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College of
Policing

The role of leadership in promoting ethical police behaviour

The findings of qualitative case study research

Louise Porter – Griffith University

Sarah Webb – Perpetuity Research

Tim Prenzler – Griffith University

Martin Gill – Perpetuity Research

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Executive summary

Key findings

This study focuses on issues of leadership and organisational ethics. It is based on 41 in-depth interviews – three with chief officers and at least five with frontline officers in each of five case study forces from England and Wales. The aim of the research was to explore the impact that senior leadership was perceived to have on ethical police behaviour, particularly that of those officers and staff in frontline roles. Its key findings were as follows:

- Overall, the large majority of interviewees felt there had been a positive shift in the style of police leadership in recent years. There was a general sense leaders had moved away from an autocratic style to a more inclusive and open approach. Most current leaders in the five study forces were seen as consultative and good communicators.
- Interviewees found it difficult to disentangle the factors that constituted effective leadership in general from those that specifically promoted ethical behaviour. The belief that ethical behaviour was a 'natural consequence' of effective leadership was common.
- A range of opinions about leadership styles were evident in all study forces, though the importance of honesty, integrity, visibility, transparency, and consistent and clear messages were emphasised, and reportedly had a clear impact on morale.
- Evidence suggested that leaders were seen as both figureheads and role models for conduct. Setting values and standards, and communicating and enforcing those standards fairly, were also key themes raised in all interviews.
- With the exception of autocratic leadership (which was mainly used to describe former chief officers), most interviewees felt that different styles could promote ethical behaviour.
- Demonstration of transformational and participative leadership styles was seen as important, particularly by senior leaders. Visibility and communication were seen as key dimensions of leadership that offered opportunities to encourage organisational commitment, as a result of it increasing the credibility of leaders among staff and a belief in shared values and goals.
- Elements of transactional leadership were also thought important for staff behaviour and morale, particularly in terms of encouraging appropriate standards through the consistent and fair application of reward and sanction within the organisation.
- For many, successful leadership in fostering ethical behaviour was seen to come through flexibility and balance in leadership style. The nature of policing – with its high levels of discretion and specific vulnerabilities towards misconduct (e.g. contact with criminals) – reportedly meant leadership needed to be both transformational and transactional.
- Comments from the majority of chief officers and frontline staff supported the idea that a more open and democratic style of leadership secured a better commitment to organisational values and promoted ethical behaviour.
- While leadership was seen as important at all levels, first line supervisors were thought to have more of an influence than chief officers as they were the day-to-day role models for behaviour for most people. The provision of support to, and the empowerment of, frontline supervisors was, therefore, seen as particularly crucial.
- The research highlighted the need for senior leaders and supervisors to be more aware of, and self-reflective about, leadership styles and processes and the impact these can have on the ethical behaviour of staff. Notably, while performance expectations need to be set and aligned with wider force priority and integrity frameworks, there was a widespread view that a narrow performance focus could have negative consequences.

Introduction

This study focuses on issues of leadership and police organisational ethics. Leadership is consistently identified as one of the most important aspects to maintaining police integrity (Porter 2005) and ensuring police professionalism (Schneider 2009). The research literature on ethical leadership identifies how principles from social and organisational psychology – such as social learning theory, transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and organisational justice – can effectively promote ethical behaviour. Through adopting particular leadership styles, leaders can promote and inspire value systems, set standards, reinforce performance, respond to problems, and transform organisations from a collection of individuals to a collective with shared principles.

Research aims and methods

The study was based on qualitative fieldwork in a sample of five police forces from across England and Wales. In each force, three members from the chief officer team, and five or more officers and staff from frontline ranks were interviewed. A total of 41 respondents were interviewed. A confidential one-on-one interview format was adopted as a means of eliciting in-depth opinions and accounts of experiences. The research aims were framed around the following questions:

- What seemed to make some people more effective in the context of ethical leadership?
- How did leadership seem to influence staff behaviour?
- What impact did leadership style seem to have relative to other influences?

More specifically, officers were asked to consider the impact on ethical behaviour of senior leadership, force culture, force values and priorities, performance regimes, and other potential influences. They were also asked to consider the successful and unsuccessful mechanisms for communicating messages of ethics and integrity.

Findings

Leadership styles

What seemed to make some leaders more effective in the context of ethical leadership?

- Across the five forces, positive and negative impressions of leadership styles were evident. While perceptions of leaders were mixed, the importance of honesty, integrity, visibility, transparency and consistent and clear messages were emphasised as being key, and reportedly had a clear impact on morale. There was a high degree of consistency – across forces and ranks – in respondents' views about 'good leadership', regardless of whether they were talking about the chief constable, senior leaders, middle managers or frontline supervisors.
- The interviewees' perceptions about the positive and negative aspects of leadership broadly reflected the following categories:
 - Participative or democratic leadership.
 - Transformational leadership.
 - Transactional leadership.
 - Autocratic or authoritarian leadership.

With the exception of autocratic leadership, these styles were considered by the majority of chief officers and frontline officers to reinforce positive values and engagement, and promote ethical behaviour.

- Unsurprisingly, senior leaders tended to have a wider perspective over ethical behaviour than frontline officers, reflecting the differences in strategic focus of each role. For example, while senior leaders commented on fundamental principles of leadership styles and ethics, vision and values, lower ranks often focused more on operational performance, for example talking specifically about stop and search activities or investigations, and factors that influence these activities directly.
- Overall, the interviewees found it difficult to disentangle the factors that constituted effective leadership in general, and those that specifically promoted ethical behaviour. There was a widespread belief that ethical behaviour was a 'natural consequence' of effective leadership.
- Participative leadership activities promoted a particular leadership style that was seen as 'accessible', and about which interviewees spoke very positively. Participative styles and activities can be described as those that opened channels for top-down communication, and those that encouraged bottom-up communication. Visibility was also an important aspect of accessibility. Activities that took chief officers 'back to the shop floor' to increase their appreciation of a range of policing roles, particularly the challenges at the frontline, and to explain important decision-making, were felt to add credibility and authenticity to leaders and their messages. Reported outcomes included:
 - improved staff morale;
 - a sense of shared vision/goals across the workforce leading to greater alignment between organisational and personal values (i.e. value-congruence);
 - staff feeling valued and empowered; and
 - feeling the organisation was more open and transparent.

A minority, however, felt chief officer visits were used to 'catch out' staff with awkward questions and were 'artificial'.

- Fewer interviewees spoke in a language that would define transformational styles of leadership (inspiring staff to take on shared values and work together towards common goals). However, there were examples of leaders being seen as innovative, forward-thinking, showing consideration to staff as individuals, empowering and building capacity of staff to lead (at all levels), and leading through values with a focus on the importance of professionalism. This was seen as a successful style of leadership.
- Overall, the large majority of interviewees expressed the view that there had been a positive change in leadership styles in policing in recent years and that this was part of a wider positive evolution in policing. With a few exceptions, police leaders were thought to have moved away from a long tradition of detached, military-style command-and-control management. Most current leaders in the five study forces were seen as consultative and good communicators.

Communicating leadership messages

How did leadership appear to influence what people do?

- When exploring the mechanisms of leadership, it was evident from the interviews that the elements of ethical leadership identified in the literature were key components of

influence in this policing context. Evidence in support of social learning theory was clear – leaders were seen as both figureheads and role models for conduct. Setting values and standards, and communicating and enforcing those standards fairly, were also key themes raised in all interviews.

- Most interviewees noted the importance – and perceived effect on behaviour – of communicating consistent standards; highlighting the significance of responding appropriately to poor performance and recognising good performance. Supporting officers who made honest mistakes was also strongly advocated, with proportionate responses including remedial training rather than punitive disciplinary measures. The importance of fairness was thought to be crucial in respect of transactional processes of reward and punishment, with damaging effects of both perceived unfair promotion and unfair handling of complaints. Perceived effects ranged from reduced staff morale and commitment, to a reduced willingness to report conduct issues.
- The visions, priorities and values communicated by force leaders to staff and the public were acknowledged by most interviewees to shape the occupational culture and, thus, to have a significant impact on staff attitudes and behaviour. The move to prioritising quality of service to the public to increase standards of performance was welcomed by the majority, but a small number of interviewees cautioned that this should not be at the expense of organisational commitment to staff.
- Generally, it was clear that the provision of adequate support was thought to be needed, if empowerment was to result in staff being given more discretion and responsibility (e.g. training and development, decision-making support, and support when 'honest' mistakes were made). Prior experience of inadequate support, however, contributed to cynicism.
- The interviewees made clear that one of the most influential processes for communicating values and priorities to staff was through performance management. The measures used to assess force and individual performance were felt to impact on staff understanding of priorities, and thought to be directly associated with ethical behaviour. Notably, many did not consider their force's performance framework to be in line with wider integrity frameworks. There was a highly consistent view that conventional quantitative measures of performance – particularly targets and those focused on crime reduction and enforcement activity – had a negative impact on ethical behaviour. While forces were attempting to move away from officer level performance indicators and quantitative performance measures generally, the messages around performance – which were not always consistent – were a persistent source of confusion for staff.
- The importance of positive role modelling was universally accepted as a powerful influence on staff perceiving leaders to be credible and authentic. The importance of leaders showing consistency between their own behaviour and their expectations of others was raised as reinforcing credibility. Misconduct by senior leaders was seen to undermine the credibility of leadership and organisational values. However, most felt confident that misconduct by chief officers would only affect staff **attitudes** towards senior leaders, not their **behaviour**.
- There was a highly consistent view that staff who deliberately fall below expected performance standards should be investigated and dealt with punitively, including by dismissal. Discipline was seen to set and reinforce the expected standards of behaviour. The importance of fair and proportionate 'punishment' was widely acknowledged, including its consistent application regardless of rank.

- A number of issues were highlighted that were thought to affect the success at which messages were communicated from the top-down. The predominant themes were: the importance of clarity and consistency, the problem of messages being misinterpreted, and deliberate resistance to acting upon them. One of the strongest points during the interviews was that messages needed to be consistently delivered down the organisation and that, sometimes, the rank structure intentionally blocked messages or unintentionally misinterpret them. Generally, the more contact frontline officers had with chief officers, the more likely they were to understand and support leadership messages. Those who had little contact with senior leaders and did not see them as visible displayed a range of responses from a lack of knowledge of their messages, to disinterest and overt cynicism about senior leadership and its impact.
- Finally, promoting staff empowerment was specifically mentioned by several interviewees, and alluded to by others, as an important mechanism for behaviour change. In the context of policing, our interviewees spoke of the importance of discretion, and the need for staff to take responsibility for decision-making and in managing others. Many first line supervisors recounted a lack of:
 - support for their role (e.g. resources, and recognition of the appropriate performance levels for their functional area);
 - adequate training in leadership; and
 - higher backing for their decisions.
- For staff to feel truly empowered, it seems likely that staff will need to feel competent and supported, and that they can have an impact. Until forces can fully acknowledge and provide these needs, staff may be more likely to choose the 'easier path' of clear directives with less responsibility.

The impact of leadership relative to other influences

What impact did leadership style seem to have on behaviour relative to other influences?

- There were some differences of opinion in respect of the impact of leadership on ethical behaviour compared to a person's moral values. There was a consistent view that integrity and ethics were personal attributes that were not subject to external influence. However, a majority of respondent also clearly thought that leaders could significantly influence behaviour and that leaders set 'the tone at the top'. There was seen to be significant benefit in forces tapping in to the main motivation that most staff had to join the police – to help people – as a way of achieving greater alignment between organisational and personal values (i.e. value-congruence), which could influence the extent to which staff upheld expected standards of behaviour.
- Crucially, middle management was seen to play the key role in how teams and front line officers behaved. Frontline supervisors were described as the day-to-day role models for the majority of officers, and the main point of contact for information for those 'at the coalface'. They were, therefore, seen to be hugely influential in terms of setting, monitoring and maintaining standards. Generally, interviewees tended to view their immediate superior as the person who most directly influenced their behaviour.
- Austerity was consistently raised as directly and indirectly impacting on ethical behaviour. The financial pressure prompted by austerity was generally seen, in itself, as a risk factor in police corruption. The effect of austerity was also felt indirectly through the organisational changes the study forces had introduced. Overall, this change was seen to have placed additional pressure on staff, which was thought to potentially impact on their behaviour.

- In general, technology (such as GPS tracking and body worn video) was seen as having improved staff accountability, not least by making police behaviour more visible. However, it was suggested that the potential benefits needed to be continually communicated, as technology was sometimes seen as a double-edged sword. While some officers and staff may see technology as a means of holding them to account and protecting them against malicious allegations, it may be seen by others as an intrusion into their private space and an infringement of personal and professional liberties.
- Several wider influences on behaviour were suggested, though their reported effect was less clear-cut. The impact of negative media reporting was highlighted, particularly in terms of the extent to which it was felt to have made police interaction with the public more challenging. The pressure for the police to live up to public expectations was also seen by some as encouraging staff to use unethical means to achieve results. Finally, there was a perceived lack of government support for police, and a concern that a change of government might see the return of central performance targets.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the interviews were consistent with the research literature on ethical leadership within a social learning framework. Demonstration of transformational and participative leadership styles was seen as important, particularly by senior leaders. Activities embodying these styles were thought likely to increase staff commitment to organisational values through a variety of mechanisms. Elements of transactional leadership were also thought important for staff behaviour and morale, particularly in terms of encouraging appropriate standards through the consistent and fair application of reward and sanction within the organisation. Overall, leaders at all levels were seen as valuable role models for staff behaviour, and the provision of support to leadership at the lower levels of the organisation – to empower frontline supervisors to lead their staff – was seen as particularly crucial.

The interviews highlighted there were lessons to be learned by senior leaders and supervisors about being more aware of, and self-reflective about, leadership styles and processes, and the impact these can have on the ethical behaviour of staff. For many interviewees, successful leadership in fostering ethical behaviour was seen to come through flexibility and balance in leadership style. The nature of policing – with high levels of discretion and specific vulnerabilities towards misconduct (e.g. contact with criminals, confrontational public contact) – reportedly meant that leadership needed to be both transformational and transactional. Leaders have to be, on the one hand, adept at working with, and giving space to, 'self-starters' and, on the other hand, able to be more directive with other staff who want or need closer supervision and instruction. The need for flexibility is also underlined in the wider literature, which suggests ethical leadership is likely to incorporate elements of both transformational and transactional styles.

The findings suggested there was a need for performance expectations to be clearly defined and articulated, and in a way that was aligned with wider force priorities and integrity frameworks. Focusing on staff development and wellbeing is very likely to benefit their performance and behaviour, and manifest in terms of improved quality of service and ethical conduct. In short, a staff focus may result in improved service delivery for the public.

There would also be scope to provide greater balance in force performance management regimes by supplementing traditional quantitative measures, which tend to focus on crime and enforcement activity, with measures of police integrity. In the future, the adoption of a more comprehensive package of performance measures and a change in nature of the performance conversation, in combination with development and support for leaders, improved staff capabilities and quality service provision could lead to measurable improvements for police organisations.

Contents

	Page
Executive summary	1
Contents	6
Acknowledgements	7
1. Introduction	9
2. Research methods	17
3. What makes an effective ethical leader?	22
4. How do leaders influence behaviour?	29
5. What influence do other mechanisms have on behaviour?	47
6. Discussion and conclusion	52
References	57

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1. Introduction

Research context

In support of its programme of work on police ethics and integrity, the College of Policing commissioned primary qualitative research to explore the role of leadership in promoting ethical behaviour in policing. The purpose of this research is to learn from the experiences of police officers and staff, through explorations of examples of, and discussions around, police leadership. The report seeks to understand the relative importance of senior police leaders and leadership for encouraging ethical behaviour, as compared with other potential mechanisms.

This research took place in early-2014 during, and following, a period of major change in the policing environment in England and Wales. These changes had the potential to significantly impact on the morale and behaviour of police officers and staff, and were considered as part of the research. Three major dimensions of change relevant to the research were as follows outlined below.

Governance

In November 2012, governance of police forces moved from police authorities to elected Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs). Holding the police force area budget, the role of PCCs is to hold chief constables and the force to account; effectively making the police answerable to the communities they serve.

