Performance Management Qualitative Research Survey

For the Office of the Dyfed Powys Police and Crime Commissioner and Dyfed Powys Police

Prepared by Crest Advisory 2014

CREST ADVISORY
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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Context

1.1.1   Crest Advisory was commissioned to review the performance management framework in November 2013. As part of this work a survey of all employees in both Dyfed-Powys Police and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Dyfed-Powys was conducted using a web-based surveying tool.

1.1.2   During the first phases of work done by Crest Advisory it was apparent that some mixed understanding existed within the organisation(s) about the current performance management regime.

1.1.3   There seemed to be clarity from both the PCC and Chief Constable about the intended (limited) performance measures and targets, but these did not always seem to be accepted by officers and staff.

1.1.4   The Police and Crime Commissioner agreed to facilitate a short survey in order to gauge understanding of the performance management regime across the OPCC and force.

1.2 Methodology

1.2.1   1,962 people were included in the survey. The specific questions were designed in consultation with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and the force.

1.2.2   The survey consisted of 17 open questions relating to performance management. The majority of questions offered multiple-choice answers. A 'free comments' section was included to add contextual information to this qualitative research.

1.2.2   The survey went live on 16th July 2014 and remained open for 14 days to maximise inclusivity. The response rate was 42.7% (n=838); the standard response rate for this kind of survey is 20%.

2.0 The Survey Findings

2.1 Overview of Responses

2.1.1   The responses appeared balanced and carefully thought through. Despite some acknowledged misunderstanding of some questions (resulting in incomplete survey responses) strongly held views were expressed.

2.1.1   The free text comments highlighted a dissonance between the direction set by the PCC and force leadership (of very limited targets) and officers on the ground. Despite the endeavours of the PCC and Chief Constable a culture of league tables and point scoring at district level still exists.

2.1.2   Many respondents seemed to express concern that with decreasing resources the focus remained by supervisors and local commanders on numerical targets rather than broader positive outcomes for the public.

2.1.3   Many respondents stated they were entirely reactive in response to calls for service and that their activity (or their performance goals) were not aligned to stated force priorities.

2.1.4   The tone of the survey results suggests that the organisation(s) welcome the proposed changes to the performance management culture, but some remain sceptical.

- Only half (52%) of respondents think that force priorities are well known and communicated;
- Over two thirds of respondents did not view the current performance management system positively;
- Over half (53%) of respondents thought preventative strategies were regularly used, those in the Constable rank were the least likely to hold they were used;
- Nearly two thirds (63%) of respondents held that targeting methods were in place and used regularly;
- Only 1% of respondents held that a registry of 'what works' was always used to support effective practice;
- Over a third (35%) of respondents believed that targets existed for self initiated activities; and
- 13% of respondents did not know if their day-to-day activities were focused on force priorities.

2.2 Individual Question Analysis

Do you think the Force priorities are well known amongst all parts of the Force and are they regularly discussed and communicated?
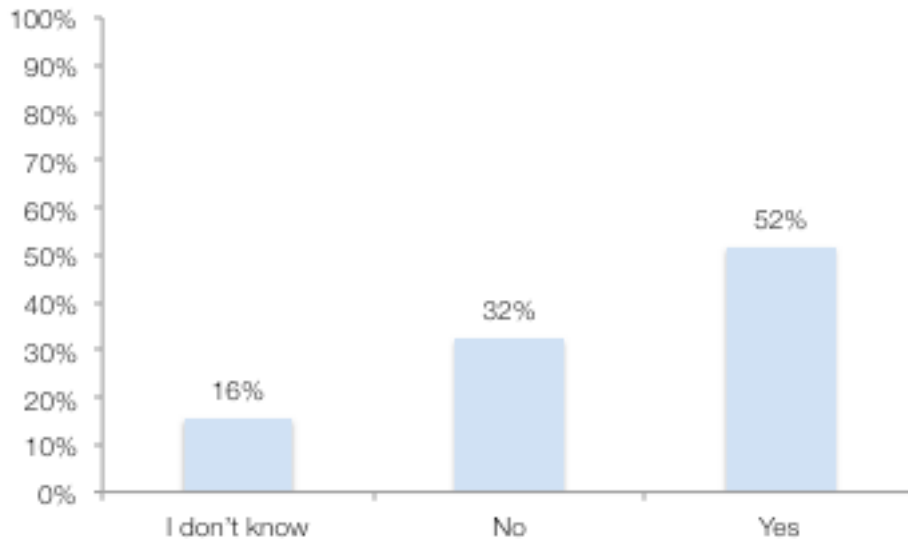
52% of respondents said that the force priorities have been communicated and understood. It may be concerning that the remaining 48% of the organisation either do not know the force priorities or are unsure about what they represent.

