



THE POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR NORTH YORKSHIRE AND THE CHIEF CONSTABLE OF NORTH YORKSHIRE

HR: Recruitment and Selection

Internal audit report 8.23/24

FINAL

1 May 2024

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Why we completed this audit and background

We have undertaken a review of the Force's recruitment and retention control framework in order to provide assurance that there are effective processes in place to manage the recruitment programme and ensure retention rates inform the development of the Medium Term People Plan (MTPP) and People Strategy. As part of our audit, we have considered the process and approval stages for recruiting new starters, the training provided to staff involved in the interview process, and the analysis of advertising channels used by the Force to advertise vacancies. We have also considered the retention and planning processes, including the use of the MTPP to assess future staffing levels, the Talent Team's assessment of attrition rates, and how these areas are reported to the Chief Officer Team and included (if appropriate) within the Force's risk register.

Recruitment and retention is managed by the Talent Team which sits within the Force's People Services function and is led by the Head of People Services. The Talent Team is led by the Talent and Development Manager, and is supported by other teams within the People Services function. Whilst the Talent Team manage the recruitment and retention processes, individual business areas are involved in key stages including the creation and approval of a Vacancy Commissioning Form (VCF), and the shortlisting and interview process. Each vacancy is managed by a Recruiter (based in the Talent Team), who works with the Hiring Manager (within the business area recruiting the position) to ensure each stage within the recruitment process is completed and is in line with the agreed procedures.

All job applications are processed via the Force's recruitment portal, Engage, and can be advertised to internal and external applicants. Engage is also used to document the results of the shortlisting process, as well as an audit trail for key dates in the process such as when an interview is offered to candidates, when a condition offer has been made to the candidate, and when the unconditional offer is made for the new starter to join. When a conditional offer is made to a candidate, the Talent Team is responsible for processing and managing the pre-employment due diligence checks, including vetting reviews (though these are undertaken by the Force's Vetting Team), reference checks and medical clearances. Additional due diligence checks are undertaken on a case by case basis depending on the role applied for, as well as whether the applicant is a current employee of North Yorkshire Police, or another UK Force.

Conclusion

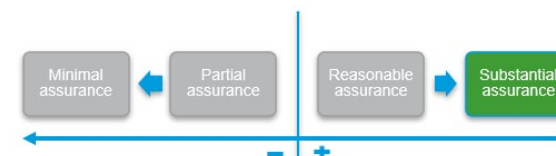
Our review has identified that the Force has a comprehensive control framework in place to manage the recruitment of new officers and staff members, and this was confirmed by our sample testing of 20 new starters. As part of our sample, we selected a range of individuals and positions, including three members from the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (OPFCC), six officer roles (including a Chief Superintendent), two Special Constables and nine staff roles. We confirmed a consistent approach to recruitment was in place across all roles and positions, and evidence of each step was available in all instances. Due diligence checks have been completed for all 20 new starters, and where appropriate, additional checks (such as checks by Professional Standards for internal candidates, and checks by other Forces for transferees) have been undertaken and saved on file.

Whilst the Force has an established process in place to manage recruitment and retention, a corresponding Recruitment and Retention Strategy is currently in development though is expected to be finalised and published by May 2024. Furthermore, whilst we identified that the interview process for applicants is clear and panel members are appropriate and consistent in their scoring, it was noted that additional guidance or training could be provided to ensure the Force is selecting the best candidates for the role, whilst also ensuring that other factors (such as the interviewers' biases) are not influencing decisions.

As part of the review, we have agreed **one medium** and **four low** priority management actions. We have also made one **suggestion** relating to ensuring a record of any verbal conditional offers is held on file.

Internal audit opinion:

Taking account of the issues identified, the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for North Yorkshire and the Chief Constable of North Yorkshire can take **substantial assurance** that the controls upon which the organisations rely to manage this risk are suitably designed, consistently applied and effective.



Key findings

We identified the following exceptions resulting in one medium priority management action being agreed:



Training and guidance

No training or formal guidance is currently provided to panel members prior to interviewing candidates, other than for interviews for Student Officers. However, the panel members who interviewed the Student Officer included in our sample had not completed the training.

The Talent Acquisition Partner confirmed that the Talent Team is looking to introduce wider training or guidance in 2024 to ensure that interviewers can better understand how to select the best candidates, as well as enabling them to identify any potential biases and ensure these do not factor in recruitment decisions.