In December 2012, the College of Policing became the new professional body of policing, with an aim of professionalising the service by setting new national standards, supporting professional development (including leadership development), and establishing evidence-based practice. The College also had a specific role in identifying, developing and promoting 'ethics, standards and values of integrity', which resulted in the publication of a new Code of Ethics (College of Policing 2014a).

Performance measures

In June 2010, the Home Secretary (Theresa May) announced that all existing policing targets were to be scrapped, including the target of increasing public confidence in the police. Police leaders were informed that their role was simply to "cut crime – no more, no less" (Home Secretary 2010). The Home Secretary also removed the Policing Pledge – a 2008 Labour Government initiative which outlined standards that members of the public could expect from their force. These included minimum standards for response times, fair access to services, and monthly updates on local crime and policing issues. Removing these targets was aimed at cutting bureaucracy within forces. Removal of centrally prescribed crime reduction targets was also aimed at ameliorating risks of unethical practice around crime recording. In a recent inspection of crime recording practices, HMIC noted: "A factor in public concern, and a probable cause for scepticism about national crime figures, is the culture in the police – as in other major government organisations – of pursuing targets and being under pressure to demonstrate good performance" (2014: page 13).

Funding climate

In the 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review, the Government announced that central funding to the police service in England and Wales would reduce in real terms by 20% over four years to March 2015. A subsequent report by HMIC (2013) noted that forces planned to

achieve 73% of the savings by cutting the total police workforce by 31,600 (13%) between March 2010 and March 2015. This included 15,400 police officers, 13,400 police staff, and 2,900 police community support officers – 95% of these reductions were to be made by March 2014.

HMIC (2013) also noted there was a risk that issues of workforce reduction, force restructuring, and changes around pay and conditions could have a negative impact on police morale. A survey conducted by the HMIC found that senior police leaders considered morale the biggest future risk to performance. Consequently, the report emphasised the importance of leadership in engaging the workforce in the planned changes, and motivating officers and staff to deliver high quality services. In that regard, the report documented examples of how strong leadership – supported by high-quality change departments, Human Resource (HR) and communications professionals – could support, communicate, engage and develop all levels of the service, in order to manage these changes and deliver an excellent service to the public.

A renewed focus on ethical policing

In 2011, HMIC published a report which looked at instances of undue influence, inappropriate contractual arrangements and other abuses of power in police relationships with the media and other parties. The report, examined the systems, processes and levels of control that forces and police authorities had in managing relationship boundaries. Although not a leadership review, the report stated it was evident that leadership had a significant part to play in setting the cultural tone of an organisation, levels of acceptability, and ultimately the conduct of its staff. In forces where chief officers and senior managers 'owned' and routinely reinforced the values and standards, staff had far greater clarity of what was expected.

A progress report, published by HMIC the following year, noted the following:

While in 2011 we found some evidence of the promotion of values by senior officers, this was not universal and, although most forces had made changes to oversight arrangements and put effort into communicating integrity messages through a variety of means, there is more to be done. (2012, page 40)

Recommendations included the scrutiny of chief officers by PCCs as well as continuous external scrutiny by HMIC.

Following a number of high profile cases, which brought into question the integrity of the police in England and Wales (e.g. Hillsborough Incident Panel and Leveson Inquiry) the newly established College of Policing sought to take action to raise standards of ethical behaviour across the police service.

Previous literature on the influence of leadership

Police unethical behaviour can encompass a variety of actions and has been described in the literature using a variety of terms such as 'deviance', 'misconduct', and 'corruption'. Roebuck and Barker (1974) offer a suitably broad definition of 'police misconduct' that involves any form of "deviant, dishonest, improper, unethical or criminal behaviour by a police officer" (page 423). Punch (2003) outlines that early explanations of police misconduct, particularly those adopted by police themselves, focused on the individuals involved – 'rotten apples'. This carried the assumption that misconduct could be addressed by identifying and removing these individuals from a police department. However, studies soon criticised the simplicity and explanatory power of a model that focused only on static 'bad character' factors to understand the more dynamic and systemic problems uncovered through a variety of high profile incidents and inquiries. A shift in focus to external influences highlighted the role of

the organisational and social environment in shaping the ethical behaviour of police officers, identifying factors that can influence officers' attitudes and encourage particular behaviour. More recently, researchers have attempted to understand how the fit of the individual within their organisational environment may be important in predicting performance (person-situation interaction). Table 1 (below) assimilates the primary individual, organisational and social influences on police misconduct or corruption that have been identified in the literature (see: Porter 2005; Porter and Prenzler 2012).

While specific leadership practice is included in Table 1, key influential figures or leaders in the police service have the potential to impact positively or negatively on all of the factors described in the table. Indeed, leadership is consistently highlighted as one of the most important aspects to maintaining police integrity and professionalism (Etter and Palmer 1995; Porter 2005; Schneider 2009). Leaders have the power to influence:

- the organisational climate (e.g. emphasising performance targets, setting standards and rules, responding to problems); and
- social culture (e.g. reinforcing certain norms or allowing norms to perpetuate unchallenged).

Numerous inquiries and reviews concerned with police corruption and misconduct have recognised this and highlighted the need for more effective leadership, enhanced supervision and much greater managerial accountability (e.g. Fitzgerald 1989; HMIC 1999 and 2015; Kennedy 2004; Wood 1997).

Leadership effectiveness

Leadership is generally defined as a process of influence over other people (e.g. Bass 1990). Theories of leadership seek to explain this influencing process through differentiating:

- different styles of leadership (behavioural qualities);
- their mechanisms (how influence is transmitted); and
- their impacts (effectiveness).

Transformational and transactional leadership

The most widely acknowledged and researched model differentiates 'transformational' and 'transactional' styles of leadership and 'non-transactional' (or laissez-faire) leadership:¹

- **Transformational leadership** can be described as 'values-based', where leaders 'transform' their followers to reach a shared vision through the following components:
 - idealised influence (or charisma);
 - inspirational motivation;
 - intellectual stimulation; and
 - individualised consideration (Bass 1985, 1998; Bass and Avolio 1993).
- **Transactional leadership**, in contrast, involves motivating and correcting followers' behaviour by responding with appropriate and proportional consequences of performance (reward and punishment) (Bass and Steidlmeier 1999).

¹ Non-transactional leadership implies leadership that is neither transformational nor transactional (Dumdum et al. 2002), with laissez-faire leadership being a particularly hands-off, avoidant 'leadership' style.

Table 1: Contributing factors to misconduct and suggestions for prevention

Contributing Factors		Prevention
Individual factors		
Personality / attitudes / coping mechanisms	Attitudes that support misconduct, personal problems (e.g. financial, drug / alcohol dependence, stress) and a lack of knowledge / skills / confidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruit screening • Education • Staff support
Organisational factors		
Organisational culture	Narrow emphasis on performance and clear-up rates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on professional standards
Policy and rules	Lack of consistent policies or unworkable rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear rules with definitions and working examples • Communication of rules and ethics training from external personnel on risks and implications of corruption
Leadership	Lack of supervisory presence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visible leadership, fair and consistent appraisal and feedback • Transformational leadership
Opportunities	Undercover work, informant handling and special squads (e.g. drugs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vetting, rotation and procedural controls (e.g. levels of access to data)
Ineffective investigation and consequences	Knowledge of difficulties in proving and convicting for corrupt acts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage reporting (helplines) • Openness and fairness of investigations • External oversight • Speedy and fair discipline process
Social factors		
Social culture	Solidarity and silence, pressure not to report, negative towards investigators and those who co-operate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intolerance to harassment – peer protection
Colleague influence	Influence from peers to conform, influence of observing supervisor's bad example	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use solidarity to encourage integrity • Good leadership (set good example)
External influence	Pressure from family / friends or criminals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combination of above, particularly those associated with 'policy and rules' and 'opportunities'

Source: Adapted from Porter 2005, and Porter and Prenzler 2012.

Transformational leadership has typically been shown to be the more effective style in terms of follower performance, job satisfaction, commitment, trust, and loyalty (Dumdum et al. 2002; Bass and Riggio 2006), as well as positively impacting whistleblowing attitudes (Caillier 2013). Indeed, transformational leadership was initially thought to be more ethical than transactional leadership (Bhal and Dadhich 2011) due to the values-based style of influence. However, this view has been criticised as limited and overly simplistic. 'Ethical leadership', however, has recently emerged as a new model of leadership.

Ethical leadership

Bass and Steidlmeier discuss the ethical components of different leadership styles and highlight that ethical leaders must show "moral character", legitimate values, and "morality of the processes of social ethical choice and action" (1999, page 182). Later, Brown et al. presented 'ethical leadership' as a new leadership construct, defined as follows:

[The] demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way, communication, reinforcement, and decision-making. (2005, page 120)

This definition suggested that ethical leaders not only demonstrate ethical behaviour themselves, but actively encourage the ethical behaviour of others.

Ethical leadership has been found to predict:

- followers' perceptions of leader effectiveness (Brown et al. 2005);
- job satisfaction and dedication (Brown et al. 2005; Ogunfowora 2014);
- 'organisational citizenship behaviour', typically described as discretionary effort and other cooperative workplace behaviours (Ogunfowora 2014; Resick et al. 2013);
- negative attitudes towards workplace deviance and avoidance of workplace antisocial conduct (Resick et al. 2013); and
- whistleblowing attitudes and behaviour (Bhal and Dadhich 2011; Brown et al. 2005).

How do ethical leaders influence behaviour?

According to Luthans and Avolio (2003), an important underlying construct underpinning ethical leadership is 'authentic leadership', which can encompass various aspects of leadership styles, but at the same time, they argue, is distinct. Walumbwa et al. describe 'authentic leadership' as follows:

The extent to which a leader is aware of and exhibits [a] pattern of openness and clarity in his / her behavior toward others by sharing the information needed to make decisions, accepting others' inputs, and disclosing his/her personal values, motives, and sentiments in a manner that enables followers to more accurately assess the competence and morality of the leader's actions. (2010, page 901)

Walumba et al. showed not only that authentic leadership behaviour is positively related to organisational citizenship behaviour and engagement, but that this relationship could be explained by the extent to which followers identified with their supervisor and felt "psychologically empowered" in their role (2010, page 910). Thus, they explain the mechanism through which follower engagement is achieved.

Similarly, Brown et al. (2005, page 118) suggest that "ethical leaders likely use both transformational and transactional leadership approaches", but go further to offer social

learning theory as a theoretical framework for explaining the mechanisms through which ethical leaders positively influence followers' behaviour. Social learning theory emphasises the importance of learning through observation and reinforcement (either personal experience or vicarious experience via others). Thus, they propose that ethical leaders are role models for followers, through their own behaviour, communication and use of reinforcement.

In a review of the literature on ethical leadership, Brown and Treviño offer the following summary of the mechanisms by which such individuals influence the conduct of others:

The emerging research suggests that ethical leaders are characterized as honest, caring, and principled individuals who make fair and balanced decisions. Ethical leaders also frequently communicate with their followers about ethics, set clear ethical standards and use rewards and punishments to see that those standards are followed. Finally, ethical leaders do not just talk a good game—they practice what they preach and are proactive role models for ethical conduct. (2006, page 597)

This passage represents some of the dominant aspects of leadership theories that relate to identified misconduct risks, each of which will be outlined below.

Attributes and values

Ethical leaders are the embodiment of the 'ethical' attributes and principles they stand for and particular values that are communicated outwards. In policing, organisational values are often set through policy documents and incorporate principles of honesty and integrity that are expected of all members of the organisation. A recent study by the CMC (2013) in Queensland, Australia, suggested that the greater the alignment between the organisational values and the personal values of police officers – value-congruence – the greater the likelihood those officers were to recognise the seriousness of, and report, misconduct.

Value-congruence or alignment between employees and the organisation can be increased through transformational leadership (Grojean, Resick, Dickson and Smith 2004). Transformational leadership values excellence in outcomes through a shared value system (Burns 1978; Bass 1985). Indeed, Mastrofski (2004) highlights transformational leadership styles as a facilitator to ethical behaviour within policing. However, Girodo (1998) found this to be the least likely style used by police managers from North American, Western European and Australian police agencies.

Fairness

Ethical leadership includes leader behaviour that demonstrates consideration for, and fair treatment of, staff as well as moral decision-making (Avolio 1999; Brown, et al 2005; Treviño et al. 2003). Fair and balanced decision-making, and respectful treatment, are at the root of 'organisational justice' and closely related to the idea of 'operant leadership' (i.e. the use of operant conditioning – positive and negative consequences – to achieve behaviour change) (Komaki 1998). A key component of operant leadership is that consequences for behaviour are timely, consistent and proportional to performance. This promotes perceptions of fairness and increases employee trust, which in turn impacts positively on employee behaviour (Rubin et al. 2010) and reduces counterproductive employee behaviour (Greenberg 1990). Conversely, research on organisational justice shows that feelings of unfair treatment can negatively affect job performance and rule adherence (Tyler et al. 2007). Furthermore, perceptions of organisational justice have been linked to police officers:

- holding positive views about the public (Myhill and Bradford 2013);
- being more likely to follow the organisation's rules (Bradford et al. 2014);

- showing greater commitment to the principles of ethical policing (Bradford and Quinton, 2014); and
- being less likely to adhere to the 'code of silence' among peers and engage in misconduct (Ivkovic and Shelley 2010; Wolfe and Piquero 2011).

Communication

The primary dimension of early leadership theories can be described as a difference between leading by having authoritarian power over the group (power to direct behaviour) and leading through having power with the group (democratic processes that encourage shared goals):

- **Participative or democratic leaders** – Such leaders invite followership through communication – inviting the participation of others to input ideas, share information and consider the opinions of others in decision-making (Vroom and Jago 1995).
- **Autocratic or authoritarian leaders** – In contrast, these leaders direct the goals and targets of group members discouraging upwards communication (Vroom and Jago 1995). For example, HMIC (1999) criticised the police rank structure for inhibiting communication between ranks, which adversely affected ethical behaviour. Problems highlighted include inconsistency of messages, lack of transparency, and limited communication channels to highlight possible problems.

Setting and enforcing standards

Along with transformational leadership styles, ethical leadership has also been found to involve elements of transactional leadership (Treviño et al. 2003). According to Gini (1998) and Treviño et al. (2003), ethical leaders set clear standards and use performance appraisal, and reward and punishment, to hold employees accountable for their conduct. These consequences reinforce 'rule-congruent' behaviour in order to maintain the set or expected standard. Brown and Treviño (2006) report a long history of research demonstrating that consequences effect ethical behaviour. In policing, as Table 1 above highlights, police misconduct may be partly explained by the use of weak or ineffective rules to set standards, and there being ineffective investigations and consequences once standards have been breached. Police leadership in the context of misconduct has previously been criticised on the basis of senior officers not setting common standards, inadequate monitoring of officer performance, and supervisors willingly turning a blind eye to corrupt behaviour (Fitzgerald 1989; HMIC 1999; Kennedy 2004; Quinton 2003; Wood 1997).

Indeed, these systems signal the 'ethical climate' of the organisation – "the shared perception of what is ethically correct behaviour and how ethical issues should be handled within an organisation" (Dickson et al. 2001, page 197). Ethical climate has been linked to managers' ethical decision-making intentions (Flannery and May 2000) and employees' willingness to lie (Ross and Robertson 2000), as well as more general organisational outcomes. Dickson, et al. (2001) argue that the effects of ethical climate can be explained, at least in part, through positive influences on employee cohesion and morale.

Role models

Social learning theory shows how people learn through their experiences in their social environment (Bandura 1971). These experiences may arise through observation of others' behaviour and the consequences that they receive. The impact of role models is increased where the observer is uncertain how to behave, perceives the model to be of high status and credibility (Bandura 1986), and is rewarded for their behaviour (Bandura, Ross and Ross 1963; Brown and Treviño 2006). Thus, the impact of leaders who are visible as role models, either for positive or negative behaviour, will impact on ethical conduct. For example, Huberts

et al. (2007) found that a positive role modelling style of leadership limited the frequency of a variety of ethical violations among Dutch police officers.

