BCH HR Collaboration Paper

June 2026

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1. Purpose of the Paper

This paper provides an overview of the current position, performance and sustainability of the BCH HR Collaboration model. It seeks to inform PAB of delivery and highlight key risks and future priorities.

2. Current Position

HR is broadly delivering against its intended objectives, with strong areas of performance and recognised efficiencies. However, there are pressures in specific areas, such as Operational Learning and Data reporting, and organisational risks in terms of system sustainability and wider strategic divergence.

3. Strategic Purpose and Scope of the Model

The tri-force collaboration of HR was established to deliver greater efficiency, consistency, and resilience across participating forces. The model aims to provide high-quality, standardised and shared HR services while supporting local operational needs.

Scope includes:

- SLT & People Business Partners (PBP)
  The People Business Partners are aligned to local force and collaborative functions.
- Operational Learning (Op L)
  Core services include Initial Training (all pathways), Public and Personal Safety Training (PPST), Driver Training, Crime Training, Work-based Assessment and Driver Risk Unit (DRU) and oversight of the external training budget for Joint Protective Services and Collaborated Units.
- HR & Shared Services (HRSS)
  This includes recruitment, contracts, pay, reward, HR policies, Employee Relations casework, generalist HR advice and all HR transactional processes (changes to role, sick pay, maternity, flexible working etc).
- HR Data & Digital (HR D&D)
  This includes all home office reporting, configuring and smooth running of 10 HR systems and applications feeding 300+ force wide systems.

- Occupational Health (OH)
  This includes work-based health support, advice and psychological treatment. Includes FMA and SMP services, physiological, Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) and surveillance.
- Health & Safety(H&S)
  This includes training, reporting and advising on all incidents, investigations and reporting of injuries, diseases and dangerous occurrences regulations (RIDDOR).
- HR Business Support

  Manages the continuous improvement work, operational Board, provides key performance indicators (KPIs) and demand data plus PA support to the HR senior leadership team (SLT) and on departmental activity.

Each area has a Head of/Manager who is also tied into national work-e.g., College of Policing (CoP), National Reward Team, National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) - Workforce Committee, National Learning & Development (L&D) Executive Committee, National Health, Safety and Wellbeing Board.

4. Key Achievements

- Delivery of significant financial efficiencies including through Project Newstead - £1m of savings this financial year, with further savings realised over the past two years through workforce efficiencies arising from continuous improvement activity and reduced contractual costs achieved through re-procurement and digital/organisational efficiencies.

Year	Realised Saving
2024-25	-682,000
2025-26	-860,000
2026-27	-1,004,100

- Successful delivery of major digital transformation across HR services, with new platforms implemented to support automation, self-service, and improved data capture.

- Strengthened governance, reporting and organisational insight, supported by improved data quality and more consistent performance reporting, enabling better-informed decision making (including development of dashboards such as absence reporting).
- Enhanced compliance and risk management across key service areas, including Health & Safety and Occupational Health, supported by improved system controls, data capture, and reporting capability.
- Embedding of a strong Continuous Improvement programme streamlining significantly HR process.
- Increased local presence, for example through the HR People Advisory Team delivering upskill and face-to-face support to managers.

5. Key Risks to maintaining delivery

- HR workforce capacity pressures, with a lean operating model, when unexpected increases in demand - particularly in workforce plans and then the support required for these, or where there are increases in change (restructuring) work.
- Dependence on systems and digital capability, with risks around the sustainability and suitability of current HR platforms and the lack of integration (impact on role-based security; new forces demands-Nectar).
- The 'unknowns' - reliance on external partners and national direction (College of Policing on training, and Home Office requirements on workforce planning), and future decisions on officer entry routes.
- Local Force ability to strategically plan their Workforce (particularly focussed on years 3 & 4 of the Neighbourhood Policing Programme) impacting on BCH HR's future ability to deliver on this.

Overall, HR is operating effectively and meeting current demand with no areas of red risk in performance.

6. Current Performance and Service Delivery

Performance

Performance across HR remains stable, with all areas reflecting steady delivery within a leaner operating model.

