

A critical examination of the success and failure of cross-force collaboration by Welsh policing since 2000

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Declarations

1.	This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.  Signed: Date: 17 July 2023
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Abstract

Forged on the anvil of austerity, collaboration between police forces to share resources and core functions (HMICFRS, 2012) has been a dominant characteristic of British policing over the past two decades.

Intended to create efficiencies and provide better services for the public, collaboration in disciplines from armed policing to enabling services, forensics to counter terrorism, became commonplace.

Yet, high profile divorces - such as the costly demise of the Warwickshire and West Mercia Police strategic alliance – have tainted collaboration's reputation and standing, attracting criticism from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue (HMICFRS) and an increasingly lukewarm reception from Chief Constables and Police and Crime and Commissioners (PCCs).

In the eyes of the policing inspectorate, however, collaboration amongst the four Welsh police forces has fared better.

Within a dearth of academic literature, this dissertation has sought to understand why, through a critical examination of the success and failure factors associated with cross-force collaboration – namely the development of shared capabilities and functions - within Welsh policing since 2003.

Born through criticality and an increasingly hostile economic environment, innovative collaborations intended to mitigate threats from armed criminality, counter terrorism and organised crime would emerge in the first decade of the new millennia. The second would bear witness to greater collaboration in enabling services as well as a growing hegemony towards bilateral models between forces.

Through a qualitative, mono-research model, this study advances a range of human, organisational and temporal and external factors influencing the trajectory of cross-force collaboration in Wales.

Within the framework of network theory (Klijn and Koopenjan, 2012; Whelan, 2017), the impact of police leadership is discussed along with the interplay of optimism bias and action orientation in creating an 'intent versus outcomes deficit'. The dampening effect collaboration can have on executive perceptions of a force's constitutional viability, especially within smaller forces, is also discussed.

Organisational factors in explaining Welsh policing's collaborative journey are also critical. The centrifugal effect of high cost and high complexity is identified from the sustainable collaborations in forensics, armed policing and counter terrorism, along with the enabling benefits of commonality in digital architecture and systems. Welsh policing's investment in a central coordinating function has also afforded an effective 'guiding hand' between forces.

Finally, the impact of temporal and external factors is also recognised. The harsh realities of austerity remain one of the most significant driving forces, in addition to the impact of criticality and, in some cases, tragedy.

Whilst weighting the individual impact of these factors remains challenging, this study seeks to contribute to professional practice by offering a collaborative assessment framework to analyse the likely success of a proposed collaboration.

Introduction

Since the turn of the century, police forces across England and Wales have collaborated to share resources and core functions (HMICFRS, 2012). Intended to create efficiencies and provide better services for the public, policing's track record in collaboration has been mixed.

Over the past decade, sizeable collaborative endeavours, such as the Multi-Force Shared Services and the Warwickshire and West Mercia Police strategic alliance, have been terminated in often costly and painful circumstances (Coventry Telegraph, 2020).

In the eyes of the policing inspectorate - HMICFRS – cross-force collaboration amongst the four Welsh police forces has fared better.

The 2020 national thematic inspection into police collaboration - 'The Hard Yards' – endorsed the collaborative ethos existing between the Dyfed Powys, Gwent, North Wales and South Wales Police forces and its benefit to the people of Wales. The human and intellectual investment that the region provided through the creation of a central coordinating function and streamlined, but effective governance arrangements drew specific praise (HMICFS, 2020).

Against a more positive backdrop, this dissertation seeks to evaluate the critical factors that have accounted for the success, and at times, failure of cross-force collaboration in Wales.

It will seek to identify the causal factors – human, operational, organisational, and political – that have impacted on the development of collaborative endeavours, as well as examining the role of executive and second tier leadership in determining their trajectory and efficacy.

The impact of external influences, such as economic conditions and criticality, in framing the success or otherwise of cross-force collaboration in Wales will also be explored, as will the influence of Welsh PCCs.

Given a relative dearth of academic commentary, this dissertation seeks to contribute to the evidence base by offering a regional, if not national lens. Recommendations arising from this research are intended to provide a framework to test the prospect of cross-force collaborations succeeding and represent suggested professional practice.

Key concepts and definitions

First, it is necessary to articulate key concepts and definitions relevant to this study, in particular defining collaboration.

HMICFRS provided a working definition in 2012, citing collaboration as *‘all activity where two or more parties work together to achieve a common goal’ including ‘cross-force activity and collaboration with the public and private sectors, including outsourcing and business partnering.’*

Framed as a contingent response to austerity, the inspectorate’s definition is sweepingly broad reflecting the range of activity and sectors forces would need to engage with to mitigate the caustic effect of the 2010 Spending Review - a 20% percent reduction in overall funding (HMICFRS, 2011). Whilst the financial ‘lilt’ associated with the inspectorate’s definition is recognised, its imprecision is not conducive to a focused academic study.

Consequently, this dissertation chiefly focuses on cross-force collaboration as advanced by L’Hoiry (2017), namely the creation of cross-force units composed of resources from two or more forces and will include operational and support functions, such as legal and procurement services.

Reflecting the recent trajectory of police collaboration in Wales, however, L'Hoiry's definition has been modified to include *shared capabilities* that have resulted from the All-Wales Collaboration programme, such as the development of a pan-Wales e-recruitment solution (OLEEO, 2018).

This modification is a conscious act and reflects the changing nature of police collaboration in Wales, namely, a move away from the construction of shared units to greater collaboration on transformation projects and programmes, particularly within the spheres of digital policing, people, and organisational development.

By focusing on this duopoly, more detailed and precise insights have been gained, particularly in understanding the interplay of human and organisational factors.

Legislative Framework

Ahead of examining the history of cross-force collaboration in Wales, it is important to understand its contextual and legal basis.

The Police Act 1996 provides the legislative enabler for cross-force collaboration.

With the agreement of police authorities, the 1996 Act empowered chief officers to enter into agreements with other forces to jointly discharge 'any police function' in the interest of efficiency or effectiveness (Gov.uk,1996).

In 2012, the legislation was bolstered by the Coalition Government through legislative amendment and publication of Home Office statutory guidance for police collaboration (Home Office, 2012).

Reflective of HM Treasury's ambitions to drive out value for money in response to austerity (HM Treasury, 2013), the reforms introduced a 'statutory duty' to collaborate on chief officers and their newly elected overseers, PCCs. Complementing the 'legal

nudge’, significantly updated statutory guidance provided not only a comprehensive exposition on the mechanics of collaborative activity but the Coalition Government’s ‘great expectations.’

The events of 2012 would be the last time the UK Government formally intervened in police collaboration. Whilst intended to empower, the ascendancy of localism in police governance (Jones and Lister, 2019) resulted in the retrenchment of the Home Office in police governance with collaboration a notable casualty.

Although interventionism returned under the “macho unionism” of the Johnson and Truss administrations (Andrews, 2021), the Home Office’s political bandwidth has been constrained by black swan events such as BREXIT and the Coronavirus pandemic, as well as heightened sensitivities over illegal migration. Consequently, political interest in collaboration has largely waned.

Cross-force collaboration in Wales: a brief history

Police collaboration, in its contemporary guise in Wales, was arguably a response to tragedy.

During the summer of 2001, a proliferation of drugs deaths, primarily involving young people, highlighted Wales’ vulnerability to organised crime and drugs trafficking (South Wales Police, 2008). Prompted by 11 drug-related deaths in one division in South Wales Police in a two-month period, Welsh policing turned to collaboration to tackle the threat of Class A Drugs and organised crime groups (OCG), as well as accumulated illicit wealth.

A forerunner to the Regional Organised Crime Unit Network, a Regional Task Force (RTF) known as Operation TARIAN was established in 2002 to provide an aggressive response to the emerging threat of English OCGs targeting North and South Wales.

Encompassing officers and staff from the three Southern forces, the RTF would quickly make its impact known. Over the first five years of operations, over 100 arrests were made from over seventy operations, with hundreds of kilograms of Class A drugs taken off the streets (South Wales Police, 2008).

In the years that followed, collaboration would be overshadowed by the prospect of forced mergers – a key policy of the second New Labour administration.

In anticipation of a single national force being created for the Principality, an All-Wales Central Team was created in 2005 to make active preparations for a national police service. These proposals were subsequently abandoned by the Home Secretary Charles Clark following active opposition by the Association of Police Authorities and the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) over rising costs and a loss of local accountability.

An expectation of greater collaboration would, however, emerge from the ashes of one of New Labour's flagship policies. In September 2006, the Minister of State, Tony McNulty MP, invited forces and police authorities to investigate opportunities for greater collaboration (Hansard, 2006).

Having actively prepared for the prospect of a single force for Wales through a national team, Welsh policing was quick out of the blocks.

Its opening gambit was further enhancements to TARIAN, adding the Regional Intelligence Unit and Regional Asset Recovery Team in 2004, enhancing TARIAN's ability to respond to serious and organised crime at levels 2 and 3 of the National Intelligence Model. Mirroring the former Regional and National Crime Squads that had been absorbed into the Serious and Organised Crime Agency, TARIAN was an

exemplar of cross-force collaboration through its operational successes and strategic foresight.

TARIAN's success buoyed wider cross-force collaboration, especially within the field of counter terrorism. The devastating events of 9/11 and the London bombings in July 2005 injected significant energy and investment into enhancing the United Kingdom's counter terrorism capability.

The development of the ACPO Counter Terrorism Network afforded Wales further opportunity to push the boundaries of cross-force collaboration. Primed by central funding and the sobering realisation of the domestic terrorist threat, in 2006 the four Welsh forces agreed to merge force Special Branches with the Regional Intelligence Cell (RIC) to create the Wales Extremism and Counter Terrorism Unit (WECTU) (Gwent OPCC, 2023). The creation of a unified counter-terrorism capability for Wales was a bold and distinctive endeavour – one not replicated across the United Kingdom until 2022 (GOV.UK 2022).

The creation of WECTU and the successes of the maturing TARIAN organised crime unit arguably created a gravitational effect for further collaboration.

In April 2009, the Welsh Chief Officer Group and the former Police Authorities of Wales group agreed to the creation of a dedicated All Wales Deputy Chief Constable (DCC) with Andrew Edwards, formerly of Dyfed Powys Police, appointed as the first post holder.

As well as providing executive leadership for existing collaborations, Edwards was tasked with developing a Welsh response to the challenge set by the UK Government through the design and delivery of an All-Wales collaboration programme that would see forces working together on shared services and initiatives (BBC, 2009).

The scale of ambition was significant with active scoping of major crime, specialist operations and some back-office services drawn up amongst the three Southern Wales forces.

Whilst the All-Wales DCC post would be an early casualty of austerity and some proposals would falter, new collaborations in legal services, forensic services and armed policing emerged during Edward's tenure and that of his short-term successor, DCC Carmel Napier.

In 2009, South Wales and Gwent Police Joint Legal Services was established creating a multi-disciplinary legal practice for both forces. The first of its kind the collaboration resulted in improved performance, greater economies of scale and specialisation and a reduction in outsourcing (Gwent PCC, 2023).

The following year, the focus would turn to forensics.

Borne from the privatisation of the forensics marketplace and demise of the financially unsustainable Forensic Science Service (FSS) in 2010 (Lakhani, 2011), South Wales and Gwent Police bilaterally developed a Joint Scientific Investigation Unit (JSIU) in 2012. The pooling of resources was heralded as increasing the capacity and services of both forces whilst realising £1 million in savings annually (BBC, 2012). Although party to discussions, Dyfed Powys Police opted against joining the JSIU retaining an independent capability whilst North Wales Police embarked on collaborative opportunities with English forces in the North-West region – a trend brought about by geographical proximity and National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) regional arrangements for public order and operational policing.

