

Understanding the impact of Positive Action workshops on minority ethnic and female success in passing the College of Policing online assessment

A report from the MPS Strategic Insight Unit, May 2021

Executive Summary

Introduction

In late 2020, MPS HR commissioned an external company, Practice to Progress (P2P), to design and deliver a Positive Action workshop to better prepare minority ethnic and female *direct entry detective constable* candidates for the new College of Policing online assessment. As part of this process, the Strategic Insight Unit (SIU) was invited to evaluate the impact of P2P's workshop on assessment outcomes for candidates who participate. This report summarises the findings of the evaluation and their implications for related efforts to address underrepresentation of minority groups in the MPS workforce.

The evaluation, a two-arm randomised controlled trial (RCT), tested the impact of P2P's workshop, with 718 minority ethnic and female candidates randomly allocated to receive an invitation to the workshop (treatment) or no invitation (control; "business as usual"). These two groups were equal in size, with 359 candidates randomly assigned to each.

For those assigned to the treatment group, workshop attendance was voluntary but strongly encouraged using behaviourally-informed email messages along with follow-up contacts by telephone.

To measure the effectiveness of the workshop, we analysed the number of *direct entry detective constable* applicants in treatment and control who:

1. scheduled a date for the College of Policing online assessment (without cancelling);
2. attempted the College of Policing online assessment;
3. completed the full College of Policing online assessment;
4. successfully passed the entirety of the College of Policing's online assessment, and;
5. successfully passed the two separate stages of the online assessment

By the end, 63% of candidates in the treatment group attended the full workshop. However, our analysis includes all candidates, regardless of whether they attended or not. This is known as an intention-to-treat (ITT) analysis, the necessity of which is explained below. This approach mirrors what we would expect if the workshops were rolled out more widely (i.e. not everyone would attend).

We find that being offered the P2P workshop is:

- significantly effective at increasing the number of minority ethnic (43.8% increase) and female candidates (16.2% increase) who **successfully pass** the College of Policing's online assessment stage.
- effective (albeit with a reduced standard of statistical significance) at increasing the number of minority ethnic candidates (11.7% increase) who **complete** the online assessment.
- not effective at increasing the number of minority ethnic or female candidates who **schedule** or **attempt** the online assessment, which is not surprising as only a small number of candidates choose not to schedule or attempt the assessment.

Conclusion

An invitation to the P2P workshop is evidently much more effective at increasing the assessment completion and success of minority ethnic candidates than it is for female candidates. Although female candidates see a statistically significant increase in success, this effect is smaller than that seen among minority ethnic candidates of both genders. MPS HR should consider whether it would be prudent to suspend the offer to female direct entry detective constable candidates given the cost of provision.

It is important to note this research was limited to direct entry detective constables only. We cannot assume that the workshop would have the same impact on the largest recruitment cohort: standard entry police constables. For example, being a degree holder – a requirement for direct entry detectives – may increase the impact of the workshop. Fortunately, it would be relatively straightforward and fast (due to the higher volumes) to replicate this research with standard entry police constables. Such a replication will hopefully confirm that the workshop is effective across different candidate types.

In the same vein, we cannot assume that another type of Positive Action workshop would have the same effect. P2P used a specific design, led by certain individuals. In this experiment, MPS HR also controlled the invitations sent to the treatment group to encourage their participation in the P2P workshop. We should test any future workshops that deviate from the original design.

In planning and implementing our research design, we also discovered the value of effective communication with candidates in the recruitment process; the invitation management process is equally important as the intervention itself. We found messages to applicants can sometimes be generic, unclear, and impersonal. There is strong evidence to suggest these things matter, so we used behavioural science to design clear and engaging emails to candidates eligible for the P2P offer. We believe there is value in applying this approach elsewhere, such as when a candidate submits an expression of interest in applying to the MPS.

As an organisation, we must recognise the value of testing new and existing interventions that affect the make-up of our future workforce. From finding the best messaging to prospective applicants, to discovering the forms that slow candidates down most, testing will enable the MPS to steadily improve and evolve its approach to increasing diversity in recruitment.

Recommendations

- Test the P2P workshop on standard entry police constable candidates to confirm that the findings replicate across different candidate types.
- Review the different components that comprise the P2P workshop and test the most promising individually (e.g. competency based interview).
- Ensure email invitations and other messages to candidates draw from behavioural science to encourage the desired behaviours (e.g. completing the online assessment). If possible, test the effectiveness of different communications using an RCT.
- Identify new and existing recruitment processes and interventions that would likely benefit from the use of RCTs to test their effectiveness.

Contents

Executive Summary	1
1. Introduction	4
1.1 Structure of document	4
1.2 Background	4
1.3 Recruitment process.....	5
1.4 Research aim	5
2. Intervention Design	6
2.1 Workshop invitation and reminders.....	6
2.2 Workshop format	7
2.3 Workshop attendance.....	7
3. Trial Design.....	9
3.1 Sample	9
3.2 Randomisation	10
3.3 Outcome measures	11
4. Research Findings	12
4.1 Primary short-term outcomes.....	12
4.1.1 Passed assessment overall.....	12
4.1.2 Completed assessment.....	13
4.1.3 Scheduled (without cancelling) and attempted assessment	13
4.2 Secondary short-term outcomes	14
4.2.1 Passed assessment overall (minority ethnic sub groups)	14
4.2.2 Comparing treated vs. untreated candidates	14
4.3 All outcomes by stage	16
4.4 Participant feedback	18
5. Conclusion	19
5.1 Recommendations.....	19
Annexe	21
A – Invitations and reminders	21
B – Survey Design.....	24
C – Ethnic breakdown of entire sample	26

1. Introduction

In this introductory section, we outline the structure of the document, provide some background to the project, and describe the aims of our research.