If training or guidance material is not available to interviewers, there is a risk that the Force may not be selecting the most suitable candidate, and irrelevant factors could influence their decision making. **(Medium)**

For details of the four low priority management actions, please see section two of this report.

Our audit review identified the following controls are suitably designed, consistently applied, and are operating effectively:



Vacancy commissioning forms (VCF) are required to be created and approved for all advertised positions. We identified no discrepancies from our sample testing and confirmed that either a VCF was on file and had been correctly approved (in 13 instances), or had been processed via a recruitment or promotion scheduled approved by the Chief Officer Team (in seven instances). The VCF was supported by a role profile for each position setting a description of duties and relevant responsibilities.



An advert had been published on Engage for all 20 of our samples and contained the role profile for the position. All adverts were open for a minimum of seven days, and were either open to internal candidates, external candidates, or both.



Shortlisting is undertaken by at least two individuals, and is formally quality checked by the Talent Team. For our sample of new starters we confirmed that shortlisting was correctly undertaken, where appropriate. Evidence of shortlisting was available on the Force's recruitment portal, and we confirmed that an interview invite had been sent in a timely manner once the shortlist process had been completed.



A template for documenting interview questions is in place to ensure consistency across candidates, and we confirmed this was used for all interviews identified within our sample. The response to these questions and the scoring made by each panel member was available for all samples, and we confirmed that consistent questions had been asked to each candidate.



Due diligence checks are completed prior to the start date and are required to be saved on file. A vetting check had been completed for all 20 of our sample, and this was dated prior to their start date. Further due diligence checks (such as a medical check or employment references) were also completed and on file for the 20 new starters sampled.



Regular meetings and discussions are in place within the Talent Team to monitor staffing levels across the Force and identify any areas where additional support or resourcing is required. This is reflected within the MTPP and is also used to track recruitment campaigns for officer uplifts. The MTPP is updated on a monthly basis and contains the estimated and actual employee joiners and leavers, and is monitored against a target headcount.



Whilst the Force's recruitment portal is used to process applications, other advertising channels (such as social media, Indeed and TotalJobs) are used to raise awareness of current vacancies. When completing their applications, candidates are asked how and where they were made aware of the position, with this information collated by the Talent Acquisition Partner on a monthly basis. This data is available within the Talent Team to allow Recruiters to identify more popular areas to advertise, as well as being reported to the Strategic People Board on a quarterly basis.



Roles within the Force have an assigned salary band, with officers and staff having the opportunity to move up a point each year as part of the appraisal process. Once the highest point is reached within the band, other than moving role or a change in the banding, officer and staff members' salary remains the same. All role profiles within our sample have an assigned salary band, and this aligns to the information within the respective contract or offer letter for each new starter.



The Force's principal risk register has two risks (out of a total of six) relating to recruitment and retention. Each risk is RAG rated, with one risk assigned as 'green' (within tolerance), and another in 'red' (to treat). Both risks have a risk owner, and we confirmed that updates were provided at recent Joint Independent Audit Committee (JIAC) meetings for both risks. In relation to both risks:

- The risk categorised as 'green' is 8584 (long term vacancies and high turnover impacts negatively on the ability to deliver effective and consistent services), and this risk was used as the basis for this audit, and therefore controls to mitigate this risk have been tested in line with the scope of this audit; and
- The risk categorised as 'red' is 8628 (prevailing difficulties in the retention and recruitment of Detective roles impact on service to the public), and is not assigned to the Talent Team, but is the responsibility of the Assistant Chief Constable. We did note that an update was provided by the Head of Crime to the September 2023 JIAC meeting to outline that a plan has been developed which involves the restructuring of the Crime Teams, with staffing levels estimated to be completed by Spring 2024. As this risk is not directly assigned to the

Talent Team, we have not considered its full control framework, but have noted Detective levels are included within the MTPP and monitoring undertaken by the Talent Team.



A Service Delivery meeting is held every six weeks within the People Services function, and is attended by key members including the Head of People Services, the Talent and Development Manager, and the Talent Acquisition Partner. A progress update is provided for each area, and we confirmed that a recruitment and retention progress report was produced for the January 2024 meeting. An action log is in place for the Service Delivery meetings, and we confirmed that these are tracked and discussed at each meeting.



A quarterly update is provided to the Strategic People Board, with the presentation produced by the Business Insight Team for each meeting. The updates include key areas such as new starters, the number of adverts published, and any important developments within the recruitment and retention process. The Strategic People Board is attended by a representative from the Chief Officer Team, as well as relevant individuals such as the Head of People Services. The progress update reports produced for the Service Delivery meetings are also provided to the Strategic People Board to ensure additional oversight.



