

Abstract

Currently little is known about how frontline police officers navigate major structural reforms within their organisation. This paper will present findings based on data collected as part of the first ever empirical study of the newly created Police Service of Scotland between October 2013 and June 2014. The findings discussed here are pertinent to the wider academic literature in that they fill the current gap in knowledge on how frontline police officers experience major structural reforms and also at a police operational level by exploring the ways if any, reform impacted on the routine delivery of local policing. This paper focuses on three main themes which emerged from the analysis of 68 interviews conducted with a stratified sample of serving police officers; frontline police officers, their supervisors and managers across two geographically distinct case study areas in Scotland. The paper highlights police officers' concerns around a lack of frontline involvement in either the planning or implementation of reform, the pace at which the changes associated with reform were rolled out and the internal communication processes adopted throughout reform journey, all of which they claim impacted negatively on their daily routines. This unique data was collected via a variety of qualitative and ethnographic research approaches including non-participant observations, walking interviews, documentary analysis and semi structured interviews at the precise time major structural reform was being implemented across Scotland. In the absence of any specific police change theoretical framework, reform was viewed through existing Organisational Change Theory.

Key Words: Police Reform, Frontline Experiences, Organisational Change, Pace of Reform, Communication Processes

Introduction

For the most part, organisations change and adapt on a continual and incremental basis in order to survive the ever changing political, social, economic and business environments they exist in. For the police to remain effective in their roles across communities they have reformed policy and evolved practice to suit the external changes that occur within each society resulting in a variety of policing organisations which look to both mirror and support the specific society in which they are situated. Change within a police organisation is therefore not a new concept, with many authors claiming that change is the one constant in any policing organisation (Hart, 1996; Skogan, 2008; and Hail, 2016).

In 2013 however, Scotland experienced the largest, single piece of police reform in decades with the introduction of the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012. The act paved the way for the amalgamation of the existing eight regional police forces into a single national police service for Scotland. The level and scope of this reform was unprecedented in contemporary policing, with relatively little known in either academic or policing circles about any potential impacts or implications of such a large scale amalgamation on operational policing.

Despite there being a large number of existing studies labelled as police reform, when we examine them in detail, there is a distinct lack of research which has explored structural or macro levels of reform, such as that experienced in Scotland, particularly from a frontline perspective. With the exception of recent work published by Fyfe and Terpstra 2015; Fyfe and

Henry 2012; Terpstra and Fyfe 2014, the majority of current police reform literature has tended to examine the more operational or micro level changes related to police practice such as the work of Skogan (2006) and his colleagues who examined the impact of community policing initiatives. The work presented here therefore provides a unique insight into how frontline police officers experienced and negotiated the many changes brought about by police reform.

The lack of empirical research on frontline police officers experiences of structural reforms has been discussed by various authors including Brunetto and Farr-Wharton (2003) and Sklansky and Marks (2008), with the latter suggesting that traditionally police research has looked to answer questions "...typically pursued by police executives..." (Sklansky and Marks 2008, p4) resulting in the marginalisation of the frontline officers experiences. Savage (2007) emphasises the important role that frontline officers play at times of reform or change and cautions police organisations against disregarding the experiences of the front line during times of change describing frontline officers as the "...street level bureaucrats who dictate how policies are (or are not) translated into actions at the delivery end of the policy process" (Savage 2007, p128). In other words, although the police organisation is known for its hierarchical, top down structure, it is frontline officers, out on the street who can help make or break change policy directives issued by internal change "...police entrepreneurs..." (Savage 2007, p129).

This lack of focus on the experiences of frontline officers through organisational change highlights the unique nature of the data presented here in this paper which could be used to expand the current police reform literature and importantly highlight to policy makers the impact of change on the frontline of the organisation at a time when many police organisations in both the UK (Devon & Cornwall and Dorset) and across Northern Europe (Norway, the Netherlands and Belgium) have also began to either discuss or implement their own police reform and the amalgamation of existing services. The insights presented here will therefore not only fill an existing gap in current academic knowledge, but will also provide empirical evidence to assist police organisations in the planning and delivery of future structural police reforms from a frontline policing perspective.

The focus of this paper is to discuss the experiences of frontline police officers using the three main themes of frontline marginalisation, the pace of reform and the internal communication processes during reform before concluding that there are important lesson to be learned which can be translated and used to develop a framework for future structural police reforms.

