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Policing

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Fast Track Inspector (internal and external) programme

Five-year evaluation report, 2014 – 2019

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Executive summary

Background and programme overview

In 2014 and following recommendations from the 2011 Winsor Review¹, the College of Policing (hereafter known as the College) launched a new Fast Track Inspector programme, with both an external intake (open to anyone with a degree outside the police service and to serving police staff and volunteers) and an internal intake for serving police constables. Fast Track was designed as a development programme and promotion mechanism to enable those with strong leadership potential to advance to the rank of inspector within two years for serving constables and three years for police staff, special constables and external graduates. The external element of the programme closed to new recruits after two annual intakes (2014 and 2015) and was, in effect, replaced by a new Direct Entry Inspector programme. As of June 2019, the Fast Track internal programme had recruited a new intake every year since 2015.

The programme aims have been to:

- open up entry to the service to graduates who would bring new perspectives and diverse backgrounds to support the continuous development of policing
- offer career progression to graduates in line with other professions to attract the most talented graduates
- attract, identify and develop the most talented constables, special constables and police staff from within the service
- develop a cadre of officers with the skills, experience and capacity to reach the senior ranks of the service, at least superintendent, to impact on and positively influence the management and culture of policing.

The Fast Track programme is mainly delivered in force, with rotation experience at the different ranks and mandated attachments and exposure to different areas of policing. The programme is interspersed with College-delivered residential modules, focused on leadership and management knowledge and skills. External Fast Track recruits spent a first year at constable rank, after which they were joined by internal members (joining at temporary sergeant rank) and together, they followed the same timetable for College inputs and for sergeant and inspector rotations.

Successfully completing the scheme is dependent on passing mandatory national assessments², line manager recommendation and chief officer agreement within

1 Winsor, T. 2011, 'Independent Review of Police Officer and Staff Remuneration and Conditions – Part II' available online at <http://library.college.police.uk/docs/Winsor-Part2-vol1.pdf>

2 External members completed the 'initial police learning and development programme' and 'diploma in policing'. Sergeant and inspector level assessment followed steps in the National Police Promotion Framework (NPPF): www.college.police.uk/What-we-do/Development/Promotion/Pages/National-Police-Promotion-Framework.aspx

the home force. Successful programme graduates are promoted to temporary inspector³, at which point, home forces are required to facilitate opportunities for work-based assessment so they can become substantive inspectors within one year of scheme completion.

Evaluation overview

The five-year programme evaluation focused on gathering evidence to explore how well the programme had been meeting its overarching aims, concentrating on cohorts 1 and 2 since they were the only ones to complete the scheme during the evaluation period. The evaluation has drawn on over 360 survey responses and 38 one-to-one interviews with programme members and a sample of their line managers and mentors – along with focus groups and analysis of programme selection and assessment data (to enable commentary on programme member demographics and pass rates). Six chief constables and one other chief officer from seven participating forces were also interviewed at fieldwork end, around perceived programme benefits. While it is still too early to assess the full potential of a Fast Track programme of this nature, the evaluation has allowed some important findings and learning to emerge, as highlighted in this executive summary and explained more fully in the following main evaluation report.

Fieldwork and analysis for the evaluation reports were ongoing from programme launch and completed in June 2019. Data, such as number of programme members, is correct as of June 2019. The longest any Fast Track programme graduates had been in substantive inspector posts at the point of fieldwork end was just over one year. Follow-up fieldwork and monitoring of programme members could enable stronger conclusions.

Alongside the publication of this programme evaluation, the College has simultaneously published evaluation reports for separate Direct Entry Superintendent and Direct Entry Inspector schemes. Common learning and findings in relation to all of these programmes are highlighted in a separate overview paper.

³ A 12-month period as temporary inspector, with work-based assessment, constitutes ‘Step 4’ of the NPPF process for promotion to inspector rank.

Summary of key findings: Fast Track Inspector (external and internal)

Profile of programme members and forces

Recruitment

Sixty two individuals started the Fast Track external programme, joining through its two recruitment rounds in 2014 and 2015, and were spread across 18 forces. As of June 2019, 252 individuals had joined the Fast Track internal programme through its five annual recruitment rounds starting in 2015 (with an average of 50 new recruits a year) and were spread across 39 forces. For both the internal and external programmes, a third of programme members have been Metropolitan Police Service officers.

Attraction

Both the internal and external programmes have brought diverse applicants into policing with, for example, each recruiting over twice the proportion of people with black and minority ethnic backgrounds than represented nationally at inspector rank and more women. The external programme had double the proportion of female joiners than represented nationally at inspector rank (30 out of 62 members were female, compared with 24 per cent nationally)⁴ and 35 per cent of internal programme members were women (cohorts 1 to 5). However, the proportion of programme members from these demographic groups are lower than in national population figures⁵.

The external programme launched at a time when many forces had recruitment freezes and it could be viewed as a rare joining opportunity. The majority of external Fast Track members were under 25 when they applied to the scheme and (as inferred from evaluation fieldwork) had already been actively interested in pursuing a police career. The scheme also attracted individuals that had never

⁴ Fourteen per cent of internal cohort 1 to 5 members self-reported as having a BME background as did eight out of 62 external members (cohorts 1 and 2), compared with five per cent of police inspectors nationally (ie, within the 43 territorial forces in England and Wales: Home Office (National Statistics), July 2019, 'Police Workforce England and Wales, March 2019' available online at: www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-workforce-england-and-wales-31-march-2019

⁵ From the most recent national census figures (2011), 51 per cent of the population of England and Wales was female and 14 per cent were from a BME background. ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/bulletins/2011-censuskeystatisticsforenglandandwales/2012-12-11#ethnic-group

previously considered a policing career and experienced professionals from the public and private sectors⁶.

Internal programme members (cohorts 1 to 5) were, on average, older than their external peers (mean average age was 32 at the point of applying, compared with 26 for the external programme). They varied greatly in terms of their prior policing experience (while some had been in the service for up to 20 years before applying to the scheme, 12 per cent had only been police officers for a year). The internal programme had higher proportions of members reporting caring responsibilities compared with external members, whereas the external programme had higher proportions self-reporting as having a disability⁷. Three quarters of Fast Track internal members held a degree level qualification (an essential requirement for those joining the external scheme from outside the service) and a third of internal members held a postgraduate level qualification (the same proportion as for external members).

Operational competence

The evaluation findings reveal that, using a rigorous selection process, graduates and police staff/volunteers can be recruited at constable rank and made ready for temporary inspector positions within three years. Serving constables with strong leadership potential can be made ready within two years.

As of June 2019, cohorts 1 and 2 (internal and external) had completed their Fast Track programmes. Forty-one external members and 98 internal members from these cohorts successfully graduated in the mandated time period and secured line manager recommendation and chief officer sign-off that they were competent for promotion to inspector rank. These members then took up temporary inspector positions across 13 and 31 home forces respectively.

Passing the NPPF inspector's exam was essential to successful programme graduation. Both external (cohorts 1 and 2) and internal (cohorts 1 to 4) members performed well, achieving a 98 per cent and 83 per cent pass rate respectively, compared with a 45 per cent national pass rate. Failing to pass programme assessments, including the exam, accounted for almost all attrition from the internal programme – seven per cent of internal members (cohorts 1 to 4) left prior to scheme completion. Attrition from the external programme was higher

⁶ Twelve of the external programme members had been police staff at the point they applied to the programme, and over half (35 out of 62) had been in other forms of employment (20 in the private sector and 15 in the public sector).

⁷ Eighteen per cent of internal members reported having caring responsibilities, compared with less than five external members. Nearly a fifth of external members reported having a disability, compared with five per cent of internal members.

(18 out of 62 external members left the programme without completing)⁸ and almost entirely due to resignations from the programme. Nine of the 18 individuals left policing, whereas the others stayed as police officers.

In end-of-programme fieldwork, cohort 1 and 2 Fast Track officer respondents (both internal and external) were almost unanimously confident in their operational and leadership skills and ability for inspector rank, with internal officers more strongly so. There was a common view, among both external and internal respondents, that the programme could not fully compensate for more lengthy policing experience and it would be important to keep learning on the job. Similarly, for both internal and external line manager/mentor interviews, there was almost an even split between those who were confident that their Fast Track officer was ready for inspector rank at the point of scheme completion and those who felt it would take time to develop the knowledge and skills to be fully effective in role (potentially applicable to any newly promoted inspector). Interviewed line managers/mentors also generally described their Fast Track officers as very capable and motivated. Some of those interviewed about external Fast Track members said their negative preconceptions of the programme had changed after working with them – for example, after finding the officers quick to learn and effective at problem solving.

Progression

Both the Fast Track external and internal scheme recruited individuals that were typically motivated to reach at least senior leadership ranks and there is evidence that some members were already showing potential for promotion at scheme completion.

As of June 2019, five Fast Track officers (two external and three internal) had been promoted, two to temporary chief inspector and three to substantive chief inspector. Almost all first-survey respondents for both the internal and external programmes (cohorts 1 and 2) said they wanted to reach senior police levels. For both programmes, the guaranteed promotion to inspector rank in two to three years (subject to assessments) was a strong pull and was crucial to some applicants' decision to apply. Not all programme members, however, wanted to progress as quickly as possible up the ranks.

Interviewed line managers/mentors of both internal and external members were almost evenly split between those that were very confident that their Fast Track officer had good potential to progress above inspector rank and those that felt they would need to prove themselves as inspectors first. A lack of post-

⁸ Three other members deferred and were due to graduate with cohorts three and four.

programme support was commonly raised as a perceived barrier to promotion for Fast Track inspectors, as well as the risk that limited experience could restrict career options and be a barrier when competing for promotion.

Return on investment

Perceived benefits

The evaluation has found internal and particularly external Fast Track programme graduates could be motivated to positively influence force culture and management, through an inclusive and empowering leadership style (as encouraged in College inputs), with a focus on staff welfare. Programme member and line manager/mentor interviewees described how some Fast Track officers, at the point of graduation, were already taking this approach and felt optimistic it would have greater positive impact in inspector level posts. There was a common recognition among evaluation respondents (as acknowledged in the programme aims) that it could be necessary to reach senior ranks to have wider, force level influence.

Some external members were described (by interviewed line managers/mentors) as taking a more analytical approach to problem solving, than typical among others they managed/of their rank. Several external members described strategic-level projects and roles they were involved with that they thought had widened their influence and for some, had created an opportunity to use pre-existing work skills.

Programme costs

The cost to the College of designing, marketing, recruiting and delivering the Fast Track external programme, for two cohorts, was £1.11 million. The same costs to the College for Fast Track internal (for the accounting period 2014 to 2019) has been £1.95 million.

Learning for future implementation

For a programme that is largely delivered in force, it is important that mechanisms are in place to ensure effective support and mandated requirements are met, and that these, as well as the programme aims, are well communicated by the College and in force. Fast Track was a challenging programme and consideration could be given for how to tailor support, development opportunities and the programme length to meet individual needs and preferences. Providing ongoing support, post-scheme completion, has been raised as important by all interviewee groups (programme members, line managers and mentors).

In-force consistency

Evaluation fieldwork indicates that in-force experiences varied considerably for both internal and external cohort members. They typically benefited from supportive workplace coaches/tutors and colleagues, but not all were assigned or benefited from suitable mentors. Force single points of contact (SPOC) had a vital role in the delivery of the programme and to be effective, they needed to ensure national minimum requirements for the programme in force were met – particularly around explaining the programme to line managers/teams and helping to secure access to suitable development opportunities and roles for programme members. Evaluation responses indicate that greater clarity and more effective communication of programme requirements by the College and within force would have been helpful. Being classed as supernumerary (ie, not part of a team's essential headcount) was commonly perceived as important – as it could allow officers more freedom to focus on learning when on rotation (such as shadowing) and to pursue development opportunities.

There were varying opinions by programme members on how prescriptive the programme should have been, particularly in relation to time spent in force. Some wanted more uniformity around programme requirements and others would have preferred more freedom to individually tailor their experiences. Views could also be completely divergent on what were the most and least helpful elements of the programme. Evaluation respondents recognised that catering for all development needs and interests would be challenging.

College modules

The College modules were mostly appreciated by programme member evaluation respondents as a chance to reflect and network, as well as hear from expert speakers and test out decision-making in a safe place. Following feedback, modules were adapted to include a stronger focus on operational readiness for the next rank, beyond developing skills and knowledge to become influential future leaders. The set two to three-year time frame for the programme created a sense among many programme members (particularly externals) that learning how to do the job was their priority and for some, other elements of the programme could be viewed as a distraction.

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1 Background

In 2014 the College launched a three-year Fast Track to Inspector programme for externally recruited graduates and special constables and police staff, along with a two-year Fast Track to Inspector programme for existing police constables. The new programmes (Fast Track internal and external) were introduced alongside a new Direct Entry Superintendent scheme (only open to external recruits). The new programmes were initiated in response to Winsor Review (2011)¹ recommendations and were all designed to meet the following main aims:

- enable a wider pool of talent to enter and progress within the police service
- attract individuals with new perspectives and diverse backgrounds to support the continuous development of policing.

¹ Winsor, T. 2011, 'Independent Review of Police Officer and Staff Remuneration and Conditions – Part II' available online at <http://library.college.police.uk/docs/Winsor-Part2-vol1.pdf>

Fast Track also had the following, more specific aims to:

- open up entry to the service to graduates who would bring new perspectives and diverse backgrounds to support the continuous development of policing
- offer career progression to graduates in line with other professions to attract the most talented graduates
- attract, identify and develop the most talented constables, special constables and police staff from within the service
- develop a cadre of officers with the skills, experience and capacity to reach the senior ranks of the service, at least superintendent, to impact on and positively influence the management and culture of policing.

A new cohort has joined the Fast Track internal programme every year since 2015 – with the fifth cohort selected in April 2019. Entry to the Fast Track external element closed after two rounds of recruitment (in 2014 and 2015) – effectively replaced by a new College of Policing Direct Entry Inspector scheme (launched 2016) and the wider, national roll-out of Police Now – an initially Metropolitan Police (MPS) specific graduate recruitment scheme.

The new College programmes (Direct Entry and Fast Track) were in accord with an aspiration set out in the College Leadership Review (2015)² to enable more flexible entry, exit and re-entry into the service. In its document Policing Vision 2025³, the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) and the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC) supported the implementation of the College Leadership Review – including acknowledgement that changes were needed around the way people entered, left and re-entered the service and noting 'many individuals now have different work and career aspirations and needs'. The document also emphasised the importance of achieving greater diversity within the police workforce, as well as attracting appropriately skilled individuals to meet future requirements. While the document did not explicitly refer to the new Direct Entry and Fast Track schemes, it helped articulate a strategy for workforce reform and one that fitted with testing new entry routes and talent development methods.

2 College of Policing, 2015, 'Leadership Review: Recommendations for delivering leadership at all levels', available online at www.college.police.uk/What-we-do/Development/Promotion/the-leadership-review/Documents/Leadership_Review_Final_June-2015.pdf

3 National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) and Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC), 2015, 'National Policing Vision 2025', available online at npcc.police.uk/documents/Policing%20Vision.pdf

2 Overview of the Fast Track Inspector programme

Programme members have been recruited based on their leadership and management potential (including to reach superintendent rank), as assessed through a College national selection and assessment process. Serving constables have been required to have chief officer approval in their home force to apply. External applicants had to pass an additional in-force selection procedure to join the programme and become employed as constables by their chosen participating force. Unlike Direct Entry, Fast Track members have not been employed and paid at the target rank from the outset – externals joined as constables and internals joined as temporary sergeants.

Like Direct Entry, the Fast Track programme combines College-delivered modules along with working in force. External Fast Track recruits had a year-long induction period, including experience working at constable rank and completion of standard initial recruit training and assessment, before internal members started their programmes – at which point, external and internal cohorts were combined and followed the same time table for College inputs (13 days in total) and for sergeant and inspector rotations – see diagram below.

College inputs focused on developing leadership/management skills and knowledge. National minimum requirements were set for the programme, which participating forces were expected to adhere to. This included governance arrangements (the appointment of a chief officer lead and force SPOC), support for members (including provision for force tutors/workplace coaches and mentors) and access to necessary and suitable development opportunities, training and postings.

Successful graduation into temporary inspector rank has been dependent on passing all programme assessments, including national inspector exams and work-based assessment (largely in-keeping with national promotion processes for sergeant and inspector rank). After completing the scheme, it is a programme requirement that forces support successful Fast Track officers to begin a year of work-based assessment before being confirmed as substantive at inspector rank⁹. Further details of the programme (including marketing, recruitment, governance, content, structure and assessment, are provided in **Appendix 1**).

⁹ A 12-month period as temporary inspector, with work-based assessment, constitutes ‘Step 4’ of the National Police Promotion Framework (NPPF) process for promotion to inspector rank. Successful completion of this stage is a mandatory requirement for all officers undergoing this process, before being confirmed as substantive in post. Further information on NPPF is available online at: www.college.police.uk/What-we-do/Development/Promotion/Pages/National-Police-Promotion-Framework.aspx

Cohort 2 Fast Track Programme - Constable to Inspector

External Graduate and Police staff/Internal Police Constable ***Indicative only subject to local force adaptation***

		January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
2015	Graduate and Police staff							College of Policing On Boarding		Appointment in force	College of Policing induction	IPLDP or internal learning programme	IPLDP or internal learning programme
	Internal Police Constable												
2016	Graduate and Police staff	IPLDP or internal learning programme	IPLDP or internal learning programme	IPLDP or internal learning programme	IPLDP or internal learning programme	College of Policing Ethics and Values Policing	IPLDP or internal learning programme	IPLDP or internal learning programme	IPLDP or internal learning programme	In force development	NPPF Insp exam	Cohort's combine 	Promotion to temporary SGT
	Internal Police Constable				Assessment Centre					Internal PC candidate's induction by forces		College of Policing Managing Self and Others	Begin CLP Work Based Assessment
2017	Combine Cohort	WBA rotations	WBA rotations	WBA rotations	College of Policing Evidence Based Practice, Creativity and Innovation	WBA rotations	WBA rotations	WBA rotations	WBA rotations	College of Policing Collective Leadership, Organisational Change and Strategic Vision	WBA rotations	WBA completion/ in force development	Substantive promotion to Sergeant
		 Princes Trust programme 30 days over 12 weeks	 Princes Trust programme 30 days over 12 weeks	 Princes Trust programme 30 days over 12 weeks									Optional 14 week Crime Group Induction
2018	Combined Cohort	In force development rotation	College of Policing Valuing Difference and Inclusion	In force development rotation	In force development rotation	In force development rotation	In force development rotation	In force development rotation	In force development rotation	In force development rotation	College of Policing Business Acumen, Partnership Working and Political Astuteness	Promoted to Temporary Inspector-Graduate from programme	
		Optional 14 week Crime Group Induction	Optional 14 week Crime Group Induction	Optional 14 week Crime Group Induction									

College of Policing modules will be 2-3 day residential events delivered at one of our venues and dates will be published as soon as they are available. Princes Trust is an intensive 20 day programme of activities, joining young people who are on a broader 12-week programme. Some of which will be residential. Custody attachment this can be completed on a rotational basis to provide exposure and experience amounting to a three month rotation. Crime Module this will be an optional 14 week induction to the detective pathway.

Table 1: Start dates of each FT external cohort and number of cohort members

Cohort number	1	2
Year programme commenced	2014	2015
How many started the programme?	41*	21***
How many graduated?	28**	13

*This includes one cohort member who deferred to join Cohort 4, Fast Track internal. **Includes three members who deferred their programmes and graduated with Cohort 2. ***Includes two members who deferred and are due to graduate with Cohort 3.

Table 2: Start dates of each FT internal cohort and number of cohort members

Cohort number	1	2	3	4	5
Year programme commenced	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
How many started the programme?	60	49*	44**	59***	40
How many graduated?	58	40	N/A	N/A	N/A

*This includes four members who deferred to join Cohort 3. **This includes three members who deferred to join Cohort 4. ***This includes seven members who deferred to join Cohort 5.

