

What could be done to improve representation, retention and progression opportunities for people of different ethnic backgrounds in public sector workforces (for example, in education, healthcare or policing) and how can we enhance community relations and perceptions of the police?

“Promise and Progress” – Nottinghamshire Police

Recruitment, retention and progression remains the constant public sector puzzle which has not yet been solved. Why? Because a simple, binary approach is not the answer.

In order to recruit, any industry – particularly public sector - must firstly have trust. This is paramount. Within policing, this continues to be an issue amongst BAME communities. Communities will react positively to a police service with legitimacy, not one which tokenises at times of recruitment. Secondly to retain staff, particularly those from underrepresented communities, an organisation must have an inclusive culture. One which is brave, and positively welcomes difference, and is unafraid to challenge unethical behaviour. A culture which seeks to develop its workforce fairly, regardless of one’s background. This leads us onto progression. This can be seen laterally, or vertically. Progression is often viewed from afar, particularly associated with the police service, as climbing the ladder of promotion. This is not necessarily the case! Whilst we do need to see more visibility of protected characteristics in the most senior of positions and this remains a fundamental challenge for British Policing, we also need to be cognisant of positive progression as moving laterally, into new and far reaching specialist opportunities. When evaluating progression within the police service, the lens must capture the wider picture in order to provide a truly holistic view.

In 2012, Nottinghamshire’s PCC set a long term ambition to improve BAME experiences of policing and the recruitment, retention and progression of both BAME officers and staff. This is also a strategic priority for the Chief Constable.

A significant force investment was made into a programme of Positive Action as part of the 2020-2021 recruitment plans, known more widely as Operation Uplift. Nottinghamshire took an innovative view of this, by linking recruitment within HR, together with the Citizens in Policing department which has control for all youth engagement, schools, outreach, cadets and mini-police programmes. The continued success of the grass-roots initiatives provides legitimacy for the wider recruitment campaign into the police service. The public appear tired of the police service (or any other public sector) recognising a staffing short fall, and attempting to recruit from a standing start via shiny advertisements and refreshed social media posts. From experience, it is almost impossible to build trust from a standing start.

'Engage to recruit' was a concept built into neighbourhood policing. This is an opportunity for officers and staff whilst out in the community to identify potential future talent, and provide details directly to HR, via an innovative QR reader activated on organisational smart phones.

The approach taken was to dovetail the growing success of the youth outreach teams, and widen this into the adult sector, utilising staff with local legitimacy. Also critical to successful recruitment is not only internal positive action role models, but external role models who verify the approach of the organisation; a positive advocate if you will. The independent advisory group (IAG), and local community and faith leaders, all provided a positive account of the approach by Nottinghamshire Police, which undoubtedly opens new doors. Nottinghamshire Police also sought support through groups in which joint success had been achieved, particularly in subject areas pertinent to trust and confidence for ethnic minority communities. One example of this was working cohesively with Hate Crime support groups, an area of business in which strong collaborative relationships and new approach to the challenge, had yielded continuous community satisfaction of over 90% throughout the early part of 2019. The HMICFRS acknowledged the positive progress made in this area of community vulnerability.

However, Nottinghamshire Police went one step further, and integrated members of the IAG into the recruitment process. This provides two significant advantages. Firstly, it supports the ethos of fairness on behalf of underrepresented groups whilst undergoing assessment, but also sends a positive message into the community, of what the organisation is seeking to achieve. The Majority of Black Led churches are also working closely with Nottinghamshire Police, and have set up a bespoke cadet programme, with the view of supporting more Black African and Caribbean communities to consider joining the organisation, whilst also further strengthening our engagement within the BAME communities.

Secondly, Nottinghamshire would promote internal role models to encourage, mentor and coach prospective candidates. These need not be BAME role models. In fact, in order to support a more inclusive culture, it is often better to ensure that we have a good cross-pollination of cultures at this early stage, if at all possible. A cradle to grave approach is taken, to support the candidate's journey not only through recruitment and initial training, but also through their journey as an operational student officer.

