

#27 (RACHEL TUFFIN)

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Jerry Ratcliffe:

Jerry Ratcliffe here with Reducing Crime, a podcast featuring influential thinkers in the police service and leading crime and policing researchers. Rachel Tuffin is the Director of Knowledge and Innovation at the College of Policing for England and Wales. We discuss the unique national role that the college has across law enforcement policy and training.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

If you've listened to recent episodes, you'll know that I'm revisiting theme tunes from classic TV cop shows. The show you just heard ran in the late 1970s and had over 90 episodes. Did you get it? The theme you heard was from season two, a funkier change up from the darker, more brooding season one theme. I'll play a snippet of that at the end of this episode. I'm sure you know the show, and it was a classic, certainly more so than last month's show, when I had the theme from T.J. Hooker. Look, I know a young lady who was a particular fan, so I'm not going to bag on T.J. Hooker too much, but let's just say that this month is a little more old school. What's not old school is how I recorded this month's episode. If you're lucky, academia can sometimes provide opportunities for travel, a rare luxury that provides a chance to catch up with people from around the world. However, COVID-19 has rather curtailed my normal adventures, so the internet allowed me a chance to catch up with an old friend, if only remotely.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Rachel Tuffin is on the senior management team at the College of Policing for England and Wales, where she is responsible for the college's strategic programs that identify and share knowledge and good practice for policing across England and Wales and beyond. She's also the lead on the college's UK and international training delivery and manages its responsibilities as a What Works Center that houses one of the world's most useful repositories of knowledge about the effectiveness of police strategies and tactics. She previously worked in research for the UK's National Policing Improvement Agency and the Home Office. She's published numerous research studies on topics ranging from neighborhood policing to advancing recruitment and career progression for minority ethnicity police officers.

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Jerry Ratcliffe:

Rachel was also a member of the first Home Office task force sent to Macedonia to coordinate the evacuation of refugees from Kosovo, and she is fluent in French, having worked as a trainer, interpreter and course director in Northern France. She was awarded an OBE in 2013 for services to policing and specifically for championing evidence-based policing. We had a socially distant chat, a mere 3,600 miles away, thanks to the miracle of science. She got me up to speed on some of the initiatives that the college is leading and some of the challenges it has faced. But look, in all honesty, I spent most of the conversation just keeping my fingers crossed that the technology wouldn't crap out on me.

Rachel Tuffin:

Oh, I just lost you for a minute. Speak again.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Are you surviving lockdown?

Rachel Tuffin:

Am I surviving? Yeah. Okay. I've been very fortunate, really. My partner, Eric, looks after me.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

There you go, then. Does everything? Cooking, washing, the whole deal?

Rachel Tuffin:

Yep, definitely. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

A bit of an artist as well.

Rachel Tuffin:

And an artist too. Yeah. He is too. Yeah.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I was also looking through your bio. We both spent time in the East End of London.

Rachel Tuffin:

We did, I was born within the sound of Bow Bells, which makes me, strictly speaking, a proper Cockney.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

You are old school, proper Cockney. You went to university in East London as well, didn't you?

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Rachel Tuffin:

I didn't go to a university there, actually. I escaped, I went to Nottingham, because at that age, I think I was 19 or so, you want to get away from your parents, don't you? I love my parents dearly, but of course, everybody wants to escape.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Don't worry, they won't listen to this podcast. Nobody does.

Rachel Tuffin:

[inaudible 00:04:13] that quickly, I love my parents. Yeah, no, I went to Nottingham. But, when I came back from Nottingham and some time in France, which is where I met my partner, Eric, I went to work at the University of East London. That was where I got my first research job. It was great actually. I was started off doing interviews with young children about the potential for victimization in a particular neighborhood in East London. I had to learn very quickly about the sorts of interviewing techniques that you need to use with children, in terms of not putting words in their mouth, cognitive interview stuff. It was absolutely fascinating and I was hooked from then on. I was really lucky as well, actually, because I got to do a lot of crime and community safety projects, which then meant that my path into policing research then led away from there.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

But that was all around Mile End, wasn't it? The University of East London's around there, isn't it?

Rachel Tuffin:

It's got new sites now. Back in the day, where I was in Stratford and it was all around new, so all of the urban regeneration at Stratford and [inaudible 00:05:07].

