



# Direct entry and Fast-track promotion, a brief history and current position

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Direct Entry and Fast-Track promotion are not new to the police service, in fact existing since the commonly accepted foundation of modern policing by Sir Robert Peel in 1829. Through necessity as much as anything else, two external appointees were given the positions of Joint Commissioners of the Policing of the Metropolis. Sir Richard Mayne was a lawyer and a rising star at the Bar, appointed to the role without interview at the tender age of just thirty-three. His co-commissioner, the military man Lt. Col. Charles Rowan, was appointed directly on the advice of the Prime Minister the Duke of Wellington, under whom he had served in Spain and Waterloo. Each brought skills thought essential for the role: Mayne a comprehensive legal knowledge who was tasked with introducing the policies and procedures of the new constabulary; and Rowan the military man was to bring discipline, organisation, and structure.<sup>1</sup> After the initial selection of the very first superintending ranks from outside applicants it was always the vision of Sir Robert Peel that:

“When the whole Establishment shall be completed, and in full operation, it will be deserving of serious consideration whether it may not be fit to establish as a fixed and invariable rule, that all appointments to situations above that of the common constable shall take place from the Ranks of the Police”.<sup>2</sup>

Even those appointed to the first wave of superintendent positions were primarily from a military sergeant-major position; those men “raised

from the ranks entirely on his own merit; when the regiments are strong, he must have attained that rank by himself above a thousand, or probably a much greater number”,<sup>3</sup> thereby still ascribing to Peel’s ‘raised from the ranks’ ideology. This same philosophy was reinforced by the *Desborough Committee* on police pay and conditions in 1919 who held that:

“no one without previous police experience should be appointed to the rank of Chief Constable unless he had exceptional qualifications or experience or no internal candidates were considered suitable”.

This view was enshrined with the introduction of the first iteration of the *Police Regulations 1919*.<sup>4</sup> It wasn’t to be until the appointment of Col. Frederick Drayton Porter of Cambridgeshire in 1963 (retiring 1977) that the practice finally ended, despite regular protestations from the staff associations about such appointments.<sup>5</sup>

Fast-track promotion is not a new concept either, with the ‘Trenchard’ police college opening in Hendon as early as 1934. Its intent was to take the brightest and best both within and without policing and offer them enhanced training and subsequent fast-track promotion to senior positions. It was intended by Lord Trenchard to mimic the military approach to direct officer entry; in the police case graduates were posted to boroughs at the newly constituted bespoke rank of ‘junior station inspector’ (after a brief few months as a constable

<sup>1</sup> Moore, T (2021) *Rowan & Mayne: A Biography of the First London Police Commissioners*. London: Blue Lamp Books.

<sup>2</sup> Peel, Robert (1829) *Letter to Joint Commissioners of the Police of the Metropolis 10<sup>th</sup> December 1829* The National Archives MEPO 2.38; Critchley, T. A. (1979) *History of the Police in England and Wales, 900-1966*. London: Constable p. 52

<sup>3</sup> Parliamentary papers (1834) [600]. *Report from the Select Committee on the Police of the Metropolis with minutes of evidence, appendix and index, minutes of evidence, p.2, q/a 33*

<sup>4</sup> Winsor, T. (2012) *Independent Review of Police Officer and Staff Remuneration and Conditions final report*, London: The Stationary Office p. 103

<sup>5</sup> Andrews, T. (2020) *The Greatest Policeman? A Biography of Capt. Athelstan Popkess CBE OSTJ: Chief Constable of Nottingham City Police 1930 - 1959* London: Blue Lamp Books p.34; Emsley, C. (2010) *The Great British Bobby: A History of British Policing from the 18th Century to the Present* London: Quercus p. 221



for external recruits). Despite widespread popular opinion standing in opposition to it – ultimately causing the scheme to terminate in 1939 after only five years – its influence cannot be understated:

“Of the 197 men who had attended the courses between 1934 and 1939, sixty-nine were still serving in 1966: they held the top six posts in the Metropolitan Police, twenty-five others were provincial chief constables, and five held posts in HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, including the chief inspector, Eric St Johnston, who had previously commanded in Oxfordshire, County Durham and Lancashire.”<sup>6</sup>

Ultimately Lord Trenchard’s short-lived initiative had been the one and only attempt within British policing to recruit officers above the level of constable and below chief officer, until direct entry opened formally at inspector and superintendent ranks in 2014.<sup>7</sup>

Other – much more informal – fast-track promotion opportunities were widespread for those who showed aptitude, diligence, or simply through nepotism, since the inception of modern policing, most notably into and within the detective branches of forces before WWII.