3 Evaluation overview

3.1 Aims and research questions

An important role for the College is the promotion of evidence-based policing – the concept that all decisions, policies and procedures in policing should be based on the best available evidence. In keeping with this, the College was clear from the outset (when the concept of Direct Entry and Fast Track was first raised) that any new routes into policing would need to be evaluated. Hence, in 2014, when the Home Secretary instructed the College to develop and deliver a Fast Track Inspector scheme and a concurrent Direct Entry Superintendent programme, the College also agreed to evaluate the new programmes and produce five-year evaluation reports – which would be shared with Parliament in 2019. Publication was planned for November 2019, but was delayed due to the December 2019 General Election and pre-election period publishing restrictions for public bodies.

The evaluation specifications for these programmes, as well as the later Direct Entry Inspector scheme, were each designed to address similar research questions and use similar research methods as each other (see below).

Alongside collecting information on the professional and demographic backgrounds of the programme members, in order to understand whether the programme was bringing in applicants from a diverse range of backgrounds, the evaluation sought to explore the following three broad areas: competence for inspector rank, barriers and facilitators to career progression, and what benefits the programme members may have brought to forces. The full questions are presented below, along with a short description of how the evidence gathered for each question supports wider consideration of the programme aims:

- **Operational competence**¹⁰ – Has the Fast Track programme attracted, recruited, trained and qualified the target number of people who are operationally competent as inspectors and are they demonstrating effective leadership?¹¹ (Support assessment of whether the programme is successfully preparing members for substantive roles and by implication, whether progressing from constable to inspector in three/ two years can work.)
- **Progression** – What rank and role did those on the Fast Track programme progress to and what barriers did the individuals encounter? (Support assessment of whether enabling quick progression to inspector rank can be an effective way to widen the talent pool for senior leaders)

¹⁰ Operational competence has been defined through the national assessment strategy. If programme members pass all programme assessments, they are deemed operationally competent.

¹¹ See Appendix 1, A1.6 for a description of programme learning objectives and particularly those relating to attitudes and behaviours for an understanding of what was meant by 'effective leadership' for the purposes of the programme.

and understand how the scheme should be implemented.) When the evaluation specification was designed, it was recognised that the opportunity to report on progression post-inspector would be limited by the fact that only two cohorts would have graduated from their schemes by fieldwork close (June 2019) and at the most, members would have only been in substantive inspector posts for one full year.

- **Return on investment** – What has the Fast Track programme cost at each stage of its implementation (ie, attraction, assessment, training and final assessment)? What are the perceived benefits? (Support assessment around whether the Fast Track programme can bring the anticipated benefits, as defined in the programme aims.)
- **Learning for future implementation** – An extra focus for the evaluation has been to draw out learning that may be used both to develop the existing programme and more generally, contribute to the evidence base around how to effectively develop serving officers and new police recruits with strong leadership potential.

3.2 Fieldwork and analysis

The research was conducted in-house by College researchers – all are members of the Government Social Research (GSR) service and as such, bound by the Civil Service Code (and its core values of integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality)¹² as well as the professional standards set out in the specific GSR code¹³, which have been designed to ensure quality, rigorous social research and analysis for government. (Further details on research governance to support an objective assessment are available in **Appendix 3**, section 2).

The evaluation was designed to capture evidence from a range of sources to address each research question. The sources included standard management information captured as ‘business as usual’ through College programme monitoring – primarily initial recruitment data and in-programme assessment data. In addition to this, the evaluation gathered a wide range of qualitative data through surveys and interviews, principally with programme members. Tables 3 and 4 below provide an overview of which methods were used for collecting data from the various cohorts. In all cases, all cohort members that remained on the programme at the point of fieldwork activity were invited to participate. More detail on the evaluation methods can be found at **Appendix 3**.

¹² Available online at www.gov.uk/government/publications/civil-service-code/the-civil-service-code

¹³ Available online at www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-government-social-research-code-people-and-products

In total, 38 one-to-one evaluation interviews (all lasting around 40 minutes to an hour each, conducted in person or over the telephone) were completed with samples of cohort 1 and 2 members and their line managers and mentors, during and immediately at the end of their programmes. A total of 362 evaluation survey responses from cohort 1 and 2 members have also been gathered and analysed.

The qualitative fieldwork for the evaluation gathered views and experiences of cohort 1 and 2 members (and smaller numbers of their line managers) in relation to the programme; whether and how they thought they were bringing and making a positive difference; what was thought to be helping and hindering this and finally; their thoughts around career progression. All interviews were audio recorded, transcribed and (as with the open text survey responses) coded by key themes. The aim was to draw out common views, where perceptions of different individuals corroborated each other, as well as insightful exceptions. An example of an interview topic guide and an online survey are provided in **Appendix 3** (sections A3.5 and A3.6).

Table 3: Evaluation fieldwork activity undertaken for each cohort, Fast Track external

Research method (sample group – programme members/ line managers/mentors)	Cohort 1 (2014)	Cohort 2 (2015)
	Number respondents	
First survey (programme members)	34	19
First interviews (programme members)	3	5
Second survey (programme members)	26	11
Second interviews (programme members)	3	–
Third survey (programme members)	19	10
Final survey (programme members)	18	6
Final interviews (programme members)	3	1
Final interviews (line managers/mentors)	6	5
Exit interview conducted by College staff with members that left prior to graduation	2	1

Table 4: Evaluation fieldwork activity undertaken for each cohort, Fast Track internal

Research method (sample group – programme members/ line managers/mentors)	Cohort 1 (2014)	Cohort 2 (2015)
	Number respondents	
First survey (programme members)	45	43
First interviews (programme members)	4	–
Second survey (programme members)	53	26
Final survey (programme members)	30	22
Final interviews (programme members)	3	1
Final interviews (line managers/mentors)	2	2

At fieldwork end, six chief constables and one other chief officer from a seventh participating force were interviewed about their perceptions of Fast Track and particularly whether and how they thought it had already benefited their force. Between them, the forces involved in this fieldwork had recruited 39 Fast Track external members (just over three fifths of all programme members, cohorts 1 and 2) and 130 Fast Track internal members (52 per cent of all programme members, cohorts 1 to 5).¹⁴

In addition to the evaluation fieldwork described above, separate standard ‘business as usual’ programme monitoring was conducted by the College throughout the five-year period. This gathered quick time feedback (primarily using online surveys with programme members) on the learning programme, including satisfaction with content and delivery style and whether members felt learning objectives were being met. The purpose was to enable continuous improvement of College inputs and of the programme more generally. The survey analysis was made available to the evaluation team and provided an extra source of evidence around perceptions of the programme. Similarly, emerging findings from the evaluation fieldwork were shared with the programme team throughout the evaluation period to inform improvements.

¹⁴ The interviews gathered chief constable/officer feedback and views on all of the Fast Track/Direct Entry schemes. Sampling focused on selecting forces with the most programme participants (as the chiefs would be in the strongest position to comment on programme experiences) and ensuring all schemes were well covered. The interviews tended to concentrate on Direct Entry, followed by Fast Track internal. By the time the interviews were conducted, the Fast Track external programme had closed to new recruits four years previously.

Throughout this report, anonymised direct quotes from fieldwork participants are provided to demonstrate views and experiences. To avoid identifying individuals, the pronouns have been changed in the quotations.

3.3 Limitations of the research

The nature of the programme created unavoidable constraints on the type of evaluation that could be undertaken. Key limitations related to the following (and are described in more detail in **Appendix 3**, section A3.3):

- a) Limited availability of objective measures** – the nature of the programme and its aims made only a few objective measures possible (primarily demographic/ recruitment data).
- b) Small cohort numbers** (particularly for the external programme) limited the opportunity to look for common trends in the data and limited what data could be reported, given the risk of identifying individuals.
- c) The relatively short timescale of the evaluation** – the commitment to present a report to Parliament five years after programme launch limited the opportunity (during the evaluation period) to learn from members' post-graduation experiences, including potential progression to higher ranks.
- d) Lack of comparison group** – comparing with traditionally promoted inspectors, in a comparison group study, was not possible given the broad nature of the programme aims.

Given the limitations described above, it was known from the outset that the evaluation would not enable conclusive answers to all of the research questions – particularly in relation to return on investment. Stronger evaluation conclusions could, potentially, become more feasible if the programme was rolled out on a larger scale and/or in a more targeted manner (for example, recruiting with more specific, measurable outcomes in mind or recruiting more members into or from an individual force to have greater likelihood of discernible group impact). Follow-up fieldwork with graduated programme members, for example, in five-year periods, could also enable stronger statements around the realisation of programme aims.

4 Findings: Fast Track Inspector external cohorts 1 and 2

4.1 Profile of programme members and forces

4.1.1 Overview

This section provides details on the numbers of Fast Track external members – how many joined, how many had graduated and how many had left by June 2019 (**subsection 4.1.2**) and force participation (see also **Appendix 4**). Descriptive data on the demographic characteristics of programme members is provided (**subsection 4.1.3**) and on their professional backgrounds (**subsection 4.1.4**). Evidence around programme members' motivations for applying to Fast Track external is described in the final subsection (**4.1.5**).

4.1.2 Programme members: numbers and force participation

In total, 62 individuals joined and started the Fast Track external programme (recruited as two cohorts in 2014 and 2015).

In the 2011 Winsor Review¹⁵, which first called for the introduction of a Direct Entry to Inspector scheme (renamed Fast Track when launched by the College in 2014¹⁶), it was suggested that the external version of the programme could have an annual intake of around 40 new members each year. This was not based on precise modelling and was not presented as a target for the programme, which launched three years later. By this point, many forces were operating recruitment freezes in response to force budget cuts (and the government-led austerity agenda) which may have affected their ability and willingness to participate in the scheme. In reality, the number of joiners in the two recruited cohorts was around a quarter less than the Winsor Review suggested (62 instead of 80).

The three-year programme period was complete for both cohorts by the evaluation fieldwork close (June 2019). At this point, 41 had successfully graduated within the set timeframe (spread across 13 forces) and:

- three remained on the Fast Track external programme – two members had deferred to Cohort 3 and one member to Cohort 4
- eighteen had left the scheme prior to programme completion. Most who left resigned and a small number were removed from the programme. Nine of the 18 left policing, whereas the other nine continued in service – their reasons for leaving the programme included wanting to follow a

¹⁵ Home Office, October 2013, 'Direct Entry into the Police, Government Response' available online at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/249824/Direct_entry_consultation_-_gouvernement_response.pdf

¹⁶ After Fast Track external closed to new recruits, the College launched a new two-year Direct Entry Inspector scheme in 2016, which required applicants to have prior management experience.

detective route, joining the Direct Entry Inspector scheme and not wanting rapid promotion.¹⁷

Cohort sizes were largely determined by the number of participating forces and the number of spaces they made available each year (see **Appendix 3** for more detail). In total 18 forces started out with a Fast Track external programme member (cohorts 1 and 2). Over half of these participating forces (10 out of 18) had only one programme member and half of these members (five out of 10) resigned prior to successful graduation – hence, the number of forces which ended up with a substantive Fast Track external inspector was 13.

Two fifths (26 out of 62) of programme members were employed by the MPS. Avon and Somerset was the force with the second highest number of external programme members (seven members), followed by Greater Manchester Police (five members) and West Midlands (four members). A third (nine out of 26) of MPS Fast Track external members left before completing their scheme – accounting for half of all members that left prior to graduation.

4.1.3 Programme members and applicants: demographics

The programme (cohorts 1 and 2) recruited over double the proportion of people from a black and minority ethnic (BME) background than represented nationally at inspector rank (eight out of 62 members, compared with five per cent) and twice the proportion of females (30 out of 62 members, compared with 24 per cent)¹⁸. More details are provided in Table 5 below, including numbers/proportions of female applicants to the scheme and applicants from a BME background. Unlike the Direct Entry Inspector and Superintendent programmes, Fast Track external did not have a lower success rate in the recruitment process for applicants from a BME background. However, the proportion of programme members from these demographic groups are lower than in national population figures¹⁹.

¹⁷ To protect the privacy of individuals, commentary on the reasons for leaving the programme prior to scheme completion has been restricted in this report. Notes from exit interviews with three external members by College staff have been shared with the evaluation team and where relevant, views expressed in the interviews have been presented with qualitative fieldwork findings (though not always signposted as drawn from exit interviews).

¹⁸ Home Office (National Statistics), July 2019, 'Police Workforce England and Wales, March 2019' available online at: www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-workforce-england-and-wales-31-march-2019

¹⁹ From the most recent national census figures (2011), 51 per cent of the population of England and Wales was female and 14 per cent were from a BME background. ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/bulletins/2011/censuskeystatisticsforenglandandwales/2012-12-11#ethnic-group

Table 5: Proportion of Fast Track Inspector (external) applicants/ programme members (cohorts 1 and 2) with BME backgrounds/female and national figures

Demographic group	Proportion (number) of:			
	External programme applicants	External programme members	All inspectors England and Wales	National population (Census 2011)
BME background	10% (380/3801)	8/62	5%	14%
Female	44% (1670/3801)	30/62	24%	51%

At the time of joining the programme, the mean average age of external programme members was 26. Nearly half the members (29 out of 62) were aged 18–24 years old, 21 members were aged 25–29 years old, nine were aged 30–34 and less than five were aged 40 or over.

Over half the members who joined (36 out of 62) had an undergraduate degree or NVQ level five qualification as their highest level of academic attainment. Over a third (23 out of 62) had a postgraduate degree (masters or PhD) and less than five members had A levels or an NVQ level three qualification as their highest level of academic attainment. Twelve out of 62 members reported they had a disability.

To protect the identity of individuals, reporting demographic characteristics where numbers were less than five has been limited. For this reason, data on sexuality, caring responsibilities and English not as a first language is not provided and data on the demographic characteristics of members that did/did not graduate has not been provided.

4.1.4 Professional backgrounds

Twelve of the programme members had been police staff at the point they applied to the programme, over half (35 out of 62) had been in other forms of employment (20 in the private sector and 15 in the public sector) and hence able to bring experience and perspectives from different work backgrounds – including six from retail. At least one member said they worked in the following areas: Government, Health, Finance, Legal, Marketing and Media, Administration, Consultancy, Education and HR. Six were still students when they applied, and nine others were categorised as unemployed, prefer not to say or ‘other’ (not categorised as public or private).

The young average age of external members meant many had limited prior work experience.

4.1.5 Motivations for joining the programme

Survey feedback suggests over half of programme members would have considered applying to join the police service without the scheme (29 out of 53 respondents, start of programme survey, cohorts 1 and 2). Fifteen out of 53 first survey respondents explicitly said they would not have applied.

When asked about their aspirations beyond the three-year programme, most cohort 1 and 2 respondents (45 out of 53 respondents) said that they aspired to reach more senior ranks. A similar proportion (43 out of 53 respondents) said they would want to work in a specialist area in policing. Thirty-eight out of 53 respondents said they would want to remain in policing and seven said they would want to look for opportunities outside of the service. The majority of respondents (32 out of 53) said they would want to remain a police officer if, for any reason, they had to leave the scheme. Four said they would not want to; the rest were unsure.²⁰

Respondents were asked to rank eight factors based on how important they had been to their decision to apply to the Fast Track programme. Providing a way to develop a career in policing was ranked as most important, followed by leadership development, guaranteed promotion, having an exciting job and giving back to the community. Lower down, was long-term job security, the training programme and the level of remuneration.

‘...Fast Track has certainly given me the opportunity for somebody like myself to actually really consider at my age whether I could make that big leap in the police force.’

‘Perhaps I would not have applied if it had just been as a regular PC and if force recruitment was going to be a regular thing but this seemed like such a good opportunity and a rare one but I had to give it a go.’

Programme members

In addition to the first survey to all programme members (cohorts 1 and 2), eight (three from cohort 1 and five from cohort 2) were also interviewed at the point that they first started their Fast Track external programme.²¹ Half had prior police force experience. Two had been volunteers in the special constabulary and the scheme offered a chance to establish police officer careers. One interviewed officer was particularly keen that it would allow them to have management responsibility commensurate with their previous day job and another officer had thought about a police career and said that seeing the rare opportunity to join and become an inspector was the motivation they

²⁰ The question provided a drop-down list of answer options and respondents were free to select as many as applied to them.

²¹ Selected to achieve a good geographical spread and mix in terms of gender.

‘I always wanted to be a police officer, culturally and family wise it was just not something that my mother was really going to be happy about.’

‘Some people have asked why I didn’t go for the straight superintendent scheme, I am very practically based, I think if I have any skills then those skills are operational skills and making decisions kind of critical incidents and so on.’

‘It’s quite a structured programme, so there is guarantees in place and that’s something that attracted me.’

Programme members

needed to apply. The other two interviewed officers had both worked in forces but had since left – one as police staff and the other as a police constable. For them, the scheme offered a way to return to policing and importantly, provide a quick route into management positions.

Another interviewee joined from another work sector and the development and guaranteed promotion (subject to assessments) gave them the confidence to make the significant career change. They felt they had strong skills to make operational decisions at inspector level and were not prepared to spend an indefinite amount of time waiting to reach that rank.

The final three interviewees said their main interest was to become a police officer and the opportunities offered by the programme were, effectively, an added bonus. There had been a police officer recruitment freeze in many forces at the time – several said the Fast Track programme offered a rare opportunity to apply.

All interviewees acknowledged the unique opportunities offered by the Fast Track programme and knew that promotion through the ranks would usually take much longer. For some of the interviewees, they were drawn to the possibilities, afforded by the Fast Track programme, to use their life skills and experiences of their past career. One respondent also described how they saw the Fast Track programme as a route into hands-on operational policing which made them consciously choose the programme over the Direct Entry Superintendent scheme.

4.2 Operational competence

4.2.1 Overview

This section provides details on the number of recruits, graduates and resignations from the Fast Track external programme (**subsection 4.2.2**), members’ own perceptions of their readiness for inspector rank (**subsection 4.2.3**), and line manager/mentor perceptions of their programme members’ readiness (**subsection 4.2.4**).

Passing programme assessments was considered the measure of operational competence for inspector rank for the

programme. In addition to this, this section presents perception evidence that, on balance, the programme succeeded in getting members to a point where they could take up temporary inspector posts. Like all newly promoted inspectors, they would need to keep learning on the job and pass their work-based assessments to get confirmed as substantive.

4.2.2 Successful completion of programme assessments

Cohorts 1 and 2 had completed the programme by the end of the fieldwork period (June 2019) and 41 out of the 62 members had graduated and been confirmed as temporary inspectors by their chief constables. All were deemed operationally competent for this promotion, having passed all programme assessments. Cohort 1 and 2 members performed very well at the National Police Promotions Framework inspector's exam²² with 98 per cent of those that sat the exam passing, compared with 45 per cent nationally.

Eighteen members left prior to scheme completion and three had deferred to later internal cohorts, making the programme pass rate within the three-year time period 66 per cent for cohorts 1 and 2 combined. Most of the 18 leavers resigned from the programme and a small number of others were taken off by their force (see **subsection 4.1.2**).

4.2.3 Programme members' perceptions of their readiness for substantive inspector rank

In their final surveys (response rate 24 out of 46), cohort 1 and 2 external members were asked to think about their readiness for substantive inspector rank. The response was almost entirely positive – with all except one respondent agreeing they felt confident in terms of leadership/management ability (23 out of 24 agreed and three of these strongly agreed) and all except four saying they felt confident in terms of operational ability (20 out of 24 respondents and eight of these strongly agreed).

Similar positive findings were found in final interviews with four external programme members. When asked,

'I've genuinely had a very positive experience of it. I don't have any real negatives to bring up. It's gone well.'

'Having come through it now, I feel like the structure of the programme makes a lot of sense and it gave me the right amount of knowledge I needed at each stage to be able to move onto the next bit.'

'As happy as I can be around the decision-making, because I think if you're happy... you're not wary enough around the risk that's involved.'

Programme members

²² A test of legal knowledge is an essential prerequisite for any officers in England and Wales to pass as part of the process for being promoted to inspector rank.

