



University of  
**Strathclyde**  
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# A STRATEGIC APPROACH TO POLICE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

## **Group 5**

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## Table Of Contents

I. Introduction.....	3
II. Background and Objective .....	4
III. Challenges .....	6
3.1 Recruitment Challenges .....	6
3.2 Operational Challenges .....	6
3.3 Retention Issues .....	6
IV. Methodology .....	7
V. Analysis.....	7
5.1 The total scale of the problem .....	7
5.2 The forces that have the highest differential (delta) from their planned FTE numbers... 8	8
5.3 The roles that have the highest delta across the regional force..... 8	8
VI. Discussion.....	9
Officer Ranks: .....	9
Support Ranks: .....	9
Overall Trends: .....	10
VII. VI. Conclusion and Recommendations .....	12
VIII. Reference .....	13

# I. Introduction

Recruiting new police officers has become an extremely difficult task for any recruitment agency in the world. In relation to this, the Metropolitan Police have undertaken an advertisement drive in London called "Change Needs You". With this drive, billboards, social media, and digital platforms are littered with recruitment efforts to increase officer numbers. It's a campaign of diversity that intends to give a lot of value to courage, empathy, and respect, and it wants to attract people who are committed to securing their communities.

This campaign comes at a time when Baroness Casey's review (2023) had highlighted problems, including institutional racism, misogyny, and homophobia within the Met—meaning significant reforms are needed with much greater diversity within the force. Commissioner Sir Mark Rowley stresses that this isn't a decision to be taken lightly; a career in the Met will be exciting and impactful. The campaign features personal stories from serving officers of all walks of life, sharing their motivation for joining and their experiences so far in a bid to inspire the next generation of recruits. (Casey,2023)

Other forces in the region are also looking to boost their numbers. Warwickshire Police is seeking to appoint part-time volunteer officers, called Special Constables, who undergo the same rigorous training and enjoy the same powers as regular officers but can balance duties with their existing jobs and commitments. Specials, as they are often known, come from really varied backgrounds, bringing so many different experiences to the force.

It is not as if police recruitment presents unique challenges to the UK. For instance, a report by the (RAND Corporation ,2020) shows how similar issues in the United States mean that local police agencies struggle with recruitment and retention in light of budget constraints, increasing skill demands, and the appearance of generational preferences. This report concludes that some wide-ranging changes in approach needed to improve recruitment and retention include better compensation, realistic previews of the job, and more employee engagement.

A study conducted by (Harvard University ,2021) also establishes diversity as imperative in the recruitment processes of law enforcement agencies. In this regard, the study recommends increasing outreach to candidates, simplifying the recruitment process, and encouraging recruits as ways to reduce attrition. The recommendations are highly important in building representative police forces in the societies in which they work.

This is further supported by Deloitte's support of the police service in the UK through innovative solutions to handle performance matching and growth against budget cuts. Deloitte adopts such an approach in cost reduction by transformation, collaboration, workforce management, and estate planning (Deloitte, 2023). The Social Value Model has,

since January 2021, been applying the philosophy of delivering value through public sector contracts. This model places focus on strategic themes and policy outcomes.

The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP ,2019) reported that 78% of the police agencies surveyed experience difficulties in recruiting qualified candidates, while 65% of these agencies indicate that there are not enough applicants. Further, the employment of police and detectives is projected to create about 63,000 openings each year from 2023 to 2033, based on projections from the U.S. (Bureau of Labor Statistics ,2023).

Facilitating the recruitment of police officers is a multifaceted issue, which by implication, demands an equally strategic and multifaceted approach. From the efforts invested in the "Change Needs You" campaign at the Met to the popular campaigns done by other regional forces, today's challenges have quantum leaps forward. These campaigns also emphasize diversity, values, and personal stories with the idea of attracting people who are committed to being positive forces for change within their communities. Support from organizations such as Deloitte and insights called from academic research provide an avenue through which improvements might be explored to better recruit and retain law enforcement. (Casey, 2023).

## II. Background and Objective

One of the major challenges nowadays in keeping up with modern times involves recruiting and retaining police officers. For this purpose, diversity and skill must be balanced out in the workforce, amid a tight budget and shifting expectations within the community. This challenge is reflected in the recent "Change Needs You" campaign issued by the Metropolitan Police, which highlights the need for substantial changes and greater diversity within the force (Casey, 2023).

