

**Perceptions of PSNI Recruits at Stage 4
Post Foundation Training (Time 4)
Results from Intakes 1 - 6**



Report produced for PSNI
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Executive Summary

- (i) This report contains results from the longitudinal study being conducted with the first six intakes of new recruits to the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). These officers joined the organisation between 4th November 2001 and 5th May 2002.
- (ii) The data presented covers probationers' perceptions at Stage 4, during their Post Foundation training at Maydown. The report also includes comparative data from Time 3, at the end of tutorship and from Times 1 & 2 where appropriate. It is anticipated that additional data will be obtained at one more point in the future.
- (iii) This evaluation is student centred and is complimentary to additional evaluation work being carried out by TED.
- (iv) Probationers' perceptions were explored in four areas using qualitative and quantitative data. A fifth area of research has been introduced at the current point in the study to capture probationers' perceptions of station life. The sample at Time 4 consisted of 250 probationers. The five areas explored were:
 - Perceptions of the Learning Climate
 - Feelings of Job Satisfaction
 - Levels of Organisational Commitment and Career Aspirations
 - Attitudes to Diversity
 - Perceptions of Station Life
- (v) The term Learning Climate refers to how well an organisation promotes a learning environment and an atmosphere of continuous learning. The learning climate score at Time 4 is 35.58 on a scale which ranges from 10-70. This score is lower than that previously achieved at Time 3 (41.14) and is also below the range recommended for an effective learning culture (50-70). Differences were found in the overall learning climate score based on gender, age and community background. Females scored the learning climate higher than males, individuals aged 44yrs+ rated the learning climate higher than younger age groups and Roman Catholics scored the learning climate higher than Protestants.
- (vi) The key factors contributing to a positive leaning environment at Time 4 are similar to those found at Time 3 and include, the practical help available to probationers from colleagues and line managers (78% rated it as good) and the warm and supportive

environment that these individuals facilitate (71% rated it as good). Furthermore, the nature of the job itself appears to provide probationers with continuous opportunities to learn. The areas that appear to prevent a more positive learning climate include a lack of non-monetary rewards & recognition (61% rated it as poor), a poor physical environment (52% rated it as poor) and a lack of learning resources in stations (45% rated them as poor). The latter two areas continue from Time 3, as areas in need of development. Results in this chapter also briefly cover perceptions of the learning climate at Post Foundation Training. Results reveal that the relaxed learning environment and the opportunity to share experiences with colleagues contribute towards enhanced learning. However, probationers outlined that the pressured nature of the exams and the content of the exams themselves detracted from a more positive learning environment.

- (vii) The final section of chapter 4 includes results over time from Time 1 through to Time 4, which indicate that responses to learning climate questionnaire items are gradually becoming less positive with time. A number of items rated positively by probationers have dropped dramatically, contributing to this lower overall score. These items include a 28% drop in positive responses to the amount of encouragement given to learn, a 24% drop in positive perceptions of the value placed on ideas, and lastly a 28% drop in positive perceptions of the emphasis placed on standards and quality. Details of the full learning climate results are available in chapter 4 of this report.
- (viii) Job satisfaction results reveal that the core factors contributing to probationers' feelings of job satisfaction are the presence of supportive colleagues (87% satisfied), the challenge and variety in their jobs (84% satisfied) and the help and support offered by their line managers (78% satisfied). These items are identical to results gathered at Time 3. Other factors, which probationers rated as making a contribution to feelings of job satisfaction include their job security and their general everyday work. Furthermore, probationers' indicated that working with the public also contributes to feelings of job satisfaction. In addition to these results, data reveals a large increase in probationers' satisfaction with their ability to balance work and home life. The areas of least satisfaction for respondents include the amount of administrative work, stress levels and financial rewards received. Amount of administrative work and stress continue from Time 3 as core areas of dissatisfaction. Analysis of results over time from Time 1 through to Time 4 indicates that responses for the majority of items have become less positive. Differences in responses to job

satisfaction questions at Time 4 were found based on a large number of demographic variables. Detailed results on job satisfaction are available in chapter 5 of the report.

- (ix) Organisational commitment measures the extent to which individuals buy into organisational goals and are motivated to work to achieve them. The commitment score at Time 4 is 14.93, on a scale that ranges from 6 (very high levels of commitment) to 30 (very low levels of commitment). This result is positive and is similar to previous positive results gathered at Times 1, 2 & 3. Differences were found in the overall commitment score based on gender and educational qualifications. Males had slightly higher commitment scores than females and individuals with less academic qualifications indicated higher levels of commitment than those with A-levels or higher. Generally, results indicate a strong sense of commitment from probationers who are happy with their role and have little intention of leaving the organisation. Results also reveal probationers have a variety of career aspirations for the years ahead. A full account of these aspirations is available in chapter 6. Results did not uncover any major barriers to current commitment. However, analysis of results over time has revealed that commitment scores are dropping gradually. Differences in responses to specific commitment question items have been identified based on gender, previous police experience and community background.
- (x) Responses under the heading of diversity remain positive, depicting a work environment that is respectful of people's differences. Results indicate that the majority of probationers feel they are treated with respect and dignity in their job (92%), that the values of the organisation adequately emphasis the need to treat others fairly and with respect (86%) and that they see the protection of human rights as a fundamental part of their job (88%). A more detailed account of probationers' perceptions of human rights training and its application is available in this chapter under section 7.4. Consistent with results from Times 1, 2 & 3, the item to be rated least positively referred to the lack of openness in discussing contentious issues. Differences in responses to questionnaire items have been found based on gender, age, community background and marital status. Diversity results over time reveal that probationers at Time 4 are finding the station environment the least positive in relation to positive attitudes to diversity and equality. A detailed breakdown of individuals who feel threatened or intimidated as a result of various personal factors is provided in section 7.6. Although the majority of the results from this section are

positive there remains a small number of individuals who indicate they feel threatened or intimidated as a result of personal factors.

(xi) Station life results reveal probationers' perceptions on many pertinent issues within PSNI. Results indicate that the majority of probationers view devolvement as a good idea in principle (44% agree) although few think it works well in practice (19% agree). Many probationers feel that the amount of paperwork they complete takes priority over seeking new detections (60%), and few probationers feel their learning was aided by the PDP (1%). Probationers also indicated that they feel officers working in response are not highly valued and that officers working in sector do not make a key contribution to achieving policing objectives. Lastly, the majority of probationers indicated that they feel resources are under utilised in their DCU's. Differences in results were found based on a number of demographic variables. Details of these differences are available in section 8.3.

(xii) Chapter 9 stands back from the detailed analysis of the data and gives a more global view of what the studies findings say about the organisation. It summarises high-level issues and trends which have developed over the length of the entire study and outlines key recommendations where appropriate. These recommendations include:

Learning Climate

- Raising awareness amongst line managers and senior managers of the issues in stations surrounding a lack of encouragement given to learn new things or volunteer new ideas and a decrease in the emphasis given to standards;
- Increasing probationer access to the common terminals;
- Increase acknowledgement and praise for good work
- Create time and space for probationers to complete paperwork and reflect on experiences;
- Encourage officers to challenge old work methods and to try new approaches to old tasks;
- Using the current data and that of previous reports to help support the case for a programme of works to bring the physical working environment in PSNI up to an acceptable contemporary standard;

Job Satisfaction

- To review processes within stations which may be supporting a negative reward culture as evidence indicates the file preparation system may be an example of this type of culture;

Organisational Commitment

- To continue to monitor the perceptions of Protestants who appear to have slightly lower feelings of organisational commitment than Catholics;

Attitudes to Diversity

- To try to help line managers to be able to find the right skills to facilitate and allow open and honest discussions to take place between officers without leaving anyone feeling intimidated or victimised as a result;

Perceptions of Station Life

- To review how resources in stations are utilised to ensure maximum value for money;
- To review the way probationers are introduced to sector policing in order to ensure they develop a clear understanding of the benefits and contributions of these teams;
- To improve probationer contact with district commanders where applicable and learn good practice from other districts who have processes in place to ensure commanders have contact with all new probationers;

- (xiii) It is proposed that this study will continue to gather data at one further point in time to measure the officers' perceptions one year after they have completed their probation period. This report should be available in 2005.

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Occupational Psychologist, August 2004

1. Introduction

This longitudinal study has been conceived and designed by the Occupational Psychology unit in collaboration with Foundation Faculty. The study began in November 2001 and has been running ever since gathering data at various points in time over the last 3 years.

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 PSNI, 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 explore the recruits' perceptions and experience of **station life**. This is a new category not previously surveyed. This category has been designed to capture probationers' perceptions of station life.
- ❑ To monitor any significant **changes in perceptions over time** as the probationers settle into their roles in various District Command Units.
- ❑ To monitor any significant **differences in perceptions due to demographic variables** including gender, marital status, age, community background, family police connections, previous experience of working with PSNI, level of education and work location.
- ❑ To monitor and explore reasons for any **voluntary turnover** that may arise among the new recruits.

This report outlines the key findings from the Time 4 evaluation with the first six intakes of new recruits to the Police Service of Northern Ireland. The Time 4 evaluation was conducted as probationers completed their Post Foundation training at Maydown. At this point in time the probationers are over two years with the organisation and are nearing the end of their probationer period, soon to become fully-fledged police officers. The study covers courses 1-2 of 2001 and Courses 1-4 of 2002. All of these individuals were recruited during the first campaign run by Consensia from February-September 2001.

