



Police Research Series
Paper 122

The Effective Detective: Identifying the skills of an effective SIO

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Policing and Reducing Crime Unit: Police Research Series

The Policing and Reducing Crime Unit (PRC) was formed in 1998 as a result of the merger of the Police Research Group (PRG) and the Research and Statistics Directorate. PRC is now part of the Research, Development and Statistics Directorate of the Home Office. PRC carries out and commissions research in the social and management sciences on policing and crime reduction.

PRC has now combined PRG's two main series into the Police Research Series. This series will present research material on crime prevention and detection as well as police management and organisation issues.

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Foreword

The challenge of improving the quality of major investigations is one that faces all forces across the UK. This report will assist the police in meeting that challenge. The research highlights the skills and abilities that senior investigating officers (SIOs) must possess in order to lead and investigate a serious crime effectively. It also usefully explores how these skills and abilities are presently acquired by SIOs, and how their acquisition might be facilitated in the future. The police service needs to ensure that the future demand for able senior investigators is fully satisfied. Forces need to put in place formal procedures for identifying and developing future investigators, thus providing them with the right mix of experience, training and mentoring.

The results of this research have already contributed in part to the design of National Police Training's National SIO Development Programme and ACPO's work on SIO competences. The report will be of interest to all concerned with delivering effective investigations.

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January 2000*

Acknowledgements

The current work has been conducted as part of the PRC's Serious Crime Research Programme (SCRIP) based at the National Crime Faculty (NCF) at the Police Staff College, Bramshill. The SCRIP aims to develop advice to help the police improve policy and practice in the investigation of low-volume serious crimes, such as stranger rape, murder and abduction. In its efforts to respond to the operational issues facing crime investigators, the SCRIP receives valued support and contributions from the staff of the NCF.

The authors would particularly like to thank those officers who made themselves available for interview. Interviews were conducted in the following forces: Avon and Somerset Constabulary, Cambridgeshire Constabulary, Humberside Police, Kent Constabulary, Metropolitan Police, Northamptonshire Police, Northumbria Police, South Yorkshire Police, Surrey Police and West Yorkshire Police.

Thanks must also go to the members of the project board for their assistance in the development of this research: Dr Charles Jackson (occupational psychologist), Detective Chief Superintendent Doug Smith (NCF), Detective Chief Superintendent Des Donohoe (Dorset Police), Detective Inspector Stuart Williams (Lancashire Constabulary) and Detective Sergeant Kevin Smith (NCF). Thanks also to Donna Holdaway for her assistance with the analysis, and to both Dick Oldfield and Andy Feist (PRC) who provided guidance and comments on the initial drafts of this report.

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Executive summary

The Senior Investigating Officer (SIO) plays a pivotal role within all serious crime investigations. Concerns have been expressed, however, that there is a shortage of investigators with the appropriate qualities to perform this role effectively. The consequences of such a shortage could be severe. Not only might it threaten the effective workings of the judicial process, it can also waste resources, undermine integrity and reduce public confidence in the police service. The principal aim of the research was to establish what skills, abilities and personal characteristics an SIO ought to possess to be effective in the investigation of low-volume serious crimes (stranger rape, murder and abduction).

Interviews were conducted with 40 officers from ten forces. These were selected to reflect a range of roles and experience within Criminal Investigation Departments (CID). Ten of these officers were nominated by their peers as examples of particularly 'effective' SIOs.

Although the debate around SIO competencies has often polarised into arguments for and against specialist or generalist skills, the research highlighted the fact that the role of an SIO is extremely complex and the skills required wide-ranging. By applying a variety of analytical techniques, a total of 22 core skills were identified for an SIO to perform effectively in the role. The 22 skills were organised into three clusters:

- *investigative ability*: this includes the skills associated with the assimilation and assessment of incoming information into an enquiry and the process by which lines of enquiry are generated and prioritised;
- *knowledge levels*: this relates to the different types of underpinning knowledge an SIO should possess; and,
- *management skills*: these encompass a broad range of skill types that were further sub-divided between 'people management', 'general management' and 'investigative management'.

The research revealed that the 'effective' SIO is dependent upon a combination of management skill, investigative ability and relevant knowledge **across the entire investigative process**, from initial crime scene assessment through to post-charge case management.

Ideally, an SIO should possess a high level of competency across each of the three clusters. In reality this is not always possible and, when this happens, there is an increased risk that the investigation will be inefficient or, in the worst case, will fail.

For example, an SIO from a predominantly non-CID background will have little experience within an investigative context. Hence there is an increased risk that an investigation will fail due to sub-optimal investigative decisions being made. Similarly, an SIO from a predominantly CID background may have less general management experience. Hence there may be an increased risk of failure from sub-optimal management decisions.

The research suggested that some - but not all - deficiencies in an SIO's skill 'portfolio' can be compensated for by drawing on the skills and abilities of more junior officers within his/her investigative team. However, it was recognised that this was still a high-risk and short-term strategy.

Acknowledging the breadth and complexity of an 'effective' SIO's skills has important implications for the future training and selection of investigators. A number of potential avenues exist for SIOs to acquire the necessary skills. These were identified as follows:

- *Selecting the right individuals to become SIOs at the correct point in their career.*
The early identification of individuals with the potential to perform well as SIOs would allow a more structured and considered approach to the career development of 'effective' SIOs. There are, however, currently no formal processes in place to identify future SIOs early in their careers.
- *The 'nurturing' of future SIOs.*
Many interviewees highlighted the importance of nurturing potential investigators of the future. This could be accomplished through a formal system of mentoring and shadowing.
- *Ensuring a correct balance between training and appropriate experience.*
There is a range of evidence that emphasises the need for training and 'on-the-job' investigative experience to go hand-in-hand; training on its own is not enough. The research identified a gap in current training provision for senior investigators (although this is being addressed through the introduction of the National SIO Development Programme).
- *Encouraging the self-development of investigators.*
SIOs have a professional responsibility to ensure that they remain up-to-date with current developments in the field.

- *De-briefing programmes.*

De-briefing was identified as a useful mechanism for transferring expertise and should occur both formally and informally. For de-briefing to be effective, however, it needs to be conducted in an open and constructive environment where officers are encouraged to discuss their mistakes.

Developing 'effective' SIOs for the future will also partly depend upon anticipating changes within the context in which investigators work. Interviewees identified a range of issues that are likely to affect the skill-base of future SIOs, including the impact of tenure, the changing nature of crime types and increased accountability.

Recommendations

ACPO and forces should be alerted to the loss of appropriate skills within investigative teams and its long-term impact on the quality of serious crime investigations, as well as overall organisational efficiency and integrity. Appropriate processes need to be developed to ensure sufficient 'effective' SIOs are in place for the future. To tackle this, the following recommendations need to be embraced:

- The role of training, continuous professional development coupled with appropriate experience were shown to be key to the development of an 'effective' SIO. It will therefore be necessary to co-ordinate training and experience within the career progression of an SIO.
- Forces should develop and implement formal systems for the early identification of potential SIOs and their subsequent career development. This would need to be supported by research to establish how and at what point someone with the potential to be an SIO is best identified.
- Senior officers should provide future SIOs with relevant opportunities to ensure that gaps in their skill portfolio are addressed by appropriate experience.
- All forces should implement a formal mentoring system early in the career of a potential future SIO.
- Forces should establish formal de-briefing programmes for SIOs. These need to be conducted in a risk-free environment where constructive lessons can be learnt. These should be documented and disseminated through the NCF.

- ACPO (Homicide Working Group) are approving standards of competence in Crime Reduction and Investigation. The findings of this research should be complementary to the development of the core competences required for SIOs.
- The National Crime Faculty (NCF) should incorporate the research findings within the National SIO Development Programme and disseminate them through its Training and Development Section, with particular emphasis given to developing the management skills associated with an investigation of serious crime.

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1. Introduction

Background

Senior detectives have raised concerns about a growing shortage of senior investigating officers (SIO) with the core investigative skills and abilities necessary to perform their function effectively. This has been attributed to a number of factors including the impact of tenure (e.g. Hirst, 1994; and Kinchen, 1996); perceptions that the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) no longer maintains its status within the police service (e.g. Greenway, 1994; and Maguire et al., 1993); and criticisms of current selection and assessment procedures. However, none of these previous studies make explicit what skills, abilities and personal attributes are necessary to make an 'effective' SIO.

Objectives of the research

The research discussed in this report forms part of the Policing and Reducing Crime Unit's (PRC) Serious Crime Research Programme. It has two key objectives:

- to establish what skills, abilities and personal characteristics an SIO must possess to investigate a serious crime effectively; and,
- to explore how these skills and abilities are presently acquired by 'effective' SIOs, and how this might be facilitated in the future.

The results of the research will serve to provide an empirical base for the National Crime Faculty's (NCF) Training and Development Section. It will also inform policy and practice associated with the selection and career management of staff for the role of SIO.

This research is primarily concerned with skill acquisition for investigators involved in high-resource/low-volume serious crime. For the purposes of this report, serious crime has been defined as stranger rape, murder and abduction.

The definition of an SIO used in this study is the lead investigator of a serious crime. The SIO makes the principal decisions within a serious crime investigation and takes prime responsibility for its outcome. An SIO will normally be of chief inspector or superintendent rank, although individual force policy may allow officers of a lower rank to fill this role. As the research is concerned with the *role* rather than the rank of an investigating officer, SIOs of lower ranks have been included within the study.

Methodology

The general approach has been to apply qualitative research techniques to explore *in depth* the skills required by an 'effective' SIO. A combination of standard job analysis techniques was used to undertake the research. Such techniques have been used successfully in the past with similar studies on police officers (e.g., McGurk et al., 1992; Wigfield, 1996; Nelson and Brown, 1998). These studies are reviewed in more detail within chapter two of this report.

For the main data collection exercise, a semi-structured interview schedule was developed in collaboration with an occupational psychologist, researchers and colleagues in the NCF. The interview schedule incorporated both the repertory grid and the critical incident techniques:

- The repertory grid technique aims to identify dimensions (or 'constructs') which distinguish between individuals (Kelly, 1955). Subjects choose 'elements' that represent the area to be examined. For this study the elements were a number of 'effective' and 'less effective' SIOs; the subject picks three SIOs and is asked to specify a fundamental way in which two are alike and thereby different from the third. This is referred to as a 'construct'. This process indicates the way in which officers discriminate between SIOs of varying ability.
- The critical incident technique identifies instances of effective and ineffective performance through recalling events that illustrate good or bad practice (Flanagan, 1954). The individual gives a brief description of what led up to the incident, what was good or bad about it and the consequences. The major strength of this method is that it establishes a comprehensive definition of role requirements. In this study, the data relate to accounts of the way that an SIO behaved on a particular occasion.

The main objective was to obtain a broadly representative range of views among police officers with direct and expert knowledge of the work of SIOs. To achieve this, participants in the study were selected from a number of different forces, and included officers of different ranks, roles and backgrounds.

Selection of participants

Ten forces took part in the study. They were selected to represent as far as possible a range of characteristics across forces in England and Wales in terms of:

- the demographics of each force area;
- the extent of serious crime within force areas;

- whether or not a tenure policy operated within CID; and,
- the number of officers within each force area above the rank of detective inspector.

Interviewees were selected according to the roles they had served in the management ‘hierarchy’ of serious crime investigation so that a rounded view of the qualities of an ‘effective’ SIO could be established. This also allowed younger officers of lower rank to offer their view on more recent skill development and training. Hence the sample was designed to include:

- detective sergeants and deputy SIOs who had worked as part of an investigative team within a Major Incident Room (MIR);
- SIOs who had led a serious crime enquiry for which an MIR had been set up; and,
- individuals who were responsible for appointing an SIO to a serious crime investigation (predominantly Heads of CID).

The selection process was also designed to ensure that the sample included both officers who had spent a large proportion of their career within CID and those who had less detective experience.

On the basis of the career details of officers provided by each of the forces, a total of 30 officers were selected.¹ Since this study aimed to identify the skills, abilities and personal characteristics of ‘effective’ SIOs, this initial sample of officers were subsequently asked to nominate SIOs who they felt were particularly effective in that role. This resulted in a second sample of ten ‘peer-nominated’ SIOs who were also interviewed. Table 1 gives the breakdown of the officers interviewed.