Numerous formal accelerated promotion schemes have existed since Trenchard introduced the idea: variously the ‘Special Course’ (1961); the Accelerated Promotion Course; The Accelerated Promotion Scheme for Graduates; and the High Potential Development programme (2002). The most recent iteration was the revamped High Potential Development Scheme, incepted by the

then National Policing Improvement Agency under the stewardship of Chief Constable Peter Neyroud on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008.

The HPDS was replaced with the fast-track (FT) PC to inspector scheme in 2014, following the recommendations of the Winsor Review in 2011,<sup>8</sup> alongside the Neyroud Review of Police Leadership and Training in 2011, and the College of Policing’s own Leadership Review in 2015; alongside some suggestions from a report entitled *Getting the Best Leaders to Take On the Most Demanding Challenges* from a Home Office working group in 2003.<sup>9</sup> Initially accepting external graduate entrants and current serving constables, the external aspect was closed after just two intakes and replaced in 2016 with the direct entry (DE) to inspector scheme after eighteen of the sixty-two external recruits (29%) dropped-out in comparison to just a 6% drop-out rate from internal candidates.<sup>10</sup>

The current DE and FT routes it can therefore be shown, represent the longest efforts to date to introduce entry points above constable rank in the entire history of the UK Police.

## PREVIOUS REVIEWS

The last and only review of the schemes to date was carried out in 2020 on behalf of the College of Policing and was broken down into each of the three strands individually (FT, DE Inspector and DE Superintendent), as well as an overview paper, under the banner title *Fast Track and Direct Entry evaluation*.<sup>11</sup> That analysis took a holistic perspective of the programmes from outside, basing results on

<sup>6</sup> Emsley, (2010) *The Great British Bobby* p. 222

<sup>7</sup> Smith, R. (2016) *New insights on police culture: A critical evaluation of direct entry into senior leadership roles in the police service* [PhD thesis] Portsmouth: University of Portsmouth p. 155

<sup>8</sup> Winsor, T *Independent Review of Police Officer and Staff Remuneration and Conditions*

<sup>9</sup> Neyroud, P. (2011) *Review of Police Leadership and Training*, London: UK Government; College of Policing (2015)

‘Leadership Review: Recommendations for delivering leadership at all levels’ [Online] available at:

<https://assets.college.police.uk/s3fs-public/2021-03/cop-leadership-review-2015.pdf> [Accessed 7 February 2023]; Police Leadership Development Board (2003) *Getting the Best Leaders to Take On the Most Demanding Challenges* London: The Home Office [Online] Available at:

<https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20080108033352/http://police.homeoffice.gov.uk/news-and-publications/publication/training-and-career-development/getbestleaderschallenges2003.pdf?view=Standard&pubID=189208> [Accessed 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2024]

<sup>10</sup> Campbell, I. & Colover, S (2020) *Fast Track Inspector (Internal and External) programme five-year evaluation report 2014 – 2019* College of Policing p. 7

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*



qualitative interviews with scheme participants alongside chief officers, peers, mentors and subordinates. The findings appear to strongly support the concept of DE and the programmes themselves offering conclusions such as delivering a “positive influence” in terms of leadership styles; trust, confidence and respect from colleagues – even following initial scepticism; and transference of prior skills and knowledge from the private sector into policing.<sup>12</sup>

The programmes were envisaged to be “hard to get on and hard to stay on” to attract and retain only the best and most committed applicants.<sup>13</sup> This is reflected in the interview answers from candidates, who confirm that to be their experiences of the diverse schemes, but confirm the necessity for why that is.