How effective do you consider the current Performance Management system to be?
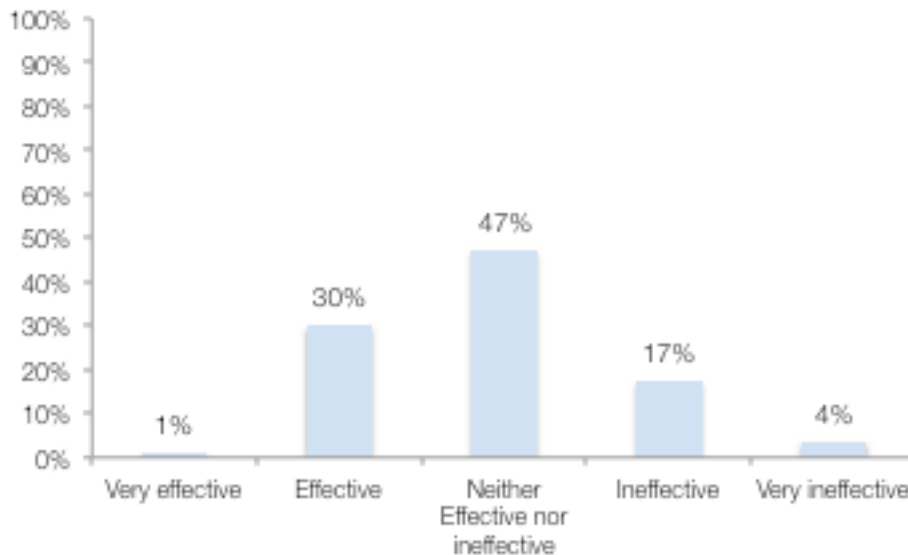
Over two thirds of respondents to this question did not view the current performance management system positively. This group felt that the system was either ineffective or held a neutral view suggesting a passive perspective,

which could be symptomatic of a general apathy towards performance management.

Some relevant comments associated with this question were captured during the survey:

"I think that the current performance set up works to a degree."
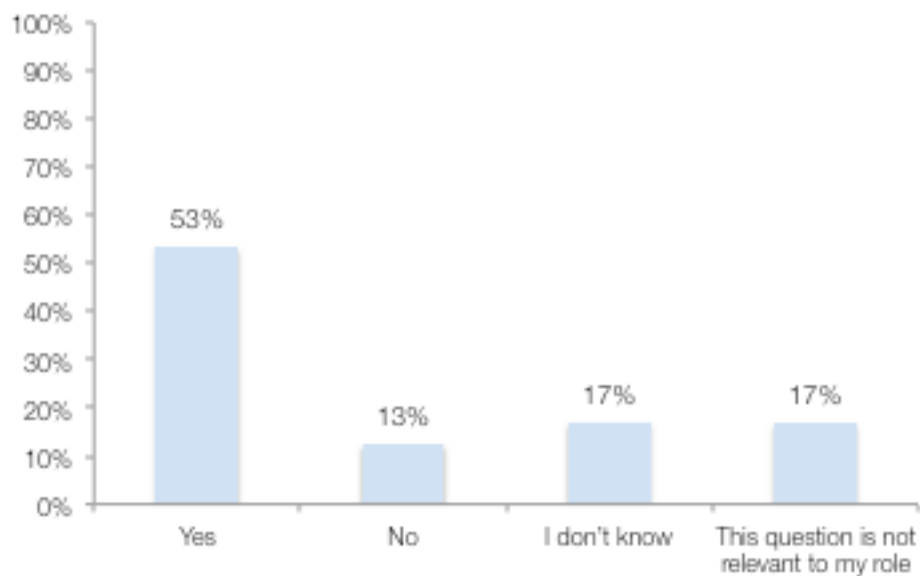-Civilian Staff

"Performance management should be about quality and not quantity."
-Sergeant

"The Force is too obsessed with targets and figures."
- Constable, Brecon

*"Too much emphasis on targets."*
-Constable, HQ

"Does not allow discretion any more."
- Constable, Brecon

Are preventative strategies regularly used in an effort to reduce crime?