¹ The number of individual officers selected from each force ranged from one to six.

Role	Number
Head of CID	6
SIO	13
Deputy SIO	6
Detective sergeant	5
Total	30
Peer-nominated SIOs	10
Grand total:	40

Structure of the report

The report is organised into five further chapters. Chapter two examines the overall qualities (skills, abilities and personal characteristics) which interviewees identified as important for the effective investigation of serious crime. Chapter three looks at the combination of skills required during a serious crime enquiry, while chapter four examines the qualities required during specific elements of the investigative process. Chapter five explores the acquisition of skills and abilities and focuses on the changing role of the SIO. Finally, chapter six summarises the principal findings of the research, with recommendations for the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO), individual forces and National Police Training (NPT).

2. Developing a 'dictionary' for SIO skills and knowledge

Previous research

A number of earlier studies have explored the skills and abilities necessary for a variety of roles within the police service. Some of these have used job analytical techniques (e.g. McGurk et al., 1992; and Wigfield, 1996) and others have applied more general approaches (e.g. Home Office, 1991; and Maguire et al., 1993). However, few studies have focused specifically on the role of the SIO. This section briefly reviews the findings and techniques employed in these studies. Figure 1 summarises the methodology and relevant findings from each of these studies.

Figure 1: Police officer skills: summary of previous research

Author	Home Office (1991)	McGurk et al. (1992)	Maguire et al. (1993)	Wigfield (1996)
Rank/role studied	Chief Inspectors and above	Detectives	Investigators	Supervisory roles
Nos. of skill categories listed	8	12	Only most prominent skills cited.	10
Skills	Communication Interpersonal skills Problem-solving Decision-making Creativity Drive/determination Copes under pressure Represent force/service	Managing tasks: Implementing Controlling Dealing with people: Assisting colleagues Assisting public Managing info.: Collecting Combining Appraising Creative thinking Deciding Communication: Communicative style Writing skills Personal style	Knowledge of the Law Local knowledge Communication skills Interviewing skills Constructing files Cultivating informants Presentation of evidence	Leadership: Taking charge Motivating people Communication Supportive Thinking style: Strategic perspective Planning Analytical thinking Personal style: Integrity Adaptability Drive to achieve
Method and sample size	Focus groups; Questionnaire; (Unknown sample size).	Position Analysis Questionnaire (15); Repertory grid (15); Critical incident (178); Task analysis (126).	Interviews (26).	Work Profiling System; Repertory grid; Critical incident; Interviews; (Unknown sample size).

As part of a Home Office initiative (1991) into the career development of police officers, research was undertaken to establish core competencies across a range of ranks, including that of chief inspector. A series of focus groups and questionnaire surveys were undertaken to establish an appropriate job description, skill profile and, ultimately, core competencies. For chief inspectors and above (who can be appointed as SIOs on serious crime enquiries), eight core competencies were identified (listed in Figure 1). While they are no doubt useful for developing appraisal systems, the core competencies generated are general, and do not address the specific roles that may be held within a particular rank.

Using a combination of job analytical techniques, McGurk et al. (1992) examined the role of detectives in general. The sample included detectives of all ranks, including 15 detectives who possessed a supervisory role within CID. The study examined (i) the tasks carried out as part of their role; (ii) how those tasks were accomplished, and (iii) the skills and abilities required to perform those tasks effectively and efficiently. The skills were summarised in the form of a skill dictionary that divided them into four principal categories: managing tasks; dealing with people; managing information; and effective communication. The results of this study contributed to the development of the National CID Foundation Course, which is attended by officers prior to their appointment as a detective.

As part of a wider exploration of issues around detectives and investigations, Maguire et al. (1993) interviewed 26 detective constables and sergeants to capture their views on what skills made a good investigator. A range of skills were identified but only the most prominent skills were cited in the published report. While identifying the skills required to perform effectively in an investigative context, the main aim of the study was to develop a method for assessing investigative performance, rather than generating a skill dictionary specific to the role of an SIO.

Wigfield (1996) used a combination of job analytical techniques to identify a set of core competencies for officers in supervisory roles within Sussex Police. Ten core competencies were identified and these were classified into three separate categories: leadership; thinking style; and personal style. These were then compared to the eight core competencies for the rank of chief inspector and above, previously developed by the Home Office (1991). The Sussex research provided more detail on the necessary competencies. Most importantly, it identified leadership, planning and strategic thinking as essential to the supervisory role (competencies not highlighted within the earlier Home Office research).

Finally, Adhami and Browne (1996) carried out a small-scale study of detective expertise in serious crime investigations (in particular, sexually-orientated child homicide). This involved developing a model of detectives' approaches to major crime enquiries and a framework for evaluating alternative approaches. Six detectives were interviewed, all of whom had significant experience of investigating homicide. Detective expertise was modelled in terms of four layers: domain, inference, task and strategic. The model identified a number of *activities* that were regularly employed within a serious crime investigation. In addition, the study highlighted four key areas that need to be addressed specifically by the SIO: (i) analysing the crime scene; (ii) resourcing and financing the investigation; (iii) managing the media; and (iv) managing the investigation. The research also demonstrated that to manage the investigative process effectively, an SIO needs to possess an awareness of a number of problems that are inherent to serious crime enquiries. These were identified as:

- deciding on a mechanism for managing information;
- deciding suspect parameters;
- determining lines of enquiry;
- linking cases;
- communicating information within the team; and,
- motivating the team.

This study does offer a helpful framework for understanding detective expertise. It provides a useful list of activities that need to be undertaken, and issues that need to be taken into account, during a serious crime investigation. It does not, however, readily explore the *skills* and *abilities* required to perform these activities and to tackle the problems that are common to many serious crime investigations. Furthermore, the model is rather static and does not address the dynamic environment in which these skills are used. Finally, the research does not explore the personality characteristics of those involved in the investigative process.

Developing skill categories

This study used a combination of three established job analytical techniques (semi-structured interview, repertory grid and critical incident technique) to explore the specific skills and abilities of 'effective' senior investigators. Each of the three approaches was analysed independently and then combined so as to generate a single, consistent dictionary of skills and abilities.² Using a range of complementary analytical approaches on the same participants offers a number of benefits. First, each approach is likely to highlight a different configuration of skills. This is because each approach gives a slightly different perspective on the required skills

² The data were analysed using the content analysis package NUDIST (Non-numerical Unstructured Data Index Searching and Theorising).

and abilities of 'effective' SIOs. The repertory grid and the critical incident analysis in particular act as a mechanism for illustrating the presence or absence of particular skills in specific individuals and/or situations. Secondly, by using three different approaches it is possible to look for convergence in the data from each method, to see the extent to which each method suggests a similar pattern of skills and abilities. Where we see agreement between the methods this gives us greater confidence in the findings.

Within the semi-structured interview, respondents were asked initially to identify the three or four most critical skills required by 'effective' SIOs. All officers answered this question citing a wide range of skills and abilities (we subsequently refer to this question as the 'critical skills' question). For the repertory grid interview, 30 officers generated 205 dimensions³ or skills that distinguished between 'effective' and 'less effective' SIOs. Finally, the critical incident technique produced a total of 89 incidents, yielding 38 examples of less effective practice and 51 examples of good practice. These were also analysed to elicit the skills that characterised both 'effective' and 'less effective' SIOs.

³ The repertory grid technique uses the term dimensions, which in this study refers to the skills and abilities of an SIO.

A standard framework was developed for coding the data from the three analytical approaches. Combining the three sets of results generated a core set of 22 different 'skill' categories.⁴ These are listed alphabetically in Figure 2 below (see Appendix A for detailed definitions for each skill category).

⁴ The term 'skill' refers to skills, abilities and knowledge.

Figure 2: Summary of the skills required by 'effective' SIOs

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| ● Adaptation | ● Maintaining professional integrity |
| ● Administrative competence | ● Managing the communication process |
| ● Appraisal of information | ● Organising the mechanics of the investigation |
| ● Appropriate delegation | ● Planning the investigation |
| ● Awareness of future developments | ● Resource management |
| ● Consultation with the team | ● Staff development |
| ● Decision-making | ● Staff support |
| ● Handling expert advice | ● Strategic awareness |
| ● Innovative investigative style | ● Team-building |
| ● Interpersonal skills | ● Underpinning knowledge |
| ● Investigative competence | |
| ● Leadership | |

Comparisons with previous research

An initial comparison with previous research suggests that our 22 skill categories differ somewhat from those indicated by earlier studies. However, when we examine the *detail* of skills and abilities that other studies have assigned to

particular skill headings, it is clear that the skills identified for SIOs and those identified for other ranks and roles share similar characteristics. What often differs is the way that studies have attempted to classify skills under different headings.

For instance, McGurk et al. (1992) identified an overall skill category of 'Assisting Colleagues'. This consisted of the following skills: displaying a helpful attitude; willing to offer help where needed; sociable and friendly; approachable; providing support; identifying and responding to people's needs in terms of assistance and support; seeking other's views; and, being prepared to seek and listen to the opinions of others respectively. These specific skills would appear to equate closely with our categories of 'interpersonal skills' (approachable), 'staff support' (providing support and responding to people's needs in terms of assistance and support) and 'consultation with the team' (seeking others views and being prepared to listen to the opinions of others).

We might also note that the 22 skills identified in our study appear to reflect a *combination* of skills that have been identified as important within the four studies: the Home Office's (1991) competency study of chief inspectors; McGurk et al.'s (1992) study of detective skills; Wigfield's (1996) study of supervisors; and Maguire et al.'s (1993) study of detectives. Since an SIO is expected to combine the investigative skills of a detective and the management skills of a supervisor, and usually be of at least chief inspector rank, this is perhaps not surprising. Indeed, this tends to suggest that the 'effective' SIO requires a particular combination of management skill, investigative ability and underpinning knowledge.

Frequency of skill categories

Having created our 22 skill categories, we then examined the frequency with which particular skills were identified by interviewees for all three analytical approaches ('critical skill' question, repertory grid and critical incident). Table 2 lists those skills that were most and least frequently cited by the interviewees for each of the three research approaches.

As we might expect, the table reveals some similarity between those most frequently mentioned skills in the critical skill question and the repertory grid. Both approaches identified 'leadership' and 'team-building' as important skills for an 'effective' senior investigator, skills that did not emerge as strongly from the critical incident technique. Instead, analysis of responses to the critical incident technique revealed 'investigative competence' and 'strategic awareness' as the most frequently cited skills. However, it is important to remember that the critical incident technique produces only a few instances of effective and less effective

Table 2: Most frequently and least frequently cited skills by analytical approach

	Critical skill	Repertory grid	Critical incident
Most frequently cited skills:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Team-building ● Leadership ● Underpinning knowledge ● Appraisal of information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Leadership ● Management of the communication process ● Staff support ● Team-building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Investigative competence ● Strategic awareness ● Professional integrity ● Planning
Least frequently cited skills:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Administrative competence ● Innovative style ● Handling experts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Future developments ● Handling experts ● Resource management ● Organising the mechanics of the investigation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Future developments ● Handling experts ● Organising the mechanics of the investigation

behaviour for each interviewee. Consequently, the technique is likely to elicit a less diverse range of skills compared to the other two approaches.

The three approaches yielded more consistent findings for the least frequently mentioned skills. All three approaches recorded infrequent references to the 'handling of experts'; both the repertory grid and the critical incident technique also perceived the 'organisation of the mechanics of the investigation' and 'awareness of future developments' as skills less vital towards defining 'effective' SIOs. However, these skills, whilst not mentioned frequently, were nevertheless perceived by some officers as important skills for an 'effective' SIO.

Perception of skills by role and background

Whilst the dictionary of skill categories was generated from an analysis of all the interview material, additional analyses were undertaken on the repertory grid data. This technique more clearly demonstrates 'real life' experience of 'effective' SIOs, since it requires the identification of a particular skill that discriminates between 'effective' and 'less effective' SIOs. The main aim of this was to examine differences between the ranks and the backgrounds of the officers interviewed in terms of the skills that were most valued in defining an 'effective' SIO.