1.1 Structure of document

This document is organised as follows:

- In this section (1), we provide a background to diversity issues in the recruitment work stream and recruitment process, and aims of this specific research project.
- In section 2, we outline the intervention; the P2P positive action workshop under test.
- In section 3, we outline the trial design (randomised control trial), sample size, trial participants, outcome measures, and general notes on implementation and monitoring.
- In section 4 we present the results.
- In section 5, we present our conclusions and recommendations.

1.2 Background

Recruiting a more diverse police force is an important public policy goal, especially when the characteristics of the police do not represent the diversity of their communities. Approximately 43% of serving-age Londoners are classified as minority ethnic, yet these groups make up just 15% of MPS officers today. Elsewhere, the proportion of females in the organisation are around half the level they ultimately should be (49%) in order to reflect London.

In late 2020, MPS HR approached the Strategic Insight Unit (SIU) to assist with their ambitious programme of work to address underrepresentation of minority groups in its workforce. The collaboration aims to support this objective through a combination of impact evaluations and statistical analysis.

Existing analysis suggests that a large proportion of attrition in the recruitment pipeline occurs during its earliest weeks. Many different interventions have been attempted to increase retention during these early phases, and future interventions are being considered.

The first assessment ('Day 1') is of particular concern to the MPS. Minority ethnic and female candidates are consistently less likely to pass the assessment compared to their White, male peers.¹

In November 2020, responsibility for the design and delivery of the Day 1 assessment was transferred to the College of Policing (CoP). The new CoP assessment adheres to the latest nationally recognised standards and takes place online, rather than in-person. While an online assessment has obvious benefits in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, transferring this key part of the process to an outside organisation also presented some risks.

In light of these changes, MPS HR commissioned an external company, Practice to Progress (P2P), to design and deliver a Positive Action 6-hour workshop to better prepare minority ethnic and female candidates for the new CoP assessment. Consequently, the Strategic Insight Unit (SIU) was approached to evaluate the impact of P2P's workshop on recruitment and performance outcomes for candidates who participate.

¹ Strategic Insight Unit. (April 2021) Identifying the characteristics that lead to minority ethnic candidate success in police recruitment. Access can be requested at: StrategicInsightUnitMailbox-@met.police.uk

1.3 Recruitment process

The MPS operates a staged recruitment process that is broadly in-line with most other police forces across the UK. The model for direct entry detective constables consists of:

1. Registration
2. Application form submitted
3. Sift – includes a Police National Computer (PNC) check and eligibility checks (UK residency, age).
4. College of Policing online assessment (formerly 'Day 1') – online assessments including role plays and interview, facilitated by community assessors.²
5. Situational Judgement Test (SJT)
6. Day 2 assessment – includes medical, physical and biometrics checks.
7. Pre-employment checks - includes vetting, DNA, and fingerprint checks.

1.4 Research aim

The main aim of this research is to investigate whether a Positive Action workshop for minority ethnic and female candidates – applying to become direct entry detective constables – increases their likelihood of scheduling, attending, completing and successfully passing the College of Policing's new online assessment, which replaced the old 'Day 1' assessment. It is worth noting that people within the MPS may refer to the CoP assessment as 'Day 1', however they are different assessments.

² Community Assessors are members of the public that assess for the College of Policing. There is a requirement for them not to be ex-officers as a way of building trust and confidence with the community.

2. Intervention Design

MPS HR commissioned Practice to Progress (P2P) to design and deliver a Positive Action workshop to better prepare minority ethnic and female candidates for the new College of Policing online assessment. The organisation has previously delivered workshops for a number of UK forces, either to support prospective recruits or prepare serving officers for promotion.

What is Positive Action?

Positive Action is the deliberate introduction of measures to eliminate or reduce discrimination or its 'effects'. It is about encouraging people from particular, demonstrably under-represented, groups to apply for and secure jobs.

2.1 Workshop invitation and reminders

MPS HR coordinated a timely and comprehensive invitation and reminder process.³ Qualifying candidates (see section 3.1) received an email invitation to register for the workshop. If a candidate either (A) cancelled or failed to attend, or (B) did not register after 3 working days, a tailored email reminder was sent.⁴ These reminders were sent to 131 members (36.5%) of the treatment group. For the small number of candidates that failed to act upon the emails (41 candidates; 11.4% of the treatment group), a telephone call was attempted.

Behavioural science indicates that how an invitation is framed has an effect on yielding positive responses. Invitation management is therefore an enormously important part of trial design and should not be separated from the workshop itself in terms of the potential effect on candidates.

We applied a number of behavioural levers to encourage registration:

Table 1. Behavioural insights applied to email invitations and reminders

Behavioural insight	Application
Personalisation. We respond better to information that is tailored to us.	We addressed each candidate by name in the email invitations and reminders.
Messenger effect. We are heavily influenced by who communicates information, such as experts or figures of authority.	We signed off the first batch of invitations from a Chief Superintendent in the HR team (Invitation A). However, because the email was sent from another HR employee's account, all subsequent emails were adapted to be sent "on behalf of" the senior officer (Invitation B).
Scarcity. We are more attracted to options perceived as scarce/exclusive.	We worded the reminders to emphasise either the timed nature of the invitation (Reminder A) or the limited number of places (Reminder B).
Social norms. We tend to behave like other people do.	We included a summary of the "incredibly positive" feedback from candidates who had already attended a workshop.

³ Our thanks go to [REDACTED] (MPS HR) for his diligence and openness to new ways of engaging candidates.

⁴ Full text for the invitations and reminders is found in the Annexe.

Active choice. We often avoid making an active choice, so we then end up with the 'default' option.	We ended both reminders with an instruction to the candidate that, unless they register, the sender will assume they wish to decline the invitation.
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2.2 Workshop format

While the content of the workshop is owned by Practice to Progress (P2P), they were happy to provide a written description:

The Practice to Progress workshop delivers one-to-one practice in all elements of the online assessment process, using realistic Competency and Value Framework (CVF) content put together by experienced policing writers. At the end of the practice sessions, there is focussed feedback from diverse and skilled assessors, all of whom have significant experience in the application of the CVF. The assessors also focus on reflective learning practices to gently build the confidence of candidates.

