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# Perceptions of PSNI Recruits at Month 1 (Time 1 Report)

Results from Intakes 1 - 6

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**Final Report produced for PSNI**

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## Executive Summary

i) This paper contains the preliminary results from the longitudinal study being conducted with the first six intakes of new recruits to the Police Service of the Northern Ireland. The student officers joined the organisation between 4<sup>th</sup> November 2001 and 5<sup>th</sup> May 2002.

ii) The data presented covers students' perceptions based largely on their first month at Garnerville. Additional data will be obtained for comparison purposes at four further points in the recruits' career. These will be at the following stages:

- Time 2: Prior to attestation at Week 19
- Time 3: At the end of the 10 week tutorship in stations
- Time 4: During Post foundation training in Maydown
- Time 5: At the end of Year 3 when they have completed both the two-year probation period and their first full year of service as a Constable

iii) This evaluation is student-centred and is complementary to additional evaluation work being carried out by Mediation Network, Northern Ireland.

iv) Students' perceptions were explored in four areas using a questionnaire survey and in-depth interviews. The questionnaire was completed by 297 student officers. This represents a 100% response rate for those in post at the end of one month of training. A sample of 21 students were interviewed. The four areas explored in the study are:

- Perceptions of the Learning Climate in PSNI
- Feelings of Job Satisfaction
- Levels of Organisational Commitment
- Attitudes to Diversity

vi) In terms of *Learning Climate* it is recommended that organisations aspiring to be learning companies, should be aiming for an average score of 50-70 on the scale used (where 10 is the minimum and 70 is the maximum). The PSNI average score is 45.61 based on 297 student responses.

vii) This score is encouraging. Students have awarded very high ratings to factors such as the availability of learning resources; the practical help and support available from staff; the warm and supportive atmosphere; the encouragement they are given to learn; and the emphasis placed on ideas, standards and quality.

viii) To improve the learning climate further, attention is required in a number of areas. The biggest of these appears to be the inadequacies of the physical environment at Garnerville. There is a particular issue about the lack of private study facilities available. Furthermore, the intensity of the learning experience, feelings of information overload and, at times, poor communication, are also reducing the effectiveness of the learning that is taking place. Finally, there are persistent problems with Personal Development

Portfolios and lack of 1:1 feedback in aiding the students' learning. These issues are discussed fully in Section 4 of the report (pages 3-7).

ix) Females, Roman Catholics and older recruits rated the learning climate somewhat more positively than the other sub groups.

x) Turning to feelings of *Job Satisfaction*, it is not surprising to note that these are high across all the dimensions measured. The students feel they are embarking upon a worthwhile career. They are particularly satisfied at this stage with the financial rewards; the challenge and variety in their everyday work; the opportunities for personal growth; and the help and support available from management and colleagues. There are a substantial number of job satisfaction dimensions where large numbers of students have indicated that it is too early in their career to express satisfaction or dissatisfaction. These include opportunities for career progression and their perceived ability to influence events. However, there are some factors engendering dissatisfaction even at this early stage. These are the levels of administration required, stress levels within the job and the juggling act required to balance work and family life. Security issues are also causing some concern. These issues and others are discussed in Section 5 of the report (pages 7-11).

xi) *Organisational commitment* measures the extent to which individuals buy into the goals of an organisation and are motivated to work to achieve these. Highly committed individuals buy into organisational life fully and have been found to have lower levels of absenteeism and to remain longer with an employer. For these reasons, a measure of commitment has been included in the present study.

xii) The results in this area are going to be of most interest at a later point in time. The key finding to report at this early stage is that commitment levels are high among the first six intakes. This is to be expected for a group of new entrants to an organisation who have successfully passed a challenging selection process and who have just embarked upon a new career. On a scale that ranges from 6 (extremely high levels of commitment) to 30 (very low levels), the mean score for the PSNI group was 13.75. This is a positive and expected result.

xiii) Commitment levels are equally high for both Protestant and Roman Catholic recruits at this point in time. Commitment will continue to be monitored throughout the course of the study. These and other findings on organisational commitment are presented in Section 6 of the report (pages 11-14).

xiv) In the final area of *Attitudes to Diversity*, the student officers generally feel that PSNI is doing a good job in promoting diversity. 95% of the 297 respondents feel that PSNI takes equal opportunity issues seriously. 98% feel their immediate supervisors are committed to actively promoting diversity in the workplace. 94% feel that harassment of any kind is not tolerated in PSNI and 91% feel the physical environment is sufficiently neutral in terms of not promoting a particular political or religious position. However, subtle issues are emerging in relation to the management of diversity within the

organisation and these are explored in Section 7 of the report (pages 15-18). The main issue is the stifling effect that the politically correct teaching environment is having on open and genuine debate. Students report that they are afraid of raising issues and asking questions for fear of offending. The current approach is perceived as somewhat bland and as attempting to negate differences rather than seeking to fully explore the background to different viewpoints and encourage genuine understanding and tolerance.

xv) Section 8 of this report summarises the key issues that should be addressed by PSNI in order to improve the student experience within and beyond the first month of training. These are:

- 1) Improve the physical environment by providing sufficient access to private study facilities and IT facilities and addressing the other environmental concerns highlighted in Section 3 of the report.
- 2) Consider the effectiveness of the Personal Development Portfolios as a key aide to self-reflection and learning. Seek out and incorporate the students' ideas on improving the portfolios.
- 3) Introduce more 1:1 feedback.
- 4) Reduce the intensity of the experience by examining the scheduling of classes and considering the introduction of study periods and a more focused approach to pre-read materials.
- 5) Improve the work/life balance for all students and particularly for those with families.
- 6) Consider ways of preparing students more fully for the disciplined nature of the police culture. This should include, but not be limited to, the provision of realistic job preview material as part of the recruitment literature. While this can cover a wide range of information on 'Life at the College', it should explicitly prepare students for the requirement for parade and personal inspections and clearly explain the rationale behind these activities.
- 7) Improve the frequency and content of security briefings.
- 8) Acknowledge the potentially damaging impact of having a sterile and politically correct environment in which students favour silence over genuine debate. Equip and train staff to work with students in acknowledging the past and openly exploring and respecting differences.

xvi) This report will be followed by a full report on the results of the Time 2 evaluation when the 297 officers approach graduation. The final Time 2 data will be collected in September and the report will be available in December 2002. Any changes in the above trends will be charted and explored then.

## 1. Introduction

1.1 This longitudinal study has been conceived and designed by the Occupational Psychology unit in collaboration with Foundation Faculty.

1.2 The aim of the study is to evaluate the perceptions of new recruits towards key aspects of the PSNI organisation, the training environment and organisational climate. To achieve the project aim, the following objectives have been set:

- To measure recruits' perceptions of the *learning climate* that exists within the organisation.
- To assess recruits' *satisfaction* levels with key components of the job itself and the training provided.
- To explore the extent to which new recruits are *committed* to the PSNI organisation, its values and goals, and are motivated to work to achieve these goals.
- To assess recruits' perceptions of how the organisation manages and promotes *diversity* in working practices and service provision.
- To monitor any significant *changes in attitudes over time* as the new recruits leave the training college and become attached to District Command Units.
- To monitor any significant *differences in attitudes due to demographic variables* such as gender, age, community background, family police connections and previous experience of working with the organisation.
- To monitor and explore reasons for any *voluntary turnover* that may arise among the new recruits.

1.3 This report outlines the key findings from the Time 1 evaluation with the first six intakes of new recruits to the Police Service of Northern Ireland. These recruits cover Courses 1-2 of 2001 and Courses 1-4 of 2002. All of these students were recruited as a result of the first campaign run by Consensia from February-September 2001.

## 2. Method

2.1 A questionnaire survey was conducted with the student officers. Please see Appendix A for a copy of the questionnaire. The rationale for the development of the questionnaire is provided separately in the Project Specification document.

2.2 The questionnaire was administered to the student officers during their fourth week in the training college.<sup>1</sup> A 100% response rate was achieved overall in the questionnaire survey with a total of 297 respondents.

2.3 Interviews were also carried out with a sample of 21 officers in the week following the questionnaire administration session.

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<sup>1</sup> Due to the need to pilot the questionnaire properly prior to going live, the administration session for the first intake (Course 1/01) was held at the end of week 6. The pilot session took place in week 4.

## The Population for the Questionnaire

Total group = 297 student officers			
<b>Age</b>	18-24 = 27% 25-30 = 48% 31-40 = 23% 41+ = 2%	<b>Community Background</b>	Protestant = 49% RC = 50% Other / Missing = 1%
<b>Gender</b>	Male = 65% Female = 35%	<b>Previous police experience</b>	Yes = 23% No = 77%
<b>Education</b>	GCSE/NVQ = 30% A Level + higher = 69% Missing = 1%	<b>Marital Status</b>	Single/sep/div = 51% Married/cohabit = 49%
<b>Ethnic origin</b>	White = 296 students Chinese = 1 student		
<b>Family member Previously served</b>	Yes = 45% No = 54% Missing = 1%	<b>Disability</b>	Yes = 1 person No = 296 people

2.4 Of the students with previous police experience, 53 had served with the RUC Reserve Full-time, 4 had served with the RUC Reserve Part-time and 12 had served with a police force outside of Northern Ireland. Of the people who specified a family member with previous police service in N. Ireland, 56 of these mentioned an immediate family member (parents or siblings) and 90 a member of their wider family (uncle, aunt, cousin etc.)

## The Sample for the Interviews

2.5 One-to-one interviews were conducted with a sample of 21 individuals. Interviewees were recruited largely on a voluntary basis at the end of each questionnaire session. The sample selected is broadly representative of the student population. However, females and Roman Catholics were slightly more forthcoming in volunteering for this stage of the study.

Sample = 21 student officers	
<b>Gender</b>	Males = 9 Females = 12
<b>Community Background</b>	Protestant = 10 (5 male, 5 female) Roman Catholic = 11 (4 male, 7 female)
<b>Age</b>	Minimum age = 21 Maximum age = 44
<b>Previous police experience</b>	Yes = 4 (all former RUC Reserve Full-time) No = 17

### 3. **Headline Results**

3.1 The study has generated a wealth of information. The main findings are presented below and are classified under four headings:

- Perceptions of the Learning Climate in PSNI
- Feelings of Job Satisfaction
- Levels of Organisational Commitment
- Attitudes to Diversity

3.2 In each area, the quantitative results from the questionnaire survey are presented initially and supplemented, where appropriate, with qualitative data from the interviews.

### 4. **Perceptions of the Learning Climate in PSNI**

4.1 A learning organisation is one which aims to generate and maintain a culture and climate that encourages continual learning among its members.