Overall, leadership qualities, the ability to communicate with those involved in the investigative process and attention to staff support were the most frequently cited abilities within the repertory grid. In particular, however, *Heads of CID* emphasised that SIOs had to appreciate both the gravity of the decisions that they will make,

as well as the level of professional integrity that the role entails.⁵ None of the Heads of CID referred explicitly to 'adaptation', 'decision-making', 'consultation' and 'interpersonal skills' in their descriptions of skills of 'effective' SIOs within the repertory grid. One possible explanation may be that they make assumptions that the appointed SIO will possess these more specific qualities within the macro-level skills identified above.

⁵ Due to the qualitative nature and the small numbers within this study, statistically significant differences could not be identified.

Another frequently identified characteristic of an 'effective' SIO from the repertory grid data was the ability to consult with members of the investigative team. In particular, three of the four *detective sergeants* interviewed saw this as an important characteristic in an 'effective' SIO. Given their position as part of the investigative team, this would appear to reflect the high value that team members place upon the SIO in encouraging them to contribute actively to the investigative process. This may reflect in part the changing profile of the SIO within serious crime enquiries. A common perception from these interviews was that an SIO has gone from being the 'loner', playing things close to their chest, to more of a team player with an open door policy. For SIOs, *peer-nominated SIOs and detective sergeants*, consultation appeared to be an important part of the everyday process of a serious crime enquiry.

The skills identified most frequently by the *peer-nominated SIOs* were broadly similar to SIOs as a whole. They placed importance on leadership qualities, communication skills and attention to staff support. In addition, however, many in this group placed value on having relevant knowledge; a majority of *peer-nominated officers* mentioned the need to possess sufficient investigative and domain knowledge to investigate a serious crime. Here too, the process of consultation was seen as important.

Background differences

The backgrounds of the 30 officers involved in the repertory grid interviews were divided into three groups:⁶

- predominantly from a CID background (12 officers);
- predominantly from a uniformed background (9 officers); and,
- those with an approximately equal amount of both CID and uniform experience (9 officers).

⁶ The career histories for each officer were made available for the purposes of this research.

The data revealed that a slightly higher proportion of officers from a predominantly CID background valued skills related to the investigation. However, it is worth noting that a similar proportion of CID officers also attached value to more

management-orientated skills. Officers from a uniformed background more frequently stressed the importance of skill categories that reflected a more team-based approach to the investigative process. Some officers explained that this investigative style compensated for their lack of CID experience and consequently, their lack of domain knowledge relating to specific crime types. As one such SIO observed:

“In compensating for the lack of experience on the investigative side, you have to tap the resources available to you and use them effectively”.

3. Combination of skills

Opinion is largely divided as to what combination of skills is required to investigate a serious crime effectively. At its simplest level this has been polarised into a debate between ‘specialist’ and ‘generalist’ skills. One perspective is that an ‘effective’ SIO requires specialist subject knowledge and investigative experience built up through a career largely within CID (the ‘specialist’ approach). The alternative viewpoint places more emphasis on general management skills, which can be obtained through various roles across the police force (the ‘generalist’ approach).

Our research, however, revealed a much more complex picture. The 22 skill categories generated from the interviews were organised into three clusters:

- management skills;
- investigative ability; and,
- knowledge levels.

Management skills

All interviewees identified management skills as a significant requirement for ‘effective’ SIOs. However when applied to senior investigators, the term ‘management skills’ is far too broad to be meaningful. Under the general heading of management skills, it was possible to distinguish a number of areas of management. By analysing references in the interviews to particular management skills, we have made distinctions between ‘people management’, ‘general management’ and ‘investigative management’ skills. Figure 3 illustrates the three management clusters with the skills associated with each of them.

People management

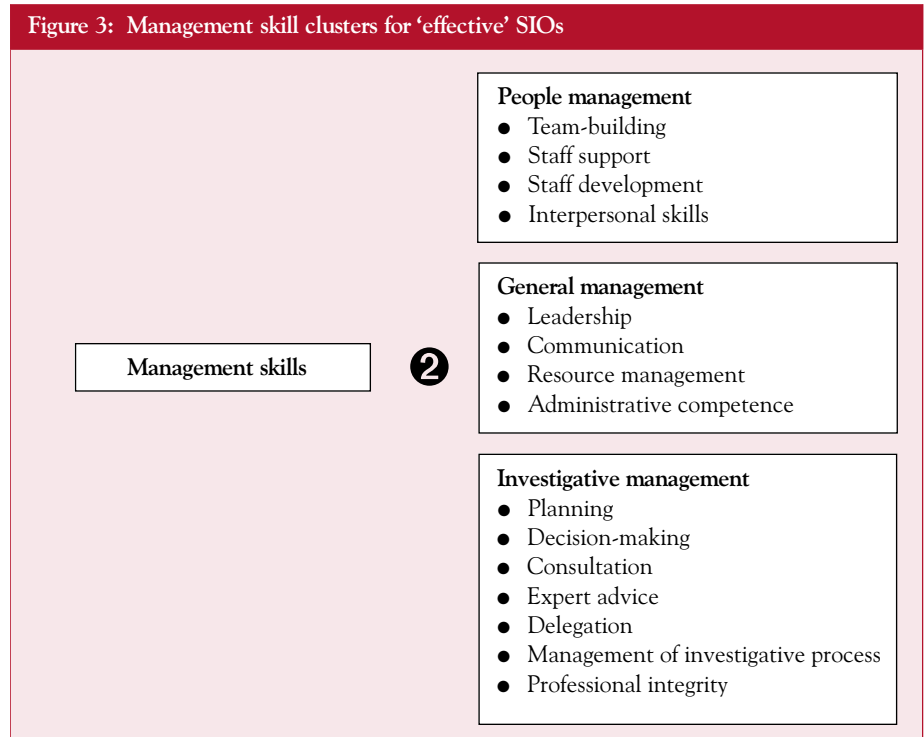
There are two main components to people management: the ability to manage the personnel directly involved in a serious crime enquiry (the investigative team); and the ability to engage in fruitful relationships external to the investigation. The latter includes dealing with witnesses, victims, specialist advisers, the media and members of the legal profession. Four discrete skill areas were identified under the heading of people management: team-building; staff support; staff development and interpersonal skills.

General management

We have classified the second area of management as ‘general management’. There is a high concentration of routine management skills contained within this area of general management. Because they are routine, the skills required are easily replicable to fit any given management role. They included: leadership; managing

COMBINATION OF SKILLS

the communication process; resource management; and, administrative competence.



Investigative management

This area of management skills relate specifically to the context of the investigation. This includes planning the investigation, consulting with advisers, handling expert advice, organising the mechanics of the investigation, appropriate delegation of investigative tasks and making and quality assuring investigative decisions.

What is it about investigative management skills that distinguish them from general and people management skills? At first we might view planning, delegation and decision-making as general management skills required in all managers, regardless of the field in which they work. However, two particular characteristics are worth noting about investigative management: the time pressures associated with investigative management within a live enquiry; and the grave consequences

that can arise from poor performance in this area. As a result, the opportunities for correcting poor performance without serious longer-term consequences are more limited than many other management sectors. For instance, the Macpherson report (1999) highlights how weaknesses in investigative management skills can undermine the whole criminal justice process. For investigators to apply skills *effectively* in investigative management requires a combination of management skills and, critically, underpinning knowledge of the complexities of the investigative process.

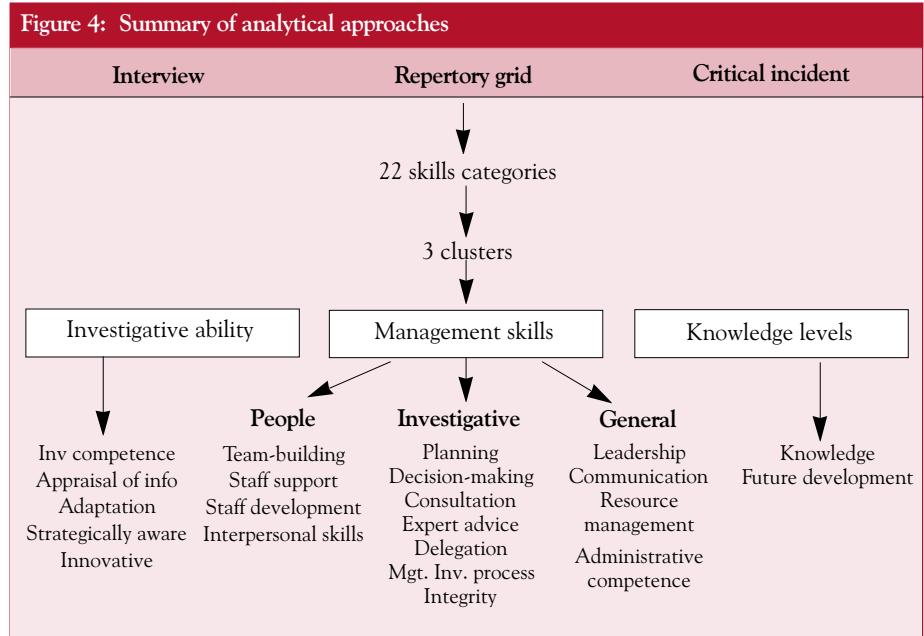
Investigative ability

During the investigative process, the SIO is often assimilating incoming information and drawing inferences from that information. The information and inferences together are then used to generate lines of enquiry, which may in turn generate more information. The SIO, with support from the investigative team, is then responsible for the continual analysis of the relevance and importance of that new information to the original inferences, either refining it or having to develop alternatives (Adhami and Browne, 1996). Five skill areas were classified under the heading of investigative ability: investigative competence; appraisal of incoming information; adaptation; strategic awareness; and, innovative investigative style.

Knowledge levels

The majority of those interviewed stressed the importance of an 'effective' SIO having relevant knowledge. Investigative procedures, the legal and court processes, how to deal with informants and knowing what is available to the SIO were all offered as examples of types of knowledge that an SIO should possess.

From the interviews, it is clear that an 'effective' SIO has to embrace a wide range of roles within a serious crime investigation – detective, counsellor, accountant, scientist and an administrator amongst others. Figure 4 illustrates how the analysis of the data indicated that a balance of management skills (people, general management skills and those relating to the investigative process), investigative ability and relevant knowledge would all appear to be essential elements of the role.

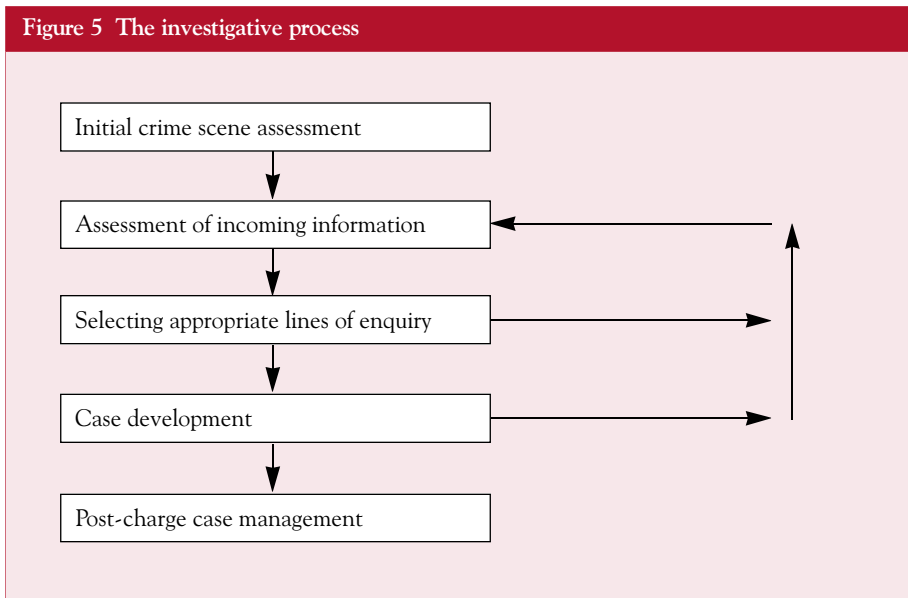


An 'effective' SIO is dependent upon a combination of skills from each of the three 'skill' clusters. This will be explored in more depth within the next chapter of the report.