In 2012, the training of armed police officers in the three Southern Wales forces was centralised through the creation of the Joint Firearms Training Unit (JTFU). The

rationalisation of individual force training facilities, instructing staff and back-office functions was cited as providing a trinity of benefits – improved training and facilities, coupled with £150,000 in savings for each force (Hussain, 2012).

More significantly, the creation of a single training function acted as a critical precursor for the brigading of operational firearms assets enabling the JFTU to transition into the Joint Firearms Unit.

In 2014, North Wales Police entered a similar arrangement with Cheshire Police creating the Armed Policing Alliance (Cheshire OPCC, 2014). Similarly, driven by cost and demographics, the creation of a strategic alliance enabled two largely rural forces to realise efficiencies and deliver enhanced specialist policing (Bodden, 2014).

In 2017, the NPCC Cymru region revisited the concept of dedicated executive leadership for police collaboration in Wales. Buoyed by the region's track record during austerity, Robert Evans QPM returned from retirement to become the second All Wales DCC.

Evans was charged by Welsh Chief Constables and PCCs with progressing new collaborative opportunities as well as exploring the implications arising from the potential devolution of policing (Hearty, 2017). Again, to support the new post holder and corral forces, a small, more modest All Wales Collaboration Team was created.

Through a series of 'All Wales Visioning' days, Evans sought to frame a broad collaboration programme ranging from a Joint Specialist Operations function to tri-service community safety officers. Attempts to seek digital convergence were made with some progress being made in learning and development, enterprise systems and the pan-Wales delivery of the Single Online Home – a national website intended to improve digital access to police services.

Two years later, however, history would repeat itself with the All-Wales post being disestablished following Evans' retirement.

Whilst the programme's achievements were more modest than its early incarnation, police collaboration would continue, but predominantly through bilaterally negotiated arrangements. The innovative Joint Digital Services Division (JDSD) and the Joint Commercial and Procurement Services established by South Wales and Gwent Police represented the last shared service function created in Wales.

Despite invitations to join, Dyfed Powys and North Wales Police would seek their own destiny illustrating a growing asymmetry between the four forces over the depth and trajectory of Welsh police collaboration.

Indeed, the formation of the JDSD arguably marked the end of cross-force collaboration at scale. Following Evans' departure, the All-Wales Collaboration Programme transitioned to a more modest endeavour.

Led by a series of Temporary Assistant Chief Constables rotated between the four Welsh forces, the programme focused on cooperative transformation projects and a small number of more narrowly focused shared capabilities. These included a pan-Wales e-recruitment system, the scoping of intelligence automation, employee wellbeing services and a pan-Wales approach to coordinating delivery of national digital policing programmes led by the Police Digital Service (Maddox, 2020).

The onset of COVID-19 in 2020, however, yielded an inevitable chokepoint for the programme – and, in turn this study - due to the programme's leadership becoming Wales' national policing coordinator throughout the pandemic (NWP, 2021).

2003 to 2018 can be described as a 'golden era' for cross-force collaboration in Wales.

Whilst outcomes have not been exponential or universally shared, the NPCC Cymru region has doggedly pushed ahead resulting in innovative capability builds across a broad range of areas, including armed policing, counter terrorism and enabling services. Against a backdrop of pessimism in other parts of the United Kingdom, understanding Welsh policing's successes and failures is, therefore, contextually relevant.

Literature review

Before doing so, it is important to consider the existing literature.

Despite forces spending over a quarter of a billion pounds on collaboration every year (HMICFRS, 2012) and a series of high profile ‘divorces’ (Coventry Telegraph, 2020), there is a significant dearth of academic research on police collaboration.

Dale (2012)

Dale (2012) provides one of the earliest analyses of cross-force collaborations. Using the creation of the South East Air Support Unit (SEASU) as a case study, a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods were used to identify a series of generic success factors.

Framing SEASU’s creation as a success story, it highlights the importance of rigorous project management, the need for momentum and pace and a requirement for specialist technocrat insights. The coalescing effect of austerity as both a driver and motivator, is clearly articulated.

In keeping with this study and others featured in the literature review, honed leadership skills were needed to reconcile competing force interests and ‘manage without authority’ (Linden, 2003). The ability to confront and challenge issues was also articulated – traits this study has identified within the lineage of cross-force collaboration in Wales.

Akin to this research, a series of opposing but interconnected forces capable of undermining collaboration were identified. Risk aversion and decision-making paralysis were recognised during the project’s early phase with the author noting many interviewees felt stuck in the ‘abyss of the business case.’ Fears over the ‘gravitational

pull of collaborative resources' to high demand areas leaving other less busier forces exposed were also cited as a serious inhibitor.

Strong resistance to change featured strongly during the research's qualitative phase. This was attributed to opposing technical opinions about the merits or otherwise of different aircraft types and manifested itself in acute derailing behaviour ranging from the spreading of misinformation to unsanctioned private briefings to Police Authority members.

Akin to this study, Dale identified the potential for different leadership behaviours amongst leadership tiers, although this was more divergent than this study has found.

Finally, Dale points to technical challenges arising from a lead force model and human resource issues becoming a significant barrier due to a lack of preparation and thoroughness. This is a novel reflection as the same challenges have largely been overcome in Wales through hosting arrangements that avoid the need for transfer of undertakings in employment law.

As one of the earliest police centric studies, Dale 'opens the academic batting' making a novel and helpful contribution to the literature. His identification of opposing and interconnected forces capable of advancing or undermining successful collaboration is beneficial, particularly within the context of applied practice and is an approach this study mirrors.

The use of a mixed methodology through questionnaires and qualitative interviews provides depths and weight to the research's findings, as does his honest exposition of the leadership challenges arising from a distinctive form of transformation. Finally, Dale's research has strong utility given its practical recommendations about the

importance of securing technocratic expertise and rigid adherence to project management doctrine.

Some limitations, however, do exist. First, the study is highly localised to a very niche and technocrat area of policing. Whilst many of Dale's findings resonate with this study, the ability to draw full comparisons with a more substantive programme of collaboration and a broader range of actors is difficult.

Second, the timeline for Dales' research is compressed to a three-year period, compared to this study's more substantive timespan.

Third, the strata of actors studied is broader than this study, including officers and staff at more junior levels who were likely to be directly affected by the creation of a collaborative air-support unit. Consequently, some of the subjective findings may be more polarised in nature given the injection of personal self-interest.

L'Hoiry (2021)

Wittingly likening cross-force collaboration to an 'extra-marital affair', L'Hoiry (2021) offers the next distinctive analysis.

Asserting that forces across England and Wales have largely failed to work together in the last two decades, L'Hoiry draws on a series of unflattering assessments made by the policing inspectorate in 2009, 2012 and 2020 (HMICFRS, 2009) (HMICFRS, 2013) (HMICFRS, 2020) on the progress of cross-force collaboration.

This critique is triangulated by academic and professional offerings from the Police Foundation and the NPCC in 2016 who described collaboration as complex, fragmented and being pursued without the 'national strategic interest' (Police Foundation, 2016) (NPCC, 2016).

L'Hoiry attributes his rather moribund assessment of cross-force collaboration to Glouberman and Zimmerman's (2002) 'complex problems' theory as well as the impact of divergent occupational cultures uncustomed to challenge in traditional police partnership settings (Reiner, 2010).

Drawing on qualitative research with seven forces in the North-East of England, the author's application of complex problem theory reflects his belief in the inherent uncertainty of cross-force collaboration and, more critically, the limited guarantees of future success even if shared functions or capabilities are initially landed.

The ecosystem of uncertainty advanced by L'Hoiry can be attributed to the interplay of unique local conditions, polytely and uncertainty and the connectivity of variables (2021).

The first element of this trinity – unique local conditions – sights the intertwined effect of police culture and identity. Accepting Chan (1996) and Loftus' (2010) premise that police culture is a bulwark to reform, L'Hoiry cites 'divergent force identities' as a significant barrier to collaboration due to the dominance of force identity amongst those who serve in cross-force functions. The hegemony of identity, advanced by the author, rails against a shared sense of endeavour and a recognition of the benefits of capacity and capability cross-force collaboration can deliver.

Historical mistrust between forces and endemic parochialism are further dimensions of the 'local conditions' element inherent within L'Hoiry's use of complex problem theory. Tensions between larger and smaller forces over the contribution and use of resources within cross-force collaboration adds complexity and, in some cases, toxicity. In keeping with the analyses of Dale (2012) the 'gravitational pull of resources' to higher demand areas, typically within larger forces, can create pervasive tensions

that acutely test the participation of smaller constabularies. Conversely, the 'propping up' of larger programmes or specialist capabilities by larger forces for the benefit of others can generate a sense of inequity, if not parasitism.

Polytelic expectations from policing's operational and political leadership coupled with uncertainty and barriers to interoperability, in particular information technology, were deemed contributory – the latter a theme identifiable with this study's findings.

The final tenant of L'Hoiry's diagnosis is the connectivity of variables, namely as one problem within a collaborative unit or programme is solved, another will emerge requiring continuous problem solving.

Akin to Dale, the author seeks to advance solutions to treat the symptoms of his own diagnosis.

In keeping with wider literature on collaboration (Metcalf and Benn, 2013; Huxham and Vangen, 2000), L'Hoiry places great importance on 'effective and multi-skilled' leadership. Citing the need to break beyond the culture and concerns of individual forces, he advances the view that effective collaborative leaders need to service multiple forces in often disruptive and unpredictable environments.

To do so, a multi-skilled leadership approach drawing on elements of transformational leadership (Bass, 1985), imbuing idealized influence over staff and providing clarity of vision and enthusiasm are essential.

A healthy dose of optimism is the second tonic offered by L'Hoiry, Celebrating and communicating success to generate positivity and heightened confidence amongst collaborative actors was strongly advocated as a means of developing institutional memory capable of overcoming 'culturally embedded resistance' to change.

The benefit of time is another facet of L'Hoiry's advice. Heeding Funke's (1991) warnings about the 'time delayed effects' associated with complex problems he stressed the importance of conditioning leaders to accept an appropriate timeline for evaluating the merit of collaborations. Guarding against unrealistic short-term expectations and encouraging a more longitudinal assessment of collaborative benefits is sage advice and a substantial finding.

Finally, facilitating bottom-up solutions through co-production and codesign was advocated. Building on Martin and Sturmberg's research (2005), a democratic approach through wholesome staff engagement was seen to maximise the prospect of workforce buy-in and mitigate identity divergence.

Published nearly ten years after Dale's study, L'Hoiry's research marks a generational shift in thinking. With deductive conclusions drawn from the collaborative experience of seven forces, his findings have weight and substance and provide a more comprehensive evidence base compared with Dale's singular case study.

Interpreting collaboration through the lens of complex problem theory has merits and can be seen as a contributory factor in explaining why some collaborative proposals have been disregarded during the design phase. The cumulative emergence of problematic challenges - ranging from equitable funding models to employment rights and diverging digital infrastructures - can have an attritional effect on stakeholder support. This phenomenon has impacted on proposed collaborations in Wales, including legal services and digital policing.

Yet, some caution must be exercised.

An inherent pessimism exists in complex problem theory, principally the belief that there is no guarantee an established collaboration remains capable of solving future

problems. When considering the longevity of several collaborative units in Wales, and in some cases their enlargement, this belief is tested.

