

Crime and Courts Bill

Fact Sheet 8 of 12 on the National Crime Agency

The National Crime Agency: learning and development

1. The National Crime Agency (NCA) will be a UK-wide crime-fighting agency with an international reach, which will have a highly visible profile committed to protecting the public. It will lead the UK's fight against serious, organised and complex crime.

2. Subject to the passage of the Bill, the NCA will be established by the end of 2013 and it will be at the centre of the reformed law enforcement landscape. It will build on the strengths of its precursor organisations, connecting the efforts of local policing and neighbourhood action to national agencies and action overseas to coordinate the fight against some of the most sophisticated and harmful criminals impacting on the UK.

Why will learning and development be so important to the NCA?

3. The most important asset the NCA will have will be its officers. It will inherit a highly skilled and specialist workforce from its precursor organisations and in the future it will want to attract the brightest and the best from a range of diverse backgrounds. The wider remit of the NCA and increased interoperability with the police service and other law enforcement agencies should provide opportunities for officers to develop their careers and help the NCA meet the challenges of protecting the public from changing threats. By building on the foundations already in place in precursor organisations and investing in its workforce, the NCA will be able to deliver the step-change needed in the fight against serious, organised and complex crime across the UK.

What training will NCA officers receive?

4. The detailed training requirements for NCA officers are currently being developed. However, the NCA will have a comprehensive learning and development programme in place for all of its officers to ensure that it has an effective, operationally focussed workforce which can work seamlessly with other crime-fighting colleagues to maximise all efforts to tackle serious, organised and complex crime. As officers progress into specific roles this training will be built upon to ensure that they are competent and capable to perform the tasks required of them.

5. Continuous learning and development will be a feature of a NCA officer's working life, delivered within the context of the NCA's culture, behaviours and values, as well as their legal obligations and responsibilities. It will reflect the fact that the NCA's work will be local to global in nature and interoperable with the work of wider law enforcement partners.

6. This approach will ensure that NCA officers have the specialist skills and competencies required to deliver the NCA's functions and capabilities. It will also enable NCA officers to deploy the full range of their operational powers and skills more effectively in a safe, responsible and legally compliant manner across the UK and overseas.

7. NCA specials and those on secondment or attachment will also receive similar training to any other NCA officer, appropriate to the role they will be expected to perform.

What about operational training?

8. Pre-cursor organisations such as the Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA) and the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) already invest heavily in staff learning and development in order to deliver the range of skills needed. The NCA will build and expand on these to meet its wider responsibilities, including economic, borders and cyber crime.

9. The NCA will be a crime-fighting agency and at its heart will be a skilled and experience workforce of operational crime-fighters. The Director General may only designate an NCA officer (whether they are full or part-time) with operational powers if the Director General is satisfied that they are capable of exercising those powers, have received adequate training and are otherwise a suitable person to exercise such powers. (See separate Fact Sheet on powers.)

10. Training is therefore a critical requirement of being an NCA officer. As an example, depending on previous experience, current training for an operational officer in SOCA can take up to two years. Overseen by operationally experienced mentors, this training consists of classroom based training (which can include practical training), on the job training and e-learning. This ensures training is focused on delivering the right skills and knowledge in a manner that represents best value for money. The training programme can include, for example, investigator skills, powers of arrest, collection of evidence, searching and interviewing witnesses and suspects. Officers are tested on their acquisition of skills and knowledge and can only progress when they have passed key examinations and their mentor is satisfied that they have reached the required standard. Where officers then go into specialist roles, such as surveillance, firearms, undercover or communications work further targeted training is provided.

How will the NCA work with the College of Policing (CoP)?

11. The creation of a police professional body was announced by the Home Secretary in December 2011 and in July 2012, the Home Secretary announced that it would be known as the College of Policing. The College became operational on 1st December and Chief Constable Alex Marshall has been appointed Chief Executive designate.

12. The CoP will safeguard the public and support the fight against crime by ensuring professionalism in policing (see separate Fact Sheet on the Abolition of the National Policing Improvement Agency for more details).

13. We expect the NCA to work in partnership with the CoP in the future and for this to be a two-way process both so the NCA can keep up to date with emerging policing techniques and experiences and so it can feed in its own expertise to the CoP. It is envisaged that NCA officers will be able to access the standards and training provided by, and accredited by, the CoP. It may also be possible for the CoP to accredit training provided by the NCA to its officers. Accreditation would be in line with the standards set by the CoP and should help facilitate better integration and interoperability between the NCA and the wider law enforcement workforce.

14. Given the nature of the NCA's remit there will also be a need for other highly specialised training which as a consequence of the work of the NCA that is unlikely to fall within the ambit of the CoP. Where appropriate the NCA will also work closely with others to develop and deliver training such as UK Border Agency, UK Border Force and Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs.

Will the NCA deliver training?

15. The NCA will be an operationally focussed crime-fighting body. However, because it will house specialist capabilities which will be at the cutting-edge of tackling crime it will play an important part in contributing its expertise and knowledge to the development of standards and training for the wider policing and law enforcement community, including working with the CoP. The NCA will also have statutory responsibility for the training, monitoring and accreditation and withdrawal of accreditation of financial investigators under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002, as it will be assuming this function on its establishment. It will also source training from a number of specialist providers who are capable of delivering to the required standards where that proves to offer the best value for money.

Home Office
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