4. Skills and the investigative process

We have established that an ‘effective’ SIO relies on a combination of skill *types*. It is important, however, to clarify what skills are applied during the investigative process *as a whole*. Is it the case, for instance, that an integrated skill base is a feature of *all* elements of the investigative process? Alternatively, do particular skill types dominate within particular elements? This has important consequences for SIO development, training and the active involvement of an SIO in a serious crime enquiry. Within the interviews, respondents therefore were encouraged to identify the different skills and abilities associated with the different elements of the investigative process.

For the purpose of this analysis it was helpful to divide the investigative process into a series of separate elements, although in practice these principal components are inter-related and the investigation has to be considered as a dynamic process. The elements were largely derived from a theoretical model of a hard-to-solve serious crime investigation developed by ACPO. Figure 5 visually represents the elements contained within the investigative process.



The process begins with an initial crime scene assessment where sources of potential evidence are identified. The information derived from this process then has to be evaluated in order to gauge its relevance to the investigation. During the

next stage, the information is interpreted to develop inferences and initial hypotheses. This material can then be developed by the SIO into appropriate and feasible lines of enquiry. The SIO will then have to prioritise actions, and to identify any additional information that may be required to test that scenario. As more information is collected, this is then fed back into the process until the objectives of the investigation are achieved. Providing a suspect is identified and charged, the investigation then enters the post-charge stage, where case papers are compiled for the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS). Subsequently, the court process will begin.

Throughout this section, a summary table that lists the different skills and abilities required for an 'effective' SIO as defined by those interviewed has been provided for each element of the investigative process (Figures 6 to 10). For clarity, they have been organised according to the three clusters defined in chapter three: management skills, investigative ability and knowledge levels. In the commentary we have highlighted a number of specific skills and abilities which respondents placed particular emphasis on. Critical incidents that illustrate both the absence and presence of particular skills are included as examples. It is worth noting that, on the whole, there was a high degree of agreement between those interviewed about the relative importance of different skills and attributes across the various elements of the investigative process.

Elements of the investigative process

Element 1: Initial crime scene assessment

This element of the investigative process begins with the initial notification of a potential serious crime to the SIO and ends when s/he decides to release the scene. It involves assessing whether a serious crime has actually been committed and, if so, the immediate gathering of relevant information.

Many of those interviewed identified a number of core investigative abilities that underpinned initial crime scene assessment. First, the ability to assimilate information from the scene. Respondents argued that SIOs need to be able to take a 'step back' from all that is going on around them and adopt a considered approach. Several investigators, across a number of forces, used the expression 'to create slow time'. This involves trying to establish what has happened, while at the same time preserving and managing the scene and ensuring that the correct people have been alerted.

As one SIO noted:

“What tends to happen at crime scenes is that everything happens in fast time. There is an urgent time issue that is upon us (SIOs) and there is a skill in slowing it down. You must not allow events to drive you and your decision-making; you must create slow time”.

Interviewees emphasised that the SIO had to consolidate the information at the scene within the appropriate investigative and legal boundaries. By correctly

Figure 6: Principal skill requirements: initial crime scene assessment

Management skills	Investigative ability	Knowledge levels
<p>People management</p> <p><i>Interpersonal skills</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to liaise effectively with key individuals 	<p><i>Investigative competence</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to start to formulate lines of enquiry 	<p><i>Underpinning knowledge</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● procedural ● knowledge of roles ● legal processes ● ethical implications ● domain knowledge of specific crime types
<p>Investigative management</p> <p><i>Planning</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to plan actions ● to negotiate action plans ● to co-ordinate relevant personnel 	<p><i>Appraisal of information</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to create ‘slow time’ ● to assimilate information from scene ● not to make assumptions ● to begin to interpret crime scene information 	
<p><i>Delegation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to delegate actions to appropriate people 	<p><i>Strategic awareness</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to be aware of the consequences of actions 	
<p><i>Organising mechanics of investigation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● overall scene management 	<p><i>Adaptation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to demonstrate flexibility 	
<p>General management</p> <p><i>Leadership</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to take responsibility ● to maintain control 		
<p><i>Communication process</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to communicate with team, specialists, media etc ● to listen to advice ● to make it clear what you as SIO expect 		

assimilating relevant information at this stage, the SIO can begin to build a picture of what is now known about both the offence and the offender(s) and start to formulate appropriate lines of enquiry.

Secondly, officers stressed that even at this initial stage the SIO had to begin to interpret the material available at the crime scene, recognising which information may act as a source of potential evidence or identify suspect sets. It is here that many interviewees felt that the SIO's investigative knowledge and experience of specific crime types comes to the fore.

Finally, and perhaps most vital to this stage, interviewees emphasised the need for the SIO to start managing the investigation. This involves planning and shaping the parameters of the investigation with all the parties involved. In order to identify salient information from the crime scene, close collaboration with relevant personnel (e.g. Scenes Of Crime Officers, forensic scientists and the pathologist) was deemed to be essential. Some interviewees said that the SIO should be able to co-ordinate these different investigative roles, ensuring that s/he maintains control of the scene, balancing the needs of those involved and dealing with a wide range of competing priorities. The interviewees felt that all too often 'less effective' SIOs would relinquish control of the scene too quickly, bowing to the pressure from other investigative parties. One Head of CID emphasised the importance of retaining the crime scene for as long as was required:

“The crime scene is like a roll of film that’s played once. If you spoil it then it’s finished forever”.

Interviewees also suggested that planning involves not just implementing the 'standard' actions of a serious crime enquiry, but also anticipating that it may not be a 'standard' investigation. Consequently, during this time an 'effective' SIO must begin to anticipate how the actions undertaken during the initial crime scene assessment will be evaluated during the court process.

As one SIO observed:

“It’s all about planning and managing this incident which doesn’t stand still for you... you must be able to decide your game plan for two years time”.

Element 2: Assessing incoming information

Assessing incoming information involves the further application of the investigative knowledge held by the SIO. This knowledge will help provide the basis for interpreting the behaviours exhibited at the crime scene and, coupled

Figure 7: Principal skill requirements: assessment of incoming information

Management skills	Investigative ability	Knowledge levels
<p>People management</p> <p><i>Team-building</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to involve team members in decision-making process <p>Investigative management</p> <p><i>Consultation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to consult with appropriate personnel (e.g. investigative team) and particularly specialist advisers <p><i>Planning</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● anticipation ● to structure investigation within appropriate boundaries <p><i>Delegation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to assign tasks to appropriately skilled individuals <p><i>Decision-making process</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to have a rationale for making decisions <p><i>Expert advice</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to manage specialist advisers effectively <p>General management</p> <p><i>Communication process</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to communicate effectively with media, staff, witnesses etc. 	<p><i>Investigative competence</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to formulate investigative strategies ● to demonstrate an ability to learn from experience <p><i>Appraisal of incoming information</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to demonstrate ability to absorb incoming information ● to establish the relevance of information ● to establish the reliability and validity of information ● to play ‘devil’s advocate’ ● to verify expert advice ● to display objectivity <p><i>Adaptation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to remain flexible 	<p><i>Underpinning knowledge</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● awareness of strengths and weaknesses of team ● knowledge of roles ● procedural ● domain knowledge of specific crime types ● to be aware of specialist advisers that could be approached

with investigative experience/ability, should enable the SIO to make appropriate inferences from the crime scene. The SIO needs to assess incoming information to establish its likely value to the investigation and establish what the investigation now knows about the offence. This includes assessing the quality and relevance of

experts' interpretation of information. Example 1 highlights an example of an SIO who an interviewee felt successfully questioned expert advice provided to the investigation.

Example 1

“This is about an SIO who applied underpinning knowledge to enable him to critically assess the advice offered by a pathologist. We had an SIO who had a lot of trouble with pathology. We [the investigative team] tend to take such advice as always one hundred per cent. This SIO was unhappy with the pathology. He went asking others [pathologists] against a lot of people's [investigative team] advice. He found that there was clearly a conflict and that the second pathologist that he saw was right. This led to the arrest and the conviction of a killer. He challenged expert advice.”

Therefore, the SIO has to readily assess the information, produce a cogent response, establish the substance of the information and whether it links with something already known by the investigative team. Respondents stressed that if it is not absolutely clear what occurred, then the SIO needs to develop a number of plausible scenarios and evaluate them against the facts of the case.

Assessing the reliability and validity of a piece of information has to be accomplished in a short space of time. In hard-to-solve serious crimes, many critical decisions will be made in the first 24 to 48 hours and these may influence the likelihood of a successful detection. A frequent observation was that the SIO alone cannot be expected to evaluate each piece of incoming information. The SIO delegates to appropriate individuals within the investigative team. The investigative team act as a filter mechanism, evaluating a lot of the 'lower level' information and passing what is believed to be more crucial information to the SIO (and the management team) to assess. The investigative team appears to be largely responsible for 'sorting the wheat from the chaff'.

Given this, appropriate delegation was considered critical; even the best SIO could not achieve their objectives throughout an enquiry without sufficient staff of the right calibre, and the skill to make the best use of them. Example 2 demonstrates the consequences on the morale of a team with an SIO who did not have staff with the relevant knowledge and investigative experience.

Because of the need to partially delegate the assessment of incoming information, particular emphasis was placed on the relevance of communication skills at this stage of the enquiry. It was important that the SIO makes the investigative team aware of priority issues and what things have to be brought to his/her attention. The

SIO places a great deal of reliance upon his/her staff and managing the team in this process was considered very important.

Example 2

“He drafted in staff from uniform who did not have the right skills for the job. When the SIO found out that in the middle of briefings, the basic, correct, legal procedures were not being adhered to because of a lack of knowledge by staff, then of course he (SIO) went ballistic. The assumption was being made that the staff should automatically know the correct legal procedure. The SIO expected that the police officers should know and that he should not have to explain the legal technicalities. You need to check constantly and not assume. There is nothing worse than people [inexperienced team members] being pulled apart in front of their peers. They tried to do the best that they had been taught but the skill levels were not there. It left bad feelings among the team so that they had to keep checking as they feared criticism all the time.”

Full consultation with the investigative team was also highlighted. Several officers remarked that an ‘effective’ SIO was one who could create an atmosphere where team members had the confidence to contribute ideas and theories on the case so that the SIO used them as a ‘sounding board’. This consultation process ensures that the information coming into the enquiry is thereby evaluated by the whole team, bringing together their experience and expertise. As one SIO stated:

“...doing that (consultation) means that you will have a better chance of hitting upon the right answers to the questions you are faced with. So look, assess and act in consultation with your team”.

Nevertheless, it was emphasised that SIOs are ultimately responsible for the decisions made on the information presented. It is the SIO, and the management team, who have the ultimate role in quality controlling incoming information. For example, have all the fingerprints been checked, including partial and low quality prints; from which surfaces have they been taken? The need to constantly question information, which filtered up the investigative process, was referred to by various interviewees as ‘investigative cynicism’. This involves constantly testing and re-testing the assumptions that underpin investigative hypotheses and the relevance of ‘facts’. It was also judged crucial during this stage that SIOs realise that they and their teams may not be in a position to assess effectively the value of a piece of information. Hence, it was argued that an ‘effective’ SIO needs to possess an awareness of specialist advisers outside the investigation who may be approached for support and assistance. An SIO should be prepared to ask experts how a piece of information may influence the investigation.

Finally, it was felt that SIOs had to ensure that an efficient structure was in place to deal with the information gathered (e.g. HOLMES). This structure should allow the results of any evaluation to be recorded in a format accessible to the investigation as a whole.

