OPI RESEARCH PAPER No. 1
EARLY INTERVENTION SYSTEMS FOR POLICE AGENCIES
# CONTENTS

EARLY INTERVENTION SYSTEMS ................................................................. 2
   Introduction .......................................................................................... 2
   Background ......................................................................................... 3
      Early History ................................................................................... 3
      The First Early Intervention Systems ............................................. 4
      An Emerging Best Practice in Policing .......................................... 5
   Early Intervention System Components ............................................. 5
      Types of Early Intervention Systems .............................................. 5
         Early Intervention System Components .................................. 6

THE BENEFITS OF EARLY INTERVENTION SYSTEMS ......................... 10
   General Benefits ............................................................................... 10
      Individual Officer .......................................................................... 10
      Supervisors .................................................................................. 10
      The Police Service ....................................................................... 11
   Specific Benefits .............................................................................. 11
      Reduction in Citizen Complaints and Use-of-Force Reports .......... 11
      EI Systems and Community Satisfaction .................................... 12

EVALUATIONS OF EARLY INTERVENTION SYSTEMS ....................... 13
   Effectiveness of Early Intervention Systems ................................... 13
   Limitations of Early Intervention Systems ..................................... 14
   Cost-effectiveness of Early Intervention Systems ......................... 14

CASE STUDIES ..................................................................................... 16
   Phoenix Police Department .............................................................. 16
   Western Australia Police ................................................................. 18

CONCLUSION ..................................................................................... 20
EARLY INTERVENTION SYSTEMS

This paper examines the use of early intervention (EI) systems as a tool for improving police performance and reducing police misconduct. Since their inception in the early 1970s, EI systems have generated growing interest within the law enforcement community. Both nationally and overseas, police agencies have begun to acknowledge the failure of traditional disciplinary structures to eradicate police corruption, misconduct and underperformance. Increasingly, organisations are turning to EI systems as an alternative. At the time of writing, two Australian jurisdictions have implemented EI systems, with others presently deliberating over the potential benefits. This paper defines EI systems and discusses their uses, components, effectiveness and limitations. Case studies of two, currently operating EI systems, one in Australia and one in the United States (US) have also been included. The research aims to provide a general understanding about EI systems, and lay a foundation for any future recommendations made to Victoria Police on this issue.

Introduction

An ‘early intervention’ (EI) system is a data-management tool designed to identify police officers whose performance exhibits concerns. These identified police officers are then referred to some form of remedial assistance, usually counselling or training, designed to rectify those performance issues. The major contribution of an EI system is its capacity to identify patterns of ‘at-risk’ behaviour and intervene before these problems lead to serious misconduct. In addition to preventing serious misconduct within policing agencies, EI systems are an important mechanism to enhance police accountability. This is primarily due to the capacity of EI systems to monitor a wide range of policing activities and detect patterns of performance that warrant concern in their early stages.

EI systems are officially separate from the formal police disciplinary system. The police disciplinary process involves an official action following an act or allegation of misconduct. Traditionally, the action taken is punitive rather than remedial, and is recorded on an officer’s official file. In contrast, EI systems are designed to identify at-risk behaviour and assist police officers in

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1 In Victorian legislation, ‘serious misconduct’ refers to “any disgraceful or improper conduct, conduct that constitutes an offence punishable by imprisonment and any conduct that is likely to bring the force into disrepute or diminish public confidence in it”, Police Regulation Act 1958, s. 86A.

improving their performance. This proactive process is usually undertaken informally and in confidence, unless formal disciplinary action is warranted.\(^3\)

However, while EI systems may help to prevent misconduct, they do not attempt to predict future police behaviour based on personal and social background characteristics. More simply, EI systems identify current behavioural performance that warrants supervisory attention.\(^4\) Managerial intervention then plays the key role in addressing performance problems and minimising the risk of misconduct and underperformance. If an EI system is supported by functional, rigorous supervision, it can lead to closer, regular monitoring of officer conduct and help to build a more positive police culture.