‘...one day you go into the job [as a PC] and dealing with what’s in front of you, and then the next day you’re a sergeant you have to just manage the job, manage the risks, make decisions, look after your officers, and that’s quite a big change... so then by the time you get to inspector you’re used to it...’

‘I would have appreciated more focus on developing decision-making skills in a policing context. Working through case studies and having the opportunity to debrief real life incidents, with those who were there (and trusted)...’

‘The scheme is obviously focused on getting people to at least supt and the modules focus on some of the skills needed to do this however the scheme finishes at the rank of T/Insp which is still very much an operational role.’

‘Other than being rapidly promoted, I don’t think I’ve gained anything from the scheme at all.’

Programme members

‘I believe in the success of the Fast Track scheme, but also genuinely feel that extending the scheme to make it longer would be of benefit – particularly to external candidates like myself...it doesn’t necessarily make sense to force everyone through the ranks within three years, as this will not suit everyone (even those who may still be seen to be future leaders). At times the programme has felt as though candidates will be made to inspector regardless of whether they were ready or not...one would have to question why three years and not four or five.’

Programme member

all officers expressed confidence around how prepared they were for taking up their substantive inspector posts answering, for example: ‘yes completely’ and ‘very ready and prepared’. Two of the interviewees described having prior policing experience, which they had found helpful, but one referred to another programme member who had no prior policing experience, and said they had been able to ‘catch up’. A few commented that they now understood why the programme had been structured the way it had been, for it had successfully got them ready. A period of acting up at inspector rank, while still on the programme and benefiting from tutor/mentoring support, was said to have helped them with their confidence around graduating from the scheme.

The interviewees provided more detail around how prepared they felt, with one officer explaining ‘I’m not sure there’s more the programme could have done’ – acknowledging that beyond the high-level essential elements covered by the course, operational knowledge would continue to be acquired on the job. Another indicated that they would never expect any responsible officers to feel completely happy in relation to making important operational decisions.

The part of the programme that appeared to be most challenging (coming out strongly in survey responses and mentioned by two out of four end-of-scheme interviews with members) was stepping up to sergeant rank and taking on supervisory responsibility for the first time. There was a view that having accomplished this and developed the leadership and management skills as a sergeant, moving into an inspector role would not be as difficult.

Despite the common feeling of confidence around readiness for inspector rank, many programme members gave feedback (both during the programme and at the end) that they would have benefited from more operationally-focused training when on the programme. There was a strong sense that the College modules had over-emphasised leadership and strategic-level issues that could be viewed as more relevant for senior ranks, beyond inspector. One end-of-programme survey respondent wrote for example, ‘there needs to be more input on decision-making, critical/major incidents, meeting new challenges (vulnerability, cyber crime, CSE etc.)’.

‘They’re functioning as an inspector. They’re not functioning as someone that’s just been promoted to inspector from sergeant. They’re actually functioning at that level...’

‘I would rather have someone who was competent, intelligent, enthusiastic and on the Fast Track scheme, yes, they might lack a little bit of operational experience, but you’d much prefer them than someone who’s basically managed to get through a promotion process that perhaps shouldn’t have done.’

‘I suppose the programme gives them the opportunity to go and experience things that somebody who’d gone through the traditional process might not have done. So, in some respects they’ll have more experience...’

‘If somebody had asked me three years ago what I thought of ...this scheme I’d have been horrified. Having worked with people in the scheme you know, not so much.’

‘There is a certain sort of appetite amongst the Fast Track candidates to absorb as much information as they can ...which you may not see from other people that are going through the conventional routes.’

‘I came out with the opinion that actually, with the right candidate, made of the right stuff, then they could get by without [experience]. So it did change my opinion.’

‘I thought I’d have to really look after these people, but it hasn’t actually turned out like that. S/he’s pretty much been as good as other people, and yeah, s/he might be lacking in some policing experience but their confidence, and...competence to work things out and to follow procedures has obviously shone through...’

Line managers

Similar to feedback from line managers/mentor interviews, some programme members suggested that the scheme should be longer or should allow more flexibility for individuals to complete it at a different pace. One programme member also said their greatest challenge on the programme had been developing the self-belief they could be a successful inspector. Their open text comments (below) add to a sense that some external programme members, as well as some of their line managers/mentors, may have struggled to embrace the Fast Track concept that passing programme assessments equated with competence for inspector rank. Given that cohorts 1 and 2 were the first to complete the Fast Track external scheme and progress to inspector so rapidly, such confidence issues may be understandable. It is unclear, without any post-scheme completion fieldwork having been undertaken to date, whether or not reservations quickly dissipated after members took up their temporary and then substantive inspector positions.

4.2.4 Line managers’/mentors’ perceptions on readiness for substantive inspector rank

A sample of 11 cohort 1 and 2 line managers and mentors (some had performed both roles) were interviewed at the point of programme completion. Five described their programme member as being ready for the role of inspector and three of these were very positive, indicating that they thought the Fast Track officer would be just as capable as any other newly promoted (or even longer serving) inspector. One suggested that their Fast Track inspector could be more competent in some areas than inspectors that had been promoted through the traditional route, due to their recent learning and experiences on the programme.

Feedback on the personal qualities and abilities of the Fast Track external members was generally very positive from interviewed line managers and mentors. They commonly described the members as being driven, enthusiastic, able to learn quickly and effective at problem-solving. Such positive characteristics were also often described as key to success for such a challenging programme and it was suggested they could make up for a lack of police experience.

Four of the 11 line manager/mentor interviewees described having their negative preconceptions or concerns about the

‘They haven’t got the knowledge, [...] the experience of dealing with an array of jobs and an array of different personnel issues from a policing perspective... But I guess what they have got is that confidence and management skills, and [...] at the end of the day we are expecting management skills from our leaders.’

‘S/he has landed both feet firmly on the floor, holding her/his own resplendently well in meetings...s/he was holding their own alongside DCIs and superintendents very well, presenting and pitching at exactly the right level.’

‘I still think they’re quite new to the role, there’s definitely an element that they’re not as experienced as others. That’s not to say they’re not as good, not as competent and confident, and they’re doing a good job but I think there’s some that have got far more experience that probably would make better inspectors.’

Line managers

‘Now s/he needs to deliver in the role for a period of time, to consolidate that and really prove that they can do it. And that’s probably going to be at least a year.’

Mentor

‘Inspector rank is a difficult rank, it’s so vast the stuff we deal with, so I think we need people that perhaps have been in that middle management in business and understand a little bit about HR processes and how people work.’

Line manager

programme overturned after working with a Fast Track external programme member. One such interviewee described how their view, that effective operational decision-making was based on policing experience, had changed. Three other line manager/mentor interviewees said they’d had no preconceptions about the programme, but were aware that other colleagues had become more positive about the scheme after working with capable Fast Track external officers.

Five of the 11 line manager/mentor interviewees indicated that, while they were satisfied with the calibre of the programme member who was the subject of their interview, they personally had or had heard concerns around the suitability of others.

Over half of the interviewed line managers/mentors had reservations about the readiness of their programme member for inspector rank at the point of scheme completion. One reported that their programme member had been taken off the programme prior to graduation, having not been assessed as ready for inspector rank. Five others indicated that while their programme member had graduated from the scheme, it would take a while in the role before they really began operating at inspector level. Their concerns stemmed from the relative lack of policing experience of external programme members and typically related to operational skills and knowledge, but a couple mentioned the limited management and leadership experience of their programme member. One specifically raised concerns around their Fast Track member’s limited investigation experience and lack of skills around partnership working. The evaluation did not explore whether such reservations were unusual or common, among line managers of newly promoted inspectors (ie, those who had been promoted through the traditional route).

Extending the length of the programme, in order for the Fast Track officers to get more exposure to different roles and specialisms, was mentioned as potentially helpful by four of the 11 mentor/line manager interviewees – either to have as an option or to introduce for all members. One said it would be helpful to be a response sergeant for two years and another said there should be time to get more public order experience and attain bronze commander status for inspector level. It was also raised as a way to reduce the pressure on programme members.

'I personally think that a candidate that comes through the traditional route has to do so much more than the candidates on the schemes to make themselves ready for promotion boards ... Certainly my candidate, I don't remember them doing any real assessments of their performance. Again the evidence that we give...it's all around that single strand of operational policing, managing Emergency Response Teams, where certainly being an inspector is far more than that...'

'Do I still think that they can do it in that short a time? I am not sure. I think we are putting pressure on them, and they are putting immense pressure on themselves to achieve... If I had to put my hand on my heart and I was brutally honest with you, I would say that the Fast Track programme is too short for them.'

Line managers

'I think for those with policing experience, three years is doable, but I think for those without, I think it is a big ask.'

Mentor

'In time as they get their feet under the table and more experience as an inspector, then they'll shine and obviously go for the next rank.'

'I think they'll probably quite naturally deal with being an inspector, chief inspector, into superintendent [...] Absolutely I can see her/him keep going.'

'I'm absolutely sure, 100%, that they've got the necessary skills and knowledge to do the role very, very well.... And I actually believe that that particular individual will get to chief officer rank.'

Line managers

One suggested that officers going through the traditional promotion route had to provide more evidence to prove their suitability. In particular, they described how Fast Track, in their force, had focused on getting the members into specific inspector roles and had not sufficiently developed their skills and knowledge, nor assessed them, in other areas. This interviewee felt their external member was very successful as a response sergeant but had reservations around them progressing to inspector.

4.3 Progression

4.3.1 Overview

The following section summarises perception evidence on the suitability of programme members for more senior roles (**subsection 4.3.2**) and potential barriers to promotion (**subsection 4.3.3**).

4.3.2 Perceived suitability for progression beyond inspector rank

Five of the 10 line managers/mentors of successful programme graduates that were interviewed at the point of scheme completion²³ were confident that their Fast Track officer had good potential to progress above inspector rank and three of these were very positive, including one who already believed their programme member could reach chief officer rank.

The other five interviewees wanted to see their Fast Track external officer succeeding in their inspector role before coming to a view. There was a common suggestion that, while a programme member could be considered bright and capable, it could take them time to build up experience and develop the necessary qualities for promotion. One said that, given the challenging nature of inspector roles and their heavy focus on people management, they thought anyone that could perform at that level had strong potential to progress higher. In their view, their Fast Track officers' potential could not be predicted before then. Another explicitly said they did not view their programme member as a potential force chief. A third thought their programme member would progress through

²³ The eleventh interviewee was a line manager/mentor of a non-graduating programme member.

‘I don’t look at them and think well there’s a chief constable in the making. I can see that they’re bright and articulate, but there are lots of bright and articulate people in the police.’

Mentor

‘We’ve shot up to inspector ... then we’ve just been cut off and left now. That is quite a frustrating thing, that there’s no onwards continuing support for the scheme... which won’t be a problem for some people, in some forces. But you’ve got all the internal politics and all the internal blockers that are inside forces, and some people will get trapped at this level, due to the removal of that additional support.’

Programme member

the ranks, more because they were driven and ambitious than because they necessarily were suitable.

4.3.3 Perceived barriers to promotion beyond inspector rank

Several line managers and mentors raised concerns around the limited experience of programme members and how this could create a barrier to promotion. There was a recognition that police promotion processes were tough and that the programme members would be competing against officers that could be equally bright and motivated, but with substantially more policing experience. A lack of flexibility to develop experience in specialist areas while on the programme was raised by some Fast Track external officers, including some frustration about their force stipulating that Fast Track was not compatible (in their force) with a detective route. There was a sense that the programme (or force interpretations of it) had been prescriptive rather than flexible and hence, had closed career options to them. Three officers left the programme prior to graduation so that they could pursue detective careers. Changes were later introduced to the programme, to make detective pathways easier to accommodate.

Both programme members and line managers/mentors provided feedback, in end-of-programme fieldwork, that a lack of ongoing development support for Fast Track external officers, post-graduation, could be a hindrance to their career progress (similar concerns were raised in Fast Track internal fieldwork, but not to the same level). There was a view that, if offered, further support could help them to continue developing and help make up for their more limited service as police officers. While it was acknowledged that individuals needed to take responsibility for their ongoing development, there was a recognition that being on the programme had created and facilitated learning and development opportunities and there was a common view that, having ended, their development could slow down or stall.

Two of four interviewed programme members, at the point of scheme completion, expressed frustration around other perceived barriers to their career progress. One, for example, found there were fewer opportunities in policing than they had experienced in their previous, private sector career. They said they would consider leaving policing if the situation did not improve. Another talked about perceived internal politics and internal blockers inside forces (linked to negative perceptions of the scheme) which they thought could present an unfair barrier to their progress.

Some programme members said they would have liked earlier information about their career and development options, for when they completed the scheme. There was a view it could help them take more personal control of their careers and therefore help their development and progression.

4.4 Return on investment

4.4.1 Overview

The following section describes and summarises the data that is available around programme benefits, starting with perceptions of how programme members could be considered different and be seen to make a difference during the programme (**subsection 4.4.2**); perceived barriers to making a difference during the programme (**subsection 4.4.3**); and members' aspirations around making a difference in the future (**subsection 4.4.4**).

4.4.2 Perceptions around bringing difference and having influence during the programme

In their end-of-programme survey, cohort 1 and 2 members were asked whether and how they had felt able to have a positive impact or influence on force management and culture. Out of the 24 respondents, 14 responded positively to this question, seven very positively and the others less so. The strongly positive answers were mainly linked to being given opportunities and roles that involved working at a strategic level, for example, sitting on internal boards, working on adapting force policies or supporting chief officers. Those who had been given such opportunities could be very positive about the influence they felt they'd been able to have. Some of the most positive respondents also referred to being valued by more senior colleagues for the different perspectives and other qualities they could bring.

The final survey did not draw out examples of programme members using pre-existing work skills, but this had not been a stated programme aim. In the final interviews, one programme member said they had taken a short-term secondment that had used their project-management skills, but this was a rare example. One programme member that left the scheme before graduation said they had been very keen to use their prior work skills while on the programme, and the lack of opportunity had been instrumental in their decision to resign.

Much more common were descriptions (by programme members and line manager/mentor respondents) of having a different leadership and management style than most peers. Some programme members from both cohorts suggested that, from the very fact they had put themselves forward for a new scheme and one that aimed to challenge them to work and lead in different ways, they were likely to have a different leadership style to inspectors who had come through the standard promotion route. They described this as a more inclusive and

less hierarchical approach, less focused on micromanaging, more welfare-focused and more empowering – encouraging proactivity, independent decision-making and questioning existing ways of doing things. Programme members had been encouraged to adopt this approach in College modules and some said it was an approach they had developed prior to joining the scheme.

Specific examples that programme members shared around influencing others included:

- One programme member interviewee described how they had challenged an inspector who had a ‘just tick this box’ approach. The inspector had not appreciated the programme member’s wider approach to problem solving and while they felt they hadn’t fundamentally changed the way that inspector then did things – at the least, they’d been encouraged to understand a different way.
- One said they were trying to get others to be more analytical in their use of statistics on crime trends, encouraging them to think about causation and correlation in a more careful manner.
- One said they had been vocal about a ‘management by exception’ approach among some of the sergeants and inspectors they had worked with, encouraging them to think about what could be influencing poor performance instead.

Another view, suggested by two programme members and one line manager interviewee in end-of-programme fieldwork, was that the Fast Track external officers could offer fresh perspectives just by being new to the organisation. One programme member, for example, suggested that policing could be an ‘old-fashioned world’ and there was lots of opportunity to ‘inject new perspectives’. Another said they could see a clear difference between internal and external fast track members since, they thought, the external were less attached to the traditional way of doing things. The line manager interviewee described how existing officers wouldn’t challenge in the same way as their external Fast Track officer, as they were ‘already in with the police culture and they understand it, or they have been exposed to it for so long’.

Three of the 10 interviewed line managers/mentors of successful programme graduates described their Fast Track external officer as already making a positive difference, to some extent, at the point of graduating. They were all described as challenging existing ways of doing things and offering different perspectives and solutions;

‘They will challenge staff, they will identify areas where we are doing things which just make no sense and s/he will look to innovate and do something there, which is really, really good.’

‘My candidate, as soon as something comes in, they would often ask “Well, why are we doing that?”... Not only that, it wouldn’t be a standard police response... they would always look to offer up solutions.’

Line managers

in two cases it was in relation to using skills developed in their previous career. One line manager/mentor interviewee specifically described how coming from a business background could be helpful for this. In their experience, they thought it could make a Fast Track external officer less constrained by hierarchy and more willing to challenge senior people, but also in a skilled way that was effective and influential, rather than antagonistic.

4.4.3 Perceived barriers to making a difference and having influence during the programme

Ten out of the 24 respondents to the end-of-programme survey (cohorts 1 and 2) felt unable to describe examples of having a positive impact or influence on the management and culture of their force (three others did not respond to the question). Similarly, six of the 10 interviewed line managers and mentors of successful Fast Track external officers felt unable to describe how their programme member had been making a positive difference while on the programme.

The most common reason for this (among both fieldwork groups – programme members and line managers/mentors) was connected with workload. Interviews with programme members raised a suggestion that there was little opportunity within teams for anyone to stop and reflect and suggest other ways of working, and if they did, colleagues and managers could be too busy to consider them. Members were also described as too busy meeting the requirements of the programme, managing their roles in force and focusing on getting competent for inspector rank to focus on influencing positive change. For roles where programme members were not supernumerary (ie, they were counted part of their team's essential resourcing on shift) this was a particular problem. Similarly, taking time away from the programme, for example, to get involved in force or national level strategic work (where there could be more opportunity to have wider influence) could be viewed as reducing time to develop operational skills and knowledge, and it was also said that such opportunities were not typically available or offered while on the programme.

Other barriers to making a difference during the programme were connected with the programme itself in terms of how it had been designed and implemented in force. There was a view (from member respondents and interviewed line managers/mentors) that the programme aims had not been sufficiently clear around what difference the programme members were meant to be making in force. There was a suggestion that the force/line managers/mentors had not been advised on how to help support the programme members to make a difference. There was also a view, raised by some members, that no one in force had been interested in or aware of the different skills and knowledge they had brought from outside policing and hence, the lack of opportunity to make use of them. There was a common view among member respondents and interviewed

'I'm not seeing well here's someone that is really going to help Policing UK think differently about how we work. I see [someone] who's bright enough to get from A to B. And it might be we won't see those benefits for another few years when s/he really starts to feel confident because at the minute, s/he's still just hanging on trying to meet the level isn't s/he?'

Mentor

'I've worked on teams where you're low staffed, low numbers, it's the middle of summer and demand is non-stop and you're running at over 100 logs on the screen that we still haven't got to yet, the opportunities for me to sit down and take a breath and say, actually, there's a different way...they just don't happen.'

'There is no systematic understanding of WHAT perspectives and diverse backgrounds any individual has and therefore no way of properly utilising this.'

Programme members

line managers/mentors that the roles Fast Track officers were being prepared for could be too narrow and operational, to benefit from external members' prior experience and personal attributes (including, for example, an ability to be analytical and think strategically). Some thought that it would be necessary to reach more senior ranks to affect change. There was also a suggestion that allowing the recruits to pursue detective careers could have made better use of such skill sets.

Interviewed programme members also reported making a conscious decision to avoid or limit how much change they pushed for early on. This was connected to wanting more time to understand police culture and how to influence it. Existing culture was perceived by some respondents as being very ingrained. Two members who were interviewed were of the view that while the senior officers in their forces may have supported the scheme, they felt that the culture among more junior officers was perhaps not ready for it. The interviewees felt they had lost support from colleagues by challenging attitudes and ways of doing things and they were concerned it could impact negatively on their credibility and careers.

Several line manager/mentor interviewees queried whether their programme member had sufficient prior experience to make a difference. This was raised in relation to perceived limited prior work skills and knowledge and limited professional experience at selling an idea, and of challenging and sharing different perspectives. There was also a suggestion by one line manager/mentor that all people in force were different and the Fast Track external officers were no more so.

