

Final Report - H4 Police Pilot - Spring 2022

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I. Outline of Programme

In Spring 2022, the Common Mission Project partnered with the Home Office unit, Accelerated Capability Environment (ACE) to launch its first ever Mission Driven Entrepreneurship™ course with the pilot “Hacking for Police” at the University of Hull. This pilot was awarded funding by the Police Science, Technology, Analysis, and Research (STAR) fund. “Hacking for Police” is a fast-paced, assessed university module where multiple teams of 4-5 university students, learn and apply Lean Start-up methods and work towards validating and potentially solving a current policing problem, in 10 weeks.

The three objectives of this pilot were:

1. To expose law enforcement to a radically different approach to solving problems.
2. To explore innovative solutions and perspectives on priority law enforcement problems at pace.
3. To harness the talent, diversity of thought and potential of university students that the Police do not otherwise have access to.

II. How it Works

Common Mission Project sources and curates law enforcement problems appropriate for the course, and provides each student team with one law enforcement problem. The team is also paired with the “Problem Sponsor”, the individual who either experiences or owns the problem. In addition, each team is assigned an “Industry Mentor” to expose them to how these types of problems are solved in the private sector. Both the Sponsor and Mentor commit to spend up to one hour a week with their student team throughout the course and to provide them with contacts to enable their discovery.

At the core of the “Hacking for” methodology is “beneficiary discovery” where teams learn about their problem in a flipped-classroom approach of “getting out of the building” and conducting up to 10 interviews each week with people connected to their problem. Each week the student team will present to the class their findings from discovery, their hypotheses about the problem, and what experiments they will conduct, or what minimum viable products (MVPs) they will build to solve the problem. Over the 10 weeks this discovery and overall approach:

- 1) Builds diverse and lasting coalitions around important problems that can be accessed long-term by law enforcement.
- 2) De-risks solutions by validating desirability (will anyone use the solution), viability (does the organisation want the problem solved and have the budget to solve it), and feasibility (can it be built).
- 3) Delivers requirements that will solve the problem.

III. Course Details

- University of Hull, Department of Criminology and Sociology
- 3 teams comprising a total 6 students completed the course.
- Students were all final year undergraduate Criminology students.
- Final presentations took place on 4th April 2022.

IV. Key Data

- *Novel solutions will be implemented:* two sponsors have indicated they intend to implement what their team delivered on the course.
- *Successfully engaged industry with law enforcement:* 100% of mentors would like to repeat the experience and sponsor another law enforcement problem.
- *Awareness of law enforcement has increased as a result of taking this course.*
 - Students who rated their awareness of UK Law enforcement as ‘good’ increased from 33% to 100% as a result of taking this course.

- Students who rated their understanding of the law enforcement problem they were given as 'good' or 'excellent' rose by 100%.
- Two students noted that they planned to seek employment in the Home Office as a result of taking this course.
- *Increased employability skills*, in particular, students highlighted:
 - Problem Solving: "I think that one of the most valuable things I've learnt is how to break problems down. Having that very practical information is very useful and I've already used it in real life." (Peter Smalley, Criminology Student)
 - Networking and Interaction with stakeholders: "Being able to professionally interact with a large number of people, and very different people, and different roles was a key skill I learnt on this course" (Niamh Wilikins, Criminology Student)
 - Confidence: "I've always had a problem with confidence, but when you're confident when you're communicating they are more likely to listen to you". (Jess Koshy, Criminology Student)

V. Benefits of the Course

- In 10 weeks, the Hacking for Police pilot achieved: Identification of solution pathways for the problem owners - see course outcomes below.
- The development of new and long term ecosystems of innovation across academia and law enforcement. Chief Inspector Nick Sparkes, one of the Problem Sponsors, noted that as a result of the team's work; "other forces have contacted me, and we have discussed the problem. Hacking for Police has created a bit of a buzz around a problem which probably wouldn't have been talked about."
- Fresh thinking and diversity of thought in potential solutions. Dave Lewis, former Deputy Chief Constable, a student team Mentor noted: "The course offers an opportunity to explore and develop solutions for policing problems and those solutions will come from people who have a fresh way of thinking, who are innovative and aren't clouded by the ideas that have come through in the experiences of the past".