Methods

Existing research examining police change has, in the main, focused on micro level changes, such as Skogan (2006) and his longitudinal study examining the impact of community policing initiatives and Bradford et.al. (2013) who examined the "...relationship between the practice of individual officers..." (Bradford et.al 2013, p111) during the implementation of new police policies such as community policing (CP). It was therefore decided that given the prominence of the scope and level of police reform and the unique timing of the data collection (which ran in parallel to the implementation of reforms) a qualitative research strategy would provide valuable in-depth data, based on an authentic insight into each participant's lived experiences of reform to the wider academic and policy communities.

To enhance the robustness of the findings the project¹ employed multiple qualitative approaches to data collection including an ethnographic approach with non-participant observations, walking interviews with local police officers and semi structured in-depth interviews. A qualitative research strategy was deemed the most appropriate in order to be able to provide robust empirical evidence collected in a real world context to extrapolate each participants' own lived experience of "policing as they experience it" (Sunshine and Tyler 2003). This standpoint is supported by Silverman (2001) who suggests that the principle underpinning qualitative research is to "...enable respondents to have their voices heard" (Silverman 2001, p124).

Due to the time constraints of the project and the geographical scale of Scotland as a whole it was decided to employ a case study design for the purposes of data collection. A case study design, is the most suitable design to study social phenomena from within a real life framework "...location...community or organization" or within a "...bounded system" (Creswell 2007, p73). Employing a collective case study design in the data collection therefore offered the researcher "...the opportunity to use many different sources of evidence" (Yin 1994, p91), including non-participant observations of community council, community safety and police scrutiny meetings.

Data collection was conducted between October 2013 and June 2014 across two distinct geographical police divisions in Scotland. The research data was collected from a stratified sample of police personnel from across various ranks, roles and responsibilities in Police Scotland and comprised of police constables (PCs); Front line supervisors (FS) including sergeants and inspectors; Senior managers (SM) including Chief Inspectors, Superintendents, Chief Superintendents and Assistant Chief Constables. In total 68 interviews were conducted for the project -39 in Case Study 1 and 23 in the second study. Full ethical approval was granted by the University of Dundee to conduct the research.

The support of senior police managers together with the researchers' affiliation to the Scottish Institute for Policing Research (SIPR) proved invaluable in gaining access to police personnel across all levels of the organisation and meant that no long term negotiations were required, keeping Police Scotland gatekeepers to a minimum. The practical support received from Police Scotland also included access to a designated, named liaison team who mediated the research and offered the researcher assistance in accessing contact details for senior police management, setting up meetings and on occasion offering reassurances to police managers as to the researcher's background and security clearance.

The Scottish Journey to Reform: How did we get there?

The financial crisis of 2008 resulted in major government cuts to public spending across the UK including policing. As a consequence police organisations were required to reduce spending and adjust budgets in relation to operational policing (HMIC 2010). In Scotland in 2008, the Justice Secretary directed the national police scrutiny body Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary Scotland (HMICS) to carry out a review of Scottish policing (Tomkins 2009). The focus of the review was to identify how policing in Scotland could be carried out more effectively and efficiently within the new financial framework whilst also looking to future savings. Post publication of this review and with the Scottish Government

¹ The research findings used in this paper were taken from a 3 year doctoral research project which was funded by the ESRC and the Scottish Institute for Policing Research based at the University of Dundee and supported by Police Scotland. The aim of the project was to examine the ways if any, in which local policing had been altered as a result of the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012.

declaring that the current regional eight police forces were unsustainable, a group was established by the Scottish Government and named the Scottish Policing Board (SPB). The role of this board was to begin examining what potential future policing priorities would be across Scotland. In 2010 the Sustainable Policing Sub Group (SPSG) was also established to specifically identify future cost savings in Scottish policing. This was followed by the introduction of the Sustainable Policing Project Team (SPPT) whose focus was specifically to examine three potential models of police reform, a single national force, a regional structure or an enhanced co-operations model and their potential impacts on policing functions.

In 2011 the first public consultation regarding proposed reforms to policing was held in Scotland with a second following in 2012. In addition to the consultation processes the Justice Secretary, in August 2011 organised an international policing summit where it was announced he would be introducing a bill to create a national police service for Scotland. Policing representatives from across European countries who had reformed or were planning to reform their existing police structure, were invited to attend the summit. On the 16th of January 2012 the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Bill was introduced by the Justice Minister receiving Royal Assent just seven months later on 7th of August 2012 becoming the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012, with day one of the new Police Service of Scotland established on 1st April 2013. It therefore took just under two years from the first consultation on police reform to the creation of the new Police Service of Scotland.

