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Fast Track and Direct Entry – areas for consideration



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Fast Track and Direct Entry – areas for consideration

Introduction

The evaluation of the Fast Track (FT) and Direct Entry (DE) programmes have shown that these types of schemes can work in, and bring benefits to, policing. There are examples of the programmes bringing high-calibre leaders into the service and increasing diversity¹.

While the evaluation has allowed important findings and learning to emerge, three key areas continue to attract the attention of the service: is there an appetite from the service for all of these pathways to continue; can the programmes help increase the number of officers from under-represented groups; and are the programmes financially viable?

This paper looks at areas for consideration to inform the future of the Fast Track and Direct Entry (FTDE) programmes. The College intends to start a period of engagement and consultation with the service, shortly after the parliamentary submission, with a view to developing refined proposals and recommendations.

Demand from the service

The FTDE programmes are currently run on a demand-led basis and forces are interested in maintaining and extending the range of FTDE schemes. To date, 401 individuals have joined an FTDE programme, spread across 41 forces.

Thirty-seven forces have engaged with Fast Track (FTI) Internal, with 32 expressing an interest in participation in 2020. Twenty-six forces have engaged with Direct Entry Inspector (DEI) with 12 intending to participate in 2020. An additional 11 have stated they are likely to participate beyond 2020.

Fourteen forces have engaged with the Direct Entry Superintendent (DES) programme. While there is not sufficient interest from forces to offer the programme in 2020, 10 forces have indicated they are likely to participate beyond 2020.

¹ Evaluation summary can be found at [Annex A](#).

Areas for consideration

The original Home Office commission stipulated annual cohorts for the FTDE programmes and this has been the model the College has adopted to date. The first gap year for the DES programme will be in 2020, responding to a low demand from the service. The predominant reasons given for non-participation were: insufficient actual or projected vacancies; a focus on serving officers; and limited scope due to the size of the force and therefore, officers at that rank.

As demand-led programmes, frequency of provision should be explored. It is not surprising that in any given year, forces may have insufficient actual or projected vacancies to participate in the DES programme, as there are relatively small numbers of officers at superintendent rank (less than one per cent of total police officer numbers). Different intervals of provision should be explored, for example, running the programme every three years. Improved workforce planning would help to inform the most appropriate model.

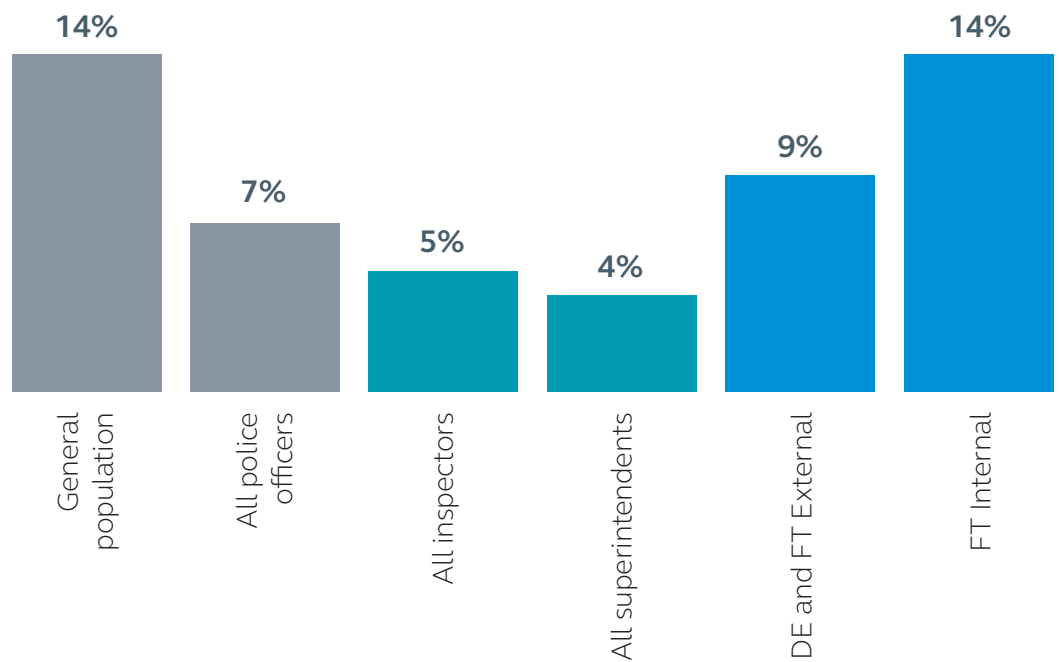
In expressing a focus on serving officers as a reason for DES non-participation, the service signals a desire to develop existing talent. Twenty forces have expressed an interest in the College developing a new internal Fast Track programme from inspector to superintendent; this option should be fully explored as a way to not only support existing officers, but also support the increased requirement in leadership roles that will follow a 20,000 uplift in officers.

It should be noted that the level of interest from forces in continued participation in these programmes was gathered prior to the government announcement of forces' allocation in the increase in police numbers by 20,000 over the next three years. Given the unprecedented scale of this uplift, it is particularly important to consider what part FTDE programmes should play in support. These considerations could change demand for the programmes in future years.