With regards to the backgrounds of the applicants, this too is seemingly positive. Women on the programmes were represented at twice the national average of female police officers at inspector and superintendent ranks on both the DE and short-lived external FT programmes. There was also a higher representation from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnicity (BAME) communities than in the police service, albeit still lower than that of the national population. The programmes were singled out for specific praise however, from both senior and rank-and-file officers, for the diverse and new viewpoints that candidates brought into senior roles where they could effect meaningful changes as well as more transformational leadership styles. These areas were specifically identified as being of great benefit to the police service, which had potentially been hindered by a far more transactional style of senior leadership for some considerable time, despite a desire to depart from such.<sup>14</sup> Indeed this was a key observation of the Neyroud Review in 2011

which identified the need for more (but not exclusively) transformational leadership at senior ranks; along with the inception of the College of Policing itself to help deliver this change.<sup>15</sup>

Perhaps surprisingly given widespread thoughts on police culture and opposition to change especially,<sup>16</sup> programme members and chief officers reported a broad acceptance of the DE officers especially by both managers and subordinates. It is possible that the gradual increase in younger generational officers who have joined post-Winsor and grown up in the era of ‘new business speak’ and a fluid careers market has contributed to acceptance of what previous generations perceived as outsiders into the exclusive policing profession.<sup>17</sup>

A key gap with the 2020 report is that it largely pre-dates the introduction of the Police Entry Qualification Framework (PEQF) policing entry pathways, introduced under the National Police Chiefs’ Council’s *Policing Vision 2025* in 2015,<sup>18</sup> but not begun until 2018 with the first graduates not completing the programmes until 2021.<sup>19</sup> It cannot therefore consider the impact on the new entry routes, most notably the Degree Holder Entry Programme (DHEP) and its partner direct-entry detectives iteration, which could be argued already represents an enhanced entry route to higher-achieving candidates. The DHEP sits in parallel (and perhaps opposition) to the *Police:Now* scheme, which also invites graduates into enhanced training programmes, intending them to go directly into community-focussed operational policing roles, enabling them through this combination to best meet police promotion requirements (albeit without guarantee of FT). Previous FT promotion schemes have primarily (and some exclusively) sought to recruit graduates, but with the DHEP alongside the Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship (PCDA) and

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* p. 6

<sup>13</sup> Winsor, T. (2012) *Independent Review of Police Officer and Staff Remuneration and Conditions final report*, London: The Stationary Office p. 118

<sup>14</sup> Dobby, J, Anscombe, J & Tuffin, R (2004) *Police Leadership: Expectations and Impact* London: Home Office

<sup>15</sup> Neyroud (2011) *Review of Police Leadership and Training* pp. 33 & 39

<sup>16</sup> Dobby et al. (2004) *Police Leadership: Expectations and Impact*

<sup>17</sup> Cockroft, T. (2019) ‘Police Culture and Police Leadership’ In: P. Ramshaw, M. Silvestri & M. Simpson, eds. *Police Leadership: Changing Landscapes* Palgrave Macmillan pp. 23 - 45

<sup>18</sup> National Police Chiefs’ Council, 2015. *Policing Vision 2025*, London: National Police Chiefs’ Council

<sup>19</sup> University of Derby (2021) *First Cohort of Police Constables in the country graduate from University of Derby*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.derby.ac.uk/news/2021/first-cohort-of-police-constables-in-the-country-graduate-from-university-of-derby/> [Accessed 7 February 2023]



pre-join degree in Professional Policing (PPD), these trio of entry pathways had sought to ensure that all police officers in future are graduates.

This was thrown into disarray however by the announcement of the Home Secretary Suella Braverman in November 2022, that policing needed to maintain a non-degree entry route into the profession. This has now re-launched, moving away from the prior Initial Police Learning and Development Programme (IPLDP), to become the Police Constable Entry Programme (PCEP) under a re-named raft of the entry routes as the Police Constable Entry Routes (PCER) [*Are you confused by all the acronyms yet? – Ed.*]. Where the DHEP, PCDA and PPD are accredited, level six (degree-level) qualifications, which award a post-graduate certificate (DHEP) or degree (PCDA & PPD), the PCEP is an unaccredited programme, resulting in no formal recognition of a student officer's learning whatsoever. It is also pitched at level five (equivalent to two years of university study, or a foundation degree), but requires the same syllabus to be covered as the three-year degree programme.

There does not appear to be any current guidance around suitability or preference of candidates from the various PCER entry pathways onto the FT scheme, other than eligibility criteria for each branch on the College's application guidance web page.<sup>20</sup> It is therefore likely that the FT and DE programmes have somewhat fallen away in recent years as a result of mission creep from the PCER entry routes and the aforementioned ambiguity around graduate entry especially. The College of Policing therefore commissioned a review and insight of scheme participants in 2023, with the aim of providing guidance and direction for the future of both FT and DE schemes.