However, this is a good point to reveal that the idea of merging regional police forces across Scotland into one, single national police service is not a new concept and therefore, we cannot examine the recent reforms without briefly exploring the historical discourse surrounding a single police service for Scotland. The notion of a single service was first mooted by Alfred John List, the head of Midlothian Constabulary in 1853 (Jackson et.al.2015). The political powers of the time however, could not be persuaded of the merits of such a merger and the notion was placed on the back burner until it was raised again in 1886. On this occasion the idea for a national police service was suggested by the then Inspector of Constabulary for Scotland. Following in a similar vein as recent police reforms, the main underlying principle put forward in 1886 was related to the impact of terrorism and organised crime. A third unsuccessful attempt at designing a national police service in Scotland was then raised during the outbreak of World War II in order to support national military interests (Jackson et.al. 2015). The following section will now discuss the findings from frontline officers collected during the implementation of reform.

Findings from the frontline: What did we learn?

The findings from the project highlighted that there was a general consensus on how reform had been experienced by frontline officers of varying years of service, geographical location and rank.

The following section will provide an outline of frontline officer perceptions of three of the main themes to emerge from the data:

1. A perception that there had been no opportunity for frontline police personnel to offer input or feedback during the reform process
2. The rapid pace and implementation of reform
3. The quantity and quality of communications officers received throughout the reform process.

As discussed above, change or reform within a policing context is nothing new with various changes occurring across and within police organisations for generations. However, in the context of this paper and its findings on the experiences of frontline officers one of the largest themes to emerge was related to the rapid pace of daily change experienced by police officers in Scotland. Pardo del Val, & Martínez (2003) refer to this as the "...scope of change..." (Pardo del Val, & Martínez 2003, p4) whereby the changes ongoing within an organisation can be identified and classified by the scale of change taking place to the structures and operations of each organisation. The scope of organisational change taking place they argue, can be defined as either transformational or incremental change. Todnem (2005), argues that in the main transformational change occurs as a result of a "...organisational crisis..." (Todnem 2005:370) which can be unpredictable. In contrast incremental change or what Kezar (2001) refers to as "first order change...is characterised by evolutionary change, a linear process..." and is implemented in incremental approaches" (Kezar 2001, p16). Police personnel confirmed that change, although not of the same level or scope, had always been an ongoing concept for the police organisation.

"...the police is always changing, this is what happens...this is not the first time things have changed...it's just the transition period people don't like, it will change again in five years and people will be like 'we liked it the way it was...' Sgt 03 Easton (F 10)²

Frontline officers and their supervisors were also in agreement regarding their claims that there had been no opportunity through either the planning or implementation stages of change for them to join the consultation or provide feedback on reform and in the main they felt marginalised by the process.

"...when the discussion came about whether it was a good idea to have a single police force they didn't actually ask anybody who worked in it..." PC 02 Longphort (M 24)

The pace of change was found to be of particular concern to frontline officers in Longphort and Easton with a consensus that it was being implemented too quickly.

The implementation of many of the operational changes brought about by reform was found to be more problematic for officers in Longphort due to their pre-reform low staffing levels which impacted on their capacity to change. It was also found that support provided to frontline officers throughout the reform process was varied within and between case study areas and appeared to be based on individual leadership style and personalities. Communication was an issue for all police staff during the implementation of reform based on the quantity and quality of electronic communications which were not always relevant to officers or their role.

As discussed above, changes and reforms to police organisations have been occurring for generations in order to ensure that police practice maintains its links with the wider societal changes occurring around them. Initially police responses indicated that change, although not of this level or scope, was not a new experience for the policing organisation and that generally police personnel were adaptable and pragmatic in their approach to change.