Over 53% of respondents to this question suggested that they felt preventative strategies were regularly used in the force, however it is important to note that this is not distributed evenly but weighted towards more senior officers.

The following graph shows the distribution of views about the use of preventative strategies.
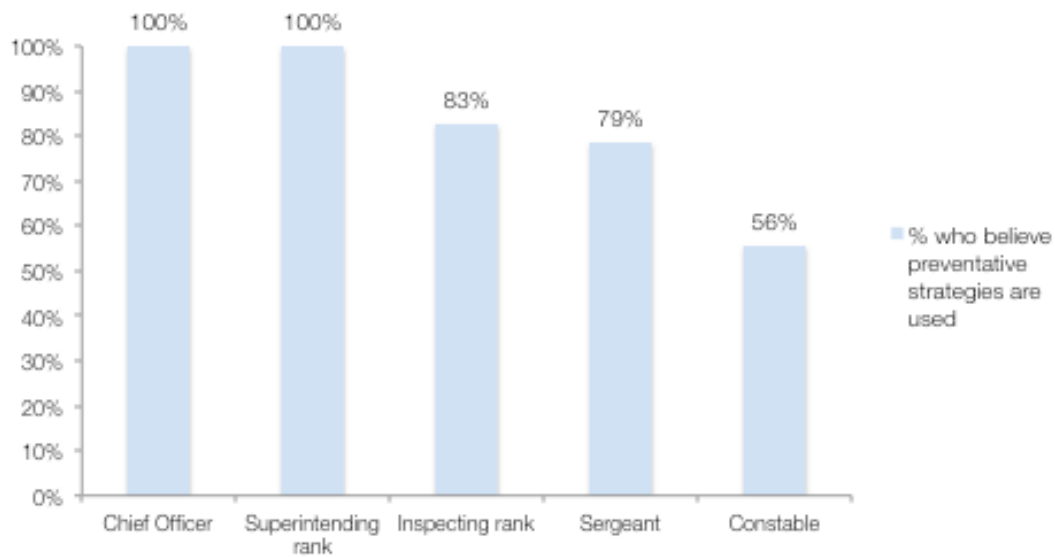

Given this position, along with the data that shows nearly 30% of respondents did not report positively, this may be of concern as it suggests that officers and staff on the ground have more of a reactive focus based on targets. The following comments support this:

"My day is driven and dictated by storm calls that come in."
-Constable, Welshpool

"Too much time/money is spent chasing figures based on dealing with incidents."
-PCSO

"Nobody seems to understand exactly what performance management is there for."
-Constable, Llandrindod Wells