Second, L'Hoiry's belief successful collaboration depends on a specific, if not messianic, type of leader is overstated. Whilst the study endorses the importance of energised leadership, successful collaboration depends on a broader leadership base given its confederal nature. This study has highlighted the importance of a collaborative leadership culture as opposed to the personality driven approach described by L'Hoiry.

Finally, insufficient attention is given to procedural and structural factors, such as collaborative strategies, governance arrangements and joint programmes that galvanise collaboration and provide a structured and secure operating environment. In essence, L'Hoiry's research is silent on impact of the governance networks (Klijn and Koopenjan, 2012) in which police collaboration takes place.

Zaghloul and Partridge (2022)

Zaghloul and Partridge (2022) trace the lineage of police collaboration to a broad range of statutory and non-statutory drivers ranging from the inclusive tone of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 to leadership ambitions to reduce spending, maximise resources and improve service delivery.

Whilst not offering an explicit definition, the authors employ the concept of 'inter-organisational collaboration' to define police collaboration underpinned by a broad spectrum of corresponding activity ranging from cooperation to formalised arrangements, including the possibility of mergers. The looser interpretation employed by Zaghloul and Partridge resonates with that of the policing inspectorate and Keast et al's (2007) integration continuum.

Although sharing Gil Garcia et al's (2019) belief collaboration is a necessary and inescapable feature of contemporary public services, both commentators chart an absence of success exemplified by the demise of the Thames Valley Police tri-force programme and the costly Warwickshire and West Mercia Police strategic alliance.

In explaining this, Zaghloul and Partridge endorse the critical factors identified by Kane (2018), namely that the time and nature of public sector funding does not always allow public sector bodies to collaborate concurrently; there is inconsistent messaging between collaborating parties; the stimulating or inhibiting effect of local politics and the attritional effect of collaborations influencing appetite for further collaboration.

The focus of the authors' research, however, is more 'laser like' with explicit attention given to collaboration within the context of collaborative information systems (IS) and information technology (IT) arrangements. Endorsing Ariel (2019)'s belief that IS and IT underpin most policing activity, Zaghloul and Partridge lock onto 'collaborative information infrastructures' as a key facet of police collaboration – an assessment partially shared by the author.

In framing their research, Zaghloul and Partridge employ Activity Theory (Engestrom, 1999) to examine two case studies involving collaboration between two police forces and one police force and two fire and rescue services.

The basic premise of Activity Theory is 'motivation' drives a subject, undertaking a particular 'activity' to act upon an 'object' with the main intention of reaching an 'outcome' (Karanasios and Allen, 2014). Crucially, activities are constrained by cultural factors including conventions and social organisation (division of labour) within the immediate context and framed by broader social patterns, such as production, consumption, distribution, and exchange (WIER, 2011).

Zaghoul and Partridge's use of Activity Theory provides strong conceptual insights helping to explain the inter-relationship between subjects' motives and goals, their activities and the impact of social, organisational and societal contexts.

Within their chosen case studies, Activity Theory was applied to 63 semi-structured interviews with research participants chosen due to role and knowledge.

The first case study involved the development of a shared IT department between two police forces as a means of reducing cost and developing a more resilient and robust operating model. The second case study was broader involving the closure of two fire brigade control rooms to create a single unit collocated within an existing police force command and control suite.

From their research, Zaghloul and Partridge advance a collaboration process activity system structured around organisational (parent) level and collaboration level pillars.

At an organisational level, *motivation* and *reputational management* were identified as the two main factors. *Motivation* was typified as catalysts or drivers creating collaborative objectives between involved parties. Examples identified ranged from austerity to resolving capability gaps and HMICFRS recommendations.

The cumulative effect of the motivational factors is the creation or encouragement of a sense of mission and collaborative objectives.

The second organisational (parent) level factor, *reputation management* relates to the impact of existent organisational characteristics and perceived professional differences between organisations. The former relating to the size and nature of the force and past interactions between forces, whilst the latter relates to general beliefs held by leadership teams. The combination of these factors can have a positive or negative effect on collaboration. A negative reputation can lead to reactance where

senior leaders react to constructive suggestions on collaboration negatively despite a compelling case for change. Conversely, a positive reputation can result in a 'Halo' effect, where forces chase a collaborative venture without due diligence.

Collaboration – the next parent level pillar - comprises four typologies. The first relates to organisational or team considerations and focuses on the effect of rules and norms within collaborations, leadership behaviours and a fair and equitable division of labour. The second typology focuses on the importance of individual characteristics, including those leading collaborative initiatives having a willingness to collaborate and prior experience, due to the complexity and associated uncertainties arising – a partial endorsement of L'Hoiry's belief in a specific leadership type. Effective communication combined with ability to establish formal and informal networks built on trust were also cited as key traits.

The third typology concerns macro-level interactions or 'inter-organizational collaboration' between forces. The criticality of developing a shared vision, mission, and goals to guide staff working within collaborative units was strongly advocated. Finally, Zaghloul and Partridge warn about the dangers of project overload, particularly during the design and delivery phase of collaboration. Whilst silent on the utility of project management arrangements, in contrast to Dale, the risk of staff overwhelming themselves at the expense of a collaboration's overall success was stressed.

Zaghloul and Partridge's research is the most contemporary offer to the literature and arguably the most structured.

The collaborative process activity system clearly distinguishes between organisational level influences and those pertinent to specific collaborative programmes and projects. Interorganisational dynamics driven by motivation and reputation management is

distinctive. The application of Activity Theory to emphasise the diversity of motivation, ranging from cost to capability builds is both rigorous and distinctive. As too, is the impact of individual force reputations and the push-pull influence this can have – a theme played out in this study.

Zaghloul and Partridge's identification of individual, team and organisational factors supports the existing literature, but they are more typologically precise. This has benefits in the context of applied practice as it affords senior police leaders with the hallmarks of successful collaborative practice.

Zaghloul and Partridge's findings are also consistent with the key tenants of network theory. Their emphasis on trust, transparency, and a willingness to collaborate is indicative of the effective *network culture* described by Whelan (2017). Similarly, effective interorganisational communications and formal and informal relationships resonate with network theory.

Akin to Dale (2012), Zaghloul and Partridge's research focuses on two successful collaborations with no detailed consideration of those that have failed. Whilst explicitly acknowledged by both authors, there is a risk their collaboration process activity system is partial in its findings and could exclude factors that could mortally affect a collaborative initiative even if the positive system components existed.

The system's derivation from two case studies could also be seen as a limiting factor with the inclusion of one involving another emergency service potentially risking distortion due to unique organisational and cultural differences.

Finally, the impact of the weight of temporal or external factors, in particular the galvanising effect of austerity, is not as pronounced as they should have been. Whilst acknowledged generically as a motivational force, describing the Zaghloul and

Partridge system within the context of a wider eco-system may have been advantageous. This approach would have acknowledged and given greater weight to external factors, such as austerity or the use of conditional grant funding that can compel collaboration, even where the positive hallmarks described are absent.

Aside from these observations, Zaghloul and Partridge's research provides an extremely rigorous and insightful contribution.

International literature

In the absence of a substantial domestic corpus, the literature review has considered international studies into cross-force or agency collaboration, predominantly within the United States of America.

Cohen (2018)

Of particular note are Cohen's (2018) insights on barriers to interagency collaboration between Texas law enforcement agencies.

Her research places significant emphasis on the existence of cultural fragmentation emerging from Wilson's (1968) typology of police department styles, Manning's (1995) classification of rank segmentation and Huxman's (1996) model for collaborative leadership.

As first principles, Cohen adopts Thomson and Perry's (2006) to frame her concept of collaboration, namely 'a process in which autonomous actors interact through formal and informal negotiation, jointly creating rules and structures governing their relationships and ways to act or decide on the issues that are brought to them together.'

In contrast to the British experience which vectors strongly on a financial imperative, Cohen cites the tragic events of September 11 as a prime driver for improved collaboration among law enforcement agencies within the United States.

In response to executive direction, an intelligence sharing plan involving both federal and non-federal law enforcement agencies emerged to develop enhanced partnerships and improve communication and collaboration (Cohen, 2018). The approach fashioned in the aftermath of 9/11 has broadened significantly with

numerous joint federal, state and local task forces emerging as a structural response to tackling criminality from child abuse to opioid abuse and serious violence (Justice.gov, 2023).

Mitigating the adverse effects of a highly fragmented law enforcement system, the growth of inter-agency collaboration is considered emblematic of a 'new governance model' for public safety delivery (Gazley, 2008) that levers increased operational efficiency, enhanced performance (Brunet and Chandler, 2009) (Federowicz et al 2007) (Kim et al, 2010) and improves public safety and quality of life (Himmelman, 2001) (Huxham and Vangen, 2000).

According to Cohen, however, many formidable barriers to these ambitions exist with cultural fragmentation (Schnobrich-Davis and Terrill, 2010), of particular pertinence to this study.

Cultural fragmentation occurs when unique organisational and environmental characteristics across agencies break the homogenous police culture (Paoline, 2003) which can lead to a 'us versus them' mentality and, ultimately, an 'anti-sharing' or 'anti-collaborative' culture (IACP, 2002).

Resonating with L'Hoiry's (2021) 'divergent force identities' and HMICFRS' 'net donor syndrome', Cohen advances three dimensions of fragmentation impeding efforts of voluntary collaboration between Texan law enforcement agencies.

The first dimension categorised as 'agency type' highlights the prospect of mistrust and estrangement emerging from differences in organisational style, most notably due to a legalistic and service dichotomy.

Drawing on Wilson's (1968) seminal typologies, legalistic law enforcement agencies are subject to firm administrative controls and have more formal operating practices.

Service focused departments are exemplified by greater discretion and fewer bureaucratic controls (Paoline, 2003) due to their focus on community needs. According to Cohen, the resulting effect of this dichotomy is a toxic combination of mistrust and alienation due to misinformation, negative stereotypes, and superiority complexes.

The second component of Cohen's theory on cultural fragmentation is the impact of rank. Employing Manning's (1995) three-tiered framework – lower participants (police officers and corporals), middle management (sergeants to captains) and top command (chief officers) – a variance in appetite and methodology to collaborate is identified. Officers operating in the lower tiers of the framework are only likely to engage in informal, ad-hoc collaboration and with peers of a respective rank, thereby limiting the prospect of developing long term-collaborative relationships. Police leaders in the top command tier were less likely to develop informal collaborative relationships due to personal capacity. Consequently, the likelihood of more substantial opportunities for joint working beyond memorandums of understanding was considered limited. Rank, therefore, has a restrictive impact on the prospect of successful inter-agency collaboration.

The final dimension of Cohen's thematic analysis focuses on the impact of leadership style and the inclination of senior police leaders to collaborate. Echoing Crosby and Bryson (2005) and Huxham (2003), Cohen regards the attitude, behaviour, and tone of police leaders towards inter-agency collaboration as a critical success factor. In particular, she draws on a legitimizing and multiplying effect Chief Officers can have amongst subordinates.

Accepting jurisdictional differences, Cohen's research introduces some unique perspectives.

Whilst at odds with the findings of this study, her assessment of the impact of rank is novel and influenced the extension of scope to include second tier leaders during the research phase.

Friction arising from cultural and structural differences between agencies was another key finding and prompted the author to carefully consider the impact of force culture, demographics, and size on attitudes to collaboration.

Stewart (2011)

This approach was also reinforced by Stewart's (2011) examination of federal and local law enforcement collaboration on homeland security matters in the post-September 11 environment.

Through a quantitative approach using numerically based surveys, organisational size was determined to have a significant bearing on the likelihood of participation in structured collaborations, such as the Joint Terrorism Task Force.