To understand its human resource issues and identify areas for improvement, the Regional Police Force has undertaken an in-depth analysis. This analysis is driven by the need to address institutionalized racism, misogyny, and homophobia that have affected the force's effectiveness and efficiency. Insights from ongoing workshops with police teams have revealed complications in recruiting qualified candidates, retaining experienced officers, and meeting the growing demand for digital skills.

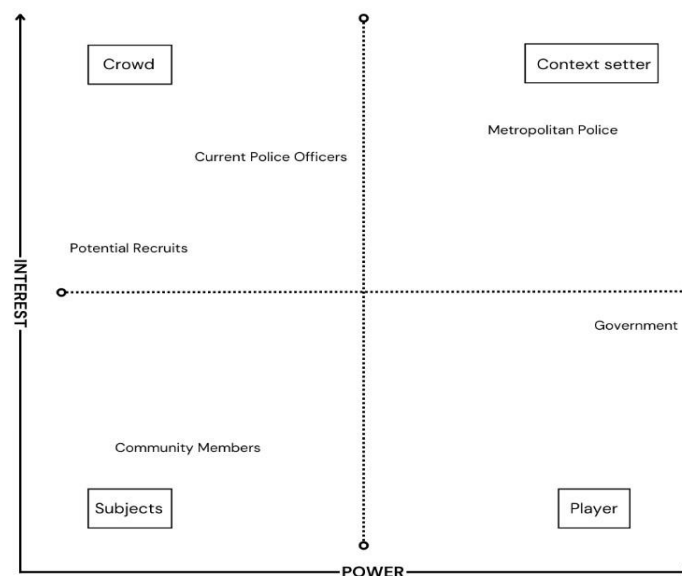
A study by the RAND Corporation on police recruitment and retention in the United States echoes these concerns. The study identifies similar challenges faced by local police agencies, including budget constraints, increased skill requirements, and generational preferences. It suggests that improving recruitment and retention requires better compensation, realistic job previews, and higher levels of employee engagement (RAND Corporation, 2020).

a study by Harvard University corroborates that recruitment into police agencies needs to be diversified. The study calls for the expansion of outreach strategies, the smoothing of the recruitment process, and the use of supportive mechanisms for recruits to reduce attrition. These recommendations are vital in building a police force that reflects the composition of a population. (Harvard University, 2021).

**The main objectives of this research are:**

1. **Analyse Current Challenges:** Analyse in detail the prevailing problems in recruiting and retaining officers in the Regional Police Force, using data from the provided Excel sheet and insights from recent interviews with police teams.
2. **Identify Key Areas for Improvement:** Highlight specific areas that require immediate attention and further investigation, such as the impact of institutional racism, misogyny, and homophobia on recruitment and retention efforts.
3. **Develop Strategic Recommendations:** Provide actionable recommendations to address the identified challenges, drawing on best practices from other law enforcement agencies and integrating insights from academic research and industry reports.
4. **Support Strategic Priorities for 2024/25:** Align the findings and recommendations with the force's strategic priorities for 2024/25, which include keeping personnel at work, supporting teams through coaching and development, recruiting a future-ready workforce with digital skills, and providing more supervision to reduce the learning curve and promotion timeline.
5. **Improve Data-Driven Decision Making:** Emphasize the importance of seeking additional sources of data and information during the client meeting in order to get a fuller picture of the situation, which could support more informed decision making and strategic planning.

By achieving these objectives, the research study in providing a comprehensive overview of workforce status and offering practical solutions for the improvement of Regional Police Forces in terms of recruitment and retention. The ultimate aim is to build a more representative, skilled, and effective police force that can meet changing community needs.



**Figure 1. Stakeholder Analysis**

The stakeholder analysis identifies five major groups that have a significant impact on police recruitment challenges and reforms. Regional Police Leadership holds the highest power and interest in developing strategies and allocating resources towards addressing diversity and skill gaps. The Current Police Workforce is a crucial element in implementing reforms at local levels and mentoring new recruits. Government and policy makers budget and legislate to facilitate resources to support operational budgets and direct policy alignment. Lastly, local communities benefit from recruitment in a balanced, skilled police force that earns trust and sustains safety.

This stakeholder mix highlights the need for tailored engagement strategies—ranging from active management for leadership to targeted campaigns for recruits and communities. Coordinated efforts will enhance recruitment, retention, and public trust in policing.

## III. Challenges

### 3.1 Recruitment Challenges

The recruitment of police officers is a very intricate process. The competitiveness emanating from skilled workers, particularly those in the digital field, is immense due to sectors competing against policing. The public perception, too, has been poisoned by high-profile incidents and pressure placed on scrutiny. This discourages potential applicants. Traditional ways of recruiting may also be less successful in reaching underrepresented segments, exacerbating workforce diversification challenges. The IACP (2019) reported that 78 percent of agencies were having a challenging time recruiting qualified candidates, while 65 percent noted too few applicants.