4.4.4 Aspirations and confidence around making a difference in the future

The final interviews with four programme members found they all were optimistic that being an inspector would extend their sphere of influence, for example, with one saying they would be managing around 100 people and would therefore have more opportunities to positively influence the management and culture in their force. Some were making detailed plans and were thinking strategically about how they intended to lead and manage their new teams as inspectors. They also described themselves as being motivated to start or continue making a difference as soon as they took up their substantive posts. Several described a strong vision for the type of leader they wanted to be, which they intended to enact as an inspector and also take with them into more senior ranks, where they hoped to have force-wide impact.

‘My perspective has still been brought to bear and I would like to think, in some small way, has had a positive effect on team culture. So it’s an effect, albeit a slightly muted one. I am hopeful that when I actually become an inspector and have my own team this effect will be multiplied.’

‘I’ve been reflecting quite a lot... thinking about the future quite a lot when I take on my own team in January and how I’m going to do things differently and the things that I want to put in place.’

‘I am now moving into a more overt leadership role. Running a large team of my own affords me an opportunity to bring my own perspective on leadership and productivity to the fore.’

Programme members

‘The College has been brilliant in terms of delivery, they have clearly worked hard to try and deliver this scheme across the forces and to us in person at Ryton and for that I am very grateful. The meet-ups in Ryton were really important, perhaps for external candidates in particular, to create a supportive network of peers and for us to learn from each other’s forces. The expert speakers and the inputs from experienced officers were also really useful for me and still stick with me when I’m making decisions.’

Programme member

A specific example of a change an individual wanted to make within their future teams was encouraging frontline officers to write more detailed rationales for their decision-making. It was hoped that this would encourage them to be more thoughtful and critical, as well as improve the quality of secondary assessments of their decisions. Another was wanting to be more proactive around dealing with poor performance. A small number also discussed their plans for when they reached more senior levels. For example, one felt when they got to chief inspector and above, they would be looking to use their data analytics and project work background to get trials running in force.

The final interviews with four programme members raised barriers to making a difference. One expressed concern around potentially not being able to maintain their difference and thought it would be hard not to assimilate into police culture. Another thought there had been a lack of opportunities to think and work strategically on the programme and that this had undermined their potential in this area. They feared that ‘despite the best intentions and efforts of the College, the officer I am being shaped to be is not the one that the College, or even I, had in mind’. A third respondent suggested an inspector position could present less opportunity to influence colleagues than in a sergeant role, as it meant having fewer direct reports.

4.5 Learning for future implementation

4.5.1 Overview

This section summarises programme members’ experiences and views of the programme to draw out learning around how it helped prepare them for inspector rank and how it could have been improved, and is divided into the following themes: College inputs (**subsection 4.5.2**), in-force programme experiences (**subsection 4.5.3**), and pressures of the programme (**subsection 4.5.4**).

4.5.2 Programme feedback: College inputs

Survey respondents and interviewees (from both cohorts) held some very positive views about College-led training. Many suggested it had been valuable for imparting knowledge as well as for motivation and inspiration around being brought in to make a positive difference for policing and their force, and the emphasis on pursuing a challenging and rewarding career. The use of expert speakers and real-life case studies was greatly valued by members from both cohorts, along with a suggestion for more opportunity to test out decision-making in a

‘But at the end of the day, you’ve got to do the practical job. As well as being a good leader, you’ve got to do the actual job itself. We didn’t really get any input in particular on how to do that. You had to just take it upon yourself to learn it from other people in the force.’

‘Majority of the sessions were aimed either too high or were just completely irrelevant – for example, encouraging us to be involved in huge EBP projects, or encouraging us to get involved in external attachments, though sounding interesting as options for the future, do not actually help prepare us to perform the inspector rank to a competent level.’

Programme members

safe environment. The College inputs were said to provide a beneficial opportunity for networking with programme members from other forces as well as a chance to ‘recharge’ after rotations in force.

The programme concept was for the College to develop leadership skills, while operational knowledge and skills would predominantly be developed in force. Feedback suggests that there was a preference for the College inputs to have more focus on the latter too, with a view that more time needed to be spent on preparing for roles in force, including a suggestion that this could be particularly important for those with no prior policing experience. For example, two thirds of Cohort 1 respondents to the survey at the point of starting their sergeant rotation (17 out of 26 survey respondents) said they didn’t feel ready for their sergeant role in terms of their operational policing skills. For most respondents, their priority for development was to gain the operational skills required for the sergeant rotation (18 out of 26 survey respondents) and to get ready for inspector rank. Programme modifications, based on interim evaluation findings, may have had some success at changing this view – as less than half (four out of 11) of Cohort 2 respondents to the same survey said they didn’t feel ready in terms of their operational skills for their sergeant role.

Other concerns about College training, raised by small numbers of individuals, included the pitch of the training, with a few suggesting that the pitch could be too low (not taking into account the level of education and prior work experience of learners) and others suggesting that they could be aimed too high and be more suitable for senior leaders. Some felt there was too much focus on the MPS.

4.5.3 Programme feedback: in-force experiences

a) In-force learning and development

Surveys and interviews found that rotations and shadowing colleagues were highly valued by programme members and feedback suggests all respondents saw on-the-job learning, at different ranks, as beneficial. Many (16 out of 24, both cohorts final survey) raised it as one of the most helpful elements of the programme in their final surveys.

Fieldwork suggests members could be evenly split around whether they would have liked more time on a rotation before progressing to the next rank or not. There was a high level of consensus that extra focus (in some form) on getting to know the roles and responsibilities of the next rank would have been helpful, for example, through

shadowing. Some thought their rotations were too response focused. Some members also mentioned they would have benefited from gaining more standard police skills such as blue light driver training, which they felt their team would expect them to have when they became an inspector.

Programme member respondents often expressed frustration that elements of the programme could reduce their time for learning on the job. For example, work-based assessment, revising for the inspector's exam, the Prince's Trust project and even College modules could be seen as a distraction from learning through experience.

A prominent view across both cohorts and with all sample groups (also raised in all three exit interviews that the College conducted with resigning officers), was that the delivery of the programme in forces lacked a uniform structure. Seven of the 13 interviewed line managers/mentors said there had been a lack of clarity about what development opportunities were expected for their programme members and when. They would all have liked clearer guidance. Of the four programme members interviewed at the point of graduating, three raised similar concerns.

'I think that my force have done an excellent job of tailoring my development programme to meet my needs as an individual.'

'What we have at the moment is 43 different interpretations of the same thing, with each interpretation being utterly different.'

'I think the College needs to communicate with the forces a little bit better around expectations and management, but I appreciate that the College can only advise and guide, and the forces will always make their own mind up.'

'... everything comes through dribs and drabs, we kind of know what is happening with our lives a month before it actually happens.'

Programme members

Fieldwork with programme members revealed a perceived lack of consistency with how the programme was interpreted in forces. Some programme members were thought to be receiving more helpful and individually tailored in-force learning and development opportunities than others. A small number of end-of-programme survey respondents thought their force had done hardly anything proactive at all to prepare them. In this situation, programme members sought out opportunities themselves, but some respondents and interviewees described barriers to this, the main being if they were not made supernumerary while on rotations.²⁴

The perceived lack of clarity around in-force delivery was described by some respondents as being due to forces having considerable freedom around how to interpret programme requirements. A more prominent explanation was that there had been insufficient communication with forces and programme members about important aspects of the programme and some felt their force knew very little

²⁴ Supernumerary means not being included in the headcount for a shift and therefore the programme member would not be essential for resourcing purposes and could more easily focus on development activities (such as shadowing) and move roles.

‘We take people with no policing experience and get them to inspector in three years. It is some undertaking and I think probably some really carefully thought out framework for when they land. I was a little bit surprised that there was nothing at all. I said, “What is the support we should be looking to do for them?” “Oh whatever you think” was the answer.’

Mentor

‘All of the things that have prepared me best for the next rank have been things that I have organised myself in force (with some difficulty). These include: shadowing inspectors and chief inspectors, visiting other forces and departments, working with senior colleagues...’

‘I’m not sure where the breakdown in communication or authority was exactly, but no one in my force knew about me, my scheme, my rotations... There was absolutely no involvement from any rank higher than inspector... It has been a real struggle to meet the basic requirements of the scheme let alone get to a place where I feel operationally competent.’

‘You’ve just turned up, but everyone knows you’re on the Fast Track. Most people were quite positive about it and they were happy to help your development along.’

‘I’ve been exposed to a lot of different departments and different people as well. So you build those contacts within various departments that you can use throughout the rest of your career in the police. I’d say that is the bit that’s worked really well because you feel like you’ve got the support there from those people.’

Programme members

at all. This problem was said to have been exacerbated by the scheme being new and evolving, with changes and decisions being made at short notice. Several programme members also commented on how critical the force SPOC role was to effective communication about the programme in force and how resourcing this role was important.

b) Force colleagues

Very encouragingly for both cohorts (first survey) nearly all (50 out of 53) survey respondents felt that they received good support from their peers in their daily work. Good support was reported to have come from peers who understood the programme and were not threatened by it, as well as from those who were open to new ways of thinking.

Final interviews with four cohort members found all considered informal support from peers they had shadowed or worked with as important for their development on the programme. Earlier interviews and surveys had also found some felt reliant on the goodwill of colleagues to help them perform their roles when on rotation.

Some fieldwork respondents and exit interviewees, from both cohorts, reported resistance from other officers towards them and the Fast Track programme more generally. There was also a recognition that the programme could have detractors at all ranks and grades. A few said this had led them to consciously not draw attention to the fact they were a Fast Track programme member. Final interviews and surveys with cohort 1 and 2 members suggested that passing the national inspector’s exam could be influential on perceptions of them and their credibility. Others specifically mentioned gaining experience in public order training as another factor which had helped to build a sense of their legitimacy in role.

c) Line management/mentor support

In terms of line management support, while most reported very positive experiences, almost a third of external first survey respondents (16 out of 53 respondents, both cohorts) did not agree that they had received good developmental support from their line managers.

'I have had lots of jokes and comments but they have all been positive and I don't feel like there is a malicious element to it, generally people have been congratulatory and supportive which has had a huge impact on my enjoyment of the role. I think I would have found it hard if not and I am sure that at some stage in my career I will be up against some of this.'

'I don't think I have met anyone other than people applying for the scheme who think that the scheme is good and going to work. But having said that no one has been negative towards me.'

'Makes a big difference if someone's trying to help you than if they're being obstructive and trying to block what you want to do.'

'...the internal resentment from fellow sgts was quite overbearing and sometimes directly hampered my learning experience.'

'There was a [chief officer] who gave us an intro when we first arrived and he basically said, "I'm not going to help you. I'm not going to do you any favours; I'm not going to do anything for you. If you want something, you go and get it. I will give you the opportunity to do what you need to do as a bare minimum on the programme, but it's all on you guys". I don't think he particularly liked the Fast Track.'

'Line manager doesn't really understand the programme – starts to engage then stares into middle distance shaking her/his head saying "I don't know how you do it; I couldn't do it..."'

'They could have given me a mentor earlier, I think. Well, I say "given me". I went and got my own mentor in the end.'

Programme members

Interviews with programme members also found two examples of programme members not feeling backed up by immediate managers, when they tried to do things differently and when they had encountered hostility from their peers (as referred to in **subsection 4.4.2**). These programme members thought the programme had support at superintendent level and above in their forces, but other ranks were not culturally ready for the programme.

One Fast Track external officer, in their final survey response, described how they had taken personal control of their line management arrangements some way into the programme. They had actively requested a chief inspector level line manager and they had also set in place formal arrangements with all of their supervisors for how they would secure sign-off for development opportunities and abstractions. The respondent suggested that not all forces may have reacted so positively to a programme member taking such initiative, but they had found it extremely helpful for their development needs.

In both cohorts, most members would have preferred more mentoring opportunities. In feedback, respondents reported that mentors could provide very effective development support, but some had not been appointed one; others reported their mentors not finding time to meet with them and a perceived mismatch in terms of a mentor's rank and knowledge base. Preferences around this varied, with a couple saying they had found a superintendent level mentor helpful, whereas others had said having a much more senior mentor could be less helpful than having one at or closer to their rank when on rotation. There was a suggestion by one programme member that being mentored by previous Fast Track participants could be helpful and another said they'd benefited from being mentored by an officer that had completed a different talent-development programme, since they could relate to the Fast Track experience.

The three mentors who participated in end-of-programme interviews felt their role had been essential in order to help their programme members consolidate learning, as well as to provide further opportunities for them to learn from an experienced officer and provide practical support when needed. One mentor found that they were able to mitigate the lack of experience the Fast Track member had by checking their decision-making at

'[The force] asking me in a one-to-one once every six months if I was OK was plainly insufficient. I don't think my colleagues on the programme have been open about their struggles and those that have been, have been discouraged from talking about it. I have been lucky and managed well but a Fast Track colleague has not been so fortunate.'

Programme member

'I don't think we should underestimate the challenges of putting someone with no past policing experience to inspector within three years... I think s/he should be applauded really for what s/he's done.'

Mentor

'In my force, there seems to be very little 'buy-in' to this scheme and very little incentive anywhere to prepare me ... Indeed, I feel as though I am thrown in at the deep end and expected to fail.'

'Both my line managers so far have told me they disagree with the scheme. My buddy offered me the opportunity to spend a day with them to see what s/he does, and my line manager would not allow me to go, even if I went on a rest day.'

'There seems to have also been an extremely high expectation on all the fast-trackers because people seem to assume we have lots of prior policing knowledge and therefore are expected to be exceptional in the job...'

'Everyone knows that I am Fast Track and there is a burden that comes from this.'

Programme members

crucial times and another described themselves as a sounding board for their programme member. All thought there should have been more structure in place in terms of mentoring and less reliance on individuals to decide on how the mentoring should work. One suggested that it would be helpful for them to have senior/chief officer mentors as well as peer mentors.

4.5.4 Programme feedback: programme pressures and wellbeing

Surveys, interviews and exit interviews with programme members during and at the end of their scheme revealed that most found it demanding and at certain points some found the programme extremely challenging – particularly those that did not feel adequately supported in force. Concerns included how much had to be learnt and achieved in short timescales, balancing home life demands, adapting to the nature of police work, feeling unprepared and the level of responsibility programme members were taking on.

Being the first cohorts on the programme and the controversy around its introduction was also felt by respondents to add pressure, with some feeling very high expectations were being placed upon them. It also created a sense of not being supported by all colleagues, including line managers and more senior managers.

Programme member feedback suggests that not all felt they had someone in force taking an interest in their wellbeing and how they were coping with the programme. Similarly, an interviewed mentor described their surprise, given the extremely challenging nature of the programme, at what they felt was a lack of structured support for Fast Track external officers. One programme member thought they had not been encouraged to discuss programme pressures. Another said that they had found the early closure of the programme demoralising.

Some of the strongest feedback on the pressures associated with completing the programme concerned the step up to sergeant roles (as referred to in **subsection 4.2.3**). Most respondents did not feel adequately prepared for this transition and many felt inadequately supported. Survey responses from this period found that the majority of respondents (both cohorts, 30 out of 37 respondents) would

‘I have found the transition to sergeant to be incredibly distressing... I have found it terrifying to be put in the situation of managing critical incidents... without any prior experience... This may sound melodramatic but the psychological impact of that is huge and does affect your health.’

‘Fast Track definitely favours those without families. Having my Fast Track workload, student officer workload, and recently driving course workload piled on top of one another – with everyone expecting the reading to be done at home – simply disregards the fact that I have [caring responsibilities].’

‘I feel that given my limited practical policing experience I have had no additional support in how to deal with major incidents, managing risk and generally leading a team that I am now expected to carry out.’

Programme members

have liked more opportunity to get to know the role of sergeant before starting that rotation. Many said they had had no chance to find out about the role in advance and would have benefited from shadowing experiences at that rank. Around half of respondents also:

- would have liked more time as a police constable (17 out of 37)
- disagreed that they were ready to start their sergeant roles (19 out of 37)
- would have liked more mentoring opportunities (18 out of 37)
- would have liked more line manager feedback (18 out of 37).

Many respondents to the open text questions in this survey (given opportunity to expand on the closed question responses) described challenges they had faced in their previous rotation and concerns about their preparation for sergeant rank. One individual described impacts on their work-life balance and another indicated that programme pressures were negatively affecting their wellbeing.

Although most external programme members would have preferred more opportunities to get familiar with inspector roles, before leaving their sergeant rotation (26 out of 29 survey respondents, both cohorts), this transition was typically described as less challenging, primarily as the Fast Track officers had by then become used to supervisory roles. Concerns around the demanding nature of the programme were still raised by members in the later surveys and interviews, but they dominated less and tended to focus on workload and barriers to getting sufficient development opportunities. This change may reflect that individuals had adjusted and had become less affected by programme-related challenges over time. It may have also been partly due to resignations from the programme, including by those who might have struggled with it most and felt least supported.

Among the sample of interviewed line managers and mentors, along with cohort members, suggestions were made to extend the length of the programme partly to help ease the workload

and reduce pressures on individuals. Some programme members suggested that the timing of the rotations and completion of work-based assessment could have been planned better in terms of balancing the workload.

The Fast Track external programme closed to recruitment after 2015 and its replacement, the new Direct Entry Inspector programme, required applicants to have prior management experience. As well as aimed at benefiting forces (by bringing in proven managers with potentially diverse knowledge and skills from their previous careers), it was anticipated that mandatory management experience would also benefit programme members, making the step up to supervisory roles during the programme less challenging.

5 Findings: Fast Track Inspector internal cohorts 1 to 5

5.1 Profile of programme members and forces

5.1.1 Overview

This section provides details on the numbers of Fast Track internal members – how many joined, how many had graduated and how many had left by June 2019 (**subsection 5.1.2**) and force participation (see also **Appendix 4**). Descriptive data on the demographic characteristics of programme members is provided (**subsection 5.1.3**) and on the length of their police officer service (**subsection 5.1.4**). Evidence around programme members' motivations for applying to Fast Track internal is described in the final subsection (**5.1.5**).

5.1.2 Programme members: numbers and force participation

As of June 2019 (after the fifth annual recruitment round) 252 constables in 39 forces had successfully taken up a place on the Fast Track internal programme (see **Appendix 4** for further details). Nearly a third (29 per cent, 74 out of 252) of programme members joined the MPS. Eight per cent (19) joined West Midlands, six per cent (14) joined Sussex, five per cent (12) joined GMP and four per cent (11) joined the Police Service of Northern Ireland. A further 34 forces had between one and nine constables on the scheme each.²⁵

As of June 2019, of the 252 members who joined:

- 98 had graduated from cohorts 1 and 2
- 140 remained on the Fast Track Inspector programme in cohorts 3 to 5
- 14 had left their scheme (cohorts 1 to 4) prior to graduation. Eight did not pass the mandatory NPPF Inspectors Legal Examination within the maximum two attempts. The remaining six left due to resignations or being removed from the programme by their force for other reasons.²⁶

5.1.3 Programme members: demographics

The programme (cohorts 1 to 5) recruited almost three times the proportion of people from BME backgrounds than represented nationally at inspector rank (14 per cent compared with five per cent) – similar to the Fast Track external programme. The scheme also recruited a higher proportion of

²⁵ For detailed force breakdown see Appendix 4.

²⁶ To protect the privacy of individuals, commentary on the reasons why programme members left prior to scheme completion has been limited. In the case of Fast Track internal, the College has not conducted exit interviews with members that left the scheme prior to completion and has instead liaised with forces to understand reasons behind early withdrawal from the programme.

females (35 per cent compared with 24 per cent nationally at inspector rank).²⁷ Unlike Fast Track external, the representation of women on the scheme was some way below 50 per cent and reflects the lower representation of women at constable rank nationally (the recruitment pool for the internal scheme). More details are provided in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Proportion of Fast Track Inspector (internal) applicants/ programme members (cohorts 1 to 5) from a BME background/female and national figures

Demographic group	Proportion (numbers) of:			
	Internal programme applicants	Programme members (joiners)	All inspectors England and Wales	All constables England and Wales
BME background	14% (406/2,852)	14% (36/252)	5%	7%
Female	30% (848/2,852)	35% (88/252)	24%	32%

At the time of joining the programme five per cent of members (12 out of 252) reported having a disability, two per cent (six members) said English was not their first language and 18 per cent (46 out of 252) reported having caring responsibilities. Twenty-two out of 252 (nine per cent) reported their sexuality as being lesbian, gay or bisexual and 23 did not provide a response to this question.