To what extent are performance indicators used to inform resourcing and deployment?
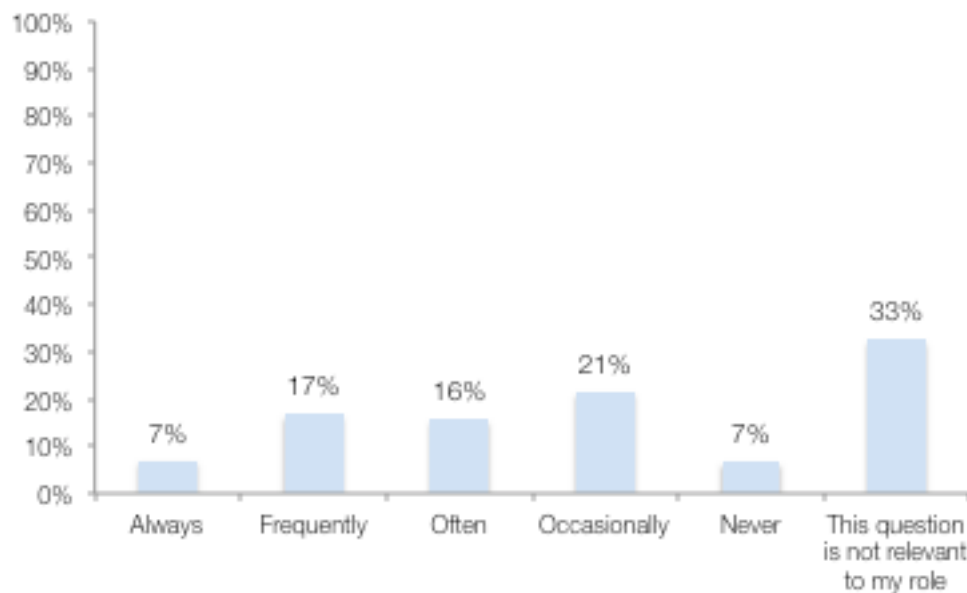
The broad range of responses to this question suggests that the performance management regime is not currently influencing resourcing and deployment in as decisive a way as it could. Although nearly 40% of respondents suggest that performance indicators are positively used, the remainder may indicate a lack of focused policing activity towards meeting priorities.

"Performance management skews resources to what gets measured. There is a culture in management of measuring arrests, summons, etc. This does not take into account preventing incidents."
-Sergeant

"Performance Management concentrates on figures not the positive outcome of work."
-Sergeant

"Performance Management tends to be driven by Force-Wide objectives, rather than reacting to local problems."
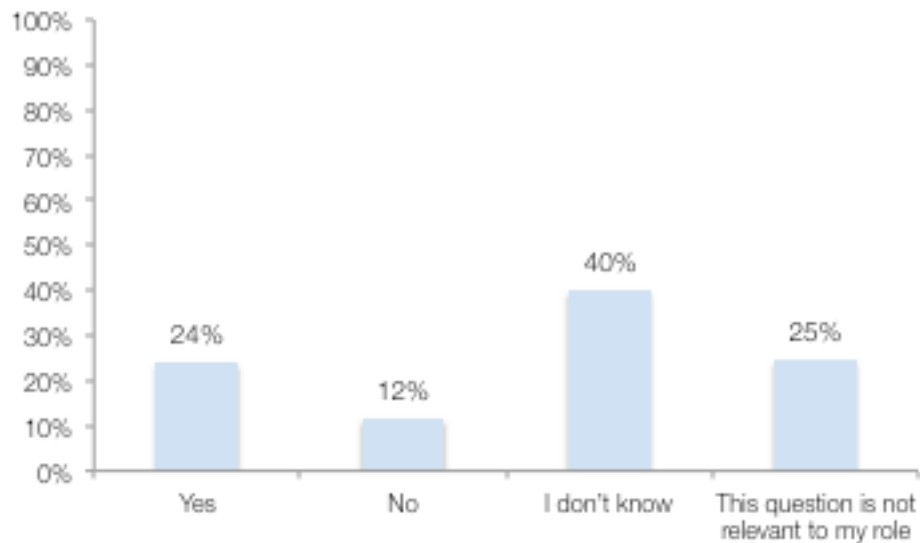-Constable, Cardigan

"There is too much focus on Performance Management and not enough on getting on with the job."
- Constable, Brecon

"I feel that targeting is not always prioritised in the right way."
-Constable, Brecon

Is predictive analysis information available and used to prioritise deployment?


Over half of personnel who felt this question was relevant to them were either not aware or did not perceive that predictive analysis was used to support their deployment. Following on from other responses to the survey, this suggests that the current analytical focus has been reactive rather than proactive.