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I used to police all around Bone Limehouse and I lived in Forest Gate.

Rachel Tuffin:

Which is where I live now.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

It doesn't look like you're in Forest Gate. You've made it look lovely.

Rachel Tuffin:

How very dare you. Forest Gate is a very lovely place. Actually, it's even getting a bit gentrified these days, we got a blooming microbrewery around the corner under the railway arches.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

That's great. You get all the nice things as soon as I leave. Fabulous. So, what's the commute like to the College of Policing?

Rachel Tuffin:

At the moment, zero of course, it being still pretty much locked down for us. I think that the problem, for us, comes, I don't know what you're finding is, if you're trying to do anything creative with more than one other person, so this is fine, like you and I can have this conversation, if you're trying to do something together with a group of people, come up with new ideas, create something new, it's much more difficult. You can't do that sort of interrupting of each other easily and fluidly and basic things like play around with post-it notes, that kind of stuff just really doesn't work at all.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I think the contribution to modern policing in terms of ideas generation with the post-it note is sorely underappreciated.

Rachel Tuffin:

So true. So true. Yeah. Also of course, for us, a big part of it is getting operational police officers' voices into what we do and their understanding. So, we're very much dependent on the kit at their end. It's much easier for us to rock up to a police station and run a session with a load of frontline officers if we've got to then contend with all of their different virtual connections as well as ours, it all becomes a little bit more sticky.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Also, that face-to-face work is hugely important. Frontline police officers are not like us in terms of spending forever on Zoom meetings seven out of eight hours every day. For us, it's becoming, unfortunately, almost a normal environment, but I don't think for frontline officers it is at all. So for them, the opportunity to open up, it is much more about chatting to somebody over a cup of tea and post-it notes.

Rachel Tuffin:

Absolutely. Again, if you've got a group of them, making it fluid and so people can interrupt each other and get ideas off each other, I've been fascinated by that actually, how clunky things are when you can't do fluid interruption. You know what I mean? When you're in a room together, somehow that just works. It must be partly to do with body language and eye contact. People pick up a cue from another person, that they're about to stop talking, and they pick up smoothly from there. Just doesn't work does it? [crosstalk 00:07:28] even things like that, it's clunk, clunk, clunk, interrupt, [crosstalk 00:07:33].

Jerry Ratcliffe:

All right. Yeah. Yeah. You've been at the college since it started, in 2012, haven't you?

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Rachel Tuffin:

I have, yeah. December, 2012, it was.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Does it resemble now what you thought it would be back then?

Rachel Tuffin:

Ooh, that's a good question. Yes, I think it does in some ways and in others it doesn't. I suppose that's a classic kind of answer, isn't it?

Jerry Ratcliffe:

It's a very academic answer.

Rachel Tuffin:

Isn't it? Oh no. So, I think in the ways that it does resemble what we were looking... We've come a long way in embedding an evidence-based policing approach in what we do, at least, and in how we work for policing. We've created evidence-based guidelines, we've put evidence-based policing into the curriculum, into parts of the promotion system, so yeah, in that way, I think so. We've got that grounding on evidence-based policing. I think where maybe we haven't so much is in how far we've come down the track of embedding all of that. But, it's pretty impressive, really. I suppose I shouldn't denigrate it, because if you compare it to other sectors like medicine and you look at how far we've come in a very short period of time towards giving frontline officers and staff all of that sort of evidence-based support and guidance, we've come a long way.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

You're comparing to other sectors, but if you think about just the world of policing, there really is at the moment, I don't think, anywhere else comparable to the college of policing for England and Wales, is there?

Rachel Tuffin:

No, I don't think there is.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I think that New Zealand have a center for evidence-based policing, which has got some really bright people doing some innovative work, but that doesn't have the kind of scope, I don't think, that the college has, does it?

Rachel Tuffin:

No. And I think it is different in that we're an independent organization as well. New Zealand have that [inaudible 00:09:09] inside policing, which is brilliant actually. I think it's a really good thing to have, and all police forces should have such things. Developing, generating new ideas, innovation, testing, new studies, new research, brilliant. But, what

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we do, I suppose, it's slightly different. We're bringing together the evidence base in one place, systematizing it, putting it into toolkits, making it easy for people to access it. We do that for the whole England and Wales, but other people use it as well, of course, people use it all over the world.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Now, not long after the College of Policing started, you were awarded the OBE. For people listening from outside the UK, Rachel is an Officer of The Most Excellent Order of The British Empire. Congratulations for that. The award was for your contributions to evidence-based policing. You've been one of these almost unsung heroes, beaver away at evidence-based policing even before it was cool and sexy, and yes everybody, evidence-based policing is cool and sexy. What led up to that?

