable

10.8 (119) Which department do you work in?

1 Response/patrol

2 Neighbourhood

3 Firearms

4 Force Support Group

5 Dog handler

6 Air support

7 Dive team

8 Mounted branch

9 Command and control

10 Roads policing

11 Learning and development

12 Operations and event planning

13 Proactive crime investigation

14 General crime investigation

15 Domestic abuse investigation

16 Sexual offence investigation

17 Major crime investigation

18 Organised crime investigation

19 Covert investigation

20 Counter terrorism

21 Forensics

22 Administrative support

23 Custody

24 Other

120 Answers for other

10.10 (121) What is your length of service?

- 1 0-5 years**
- 2 6-10 years**
- 3 11-15 years**
- 4 16-20 years**
- 5 21-25 years**
- 6 26-30 years**
- 7 31-35 years**
- 8 Over 35 years**

10.11 (122) What is the highest level of educational qualification you hold?

- 1 CSE**
- 2 GCSE/'O' level**
- 3 NVQ**
- 4 'A' level**
- 5 Undergraduate degree**
- 6 Postgraduate degree**
- 7 Doctorate**
- 8 Other**

123 Answers to other

10.12 (124) Do you belong to any of the following staff associations?

- 1 Police Federation**
- 2 Unison**
- 3 Superintendents Association**
- 4 Chief Police Officers Staff Association**
- 5 I do not belong to any staff associations**
- 6 Prefer not to say**
- 7 Other**

125 Answers to other

Appendix E Example interview topics

List of topics for football events policing interviews

1. Introduction-rank, role and experience of football policing/public order
2. Participant understanding and knowledge of EBP. Discuss engagement with College of Policing-personal and more general. Use of APP in role.
3. What factors influence the way in which football is policed?
4. What sources of information do officers use to inform their working practices?
5. Discuss what training is provided for officers involved in policing football and establish what the content of any training based on. Specialist roles/PSU officers-crowd theory etc?
6. Gaining an understanding of whether officers perceive academic research beneficial to their work.
7. Understanding the relationship between experience and evidence in the operational environment.
8. Is any use of EBP within the football unit linked to organisational aims and objectives-does the wider Force promote a culture of EBP use? Where does the innovation in the unit come from-it seems to be resilient to change?
9. Challenges of using EBP in football
10. Discuss the extent to which different commanders influence whether EBP is considered in policing football-cover issues such as resourcing, engagement strategies, code of dress-role of POPSA-are they EBP focused?
11. Is personal/organisational risk aversion a factor in any willingness to consider new methods and working practices?

Appendix F Example reflective fieldnotes

Had planned to work a different match with football unit but had been told by Sgt a week before this wasn't possible due to other observers with the team. Only got this info when I e-mailed to confirm details. Bit disappointing as this game had been planned from start of the season. Shows the need to keep in touch and how things can change with police. Obviously my needs are not their top priority but such decisions can affect the research process. Decided to ask if I could work with another team e.g. OSU. Sgt referred me to the unit Insp who replied and supported me working with the OSU that day either at another fixture or in the city centre. He described me as a 'low maintenance visitor' which was reassuring. OSU Insp happy to have me and had a phone call to explain what I wanted to achieve. Shows the importance of persevering and trying all options-don't take no for an answer without being pushy or annoyed. Need to keep people onside to get access.

6th game in the force and 2nd with OSU so felt quite comfortable as knew where I was going to brief. Insp made me feel welcome as did the Sgts. Said I would brief the van at the start to deal with any issues. Knowing 2 officers in the van from last time was helpful as they said hello and sort of vouched for me in a way. Went through my briefing, we left quite quickly so decided to leave the consent forms for a while although I had told them about the forms. Got them signed when we stopped off for a drink. Seat at the back of the van was better than the one in the front last time as I had a good vantage point of the team and easy to engage people in conversation. They engaged with me quicker than the last OSU team and started asking me questions about the research and my police career. Helpful in breaking the ice and building some rapport. Tried to strike balance between talking about myself a bit but not too much so as to distract from the task-difficult balance especially when they ask me questions. I introduced some of the topics but they raised some issues re uniform decisions. Conscious of not influencing their responses but need to explain some things so they understand and can give an answer.