VI. Course Outcomes

Problem 1 - Original Problem Statement

Original Problem Statement: *Kent Police officers and particularly those in non-uniform (plain clothes) need a publicly trusted way to quickly identify legitimate police officers in order to rebuild trust between the police and the Kent community.*

Final Problem Statement: *Kent Police Officers need to improve public trust by easing tensions between the police and the public through small consistent actions*

Applying the course methodology, the student team interviewed 24 individuals across 6 constabularies and sent out a survey to members of the public that received 48 responses. This discovery enabled the student team to develop two solution ideas within the space of 10 weeks:

- 1) Increase presence and engagement on Kent Police's social media channels.
- 2) Increase the number of 'ride alongs' – invite members of the public to a 'day in the life of'.

Both solution ideas would serve to showcase the work that Kent police are doing as well as increase engagement with the public through these 'small consistent actions' thereby easing tensions between the police and the public. The team's Problem Sponsor, Chief Inspector Nick Sparkes noted: "The 'ride alongs' idea where people come out on patrol with the police will help to increase public confidence and transparency about what we do and help build a better understanding of our role amongst the public. I think it would also bring with it a degree of scrutiny".

Chief Inspector Nick Sparkes noted his overall impression of the course: "I have to say I was genuinely so impressed with how quickly they got to grips with the problem and the enthusiasm they had to explore it and challenge me on it. The students had a creative, outsiders' mindset which was great to work with. The course had a little bit of a spark about it which made it so different from my day-to-day work."

When asked about implementing the students' solution ideas, Chief Inspector Sparkes noted: "I would like to see their solution ideas implemented. We recognise the benefits those ideas bring, however we now need to work out how we make those happen. We now need to move from a concept and idea to a design phase where we discuss is that going to be practical? How do we do it? How can we overcome any barriers?" The overall impact of implementing the student's ideas; "would increase public confidence

and transparency and increase the public's understanding of our role." Re-building this trust and cooperation between members of the public and the police plays a pivotal role in the success of the police force.

On the basis of their fresh thinking and solution ideas, the team has been invited to speak with the Kent Police Force and have had multiple other members of the police, including within the Police Media Team, contact them to speak with them about their solution ideas.

Problem 2

Original Problem Statement: *Leicestershire Youth Liaison Officers need an effective way of engaging youths in school on the risks involved with knife crime in order to reduce the number of youths participating in gang activity.*

Final Problem Statement: *Leicestershire Police need to communicate the positive behaviours of youth giving up knives, as well as provide a safe way to turn their knives in, in order to reduce the number of youths participating in knife crime gang activity.*

This was a 'team' of one student who conducted 17 interviews with stakeholders throughout the course. He noted how his understanding of the problem evolved: "The main problem was that the police forces weren't communicating and that there was significant negative PR regarding knife boxes. It would focus on how many people have knives rather than how many people have given them up. There was no safe way for people to give in their knives either, as it would be in a police station and there would be the risk of arrest".

Solution ideas:

1. Place knife boxes in public locations such as Churches and have police amnesty for those who have a knife in their possession who are going to a knife box.
2. Change Police public relations approach to focus on how many give up their knives instead of how many people actually have knives in order to positively influence youth participating in gang activity.
3. Widespread and more clearly communicated marketing regarding knife boxes in public areas away from the police station to increase the rate of knife submission without the fear of arrest

The student rated their experience on the course positively noting that they are keen to do further work on the problem.

Problem 3

Original Problem Statement: *Leicestershire Police Call Handling staff need a way of clearly identifying within initial calls those DA incidents with increased risks that are less obvious than overt violence or threats, in order to ensure they are prioritised effectively and investigated in a timely manner.*

Final Problem Statement: *The statement remained extant but the team realised that this needed to be expanded to include identification in calls from individuals from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds as well as whether call volume had an impact on the quality of risk assessment and response delivered.*

Solution ideas:

- Additional training for call handlers. Either via training days, or online portals.
- Trauma training for officers to allow them to liaise with victims during an initial visit, bridging a better relationship with the police and public.
- Integrating police and support agencies to relieve pressure from both organisations, assist in victim rehabilitation, public image, and streamline calls.
- Recruitment drive for a more diverse force to assist in identifying domestic abuse issues that may be difficult to spot in different cultures and ethnic backgrounds.