- Overall workforce data on turnover, and length of service are stable, while recruitment performance has strengthened over the year, with intake targets meeting the workforce plan and maintenance grant/workforce planning requirements achieved. Training compliance and workforce accreditation continue to be well governed. This has been supported by targeted interventions, for example a focus on Health and Safety compliance and the launch of the national Public and Personal Safety Scenario based training and national trial.
- Under the continuous improvement programme across HR there have been significant developments that have improved service delivery and increased productivity.
- Occupational Health (OH) performance has improved overall, with waiting times reduced on the time it takes to see a clinician, following the reallocation of Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship (PCDA) income streams purchasing more psychological and Force Medical Adviser (FMA) support and the new Occupational Health G2 system enabling self-service, improving timeliness of support to officers and staff.
- The introduction of the Safety Hub has strengthened the quality and completeness of incident reporting, increased visibility of risk and reduced the time it takes for managers to investigate accidents or incidents.
- The People Hub is a self-service option for all staff and officers on anything people related and continues to enhance accessibility to services and has enabled the HR team to focus on higher-value activity, including manager upskilling and targeted support.
- Annually planned and unplanned, change programmes have been delivered to local requirement and timescales.

- Customer feedback remains consistently strong, with high satisfaction levels, although overall response rates remain low and continue to be an area of focus.
- We achieve 100% compliance on statutory and home office reporting, audited data integrity and stability across all HR owned systems, and all Freedom of Information responses are within time.
- There have been no legal claims or judgements against BCH based on HR practices or advised approach, Health and Safety Executive actions mitigated and internal RSM UK audits on Health & Safety and Occupational Health have assessed the areas as assured.
- Phased implementation of a Case Management System for Employee Relations casework, enabling a move away from spreadsheets and word document case logs for managers.
- Devolvement of the external Learning Needs Assessment (LNA) process and budget back to home forces, albeit retaining collaborated units and Joint Protective Services, enabling a better return on investment.

Demand

Demand remains high across key areas, for example change work and data reporting, and, while performance is being maintained, this continues to place pressure on HR capacity.

Demand examples

A. Operational Learning-Course places delivered

2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-2026
1,268	1,402	1,569	1,679	1,790*

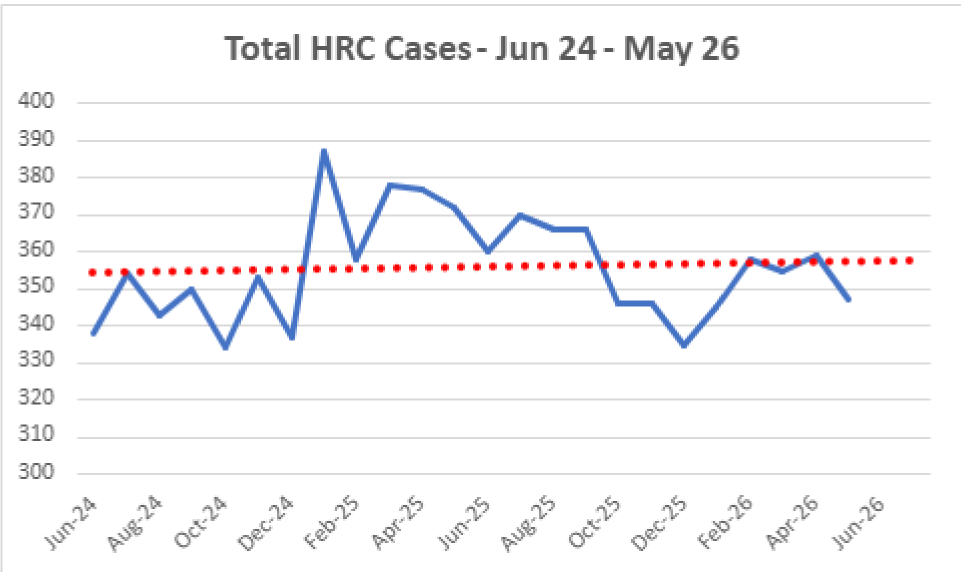
*Increases relate an increased workforce and new national rollouts such as Neighbourhood Policing Programme, PIP 1 Supervisor, Teaching Essentials. Programme. In addition, it has been noted nationally that forces are facing unprecedented levels of new training both classroom and digital. This places pressure on Learning & Development (L&D) teams across the service which is currently being discussed through the national L&D executive meeting to agree some proposed steps forward as this places great pressure also on the front line as a result of training abstractions.