Stewart's research identified that US police chiefs in larger agencies were more likely to collaborate than counterparts in smaller constabularies. This was attributed to the interplay of lower professional contact and regard for Federal agencies (Katz and Khan, 1978) and cultural differences making small agencies less accepting of and willing to engage (Payne et al, 2005; Weisheit et al, 1995).

Although the federal-local dynamic is largely absent within British policing, the trend described by Stewart has conceptual relevance to this study, particularly in explaining

why some of Wales' smaller forces have declined collaborative opportunities with strategic or semi-urban constabularies.

HMICFRS (2009) (2012) (2020)

Beyond academia HMICFRS has provided the most comprehensive exposition of police collaboration in England and Wales. Charged with independently assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of police forces, collaboration has been the focus of thematic inspections for over fifteen years.

The 2009 inspection report, *'Getting Together – a better deal for the public through joint working'* is arguably the most influential and challenged the service to work beyond traditional boundaries to achieve the best results in crime fighting and financial efficiency.

Whilst heavily focussed on the merits of collaboration in enabling services and policing serious and organised crime, the thematic inspection eloquently described a 'patchwork' landscape having resulted from five styles of collaboration - ad hoc and informal 'handshake' agreements to more ambitious lead authority and joint venture delivery models (HMICFRS, 2009).

"Getting Together – a better deal for the public through joint working" was also highly significant in seeking to equip policing with a framework and methodology for police collaboration.

The *'Informed Choice Model (ICM)'* - based on a market-style approach - sought to overcome hesitancy to collaboration by equipping decision makers with facts, figures and learning from across the service to identify and select a collaborative model most applicable to their needs. The menu of options offered to forces was innovative

affording a sliding scale approach not dissimilar to Keast et al's (2007) sector agnostic 'integration continuum.'

HMICFRS envisaged that the ICM would be backed up by the creation of a Responsible Body – a national coordination function to identify areas of persistent high risks or costs, the ability to act if forces and authorities chose not to collaborate was also mooted.

The 'Getting Together' report represents a highpoint in inspectoral activism. HMICFRS' advocacy of a structural framework and coalescing force to achieve successful collaboration was insightful and resonates strongly with the findings of this study.

The appointment of Sir Thomas Winsor as Chief Inspector of Constabulary in 2012, however, brought a retrenchment in the inspectorate's role in propagating applied practice. With responsibility passing to the newly formed College of Policing, HMICFRS' subsequent thematic reports on collaboration turned to more traditional assurance.

Driven by the economic imperative of austerity, the 2012 inspection *increasing efficiency in the Police Service: The role of collaboration* charted growing commitments by forces or plans to do so with 543 initiatives identified. Citing three typologies of collaboration – force-to-force, force and public sector and force with the private sector - the prospect of savings of approximately £169 million over the course of the spending review was highlighted.

Rolling back on the ICM, the HMICFRS advocated a more amorphous methodology for assessing the merits of collaboration or otherwise – a subjective 'public interest test' (HMICFRS, 2012) that could include cost savings or improved operational

effectiveness. Equally, there was a *volte-face* on advising on potential operating models expressing a belief there is ‘no one size fits all route to making savings.’

In its place, a brief practical framework of questions was offered along with a nudge towards focusing on enabling and support functions.

Whilst more conservative in tone, the report highlighted six barriers and enablers - leadership and culture, vision and scope, benefits and evaluation, finance resources and processes, governance and accountability and people and policies – with many of these converging with contemporary literature.

Aside from a bespoke commission in the East Midlands region, HMICFRS did not offer a further national assessment of collaboration until 2020 with the publication of ‘*The Hard Yards*.’ The report focused on six case studies from across the United Kingdom, including the All-Wales programme.

In keeping with its name, the report was hard hitting and issued substantial criticism of the service’s approach to collaboration.

The inspectorate’s critique locked onto four attack vectors. Too many collaborations did not have a clear purpose or objective, with others not tracking the benefits of collaboration and failing to think beyond financial savings, complicated and bureaucratic decision-making were highlighted as undermining effectiveness whilst some forces were failing to put people with the right skills in their collaborations and were not effectively sharing learning.

Going beyond the ‘opportunity lost’ narrative of *Increasing efficiency in the Police Service: The role of collaboration*, HMICFRS charged policing with wasting time, money and effort (HMCFRS, 2020).

Although an appeal for improvement accompanied the report, the inspectorate rolled back even further on prescribing a structured methodology or framework for improvement. Instead, general thematic conclusions on the importance of trust, clear vision and purpose and business benefits realisation were offered.

Influenced by the demise of the Warwickshire and West Mercia Police strategic alliance, HMICFRS issued an uncustomary warning to forces on the need for strong cases for entering into a collaboration agreement as well as a considered approach should they wish to withdraw. Cautionary in nature, the importance of a strong evidence base to underpin strategic commitments resonates with one of the key findings of this study.

In the absence of substantial academic discourse, HMICFRS provides the greatest longitudinal assessment of police collaboration over the past two decades. Whilst its methods are not dogmatically academic, their independence and use of mixed methods – from interviews to financial analysis - provide an important evidence base on the success and failure of collaboration.

Whilst the breadth and activism in the inspectorate's reports has declined over time, they repeatedly triangulate several core themes; leadership, culture and people; finance and resources; governance, accountability and policy, and vision and purpose. These have provided a skeletal framework for academic studies, allowing the application of concepts ranging from cultural fragmentation to complex problems and active and network theory to be applied.

The extended timeline and national perspective afforded by the inspectorate's statutory role provides a richer evidence base than single or dual case study approaches pursued in contemporary literature. Recommendations in support of

professional practice are also beneficial and with the ICM present a pragmatic attempt at promoting cross collaboration for the benefit of the service and the public.

Police Foundation (2016)

Offering creditable expertise (Rich, 2004), the 'think tank' The Police Foundation provided a compelling contribution to the debate publishing research on '*The governance of supra-force specialist policing capabilities*' in 2016.

Commissioned by Paddy Tiffin, then Nottinghamshire PCC, during his tenure as Chair of the Specialist Capabilities Board, the Foundation's research charted the acceleration of collaboration as a response to austerity. Akin to the inspectorate, the authors point towards a loss of momentum in the 2010s culminating in a substantial 'stalling' by 2013 with projected savings through collaboration falling back to seven percent (Police Foundation, 2016).

Whilst less direct than Skogan's (2008) critique, the report's authors point towards the introduction of PCCs and the growing hegemony of localism.

In attempting to reconcile what they believe is a more distributed model of leadership and accountability, The Police Foundation offered a third way through the concept of 'networked policing.'

Using Section 22A collaboration agreements, forces would enter a network marketplace where a range of high-end capabilities, such as cyber and digital, forensics and surveillance, would be offered on a supplier or procurer basis. In keeping with HMICFRS' earlier thinking (2009), a brokerage function and simplified lines of accountability and governance would ensure the effective operation of the network. To address the challenges of localism, a two-tier decision-making model would be employed with wholesale strategic issues remaining the preserve of Chief

Constables and PCCs with routine matters of governance, including leadership, operations and performance, being delegated to a Networked Policing Board. Aided by clearly defined network rules and operating procedures, the separation of powers would insulate the network from inappropriate interventions or derogations whilst allowing for strategic oversight and accountability.

The Police Foundations' recommendations did not take flight, but they marked an interesting contribution to academic and professional thinking.

The concept of a networked approach resonates with broader academic thinking on collaboration and interorganisational dynamics (Whelan, 2017; Klijn and Koopenjan, 2012). Although recognising the importance of leadership and key actors, such as Chief Constables and PCCs, the Foundation's report places greater emphasis on a rules-based approach and the need for an effective operating framework to build trust and cohesion.

The injection of a free-market approach into the collaborative landscape is distinctive. By enabling forces to 'pick and choose' collaborative services and also become suppliers, the Foundation were proffering a culture and operating environment that was flexible and accommodating to both operational and political needs.

The distinctiveness and complexity of these proposed arrangements is likely to have been their downfall. However, the Police Foundation's application of network theory to explain the dynamics of cross-force collaboration was hugely beneficial and features in this study.

Methodology

The strategic aim of this research is to improve academic understanding of human, operational and organisational factors impacting the efficacy of police collaboration in Wales.

Accepting Aspers and Cote's (2019) belief that research relates to the obtaining of knowledge through systematic procedures, careful consideration has been given to selecting research methods.

In fashioning a primary approach, the enabling legislation - the Police Act 1996 - provides a partial cue. Although the 1996 Act provides a basis in law, police collaboration is predicated on the negotiation of formalised agreements between separate corporation souls. Confederal in nature and routinely dependent on the ceding of authority, understanding the attitudes, behaviours and interchanges of key actors who transact collaboration is a natural starting point.

Whilst mindful of Mason's warnings (2002) not to overlook other approaches, the need to make sense of, or interpret, collaboration as a phenomenon (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005) as well as understanding the processes and experiences (Kalof et al, 2008) underpinning it, weighted the author towards a qualitative approach.

Turning to a specific methodology, the most commonly used research method in social sciences (Ruslin et al, 2022) - the semi-structured interview - was selected.

This is due to the ability to acquire in depth information and evidence from participants in a focused context whilst affording flexibility and adaptability (Ruslin et al, 2022). It also mitigates against a conscious or subconscious power imbalance between researcher and interviewee (Kvale, 1996) – an important consideration given the author is a senior police officer. Finally, extant research shows research participants

are more likely to express viewpoints in a reasonably openly designed situation than a standardised type of conversation, such as questionnaires (Flick, 2002). The chance to probe more deeply affords greater opportunity for discovery (Megaldi and Berler, 2020).

Twelve semi-structured interviews were conducted representing senior police officers and police staff that have played an active role in police collaboration in Wales since 2000.

The cohort size was considered methodologically consistent with contemporary qualitative research methods and extant literature. In particular, the research of Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006), Francis et al (2010), Ando, Cousins, and Young (2014), Constantinou, Georgiou, and Perdikogianni (2017) collectively triangulated the strong likelihood of data saturation arising within a range of 7 to 10 interviews. Consequently, the author was satisfied theoretical sufficiency (Dey, 1999) for the study's thematic analysis would be achieved through the selected sample size.

Participants were equitably drawn from the Welsh forces providing insights from one strategic force, two semi-rural forces and one rural constabulary – typologies drawn from HMICFRS PEEL inspection framework (2023).

The diversity of forces represented is explicitly acknowledged as their size, structure and resource base are likely to be influencing factors for those charged with entering into collaboration agreements – an assessment in keeping with Martin and Sturmberg's (2005) identification of unique local conditions that have a bearing on collaborative settings.

The cohort's composition in terms of role and seniority has also been given careful thought with the College of Policing's CVF actively employed to define an appropriate sample.

Published in 2016, the CVF introduced a national set of recognised competencies and values for leadership practice. Structured along three hierarchical tiers – practitioners, supervisors and managers, and senior managers and executives - collaboration is an explicit competency focused on constructing and maintaining effective inter-organisational relationships for the benefit of all (College of Policing, 2016).

Given cross-force collaborations typically represent long-term partnerships delivering services at scale, it was considered appropriate to draw the research cohort from officers and staff operating at Level 3 of the framework.

Chief Officers from ACC to Chief Constable were interviewed, along with second tiers leaders at the rank of Superintendent and above. Police staff equivalents were included.

This cohort was further qualified through an explicit requirement for direct experience of cross-force collaboration in Wales to prevent hearsay or unqualified opinions being introduced into the evidence base.