VII. Stakeholder Experiences

The Student Experience

“This module was very beneficial for me as it provided me with many new skills, in particular, problem solving, interview techniques and networking. It challenged me as I was learning in a completely different way to usual university modules, but because the problem was interesting this just drove me to work harder and learn to adapt to issues that arose. One important thing for me is that this module helped build my confidence not only in my work but in myself, which is a big thing for me as this is something I have always been lacking. I would definitely recommend this module to anyone who has the chance to participate as it is a one of a kind experience.” (Jess Koshy, Criminology Student)

The University Experience

Professor Robert Dover, Head of Criminology and Sociology and Sociology, and Dr Nicola O’Leary formed the teaching team for the pilot course. Professor Dover noted his overall impression of the course as “Fabulous and valuable. The course delivers what it sets out to do.”

Professor Dover and Dr O’Leary noted the experiential learning on the course highlighting how:

- Students interacted with people across UK law enforcement which made the student experience a unique one.
- It was different to other modules in that they weren’t reading other people’s work rather they were actively investigating a real world problem.
- Students were empowered by the realisation that the work they did on the course could have real world impact.

Professor Dover noted: “We spend a lot of time as university educators aligning our teaching to the needs of our students’ future careers. The *Hacking for Police* initiative takes this turn to the professions a leap forward in allowing students to work on a real-world practitioner problem alongside the practitioner who owns the challenge or issue for their organisation.... This level of engagement with law enforcement professionals and the potential to create a real-world impact is a genuinely novel innovation in our field.”

The Problem Sponsor Experience

“There is a risk that we listen to ourselves and therefore we think that’s the only version of the truth or the only way to do something. A core value of the course was having a group of people from outside of the police to look in and give us feedback. So that was really positive.” (Chief Inspector Nick Sparkes, Kent Police)

The Mentor Experience

Asked about the best part of the course in our survey, our three mentors noted:

- “Interaction with the students. The opportunity to explore a perennial problem from a fresh perspective.”
- “Getting to work with someone truly excited and passionate about the subject matter of their project.”

- “Helping students to develop hands-on experience of attacking real-world problems - seeing them really learn something new that will be widely applicable once they leave university.”

Dave Lewis, former deputy Chief Constable:

“Hacking for Police is an interesting and novel take on how you can bring fresh thinking and new ideas into policing”. He noted further how the course “is a great opportunity to spend some time with students who are enthusiastic and interested in making a difference. It was really enjoyable being with young people who are thinking about how they can make a contribution and coming up with new ideas.”

Steve Maynard, Managing Consultant, Triad:

“Hacking for Police has given the students some exposure to real world problems, they’re not working on a hypothetical problem that’s been created by their lecturer. These are problems that people in the real world actively want to solve.”

VIII. Key Lessons learnt from the Pilot

1. Validated the Proof of Concept - this Pilot successfully validated that this new approach and methodology works in the law enforcement setting and provides value to all stakeholders.
2. That students without experience in law enforcement can make a significant impact on important law enforcement problems in a short period of time.
3. There is a high degree of desirability of problem sponsors to use this approach to address current problems being experienced.

IX. Future Plans:

- **Increasing Course Marketing.** This course unfortunately suffered from a high drop out rate of students, in part as a result of an expedited timeline. While best practice sees teams of 4-5 students per team, it should be noted how the methodology can deliver impact by one individual (Problem 2).
 - ACTION: Directly liaise with university departments to run marketing materials earlier in the year, offer information sessions for students to drop in and ask questions about the course, and ensure that expectations are clearly communicated along with the high course workload and the opportunities offered to students on the course (transferable skills).

- **Problem Sourcing:** We learned that the more disparate nature of law enforcement meant our normal approach to marketing did not reach as many people as usual.
 - ACTION:
 - 1. Identify multiple Points of Contact across different areas of the police forces to ensure as wide a spread as possible to market the course and offer multiple, and short, information sessions to create greater buy-in with potential sponsors.
 - 2. Working with our main ACE Point of Contact to identify sponsors who are willing to work with students and want to engage with this innovative approach to a problem they experience. This would allow us to mitigate against those sponsors who might be ‘voluntold’ to be a sponsor, which can create difficulties for both the sponsor and the student team.