Brown et al. (2005) propose that leaders become credible role models for ethical behaviour through demonstrating normative values (i.e. norms about what ought to be done), concern for others, fair treatment of employees and showing appropriate responses to performance. A survey by the Ethics Resource Center (2003) showed that identification of such leader behaviour was associated with lower levels of employee misconduct. In contrast, Hannah et al. (2013) showed that abusive or hostile supervision was associated with a higher degree of subordinate unethical behaviour and weaker identification with organisational values.

While organisations can change their formal systems, informal (cultural) systems are equally, if not more, influential (Alpert et al. 2012; Reiner 1992; Chan 1996). Cultures influence members through informal rules, beliefs, myths and norms that perpetuate misconduct through socialisation between members (Chan, Devery, and Doran 2003; Porter 2005; Punch 2000). Thus, it is important to explore not just formal leadership mechanisms and styles, but also informal leadership, including social influence and role models. Indeed, experience can provide legitimacy for influence, with serving officers passing on unacceptable practices to new recruits (Howitt 2002).

A question of the right mix?

The research literature on ethical leadership identifies how principles from social and organisational psychology – such as social learning theory, transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and organisational justice – can effectively promote ethical behaviour. A combination of leadership theories, therefore, must be considered as ideal. For example, leading by example can be more effective at influencing collective behaviour when coupled with authority and the power to exclude (a transactional mechanism) (Güth et al. 2007). Similarly, the effectiveness of transactional rewards and punishment depends upon the recipient's levels of trust (Rubin et al. 2010), which can be increased through organisational justice. Leadership mechanisms may also differ according to the recipient. For example, Huang et al. (2010), showed that feelings of trust explained the positive effects of participative leadership on task performance for frontline employees, but for 'managerial subordinates', the explanatory mechanism was feelings of empowerment.

Finding the right mix of leadership styles and processes to ensure officers act ethically would appear to be a key challenge for police integrity management. Recent developments in policing show several initiatives that can promote leadership responsibility throughout the organisation; for example, clear accountability structures (Porter and Prenzler 2012), values statements and management intervention models. A combination of these initiatives, through incorporation of the leadership qualities mentioned above, could offer an appropriate model for improving leadership, management and, ultimately, integrity.

Structure of the report

The next chapter describes the research methods used in this study. Chapter 3 seeks to address the broad research question – what makes some people more effective than others in the context of ethical leadership? It describes the different leadership styles (past and present) identified during the fieldwork, how they related to leadership theory, and how the interviewees regarded them. Chapter 4 looks at the mechanisms adopted by leaders to promote integrity to answer the question – how does leadership behaviour influence what people do? Chapter 5 notes other influences on ethical behaviour in line with the third broad research question – what is the relative influence of leadership style against other means of shaping behaviour? The final chapter aims to discuss the research findings in the context of the previous literature, and draw out the main conclusion and implications for policing.

2. Research methods

Aims of the study

The present study was focused on issues of leadership and police organisational ethics. The study involved qualitative fieldwork in a sample of five police forces from across England and Wales. A confidential one-on-one interview format was adopted as a means of eliciting in-depth opinions and accounts of experiences. For each force, three members from the chief officer team were interviewed, followed by five frontline officers or members of staff. The interview schedule was based around three main research questions:

- What makes some people more effective than others in the context of ethical leadership?
- How does leadership behaviour influence what people do?
- What is the relative influence of leadership style against other means of shaping behaviour?

Selection of forces

The initial proposal was to select forces based on a range of indicators that might be linked to different standards of ethical behaviour, such as a reported use of an approach or intervention (e.g. organisational learning or organisational justice) or reported complaints. However, a comprehensive review of a range of data (including reports from HMIC and the Independent Police Complaints Commission) showed there was no reliable or consistent measure of the ethical health upon which to base the selection of forces.

Instead, forces were selected on the basis of a recent change in leadership at the chief constable level to enable the interviews to explore developments in policy and practice that emanated from the incoming chief, which may have been designed to, or result in, a shift in the ethical police behaviour. The College provided advice to the research team based on its direct knowledge of leadership changes in forces over the preceding three years, and following discussions with stakeholders.

The selection process also sought to engage a cross section of forces with regard to size, type and geographical location, though this was secondary to identifying forces from which the most valuable lessons could be learned.

The five selected forces, all of which had experienced some change in leadership style, all agreed to take part in the research and included one metropolitan force, two non-metropolitan and two unitary authority forces. One chief constable had come into post within the past year, three within the past two years, and one within four years.

Selection of interviewees

A sampling strategy was devised, which adopted a dual approach – one for identifying chief officers and one for frontline officers and staff.

Sampling of chief officers

The aim was to interview the chief constable and a range of others in different senior leadership roles, focusing on those in more visible leadership positions. Purposive sampling aimed to include a spread across policing functions and portfolios, though the forces varied in

size and in smaller forces the chief officers interviewed represented all or most of the leadership team.

Sampling of frontline officers and staff

For frontline interviewees, a primary focus was placed on sampling supervisors – principally sergeants – as they would not typically have had much direct contact with chief officers, but would nevertheless be required to translate their messages into action through their managerial and supervisory decisions, and would have the most contact with those in operational roles. In order to gain a perspective on the leadership changes that occurred within each force in recent years, only officers and staff with a minimum of five years' service were included in the sample.

Sampling criteria were developed to ensure a wide range of views and experiences were gathered during the fieldwork in order to enable differences in perceptions to be explored. The criteria were developed by the research team for use by the study forces to identify officers and staff to be interviewed. The criteria aimed to ensure the final sample contained representation from a range of different officers and staff including the following:

- **Supervisory rank / grade** – The inclusion of supervisors at the sergeant and inspector level (in a 4:1 sergeant to inspector ratio).
- **Length of service** – The inclusion of different levels of experience (beyond a five year minimum).
- **Functions / roles** – The inclusion of officers and staff in a range of functions, including those in uniformed roles (e.g. neighbourhoods, response) and non-uniformed roles (e.g. investigations, intelligence, performance).
- **Geography** – In geographically large forces, the inclusion of officers and staff from more than one geographical command area (to explore issues of leadership visibility and the transmission of leadership messages within dispersed organisations).
- **Gender and ethnicity** – The inclusion of female, and black and minority ethnic, officers or members of staff.²

Contacts within each force used these criteria to identify and approach individual respondents for interview. Fieldwork dates were fixed in advance with each force based on the availability of the chief officer team. The frontline officers and staff were, therefore, also selected on the basis of who was available on those dates.

The reliance on contacts within the force to apply the sampling criteria and identify respondent will inevitably have led to selection bias. Some forces were more successful than other in applying the selection criteria. This resulted in some groups being more or less well-represented in the final sample than was originally anticipated – most notably members of police staff. The results are, thus, likely to reflect more the experiences and perceptions of sworn officers. The effect of other potential sources of selection bias are less clear-cut. The wide-ranging and candid nature of the responses provided during the interviews perhaps suggests that selection bias was less of an issue in practice. Indeed, the confidential nature of the interviews was stressed to all respondents to encourage them to answer in an open and honest way.

² The aim was for the final sample to contain at least five female interviewees and at least five from black and minority ethnic groups.

Sample size and characteristics

At total of 41 interviews were carried out across the five study forces. Tables 2 and 3 below describe the profile of the achieved sample in terms of rank and role.

Table 2. Rank structure of interviewees

Rank	Number
Chief officers (n=16)	
Chief constable	4
Deputy chief constable	5
Assistant chief constable	6
Chief officer (police staff)	1
Frontline officers / staff (n=25)	
Inspector	6
Sergeant	18
Police staff	1

Table 3. Function / department of interviewees

Function	Number
Chief officers (n=16)	
Chief police officer	15
HR	1
Frontline officers / staff (n=25)	
Neighbourhoods	8
Response	5
Investigations	6
Organisational change	4
Professional standards	1
Police staff	1

Data collection and analysis

The interview schedule

As mentioned, the interviews sought to answer the main research questions outlined above. More specifically, respondents were asked to consider the impact on ethical behaviour of:

- culture and leadership style within the organisation;
- force values and priorities; and
- performance regimes and other potential influences.

They were also asked about successful and unsuccessful mechanisms for communicating leadership messages.

The interview schedule for frontline officers and staff largely mirrored the one developed for chief officers in order to enable triangulation and assess the level of coherence across the interviews (i.e. whether frontline perceptions about chief officers were in line with their own views about themselves as leaders).

It was explained that ethical behaviour was not restricted to issues of wrongdoing and corruption, but also encompassed the wider range of attitudes and behaviour (e.g. those towards other people and ethical decision-making as part of policing practice).

The overall interview approach was influenced by the Critical Incident Technique (developed by Flanagan 1954) which involves discussing specific situations using prompts to provide evidence and examples in support of the views given.

Fieldwork

The interviews were carried out during a two-day fieldwork visit to each of the five study forces. Almost all the interviews (40) were carried out face-to-face; one was conducted after the main fieldwork period over the telephone. The interviews were recorded for later transcription. In most cases, chief officers were interviewed first, followed by interviews with frontline officers. Interviews took between 45 and 105 minutes.

Coding and analysis

It was important, from the outset, to differentiate the data that related to different types of respondent. Each interview was ascribed a range of attributes (e.g. rank, force, demographics) to enable findings for specific subgroups to be grouped and investigated. This step also helped to triangulate the two main data sources (i.e. chief officers and frontline) and synthesise the contrasting accounts.

The coding was undertaken at three levels:

- First, initial coding was carried out that grouped text from the interviews under key lines of questioning. This was based on a pre-designed coding framework that mirrored the themes of the interview schedule with a view to collating the responses and allowing broad comparisons between interviewees from different forces.
- Secondly, more in-depth coding of material was carried out to: elicit specific codes from the data (e.g. for positive and negative attributes, styles of leadership, and subtypes and categories); and identify any additional themes (e.g. austerity measures).
- Thirdly, higher level thematic coding was carried out to explore the relationship between the data and the literature on ethical leadership. The resulting themes have been used to structure the findings (i.e. the subheadings).

Caveats

It is worth noting that a relatively small number of interviews were carried out for this study. Thus, the views that are reported here cannot be considered to be representative of all officers and staff in the all (or any) of the study forces. For this reason and in the nature of qualitative research, the reported findings attempt to give a broad indication of how widely a view was held, but has steered clear from giving specific numbers because it has the potential to mislead.

Furthermore, this is an explorative and in-depth qualitative study. Its results represent the opinions of officers and staff based on their perceptions and self-reported observations of the behaviour of others. The findings cannot, and were not intended to, provide a more 'objective' assessment of the effect that different leadership styles and strategies have had on ethical behaviour.

Quotations from the interviews have been used to illustrate the main findings. The quotations are attributed, generally, to either a 'chief officer' or 'frontline officer'. With the small sample size, the use of additional labels (e.g. rank and role) would potentially jeopardise the anonymity of the respondents. For similar reasons, no attempt was made to link, presentationally, multiple quotations to individual respondents (e.g. use of a unique identifier).

As previously discussed, respondents were selected by force contacts, meaning selection bias cannot be ruled out. The final sample largely contained police officers (rather than police staff), which limited our ability to explore the role and impact of leadership with this specific group, and the relationship between police staff and officers.

It should be noted that the term 'staff' is used throughout the report in general term to describe all employees working for the force, and is intended to include both police officers and unsworn civilian staff.

3. What makes an effective ethical leader?

This chapter explores the perception of chief and frontline officers in the five study forces about leadership and its influence on ethical behaviour. The key findings are as follows:

- Overall, the large majority of interviewees felt there had been a positive shift in the style of police leadership in recent years. Most of the current leaders in the five study forces were seen as consultative and good communicators.
- Leadership was seen as important at all levels, with chief constables setting standards, and sergeants having the most direct impact on the behaviour of frontline officers. Overall, first line supervisors were thought to have more of an influence on behaviour than chief officers.
- Openness, consistency and fairness were identified as essential leadership components in promoting ethical behaviour. Honesty, integrity, visibility, transparency, and the consistency and clarity of communication were also highlighted as characteristics of 'good leadership'.
- Overall, the interviewees found it difficult to disentangle the factors that constituted effective leadership in general, and those that specifically promoted ethical behaviour. There was a widespread belief that ethical behaviour was a 'natural consequence' of effective leadership.
- **Participative or democratic leadership** – Examples of a participative leadership style were relatively common and seen as positive. Top-down communication – providing information and explaining decisions – was seen as particularly important in increasing staff 'buy-in' to organisational values. Bottom-up communication was also reported to help:
 - increased staff morale;
 - staff to feel empowerment and being valued;
 - improve staff perceptions of organisational openness and transparency; and
 - develop more of a shared understanding across the workforce.

Visibility was widely recognised as having a positive effect, but thought difficult for chief officers to achieve because of their role. This approach was seen to give leaders credibility and authenticity, though a minority viewed such efforts with suspicion.

- **Transformational leadership** – There were fewer reported examples of transformational leadership. Leaders who could be described broadly as transformational were generally popular, respected and well liked. This style of leadership was also seen as being particularly successful in shaping behaviour because of the positive feelings it engendered and the values it transmitted through the organisation.
- **Transactional leadership** – The importance of leaders being clear about expected standards of behaviour was highlighted during the interview, as was the need to spell out the consequences of staff failing to meet those standards. A risk was identified with this approach in terms of being overly reactive and failing to identify learning.
- **Autocratic or authoritarian leadership** – This style of leadership was viewed negatively and only described in relation to former (not current) chief officers. Its reported effect was to reduce the capacity of staff to make decisions, and encourage staff to cover up mistakes for fear of the consequences.

Perceived leadership styles

In examining the role of leadership in promoting ethical behaviour, the importance of openness, consistency and fairness were identified as consistent themes across the interviews. Leadership was seen as important at all levels within the study forces; with chief constables setting standards, and sergeants having the most direct impact on the behaviour of frontline officers. The broad perspective on ethical behaviour taken in this study allowed us to examine some of the more subtle methods of influencing behaviour. This perspective required a general exploration of leadership styles and their perceived impact, and a more specific focus on the initiatives and practices that had been adopted with a view to promoting ethical behaviour. Overall, the interviewees found it difficult to disentangle the factors that constituted effective leadership in general, and those that specifically promoted ethical behaviour, as there was a widespread belief that ethical behaviour was a 'natural consequence' of effective leadership.

The large majority of interviewees had experienced a change of leadership during their service, in part because of the sampling requirement for them to have a minimum of five years' service. In many cases, more than one change of leadership had been experienced. While some of these changes represented a gradual evolution in leadership style, where the incoming leader had continued and adapted the previous incumbent's approach (and may have been part of their leadership team), others involved a 'sharper turn' to mark out the incoming leader from the previous incumbent. These changes enabled interviewees to describe how they thought different leadership styles had impacted upon the organisational culture and the perceived behaviour of staff. It was difficult to tease out the roots of leadership style. However, it was reported that chief constables were deliberate in their choice of leadership style, while some deputy and assistant chief constables adopted an approach they thought was required by the role even though they admitted it was not necessarily their 'natural style'. In four out of five study forces, the current chief was the former deputy. While the intent for continuity in leadership style and vision was occasionally raised, there were few cases where evidence was provided that this was the case.

Positive and negative opinions about leadership styles were evident in all study forces, drawing on how interviewees responded to questions about current and past leaders, their own leadership style, and the attributes of 'good' leadership. Overall, perceptions about leaders were mixed. However, the importance of honesty, integrity, visibility, transparency, and the consistency and clarity of communication were emphasised, and reportedly had an impact on staff morale.

Overall, the large majority of interviewees felt there had been a positive shift in the style of police leadership in recent years, which was part of a wider positive evolution in policing. With a few exceptions, police leaders were seen to have moved away from a long tradition of detached, military-style command-and-control management. Most of the current leaders were seen as consultative and good communicators. Policing had also reportedly become more concerned with helping and protecting victims of crime, and working with communities to address problems, rather than working in isolation to their own agenda. These changes were seen as being enmeshed with improvements in organisational ethics and integrity.

Perceptions of positive and negative leadership fell into the following categories (which are discussed in detail below):

- Participative or democratic leadership.
- Transformational leadership.
- Transactional leadership.
- Autocratic or authoritarian leadership.