Additional data will be obtained one last time in this study (Time 5), in approximately 1 years time when the new officers have completed both the two-year probation period and their first full year of service as a constable.

2. Method

A questionnaire survey was conducted with probationer officers, a copy of which is contained in the Appendices. The questionnaire was administered to the probationer officers during their Post Foundation training. An 84% response rate was achieved in the questionnaire survey with a total of 250 respondents. A breakdown of biographical information of the questionnaire respondents is given below.

Total group = 250 student officers			
Age	18-24: 17% 25-30: 48% 31-40: 32% 41+: 3%	Community background	Protestant: 47% Roman Catholic: 53%
Gender	Male: 66% Female: 34%	Previous police experience	Yes: 22% (19%FTR, 1%PTR, 2% other) No: 78%
Education	GCSE/NVQ: 26% A Level & higher: 74%	Marital status	Single/sep/div: 44% Married/cohabit: 56%
Ethnic origin	White: 100% Non-white: 0%	Disability	Yes: 1 person No: 249 people
Family member previously served	Yes: 38% No: 62%	Region **	North: 31% South: 25% Urban: 44%

Table 0.1 Summary of biographical information from questionnaire sample

** The categories North, South and Urban region are used throughout this report as the questionnaire data was gathered before and during the changeover to Rural and Urban regions. For the sake of consistency the same three categories were used throughout data gathering.

Interviews were also carried out with a sample of 20 probationers. This is one less than at Time 1 and Time 2 as one interviewee resigned during their tutorship. An exit interview was conducted with this individual and a summary of the issues raised were fed back to Foundation Programmes and the Senior Director of Human Resources.

Interviewees were recruited on a voluntary basis at the end of each questionnaire session at Time 1. These same volunteers, minus one, were interviewed at Time 4. The sample is broadly representative of the population.

Sample = 20 student officers	
Gender	Males = 9 Females = 11
Community Background	Protestant = 9 (5 male, 4 female) Roman Catholic = 11 (4 male, 7 female)
Age	Minimum age = 22 Maximum age = 46
Previous police experience	Yes = 4 (all former RUC Reserve full-time) No = 16

Table 0.2 Summary of interviewees’ biographical information

3. **Headline Results**

The study has generated an expanse of information. The main findings presented in this report are classified under five headings:

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

In each area the quantitative results from the questionnaire survey are presented initially and supplemented, where appropriate, with qualitative data from interviews. Also included under the first four headings are the results of analysis of all the survey results across time.

4 Perceptions of the Learning Climate in PSNI

4.1 Introduction

A learning organisation is one, which aims to generate a culture and climate of continuous learning among its members. Perceptions of the learning climate within the PSNI were measured in this study using the 10-items contained within the Learning Habit Questionnaire (Pedler, Burgoyne & Boydell, 1997). These items allow PSNI to analyse the extent to which important factors, conducive to a healthy learning environment, are perceived to be present within the organisation. The factors measured include the physical environment, availability of learning resources, active encouragement to learn, warmth and support, and practical help available from colleagues.

The output of the questionnaire is two fold. Firstly, it provides an overall learning climate score. Secondly, it produces frequency scores of ratings on individual questionnaire items.

4.2 Learning Climate Score

Research based on the Learning Habit Questionnaire recommends that learning organisations should achieve a mean score that lies between 50-70, on a scale where 10 is the minimum score and 70 is the maximum score.

The overall mean score based on results from Time 4 is 36.58. This score is below the recommended range for an effective learning climate. It is also lower than the learning climate score achieved at Time 3 (41.14). Figure 4.1 illustrates the learning climate scores across time, it also highlights how the latest learning climate score is the lowest achieved since the start of the study two and a half years ago.

Analysis of the learning climate score broken down by respondents' demographical information indicates some variance between groups. Females (37.68) scored the learning climate slightly higher than males (36.00), individuals aged 44yrs+ (44.38) rated the learning climate higher than all other age groups (38.64, 36.18 & 35.34) and Roman Catholics (37.80) rated the learning climate higher than Protestants (35.07). Although these differences have arisen between groups and indicate a difference in perceptions, they are not large differences and therefore would not be of any great concern.

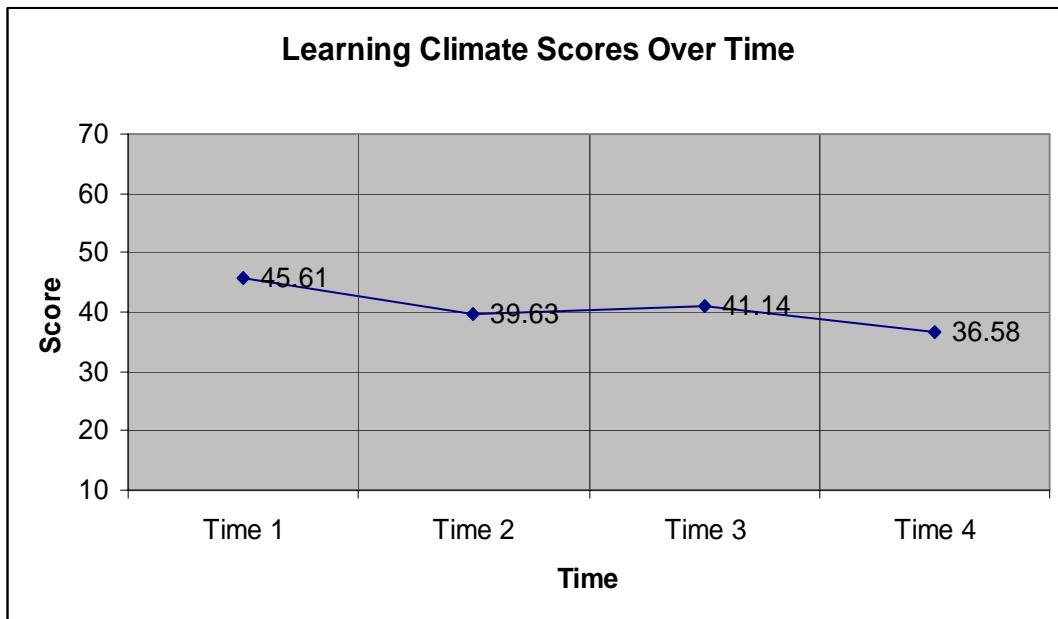


Figure 4.1 Learning climate scores over time

4.3 Ratings on Individual Items

The ten learning climate items were rated on a scale of 1 to 7 (1 = poor, 7 = excellent). The percentage of probationer officers awarding particular ratings to each of the dimensions is given in bold on Table 4.1. Below these ratings are the percentage differences from the Time 3 data for the same questions. These are indicated with a plus (+) if the new score is higher than the previous score and with a minus (-) if the new score is lower than previously. A dash indicates there is no difference between the Time 3 and Time 4 results.

4.4 Positive Results

At this point in the research, positive responses to questionnaire items have decreased for all items. This is in contrast to the results achieved at Time 3 where there was an increase in the number of individuals responding positively to almost all questionnaire items.

The top two rated questionnaire items at Time 4 are:

1. Practical help available (78% rated this item as good or excellent)
2. Warmth and Support (71% rated this item as good or excellent)

Questionnaire items relating to Communications and Conformity also received relatively high positive ratings from participants.

Questionnaire Item	Rating 5-7 Good to Excellent	Rating 4 Average	Rating 1-3 Very poor to poor
1. Physical Environment. The amount and quality of space and privacy afforded to people; the temperature, noise and comfort levels.	24% -10%	23% +8%*	52%* -
2. Learning Resources Numbers, quality and availability of training and development staff, books, films, training packages, IT facilities, equipment, etc.	28% -1%	26% +2%	45%* -1%
3. Encouragement to learn The extent to which people feel encouraged to have ideas, take risks, experiment and learn new ways of doing old tasks.	32% -28%	28% +2%	40% +25%*
4. Communications Generally speaking how open and free is the flow of information? Do people express ideas and opinions easily and openly?	43% -19%	22% +3%	34%* +16%
5. Non-Monetary rewards & recognition How well rewarded are people for effort? Is recognition given for good work or are people punished and blamed?	20% -26%	19% -7%	61% +33%
6. Conformity The extent to which people are expected to conform to rules, norms, regulations and policies rather than think for themselves.	43% -11%	32% +5%	26%* +6%
7. Value placed on ideas How much are ideas, opinions and suggestions sought out, encouraged and valued?	28% -24%	32% +5%	39%* +17%*
8. Practical help available The extent to which people help each other, lend a hand, offer skills, knowledge and support.	78% -9%	15% +5%	7% +4%
9. Warmth and Support How friendly are people in PSNI? Do people support, trust and like one another?	71% -10%	19% +6%	10% +4%
10. Standards The emphasis placed upon quality in all things; the extent to which people set challenging standards for themselves and each other	43% -28%	36% +14%	21% +13%*

Table 4.0.1 Summary of Learning Climate responses at Time 4 with comparison data from Time 3.

*Due to rounding errors the total of these percentages are either over or under by 1%.

Consistently across time, both Practical Help Available and Warmth and Support, have remained the highest rated items by participants. From this consistency in results, it could be intimated that a culture exists, both in the police college and in the stations, that is supportive and encouraging and in which people are willing to share their knowledge to help others

develop. It is encouraging to see this trend continue over time and that the help and support given to probationers extends beyond the tutorship and into the stations.