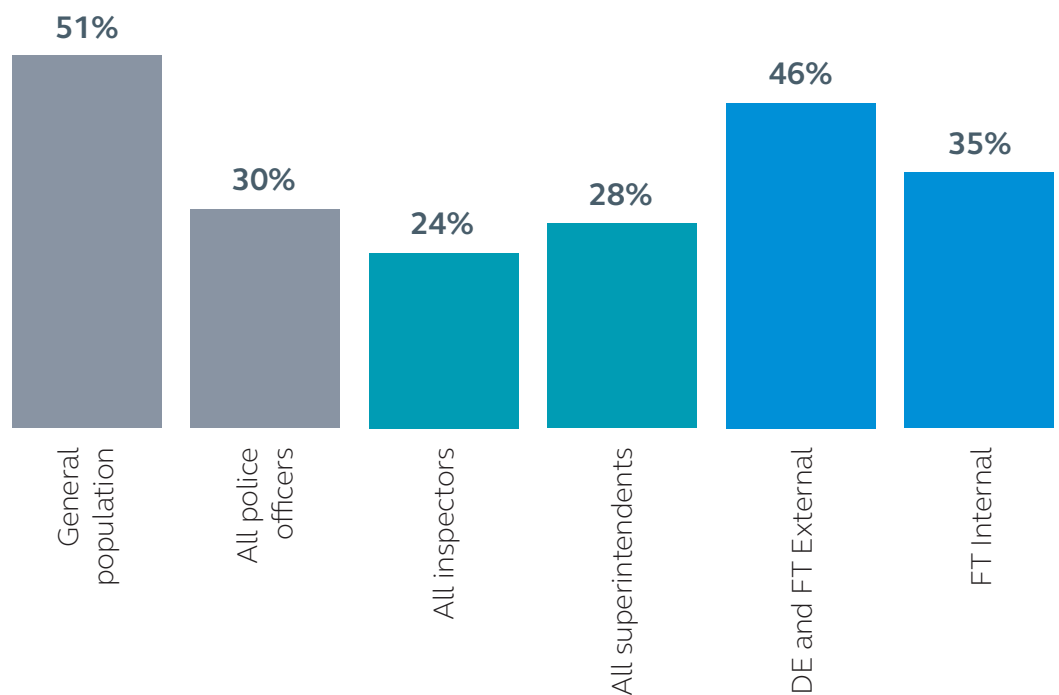
Diversity

The charts below show the Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) and female representation across the FTDE programmes based on those joining.

BAME representation in policing



Female representation in policing



Although not originally a specific aim of the FTDE programmes, forces are increasingly interested in how they can improve the representation of people with protected characteristics in police leadership roles. While attraction to the FTDE programmes has been promising in terms of applications from BAME and female populations, conversion to success at assessment centre has not been sustained for BAME DE candidates, and the reasons are not apparent.

Yearly improvements have been made to all stages of the recruitment process for programmes, where possible. Independent reviews of the DEI sifting processes and assessment centre were undertaken in 2018 and 2019 respectively; recommendations for improvements to the sifting process were already being implemented or were already part of the process. The review did not identify any form of unfair discrimination or bias at the assessment centre. The main observation was that the assessment centre was an outstanding process, well designed and run with rigour and professionalism.

Given the opportunity the FTDE programmes could offer to attract those from under-represented groups into leadership roles, options to maximise this potential must continue to be explored.

Areas for consideration

The FTDE attraction approach should continue to reflect the best available evidence and consideration of suitable marketing tactics to target under-represented groups should be further explored, such as the use of executive search companies.

With regard to recruitment processes, evidence points to including selection procedures that are proven to predict performance on the job, however, evidence has also shown that BAME candidates perform less well through such procedures². The key is in identifying and working to remove barriers to participation for people from all backgrounds.

Being explicit about programme aims to increase the representation from under-represented groups may attract more applicants from these groups. A review of provisions to facilitate in-programme deferrals, career breaks, and undertaking the programmes part-time may also make the prospect of joining the police less of a perceived career risk.

Funding for FDTE attraction activity has been limited. National activity to support the 20,000 uplift in officers could provide further opportunities to increase representation from under-represented groups.

² college.police.uk/What-we-do/Development/Documents/Review_of_police_initial_recruitment_final_report.pdf

Financial viability

The FTDE evaluation does not specifically answer the question of financial viability, but the financial analysis has enabled a cost per head for the central management and delivery of each programme based on those graduating. The per-head cost is for the full programme duration and does not include salary costs.

Programme	Duration	Per-head cost
Fast Track External (those from outside policing)	36 months	£27,037
Fast Track Internal (existing police constables)	24 months	£8,227
Direct Entry Superintendent	18 months	£134,351
Direct Entry Inspector	24 months	£118,818

During the reporting period (2014/15–2018/19) the central spend on the FTDE programmes was almost £16 million. Forty per cent of the spend was on DE Superintendent salaries; the remaining £9.6 million funded design and delivery of the development programme overall including the core team (49 per cent), recruitment (39 per cent), marketing (11 per cent) and business administration (one per cent).