"I've been in the police force X years and it changes all the time, change happens all the time regardless if it's the first of April or not... you know shift changes all the time people get moved left right and centre..." PC 05 Easton (F 8)

² Indicates the gender and years of service of each participant

Participants from both case study areas and with a variety of years' service highlighted how in general they believed that members of the policing organisation because of their pragmatic approach to change were not finding the concept of change difficult. The concept of continual growth and evolution within the modern policing organisation was also discussed by police management who corroborated the view of many frontline officers that change was not a new concept for them to deal with. Comments such as those from frontline officers, supervisors and management from within both case study locations indicated a consensus that the concept of change per se had not been identified as being significant in itself with serving officers in Scotland and that overall officers and management within the organisation were understanding of change as a part of modern day policing. These comments also support the works of authors such as Hart (1996) and Skogan (2008) who both refer to continual change within policing organisations and highlights the ways in which policing requires to adapt to the specific historical or cultural context the organisations operate in.

However, a key theme which emerged from the data analysis did show that many frontline officers and their supervisors believed they had been marginalised from the reform process in Scotland, particularly in terms of their lack of opportunity to contribute to either the planning or implementation of reform.

“...when the discussion came about whether it was a good idea to have a single police force they didn't actually ask anybody who worked in it...” PC 02 Longphort (M 24)

Many frontline officers appeared to be shocked, although not surprised that there had been no official platform available for them to take part in the consultation process and as the above comment, just one of many similar in tone and content, indicates they believed they were in a much better position to report on how the changes would impact on the delivery of day to day policing.

More recently, work conducted by Moggre, den Boer and Fyfe (2018) which examined police leadership in times of police transitions across Scotland and the Netherlands reported similar findings from Police Scotland senior police managers. Their data, showed that whilst Police Scotland managers were understanding of the need for police reform, they too felt marginalised from the process in relation to their suggestion put forwards in the early stages of planning reform that “...a limited programme of mergers” (Moggre, den Boer and Fyfe 2018, p394) which would have seen the creation of three or four regional police services in Scotland was ignored by politicians who it was claimed had more interest in the upcoming 2014 Scottish referendum than the success of police reform.

The Rapid Pace of change

The speed at which the changes occurred in Scotland was identified by participants, both frontline staff and their supervisors across case study areas, as causing particular difficulties for operational policing. On the whole participants regarded the pace of reform as being the biggest obstacle to engaging with post reform operational changes. From the perspective of frontline officers and their supervisors the speed at which the changes were implemented caused the most anxiety.

“...it's all been so rapid and constant...it's too quick and too much change...too much change too soon and it's not over” PC12 Easton (F 4)

With a frontline supervisor also adding that;

“I am struggling to keep up the change of pace...if you asked me am I on top of what is happening with Police Scotland I would have to say no, because there is so much change...”
Sgt 01 Longphort (M 15)

As discussed above police participants were shown to be generally adaptive to changes within the organisation and viewed it as part of modern day policing. However, the comments from frontline officers and their supervisors highlighted how many were struggling to keep up to date with the pace of organisational reforms. Frontline officers in particular reported that a consequence of the rapid and daily changes, which at times consisted of up to fifty emails being received daily regarding changes to operations, had resulted in them paying less attention to the specifics of many operational changes and sometimes deleting emails they had no time to read. Overall, there was a general sense of frustration and resignation from across case study areas and participants regarding how quickly the changes were being introduced with a consensus between frontline officers and supervisors adding weight to the claims made regarding the impact on operational policing. It should be noted however, that little or no mention was made by senior police management of the speed of reforms in Scotland.

In their paper published in 2018 Moggre, den Boer and Fyfe suggest that it was the overly political influence on police reform in Scotland which controlled and steered the pace of change and quote the then Cabinet Secretary for Justice as saying ‘You can take a long time and stage it over two or three years, or you can go the other way: change it and fix all the concerns’ (Moggre, den Boer and Fyfe 2018, p394) indicating the Government’s intention to manage the change rapidly in a top down and centralised fashion. When looking to examine police reform in Scotland it is almost impossible to ignore the wider political context of nation building occurring at the time, namely the Scottish Independence referendum of September 2014 and the desire for the Scottish Government to have their flagship single police organisation fully functioning before the referendum.

The quantity and quality of communications

Existing literature on organisational change cites effective and robust communication strategies aimed at preparing, coaching and supporting the workforce through the planning and implementation of organizational change (Tops and Spelier 2012, Manuela and Clara 2003 and Osborne and Brown 2005). With Elving (2005) claiming that.

