

**Leading to Learn, Learning to Lead:**  
***The importance of leadership and personal development for  
policing diverse Britain***

*Professor Kay Hampton, Professor in Communities and Race  
Relations*

Paper presented at the National Black Police Conference at  
Edinburgh 4-6 October

**Introduction**

Good Morning Delegates, It is both a pleasure and privilege to address you this morning. Judging by the list of presenters, the discussions over the next two days promise to be both informative and thought provoking.

(As Steve Allen has pointed out,) the police services in Britain are currently undergoing significant changes and while this presents challenges for the sector, I (too) believe that it also provides opportunities to reflect, re-energise and refocus in line with developments within the sector and within, wider society.

This conference is timely in that it provides a dedicated space to share mutual experiences and ideas on policing from a diversity perspective. Most importantly, it provides an excellent opportunity for 'peer to peer' learning.

I am aware that colleagues from England and Wales have been discussing the subject of policing in 21<sup>st</sup> century Britain for some time now and more so since the publication of the Home Office Report in July 2010 (*21<sup>st</sup> century policing: reconnecting police with people*).

I am aware also that you have had difficult discussions about governance, accountability and what it means to “*give the power back to the people*”. Very often what sound principally good on paper becomes complex in practice, as we have seen from UK government rhetoric.

### **Rights...**

In addition to these discussions, I believe that it is important for the police to include in their deliberations, the public's increasing awareness of Human Rights and equality and its implications for modern policing. Theresa May certainly has a lot to say about it in relation to crime and security, you too as a service, owe it to yourself to consider this matter in an intelligent, non partisan and forensic manner.

Given that Human Rights is integrated into our legal systems, and that the police services are ultimately guardians of the law, it is expected that Officers will lead by example.

It goes without saying that Officers will be required have an in-depth understanding of, and be able to respond to individual right as well as collective rights, in a confident yet sensitive manner to ensure that good policing is not hindered in any way

Just to make it clear, I am not suggesting that you become “social workers” as suggested by the Home Secretary, on the contrary. What I am suggesting is that dealing with theses sort of matters in democratic, modern societies, requires a different kind of leadership and specific type of training for contemporary police officers.

There is ample evidence to suggest that during periods of instability, advances made in areas of human rights, equality and non-discrimination, are particularly at risk with equality interventions being either suspended or lost due to hasty or ill advised planning and poor leadership.

### **Ongoing Equality concerns**

Moreover, there is evidence to suggest that issues relating to racial rights, in particular, are not fully resolved

For Example, in Scotland, despite the positive commitment of ACPOS to equality and diversity, there is evidence to suggest that there are still outstanding issues in relation to trust and confidence for certain population groups.

In the most recent study conducted by Frondigoun et al in 2007 (2007: 60) they state that:

*“ ...While the police have achieved some success in building trust and relationships with the communities they serve in relation to Community policing, from the point of view of minority ethnic young people this trust is not extended to the police more generally.”*

Similarly, there is also substantive evidence to suggest that prejudice and negative attitudes towards BME communities is still very much a feature of British society. This will in my view continue to prevail, because with diversity comes prejudice, whether this is home grown or imported.

At the risk of sounding out of character, I will elaborate the latter. A recent encounter, made me realize that we have to have honest and robust in our debates about these matters- only then can we address sensitive issues.

I know that at times, police service might make use lay advisors, perhaps even private security services. The service has a responsibility to ensure that the procured service is equality impact assessed.

The reality is that certain private companies hire immigrants at low pay, who are not accustomed to working within the framework of Equality and Human Rights and sadly, in some cases, the bad as well as the good is imported.

It is imperative that these factors are carefully considered into broader discussions on police reform and changes in policing. More specifically, the ongoing debates on police reform in Scotland, can benefit considerably from the experiences of colleagues in England and Wales, and indeed, from the discussions in this conference.

We have the opportunity here to choose the best ideas, and leave the rest.

### **Leadership...**

Steve Allen discussed the significance of strong leadership during challenging time. I totally agree, but would like to add that leadership skills also tend to be most tested during periods of instability.

In this respect, strong and successful leadership depends on a number of factors, an important one being organisational competence and expertise.

New ways of working will require considerable assessment of the personal capacity and professional development of staff to ensure that current and potential staff members are appropriately equipped to carry out their duties in line with new models of operation.

### **Professional development and Training...**

It is apparent that with the broadening of Officers roles and responsibilities, issues relating to continuing professional development and training will be a key topic for discussion in the coming months.

In addition to the specialist policing skills including communication, problem-solving and decision-making skills, Officers will also need to be equipped with other types of knowledge in relation to policing diverse communities; working effectively within a rights based culture, internationally developments, legislative changes and working effectively in partnerships, in the public, private, voluntary and community sectors.