Rachel Tuffin:

It was largely based on what I'd done in neighborhood policing, and that's where you can see how far we come. Neighborhood policing, and problem solving within neighborhood policing, was just a terrific way of us being able to get more evidence-based activity. It was also probably one of the first evaluations I've done where we actually got a result, which was pretty major. A lot of that was to do with how much implementation support was done by policing.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

How was neighborhood policing really, a decade ago before then?

Rachel Tuffin:

[inaudible 00:00:10:33]. A guy called Tim Godwin in The Met used to talk about the reinvention cycle. So, you'd have a big focus on it and then it would fade away as there was more focus on burglary, car crime, vehicle crime, and then there'd be a recognition that perhaps been a lot of focus on those target areas and less focus on what was going on in neighborhoods and we'd swing around again.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Isn't that always the case? After a while we reinvent something that we already had a while back, we give it a slightly different name and somebody gets promoted.

Rachel Tuffin:

You could look at it like that. I'm quite relaxed about that if it means that we make a little bit more progress each time. This relabeling and things like that, I'm quite relaxed about, that we go beyond what we had already and take a further step forward. I think that's what's happened with evidence-based policing. We've come out of the sort of narrow, within individual topics version of evidence-based policing, so you get it in a pocket in domestic abuse or in a bit in neighborhood policing, and now it's becoming much more part of the system, I think.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Now, you're also in charge of the What Works Center.

Rachel Tuffin:

That grew out of recognition that we needed just to bring all in one place what we know about crime reduction.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

That's a huge challenge worldwide. There are a gazillion different sources and databases and web pages. If somebody was coming into this new or even somebody fairly experienced, unless you can dedicate full time to it, it's a daunting task just trying to understand where the evidence is around policing, isn't it?

Rachel Tuffin:

That's right. We were conscious that we really needed to do something about that before we did anything else. So, saying that we need to do more and more research in policing and in crime reduction, there's lots of things we haven't studied yet. We were basically saying, "Yeah, fine. But, we also need just to know what we know." And there's no one place where you can go and find what is the best available evidence on crime reduction right now and that's the first thing we wanted to do.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

There's so much desire for innovation. Sometimes it's nice just to come back and go, "Hey, let's just remember how we get the basics right."

Rachel Tuffin:

That's definitely right. The basics, I think, are gradually also, in England and Wales anyway, being recognized by government too. Just recently, there was a safer streets initiative in the home office where they wanted us and we did put together the evidence base and they started with that as what they would use to give out grants, and I think that's becoming increasingly normal, if you'd like, in our system.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Do you mean, in terms of: Unless you're demonstrating that you're using the best available evidence, you won't get the grant?

Rachel Tuffin:

That's right. Or that you found something that you want to test and you're going to evaluate it. That's not the case everywhere, but certainly in certain initiatives, like that safer streets one, at its core, it was about how are we going to use the evidence base.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

One of the things that I know that you guys have been working on is really stressing officer-led innovations.

Rachel Tuffin:

Yeah, definitely.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Are you trying to say that academics in offices aren't able to come up with all the ideas?

Rachel Tuffin:

You're a good example in a way, aren't you? Because you've crossed the rubicon or whatever we call it.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I'm just a mongrel. Yeah.

Rachel Tuffin:

But I think what happens otherwise is it feels like, to officers, this is stuff that's done to them. I think we're past this now to some extent, but it's still there a bit. You don't want them to feel like that. You want them to feel that this is theirs, this is their stuff. It's part of their professional expertise. Research, being evidence-based, isn't something separate, something different that other people do, it's something that belongs to you as an officer. You should be able to make your contribution when and if you want to. You should be able to engage, critique, challenge what the evidence is saying, have your own ideas, test new things out.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I think that's a great way of putting it. I think academics can make a contribution and pracademics and well-educated, well-trained police officers and academics can certainly make a contribution to the evaluations, and occasionally to the ideas. But, what they're evaluating, and the core of what they're evaluating, has to really stem from the people on the front line and the people who are doing the job, because they know better than anybody else.

