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was written by Lynda King Taylor, reporting from  
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The 21st century is demanding new skills and ways of working from the police service, as officers grapple with sweeping changes in society, global threats and the increasing pace of technological change. **Lynda King Taylor** reports from the Modernising Policing conference



## Rising to the challenge

**D**ramatic changes in society demand a response from the police service to match. And for police forces to remain effective they have to adapt to 21st century pressures, Public Service Events' Modernising Policing conference heard.

Keynote speaker Sir Ronnie Flanagan emphasised that robust reforms in policing would be central to this.

The former RUC chief constable, now senior policing adviser to the Home Secretary, told delegates at the Barbican, London, that policing had become "too important and impactful to be left to police alone".

He set the scene for the debate by outlining the main recommendations from the Flanagan Review, which he said pointed the way to a new era of policing. This included reduction of red tape and bureaucracy; promotion of better business processes; continuing the progress that had been made on neighbourhood policing; ensuring the public were driving local policing priorities; and better management of resources to deliver on future challenges. "This is a move from policing by consent to policing in partnership," Sir Ronnie said.

The future was described as "challenging" by conference chairwoman Jan Berry, who is also

chairwoman of the Police Federation, representing 124,000 police officers from the ranks of constable to inspector. Berry pointed out that Sir Ronnie's reform recommendations had to be achieved against a backdrop of a bitter pay dispute which had seen an unprecedented demonstration by 25,000 police officers on the streets of London, as well as growing disquiet and frustration over aspects of the government's modernisation drive.

"As the pressures of the job, and the countless targets, continue to grow, so too has the gap between a detached government and its public bodies," Berry said, warning of problems of low morale and motivation among rank and file officers.

Angela O'Connor, chief people officer at the National Policing Improvement Agency, the organisation responsible for police training, said its role centred on "the right people, the right skills, at the right time and place". But she conceded that achieving buy-in to workforce modernisation would be a challenge and that reforms could not work without "creating more choice, greater capacity, capability and community cohesion, and meeting the increasing expectations of partnership policing".

For Adrian Jackson, programme manager for policing at sector skills council Skills for Justice, workforce modernisation was as much > **page 53**

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This is a move from policing by consent to policing in partnership





**BERRY:** "the pressures of the job continue to grow"



**BOBBETT:** "technology must be a benefit"



**O'CONNOR:** "the right people, the right skills, at the right time and place"



**BARBER:** "get better at spotting problems"

# Rising to the challenge

< **page 51** about people as it was modernising systems and processes.

He said that while the police developed new methods to tackle criminality they had to ensure that the skills of the workforce kept pace with these new developments. "New systems, processes and practices will not provide the benefits that the police are seeking unless they ensure that all staff have the skills to utilise and work with them," Jackson said. This did not mean that all staff needed to return to the classroom, but "the service needs to continue to ensure that learning and development is provided to those that need it when they need it".

To support this, the police needed to engage with developments within the broader national education and training sector to ensure they were able to maximise the opportunities that reforms, such as those outlined in the Leitch Review of Skills, could provide.

Following the Bichard Report, information handling and interoperability issues have also been also thrust to the forefront of the modernising policing agenda. Coupled with renewed calls for a national police DNA database following recent high profile convictions, presentations to the conference on information access and exchange and computer forensics were of particular relevance.

Patrick Phillips, deputy director of information, Metropolitan police, discussed the "exponential growth" in digital forensics, accompanied by new challenges such as retrieving data from increasing CCTV coverage to ensure evidence admissible in court.

He highlighted more collaborative working across police forces and agencies, and the "improvement of policing performance through developing people, process, information sharing and technology". Standardising electronic data across the UK and reducing reliance on paper records to cut the burdens of bureaucracy was yet another challenge for the police service to grapple with.

In the Met alone there were more than 2,000 types of paper forms and three football pitches worth of paper filing. Achieving efficiencies through IT required police, partners, and agencies to be interlinked – not easy when the Met alone had 600 operational locations across 32 London boroughs, with 1,500 vehicles, a 52,000-strong workforce and 30 per cent of its staff having no fixed location or IT resources.

Richard Bobbett, chief executive of Airwave, which operates the UK's national digital radio communications service dedicated to the emer-

gency services, said the potential of technology continued to grow. "We are starting a new journey of discovery where technology in modern day policing must be a benefit, no longer a burden – an efficiency gain," Bobbett said.

Steve Barber, sector manager for investigation, enforcement and protection with the Home Office Scientific Development Branch, highlighted how new science and technology had much to offer the police service to help improve operational effectiveness – provided it could be integrated with business processes.

The keys to successful exploitation of technology included sharing and partnerships between police forces and other emergency services to aid interoperability, reduce cost and create markets.

The police also had to engage with the IT industry to articulate requirements clearly and adopt a systems engineering view that encompassed the product lifecycle, and promote a partnership with the public to ensure public support and consent.

Barber also debated a downside to new technology in that it facilitated new types of criminality such as cyber-crime, or created new problems, such as difficulties retrieving and replaying digital CCTV compared with older analogue systems.

"Modernising policing has to include being better at spotting these problems in advance and heading them off at the pass," Barber said.



New systems, processes and practices will not provide the benefits that the police are seeking unless they ensure that all staff have the skills to utilise and work with them



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