**Background**

*Early History*

EI systems emerged in the US in the 1970s, in response to increasing concerns among the community and law enforcement management about excessive use of force by police members. In particular, it was becoming apparent that a small proportion of police officers were responsible for a disproportionate number of use-of-force reports and citizen complaints. According to the 1981 report by the U.S. Civil Rights Commission, *Who is Guarding the Guardians?*, investigations into the Houston Police Department found that within a two-year period, the 12 per cent of officers who received five or more complaints accounted for 41 per cent of all complaints.\(^5\)

The Houston data was confirmed in subsequent reports by other policing agencies around the US. The Christopher Commission found 44 ‘problem officers’ within the Los Angeles Police Department who were readily identifiable based on citizen complaints and use-of-force incidents.\(^6\) A Boston Globe investigation found that within a ten-year period, two officers alone accumulated 24 complaints.\(^7\) Furthermore, the Kolts Commission reported that seventeen deputies from the Los Angeles Sheriff’s Department (LASD) were responsible for 22 civil lawsuits, costing the county about $32.2 million. As commented by the Kolts Commission, these lawsuits were a result of the LASD failing to take any corrective action with deputies who had readily identifiable patterns of excessive force incidents on their official records. In response to these findings, the US Civil Rights Commission recommended

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\(^3\) ibid, p. 104.
\(^6\) ibid.
\(^7\) ibid.
that each police department devise a system to assist officials in the early identification of officer misconduct, arguing that

The careful maintenance of records based on written complaints is essential to indicate officers who are frequently the subject of complaints or who demonstrate identifiable patterns of inappropriate behaviour. Some jurisdictions have “early warning” information systems monitoring officers… [though] routinely ignore early warning signs.  

**The First Early Intervention Systems**

Two of the earliest EI systems (both of which remain in operation today), were established by the City of Miami Police Department and Miami-Dade Police Department in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

In 1979, the City of Miami Police Department became concerned with citizen-generated complaints involving a series of racial incidents between police officers and the wider community. In response to a major police-community relations crisis, Commander John S. Ross of the internal security unit suggested the establishment of an Early Warning (EW) system based on the principle of organisational development. Ross suggested that, “the department should respond to these officers before they become involved in self-destructive activities or develop a trend of violating departmental orders”. His model proposed intensive supervision of police officers, counselling by outside professionals and the development of training programs and strategies to reduce inappropriate police behaviour. The City of Miami EW system evolved, and has broadened its range of performance indicators to tackle police misconduct and enhance police-community relations.

The Miami-Dade Police Department implemented an Employee Profile (EP) System after two serious incidents in the late 1970s. The beating of an African-American school teacher and the fatal beating of Arthur McDuffie, an African-American insurance agent, by Miami-Dade officers aggravated existing racial tensions in the Miami district. In early 1980, the four officers accused of McDuffie’s death were acquitted by an all-white jury. As a result, Miami broke out in a three-day riot, causing numerous civilian deaths and excessive property damage. The Miami-Dade Police Department consequently adopted the EP system to monitor formal complaints, use-of-force incidents, commendations, discipline and disposition of all internal investigations. This became the basis for the EI system, which came into operation in 1982. The structure of the EI system has remained unchanged since its implementation, and evaluations by the National Justice Institute

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9 ibid, p. 138-139.
have concluded that intervention has substantially reduced use-of-force incidents among subject officers.\textsuperscript{10}

\textbf{An Emerging Best Practice in Policing}

Traditionally, EI systems emerged to deal with ‘problem’ officers who generated excessive civilian complaints and use-of-force reports. Current EI systems have adopted a broader focus. Rather than narrowly focusing on ‘problem’ officers, contemporary EI systems recognise the importance of various indicators to comprehensively assess officer performance and influence organisational culture. Since the late 1990s, EI systems have gained increasing prominence as a best practise mechanism for police accountability. In 2001, the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) adopted a new standard requiring all large law enforcement agencies to implement an EI system. Under the CALEA standard 35.1.15,

\begin{quote}
A comprehensive Personnel Early Warning System is an essential component of good discipline in a well-managed law enforcement agency. The early identification of potential problem employees and a menu of remedial actions can increase agency accountability and offer employees a better opportunity to meet the agency’s values and mission statement.\textsuperscript{11}
\end{quote}

With the shift in focus, EI systems have developed into a sophisticated mechanism for identifying and assessing officer performance. EI systems have the potential to alter the organisational culture by introducing a high standard of professionalism and establishing a data-driven tool for management to enforce those standards.\textsuperscript{12}

\textbf{Early Intervention System Components}

\textbf{Types of Early Intervention Systems}

While EI systems consist of the same basic components, two distinct system types exist, which vary in size and scope in accordance with their objectives.