Finally, to provide diversity of perspective, three interviews were conducted with representatives of Welsh PCCs. The cohort was kept deliberately small as the bulk of cross-force collaboration preceded their tenure.

In designing the interview format, Salmons' (2010) 'level of interview structure' was employed (2010). The research question was used as an opening gambit to invite personal perspectives on factors leading to success and failure of cross-force

collaboration in Wales. This was followed by open-ended questions to home in on areas of interest or respond to explicit points or matters requiring clarity.

For introverted or less responsive research participants, several thematic topics were prepared to elicit responses, providing a fluid, flexible structure and an ability to respond to unpredictability as Ruslin et al (2022) counsel. Prepared topics included the impact of external factors, executive and second tier leadership, technology, finance, force culture and legacy of past collaborative endeavours. An ethnographic approach to interviewing was considered but discounted due to greater volume of sessions that would have been required given the emphasis on developing more substantive frames of reference (Drever, 2003). This is an accepted limitation and reflects the capacity constraints of the author and research participants.

Interviews were conducted online using Microsoft Teams with audio and visual recording to enable transcription and analysis. It is acknowledged some scholars favour face-to-face research interviews (Parker, 2014) as it allows researchers to build and maintain rapport with interviewees (Fontana and Frey, 1998) and identify visual cues allow for improved communication (Fielding and Thomas, 2008).

However, the substantial geographical distance between the author and research participants meant a traditional approach was not viable..

Whilst a potential limitation, the author was reassured by De Villiers et al's (2021) contemporary research that use of high-quality video conferencing provides no significant impediment to effective qualitative interviewing. Video technologies allow for immediate feedback, diversity of clues, personalization, and language variety providing an effective personal rapport is established (Farooq and De Villiers, 2017).

Having active cognisance of this requirement, the author was content to proceed given the routine and accepted use of Microsoft Teams within policing and its high latency and efficacy.

Following the conclusion of the interviews, the author embarked on a period of detection (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994) employing Rulsin et al's (2022) six stage methodology. This focused on defining concepts, mapping phenomena, creating typologies, categorising attitudes, behaviours and motivations, finding associations between circumstances and motivations, seeking explicit and implicit explanations and developing new ideas, theories or strategies. This was achieved through manual open coding of interview transcripts and an inductive approach.

Whilst consideration was given to the application of active theory employed by Zaghloul and Partridge (2022), the author believed this was better suited to deductive analysis and therefore out of kilter with this study's approach.

Archival research accompanied the use of semi-structured interviews. Given the central bureaucracy to support collaborative activity in Wales and active oversight by HMICFRS and PCCs, a body of evidence existed. This allowed analysis of publicly available records, such as meeting minutes and policy documentation relating to police collaboration in Wales, forming part of the mono-research methodology employed by the author.

Several benefits have derived from this approach. First, it facilitates the examination of cross-force collaboration over time as many of the documents referred to originate from regularised governance and oversight arrangements, such as HMICFRS' recurring thematic inspection programme. As Heng et al (2018) note, the longitudinal nature of these datasets allows the effect of duration and overall trajectory of the

subject matter to be studied. Second, the use of archival research broadens the overall evidence base available to the researcher, providing complementary insights.

Finally, in contrast to the primary research method, the prospect of bias being introduced through interviewee behaviour - chiefly attempts to discern the author's hypotheses and consciously or unconsciously change their behaviour in response to their interpretation of the research purpose (Orae, 1969) (Klein et al, 2012) - is reduced. Archival research circumvents this issue, as many contemporaneous documents, such as a meeting minutes will have been prepared to provide an accurate record of discussions for governance purposes vis-à-vis academic research, thereby reducing active bias described.

As with all research methods, some risks remain with data access a predominant concern.

Due to data protection and operational security considerations, access to all contemporaneous records relating to police collaboration in Wales was not possible. Coupled with the need for redaction under the Data Protection Act 2001, the prospect of archival material representing a distorted evidence base was recognised. The potential for subjectivity being injected into some archival documents – for example, the conscious or unconscious perceptions of minute takers – was similarly acknowledged.

Consequently, a strategy of methodological triangulation (Bekhet and Zauszniewski, 2012; Ruslin et al, 2022) was adopted during analysis to enhance the study's overall validity.

Whilst a mono-research method was used, other techniques were considered. Using questionnaires as a data collection technique was ruled out due to anticipated low

return rate. Although the author acknowledges Nix et al's (2017) assertions that a response rate for police surveying of 64% is achievable, the significant professional commitments of Chief Officers and second tier leaders heightened the prospect of a small sample. As well as increasing the risk of false negatives, the precision of any resultant survey would decline due to greater sampling error and lower statistical power (Cohen 1988, 1992).

Given the cohort of senior police leaders with experience of collaboration in Wales was already limited, surveying was felt to be an unnecessary burden on senior leaders.

The use of focus groups was considered but also discounted due to the potential adverse interplay of high group cohesion and directive leadership identified by Ricciardelli et al (2020).

As research participants would be interviewed in force or rank based cohorts for reasons of practicality and availability, the possibility that individual perceptions and views could be distorted or unduly influenced by dominant personalities or those in positions of authority was considered credible, especially where Chief Officers were present.

Ethical considerations have rightly shaped the research methodology.

Whilst collaboration is a less socially sensitive subject than other areas of criminology and policing, numerous ethical issues exist. These are principally derived from the chosen research methodology and considerations relating to police organisational culture and power dynamics.

The selected interview cohort was drawn from Chief Officers and second tier leaders with direct experience of police collaboration in Wales. The overwhelming majority

were still serving, with many officers and staff line managed by other research participants.

In addition, interviews were conducted with representatives of PCCs – corporation souls responsible for appointing Chief Constables and for holding forces and, by proxy, members of the interview cohort to account for operational and organisational delivery.

Whilst numerous academic commentators (Neyroud, 2011; Mazerolle, Darroch and White, 2013; Cockcroft, 2014) point towards the hegemony of transformational leadership in police leadership culture and its values of ‘participation, consultation and inclusion’ (Silvestri, 2007), the existence of power imbalances between research participants cannot be ignored.

Applying contextual literature to the impact of power imbalance (deVault, 1990; Edwards and Mauthner, 2002; Oakley, 1988; Olesen, 1994; Reinhartz, 1992), a series of mitigations were enacted. This included the anonymisation of research participants, their employing organisation and role or rank to maximise the prospect of wholesome insights being gleaned and prevent any professional recriminations, particularly where an employer-employee relationship existed.

The risk of reputational harm or impropriety to both participants and the study more generally was reduced through the research’s focus on making thematic conclusions – an approach mirroring the police inspectorate and other academic studies. This was conveyed to research participants all of whom engaged with the study on a voluntary basis.

The author has given due regard to personal ethical considerations by utilising the components of the ethical research relationship advanced by Hewitt (2007). The need for rigour, rapport, respect for autonomy and acknowledgement of bias was actively

considered throughout the research. Similarly, protecting the confidentiality of participants and practicing reflexivity to critically examine their own prior assumptions and actions through self-awareness was undertaken. Care was also taken in the preparation of interview transcripts to prevent misinterpretation of participants' experiences.

As the author is a serving Chief Officer, the power imbalance with research participants was mitigated by adopting an egalitarian approach during the preamble of each interview to encourage what Hewitt (2007) describes as reciprocity and a sense of mutuality.

Analysis of results

One of the unifying themes both academic and police professionals agree on is that collaboration is tough and riddled with uncertainty.

The title of the inspectorate's last thematic inspection, 'The Hard Yards' (2020) summarised perfectly the grit and persistence required to land cross-force collaboration well for the benefit of the public – sentiments echoing the application of Glouberman and Zimmerman's (2002) 'complex problems' theory.

Some academic commentators even question the utility of trying.

Dickinson and Sullivan (2013) claim that evidence of performance improvement brought about by collaboration 'remains uncertain at best', whilst Huxham and Vangen (2004) say 'don't do it unless you have to'.

Despite this pessimism, there is a long and established lineage of cross-force collaboration in Wales.

The analysis of primary and secondary sources gathered during the research phase has identified thematic factors that can positively or negatively affect the trajectory of police collaboration.

Leadership: energiser or resistor?

Supporting the extant literature (Cohen, 2017; Chrislip and Larson, 1994; Margerum, 2001; L'Hoiry, 2021; Vanghem and Huxham, 2003; Wankhade and Patnaik, 2019), successful cross-force collaboration depends on compelling police leadership.

Whilst some external forces and temporal events may induce collaboration, this study reinforces the pivotal role Chief Officers and second tier leaders can have in energising or, in some cases, resisting cross-force collaboration.

Interviews with research participants identified a largely positive outlook amongst Chief Officers and second tier leaders across Wales towards collaboration. This was evidenced by a willingness to engage in the All-Wales programme and an endorsement of the potential benefits to service delivery and the public.

In several cases, particularly the bilateral collaborations between South Wales and Gwent Police, significant leadership effort to drive the design and delivery of new functions was apparent. Although weighted towards Chief Officers, there was evidence second tier leaders made significant contributions, particularly in transacting the strategic vision of seniors.

At a macro level, the study believes the main tenants of 'network theory' - *culture, policy, relationships, and structure* (Whelan, 2016) – have been successfully embedded within the NPCC Cymru region providing an energising effect for collaboration.

From a *network culture* perspective, a willingness to engage with collaboration either in Wales or the Northwest was apparent. This was evidenced by Chief Officers taking on take Senior Responsible Officer responsibilities or by actively contributing programme and financial resources– all indicative of a shared sense of purpose

Cultural positivity was mirrored by effective *network structures and policies* initiated by senior police leaders over the past two decades. Archival research identified durable collaborative governance arrangements, including the Police Authorities of Wales Board and its successor, the All-Wales Policing Group, underpinned by maturing iterations of collaboration strategies and concepts of operation. With collaboration representing a confederal construct, the arrangements brokered by senior leaders have created a largely effective form of 'brokered network governance' (Provan and

Kenis, 2008). Whilst there have been ‘bumps in the road,’ such as the failed specialist operations collaboration, there was an overarching sense long standing formal and informal *network relationships* built on trust - central to the effective performance of collaborative networks (Whelan 2017) – had been achieved.

The strength of Welsh policing’s collaborative relationships was typified by a willingness to challenge. Although not necessitating the ‘collaborative thuggery’ advocated by Vangen and Huxham (2003), there was a readiness by Chief Officers and second tier leader to ‘call-out’ forces making strategic decisions that could adversely affect future collaboration or erroneously commit resources to projects unlikely to succeed.

In keeping with Kelman and Hong’s (2016) analysis, the pursuit of ‘tough love management’ to resolve conflicts over cost and resourcing models has helped bring clarity and commitment, particularly where the ‘net donor’ effect is acute. This was apparent during the genesis of the JDSD where perceived inequity over funding arrangements and a lead force model were challenged leading to pragmatic accommodations by both forces.

Although positive leadership behaviours have created a resilience network environment for collaboration in Wales, the existence of secondary networks can have an adverse impact.

Research participants in North Wales were notably more hesitant to engage in pan-Wales collaboration given conflicting loyalties and relationships with the Northwest of England. As one interviewee summarised:

'I think it's quite tricky in the north because operationally we are very much aligned with the Northwest. I we feel like we've got a foot in both camps, so we certainly aren't going to buy into as much [all] Wales collaboration.'

A similar inference can be drawn from Dyfed Powys Police's decision to join the Northwest Records Management System collaboration, which has largely negated the prospect of technological collaboration with the South Wales and Gwent Police's JDSD. Consequently, it can be argued the existence of secondary collaborative networks can have a dampening effect on leadership behaviour and network culture and relationships.