Results from qualitative data gathered from interviews support the quantitative findings and give a greater insight into how probationers are getting on in stations and developing as a result of the existing learning climate.

Interview results indicate that the majority of probationers sampled are getting on well, settling into their stations and enjoying their work. They are finding that this situation is facilitated by the friendliness of colleagues who are willing to lend a hand and support probationers when needed. Furthermore the presence of supportive colleagues is enhancing probationers learning ,as team-mates share their experience and knowledge with new recruits.

“My colleagues keep me right”

“I’m more than happy with the job”

“It’s going well, everybody in the section is friendly”

The nature of the job itself and the tasks which probationers undertake seem to be major contributors to a positive learning climate. 90% of those interviewed stated that they were continuing to learn on the job during their probation. Respondents stated how they were learning something new everyday, as every call they attend is different. Probationers also reported learning from working with experienced officers and drawing on their experience.

“I learn everyday. There is always something different going on.”

“There are different scenarios every day and there’s plenty of people to help.”

“You learn from others. You’d be lost without their experience.”

In response to a question on what helps to maximise a probationers’ learning in the workplace, the majority of interviewees stated that help from colleagues was top of their list. This result concurs with the results from the questionnaire. Other areas, which probationers found contributed to their learning included, being self motivated and seeking out information and the nature of the job itself as mentioned above.

“The sergeant in the section helps as much as possible, as does everyone else.”

“Dealing with calls with experienced officers (helps my learning). If you’re not with them you won’t pick anything up.”

“The best way to learn is to ask questions and find out for yourself.”

“(Learning) comes from enjoying the job and being motivated and enthusiastic.”

Overall, results from the questionnaire and interviews portray a learning environment which is positive in many ways, albeit less positive than Time 3, and which is particularly supported by the fact probationers work with helpful and supportive colleagues who are willing to lend a hand and share their knowledge and experience. Furthermore, the very nature of the job, which encompasses variety and exposure to new opportunities to learn, also appears to contribute strongly to a positive learning climate.

4.5 Areas for Development

Analysis of the quantitative data reveals that a number of questionnaire items received high negative responses from participants. Overall, the majority of negative responses given to individual questionnaire items have increased since the last point in data collection (Time 3). This indicates that participants have more negative perceptions of certain questionnaire items now as they complete their probation period than when they were finishing their tutorship. This result is reminiscent of the findings between Time 1 and Time 2 where negative responses to individual questionnaire items increased. This pattern changed at Time 3 when negative responses decreased temporarily, only to rise again at Time 4.

The top negatively rated questionnaire items are listed below:

1. Non-monetary reward & recognition (61% rated this item as poor or very poor)
2. Physical environment (52% rated this item as poor or very poor)
3. Learning resources (45% rated this item as poor or very poor)

The inclusion of Non-Monetary Rewards and Recognition in the top three negatively rated items is a new finding in the Learning Climate results. This item has had the biggest increase in negative responses of all items, with 33% more individuals rating the items as poor or very poor compared to responses at Time 3. Interview data neglects to shed any light on this result. However, results under Job Satisfaction in section 5 indicate that probationers are very satisfied with recognition and help and support they receive from their immediate manager. This job satisfaction result appears to contradict the above finding. Therefore, it could be concluded that the result relating to poor ratings on the amount of non-monetary rewards and recognition given to probationers could be with relation to the recognition probationers receive from the higher echelons of management and senior command. Focus group data would reiterate this proposal as many probationers expressed the view that they perceive senior officers are more concerned with external commitments i.e. DPP's than staffing issues.

The physical environment and learning resources have, consistently across time, gathered the highest negative responses. This indicates that little has changed.

It is interesting to note that even with the recent roll out of Common Terminals, which should provide probationers with easier access to work related information, quantitative findings indicate that they have had little impact on probationers' perceptions of the amount of learning resources available to them. However, there appears to be some incongruence between the findings from the questionnaire and those from the interviews. Half of those interviewed stated that in their experience there were enough learning resources in their stations. A number of individuals even contributed this to the introduction of the common terminals specifically.

"The introduction of the computers is helpful, I use them a lot."

"With the new computers its easier to refer to manuals and check information."

Interview data gives some insight into why the common terminals may not be having the impact they could have in all DCU's. A number of probationers highlighted that the location of the common terminal, often placed in their sergeant's office or the custody suite limits their access. Interviewees suggested locating common terminals in the constables' workroom or other alternative locations, which would increase accessibility.

Additional issues, which many interviewees highlighted as detracting from increased work-based learning include, a lack of force order manuals and other relevant reference material in the stations, and a lack of time to review and reflect on experience. This latter issue appears to be caused by the large workload, which probationers take on. During interview many probationers highlighted that they rarely have time to review or revise offences because they are constantly busy being out on the streets or completing files in the station.

"..You are always busy. You don't get the chance to sit and read or check things out."

"There is too much paperwork to consider studying."

"There is no time designated to learning or checking things."

"Sometimes you are under pressure to make decisions when you would have liked time to check things."

Time constraints also appear to be a factor contributing to the high Police Diploma dropout rate. Out of the sample of probationers interviewed, 70% initially signed up for the Police Diploma in Garnerville, and only 10% are still pursuing it. Reasons given as contributing to the high dropout rate include, a lack of advantage in completing the diploma in terms of promotion or monetary rewards and difficulty balancing work/study and a personal life.

"I didn't feel (there was) any benefit. The sergeants exams will be more help to my career."

"I registered but then pulled out, it's a already a struggle to have a life outside of work."

“There is no time to do it.”

Finally, it should not go unnoticed that positive responses to a number of Learning Climate items have dropped dramatically in comparison to Time 3 results. In particular, positive ratings on the amount of encouragement given to learn in stations has dropped by 28%, positive ratings on the value placed on ideas, opinions and suggestions has dropped by 24%, and positive ratings on the emphasis placed on standards has dropped by 28%. From these findings it could be inferred that within stations there is a decreasing emphasis on people experimenting with new ways of doing things, offering opinions or setting challenging standards for themselves.

In summary, it appears that overall probationers’ perceptions of the learning climate in PSNI are becoming progressively more negative. The core areas, which are detracting from probationers flourishing in a more positive climate, include a lack of feedback and recognition for a job well done, working within a less than optimal physical environment and a lack of learning resources. This last item is particularly noteworthy, as it appears the roll-out of common terminals has not had the impact in every DCU, which it has the potential to have.

4.6 Post Foundation Training

As previously outlined, the current data, was gathered as the probationers complete their probation period in their stations. On two different occasions during probation, the officers return to the classroom for Post Foundation training. Through interview, the study sought to gather information on aspects of their experience, which facilitated a positive learning climate on these occasions. Results indicated that sharing stories and learning from other colleagues’ experiences, working in a relaxed environment, having approachable trainers, revising material previous covered in Garnerville, and learning new things based on the probationers’ experience all contributed to a constructive learning experience. These results are similar to the quantitative findings and indicate that, in the classroom having supportive colleagues and being able to learn from them and working in a relaxed and trusting environment are core factors in facilitating a positive learning environment.

Other views expressed by probationers in relation to Post Foundation Training included negative reactions to the content of exam papers. Additionally, a number of probationers found the Post Foundation exams very difficult. Furthermore, a number of probationers did not like the pressured nature of Stage 4 training, which stipulates that any probationer who

fails their exams must return at a later date to repeat them. This information has been fed back to the relevant individuals in Post Foundation Training for their consideration.

4.7 Demographical Differences

Analysis of individual questionnaire items based on demographic variables has highlighted a significant difference in perceptions according to age. Across the majority of Learning Climate questions individuals aged 41yrs+ tended to give more positive ratings to question items than other age groups. No significant differences were identified according to other demographic variables.

4.8 Differences in Results Over Time

As this study reaches its latter end it was deemed an appropriate time to examine if participants responses to individual items were changing over time. Results indicate that there has been a shift in response patterns and that for every Learning Climate question probationers' responses have changed significantly. Overall responses to questionnaire items have become less positive with the biggest differences in results occurring between responses given at Time 1 and responses given at Time 4. The majority of questionnaire results have gradually become less positive with the least positive results gathered at Time 4. From this finding it could be intimated that as probationers move from Garnerville through their tutorship to finally settle in their stations, they are finding the environment in which they work and the resulting learning climate is becoming less conducive to continuous learning.

5 Feelings of Job Satisfaction

5.1 Introduction

The second part of the questionnaire measured levels of job satisfaction among probationers. Questions were derived from a review of established job satisfaction questionnaires as well as data gathered from a recent MSc research project on morale and motivation within Police Services.

The percentage of probationers indicating levels of job satisfaction with various aspects of their work is provided in Table 5.1. The responses are based on 250 student officers from the first six intakes. Figures in bold refer to the current Time 4 responses. The figures beneath them indicate the percentage difference between Time 3 and Time 4 data. A dash indicates there is no difference between the Time 3 and Time 4 results.