While a small number of interviewees talked about leadership using these terms, most provided examples of behaviour or attributes that described elements of these models. As such, it was difficult to make an overall assessment of the leadership style within each force. However, all chief constables were generally described as being participative to some degree, although this style was reportedly often coupled with them having a strong vision and/or strict disciplinary approach. The majority of chief and frontline officers felt that each of these styles – apart from autocratic leadership – could reinforce positive organisational values and engagement, and promote ethical behaviour.

Participative leadership

The majority of interviewees were able to provide examples of chief officers who exhibited, to varying degrees, a participative leadership style. The activities participative leaders engaged in were seen as 'accessible', which interviewees regarded very positively. A participative style can be described as:

- opening channels for top-down communication;
- encouraging bottom-up communication; and
- being accessible and a visible presence.

Top-down communication – providing information

Providing information and explaining decisions to staff were frequently seen as particularly important ways in which leaders could increase 'buy-in' to organisational messages and understanding about the need for unpopular organisational changes. The view was expressed by interviewees at all ranks that when staff understood the reasons for difficult or unpalatable decisions, their resentment was likely to be reduced and their organisational commitment likely to be maintained (if not increased).

There is a counter-argument [with austerity] and it's: if you are able to deliver a message to the workforce – 'Look, it's really tough, but you're doing a fantastic job and we're all in this together' – if you can be credible in the way you deliver that message, it can actually have a positive effect. Times of crisis bind people.
(Chief Officer)

Similarly, leaders who explained why alternative options were not taken were seen to ameliorate uncertainty and ensure faith in the system. Top-down communication was, therefore, viewed as a way of clarifying, and increasing the transparency of, senior leadership decisions, which in turn was seen to quell staff suspicions and anxieties, and increase trust in the organisation.

I think the biggest barrier for integrity and buy-in is rumours. (Frontline Officer)

Bottom-up communication – inviting staff input

The following examples were given during the interviews of senior officers who actively encouraged the input of more junior staff in decision-making:

- Providing channels of communication for staff to ask questions or raise issues they would like to be dealt with.
- Inviting ideas or direct input into the strategic direction of the force.
- Encouraging staff to challenge current direction or practices.

Invited participation was sometimes limited to particular ranks and grades. For example, frontline officers were more likely to be invited to raise issues, while senior managers more likely to be involved democratically in change processes.

Acting on staff feedback was noted by both chief and frontline officers as important for maintaining leadership credibility:

It's important that when you get something raised, you do something about it.
(Chief Officer)

Any improvements that were fed in by individuals, [the chief] then fed that back and said: "This is what we are going to do with the feedback that we have gained from people in and around the force". I have never had that before in any organisation that I have worked for, so that was good, and people took positively to that. (Frontline Officer)

A minority of interviewees, however, believed that staff still appreciated the chance to 'vent' and 'voice' their views even if nothing was or could be done with their feedback (a finding that was in line with research on organisational justice).

The perceived outcomes when these practices were evident included improved morale, a greater sense of there being a shared vision across the workforce (and related value-congruence), as well as staff feeling more valued and empowered and that the organisation is open and transparent:

So there's very much, the two-way street, you're talked to rather than talked at and there's certainly a feeling of, you know, everybody's voice is heard and accepted and a lot of times when people put suggestions in or have concerns of what we should be doing or shall we consider doing that, they'll get an answer rather than, you know, knocking on the closed door. Everybody has a part to play. (Frontline Officer)

However, it was commonly said to be important for leaders to adopt more of a balanced style in order to allay any perceptions of them being 'weak', which was identified as a concern by a minority of interviewees with this style of leadership:

I think you need that little bit of fear of your superiors but, at the same time, they need to be open, so it is a fine balance really, because I have had some people that you can't talk to... and I have had some leaders that you can go in, it's really open, but sometimes they are a little bit weak, so it's a fine balance really, getting the ideal mix. (Frontline Officer)

One chief officer illustrated how they sought to balance their own democratic style by demonstrating a 'strength of character', which was described as them having the 'courage of their convictions', for example, in terms of considering but rejecting opinions or ideas that were not appropriate.

You need to be sure what it is you're after, cos you might have to say: 'Yeah, I've heard that, but we're not gonna do it'. (Chief Officer)

The chief of one of the study forces, who had been recruited from outside, reportedly sought to implement change from the bottom-up; democratically encouraging and empowering staff to contribute to the force vision and priorities through workshop-style activities. Though the process met with some resistance, interviewees were positive about the change overall. The chief was recognised as being open and sympathetic to staff, though the chief was clear they needed to balance their style with a tough 'zero tolerance' approach towards performance.

[I] tried to be prepared to step into the shoes and be a leader, but not be so autocratic nobody will come up with any ideas... that's a mixture of the two.
(Chief Officer)

Indeed, interviewees from three of the study forces were clear about the importance of balancing 'softer' leadership styles with displays of strength (e.g. showing 'tough love', decisiveness, or a hard line on misconduct).

Visibility and accessibility

Interviewees expressed appreciation of leaders who were visible. The varying degrees to which visibility was adopted by senior leaders reportedly ranged from those who were merely 'seen' within and beyond police headquarters, to those regarded as being 'approachable' and 'accessible'. Open-door policies were said to increase feelings of accessibility, openness and transparency. Other examples included:

- removing physical barriers in the office environment (e.g. security doors to the chief team office corridor);
- making the chief constable's electronic diary accessible;
- allocating time for staff drop-in meetings with the chief constable; and
- scheduling time for chief officers to meet with staff at all levels of the organisation.

Increased contact was specifically cited by one interviewee as leading to a greater likelihood of staff reporting questionable conduct of colleagues:

I think the more face-to-face contact you have with individuals, the more chance that you are going to get something out of them. They are more likely to come to you and tell you something. (Frontline Officer)

Activities that took chief officers back 'to the shop floor' and enabled them to observe and experience a range of policing roles, particularly those performed by the frontline, were appreciated. These activities were seen as them:

- showing an interest in staff; understanding the difficulties faced by staff;
- keeping in touch with modern policing issues;
- demonstrating that they were 'willing to get their hands dirty' and did not expect staff to do things they were not prepared to do themselves.

This type of activity reportedly gave credibility and authenticity to leaders and their messages, as it showed they were aware of, and demonstrably embedded in, the organisational environment, rather than being remote from it (an important aspect of participative leadership):

I think it's just that they are still police officers, that they are still there to fulfil the primary function of a police officer and that they are prepared to get involved and they want to experience what it is like still for the officers on the streets, and I think that is why it's positive. (Frontline Officer)

Conversely, a minority of respondents felt that chief officer visits were used to 'catch out' staff with awkward questions, and created an artificial environment from which staff would remove themselves or where they would be 'on their best behaviour'. These forces reportedly had leaders who counterbalanced their use of participative activities with a strong and sometimes directive style. While a level of 'fear' of chief officers was thought by several interviewees to be a positive influence on ethical behaviour, in this particular case it seemed to result in their positive intentions being lost and interpreted negatively by staff.

The roles and responsibilities of the chief officer team were acknowledged as making accessibility and contact with staff on the ground more difficult. However, efforts to open such channels were, in the majority, welcomed and appreciated. Generally, the more contact a frontline interviewee had with the chief officers, the more likely it was that they acknowledged, understood and supported their messages. Frontline interviewees who had little personal contact with senior leaders and did not see them as visible, displayed a range of response, from a lack of knowledge of their messages, through to disinterest and overt cynicism about senior leadership and its impact.

While most interviewees believed senior leaders were influential in some way, there was a strong feeling that first line supervisors had the most direct influence on the behaviour of the frontline – they were seen to represent day-to-day leadership due to their high levels of visibility and staff contact. Indeed, respondents at each rank reinforced the view that their immediate supervisor typically had the greatest influence over them (compared to those who were more removed in the organisational structure). Thus, 'proximity' appeared to be positively related to influence.

Transformational leadership

Fewer interviewees spoke in language that pointed to chief officers having adopted a transformational style of leadership (compared to a participative style). However, there were examples of leaders (both past and present) who were seen as:

- innovative and forward-thinking;
- showing consideration to staff as individuals;
- empowering staff by building their own capacity to lead (at all levels); and
- leading through values (i.e. values-based leadership) by focusing on the importance of professionalism.

The above were also raised by interviewees when they were asked to describe the qualities of effective leadership:

If you can get a leader who can literally unite, empower people, bring the greatest out of people... make you a leader. So I think an awareness of the diversity of their workforce, and treating everyone as an individual with their own needs... I do think there's a bit of a gap. I do think we've sometimes felt like we're machines. (Frontline Officer)

Leaders, who were described by interviewees in terms that were consistent with transformational leadership, were particularly popular, respected and well liked on a personal level. This style of leadership was also seen as a more successful due to the positive feelings it evoked in followers (including an increased sense of self-worth and task ownership).

I think you get more out of people as well if you let them... go out there and produce their own work. I think the job becomes a bit more justifiable, there's a bit more self-esteem and enjoyment. (Frontline Officer)

The transformative nature of this leadership style was also recognised in terms of its effectiveness in transmitting values and goals throughout the organisation:

If I can communicate on a daily basis, as an individual leader, and kind of almost begin to build some momentum and some traction around that as a notion, then that is, I think, a leadership success, because you're always ultimately bound by the limitations of being one person, unless you can create followership and that is a wider following and a wider attraction and people

doing things out there when you're not with them, because actually they think that's what you would want them to do. (Chief Officer)

Transactional leadership

While no interviewees used the term 'transactional leader', the elements of transactional leadership were commonly discussed. In line with the principles of transactional leadership, many noted the importance of consistent standards and consequences on staff behaviour, highlighting the value of recognising good performance and responding to unacceptable behaviour.

You reward good behaviour within the team as well as dealing with bad behaviour. And when the rest of the team go, 'Thank you for dealing with that', you know you have got it right. (Frontline Officer)

Typically, the use of 'punishment' was seen as an activity that should occur more often in response to unacceptable behaviour and in a timely way. Many interviewees referred either directly (with examples) or indirectly to the damaging impact of 'turning a blind eye' to poor performance and misconduct, including generating feelings of unfairness where people were seen to 'get away with it'. When interviewees cited examples of where unacceptable behaviour was challenged or punished, the reported outcomes were positive staff engagement. It was generally acknowledged, however, that these processes should not be designed to be purely reactive: "You don't get any value catching people out" (Frontline Officer). Instead, it was recognised that, while deliberate misconduct should be addressed with discipline, responses to poor performance should be used to support organisational learning and personal development.

Autocratic leadership

Autocratic leadership was seen by interviewees to alienate staff and undermine their commitment to organisational values. Where interviewees discussed this leadership style, it was typically in relation to a former, rather than current, chief officer. The descriptions of attributes and activities related to this style of leadership – which were negative – tended to be the reverse of those outlined above. Autocratic or overly directive leaders were viewed as removing discretion and responsibility from staff:

I think [direction] went a bit over the top. I think we took it too far... our hands were tied. Discretion was taken away from us. (Frontline Officer)

There was a tendency for leaders with this reported style to be viewed as 'closed off' from staff, lacking visibility, 'out of touch' with modern policing, and sometimes even irrelevant. This leadership approach was considered likely to block transparency, and achieve results 'by force' rather than commitment:

The thing that concerned me particularly was – somewhat topical – how performance was being achieved... it was being achieved by a steel glove around the throat. (Chief Officer)

Interviewees from two forces specifically referred to a fear of 'upward challenge' in the organisational culture. In one, there was reportedly a culture of risk aversion that was a result of the previous chief constable, who was seen as authoritarian and discouraged challenge. In the other force, an interviewee remarked that the strict chain of command contributed to staff being unable to challenge or go around senior officers out of fear of being labelled a 'trouble maker.'

4. How do leaders influence behaviour?

This chapter explores the initiatives and interventions that senior leaders reportedly used to influence behaviour, as well as their perceived effect. The key findings were as follows:

- **Settings standards of behaviour**

- Force visions were seen as having an important influence on the occupational culture and, thus, staff attitudes and behaviour. Priorities that emphasised the 'public service' role of the police were felt to have an important influence on ethical behaviour because of the emphasis on 'quality', though this potentially risked some staff feeling undervalued. Priorities focused internally on staff were felt to build staff capacity for using discretion, though there was a widely recognised need for ethical decision-making to be supported.
- Generally, it was clear that the provision of adequate support was thought to be needed, if empowerment was to result in staff being given more discretion and responsibility (e.g. training and development, decision-making support, and support when 'honest' mistakes were made). Prior experience of inadequate support, however, contributed to cynicism.
- There was a widespread view that performance management was one of the strongest influences on behaviour. Measures reportedly sent out explicit signals about what was valued, which could undermine the leadership vision if they were disconnected. The narrow performance focus on crime and enforcement activity, the use of quantitative targets, and pressure to deliver were cited as contributing to unethical behaviour.
- There was a range of views on the value of codes of conduct. While a minority thought their idea was insulting, most felt they were necessary to set standards.
- All respondents agreed on the value of leaders 'leading by example', which was universally accepted as a powerful influence on attitudes and behaviour. Conversely, misconduct by senior officers was seen to undermine the credibility of leadership and the organisation's values. Despite many respondents saying the 'tone was set at the top', most felt confident that misconduct by chief officers would only affect attitudes towards senior leaders, not staff behaviour.

- **Communicating standards of behaviour** – Face-to-face contact with staff was seen to be the most effective method of communicating organisational values. All the study forces had also reportedly made use of technology – to varying degrees – to disseminate messages. Clarity and consistency were highlighted as important issues for communication to be effective. The potential for communication, however, to be lost in translation or wilfully misinterpreted was also highlighted.

- **Reinforcing standards of behaviour** – There was a consistent view that it was important for leaders to take action whenever someone did not meet the expected standards, as it had an important influence on behaviour. However, the need for these processes to be fairly and consistently applied was highlighted because of their potential to have a negative effect on staff. Reward and recognition was also widely cited as enormously influential, though views were mixed on how well this had been implemented.

The mechanisms of influence

To address the question of how leaders influence ethical behaviour, this chapter explores the specific mechanisms that were discussed during the interviews. The following themes were identified, which were in line with the primary aspects of social learning theory and which the idea of ethical leadership draws upon:

- Setting standards of behaviour.
- Communicating those standards.
- Enforcing and reinforcing the standards.

Setting the standards of behaviour

A number of mechanisms were raised during the interviews that showed the ways leaders in the study forces had sought to set standards of behaviour throughout the organisation. Standards were set through:

- specifying organisational priorities;
- performance measurement;
- use of explicit behavioural codes of conduct; and (less formally)
- demonstrating exemplar behaviour (i.e. role modelling).

Setting standards through organisational priorities

The visions, priorities and values promulgated by leaders to both staff and the public were seen by most interviewees to shape the force culture and, therefore, to have a significant impact on staff attitudes and behaviour. The visions and priorities that were discussed could be described as focusing on self, public or staff interests.

Self-interest

A small number of interviewees talked about their negative experience of previous chief constables, who were seen to be motivated by self-interest (e.g. in promoting their own reputation or advancement disproportionately). These leaders also tended to be those whose leadership styles were directive rather than participative, and were reportedly unpopular and often disliked among staff. However, as expected, the majority of chief officers who were interviewed for this study or described by frontline officers had visions that were aimed towards others, not themselves.

Public-oriented

Forces where the public was central to the chief's vision, tended to prioritise the 'public service' role of the police – police being 'duty-bound' to serve the public and focus on what the public see as important (within reason). For some of the study forces, there was a general focus on delivering quality of service and improving public confidence. On occasion, there was also a specific focus on victim satisfaction and restorative justice. Frequently, the nature of this public priority was viewed by respondents as encouraging improvements in officer behaviour because of its focus on the 'quality' of policing processes and outcomes. Other forces, however, were reportedly focussed on public service but framed their priorities more in terms of crime and enforcement (e.g. being more intelligence-led, focusing on serious and organised crime, and being fearless in targeting criminal gangs).