Rachel Tuffin:

And we've started now this thing we've called the Ideas map, woo-hoo jazz hands, where we're getting officers to share their ideas and then we're sifting through those, working out where are ones that might be things that we could evaluate, where are there things which actually is just really cunning little trick that we could pass on to another body in policing or pass on to forces to say, "Look, you could just start doing this. It doesn't really need evaluating, it's not particularly contentious, expensive, or risky. Let's crack on."

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Is that something that you want to advertise and say where people could do it?

Rachel Tuffin:

You can find that by the College of Policing website. I think if you just Google the College of Policing Ideas Map, I'll do that while we're sitting here, make sure I can find it.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

No, that's okay. If you Google Ideas Map policing, it comes right up.

Rachel Tuffin:

So, just the huge range of ideas so far that officers come up with in so many different categories. People might think that it would be about ideas to do with practice ways that they might do their response activity, things they might want to know about victims or investigation, but of course it's much, much broader than that. They have all sorts of problems that they [inaudible 00:15:25] to do with. Everything from mental health and to missing persons. That's a huge part of their business. They're very interested as well in how the bigger system, how the bigger force works around them, so they have ideas about how the organization could do things better too.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Oh, that's great. Are you finding commonalities across forces, glaring things that are problems in policing for England and Wales generally?

Rachel Tuffin:

I had to look through, because 400 is not too many, I was really interested, so I had to quickly scroll through all of them. Nothing leapt out at me actually, and that's another thing that you notice about policing. The individuals, they're so diverse, they've got so many different perspectives, their experience in their own forces is so different that they often actually are coming up with all sorts of different ideas across the board. Yeah.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

That's fascinating. And you have about 400 entries at the moment?

Rachel Tuffin:

Yeah. [inaudible 00:16:11] we didn't do any big marketing push or anything like that, it was just putting it out on social media.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

That's fantastic. If any British police officers are listening, here's your opportunity, log on to the College of Policing's website and give them your ideas.

Rachel Tuffin:

Yes, please do.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

The key part to so much of this is getting ideas from the field. The things that I've had a chance to evaluate have pretty much always originated with policing, and I think there's a great value in tackling things that actually originate with policing, because you already have the buy-in [inaudible 00:16:42] people going, "I've got this really good idea, can you help me find out whether it's a viable one, whether it works or not?"

Rachel Tuffin:

Yeah. Sometimes, a tiny bit of resource they might need or a bit of help in navigating some tricky other stakeholders, so another thing we do, we have something called the Trials Registers. That's for people who have got a really good idea, but it's a really challenging one. Say they want to do something to change the way we police domestic abuse or something, which really is risky, contentious, potentially expensive, all the rest of it.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

There's always that risk that it could go South instead [inaudible 00:00:17:14].

Rachel Tuffin:

Exactly. In those cases, you might be up against a load of local stakeholders who are very edgy about what you're trying to do-

Jerry Ratcliffe:

They're embedded in the existing way of doing it.

Rachel Tuffin:

With this pilots register, and the idea behind that is to, when people want to do something tricky and risky, they come and tell us about it and then we help them navigate round all the stakeholders in the criminal justice system and to smooth the path, really, if they're trying to do something difficult and contentious and we test out and look at the evaluation idea... And they've got a design of their evaluation. So, we can and reassure people and say, "Yeah, we think this idea is testable, and we think they've got a good plan to test it."

Jerry Ratcliffe:

So the college has these two roles where, at the moment you've got more than that, but the two roles we've talked about so far, you've got this role of: Being, essentially, the hub for all knowledge about evidence and science and what works in policing or what doesn't work as much as we know it. You've got the secondary role, which is: Helping to develop that evidence base and working with frontline officers, who've got innovative thoughts and ideas. What about the delivery of all of that into, essentially, the structures and the standard operating procedures of policing? Does the college have a role in that?

Rachel Tuffin:

Yeah, for sure. In several different ways. I suppose the big ones are: The curriculum, we're responsible for the curriculum for new police officers all the way through up the ranks and into all of the specialisms.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

That's required for every police department in the country?

Rachel Tuffin:

Yeah.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

They have to use your curriculum in their training?