"Predictive analysis is used only on a limited basis"
- Superintending Rank

"Predictive trends sometimes come too late as local officers are already aware of emerging issues through routine daily policing and knowing their area."
- Inspector

Are targeting methods in place and regularly used to identify the most prolific offenders/offences/locations/victims (Problem solving model)?
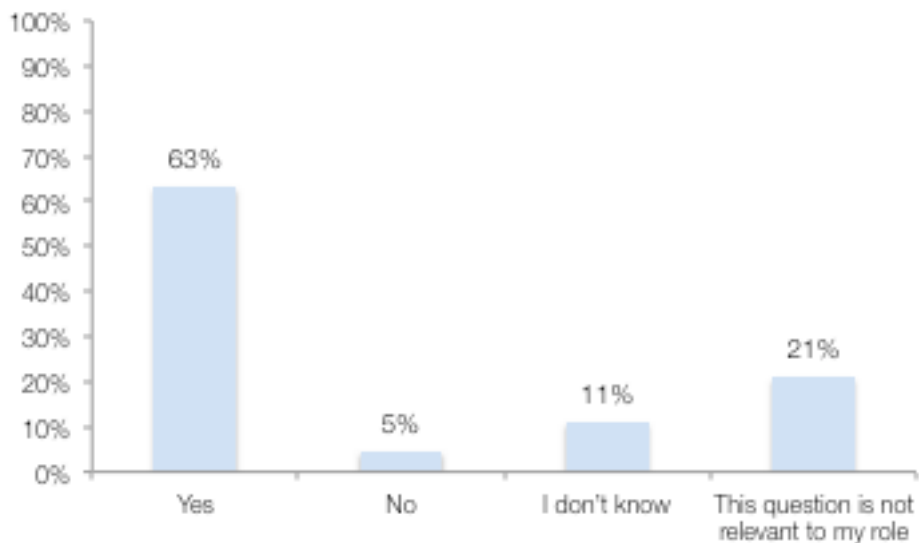
Nearly two thirds (63%) of respondents held that targeting methods were in place and used regularly, which suggests a very positive situation in the force because problem solving is recognised to focus more on outcomes than simply outputs.

However some of the comments suggest that the products of the current performance management model do not support problem solving as much as it could.
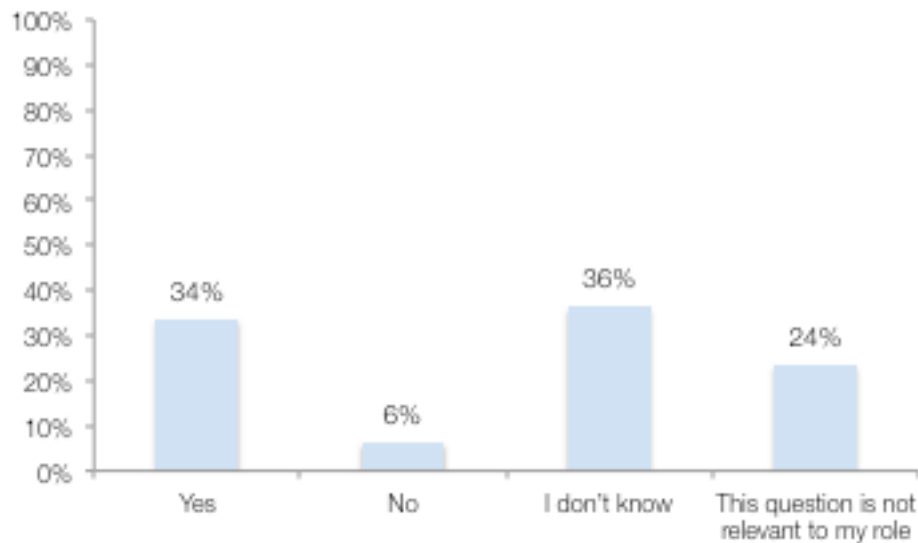
"The current performance management is ripe for change as it is too close to tasking presently."
-Inspector

"Better information needs to be collected and regularly analysed to ensure all policing activities are targeted appropriately to deliver best results."
-Civilian Staff

Is data of repeat rates used to influence operational deployment strategies?

Under half of respondents (42%) either responded negatively or were uncertain if repeat rates were used to influence deployment strategies. This could suggest that the rationale for deployment strategies are not well communicated across the whole force.