At the time of joining, the mean average age of programme members was 32. Over a third of members (38 per cent, 95 out of 252) were aged 30–34 years old, over a quarter (27 per cent, 66 out of 252) were 25–29, 16 per cent (41 out of 252) were 35–39, nine per cent (22 out of 252) were 40 or over, seven per cent (18 out of 252) were 18–24 and eight members preferred not to say. One of the interviewed chief constables specifically commented on how the Fast Track internal programme in their force had recruited older as well as younger officers. They saw this as a positive for diversity and inclusion in force.

Several of the chief constable/officer interviewees talked generally about how the programme had enabled the swift promotion of officers who may have experienced barriers to career progression related to demographic characteristics. One programme member, in fieldwork, described how the programme had given

²⁷ Home Office (National Statistics), July 2019, 'Police Workforce England and Wales, March 2019' available online at: www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-workforce-england-and-wales-31-march-2019

them the opportunity to move into a senior role after a period of reduced hours due to childcare responsibilities.

Over half the members who joined (58 per cent, 146 out of 252) had an undergraduate degree or NVQ level 5 qualification as their highest level of academic qualification. Eighteen per cent (46 out of 252 members) had A levels or NVQ level 3 qualifications. Fifteen per cent (39 out of 252) had a postgraduate degree (masters or PhD). Five per cent (13 out of 252) had up to O level, GCSE, CSE level qualifications or no formal qualifications and eight members preferred not to say.

The numbers of programme members that left Fast Track internal without graduating are too low to provide data on their demographic characteristics. It would risk making individuals identifiable.

5.1.4 Length of police officer service

At the time of applying to Fast Track, programme members had been serving police officers for between one and 20 years, with the mean average being seven years of prior police officer experience before applying. The most common number of years of prior police officer experience was two years (the mode average) with 30 out of 252 programme members falling into this category.

At the point of applying to the Fast Track internal programme over half (54 per cent, 136 out of 252) had been police constables for three to 10 years, almost a quarter (24 per cent, 60 out of 252) had been constables for one to two years, 19 per cent (48 out of 252) had 11 to 20 years at constable rank and eight preferred not to say.

Table 7: Length of police service of Fast Track internal programme members (cohorts 1 to 5 combined) – numbers and proportion of all members

Length police officer service (years) prior to application	1 to 2	3 to 10	11 to 20	Prefer not say
Number/proportion of programme members	60/24%	136/54%	48/19%	8/3%

Twelve per cent of programme members had only been police constables for one year prior to applying to the scheme, meaning they joined the Fast Track internal programme with a very similar length of police officer experience as the

Fast Track external members. Nine of these one-year service internal Fast Track members were also university graduates, in the 18 to 24-year age bracket. When these officers joined Fast Track they were in a similar position to nearly half of the Fast Track external members, ie, aged under 25 and joining soon after university.

The prior work experience of Fast Track internal officers was not explored as part of the evaluation activity (since recruiting individuals with previous, non-police officer careers was not a stated aim of the internal programme). The differential between the length of police service and the age of some members suggests a proportion had previous non-police officer careers. From the data available, 44 per cent of Fast Track internal members were over 25 years old when they first became police constables and 10 per cent were aged 30 or over.

Table 8: Age Fast Track internal members (cohorts 1 to 5 combined) when joined police service as constables

Age (years) joined police service	18–24	25–29	30–34	35+	Prefer not say
Number/proportion of programme members	128/51%	8/34%	21/8%	5/2%	12/5%

The average length of service for those Fast Track internals who left the programme early (14 individuals in total, cohorts 1 to 4) was seven years – the same as the average for all 252 members who joined the first five cohorts.

5.1.5 Motivations for joining the programme

Forty-five out of 47 Cohort 1 members completed a survey at the point of starting their Fast Track programme. Out of these, 40 respondents said they wished to reach senior police ranks (superintendent and above). The guaranteed promotion to inspector rank (subject to passing assessments) appeared to have been the primary attraction of the scheme as well as the prospect that it could support further progression.

Four internal programme members were interviewed at the start of their scheme and provided more insight into reasons for applying to Fast Track internal. All wanted to reach at least superintendent rank and one already knew they wanted to reach chief officer level. Three had passed their sergeant's exam some years prior to applying to Fast Track but had consciously delayed getting promoted, one due to not wanting to lose their role in a specialist team and the other two because they wanted to gain more experience at constable rank first.

Two interviewees described how they were encouraged to apply to Fast Track by more senior officers, which was crucial to their decision to apply. One of

‘...to reach a senior rank... that was always my intended career path I suppose, it’s just a fantastic opportunity to kind of accelerate it.’

‘Yes I think if I hadn’t been successful on Fast Track I would have eventually considered leaving because you can get so frustrated, you know with not being able to develop yourself that I would have had to consider doing that.’

‘If I hadn’t had the support and the backing that I did, I probably wouldn’t have gone onto the Fast Track...’

Programme members

these explained that they would have likely avoided applying without the encouragement, as they would not have wanted to put themselves under the pressure of completing the programme, but more importantly, because they would have lacked sufficient self-confidence. The other interviewee, who had needed encouragement to apply, added that getting involved in business change work had also motivated them to influence change at force level. One of the interviewed chief constables described how the scheme had presented a good opportunity to spot talent – including officers who had not recognised their own potential for senior leadership posts.

There was a strong appreciation among programme members that being on the scheme indicated that their potential had been recognised in force. Joining the programme was considered a privilege and was seen as offering opportunities that the members would not have otherwise got in force. The four interviewees at programme start were all enthusiastic about the opportunity to have increased responsibility and early promotion. There was a recognition that promotion opportunities, outside of the scheme, could be limited in forces. One said they may have changed career in time if it weren’t for the scheme, as they knew they would become ambitious to progress and they thought their opportunities for promotion and career development more generally could be restricted in the police. There was a view that Fast Track could be an attractive opportunity to take more personal control of your career – which, it was suggested, could be difficult when not on the scheme.

5.2 Operational competence

5.2.1 Overview

This section provides details on the number of recruits, programme graduates and resignations from the Fast Track internal programme (**subsection 5.2.2**), members’ own perceptions of their readiness for inspector rank (**subsection 5.2.3**), and line manager/mentor perceptions of their programme members’ readiness (**subsection 5.2.4**).

5.2.2 Number of recruits, programme graduations and resignations

Cohorts 1 and 2 had completed the programme by the end of the fieldwork period (June 2019) and 98 out of the 109 members had graduated and been confirmed as temporary inspectors by their

chief constables. All were deemed operationally competent for this promotion, having passed all programme assessments. Cohorts 1 to 4 internal programme members typically performed well in their inspector exams, achieving an 83 per cent pass rate compared with 45 per cent nationally (Cohort 5 were yet to take their exam). Fast Track external, cohorts 1 and 2, achieved a 98 per cent pass rate.

By June 2019, 14 Fast Track internal members had left the programme prior to graduation; two members from both cohorts 1 and 4, along with five members from each of cohorts 2 and 3. The main reason for leaving the programme early was due to failing the law exam after the second attempt or being removed from the scheme for other reasons (accounting for 12 out of 14 members who left without completing the programme). Only two members who left the programme early resigned (they also resigned as police officers). This pattern is quite different to Fast Track external, where the main reason for leaving early was resigning (accounting for 16 out of the 18 externals who left early).

5.2.3 Programme members' perceptions of their readiness for substantive inspector rank

'When we had a control room inspector come in and showed us a pursuit, and said, "In two years' time you're going to be good at that", I looked at them and thought that's ridiculous, I'm not prepared to do that, yet a year and a half later that's exactly what I'm doing.'

Programme member

At the point of graduating, almost all Fast Track internal members responding to their final survey (cohorts 1 and 2) were confident they were ready for substantive inspector positions, both in terms of their operational ability²⁸ and in their leadership and management ability²⁹.

There was a difference between how Fast Track external and internal officers responded to these final survey questions. Like internal officers, almost all Fast Track external respondents agreed they were confident about progressing to inspector rank, but fewer 'strongly agreed'.³⁰ Potentially, the prior policing experience of Fast Track internal members gave them more confidence in their readiness, particularly on the operational side, for inspector rank.

This proposition is supported by the more striking difference between how external and internal programme members viewed the move into

²⁸ 47 out of 52 respondents agreed they were confident in this area.

²⁹ 50 out of 52 respondents agreed they were confident in this area.

³⁰ Three out of 24 Fast Track external respondents **strongly agreed** they were confident in terms of their operational ability compared with 28 out of 52 internal respondents. In relation to management and leadership skills, eight out of 24 externals **strongly agreed** they were confident, compared with half of internal respondents (26 out of 52).

'I came onto the programme already having experience of being a T/Sgt... I felt this assisted when I completed several rotations in the role, as I already had a core background...'

'I've been here in an acting position since May... before I was promoted early in September. I've been given the opportunity to almost try it and learn on the job while I was being supported still.'

'Every day you learn something new, but I think that's the challenge of policing in general, isn't it?'

'...the career history of people isn't necessarily taken into account on the time table, and the time frame for the two years.'

'It's going to be the hardest if you're struggling with something that you can't just go and confide in someone because there's nobody else of your rank there necessarily to speak to, which is a bit difficult. A lot of people said being an inspector's a very lonely role.'

'I am afraid that the scheme has become one which revolves around promotion to a much greater extent than development... There has been too little ability for officers to move at their own speed and to learn in specific areas.'

Programme members

sergeant level roles, which was the point at which the most anxiety about the programme was expressed by some external members. By contrast, most internal members felt ready for their sergeant rotation (39 out of 43 respondents agreed they were ready and 24 of these strongly agreed, cohort 2) – whereas only half of external programme members (both cohorts) had said they felt ready for the transition. Open text survey responses and interviews revealed that many Fast Track internal members had experience of acting up to sergeant rank (at least one had already been promoted to that level) before starting the programme.

While the majority of internal programme members said they felt ready for substantive inspector roles in the end-of-programme fieldwork, some reservations were raised. One of the four members interviewed at the point of scheme completion acknowledged that becoming an inspector within two years was 'a bit daunting' (despite having over 10 years' experience at constable rank) and expected to keep learning on the job. They thought this was a requirement of all police officers. Other respondents (including in final surveys) expressed concerns about a lack of post-programme support. While this was mainly in relation to supporting ongoing career progression, one programme member felt some apprehension about being left on their own to make decisions as an inspector, particularly as they saw it as a role where there were few peers to ask for advice. Another survey respondent explained that the programme finished at sign-off as temporary inspector and thought there needed to be more ongoing development in the role beyond this. They said 'it's a big jump' taking up a substantive role. In their view, the Fast Track scheme should have continued until one year after promotion to substantive inspector rank.

Similar to Fast Track external, a common concern about the internal programme (particularly expressed in evaluation fieldwork with Cohort 1 members) was a view that College inputs had insufficient focus on operational preparation for inspector roles. There was a sense that a lot of the training (such as around business change and political astuteness) was relevant for future, more senior leadership roles. Respondents were typically interested in such modules, but they reported their priority was ensuring they would be operationally capable and credible in force. A few respondents indicated that those with more limited policing experience could have particularly benefited from more operationally-focused training. Cohort 2 fieldwork respondents acknowledged that the College had reacted to this feedback, and inputs had been altered to include more focus on operational elements for the final stages of their programme.

‘I’ve been very fortunate in my force, as the opportunity to develop and sculpt your career is second to none, as well as the mentoring and support that is offered in force. From speaking to my other Fast Track colleagues, this hasn’t necessarily been the same in other forces.’

Programme members

Again, similar to Fast Track external, concerns about the lack of operational focus of College inputs were compounded by a common concern among internal programme member respondents that it could be difficult to get necessary development opportunities in force. The majority of cohort 1 and 2 programme members in their final survey said they had encountered barriers that held back their preparation for inspector rank, to a greater or lesser extent (outlined in **subsection 5.5.3** below). The difficulties they experienced may explain why more members were not able to ‘strongly agree’ they were confident in their operational ability and leadership/management skills for inspector rank at the point of graduating from the scheme.

5.2.4 Line managers’/mentors’ perceptions on readiness for substantive inspector rank

Interviews were conducted with two line managers and two mentors of Fast Track internal officers (cohorts 1 and 2) at the point of graduation. Together, they had worked with six Fast Track internal officers, but the interviews specifically focused on one programme member each.

‘They were at least at the level playing field of any of the others that went through... the usual process.’

‘They do have a continual drive whereas some who have just got through, sometimes maybe they take their foot off the gas a little bit.’

‘A big culture in the police...you’re almost perceived as being good because you’ve got 10 years in. Well, that’s not necessarily the case; you can be rubbish for 10 years can’t you? As opposed to someone who’s come in and done [less] years, who’s really driven...intelligent and you can pick up a lot from [less] years as opposed to 10 years.’

Line managers/mentors

All four of the interviewees were positive about the personal attributes of their programme members, particularly their enthusiasm for policing and motivation to learn and develop. One felt confident that their programme member would not become less motivated over time as, they said, could sometimes be the case with inspectors after getting through the promotion process. Other mentioned attributes were intelligence – the scheme had recruited some very bright officers with a tendency to consider wider issues and had innate leadership qualities. There was a common view among interviewees that the programme assessment process had been highly effective at selecting high calibre candidates. One mentor felt that it could successfully promote very good constables who may have been overlooked or struggled with the promotion interview/process through a standard promotion route.

All seven of the interviewed chief constables/officers were satisfied with the Fast Track internal programme, recognising that it provided an important opportunity to identify officers with talent for leadership roles. One indicated that it was important to be able to reward those with high potential after/during a period of austerity and another said the scheme had recruited ‘stars’.

Three of the four line manager/mentor interviewees described the prior policing experience of their programme member as having been helpful to their readiness for inspector rank. However, there was not a sense that the longer the prior experience, the better. One explicitly said that they were against the idea of correlating time served with competence – they felt that with capable and motivated individuals, it was possible to succeed on the scheme with limited police experience.

Two of the interviewees expressed complete confidence in their programme member's readiness for inspector rank. One described their individual as a very strong inspector but added they would need to keep learning on the job as, they said, would any newly promoted inspector. The two other line manager/mentor interviewees raised reservations around the readiness of their programme member. One was concerned that the scheme did not allow flexibility for people to be promoted when they were individually ready. For this reason, they did not like the name Fast Track as it implied a rush to progress up the ranks, rather than allowing individuals the time they needed. There was also a view that the scheme may not have offered enough preparation to members around managing what could be over 100 people. Both interviewees who expressed reservations felt that their officer would need considerable ongoing support with decision-making and advice. They thought it could take at least a year, post-scheme completion, for their Fast Track internal officer to develop the ability and confidence to operate effectively and independently at inspector rank.

5.3 Progression

5.3.1 Overview

The following section summarises perception evidence on the suitability of Fast Track internal programme members for more senior roles (**subsection 5.3.2**) and potential barriers to promotion (**subsection 5.3.3**).

5.3.2 Perceived suitability for progression beyond inspector rank

Of the four cohort 1 and 2 line managers and mentors interviewed at programme end, all were confident that their Fast Track internal officer had potential to progress above inspector rank and two of them were very positive. Two spoke of their programme members being very ambitious to move up the ranks. One said theirs was proactive around taking on extra responsibilities (partly to get ready for promotion) and the other described how they were supporting their Fast Track internal officer to secure opportunities that would help prepare them for promotion.

The two line manager/mentor interviewees that weren't so strongly positive around the promotion potential of their Fast Track internal officer explained they

'I think s/he has got the leadership abilities to get to the senior ranks. I have absolute confidence in that. They're charismatic. They're very personable. They're hard working. They're sincere. They're reflective. Their appetite for learning, and for supporting others, and for helping the organisation to improve, s/he's got the whole package.'

'I felt as though I spoke with them as [a] peer...as opposed to [a] supervisor... if that makes sense? Because they had that mindset and ... outlook as to how they carried themselves and how they wanted to work... I could see why they'd got on the programme.'

'I would say that promotion was always something that they'd been interested in from when they started.'

Line managers/mentors

'I expected the process to take more account of my interests and the areas that I'm good at rather than just posting me somewhere that was seen as good for the force with no regard for whether it was right or a good fit and I think that was very disappointing.'

Programme member

would want more evidence around them succeeding at inspector rank first. One said they were concerned about their Fast Track officer being potentially encouraged to go for promotion before they were ready.

One programme member in their final interview queried whether all Fast Track internal officers wanted to progress to superintendent rank. The interviewee said it was plausible that they themselves could want to leave policing before progressing to a senior role to pursue other career interests. The interviewee was aware that some internal Fast Track members had many years' service and therefore were not that far from retiring as police officers. Responses to the first evaluation survey to cohort 1 members provide some support for this. When asked about aspirations after completing the programme, five out of 45 respondents did not indicate that they hoped to reach senior ranks and eight indicated that they hoped to look for opportunities outside the police service. Proximity to service retirement could have influenced these responses.

5.3.3 Perceived barriers to promotion beyond inspector rank

Respondents to the Fast Track internal fieldwork have raised fewer concerns around potential barriers to career progression than gathered through external evaluation research. The main relevant concern was a view that some internal officers could potentially need longer in post to become confident and effective at inspector rank. This was not seen by the interviewees to harm their longer-term career prospects.

One line manager/mentor interviewee said they would have wanted more specific advice around how to support the career progression of Fast Track internal officers during the programme. Lack of post-programme support was also raised as a concern by a number of respondents, but without the same strong sense that the lack of support could potentially stall their careers, as had been raised in some Fast Track external interviews. Several chief constable/chief officer interviewees raised this issue, acknowledging how important it was for talented officers to continue to be developed by the organisation.

A further concern, described by some internal programme member respondents, was that joining Fast Track could actually reduce their personal control over career choices. Some said they'd had to leave specialist areas of policing (particularly CID) that they enjoyed to be on the scheme. In their first survey responses, 21 out of 45 respondents (cohort 1) said they would want to work in a specialist area in policing

after completing the programme, but some programme members felt the scheme had not set them up well for this or had actually undermined their preparation for inspector rank in specialist areas, as explained in **subsection 5.5.2** below.

5.4 Return on investment

5.4.1 Overview

The following section describes and summarises the data available around Fast Track internal programme benefits, starting with perceptions of how programme members could be bringing difference and be having influence during the programme (**subsection 5.4.2**) and then perceived barriers to making a difference (**subsection 5.4.3**).

5.4.2 Perceptions around bringing difference and having influence during the programme

In their final survey (52 respondents, cohorts 1 and 2) 40 individuals responded to a question on the extent to which they had felt able to make a positive difference in their forces during the programme. Half of these question respondents (20) reported that they had felt able to have a positive impact and/or influence on the management or culture of their teams. Fourteen respondents mentioned having had influence/made a difference to some extent while on the programme. Examples from these survey responses and from the interviewed programme members and line managers/mentors (at the point of scheme completion) are summarised below.

Like Fast Track externals, the most regularly described way internal members hoped to make a difference post-graduation was through having a positive leadership style with their teams. Most commonly, survey respondents described how the College modules had helped them develop a leadership style that was more encouraging, inspiring and inclusive. A number of respondents also described the programme as having helped their members' self-confidence which they felt could make them more influential leaders. Five end-of-programme survey respondents felt they were already having a more positive influence on their teams as a result of completing the programme. Programme member interviewees specifically talked about being motivated to treat officers and staff equally, focus on workforce morale, give praise where due and invite feedback from others. There was a suggestion that learning about less hierarchical leadership styles outside policing from external programme members in College modules had been a benefit.