Rachel Tuffin:

Yes, that's right.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

So, if I'm trained in one force and I decided later in my career, I want to transfer to the far side to the other end of the country, then theoretically, I should have been trained on exactly the same stuff, right the way across the board?

Rachel Tuffin:

That's right. Yeah. So, we don't do the delivery necessarily. We do for some niche areas or for some specialist areas, but the delivery is done usually by forces or people working with forces. But the curriculum, the standard if you like, of what needs to go in there is set by the college. That's one of our statutory roles.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

How's that been received?

Rachel Tuffin:

Because we do it in partnership, I think it's accepted part of the policing system. I think the most challenging was when we reviewed the initial curriculum, so this is for new constables in the past few years. We did a big piece of work, we talked to lots of people about what needed to change and as part of that, it was clear that there were lots of things missing from the new police officer curriculum, [inaudible 00:19:39] cyber, there was not enough on vulnerability, all sorts of new things that needed to be in there, and there was almost nothing on evidence-based policing, a minimal amount on problem-solving.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

That probably pretty accurately mirrors most of the police academies here in the United States as well.

Rachel Tuffin:

Yeah. There was a lot to do there. We worked with all of the different police forces to feed in how they felt that should look. When we finished doing that piece of work, the curriculum that we ended up with was then at university degree level and that was massively contentious of course, because although we weren't setting it as a barrier, what we were really saying was: You can join without this, and by the time you get to the end of your police training, you'll have reached this level, because that's just what you need in order to be a police officer. But, a lot of people interpreted that as meaning we were saying you have to have a degree to join the police. Now, people have started to understand it and started to get used to it and started to get the point, that it's not about putting barriers in place for people before they join, it's actually about what development, what learning should they be given in order to have the best chance of being a terrific police officer.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Right. And I think reflecting the idea that it's a profession. In a profession you do need to have some kind of level of education.

Rachel Tuffin:

Yeah. And it's what they get linked to the practice as well and that's come out really strongly in some of the work that, I think it was UCL did on this, looking at this early on, is they need to know this stuff to help them to apply it. So, procedural justice is a great example, the fact that how you talk to people on a day-to-day basis in your encounters, making sure they have the opportunity to [inaudible 00:21:15], making sure you're explaining a bit about the background to why you've stopped them, for example, making sure that the language that you're using in the encounter is really supportive, if you'd like, all of that. That all helps for people to comply with the law in the future. Just to learn that in a classroom on its own is not helpful, they need to be able to tie that to: So what do I actually say then? How do I do the bit where I let them have their turn to speak and explain stuff to me? What triggers could I use? How can I build up a good rapport? It needs to be theory linked to practice.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

That level of procedural justice training is going to be delivered outside of the college, it's going to be delivered in the police services, are you getting buy-in from the instructors? Because, if they're not selling things like the importance of procedural justice, you're not going to get the buy-in from the new officers, are you?

Rachel Tuffin:

Yeah, absolutely. Spot on. So, it's partnership, academic institutions and forces working together. It's early days, everybody's learning together, so there'll be probably be a mixed picture. It will be how good some of these partnerships are at feeding from each other, making sure that the theory and the practice work hand in hand. So, we'll see how we go. I think there's loads of scope to do some brilliant stuff though, and to make it quite exciting and quite fun. But, then I'm a glass half full kind of a person.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

You're generally a glass three-quarters full at least kind of person. What do we do about training for some of the things where it's more about the craft of policing, for which there really isn't much of an evidence base yet?

Rachel Tuffin:

Yeah. That's a really, really good question. I think the key thing there is all about how we work with tutor Constables.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

A tutor Constable is more commonly known as a field training officer in other places, right?

Rachel Tuffin:

Yeah. Tutor Constables and supervisors, I think, are under-supported in policing generally. Historically we've put loads of investment into leadership training for the senior ranks, but actually where we really need to put our investment is in Tutor Constables and supervisors first, because they're the most important people for new constables. They'll identify how to help them with the craft, little tips that help you to operate as a Constable.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I think Sergeant is underappreciated as being probably one of the most influential, if not the most influential, rank in policing anywhere.

