



Demand Management: Scoping Study Results Summary

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Introduction

There is increasing recognition that there is scope for improvement of demand and capacity management in police services. Police services across the UK have varied levels of understanding of the nature of demand within their system but there is greater recognition of the different sources of demand and their relative importance. One of the main concerns is that much of the demand that consumes resource is internally generated, either through bureaucracy and administrative processes or through *failure demand*. This latter term is used to represent demand that we do not want. Failure demand can come from external sources where a service has failed to deal with a customer “right first time” creating the need to repeatedly deal with one demand or to perform some kind of rework. Errors or waste in internal processes can also generate failure demand.

The literature makes a very clear point:

“In service organisations...failure demand often represents the greatest lever for performance improvement. In financial services it can account for anything from 20 to 60 per cent of all customer demand...in local authorities and police forces as much as 80-90% are avoidable and unnecessary”
[Seddon (2009), p33]

There is now a significant project between the NPCC and the College of Policing to study demand management in the police service, with aims to develop measures to assist in demand prediction, examine demand, capacity supply and risk, explore capacity generation and productivity and examine the relationship with public value.

The OU Police Consortium has also started a scoping project to look at the nature of internal demand as a source of waste and failure demand. The work is sponsored by Thames Valley police in the first instance and there has also been liaison with Dorset police on the conceptual aspects of this project. This report provides a brief summary of the preliminary findings of the OU project, together with some recommendations about how the work should be continued.

Research Method

Preliminary interviews were held with eight employees from police services in Thames Valley and one staff member from Dorset. The main source of information is from staff at Milton Keynes police station and officers from nearby community locations. The interviews were held in April and May, 2106. Staff were chosen to represent as many different levels of seniority and included community

support officers and civilian staff. The main research question was to establish whether or not staff believed that administrative requirements from HR or other sources were too burdensome and wasteful. Interviewees were asked questions about:

- The amount of time they spent on non-core activity
- The nature of the non-core work and whether or not it was unnecessary
- What they saw as core, value-added activity

Key findings

The following generalised points can be made about the responses:

1. Staff were not concerned about the administrative burden placed upon them by the Human Resources function. Although every interviewee mentioned their Professional Development Review (PDR) as a piece of administration that took them away from other activity there was no sense of it being an issue that needed addressing. Interviewees fell into two camps when it came to the time spent. Some staff wanted to spend more time on the PDR as they saw it as an essential part of the process to obtain promotion and career development. In such cases they were willing to spend time out of normal hours working on the document. Other staff, who were not seeking promotion as actively, understood the need to complete the document. All staff valued the opportunity to have a record of competent working. There is a strong cultural attitude of being seen to be “able to do the job”. All staff were keen to stress that the interviews were happening at the same time of year as the PDR, and we must not disproportionately emphasise this activity.
2. Other activities did take staff away from their core work. The regular training courses that officers are asked to attend were mentioned by most staff. In general there was support for this training activity and it was mostly seen as useful. One person mentioned “return to work” interviews as another non-core activity.
3. All staff were highly motivated and had a very clear idea about what they saw as “value” work. Their own explanation of it very much depended on the role, but there was a general pattern of understanding value activities, usually involving dealing with members of the public, as either offenders, witnesses, victims of crime or local residents.
4. Most interviewees did not see an issue with wasted time created by HR. There was a very diverse set of examples of waste in core activities that raises the question of whether or not this should remain a focus of attention rather than back office administration. Some complained that work previously conducted by HR had now been moved to front-line staff as an extra (unresourced) burden. Others commented that simple system failures still got in the way of value work – for instance the difficulty of finding a working computer printer to print off a custody sheet.

Conclusions

Overall, it was concluded that HR administration was not the major cause of waste or failure demand for most of the staff interviewed. It is possible that the restructuring of HR has passed extra work onto some officers, but it is likely to have affected senior officers most.

There is probably quite a lot of hidden failure demand and waste still present in core activity that has not yet been recognised by staff. Existing efficiency activities have focused on step-based change and I would recommend much more of a focus on continuous improvement activity that allows staff at all levels to identify waste and failure demand and then eliminate it. These interviews would

suggest there is the managerial capability and supportive staff culture to make this work at the site involved in the study. Other sites might be more challenged.

The recognition of waste and failure demand will take time and is a developmental process where more opportunities are identified steadily as people become more familiar with their processes. Hence, the whole emphasis should be on a more longitudinal approach rather than a short step-based change.