

Prevention First – training and guidance in prevention practice

A whole-system approach that aims to train officers and staff in preventative approaches, and promote problem-solving and evidence-based policing.

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Key details

Does it work?	Promising
Focus	Prevention Organisational
Topic	Crime prevention Operational policing Organisation including workforce
Organisation	Hertfordshire Constabulary
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Region	South East
Partners	Education
Stage of practice	The practice is implemented.
Start date	December 2020

Key details

Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	Workforce

Aim

The two main aims of Prevention First are to prevent harm and reduce demand within the force.

This initiative seeks to improve understanding of how all officers and staff can take a preventative approach to crime.

The aims of the initiative are actioned through several mechanisms. These include:

- a Prevention First academy — provides training to officers and staff on topics including problem-solving and evidence-based policing (EBP).
- the Prevention First portal — provides an online form where officers and staff can submit ideas, initiatives, or operational issues they are facing in the role
- the Prevention First Hub — provides a platform for officers and staff to receive tailored guidance and support from the Prevention First team, using an evidence-based and problem-solving approach

Intended outcome

Intended outcomes include:

- improved understanding and application of problem-solving and EBP
- increased confidence among officers and staff to adopt an innovative approach to their work in preventing crime
- the reduction of demand on policing as crime is prevented
- the prevention of harm

Description

Prevention First portal

Officers and staff are encouraged to submit ideas, operational issues or organisational inefficiencies to the online portal. This is done using a five-question Microsoft form.

Prevention First hub

The hub provides a platform for officers and staff to receive tailored guidance and support. Staff in the hub take an evidence-based approach, reviewing What Works evidence and other research to inform their response. They also take a problem-solving approach to provide advice on how issues can be addressed. The hub consists of 16 full time employees, ranging from superintendent rank to business support assistant.

Prevention First academy

Four modules have been designed for the academy for varying ranks and roles, delivered by staff with a Level 4 Certificate in Education and Training. The modules cover topics such as:

- problem solving
- the SARA (scanning, analysis, response, assessment) model
- the national decision model
- reflective learning
- situational leadership
- EBP
- coaching

Training is held on non-police premises and participants do not wear uniform to take emphasis away from ranks. This decision was informed by the theory of psychological safety and how people are more likely to be open-minded and relaxed when they do not fear talking honestly in front of senior staff.

Resources

Prevention First currently has 20 dedicated officers and staff. They support everyone in the organisation to be more preventive in their thinking and practice.

Those working in Prevention First are required to have knowledge and skills in:

- enhanced problem solving
- research skills
- EBP
- Office 365

Evaluation

Durham University has been commissioned to conduct a longitudinal evaluation looking at the impact of an academy module on cultural change within the force. This will be completed by April 2023.

A sergeant in the force is currently evaluating one of the academy modules as part of his MSc. He is surveying all previous academy participants to determine the extent to which they have retained their learning and applied it in their role.

Overall impact

As of August 2022, 636 leaders have received the 'Learning for prevention' module through the academy.

Pre- and post-event surveys were conducted for the first 28 academy cohorts. The average response when participants are asked how likely they are to recommend the course to a colleague (with 10 being the most likely) is 8.5.

Anecdotal benefits of the academy include officers leaving the training feeling empowered and motivated to think of innovative ways to prevent crime and seek out problem-solving opportunities.

There were 233 submissions to the portal between January 2022 and 19 December 2022. More than half of these have been addressed by the hub team. The force reports anecdotal success including:

- positive feedback from those who have used the resource
- greater creation of innovative ideas within the force

Learning

The following factors should be considered when implementing a similar initiative.

- The hub team should ensure that they're working alongside key internal stakeholders, such as neighbourhood portfolio leads, within the area they're researching. This will help ensure that they aren't working in a silo, and there isn't duplication of work.
- Prevention First is a whole-force approach. It therefore requires cultural and organisational change to fully embed. Prevention needs to be seen as a priority across all crime types. This requires senior leadership support to drive change across the whole organisation.
- Reflective practice should be encouraged. Not only do the Prevention First team highlight good practice, they also recognise the importance of acknowledging and understanding when something has gone wrong. They capture this to ensure any learning is shared appropriately.

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Tags

Crime reduction Evidence-based policing