5.2 Positive Results

Overall participants' ratings of individual job satisfaction items have become less positive. All but one item, 'Ability to balance work and personal life', have been rated less positively, than at Time 3 when probationers were finishing their tutorship. However, there were still a number of items, which received highly positive ratings. The top three rated items are:

1. The presence of supportive colleagues (87% of participants satisfied or very satisfied)
2. The levels of challenge and variety in your job (84% of participants satisfied or very satisfied)
3. The help and support available from your immediate manager (78% of participants satisfied or very satisfied)

These top three rated items are the same items, which were rated highly at the last point in data collection. This consistency across time gives credence to the finding, which are further supported by qualitative data. In addition to these three areas, high satisfaction scores were also obtained for the items relating to job security and probationers satisfaction with their everyday work.

Please rate your satisfaction with each of the following aspects of your job.	Satisfied or Very Satisfied	Undecided	Dissatisfied or Very Dissatisfied
11.The financial rewards you receive for doing your job	47% -15%	18% -8%	35% +22%*
12.The competitiveness of your pay and benefits when compared with people of your own age in other organisations	49% -14%	20% -3%	31% +17%
13.The feedback you receive on your performance	47% -17%	32% +2%	21% +15%
14.The recognition you get from your immediate manager for a job well-done	59% -11%	20% -1%	21% +12%
15.Opportunities for career progression & promotion	55% -11%	37% +4%	8% +7%
16 Your job security	73% -5%	21% +4%	7%* +1%
17. Your ability to do the job without undue stress	30% -	21% -29%	49% +28%*
18. Your ability to balance work and family/personal life	51% +22%	23% -15%	26% -8%*
19. Your satisfaction with everyday work	71% -5%	19% -1%	10% +6%
20. The levels of challenge and variety in your job	84% -7%	12% +4%	4% +2%*
21. The administrative work required of you	12% -3%	8% -12%	81%* +15%
22.Opportunities for personal growth within the job	50% -11%	36% +1%	14% +11%*
23. Your ability to influence events	25% -12%	42% -11%	34%* +24%*
24. Freedom and autonomy to adopt your own approach	35% -11%	37% -8%	28% +19%
25. The help and support available from your immediate manager	78% -6%	13% +1%	10%* +6%*
26. The extent to which your manager listens to and respects your ideas	64% -5%	25% -	12%* +6%*
27. Your manager’s commitment to implementing change	57% -5%	33% -1%	10% +6%
28. The organisations readiness to embrace change	39% -14%	41% +5%	21%* +10%*
29. The presence of supportive colleagues	87% -2%	10% -	3% +2%
30. Opportunities to effectively serve the public	59% -18%	28% +11%	13% +7%
31. Freedom to challenge colleagues and supervisors when you feel it is appropriate	41% -1%	31% -13%	28% +14%

Table 0.1 Summary of job satisfaction response at Time 4 with comparison data from Time 3.

*Due to rounding errors the total of these percentages are either over or under by 1%.

Interview data highlights that supportive colleagues and managers, as well as the variety and nature of the job contribute towards positive feelings of job satisfaction. This data revealed that probationers are gaining much job satisfaction from the people they are working with and the teamwork involved in the job. Furthermore, probationers are finding working with colleagues and a good section is personally motivating.

“I like being part of a section and a team.”

“I had annual leave and I couldn’t wait to get back. I missed my colleagues.”

With regard to the variety and challenge in the job, interviewees stated that they enjoy not knowing what they will face day to day and how each day’s work is different. Probationers are still finding many experiences new to them. They have highlighted that attending calls, which are of a similar nature never result in the same experience, and this in itself is a constant challenge. It appears to be the nature of the job itself and its inherent variety that provides both a challenge and an excitement for the new officers.

“No two days are the same.”

“Not knowing what you will be doing everyday means there is variety.”

“(I enjoy) the excitement of the job.”

“You don’t know what you will be doing next. I like the challenge of this.”

Responses to the open-ended question, ‘What do you most like about your job?’ reinforce how probationers value the variety of their jobs and the support they receive from colleagues. 48% of respondents sighted variety as the most liked aspect of their job while 38% sighted comradeship.

Lastly, interview data revealed a finding, which was not highlighted in the quantitative data as a great source of satisfaction. Numerous interviewees stated that they found working with the public was a particularly satisfying aspect of the job. Probationers stated how they find a great sense of achievement in working with the public and that they find the positive feedback they receive from the public very satisfying. This finding is similar to results found at Time 3 in which probationers also stated working with members of the public and helping them was particularly fulfilling. The finding is also reiterated in responses to open ended questionnaire items.

“I get job satisfaction from helping the public.”

“There is satisfaction in helping the public. It makes it worth while.”

“I have never not been able to help someone.”

It is also worth noting at this point that the questionnaire, the item; 'Your ability to balance work and family/personal life', has had a 22% increase in positive responses compared to Time 3. This is a big turnaround in results as this same item was counted in the top three negatively rated items at Time 3. Interview data has revealed that this change in results is due in the most part to the new shift system. The four-on-four-off shift system appears to be making a big difference for probationers in term of helping them to balance a life and family outside of work.

In general, the dominant themes highlighted in the quantitative and qualitative data indicate that the nature of the job itself which provides opportunities for continuous learning, challenge and opportunities to work with the public coupled with a supportive working environment are providing the biggest source of satisfaction for probationers.

5.3 Least Satisfying Aspect of a Probationers Job

Overall, probationers have rated Job Satisfaction items less favourably than at Time 3, indicating a reduction in job satisfaction. The majority of negative ratings given to individual job satisfaction items have increased. There have been particularly large increases in negative ratings on items relating to the financial rewards probationers receive in their job, the amount of job-related stress probationers feel and their ability to influence events. The items to receive the highest negative ratings overall are:

1. The administrative work required of you (81% dissatisfied or very dissatisfied)
2. Your ability to do the job without undue stress (49% dissatisfied or very dissatisfied)
3. The financial rewards you receive for doing your job. (35% dissatisfied or very dissatisfied)

Both the amount of administrative work required of probationers and work related stress continue from Time 3 to be the biggest areas of dissatisfaction. Previously at Time 3, the absence of a satisfactory work-life balance was also rated negatively, but as mentioned earlier, the introduction of new shift systems for most probationers has reduced negative responses to this item.

Questionnaire results have revealed that over 80% of participants are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the amount of administrative work in their job. Many are frustrated with the repetitious nature of the paperwork, having to fill out the same personal details in many different forms. Interview data reiterates these results. Probationers stated that they felt there was little time allowed for them to complete their paperwork, and that this problem is

compounded by the fact they are unable to make use of the CJU. A number of individuals felt their workload would be greatly lightened if they could use the CJU. Probationers also stated that they are finding the repetitious nature of the paperwork they complete frustrating.

Open-ended questionnaire items gathered similar negative responses to the amount of paperwork probationers have to complete. Furthermore in response to the question; ‘What changes would most help improve your work environment?’ 43% of respondents stated that less paperwork would help to improve their work environment.

Probationers highlighted that there was a lack of understanding in the stations about the amount of additional paperwork they have to complete as part of their PDP’s. The general feeling from the probationers was that the PDP only added stress in terms of enlarging their workload. A number of individuals felt they were not learning or gaining from the PDP and viewed their work related paperwork as a greater priority than the PDP. Overall, participants felt that the amount of paperwork and PDP’s they had to complete kept them from being on the ground or responding to the public.

“It seems I’m always pushing paper.”

“There is paperwork for everything, it’s too much.”

Focus group data has revealed a little more detail on the culture that surrounds paperwork and how it is processed. It appears that the current system in operation for processing files is inadvertently rewarding inefficient work practices. Probationers outlined that individuals who stay on top of their files continue to be given more and more files to handle. However individuals that fall behind with their file preparation eventually receive expedites and as a result are often given ‘file time’ by their sergeant to get on top of their work. Inadvertently this system appears to be reinforcing and supporting inefficient behaviour and creating a negative reward culture. During focus groups a number of probationers indicated that they had been informed of this system and ‘advised’ by more senior constables to let their file work fall behind as they would eventually be rewarded with time aside to get on top of their work.

Stress has also been linked to the area of administration and paperwork. Questionnaire data identified job-related stress as one of the most dissatisfying aspects of the job. Negative responses to this item have risen by 28%. However, interview data has highlighted that in the majority of cases the stress of the job is manageable, and it is in fact the amount of paperwork, which is the biggest source of stress for probationers. The large rise in negative responses to job-related stress could be attributed to the increased amount of paperwork

probationers have to complete now that they are working in stations. Similar to the findings in the Learning Climate section, a secondary stressor for many probationers also appears to be the lack of positive recognition and feedback they receive from their supervisors.

“It’s stressful when you’re busy, but that’s the case with any job.”

“Everyday I come in looking forward to work. I am frightened of losing that because of all the hassles. It takes the heart and soul out of you.”

The last area to receive a high negative response from probationers relates to the amount of financial rewards they receive for doing their job. This item has had a 22% increase in negative responses compared to results at Time 3. Interview data neglects to give insight into this finding. Therefore, it can only be suggested that as probationers become increasingly familiar with their role and its inherent risks, they are becoming less satisfied with the remuneration package PSNI offers them.

In conclusion, it appears that the top two areas of dissatisfaction for probationers; administrative work and stress, appear to be inextricably linked, with the PDP’s contributing greatly to an increase in paperwork. It will be interesting to measure these same constructs at Time 5, in one year’s time, when the administrative pressures will have reduced for probationers with the absence of the PDP and the authority to use CJU.

5.4 Demographical Differences

Examination of the quantitative data reveals a number of differences as a result of demographic variables. As with the Time 3 results significant differences were found based on all variables. Below is a summary of where these differences appear to lie.

