

# **The New Public Management and Managerial Roles: the Case of the Police Sergeant**

## **Abstract**

This paper explores the introduction of New Public Management techniques within the UK police service after 1995, and in particular, the impact upon the role of the first line manager: the police sergeant. It draws upon qualitative data collected within 'City Police Service' by means of in-depth interviews with role sets of police sergeants, constables, inspectors and members of the senior management team in two police divisions. After evaluating a number of NPM precepts in the light of the findings, the paper makes a number of conclusions relating to the role of police sergeants. These echo the findings of other research on changes in managerial roles, including a shift towards more strategic responsibilities, but with a significant intensification of work, tighter control and scrutiny through organisational performance management systems, and less daily contact with their police constables. This limited their ability to provide leadership and support for their constables, encouraged a greater reliance upon peer group networks, reinforced the 'canteen' subculture, and inhibited the development of a new customer-focused organisational culture. The paper provides a further example of the way in which the implementation of NPM has failed to diminish the power of professional groups in the public services and lead to unintended consequences at variance with the philosophy of NPM.