#### **DIRECT ENTRY AND FAST TRACK – CURRENT RELEVANCE AND BENEFIT?**

With the gradual drop off in the active promotion of the schemes considered above, paired

with the general upheaval of the 2020 – 2022 Coronavirus pandemic, it is perhaps time to consider in detail the efficacy of the various programmes, and indeed whether the scope of DE especially should be considered with a view to attracting top talent to senior police leadership roles, in light of current issues.<sup>21</sup>

The issue of FT, and DE particularly, are of key import in contemporary policing, despite standing in direct opposition to both Peel's and Desborough's views. It has already been demonstrated that the FT and DE schemes have increased diversity – both in terms of physical appearance such as race and gender, but also in terms of leadership styles and initiatives. There is less data available for the impact that the HPDS scheme influenced in these regards; but the talent from which those candidates was drawn was those already within the police service which was still at that time predominantly White, straight and male. DE therefore perhaps represents the best opportunity to attract diverse talent into senior roles within a service that has still to date only seen one BAME chief constable in Michael Fuller QPM of Kent Constabulary between 2004 – 2010, and the equivalently ranked Assistant Commissioner Patricia Gallan QPM in the Metropolitan Police in 2015. As identified by the 2020 report however:

“It may take more marketing, positive action and time for the Direct Entry programmes to have broader appeal. Work should continue to attract talented applicants from underrepresented groups, as well as people with no prior police connections or interest in police careers”.<sup>22</sup>

This is a key intent of direct entry, to increase both visible and invisible diversity amongst senior ranks within the police service, at a time when there is still significant under-representation at all ranks, including PC. This is why FT, and DE especially, are of more importance now than before, and existing despite the views of Peel and recommendations of Desborough. This links entirely back to the need to

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.college.police.uk/career-learning/learning/courses/fast-track-programme-serving-constables>

<sup>21</sup> Casey, Louise (2023) *Final Report: An independent review into the standards of behaviour and internal culture of the Metropolitan Police Service*, London; Tyson, Jemma & Charman, Sarah (2023) 'Leaving the table: Organisational (in)justice and the relationship with police officer retention'. *Criminology & Criminal Justice* Online First.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* p. 9



increase diversity within policing. An issue first identified by Lord Scarman in 1981,<sup>23</sup> and significantly reinforced by Lord MacPherson in 1999,<sup>24</sup> representation by BAME and other minority communities within policing – especially at senior ranks – has been (and remains) a key barrier to police legitimacy.

Both Peel and Desborough lived in a Britain wholly different to today, where British Imperialist ideology and the pervading sense of telos within the country of British (White) supremacy was all-pervading. Put plainly, Peel's police took to the streets five years prior to the abolition of slavery and Desborough's committee convened concurrently to the 'Baird' Committee on the Employment of Women on Police Duties, which considered for the first time the prospect of employing women in the police, before they even had the vote.<sup>25</sup> Thanks to both Scarman and MacPherson, insights of countless academics, and paired with the rapid development in British cultural values around the millennium, the importance of a representative workforce is now firmly established. If diverse talent can be recruited at higher ranks and exploit the opportunity that DE affords to "bring in different perspectives" and be "more open to change and more prepared to look outside of policing for inspiration and learning",<sup>26</sup> then this represents quite possibly the best means to address the obstacles to recruitment and retention of diverse candidates at lower ranks. Voluntary resignations by BAME officers stands at 29.3 officers per thousand, compared to 18.1 of White officers;<sup>27</sup> recent research into police resignations highlights that a lack of representation by diverse individuals (of any nature) at senior ranks is a key driver thereof.<sup>28</sup> BAME officers are also under-represented at all levels with only 2.9% of officers from an Asian background compared to

6.8% of the general population; just 1.2% of officers identifying as Black compared to 3.3% of the population; and 0.7% identifying as 'other' contrasted to 1.7% of the population. White officers represent 93.1% of the workforce compared to 86% of the general population.<sup>29</sup>

Simply put, DE represents an excellent opportunity to introduce diversity at a level where change can be effected and enacted.