More pronounced resistance towards collaboration has periodically been witnessed over the past two decades contrary to the predetermination towards partnership working identified by Rogers and Gravelle (2014). This study attributes this to a complex interplay of a range of factors.

The first, in keeping with international literature, is cultural fragmentation between forces due to their varying size and resource bases (Cohen, 2017). As Dale (2012) and HMICFRS (2009) note, this leads to pervasive tensions with smaller force's fearful of losing resources to higher demand areas, whilst larger forces become reticent due to a perceived parasitic draw on expensive or niche capabilities.

Where senior leaders are unable to see beyond this, cultural fragmentation has had a chilling effect on collaborative practice. The degradation of the proposed Specialist Operations collaboration in 2018 from a large-scale regional alliance to a handful of very niche capabilities can be attributed to this phenomenon.

Second, the hegemony of localised self-interest can have a significant adverse impact on leadership behaviour, particularly where financial considerations are in play.

Despite considerable operational logic, the evidence base identified several instances where meaningful collaborative initiatives – including a pan-Wales command and control system - were derailed by forces renewing existing commercial relationships lured by short-term financial incentives. Whilst the harsh economic realities in which Welsh policing has operated is acknowledged, localised self-interest has occasionally trumped the expectations set out in the collaboration duty and the Competencies and Values Framework.

In deriving applied conclusions, this study highlights the importance of leadership. Cognizance of positive leadership behaviours creating energised collaborative networks supportive of collaboration cannot be understated. Similarly, vigilance of cultural fragmentation and self-interest and the resisting effect this can generate should be borne in mind, particularly, in programme or project scoping.

Intent versus outcomes deficit

Allied to leadership behaviour, is the prevalence of an ‘intent versus outcomes deficit’.

Running parallel to the region’s successes over the past two decades, there has been a series of collaborative failures.

Attempts to collaborate on specialist uniformed operations and major crime collaboration have been attempted on successive occasions to no avail. More recently, attempts to extend the participation of existing collaborations, particularly within digital policing and forensics have faulted despite exploratory commitments made by forces.

Some of the most compelling evidence of a strategic ‘misfiring’ between Welsh policing’s intent and commitment to collaboration can be drawn from two sources.

The first is the short-lived existence of the two All-Wales DCC posts created to drive collaboration across Wales (BBC, 2009) (Hearty, 2017). Representing a significant

investment in leadership, the posts were intended to afford the NPCC Cymru region a strategic edge and galvanising force for cross-force collaboration. Yet, their disestablishment, within two to three years, charts the decline of strategic ambition and the ascendancy of a negative cost benefit analysis by Welsh Chief Constables and oversight bodies that funded both roles.

An analysis of discussions at three All Wales collaboration 'Visioning days' held between 2017 and 2020, provides an additional lens.

Contemporary evidence reveals a repeated willingness by Chief Officers and PCCs from across Wales to work together and scope opportunities for structural and programmatic collaboration.

When considered independently, the outputs of these events illustrated warm strategic intent, yet a longitudinal analysis highlights a frequent recourse to resetting or reframing collaborative aspirations. Interviews with research participants describe the frequent injection of new priorities or an abrupt change of direction from earlier agreements.

Against this backdrop, it is, therefore, unsurprising the number of failed attempts at collaboration in Wales has come close to equalling the region's successes.

Consequently, this study advances the notion of an 'intent versus outcomes deficit' as a risk factor with the root cause being attributed to a lack of positivism on the part of executive and senior leaders.

Interviews with research participants identified a reoccurring tendency by executive leaders to commit their organisations to collaborative initiatives without compelling evidence cases. The available evidence indicates the use of organisational analyses,

such as Force Management Statements and strategic assessments, to prime and contextualise potential collaborative initiatives was limited.

As one research participant confessed:

We don't go in and say right this is a really strong business case for collaboration. These are the benefits that will drive out. This is the roadmap to drive them out... We do not set out the financial benefits at the beginning of a programme in the two to three years.

Instead, there was a frequent recourse to 'visioning days' or bilateral 'blue sky thinking' sessions with partners to scope the 'art of the possible.' Whilst democratic and inclusive, the cerebral and discursive nature of these events typically resulted in hazy and often ill-conceived agreements which fail to survive contact following due diligence by second tier leaders.

The author largely attributes this phenomenon to the complex interplay of optimism bias (Sharot, 2012) and the action orientated dimension of police culture famously described by Reiner (2010). Whilst largely subconscious and well-intended, the hegemony of enthusiasm over positivism has contributed to a deficit that has frequently derailed sensible and achievable collaborative initiatives.

In mitigating this going forward, the author argues future collaborations should be framed through the lens of positivism and sober reflection as opposed to well-intentioned but unrealistic aspirational thinking. Ensuring strong evidence bases exist to inform change is, therefore, critical.

Constitutional viability

The author believes the principle of ‘constitutional viability’ – particularly amongst smaller forces – can be a significant factor in determining the successful trajectory of police collaboration.

The concept relates to a subjective assessment by force executives as to the corpus of capabilities intrinsic to a force’s identity and whose loss would challenge its constitutional sovereignty and viability.

As one research participant commented:

It definitely comes down to sovereignty.... some forces will be concerned about collaboration because it will inevitably involve key functions being located somewhere else and jobs being lost. So politically, we know that that's affected the collaboration landscape during the last 20 years.

Whilst difficult to quantify, research participants identified a rump of areas where collaboration was ideologically unacceptable. These typically included emergency response and neighbourhood policing due to the proximity of these services to local communities and a force’s core identity.

Enabling services responsible for defining or shaping a force’s organisational culture and workforce, such as human resources and initial training, also generated hesitancy amongst some Chief Officers and second tier leaders. As did certain specialist capabilities, principally strategic roads policing and homicide investigation.

The principle of constitutional viability was drawn from interviews with research participants in all four Welsh forces but was more dominant in smaller rural forces whose critical mass was more likely to be affected by cross-force collaboration.

Distinct but complementary to the 'Net donor' syndrome (Home Office, 2012), there appears to be a metaphorical 'tipping point' at which engaging in collaboration represents a threat to a force's sovereignty or degrades its ability to exercise substantive direction and control.

In an applied context, constitutional viability should be considered as an important normative principle capable of setting thresholds and tolerances for collaboration, particularly amongst Chief Officers.

By acknowledging the principle's existence early on and overtly setting 'limits of exploitation' for collaboration, the prospect of shared functions being undermined from the outset is arguably reduced – principles integrated into the proposed collaboration viability assessment matrix.

Collaboration fatigue

Resonating with existing literature (Kane, 2018; Meehan et al, 2016; Zaghoul and Partridge, 2018), the attritional impact of failed collaborations emerged as a likely impact factor during the research phase.

Interviews with second tier leaders particularly identified a sense of fatigue, if not hesitancy, towards cross-force collaboration due to the failure of past endeavours.

The period 2008-2017 appears to be the anchor point for this sentiment.

During this time, numerous large-scale collaborations in disciplines from major investigations to specialist uniform operations were actively pursued with substantial resourcing given to the Wales Central Team. Despite comprehensive business cases being developed, most initiatives failed before initiation with only the Joint Firearms

Unit and the Joint Scientific Support Unit emerging as comprehensive and far-reaching endeavours.

Sadly, history repeated itself in 2017.

Despite representing a reset moment, attempts by the second All-Wales DCC to revive proposals for a Southern Wales Specialist Operations Unit stalled with ambitions for a shared public order, roads policing and specialist search function being whittled down to a shallow and unattractive proposal for a joint canine and drone unit.

The decline of this proposal would mark the start of numerous programme resets - principally through additional 'All Wales' visioning days – and an emerging sense of what this study has termed 'collaboration fatigue.'

Whilst not as pronounced as 'legitimised strategic resistance' described by Meehan et al (2016), a degree of apprehension towards collaboration, particularly at scale, has been embedded within the current leadership psyche, reflecting in comments made by one research participant on the merit of the All Wales visioning days:

'I just don't sense that there was any longevity to any of those [collaborative] conversations or the apparent goodwill that was apparent in the room. It didn't seem to manifest itself in anything in medium term.'

Quantifying the attritional impact of 'collaboration fatigue' is beyond the scope of this study, however, recognising its existence and the impact it may have on 'institutional logic' (Ocasio, 1997; Thornton and Ocasio, 2008) in collaborative negotiations is important learning.

Against this backdrop, this study advocates the need for a sober recognition of the adverse impact failed initiatives have had on staff, particularly second tier leaders, and

inter-force relationships. Consequently, minimising the attritional affect through an honest exposition of force ambitions and 'limits of exploitation' for collaboration is advocated.

Digital convergence – enabler or disabler

In keeping with extant literature (L'Hoiry, 2021) (Partridge and Zaghoul, 2022), commonality in information technology and systems between the Welsh forces can enable or disable cross-force collaboration.

Whilst requiring a continuous problem-solving mindset (Funke, 1991), convergence in digital architectures or hosting through a lead force model has provided the foundations for some of the region's most innovative shared capabilities.

The creation of the South-East Wales NICHE (SWENIC) collaboration in 2011 – a shared record management system between Gwent and South Wales Police – afforded officers from both forces access to each other's operational data (SWOPCC, 2017). More significantly, it acted as a springboard for a progressive joint digital programme, FUSION, and the development of common body worn video, mobile data and live facial recognition technologies. Through a 'snowballing' development of common capabilities, Programme Fusion would be consolidated into a substantial shared function with the innovative JDSD established in 2018.

As the JDSD's first strategy shows the decision to converge digital architectures has been a keen enabler resulting in a progressive transformation programme, robust governance arrangements and inclusive workforce arrangements (GOPCC, 2018). Applying Provan and Lamarie's (2012) research, the collective outcome of these ties is a high degree of network integration between the two forces and strong trust-based relationships – ingredients critical to successful long-term collaboration.

Conversely, asymmetry in digital architectures and ambitions can be a significant push factor or present an insurmountable barrier to change (Kwon et al, 2009). As previously alluded to, Dyfed Powys Police's decision to join the Northwest Records Management System collaboration has largely negated the prospect of technological collaboration with the South Wales and Gwent Police's JDSD and has been followed by further divergence in other areas such as body worn video and evidence management systems.

High cost, high complexity – a centrifugal force

Having predominantly focused on risks to collaboration, this study will turn to corralling factors with high cost and high complexity of policing services, providing a strong centrifugal force.

An analysis of the track record of the All-Wales Collaboration programme since its initiation has demonstrated a greater success rate in highly technocratic or specialist disciplines, particularly where external accreditation is required or operational complexity exists.

The emergence of now longstanding collaboration in armed policing, counter terrorism and serious and organised crime since 2000 can, in part, be attributed to their high complexity and need for a greater degree of national coordination. Allied to this is the impact of high cost especially for niche or low demand capabilities. The fragmentation of the forensic science marketplace following the dissolution of the government owned Forensic Science Service in 2012 exposed British policing to market forces. Consequently, many forces turned to collaborative solutions to reduce commercial exposure and improve operational effectiveness.

This strategy was pursued in both North and South Wales, with North Wales Police joining the Northwest Forensic Alliance with English counterparts, whilst South Wales and Gwent Police established the JSIU immediately realising over £1million in savings (Jacques, 2012).

With growing oversight of police forensic services brought about by the Forensic Science Regulator Act 2021 (House of Lords Library, 2021) injecting more cost pressures, further cross-force collaboration in this space is anticipated.