The workshop lasts roughly 6 hours – with fewer attendees it can be shorter – and consists of:

- a written exercise;
- a competency based interview;
- a briefing exercise;
- multiple reflection periods (between sessions); and
- dedicated time to complete the workbook.

The workbook also allows candidates continue their learning upon completion of the workshop.

A maximum of 8 candidates can attend each workshop, alongside one facilitator and two assessors. Facilitators and assessors are a mixture of former senior police officers (sergeant to Chief Constable), academics, community leaders and professionals with relevant CVF assessor experience and training.

2.3 Workshop attendance

Every candidate randomised into the treatment group received an invitation to attend the P2P intervention. Table 2 provides a breakdown of the 359 candidates in the treatment group and how they ultimately reacted to the invitation to attend the P2P intervention.

Of these 359 candidates, 304 (85%) registered with P2P and booked onto an available workshop slot, meaning that the other 15% failed to take this step. In terms of attendance, 245 candidates (68%) logged on and experienced some part of the intervention, and 227 (64%) completed the full workshop.

Table 2. Treatment group interaction with the P2P intervention

Treatment delivery	n	Percent
Candidates randomly assigned to treatment group	359	100.0%
Invited to register for P2P intervention	359	100.0%
Registered for a P2P session	304	84.7%
Attended at least some portion of a P2P session	245	68.2%
Completed an entire P2P session	227	63.2%

Reminders and nudges to attend	n	Percent
Sent an email reminder concerning the intervention	131	36.5%
Phoned to encourage attendance	41	11.4%

Invitation management was crucial in boosting participation in the workshop. Over a third of the treatment group failed to respond to the initial email invitation and required at least one email reminder. HR sent reminders to 76 of our eventual workshop attendees, accounting for 31% of everyone who attended some portion of a P2P intervention.

Most of those who attended and completed the training did so in a straightforward manner, in that they registered for just one workshop, turned up on time for that workshop, and completed the workshop in a single sitting. Nevertheless, we find that about 10% of the treatment group required multiple opportunities in order to attend and/or complete the P2P intervention.

3. Trial Design

The impact of the workshop was evaluated through a randomised controlled trial (RCT), with evaluation at the individual candidate level. This was a two-arm trial, illustrated in Table 3 below.

RCTs, which are commonly used to evaluate the efficacy of new medicines, are considered the 'gold standard' for establishing causal conclusions. RCTs allow us to begin with two groups who are statistically identical to one another, and then compare the outcomes for the group that has received an intervention (the 'treatment group') to the outcomes for the group that has not yet received the intervention (the 'control group').

Table 3. Overview of trial arms

Arm	Description
Control	No intervention.
Treatment – Positive Action workshop	A Positive Action workshop to better prepare minority ethnic and female direct entry detective constable candidates for the College of Policing online assessment.

3.1 Sample

A total of 718 minority ethnic and female direct entry detective constable candidates were randomly allocated to either receive an invitation to attend the Positive Action workshop (treatment) or experience "business as usual", with no invitation to the workshop (control). Candidates must identify as minority ethnic and/or female, and have passed the initial employment checks ('the sift') to be eligible.

This research trial only applied to candidates applying to become detective constables due to timescales. The direct entry detective constable applications opened in November 2020 whilst the more-typical police constable entry opened in January 2021. This is important for replication as the profile of those applying to be detectives, who must be degree holders, is very different to those applying as standard entry police constables, although both must sit the same College of Policing online assessment.

Prior to the experiment, the SIU conducted a statistical power analysis, using forecasts of expected numbers of applicants in the November 2020 recruitment campaign, to indicate the sample size required for the RCT to be sufficiently powered to detect an effect of treatment (the workshop), if one existed. Given the lower numbers of minority ethnic and female applicants compared to other groups, we decided to reduce the usual academic standard of 'statistical significance' ($p < 0.05$) to $p < 0.20$. This means that our study would accept a 20% (rather than the standard 5%) chance of the workshop being effective due to chance or luck, in order to tolerate a lower sample size than ordinarily desired (see "A Note on Statistical Significance" in Section 4). Whilst 718 candidates represent the final number in our study, in an ideal world we would have preferred more to ensure small effects could be detected.

In the final analysis, however, this reduced standard proved to be largely unnecessary. The effects of the P2P intervention were so strong that the more stringent and traditional standard of statistical significance, where p is less than 0.05, applied to nearly all of the most important comparisons between the treatment and control groups.

3.2 Randomisation

The process of randomisation took place in multiple batches until a decision was made by MPS HR to stop enrolment into the trial due to time constraints, as evaluation was required within a certain time period to enable decisions on continued funding of the programme. Each batch was checked for duplicates across prior batches and the current batch itself. The random assignment was somewhat constrained in order to ensure that each gender and ethnic sub-group was equally balanced between treatment and control. When pre-existing batches of random assignment were unbalanced within any sub-grouping, a candidate was 60-90% likely to be randomly assigned to the least common group (i.e. treatment or control).

As Table 4 demonstrates, random assignment successfully produced two statistically identical groups at the start of the experiment. The two groups were balanced on three available variables: gender, age and ethnicity.