4.2 Perceptions of the learning climate within PSNI were measured in this study using the 10-items contained within the Learning Habit Questionnaire (Pedler, Burgoyne & Boydell, 1997). These items allow us to analyse the extent to which important factors, conducive to a healthy learning climate, are perceived to be present within PSNI. It also allows us to track these over time. These factors include the physical environment, availability of learning resources, active encouragement to learn, warmth and support, and practical help available from colleagues and significant others.

4.3 The ten items are scored on a scale of 1 to 7 where 1 is very poor and 7 is excellent. The percentage of student officers awarding particular ratings to each of the dimensions is given below.

	<b>Rating 1-3 Very poor to poor</b>	<b>Rating 4 Average</b>	<b>Rating 5-7 Good to Excellent</b>
<b>1. Physical Environment</b> The amount and quality of space and privacy afforded to people; the temperature, noise, and comfort levels.	53%	20%	27%
<b>2. Learning Resources</b> Numbers, quality and availability of training and development staff, books, films, training packages, IT facilities, equipment, etc.	6%	14%	80%
<b>3. Encouragement to Learn</b> The extent to which people feel encouraged to have ideas, take risks, experiment and learn new ways of doing old tasks.	5%	12%	83%
<b>4. Communications</b> Generally speaking how open and free is the flow of information? Do people express ideas and opinions easily and openly?	12%	13%	75%
<b>5. Non-Monetary Rewards &amp; Recognition</b> How well rewarded are people for effort? Is recognition given for good work or are people punished and blamed?	13%	25%	62%

	Rating 1-3 Very poor to poor	Rating 4 Average	Rating 5-7 Good to Excellent
<b>6. Conformity</b> The extent to which people are expected to conform to rules, norms, regulations and policies rather than think for themselves.	16%	22%	62%
<b>7. Value placed on ideas</b> How much are ideas, opinions and suggestions sought out, encouraged and valued?	8%	20%	72%
<b>8. Practical help available</b> The extent to which people help each other, lend a hand, offer skills, knowledge or support.	2%	6%	92%
<b>9. Warmth and support</b> How friendly are people in PSNI? Do people support, trust and like one another?	2%	10%	87%
<b>10. Standards</b> The emphasis placed upon quality in all things; the extent to which people set challenging standards for themselves and each other?	1%	11%	88%

4.4 The above results are encouraging. The majority of students feel that the learning resources are good, that they are encouraged to learn and that a high premium is placed on ideas. The atmosphere is perceived as warm and friendly with everyone helping each other out and a healthy emphasis being placed on standards and quality. There is also lots of practical help available to the students.

4.5 These findings are further supported by the results from the interviews. Student officers commented that ‘it is good that trainers have real life experience... and know what they are talking about.’ The *variety of training styles* was welcomed as was the trainers’ willingness to always *check the students’ understanding* of topics. The interviewees also welcomed the *highly practical nature* of the training and the balance that was being struck between theory and practice. The scenario-based exercises and both the SDE’s and SAE’s were viewed very positively by the students. It is seen as a *safe environment* where one can ‘make mistakes and nobody laughs.’ Comments were passed that the *‘training staff were supportive and all very approachable.’* The learning content is also perceived as highly topical and challenging ‘The *content is all very relevant* and put in the context of when we’ll need it. The course is making me work and constantly assess and reassess myself. I am now very aware of my weaknesses and the need to work on them.’ The teaching style and content is *clearly making an impact on the students:*

‘PACE and the codes of practice were the best. I enjoy learning about powers of the police. It can humble you when you realise how much power you have. You must always think of the consequences.’

4.6 While the course is generally seen as intense, this intensity is welcomed by some ‘...if there wasn’t a challenge in this, I wouldn’t be gaining as a person.’

4.7 Student officers were also given a chance to specify on the questionnaire the aspects of their job that they like most at present. Numerous comments were made on the challenging and competitive nature of the learning environment; its safety and neutrality; and the friendly, helpful and relaxed nature of the staff at Garnerville. Clearly, the

opportunities for learning the law and skills required to be a police officer, in a warm and collegiate environment, is a powerful motivating force for the new officers.

4.8 There are obviously some **areas of concern** highlighted from the quantitative results in the table above. The lower ratings tend to fall in the areas of the *physical environment*, *non-monetary reward and recognition (feedback)* and, to a lesser extent, *communications*. While the area of conformity also receives a somewhat lower rating, this is to be expected in a disciplined, uniformed organisation.

4.9 Turning to the first of these, the *physical environment*, the main issues arising include:

- Lack of private study facilities
- Cramped living accommodation
- Lack of personal space
- Poor canteen facilities and lack of healthy eating options
- Inadequate computers in the ILC and classrooms
- Insufficient recreational activities and facilities for socialising and unwinding
- Over-crowded changing rooms for PE
- Distance from basic necessities such as shops and bank facilities
- Lots of noise at night time resulting in difficulties sleeping and maintaining concentration in class
- Discomfort and lack of air-conditioning in the lecture theatre and classrooms
- Problems with the hot water supply and heating and with electrical appliances such as washing machines and vacuum cleaners

4.10 Comments made by the students on environmental issues include

‘It’s a form of Chinese torture, the beds are uncomfortable and squeaky.’

‘It’s like my squad have never left home before. I had five cold sores in the first week from lack of sleep.’

‘We need more computers. We haven’t even got our passwords yet.’

‘Considering it is a training college, it is almost impossible to study. There is nowhere quiet to study.’