The Force has implemented a retention process called 'Say and Stay', aimed at increasing retention rates and reducing leaver numbers. 'Say and Stay' is on the front page of the Force's intranet, and allows potential leavers to communicate any concerns or queries they may have to the People Services function, before they formally decide to leave.

2. DETAILED FINDINGS AND ACTIONS

This report has been prepared by exception. Therefore, we have included in this section, only those areas of weakness in control or examples of lapses in control identified from our testing and not the outcome of all internal audit testing undertaken.

Risk: 8584				
Control	The Force has an overarching People Services Strategy covering all areas managed by the People Services function which includes the Talent Team.	Assessment:		
	A Recruitment and Retention Strategy 2023-2025 is in place covering the Force's approach to resources, staff and officer recruitment and retention, including the demand and challenges of the labour market (and how the Force will address these).	Design		✓
		Compliance		×
Findings / Implications	Through discussions with the Talent Acquisition Partner we confirmed that the Force has a People Services Strategy 2021-2024 which was implemented in April 2021. The Strategy is due for renewal in 2024 where an updated version will be created, approved and made available to officers and staff. We requested evidence that the Strategy had been approved by the Chief Officer Team; however, the Talent and Development Manager confirmed that they were unable to locate this as it had been approved several years prior and the Force's governance structure has significantly changed since. We reviewed the People Services Strategy and confirmed that this sets out an overarching approach for managing the People Services function, which includes the Talent Team. The approach for the Talent Team can be summarised as providing services for the attraction, identification, selecting and onboarding of new recruits, as well as developing the Force's existing workforce. A series of commitments have been identified and recorded for the Talent and Development area within the People Services function which aligns to the testing undertaken during this audit. The People Services Strategy is supported by the Recruitment and Retention Strategy 2023-2025. The strategy requires some minor changes with regards to the visual of the document, the strategy is complete. The Talent Acquisition Partner confirmed that the Recruitment and Retention Strategy was approved by the Chief Officer Team in August 2023 but has yet to be published internally. We were not provided with evidence of approval of the Recruitment and Retention Strategy 2023-2025. If key documentation setting out the Force's approach to recruitment and selection is not in place and available to officers and staff, there is a risk that there is no mechanism to improve recruitment and retention within the Force. The Recruitment and Retention Strategy's main purpose is to provide the Force with an approach to its resourcing challenges between 2023-2025. Upon review of the strategy, we confirmed that the sections include the 'current climate' of recruitment within the Policing sector, the critical business areas and roles, as well as how the Force plans to manage these areas. A section titled 'our challenges' sets out the key challenges facing the Force, as well as how these will be addressed, and any risks mitigated. These challenges include the growing competitiveness of the labour market, national shortages in specialist roles, the aim to achieve a more diverse and experienced workforce.			
Management Action 1	The Recruitment and Retention Strategy will be completed and uploaded to the Force's intranet. Evidence of approval from the Chief Officer Team will also be sought to ensure this is on file.	Responsible Owner: Talent and Development Manager	Date: 31 May 2024	Priority: Low

Risk: 8584

Control	Partially missing control A supporting Recruitment, Selection and Promotion Procedure is under development to provide operational guidance to staff regarding these processes.	Assessment:		
		Design	x	
		Compliance	-	
Findings / Implications	<p>We obtained a copy of the Recruitment, Selection and Promotion Procedure which is currently in draft and has not been communicated or uploaded to the intranet for officers or staff to access. The procedure provides the Force with an agreed approach from an operational perspective to ensure good practice and principles are adhered to throughout the recruitment and selection process.</p> <p>The Talent Acquisition Partner confirmed that the Recruitment, Selection and Promotion Procedure is currently out for consultation with the wider business and partners (such as the union, Unison), with the consultation deadline set for 13 March 2024. The current draft document was written at the end of 2023, and given the consultation deadline within March, the Force expects the procedure to be finalised and released within the business in April 2024. We also noted no version control within the procedure, although given the document is currently in draft and out for consultation, this is not expected at this point.</p> <p>Whilst the new procedure is not yet in place, we confirmed that an old Recruitment, Selection and Appeals Procedure is currently in place on the Force's intranet and available to all staff and officers. We noted that there is a review date of December 2022 and this procedure is therefore overdue for review.</p> <p>Without an up to date procedure in place to define the recruitment, selection and promotion procedure, there is a risk that staff and officers are unable to complete the recruitment and selection process consistently and in line with national regulation and legislation.</p>			
Management Action 2	Following the consultation deadline, the Recruitment, Selection and Promotion Procedure will be revised (if required), published on the intranet and communicated across the Force.	Responsible Owner: Talent Acquisition Partner	Date: 30 April 2024	Priority: Low