### 3.2 Operational Challenges

Another explanation for recruitment and retention is given by the operational challenges. Budgetary constraints limit the resources to be used on training and development, which negatively impact the overall effectiveness of the force. This evolving complexity in crimes, for example, cybercrime and terrorism, also demands specific sets of skills and knowledge among officers. The unending demand for upskilling is creating another challenge for the newly recruited and serving personnel. As the RAND Corporation says, "Local police agencies across the United States share many of the operational issues, such as offering compensation packages and realistic job previews in an effort to attract and retain talent."

### 3.3 Retention Issues

Such factors might give rise to burnout and attrition; thus, elevated levels of stress, exposure to traumatic events, and the very demanding nature of the job create conditions where it is exceedingly difficult to retain experienced officers. Racism, misogyny, and homophobia within institutions take root in the workplace to an extent that police organizations struggle to retain officers from diverse backgrounds. The Harvard University study articulates that supporting the recruits along with giving them an appropriate work environment can reduce the rate of attrition. In addition to this, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, around 63,000

openings for police and detectives are projected each year from 2023 to 2033 because of the constant demand for new recruits due to police leaving the force.

## IV. Methodology

The analysis was done to investigate the planned FTE as compared to actualized FTE across several roles in police precincts, including Police Constables, Detective Constables, Detective Sergeants, Junior Police Support Investigators, Police Support Investigators, and Police Sergeants. Data collection and organization were done based on role structure and FTE metrics.

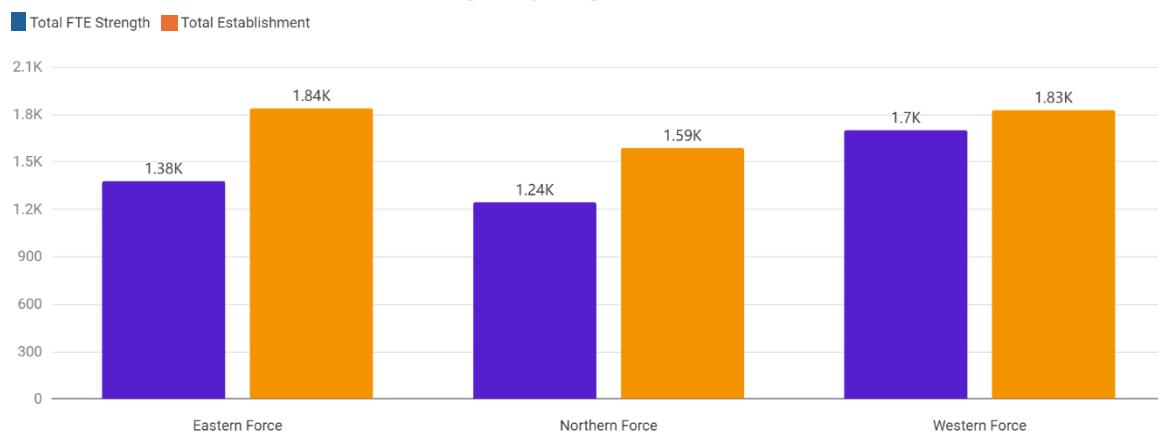
Data was analysed and visualized by Microsoft Excel. Pie charts were constructed for the proportion of planned vs. actual FTE by role, so distributions across roles could be easily compared. Stacked column charts were used to visualize the breakdown of planned vs. actual FTE for a single role across precincts. Bar charts provided comparisons between actual and planned FTE for specific roles to indicate discrepancies.

This methodology has provided a structured and visually accessible approach to the understanding of resource allocation and structural dynamics within regional precincts.