Element 3: Selecting appropriate lines of enquiry

Figure 8: Principal skill requirements: selecting appropriate lines of enquiry

Management skills	Investigative ability	Knowledge levels
<p>Investigative management</p> <p><i>Consultation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to encourage contributions from the team and other relevant personnel <p><i>Planning</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to anticipate consequences of actions <p><i>Delegation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to continue to delegate appropriately <p><i>Decision-making process</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to provide rationale for decisions taken <p>General management</p> <p><i>Communication process</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to continue to make effective use of de-briefings, media etc. <p><i>Resource management</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to negotiate for both staff and finance at all levels <p><i>Administrative competence</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to structure the information gathering process ● to initiate a policy for recording key decisions taken 	<p><i>Investigative competence</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to formulate a media strategy ● to remain appropriately focused ● to develop and test investigative hypotheses ● to prioritise lines of enquiry <p><i>Appraisal of incoming information</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to continue to display objectivity ● to continue to evaluate incoming information <p><i>Strategic awareness</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to realise how the consequences of actions impact on both the force and the community <p><i>Adaptation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to remain open, particularly to expert advice ● to remain flexible 	<p><i>Underpinning knowledge</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● procedural ● knowledge of roles ● domain knowledge of specific crime types ● awareness of what resources are required (both staff and finance) ● knowledge of what resources are available ● knowledge of how such resources are obtained ● awareness of specialist advisers that can be approached <p><i>Future developments</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to be aware of current developments in the investigative field ● to be aware of changes in legislation, forensics and technology

Selecting appropriate lines of enquiry is closely linked to element two of the investigative process. Having assessed and evaluated information, the SIO may be in a better position to begin to formulate hypotheses about the offence and the offender. In turn, this will enable the SIO to select appropriate lines of enquiry that might yield useful information to the investigation. Although ultimately responsible for the decisions adopted, the SIO accomplishes this with the aid of the investigative team. The team, at whatever level, should be encouraged to contribute their views and opinions. Consequently, regular briefings and debriefings are fundamental to this process.

Combining advice from both the team and other specialist advisers, together with information from the investigation and his/her own knowledge, the SIO recognises what is needed to identify, arrest, charge and prosecute the offender. The SIO needs to know where additional relevant information is likely to be obtained, and how the investigation can best get hold of it. It is interesting to note within this element of the investigation that few interviewees spontaneously mentioned an 'instinct' for solving crime (the natural detective) as a key skill.

It was also argued that 'effective' SIOs were able to make decisions based on what is relevant to the investigation, rather than making decisions on the basis of unsubstantiated assumptions. This involved SIOs keeping an open mind and retaining flexibility within the investigative process. The current climate of accountability has placed particular attention on the closing down of lines of enquiry and the justifications for such decisions. The SIO should also realise how the consequences of his/her actions impact on both the force as a whole, the local community, the victim, the victim's family, witnesses and the investigative team.

Resource management was considered a key skill during this stage of the process. Although there are often guidelines in place which provide the SIO with a breakdown of staffing levels and resources available for a serious crime investigation, the majority of officers interviewed acknowledged that in reality the acquisition of resources provides a challenge for many SIOs. Hence, an SIO needs to possess a realistic awareness of what resources are available and how to obtain them; negotiation skills are vital in this respect. An 'effective' SIO should be able to appreciate the fluctuations within the investigative process, and know both where and when to concentrate the available resources. Example 3 illustrates where an SIO felt that he was lacking in this particular skill.

Example 3

“Initially there was a misunderstanding on the level of resources needed to run the enquiry. The (divisional) estimate was completely out of sync with my estimate and it took a few days to get the staff we needed. I think that was bad for the investigation, because in the end we lost a lot of ground. There was a lack of understanding of what was required to conduct the investigation in terms of the personnel and resources that are required to run an enquiry. In hindsight maybe I should have been a bit tougher than I was in demanding the resources I really needed. But I was a new boy on my first major enquiry as the SIO. I feel that I would not tolerate that now, I would explain that I needed more than this. Looking back, I should have been stronger on that as we lost some time, although we got the case solved.”

Differences exist between forces as to the level of involvement in resource management by the SIOs. Some of those forces that took part in this study operate logistics departments that are responsible for the majority of the resource management involved in serious crime investigations. The existence of such support units was cited by some interviewees as an example of good practice, as it leaves the SIO with additional time to actually investigate. However, even with a logistics department an SIO still has to decide what level of resources to draw upon and when. Other forces, however, felt that such units have contributed to the de-skilling of SIOs. Having to resource an investigation was perceived by some as integral to the role of an ‘effective’ SIO. It was argued that managing resources enables the SIO to have greater control of the investigative process, allowing them to be more responsive to the changing resource needs of the investigation.

Element 4: Case development

By this stage of the investigative process, information has been integrated into the investigation and interpreted accordingly. Options for gathering additional information have been reviewed. If sufficient information has been gathered, it may be possible to move to the post-charge element of the investigative process.

Where additional information is required, the investigative cycle continues to iterate. If more information is required, it is important for the SIO to consider where this information is likely to reside. Many of those interviewed emphasised the need for the SIO to establish what options exist to gather the required information and which are the most appropriate to pursue. If no practical lines of enquiry exist at this stage then the investigation is no longer perceived as active. Future reviews may identify new lines of enquiry that could serve to re-start the investigative process anew.

Figure 9: Principal skill requirements: case development

Management skills	Investigative ability	Knowledge levels
<p>People management</p> <p><i>Staff support</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to tend to welfare of staff ● to motivate team members <p><i>Team-building</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to continue to keep staff involved <p>Investigative management</p> <p><i>Consultation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to continue to encourage contributions from team members ● to continue to consult specialist advisers <p><i>Professional integrity</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to maintain professional continuity <p>General management</p> <p><i>Leadership</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to act as a role model to team members <p><i>Resource management</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to maintain appropriate resource levels <p><i>Administrative competence</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to constantly monitor investigation 	<p><i>Investigative competence</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to investigate all feasible options <p><i>Appraisal of incoming information</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to continue to review lines of enquiry ● to continue to validate incoming information ● to avoid speculation <p><i>Strategic awareness</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to realise how the consequences of actions impact on both the force, the community, victim, witnesses etc. <p><i>Adaptation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to remain flexible ● to remain open-minded <p><i>Innovative style</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to think laterally ● to incorporate new developments into the investigation 	<p><i>Underpinning knowledge</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● procedural ● domain knowledge of specific crime types ● awareness of specialist advisers that can be approached ● awareness of what motivates team members <p><i>Future developments</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to be aware of current developments in the investigative field ● to be aware of changes in legislation, forensics and technology

At this stage, respondents believed it was imperative that the SIO did not become too focused on a particular line of enquiry at the expense of others, but was mindful of other avenues that could be pursued. It was here that many interviewees referred to the ‘flair’ that ‘effective’ SIOs seemed to possess. When asked to define this more fully, it became clear that this related to the ability of the SIO to think laterally, going beyond the traditional methods of investigation. ‘Effective’ SIOs were

described as those who not only kept up-to-date with changes in legislation, forensics and technology, but would actively incorporate new developments into the enquiry. Example 4 illustrates where an SIO used new technology effectively within an investigation.

Example 4

“I had a murder enquiry where we had lots of intelligence but no firm evidence. I needed to arrest a number of people and the intelligence was that the offender was a gang leader from XX, but we couldn’t find him. One of the good things was the technology. I managed to get hold of an emerging analytical technique. I was becoming aware of what such analysis could do and how, at the end of the day, we managed to trace the offender through this process. I just felt that that was using experts and technology to their full potential.”

Several officers argued that constant reviewing of the situation through regular briefings and de-briefings was also required; a single piece of evidence may result in the investigation changing direction. The SIO should also continue to balance the lines of enquiry against the available costs. An ‘effective’ SIO needs to remain detached, open-minded, analytical and ensuring that professional continuity is being maintained throughout the investigative process.

By far the most frequently cited skill in this stage of an investigation was attending to the welfare needs of the team. This was perceived as particularly important in long-running investigations. We have already noted that the SIO has to employ a variety of techniques to motivate staff in order to maximise their contribution. This requires an understanding of *what* motivates the different individuals in the team and an awareness of *when* motivation is required. Interviewees suggested a number of factors which influence the motivation of the team. These included: ensuring actions given to team members are relevant and that they will have a clear end result; making the staff feel valued; having an open door policy rather than establishing cliques; providing constant encouragement to the team; and, perhaps most importantly, being perceived as a credible SIO. Those interviewed perceived credibility as extremely important in motivating staff and maintaining the momentum of an enquiry, whilst ensuring a tight control of the strategic objectives. Example 5 illustrates where an SIO paid good attention to the welfare needs of the staff.

Example 5

“This relates to a triple murder where the husband murdered the wife and then murdered the two children. It was the care for the extended family by the SIO that was handled very well. He appointed victim liaison officers not only to the grandmother of the children but also to the sisters of the victim. It was the care that he showed, and the concern for the other officers, as the children who were murdered were similar in age to the children of the officers working on the case. It was very well handled. He spoke to people on an individual basis. For example after the post-mortem, he took the time to talk to the officers that went to ask how they were coping. He took the time to be very caring, and that was an important aspect.”

Element 5: Post-charge case management

‘Effective’ SIOs were widely seen as those officers who had been anticipating the post-charge case management from the start; consequently the investigative process had been documented as it occurred. A detailed and concise summary of the investigation, together with an audit trail documenting the decision-making process must be created. Policy books were seen as an integral part of this process.

While the direct involvement of the SIO diminishes at this stage, the SIO still maintains overall responsibility for the investigation. Consequently, it was felt that an ‘effective’ SIO should adopt a clear supervisory role regarding the preparation of the case file. This task should have been delegated to an officer from the start of the investigation, together with the responsibilities for disclosure and exhibits.

Many of the SIOs felt that it was beneficial to attend court hearings. This enabled them to observe the judicial process and learn the ‘protocol’ involved (e.g. the rules for presenting evidence and how such evidence can be tackled and interpreted by barristers). Predictably, knowledge of the legal process was perceived to be a key skill during this stage.

Respondents also considered it important that the SIO should be able to communicate effectively with those involved in the legal process. Close liaison with CPS and barristers, as well as attendance at case conferences, was recommended.

The post-charge phase of an investigation does not necessarily signal the end of the investigative process. Staffing levels and resources have to be maintained at an appropriate level. Additional information may still be required to strengthen the case. Interviewees felt that it was important that this is acknowledged by the SIO.

Figure 10: Principal skill requirements: post -charge case management

Management skills	Investigative ability	Knowledge levels
<p><i>People management</i></p> <p><i>Interpersonal skills</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to relate to all individuals involved during this stage <p><i>Investigative management</i></p> <p><i>Professional integrity</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to remain meticulous in actions <p><i>Planning</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to anticipate any weaknesses in case <p><i>General management</i></p> <p><i>Leadership</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to maintain involvement in a supervisory role ● to retain commitment to the investigation <p><i>Communication process</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to communicate with those involved in the legal processes ● to inform witnesses and victims of court process <p><i>Resource management</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to maintain appropriate resource levels <p><i>Administrative competence</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to prepare audit trail for legal parties etc. 	<p><i>Investigative competence</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to be aware of possible defence arguments ● to ensure that all lines of enquiry are completed ● to demonstrate the ability to learn from experience <p><i>Appraisal of incoming information</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to question and challenge legal parties 	<p><i>Underpinning knowledge</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● legal processes ● court 'protocol' for presentation of evidence ● rules of disclosure ● rules for exhibits ● knowledge concerning content and format of case file ● knowledge of roles required <p><i>Future developments</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to be aware of changes in legislation

Several officers also perceived this stage of the investigative process as an opportunity for development. 'Effective' SIOs were described in some of the interviews as those who ensured that both they and their staff learned lessons from the particular investigation. Example 6 highlights the importance that an SIO placed on this aspect of the investigative process.