The focus on public service was mostly seen by respondents to encourage ethical behaviour because it was seen to support 'quality' policing and help deliver 'meaningful' performance 'with integrity'. However, there were some who felt that the public service priority can

alienate staff, particularly staff who work in areas of policing that are 'removed' from the public or where the public focus had led to staff being 'neglected' or de-prioritised. A minority of interviewees who felt the force message was that the public were more important than staff said that morale had been affected as a result of staff feeling undervalued and unappreciated.

In one of the study forces, the incoming chief reportedly set a clear public service priority for the force. However, the new chief was seen to be 'tougher' than the previous incumbent, whose leadership style was generally viewed positively because of his focus on relationships. The combination of the incoming chief's style and priority led one interviewee to lament the loss of the staff relationship culture. The interviewee felt that staff were not sufficiently valued, which would potentially have consequences for organisational commitment and workplace behaviour.

Staff-oriented

Two of the chief constables interviewed for the study specifically talked about their aim being to build staff capacity and self-sufficiency.

I want an organisation, when I leave, that doesn't miss my going. Because, if that happens, I haven't created the leadership strength in the organisation to carry that on. (Chief Officer)

The force needs a figurehead, but they shouldn't rely on the chief to do everything... my goal is to make it self-sufficient. (Chief Officer)

Forces that were reportedly more internally-focused tended to prioritise the value of staff, capacity building, and improvements to the working environment and culture. The value that was placed on staff was felt to increase their performance beyond expectations:

I'm a big believer in a massive push for ensuring public confidence and satisfaction, which is right and what it should be, but equally, if you want people to turn up on people's doorsteps and give that service, they've got to feel valued in the first place. (Frontline Officer)

Staff support, particularly in the form of training, was raised by many interviewees. Senior leaders and frontline officers both talked about the importance of training first line supervisors, in terms of providing supervisors with the knowledge and skills to take responsibility for managing their staff. The need for leaders to support the decision-making of staff was also viewed as particularly important, especially where there was a priority to empower staff to use their discretion. As a consequence of this priority, it was also felt that leaders needed to appreciate that staff decisions made in these circumstances could sometimes be wrong:

If you're going to empower people who have not been previously empowered, they will make mistakes... it's about knowing that, if they are reasonable mistakes then they will be dealt with sympathetically. (Chief Officer)

Supporting staff who made honest mistakes was seen to be important on grounds of integrity because, as several interviewees noted, failure to do so would risk staff covering up errors due to fear of the consequences. Leaders who were risk averse and seen to treat staff harshly were thought to breed 'decision inertia', such that staff would be hesitant to take 'risky' decisions or be unwilling to act at all. Such an outcome could potentially result in staff failing to do what was necessary, challenge or report inappropriate behaviour, or perform to the expected standards.

I think what happens when you have a chief that is so risk averse, and when you get it wrong, he's on to you... I think that's the type of environment where people almost think: 'Well, best I just keep my head down, keep out the way, no point in making those sort of decisions, because if that doesn't go right, I'm just gonna get walloped for it, even if I've done it for the right reasons'. (Chief Officer)

Examples where chief officers had publicly admitted their own mistakes resonated strongly with several interviewees. Doing so sent an important message, and was seen as a key factor in encouraging staff to report their own and others' shortcomings.

But I think what's really fresh for leaders, they will acknowledge if they have made a mistake... if the boss... they're actually saying that in a uniformed environment, then I think that's a massive message to people that, yeah, we can make mistakes, providing we learn from them. (Frontline Officer)

On occasion, the National Decision Model (College of Policing 2014b) was highlighted as a tool that can help to empower staff by supporting their decision-making processes. It was noted, however, that many staff may not knowingly use the model to make decisions, but may follow the processes it sets out automatically.

There were some differences between individual respondents and across ranks in the extent to which they valued staff empowerment and discretion. On the one hand, several chief officers spoke about empowering staff to use their discretion and decide on their own course of action to achieve results in line with the force vision. On the other hand, several frontline officers reported that they – or frontline officers in general – liked expectations to be clearly stated, and that police constables needed or wanted 'black and white' instructions.

Respondents in those forces that had experienced a change from a directive leadership style to a more participative one seemed to be reacting positively. This perception was perhaps more consistent at senior levels. Lower ranked staff seemed to hold slightly more divergent views. Some said they wanted to be left alone 'to get on with it' but, at the same time, wanted prescriptive direction about what they were expected to do. Generally, it was clear that the provision of adequate support was thought to be needed, if empowerment was to result in staff being given more discretion and responsibility (e.g. training and development, decision-making support, and support when 'honest' mistakes were made). Prior experience of inadequate support, however, contributed to cynicism.

Setting standards through performance management

The measures used to assess performance at a force and individual level perhaps inevitably impacted on staff understanding of what the priorities were, and the use of targets was believed to be directly associated with ethical and unethical behaviour. These targets reportedly sent an explicit message about what was valued in the organisation, and how a person's performance was likely to be judged. Indeed, it was evident that targets provided staff with a more direct message about force priorities compared to leadership rhetoric. Thus, targets have the potential to undermine leadership messages where these were seen to be 'disconnected' (e.g. where messages emphasising quality were replaced by a 'push' to meet quantitative targets).

I have sat in meetings where we've had officers come and address the staff, and the first thing they talk about is performance figures and instantly the staff switch off. For me, that is a real missed opportunity there, to deliver positive messages. (Frontline Officer)

We're told detections don't matter, but we still get talk about them every day at the morning meetings and, if they slip, somebody comes down like a ton of bricks and wants to know why. However, everything is focused towards public satisfaction and confidence. (Frontline Officer)

Furthermore, many did not see that performance frameworks were in line with integrity frameworks. For example, integrity was not seen to be sufficiently embedded within the systems for appraisal and promotion (i.e. the measurements used to judge performance did not incorporate integrity beyond a superficial level):

It [performance] is intrinsically linked with senior officers' bonus schemes... it seems to be with a self-serving interest as much as for the greater good. Because people don't get bonuses unless they're performing, and the easiest way to measure performance is with [numbers]. (Frontline Officer)

One of the issues that has bedevilled integrity over the last few years has been performance management. People measuring the wrong things, or measuring them and the numbers being important rather than what lies behind them. (Chief Officer)

The above quote from the chief officer highlighted that performance frameworks frequently omitted specific measures related to integrity, and resulted in attention being placed narrowly on 'the figures' rather than questioning about what issues those figures represented or how they were achieved.

Indeed, a highly consistent view across the interviews was that conventional crime-focused quantitative measures, which typically 'counted' police activity (e.g. arrests, searches), have had a negative impact on ethical behaviour. This reportedly occurred because the measures provided a clear message to staff that the 'outcome' was the priority (not the 'process') and due to the pressure to deliver 'results'. Interviewees from more than one force gave specific recent examples of incidents that were resolved in order to achieve a target rather than to satisfy those involved:

Because of the drive from above, there was a certain course of action [prosecution] which was undertaken which was clearly against the victim's wishes, but it was done to hit a performance target... Unfortunately, when anybody phones the police, it generates an incident and a crime, and we have to do everything we possibly can to get a positive outcome to that crime, and if that means going against the victim's wishes to force a course of action, that seems to be the way. (Frontline Officer)

Without adequate support or communication to the contrary, this was viewed as having the potential to lead to 'cutting corners', 'fiddling the figures', attitudes that the 'end justifies the means' and focus on 'quantity over quality'. Respondents were often not specific as to what they meant, but there were some suggestions that they were talking about officers potentially over-using arrests and searches, and under-recording and misclassifying crime:

[In] the early 2000s to the mid-2000s, at all costs, it was reduce crime. Well that 'all costs' then resulted in a number of organisations, nationally, potentially fiddling the crime figures. (Chief Officer)

Historically [performance measurement] has driven quite a lot of perverse behaviour, and I do believe that we are still struggling to come out of the tick-box mentality into actually, 'What's the right thing?' (Frontline Officer)

Quantitative targets were also seen as demotivating and uninspiring, particularly when they were thought to be unrealistic, if not revised down to take account of reduced resources. A notable proportion of respondents commented on the need to improve the performance measures of individual people, such as by focusing on their service quality rather than their ability to meet the targets.

It's still quite a proud thing that you've done that many jobs or you know, it's still irrelevant this other officer's done, say, two sexual offences jobs that have taken her hours and she'll have got nothing from it in a [performance indicator] way, yet done a marvellous job. Still no correlation on recognising that and I think that's demotivating, definitely. (Frontline Officer)

Ideas for measuring 'quality' included more of a focus on victim satisfaction, though respondents felt prescribed measures (e.g. the number of call backs and level of satisfaction) were needed to offer clarity to the frontline. Frontline interviewees also highlighted the need for their force's performance framework to give them greater flexibility over the way incidents are closed (e.g. enabling them to pursue 'alternative' outcomes to, say, arrest).

While most interviewees expressed some scepticism about performance targets, many acknowledged that they could help highlight areas that, appropriately, needed to be prioritised (e.g. crime reduction and public confidence). Ensuring the resulting measures were not biased towards these areas was reported to be a potential way of avoiding the risk of skewing officer activity. For example, one respondent observed that "confidence in the force and whether the public see the force as providing a good service is measured" but "ethics and integrity are not measured" (Chief Officer). This chief officer felt that complaints were a valuable way of assessing the ethical health of the force as long as the measure was reviewed from different angles. Another chief officer made a similar argument:

Hopefully, if you have better leaders it will produce better outcomes, such as lower crime [and] higher customer satisfaction. A well-motivated workforce and all the rest of it should follow. And... if primarily the police officers, but ideally police staff, if they are going about their business in an ethical way I like to think we would get fewer complaints. It may also manifest itself in lower levels of ill-discipline. (Chief Officer)

The value of quantitative performance indicators was summed up in the following statement, which suggested that such measures could be useful, as long as they triggered discussions about the underlying qualitative issues they raised:

Are numerical matrices important in managing the police force and being able to demonstrate value for money? Yes they are, because there are basic things that we can do that can be counted, can be recognised in terms of trends... but what is important was that we have a discussion about the quality and the people issues around it, as opposed to beating people up for the numbers. (Chief Officer)

Indeed, there was a general view among the interviewees that performance on quantitative measures should not be judged without taking the context into consideration. This was typically raised in examples of how a focus on providing a quality service could have a negative impact on the quantitative performance of an individual officer (e.g. spending a shift resolving an incident with a high degree of professionalism, rather than superficially attending multiple incidents).

While many interviewees commented that their forces had attempted to remove officer level performance indicators, and supplement quantitative performance indicators at the force level with qualitative indicators, this was a persistent area of confusion and difficulty. The general

consensus was that performance measures were necessary in order to be able to be responsive to problems, hold staff to account, and reward/address behaviour.

The danger is that you just take one route or the other, because actually if you just say, 'I am going to focus on people and quality', and the numbers are going in the wrong direction... and you don't drill down to it, it almost encouraging the laissez faire approach. (Chief Officer)

Targets were also often seen as easier to manage rather than the more nebulous aspirations to, say, 'provide a quality service'.

The sergeants and inspectors won't know how else to measure an officer's performance other than how many of this, this, and this you've got. There's no kind of structure in place other than that. (Frontline Officer)

A move towards greater discretion and trust in decision-making also reportedly made life harder for middle managers who are required to exercise judgment over the performance of their staff, often in testing circumstances, and against a background where the criteria for success had changed. Frequently, the sergeants and inspectors who were interviewed talked about a lack of support for this aspect of their role in terms of inadequate training and lack of clear or consistent information. Apparently, this sometimes led to inconsistencies in practice and affected ethical decision-making processes. For example, frontline supervisors (particularly sergeants) said they had to be prepared to defend or justify decisions made by their team as a result of there being fewer measures, sometimes against the values and expectations of more senior ranks.

Without performance indicators, how do you get a measure of how well your team's performing, yet give a team performance indicators, and you can almost certainly guarantee that they will perform to them, but they might not perform to them in an ethical manner. (Frontline Officer)

Setting standards with rules – codes of conduct

Interviewees were asked their opinions on the significance of rules and 'codes of conduct' for setting the standards of behaviour within their force. The resulting discussions revealed a range of general views around the purpose and effectiveness of such codes, to more detailed comments related to particular examples developed by their own force or externally. It should be noted that the fieldwork was carried out before the new Code of Ethics for policing profession was published (see College of Policing 2014a). While some respondents will inevitably have seen the draft that was being consulted upon at the time, their views provide insights about the perceived role and impact of behavioural rules in setting standards rather than specific comment on the published Code of Ethics and, as such, should not be taken out of context. The term 'code of conduct' is used here in broad terms to describe any written rules rather than in reference to any particular document.

Most respondents viewed codes of conduct as generally representing behaviour that was 'common-sense', 'obvious' and, therefore, how the majority of staff behaved already. While this led a minority to view the very idea of codes of conduct as insulting, most agreed they had their necessary place. Many interviewees expressed the opinion that the police had to 'cover itself' by setting standards and the consequences for breaching them, and also recognised the existence of 'the odd bad apple'. For example:

For me, it's much more leading from [the heart], making people proud of their organisation and thinking about what we're doing, than telling them to go and read the code – job done! The police service has had codes before. Years ago, we had the Statements of Common Purpose. It was the same kind of thing. I'm

not saying it's a bad thing. I think it's the right thing to do, and I think it was necessary in the circumstances, but I don't think it will change much. (Chief Officer)

One interviewee suggested codes of conduct would be better suited to educating the public about the standards they can expect from the police, rather than as a tool for staff.

Indeed, one chief officer highlighted the need for codes of conduct to 'keep up' with the current integrity issues facing the service, such as the taking of sick leave on non-preferred work days, which was described as an "ethical issue about letting your colleagues down".

There was also the view expressed that a code of conduct, on its own, would make no difference to behaviour unless internal processes were put in place in forces to utilise and discuss the code in relation to officers' performance and broader ethical issues.

If we have a process in place where we can discuss it [the then forthcoming Code of Ethics], then clearly it will be at the forefront of people's minds and it can be pushed, but if we don't have a process to discuss it, then it's another document that goes in the file and is forgotten about. (Frontline Officer)

Aside from specific codes of conduct, policies and values were discussed more broadly. Particularly, there was seen to be benefit in reducing the number of force policies, and simplifying messages into succinct values statements that staff could easily remember. There was evidence in support of this approach from one of the study forces. Its 'campaign slogans' were recited and discussed by many of the interviewees from that force, showing that the messages had permeated through the organisation to some degree. A large number of policy documents was seen as potentially unhelpful due to the possibility of conflicting information. Instead, most forces had chosen key values for the organisation to aspire to.

Setting standards through role modelling – leading by example

Leading by positive example

All of the interviewees agreed that an important method of setting standards was by leaders demonstrating the standards they expected. Engendering respect and leading by example were both universally accepted as powerful influences on staff perceiving leaders to be credible and authentic:

I think the best way of getting the best out of your staff is going out there policing with them, showing them that you're willing to do what you're asking them to do and showing that how you do it is how you expect them to. (Frontline Officer)

His decision-making and behaviour signals to the organisation what is acceptable and what's not – if you don't challenge, you accept, and if you accept, it becomes acceptable. (Chief Officer)

Chief officers reported taking great care in the way they appeared and behaved in force, and in both their public and private lives.