B. Occupational Health-Appointments

Year	Force Medical Advisor (FMA) Demand	Occupational Health Advisor (OHA) Demand	Medicals including pre-employment	Psychological Health Advisor (PHA) Clinical Treatment	PHA Assessment	Psychologist	Total
2023	542	1645	1381	805	1319	144	5836
2024	576	1393	1625	531	1112	173	5410
2025	583	1488	1492	531	1192	185	5471

Appointment levels in Occupational Health are restricted to the availability of resource; the reduction is due to the new system allowing better use of clinician time as referred officers and staff can now self-serve appointment times.

C. HR Consultancy Case (HRC) levels



Whilst case levels have declined from an overall peak in 2024 the breadth and complexity of change projects have increased requiring additional resource. A new Case Management System is enabling better and more efficient reporting and management of cases.

7. Workforce Capacity and Capability

Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire (BCH) HR	Budget FTE	Strength FTE	Variance FTE
SLT	5.00	4.54	-0.46
People Business Partners	5.00	5.00	0.00
Health & Safety	4.00	4.00	0.00
Occupational Health	20.36	18.57	-1.79
Data & Digital	14.84	15.68	0.84
HR & Shared Services	67.72	65.04	-2.68
Operational Learning	150.31	135.94	-14.37
Continuous Improvement & Business Support	4.00	3.80	-0.20
Total	**271.23**	**252.57**	**-18.66**

HR workforce capacity remains lean and below establishment, following the implementation of Project Newstead and associated reductions in central HR roles. Current staffing levels sit at approximately 252.6 full time equivalent (FTE) against an establishment of 271.2 FTE, representing a gap of circa 18.7 FTE that continues to constrain capacity within an already streamlined model.

The workforce is stable and well maintained. Turnover within HR is low at approximately 6.2% and largely driven by redundancy.

HR continues to benefit from strong professional expertise and depth of capability across a wide range of specialist disciplines, including Employee Relations, Organisational Development, Reward & Conditions, and Health and Wellbeing. This specialist capability remains a key strength and underpins the organisation’s ability to manage complex workforce challenges. Due to the leanness of the model sometimes a capability rests with a single person (programming or doctor) or a few (Occupational Health Nurses, digital developers, system administrators) creating a risk on delivery.

8. Financial Position and Value for Money

The HR and Operational Learning position at the end of year 2025/26 shows a small net overspend of £65k against a £20.1m budget (0.3%), masking more material variances within portfolios.

HR is overspent by £477k, driven primarily by £605k pressure on other employee costs (largely £750k redundancy costs) and a £160k staff pay overspend, where the vacancy factor (£519k) is not fully realised despite FTE gaps; this is partially mitigated by underspends across supplies, travel and agency.

Operational Learning is underspent by £412k, with police pay £565k below budget due to significant FTE vacancies and additional Policing Education Qualifications Framework (PEQF) income (£149k favourable) helping offset pressures including staff pay (£153k overspend) and travel (£148k pressure from fleet costs, which have now been moved to local force budgets). Across both areas, non-pay budgets are broadly controlled with tangible underspends. Below-the-line spend is £284k underspent, reflecting lower than anticipated employee cost, due to the delays in releasing officers.

From a policing perspective, the position indicates workforce gaps across both police officer and staff roles, which are managing in-year cost pressures and contributing to the vacancy factor, but carry operational risk to capacity, delivery of training/assessment, and long-term workforce sustainability; the reliance on vacancy savings and one-off income streams (PEQF) provides short-term balance rather than structural stability.

9. Governance and Accountability

At a strategic level, the senior leadership team provides oversight of performance, workforce issues, and service delivery. This includes the use of quarterly performance clinics, which enable detailed review of key metrics, identification of emerging risks, and agreement of targeted actions. Outputs from these clinics are fed back to support local performance management and continuous improvement within teams.