Example 6

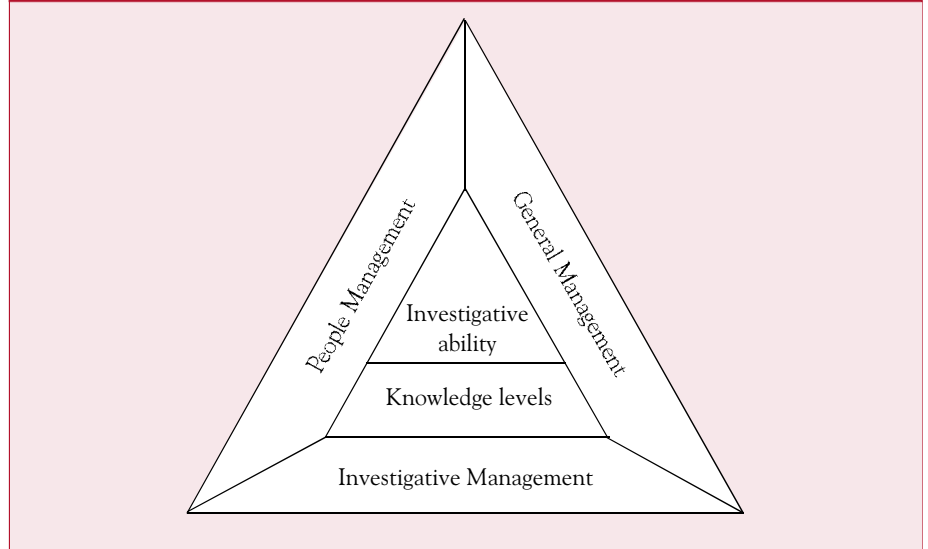
“After the investigation finished, I had an afternoon session where I brought all the investigation team together, even the ones that had left. We had an honest and open discussion that we agreed not to take outside the room, apart from the learning aspect. We looked for learning opportunities from the investigation, where that was raised, whether or not people should have been charged at that time, when we could have used certain tactics etc. It was specifically about learning opportunities that existed for all of us within those couple of months. It is not dissimilar from a hot de-brief from a tactical operation that you might conduct within twenty-four hours, only this was a slow time de-brief. I think that it was a good aspect of the investigation, as immediately after, a similar offence took place where those learning opportunities were straight in and working. They made a difference. Unless we had facilitated that and brought it out, I don't think that we would have gained that opportunity. I have never had an SIO do that for me before, you have to ask yourself why? It does leave you vulnerable as an SIO. I can imagine some of the SIO's wouldn't want that vulnerability and would not want to be associated with it, maybe they could not handle some of the critical feedback they would receive.”

Integration of skills

While the balance of skills and abilities varies throughout the course of an investigation, the most striking finding is the extent to which each element relies on the combination of skill types. Overall, the interviews revealed that to be 'effective', an SIO is dependent upon a combination of skills and knowledge across *all* elements of the investigative process. A major crime investigation is very much a synthesis of the three skill clusters (management skills, investigative ability and knowledge levels). Figure 11 illustrates the integration of the skill clusters.

The interviews reveal that effective management skills permeate all elements of the investigative process; they facilitate the execution of many of the activities central to a serious crime enquiry. However, it is important to note that our definition of management skills includes what we have defined as 'investigative management', which in itself is dependent upon the combination of management skills and relevant knowledge. Investigative ability is particularly evident when performing tasks such as evaluating the relevance of information, inferring meaning, developing lines of enquiry and investigative hypotheses. The need for knowledge underpins the investigative process as a whole. Knowledge of investigative and forensic techniques, court procedures and crime types were identified as being of particular relevance.

Figure 11: Integration of skill clusters



Within our sample of SIOs from both the initial and the peer-nominated groups, there were some whose limited experience as investigators would not enable them to possess the full ‘dictionary’ of skills required to be ‘effective’. However, we know that some of these SIOs were nevertheless perceived as effective by their colleagues. When discussing this in the interviews, these officers felt that their success reflected more of a team-based approach to investigations. They argued that an SIO with less developed investigative management, investigative skills and/or lower levels of knowledge, could in part be supported by their deputy, their management team, the investigative team as a whole and those individuals less directly involved with the investigation. Therefore some interviewees perceived the team-based approach as a fundamental support mechanism for the SIO. As one officer observed:

“If the SIO does not have the knowledge and experience some of it can be made up by other people on the team, but again it depends whether they are willing to listen to the advice”.

However, it would appear overall that a basic level of ability in investigative management is pivotal to the role of an ‘effective’ SIO. While other gaps in an individual SIO’s portfolio of skill can in the short-term be compensated by the

skills resident in the team and in the long-term through experience and development, it is difficult to conceive of an 'effective' SIO operating without some skills in this area.

In conclusion, 'effective' SIOs require a combination of management skill, investigative ability and knowledge that need to be applied across all elements of the investigative process. We know, however, that some 'effective' SIOs have succeeded with some gaps in their skill portfolio. The findings suggest that, providing appropriate skills reside in the investigative team and that the SIO has an understanding of the potential application of those skills and knows how to access them, these gaps can be overcome. However, the process of investigative management cannot be delegated down within the investigative team; these skills *must* reside with the SIO. The critical nature of investigative management skills means that while an SIO may be dependent on specialist skills and experience associated with serious crime enquiries, an 'effective' SIO is one who also possesses abilities in this management arena.

5. Skill acquisition, selection and the future environment for SIOs

This chapter examines current thinking on skill acquisition in general and comparisons with SIOs' perceptions on how skills are best acquired. It also examines the selection and 'nurturing' of SIOs and concludes with a brief overview of issues that will influence the environment in which SIOs will work in the future. Due to the changing nature of the police service, it is unlikely that the same environment in which 'effective' SIOs acquired their skills in this study will be replicated. Furthermore, it is likely that the skills and abilities of the next generation of SIOs may differ somewhat from today's SIOs.

Skill acquisition

Current thinking on the development of managers emphasises several aspects of the process by which managers learn. Research conducted by Mintzberg (1980) in the US and Stewart (1976; 1982) in the UK examined how managers spend their time. As a result of this work, the emphasis in management development work has shifted from formal learning programmes to developmental processes (e.g. projects and assignments) as vehicles for learning. An awareness of different learning styles is considered to be important if people are to learn effectively.

The balance between training and experience

Traditional training programmes are generally perceived as good methods for teaching conceptual or theoretical knowledge. Mumford (1994) argues that skills that emphasise getting things done are better learnt in other ways, particularly through on-the-job developmental experiences or assignments. This distinction has also been made within police management training. Bourne (1999) stresses the interdependence of knowledge and skill, where skills are seen as the practical application of knowledge. According to Bourne, *knowledge* is best acquired through the more traditional classroom-based methods – listening, observing and reading. *Skills*, however, need to be acquired through practice and feedback. Therefore, in order to acquire the necessary skills, officers need to be provided with the opportunity for practice, or as he terms it, 'reinforcement'. He states that without reinforcement, "40% of newly-acquired skills disappear within one week...and 80% will disappear...within one month" (p16).

This viewpoint was widely supported in the interviews. Whilst training was perceived to provide the SIO with a valuable source of knowledge, it was felt that it must be combined with experience in the field. SIOs cannot be taught everything in the classroom. Training courses were felt to be useful in preparing an SIO on how to progress a serious crime enquiry (providing them with the knowledge base), but many of those interviewed also believed that it was essential

for an SIO to put 'theory into practice'. It was widely felt that this could best be achieved through direct involvement in investigations. It is important to note, however, that experience was not so much concerned with the *time* spent in the role, but defined as an ability to learn lessons from investigations. Being involved in a large number of serious crime investigations did not necessarily provide an SIO with the correct 'repertoire' of skills. Consequently, an 'effective' SIO was identified as one who has the capacity to *learn* from investigative experience. Furthermore, many officers felt that this experience did not necessarily have to be obtained through the role of a lead investigator, but could be gained at a number of levels within CID. As one SIO noted:

"I gained a lot of experience on the ground as a detective constable working on a murder enquiry; a vast amount of experience as a DS at a different level and a huge amount of experience working outside the force with the Forensic Science Service. All of these are like pieces of a jigsaw that come together".

As a result, future SIOs are more likely to have witnessed, and more importantly learned from, issues and problems that have to be tackled within a serious crime enquiry.

The interviewees felt that there was a requirement, on behalf of team members, for SIOs to have 'gone through the pain barrier' (been involved in a major investigation from beginning to end). This was also seen to afford them credibility, which we have noted is important in terms of motivation, and provide them with the confidence to carry out their role effectively. In addition, SIOs (including the peer-nominated SIOs) and Heads of CID stressed that having a great deal of investigative experience does not mean that SIOs have no more to learn. It was believed that every investigation presents a different set of challenges and difficulties for SIOs to experience and points to learn.

A common complaint from the majority of SIOs interviewed was that some newly appointed SIOs, with little investigative experience, appear to feel that their attendance on a training course will "magically" qualify them as an 'effective' SIO. One SIO observed:

"I think that there is a tendency, especially with the Management of Serious and Series Crime (MSSC) course, that if you've got on that, it qualifies you as an SIO. Why do they think an SIO can become an expert because they have been sent on the course and been given the manual?"

Training was perceived as only one method by which SIOs acquire the necessary skills and abilities required to carry out their role within a major crime enquiry. A balance of focused training and relevant experience should exist; training cannot exist on its own.

Some of the criticisms of current training have already been acknowledged through the introduction of the National SIO Development Programme. The aims of the Programme are to combine taught courses with personal study, work experience and 'on-the-job' development. The Programme will provide individuals on the two existing courses, Management of Serious Crime (MSC) and Management of Serious and Series Crime (MSSC), with opportunities to develop investigative competence. Four modules of learning, focusing upon complex legal and forensic issues, the most effective use of resources in procedure and the intelligence function, have been produced (Management of Linked Serious Crime Course). In addition, the programme also addresses both investigative knowledge and investigative management – two 'skill clusters' this study has found integral to an effective serious crime enquiry. The Programme hopes to bridge the gap between the present MSC course and the MSSC course, a gap that was identified by the majority of officers interviewed as part of this study.

Self-development

Officers in the study also believed that SIOs have a responsibility, to both themselves and the police service as a whole, to keep themselves up-to-date with issues affecting the investigation of serious crime. Self-development was perceived as particularly relevant to increasing the knowledge of SIOs. With the rapid increase in technology and changes in legislation, SIOs can "become fairly rusty, fairly quickly". The new National SIO Development Programme has recognised this and has introduced a self-development structure for SIOs, combining a variety of learning techniques.

'Nurturing' future SIOs

The interviews also revealed that there were no *formal* processes in place which identify and groom future SIOs. At an informal level, however, officers believed that in some forces, those who possess the clear potential to be SIOs are encouraged to develop the appropriate investigative experience from an early stage. This is built on a system of early identification, unofficial mentoring and shadowing. Additionally, some forces were seen to provide such individuals with the opportunity to ally themselves with suitable senior officers, encouraging them to question investigative approaches. Attachments to departments other than the police service (such as the Forensic Science Service) were another method by

which relevant experience was gained. Such attachments enabled officers to understand how an investigation exists within a wider context. One officer interviewed had been provided with this experience and felt that it had benefited him greatly, increasing his understanding of the investigative process and the pressures which impinge upon all those involved.

Not all forces, however, were found to operate these informal methods for acquiring skills. Furthermore, a general feeling expressed by interviewees was that they would like to see these methods developed into a more formal and structured system. It was recognised, however, that certain issues would need to be explored in more depth before recommendations can be made regarding implementation of such a system. For instance, when in an officer's career do you identify someone with the potential to be an SIO? And how do you ensure that such an individual is mentored in the discipline of investigation before promotion?

De-briefing programmes

Mumford (1994) also distinguishes between accidental processes, opportunistic processes and planned processes as ways of developing people on-the-job. He argues for trying to turn accidental learning processes into opportunistic learning processes that are integrated into the work activity but are clearly structured to deliver development. An example of this is the senior investigator reviewing the learning experiences from a particular investigation with the team in the form of a de-briefing.

The majority of officers interviewed suggested de-briefing as a useful means by which SIOs were able to develop skills required for the role. De-briefing was seen to occur both formally and informally. The latter often occurs in an unstructured way (over 'a pint of beer in the bar'), where anecdotal stories of both good and bad practice are related. This was perceived as an on-going process throughout an investigation.

However, potential benefits from more formal de-brief programmes were stressed. The need to reflect back in a structured way on how aspects of an investigation were dealt with was felt to benefit both an SIO and the team. This was particularly true if the focus was on the more negative aspects of the investigation. This was seen to enable officers, at whatever level within an enquiry, to develop their role within the investigative process. The de-brief acted as a form of critical appraisal. As one detective sergeant stated:

“Passing a driving test does not make you Stirling Moss. If you think that once you pass your driving test you have nothing left to learn, then you are mistaken. You learn a lot more about driving after you pass your test”.