The two systems that currently exist are the \textit{comprehensive personnel assessment system} and the \textit{performance problem system}. The \textit{comprehensive personnel assessment system} collects a wide range of data and has the capacity to assess a wide range of issues, from identifying the top-performers to analysing the under-performers. Systems with this capacity require sophisticated technology and demand enormous administrative commitment. Such systems

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{10} S. Walker, op. cit., 2003, p. 52-53.
\end{flushright}
are generally suited to larger organisations, which have the resources to support and commit to the demands of the system.

The performance problem system consists of a narrowly focused approach to identifying and analysing organisational data. It collects a smaller range of data and analyses a limited range of performance issues. In effect, these systems are less expensive and require less commitment from administration, better suiting the capacity of smaller police organisations.\(^\text{13}\)

Despite their size and scope, usually EI systems are initially established within the organisation’s internal affairs unit. This allows internal affairs to manage and oversee data-entry relevant to all officers subject to EI monitoring. However, many EI systems centralise their access to the database by also allowing supervisors to enter valuable corporate information, such as complaints, use-of-force incidents and positive correspondence reports, direct from the field. This enhances supervisory responsibilities and creates a higher standard of accountability for the conduct of officers under their command. Additionally, such transparent systems also permit officers read-only access to their own information, offering officers the opportunity to conduct self-intervention prior to identification by management or internal investigators.\(^\text{14}\)

Due to the technological sophistication of centralised data access, it is usually available only to those organisations with the resources and funding to obtain and implement a comprehensive personnel assessment system.

**Early Intervention System Components**

Initially, EI systems were seen to consist of three basic components: selection criteria, intervention and post-intervention. Recent publications add a fourth component, by separating performance indicators from the identification and selection process.

- **Performance Indicators:**

  Performance indicators are official, measurable officer activities or functions subject to departmental monitoring and entered into an EI system database. As mentioned above, there are two basic EI systems, varying in size and scope. This distinction is usually made based on the number of performance indicators included in the EI system database. Performance indicators include citizen complaints, use-of-force reports, officer-involved shooting incidents, departmental commendations, sick leave use, resisting arrest charges, and any other indicators deemed

\(^{13}\) S. Walker, op. cit., 2005, p. 105.

appropriate by the department. Traditionally, EI systems consisted of single indicators, such as citizen complaints, to identify problem officers. However, there is an increasing consensus that systems utilising a single indicator in isolation from other factors fail to capture an accurate picture of officer performance. A broad range of indicators within an EI system generates a greater capacity to identify, analyse and evaluate officer performance.\textsuperscript{15}

- **Identification and Selection Process:**

  The identification and selection of police officers for performance intervention is a crucial and complex process. Many early EI systems were based on rigid, nondiscretionary formulas to identify problematic officers, which created a number of problems. For instance, set thresholds (whereby a specific number of complaints received by an officer within a certain timeframe trigger an automatic referral to intervention) do not take into account the nature and context of the incident. This type of threshold completely disregards a review process of the incident, and dismisses the possibility that there may be a legitimate reason for the officer’s performance.\textsuperscript{16} For this reason, current EI systems utilise a two-stage process. Subject officers undergo a full departmental review of the incident, and subject to the review results, formal intervention may be requested.

  At present, there is no consensus regarding the best set of thresholds for identifying and selecting officers for intervention, although there are three formulas currently used. ‘Department-level thresholds’ (based on the ‘two-stage process’) are triggered when a certain number of complaints are received within a set timeframe. Once identified, the supervisor must take action by reviewing the incident and referring the officer to the appropriate type of intervention, if required. The ‘peer officer average’ approach compares an officer’s performance with that of their peers. For instance, a set of performance indicators received by one officer conducting specific duties are compared with the performance of another officer who is assigned to similar duties.

  Lastly, many departments use the ‘performance indicator ratio’ approach to analyse performance data within their EI system. This approach analyses data by comparing the ratio of different performance indicators – for instance, the ratio of an officer’s use-of-force reports to the number of arrests made. The distinct benefit of using this method is that it allows supervisors to “identify top-performing officers (e.g. high arrest activity, low

\textsuperscript{15} G.P. Albert and S. Walker, op. cit., p. 2.23.
arrest-to complaint ratio) and not unfairly subject them to intervention".\textsuperscript{17} Unsurprisingly, departmental implementation of any of the abovementioned thresholds is highly dependant upon availability of resources, given that cost and technology vary considerably among each approach.