These examples with wider primary and secondary evidence support the hypothesis that the interplay of high complexity and cost creates a gravitational force in favour of cross-force collaboration.

Against a backdrop of more complex and challenging demand brought about by the fourth industrial revolution (Deloitte, 2020) and a stubbornly bleak economic environment, this is a significant finding and should encourage the concentration of leadership effort in areas of policing where this dynamic plays out.

‘A guiding hand’

A ‘guiding hand’ to coordinate collaborative activity amongst the four Welsh forces was, on balance, seen as a positive factor. Since 2000, cross-force collaboration has benefited from pan-Wales or bilateral governance and programme management arrangements. These have ranged from an All-Wales Police Authority structure and a substantial Wales Central Team (HMICFRS, 2012) to a smaller core programme team formed following the onset of austerity.

Resonating with successive endorsements by the policing inspectorate (2009), (2012) (2020), research participants repeatedly inferred the importance of a core nucleus of capabilities to offer a ‘guiding hand’ to nurture and transact cross-force collaboration.

The need for both a framework and resource arguably resonate with Zaghoul and Partridge's (2022) advocacy of 'collaborative information infrastructures' to maximise the prospect of success. Opportunities for formal and informal communication to generate new ideas and participation (Wankhade and Patnik, 2020) are also facilitated by the existence of a central coordinating function and good governance arrangements.

A potential misnomer to this assessment, however, is relatively short-lived existence of the All-Wales DCC role created and disbanded on two separate occasions. As personal circumstances are likely to have been contributory, it is not possible to offer a definitive narrative.

Numerous research participants commented that a disconnect emerged between the breadth and depth of expectation placed on the post holders and their capacity to deliver. As such, their ability to offer a meaningful 'guiding hand' was diluted to the extent a negative cost benefit calculus emerged, particularly against a backdrop of austerity. With a more focused role, at the rank of ACC, having emerged (SWP, 2023), Welsh policing's continuing investment in a senior leadership role for collaboration and supporting secretariat seems empirical endorsement of the need for a 'guiding hand.'

Police and Crime Commissioners – a revisionist perspective

Some academic commentators have been less than complimentary in their assessment of the contribution of PCCs. Lister and Rowe (2015) signpost political indifference in their analysis of PCC manifesto commitments, whilst Skogan (2008) describes PCCs as having significant influence in restricting collaborative efforts predominantly on politically motivated protectionist concerns.

Whilst the study has focused on the leadership effort of senior police leaders, it found limited evidence of this trait in Wales.

Contrary to the position in England, there was a general sense Welsh PCCs were constructive network actors who actively endorsed collaboration (SWOPCC, 2020) (GOPCC, 2021) or were passive, enabling innovation.

As one research participant commented:

'From my own perspective, I think the Commissioners probably aren't too worried about the collaboration part of it. They're more worried about their own communities in fairness. So I'm lucky, I get support from both Commissioners and get invited to police and crime panels etc to present.'

In some cases, Welsh PCCs exerted a convening influence, particularly in cross sector collaboration. The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) programme (Mason et al, 2022) and the Prisoner ACE Survey (Ford et al, 2019) are significant examples where Welsh PCCs have proactively created a multi-agency coalition capable of securing human and financial resources.

Welsh PCCs have also played an active role in developing and sustaining the positive *network policy, structure and relationships* needed to frame collaboration. The creation of a pan-Wales memorandum of understanding in 2014 (GOPCC, 2014) and the All Wales Policing Group (DPOPCC, 2023) provide strong empirical evidence.

Although L'Hoiry (2021) is right to highlight the potential for divergence through the electoral churn of PCCs, this study finds no compelling evidence to suggest the largely positive contribution of Welsh PCCs will dissipate in the short to medium term. Wales, therefore, offers a revisionist perspective to more negative perceptions across the border.

Welsh identity?

From an ethnocentric perspective, one of the most distinctive findings of HMICFRS' 2020 thematic inspection, 'The Hard Yards', was their assertion that Wales' common geographical, demographical, and political identities had a galvanising factor on police collaboration.

Having explored this finding with research participants, there was a conditional endorsement amongst senior police officers and staff. However, causality is more nuanced than the policing inspectorate portrayed with institutional factors also exerting a positive effect.

In contrast to the policing inspectorate, this study acknowledges the organisational coherence brought about by the NPCC and its predecessor, ACPO. Benefitting from the input of South Wales Police Chief Constable and first vice chair Peter Vaughan QPM (NPCC, 2015) distinct pan-Wales policing structures have existed for a considerable period, fashioning a collective identity and sense of purpose amongst the senior leadership of the four Welsh forces. As evidence to the same, ACPO Cymru's detailed submission to the Commission on Devolution in 2013, illustrates not only a high degree of organisational coherence amongst Welsh policing's senior leadership but a willingness to reach common policy positions by four distinct corporation souls (Madge, 2014).

Wales' maturing political and partnership landscape has had an osmotic effect in engendering a collaborative mindset within Welsh policing.

Drawing on Entwistle's (2006) formative research, the advent of devolution and the broadening ambitions and policy responsibilities of the Welsh Government has created a unique partnership environment in which Welsh policing now operates.

Whilst not the ‘aegis’ conceived by one PCC (Michael, 2016) the four Welsh forces have been drawn into the Welsh polity through several interventions. Financial inducements, such as 600 Welsh Government funded Police Community Support Officers (GOV.WALES, 2023), coupled with shadow governance structures, including the Police Board for Wales (GOV.WALES, 2022), and legislative competence in policy areas allied to or interfacing with policing, such as child protection and early intervention and substance misuse, have created a distinctive network environment Welsh policing has had to adapt and respond to.

Coupled with the relative proximity to Welsh Ministers and the high political priority successive administrations have placed on stakeholder engagement (Entwistle, 2006), the new landscape increasingly requires Welsh policing to formulate its own policy positions or to work collaboratively to secure funding or influence government thinking.

Although gradual and osmotic in nature, there is little doubt Wales’ maturing constitutional settlement has conditioned a greater collaborative mindset amongst the senior leadership of Welsh policing. As such, Rogers and Gravelle (2014) description of a ‘predetermination’ by Welsh policing to working in partnership is considered sound.

Operational considerations can, however, trump the cogency of politics and national identity and the practicalities of pan-Wales collaboration have played out on numerous occasions.

North Wales Police’s alignment to the Northwest of England for forensic science collaboration and a bilateral firearms alliance with Cheshire Police (NWOPCC, 2022) are two examples where an operational imperative has triumphed due to practicalities

of geography and cross border crime trends. More recently, Dyfed Powys Police's decision to join an existing tri-force records management system involving North Wales Police, Merseyside Police and Cheshire Constabulary (NICHERMS.COM, 2020) offers further qualification given the force has far greater geographical and operational alignment to the Southern Welsh forces.

Temporal events and external factors

Finally, temporal events and external factors have been shown to precipitate or negate successful cross-force collaboration in Wales.

The impact of austerity from 2010 was undoubtedly one of the most significant drivers in accelerating pace. Facing budgetary pressures between £12 -£43 million (HMICFRS, 2012) (HIMCFRS, 2012a), the four Welsh forces were strong-armed into an aggressive budget, workforce cuts and radical transformation. Collaboration, as a subset of the latter, emerged as a cohesive response, particularly within the specialist capabilities arena. The realisation of financial efficiencies was a prevailing backdrop to the formation of the collaborative firearms alliances in Northern Wales as was the creation of the bilateral Joint Legal Services and JSIU (Hussain, 2012) (Ilston, 2012) (Jacques, 2012).

The 'cold steel' of budget cuts as a galvanising factor for collaboration is well documented in the extant literature (HMICFRS, 2009) (L'Hoiry, 2021) (Zaghoul and Partridge, 2022). As are opportunities to unlock economies of scale through the combination of common or complementary services (Entwistle, 2014).

In this context, this study shares Topping's (2022) belief negative economic conditions, particularly where acute, create a 'critical juncture' and 'inevitable logic' for structural

reconfiguration with cross-force collaboration forming part of a menu of options for senior leaders.

Beyond the accepted logic of Topping, however, is the inverse effect of positive economic conditions on cross-force collaboration – a theme this research has identified.

The transition away from austerity embarked upon by the Conservative Government in 2019 reinjected significant amounts of funding back into policing. Although not entirely compensatory, the Home Office's Police Uplift Programme committed £3.6 billion of additional funding into the service to recruit an additional 20,000 police officers with modest police staff uplifts to support delivery (NAO, 2022). The relative generosity of Welsh PCCs in exercising their council tax precept powers further cushioned Welsh policing, affording a more comfortable financial operating environment.

Since July 2019, the All-Wales Collaboration programme notably transitioned away from ambitious large-scale capability builds to more narrowly focussed, less intense transformation projects. A longitudinal analysis of the outcomes of pan-Wales collaboration 'visioning days' also evidences lower intensity and greater indecision over time, including a greater willingness by Chief Constables to 'pick and choose' areas of interest. Several research participants were candid in their views that the relative improvement in the force's economic health had depleted the necessity and urgency for collaboration. It also introduced greater latitude for decision making – arguably in keeping with the informed choices model advanced by HMICFRS in 2009.

This study, therefore, believes a positive economic environment – a temporal state – can inversely affect the prospect of cross collaboration, particularly at scale. This is

attributed to a cost benefit calculus on the part of senior leaders where financial and organisational benefits are outweighed by the challenges of complexity, corporate capacity, and organisational tolerance for change.

Consequently, the impact of economic conditions - whether positive or negative – should be actively borne in mind when scoping collaborative programmes.

As an allied matter, the use of central conditional grant funding has, over time, pump-primed the development of collaborative capabilities. As one participant commented:

[Collaboration] is likely to be successful in the first instance if there is a pot of central funding which compels the success of the collaboration to certain degree.

This has been particularly apparent within counter terrorism and organised crime with both WECTU and TARIAN drawing down significant investment from the UK and Welsh Governments during their early years.

The use of grant conditions, including detailed expectations on design, neutered the prospect of local interjections from hesitant or opposing Chief Constables and PCCs.

Recourse to grant funding by political actors has also prompted collaboration in more traditional areas of policing. As Jones et al (2022) describe, this has included funding for the 600 PCSOs, the Wales Police Schools Programme which supports schools educating pupils about personal safety issues (Welsh Government, 2018), and a joint police and Public Health Wales programme aimed at tackling adverse childhood experiences aimed at reducing the prospect of offending by children and young people (Hardcastle et al, 2021). To unlock these opportunities, Welsh policing needed to align its engagement with Government with the governance structures within the All-Wales Collaboration programme, affording an effective network environment.

Other temporal events can affect the trajectory of collaboration. Criticality and major incidents have demonstrated an ability to generate radical instances of cross-force collaboration. The London terrorist attacks of 2005 catapulted the development of the national counter terrorism network with WECTU emerging as a distinctive Welsh construct. As one research participant noted:

“Sometimes you'll get a change in context ... counterterrorism is a brilliant example because at the time the collaborative unit I was involved in was set up, there was absolute compelling need.”

More recently, the increasing fragility of the forensic marketplace and the collapse of several providers led to the Southern Welsh forces entering a revised regional consortium for traditional forensic services hosted by Dyfed Powys Police (GOPCC, 2022a).

Whilst the longevity and frequency of temporal events can vary, they can have a determining influence on the appetite and feasibility of police collaboration.

Conclusion and recommendations

In the eyes of some commentators, the past decade has seen the ‘decline and fall’ of police collaboration in England and Wales. In England, the exorbitant costs of high-profile failures, coupled with concerns over localism have had a chilling effect on Chief Constables and PCCs across the country.