“If organisational change is about how to change the individual tasks of employees, communication about the change, and information to these employees is vital ...communication with the employees should be an important and integrative part of the change efforts and strategies” (Elving 2005, p130)

From this perspective internal communication processes within the organisation become fundamental through both the planning and implementation of organisational change. From an internal organisational context Terpstra, Fyfe and Salet (2019) also claim that the over use of online communication systems in contrast to face to face meetings which they claim has resulted in “...changing internal relations within the police services [and] less access to and interaction with senior officers than before reform” (Terpstra, Fyfe and Salet 2019, p7)

When frontline officers were asked about how they were kept up to date with the changes that were being operationalised across the service during the reform journey they stated that in the main information was relayed using the internal police Intranet. Overall frontline officers raised

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no concerns with regards to the methods of communication employed by the organisation, however, what they did highlight was the quantity and the regularity of the emails they received.

“...we get bombarded with information...” PC 01 Easton

...you were bombarded daily with emails...” PC 03 Longphort (M 7)

Many of the concerns highlighted around communications were related to the impact of officers returning from days off, holidays or training courses to find their inboxes filled by a multitude of backdated emails and many claiming that there was no possible way of them working through such a backlog during their shift and keeping abreast of changes.

“...you are expected to look at your emails, look at what has been happening, check the intelligence data base, check the daily info’s, check the briefing and that is before anything...oh the public dam we forgot them (sarcasm)” PC 02 Longphort (M 24)

When probed further on how they were able to find the time to ensure they were up-to-date on new processes and learning packages, many officers claimed they waited till they were working a night shift when it was quieter. However, worryingly some officers admitted that in general they were skim reading operational documents in the hope of gaining an overview of the contents. Other officers claimed that they were depending on officers in their teams having read the documents and sharing that knowledge on an ad hoc basis as it was required.

“...you have just got to read as much as you can and hope for the best! But there is always someone to ask, that is the beauty of being in the police there is always someone about, there is always someone who can tell you the answer.” PC 04 Longphort (F 2)

Additional to the quantity and regularity of email communication received officers also highlighted their frustrations with the relevance of some of the information being passed to them claiming that they sometimes received multiple paged emails which had no direct correlation with either their role or their rank status. Similar themes regarding the communication processes employed throughout the reform journey were discussed within ranks and across the case study areas with an overall consensus that police personnel were feeling overwhelmed and were receiving an overabundance of emails with no time to read them and that there were occasions when the information they received was not entirely relevant to them or their role.

Generally frontline supervisors and management perceptions surrounding the quantity and consistency of communications throughout the reform journey reflected those of frontline staff. In the main they supported the notion that staff were being inundated with emails and operational packs which arrived on a daily basis. In addition to the perceptions of frontline officers, middle and senior police managers were also asked to relate their experiences of internal communications through the reform process. The addition of this data to the project relates to the seminal work of Reuss-Ianni and Ianni (2010) who defined two separate and distinct cultures within the policing organisation; the street cop and the management cop and claimed that both cultures experienced policing in diverse ways and could at times be seen to be in conflict with each other. Generally frontline supervisors and management perceptions surrounding the quantity and consistency of communications throughout the reform journey reflected those of frontline staff. In the main they supported the notion that staff were being

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inundated with emails and operational packs which arrived on a daily basis. With one middle manager adding that;

“the intel side are saying that we have to very cognisant of the number of things that we are sending out to officers that it doesn’t get too flooding...there is that awareness there... I could spend all day and I still wouldn’t get through what was on the briefing sites,” Middle Manager 02 Easton (M 20)

Although these extracts are taken from officers in only two Scottish policing areas, the similarity of experience and consistency of themes indicated from the varied geographical locations, gender and years of service adds emphasis to the comments and, it could be suggested, could be used as an indication of how communications were received across the organisation as a whole.

Discussion and Recommendations

In the years following the introduction of Police Scotland there have been many policy and political debates as to the impact of reform on service delivery and management style with the media discourse, in the main, focused on some high profile incidents which were attributed at the time to the introduction of the more centralised decision making process of a new single police service (Terpstra, Fyfe and Salet 2019). However, until now there has been little or no focus on how frontline police officers experienced the many changes brought about by reform. This paper has therefore sought to fill this gap in knowledge from both an operational policing and academic context and has provided a unique insight, using empirical data collected from frontline police officers at the precise time they were negotiating the implementation of structural reform, to highlight some of the unintended consequences they experienced at an operational level. The insights brought by these findings can therefore be used to guide future structural changes in police organisations and support them in delivering organisational change which will avoid similar concerns.