- **Intervention:**

The intervention phase of the EI system involves the counselling or retraining of selected police officers, aimed at improving their performance at work. In some departments, counselling involves a discussion between the officer and his/her immediate supervisor. The purpose of this informal counselling session is to come to an agreement about which type of method is best to tackle and correct an officer’s performance issues.\textsuperscript{18} In other departments, counselling is referred to the appropriate profession, such as psychological counselling, to deal directly with a particular problem.

Among a few US departments, EI interventions offer alternative models for counselling and retraining, with the use of group sessions. A group session with peer officers offers support and guidance for those who are experiencing similar issues in the line of duty. On the other hand, there are a number of problems with using a group session approach. Firstly, the general subjects that are covered in group sessions may not address particular issues that an officer is confronted with in his/her line of work. Secondly, organising group sessions is difficult and time consuming, as the nature of police duty involves shift work. This may create a problem for officers, as considerable time may pass between the time of identification and receiving counselling or retraining. Lastly, evidence suggests that group sessions may reinforce inappropriate behaviour by creating group solidarity between selected officers, and encouraging them to identify themselves as “bad” officers.\textsuperscript{19} Thus, through the labelling process,\textsuperscript{20} group sessions may reinforce undesirable attitudes among subject officers. Despite these potential drawbacks, it is conceivable that group sessions may influence positive officer performance by offering peer support and reinforcing trust within the policing organisation.

\textsuperscript{17} S. Walker, op. cit., 2003, p. 32-33.
\textsuperscript{18} S. Walker, op. cit., 2005, p. 115.
\textsuperscript{19} S. Walker, op. cit., 2003, p. 36.
\textsuperscript{20} The labelling process, also known as Social Reaction (Labelling) theory, refers to the stigma of being socially labelled as a deviant, and conforming to the attitudes and actions that reflect this assumption (L. J. Siegel, *Criminology: The Core* (3rd ed.), Thomson Wadsworth, USA, 2008, p. 162-165.)
An important aspect of the intervention phase is the training of supervisors. The lack of adequate orientation and training of first line supervisors poses a serious problem to the effectiveness of EI systems. The essential role of supervisors is to coach and assist officers under their command with their performance issues. If the department does not provide adequate training, the system’s goals are misunderstood and an officer’s inappropriate behaviour remains untreated.\textsuperscript{21} As supervisors have the primary responsibility for conducting interventions, it is crucial for the department to provide adequate and consistent training.

- \textit{Post-Intervention Monitoring}: Following the intervention stage, the department monitors the performance of subject officers for a specified period. There is no consensus on the formality of post-intervention monitoring; rather each department has their own process in place to reflect their organisational needs. Generally, post-intervention monitoring is informal, relying on the immediate supervisor to monitor the performance of subject officers under their command.

However, the absence of formal documentation and close departmental supervision minimises the guarantee that monitoring of subject officers will occur.\textsuperscript{22} As a result, many departments have developed a formal process of post-intervention monitoring, involving the observation, evaluation and reporting of officer performance. For instance, the New Orleans Professional Performance Enhancement Program (PPEP) requires immediate supervisors to regularly observe subject officers on duty and file a formal evaluation every two weeks for a six-month period.\textsuperscript{23} On the other hand, Western Australia (WA) Police have incorporated a manual post-intervention process, whereby the formality and duration of monitoring is determined on a case-by-case basis. There is insufficient evidential data to suggest that either method is more effective. For most police organisations, the aim is to strike a balance between the formal bureaucratic demands of accountability and enhancing efficiency.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{21} S. Walker, op. cit., 2003, p. 37-38.
\item \textsuperscript{22} G.P. Alpert, D.J. Kenney and S. Walker, op. cit., p. 148.
\item \textsuperscript{23} S. Walker, op. cit., 2005, p. 117.
\end{itemize}
THE BENEFITS OF EARLY INTERVENTION SYSTEMS

General Benefits

Individual Officer

EI systems initially focused on improving officer performance by holding individual officers accountable for their actions, hence creating a higher standard of police integrity. A study conducted in the US by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) found all three EI systems, (Miami-Dade, Minneapolis and New Orleans) despite their differences, to be effective in reducing citizen complaints and use-of-force incidents among officers subject to intervention. Further, the systems not only reduced misconduct within the policing agency, but also improved the behaviour of subject officers. In Minneapolis alone, the average number of citizen complaints received by subject officers declined 67 per cent one year after intervention.