The core... it's that thing – walk the walk, talk the talk – but be seen to be operating in that way. (Chief Officer)

You can't expect, or hold somebody else to account if you're not beyond reproach. You've got to look the part. You've got to act the part. (Frontline Officer)

The potential for senior leaders to act as role models for the behaviour of others was recognised by chief and frontline officers alike:

You can get a situation where you get some people who... will say: 'Well that is how the chief is behaving, I will emulate that behaviour'... So it is a case of making sure that, from the top, we are behaving ethically. And if from time to time, as can happen, we get things wrong as individuals, then we hold our hands up and say, "We have got this wrong, I am sorry", and try and move on from that. (Chief Officer)

Leading by negative example

Interviewees discussed the effects of misbehaviour by senior staff, both in terms of specific experiences in their own force and examples that they see presented in the media. Consistent with the comments above, misconduct by senior officers was seen to undermine the credibility of leadership and the organisation's values:

If you are trying to create followership in an organisation around a set of ideas and values and beliefs, if you are seen to be acting contradictory to those, you're not going to create a followership. (Frontline Officer)

When asked how their own behaviour might be affected, the majority of interviewees felt confident that misconduct by a senior leader would only affect their attitudes towards that leader, but not their own values or ethical behaviour:

The fact that someone behaves in a particular way would not make me behave in that particular way. You have got to keep you own sense of values. (Chief Officer)

Personally, it affects my attitude, not my ethics, if I was to see that a chief officer was doing something that if I were to do it I would be disciplined for – or if it was something that was very hypocritical. (Frontline Officer)

However, it was acknowledged by one interviewee that their resulting negative attitudes could affect their commitment to work:

I certainly would be quite annoyed at the situation [chief officer misconduct] and I would probably say that that may well affect my work until I've got over it. (Frontline Officer)

Respondents drew an interesting distinction between themselves and colleagues. Interviewees often said that chief officer misconduct would not affect their own ethical behaviour, but accepted it might affect the behaviour of others:

Personally, I wouldn't act upon that... [but] there probably are people that would act on it, probably be quite blasé and say: 'Well, you know, I'm going to take that attitude and do whatever they've done, then'. I would never be like that – that's my personality, but I can see that other people may. (Frontline Officer)

Many interviewees also believed that the 'tone' set at the top would filter down, shaping what was acceptable at other levels of the organisation:

If I consistently operated in a way that did not have integrity and wasn't ethical... at the top of the organisation... then don't be surprised if the organisation starts to move into a position, 'Well that's all right isn't it, because the boss does it that way' or 'The chief does it that way'. So over time it can influence and make it a position where it becomes acceptable. (Chief Officer)

This was particularly the case if there were not visible consequences for the wrongdoing at that level:

You get the first stage of bad-mouthing and moaning. Then you get people sort of stepping back and saying, 'I don't care', not taking the care in their role anymore. And you can get to the stage where they just blanket disregard and go against policies and decisions because that person is not integrity-based.
(Frontline Officer)

In the forces that had recent experience of chief officer wrongdoing, interviewees voiced fears for the reputation of the force and, by association, the reputation of all the individual officers and staff in that force. Expressed emotions included shock, shame, embarrassment and disappointment. These experiences also clearly undermined the interviewees' confidence in the leadership of the organisation, and made some question whether there was a wider misconduct problem in the force. However, misconduct was usually seen as being limited to a few 'bad apples', and was being – or had been – addressed.

However, interestingly, a minority of interviewees also highlighted examples of negative media reporting about senior leadership behaviour, which they felt was unfair; expressing support for the officers involved. In both cases, the wider impact of such incidents on public confidence was noted, with fears that the resulting negative public attitudes would impact on police performance and directly affect frontline officers (e.g. who were expected to receive negative comments by members of the public).

Communicating standards of behaviour

The chief and frontline officers gave examples of the methods by which organisational messages were communicated to staff, as well as their perspective on how successful they were thought to be. Interviewees discussed explicit activities and programmes for communicating standards, both face-to-face and through the use of technology. Of those who discussed ethics training, many noted significant improvements in recent years, especially within leadership development courses, but they also noted ongoing deficits. The impact of communication mechanisms was discussed, and barriers to success were highlighted. The interviews also suggested that 'deliberate' leadership messages could be supported or undermined by other, less deliberate, signals that came from the ordinary working of organisational processes and procedures (e.g. promotions), and the perceived behaviour of chief officers.

Face-to-face communication

Most of the study forces had attempted to communicate leadership messages through face-to-face contact with staff, and this was seen to be the most effective method by interviewees. Example activities included chief officers travelling to local police stations, and giving seminars to deliver the force vision. One frontline officer commented specifically on the impact of this approach:

In recent months, I have heard officers, when they maybe challenged a colleague on something they said, I have heard them refer to: 'Hang on a sec, think back to what was said on that seminar, what the chief said or what ACC said. Do you think you should have said that?'. So they actually refer back to a message that was given out. (Frontline Officer)

In all forces, it was reported that the chief constable and/or the deputy were also the 'face' of specific training programmes (e.g. on professional conduct), gave talks to new officers, or chaired committees where ethical issues were discussed. In one force, a working group had

been set up with all ranks, so that key issues could be fed back to senior management. In another, quarterly focus groups with frontline representatives were held to discuss issues of concern, particularly those arising from the austerity measures. The visibility and reputation of chief officers as figureheads for these activities, as well as the accessibility afforded through these activities, was viewed by frontline officers as conveying the importance of the message and values expressed.

The chief constable delivers and runs different roadshows and things ... delivers those messages to the staff. I think people take a lot more note of it because it's the chief constable delivering them. (Frontline Officer)

Communication through technology

The study forces – particularly those covering a large geographic area – reportedly faced communication challenges in terms of the visibility of the chief officer team, and their ability to ensure their values were being upheld, across the organisation. In recognition of this, all of the forces had reportedly made use of technology – to varying degrees – to disseminate messages. While emails were criticised as generally being impersonal and easy to ignore, the use of blogs for many was an improvement (though criticised by some for the same reasons). Examples were given of video blogs that had specifically addressed issues of integrity. In one force, message boards had been created on the intranet that enabled staff to express concerns, which were then shared with senior management. Interviewees particularly appreciated it where senior leaders were seen to have made a tangible response to these concerns.

Force messages were also presented on posters, computer screen notices, as well as newsletters that relayed the outcomes of disciplinary action to reinforce to staff the consequences of unethical behaviour. Some of the study forces had developed comprehensive campaigns promoting ethical behaviour and values-based practice that were supported by logos and straplines, which had evidently entered the parlance of many of the officers we interviewed. A small minority believed, however, that officers were too busy to pay attention to many of these messages unless they were studying for promotion. Conversely, while some interviewees thought that communicating details about misconduct cases that had been uncovered was an effective way to present messages about integrity (by reinforcing the likelihood of getting caught), others felt this 'transactional' approach was less helpful. As one interviewee remarked, such an approach had the potential to create mixed messages:

I think, it's like: 'Note to self – don't get caught'. I don't know whether it actually says: 'No, don't do it'. (Frontline Officer)

Others also felt that values-based campaigns that incorporated the penalties for transgressions had a threatening undertone, which they felt risked making officers defensive rather than open.

Communication impact and barriers

A number of issues were highlighted during the interviews that were thought to influence whether messages were successfully communicated from the top-down. The predominant themes were:

- the importance of clarity and consistency;
- the problem of misinterpreted messages; and
- deliberate resistance.

Clarity and consistency

The importance of clarity and consistency of messages was a salient theme throughout the interviews. For example, messages had to be delivered clearly using language that was appropriate to all levels:

I know from my own operational history that operational cops do not want to hear management-speak. It makes them vomit, frankly. They just want: 'Tell us what you want us to do boss, and we'll do it'. (Chief Officer)

Written communication reportedly helped with clarity – such as written statements accompanying video blogs where a turn of phrase might have been misinterpreted, and the use of examples and explanations backing-up the main message.

Consistency of message was seen to be important in a variety of ways. Messages reportedly had to be consistent over time and consistently delivered by different people and ranks, while the behaviour of those communicating the message also had to be consistent with that message (i.e. leading by example):

I would expect the qualities in the chief constable to be exactly what the chief constable expects of us. (Frontline Officer)

The need to follow through on promises was also highlighted:

We say something, we don't do it, and people get away with it, so why are we surprised when people are cynical about us coming up with a new idea when we haven't enforced the last one? (Chief Officer)

Similarly, not being seen to reinforce messages with action at the individual level was seen to be damaging to the credibility of leaders:

I've seen it happen a number of times: 'You can tell me what you want. You're there to challenge me'. And then somebody does it and gets publicly shot... It's immensely damaging because you have no credibility then. (Chief Officer)

The chief had said to the members of the chief officer group: 'I want this done once a year'. And it wasn't done, and everyone went: 'How can they get away with that?' ...If you're going to give out that really strong message, and if anyone then breaches it, at whatever level of the organisation, I think they would have to go. Otherwise, it completely breaks down that strong message, and it won't go well. (Frontline Officer)

They [chief officers] must decide that's what they're going to do, say in advance and stick to it. But that's not what happens. They change the rules as they go through to satisfy themselves, people appear to be being picked [for promotion] ahead of time and then ushered through the process. And that might seem like a trivial example, but I can assure you it's not, because it affects people's perception of the overall integrity of the organisation... that's shaken the faith of the ranks. (Frontline Officer)

As a positive example, one chief constable recounted that his message to the force was to challenge organised crime but that he understood targeting suspected criminals might result in complaints due to an increase in enforcement activities.

They [a suspected organised criminal] made a complaint of harassment so I wrote to them saying: 'I'm not going to accept this as a complaint. This is a sign that my officers are doing what I've asked them to do.' I sent a copy of that

letter to their local inspector, who blew it up and put it on their notice board because it was vital that those officers knew they were being supported in what is a very tough environment. (Chief Officer)

Two of the study forces had relatively new chief constables in post, and there seemed to be a sense of confusion over the priorities and vision of the force under this new leadership. Most interviewees in one of the forces were unable to say what the vision was or expressed the need for a clear vision. However, the interviewees in the other force gave markedly different views of what they thought the vision was. While the chief constable clearly articulated that staff were the over-arching force priority, others described the priority as organised crime, intelligence-led crime reduction, public service, and victim satisfaction. Evidence of confusion over performance measures was also found among the interviewees from these forces.

By way of contrast, only one study force did not have multiple interviewees expressing confusion about performance messages. Notably, this force had seen a change of leadership from a reportedly autocratic chief, who had removed staff discretion, to a more emotionally expressive chief, who aimed to empower staff by increasing trust, professional judgement, and responsibility. The campaign designed to communicate priorities and values had clearly permeated down to the respondents; many used the campaign language. One interviewee, however, expressed some cynicism as to whether the messages would really be reinforced – unwilling to accept that performance targets really had been removed. Despite the positive changes in leadership, clarity of messages, and good morale, interviewees nevertheless voiced concerns over the unfairness of the promotion and disciplinary processes, losing faith in both.

Misinterpretation of messages – ‘lost in translation’

One of the strongest points made by both chief officers and frontline interviewees was that messages need to be consistently delivered down the organisation. They felt that, sometimes, the rank structure resulted in messages being intentionally blocked or unintentionally misinterpreted. Respondents in the ‘healthiest position’ were those in the lower ranks who felt comfortable circumventing their immediate supervisor if they felt they were being delivered the wrong message. They reported that senior ranking officers and staff were open to hearing about and dealing with such issues.

One of my inspectors came up with a scheme for their staff where performance would be driven on a numerical basis... which is actually something we completely don't want to do. So it was something that was brought to my attention... I was really disappointed, so I had to stop that straight away because it skews behaviour and it is really, really counterproductive. (Chief Officer)

Examples where messages had been ‘lost in translation’ down the ranks were, most frequently, about performance management.

Sometimes it is just things can get lost in translation. The obvious example is we have talked about improving our performance and this gets misconstrued to become all about detection rates, which it is not. (Chief Officer)

As previously indicated, in most study forces, interviewees exhibited some confusion over the messages delivered at senior level and the performance targets imposed at lower levels. The general feeling was that, even though chief officers had moved away from using quantitative targets, and in some cases specifically stated that quantitative performance measures should not be the concern of frontline officers, the reality was that staff felt their performance was still being assessed quantitatively. This inconsistency reportedly had the potential to impact on ethical behaviour:

We get mixed messages, in my opinion, a lot of the time on certain issues which just confuse and, in some cases, stifle officers' natural common-sense reactions to deal with things because they're trying to second guess what is the boss going to say. (Frontline Officer)

The breakdown in communications seemed difficult to pinpoint, but sergeants, in particular, exhibited confusion over the messages they were supposed to relay to their frontline staff.

The chief... sent a message saying that there were no performance figures and he certainly wasn't pushing officers unduly, but that wasn't the message that comes through to the officers on the ground, and certainly when I was a [detective sergeant] in the CID office, that's not the message that I was getting; the message from the middle management on police stations is that they are getting pressure, so we need to perform. (Frontline Officer)

As noted earlier, some leadership activities that were designed with the best intentions also reportedly lost their message or were misinterpreted by those on the receiving end. In one example, chief officers visiting stations to show they were accessible to staff and listening to their concerns were interpreted by some as an attempt to micromanage and catch staff out.

Resistance

While messages that were 'lost in translation' could be the result of a simple breakdown in communication, interviewees also talked about more intentional resistance to leadership messages or force change programmes. This resistance could be passive or active:

Is it possible to resist? I think it is because you can, as a sergeant you have your briefings, you brief your staff; you just decide not to brief them about that. (Frontline Officer)

We were trying to implement a new team structure... Superintendent, chief superintendent and above were all positive about the change and, then, we got to this chief inspector level and the dissent started to creep in, and that then perpetuated down, and we were then getting sergeants and PCs being obstructive to what we were trying to do, because of the attitude that they were getting down from their chief inspector. So it's got to go all the way down the organisation. (Frontline Officer)

On a general level, it was recognised that this resistance may have stemmed from individual officers or members of staff simply being uncomfortable with the process of change, regardless of what the change represented. A minority of officers felt that the introduction of new leadership messages, visions and values were irrelevant, because they were likely to be changed again or because changing them was not seen to affect 'core business'.

The core business remains consistent all the way through, it's only the ideas that change, of how we should deal with [it]... I think at grassroots level, people are very ambivalent to it. They've seen it come, they've seen it go... The vast majority of boots on the ground are far too busy to swallow the latest corporate message, because they know, in two years, it's gonna be something different. And it has so little impact, really, on their day-to-day business. It's almost irrelevant. (Frontline Officer)

In contrast, others felt that change was good and necessary, but the process would be slow:

It's like a train isn't it? Try and get a train to go in the opposite direction. It's going to take a few miles to slow down before it can turn round. (Frontline Officer)

Enforcing and reinforcing standards of behaviour

The means of enforcing standards of behaviour were explored with the interviewees, including the process and application of those mechanisms, and the willingness of officers to invoke them. Interviewees were asked to indicate the reputation of the force and the greatest threats to integrity. Both chief and frontline officers were most likely to report that their force was not currently experiencing significant problems around integrity. In all of the study forces, however, there had been relatively recent misconduct cases that had resulted in suspension or dismissal. Many interviewees were confident that problems were being – or had been – ‘weeded out’. Often the perception was that bad behaviour was limited to a few individuals rather than systemic issues. In particular, frontline officers typically claimed not to have been exposed to, or had to deal with, wrongdoing by colleagues or more junior officers. There were, however, a minority of interviewees who expressed concerns about internal integrity issues, which they felt needed continued vigilance. Overall, interviewees considered the greatest risk to staff integrity was the temptation created by financial hardship, though compromising associations and substance misuse were also identified as risks in one force.

Chief officers gave examples of the kinds of initiatives that had been implemented to improve ethical behaviour. These included:

- training programmes;
- publicity campaigns;
- the use of technology;
- changes in performance management; and
- disciplinary responses.

Other chief officers had undertaken reviews of areas where integrity might be compromised:

We have been through a complete overhaul of businesses, where people have secondary businesses outside work. And each person who has submitted has been told whether they can retain that, or they have to get rid of it. Now we have got an onward rolling programme where we revisit that on an annual basis to check it is as they said it was when it came in. (Chief Officer)

It was pointed out, by chief officers in particular, that forces were also subject to a plethora of audit, monitoring and inspection procedures designed to pick up on discreditable activities.

Enforcement through negative consequences – discipline

There was a consistent view that officers and staff who deliberately fall below expected performance standards should be investigated and dealt with, including by dismissal. Discipline was seen to set, and reinforce, the expected standards of behaviour. However, the importance of fair and proportionate ‘punishment’ was widely acknowledged, particularly to differentiate between those who engaged in intentional misconduct and those who made ‘honest mistakes’:

It is about constantly re-affirming and being seen to deal with people who transgress, but dealing with them in a fair and proportionate way. So if somebody makes a simple, honest and genuine mistake, deal with those in a way that is appropriate and proportionate to somebody who makes a simple mistake. Someone who acts unlawfully or significantly against integrity, ethics

and the values that we have got, needs dealing with firmly and if that means dismissal then they need to go, so it's making sure people can see that. (Chief Officer)

One interviewee specifically stated that, where they had seen examples of discipline not being enforced, this made challenging and changing future staff behaviour more difficult.