4.11 Concerns in relation to the physical environment have persisted over all six Courses. The single biggest issue that appears to be impacting upon the students’ ability to learn is the absence of adequate private study rooms. This is closely followed by the insufficient number of computer terminals.

4.12 Turning to *communication* and the issue of *feedback / non monetary reward*, quotes from the students include:

‘They keep swapping trainers. We may have 3 trainers in a related area yet they don’t communicate.’

‘We get into trouble by obeying conflicting orders from trainers who don’t talk to each other.’

‘The emphasis is on teaching yourself – we get no feedback on practicals – e.g, for stop and search, how do we know if we have we done it properly?’

4.13 More specific concerns have also been picked up from the interviews relating to the *intensity of the experience* and how this may impact negatively on real and lasting learning taking place. For example:

‘it is a very intense course and everyone is rushing what they are learning. I want to get the exams but also retain what I am learning and I can’t do this at present. They are also expecting us to go out and teach existing officers new ways of doing things and this is added pressure. We can’t just go out there and change the way others think. I am afraid that if we cram for exams and have little understanding, we won’t be able to go out there and make a real difference.’

4.14 The key factors which appear to be contributing to the intensity of the experience are:

- The number of compulsory activities scheduled outside hours
- The early starts for drill with associated preparatory work
- The amount of pre-read materials distributed
- Requirements for weekend reading and preparatory work
- Scheduling of classes and distribution of the workload across the first few weeks
- No formal study periods built into the curriculum

4.15 These factors are combining to create a situation where students feel overwhelmed and unable to learn in a manner which will encourage real and lasting understanding.

4.16 The *personal development portfolios* (PDP’s) were referred to as ‘just terrible things’ that are causing considerable confusion among both trainers and students alike and which were perhaps biased towards those who ‘can waffle’ and present a good case on paper. Interestingly, picking up on the lack of feedback mentioned earlier, students feel that the emphasis has swung too much towards self-assessment and that *more direct 1:1 feedback* from trainers on their performance should be incorporated into the PDP. It was also suggested that trainers should provide more practical examples of how to do things properly e.g. by role playing practical scenarios themselves before asking the students to do them and by asking the students to do less presentations themselves. Concerns about PDP’s continued to persist across all six courses.

4.17 Final areas in which concerns were raised at interview related to *paucity and standard of PE training*, the *variable standard among student trainers* and *timetabling/scheduling* issues. The PE provision appears to be less of an issue over time. As regards timetabling, people lacked information beyond the first ten weeks and also felt the overall scheduling and organisation of classes could be improved. While trainers delivered their own information well, there was felt to be a 'lack of overall direction.' The first two weeks were felt to lack structure, while the third and fourth weeks were crammed pack with classes and information. It was also felt that better use could be made of *external speakers* with a clearer rationale for their inputs. It was also requested that *more exposure to the realities of policing* outside the Garnerville complex could be incorporated earlier in the curriculum.

4.18 Returning to the quantitative analysis, and looking at the overall learning climate score, it is recommended that organisations aspiring to be learning companies should be aiming for an average overall score of 50-70 (where the minimum possible score is 10 and the maximum is 70). The overall mean score across the six intakes is 45.61. This is an encouraging result.

4.19 There are some differences in the mean learning climate scores for the various sub-groups examined. Those in the older age group of 41+ perceived the learning climate somewhat more positively than those in the 18-24, 25-30 and 31-40 age groups (mean of 49.6 compared with 46.2, 45.4 and 45 respectively). Roman Catholics had slightly more positive views on average than Protestants (mean of 46 compared with 45). Also females had a slightly higher mean than males and those with lower levels of qualifications (up to GCSE/NVQ) had a slightly higher mean score than those with A levels or higher. There were no differences observed in relation to marital status, previous police experience and family connections. On delving further and looking at differences in mean scores on individual items, it is interesting to note that Protestants and Roman Catholics had the same mean score (5.6 out of a possible 7) on item 9 which refers to the perceived warmth and support of the learning environment.

## **5. Feelings of Job Satisfaction**

5.1 The second section of the questionnaire measures the levels of job satisfaction among new recruits. The items in this section were derived from a review of established job satisfaction questionnaires as well as from data gathered from a recent MSc project into morale and motivation within the Police Service.

5.2 The percentage of student officers indicating levels of satisfaction with various aspects of their work is provided below. The responses are based on 297 student officers within the first six intakes.

Perceptions of PSNI Recruits at Month 1

Please rate your satisfaction with each of the following aspects of your job by placing a tick in the appropriate box opposite each statement. Please tick one box only for each item.	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Undecided	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
	1	2	3	4	5
11.The financial rewards you receive for doing your job	1%	4%	24%	59%	11%
12.The competitiveness of your pay and benefits when compared with people of your own age in other organisations		6%	20%	52%	22%
13.The feedback you receive on your performance	1%	7%	29%	58%	6%
14.The recognition you get from your immediate manager for a job well-done		3%	34%	55%	7%
15.Opportunities for career progression & promotion		1%	33%	44%	21%
16>Your job security	1%	4%	28%	47%	20%
17.You ability to do the job without undue stress	1%	18%	50%	30%	1%
18>Your ability to balance work and family/personal life	3%	23%	39%	33%	3%
19>Your satisfaction with everyday work		3%	23%	67%	6%
20.The levels of challenge and variety in your job		1%	11%	67%	21%
21.The administrative work required of you	7%	23%	34%	35%	1%
22.Opportunities for personal growth within the job		1%	28%	55%	15%
23>Your ability to influence events	1%	8%	55%	32%	3%
24.Freedom and autonomy to adopt your own approach	1%	11%	53%	32%	3%
25.The help and support available from your immediate manager		2%	18%	57%	23%
26.The extent to which your manager listens to and respects your ideas		2%	21%	60%	17%
27>Your manager's commitment to implementing change		1%	39%	48%	12%
28.The organisation's readiness to embrace change		4%	38%	42%	16%
29.The presence of supportive colleagues		1%	7%	60%	32%
30.Opportunities to effectively serve the public		2%	29%	54%	15%
31. Freedom to challenge colleagues and supervisors when you feel it is appropriate	1%	8%	30%	49%	12%