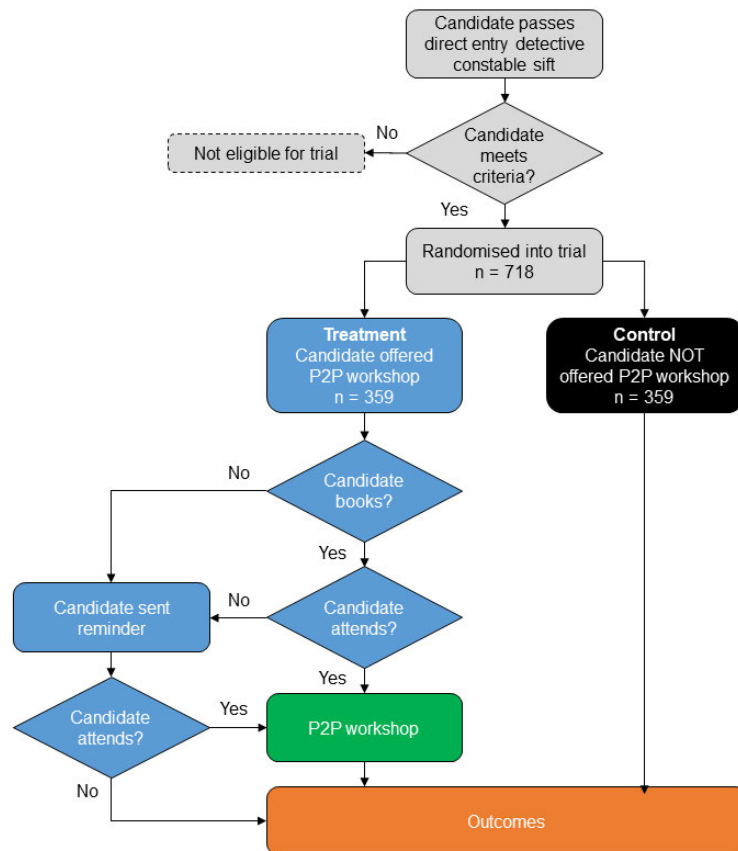
While there are many variables we cannot measure (e.g. family member in the police, inner desire to become a detective), randomisation means we can confidently assume that the treatment and control are equivalent on all other variables; this is one of the most powerful benefits of RCT design. The two groups will have the same numbers of people who were successful in school, who are currently unemployed, or who have dreamed of becoming detectives since they were children. Every pre-existing characteristic which could be relevant to their success in the employment process will be balanced between the two groups. The only difference between these groups, therefore, is whether they were (or were not) offered the chance to attend the P2P intervention.

Table 4. Equivalence of randomly assigned groups

Group	Treatment	Control	<i>p</i>
Gender: Male	19.8%	21.0%	.631
Average age	26.6	27.0	.467
Age below 24 years	47.1%	44.8%	.550
Ethnicity: White	58.5%	57.7%	.821
Ethnicity: Minority ethnic	40.7%	41.8%	.762
Ethnicity: Black	8.6%	8.6%	1.000
Ethnicity: Asian	15.9%	17.0%	.688
Ethnicity: Missing	0.8%	0.6%	.654

A more complete examination of specific ethnicity groups is provided Annexe C.

Figure 1. Trial process flow



3.3 Outcome measures

The short term outcomes measures were the proportion of applicants who:

1. scheduled a date for the College of Policing online assessment (without cancelling);
2. attempted the College of Policing online assessment;
3. completed the full College of Policing online assessment; and
4. successfully passed the entirety of the College of Policing's online assessment.

In addition, there are individual scores for two exercises that comprise the College of Policing's online assessment: (Stage 2) competency based interview; and (Stage 3) written and briefing exercises. These scores allow us to ascertain whether the P2P intervention had a differential effect across the two stages.

4. Research Findings

In this section, we first present the results of the RCT.

A note on statistical significance

In this report, in order to measure our degree of confidence in the results, we use the concept of statistical significance. Statistical significance tells us the probability that an intervention's effect is the result of the intervention, and not the product of chance. We designed the trial to use a 20% level of statistical significance. This means that there is a less than 20% probability that random chance could explain the result and there is no effect. This is indicated by an asterisk (“*”) on our charts and tables, whilst a double asterisk (“**”) denotes a less than 5% chance that the result is the product of chance. The 5% level is traditionally used in scientific publication.

The analysis presented in this report is “intention-to-treat” (ITT), in which all candidates who were randomised are included in the groups to which they were assigned. For members of the treatment group, this means that their outcomes are included in the analysis even if they did not attend a P2P workshop. For the control group, we also included a single candidate who managed to attend the workshop despite never receiving an invitation. This approach to “analyse as we randomise” enhances the validity of the trial results, as it is unlikely that the workshops would achieve 100% attendance if the MPS adopted a policy to offer these same sessions to everyone.

4.1 Primary short-term outcomes

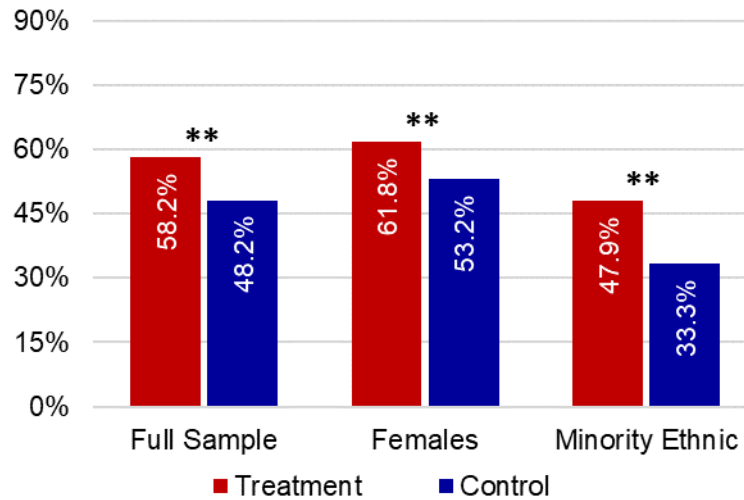
We begin by presenting the primary findings (4.1) on candidate success and then work back in the reverse order to which they occurred (i.e. completed, attended and then scheduled). We then review two secondary outcomes (4.2) – pass rates by specific ethnicity and pass rates for those who attended the workshop versus those who did not in the treatment group. The results are then summarised in three full tables (4.3) for the complete sample of all 718 candidates, minority ethnic candidates, and female candidates.