Rachel Tuffin:

Yeah, for sure.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Moving supervisors, it can be really challenging. We run into the same things in pretty much everywhere I go to. Because they've often done 10, 15 years in the job, they figure they know the job and then here's this outsider, in my case, some weird English guy with a strange accent turns up to try and tell them how to, they assume, tell them that they're doing it wrong and it's no, it's just try these different ways of thinking about doing things, and you can often run into resistance. You've been working on projects to try and understand how to overcome that level of resistance, haven't you?

Rachel Tuffin:

It's more about trying to identify how to do it looking at it from their perspective. It's actually really about dealing with the point you just raised there, because what happens is, in most police forces, is supervisors are loaded on with all of... Everything comes back to supervisors, doesn't it, right? Almost everything as a recommendation about: Supervision needs to be improved.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Increasingly, it comes with the legal stick as well, which is: It's not just you didn't comply with the policy, but not complying with the policy is now an offense, it's illegal.

Rachel Tuffin:

Yeah. And rightly, when you talk to people about this [inaudible 00:24:38] sergeants and people at that level, they will say, "Well, where's my time to do this? You want me to get out there more." Let's say for example, this is a common one, we need supervisors to be out there more with officers, watching what they're doing on the ground, engaging with them, mentoring, coaching, doing all that great stuff, and the supervisors are like, "Yeah, great. Okay. And when exactly am I supposed to have time to do that? Because you've put in loads of quality assurance functions, I have to sit behind a desk, checking all these records and making sure that people have filled the paperwork."

Jerry Ratcliffe:

It's an incredibly challenging job. Go back last 20, 30 years and the pressure that's put on supervisors now is incredible compared to how it was.

Rachel Tuffin:

Yeah. And I think they were real choices. I've spoken to a few chief officers about this and it's really challenging. They're trying to make space for some of this and make more space for supervisors to be able to spend more time with their teams, get out a bit more on the ground, do all the things that's supposed to help with reflections like getting officers to think about what they've been doing in particular incidents and learn from those and do all the continuous professional development stuff.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

So your perennial issues project is really about understanding how to make those changes, because we understand the changes that have to be made, but we just don't see them actually happening. Have I got that right?

Rachel Tuffin:

So, we will get recommendations from lots of different bodies that officers need training in and officers need guidance on, stop and search, mental health, domestic abuse, the list will go on and on and there comes a point when you think, "Well, is that really right? Or is there something else going on here?"

Jerry Ratcliffe:

So, is the perennial issues project really about identifying those things where we know we could do things better, but trying to figure out why we haven't been able to move there?

Rachel Tuffin:

Yeah, it is actually. Because, what we found when we analyzed sort of all [inaudible 00:26:22] like the pattern across recommendations that we get is that it's the same things that keep coming up in these different topic areas. Supervision will get repeated over and over again, data quality, data analysis, being better at prevention, being better at partnership working, they're the same things. I'm sure you'll see this in forces all over the world.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

So, we're starting to get a better sense of the science and evidence around what we should do better, but in many cases that doesn't change. You're starting to understand some of that?

Rachel Tuffin:

Yeah. So, building on those perennial issues, we then need to know: How can we help to change this situation? We've been using this model that UCL developed-

Jerry Ratcliffe:

That's University College London.

Rachel Tuffin:

Oh yeah, sorry. University College London. Capability, opportunity, motivation leading to behavior change. When we look at what we do a lot in policing, there's loads of work on capability, but almost nothing on opportunity and motivation. That's when you realize: That's why we're struggling to get some change here. Because for example, opportunity, there's no time. The officers have no time to do it. So, in the case of supervision: Where's the time for the supervisors? Or motivation. What's really being valued in their force? What do they get rewarded for? Is all the checking and the notice all about these forms that you have to make sure are filled in on the online system? Or do you get reward and recognition for doing really great supportive work with individual police officers?

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I wonder so much seeing where policing is at the moment and the demand being put on policing for supervisors, what's being thrown at them is just too many sticks and not enough carrots.

Rachel Tuffin:

Yeah. What's happened over time is: We've put more and more into the system to try and manage... Remove, not just manage, remove risk from the system. Which of course is impossible, but it means that everybody in policing is carrying this massive burden of risk checking and risk removal attempts to try and take everything out of the system, and that's a real problem, I think.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

What do you mean by risk in this context?