5.3 As with the perceptions of the learning climate, the results in terms of job satisfaction are largely positive at this stage for the first six intakes of student officers. This is particularly so for the perceived adequacy of financial rewards (items 11&12), satisfaction with everyday work and its levels of challenge and variety (items 19&20), opportunities for personal growth (item 22), help and support available from management (items 25 & 26) and the presence of supportive colleagues (item 29).

5.4 The interview data supports these findings with students citing their exhilaration at successfully 'getting in' to the PSNI; 'the close friendships and the craic'; 'the variety and diversity of the work we are given'; the 'decent' pay and good working conditions; and the opportunity to serve the public as some of the most satisfying aspects of their job. These factors are complemented by the positive, supportive and challenging learning environment described above. There is a strong sense that the students feel they are embarking upon a worthwhile career that has real meaning to both themselves and the wider community. They feel they can make a difference. They are working to 'stamp out sectarianism', 'offer a quality service' and to 'save lives and solve crime.' There is a sense of 'solidarity and optimism' prevailing as the student officers set out to become part of the continuous change process. Some are harbouring thoughts of successfully 'helping to change people's attitudes to the PSNI' in society as a whole. On a somewhat lighter note in terms of job satisfaction, a few people mentioned the thrill of drill and the 'uniformity of it all' as particularly satisfying!

5.5 There are a number of areas where a relatively large number of people are undecided and this probably reflects their newness to the organisation and a desire to keep an open mind. In items such as 13 (feedback received on performance), 14 (recognition from immediate manager), 15 (opportunities for career progression), 23 (ability to influence events), 24 (freedom and autonomy), 27 (manager's commitment to change), 28 (organisation's readiness to change), and 31 (freedom to challenge) it is too soon to decide for a significant number of people.

5.6 There are, however, a number of areas where warning bells are ringing. One area causing dissatisfaction at present is that of *administration and paperwork* (item 21). There is also cause for concern in relation to *stress levels* (item 17) and the ability to *balance work and family life* (item 18). These concerns and others (such as some students *being unprepared for and disliking aspects of the disciplined police culture*) are further illustrated by the interview findings and by the open questions on the survey:

'There is too much paperwork involved even for simple tasks' and 'the administration is daunting – there are too many forms.'

'I dislike the hierarchy and the discipline and constantly feeling as if you are being watched'

'Drill is militaristic and authoritarian and not required in a modern police environment' and 'I don't think it is appropriate for others to look me up and down and decide if my personal appearance is satisfactory.'

‘Sometimes we are made to feel infantile e.g. “11.30pm it’s time for bed.” This was a bit of a shock... ‘I never realised it would be so schooly.’

‘Obviously rules need to be followed but it seems clear that any mistake will result in disciplinary hearings.’

‘There is an uncertainty of having a job after training – we have all left jobs and careers and homes. If we don’t pass what are we going to do? Being jobless is a real fear.’

‘Balancing family life with work puts pressure on your family.’

‘There is a great emphasis put on the police and your career but family are just as important and there is no mention of them.’

‘I dislike being away from home. I miss my wife and son.’

‘Management need to recognise the need for a balance between study and family life.’

‘I would like the training to be closer to home. We need more than one training centre to accommodate people travelling.’

5.7 There were additional concerns expressed about *security issues* and dealing with the fact that ‘we are hated by individuals to the extent they want to kill us.’ Concerns were expressed for the safety of family members and officers resent that they cannot still talk publicly about the job they perform. Security briefings were perceived as inadequate by some and a desire was expressed for these to be more open and less ‘rosy’. Security issues featured as a factor across all six courses although other issues generated more comment and elaboration.

5.8 Although not major issues at this point in time, it is worth mentioning that there are some aspects of the *wider policing and political environment* that students are beginning to mention as possible sources of dissatisfaction. These include:

- being under constant scrutiny from the media, politicians and government.
- learning how to do the job and then being told by serving members that procedures are not followed.
- feelings of a wider culture where ‘we are being encouraged slightly too much to question and complain.’
- a desire for PSNI to remove members ‘who are not genuinely sick but claim sick pay.’
- frustration at public attitudes to the police and an unwillingness by the public to give support and acknowledge the changes. This last point is illustrated by one student citing on his/her questionnaire that there should be tougher sentences for those who injure police officers during public order disturbances.