I have found cases that have been dealt with in the past in certain ways that I just find amazing, where people have been allowed get away with certain behaviours for a long [time]... and have made it even more difficult now to turn things round – the behaviours – because the behaviour and decision in the past has never been challenged. (Chief Officer)

In contrast, another interviewee related the positive message from appropriate discipline:

Recent suspensions for unethical behaviour [made] clear what the process is amongst frontline staff. [It's] been well-received. (Chief Officer).

One chief officer emphasised the importance of a "tough love" approach that included "the hard word" about shortcomings in individual performance; referring to the need to sack two officers for actions against a suspect. Chief officers from two different forces, emphasised their open and consultative leadership styles, but said there were definite limits when it came to breaches of standards, which included a willingness to take firm action even against well-respected staff:

We're quite strict on discipline. I've got a fast-tracked hearing tomorrow, which is [for] off-duty behaviour. Unless something is pulled out the bag tomorrow, the officer's gonna be sacked... Everybody's written in saying what a good police officer he is. He's [assaulted] somebody... Sorry, he can't stay. I've been very strict about results over discipline. (Chief Officer)

As previously indicated, most interviewees felt that unethical behaviour was not endemic within their force, and most said they would be willing to report or address conduct issues. However, examples were given that highlighted the importance of monitoring and the need for a fair and consistent response. Some frontline officers in two of the study forces pointed to inconsistent treatment of staff who had received complaints, which reportedly undermined their faith in the complaints process. There was a perceived double-standard between how staff were expected to behave towards the public, and how the organisation treated its own staff. Interviewees commented that they were being judged on their performance with victims of crime – including service delivery, communication and timeliness – but that officers who were subject to complaints were not receiving the same standard of fair and professional treatment:

If [complaint investigations are] managed properly, that will give a lot of the force – huge confidence that they're onto the right people dealing with the right things... [but] I've got no confidence in them at all, and I'm now fearful of going to them if I've got a problem with an officer, because I wouldn't trust that they would then start saying: 'Well actually you're the one that's causing the problem too'. (Frontline Officer)

In line with the concept of organisational justice, respondents from all forces highlighted the damaging effect that disciplinary standards could have if they were inconsistently applied. The importance of enforcing discipline across all ranks and grades was noted in order to demonstrate fairness in the system, regardless of seniority:

For low-ranking officers to look up and see that the chief is actually addressing issues with other senior officers – you know, there is a general sort of view from low-ranking police officers that, once you get past a certain rank, you're sort of... not untouchable, but it's very much a boys' club and... so that was quite refreshing to sort of see or hear stories like that, so that you knew there was an even playing field under him. (Frontline Officer)

Most interviewees felt that publicising the outcomes of discipline proceedings was a helpful way of setting the expected standards of behaviour in force. Many felt that, particularly for frontline officers, the use of examples were necessary to communicate what was and was not acceptable. Similarly, openness about the details of specific cases was seen to reduce the risk of misinterpretation and damaging rumours, which potentially created resistance towards managing officers.

Enforcement through positive consequences – reward and recognition

Recognition and reward were highlighted as being enormously influential. The importance of 'the little things' when it came to recognising staff effort was felt to be an area where most forces could or should make improvements:

We get feedback... obviously if you get negative ones, normally it's: 'Come and see me I need to speak to you about this'. If you get a positive one, it's normally an email: 'Well done'. So... if you are getting face-to-face for a negative, but an email 'well done' on a positive, then it goes against it really. You should be having a face-to-face probably with them all. (Frontline Officer)

Promotion can be seen as a part of the formal process for reward and recognition. Respondents were asked whether they felt their force's promotion processes reinforced standards of integrity – the responses were mixed. Internal processes, such as promotion, were identified as examples of where forces were seen to be failing staff. A significant number of interviewees felt there were inconsistent practices with promotion, particularly between certain ranks. This led staff to become unsettled, frustrated and mistrusting of the process, and reportedly endangered the relationship between supervisors and their staff, which was considered to be a potential precursor to staff not following the rules:

Promotion processes in the policing context are not recognised by sufficient people as being a cultural driver. I think very carefully about what the questions are to improve the organisation's culture and the way people are. (Chief Officer)

While a few interviewees felt that the questions used during the promotion interviews did focus on the importance of ethical decision-making and the management of ethical behaviour, others expressed cynicism that those values were only recognised by those seeking promotion and that the 'right answers' could be learned.

Indeed, a small number of interviewees voiced their concern that promotion decisions narrowly favoured certain characteristics; particularly, similar characteristics and leadership styles to those already occupying top positions. There was concern that this produced a lack of diversity in the upper ranks, and that this could restrict diverse thinking and willingness to challenge and discuss ideas. Further, a minority commented that the 'top team' was often not representative of the workforce, which could negatively impact feelings of identification with leaders and perceptions of shared values.

Others highlighted the difficulty of ensuring impartiality within promotion processes due to the working relationships that already existed between staff. A minority also reported experiences of nepotism that caused them to lose faith in the system:

I know most of the sergeants, inspectors, chief inspectors. I know what they've done, where they've been... personal favourites... But you come to a promotion board... you're left with this position where I actually think he's the best person for the job, but actually she's better at the interview process... You want to be completely independent, completely impartial, but you struggle. (Chief Officer)

5. What influence do other mechanisms have on behaviour?

While there was broad consensus that senior leaders do have a significant impact on the ethical behaviour of staff, a number of other influences were identified. The key findings were as follows:

- **Personal values** – Serious unethical behaviour was thought to be limited to a small number of 'bad apples'. Their behaviour was generally attributed to their 'moral compass' that was present from upbringing. There was seen to be significant value in forces tapping in to the main motivation that most staff had to join the police – to help people – as a way of achieving greater value-congruence, which could influence the extent to which staff upheld expected standards of behaviour.
- **Middle management** – There was a strong tendency for frontline officers to refer to middle ranking officers as 'leaders' – as they reportedly had the greatest influence on them. Frontline supervisors were described as the day-to-day role models for behaviour for the majority of officers. However, there were reports of staff receiving mixed messages from senior leaders and middle ranking supervisors, particularly around performance, which caused confusion – 'do the right thing' vs 'keep the figures up'. Nevertheless, the importance of empowering and supporting middle management to deliver on their responsibilities was highlighted.
- **Austerity and organisational change** – Austerity and the organisational changes it had prompted were consistently raised as impacting on ethical behaviour. The financial pressure prompted by austerity was generally seen as a risk factor in police corruption. The effect of austerity was also felt indirectly through the organisational changes the study forces had introduced. Overall, this change was seen to have placed additional pressure on staff, which was thought to potentially impact on their behaviour. A minority – potentially those to whom change had been better explained – reported a positive effect on camaraderie, as staff were thought to be 'pulling together' during adversity.
- **Accountability via technology** – In general, technology was seen as having improved staff accountability, not least by rendering police behaviour more visible. However, it was suggested that the potential benefits needed to be continually communicated, as technology was sometimes seen as a double-edged sword.
- **External influences** – Several wider influences on behaviour were suggested, though their reported effect was less clear-cut. The impact of negative media reporting was highlighted, particularly in terms of the extent to which it was felt to have made police interaction with the public more challenging. The pressure for the police to live up to public expectations was also seen by some as encouraging staff to use unethical means to achieve results. Finally, there was a perceived lack of government support for police, and a concern that a change of government might see the return of central performance targets.

The relative influence of leadership style and other mechanisms

There was broad consensus that senior leaders do have a significant impact on the behaviour of staff. However, a number of other influences were also identified during the interviews, including:

- personal values and motivations
- middle management and frontline supervisors;
- organisational change prompted by austerity;
- the effect of technology on accountability; and
- external factors, such as the media, the public and politics.

Personal values and motivations

The view that serious unethical behaviour was limited to a small number of 'bad apples' was, unsurprisingly, common. Most interviewees felt the majority of police officers and staff were honest and ethical, but that there was a minority who 'let the rest down'. Individual factors were highlighted to explain their behaviour. The idea of the 'moral compass' that was present from upbringing was a recurrent one, which meant officers were thought to have had a particular moral code in place when they joined the police. Thus, those who made bad choices were seen to have a propensity to do so regardless of career, environment or opportunities. Despite their focus on 'a few bad apples', interviewees talked about a positive change in recent years in terms of improved organisational standards that were seen to apply across the board to all officers and staff. They reported that many unethical practices, which were previously accepted (e.g. inaction with victims and excessive sick leave), were no longer tolerated.

The congruence between personal and organisational values was specifically highlighted by a small number of interviewees as being important to increasing staff 'buy-in' to the chief's vision, which may influence the extent to which they uphold standards of behaviour:

As the supervisor within the room, I am duty bound to say something [about misbehaviour]. But obviously, it's easier if it challenges your own moral ethics and standards, as well as knowing that it is not acceptable within the organisation. (Frontline Officer)

One interviewee spoke about how he tried to encourage value-congruence in junior staff through his HR role:

I do talk about this idea of personal interests and organisational interests, and how we need them to overlap... If they all were overlapped, then we have got people who are prepared to sign into the vision and work their darnedest to deliver the vision. (Chief Officer)

The reasons for joining the police were frequently highlighted as important in relation to matching personal and organisational values. Most interviewees believed the main motivation for joining the police was to help people, and that this motivation guided the moral choices of most staff. A small number of interviewees said it was important to remind longer-serving officers of why they joined in order to secure their 'buy-in' to organisational messages about public-oriented service delivery. Several interviewees thought the idea of policing as a 'vocation' was becoming lost on newer generations of officers who, with an erosion of their terms and conditions, lacked the commitment, work ethic and experience of discipline that officers from earlier generations had. For example, one officer reported that the generational

difference in policing experiences produces different personal values, which in turn impact on integrity:

that discipline that I received... I think we have lost that. I think the ramification is that it is reflected in integrity of the police. I think probably, because of my length of service, the discipline I received, I have my own personal standards.
(Frontline Officer)

There were some contradictions regarding the perceived impact of individual factors and leadership on ethical behaviour. It was consistently claimed integrity and ethics were personal attributes that were not subject to influence, yet the point was strongly made by the majority that leaders had a significant influence and that everything 'came from the top'. A notable minority of interviewees qualified this contradiction by stating that, while most officers and staff were basically honest and a tiny proportion were inherently dishonest and corrupt, there probably existed a small contingent occupying the centre ground who might be susceptible to 'good' or 'bad' influences.

Middle management

There was a strong tendency for frontline supervisors to refer to middle ranking officers (i.e. inspectors to chief superintendents) as 'leaders' – as they reportedly had the greatest influence on them. Indeed, it was quite a challenge in the interviews to get frontline officers to focus on the executive level when answering the questions.

Crucially, middle management was seen to play a key role in how teams and frontline supervisors operated, more so sometimes than the messages and direction that came from the chief officer team. Indeed, when asked about the most influential factor on frontline officer behaviour, the role of the sergeant was consistently cited. These frontline supervisors were described as the day-to-day role models of the majority of officers, the point of contact and information to those 'at the coalface' and, therefore, hugely influential in setting, monitoring and maintaining the standards of behaviour for the majority of officers and staff. As a result, each team was reported to operate in a different way depending on the leadership and management style of the team supervisor:

Sergeants and inspectors and police staff equivalent... how they behave on a day- to-day basis, their visible manifestation of what you'd call ethics... how they hold their teams to account, is how we maintain standards throughout the whole organisation. (Chief Officer)

While ethical behaviour and integrity were seen as being fundamental to the police role, their interpretation reportedly varied according to different managers' viewpoints. When this inconsistency sometimes occurred, it was said to create unease, with staff feeling disengaged from the values of the force. As mentioned, there were also reports of staff receiving mixed messages from senior leaders (i.e. 'do the right thing') and middle ranking supervisors (i.e. 'keep the figures up'), which emphasised the importance of making sure that messages were relayed consistently at all management levels:

Messages are sent out by [the chief constable] but I actually think that, because they're seen as quite remote... the true power lies with the chief inspectors and superintendents. They're the ones that you see more day-to-day. Certainly, me as a sergeant, I see my chief inspector virtually every day, and if he says you're doing X, I'll do X, even though I know [the chief constable] maybe would say I'm doing Y, but I don't see [the chief constable]. (Frontline Officer)

Many, particularly sergeants, highlighted the importance of empowering middle and frontline managers to deliver on their responsibilities. Such empowerment was said to require training and support for decision-making, leadership training, improved communication (e.g. providing explanations) as well as enabling these frontline leaders to translate policy decisions into operational expectations (including those around ethical practice).

Several interviewees talked about how middle and frontline management roles were often very task-oriented, which created difficulties in delivering quality supervision to lower ranks:

You can't necessarily be a leader because you're too busy trying to be a supervisor... very task-oriented. (Frontline Officer)

Austerity and organisational change

Austerity measures, both specific to the police (e.g. reduction in posts, terms and conditions) and more broadly in society, were consistently raised as impacting on ethical behaviour. Most directly, austerity was highlighted as increasing the potential for corruption, with officers and staff in financial stress being easy targets for criminals:

The risk of corruption within the police service is very high. We're living at a time at the moment where police families have never been more under pressure financially. (Chief Officer)

However, this was seen within the context of the propensity of individual 'bad apples' to engage in corruption, as discussed above.

Austerity was also thought to have had an indirect effect on behaviour, as a result of the organisational changes that had been prompted by reduced police budgets. The negative effect on morale was mentioned most often. Uncertainty of job security, as well as additional responsibilities and workload, were said to be creating stressful work environments and, potentially, a feeling that staff were undervalued by the organisation. For example, it was reported that single-crewing, believed to be introduced because of reduced resources, meant some officers were more reluctant to intervene in risky situations (or would wait for back-up) which was felt to increase the risk to the public.

For a minority of interviewees, however, the austerity measures were seen, potentially, to have a positive effect; boosting camaraderie between staff trying to deliver quality service 'under adversity'. The reason why these respondents held a different and more positive view than the majority seemed to be linked to the type and quality of the communication they had received:

- The austerity measures may have been better explained to them, with the use of open and honest lines of communication, and staff being given the reasons behind changes.
- The message around performance may have been 'softer' in terms of their being greater understanding that it would be difficult to continue to deliver the same level of service with reduced resources.

Thus, the way that leaders implemented and communicated organisational change in response to austerity may have had more of an impact on staff attitudes and behaviour than the austerity measures themselves.

Increased accountability through technology

Technology was seen as having improved accountability, not least by rendering police behaviour (especially that of the frontline) more visible. Interviewees commented on the unprecedented level of transparency experienced by officers as a result of technology (e.g. CCTV, police worn video cameras, system-based monitoring, public use of camera phones, social media, electronic Freedom of Information requests, GPS tracking, centralised communication, and 'black boxes' in police cars). However, chief and frontline officers noted that the potential benefits needed to be continually communicated, as technology was sometimes seen as a double-edged sword. While some officers and staff may see technology as a means of holding them to account and protecting them against malicious allegations, it may be seen by others as an intrusion into their private space and an infringement of personal and professional liberties. It was seen as insufficient to suggest that only those 'with something to hide' should fear increased transparency. The context in which technology operated, thus, seemed crucial, including the perceived levels of staff and public support, and their understanding for its introduction:

Police in UK didn't implement the Airwaves radio system so that they could spy on its staff. They implemented it because it was secure, it was the future; it's digital and everything. This side of it just happens to be a by-product and if the understanding of that for staff, you know, not being cloak-and-dagger about it, not sort of using smoke-and-mirrors and saying: 'Oh no, we cannot follow you'. Yeah, we can and it can be done, but it's also there for your safety as well should anything happen, if you get into trouble or difficulties or you press your alarm, we know where you are. (Frontline Officer)

Although many of these technological changes had reportedly been introduced by chief officers to increase efficiency and accountability, it was difficult to assess from the interviews whether the changes resulted from a strategic leadership decision to increase the monitoring of staff behaviour or were more of an inevitable 'progression' afforded by technological advancement.