4.1.1 Passed assessment overall

Overall, we find that being offered the P2P workshop significantly increased the number of minority ethnic and female candidates who **passed** the entire College of Policing online assessment (see Figure 2). The impact is most pronounced for minority ethnic candidates, with 43.8% increase in passes in the treatment group compared to the control group, with only a 1% risk of being caused by chance alone. The impact on female candidates (16.2%) is somewhat reduced but remains statistically significant, within the margin of just a 3.8% likelihood the increase being the product of chance.

When we break down the College of Policing assessment into the scores for its two composite stages, the P2P workshop appears to have had a slightly larger impact on the interview stage than on the written and briefing exercises (see Tables 5, 6 and 7 in Section 4.2). This effect is consistent across both minority ethnic and female candidates. However, we recommend that these results be interpreted as P2P having roughly equivalent benefits for both stages of the online assessment.

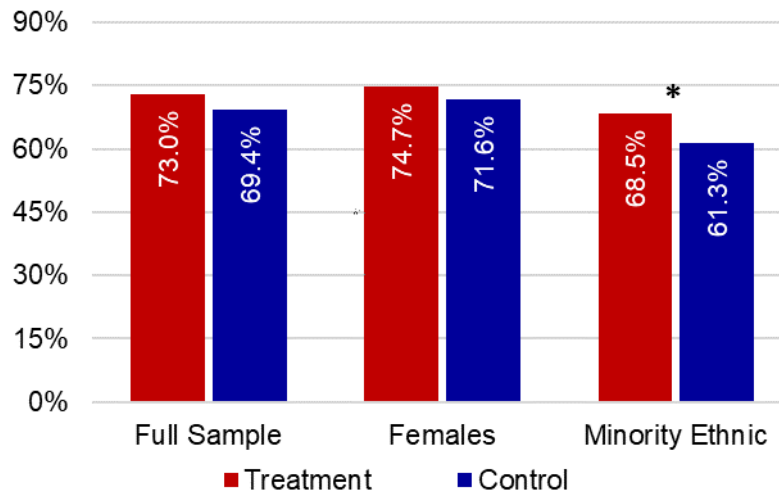
Figure 2. Candidates who successfully passed the CoP online assessment



4.1.2 Completed assessment

We find that being offered the P2P workshop significantly increased the number of minority ethnic candidates who **completed** the College of Policing online assessment (see Figure 3), but with a 19.8% chance of this difference being caused by chance variations. We find no statistically significant effect on this outcome for female candidates, or across the full sample.

Figure 3. Candidates who completed the CoP online assessment



4.1.3 Scheduled (without cancelling) and attempted assessment

We find that being offered the P2P workshop intervention was not effective at increasing the number of minority ethnic and/or female candidates who **scheduled** or **attempted** the College of Policing online assessment date (see Section 4.2). There are minor differences but they are extremely small and not statistically significant.

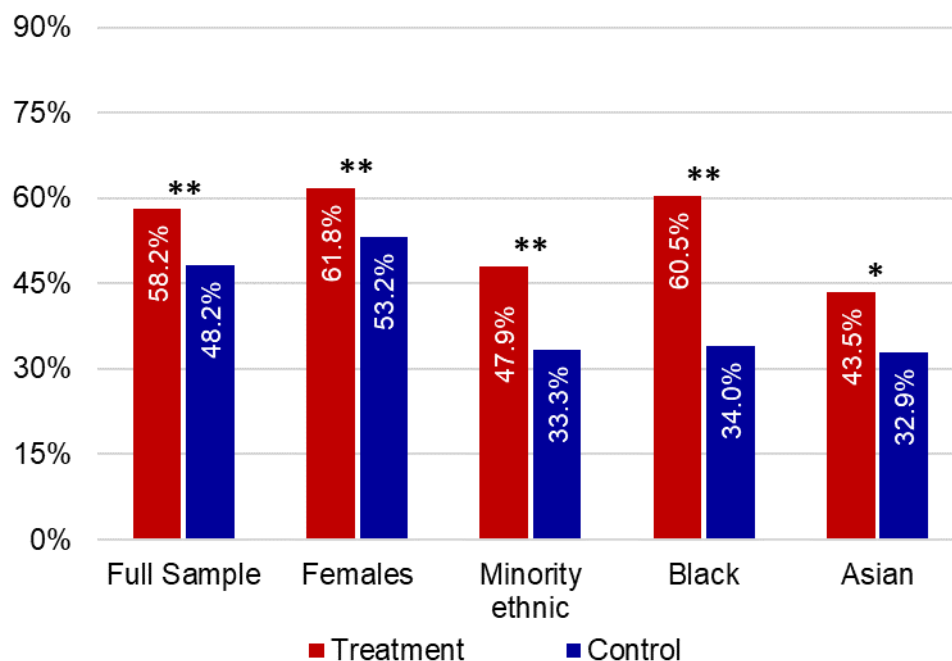
4.2 Secondary short-term outcomes

4.2.1 Passed assessment overall (minority ethnic sub groups)

In order to be able to assess the impact of the P2P workshop on individual ethnic groups, we needed to boost the available sample size as much as possible. To do this, we reassigned Mixed Black candidates as Black, and Mixed Asian candidates as Asian. This increased the sample size to a point that we could detect any possible effect.

We find that being offered the P2P workshop has a much larger effect on Black candidates than Asian candidates (77.6% vs 32.2% respectively). The statistical significance for the effect on Black candidates is also much higher, which means the effect on Asian candidates is more likely down to chance (5% vs 20% respectively).