- Probationers aged 18-24 were more satisfied with the competitiveness of their pay and benefits than individuals aged 41+yrs.
- A higher number of Protestants were dissatisfied with their level of job security than Roman Catholics. This finding mirrors previous findings from Time 2 and Time 3. Also, a higher number of Roman Catholics were undecided about the amount of freedom they have to challenge colleagues and supervisors.
- Individuals who had previous police experience were more dissatisfied with the levels of challenge and variety in their job than those with no previous experience.
- Probationers who had a family member who had served in the police were more dissatisfied with the opportunities available to them for personal growth within the job, than individuals who did not have a family connection.

-
- A far greater percentage of probationers who were educated to the level of GCSE were more satisfied with the freedom and autonomy to adopt their own approach in the workplace than individuals who had higher academic qualifications.
 - Females were more undecided about their level of satisfaction with the amount of administrative work required of them than their male counterparts. However, females were more satisfied than males with the presence of supportive colleagues in the workplace.
 - Individuals who were married or co-habiting were more undecided about their level of satisfaction with their everyday work than probationers who were single/separated.

Generally, results based on demographic difference do not mirror results found at Time 3. It appears that there continues to be variance in terms of the demographics having an influence on different questionnaire items. With the exception of community background, all other demographics appear to have an inconsistent effect on responses.

5.5 Differences in Results Over Time

As previously outlined, at this point in the study it was deemed appropriate to analyse questionnaire results across time to identify any changes in responses. In the case of job satisfaction probationers' responses to each questionnaire item have changed significantly over time. In the majority of cases responses to items have become less positive and/or more negative as they settle into their new career.

There are three exceptions to this finding. Firstly, probationers' responses to the item referring to job security have become more positive over time, peaking at Time 3 when officers were finishing their tutorship. It could be concluded that as probationers become more knowledgeable about their job they are discovering it offers more security than first anticipated. Additionally, at the end of their tutorship, probationers have passed the bulk of their assessments and they may be feeling generally more secure in their jobs. Secondly, positive responses to the item referring to their ability to balance work and family/personal life have increase significantly from Time 3 to Time 4. This change in responses could very possibly be contributed to the introduction of a new shift system for many DCU's. Lastly, probationers' positive perceptions in relation to the help and support they receive from their immediate manager peaked at Time 3 (end of tutorship) only to fall again at Time 4. Indicating that the help and support provided by tutor constables and sergeants during the tutorship period had a very positive impact on probationers.

6 Levels of Organisational Commitment and Career Aspirations

6.1 Introduction

Organisational commitment is a relatively new concept, which has attracted a lot of research in recent years. This is primarily due to the 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. At a time when PSNI is trying to reduce absenteeism and 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 Organisational Commitment Score

The commitment scale used in this study provides both an overall commitment score and percentage scores on individual items. The scale for the overall commitment score ranges from 6 (extremely high levels of commitment) to 30 (very low levels of commitment). At this point in the research, commitment levels remain high with an overall score of 14.93.

This score is slightly less positive than the commitment score at Time 3 (14.10). However, as can be seen from Figure 6.1, commitment levels remain highly positive and have fluctuated very little for probationers over their first 22 months with PSNI. It is encouraging to see that as probationers settle into their roles, working independently of a tutor, their commitment levels have remained high.



Figure 0.1 Organisational Commitment Scores over Time

6.3 Demographical Differences in Overall Commitment Score

Table 6.1 lists the different organisational commitment scores for various sub-groups. The largest differences were found based on gender and educational qualifications. In a similar trend to Time 2 and Time 3, males had slightly higher commitment scores than female and individuals with less academic qualifications indicated higher levels of commitment than those with A-levels or higher. Furthermore, in a similar finding to Time 3, individuals’ aged 31-40 had the highest levels of commitment of all other age groups. In conclusion, although there are small some differences within these sub-groups, commitment scores remain generally high regardless of demographic variables.

Commitment Score			
(Note: lower scores indicate higher levels of commitment)			
Male:	14.56	Police experience:	15.04
Female:	15.60	No experience:	14.88
Married/co-habiting:	14.95	Family history:	14.88
Single/sep/div/widowed:	14.87	No family history:	14.87
Protestants:	15.46	Up to GCSE/NVQ:	14.51
Roman Catholics:	14.63	A Level or higher:	15.06
Age Group:		Area:	
18-24yrs:	14.98	North:	14.82
25-30yrs:	15.43	South:	15.02
31-40	14.76	Urban:	14.83
41+yrs:	15.00		

Table 0.1 Commitment scores for different demographic groups

6.4 Ratings on Individual Items

As previously outlined, the questionnaire used provides an overall commitment score and also percentage scores on individual questionnaire items. The percentage of probationers agreeing or disagreeing with various questionnaire items are provided in Table 6.2. The current percentage score (Time 4) is indicated in bold. The figure below indicates the percentage difference in comparison to the Time 3 results. A dash indicates there is no difference between the Time 3 and Time 4 results.

6.5 Positive Commitment Results

Analysis of the individual questionnaire items identifies a number of items, which received high positive ratings from probationers. These are as follows:

1. Deciding to work for this organisation was a definite mistake on my part (87% of respondents disagree or strongly disagree)
2. I would be happy to spend the rest of my career with this organisation (77% of respondents agree or strongly agree)
3. I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond that normally expected to help this organisation succeed. (69% of respondents agree or strongly agree)
4. I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to the organisation (68% of respondents disagree or strongly disagree)

Interview data supports this strong sense of commitment from probationers. Interviewees stated how they intend to stay with PSNI for their full career until retirement and have few aspirations to go elsewhere. Probationers proclaim to be happy with what they are currently doing and therefore don't see why they would leave in the future.

Predominantly, interviewees' sense of commitment and feelings of belonging appear to be facilitated by their colleagues and the supportive environment in which they work. This finding is not unlike the results found under Job Satisfaction. Interviewees highlighted how being part of a section and working as part of a team help generate feelings of commitment and a sense of belonging to the organisation.

"I fit in well, everybody knows me."

"(I fit in) quite a lot. It depends on who you work with. I have great colleagues."

"(I would like to stay for) the rest of my career probably."

"I'm very happy now, I can't see why I'd leave."

Questionnaire Item	Agree / strongly agree	Undecided	Disagree / strongly disagree
32. I would be happy to spent the rest of my career with this organisation	77% -	18% -4%	6%* +4%
33. I really feel as if the organisations problems are my own.	30% -9%	26% -6%	45%* +16%*
34. I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to the organisation.	15% +6	17% -4%	68% -2%
35. I do not feel emotionally attached to the organisation.	19% +5%	20% -9%	61% +4%
36. I do not feel like part of the family at my organisation	14% +5%	21% -3%	65% -1%*
37. This organisation has a great deal of personal meaning to me.	55% -12%	24% -	21% +12%
38. I find that my values and the organisations values are very similar.	47% -20%	36% +7%	17% +12%*
39. I talk up this organisation to my friends as a great organisation to work for.	61% -4%	16% -9%	23% +13%
40. I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond that normally expected to help this org succeed.	69% -11%	20% +3%	11% +8%
41. I am proud to tell others that I am part of this organisation.	64% -1%	21% +2%	15% -1%
42. Deciding to work for this organisation was a definite mistake on my part.	2% +2%	11% +2%	87% -3%*
43. Taking everything into account, I am optimistic about the future of policing in Northern Ireland.	48% -11%	38% +4%	14% +6%*

Table 0.2 Summary of organisational commitment response at Time 4 with comparison data from Time 3.

*Due to rounding errors the total of these percentages are over or under by 1%.

6.6 Low Commitment Responses

The question item to receive the lowest positive response rate, 'I feel as if the organisations problems are my own', achieved only a 30% positive response rate. Qualitative data neglects to provide any insight into this finding and it would therefore warrant further research. Additionally, two other items from the questionnaire had a large drop in positive responses compared to the Time 3 results. These items are 'This organisation has a great deal of personal meaning to me', and 'I find that my values and the organisations values are very similar.' Positive responses to these items dropped by 12% and 20% respectively. These results indicate that although the majority of commitment responses remain positive, there are

a number of items that would need to be monitored over time to identify if there is a negative trend developing.

6.7 Career Aspirations

A number of interview questions focused on probationers' particular career aspirations and whether they were changing over time. Results indicate that as probationers settle into their roles and learn more about the opportunities available to them their career aspirations are changing very little. From the entire sample of interviewees, 88% still held the same career aspirations as when they were completing their tutorship. These career aspirations fall into three distinct categories and are as follows:

1. Many probationers are keen to enter into a specialist field in the future. However, many have a realistic understanding that they may need to have more experience before they can do this.
2. Other officers are thinking of going for promotion as soon as they are eligible. Some individuals are also hoping to get onto the High Potential Development Scheme.
3. The last group of probationers' intent to work in a variety of roles to broaden their experience before deciding where they would like to focus their career development.

Across time these categories have remained fairly similar. Indicating that the original career aspirations which probationers had back in Garnerville have remained the same and have been little swayed by experience, be that positive or negative.