In addition to improving officer performance, EI systems have the capacity to distinguish the ‘top-performers’ from the ‘under-performers’ and ‘problem officers’. This enables the provision of remedial assistance for officers who are in need of correcting their behaviour, and acknowledges appreciation for the top-performing officers within the department.

Supervisors

EI systems have changed the traditional role of supervisors in several ways. Firstly, as mentioned above, EI system databases provide supervisors with systematic data on the performance of officers under their command. This allows supervisors to become data analysts by identifying patterns of conduct, especially behaviour that warrants attention. Additionally, this change in role creates a new standard of intensive supervision and accountability for supervisors. EI systems provide senior management with a formal mechanism to hold supervisors accountable for their role in early intervention. For instance, management is able to oversee the actions of supervisors each time they access the EI system. Furthermore, many EI systems require supervisors to formally report to their managers, in order to ensure accountability and improve consistency within the department. Lastly, EI systems provide timely data that allows supervisors to come up-to-speed with newly assigned officers they know little about. In effect, supervisors are able to develop proactive strategies to addressing personnel and leadership.

issues, by evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of their unit before meeting them.  

On the other side of the continuum, some have argued that the demands of EI systems intrude upon supervisory autonomy, rather than create proactive supervision. This argument refers to the need for more deskwork in the presence of EI systems, instead of monitoring officers directly out on the streets. Despite this argument, evidential data suggests that EI systems not only enhance management skills but also their interpersonal skills. The demand for close monitoring, and the need to report to senior management on such monitoring, encourages supervisors to communicate with officers on a personal level. This change in the supervisor’s role has the potential to minimise the risk of officer misconduct, and ultimately enhances departmental integrity.

**The Police Service**

As mentioned above, EI systems have the capacity to enhance accountability and integrity by identifying officers who conduct themselves inappropriately, and by assisting the department to intervene when performance issues are present. Thus, whilst EI systems reduce officer misconduct, they can simultaneously promote integrity and professionalism within the police service, and reinforce positive police-community relations. In essence, EI systems are a beneficial tool to the police service as they communicate the general message that officer misconduct will not be tolerated and integrity is the key to an effective law enforcement agency.

**Specific Benefits**

*Reduction in Citizen Complaints and Use-of-Force Reports*

In the US, the initial goal of EI systems was to reduce citizen complaints and the excessive use of force by on-duty police officers. To date, EI systems have had a significant effect on decreasing citizen complaints, use-of-force incidents and other indicators of problematic police performance among subject officers. As mentioned above, the NIJ study found a considerable reduction of citizen complaints and use-of-force reports following the introduction of EI systems by Miami-Dade, Minneapolis and New Orleans police departments. In addition, Miami-Dade saw a reduction in their use of force reports after subjects received intervention. As reported, “Prior to intervention, 96 percent of officers in the early warning cohort had filed use of force reports.”

reports, compared to the 50 per cent following intervention”.29 In New Orleans, the study concluded that the number of citizen complaints dropped by 62 per cent within one year after subject officers received intervention.30

**EI Systems and Community Satisfaction**

For many decades, tensions between police departments and the communities they serve have revolved around the alleged misconduct of police officers, such as excessive use-of-force against minority groups. Tensions have also stemmed from the social injustice of police departments failing to investigate complaints and discipline corrupt officers.31 In theory, police-community relations may improve through the introduction of EI systems. Aiming to enhance accountability, EI systems have the capacity to identify police officers who are not effectively serving the community. The documentation of officer performance provides a reliable source of evidence for police and citizens if legal proceedings are initiated. Finally, EI systems allow remedial intervention to be carried out before problematic behaviour leads to serious misconduct. This is consistent with the goals of community-oriented policing, which tends to emphasise informal resolution of complaints and strong community-police interaction.

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EVALUATIONS OF EARLY INTERVENTION SYSTEMS

Effectiveness of Early Intervention Systems

Unfortunately, there is limited evidential data on the effectiveness of EI systems. However, what little literature does exist tends to agree that the level of effectiveness within EI systems relies heavily on the pre-implementation phase. As EI systems vary in scope and size, it is crucial that a police agency implements an EI system that reflects their organisational needs. This begins with a self-assessment of identifying specific existing problems, current accountability efforts and the potential to incorporate existing programs and data into an EI system. If assessed accordingly, implementing an EI system can produce effective results in reducing police misconduct and enhancing accountability and integrity within the department.