Providing a comparison of FTDE costs and standard track recruitment to the same rank is not feasible. There is no comprehensive information available about costs to the service for the provision of standard track inspectors or superintendents, including development costs. As such the only comparison available would be a simple comparison based on salary to reach the target rank. This would arguably provide a disproportionately high per-head cost for standard-track officers, and not take into account the contributions made to policing during their careers. Given these issues, no appropriate comparison technique could be identified and any resulting figures would not stand up to scrutiny.

Areas for consideration

Salaries for DE superintendents were funded for the duration of the programme (and for a further two years for cohorts one and two) to enable supernumerary status. The total cost of DES salaries during the five years was £6.3million, 40 per cent of total spend during the reporting period. This is a difficult element to reduce; to withdraw Home Office funding would move the burden of cost to

forces, and there is the potential this would adversely affect demand but future funding models should be considered.

Twenty-four per cent of costs are attributable to recruitment, including running the National Assessment Centre (NAC). Passing a College-run NAC is a regulatory requirement for those entering policing via the FTDE programmes. Removing this regulatory requirement would enable alternative options to be explored and potentially reduce costs.

The dedicated programme-management team represents 24 per cent of total costs. To reduce this amount, consideration should be given to how workstreams, currently sitting internally at the College, could be reduced. Such considerations could include local rather than national marketing, a cost that represented six per cent of total spend in the reporting period.

A process of licensing the FTDE programmes could provide forces with the option of an off-the-shelf product to be used as and when business need arose. This could minimise the need for a centralised College team to one of curriculum maintenance and quality assurance.

Provision of the DES programme at different intervals could increase the number of programme members per cohort and therefore decrease the per-head cost. Consideration of furthering the co-delivered elements of training across FTDE could provide additional reductions in cost.

Next steps

Submission of the FTDE evaluation reports to Parliament will lead to a subsequent period of engagement and consultation with the service. The College, working in partnership with NPCC's Workforce Coordination Committee, will establish the process of consultation, ensuring all stakeholders have the opportunity to inform recommendations for the future of FTDE. It is anticipated that recommendations from this consultation process will be presented to the Chiefs' Council in July 2020.

Annex A – Evaluation summary

Does the concept of Fast Track and Direct Entry work in policing?

The evaluation has shown that Fast Track and Direct Entry programmes can work in policing:

- Talented constables have fast tracked to inspector within two years (FT Internal).
- New recruits have become competent inspectors within three years (FT External), or within two years for those with prior management experience (DE Inspector).
- New recruits with senior management experience have become competent superintendents within 18 months (DE Superintendent).

Beyond having an operationally competent officer in post at the end of the scheme, the evaluation identified the programmes brought:

- High calibre and exceptional leaders, from a range of sectors, into inspector and superintendent roles. Direct Entrants, and to some extent FT officers, were commonly said to have a more collaborative and empowering leadership style than typical at their rank.
- Officers who were motivated to continually improve policing and to take up more senior roles. Across all schemes, some members have already been promoted.
- Direct Entrants who were challenging norms, offering different perspectives, looking to problem-solve and were encouraging others to do the same.
- A greater proportion of female officers into inspector and superintendent positions, than typical at those ranks and (in the case of DE Superintendent and FT internal) a greater proportion of officers from BAME backgrounds.

In addition, force participation in the programmes – even if a force only had one or two members – was described as a signal to the workforce that difference was valued. FT Internal was valued for enabling talented constables to be developed and supported to overcome potential barriers to career progression.

How many forces and individuals have participated?

As of June 2019, 401 individuals had joined a FTDE programme and 196 had successfully completed (62 FT External Inspectors; 98 FT Internal Inspectors; 25 DE Superintendents and 11 DE Inspectors). Forty-one forces have had at least one FT or DE programme member.

What are the key lessons for future delivery?

- Work should continue to attract talented applicants from under-represented groups, as well as people with no prior police connections, or interest in police careers. Ways to make joining less of a career risk need to be developed and promoted. This work should include developing ways for potential applicants to become familiar with the programme/police work prior to applying or joining; and also, ways in which the programmes can be tailored to suit individual circumstances and experience.
- Ongoing from programme launch, recruitment processes should be continually monitored and adapted in the light of learning and best available evidence.
- More tightly defined programme aims, or allowing forces to recruit with specific needs in mind (for example, to fill skills gaps or to increase demographic diversity in leadership teams), could improve clarity of purpose for both potential applicants and those in-force supporting the delivery of the programmes.
- Much of the programme delivery is done in-force. Ensuring forces are properly resourced is essential. This resourcing includes the appointment of supportive mentors and line managers, together with ensuring programme members can access suitable roles and opportunities.
- Effective communication and championing in-force is also important. Members benefited from knowing that they have chief officer and senior support, and recognition that their difference is valued. Goodwill of colleagues is vital when learning on the job and when substantive in post, and needs to be encouraged and nurtured.

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