Two of the four interviewed line managers/mentors of Fast Track internal members, at the point of scheme completion, raised the positive influence of their programme

'... force culture is very much transactional...task-focused around a job rather than around the people, and I'm trying to challenge that...I think certainly the sergeants who work directly for me...had adopted that style and were putting their staff at the forefront. At times I've noticed a rub between me saying to staff that they need to look after themselves and go home and leave this particular job for now. It can wait til the morning, and the in-force assumption that people just work until they drop really and get by on about three or four hours sleep. So I think that's something where I would say that's different there, which has been from the inputs I've had.'

'I have been able to use the skills and knowledge gained on the programme to improve the performance and culture of the teams I have worked on. Moving forward I am hoping to be able to make more influential changes to the internal culture of my force to improve the service we provide and the culture in which we operate.'

'The six module inputs from the College of Policing have definitely given me a different perspective on my own leadership and management style and ability.'

Programme members

member on their teams when asked whether and how they were making a difference. This included a description that fitted with them having an empowering and inclusive management style that supported the 'valuing difference' agenda. One line manager also described a positive approach to partnership working.

One programme member interviewee described how their Fast Track attendance had given them a strong sense of obligation that they had an ongoing role to positively influence force culture and management approaches. Respondents described proactively looking for mentoring opportunities to help the development of others. One described talking positively about policing and sharing knowledge about the Fast Track programme with potential applicants. Another spoke of challenging the 'old sweat' mentality in their team.

Some programme member respondents felt that by being on the scheme they were given a platform to challenge ways of working and were given more access and visibility with senior officers. Four end-of-programme survey respondents perceived that, due to being on the programme, their views could be actively sought by senior leaders and could be taken more seriously. Examples included being invited to join a 'challenge panel' and a business change team in force, due to being on the programme – which they felt allowed them to have influence at a strategic level.

Specific examples of sharing learning from the programme were limited in the question responses, but one programme member described explaining evidence-based policing to colleagues and promoting well-evidenced approaches to tackling crime. The interviewee also said they were encouraging interest in professional development within their team, as well as innovation.

One programme member referenced the value of quickly progressing from constable to higher ranks, as it was a way to bring ideas and issues from the front line up to more senior levels, where they could be acted upon.

One programme member described how the scheme could help those (like themselves) from under-represented groups progress into senior police ranks.

‘I have been able to use my platform to educate long serving officers about EBP and apply some of the proven methods of policing. I have pushed the boundaries of technology and encouraged officers to challenge the status quo and seek to improve. I have promoted a culture of CPD within my teams which prior to me was seen as a tick exercise with no end product.’

‘I feel able to constructively challenge ways of working and am regularly approached by senior officers for my views on ways of tackling problems such as recently regarding the use of mobile devices.’

‘I think you’re fortunate you have an ear to listen to you, you’re in a position where you can make that influence, so I think it’s an obligation for you to do it.’

Programme members

‘This is a daily battle, whilst I will always do my best to inspire the staff I work with and influence them to support change or challenge the old sweat mentality, the reality is as an inspector there are still many people who wish to stand in your way.’

Programme member

5.4.3 Perceived barriers to making a difference and having influence during the programme

Survey feedback and interviews with cohort 1 and 2 programme members have raised perceived constraints around the ability for members to have a positive influence during the programme – similar to those that were described in relation to the Fast Track external programme. In the final survey to cohort 1 and 2 members, 20 out of the 40 members who responded to the question around making a positive difference in force felt unable to give a positive response.

The following list summarises the perceived barriers:

a) Large force: As with external members, some internal members felt that the size of their force and the fact that they were ‘one of many’ inspectors hindered the impact they were able to have and the opportunities to make a difference on a wider scale.

b) Inspector role: As with external members, the scope of inspector roles could be viewed as too operational and not senior enough to influence force-level change.

c) Need ongoing support: Like Fast Track external, there was a suggestion that programme members would need more post-programme support if they were going to become more influential and potentially progress up the ranks.

d) Background characteristics: Unlike Fast Track external, some internal members suggested that their own personal backgrounds or those of the wider internal intake were not significantly different to others in policing and hence they said they or the scheme was not able to bring difference and influence change in the way the programme aims intended. Another thought all police officers brought difference, and Fast Track internal officers were no different in this respect.

e) Different qualities not being sufficiently recognised or valued: There was a view that forces did not recognise Fast Track internal programme members as bringing different qualities and/or did not offer them opportunities to have influence.

f) Existing culture and force structure: There was a concern among a small number of respondents that hierarchical structures in forces and prevailing culture could restrict opportunities for inspectors to have influence.

g) Programme aims: There was a suggestion that the Fast Track internal programme had not encouraged members to be different or given enough attention to how programme members could influence change.

5.5 Learning for future implementation

5.5.1 Overview

This section summarises programme members' experiences and views of the Fast Track internal scheme to draw out learning around how it helped prepare them for inspector rank and how it could be improved, and is divided into the following themes: College inputs (**subsection 5.5.2**), in-force programme learning and development (**subsection 5.5.3**), defining programme requirements (**subsection 5.5.4**), and pressures of the programme (**subsection 5.5.5**).

5.5.2 Programme feedback: College inputs

The main described benefit of the College inputs was reported as the chance to network and learn with others on the programme. Group discussions were commonly reported as a good approach to learning on the modules. Programme member respondents also greatly appreciated the more informal opportunities on the residential courses to talk with other learners – particularly to find out how others were managing their programme in force, but also to develop contacts that could be a source of ongoing mutual support and advice. Programme member respondents also felt the chance to step away from their busy day jobs and have time to reflect was valuable.

Beyond a concern that there could be too little focus on operational knowledge and skills (particularly for the first cohort), a lot of positive feedback on College modules was shared in evaluation interviews and surveys. When asked in the end-of-programme survey to 'briefly describe up to three of the most influential experiences on their programme that helped prepare them for inspector rank', College inputs were listed by 39 out of 48 respondents – far more than anything else. While learning knowledge and skills for inspector rank was reported by respondents as the main interest of most members, many said they particularly enjoyed learning more about the strategic, national context for policing and it had encouraged them to start thinking and reading more on this level. This could include modules that others had said were not relevant for inspector level, such as business change, evidence-based policing and political astuteness.

The module most commonly cited as a 'top three beneficial experience on the programme' was 'managing self and others'. Over 20 respondents referred to this module directly or indirectly in their question response, having clearly valued the opportunity to learn more about themselves as leaders and team members and

how they could develop their leadership and management style in the future. Some specifically mentioned how valuable they had found completing a personality test and using a 360-degree feedback tool. Other modules that were thought to have developed the leadership abilities of programme members and their leadership vision included the modules on ethics, collective leadership and valuing difference. All could be considered inspiring, thought-provoking and capable of having lasting impact on the learners.

The range of external speakers on the College inputs could also be praised. When interviewed, a sample of Cohort 1 members spoke of the high calibre of speakers, giving them ‘food for thought’ and how they had felt inspired to apply the learning they had gained from them back in force. Members particularly valued hearing from senior police leaders and there was a view that more chief officers should have been involved. Members were interested to hear and learn from their career experiences and could value informal conversations with them, as well as their presentations. Equally, contributions from serving frontline officers could also be highly valued, for sharing up-to-date knowledge that would help members get operationally ready for sergeant and inspector ranks.

The College responded to early programme feedback and made adjustments. For example:

‘Inputs at College of Policing – delivered by subject matter experts and also academics. These followed by group and peer-based discussions allowed a priceless opportunity to consider how to incorporate and develop certain skills and practices into my core business.’

‘Overall good scheme. Very impressed with the work of the College and their staff who put maximum effort into making the course work and dealing with concerns.’

‘The staff at the CoP have been very good and listened to feedback given to adapt the briefings.’

Programme members

- The introduction of smaller class sizes, more time for group conversation and less use of PowerPoint presentations was positively reviewed in later surveys and interviews with cohort 1 and 2 members. It was said to have allowed more opportunity for discussion and exchange of experiences with peers.
- In the final survey with Cohort 2, the majority of respondents felt they had the right amount of College-led training (18 out of 24). This has changed from an earlier survey where respondents would have liked more time on College inputs (16 out of 37 respondents), suggesting changes to the programme were improving the balance between in-force training, rotations and College-led training.
- As mentioned in **subsection 5.2.3** the College also introduced more operational training for Cohort 2 in the final stages of their programme. While this was appreciated, the majority of Cohort 2 third survey respondents still said they would have preferred more opportunities to get to know the role of

‘As with every input given on the Fast Track programme you can’t cater for the wide range of experience and interests as such people will like or dislike parts of the input... I am enjoying the course and a huge advocate of it... I have found the College always available, interesting inputs delivered by passionate people... Overall loving it.’

Programme member

‘Internally in the force, fantastic. I couldn’t thank my own force highly enough, and certainly after speaking to several colleagues, other forces on the scheme, I was very, very fortunate in what I had compared to them.’

‘The experience of individual candidates should be very similar across the whole country, however this most certainly is not the case at the moment.’

Programme members

inspector (22 out of 24 respondents), however, this could be in the form of shadowing in force, rather than more College input.

There was a recognition from some programme members that catering for all development needs and interests was not possible in the College inputs. Most notably, the strongest reservations about the College inputs typically revolved around whether they had been pitched at the right level. A few indicated in end-of-programme feedback that there should have been more to prepare members for future/more senior leadership roles – which clashed with the majority view that there should have been less focus on this. Some also wanted more specialist inputs. There were also starkly conflicting views over the value of different inputs. For example, one interviewed programme member specifically did not feel they needed the ‘360 awareness’ session, whereas several programme members listed it as one of the most valuable aspects of the programme, in their final survey.

5.5.3 Programme feedback: in-force learning and development

One of the main findings from evaluation fieldwork in relation to the in-force elements of the programme was the variation in how forces were said to have responded to the programme in terms of the opportunities they made available for programme members, and how much attention was paid to structuring the rotations around individual development needs.

In the best cases, members were able to use their time in force to focus on their development as intended; they were supernumerary and there was support in force to identify and secure suitable opportunities to meet the programme requirements, as well as the specific needs the programme member had identified in their personal development plan. Ideally, they had senior leader support and a mentor appointed at the start (a stated programme requirement) for advice and guidance throughout.

Feedback suggests that this ideal situation, or something similar, may have been the case for at least half of cohort 1 and 2 Fast Track internal members. This is based on the proportion of final survey respondents (23 out of 52) that indicated they had nothing to report when asked, ‘did you encounter any barriers, that you felt could have been avoidable, that held back your preparation for a substantive inspector role?’ (11 explicitly said they had nothing to report and 12 did not answer the question), indicating they were unlikely to have strong concerns to raise. Almost all of the other 29 (out of 52)

‘I’d have got to the rank of sergeant already, regardless of whether I was on the Fast Track or not. The main benefit of Fast Track is obviously having that extra exposure to different roles, which I’ve not really had, and I had promotion to inspector, which I could have potentially have got conventionally in the time period.’

‘Although the Fast Track schemes are national, it varies so much that in my force, it doesn’t really feel like you get much more support than you would otherwise.’

‘I think, certainly in force, it’s just been really badly organised. I think that’s marred my entire experience, I would say.’

‘I think that was probably the biggest thing; knowing who was there, knowing you could contact them at any point, and knowing that you then had the regular meetings that were already booked in, that was probably the biggest thing.’

‘I never met my mentor once. I didn’t even know who it was. That’s partly my fault... I didn’t go looking for them, but there was not someone contacting you saying, “I’ve been put as your mentor. If you need anything, here I am”’

‘I had to identify myself a mentor and within the force. I was probably in the programme for about a year before that happened.’

Programme members

question respondents raised barriers which related to how they were supported in force and the development opportunities they got.

The development barriers which programme members described in their final survey mostly related to lack of structure and support to secure necessary development opportunities in force. It could be the responsibility of individuals to seek out opportunities and if they were not motivated enough or encountered strong barriers to this, there was a view that the programme would offer very little else to prepare individuals for inspector rank. Some members in larger forces, with multiple talent programmes running, reported feeling forgotten by their force once the programme had started. Feedback suggests that even in the least supportive forces, members were driven to self-develop and overcome the barriers, but it is difficult to know how successful they were. Eleven out of 26 Cohort 2 respondents to their second survey, for example, said they would have liked to have had more varied experiences on their sergeant rotation.

As with the external programme members, communication between the College and forces and with programme members was raised as a strong concern for many cohort 1 and 2 internal members. Interviews and surveys with both cohorts reported a lack of consistency between their force and the College in terms of how to run the programme, including timings of rotations and restrictions on pursuing specialisms. There was a recognition among cohort 1 and 2 members that the scheme was new and evolving, but there was a view that amendments to programme requirements could have been better communicated. The programme was designed for the force SPOC to have a pivotal role in the force delivery of the programme, and one end-of-scheme survey respondent described communication and support in force considerably improving after a SPOC was appointed after a long period of the post being vacant.

Interviews and surveys with cohorts 1 and 2 highlighted members’ positive experiences with mentors and the pivotal role they could play in supporting members on the programme, through providing advice and honest feedback. Some members in both cohorts continued to access support from their mentors after they graduated from the programme and they said they had found this helpful for their development. However, not all programme members were assigned one, despite it being a programme requirement. Over half of Cohort 2 respondents in their second and third surveys (33 out of 61 respondents, both surveys combined) wanted more mentoring.

‘Prince’s Trust Attachment – I think this was really important in understanding leadership in different contexts and understanding ‘valuing difference and inclusion’... Custody Sergeant Placement – I would stand by my view this was the most challenging phase in my [...] year policing career. However, it was valuable in developing my dynamic and high pace risk-based decision making and personal and professional resilience. I felt this was so rewarding and a must for setting me up going into insp role.’

‘The Custody attachment needs to be considered for future cohorts. It was not required for my career progression and I feel is a legacy from HPDS which does not offer value for the candidate or force based on current requirements.’

‘The mandatory time we had to spend on the Prince’s Trust attachment took me away from my day job where I was really busy and learning a lot. Whereas the attachment taught me nothing and was pitched at totally the wrong level.’

‘I am still extremely disappointed that the scheme has blocked me from being posted as a detective inspector... For the scheme to prevent me (and many others) from fulfilling my potential and passion as a detective has been the hardest thing to deal with.’

Programme members

Cohort 2 members consistently reported that they would have preferred more line management feedback to support their development on the programme (34 out of 61 Cohort 2 second and third survey respondents). Interviews with line managers and mentors found that they wanted guidance on how they were meant to be supporting their programme members, both before and after scheme completion. One suggested there should have been a half-day preparation session beforehand.

5.5.4 Programme feedback: defining programme requirements and aims

There was considerable variety in respondents’ views about the most beneficial aspects of the programme. Some elements that were highlighted as most useful by individual programme member respondents could be viewed much less positively by others. The early requirement to spend time as a custody sergeant and the Prince’s Trust attachment provided the strongest example of such a dichotomy. When asked about ‘top three avoidable barriers to getting ready for inspector rank’, three final survey respondents raised these elements with the explanation that they were perceived to have taught the individuals nothing new that would be helpful to their future careers and that they had taken time away from other development opportunities in force. However, five other officers explicitly raised these experiences as examples of the most helpful elements of the programme. One officer explained that the time spent working in custody had helped them develop their personal resilience as well as their risk-assessment skills; and that working with people from diverse backgrounds, on their Prince’s Trust project, had helped them develop their leadership vision in relation to valuing difference. Similarly, six Cohort 2 respondents to their second survey said they would have liked to have spent less time on their custody experience, whereas three of the survey respondents said they would have liked more time on this.

Many criticisms of Fast Track internal came from programme member respondents who felt programme requirements had meant working in areas that did not relate to their longer-term career plans. Some thought their force had allowed less flexibility to tailor the programme to suit individual needs and interests than others. The strongest sense of dissatisfaction came from a small number of respondents who thought their force had not been willing to deviate from the programme aim to prepare officers for uniformed, operational inspector roles. Three out of 53 respondents to the end of programme survey (cohorts 1 and 2) raised this

'I spent two years doing uniform ...policing only to be immediately approached to return to my specialism as an inspector... I will be returning as an inspector with uniform experience but no direct management experience in my specialty.'

'It was actually described by a colleague as sprinting into a cul-de-sac for colleagues who do not already have an existing reputation or network of contacts.'

Programme members

concern, indicating that they regretted joining the scheme, as it had drawn them away from following their preferred specialist path or vocation. For those that wanted to get into a new specialism, after the programme, there was a concern that their prospects could also have been undermined by Fast Track, as they would have a management rank but not the experience and contacts in the specialist area to be viewed credible in role.

Two of the four line manager/mentor interviewees felt that the programme aimed to expose individuals to too much and change their roles too frequently. It was suggested that it took time to embed into roles and really understand related issues and the people in teams, which was considered a vital part of a leadership position. The frequent movement between roles could, it was said, reduce the learning and development potential they offered. Alternatively, another line manager/mentor interviewee felt programme members benefited from the range of opportunities available to them, particularly as a way to develop interest in different career options. Another felt their force had prioritised using the Fast Track member's existing skill set during and after the programme rather than allowing them to address skills gaps and development needs.

The contrast in views and perceptions of the different elements and features of the programme, raised by internal fieldwork respondents, illustrates the difficulty of being prescriptive about programme content. There were mixed views from line managers/mentors and programme member respondents around how tightly defined programme requirements should have been. On the one hand, there was a view that the in-force requirements should have been made more explicit, so that forces would be clear about what opportunities needed to be arranged for the Fast Track internal members. It was suggested that if there had been greater clarity, there could have been more time to make in-force arrangements and there would have been less opportunity for forces to not implement all programme requirements. The alternative view, expressed by some programme member respondents, was that the College should have allowed individuals greater freedom to identify their own development needs and opportunities, to suit their future career plans. For example, in their end-of-programme survey (cohorts 1 and 2, 53 programme members), when asked about potential improvements to the scheme, five said they would want a more prescriptive programme (one which made it clearer what development opportunities programme members would need to undertake), whereas four others described greater opportunity to tailor the programme to suit individual interests and needs. Eleven

respondents said they would want the College to have a stronger role around ensuring the programme was delivered as expected in force.

5.5.5 Programme feedback: programme pressures and wellbeing

The evaluation fieldwork gathered evidence that internal members did not experience, at least to the same extent, some of the pressures around completing the programme that were described by external members.

Most notably, as described in **subsection 5.2.3**, almost all Fast Track internal members were confident about starting sergeant level roles (whilst half of external end-of-programme survey respondents were not). Surveys and interviews did not uncover examples of any Fast Track internal officers feeling as apprehensive about this transition as some of the most negative examples raised in the Fast Track external fieldwork. This was despite the fact that a proportion of Fast Track internal candidates had a similar length of police officer experience as their external peers (11% of internals had only one year as constable before applying to the programme).

Some internal programme members said, in surveys and interviews, how their years of experience at constable rank had given them confidence during the programme – but there does not seem to have been a straightforward relationship between time-served and how difficult individuals found the quick progression up to sergeant and inspector ranks. As referred to in **subsection 5.1.4**, the mean average length of service for the 14 Fast Track internal members that left the programme early was seven years – the same as the mean average for all 252 members who joined the first 5 cohorts. The most common length of prior service for the leavers was one year (three members) and nine years (three members).

Unlike Fast Track external members, very few internal Fast Track officers, in interview or survey responses, raised concerns around negative perceptions of the programme in force. Overall, internal participants seemed to have avoided many of the tensions described by external members in terms of being associated with the programme. No Fast Track internal evaluation participants described anything as strong as hostility from their colleagues. A few perceived a bit of jealousy from some and a couple of cohort 1 members, early on, said they'd been treated as inexperienced officers by colleagues, as they'd been inadvertently mistaken for external Fast Track recruits. Nothing worse than this was raised. As several line managers and mentors said in interviews; for the internals, the scheme seems to have been viewed by their colleagues as similar to other talent-development programmes in force and not particularly controversial. Being known and having friendships already established within forces, may have been a protective factor for internal members, as well as the fact that a good number, it seems, had senior encouragement to apply.

'I think that's one of the things that I've come to realise is that offered the choice between job satisfaction and wellbeing, or being a higher rank, I'd choose job satisfaction and wellbeing rather than that. I don't think it should be a choice... I don't think it's the rank that's causing me the issues. I think it's the role and the general lack of support really.'