"I'm a street bobby, I do as I'm told and let someone else worry about policy and targets."
-Constable, HQ

"More up to date figures will enable operational supervisors to effectively brief their officers so that they patrol with a purpose and have a target to compare with."
-Sergeant, Haverford West & Milford

"Insular management teams… do not want to change the way they have always done business."
-Civilian Staff

To what extent is any registry of 'what works' used to support effective practice?
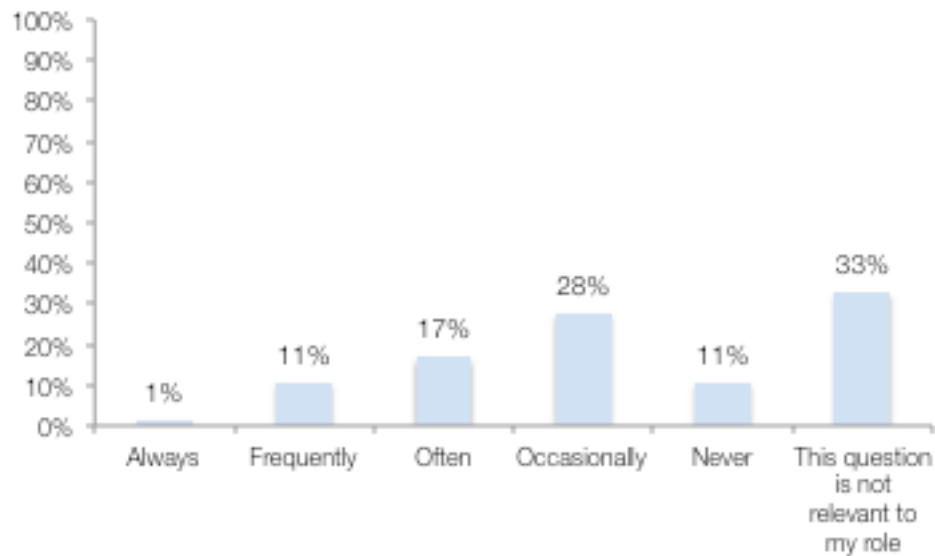
The distribution of responses suggests that there is not a clear consensus in the force on how evidence is used to guide operational policing. Only 1% of respondents (equivalent to eight people) held that a registry of 'what works' was always used to support effective practice.

"The information that currently comes out of 'Performance Management Unit' personally I think a lot more could be done as opposed to just throwing out statistical information…

I feel that they could 'assist' Operational Section Inspectors more with a suggested problem solving approach and identify locations, MO times etc. as opposed to having the Section Inspector/Supervisors have to do the research when in essence, they already have this."
-Sergeant

"I often want to share data with other agencies, but have in the past been prevented from doing so by your data protection department even when the sharing would have been used to ensure public safety "
-Civilian Staff

To what extent does monitoring and tracking take place to ensure maximum efficiency of resources and the integrity of data?
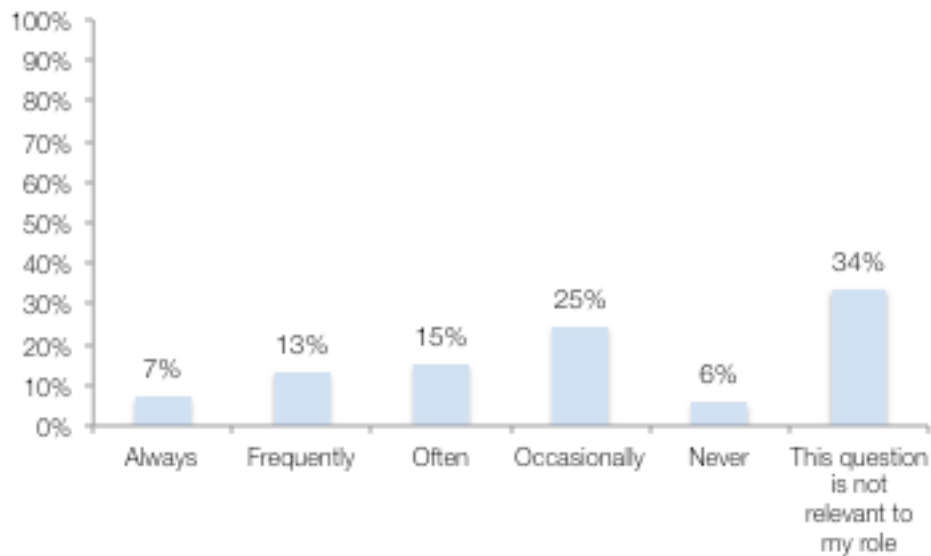
Perhaps the phrase 'Tracking' was not clear across the organisation and this resulted in the broad spectrum of responses. However, the question was explicit about monitoring performance to ensure maximum efficiency and maintain integrity of data. This mixed response may be of concern given the commitment and endeavour of the PCC and Chief Constable towards data integrity.