6.8 Demographical Differences

Questionnaire data reveals a small number of differences in responses to particular commitment questions as a result of demographic variables. Significant differences were found based on gender, previous police experience and community background. The identified differences do not bear a close resemblance to the results found at Time 3. The differences identified are as follows:

- More males than females agreed or strongly agreed with the statement; 'This organisation has a great deal of personal meaning for me.'
- Individuals who did not have previous police experience were more undecided about the item 'I feel as if the organisations problems are my own,' than those who did have police experience.
- Respondents from a Roman Catholic background answered more positively about the future of policing in Northern Ireland than respondents from a Protestant background. On the same item, individuals aged 41+yrs were more optimistic about the future of Northern Ireland than any other age group.

6.9 Differences in Results Over Time

Analysis of probationers' responses to individual questionnaire items over time indicates that, responses have changed significantly for over half the questionnaire items. Results reveal that in all cases these changes have resulted in increasingly negative responses. In particular there has been a large drop in positive responses on a number of items from Time 3 to Time 4. These items are:

- 'This organisation has a great deal of personal meaning to me' (12% drop in positive responses),
- 'I find the values and the organisations values are very similar' (20% drop),
- 'I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond that normally expected to help this organisation succeed' (11% drop),
- 'Taking everything into account, I am optimistic about the future of northern Ireland' (11% drop).

These particular items will need to be monitored at Time 5 to see if further experience in the role as a probationer causes positive perceptions of these items to drop further. It could be concluded from all of the above findings that as probationers spend more time in their new career they are becoming less committed to PSNI. However, these results cannot override that commitment results remain high despite their gradual reduction.

7. Attitudes to Diversity

7.1 Introduction

The items for this section of the questionnaire were designed based on an analysis of previous cultural surveys and a review of the pertinent diversity issues impacting on the organisation at present. The results are given below. Figures in bold refer to the current Time 4 responses. The figures beneath them indicate the percentage difference between Time 3 and Time 4 data.

Questionnaire Item	Agree/ strongly agree	Undecided	Disagree / strongly disagree
44. The values of the organisation adequately emphasise the need to treat others fairly and with respect	86% -6%	9% +3%	4%* +2%*
45. Overall, I think PSNI is an organisation, which takes equal opportunities seriously.	82% -12%	11% +7%	8%* +6%*
46. On a day-to-day basis, I feel my colleagues at work treat me with respect and dignity.	92% -4%	5% +1%	3% +3%
47. I enjoy a harmonious working environment and atmosphere at PSNI.	78% -10%	15% +5%	7% +5%
48. I see protection of human rights as a fundamental part of my job.	88% -5%	7% +2%	5% +4%*
49. My immediate work colleagues are committed to treating all members of the public fairly.	86% -6%	9% +3%	5% +3%
50. My immediate supervisors are committed to actively promoting and valuing diversity in the workplace.	81% -7%	15% +5%	4% +2%
51. The organisation talks a lot about diversity but rarely does anything about it.	11% +7%	30% +8%	59% -15%
52. The physical environment is sufficiently neutral in terms of not promoting a particular political or religious perspective	80% -7%	14% +4%	6% +3%
53. There are aspects of the physical or working environment that I find intimidating or offensive.	10% +8%	10% -2%	80% -6%
54. Contentious issues are openly explored and debated in a non-threatening manner.	43% -5%	31% -9%	26% +14%
55. Harassment of any kind is not tolerated in this organisation.	68% -15%	19% +3%	12%* +11%*

Table 0.1 Summary of diversity response at Time 4 with comparison data from Time 3.

*Due to rounding errors the total of these percentages are over or under by 1%.

7.2 Positive Results

In general, positive responses to individual diversity questionnaire items remain high, depicting a work environment that is respectful of people's differences and an organisation that promotes diversity. The items to receive particularly high positive scores are:

1. On a day-to-day basis, I feel my colleagues at work treat me with respect and dignity. (92% agreed or strongly agreed with this item)
2. I see the protection of human rights as a fundamental part of my job. (88% agreed or strongly agreed with this item)
3. The values of the organisation adequately emphasise the need to treat others fairly and with respect. (86% agreed or strongly agreed with this item)

Interview data also reflects probationers' positive attitudes towards diversity and the promotion of diversity in the workplace. Overall the majority of interviewees describe a work environment, which is not entirely politically correct, but they are relieved that this is the case. Probationers describe a workplace in which colleagues joke with each other and have 'banter'. Some respondents even explain how the ability to joke and have fun with colleagues is a necessity given the intensity of the job. Jokes and banter are said in jest, and interviewees were confident that there is never any harm or malice in what is said, as people are respectful of each other's boundaries. Similar to the Time 3 findings, probationers are thankful that their work environment is less politically correct than Garnerville, a situation, which some individuals found oppressive.

"There is banter but nothing offensive."

"It's (the environment) as good as you will get anywhere."

Overall, questionnaire and interview data combine to reflect an environment, which is realistic and relaxed and in which probationers feel respected by their colleagues. Conversely, the majority of probationers indicated that they see respecting others rights and treating them fairly, as a core value.

7.3 Barriers to a Diverse Environment

Overall, responses to diversity questionnaire items are fairly positive and do not highlight any major areas of concern. However, when these results are compared to those found at Time 3, positive responses are generally. In particular positive responses to the items 'Harassment of any kind is not tolerated in this organisation,' and 'I enjoy a harmonious working environment and atmosphere at PSNI,' have dropped by 15% and 10% respectively.

In a similar trend to the findings of Time 1, 2 & 3 the item, 'Contentious issues are openly explored and debated in a non-threatening manner,' continues to receive the lowest positive

rating of all diversity questionnaire items. Only 43% of probationers sampled agreed or strongly agreed with this item, compared to responses to other items, which averaged approximately 80% positive responses. Responses to open ended questionnaire items also indicate that there does not appear to be much opportunity for probationers to speak freely and discuss potentially contentious issues. 16% of respondents stated that they feel expressing a political or religious opinion is never a good idea for fear of being reported.

It is difficult to make a conclusion based on this finding without further qualitative information. At this point it is only possible to deduce that for many probationers there is the feeling that there is still scope for PSNI to develop a more open environment where people can discuss all points of view and address conflict.

7.4 Human Rights Training

Questionnaire analysis identified that over three quarters of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'I see the protection of human rights as a fundamental part of my job'. Interview data gives a little more insight into the area of human rights and probationers' attitudes towards the training they receive in this area.

Interviewees were divided into two groups when questioned about the contribution their human rights training has had in helping them deal with work incidents. Approximately 50% of the interviewees' felt that their human rights training was beneficial and that it feeds into everything that they do and the decisions they make. For them, the training has helped to raise their awareness of people's human rights.

"It's (human rights training) been beneficial for me...I keep notes in the back of my notebook to ensure I give full consideration to a person's human rights."

"I am so much more aware of people's rights and cultures. Respecting others cultures doesn't mean you have to give up your own."

"There are certain things that I have and haven't done because of the human rights aspect."

The other 50% of interviewees indicated that the human rights training they received did not benefit them. They felt much of what they learnt was common sense and that if you were 'well brought up' you would treat everyone with respect regardless. Furthermore some probationers commented that if you can't treat people equally to start, you shouldn't be a police officer.

"For some people all the training in the world wouldn't make a difference. It's either in you or not to respect others."

"It has had no impact on me. It's all common sense. You know what not to do."

“With the way I was brought up it’s second nature (for me) to deal with others with respect.”

Out of the sample of probationers who felt they benefited from the human rights training, a number of them were able to give examples of how their human rights training has helped shape some of their work related decisions. Two examples of these are given below:

- One interviewee gave an example of how, when dealing with a non-molestation order, they were tasked with arresting an individual. This individual was located attending a family party. The probationer in question felt, considering this individual’s human rights it was not proportionate to arrest them in front of their family and decided to wait until the individual left the party and returned home before arresting them.
- Another probationer gave an example of how the human rights training they received influenced a decision they made in relation to a person in custody. The probationer had arrested an individual for criminal damage and was holding them in custody. The probationer held a conference with the custody sergeant to consider this individual and their human rights. Between the probationer and the custody sergeant it was decided that continuing to hold this person in custody and take away their freedom was not proportionate to the charge. Therefore, and as a result of considering their human rights, the probationer reported this particular individual and released them.

Despite individual’s personal opinions towards human rights training, the entire sample of interviewees were questioned as to whether they felt they would benefit from further training in either human rights or diversity issues. More than half the group felt that further training was not necessary. These individuals indicated that they felt human rights is threaded through every training course they attend, some even referred to it as a ‘mantra’. They, therefore, feel they have been well schooled and that further training would not be necessary. The probationers that felt they could benefit from further training suggested that any further training should be more practically based and made more relevant to the job. A number of probationers also suggested they would benefit from further diversity training on issues and cultures that are particular to their DCU, such as more insight into the Indian culture for probationers based in North Belfast.

7.5 Demographical Differences

Detailed analysis of probationers’ responses to diversity questionnaire items has identified differences in responses based on different demographic variables. In a similar result to the Time 3 findings, significant differences were found based on gender, age, community background, and marital status. Below is an outline of where these differences appear to lie:

- A higher number of males than females agreed or strongly agreed with the statement ‘My immediate colleagues are committed to treating all member of the public fairly.’ On the same item, more probationers aged 18-24yrs than any other age group disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement.
- More probationers from a Protestant background agreed with the statement, ‘I see protection of human rights as a fundamental part of my job,’ than individuals from a Roman Catholic background.
- A higher number of probationers from a Protestant background than a Roman Catholic background, disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, ‘Harassment of any kind is not tolerated in this organisation.’ Also, a larger number of respondents who were single or divorced agreed with this same item than those who were married.