It was suggested that officers, especially SIOs, should try to be less afraid of feedback and criticism concerning the way in which they handled an investigation. In order for structured de-briefs to be constructive, officers believed that they should be conducted in an open and risk-free atmosphere where staff can be honest and learn lessons from the de-briefing. Some forces in the study do operate successful formal de-brief programmes. These were characterised by providing on-going access to other SIOs, and holding review meetings that were supportive, rather than concerned with assessing performance. This suggests that within some of the forces that took part in this study, a genuine learning culture does exist, rather than one where officers are blamed for their mistakes. De-briefing acts as a method by which experiential learning can be captured and disseminated.

Selection of SIOs

Selecting the right individuals

As well as acquiring skills and abilities through training and experience, many interviewees felt that personal characteristics were also critical in defining ‘effective’ SIOs. The suggestion that leaders possess an inherent set of personality characteristics which serve to distinguish them from non-leaders, has previously been explored by the Trait theory of leadership (e.g. Stogdill, 1974; Sorrentino and Field, 1986). The evidence, however, to support this view is mixed. It does appear from the literature that some people are more ‘natural’ leaders than others, but there does not seem to be a set of personal qualities which consistently discriminates between leaders and non-leaders (Turner, 1991). An opposing viewpoint is that the effectiveness of leaders is dependent upon the context in which the individuals work; some individuals will be more effective leaders in some situations as opposed to others (Fiedler, 1964; 1981).⁷ Given what we have observed about investigative management in Chapter 3, this point is worth highlighting.

⁷ An additional factor might also be the willingness of team members to be led.

Nevertheless, many officers interviewed believed that personal characteristics should be taken into account when selecting individuals, at whatever point in their career, for the role of an SIO. As one detective sergeant stated:

“Some of the ‘skills’ of the best investigators are inherent in the individual”.

In particular, several respondents talked about having a passion to be an investigator. All interviewees displayed a high level of commitment to the role. This dedication cannot be taken for granted and appears integral to the role of 'effective' SIOs. A second key characteristic was related to the qualities of leadership, which serve to inspire those below them – the charisma of an 'effective' SIO was frequently mentioned by officers of all ranks.

Other personal characteristics identified were:

- tenacity;
- attention to detail;
- patience;
- enthusiasm;
- being a 'people' person;
- sympathy;
- honesty; and,
- an appropriate sense of humour.

More 'effective' SIOs were identified as those that were naturally gifted with many of these personal characteristics. In contrast, it was felt that those individuals who did not possess these 'natural' attributes would have to rely more upon their training and experience in order to be perceived as 'effective'. This is an area that deserves further study; in the uncertain world of crime investigation, a person who is able to facilitate effectively may be a more competent investigator than a more judgemental individual within some elements of the investigative process.

Factors affecting the future role of the SIO

A final issue that was addressed by the research was the changing role of the SIO. A number of factors emerged from the interviews that may influence the skill-base of 'effective' SIOs in the future. These were: tenure; downgrading of CID status; de-skilling of the role; financial restrictions on investigations; involvement in different crime types; accountability; and, accreditation for SIOs.

- *Tenure*

In some forces, detective expertise appears to have been affected by the introduction of tenure. This limits the time an officer can spend within one department of a force. After the time has expired, the officer must then transfer to another department within their force.⁸ Although not implemented in every force, some SIOs see tenure as a severe threat to SIO 'specialist' knowledge.

⁸ See Mundy (1999) for a general discussion on the impact of tenure.

While the effects of tenure will impact on all three skill clusters, it is likely to pose most threat to the area of investigative management, investigative ability and knowledge. Aside from its impact on SIOs, this could perhaps result in the disintegration of an 'expert' investigative team. It was argued that, to avoid this, 'placements' in other departments should be long enough to allow officers to accrue new skills, but brief enough to prevent their CID skills from becoming outdated or 'rusty'.

- *Perceived downgrading of CID status*

A second factor that may affect the ability to develop and retain 'effective' SIOs is the perceived downgrading of CID status. This has largely been attributed to the de-layering of management ranks within CID. First, in some forces there is a phasing out of the rank of chief inspector. This results in a decrease in line management skills and fewer opportunities for chief inspectors within CID as a whole. Secondly, changes in pay regulations for detective inspectors and above (salaried) have meant that they are no longer able to claim overtime. It is now becoming common within CID that many officers do not want to progress beyond detective inspector. Finally, there has been a perceived move towards enhancing the uniform role within the force in order to promote equal opportunities. Consequently, CID is no longer perceived as an attractive career past middle management.

- *De-skilling of the SIO role*

The role of the SIO is perceived in some forces as changing from that of an investigator to more of a crime manager. It was felt that with the increased use of specialist advisers (e.g. analysts, forensic scientists and profilers), the role of the SIO is becoming more of a co-ordinator of others. As noted in chapter four, the setting up of logistics and administrative support departments has also been seen by some officers as contributing to the process of de-skilling. Some interviewees argued that the existence of such support units and specialist advisers did, to some extent, appear to devolve part of the responsibility of major crime enquiries away from the SIO. A common perception was that SIOs were no longer being provided with the opportunities to gain the appropriate skills and attain the relevant experience. Some of those interviewed felt that, if this trend continued, the SIO role would probably be replaced by a combination of highly trained scene managers and investigative managers. They would be answerable to an overall manager, probably of detective chief inspector level or above.

- *Financial restrictions*

Many officers believed that budgets for serious crime investigations will in the future be more constrained, and that costing and resource issues will become increasingly important for the SIO. Therefore, SIOs will need to become more skilled in certain areas relevant to resource management (e.g. negotiation, risk assessment and financial management).

- *Involvement in different crime types*

A frequently mentioned point was that SIOs will become more involved with the investigation of different and possibly specialist types of major crime (e.g. crimes relating to gang activities). Several interviewees believed that SIOs will become more involved in internal enquiries relating to the investigation of allegations of police corruption. It was argued that SIOs should therefore be trained in a number of specific areas to deal with these challenges (e.g. covert surveillance techniques and the appropriate use of both informants and intelligence).

- *Accountability*

High profile cases in the media recently have demonstrated that the police must be *seen* to be responding appropriately within major crime investigations. Challenges to the way that the police investigate crime and their duty of care are likely to increase, from both within the police service and by the public. As media interest has grown in serious crime investigations, so has public criticism of some investigators. Interviewees were acutely aware that they now operate in an environment of accountability where their actions and decisions are transparent to all. Consequently, the potential of civil litigation against SIOs and the public scrutiny of police investigations, are issues that need to be addressed by police forces. Some interviewees saw the move towards accountability as a positive one. They saw it as an opportunity for SIOs to demonstrate that what they do is not based upon intuition, but rational thought processes. However, there was concern that the need to be publicly and internally accountable has led to fewer officers wanting to become SIOs. As a result of this, many of those who took part in this study wanted to see more support from ACPO. One way this could be achieved is by ensuring that members of ACPO possess a clear understanding of the way that major enquiries are run and the role of the SIO in particular. Relevant serious crime experience was seen as imperative for some officers within ACPO. This has been recognised by the ACPO Crime Committee Homicide Working Group, which is currently

progressing work into the role of ACPO officers within homicide investigations. This has also been acknowledged within an HMIC report (1999) concerning wider issues of police integrity.

- *Accreditation*

The role of the SIO is perceived as becoming more professional, with standardised procedures being established across many aspects of the investigative process. Many SIOs saw the role as a vocation and therefore felt the need for development of an SIO from early in an officer's career. These factors led some to suggest the need for national accreditation of SIOs. Accrediting SIOs should ensure that they are recognised as being qualified for the role of an SIO.

It is perhaps worth adding that while the focus of the interviews was about factors that will influence the environment for future SIOs, many will affect more junior members of CID. This in turn will have further consequences for the career development of investigators.

6. Conclusions and recommendations

The environment within which SIOs operate is going through a process of change. A combination of external and internal factors have contributed to this. Serious crime investigations have come under greater scrutiny. This reflects the increased emphasis on accountability, transparency and the quality of many aspects of public service. These developments have taken place at a time when other factors in the police service have started to change the role of the SIO (e.g. tenure, perceived downgrading of CID status, the continuing debate about omni-competence and specialisms, and concerns about police integrity). It is likely that the wider public's interest in serious crime investigations, via the media, will continue to grow. All of these factors will raise the importance attached to the way high-profile crimes are dealt with. It is therefore critical that the police service ensures the future supply of effective investigators with the appropriate balance of skills and abilities.

The research has found that the role of an SIO is a complex one. An 'effective' SIO is dependent upon a combination of skills derived from three clusters: management skill, investigative ability and relevant knowledge. Furthermore, it was found that an 'effective' SIO was dependent upon a minimum one skill from each cluster within each stage of the investigative process. Ideally, an SIO should possess a high level of competency across each of the three clusters but in reality this is not always possible.

Less CID-orientated SIOs

Changing career patterns within the service have meant that some officers have become SIOs with little or no CID experience. Consequently, they may lack experience associated with a particular subset of the management skills (investigative management), investigative ability and relevant knowledge. However, the interviews suggested that even with such a background, some SIOs could still perform effectively in the role. This apparent paradox was explained by the observation that these less CID-orientated SIOs were effective in using the investigative experience and knowledge of individuals in their teams. The combination of this and their own personal experience within the other more generic 'skill' clusters meant that they could be 'effective' senior investigators.

We must acknowledge, however, that the circumstances that have facilitated the success of these less CID-orientated SIOs may only be temporary. Many of those interviewed believed that the lack of investigative expertise evident within some of today's SIOs is likely to permeate down to more junior members of the investigative team. Indeed, there are already concerns around a decline in the number of experienced junior detectives. This issue needs to be highlighted to ACPO and addressed accordingly.

It must also be acknowledged that the future use of less CID-orientated SIOs represents a high-risk strategy. While SIOs from these backgrounds have strengths, the possible absence of what we have defined ‘investigative management’ skills is a significant weakness. Without at least some investigative experience, these SIOs will only have a limited knowledge of the specialisms that may be relevant to their investigation and little experience of how and when to employ those skills. It is also likely that the ability to anticipate problems (identified earlier as a critical skill) will also be hampered by this lack of experience. Hence, there is a serious risk that a less CID-orientated SIO will falter over aspects of the investigative process, even if s/he is the most competent of managers. A further concern is that, in addition to weakening the investigative process in serious crimes, there will be wider consequences for the overall organisational efficiency of the police service.

Experienced CID SIOs

Whilst this study has identified gaps in the skills of less CID-orientated SIOs, it has also indicated that the SIOs that graduate through the traditional CID route may well lack some essential skills as well. Whilst they are likely to possess a sound foundation in investigative processes and a degree of specialist knowledge, it cannot be guaranteed that they will have acquired the necessary management skills. Without these management skills an SIO may well flounder even if his/her investigative abilities are outstanding. Such officers need to develop appropriate management skills in a more structured manner if they are to operate as competent SIOs. Again, ACPO needs to acknowledge formally that a good thief-taker will not necessarily make a good SIO. In other words, the career detective route cannot by itself guarantee to produce ‘effective’ SIOs.

Selection and development of SIOs

The multi-skilled nature of the SIO role has been clearly demonstrated through this research. To ensure that sufficiently qualified SIOs are developed for the future requires a degree of forward planning that, by and large, has not been present within the career development of current SIOs. In order to develop such multi-skilled officers, forces must ensure the next generation of SIOs are identified early in their careers and, more importantly, that they can develop the skills necessary to effectively fulfil the requirements of the role. A number of methods were suggested for acquiring these skills, and these reflect current thinking on the processes by which managers develop. In fact, there are three main areas where intervention is possible: early identification, career development and final selection of SIOs.

Early identification of SIOs

Many of those who participated in this study suggested the need for early identification of individuals with the potential to perform well as SIOs. Further research would be required, however, to establish the point at which an individual with this potential is best identified, and to assess on what basis this potential is recognised. Our findings indicate that to be an 'effective' SIO, an officer should possess a number of core skills, abilities and personal attributes. A number of these may be partly demonstrated early in an officer's career.⁹ For example, successful completion of the sergeant's exam demonstrates a measure of some of the qualities associated with the role of an SIO (leadership, basic management skills, etc.). If such officers also possess the desire to be an SIO and possess the right personal attributes, they could be targeted as potential future SIOs. It would then be incumbent upon senior officers to encourage them to further develop the skills, abilities and knowledge suitable to the role of an SIO.

⁹ PRC are planning future research in this area.