"Managers still chase figures putting pressure on officers for illegal stop searches and breath tests. There is need for a real change in the attitudes of middle and senior management…"
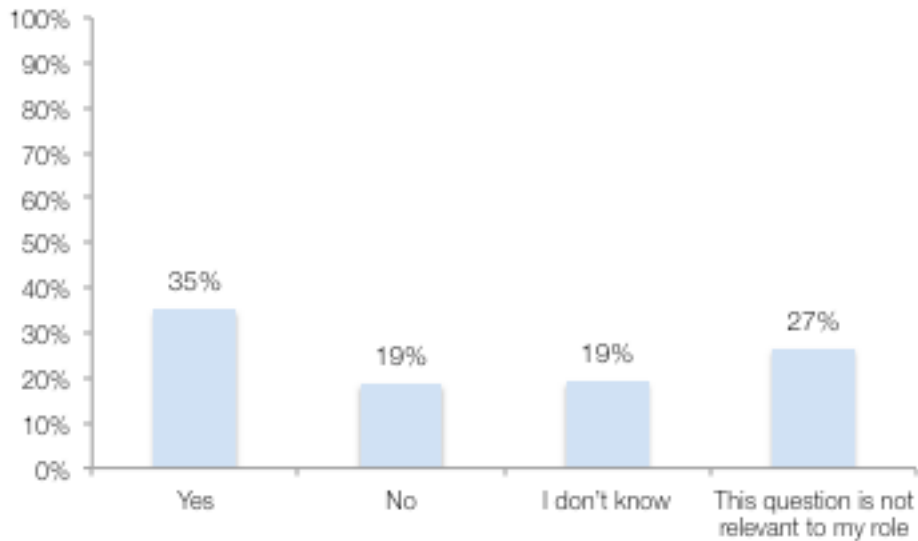- Constable, Haverfordwest & Milford

"There is an army of people examining with a fine tooth comb what the poor one or two officers on ground are actually doing."
-Sergeant

"Main tool used on a daily basis DMM system."
-Inspector

Do targets exist for self initiated activities? (i.e. Stop & Search, Fixed Penalty Notices)

Over a third of staff felt that targets existed for self initiated activities and whilst targets used as estimate indicators may be a useful management tool and not be of concern, in this context respondents reported on-going perverse activities.

"PI's are seen as the 'Big Stick' used to motivate staff, with officers competing with each other to ensure they don't fall foul of required acceptable performance targets."
-Constable

*"Get rid of targets for stop & search, sanction detections, FPN's issued etc."*
-Constable

"We are constantly being told we are not doing enough Stop Search's, section 27's, drink drive breath tests and Seatbelts…"
-Constable

"Officers are measured on a small number of areas, i.e. section 27 notices and stop searches…."
-Constable

Do you think your day-to-day activities are focused on the force priorities?
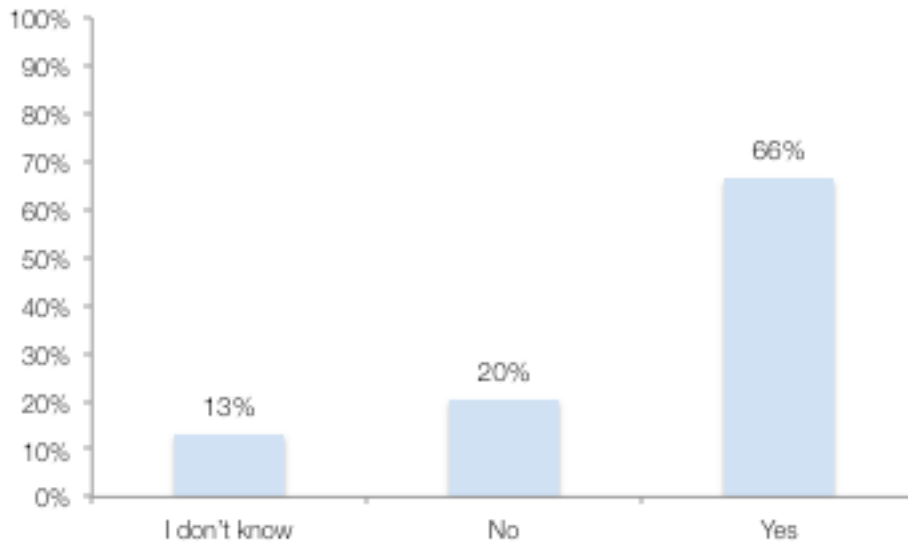
Over two thirds of respondents felt that their day-to-day activities were focused on Force priorities, although, one in five stated that they were not focused. Many respondents commented that they felt there were a lack of resources and were unable to do their job effectively. Aligning resources effectively to priorities and demand may diminish that perspective.