Prior to implementation, it is also important to inform staff of the nature and purpose of the system and provide comprehensive training on their compliance responsibilities. This can minimise staff hostility towards the EI system and allow officers to appreciate its potential benefits. Failure to train staff extensively can lead to an array of problems for the police agency. For instance, the first EI system within Miami Police failed to successfully reduce police misconduct and enhance integrity, as miscommunication between staff led to the department not collecting critical performance data necessary for the system to be successful. This deficiency allowed a corruption and brutality scandal to erupt within the department, creating internal and external criticism regarding the system’s operational value. This cost the department unnecessary time and money in redeveloping the EI system and extensively retraining staff.

The effectiveness of EI systems is also heavily reliant on supervisors following through with the system’s principles. Many EI systems require supervisors to redevelop their role within the department as data analysts, requiring them to identify and analyse patterns of police performance. This new role of intensive supervision creates a higher standard of accountability, and may place a burden upon supervisors who are reluctant or unwilling to change. Supervisors may lack the commitment to adhere to the principles of an EI system, consequently impinging upon its overall effectiveness. The police agency must place considerable emphasis on training supervisors in their responsibilities and making clear that their own performance will be assessed on the fulfilment of such responsibilities.

Limitations of Early Intervention Systems

Studies have revealed that there are several limitations of EI systems, which tend to flow from the failures of implementation, rather than the system itself. As mentioned above, the planning and implementation stage of an EI system is crucial and complex. If a department fails to communicate the nature and purpose of the system, and withholds adequate training for staff, this may increase officer hostility and resistance towards the concept of early intervention. US studies have found that in the initial stages, officers perceive EI systems as ‘an out to get them mechanism’, rather than a system that intends to enhance organisational accountability and integrity. In this regard, the failure to comprehensively plan and adequately implement an EI system in turn jeopardises the overall operational value of an EI system.

In addition, an obvious obstacle to implementing an EI system is the necessity for sophisticated technological infrastructure and an enormous amount of administrative commitment. If a police agency underestimates the administrative resources required by an EI system, an enormous burden is placed upon the department once the EI system is in effect. For instance, if a small organisation implements a comprehensive personnel assessment system, without considering its technological and administrative requirements and the financial support available, this can place a significant financial burden upon the department. If the department lacks the financial means to support the technological infrastructure and the demand of administrative resources, the system is limited in effectively reducing misconduct and enhancing integrity.

In summary, the limitations highlighted by the literature tend to relate to the department’s commitment to carefully planning and implementing an EI system that reflects their organisational needs. As such, they should not be read as limitations of EI systems in general.

Cost-effectiveness of Early Intervention Systems

The implementation of an EI system can be both costly and time-consuming. IAPro software is perhaps the most widely used early intervention package among US and Australian law enforcement agencies. The pricing of IAPro packages is dependent on the number of personnel employed by the police department. For example, 750 to 1000 employees will cost the department $US25,000 to purchase the software package. On-site training and installation

33 Ibid, p. 128.
will incur costs of $US1,200 per day, with additional travel expenses. In addition to the purchase, installation and training costs, the implementation of integrating an agency’s current data infrastructure into an EI system is a lengthy process. For instance, the implementation of the Phoenix PAS took the department three and a half years to integrate their systematic data into the technological infrastructure of an IAPro EI system, incurring costs of up to $US375,000 for the programming and essential training. Moreover, from an Australian perspective the implementation of the Western Australia Police EI system took two years, costing the department $141,000. Costs were associated to the number of personnel employed (5,300 sworn and 1,700 unsworn), the customisation of the software, the integration of existing data from two separate systems into IAPro, and the required training, licence and maintenance to successfully operate IAPro.

Despite these indications, evidence suggests that EI systems are a cost-effective complaint reduction and performance management mechanism for law enforcement agencies. As US studies reveal, EI systems are effective in reducing officer misconduct and official complaints. These reductions can translate into reduced costs associated with disciplinary action, civil lawsuits and compensation. At the same time, EI systems can increase operational efficiency, provide immediate identification of crucial performance trends, and enhance inter-departmental communication by receiving and disseminating information in a timely manner. It is conceivable that these benefits might offset the financial costs associated with the implementation of EI systems.