Rachel Tuffin:

For example, we've got grading systems for missing persons and there'd be high risk, medium risk, lower risk, and that understanding is what affects what police officers and forces will then do when they're looking for a missing person. Now, getting it right, so did you get the right risk level to get the right actions? So, you need people to check. Did they make the right decision? That could then have consequences when the media or other commentators later down the track say, "Something different should have happened. They didn't grade it right. They didn't deal with the risk right."

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Is that level of checking seen by the front lines and frontline supervisors as a way for the systems to learn? Or is it seen by them as a way to punish officers that get it wrong? Because I think that how they perceive how that checking is taking place is going to hugely influence and impact how they approach that task, right?

Rachel Tuffin:

Yeah, that's absolutely right. I think it varies. So, it varies both within forces and cultures in forces, but also I think most forces try to give officers the feeling that the forces has their back.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

That's nice to hear, because I'm increasingly getting the sense, in modern policing, that there is no scope for honest mistakes. I think that's inevitable in any kind of job that involves human beings and interactions with the public and a lot of decision-making that's done in the time constraint.

Rachel Tuffin:

I think you would still definitely hear officers say the opposite to what I just said, just to be clear.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Right. From your position 30,000 feet above all the individual forces, do you think that that's down to individual forces, the cultures of individual forces, or is it more down to the supervisors of the supervisors?

Rachel Tuffin:

I think it goes way beyond that. I would take it completely out of policing actually and point the finger a little bit more here at the media, government, at society in general, all of us, and that's part of the problem is we are way above. We try to be closer to policing in the college, but people commenting on it and seeing it from the outside, it's all very easy with the benefit of hindsight to say, "You should've done this or you should have done that." There's almost no allowance, I think, in the public understanding of what goes on in these situations, of the massive cognitive load on officers and on the system in the force at the time when all of this is going off.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Certainly the case in here in the late summer of 2020.

Rachel Tuffin:

Yeah. I think that that's what I think we probably need to do... something we can do more of.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

That capacity for the public understanding, that sometimes decent people make genuine mistakes, it seems to have disappeared in the last six months.

Rachel Tuffin:

And I'd agree, absolutely agree with that. It's difficult, isn't it? Because, you do see some examples where everybody agrees that's wrong. We have something called the barred list and the officer should now go on the barred list and shouldn't be allowed to be in policing. All the other officers basically would agree with that and say, "Yeah, we shouldn't have an officer like that in there." But, some of that seems to creep into suggesting that none of them could ever make an honest mistake, like you just said, that they somehow should always be able to get everything right. Or their bosses should be able to manage all the risk, remove all the risk. You can't do that.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

No. Because, you can't anticipate all the potential risks that are going to come up. After a while, you have to rely on the individual good will and smart thinking of people, because you can not have a policy for absolutely everything.

Rachel Tuffin:

Exactly. That's why, going back to we were talking about the perennial issues, you want to get those core things right. Get the core support and skills right for officers and not keep ladling information about individual topics all over them all the time, because you can't expect them to remember all that stuff when they're dealing with hundreds of different kinds of incidents over the course of a month or so. You need to focus more on the core and less on teaching them and giving them guidance on every single policing issue they'll face.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I'm going to paraphrase here, but it reminds me of a situation that I read about, I think the German General, Rommel, said in the second World War, he said, "The British have the best military manuals in the world. Thank god they don't read them."

Rachel Tuffin:

Well, that's absolutely right. We know that we've got a lot of guidance, which can be useful for specialists, but frontline officers don't use it, nor should they. Because, what we need them to be really sound on is their core skills and their core stuff that they use every day. We should be much better [inaudible 00:32:46] the rest [inaudible 00:32:47] giving them access to what they need very quickly online in an easily digestible format. We're not very good at that at the moment, we need to do much better on that.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Yeah. I think that's a great way of thinking about it. I go to too many places, they say, "Well, we have this policy." Then you go and find the policy on dealing with domestic violence or dealing with child abuse or dealing with things that officers come up against at two o'clock in the morning on a winter's night and the policy is borderline impenetrable to understand. But also, they make no effort to try and help the frontline officers apply the policy in an easy way. There are no mnemonics or there's no kind of here's a bullet point of six things you should, these kinds of things that they can just pull out on their phone and very quickly look at and tick off to make sure they've done those six or seven things. But rather, they're expected to know a policy that's 40 pages long and kept in the chief's office.