A supportive approach within training is critical to retention, and ensuring that an employee has the best possible start within the organisation. In addition to coaching and mentoring, learning and development is overseen by a Superintendent, who regularly meets student officers. Culture and ethics form a large part of early training, and regular forums take place to evaluate student progress. Nottinghamshire have adopted a new approach to support neurodiversity, which includes screens and scans for new staff. At the time of writing this paper, during the latest intake of regular officers, four were highlighted as having dyslexia, having been unaware for their entire life through education

Superintendent S. Verma – Operation Uplift Lead

and employment. This previously would not have been picked up, and potentially jeopardised their ability to successfully complete police training, thus directly affecting retention. Of note, 50% were BAME.

Prior to Operation Uplift, Nottinghamshire Police had a BAME officer representational figure of 3.8%. As of December 2020, this figure stands at 7.0%, representing huge organisational change, and the most representation force within the Country, of any area with a significant BAME population of over 10%. The MacPherson report, 1999, alluded to an aspirational rate of 7% BAME for police services to achieve, and Nottinghamshire have displayed clearly on a national scale, that a clear, targeted plan, working cohesively with the local communities can bear fruit.

Fundamental to retaining these numbers, is ensuring procedural justice. Disproportionality within Professional Standards Investigations towards BAME officers has been a national issue. In Nottinghamshire however, 2018 saw no BAME officers with a case to answer, in 2019 5.4%, and none in 2020 which demonstrably portrays no disproportionality.

The Chief Officer team in Nottinghamshire hold regular conversations with the support networks and Staff Associations. These include the Black Police Association (BPA) and Nottinghamshire Empowering Women to Succeed (NEWS). Confidential conversations have occurred with officers from underrepresented groups, to better understand the culture within the force, and recently the PCC commissioned a report by the University of Nottingham, to understand the internal bias and prejudice. This will be accompanied by a full action plan, academic and internal recommendations for further improvement. It is worthy of note that many of the author's recommendations have already been actioned and addressed which is a sign of open and honest organisational reflection.

Nottinghamshire hold an Equality and Diversity Board, and this is split into a tactical and strategic element. The tactical meeting, chaired by a Superintendent, is attended by local support networks, divisional inspectors and members of HR. Culture is a key theme, and the confidentiality of the group, enables difficult and challenging areas to be raised, which are taken in confidence to the strategic board, attended by Chief Officers, for remedy and action if appropriate. One of the themes is exit reports and better understanding of organisational issues.

As a result of the above processes, retention of underrepresented groups within Nottinghamshire Police is extremely healthy, seen by the rapid growth during Operation Uplift in both new starters and also in transferees from other forces.

In terms of progression and fairness, the Chief Constable implemented yearly promotion processes four years ago. This offered the opportunity for all eligible candidates to apply, following an appraisal with their line manager. This appraisal, known as an 'honest conversation' is not a barrier to an application being submitted. The formal process involves the application forms being anonymised, prior to scoring. For Superintendent ranks and above, there is a 'peoples panel' attended by community groups and leaders. This is held prior to a formal board, which always has an independent board member (not from the Police service), and also in attendance within this process are the Police Federation and representatives from both staff associations. For lower ranks, all panels now have a Chief Officer chairing the panel, to ensure fairness and transparency.

Since the implementation of this process, Nottinghamshire have seen a greater number of ethnic minority officers promoted. Prior to the arrival of Chief Constable Craig Guildford in 2017, the highest ranking BAME officer in Nottinghamshire was an Inspector. In 2020, the force has two BAME Superintendents, two BAME Chief Inspectors and half a dozen BAME Inspectors. The transparency and success of this approach, has resulted in a number of BAME officers transferring to Nottinghamshire under Operation Uplift.

This holistic approach of ensuring fairness and opportunity has supported the pleasing growth both in terms of recruitment, retention and progression. In line with the MacPherson report, nationally, Chief Constable Craig Guildford has steered and implemented changes to the disciplinary system, which include post retirement provisions, indicative sanctions guidance and a systemic legislative change which encourages reflective practice and mandates supervisors to deal with issues dynamically. He has worked with DCC Cain in evidencing, addressing and sharing data on disproportionality. Both NPCC Portfolios are aligned strategically and learning is shared.