## V. Analysis

### 5.1 The total scale of the problem

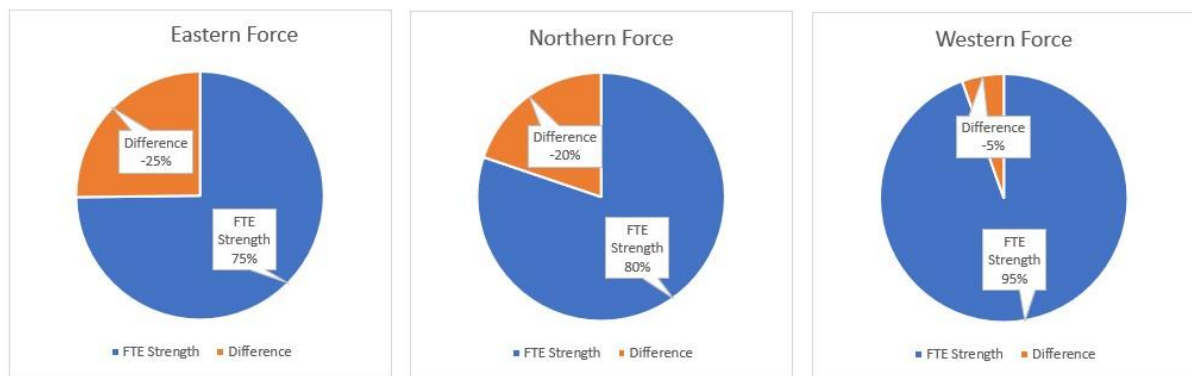
**Total Establishment and FTE Strength by Region**



**Figure 2. Total establishment and FTE strength by region**

The total scale of the problem in police recruitment and resource distribution across the Eastern, Northern, and Western forces can be analysed by focusing on the discrepancies between planned FTEs and actual FTE strength. For the Western Force total establishment is 1825, and the total FTE strength is 1698.6776. For the Northern Force total establishment is 1586.3 and the total FTE strength is 1242.523. For the Eastern Force total establishment is 1836.12 and the total FTE strength is 1376.4381.

## 5.2 The forces that have the highest differential (delta) from their planned FTE numbers.



**Figure 3. Difference between Planned and actual FTE's**

The largest staffing gap was 25% in the Eastern Force, which shows the highest priority need for recruitment and resource investment. The Northern Force also has a major gap, but the problem is less severe than in the Eastern Force, with a shortfall of 20% being reported. The Western Force can be viewed as in a relatively strong position, with only a 5% shortfall in its staffing-a staffing level that's been closer to the planned one, therefore.

This further confirms that the Eastern and Northern Forces are dealing with more critical understaffing problems, while the Western Force faces minor staffing discrepancies.

## 5.3 The roles that have the highest delta across the regional force.



**Figure 4. Rank wise roles that have delta Across the regional forces**

From the charts, we can analyse the differences in FTE strength (actual staffing) and planned FTEs (intended staffing levels) for police forces across three regions: Eastern, Northern, and Western. The breakdown is rank-specific, focusing on both officer ranks (Police Constable, Detective Constable, Detective Sergeant) and support ranks (Junior Police Support Investigator, Police Support Investigator, Police Sergeant).



## VI. Discussion

### Officer Ranks:

#### 1. Eastern Force:

- There is a **significant gap in Detective Constables (P1)**: planned FTE is 63, while the current strength is 28.91.
- Police Constables (P2) recorded an actual strength of 34.20, below the planned strength of 49.
- Detective Sergeants present a smaller variance: the planned FTE is 20, and the current strength is 11.29.

#### 2. Northern Force:

- Detective Constables (P1) are considerably behind the planned level, with an actual FTE strength of 27.50 compared to a planned 39.98.
- The gap for Police Constables, P2, is less extreme than the other forces: actual strength is 38.31 versus a plan of 51.
- Among the smaller gaps is Detective Sergeants: actual strength of 10.87 versus a planned FTE of 19.10.

#### 3. Western Force:

- The largest gaps are observed in **Detective Constables (P1)**: planned 63 vs. actual 39.82.
- Police Constables (P2) show better coverage, with an actual strength of 48 compared to a planned 58.
- Detective Sergeants shortfall: The planned FTE is 19, while the actual strength is 15.56.

### Support Ranks:

#### 1. Eastern Force:

- There is a reverse gap for Junior Police Support Investigators (P2), with an actual strength of 55.15 as against the planned FTE of 26.2.
- Police Support Investigators (P1) have a planned FTE of 28.97, while the actual strength is 10.32.
- Police Sergeants have a planned level of 5.17 but only 3 are in place.

#### 2. Northern Force:

- Junior Police Support Investigators (P2) are close to planned levels: 40.36 actual vs. 32.2 planned.

- Police Support Investigators (P1) and Police Sergeants have deficits. Police Support Investigators show a planned FTE of 19.96 and actual strength of only 5.5. Police Sergeants have a small gap (planned 4, actual 7.6).

### 3. Western Force:

- Junior Police Support Investigators (P2) are overstaffed, with an actual strength of 58.38 compared to a planned 20.01.
- Police Support Investigators also are above the planned levels of 24.11 planned vs. actual 15.22.
- Police Sergeants are closer to planned levels, with a planned 7.5 and actual 4.