The media, public and politics

The impact of external agencies was mentioned frequently across all of the study forces. The impact of the media was raised most often, particularly in terms of the media creating and reinforcing negative public perceptions of police based on the behaviour of a minority of officers and staff involved in recent scandals. The impact of negative public perception was said to manifest in a number of important ways, including negatively affecting morale and engagement with the force, and making it more challenging for the police to deal with verbally abusive and uncooperative members of the public.

Negative treatment by the public was also reported by a small number of frontline officers to create circumstances under which the tools available to officers for making ethical decisions could lose their relevance:

The people who are delivering your service are in the trenches, and the last thing they're thinking about, when they're being spat at, are the Peelian Principles or the National Decision Making Model. They're thinking, I'm going home at the end of the day... You know, in the depths of... awful places, dealing with awful people doing awful things to each other, and they're doing what they can in a very difficult set of circumstances. (Frontline Officer)

The pressure to live up to public expectations was suggested by some as also encouraging staff to use unethical means to achieve end results:

There's also a lot of pressure from the public at times and I would suggest that some officers are put under a lot of pressure to get results by the public and they feel they want to get that result. So sometimes their integrity might not be totally right, because they want to do their best for that person. (Frontline Officer)

National and local government were also cited as imposing certain targets, resource constraints, and practices on police that could affect behaviour. Many interviewees felt policing had been treated particularly harshly in recent times, with little external support. A minority of interviewees felt the government should be more supportive, publicly, of police and not reinforce negative public perceptions regarding integrity. On occasion, interviewees described positive partnerships with local agencies and their PCC as being particularly important in delivering a coherent message both externally to the public and internally through the ranks.

Interestingly, the role of the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) was raised by one chief officer in the context of its role in ensuring police accountability and the impact of possible failures to do so. The importance of ACPO as a forum for recognising potential misconduct issues, ensuring they are addressed and learning from these cases was expressed, and that failing to do so might perpetuate the culture of 'turning a blind eye' to problems. The chief officer highlighted a concern about colleagues in the ACPO who, in their view, failed to recognise and deal with misconduct at senior levels in the police service:

When I'm amongst chief constables, there's a view that, you know, [name]... just went rogue... I don't get any sense of collective responsibility for allowing that to happen. And when I challenge that, and there's a few of us do, in Chief's Council, we're sort of patted on the head. (Chief Officer)

Several interviewees also highlighted a potential future risk, at a national political level, around performance management. Of particular concern was any return to the use of central performance measures – especially quantitative targets to reduce crime – which would be seen to be a 'step backwards' – because of their reported effect on behaviour – if reintroduced due to a change of government:

Don't be surprised when electioneering coming up to 2015 is about reducing crime. So if the government comes in and the Home Secretary at the time is just pushing on reducing crime, that could push us back into a cycle of focussing just on numbers and forgetting some of the other things that are really important. (Chief Officer)

6. Discussion and conclusion

Discussion

Unsurprisingly, and perhaps reassuringly, the findings from the interviews revealed a perspective on leadership that is consistent with much of the existing research about ethical leadership and integrity management. This section highlights the key findings in relation to the three research questions.

What makes some people more effective than others in the context of ethical leadership?

Comments from the majority of chief officers and frontline staff interviewed for the study supported the notion that a more open and democratic style of leadership secured a better commitment to organisational values and promoted ethical behaviour. This idea is in line with the literature presented in Chapter 1, for example in relation to participative leadership, organisational justice, and components of transformational leadership. Indeed, there was a general sense that police leaders have moved away from an autocratic style to a more inclusive and open approach, which was viewed positively.

Visibility and communication were seen as key dimensions of leadership that offered opportunities to encourage 'buy-in' and commitment to organisational messages as a result of increased leader credibility and a belief in shared goals and understanding. The fact that several officers referred directly to messages from 'the chief', delivered on occasion at face-to-face gatherings, suggested that this visibility and the willingness to present difficult messages (e.g. in relation to austerity-related change) had achieved a degree of success in promoting a sense of cohesion, certainly in some forces. Indeed, there were specific references by both senior and frontline officers to 'pulling together' in times of hardship.

Overall, it was a challenge for the interviewees to disentangle the factors that constituted effective leadership in general, from those that specifically promoted ethical behaviour. Unsurprisingly, senior leaders tended to have a wider perspective on ethical behaviour than frontline officers, reflecting their more strategic role. For example, while senior leaders commented on the more fundamental principles of leadership styles and ethics, and vision and values, lower ranked respondents often focused more on operational performance (e.g. stop and search, investigations) and the factors they thought had a direct influence on these activities.

For many, successful leadership was seen to come through flexibility and a balance in leadership style. The nature of policing – with high levels of discretion and vulnerability towards misconduct – reportedly meant that leadership needed to be both transformational and transactional. Leaders have to be, on the one hand, adept at working with, and giving space to, 'self-starters' and, on the other hand, able to be more directive with other staff who want or need closer supervision and instruction. The need for flexibility also extended to ethical leadership, which the literature suggests is likely to incorporate elements of both transformational and transactional styles (Brown et al. 2005). The fine lines that can be drawn between positive and negative perceptions of each style were noted in our findings (e.g. democratic leaders being empowering / weak; autocratic leaders being strong / selfish). Interviewees recognised that the chief officer team needed to show balance in its composition in terms of leadership style, so its members complemented one another. For some chief officers, the approach they took was reportedly dictated by the role rather than their preferred personal leadership style, with some recognising their responsibility as the 'enforcer' of the chief's vision.

In addition to the chief officer team showing diversity in leadership styles, interviewees' comments also highlighted the importance of the team showing diversity in its background and demographic profile. A small number of interviewees commented that the 'top team' was often not representative of the workforce. There were also concerns that promotion processes could reinforce certain characteristics and styles, with only those who are similar to current senior leaders being promoted. The potential negative result of this lack of diversity was twofold:

- First, a non-representative team seemed to lack credibility in attempts to show shared values and goals – weakening the mechanisms of transformational leadership.
- Second, the lack of diversity was thought to reduce the likelihood of disparate opinions and healthy challenge of ideas at the top of the organisation, which was reminiscent of the concept of 'groupthink' (Janis 1972) that can result in faulty team decision-making.

How does leadership influence what staff do?

Exploring the mechanisms of leadership, it was evident from the interviews that the elements of ethical leadership identified in the literature were key influences on behaviour in this policing context. Evidence related to social learning theory was clear:

- Leaders were seen as both figureheads and role models for conduct.
- The setting, communicating and fair enforcement of values and standards were themes raised by all interviewees.

All forces had reportedly set values and standards for the conduct of staff, though not all interviewees saw value in adopting a formal code of conduct. Interestingly, though, research has suggested that formal codes can change attitudes and behaviour (see also Brown 2014), but that they might operate on a tacit, unthinking level. Adams et al. (2001) found that staff in companies that had a code of conduct were more likely than those in companies without a code to rate workers at all levels to be more ethical and felt their ethical behavior was more supported. They concluded that: "The mere presence of a code of ethics appears to have a positive impact on perceptions of ethical behavior in organisations, even when respondents cannot recall specific content of the code" (2001, page 199). As this result suggests staff may be unaware of a code's effect on their own behaviour, the use of an interview methodology in this study may have made it difficult for us to tease out any positive impact because of its inevitable focus on perceptions.

Elements of organisational and procedural justice – specifically the concept of fairness – could be seen in interviewees' comments when talking about their experiences. The ability to communicate with supervisors and senior leaders was seen as important; it provided staff with a feeling of being 'heard'. Research on procedural justice shows that the opportunity for people to have a 'voice' in, and a sense of influence over, decision-making processes are central components of perceived fair treatment, which can have a positive impact on attitudes and behaviour (Murphy et al. 2008; Tyler 1990). The importance of fairness was also evident regarding transactional processes of reward and punishment. Damaging effects – ranging from reduced staff morale and commitment, to an unwillingness to report conduct concerns – were reported in respect of the perceived unfairness of promotion, and complaints and discipline, processes.

Finally, promoting the staff empowerment was specifically mentioned by several interviewees, and alluded to by others, as an important mechanism for behaviour change.³ In the context

³ 'Empowerment' has been defined as follows: "[A] psychological state that encompasses four cognitions: competence, an individual's belief in his or her capability that he or she can be

of policing, our interviewees spoke of the importance of discretion, and the need for staff responsibility for decision-making and in managing others. However, while senior leaders generally spoke in positive terms about the aims of building staff capacity, the views of frontline officers were mixed. Taking their perspectives together, it seemed likely that those who thought frontline officers preferred direction over discretion did so due to deficiencies they perceived or had experienced in respect of staff empowerment. Many first line supervisors recounted a lack of:

- support for their role (e.g. resources, and recognition of the appropriate performance levels for their functional area);
- adequate training in leadership; and
- higher backing for their decisions.

For staff to feel truly empowered, it is likely that they will need to feel competent and supported, and that they can have an impact. Until forces can fully acknowledge and provide these needs, staff may be more likely to choose the 'easier path' of clear directives with less responsibility.

What is the relative influence of leadership?

There was strong commitment to the idea that policing was a 'noble profession' that attracted recruits of an honourable disposition who were motivated to serve the community. Recognition of staff motivations has implications for the values that are set and communicated by the organisation. Clear articulation of these motives should, in theory, attract applicants with congruent values who will reinforce the culture, feel committed to the organisational goals and, in turn, exhibit ethical behaviour (CMC 2013). However, there was also acceptance that some people would perform poorly and/or behave unethically, and that leadership (at both senior and junior levels) had the capacity to create an environment that can foster (or challenge) such behaviour. This finding reflects the current perspective on police misconduct as a function of an interaction between the individual and their environment.

These issues are particularly relevant in the current climate, with forces having introduced significant change programmes. Austerity measures were routinely identified during the interviews as new and strong influences on police behaviour, and effective leadership was seen as the key mechanism for ensuring organisational change was positively received and understood by staff, and implemented successfully. Police officers and staff reported experiencing unprecedented changes to, for example, their working environment, and terms and conditions. However, while morale was often highlighted as a concern, it was notable that these changes had been understood and accepted by the majority of frontline interviewees. While we have to be open to the possibility of selection bias, the inspectors and sergeants interviewed for this study – except for a small minority of dissenters – were generally 'on-message' about the need to maintain standards and respond positively to change. Communication by leaders was particularly appreciated in this context, echoing ideas in organisational justice, such as explaining to staff the decision-making process and its outcome, and delivering news with sensitivity and respect (Colquitt 2001). In a UK policing context, Myhill and Bradford (2013) found that officers' perceptions of organisational justice (including the quality of information) were linked to satisfaction with the organisation and positive attitudes towards serving the community. Subsequent research has also shown that officers who perceived supervisors and senior leaders to act in line with organisational justice

effective; impact, the degree to which an individual can influence strategic, administrative, or operating outcomes at work; meaningfulness, the value of a work goal or purpose, judged in relation to an individual's ideals or standards; and self-determination, an individual's sense of having choice in initiating and regulating actions. (Walumbwa et al. 2010, page 905).

were more likely to say they complied with the organisation's rules (Bradford et al. 2014) and report commitment to principles of ethical policing (Bradford and Quinton, in press).

There were, however, concerns that middle ranking leaders were – knowingly or unknowingly – not always delivering the same messages as senior leaders. This inconsistency was particularly prominent around performance management, which reportedly resulted in frontline officers being confused about what was expected of them, and was a particularly important issue given that most frontline officers said they took most of their cues from their immediate supervisor. The blocking or mistranslation of messages by middle managers could indicate deliberate dissent that needs attention. However, it might also indicate that, while increased visibility at chief officer level had helped to transmit messages directly to the frontline, middle management were finding it difficult in practice to implement alternatives to the quantitative targets and measures that had supposedly been removed 'by the top'.

Nevertheless, the importance of first line supervisors was perhaps predictable from the social learning perspective, as they are the 'closest' role models for most staff and deliver the most immediate consequences on their performance (Mayer et al. 2009). Indeed, Mayer et al. (2009) found that ethical leadership by supervisors mediated, or helped explain, the effects of senior management ethical leadership on staff deviance and organisational citizenship behaviour.

Conclusion and implications

In conclusion, the results of the interviews were consistent with the (largely non-policing) research literature on ethical leadership in a social learning framework. Demonstration of transformational and participative leadership styles was seen as important, particularly by senior leaders. Activities embodying these styles were thought likely to increase staff commitment to organisational values through a variety of mechanisms. Elements of transactional leadership were also thought important for staff behaviour and morale, particularly in terms of encouraging appropriate standards through the consistent and fair application of reward and sanction within the organisation. Overall, leaders at all levels were seen as valuable role models for staff behaviour, and the provision of support to leadership at the lower levels of the organisation – to empower frontline supervisors to lead their staff – was seen as particularly crucial.

The interviews highlighted there were lessons to be learned by senior leaders and supervisors about being more aware of, and self-reflective about, leadership styles and processes, and the impact these can have on the ethical behaviour of staff. Indeed, Brown and Treviño have argued that "leaders should be trained to understand the importance of their ethical leadership role and how they can become ethical role models for their employees" (2006, page 609). Treviño and Brown (2004) also stated that executive leaders need to:

- understand the ethical culture of their organisation;
- communicate the importance of ethical standards to their employees;
- focus on a reward system; and
- promote ethical leadership in others, throughout the organisation.

One of the study forces appeared to have taken positive steps in this respect, through the use of specific 'campaign slogans' to focus staff at all levels on their responsibility to provide leadership and ethical decision-making in every-day situations.

Brown and Treviño (2006) have discussed how a range of mechanisms might be used to support the move to ethical leadership. For example:

- They argued that ethical leaders can be selected by, and developed within, an organisation, and that their selection should begin with the appropriate articulation of organisational values in order to attract the 'right' people (i.e. those with congruent personal values) into the organisation in the first place.
- They also suggested that organisations use integrity-based promotions criteria in order to promote the 'right' leaders, and provide ethical role models to assist their development.
- Finally, Brown and Treviño also proposed improving ethical leadership through training (e.g. on leadership styles, moral reasoning and interpersonal communication, all of which were raised as important during the interviews).

Forces must also address the issue of performance management. Our findings suggested there was a need for performance expectations to be clearly defined and articulated, and in a way that was aligned with wider force priorities and integrity frameworks. The interviews highlighted how a balance in organisational priorities could potentially be effective, with organisational goals focusing on the needs of staff in addition to the public they serve. Focusing on staff development and wellbeing is very likely to benefit their performance and behaviour, and manifest in terms of improved quality of service and ethical conduct. In short, a staff focus may result in improved service delivery for the public.

One way to enrich existing quantitative measures of performance could be through more routine use of qualitative measures, such as narrative accounts of police assistance to victims and reports of successful problem-solving activity (Stone and Ward 2000), with a view to changing the nature of performance conversations in forces. There would also be scope to provide greater balance in force performance management regimes by supplementing traditional quantitative measures, which tend to focus on crime and enforcement activity, with measures of police integrity. Police departments across the globe have introduced a variety of indicators to measure and help improve police conduct (Porter and Prenzler 2012). For example, detailed trend data are available on complaints and allegations though it should be recognized that there may be some initial uncertainty about the preferred 'direction of travel' with such data, and the integrity risks posed by a focus on any quantitative measure of 'performance'. However, the expectation should be that complaints will decline over time once a robust complaints management system is in place, innovative integrity strategies are introduced, and ethical leadership takes effect (Porter and Prenzler 2012). Further, an independent process for investigating and adjudicating complaints could add strong validity to substantiated complaint reports (Harvey et al. 2014; Smith 2010). There would be scope for forces also to introduce other assessments of police integrity by building on their existing victim satisfaction surveys. Insights could be generated more routinely from surveys of, or qualitative work with, stakeholders (e.g. criminal justice partners), the general public, those who have experienced police-initiated contact (e.g. suspects), as well as officers and staff (see Prenzler et al. 2013 for a review of stakeholder surveys). In the future, the adoption of a more comprehensive package of performance measures (which includes integrity) and a change in nature of the performance conversation, in combination with development and support for leaders, improved staff capabilities and quality service provision could lead to measurable improvements for police organisations.

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