5.9 Returning to the quantitative findings, there are a number of items where the statistically significant differences exist between the various subgroups:

- A higher number of females are 'very satisfied' with both the financial rewards received and the competitiveness of their pay and benefits when compared with males.
- Those in the youngest and oldest age brackets (18-24 and 41+) are more satisfied with the competitiveness of their pay and benefits than are those aged 25-40.
- Those with previous police experience are more dissatisfied than others with the financial rewards received and the competitiveness of their pay and benefits. However, these experienced students are more positive about the opportunities for career progression than their colleagues without previous police experience.
- A higher proportion of those with family connections in the police are more satisfied with the opportunities for personal growth than those without such connections.
- A higher proportion of those with lower educational qualifications (up to GCSE/NVQ) are 'very satisfied' with the opportunities available for career progression.

5.10 Other differences which exist but do not reach statistical significance include:

- Females are more satisfied than males with the opportunities for both career progression and serving the public.
- A higher proportion of Roman Catholics are undecided about their job security.
- A higher proportion of those with lower educational qualifications (up to GCSE/NVQ) are less satisfied with their job security. This may reflect concerns about successfully passing their exams.

5.11 There are no meaningful differences on job satisfaction items relating to marital status.

## **6. Levels of Organisational Commitment**

6.1 Organisational commitment is a relatively new concept and has attracted a lot of research interest in recent years. This primarily due to the moderating influence it can have on variables such as absenteeism and voluntary turnover. Individuals who are highly committed to an organisation i.e. who buy into the organisation's goals and are highly involved in organisational life, have been found to be more likely to continue working with the organisation and to have lower levels of absenteeism. In an era when PSNI is trying to continually reduce absenteeism and also to retain staff from all sections of the community, it was judged appropriate to include a measure of organisational commitment within the study. Commitment was measured using well-researched psychological scales. Sample items included statements such as 'I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organisation' and 'I do not feel like 'part of the family' at my organisation.'

6.2 The results in this area are going to be of most interest at a later point in time. *The key finding to report at this early stage, is that commitment levels are high among the first six intakes.* This is to be expected for a group of new entrants to an organisation who have successfully passed a challenging selection process and who have just embarked upon a new career.

6.3 On a scale that ranges from 6 (extremely high levels of commitment) to 30 (very low levels), the mean score for the group was 13.75. This is a positive and expected result.

6.4 Commitment levels are high for all subgroups. While there are small differences in the group means shown below, these are flagged up here simply as a matter of interest rather than as a cause for concern.

<b>Organisational Commitment: Comparison of Subgroups (n.b. lower scores indicate higher levels of commitment)</b>	
Males demonstrated slightly higher levels of commitment than females.	Male mean = 13.4 Female mean = 14.4
Younger people demonstrated slightly higher levels of commitment than older people.	18-24 group = 12.78 25-30 group = 14.24 31- 40 group = 13.88 41+ group = 13.80
There was little difference between Protestants and RC's levels of commitment.	Protestant = 13.64 Roman Catholic = 13.91
There was little difference between those with previous police experience and those without.	With previous experience = 13.57 Without previous experience = 13.81
Those whose family members had served in the police demonstrated higher levels of commitment than those without such connections did.	Family members in police = 13.17 No family members = 14.19
Those with lower levels of educational qualifications (up to GCSE/NVQ) demonstrated slightly higher levels of commitment than those with A Levels and higher.	Up to GCSE/NVQ = 13.18 A Level and Higher = 14.00

6.5 As mentioned above, the results for all sub-groups are high on the combined organisational commitment scale. The breakdown of results for each of individual items in this area is provided below.

Perceptions of PSNI Recruits at Month 1

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
32. I would be happy to spend the rest of my career with this organisation	49%	38%	13%		
33. I really feel as if the organisation's problems are my own	6%	36%	31%	22%	4%
34. I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to my organisation	2%	6%	22%	55%	15%
35. I do not feel emotionally attached to this organisation	2%	14%	29%	45%	10%
36. I do not feel like part of the family at my organisation	1%	6%	26%	53%	14%
37. This organisation has a great deal of personal meaning for me	17%	49%	26%	7%	1%
38. I find that my values and the organisation's values are very similar	16%	58%	23%	3%	
39. I talk up this organisation to my friends as a great org. to work for	16%	50%	23%	9%	2%
40. I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond that normally expected to help this org. succeed	21%	68%	9%	1%	
41. I am proud to tell others that I am part of this organisation	23%	44%	21%	9%	3%
42. Deciding to work for this organisation was a definite mistake on my part		1%	6%	29%	65%
43. Taking everything into account, I am optimistic about the future of policing in Northern Ireland	24%	53%	20%	3%	

6.6 The individual items on which differences between sub groups were statistically significant are as follows:

- More males disagreed with question 41 than females (I am proud to tell others I am part of this organisation).
- Married and cohabiting respondents were more likely to strongly agree on question 40 (I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond that normally expected to help this organisation succeed).
- Roman Catholics were more likely than Protestants to strongly agree on question 43 (I am optimistic about the future of policing in Northern Ireland).
- People without previous police experience were more likely to be undecided on questions 33, 34, 35, 39 and 41 than people with previous experience. Also, those with experience were more likely to strongly agree with questions 32, 39 and 41, and to agree with question 35.
- Those with family members in the police tended to strongly agree on question 37 (This organisation has a great deal of personal meaning for me).
- Those with higher levels of educational qualifications were more likely to agree with question 35 (I do not feel emotionally attached to this organisation). They were also

more undecided on question 42 (Deciding to work for this organisation was a definite mistake on my part).

6.7 There were no significant differences on organisational commitment in relation to age.

6.8 The interview data gives an added insight into the high commitment levels that exist at present. Quotes include:

‘It feels like home away from home.’