Figure 4. Candidates who successfully passed the CoP online assessment by individual ethnicity



4.2.2 Comparing treated vs. untreated candidates

The analyses presented in section 4.1 tests the effect of inviting candidates to the P2P intervention, but only 63% of those who were invited ultimately completed a full session with P2P. A natural question, therefore, is why we have decided to test the invitation of offering P2P (by comparing the treatment group to the control group), and why we are not instead comparing (within the treatment group only) those who attended a P2P session with those who did not. An example of two such comparisons – both of which also include a separate bar for the control group – is shown in Figures 4 and 5.

Figure 5. Completion of the online assessment; Treatment group (Treated vs Untreated) compared to the Control group

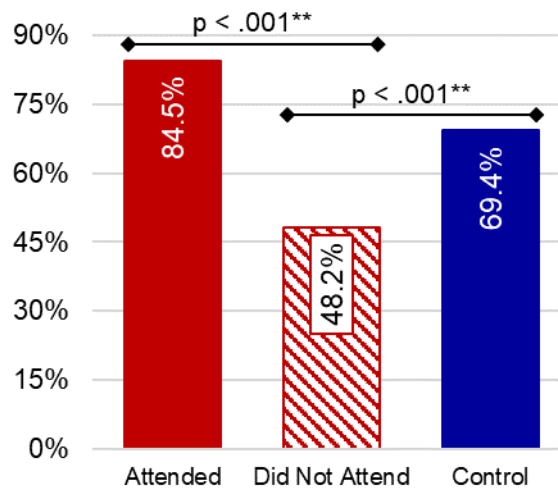
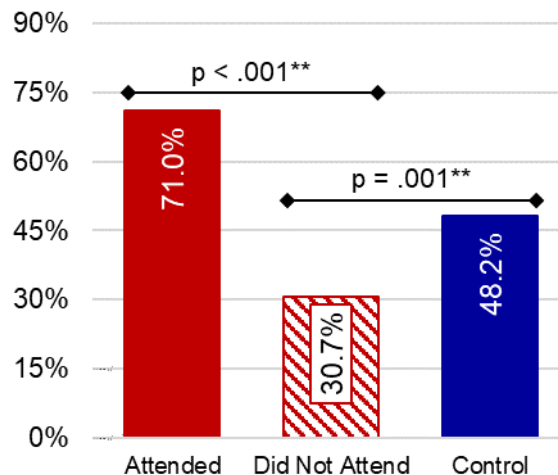


Figure 6. Successful passing of the online assessment; Treatment group (Treated vs Untreated) compared to the Control group



These comparisons illustrate that candidates in the treatment group who did not take up their offer of P2P did significantly worse than those who attended the training, which is to be expected. The important thing to remember is that once candidates were randomly assigned to the treatment group, their decision to either attend or skip the P2P intervention was entirely self-selected. Those who had more inner motivation to become a detective, for example, were probably more likely to take up the offer to improve their chances for success by attending the P2P training. Not surprisingly, these more-motivated candidates were also more likely to complete the online assessment, and more likely to successfully pass the assessment and continue into the rest of the hiring process.

For this reason, any comparisons between the “treated” and the “untreated” groups (i.e., “Attended” vs “Did Not Attend”) is unreliable. We can never know what portion of this difference is

caused by their attendance at the training sessions, and what portion of it is caused by the many pre-existing differences that these two self-selected groups exhibited well before they ever applied to become detectives.

Similarly, the differences between “Did Not Attend” and “Control” demonstrate that those invitees who ignored the offer of P2P are fundamentally different from a general sample of detective candidates. The non-attenders cannot be used as good comparison for either of the other two groups shown in Figures 4 and 5.

The invitation-based comparisons of the (full) treatment and control groups, on the other hand, are entirely valid. The candidates in these groups were not permitted to self-select themselves. Because they were randomly assigned through a lottery, we can easily assume that there are no systematic pre-existing differences between the two groups. They contain the same number of motivated candidates, along with the same number who are relatively indifferent to a potential career as a detective. Indeed, the only real difference between them is that one group was invited to attend the P2P intervention, and the other was not.

4.3 All outcomes by stage

The tables below provide a breakdown of results by each stage of the CoP Assessment for the whole sample (Table 5), and then separately for minority ethnic candidates (Table 6) and female candidates (Table 7). The p value in the tables is the level of statistical significance between the treatment and control group. Only those marked with * or ** should be treated as statistically significant.

Table 5. Individual stage outcomes for minority ethnic and female candidates

Stage	Treatment	Control	Change	<i>p</i>
Offered CoP assessment	96.7%	97.5%	– 0.9%	.507
Registered for assessment	96.7%	97.2%	– 0.6%	.665
Scheduled assessment	90.8%	90.3%	+ 0.6%	.799
Attempted assessment	90.5%	90.0%	+ 0.6%	.802
Completed assessment	73.0%	69.4%	+ 5.2%	.285
Completed and successfully passed assessment	58.2%	48.2%	+ 20.8%	.007**
Completed and failed assessment	13.1%	17.5%	– 25.4%	.098*
Either did not complete or failed assessment	39.0%	47.1%	– 17.2%	.029**
Score on Stage 2 (competency based interview) ⁵	42.8	35.6	+ 20.5%	.002**
Successfully passed Stage 2	59.9%	49.9%	+ 20.1%	.007**
Score on Stage 3 (written and briefing exercise)	41.7	35.7	+ 16.9%	.011**
Successfully passed Stage 3	64.1%	55.2%	+ 16.2%	.015**

Table 6. Individual stage outcomes for minority ethnic candidates only

Stage	Treatment	Control	Change	<i>p</i>
Offered CoP assessment	97.3%	99.3%	– 2.1%	.171*
Registered for assessment	97.3%	99.3%	– 2.1%	.171*
Scheduled assessment	91.1%	92.0%	– 1.0%	.781
Attempted assessment	90.4%	92.0%	– 1.7%	.631
Completed assessment	68.5%	61.3%	+ 11.7%	.198*
Completed and successfully passed assessment	47.9%	33.3%	+ 43.8%	.010**
Completed and failed assessment	17.8%	22.7%	– 21.4%	.300
Either did not complete or failed assessment	47.9%	60.0%	– 20.1%	.038**
Score on Stage 2 (competency based interview)	36.9	26.0	+ 41.8%	.003**
Successfully passed Stage 2	51.4%	36.7%	+ 40.1%	.011**
Score on Stage 3 (written and briefing exercise)	35.6	27.2	+ 30.9%	.022**
Successfully passed Stage 3	56.2%	42.7%	+ 31.6%	.020**

⁵ Any candidate who failed to complete Stages 2 or 3 (e.g., those who never attempted, or who only partially attempted a stage) have been coded as having a score of zero on that stage.

