

Police Pay at a Crossroads?

In October 2010, The Home Secretary asked Tom Winsor (former Rail Regulator) to undertake an independent study of Police Pay and conditions. The first part of the review was to look at short term improvements and the second to look at longer term reform.

The key objectives were:

- Use remuneration and conditions of service to maximise officer and staff deployment to frontline roles where their powers and skills are required.
- Provide remuneration and conditions of service that are fair to, and reasonable for, both the taxpayer and police officers and staff.
- Enable modern management practices in line with practices elsewhere in the public sector and the wider economy.

The first part of the report was published in March 2011 with some key recommendations:

- People should be paid for what they do, the skills they have and are applying in their work, and the weights of the jobs they do.
- People should be paid for how well they work.
- A single police service – distinctions in pay and other conditions of service between police officers and staff should be objectively justified.
- Arrangements should be simple to implement and administer.
- A phased introduction of reform

Without going into the micro detail of the quick wins that Winsor has recommended, the summary recommendations above would suggest some key strategic Reward issues for the 43 Police Forces across the country. Although the majority of Winsor's analysis focuses on uniformed roles, his reforms also include all Police Staff roles. These account for 40% of the Police headcount and are under Local terms and Conditions. Police Staff roles include Scenes of Crime Officers, Police Community Support Officers (PCSO's) as well as typical support roles such as Finance, HR and IT.

From Winsor's recommendations two key areas stand out:

- Progression based pay on performance
- An approach which fits a Single Police Service.

It is interesting that in the Unison response to the report (A Unison Pay And Conditions Strategy To Improve Police Performance) the focus is more on the Police Staff as this is where the majority of their membership is. Their key views on the two elements above are that they are prepared to explore a competency based approach to pay progression, however they are opposed to performance based approaches as the current PDR system is discredited and under resourced. More importantly, and with significant implications for Police HR teams across the service, the Unison report strongly recommends one Job Evaluation scheme for all Police Staff across all forces.

If either of the above recommendations from either side are progressed, significant planning, process design and systems will be required to ensure the smooth implementation, operation and monitoring of the approach.

If pay is linked to performance or contribution, PDR processes need to be monitored and managed effectively to ensure equality and fairness in the approach. Reward management and reward systems will become more of a need where pay progression is no longer based on time served increments.

Should Winsor agree with Unison's view that one Job Evaluation scheme be used for all forces this has much wider implications as a project. One scheme underpinning one pay and grading structure will move the Police Staff towards the NHS agenda for change approach and go some way to creating a single Police Service; however if each force is asked to implement the same scheme independently this will be a similar approach to the Local Government implementations of Single Status which will result in localised pay structures, local interpretations of the scheme and local pay.

In the current financial climate can the Police force afford to implement a new Job Evaluation scheme or for the future of a Single Police Service can they afford not to?

Watch this space - the second part of Winsor's report is due this month.