The above results indicate that two particular questions; ‘My immediate colleagues are committed to treating all member of the public fairly,’ and ‘Harassment of any kind is not tolerated in this organisation,’ generated the biggest variation in responses as a result of demographic differences. However, examination of the Time 3 results does not indicate that these findings are reflective of a trend in terms of the same differences being found on the same items over time.

7.6 Differences in Results Over Time

During probationers first two and a half years in PSNI their working environment changes a number of times. Starting in Garnerville, they move on to operational training, then on to stations or tutor units for their tutorship, before finally settling in their stations to complete their probationer period. Therefore it is interesting to examine how probationers’ responses to diversity questionnaire items have changed as their environment changes.

Analysis of diversity results reveals that respondents’ perceptions have changed significantly over time. Data gathered at Time 4 expose the least positive results of all data gathering stages. These results indicate that so far, probationers are finding the station environment is the least positive environment they have worked in, in relation to positive attitudes to diversity and equality.

7.7 Probationers Feeling Threatened or Intimidated

The final question under the heading of diversity asked students if they felt under threat or intimidated due to a range of factors. The data is presented below in Table 7.2, in the form of frequencies rather than percentages. The total number of respondents was 250.

I feel under threat or intimidated because of my:	Agree / strongly agree	Undecided	Disagree / strongly disagree
Religious belief	9 (3 P, 5 RC)	16 (6 P, 7 RC)	225 (95 P, 106 RC)*
Political opinion	6 (3 P, 3 RC)	21 (9 P, 9 RC)	223 (92 P, 106 RC)*
Gender	10 (4 M, 6 F)	19 (7 M, 12 F)	221 (154 M, 67 F)
Marital status	11 (9 Single, 2 Married)	11 (5 Single, 6 Married)	228 (96 Single, 132 Married)
Ethnic origin	3	10	237
Sexual orientation	3	9	237*
Disability	3	3	154*

Table 0.2 Summary of variables contributing to students’ feelings of intimidation at Time 4.

*Due to missing data some of the above sub-categories are incomplete.

Results indicate that the majority of probationers sampled do not feel under threat or intimidated as a result of their background. Nevertheless there are still a small number of probationers who do feel this way as a result of personal factors. These results are slightly less positive than those achieved at Time 3. The last report from this study highlighted that a high number of individuals were undecided in giving responses to the question relating to feeling threatened or intimidated. At the time this result was flagged-up to be monitored in future data collection to see if these individuals changed their responses as a result of their experiences. It appears that a number of respondents have changed their opinion as a result of experience and that it has become more negative. The latest results from this study indicate that an increasing number of probationers feel threatened or intimidated as a result of their religious belief, political opinion, gender, marital status, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, and/or disability. With the largest number of individuals feeling threatened or intimidated as a result of their gender and/or marital status.

Qualitative data concurs with the questionnaire results, with the majority of individuals indicating that they do not experience any negative behaviour as a result of their background. However, similar to the questionnaire results a small number of probationers reported some negative experiences in the form of homophobia, sexist behaviour and derogatory references to an individual’s background. Focus group data highlighted some negative instances of attitudes and behaviour towards females. These include females being asked to make the tea, being perceived as a token female and being allocated a disproportionate number of rape cases. In conclusion, it emerges that although results indicate that probationers work in an

environment that accepts diversity and respects differences the majority of the time, there still appears to be occasions where people are less tolerant of difference and unacceptable behaviour occurs.

8. Perceptions of Station life

8.1 Introduction

As previously outlined, the data for the current report, Time 4, was collected as probationers completed their Stage 4 exams at Maydown. At this time, probationers had been working and training in PSNI for a total of 22 months and had been based in stations, working independently of their tutors for a number of months. Therefore, it was deemed an opportune time to extend the study beyond the four key areas previously surveyed (Learning Climate, Job Satisfaction, Organisational Commitment and Attitudes to Diversity) to include questions, which would give a snap-shot of station life.

Questions were designed based on pertinent initiatives ongoing in the organisation, i.e. devolvement, and also issues, which had previously been raised as part of the current study. Questions were piloted with probationers outside of the current sample. A copy of the final questionnaire used for data collection is contained in Appendix A.

8.2 Results

Results are summarised as percentage responses and are tabulated in Table 8.1. Initial analysis of the results has identified a number of different themes.

Almost half of all respondents believe devolvement is a good idea in principle. It is a positive result to see so many respondents supporting this scheme at a conceptual level, considering devolvement is a relatively new initiative for the organisation. The newness of this initiative could also possibly explain why 25% of respondents were undecided on this matter. It is anticipated that their opinions will change over time as they become more exposed to devolvement within their district.

However, although a large number of probationers supported the concept of devolvement, it is concerning that only a fifth of them agree that devolvement is working well in practice. Over 40% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that this initiative is working well in practice. Hence, it appears that although devolvement has recently occurred and a large number of probationers agree that it is a good idea, in their opinion it does not appear to be having a significantly positive impact at this point in time.

Questionnaire Item	Agree /strongly agree	Undecided	Disagree /strongly disagree
61 Giving local districts responsibility for their own budgets is a good idea in principle.	44%	25%	31%
62 Giving local districts responsibility for their own budgets is working well in practice.	19%	40%	42%
63 Clearing my current files and paperwork takes priority over seeking new detections.	60%	27%	13%
64 Officers working in Response (Section) policing are valued highly within my station.	16%	10%	74%
65 Officers working in Sector (Neighbourhood) policing make a key contribution to achieving policing objectives in my district.	24%	21%	55%
66 The senior management team within my district take a keen interest in developing probationers.	29%	23%	48%
67 My learning has been assisted by the PDP's.	1%	4%	95%
68 The community is interested in working with the police to prevent and solve crime.	27%	34%	40%
69A My station makes maximum use of its people.	34%	19%	47%
69B My station makes maximum use of its IT/Computers	37%	16%	48%
69C My station makes maximum use of its vehicles	41%	10%	49%
69D My station makes maximum use of its training staff	21%	27%	52%
69E My station makes maximum use of its books & manuals	21%	21%	59%

Table 8.1 Summary of station life responses at Time 4

*Due to rounding errors the total of these percentages are over or under by 1%.

During focus groups probationers have described the financial atmosphere in stations as 'penny-pinching,' with a general lack of resources. Participants expressed how this lack of resources often negatively impacts on their ability to do their job effectively and efficiently. Attempts to cut costs have resulted in some instances of vehicles being left in poor repair with broken radios, SOCO officers being limited to office hours and managers developing negative attitudes towards training, as the DCU has to foot the bill. Probationers expressed the opinion

that although many are supportive of devolvement their stations should be focusing more on solving crime than saving money.

The second theme to emerge from the data relates to the amount of paperwork probationers complete. 60% of probationers agreed or strongly agreed with the statement; 'Clearing my current files and paperwork takes priority over seeking new detections.' Focus group data gives further insight into this finding. A number of probationers indicated that on occasion they have turned a blind eye to detections in order to avoid the additional paperwork that would ensue. This finding also links closely with qualitative findings from Job Satisfaction in which probationers stated they felt the amount of paperwork they were required to complete, coupled with the paperwork linked to the PDP, was keeping them from being on the ground and responding to the public.

Results also indicate that probationers are learning very little from completing their PDP. Only 1% of respondents agreed that their learning had been assisted by the PDP. Therefore, it could be concluded that in respondents' opinion, the PDP, which is contributing heavily to the paperwork of probationers, as outlined under Job Satisfaction, is having little positive impact on furthering probationers learning, and is having a negative impact in terms of preventing probationers working with the public more often and seeking new detections.

The third theme identified from the current results indicates that a large majority of probationers (74%) do not feel officers working in response (section) are highly valued. Undoubtedly this result is having an impact on probationers' morale as the majority of which are based in response, spending only short periods of time in sector policing. This result could be linked with an earlier finding under Learning Climate, in which a large number of probationers rated the non-monetary rewards and recognition, which they receive for doing their job as poor or very poor. Overall, a result emerges in which probationers appear to feel under-valued and under-rewarded for their work in response.

As outlined above, probationers spend short periods based in sector (neighbourhood) policing throughout their probationer period to expose them to the work of the these units. Sector policing plays an important role in the Policing in the Community initiative and a vital role in the organisations endeavour to promote proactive policing. However, it is disappointing to see that over half of probationers disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement; 'Officers working in sector policing make a key contribution to achieving policing objectives in my district.' These results indicate that from the probationers' experience, albeit brief, they do not see sector policing as having as big an impact as it potentially could.

Focus group data has revealed more about the attitudes of probationers towards sector policing. A common perception among probationers was that community officers are just out for a pleasant walk in the locality and call response teams if any incidents arise. Some probationers question the impact sector has on crime and feel that often the young people take advantage of neighbourhood teams by going on bus runs with the police one day and stoning the police the next. In conclusion, the general view was expressed that response teams have more impact on crime than sector policing.