Programme member

'I've really tried to provide as much flexibility as I possibly can to enable the candidate to work within work's time on assessments, portfolio, I've given working from home days – numerous really.'

Line manager

'I think if I wasn't on Fast Track they wouldn't have put me in somewhere where I've got no experience or interest without any support. I think to an extent some of that was an expectation that I'll just cope.'

Programme member

Where the experience of internals and externals did cross over though, in terms of the impact of having the 'Fast Track label', was in relation to there being high expectations of them. For internals, there was a perception amongst some, that they could be deliberately given challenging roles or extra responsibilities, as they were on the programme. They reported that this was presented as a way to support their development, but a small number of programme members and interviewed line managers/mentors felt that it could also be more for organisational benefit and sometimes in response to under resourcing in force.

Another perceived impact of being seen as Fast Track, raised by internal interviewees, was that it could be assumed by managers and other more senior colleagues that they could cope, and did not need help with managing their workload or with support when taking on new and challenging roles. Evaluation fieldwork uncovered evidence that for a small number of officers at least, this could put them under considerable pressure and could also impact negatively on their wellbeing and job satisfaction.

More broadly and similar to Fast Track external, there was a common view, among internal members and some line manager/mentor respondents, that the workload associated with the programme could create considerable pressure. For internal members, this mainly related to combining the programme with existing work commitments. Given their prior police experience, some reported that they were expected to perform as an experienced officer when they were on their sergeant and inspector rotations. Many said they found it difficult (particularly if counted as part of the essential resourcing for a team, and not 'supernumerary') to devote work time to the programme. For those that were supernumerary and for those who had a supportive line manager, who allowed them to work flexibly, the pressures were reduced.

6 Conclusion

A main benefit of the Fast Track internal and external schemes is the learning that can be drawn from them. The external scheme was developed rapidly and delivered for only two cohorts. In effect, it was a relatively small-scale pilot that has drawn out extensive and valuable learning around what can work well and what would need to improve if a similar initiative was rolled out in the future. A scheme that delivered such rapid promotion to inspector ranks for external recruits had never been tried before in policing and there was a strong interest to see whether it could succeed and whether it could bring wider benefits. Similarly, a scheme that delivered guaranteed rapid promotion (within two years, subject to assessments) for serving constables to inspector ranks was untried. The Fast Track internal evaluation and ongoing feedback from programme members is enabling that scheme to be continually improved.

The evaluation of both the Fast Track internal and external schemes have overlap with learning from the Direct Entry Inspector and Direct Entry Superintendent evaluations. Together, they provide a body of evidence around new methods for recruiting and developing talented future leaders for the service. Further follow-up work with successful programme graduates, after they've had more time to progress in their careers, could enable more revealing exploration of potential programme benefits.

Fast Track external

According to first-survey evidence (cohorts 1 and 2) close to a third of programme members³¹ would not have considered joining as constables without the scheme, indicating success around the aim to attract new talent into the service. There are multiple indications, throughout the evaluation findings presented in section 4 of this report, that external programme members were high calibre. It would be hard to avoid the conclusion that the 41 people who successfully graduated demonstrated outstanding resilience as well as a high degree of dedication to becoming a leader in the police service. While line managers and mentors mostly felt unable to judge the future leadership potential of their Fast Track external officers at the point of graduation, one mentor said in an interview: 'there is good reason to applaud them. They reached inspector rank with unprecedented speed and showed the concept of a three-year Fast Track to inspector programme was possible'.

The demographic data for programme members (presented in **subsection 4.1.3**) shows the scheme also had success at attracting people from under-represented groups. Recruiting more individuals with no prior police connections or interest in police careers, could require more extensive marketing and perhaps a much longer time for the schemes to have broader appeal.

³¹ Fifteen out of 53 first survey external respondents (cohorts 1 and 2, response rate 53 out of 62 members) said they would not have considered applying to be constables if their application to Fast Track had been unsuccessful.

The Fast Track external programme was developed very rapidly and yet, despite some perceived weaknesses, it received some positive feedback from programme graduates. Testament to the scheme was the almost unanimous confidence in readiness for inspector rank, reported in end-of-programme surveys with members.

The evaluation revealed a discrepancy between forces in terms of formal support and learning arrangements for the members while they were meant to be developing operational competence on the job. College inputs deliberately had an emphasis on developing leadership and management-related skills and knowledge, but there was a common view amongst members that more focus on operational readiness would have been helpful. For many, to acquire the necessary experiences and skills to pass assessments appears to have meant being highly proactive and also effective at building supportive relationships with colleagues. Almost a third left prior to graduation, which for some could have been as a result of challenging experiences on the programme. Improvements to the scheme were made throughout the delivery period and the evaluation has drawn out more learning that could help any future, similar programmes be more effective at supporting and preparing learners. Given the programme pressures, reported potential impacts on wellbeing (reported in **subsection 4.5.4**) and the relatively high voluntary attrition from the programme; the need for improvements in this area (should the scheme or a similar one ever be re-launched) appears as one of the most important conclusions of the evaluation.

End-of-programme interviews and surveys suggest that successful graduates from the scheme commonly supported the style of leadership and management that was promoted through the College modules. They often described themselves (and backed up by line manager/mentor interviewees) as having an open, inclusive, empowering style of leadership, which aimed to foster wellbeing and high morale; valuing difference and greater ownership of personal development and decision-making. Some expressed strong commitment to using this approach to change management and culture within their teams, as inspectors.

There is little evidence to date around how successful external programme members may be post-scheme completion, around influencing positive change and bringing benefits to their forces. The barriers to making a difference while on the programme means the evaluation has drawn out few tangible examples of having impact and influence to date. There was a sense from interviewed mentors and line managers that it could still take time for the graduated Fast Track officers to become confident in their inspector roles and if so, it could take longer still before they could become influential leaders at that level.

The evaluation evidence suggests the successful programme graduates were typically highly motivated, proactive and driven individuals – most Fast Track external members in first surveys indicated they wanted to reach more senior ranks (see **subsection 4.1.5**). However, getting prepared for inspector level within three years was clearly challenging. The end-of-programme fieldwork did not uncover a common sense of urgency around the next promotion and getting to senior levels. There was a strong view though, amongst evaluation participants, that Fast Track Inspectors (particularly, but not exclusively, external members) would benefit from post-programme support. There was thought to be a risk that, because of the unique barriers they may face, without some ongoing input they could stall in their careers.

Fast Track internal

While the evaluation has focused on gathering feedback to inform improvements to the programme, a strong finding is how positively most internal programme members have viewed their experience overall and in particular, the opportunities it has afforded them. Demographic data of programme members (cohorts 1 to 5) indicates that the scheme has been successful at recruiting a diverse range of members (in terms of ethnicity, gender, length of prior police experience). It can also provide a career enhancing opportunity for those that did not previously think they had potential for senior (and even chief) officer positions, and create a way for those that may have taken time away from their career (for example, for caring responsibilities) to quickly progress up the ranks.

In many ways, the findings from the Fast Track internal evaluation mirrored those from the external programme fieldwork, but they were, in many cases, less pronounced. Notably, as presented in **subsection 5.5.4**, no internal members expressed anxiety about the step up to sergeant rank to the same level as some of the Fast Track external fieldwork respondents. They were also more strongly confident about their promotion to ‘temporary inspector’ rank. This may be because they were more familiar with the roles and had a wider range of police experience to draw on, but the fact that there is no evidence that length of prior police experience influenced attrition rates from the programme, suggests that other causes were also at play.

The reassurance and support of being known in force and already having established working relationships with colleagues, may have helped protect internal programme members from some of the pressures experienced by their external counterparts. The older average age of internal programme members (and therefore more professional work experience, potentially from outside as well as from inside policing) could also have been beneficial. Some Fast Track internal members had already sat and passed their sergeants exam and had acted at the rank prior to joining the scheme. There was also less controversy surrounding the

Fast Track internal programme and whilst it was a radically new scheme in some respects (guaranteeing promotion to inspector within two years) it seems to have often been perceived by members and their colleagues as not necessarily that different to other talent-development programmes.

This potential misperception of the Fast Track internal scheme is an issue that stands out as an important conclusion of the evaluation. It is likely a contributing factor to the main weaknesses of the programme, identified through the evaluation fieldwork, particularly the inconsistent support for programme members and access to development opportunities in force. For nearly half of Fast Track internal respondents the programme appears to have been delivered as anticipated, showing the delivery approach can work. But around half experienced problems that could have been avoided and which, they felt, held back their development. Many found that they were not given a suitable mentor, nor sufficient time, support and opportunities for development (tailored to fit with their personal development plans). Viewing the programme, mistakenly, as like many other talent-development programmes in policing, may have meant the importance of meeting 'national minimum requirements' for the scheme was not fully recognised. A few internal programme members felt they got such little structured support and development in force, that the programme, to them, was little more than attending College inputs and rapid promotion.

Another factor influencing the implementation of the programme in force was resourcing. The Fast Track schemes were launched at a time when forces were responding to budget cuts and the need for recruitment freezes. If anything, resourcing issues may have affected Fast Track internal members even more than their external peers. Some internal members described, in evaluation fieldwork, how they could be expected to perform as experienced officers when on rotation. For them, there may have been less recognition that they were meant to be developing in role and ideally should have been supernumerary whilst on the programme. Fast Track internal members, in the early cohorts, could also be of the view that their career aspirations were actually negatively affected by joining the programme. Some respondents (including line manager/mentor interviewees) thought that programme members could be put in roles that suited organisational requirements, rather than members' own interests and needs. Similarly, inflexibility within some forces around the early stipulation that the programme was for uniformed, operational inspector roles, meant those that were actively pursuing a specialist career (or were interested in doing so afterwards) could feel hindered by the Fast Track programme requirements.

The issues described above created pressures for internal programme members that were different, but for a few, similarly challenging, to those experienced by external members. For Fast Track internal, as well as external, ensuring participating forces have resources, processes and drive to meet programme 'national minimum

requirements' is essential to programme success, satisfaction and potentially to members' morale, wellbeing and organisational commitment. Importantly, forces must have an appropriate SPOC for the duration of programme delivery (with chief officer oversight) or consideration should be given to how the functions of a SPOC could be better fulfilled. Similarly, the College has a role to support forces and SPOCs with the delivery of the programme in forces and in particular, central communications about programme requirements need to be clear. Further thought may be needed around how prescriptive they should be.

As with the Fast Track external scheme, it is too early to comment meaningfully on the return on investment of the Fast Track internal programme. Ultimately, Fast Track internal was about identifying and developing constables with strong leadership potential, with the intention of them progressing to more senior ranks (above inspector) where it was hoped they would positively benefit policing. Follow-up research with cohort graduates, when they are further into their careers, could help address the return on investment question more insightfully, but even then (and similar to Fast Track external) it is unlikely that strong 'return on investment' statements could be made.

Appendix 1 – Programme description

1 Overview

The Fast Track (FT) Inspector programme has changed since it first launched in 2014 as a programme for external³² applicants and an internal scheme for serving police constables, to an internal only programme. The external element of the programme closed to new recruits after two annual intakes (2014 and 2015) and was in effect, replaced by a new Direct Entry Inspector programme. The internal element of the FT programme has continued and has recruited a new cohort of candidates every year since 2015. The following section gives an overview of all programme elements – including of **programme marketing; recruitment and selection; governance; programme content and structure; learning objectives; assessment** and **support for members** – and describes relevant changes that have been implemented during the last five years.

2 Marketing and attraction

Initial marketing and attraction was targeted at outward facing channels for the external FT scheme and inward facing channels for the internal scheme. The College website provided information for each of the FT programmes, and templates were created for forces to use on their websites and for university career sites with links to the College and force websites. Marketing materials (eg, flyers) were produced for forces to use at university career events to attract graduates. Targeted materials were also produced for police staff and specials and for serving officers, which were used internally by forces and the College at engagement events.

Current marketing³³ for the FT internal scheme is coordinated by forces through their FT SPOCs with the support of the College. The College provides forces with marketing materials, such as flyers and pull-up banners to support in-force engagement events. The College holds briefing sessions via a web-based webinar platform and is currently creating a Fast Track booth as a one-stop site for the FT programme. The College is also working with staff associations to promote the FT programme to their members and support them to identify relevant development opportunities. From 2019, an expressions of interest form has been introduced to create a database of interested officers who can be sent targeted marketing throughout the year.

32 The external programme was open to anyone with a degree outside the police service, as well as serving police staff and volunteers (who did not require a degree level qualification).

33 i.e. at the time of evaluation fieldwork closure, June 2019

3 Recruitment and selection and assessment

The application process has always involved the following stages for internal and external candidates. The assessment has changed from the first cohorts who were assessed at National Police Promotion Framework (NPPF) superintendent level, to the more recent cohorts who are now assessed at Competency Values Framework (CVF) level 3.

- Online application form.
- National assessment centre, based on the following criteria:
 - the ability to reach, and perform competently in, the rank of inspector within three years (two years for internal candidates)
 - the potential and motivation to reach at least the rank of superintendent during their service
 - the ability to bring new ways of thinking and different perspectives into the police service and to effectively influence the way that policing operates
 - meeting the legislative entry requirements of someone becoming a police constable (not internal candidates).

Unlike the Direct Entry Inspector and Superintendent programmes, the FT programme (internal and external) did not have a lower success rate for BME applicants through the recruitment process.

4 Governance

A Consolidated Governance Board (currently named a 'Professional Reference Group') has managed the Fast Track and Direct Entry programmes since their launch, along with a pre-existing High Potential Development Scheme. It is chaired by a chief police officer, in their capacity as representing the Workforce Coordination Committee of the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC). Members include relevant College staff and representatives from stakeholder organisations, including the Home Office, Police Federation and Police Superintendents' Association.

Both the College and participating forces have been required to have a programme lead (in the case of forces, from the chief officer team/executive level) as well as a SPOC for the programme. The force lead has overall responsibility for ensuring the national minimum standards for delivery of the programme in force

(as set by the College) are met. The force SPOC manages the implementation, delivery and end-to-end quality assurance of programme requirements, ensuring they are communicated to all relevant in-force stakeholders (including programme members, line managers, trainers, assessors, mentors, workplace coaches and local staff associations).

5 Programme content and structure

The programme follows a blend of mandatory national core learning products, including the Core Leadership Programme (CLP) and National Police Promotion Framework (NPPF), which are set by the College and delivered by forces and self-study. The College delivers five 2 to 4-day residential modules throughout the 2/3-year programme. These are designed to provide strategic leadership learning over and above the CLP to prepare members for their career progression to more senior ranks/and for being an inspector. They all include topics related to 'leadership in a police context' and cover the following broad areas: personal leadership; Code of Ethics; equality, diversity and human rights; business skills; managing self and others; and partnership working.

Most of the programme is delivered in force, as 'rotation' experiences at the different ranks from constable onwards. The programme allows flexibility for forces to include development opportunities or training not specified by the College, provided they are informed by identified, specific requirements of the force or by a programme member's personal development plan.

Example FT Inspector timetable overview 2015 (external and internal programme)

Cohort 2 Fast Track Programme - Constable to Inspector

External Graduate and Police staff/Internal Police Constable ***Indicative only subject to local force adaptation***

		January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
2015	Graduate and Police staff							College of Policing On Boarding		Appointment in force	College of Policing induction	IPLDP or internal learning programme	IPLDP or internal learning programme
	Internal Police Constable												
2016	Graduate and Police staff	IPLDP or internal learning programme	IPLDP or internal learning programme	IPLDP or internal learning programme	IPLDP or internal learning programme	College of Policing Ethics and Values Policing	IPLDP or internal learning programme	IPLDP or internal learning programme	IPLDP or internal learning programme	In force development	NPPF Insp exam	Cohort's combine	Promotion to temporary SGT
	Internal Police Constable				Assessment Centre					Internal PC candidate's induction by forces		College of Policing Managing Self and Others	Begin CLP Work-Based Assessment
2017	Combine Cohort	WBA rotations	WBA rotations	WBA rotations	College of Policing Evidence Based Practice, Creativity and Innovation	WBA rotations	WBA rotations	WBA rotations	WBA rotations	College of Policing Collective Leadership, Organisational Change and Strategic Vision	WBA rotations	WBA completion/ in force development	Substantive promotion to Sergeant
		Princes Trust programme 30 days over 12 weeks	Princes Trust programme 30 days over 12 weeks	Princes Trust programme 30 days over 12 weeks									Optional 14 week Crime Group Induction
2018	Combined Cohort	In force development rotation	College of Policing Valuing Difference and Inclusion	In force development rotation	In force development rotation	In force development rotation	In force development rotation	In force development rotation	In force development rotation	In force development rotation	College of Policing Business Acumen, Partnership Working and Political Astuteness	Optional 14 week Crime Group Induction	Promoted to Temporary Inspector-Graduate from programme
		Optional 14 week Crime Group Induction	Optional 14 week Crime Group Induction	Optional 14 week Crime Group Induction			Custody attachment	Custody attachment	Custody attachment				

College of Policing modules will be 2-3 day residential events delivered at one of our venues and dates will be published as soon as they are available. Princes Trust is an intensive 20 day programme of activities, joining young people who are on a broader 12-week programme. Some of which will be residential. Custody attachment this can be completed on a rotational basis to provide exposure and experience amounting to a three month rotation. Crime Module this will be an optional 14 week induction to the detective pathway.



Example FT Inspector timetable overview 2019 (internal only)

	October	Nov - Dec	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
Selection Process	Application window opens	Internal Force selection process	National Assessment Centre Briefing	Assessment Centre			Revision for Inspectors' knowledge examination Preparation and planning for new role as Temporary Sergeant in December Begin CLP curriculum College run Meet and Engage events					NPPF Insp exam	Preparation and planning for new role as Temporary Sergeant in December	Promoted to Temporary Sergeant and Work Based Assessment
First Year	WBA rotations	WBA rotations	WBA rotations	College of Policing Evidence Based Practices, Creativity and Innovation	WBA rotations	WBA rotations	WBA rotations	WBA rotations	WBA rotations	WBA rotations	College of Policing Collective Leadership, Organisational Change and Strategic Vision	WBA rotations	WBA completion/ in force development	Substantive promotion to Sergeant
Final Year	In force development rotations	College of Policing Valuing Difference and Inclusion		In force development rotations	In force development rotations		360° Feedback	360° Feedback	360° Feedback	Preparations and planning for new role as Temporary Inspector in December		College of Policing Business Acumen, Partnership Working and Political Astuteness	Preparation and planning for new role as Temporary Inspector in December	Promoted to Temporary Inspector - Graduate from programme

Mandatory - must be completed within timescales to graduate from the programme

College of Policing Module - 2-4 day residential strategic leadership learning events delivered by the College.

Community Placement and Custody Attachment - To be completed by the end of the final year.

Core Leadership Programme (CLP) - Contains leadership curriculum for Sergeants and Inspectors. Should be delivered by force or self-study as preparation for promotion.

6 Core learning objectives

The learning outcomes for the three year (external) or two year (internal) programmes were, from the outset, designed to reflect the skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours that a Fast Track Inspector would require in order to operate independently, as a competent, uniformed inspector in a wide range of deployments. They also address the wider programme aims to support the continuous development of policing. The following list of core learning objectives has been taken from the 2019 FT internal programme handbook and the 2016 FT programme handbook (including the external scheme).

External programme members after year one will have:

- achieved all learning standards within the Initial Police Learning and Development Programme (IPLDP) and demonstrate achievement of the assessment criteria associated with the Diploma in Policing (or equivalent standard, in the case of the Metropolitan Police Service)
- performed effectively in the rank of constable in line with the core competencies of the rank
- demonstrated readiness for promotion to sergeant.

External and internal programme members after years two and three will have:

- achieved a pass at NPPF Step 2 inspectors' knowledge examination
- achieved all learning standards in the Fast Track programme curriculum by attending all the College Fast Track modules
- achieved all learning standards in the CLP at sergeant and inspector level via in-force development and self-study
- performed effectively in the rank of sergeant in line with the core competencies of the rank and achieved all sergeant-level WBA units
- completed all mandatory aspects of the Fast Track programme
- demonstrated readiness for promotion to inspector through completing the performance assessment report (PAR) and commencing the inspectors' WBA in line with NPPF.