Career development

Developing 'effective' SIOs for the future does partly depend on selecting the right type of individual who appears to possess an aptitude for the role. However, once these individuals are identified it is necessary for officers to be exposed to the right kind of experiences. This will enable them to enhance any existing skills and abilities that they may possess, as well as allowing them to develop those skills that they lack. The research acknowledges that there is no single clear route to becoming an 'effective' SIO; a number of alternative methods and complementary methods of skill acquisition exist.

● *Skill development*

Forces need to provide future SIOs with the relevant opportunities to increase their investigative ability, management skill and knowledge base throughout their career. Officers from a less CID-orientated background possess limited investigative experience. Therefore it would be necessary for senior officers to ensure that these officers are provided with sufficient exposure to this type of experience. This could be achieved through attachments (both within their own force area and in different forces) to relevant units such as forensic departments and major crime units. This may be both a cost-effective and practical solution, the principle of which could also be applied to those officers with a strong investigative background who need to develop their management skills. *Some* of these skills might be obtained through short-term attachments outside the CID context.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- *Training and self-development*

Many officers interviewed identified a gap in current training provision for senior investigators. This is largely being addressed through the introduction of the National SIO Development Programme. Critically, interviewees emphasised the need for training and on-the-job investigative experience to go hand-in-hand, a point which more general research into developing management skills tends to confirm. Again, this is catered for in the SIO Development Programme.

- *Mentoring and de-briefing*

The interviews revealed that, within the forces studied, there are currently no formal processes in place to ‘mentor’ future SIOs, although informal arrangements exist in some force areas. This was largely perceived as a successful technique for ‘nurturing’ potential SIOs and should therefore be implemented on a more formal basis. De-briefing was also seen as a useful mechanism for transferring expertise and occurred both formally and informally. However, for de-briefing to be effective, an open and honest environment where officers were encouraged to discuss mistakes constructively is required. Both potential and existing SIOs have a professional responsibility to develop their levels of knowledge and structured de-briefing is one method by which they could achieve this.

- *Final selection of SIOs*

The ACPO Homicide Working Group has developed standards of competence for SIOs. It is anticipated that these competences will specify the underpinning knowledge, understanding and skills that are essential for competent performance in the role and provide the criteria to assess whether an SIO is performing competently. The results of this research are being incorporated into the development of these competences.

Developing ‘effective’ SIOs for the future will partly depend on ensuring the right kind of environment for potential SIOs to work within, selecting the right individuals to undertake the role, maintaining a close eye on appropriate career progression, and anticipating changes within the context in which they work. Such factors should be acknowledged within future training programmes and policy decisions.

Recommendations

ACPO and forces should be alerted to the loss of appropriate skills within investigative teams and the long-term impact on the quality of serious crime

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

investigations, as well as overall organisational efficiency and integrity. Appropriate processes need to be developed to ensure 'effective' SIOs are in place for the future. To tackle this, the following recommendations need to be embraced:

- the role of training, continuous professional development coupled with appropriate experience was shown to be key to the development of an 'effective' SIO. It will therefore be necessary to co-ordinate training and experience within the career progression of an SIO;
- forces should develop and implement formal systems for early identification of potential SIOs and their subsequent career development. This would need to be supported by research to establish how and at what point someone with the potential to be an SIO is best identified;
- senior officers should provide future SIOs with the relevant opportunities to ensure that gaps in their skill portfolio are addressed by appropriate experience;
- all forces should implement a formal mentoring system early in the career of a potential future SIO;
- forces should establish formal de-briefing programmes for SIOs. These need to be conducted in a risk-free environment where constructive lessons can be learnt. These should be documented and disseminated through the NCF;
- ACPO (Homicide Working Group) are approving standards of competence in Crime Reduction and Investigation. The findings of this research should be complementary to the development of the core competences required for SIOs; and,
- the National Crime Faculty (NCF) should incorporate the research findings within the National SIO Development Programme and disseminate them through its Training and Development Section, with particular emphasis given to developing the management skills associated with an investigation of serious crime.

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Appendix A

Definitions of the 22 skill categories identified for 'effective' SIOs

- *Adaptation*

Investigative strategies need to be dynamic. Due to the evolving nature of the investigative process, an 'effective' SIO has to be able to adapt to the changing needs of an enquiry and new opportunities that present themselves. The SIO should remain open-minded and flexible, being able to re-prioritise existing lines of enquiry and not concentrating on one line of enquiry at the expense of all others.

- *Administrative competence*

The enormous amount of information that enters the majority of serious crime investigations has to be dealt with in a proficient manner. The main issue here is that the SIO has an in-depth understanding of the strengths and limitations of the systems available (e.g. HOLMES), and how to optimise them. The creation and accurate completion of a policy file was felt to be an important administrative competence for the SIO.

- *Appraisal of information*

The ability to assimilate large amounts of incoming information and develop suitable hypotheses is an integral part of a serious crime enquiry. These hypotheses often undergo a process of constant evaluation and review by the SIO and the investigative team to generate options and alternatives. The role of an SIO is to provide quality control. This involves not accepting information at face value but checking the veracity of information by challenging, probing and asking the right questions of the information to establish its relevance to the enquiry. Since SIOs are unable to quality assure every piece of incoming information to the enquiry, it was felt that SIOs should establish other quality assurance processes (management team, effective communication, appropriately skilled officers, etc.). The SIO should remain objective and focused throughout the investigative process and avoid making unfounded assumptions.

- *Appropriate delegation*

SIOs cannot be directly involved in every aspect of an investigation. Several officers emphasised appropriate delegation and empowerment of the staff. Consequently, devolving specific elements of the investigation to officers with appropriate skills, whilst maintaining responsibility for the investigation, was believed to be important qualities of SIOs. The SIO should therefore possess

both an understanding of the roles and tasks required within a serious crime investigation, and where possible, the knowledge of what skills the team members possess.

- *Awareness of future developments*

Changes in areas such as legislation, forensics and technology are common. It was considered essential that an SIO remains up-to-date with current developments in the fields.

- *Optimising the knowledge of the team through appropriate consultation*

An 'effective' SIO was seen as one who creates a more open atmosphere, encouraging all within the investigation team, regardless of rank and role, to contribute their ideas and opinions. Staff should be made to feel at ease expressing their views. More importantly, the SIO should not be seen to be paying 'lip service' to ideas offered, but should listen and comment constructively upon the value of their contributions. This applies not only to the members of the investigative team, but also to those offering other forms of investigative support (The Forensic Science Service, National Crime Faculty, specialist advisers etc.).

- *Decision-making*

Several officers highlighted the ability to make carefully considered and timely decisions. This process is arguably best achieved in consultation with team members. The decisions should be based upon objective and rigorous assessment of available information, coupled with an appreciation of the risks associated with any decision. It was felt that SIOs should be clear as to the rationale underpinning any decisions, and to be able to document them clearly.

- *Handling expert advice*

Increasingly, a wide range of outside experts are being called upon to offer specialist advice within serious crime investigations. Consequently, an SIO should be able to engage these advisers appropriately and to manage their output. The SIO should, however, retain overall control of the enquiry and maintain critical objectivity when assimilating expert advice into the enquiry.

- *Innovative investigative style*

Developments in the support offered to the investigative process have meant that SIOs have more potential sources of information open to them. SIOs

should not be constrained by traditional methods of enquiry. An 'effective' SIO should look for different ways to investigate, not confining themselves to the usual or more obvious approach. Where appropriate, the SIO should adopt a creative approach, thinking laterally, as well as incorporating new developments into the investigation. This might include exploring new ideas and embracing new technology.

- *Interpersonal skills*

The SIO should be capable of relating to people across all levels, inside and outside the investigation. In particular, the SIO should be capable of liaising well with specialist advisers and other key individuals who serve to progress the enquiry.

- *Investigative competence*

An 'effective' SIO should be a competent investigator who is comfortable in the role. Such SIOs have to show that they are adept at understanding the investigative process and to demonstrate sound judgement. Making errors of judgement could lead to the SIO pursuing erroneous lines of enquiry. They have to be capable of creating a balance between a focused approach that is not to the detriment of other reasonable lines of enquiry. 'Effective' SIOs should fully appreciate their role throughout all stages of an enquiry, including post-charge case management.

- *Leadership*

Leadership was defined in terms of an SIO who is able to obtain the respect of the staff, based upon their ability rather than their rank. Such an SIO has to be seen taking responsibility for the investigative process, providing direction, being able to impart confidence in both experienced and less experienced officers. In addition, the good leader was able to bring pertinent information out of the team, to both facilitate and maintain control, to challenge the team in an appropriate manner, and to possess the ability to inspire the team.

- *Maintaining the professional integrity of the investigation*

SIOs should demonstrate a professional approach to the investigative process, consistent with the need to ensure that their actions and decisions are accountable. It was therefore thought essential that an SIO works to a 'code of ethics', is meticulous, paying attention to detail, and methodical in his/her overall approach.

- *Managing the communication process*

These skills encompass the management of both internal (team members, divisional commanders, HOLMES managers and administration departments) and external (media, the public, witnesses and victims) forms of communication. The development of effective communication strategies was also considered important. Examples include the management of briefings and de-briefings, the development of an appropriate media strategy, providing clear instructions to the team and the ability to communicate with those in the team who were less experienced. Presentation skills were also considered important for the 'effective' SIO.

- *Organising the mechanics of the investigation*

These skills relate to the management and execution of the investigative process as a whole. For example: effective management of the crime scene (planning and co-ordinating the various personnel); establishing a system for the management of incoming information into the enquiry; following the procedures for setting up an MIR; and, finally the day-to-day management of the media.

- *Planning the investigation*

The development of an investigative strategy requires an SIO to provide structured direction to the enquiry, establishing performance goals and co-ordinating the actions to be completed by the team members. Lines of enquiry need to be developed, assessed and prioritised. The SIO should be able to anticipate any problems which may arise during the investigative process. Planning the investigation needs to be underpinned by an awareness of the legal and ethical implications of decisions.

- *Resource management*

It was considered imperative that an SIO is able to manage both the staff and finance available to the enquiry. Appreciating the ebbs and flows within the investigative process is important to enable the SIO to know where and when to concentrate resources. The ability to negotiate on a number of levels (administration departments, divisional commanders, etc.) for support is also a significant skill for an 'effective' SIO.

- *Staff development*

Concerns for the longer-term interests of staff were felt to be important. It was believed that 'effective' SIOs should take an active interest in staff development

and provide opportunities for staff to both consolidate and develop further skills. This was primarily achieved by the SIO sharing examples of good and bad practice with staff, highlighting any relevant learning points, and ensuring that they were implemented in future investigations.

- *Staff support*

The ability to motivate the staff within a long running enquiry, especially when morale is low, was widely considered to be a critical management skill of an SIO. This can be achieved through tailoring motivation techniques to team members. One of the most frequently cited skills was a concern for support measures for the welfare of both the team members and the SIO.

Accommodating the reasonable personal needs of staff members of a long-running enquiry was felt to be particularly important. Many 'effective' SIOs would allocate a welfare officer for the duration of long and demanding investigations.

- *Strategic awareness*

Investigations do not happen in isolation. 'Effective' SIOs should be aware how their investigative strategy operates in conjunction with force and organisational goals, as well as being mindful of how the investigation will impact on both the public as a whole (local and particular communities) and their peer group.

- *Team-building*

SIOs have a clear responsibility to manage the investigative team. An 'effective' SIO should be a good team player, dealing with the staff in an equitable manner and managing the team dynamics well. This usually requires that the SIO should possess a knowledge of the staff within the investigative team. This should allow him/her to minimise personality clashes, and recognise the strengths and weaknesses of team members so they can be appropriately employed within the investigation. Several officers also believed it was important not to use rank to intimidate other officers.

- *Underpinning knowledge*

While there will be inevitable differences in the knowledge held by individual SIOs, a basic level of investigative and legal knowledge should be an essential prerequisite of an SIO. If an SIO lacks knowledge in certain areas, they must then ensure that they know where to go and who to approach for information.

Support can also be found from team members, peers and training manuals. Some SIOs, with relatively little investigative experience, felt that their success rested upon their ability to recognise the limits of their knowledge, as well as knowing who to approach and what questions to ask.

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