Whilst the very public and painful demise of the Warwickshire and West Mercia Police’s strategic alliance was the cause-celebre, other collaborations have quietly dissolved or been redrawn (COPCC, 2019; Mason, 2021, HMICFRS,2020).

Political interest in collaboration has also waned.

Eclipsed by BREXIT, illegal migration and the COVID-19 pandemic, Home Office interest has receded with no policy or legislative interventions since 2012.

The appetite for cross-force collaboration within the NPCC Cymru region has also ebbed, although the region’s successes over the past two decades have insulated Chief Officers and PCCs from heightened sensitivities felt across the border.

Since 2003, the NPCC Cymru has demonstrated an ability to collaborate at scale with shared functions, such as TARIAN ROCU, WECTU and two firearms alliances in the North and South of the country, emerging as capable and longstanding examples. Bilateral collaborations, predominantly between South Wales and Gwent Police have emerged in a broad range of areas, including digital policing, procurement, and legal services.

Although senior leadership roles have evolved over time, the region has repeatedly invested in an ‘All-Wales’ Chief Officer role providing a guiding hand and corralling influence. The relative continuum of a central bureaucracy to aid programme

management arrangements and provide the network rules and relationships envisaged by Whelan (2017) also reflects Welsh policing's commitment to working together.

There have, however, been several false starts and missed opportunities. Attempts to collaborate on specialist operations and major crime have faltered on several occasions. Intended national collaborations in areas such as digital policing and forensic services have also failed to realise their full potential.

Consequently, the collaborative flightpath has been less steep than once envisaged with a growing ascendancy towards cooperation or more narrowly focussed transformation initiatives, such as the All-Wales e-recruitment platform.

Yet, the prospect of a second coming is growing.

The economic hangover of BREXIT and war in Ukraine has created one of the most challenging economic environments since the Second World War. With inflation stubbornly resistant to control, economic restraint in the public sector will remain a prickly and uncomfortable priority for any future government.

Although electioneering will likely shield the service until a new Government is formed, a hard economic environment awaits. A recent analysis by the trade union Unison (McAnea, 2023) projects a £721 million budget shortfall by 2026 with all Welsh forces affected.

As with the financial crash of 2009, the prospect of Austerity 2.0 and its galvanising effect on collaboration is a reasonable hypothesis.

Against this backdrop, this study seeks to highlight the factors underpinning both success and failure in Welsh policing's collaborative journey to inform any future reconsideration at scale.

In contrast to Zaghoul and Partridge's (2022) more protracted system, three typologies of factors are advanced – human, organisational, and temporal and external factors – and have been employed to structure conclusions.

Human

Collaboration is a confederal act predicated on the ratification of formalised agreements between Chief Constables and PCCs. Consequently, human factors are a natural starting point.

In keeping with literature, senior leadership can make or break collaboration and the NPCC Cymru region has benefitted from a leadership tradition that remains largely supportive of the principles and practice of collaboration.

Honed by past successes and a *network culture* and *relationships* conducive to trust and confidence (Whelan, 2017), the constructive behaviours of Welsh Chief Officers and second tier leaders has had a positive effect.

In many cases, visionary and energised leadership has driven cross-force collaboration or created a psychologically safe operating environment for second tier leaders.

The 'guiding hand' of central leadership and a supporting bureaucracy have also been positive in supporting and coordinating the activity of Welsh policing's collaborative *network*.

Although the All-Wales DCC role has been a frequent casualty of Welsh policing's collaborative campaign, the principle and perceived benefit of dedicated executive leadership has survived contact at the rank of ACC.

In contrast to their English counterparts, Welsh PCCs have provided a passive or enabling environment for collaboration with significantly less evidence of paralysing localism. Wales' unique political environment, in particular PCCs' proximity to Welsh Government and a predetermination towards partnership (Rogers and Gravelle, 2014), provide a convincing rationale for Wales' divergent position.

Whilst the collaborative 'score card' of Welsh police leaders is higher than other parts of the UK, there is evidence of adverse behaviours.

In the absence of a compelling evidence base or sufficient organisational capacity, a tendency by executive leaders to overcommit to collaborative initiatives due to the interplay of action orientation (Reiner (2010) and optimism bias (Sharot, 2012) has been a frequent derailer. The 'intent versus outcomes' deficit advanced by this study can introduce psychological fatigue and scepticism, particularly amongst second tier leaders tasked with transacting collaborative programmes.

Furthermore, executive awareness of the principle of 'constitutional viability' – especially within smaller forces – can dampen collaboration. The aggregation of shared functions and services can generate a metaphorical 'tipping point' at which Chief Officers and other senior leaders believe collaboration represents a threat to a force's sovereignty or degrades its ability to exercise direction and control. In the face of the collaboration duty, this principle can lead to perverse or unexpected outcomes. Acknowledging this effect and framing limits of exploitation for future collaborations should help provide mitigation.

Finally, self-interest can have a particularly disruptive effect on collaboration, especially where the development of a shared function could result in job losses or declining professional influence and control. As the extant literature has shown, strong leadership and effective communication is key in guarding against these factors.

Organisational

As the collective sum and arrangement of its workforce, organisational behaviours and influences can influence the likely prospect of successful collaboration. This study has identified three areas with a particularly galvanising effect.

First, the development of cross-force collaborations is more likely in policing disciplines associated with high cost and complexity.

Along with the service's professionalisation agenda (Neyroud, 2011), the emergence of costly technocratic capabilities to respond to policing's increasingly diverse and complex mission has generated lofty financial and organisational burdens, particularly within small forces.

The aggregation of niche capabilities, particularly within regulated environments such as forensics and armed policing, makes compelling economic and organisational sense. As such, recognising and exploiting the centrifugal effect complexity and cost generate should be actively considered when commissioning collaborative programmes.

Second, commonality and interoperability in digital systems underpin most successful cross-force collaborations – an assessment in keeping with Zaghoul and Partridge's (2022) research.

With digital technology and information systems being mission critical to modern policing, alignment or otherwise in core architecture exerts a 'push-pull' effect on cross-force collaboration. Commonality in digital systems creates an enabling environment promoting interoperability and operational and economic efficiencies. The breadth and depth of bilateral collaboration between Gwent and South Wales Police, for example, stems from deliberate investment in common business and operational systems. Digital divergence, can significantly dampen collaborative ambitions due to the operational friction and financial inefficiencies that are typically ingrained. With police technology standards being overwhelmingly decentralised, this is an area Chief Officers can exert significant influence in honing successful collaboration.

Thirdly, this study has illustrated the importance of a 'guiding hand.'

Resonating with successive endorsements by the inspectorate (2009) (2012) (2020), a core nucleus of capabilities to nurture and transact cross-force collaborations has been an important element.

Applying network theory (Klijn and Koopenjan, 2012; Whelan, 2017), Welsh policing's investment in dedicated governance and programme management arrangements for collaboration has created a positive collaborative network exemplified by a strong culture, policy framework, structure, and relationships. Although the size and scale of the dedicated bureaucracy has ebbed and flowed, it has afforded the NPCC Cymru a strategic edge. Investing in a corporate 'guiding hand' remains sage advice for those charting the course of future police collaborations.

Temporal and external events

Finally, temporal events and external conditions can have a profound impact on cross-force collaboration with economic forces representing one of the most significant causal factors. There is no doubt the financial abyss created by austerity galvanised police forces across Wales to collaborate. The surge in the number of large-scale shared functions between 2010 and 2018 is clear evidence collaboration was a conscious policy response to the harsh economic realities facing Chief Officers. Similarly, the ‘tapering off’ of collaborative ambitions in recent years can be attributed to the improving financial position, affording Chief Officers greater latitude on organisational design and strategic partnerships.

As both a temporal and external factor, economic conditions can have a marked impact on likely engagement by forces in collaborative endeavours. The bleaker the financial position, the more likely a collaboration initiative is to succeed provided it affords tangible economic benefits.

As an allied matter, the use of conditional grant funding by governments can leverage collaboration – an approach exemplified within the disciplines of counter terrorism and organised crime. The combination of specificity and financial inducement has proved capable of securing strategic buy-in of Chief Officers and PCCs and is arguably a more potent lever than the collaboration duty introduced in 2012. Although outwith the scope of this study, greater use of conditional grants by governments to cajole collaboration between forces is arguably a future policy consideration.

Criticality can also be a driver for collaboration. TARIAN and WECTU were born in response to the acute changes in the threat landscape facing Welsh communities. Similarly, the fragility introduced into the forensic science marketplace by privatisation

mobilised forces to develop a sustainable collaborative model. This study believes criticality can induce collaboration, particularly where a capacity and capability gap is identified.

This dissertation has advanced the interplay of human, organisational, and temporal and external factors in determining the success or otherwise of Welsh police collaboration. Within a relative dearth of literature, this dissertation has provided a longitudinal examination of cross-force collaboration in Wales.

Recommendations for professional practice

As well as offering a novel contribution to academic thinking, the research seeks to support professional practice given the likelihood of cross-force collaboration returning as a policy response to future economic hardship.

The thematic findings described therein have been used to create a collaboration assessment framework set out in appendix A. The framework offers a series of qualitative tests to enable senior leaders to assess the likely success of a cross-force collaboration initiative prior to commissioning. The question set has been derived from the findings of this research and is intended to complement professional judgement by offering a majority scorecard to inform decision-making. It is recognised the framework is not thematically weighted - an outcome that would necessitate further research – but it is hoped it will enhance decision-making given the typically grave outcomes of failed cross-force collaborations.

As well as developing this concept further, this study recommends more substantive research on the role of PCCs in determining the trajectory of cross-force collaboration, as this was a limitation of this study. Building on HMICFRS' approach, a comparative

analysis of Wales' success against another a region could provide additional insights to the conclusions reached.

In closing, this study has charted an upbeat journey of Welsh policing to collaborate and work together for the benefit of the people of Wales. Born as a response to criticality but accelerated through austerity, cross-force collaboration has become part of Welsh policing's DNA. Attributed to the complex interplay of human, organisational and external and temporal influences, the four Welsh forces have successfully developed innovative and sustainable capabilities and avoided the discord and toxicity that have plagued their English counterparts.

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Appendix A: Collaboration Assessment Framework

Drawing on the findings of this research, this framework offer a series of qualitative tests to enable Chief Officers to assess the likely success or otherwise of any propose cross collaboration. Whilst professional judgement remains critical, a majority scoring based on success and risk factors is offered to assist evaluating collaborative proposals.

Thematic	Yes	No
Does the proposed collaboration relate to an area of policing that attracts high cost?		
Does the proposed collaboration relate to an area of policing involving high complexity?		
Is the proposed collaboration based on a compelling evidence base?		
Does the economic and operational case outweigh the human, psychological and financial costs of the proposed collaboration?		
Does the proposed collaboration involve a business area where previous attempts at collaboration have been unsuccessful?		
Is there significant Chief Officer support for the proposed collaboration in all forces?		
Is there significant support amongst second tier leaders for the proposed collaboration in all forces?		
Is there significant support amongst Police and Crime Commissioners in all forces for the proposed collaboration?		
Does a high degree of trust exist between the parties to the proposed collaboration?		
Does the proposed collaboration affect local policing services to the extent that this could be of public and political concern?		
Successful cross-force collaboration often depends on common IT systems. Do these exist or is there an unqualified commitment to digital convergence?		

Is the proposed collaboration supported by dedicated programme / project management arrangements?		
Will the proposed collaboration respond address corporate or operational criticality?		
Is the proposed collaboration externally funded?		