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35 IAPro Ever Alert, ‘Product Pricing’, CI Technologies, Inc., USA, 2007 (Pamphlet)
36 Phoenix Police Department, op. cit., n.p.
37 Meeting with Graeme Cruise of the Western Australia Police Risk Assessment Unit, on 20th December 2007.
CASE STUDIES

Since the establishment of the first EI systems in the 1970s, the number of law enforcement agencies utilising the tool has grown considerably. The following case studies examine the Phoenix PAS, widely considered the best EI system in the US, and the first Australasian EI system, implemented by the Western Australia Police in 2007.

Phoenix Police Department

The Personnel Assessment System (PAS) is the Phoenix Police Department’s early identification and intervention system, which was implemented in January 2004. While the system has only been in practice for four years, anecdotally it is widely recognised as the best EI system in the US.\(^39\) The PAS was designed as a proactive tool to enhance employee success while providing a risk management tool for the Phoenix Police Department. A non-disciplinary system, the PAS identifies problematic behaviours among officers and offers a range of interventions to correct officer performance. By identifying inappropriate behaviour and offering remedial assistance, the PAS assists in reducing liability and risk exposure to the department.\(^40\) In effect, the PAS proposes to reduce police misconduct, whilst enhancing accountability and integrity within the department.

The Phoenix PAS utilises US IAPro software, early intervention system package which is currently used by around 200 law enforcement agencies in the US, Canada and Australia. IAPro software offers law enforcement agencies the ability to identify and analyse errant behaviour amongst police officers, whilst upholding organisational integrity.\(^41\)

The PAS is a transparent system, which not only allows management to view data but also permits officers read-only access to their own PAS information. The transparency of the system offers police officers the opportunity to conduct self-intervention prior to the PAS identifying their behaviour as problematic.\(^42\)

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\(^40\) Phoenix Police Department, *The Personnel Assessment System (PAS) Information*, USA, 2008a, retrieved from http://phoenix.gov/POLICE/pas.html


\(^42\) Phoenix Police Department, op. cit., 2008, n.p.
The PAS currently collects data against thirty-seven areas and utilises thresholds on the following elements:

- Discretionary arrest;
- Use-of-force incidents;
- Sustained complaints;
- At-fault accidents;
- Out of policy pursuits;
- Non-compliant inspections; and
- Deadly use of force/fatal police action.

Each of these indicators is weighted against a point value system, which when added together has a threshold of five points in three months or seven points during the year, creating an automatic alert within PAS. Once an officer is identified through PAS, case managers review their case and if intervention is required, it is then referred to the officer’s chain of command. If an officer is referred to intervention as an outcome of his/her incident review, several intervention methods are available. For example, the Phoenix Police Department offers mandatory individual training/coaching, professional or peer support counselling, temporary reassignment, and other intervention methods in order to correct officer performance.

Since the implementation of PAS, the Phoenix Police Department has achieved many positive outcomes, including fewer complaints and frivolous lawsuits against the department and reduced costs associated with lawsuits. Anecdotally, the department reports greater communication between supervisors and officers, the strengthening of inter-departmental relationships and additional knowledge and training provided by the department to assist employees in avoiding future risk exposure.

Statistical evidence reveals that since 2004, cases where employees breached system thresholds or were referred to PAS by co-workers have significantly

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43 Assignment history; Discipline; employee use of force; Firearms qualification data; Suspect use of force; All O.T. worked and % paid & held; All citizen, supervisory & PSB employee requested notes; Complaints; Police accidents; Refer to driving analysis; Interrogations; Significant event radio codes from CAD; Industrial injuries; Use of force ratios; Industrial exposures; Departmental reports; Training records; Employee summary report; Leave time history & balances; PAS contact information; Police shootings; Employee photo; Work hour summary; Threshold summary report; Arrest; Employee assistance options; Discretionary arrest codes; Peer support; Citation traffic & criminal; Critical incident stress team; Pursuits; chaplains; Internal audits; Mental health professionals; Off-duty work data; 24/7 Crises lines; and Commendations, awards & letters of appreciation (ibid).

44 ibid.