‘Outside when I am listening to the TV, I feel my perceptions have changed. For example, in the recent debate over the Omagh bomb warnings and the police not acting on them, I now think “No. I don’t believe they’d do that. They have standards and codes that they work to.” That’s a real attack on the effort we put in.’

‘I would stick up for the organisation’

‘I have pride in the fact that I am part of the organisation. Others don’t have enough information about the organisation.’

‘Within the first few days lots of organisations wanted to come in and meet us and the media wanted to meet us. We are the new police service that everyone is focusing on’.

‘When we put on the uniform and stand and march there is a real sense of belonging. When it goes right, it’s great and I feel as if there is no one better than us’

‘I do see this as a career choice and plan to stay here for my working life, for the next 25 years or so, unless I win the lottery!’

‘This is the first job that I have wanted to make a career.’

‘I am learning to do stuff. It feels like a way of life.’

‘It’s as if I’ve been working all my life to find this job. It’s such a difference. It’s stressful but very rewarding. I’ve found my niche.’

6.9 A few factors were mentioned that might impinge upon students’ intentions to stay with the organisation in the future. These included promotion prospects, the ability to move around the organisation and do interesting jobs, lack of abuse from the community and personal happiness and enjoyment on a daily basis at work.

## 7. Attitudes to Diversity

7.1 The items for the final section of the questionnaire were designed based on an analysis of previous cultural surveys and a review of the pertinent diversity issues impacting upon the organisation at present. The results for the whole group are presented below.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
44. The values of the org. adequately emphasise the need to treat others fairly and with respect	52%	47%	1%		
45. Overall, I think PSNI is an org. which takes equal opportunities seriously.	53%	42%	3%	1%	
46. On a day-to-day basis, I feel my colleagues at work treat me with respect and dignity.	37%	58%	5%		
47. I enjoy a harmonious working environment and atmosphere in PSNI.	24%	59%	16%	1%	
48. I see protection of human rights as a fundamental part of my job.	51%	45%	3%	1%	
49. My immediate work colleagues are committed to treating all members of the public fairly.	31%	58%	10%		
50. My immediate supervisors are committed to actively promoting and valuing diversity in the workplace.	49%	49%	2%		
51. The org. talks a lot about diversity but rarely does anything about it.		3%	16%	58%	23%
52. The physical environment is sufficiently neutral in terms of not promoting a particular political or religious position.	38%	53%	6%	2%	1%
53. There are aspects of the physical working environment I find intimidating or offensive.		5%	12%	54%	29%
54. Contentious issues are openly explored and debated in a non-threatening manner.	11%	54%	21%	12%	1%
55. Harassment of any kind is not tolerated in this organisation.	61%	33%	4%	1%	1%

7.2 Overall, the student officers feel *the organisation is doing a good job in terms of promoting diversity*. The overwhelming feeling is that the values and the day-to-day practice convey an organisation that is committed to valuing diversity and promoting equality. The physical working environment is seen by a majority of respondents as sufficiently neutral. Student officers feel they are treated with respect and dignity at work on a daily basis.

**7.3 There are small numbers who disagree with a number of the statements above.**

Four people do not feel PSNI takes equal opportunities seriously and a further three do not feel they enjoy a harmonious working environment. Eight people feel that PSNI talks a good show on the diversity front but rarely does anything about it. Perhaps more worryingly, there are 15 people who find aspects of the physical environment intimidating or offensive. Of these, 11 are male and 13 have no previous police experience. Interestingly they are drawn from both communities (8 Protestant and 6 Roman Catholic). 39 people disagree that contentious issues are openly explored and 6 people feel that harassment is tolerated.

**7.4 Looking at items where differences exist between the various subgroups:**

- Males are more likely than females to find aspects of the physical environment threatening or intimidating.
- Those in the older age group and those without previous police experience are more likely to find aspects of the physical environment threatening or intimidating.
- Roman Catholics are more likely to strongly agree that the protection of human rights is a fundamental part of their job.
- Roman Catholics and females are more likely to strongly agree that they are treated with respect and dignity on a day-to-day basis by colleagues.
- Protestants are more likely than Roman Catholics to report feeling under threat or intimidated because of both their religious belief and political opinion.
- Those with previous police experience are more likely to disagree that contentious issues are openly explored and debated.

7.5 There were no meaningful differences on items 44-55 in relation to marital status, family history or educational qualifications.

7.6 The final question (Qn56) asked people if they felt under threat or intimidated due to a range of factors. The data is presented below in the form of frequencies rather than percentages.

I feel under threat or intimidated because of my:	Strongly Agree / Agree	Undecided	Strongly Disagree / Disagree
Religious belief	6 (5 Protestant, 1 RC)	17 (8 Protestant, 9 RC)	273
Political opinion	4 (3 Protestant, 1 RC)	20 (12 Protestant, 8 RC)	271
Gender	6 (5 Female, 1 male)	15 (11 female, 4 male)	275
Marital status	2 (1 single, 1 married)	17 (13 single, 4 married)	277
Ethnic origin	-	4	291
Sexual Orientation	-	7	288
Disability	1	3	293

7.7 The interview data and open-ended questions from the survey provide further insights on the issue of religious diversity.