7 Programme assessment

The assessment strategy consists of a number of methodologies, with some specific to the external scheme only, including: knowledge-based examination, work-based assessment, completion of policing diploma and performance-assessment report. Programme members are required to successfully complete all assessment components.

The external scheme required the following assessments (to be completed by the end of the first year):

Initial Police Learning Development Programme (IPLDP)

External programme members are required to undertake the IPLDP which all probationary officers must complete within their first two years. The IPLDP consists of a national curriculum, defined by learning outcomes based on 21 national occupational standards of the student officer role profile national qualification. The IPLDP consists of:

- induction
- 80 hours community engagement (including a placement)
- independent patrol
- a minimum qualification (Diploma in Policing)
- officer safety training
- first aid training.

Diploma in Policing Level 3

External programme members were required to complete the ten-unit qualification. In order to achieve the diploma, members had to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding, as well as competent operational application in the workplace.

The internal scheme required the following assessment:

Competence in current rank

Internal programme members are required to be supported by their force to ensure their suitability to enter the promotion process as per the NPPF Step 1 competence in current rank.

Both internal and external schemes required the following assessments:**Knowledge-based examination**

Programme members are required to pass the National Police Promotion Framework (NPPF) Step 2 knowledge-based examination in line with the national process for those seeking promotion to the rank of inspector. Programme members are required to pass this multiple-choice exam, which assesses their knowledge and understanding of relevant law and procedure. Programme members that do not achieve the pass mark first time have one opportunity to resit the exam.

Sergeants' work-based assessment (WBA)

As per required by the NPPF Step 4, programme members must complete the WBA and demonstrate they are competent in the rank of sergeant. The WBA includes workplace assessment of programme members promoted to, and undertaking the duties of, sergeant or inspector. Internal programme members are required to complete Step 4 in addition to obtaining their OSPRE Part II.

Inspectors' performance assessment report (PAR)

Programme members are required to submit a PAR during their final year of the FT programme. The PAR process replaces the traditional NPPF Step 3 promotion process and progress is dependent on line manager recommendation and agreement by senior management within the home force. Programme members are required to successfully complete all components of the National Police Curriculum, required for the programme, to meet the standard required to graduate. A chief officer is required to sign-off the programme member for them to be promoted to temporary inspector and graduate from the programme.

8 Support for members

National minimum standards, set by the College, include standards of support for programme members while in force. It stipulates that forces should ensure programme members have regular performance reviews and a personal development plan, which informs which roles and opportunities the member should take up in force while on the programme. Participating forces are also required to provide each programme member with two mentors – one should be at inspector rank (if possible, a current or former member of the FT programme or HPDS to provide peer support), and another of more senior rank to support ongoing development to meet career aspirations.

For external programme members, at each of the force rotations (constable, sergeant and inspector) they were also to be assigned a tutor, who should be an officer at the rotation rank. This tutor is responsible for their programme member's training and development and for ensuring they receive the necessary level and variety of operational exposure during their rotation.

Appendix 2: Programme costs

The programme costs have been calculated using the College's auditable accounts for the five years the programme has been run (2014–19). They include all associated costs to the College of implementing the programme, including: marketing, recruitment, design and delivery, administration and staffing of the programme. The cost for each activity for delivering the programme over the five years (2014–19)³⁴ is outlined in the tables below, followed by further detail of what was included under each activity.

Fast Track external – College five-year programme costs by activity

Programme activity	Total cost: 2014–2019
Marketing	£114,024
Recruitment	£383,527
Programme design and delivery	£59,723
Business administration	£28,792
Fast Track College staff team	£522,470
Total	£1,108,535

Fast Track internal – College five-year programme costs by activity

Programme activity	Total cost: 2014–2019
Marketing	£0
Recruitment	£1,324,385
Programme design and delivery	£142,264
Business administration	£24,268
Fast Track College staff team	£457,104
Total	£1,948,021

Marketing: The marketing cost included the costs of – the LeadBeyond website, meet the police events, positive action initiatives, paid advertising (such as in the METRO newspaper), design and production of marketing materials and anything else identified as marketing the programme.

Recruitment: The recruitment cost included the costs of – the sift and selection process (including interviews), running the assessment centre and anything else identified as part of the application to selection process for the programme.

³⁴ The external programme costs ran until the end of 2018, when the last recruited cohort (cohort 2) graduated.

Programme design and delivery: The programme design and delivery cost included the costs of – the design and delivery of module plans and tutor guides, delivery of classroom teaching/modules, programme graduation, accommodation and venue, assessment training for forces/candidates and anything else identified as relating to the design and delivery of the programme.

Business administration: The business administration cost included the costs of – couriers, telephony, programme staff team meetings and accommodation, legal advice, IT software and hardware, office supplies, staff training, programme evaluation and anything else identified as involved in the day-to-day administration of the programme.

Fast Track College staff team: The Fast Track College staff team cost included the costs of the Fast Track College staff team salaries and Fast Track College staff team expenses.

Appendix 3: Evaluation technical information

1 Overview

This appendix section supplements the description of the evaluation methods in the main report (in **section 3**) and describes the **research team and governance**; **limitations of the evaluation** and a **summary of evaluation fieldwork**. An **example survey** is included and **interview questions**.

2 Research team and governance

The research was conducted in-house by College researchers; all of whom were members of the Government Social Research (GSR) service and as such, bound by the Civil Service Code (and its core values of integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality)³⁵ as well as the professional standards set out in the specific GSR code³⁶, which have been designed to ensure quality, rigorous social research and analysis for government.

Throughout the evaluation, research participants have been guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality. The researchers have been the only College staff with access to the raw data gathered through qualitative evaluation fieldwork (interviews, survey and focus groups).

From the outset, a Quality Assurance and Evaluation Steering Group (QAESG) was established, which convened on a quarterly basis through the duration of the five-year evaluation period. The group was chaired by the College Fast Track and Direct Entry programme lead and included the College evaluation leads for the project, other relevant College staff and representatives from external stakeholder organisations (Home Office, Police Federation and Police Superintendents' Association for England and Wales), as well as two external academics. QAESG was involved in the development of the original evaluation specification and was a forum for presenting emerging findings from evaluation fieldwork; providing programme updates and discussing and agreeing any adjustments to the planned fieldwork.

QAESG reported to a larger Professional Reference Group for the Fast Track/ Direct Entry Programmes and a separate (and longer established) High Potential Development Scheme (HPDS) Board, headed by an external chair (a chief police officer). This group signed off the original evaluation specification, before it was approved by the Home Office.

³⁵ Details available online: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/civil-service-code/the-civil-service-code>

³⁶ Details available online: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-government-social-research-code-people-and-products>

Annual interim reports were produced and shared with the programme team, QAESG members and the Professional Reference Group. The final evaluation reports all underwent external peer review by two independent academics.

3 Limitations of the research

As explained in section 3.3, the nature of the programme created unavoidable constraints on the type of evaluation that could be undertaken. Key limitations were outlined in section 3.3 and further detail is provided below.

a) Limited availability of objective measures

Given the limited availability of objective measures for the evaluation, there was a heavy reliance on perception evidence, which is understandable for an evaluation of this nature.

Methods have been used to enhance the reliability of the perception evidence (for example, guaranteeing anonymity to fieldwork) but weaknesses, such as the possibility that unconscious personal biases could influence responses, are unavoidable. Additionally, while fieldwork participants were guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality, the extent they felt able to be candid is unknown.

The perceptual evidence was strengthened by comparing responses from different evaluation participant groups (programme members and line managers/mentors). In relation to the operational competence and effective leadership research question, perception evidence was also corroborated by programme assessment data (most of which was based on observation of programme members by in-force assessors).

It is possible that the common perceptions that have been drawn out from the fieldwork participants may differ to common perceptions that could be drawn out from other groups, that were not involved in the evaluation research. The evaluation did not gather any feedback from those managed by a Fast Track officer and did not gather views from the wider workforce in participating forces, for example, on how the programme was perceived and whether it had had a positive or negative influence on morale and organisational commitment.

b) Low numbers of programme participants

This has been an issue for Fast Track external, in particular, which stopped recruiting after two cohorts joined, but it has also influenced the Fast Track internal evaluation. Small numbers of participants reduced the opportunity to look for trends in the data – for example, whether individuals with particular work experience have been more/less likely to graduate from the programmes and be promoted. Low attrition from Fast Track internal has, so far, precluded this type

of analysis. It has also created sensitivities around the report writing, since low numbers increase the risk of identifying individuals. This affects both programmes (for example, the report has not been able to include detailed comments on the reasons for leaving either the internal or external schemes, as there is a risk that individuals could be identifiable). Finally, the low number of Fast Track officers in most participating forces may have limited the opportunity for the scheme to have a discernible impact at a force level. Even in the MPS (the force with by far the most members) the participants were spread out within the organisation and geographically.

c) Timescales

The five-year evaluation deadline has meant it can only report on two graduated cohorts – again limiting the opportunity to look for trends in the data. It has also limited opportunity to explore members' performance in substantive posts. It may take time and a greater number of Fast Track Inspectors, in individual forces, for more discernible force-level impacts to be realised.

d) Lack of a comparison group

Opportunities for comparing Fast Track Inspectors with traditionally promoted officers were considered but ruled out, largely because fair, objective and helpful comparison measures could not be identified. The programme aims were deliberately broad around attracting and promoting talented individuals; bringing in those with diverse perspectives and backgrounds to support the continuous development of policing (external scheme) and in the longer term (both internal and external) positively benefiting the management and culture of policing. The evaluation has focused on exploring whether, and how, this may have been achieved with the recruited cohorts to date; together with identifying potential barriers and facilitators to success. Without having more specific differences defined and aimed for at the outset, it was not feasible to have a more robust research approach, for example, to measure whether Fast Track Inspectors were more/less likely to exhibit particular differences to other inspectors.

e) Consistency of administrative data

Data collected for the purpose of recruitment and assessment could suffer from potential weaknesses such as: misreporting, different recording methods and sample errors.

4 Summary of fieldwork activity by year

Cohort	Fieldwork activity	No. participants	Fieldwork year	Internal or external?
1	First survey (cohort members)	34	2014/15	External
	First interviews (cohort members)	3	2015	
	Focus group (cohort members)	8		
	Second survey (cohort members)	26		
	Second interviews (cohort members)	3		
	First survey (cohort members)	45	2015	Internal
	First interviews (cohort members)	4	2016	
	Second/third survey (cohort members)	54	2017	Internal and external
	Final survey (cohort members)	48		
	Final interviews (cohort members)	6	2017/18	
Interviews (line managers/mentors)	8			
2	First survey (cohort members)	19	2015	External
	First interviews (cohort members)	5	2016	Internal
	First/second survey (cohort members)	54/66	2016	Internal and external
	Second/third survey (cohort members)	37/67	2017	
	Final survey (cohort members)	28/55	2019	
	Final interviews (cohort members)	2	2018/19	
	Interviews (line managers/mentors)	7		

5 Example online evaluation survey to programme members

Fast Track Inspector Cohort 2 – end of programme survey (text only)

About this survey.

The College is conducting an evaluation of the Fast Track scheme and the final reports are due to be laid before Parliament in 2019. The evaluation will present evidence and learning on how the programmes have been implemented and how they are meeting their aims. We would like to request your support with the evaluation. Your feedback to this survey will support the continuous improvement

of the Fast Track scheme. This survey is anonymous and asks for your feedback on the scheme. Thank you for taking part.

Please read the following statement and then answer whether you have read and understood it.

This survey is commissioned by the College of Policing, as such, the College is the Data Controller for the personal and sensitive personal data that will be disclosed by survey participants. The College is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office under registration reference: Z3458257. Your participation in the survey is based on your consent, which you are free to withdraw at any time by responding back to the survey invite email. Your information will not be used for any other purposes other than for monitoring and evaluation of the Fast Track to Inspector programme and, anonymously, for the production of future training/guidance documents and/or publicity materials for the programme. This survey will not ask for your name or any identifiable information.

This survey is being delivered in-house by College government social researchers. Access to the 'raw' data (individual responses) will be restricted to the College researchers – who will analyse all responses and only share aggregated data (ie, summarising feedback from all respondents), along with example quotes, with the programme team and in resulting evaluation reports. All comments will be treated anonymously and no individual will be identifiable in the published evaluation findings or any other published documents drawing on the findings – unless your express permission is given. Your responses will be held securely by the College research team for five years, after which time the data will be securely destroyed.

The College of Policing takes its legislative responsibilities under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) very seriously, therefore, should you have any concerns regarding the processing of your information in this regard, please do not hesitate in contacting the College of Policing Data Protection Officer on: Data.Protection@college.pnn.police.uk. For further information about your rights under GDPR please see our full Privacy Notice on our website. Please contact the Fast Track programme team or a force representative directly, if you wish to discuss an issue concerning your programme. Alternatively, please refer to our complaints process <http://www.college.police.uk/Contact/Pages/Feedback-and-complaints.aspx>

1. I have read and understood the Privacy Statement (Please note if you press no, you will not be able to complete the survey)

* Yes/ No

2. Did you join as an internal or external member of the Fast Track Programme?

* Internal/ External

3. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements in terms of being ready to become a substantive inspector?

* Strongly Agree/Agree/Neither agree nor disagree/Disagree/Strongly Disagree

'I feel confident in my operational abilities'

'I feel confident in my leadership and management abilities'

4. Please think about your development journey, then briefly describe up to three of your most positive and influential experiences on the programme. We'd like to hear what you think most helped prepare you for inspector rank.

5. Again, thinking about your development journey, did you encounter any barriers that you felt could have been avoidable and held back your preparation for a substantive inspector role? Please briefly describe below.

6. Please use the space below to add any further comments around what you think could improve the Fast Track scheme.

7. Please use the space below to add any further comments around what you think worked well on the Fast Track scheme.

8. One of the main aims of the Fast Track scheme is to open up entry to the service to people who will bring new perspectives and diverse backgrounds, as well as promote talented internal candidates to make a positive impact and influence on the management and culture of policing. With this in mind, please use the space below to describe to what extent you have felt able to do this and please give examples from your programme.

[Questions 9 and 10 were asking for specific feedback on the most recently completed College module and were not part of the evaluation questions]

11 Please use the space below to leave any further comments

6 Example evaluation interview topic guide

Fast Track end of programme interviews with line managers, Cohort 2 (Dec 2018)

(The following text was used as a guide for College interviewers and includes probes, which the interviewer could use or adapt when needed, to elicit more detailed responses).

PURPOSE: To hear about your experience of being a line manager/workplace coach or mentor and your perception of your Fast Track programme members' ability to undertake the role required of them. Ultimately, this will help to shape and improve how the Fast Track programme will be implemented in future years. As such we are interested in hearing about the positives and the negatives.

DISCLAIMER: We were sent details of the purpose of interview and privacy statement with the invite to participate. As explained then, all answers will be kept anonymous and confidential, and will only be used to support the ongoing evaluation of the Fast Track programme. To help us with the research we would like to record this interview, we will delete the recording after the analysis has been done. Are you happy for us to record this interview?

1. What were your preconceptions of the Fast Track programme?
 - a. Have they changed and if so how?
 - b. What about others in your force/team – do they support Fast Track? What was the effect of the FT candidate on their views of the programme?
2. What were your expectations around the difference your Fast Track candidate may bring to your force?
 - a. To what extent did you expect your programme member to bring fresh perspective to the force?
 - b. To what extent did you expect to be able to make use of your programme member's skills from the beginning, or only after they had completed the programme?
 - c. How has this played out?
3. How have you and your Fast Track programme member kept in contact throughout the programme?
 - a. Has contact been regular?

- b. How well have you got to know your programme member?
 - c. Have you had opportunity for regular one to ones?
 - d. Have you been able to monitor their work/performance/progress?
 - e. Have they completed any work for you?
4. How confident do you feel that your Fast Track programme member has the skills and knowledge to fulfil the role of inspector?
 - a. Do you think they have any significant development needs, and do you have ideas for how these could be addressed?
 - b. Do you think they will need to continue getting frontline operational experience or were the rotations adequate?
 - c. How would you compare the readiness of this candidate for inspector rank with a candidate promoted through the normal route?
5. The Fast Track programme aims to develop officers with the skills, experience and capacity to reach the senior ranks of the service – it is early days, but could you describe whether and how you may have seen this potential in your programme member?
6. The Fast Track programme also aims to positively influence the management and culture of policing.
 - a. Can you give me any examples where the Fast Track programme member has influenced colleagues? Eg, helped change ways of working; management styles; views and perspectives? How influential have they been?
 - b. Can you give any examples where the programme member took an opportunity to make a difference?
7. Is there anything you would change or add/improve about the programme?
 - a. How could officers be better supported in force or by the College?
 - b. How could your role in the programme be better supported by the force or College?
 - c. How could the officers be able to use their existing skills and make a difference more quickly/have more impact?

Appendix 4. Recruitment selection and assessment data

1 Results of FT external recruitment activity cohorts 1 and 2

Recruitment stage	Cohort 1 (2014)	Cohort 2 (2015)
No. applications received	1,849	1,952
No. invited to assessment centre	120	121
No. withdrew from assessment centre	15	22
No. attended assessment centre	105	99
No. successful at assessment centre	43	27
No. started programme	41	21

2 Results of FT internal recruitment activity cohorts 1 to 5

Recruitment stage	Cohort 1 (2015)	Cohort 2 (2015)	Cohort 3 (2017)	Cohort 4 (2018)	Cohort 5 (2019)
No. applications received	753	704	468	482	449
No. invited to assessment centre	127	100	99	139	105
No. withdrew from assessment centre	4	1	1	8	3
No. attended assessment centre	123	99	98	131	102
No. successful at assessment centre	61	50	44	59	40
No. started programme	61	48	44	58	40

3 FT external: home forces of programme members (cohorts 1 and 2) at programme start

Police force	Number of programme members
Avon and Somerset Constabulary	7
BTP	1
Cambridgeshire Constabulary	1
Cheshire Constabulary	2
Essex Police	1
Greater Manchester Police	5
Hertfordshire Constabulary	1
Humberside Police	1
Kent Police	2
Metropolitan Police Service	26
Norfolk Constabulary	1
North Yorkshire Police	1
Northamptonshire Police	1
Suffolk Constabulary	1
Sussex Police	1
Thames Valley Police	2
Warwickshire Police	1
West Midlands Police	4
West Yorkshire Police	3

4 FT internal: home forces of programme members (cohorts 1 to 5) at programme start

Force	Number of programme members
Avon and Somerset Constabulary	7
Bedfordshire Police	2
British Transport Police	3
Cambridgeshire Constabulary	2
Cheshire Constabulary	1
City of London Police	3
Cleveland Police	3
Cumbria Constabulary	1
Derbyshire Constabulary	7
Devon and Cornwall Police	2
Dorset Police	1
Essex Police	4
Gloucestershire Constabulary	3
Greater Manchester Police	12
Gwent Police	3
Hampshire Constabulary	5
Hertfordshire Constabulary	2
Humberside Police	1
Kent Police	4
Lancashire Constabulary	3
Leicestershire Police	3
Merseyside Police	5
Metropolitan Police Service	74
Norfolk Constabulary	3
North Wales Police	3
Northamptonshire Police	1
Northumbria Police	6
Nottinghamshire Police	7

Force	Number of programme members
Police Service of Northern Ireland	11
South Yorkshire Police	5
Staffordshire Police	4
Suffolk Constabulary	1
Surrey Police	8
Sussex Police	14
Thames Valley Police	6
Warwickshire Police	1
West Mercia Police	3
West Midlands Police	19
West Yorkshire Police	9

About the College

We're the professional body for everyone who works for the police service in England and Wales. Our purpose is to provide those working in policing with the skills and knowledge necessary to prevent crime, protect the public and secure public trust.

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