

FOI 2022-934

I write in connection with your request for information dated 23rd November concerning Interview Training and Confirmation Bias.

I am required by the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to handle all requests in a manner that is blind as to the identity and motives of the requestor. Any information released as a response to a request is regarded as being published and therefore in the public domain without caveat.

Your request for information has now been considered and - having consulted our Learning & Training Department - I am now able to respond as follows.

You wrote:

- 1) Contents of suspect interviewing training undertaken by police officers and detectives
- 2) Length and number of hours spent on suspect interviewing training
- 3) Specific practical activities on suspect interviewing training, e.g. role play
- 4) Skills taught for suspect interviewing and how they are taught
- 5) Title of readings on suspect interviewing requested to police officers during their training
- 6) Is the topic "confirmation bias" covered in any section of the training?
- 7) Do police officers receive any follow up or refresher training on suspect interviewing?
- 8) At what point of their career do they receive it?
- 9) Who is entitled to it?
- 10) Is it mandatory?
- 11) How many hours is the refresher training on suspect interviewing?
- 12) What topics related to suspect interviewing does it cover?
- 13) Does it involve any practical exercise?
- 14) If so, what practical exercise does it involve?
- 15) If the topic of "confirmation bias" is covered in police training, please provide:
 - Sections of training covering "confirmation Bias"
 - Details of training covering "confirmation bias"
- 16) Does the training provide specific skills to counteract confirmation bias in suspect interviewing?
- 17) If so, what type of skills?

Response:

1) Suspect Interview Training forms part of both the PIP (Professional Investigations Program) Level 1 and Level 2 Training undertaken by police officers and detectives within Wiltshire Police.

The training for both the PIP Level 1 and Level 2 qualifications consist of a consolidated week of training in this particular subject matter.

Please refer to the two documents provided which give the breakdown of the training weeks for both qualification levels.

2) Please refer to the attached timetables of training schedules.

3) Please refer to the attached timetables of training schedules.

4) The training consists of a blended approach of didactic teach, group work and practical exercises.

5) Candidates undertaking these two courses are encouraged to reference the relevant College of Policing APP (Authorised Professional Practice) materials relevant to Interviewing. They are also recommended to read and reference books such as "Investigative Interviewing" by Professor Eric Sheppard.

6) Unconscious Bias is covered on both courses.

7) For Officers and Detectives that have undertaken the PIP Level 1 qualification, the natural follow-up training comprises the Level 2 qualification.

For Officers and Detectives that have undertaken the PIP Level 2 qualification, there is a follow-on additional qualification entitled PIP Level 2 Specialist which can be sought subject to the requirements of their role and personal development (subject of course to relevant approval).

Otherwise, there is no specific refresher or follow-up training per-se.

8) Please refer to the previous answer.

9) All Police Officers and Detectives have to undertake PIP Level 1 Training as part of IPL (Initial Police Learning).

For the PIP Level 2 Training, this is given to Officers and Detectives on that program or – again – if it is a specific requirement of their role or required as part of their agreed personal development.

10) As part of these programs, yes.

11) There is no specific refresher training in respect of suspect interviewing, unless there is a change to legislation / guidance etc in which case the Crime Department would organise relevant CPD training sessions for those that needed it.

12) Please refer to the attached timetables of training schedules.

13) Please refer to the attached timetables of training schedules.

14) Please refer to the attached timetables of training schedules.

15) Sections of training covering "confirmation Bias"

16)Details of training covering “confirmation bias”

17) Yes, Confirmation Bias is covered during both PIP1 and PIP2 Training. It is referred to and referenced throughout the agenda of both Training Schedules, although there is no specific dedicated module of the training for it.

The training recognises that if Investigators develop an early view as to what has occurred or who is responsible for a crime, there is a danger that they can focus on the material that supports those views.

The following inputs during Investigator Training are designed to counteract Confirmation Bias – this is tested during the planning, preparation and execution of witness and suspect interviews :-

Investigative Mindset

- a. Understanding the source of material
- b. Planning and preparation
- c. Examination – Account / Clarification / Challenge
- d. Recording and Collation
- e. Evaluation

Challenge

- f. Assume nothing
- g. Believe nothing
- h. Challenge everything

The following session objectives cover BIAS and its effects in a broader context:

Decision-making and Discretion

The influences of bias on the ethical decision-making process:

- i. Disproportionality
- j. Prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination
- k. Conscious and unconscious bias, including implicit bias
- l. Direct and indirect discrimination
- m. Relevance of police occupational culture
- n. Structural, institutional, and individual explanations for bias and discrimination

Effects of personal experience, personal bias, values, cultural norms and emotions upon ethical decision-making, including:

- o. Personal resilience
- p. Cynicism
- q. Empathy
- r. Policing culture

Victims and Witnesses:

- s. Ensuring victims and witnesses are dealt with fairly, with respect and in an ethical and non-biased manner:

The Code of Ethics / Procedural Justice Impacts of investigations on the investigator
e.g. investigator fatigue

- t. Empathy fatigue, mindlessness, bias and stereotyping

Legitimacy of victim and witness and defence accounts:

- u. to conduct balanced, unbiased investigations in search of the truth