45 ibid.
declined. In 2004, employee breaches and co-worker referrals alerted PAS case managers to 269 incidents; by 2006, this figure had dropped to 162 PAS cases.\textsuperscript{46} This data suggests that in reducing police misconduct, the PAS is having a general deterrent effect on Phoenix police officers from participating in unethical behaviour. By these accounts, it is apparent that the PAS has had a positive impact on police misconduct within the Phoenix area and is effectively enhancing integrity within the department.

**Western Australia Police**

The Western Australia Police (WAPOL) implemented the first Australasian EI system in early January 2007. The Kennedy Royal Commission was the key driver for WAPOL to implement a proactive management system to identify and treat officers who represent a risk to the department’s integrity. The Kennedy Royal Commission Final Report (2004) stated that:

> It is no longer acceptable “for a police service to deal with corruption by awaiting the receipt of allegations before embarking upon reactive investigations. It is necessary to adopt a proactive approach of identifying high-risk officers and activities through a process of target identification and profiling”… A mechanism to achieve this is through the implementation of an early warning system.\textsuperscript{47}

The WAPOL EI system utilises US IAPro software, and functions as the main Corruption Prevention & Investigation Portfolio database. This database proactively focuses on corruption prevention, quality internal investigations and providing a ‘best-practice’ complaint management system.\textsuperscript{48} WAPOL is also due to incorporate the next stage of its system by introducing the “Blue Team” component to all policing districts. This will allow supervisors to enter valuable corporate information, such as complaints, use of force incidents and positive correspondence reports, via a web based interface, which is then imported into the IAPro database direct from the field.\textsuperscript{49}

The current system records fifteen information types and indicators, some of which include:

- External & internal complaints;

\textsuperscript{46} Phoenix Police Department, op cit., 2008a, retrieved from http://phoenix.gov/POLICE/pas2.html
\textsuperscript{47} Kennedy, Royal Commission into Whether There Has Been Corrupt or Criminal Conduct by Any Western Australian Police Officer, Final Report, v. 2, Government of Western Australia, 2004, p. 147.
\textsuperscript{49} Western Australia Police, op. cit., n.d., p.2
• Use-of-force incidents;
• Death/injury in custody;
• Register of associations;
• Secondary employment;
• Information reports; and
• Positive correspondence.

Unlike the Phoenix PAS, Western Australia’s EI system incorporates a double-threshold system to identify problematic officer behaviour. Firstly, the manual system allows management to manually flag an officer who is in need of monitoring. Secondly, the threshold system automatically alerts management to officers displaying inappropriate behaviour via a double alert system. This includes the flagging of two information types within a six month period or four information types within a twelve month period. The double-threshold system WAPOL has incorporated into their EI system minimises the risk of errant officer behaviour slipping through the system, by enhancing the role of supervisors to proactively monitor officers under their command.

Once an officer is identified, WAPOL offers remedial intervention via the managerial discipline model. This consists of a review process whereby an officer’s behaviour is assessed within its context, and the selection of an appropriate intervention strategy is identified through consultation between the officer and management.

To date, an evaluation on WAPOL EI system has yet to be carried out, as the implementation phase is still in its early stages. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that the system is having a positive impact on the agency, as efficient and streamlined processes are immediately notifying management of trends and patterns of officer behaviour within the department.50

50 Western Australia Police, op. cit., n.d., p. 2.
CONCLUSION

Since the late 1990s, EI systems have gained increasing prominence as a best practise mechanism for police accountability. As a data-management tool, an EI system is a promising mechanism for identifying and assessing officer performance. While evaluation data is limited, there is some evidence to suggest that through careful implementation, EI systems can improve officer performance and reduce the risk of misconduct within policing agencies. EI systems also have the potential to alter the police culture by communicating the general message that officer misconduct will not be tolerated, and to improve police-community relations by enhancing police integrity.

Law enforcement agencies have seen an enormous growth in the development of EI systems worldwide. In Australia, the WAPOL is nearing implementation of the second phase of its EI system, and South Australia Police implemented its own IAPro EI system in mid-2007. New South Wales Police and Victoria Police are currently conducting research into the benefits of early intervention systems, with a view to implementing an IAPro system at some point in the future. While further research is required, an EI system could have a profound impact on Victoria Police and its prevention of officer misconduct. It is recommended that OPI continues to liaise with Victoria Police on this issue and builds on this report through a review of existing Victoria Police performance management systems.