For example, In Scotland, it is expected that ongoing discussions on the police reforms, will pay particular attention to new training and education requirements. This may well require an evaluation of existing frameworks for training and CPD.

The task, however, is not as daunting as it sounds if contemporary police services have available a broad spectrum of opportunities for learning. Technological and intellectual developments have guaranteed easy access to a vast amount of knowledge and increased opportunity to share ideas and experiences locally and globally.

Additionally, the service can access higher and further education services, which are exceptionally well equipped to provide high quality training, I know as I am a Criminologist!.

Despite his greatness, I disagree with Einstein's claim that

**“The only source of knowledge is experience”,**

As an educationalist, I am a firm supporter of continuing personal development and training for employees, as I believe that experience alone is not enough to keep up with the pace of external developments in the wider society.

**Review in England and Wales...**

In this regard, discussions have already started in England and Wales, with the recent publications of **“Review of Police Leadership and Training”**. Again, there is a lot we can learn from this and a lot we can do challenge.

The review provides a number of recommendations on mainly in regard to the professionalisation of policing services: In particular the, report comments on the possibilities of **'Creating a Professional Body'**; **'Building professional development'**; **'Delivering Senior and Strategic leadership'** and **Delivering Leadership and Training**

While the report received mixed responses, I noted with interest that the NBPA supported the notion of multiple routes to achieving qualifications. They are correct in pointing out that these proposals will broaden the range of potential applicants, especially in relation to BME communities.

Of greater significance, for me, is the recommendation to widen the prospect for lateral development and the idea of creating a qualification framework that will support and recognise developing expertise at all levels of policing from neighbourhood officers to specialists.

Moreover, the proposal for new national qualification standards for managers, with stepped opportunity for progression is especially appealing.

The review quite rightly sees knowledge and learning as key ingredients for progression. It accurately places particular emphasis on the required legal and scientific knowledge;



leadership skills, business skills, behaviour and command skills at each level.

The approach to learning proposed here is both empowering as well as inclusive and it will be wise to consider the recommendations more closely in future deliberations. By allowing for the possibility of using external professional educators, the police service will benefit greatly from the unique expertise and different perspectives they bring while still being confident that specialist modules will be taught within police training colleges.

There is also potential here to offer choice in terms of education providers, varied subject content and teaching methods, and diverse learning environments. It will therefore appeal to a broader range of potential applicants, especially one from traditionally hard to reach communities.

The idea of a national, consistent professional standards framework has been shown to be successful in other professions including, the legal profession in England, Wales and Scotland.

It has proven to be quality driven, fair, independent and transparent. This model of professionalism ensures effective talent management and greater transparency in progression-this issue being of particular concern to minority groups.

**BUT**, this model will only be successful if it implemented in a way that is totally **independent** from political or state interference, its governance structure is not compromised and its operation is seen to be open, efficient and robust.

So while the ideas proposed in the review is worth considering, the principles need to be nailed down.

Additionally, the success of such radical changes will require organisational leaders who are visionary and courageous yet at the same able to take calculated risks and be decisive and confident.

This sort of leadership is only possible within an organisational culture that appreciates the significant role knowledge and learning plays in modern policing: - one where continued learning and development is seen as an integral part of meeting new and different challenges.

While this kind of organisational culture is common in the business and parts of the public sector, initially, it is likely to appear foreign to policing given previous models of policing.

In effect, this concept of learning and leadership is interconnected in that it ***involves learning how to become a leader and at the same time leading in a way that allows others to learn and develop.***

This approach to leadership and learning ensures that leadership qualities are embedded throughout the service and not confined to only those at the top or those longest in service.

This approach also ensures collective participation in decision-making and collective responsibility for meeting strategic goals through peer support, encouragement and empowerment.

### **In conclusion...**

I would like to conclude by saying that, ultimately, the nature and style of successful leadership will depend largely on context.

For example, as policing in Scotland moves from a decentralized structure to a national one, the style of leadership adopted, will be important to the future of policing in Scotland.

The wrong kind of leadership style can easily result in regression to earlier bureaucratic models of operations where leaders felt that efficiency could only be achieved by total control through inflexible chains of command.

On the opportunity side, the proposed changes provide an excellent moment for examining different models of leadership and developments elsewhere, and to decide on a style and model that will work best here.

In this regard, the proposed national structure of policing in Scotland will find it easier to adapt a **learning leadership culture** as it has already proved to be successful in connecting with people with its community policing initiative.

Evidence on the ground, suggests that community policing in Scotland which is grounded in networks and partners, has led to improved relations between the police and members of BME community.

This is a good foundation to build on here the next stage is to be bold enough to consider alternatives to learning and training by working even more closely that they currently are with a diverse range of education providers.