Table 7. Individual stage outcomes for female candidates only

Stage	Treatment	Control	Change	p
Offered CoP assessment	96.9%	97.2%	– 0.3%	.840
Registered for assessment	96.9%	96.8%	+ 0.1%	.964
Scheduled assessment	91.0%	89.7%	+ 1.4%	.613
Attempted assessment	90.6%	89.4%	+ 1.4%	.616
Completed assessment	74.7%	71.6%	+ 4.2%	.417
Completed and successfully passed assessment	61.8%	53.2%	+ 16.2%	.038**
Completed and failed assessment	11.1%	16.0%	– 30.4%	.091*
Either did not complete or failed assessment	35.1%	43.6%	– 19.6%	.037**
Score on Stage 2 (competency based interview)	44.8	38.6	+ 16.0%	.020**
Successfully passed Stage 2	63.9%	54.6%	+ 17.0%	.024**
Score on Stage 3 (written and briefing exercise)	43.4	38.3	+ 13.4%	.053*
Successfully passed Stage 3	66.3%	58.9%	+ 12.7%	.066*

4.4 Participant feedback

A survey was disseminated by P2P to all workshop attendees. Although we provided advice on survey design, the process was owned by P2P. The complete list of questions can be found in Annexe B.

These survey findings should be treated with caution. The fixed choice questions lack flexibility and force people to answer. Furthermore, social desirability bias leads respondents to answer questions in a manner that will be viewed favourably by others.

Most importantly, these responses come only from the treatment group, and only from the sub-set of these candidates who successfully completed the P2P workshop. There is no way to compare these responses to the control group, which strongly limits their utility. We have therefore chosen to provide only a summary of the free text comments:

- **The one-to-one with a facilitator was valued.** Candidates appreciated the opportunity to ask questions and receive personalised feedback away from the group sessions.
- **Many attendees wanted to focus on the MPS competencies.** P2P covered some but not all of the competency questions. A handful of attendees stated that they would have liked to focus on this area more, including covering all competencies.
- **Some attendees were pleased to have a clearer understanding of what to expect on the day of their online assessment.** Many attendees mentioned or alluded to their anxiety about what might come up on the day of their assessment, which the workshop addressed.
- **The assessors and facilitators were friendly and informative.**
- **The length of time required was too long.** Each workshop ran for up to 6 hours depending on the number of attendees and how long each segment took to complete. This was understandably too lengthy for some.

5. Conclusion

This research examined whether Positive Action workshops increase the diversity of MPS applicants, post the online assessment. In this section, we briefly discuss the findings and make recommendations.

When it comes to ethnic minority and female candidates who apply to become *direct entry detective constables*, we can confidently state that the P2P workshop is effective at increasing their likelihood of passing the College of Policing's new online assessment. The increase among minority ethnic candidates is especially marked, with 44.5% of minority ethnic candidates in the treatment group going onto pass compared to only 30% in the control group – a 48.3% increase.

Analysing these results further, we discover that Black and Mixed Black candidates (as a group) benefit more than any other group, with a statistically significant increase of 77.6% compared to the control group. The effect was much smaller for Asian and Mixed Asian. This would suggest that Black and Mixed Black candidates drive the effect of the minority ethnic participants.

Whilst offering the workshop did not have an impact on increasing either assessment bookings or assessment attempts, the baseline numbers were high in the control group, and thus harder to shift.

While these results are very encouraging, they are necessarily limited by the nature of the sample. We cannot assume that the workshops would have the same effect on candidates applying for the standard entry police constable recruitment process. For example, all of our detective candidates were degree holders, and may have had a different reaction to the workshops than those without degrees. The P2P intervention should therefore be separately tested with this very different cohort of applicants. This replication exercise will increase the study's external validity, namely, confidence that results can be generalisable to other situations. Conclusions as to cause and effect should never be drawn from single studies, even those conducted (as was the case here) to a high standard.

In the same vein, we cannot assume that another type of Positive Action workshop would have the same effect. The P2P workshop followed a specific design, driven by a strong invitation system and led by certain individuals. It would be wise to test any future workshops that deviate from this design. Alternatively, the sessions that comprise the workshop, such as the competency based interview, could be tested separately.

As stated earlier, the invitation management element of the offering such a workshop is part of the intervention under test, and should not be ignored if this approach is rolled out as policy.

Finally, we should endeavour to use RCTs to test the effectiveness of new and existing positive-action interventions; to learn what is working and what is not; and to adapt our policies so that they steadily improve and evolve both in terms of quality and effectiveness. From finding the best advert and email to encourage applications, to discovering the forms that slow candidates down most, the recruitment pipeline is ripe for further testing.

5.1 Recommendations

- Test the P2P workshop on standard entry police constable candidates to confirm that the findings replicate.
- Review the different components that comprise the P2P workshop and test the most promising individually (e.g. competency based interview).

- Ensure email invitations and other messages to candidates draw from behavioural science to encourage the desired behaviours (e.g. completing the online assessment). If possible, test the effectiveness of different communications using an RCT.
- Identify new and existing recruitment processes and interventions that would likely benefit from the use of RCTs to test their effectiveness.