Local BAME communities are included in local training and review processes. Our new and existing officers undergo community cohesion training, which involves unconscious bias awareness and reflection sessions, and meeting a range of community members, to hold challenging discussions around policing. This has been well received by both officers and the communities involved. Furthermore, the community listening group has been launched by the PCC, which again provides independent scrutiny of the organisation, and displayed actions and behaviours.

However, one of the areas which define Nottinghamshire is the development of strong and trusted relationships between the police and young people, which remains a core component of our long term strategy. In 2018, a 'mini police' scheme was launched, which has over 1500 pupils, many from socially deprived areas within the city, whom often encountered adverse childhood experiences (ACE'S). 44% of our mini police are from BAME backgrounds. Likewise, BAME representation within the Police Cadets is strong, having risen from 6% in 2018 to over 24% this year. Nottinghamshire opened the first mosque centred base outside London, and also a base in an area following a youth homicide, both of which received widespread media attention. Furthermore, our youth outreach

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community worker has played an important role in reaching out to young people and has been intrinsic in the growth and diversification of the cadet programme. In order to support our brand new accelerated 2 year policing degree and our PCDA programme a careers officer has been employed to support better youth relations, and inspire a future generation of police recruits, but also good local citizenship. The careers officer is supported by the 12 schools and early intervention police officers that cover all major secondary schools across the City and County. This approach is augmented by a dedicated apprenticeship officer who promotes alternative non-uniformed positions across the organisation too.

All of the above displays the desire for Nottinghamshire to be more inclusive of the communities that it serves. The positive strides forward have come to the attention of the Home Secretary, the race disparity unit, the positive action practitioner's alliance and also other police forces within England and Wales.

In conclusion, Nottinghamshire has made strong progress in reducing disproportionality in policing outcomes and increasing representation. There is a thoughtful and intelligence led approach to building better community relations with our diverse communities, whilst also improving diversity, inclusion and engagement, throughout the organisation. Challenges will continue to remain around recruitment, retention and progression of BAME communities; however, by tackling key issues around culture, inclusivity and fairness, real and meaningful progress is indeed achievable.



Craig Guildford, Chief Constable



Paddy Tipping, Police & Crime Commissioner



Sukesh Verma, Superintendent

Illustration 1 – Nottinghamshire Police officer BAME representation versus the local census (2011) in comparison with other force areas with a BAME population higher than 10%, denoting Nottinghamshire is 63% representative as a force of its diverse communitiesⁱ:

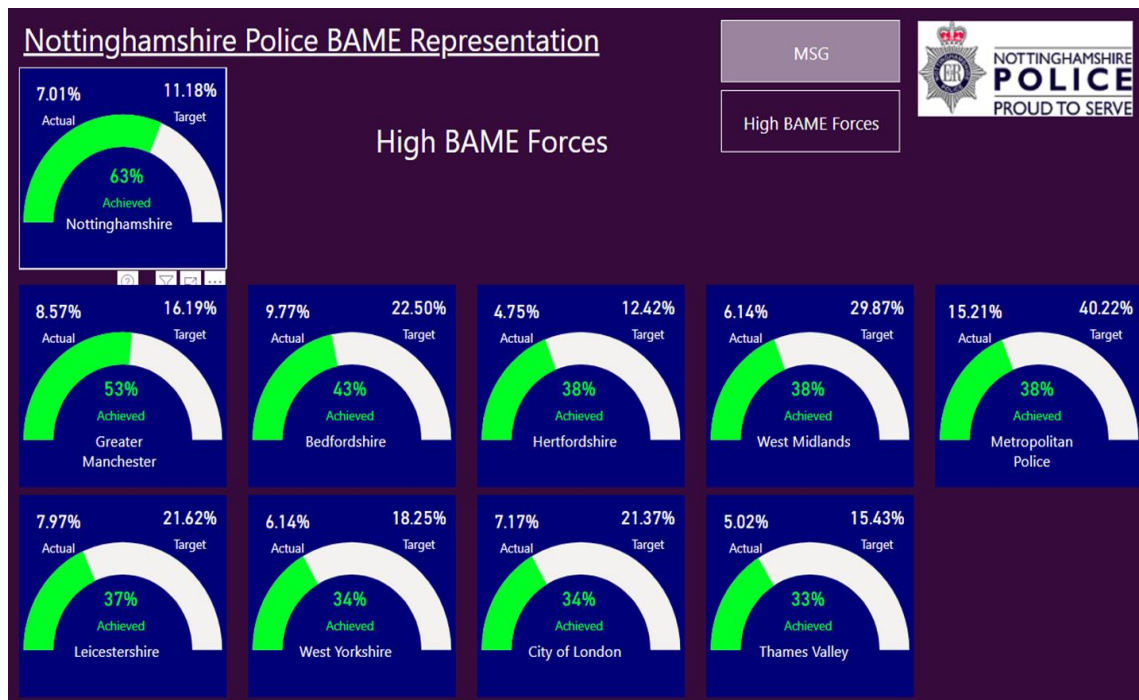
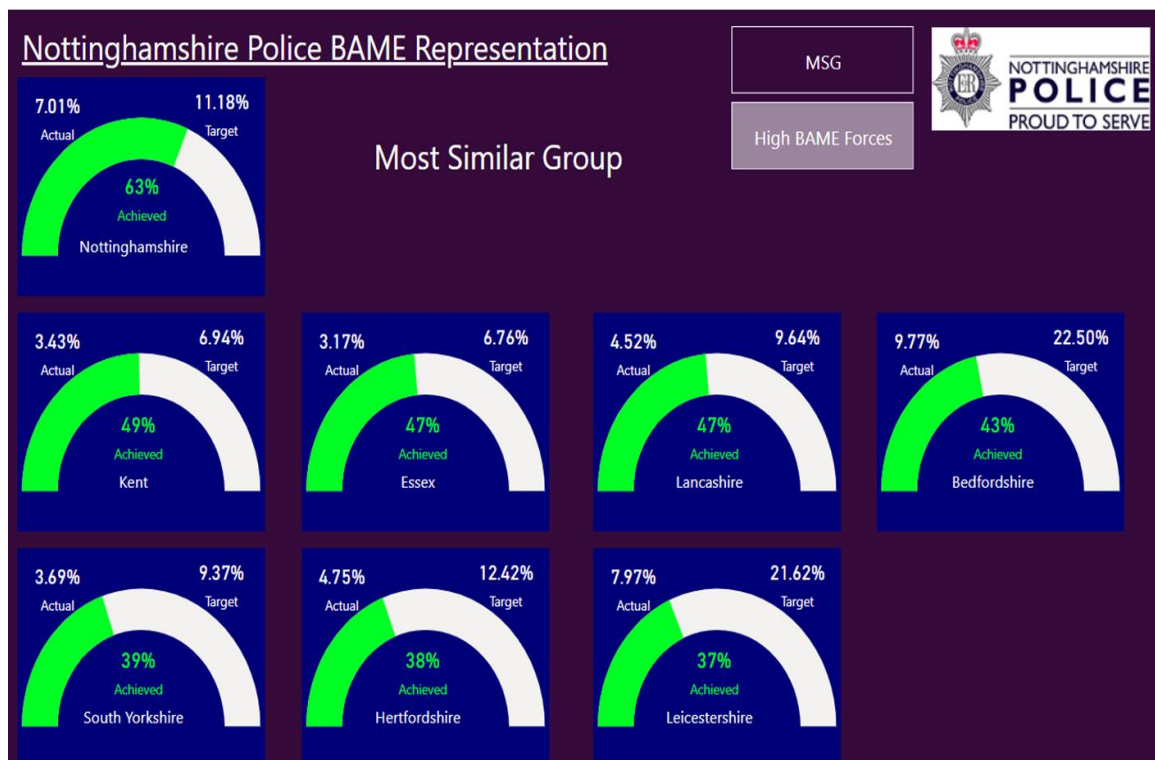


Illustration 2 – Nottinghamshire Police officer BAME representation versus the local census (2011) in comparison with other ‘most similar forces’ for size and coverage:



ⁱ Produced on the 2nd December 2020 – data obtained from the Home Office Uplift Programme data release