Risk: 8584

Control	The assessment process is scored by an agreed panel using an agreed criteria. If applicants are interviewed, a consistent question set is used. All applicants are assessed by at least two panel members which are suitable for the role being advertised. Records of assessment are retained on file by the Talent Team and are used to determine the candidates to be appointed.	Assessment:		
		Design		✓
		Compliance		✓
Findings / Implications	<p>For all 19 samples where an interview was held, we confirmed that the top scoring candidate (or candidates in some instances) was offered the role first. For one candidate (a Student Officer role), we identified that multiple candidates were to be offered the position, and that the new starter selected as part of our sample, scored high enough to be correctly offered the role. For another candidate, we noted that the highest scoring applicant was offered the job but withdrew late on within the due diligence process. As such, the second highest scoring candidate was offered the role instead (our sample).</p> <p>For the 19 samples, we confirmed that evidence of the conditional offer was on file for only 17 new starters. For the remaining two where the conditional offer was not on file, one position (a Chief Superintendent role) had been offered verbally by the Chief Constable (but not formally documented), and the other position (the Student Officer role) had also been offered verbally due to the volume of successful candidates. As a conditional offer letter was not sent, no evidence for this can be found on file, though evidence is available to confirm that the correct candidate was selected. A management action has not been raised for this discrepancy, as conditional offer is not a guaranteed offer or contract of employment, and is subject to withdrawal at any point within the due diligence process. As such, whilst it is good practice to document the conditional offer letter or verbal conditional offer (and we have raised a suggestion for this to be completed), the Talent Team do not believe that there is a risk to the business if this is not on file.</p> <p>For the 17 samples where evidence of the conditional offer is on file, we noted the timeframe between the interview and offer was under 14 days for 11 samples. For the remaining six, we noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• three were either 15 or 16 days;• one was 25 days;• one was 220 days. We queried this and the Talent Acquisition Partner and Talent and Development Manager confirmed that this was for a position in a team that was undergoing a restructure, and during the process a recruitment freeze was in place. As such, all applicants were told their application was on hold; and• for the final sample, the candidate was not given a conditional offer until approximately five months later. However, we noted that another candidate (the highest scoring) had been correctly offered the job first but had withdrawn during the due diligence process. As such, the second highest scoring candidate had been informed following this.			
Suggestion	The Force should consider documenting when a verbal conditional offer is made to an applicant.	Responsible Owner:	Date:	Priority: Suggestion

Risk: 8584

Control	All staff are required to sign and date a contract prior to the start date.	Assessment:		
	All Special Constables and officers are required to sign an office letter prior to the start date.	Design	✓	
	All contracts and offer letters are retained by the Talent Team in a central folder.	Compliance	×	
Findings / Implications	<p>Of the 20 new starters, we confirmed either an offer letter (for officers) or a contract (for staff members) was on file for all new starters. For 17 new starters, we confirmed the contract or offer letter was signed and dated prior to the start date. However, for three new starters, we noted that the offer letter was not signed or dated by the new starter.</p> <p>For a further two samples, we noted that the new starter had received a copy of the offer letter prior to their vetting being completed. Whilst one of these individuals had not signed the offer letter until after the vetting had been completed, in the other instance, the new starter had signed the offer letter prior to vetting having been finalised. In this case, the individual had received and signed the offer letter on 14 September 2023, but vetting was not completed until the 15 September 2023. We queried this with the Talent Acquisition Partner who confirmed that if they receive verbal confirmation from the Vetting Team (which was received for both samples), they can send the contract or offer letter to the new starter prior to receiving written confirmation. This is used primarily when there is a short turnaround for the new starter to begin work. Whilst we acknowledge that this new starter was scheduled to begin their role only several days later on 18 September 2023, the Force should ensure that offer letters and contracts are not sent to new starters until after vetting checks have been completed and evidence of this is on file.</p> <p>If signed contracts and offer letters are not on file, and they have not been signed prior to the start date, there is a risk that the Force could be at risk of financial loss or legal disruption in the event of a contract dispute.</p>			
Management Action 3	<p>The Force should ensure all offer letters and contracts are signed and dated and a copy is retained on file.</p> <p>When contracts and offer letters are sent to new starters, they should not be sent until after vetting confirmation has been provided to the Talent Team.</p>	Responsible Owner: Talent Acquisition Partner	Date: 31 May 2024	Priority: Low