The original data showed us that that although change was not a new concept within the police organisation, and something with which police were more than familiar with, frontline officers could identify specific issues with regards to their experiences of reform in Scotland. The three most common concerns raised by frontline officers and their supervisors were related to a perception that there had been no opportunity for them to offer input or feedback during the reform process, the rapid pace and implementation of reform and the quantity and quality of communications they received throughout the reform process.

So what lessons if any, are there to be learned from the experience of front line police officers who experienced macro level reform in Scotland? The following section will set out some proposals in relation to the three key themes discussed above.

A perception that there officers were marginalised:

Officers’ perceptions of having no real voice in either the consultation, planning or implementation of reform has, according to the organisational literature the potential to lead to high levels of internal resistance to the change process. This finding reported above supports the work of Bayley (2008) who has previously claimed that that in the main when it comes to reform or organisational change within a policing organisation frontline officers are “...very rarely consulted about the kind of changes needed” (Bayley 2008, p13) and are “...regarded by senior officers as the source of unhelpful complaints rather than useful insights” (Bayley

2008, p14). In this way frontline workers are marginalised by the organisation in terms of them having no voice in the reform process.

In the year one evaluation of police reform in Scotland we are reminded that “...reform may be driven centrally but is experienced locally” (SIPR, What Works Scotland and ScotCen 2016, p8) emphasising the important role that frontline officers play in the implementation and later evaluations of police reform. It is therefore recommended policing organisations who are planning to conduct future structural reforms include in their processes formal and meaningful consultation with serving police officers early in the initial planning stages to provide a bottom up view of any potential impacts on the delivery of operational policing at an early stage. Including frontline officers in the early stages of planning police reform will provide those on the frontline of policing the opportunity to contribute to and be part of any change process, negating any perceptions of exclusion from the process, reduce incidences of resistance to change and importantly from an organisational context, provide a means to an early identification of operational issues and concerns.

Frontline involvement should also be encouraged throughout the implementation phase of reform in order to help deliver a robust on the spot evaluation of the stated aims of reform. Feedback from the frontline as and when changes are occurring are important for the senior executive team of a police organisation undergoing change. Being able to assess how change is being operationalised and experienced at street level on an ongoing basis will enable them to develop a robust evaluation of change and importantly allow rapid remedial processes to be put in place together with identifying best practice which can then be shared throughout the organisation.

The paper also recommends that a theory of police organisational change be developed which can be used in future evaluations of major structural police reforms to produce robust analysis that takes account of the unique ways macro level reforms impact on hierarchical organisations, where officers on the ground provide a distinct service.

The findings from this project also indorse the involvement of frontline officers in future police reform from an early stage of the planning process in order that they feel part of the process. This should include the development of an effective two way communication system which would allow them to provide input, and importantly feedback on how reform is being experienced at an operational level. Finally it should be encouraged as good practice in all future public sector reforms to include a formal processes which allows frontline staff to provide crucial feedback on how changes made are being operationalised.

The rapid pace and implementation of reform

When engaging with the literature around organisational change it became apparent that there has also been little attention paid to the pace of organisational change on employees and overall there is an absence of empirical work which focuses on the impacts experienced by staff as a consequence of rapid implementation strategies.

Kotter and Schlesinger (2008) however, do discuss the “optimal speed of change” (Kotter and Schlesinger 2008, p1) and define two separate categories to assist organisations in deciding how quickly or slowly their change should be implemented. In the first instance they suggest that the organisation should implement rapid change only when “...the organisation risks plummeting performance or death if the present situation isn’t changed” (Kotter and Schlesinger 2008, p1) and that they should proceed incrementally if they perceive resistance to

be intense and extensive. From a Scottish perspective there was no crises which necessitated the rapid implementation of reform, it is argued however, there was a political will to see the introduction of a single Scottish police service before the Scottish independence referendum of 2014.

The pace and scope of the recent reform which occurred across policing in Scotland, showed that not all change occurs continually or incrementally. Frontline officers from across both case study areas discussed in great detail the concerns they had in keeping up to date with the constant changes to their roles and routines, the unstable environment change was causing and the impact it was having on operational policing. The nature and pace of the change experienced by frontline officers left many individuals unsure as to their future within the organisation, which ultimately affected morale and motivation. On the whole frontline participants regarded the pace of reform as being the biggest obstacle to them engaging with post reform operational changes. Conversely, police managers did not discuss the pace of reform or its impact on staff morale or operational policing matters indicating that the majority of changes which were being made on a daily basis were more operational in focus and therefore had more of an effect on frontline officers who then had no way of feeding back their concerns.