A final reason why FT and DE are of contemporary import links also to the introduction of the PCER recruitment pathways; that being the drive to professionalise the police force for the twenty-first century and the information age. Peel recognised the role of police as professionals with an editorial in *The Times* printed alongside a reproduction of the *New Police Instructions* reading:

"Undoubtedly officers of a much more enlarged degree of attainment and intelligence than those to whom the humbler functions of the police have hitherto been entrusted [parish constables] must be sought out for the performance of this more complicated service".<sup>30</sup>

This was echoed, and even more relevant to DE, by Commissioner Lt Col. Rowan to a select committee on the policing of the metropolis in 1834 when talking about the factors influencing the appointment of the first superintendents:

"he is a man usually of great intelligence, integrity and activity; he is not disinclined to do what men of superior acquirements in point of education in life would think beneath them; it is therefore considered best to select highly

<sup>23</sup> Scarman, L. (1981) *The Scarman Report: the Brixton disorders 10-12 April 1981*. London: Home Office

<sup>24</sup> MacPherson, W. (1999) *The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry* London: Home Office

<sup>25</sup> *Report of the Committee on the Employment of Women on Police Duties* (1920) CMD 877 The National Archives 3AMS/B/12/04

<sup>26</sup> Campbell & Colover (2020) *Fast Track and Direct Entry evaluation: Overview paper* p. 6

<sup>27</sup> Home Affairs Select Committee (2021) *The MacPherson Report: Twenty-two years on* London: House of Commons p. 75

<sup>28</sup> Charman, S. (2022) *Police officer resignations have risen by 72% in the last year – we asked former officers why*, Portsmouth: University of Portsmouth.

<sup>29</sup> Gov.uk (2019) *Police Workforce* [Online] Available at: <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/workforce-and-business/workforce-diversity/police-workforce/latest#by-ethnicity-police-officers> [Accessed 9 February 2023]. Population-wide figures are based on the 2011 census data.

<sup>30</sup> *The Times* 'New Police Instructions' *The Times*, 25 September 1829 p. 2



recommended persons of that class as superintendents”.<sup>31</sup>

The importance of an individual’s intelligence is once again prominent herein, and this was a sentiment echoed by Desborough nearly one-hundred years later as well, identifying the special nature of policing and the unique demands placed on officers.<sup>32</sup> Fast-forward nearly another century to 2011 and Neyroud’s comprehensive review identifies the same theme:

“a police career is still viewed as more challenging than most. This long-held assumption supports a professional approach to leadership development and training in the police and justifies the level of concern that it receives”.<sup>33</sup>

In a society where now 57% of the population hold a tertiary (degree) level qualification (contrasted with just 29% in 2000),<sup>34</sup> and educational qualifications being essential to a ‘professional’ occupation,<sup>35</sup> it must be concluded that if policing wishes to continue representing above-average intelligence, they require a degree-level education to do so. With the entry-level pay only generally appealing to recent graduates or those seeking to obtain a degree on the PCDA, another route for graduates with life experience must surely remain available if policing wishes to continue changing cultures, professionalising and being generally more appealing to diverse applicants – especially those with transferable outside life experience. Rowan’s comments of 1834 about his choice for direct entry superintendents, with only minor amendments, remain perhaps the best summation of why DE and FE should exist in contemporary policing – amendments in *italics*:

“The *direct entrant or fast track candidate* should be a person usually of great intelligence, integrity and activity; they are not disinclined to do what those of

superior *prior policing experience in point of life or rank* would think beneath them or abstract; it is therefore considered best to select highly recommended persons of this class for superintendents or *inspectors*.”

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<sup>31</sup> Rowan (1834) *Report from the Select Committee on the Police of the Metropolis* p.2

<sup>32</sup> Neyroud (2011) *Review of Police Leadership and Training* p. 31

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development, 2022. *United Kingdom: Overview of Education System*. [Online] Available at: <https://gpseducation.oecd.org/CountryProfile?primaryCountry=GBR&treshold=10&topic=EO> [Accessed 8th February 2023]

<sup>35</sup> Heslop, R. (2011) ‘The British Police Service: Professionalisation or ‘McDonaldization’?’ *International Journal of Police Science & Management* 13(4) p. 312 – 321.