"There is an on going daily issue of "priorities" outstripping available resources"
-Sergeant

"Complete over emphasis on the wrong priorities - the public care about sworn officers tackling crime, ASB, road traffic incidents and missing persons. They don't give a hoot about file quality, form filling, meeting this admin target."
-Constable, Ceredigion

"Too few staff to actually achieve real results under force objectives, we do get results but would like systems flipped so they support NPT and response. PVPU, CID, IRT and DSU are seemingly there to support frontline policing when in real terms we support them often at the expense of such objectives"
-Sergeant

3.0 Key themes and next steps

3.1 Culture Change

3.1.1 Many comments throughout the survey reflect the efforts made by the PCC and Chief Constable to move away from a target driven regime:

"I believe that the Force is currently going through a period of significant change with regards to management of performance which includes a move away from quantitative-only measurements of performance. I believe that this is the right thing to do. We must continue to capture the figures whilst seeking to include more qualitative measurement criteria."

3.1.2 But some indicate that the message is either not understood or practised across the organisation:

"The Chief Constable's ethos of a non-target-driven force does not seem to filter down through the ranks"

3.1.3 It seems key that strong messaging in words and actions continue from both the OPCC and the Force Executive. One prevalent perception seemed to be that future promotion prospects relied heavily on 'strong' performance figures against targets rather than any balanced 'quality assessment'.

3.1.3 Many staff reported being aware of the proposed 'culture changes' but said that at District and middle management level they were being told that local performance management would still include quantitative targets. Therefore the message needs to be presented in a cascade style to eliminate this diversion from the core messages of the PCC and Chief Constable.

3.2 Outputs v Outcomes

3.2.1 One other area that seemed to be of concern to respondents was a perceived lack of consideration towards the less tangible outcome measures such as victim care, quality of service and problem solving. The situation seems to persist that some staff feel the only thing that matters are 'hard' KPI's and output targets. This is reinforced by many comments about league tables and 'point scoring' by supervisors and managers at the expense of front line staff.

3.2.2 One option that may be of use would be transparent availability of simple performance position (one truth data) that is focused on outcomes (as well as any short term considered outputs). The use of the Dashboard as a simple and effective graphical tool would present a more holistic performance position.

3.2.2   During Phase II of the work done by Crest Advisory, the concept of a more 'evidence-based' policing approach was discussed. The survey has highlighted that many officers in particular believe that knowledge is lacking in local problem solving and therefore solutions are aggregated at a Force level and thereby ineffective locally. The introduction and promotion of a Force/District Registry including details of previous/on-going initiatives and outcomes would help support limited resources deploy the most effective operational response.

3.3 Recommendations

3.3.1   The content of this report along with the specific survey findings should be considered as part of the accountability framework between the PCC and the Chief Constable.

3.3.2   It would be useful if key messages about performance management could be shared directly to all members of the organisation(s) – perhaps by video message broadcast on the internal web to ensure the message remains intact as intended.

3.3.3   Specific inputs from the executive level about the culture changes would be useful for senior/middle managers at district level. Some of these staff are reported as being 'blockers' of change and progress towards the desired position.

3.3.4   Once this has been considered and a whole cycle of the performance management process has followed, it may be useful in the remaining contracted time of Crest Advisory to review the changes and update them against the initial baseline findings.