Didn't feel like they modified their behaviour in my presence and there was the sort of conversation and banter I would have expected in an OSU van. The PC who challenged research on dress codes joked with the Sgt that he probably ought to be quiet after his input.

Pre-match was a bit disappointing given the intel and I had hoped to see more issues with fans for officers to deal with. Very quiet but took the opportunity to discuss things in the van. As always not that easy to record things, did make some notes in the van but not appropriate to write lots down even though I had told them I would need to make some notes to help me recall what happened during the day.

Good deployment in the ground with the serial in the away end. Able to blend in quite easily in the tunnel area. Stewards left me alone and fans didn't really notice me either. Ended up on my own in the 2nd half when things started getting busy. Comfortable in the environment and able to remain at the tunnel entrance observing what was going on. Didn't feel the need to go and stand with officers as I think I would have been a hinderance to them and would have increased the risk to myself from fans.

Appendix F

Made decision to request to work with Insp post-match so I didn't remain in the ground. Ended up on my own outside the ground until he arrived post-match. Again no issues being in amongst the fans. When disorder started down on the road I made the decision to head towards it, a bit ahead of the Inspector. Happy to work that way as it was a very small footprint so I would be able to find the Insp or serial as time went on. Had also taken the Sgt and van driver phone numbers at the start as a safety measure should I become separated.

Happy being in and around the disorder, conscious of not being confronted by officers or fans but able to operate in the neutral space officers created. Tried to stay out of things and just observe without need to get too close which is quite easy in football policing.

Sense of anticipation of going to city centre for large scale disorder although did think it would be over by the time we got there, bit frustrated we didn't deploy straight away when there was nothing going on where we were. Enjoyed the blue light run in the van. Code 1 dress so I decided I would tag along with the team into the station and then see what the threat was and risk assess accordingly rather than just decide to stay in the van because of dress code.

Overall another good day with some new points emerging about officers wanting to understand where research comes from in respect of dress codes. Frustrating not to be on the other match given the disorder but have to consider how close I would have got to it with the threat level.

Appendix G Example codebook (football case study)

Academic research training for officers	4	6
APP	5	10
Briefing officers	4	9
Consistency across forces	1	1
CoP engagement	8	10
CoP role	2	2
CoP views	5	8
Covid lack of experience	3	4
CPD	4	5
Debriefs	1	1
Degree entry views	3	6
Disorder examples	9	20
Dress code	12	34
EBP benefits	3	4
EBP champions	1	1
EBP commanders using it	6	8
EBP definition	8	9
EBP interpretation of	1	4
EBP knowledge	6	7
EBP language	1	2
EBP Pola role	1	4
EBP understanding why police do things	2	2

Appendix G

EBP wider force culture		6	10
Engagement benefits		12	30
Engagement briefing		6	6
Engagement challenges		12	22
ENTE		4	5
Evaluation		2	3
Experience benefits at football		12	25
Experience commanders		5	6
Experience lack of		6	19
Factors impacting football policing		7	14
Innovation to remain relevant		3	8
Intelligence for planning		7	9
Learning from experience		3	11
OFO role		4	9
POPSA influence		5	9
Proactive tactics		1	3
Resource levels at football		1	2
Risk assessment		2	3
Risk averse tactics		6	14
Risk aversion new practices		8	17
Risk groups		3	8
Risk reputational		2	4
Risk supporter definitions		1	1
Specials at football		1	1

Student operational competence		5	7
Students confrontation		7	9
Students online learning		1	2
Supervisors importance of briefing		1	2
Tactics		4	5
Training		6	10
Training-lack of for PSU		8	17
Trust		1	1

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