### Overall Trends:

1. **Detective Constables (P1)** consistently show the largest shortfall across all regions, indicating a potential recruitment or retention issue.
2. P2 Police Constables do better but are below planned levels in all three regions.
3. In support roles, **Junior Police Support Investigators (P2)** are often overstaffed, particularly in Eastern and Western forces.
4. The shortfalls in planned versus actual Police Support Investigators are extensive in all regions for the P1 level.

### The areas with the highest ratio of Constables to Sergeants.

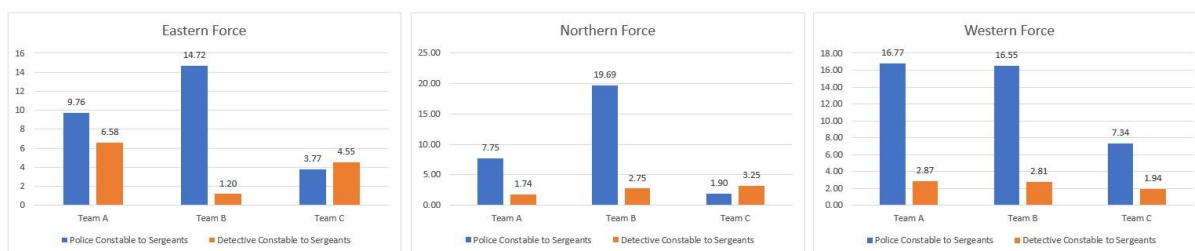


Figure 5. Ratio of Constable to Sergeants.

The graphs highlight significant fluctuations in the respective ratios of Constables to Sergeants within teams and Forces. Within the Eastern Force, Team B has the highest ratio of Police Constables to Sergeants, 14.72, while Team C experiences the greatest strain in detective workloads (4.55). The Northern Force has the highest overall ratios, with the Police Constables to Sergeants ratio in Team B being 19.69 - a critical supervisory burden. Detective ratios are more balanced, with Team C being slightly higher at 3.25.

In the Western Force, Teams A and B both have high ratios of Police Constables to Sergeants at 16.77 and 16.55, respectively, indicating high strain. However, the workloads regarding detective work are not that bad, with Team A having the highest ratio of only 2.87. The overall most significant challenges are faced by Northern Force Team B and Western Force Teams A and B, while detective imbalances are at their most pronounced in Eastern Force Team C. Targeted resource redistribution and recruitment are needed to address these supervisory gaps.

## 1. Prioritize Critical Shortages

- **Detective Roles:** The most notable gaps are among Detective Sergeants (57% filled) and Detective Constables (69% filled). Consider targeted recruitment campaigns to fill these crucial investigative roles, emphasizing skill development and career progression.
- **Police Support Investigators (P1):** With only 28% filled, this role needs urgent attention. Collaborate with HR to streamline recruitment processes or consider temporary hires to maintain operational efficiency.

## 2. Redistribute Overstaffed Positions

- **Police Sergeants (190%):** Assess if the overstaffing can support under resourced teams. This could involve reassigning or repurposing these officers into roles that match their skills but also align with force priorities.
- **Junior Police Support Investigators (125%):** Since this role is overstaffed, explore opportunities to upskill or transition these investigators to more critical areas, potentially reducing reliance on external recruitment.

## 3. Team-Specific Adjustments

- **Team A:** Focus on filling gaps in Detective roles (only 60% filled) and Police Support Investigators (17% filled). Engage in flexible workforce planning to support short-term needs while addressing long-term gaps.
- **Team B:** Work on filling Detective Sergeant positions (59%) and review the overstaffing among Junior Police Support Investigators. Consider secondments or temporary role changes.
- **Team C:** Although Police Sergeants have an overstaffed subset (560%), there are still other shortages, such as in Police Constables (61%). Redistribute excess resources from overstaffed roles to balance the team.

## 4. Long-Term Strategies

- **Recruitment and Retention:** Implement programs that highlight career progression, training, and work-life balance to attract and retain talent, particularly for Detective and Police Support roles.
- **Internal Training:** Develop accelerated training for existing officers who could fill detective roles or provide support in high-need areas.
- **Data-Driven Resource Management:** Regularly update and review staffing data to adapt to changing needs and ensure efficient resource allocation.

These strategic actions could significantly improve the staffing balance and operational effectiveness of the Northern Force.

## VII. VI. Conclusion and Recommendations

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