Annexe

A – Invitations and reminders

A.1 Invite (First cohort only – 06/11/2020)

Dear [Candidate Name]

Congratulations on making it through to the Police Constable Day 1 Assessment. You are one step closer to joining the police family.

I would like to offer you a free place on our new 'getting ready' online workshop. This is an opportunity for you to work with Practice to Progress (P2P) – a group of specially trained assessors, including former police officers – who will help to prepare you for the Day 1 assessment.

Please click on the link below to secure your place at the 'getting ready' workshop.

Constable Recruitment – Support Workshops [link]

I would urge you to take up this opportunity, as it will help you understand the skills and attributes we are seeking in our future officers and help you thrive in your Assessment Centre. It could make the difference to your success.

Best of luck

Chief Superintendent Tara McGovern

A.2 Invite (All other cohorts)

SENT ON BEHALF OF CHIEF SUPERINTENDENT TARA McGOVERN

Dear [Candidate Name]

Congratulations on making it through to the Police Constable Online Assessment. You are one step closer to joining the police family. You will soon receive details of your Assessment date via the online portal.

I would like to offer you a free place on our new 'getting ready' online workshop. This is an opportunity for you to work with Practice to Progress (P2P) – a group of specially trained assessors, including former police officers – who will help to prepare you for the Day 1 assessment.

Please click on the link below to secure your place at the 'getting ready' workshop.

<https://calendly.com/p2p-workshops>

The workshops are accessible using any smart device, although using a computer, laptop or tablet will ensure you enjoy the best experience.

I would urge you to take up this opportunity, as it will help you understand the skills and attributes we are seeking in our future officers and help you thrive in your Assessment Centre. It could make the difference to your success.

Best of luck

██████
Detective Inspector
Metropolitan Police Service

A.3 Reminder (Cancelled or did not attend despite booking)

SENT ON BEHALF OF CHIEF SUPERINTENDENT TARA McGOVERN

Dear [Candidate Name]

I notice that you were not able to attend our new 'getting ready' online workshop. Attending could make all the difference to your future success. We are therefore happy to provide you with one final opportunity to take part.

Feedback from candidates that have attended has been incredibly positive. Many feel better prepared for their upcoming assessments and have an overwhelming sense that they understand the skills required to succeed.

Please click on the link below to secure your place at the 'getting ready' workshop.

<https://calendly.com/p2p-workshops>

The workshops are accessible using any smart device, although using a computer, laptop or tablet will ensure you enjoy the best experience.

Unless you register, this is the last email you will receive from me and I will assume you do not want to join.

Best of luck.

██████
Detective Inspector
Metropolitan Police Service

A.4 Reminder (Not booked after 3 working days)

SENT ON BEHALF OF CHIEF SUPERINTENDENT TARA McGOVERN

Dear [Candidate Name]

I notice that you have not yet booked a place on our new 'getting ready' online workshop.

This is a brand new opportunity for 2020 that we have offered to you and a limited number of other candidates. If you attend, you will get to work with Practice to Progress (P2P) – a group of specially trained assessors, including former police officers – who will help to prepare you for the Day 1 assessment.

Feedback from candidates that have attended has been incredibly positive. Many feel better prepared for their upcoming assessments and have an overwhelming sense that they understand the skills required to succeed.

Please click on the link below to secure your place at the 'getting ready' workshop.

<https://calendly.com/p2p-workshops>

The workshops are accessible using any smart device, although using a computer, laptop or tablet will ensure you enjoy the best experience.

Unless you register, this is the last email you will receive from me and I will assume you do not want to join.

Best of luck.


Detective Inspector
Metropolitan Police Service

B – Survey Design

Thank you for taking part in the Practice To Progress workshop. We welcome and appreciate your feedback which will be used to better understand the value the workshop offers and how the service can be developed.

The following survey is anonymous and we are grateful for your participation.

1. Overall, how would you rate the Practice To Progress workshop?

- Excellent
- Good
- Average
- Poor
- Very Poor

2. How satisfied are you with the quality of the feedback from your practice assessment completed during the workshop?

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

3. How helpful has using Practice To Progress been in increasing your confidence going into the online assessment?

- Extremely helpful
- Very helpful
- Moderately helpful
- Slightly helpful
- Not at all helpful

4. How satisfied are you with the workshop booking system?

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

5. How useful did you find the workbook?

- Extremely useful
- Very useful
- Moderately useful
- Slightly useful
- Not at all useful

6. Overall, how convenient is Practice To Progress to use?

- Extremely convenient
- Very convenient

- Moderately convenient
- Slightly convenient
- Not at all convenient

7. After completing Practice To Progress and receiving your feedback, how much more prepared did you feel for your online assessment?

- Extremely prepared
- Very prepared
- Moderately prepared
- Slightly prepared
- Not at all prepared

8. We're keen to hear any further thoughts on your experience of Practice To Progress. Please let us know what you valued and if there is anything we can do to improve our service.

C – Ethnic breakdown of entire sample

Table 8. Equivalence of randomly assigned groups by ethnicity

Ethnicity	Treatment	Control	<i>p</i>
White – British	171	172	343
White – Irish	1	3	4
White – Other	35	35	70
Greek & Greek Cypriot	5	7	12
Turkish & Turkish Cypriot	5	8	13
Black – British	12	11	23
Black – African	11	13	24
Black – Caribbean	7	4	11
Black – Asian	0	1	1
Black – Other	1	2	3
Indian	21	19	40
Pakistani	11	14	25
Bangladeshi	12	12	24
Chinese	3	1	4
Asian – Other	14	11	25
Mixed – White & Black African	7	2	9
Mixed – White & Black Caribbean	9	10	19
Mixed – White & Asian	12	12	24
Mixed – Other	13	11	24
Any other group not specified	7	8	15
Prefer not to disclose	2	3	5
Totals	359	359	718

Chi-squared = 9.47; *df* = 20; *p* = .977