Risk: 8584

Control	Partially missing control - Panel members involved in the recruitment process do not receive any training regarding interviews. Panel members interviewing Student Officers are required to complete mandatory training covering biases when assessing candidates.	Assessment:		
		Design	x	
		Compliance	-	
Findings / Implications	<p>The Talent Acquisition Partner confirmed that currently no formal training is provided to panel members before they undertake interviews. Some guidance is currently provided and informal guidance provided when required. We confirmed an assessment pack was in place with agreed set questions which we confirmed was in place during our sample testing. In addition, we confirmed training for assessors supporting with student officer assessment had recently been rolled out. As this had recently been rolled out and there had not been a student enrolment process since the training had been provided we could not verify this at the time of our audit.</p> <p>However, it was explained that the Talent Team are looking to introduce formal training or producing guidance material later this year, with an estimated completion date for April 2024. If staff and officers do not receive training or guidance before interviewing applicants, there is a risk that the interview panel could ask questions that may not be appropriate and could lead to potential legal action or reputational damage to the Force.</p> <p>It was noted that an online assessment training course is required for panel members interviewing student officers. This training is provided by the College of Policing and completed on their e-learning system. From reviewing a report of this training, we identified that there are currently 39 individuals that have completed the training and can interview student officers. From our sample of 20 new starters, one of these individuals was a Student Officer and, when comparing the interview panel to those individuals that have completed the training module, we identified all three panel members had not completed the training. However, the Talent Acquisition Partner confirmed that the mandatory training had not been rolled out at the time of the interview. If officers and staff are not appropriately trained when interviewing candidates, there is a risk that interviews may not be conducted fairly. Using untrained panel members to assess student officers could also result in candidates being assessed incorrectly, resulting in applicants being selected based on interviewers' biases.</p>			
Management Action 4	The Force will produce training material for assessors to assist them in the interview process. Once complete, this training material and guidance will be rolled out across the Force to ensure interviewers are qualified to recruit and select candidates.	Responsible Owner: Talent Acquisition Partner	Date: 30 September 2024	Priority: Medium
Management Action 5	The Force will implement a check on all panel members interviewing Student Officers to ensure that they have completed the relevant training module.	Responsible Owner: Talent Acquisition Partner	Date: 30 September 2024	Priority: Low

APPENDIX A: CATEGORISATION OF FINDINGS

Categorisation of internal audit findings	
Priority	Definition
Low	There is scope for enhancing control or improving efficiency and quality.
Medium	Timely management attention is necessary. This is an internal control risk management issue that could lead to: Financial losses which could affect the effective function of a department, loss of controls or process being audited or possible reputational damage, negative publicity in local or regional media.
High	Immediate management attention is necessary. This is a serious internal control or risk management issue that may lead to: Substantial losses, violation of corporate strategies, policies or values, reputational damage, negative publicity in national or international media or adverse regulatory impact, such as loss of operating licences or material fines.

The following table highlights the number and categories of management actions made as a result of this audit.

Risk	Control design not effective*	Non Compliance with controls*	Agreed actions			
			Low	Medium	High	Suggestion
Risk 8584	2** (18)	2 (18)	4	1	0	1
Total			4	1	0	1

* Shows the number of controls not adequately designed or not complied with. The number in brackets represents the total number of controls reviewed in this area.

** More than one management action raised against one control.

Debrief held	6 March 2024
Additional evidence received	8 March 2024
Draft report issued	19 March 2024
Revised Draft report issued	29 April 2024
Responses received	1 May 2024
Final report issued	1 May 2024

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Our report is prepared solely for the confidential use of **The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for North Yorkshire and the Chief Constable of North Yorkshire**, and solely for the purposes set out herein. This report should not therefore be regarded as suitable to be used or relied on by any other party wishing to acquire any rights from RSM UK Risk Assurance Services LLP for any purpose or in any context. Any third party which obtains access to this report or a copy and chooses to rely on it (or any part of it) will do so at its own risk. To the fullest extent permitted by law, RSM UK Risk Assurance Services LLP will accept no responsibility or liability in respect of this report to any other party and shall not be liable for any loss, damage or expense of whatsoever nature which is caused by any person's reliance on representations in this report.

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