7.8 As mentioned earlier in this report, many of the student officers are *motivated by the opportunity to work in such a diverse group* – and to mix with people they haven't previously had the opportunity to work with. They are all part of the new era in policing and proud to be so. There is a reported feeling that 'everyone is wanted' and there is 'no religious tension. Everyone gets on well.'

7.9 To some extent, *religion is not perceived as a major issue*:

'Religion isn't an issue – I want someone who can do the job. I'm interested in a colleague's proficiency rather than their religion.'

'I don't ask anyone their religion – we're all in this together.'

7.10 However, the *political correctness of the teaching environment* at Garnerville does appear to be a real problem which numerous students take issue with. Many students feel loath to discuss contentious issues or ask questions for *fear of offending* others. Students report 'not being allowed to speak their minds' and of being 'too scared of upsetting others' with their views. In the final comment section of the questionnaire, numerous students requested a more open environment with genuine debate and learning in order to reach a greater understanding of other's backgrounds. It is felt that the politically correct argument has been carried to extremes in Garnerville and is actually stifling diversity. One student expressed anticipation of moving out to the DCUs where it 'would be a lot more easy going.'

7.11 A student captured the feeling when he said:

'We are not all neutral. People hold different views and have different backgrounds. The important thing is to try to understand their background and not to discriminate on the basis of it...diversity and respecting another's culture does not mean that you lose your own.'

7.12 Resentment is expressed at the '*sterile*' *working environment*. PSNI is accused by the students of being 'afraid to accept its heritage from the RIC and RUC.' It is felt that the history of the PSNI should be fully accepted and that the word RUC should not be taboo in the training environment. In a similar way as above, it is felt that *opening the past and exploring painful issues will lead to deeper understandings*. This is not perceived to be happening at present. One student expressed the view that it would be good to extend the process of dialogue and discovery more formally within the classroom setting.

'There is still lots of hurt out there for officers whose colleagues have been murdered. It is quite a cotton wool environment in here [Garnerville]. It would be good to discuss and air our views but this hasn't happened.'

7.13 One Roman Catholic student expressed the view that perhaps PSNI is '*overcompensating for the wrongs of the past...to the detriment of Protestantism.*' The student went on to explain that he feels there is a thin line between accommodating large numbers of Catholics into the service for the first time and simultaneously ensuring that Protestants and others do not feel alienated. The cultural traditions evening and community fair were perceived in a very positive light by many students as was the setting up of a PSNI GAA team.

7.14 There have been some comments passed during the interviews on age and *gender discrimination*. While the quantitative data suggests that most females are not experiencing problems, it is worth highlighting the nature of the comments. These include a perceived over-emphasis on the use of non-sexist language (which is seen as serving only to highlight differences). They also include a reported lack of respect from male colleagues to females when they take on Squad leader role; perceived leniency on the part of some trainers towards females and forcing females to conform to a male norm in relation to uniform and appearance. Females are also expecting to get a bit of 'banter' when they go out into the male-dominated world of the stations.

7.15 There is little data on *age discrimination* except a small number of comments suggesting that older people feel they are treated differently on occasion. They can be the butt of younger students' jokes and can react badly to those aspects of the culture which fail to treat them like adults. On the other hand, many younger students appear to openly value the contribution and experience of older recruits.

7.16 There is one individual in the first six intakes who reports having a *disability*. There is also one person on the questionnaire who has reported feeling under threat because of a disability. This issue should be addressed by the relevant Team leader.

7.17 Views on *50:50 recruitment* were wide-ranging within the interview sample. Views ranged from seeing it as 'fair', to 'a necessary evil that has to be done if change is to happen' to 'blatant discrimination.' Interviewees generally agreed that 50:50 recruitment is not discussed at all within the training environment.

7.18 The final issue explored at interview in relation to diversity was students' perceptions of how well they might *integrate with existing officers*. Students had some concerns about the extent to which officers in stations would welcome them and embrace the changes. This was particularly true for former members of the RUC Reserve. They are also concerned that they are being expected to 'go out and change the country.' They had additional worries at the rumours reportedly flying around about their 'uppity' nature while they were residing in Garnerville. Garnerville is reportedly known as the 'Dream Factory' and 'PC World' by serving officers! The students whole-heartedly embrace the idea of the tutor constable scheme.

## 8. Summary of Priority Areas

8.1 To assist PSNI personnel in acting upon the survey results, the following issues have been identified and summarised as the key priorities for action:

- 1) Improve the physical environment by providing sufficient access to private study facilities and IT facilities and addressing the other environmental concerns highlighted in Section 3 of the report.
- 2) Consider the effectiveness of the Personal Development Portfolios as a key aide to self-reflection and learning. Seek out and incorporate the students' ideas on improving the portfolios.
- 3) Introduce more 1:1 feedback.
- 4) Reduce the intensity of the experience by examining the scheduling of classes and considering the introduction of study periods and a more focused approach to pre-read materials.
- 5) Improve the work/life balance for all students and particularly for those with families.
- 6) Consider ways of preparing students more fully for the disciplined nature of the police culture. This should include, but not be limited to, the provision of realistic job preview material as part of the recruitment literature. While this can cover a wide range of information on 'Life at the College', it should explicitly prepare students for the requirement for parade and personal inspections and clearly explain the rationale behind these activities.
- 7) Improve the frequency and content of security briefings.
- 8) Acknowledge the potentially damaging impact of having a sterile and politically correct environment in which students favour silence over genuine debate. Equip and train staff to work with students in acknowledging the past and openly exploring and respecting differences.

## 9. References

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