Key performance indicators are also reported through the Joint Chief Officer Board (JCOB) via a structured narrative reporting process, ensuring that senior leaders maintain visibility of delivery, risks, and organisational health across HR. The senior leadership team provides a direct reporting line into the Deputy Chief Constables (DCCs), strengthening strategic oversight and ensuring alignment between HR activity and operational priorities.

Governance arrangements are further supported through established and collaborative BCH board structures for Occupational Health, Health & Safety and Operational Learning. These functions operate within defined governance frameworks, with performance, compliance, and risk regularly reviewed and escalated through the relevant boards. Reporting from these areas' feeds into DCCs Board/JCOB/Chief Officer Group (COGs), ensuring that critical areas of workforce safety, training, and operational capability are subject to appropriate scrutiny and oversight at a senior level.

While services are delivered locally, governance arrangements ensure that performance information, risks, and learning are shared across forces, enabling a coordinated and consistent approach where required.

10. Dependencies and Interdependencies

The effective delivery of HR is dependent on a range of internal and external enablers, reflecting the complexity of the operating model.

- HR delivery is closely linked with Finance, Payroll, and IT, which support budget management, pay and reward processes, and underpin service delivery systems and establishment, financial, pay and rostering data.
- The HR system iTrent feeds over 300 other policing systems and enables role-based access across the collaboration.
- Some people processes, for example pay increments, are managed within individual forces, requiring consistent policy application and engagement with HR.

- Strong interdependencies exist across specialist functions such as Recruitment, Occupational Health, Operational Learning, and Health & Safety e.g. recruitment, training, workforce planning. Performance and capacity in any one area can directly affect wider workforce outcomes.
- External HR dependencies include national frameworks and strategies, the College of Policing, and the National Police Chief Councils, as well as, at this point, influence from the National Police Reform Programme.
- Occupational Health services and National Health Service linked providers reduce waiting times and make available access to specialist interventions, while in Operational Learning partnerships with training providers and universities underpin key development and entry programmes.
- Effective HR delivery requires collaboration across local Force internal teams, consistent management practice, and from Chief Officer team's strong collaborative working to sustain performance and workforce outcomes.

11. Future Direction and Sustainability

The future trajectory for HR is articulated through the People Plan 2026/27, which is firmly aligned with organisational priorities and operational delivery across the three forces. This plan is structured around six central pillars. Together, these pillars create a robust framework for sustaining workforce capability and driving organisational performance.

12. BCH HR People Plan

Pillar	Focus Areas	Key Objectives/Initiatives
Resourcing and Workforce Planning	Recruitment, selection, safer recruitment, workforce planning	Preserving training capacity, innovative officer entry routes, refining workforce data

Diversity and Inclusion	Organisational culture, ethical practice, statutory compliance	Maintaining accreditations, adapting to legislative changes, embedding inclusive practices
Developing Our People	Leadership, capability, professional development	Integrating performance and development, supporting progression, operational training, digital learning strategies
People, Processes and Relations	People services infrastructure	Digitised pay and reward model, case management, policy and process consistency, supporting change
Digital and Data	Data-informed, digitally enabled HR	Reviewing data strategy, enhancing workforce systems, improving digital services
Health, Wellbeing and Safety	Workforce wellbeing, absence reduction, compliance	Developing health insights, Occupational Health accreditation, absence management, health and safety systems

A significant future consideration lies in setting the strategic direction for police officer entry routes. This involves deciding on degree pathways, particularly as the Anglia Ruskin University contract ends in 2028.

Collectively, these priorities continue the shift towards a more proactive, digitally enabled, and capability-focused HR function, aligned both with operational requirements and national policing priorities. Nonetheless, it is essential that delivery is balanced against existing capacity constraints to ensure sustainable implementation.

In summary, the People Plan offers a clear and actionable roadmap for the future of HR. Its success with regards to People and HR activity, however, hinges on continued collaborative commitment and alignment across the forces.

13. Recommendations / Matters for PAB

PAB is asked to:

- Note performance / position
- Endorse direction of travel