Rachel Tuffin:

Absolutely. That's where you have to use operational officers to do that stuff for you. Great example during COVID, we were talking about procedural justice earlier and how you make that sort of applied, so operational police came up with the four E's. The four Es are, I'm going to get them wrong now and in the wrong order, which is really annoying: Engage. Explain. Encourage. And only if those are failed, do you Enforce. In the face of the COVID regulation.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

That's great. Say those again.

Rachel Tuffin:

Engage. Explain. Encourage. And only Enforce if those first three E's haven't worked for you.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

That sounds like that could apply to just about every aspect of police interaction with the community outside of COVID-19 it sounds great for everything, right?

Rachel Tuffin:

Yeah. They're really good at that. So, operational police would be really good at working out ways of communicating to each other in snappy ways to give them just what they need when they walk into a situation. Because, when they walk into a situation, this is what, again, [inaudible 00:34:40] and others don't quite get, is you think about the cognitive load. Officer walks into scene, they've got to think: Victim. Maybe safeguarding other people as well as the victim. They need control of the scene. They need to make sure that order is maintained. They need emergency response. Potentially, is anybody dying? Is there anybody wounded? They need to do first lines of investigation. What kinds of things do I need to think about investigatively here? Then they need to do: Oh yeah. By the way, procedural justice, let's make sure that everybody feels like the police are a legitimate force and that I am taking everybody with me in this scenario. And all the rest of it. Plus there could be other people filming me. I need to make sure that I've got that in mind as well. Try and make sure nothing I'm doing could be misinterpreted by people taking little clips of this and using it out of context. Can you imagine?

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Perish the thought. The public would never do that. Would they? Take clips and take them out of context? No, come on. Of course, sometimes bad videos are not out of context, unfortunately.

Rachel Tuffin:

Yeah, that's right. How good are we at making sure that we've done the right groundwork with all of our new officers when they come in, so that they can be comfortable walking into that... They're doing it all the time anyway, so how good have we been at preparing them for that, basically?

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Yeah. I was out on a ride along last night with some officers in Philadelphia, through to midnight, just a bunch of great guys, but youngsters, and I was like, "Wow. I can't imagine what it will be like to join policing now." There's so much more pressure, there's so much greater expectations.

Rachel Tuffin:

I was thinking that incident I was just describing, so the officer walks in, all of those things, all of that cognitive load. I didn't even mention their own safety, which is a massive deal of course, and that trying to do all of those things and they've got to think about their own safety, the safety of other officers as well. Increasingly, I think that's something they're aware of, because we've seen quite a few extreme scenarios recently.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

The final thing I wanted to talk to you about was, you've got this looking to the future, the operating environment for 2040, which is 20 years out in the future. That seems awfully optimistic that we have any idea what the world is going to look like in 2040. First of all, is there even going to be a bloody planet in 2040?

Rachel Tuffin:

It tackles all of those potential scenarios, except total non-existence, so it doesn't deal with that as a scenario. The future operating work tries to look at what's next for policing, and to look at all of the different influences that could happen. It combines different possible scenarios. Scenarios where we've got extreme climate change, scenarios where we've got extreme political change, and it puts those together and tries to come up with themes and things that look like they're quite plausible, no matter which of those scenarios you go down, as things that the policing will need to cope with. Actually, because some of them already starting now. Good one is disinformation or misinformation.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

In what way?

Rachel Tuffin:

Like deep fakes and the kind of move from that being something that hostile state actors would do and specialists would do to being something that's much more generally available and easy to do with regular software. If everybody starts to mistrust all of the sources of information around them, that could have some very interesting implications for policing, I think.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Oh good grief, it sounds horribly challenging.

Rachel Tuffin:

It does.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Well, Rachel, it's always a pleasure. It's a shame that we couldn't do this in-person over an adult beverage, which I know is where we normally hang out. But, thanks very much, indeed. I appreciate you coming and spending some time with me.

Rachel Tuffin:

It was a real pleasure. Thanks, Jerry.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

That was episode 27 of Reducing Crime, recorded remotely in September, 2020. Transcripts of every episode are available at reducingcrime.com/podcast. As usual, new episodes are announced on Twitter @_ReducingCrime. Be safe, especially in these trying time. And best of luck.