It is therefore recommended that future public sector reforms should be carefully planned with the input of frontline officers and implemented at a slower pace with change managers acknowledging that not all divisions work to full capacity at all times, which has a direct impact on how they ultimately experience the changes being implemented.

The quantity and quality of communications

Throughout the corpus of literature on organizational change one of the most significant claims made is that successful change in any organisation is dependent on effective and robust communication strategies aimed at preparing, coaching and supporting the workforce through the planning and implementation of organizational change (Manuela and Clara 2003, Osborne and Brown 2005, Elving 2005, and Bevir 2010). It is through effective and open communication lines that change managers are able to firstly gain employees support for upcoming change, monitor employee concerns surrounding the change feeding back into the change evaluation process and be able to measure and evaluate outputs against how effective the change is (Elving 2005).

Similar findings to those reported above regarding internal communications, were also reported in the first ever Police Scotland staff survey which was published in 2015. Although there were no questions relating directly to the reform process or experiences of the process, again showing the unique data collected as part of this project, there were similarities in themes, specifically related to internal communications. In terms of communication processes the findings of the report stated that information and communication were issues faced by police staff and that since the introduction of Police Scotland there had been "...a heavy reliance on non-verbal communication (particularly email and intranet)...(Police Scotland staff survey 2015, p38). In a similar vein to the discussion above, respondents to the staff survey also commented on the relevance of much of the communication posted, claiming that it was not always relevant to them or their role.

Frontline officers concerns with the internal communications outputs during the implementation of reform in Scotland were again highlighted in an official report by Her Majesties Inspectorate of Constabulary Scotland (HMICS) and the year one and two

evaluations of police reform conducted jointly by the Scottish Institute for Policing Research (SIPR), What Works Scotland and ScotCen. These reports claimed that the lack of a robust internal communication system had overwhelmed officers with irrelevant information to their rank and/or role, marginalised them from the process of reform and combined had negatively impacted upon staff morale during the implementation of reform.

A further recommendation based on the findings from the Scottish experience of reform would be to ensure that policing organisations considering structural reforms put in place effective, targeted and reliable two way communication procedures between management and staff during all stages of the change process. Additionally it is recommended that taking a streamline approach to future internal communications will help reduce frontline officers feeling they are being overwhelmed with (mis) information that is not relevant to them, encourage them to engage with the relevant operational packs and briefings, whilst also reducing the time spent backtracking through mail after days off or training.

The content of internal communications between management and the frontline during organisational change should also be of importance for future change managers. Reform narratives should focus on the need for change together with providing a transparent vision and rationale for change and should be delivered in a clear and concise manner to help staff understand how change will be operationalised and to maintain positive working relationships between the frontline and their managers as cited by Terpstra, Fyfe and Salet (2019).

Conclusion

Change within police organisations occurs on a regular basis, whether that be change in operational direction, focus, leadership or change to local working patterns. However, the recent experience of police reform in Scotland has brought both a new scope and level to police reform in the UK, notwithstanding the pace at which this particular reform took place. In the experience of frontline officers, the changes brought about by reform, specifically perceptions that they were marginalised from the reform process, the rapid pace of reform and the internal communication process adopted throughout the process, produced unintended negative consequences for the delivery of local policing in Scotland. The findings presented here in this paper provide a unique opportunity to examine, for the first time, how frontline serving officers negotiated their way through change and the implications this had for the delivery of local policing.

The consensus from participants from both Easton and Longphort reported that although change was not a new concept within the police organisation, and something with which they were more than familiar with, they could identify specific problems with regards to the recent reform as set out above. From a conceptual point of view the findings reported above will add to the knowledge base of public sector reform more generally and police reform specifically in terms of the effective implementation of future police reform. From an empirical point of view, the findings also offers police organisations a unique insight on how recent reform was experienced at the frontline highlighting the complex nature of policing through change with the intention that the findings will support the implementation of future reforms.

A key motivation for conducting applied research is that the findings are able to provide empirical evidence to support and promote changes to both policy and practice, it is therefore anticipated that these lessons learned from the single, largest piece of police reform in generations will be used to develop a framework which will support future police reforms from

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both policy and operational standpoints by highlighting the impact of non-intended consequences on frontline staff and therefore operational policing.

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