The last theme, which arose from the questionnaire data, relates to use of resources. These items were included in the questionnaire based on previous findings from Time 3, which indicated that resources were not being optimised and that much of this was linked to devolvement and money saving measures. Results from the current data help to put quantitative figures next to this previously qualitative finding. Data analysis indicates that the findings identified at Time 3 continue into Time 4 and that resources are not optimally used. Almost 50% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that their station makes maximum use of its people, IT/computers and vehicles. This result supports a previous finding under Learning Climate, which outlined that the use of Common Terminals is often not optimised as a result of their location and inaccessibility.

Questionnaire items referring to the use of training staff and books and manuals gathered the highest negative responses. 52% and 59% of probationers did not think their station made the best use of training staff or books and manuals respectively. This indicates that overall, there appears to be scope to improve the use of resources. With devolvement only a recent initiative, results indicate that at these early stages districts do not appear to be making optimal use of the resources for which they are responsible. With time these results may change as districts become more experienced at managing budgets. Time 5 results should give some insight if this is the case or if these results are early indicators of a possible training need.

Focus group data has highlighted one additional issue in relation to station life, which refers to probationer's relations with senior commanders. Results indicate there is much variance in the amount of contact that probationers have with commanders. In some DCU's probationers are welcomed into the district by their commander who briefs them on their vision of the district. Other commanders bring probationers along to accountability meetings with their ACC to give them a more strategic insight into the functioning of the DCU. In addition to this

some DCU's have put together welcome packs for probationers, which provide them with pertinent information on the geography and crime trends in the area to help them settle into their new station. At the other end of the spectrum some probationers have never met their commander or have had limited contact.

Overall, the introduction of a new section into the questionnaire and focus groups to gather probationers' perceptions of station life have revealed some interesting results. These include; the effectiveness of devolvement, working practices that are preventing probationers from spending more time on the streets, issues with individuals working in response feeling undervalued, questions about the contribution that sector policing is making to the achievement of current policing objectives, the under utilisation of resources, and finally variance in the amount of contact probationers have with their commanders.

8.3 Demographical Differences

Questionnaire data reveals a small number of differences in responses to particular questions as a result of demographic variables. As previously outlined in section 2, the categories North, South and Urban region are used throughout this report as the questionnaire data was gathered before and during the changeover to Rural and Urban regions. For the sake of consistency the same three categories were used throughout data gathering. The differences identified are as follows:

- A higher number of respondents from South region disagreed with the statement 'Giving local districts responsibility for their own budgets is a good idea in principle,' than individuals from North region.
- A higher number of probationers from South and Urban region, disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement 'Officers working in Sector (Neighbourhood) policing make a key contribution to achieving policing objectives in my district,' than probationers from North region. Respondents educated to the level of GCSE/NVQ were more likely to agree with this same item than respondents with higher qualifications.
- More probationers from Urban region than North region disagreed with the statement 'The senior management team within my district take a keen interest in developing probationers.'
- Respondents from North region were more likely to agree with the statement 'My station makes maximum use of its books & manuals,' than respondents from Urban region. A higher number of probationers with A-Level qualifications or higher disagreed with this item than individuals with less qualifications. Furthermore,

individuals who were single were more likely to be undecided regarding this item than probationers who were married.

- In a similar trend to the previous result, a higher number of respondents with A-Levels or higher disagreed with the statement 'My station makes maximum use of its books & manuals,' than probationers with less qualifications.
- A higher number of probationers aged 41+yrs were undecided about the item 'Giving local districts responsibility for their own budgets is working well in practice,' than any other age group.
- Probationers who had previous police experience were more likely to disagree that their station makes maximum use of its people resource than probationers who did not have previous police experience.

The above differences were found based on area of work, level of education, age, previous police experience, and marital status. Although these particular demographic variables are causing variance in responses closer examination of the data does not reveal any particular trends. All differences found as a result of demographic variables, appear to be random at this point in time,

9. Summary

In concluding this report, it is worth standing back a little from the detailed analysis and taking a more global view of what the study is saying to us as an organisation. This section summarises high-level issues and trends, which have developed over the past two years in which the study has been running. Action points are also highlighted, where appropriate.

1. ***Perceptions of Learning Climate:*** Over the past two years, new officers' perceptions of the learning climate that exists within PSNI have increasingly become less favourable. While the recruits have consistently found the environment warm and friendly with colleagues always willing to lend a hand, persistent problems are being experienced. These relate to the poor physical work environment, the paucity of learning resources and an increasingly shared view that hard work and effort are not well rewarded within PSNI. Mistakes, on the other hand, rarely go unnoticed. Subtle shifts in perceptions are also now emerging. For the first time, we are seeing large percentage drops in the number of people who feel this organisation actively encourages them to learn, to put forward new ideas and to strive for high quality in all aspects of their work. The question arises are we recruiting and training high calibre individuals to enter into a culture where people are not 'paid to think', where there can be low expectations of people in terms of skills and abilities and, where getting the job done can be just as important as getting the job done well? While the picture is not all one of doom and gloom, and results in this type of study could naturally be expected to drop over time, we do feel it is very important to flag up these trends now. The key recommendation in this area, is that these results are brought to the attention of as many frontline supervisors and senior managers as possible. In disseminating and debating this information at District level, people can be encouraged to question the extent to which their current practices and culture are actually inhibiting active learning and the quest for quality in all areas. At an immediate practical level, there are several small-scale changes which would be very helpful. These include increasing access to the excellent resources provided on the common terminals; making an active habit of acknowledging and rewarding good work; providing probationers with time and physical space to reflect upon their learning; and continually challenging all officers to experiment and to learn new methods of doing familiar tasks. Moreover, the data from this study should be used to support the case for a programme of works to bring the physical working environment in PSNI up to an acceptable contemporary standard which all officers deserve.
2. ***Job Satisfaction:*** Probationers perceptions of job satisfaction have become generally less positive over time. Responses to a number of items peaked as probationers

completed their tutorship only to fall again as they settled into their stations (current report), indicating that possibly the close supervision of the tutorship was having a positive impact on probationers perceptions. Across time paperwork and job related stress have consistently caused probationers frustration. Evidence indicates these two areas may be linked with one compounding the other. Furthermore, evidence has revealed a negative performance culture with regard to paperwork, which compensates and rewards inefficient work practices. This finding raises the question, what other systems in stations support inefficient behaviour? Supportive colleagues & managers and the nature of the job itself with its variety and challenges are the main sources of job satisfaction for probationers and have been over time. There has been a positive shift in probationers' perceptions of their ability to balance work and home life in comparison to previous findings. This change could be contributed to the introduction of a new shift system in many of the probationers' stations. The key recommendation in this area is to investigate the file preparation and other systems in stations to identify and address working practices, which make allowances for lax behaviour and penalise efficient officers by increasing their workload.

3. ***Organisational Commitment:*** Probationers feelings of commitment have remained very positive across time, with probationers hoping to stay with PSNI until retirement. This result shouldn't be underestimated, as a decrease in commitment would be expected over time. Yet, probationers appear to be as committed to PSNI now as they were when they first joined. This positive result can only be attributed to the positive contributions trainers, tutors, line managers and colleagues have made to help probationers settle in and feel they belong and they should be acknowledged accordingly. Although results have remained high they have indicated a possible negative kickback from 50:50 recruitment and the change in composition of the new recruits. Differences in perceptions were identified between Catholics and Protestants, with Catholics having higher commitment levels and being more optimistic about the future of policing in Northern Ireland and Protestants feeling less confident about their job security within PSNI. Nevertheless, results from the study reveal that across the first 2 years of the new recruits careers they are as committed to their jobs in PSNI now as they were when they first entered Garnerville.
4. ***Attitudes to Diversity:*** Probationers ratings of attitudes to diversity have remained positive over time. The general atmosphere reflected in the results is one in which colleagues respect each other and are aware of individuals boundaries. It appears that things aren't always as politically correct in stations as they could be, but probationers

welcome this as it allows for 'banter and craic' with colleagues which helps to form friendships and teams. Many probationers have found this situation an improvement upon the stifled atmosphere of Garnerville. However, over time probationers have found consistently found that there is a lack of open discussion of contentious issues in the workplace. The general learning point from these results and a key recommendation, is that probationers appear to have a preference for a more realistic working environment where all topics are open for discussion. Probationers appear to have the skills to be able to acknowledge and respect people's boundaries, which would facilitate using personal judgement when it comes to discussing contentious issues. Having an more open atmosphere in stations where all issues can be discussed and explored would not only allow for team work and camaraderie to develop but it would also help to develop learning and understanding.

5. ***Perceptions of Station Life:*** This new section in the study was introduced to gather probationers' perceptions of station life as they have now spent a good 8 months working independently in the stations and have formed a number of opinions on particular issues. Results have highlighted that with in many stations devolvement doesn't appear to be working and has only lead to an atmosphere of penny-pinching and the misuse of resources. Furthermore, at this early stage of their career, probationers appear to be developing negative perceptions of the contribution sector poling is making to the achievement of district goals. This finding could undermine the goals of Policing with the Community if new recruits are suspicious of neighbourhood teams and the work they do. A lack of contact with district commanders for many probationers could also be leading to a lack of continuity between their work and the strategic goals of the organisation.

In conclusion, a number of general issues have arisen from this research, some persistent over time, some newly emerging. The psychologists on this project will endeavour to share these findings with as many key individuals throughout the organisation, as it is only through raising awareness and sharing information that these issues will begin to be addressed. It is recommended that frontline managers and senior managers disseminate the findings in this report and encourage debate and creative solutions to the issues highlighted.

