



No police force is immune from welfare results

A number of chief constables and police leaders will attend the first of several workshops at Police Federation headquarters this Friday 9 February to discuss police officer welfare.

The workshops, organised by the Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW) follow extensive research into the links between demand, capacity and officer welfare and coincide with a new report being published on the issues, the *Police Officer Welfare, Demand, and Capacity Survey Inferential Results*.

Ché Donald, Vice-Chairman Police Federation of England and Wales, explained the work has been part of a bigger research project led by PFEW and the workshops will explore the issues which “no force is immune from.”

“We began our research back in 2015, starting with focus groups with officers about reduced officer numbers,” explained Mr Donald. “Officers raised concerns over an imbalance between demand and capacity, as well as how this was impacting on their welfare and the level of service that they were able to deliver to the public.

“As a result a large-scale survey on demand, capacity and welfare was undertaken in 2016 to explore the **relationships** between officers’ experience of these sorts of demand and capacity pressures, and aspects of their overall welfare.

“After careful analysis, it is clear there are several links between demand and capacity, and the health and wellbeing of our officers. Within the current context of continuing austerity and the steady rise of recorded crime, it’s clear that the current situation is untenable and no force is immune from the results.

“Although there is a lot of excellent work being done to address the symptoms of poor officer welfare, there is little being done to address their causes; and unless we start focusing on reducing demand or improving capacity, officer wellbeing will not improve.”

The original research produced nine reports* in which officers felt that their workloads were too high and that they were struggling to meet demand. In addition, many officers reported that they were suffering from fatigue, high levels of stress, and poor overall mental wellbeing. The survey’s aim was not just to quantify separate issues, but to also explore the *relationships* between them. To that end, the new report published today looked at the inferential statistics, expressed as odds ratios. For example, the odds that an officer experiencing frequent unrealistic time pressures is also experiencing lower morale, and / or poorer wellbeing.

Mr Donald continued: “The aim of the workshops is to gather ideas, develop practical solutions, and agree a set of shared recommendations with a broad range of stakeholders to try to address the issues raised by our research. We’ll be concentrating on both the causes and effects of a demand and capacity imbalance; paying particular attention to discussions around measuring and balancing demand and capacity, as well as increasing the opportunities for welfare training and support.

“We recognise that we cannot effectively enact change alone and need on-going support from key stakeholders and partner agencies to meet these challenges going forward.”

The latest findings indicate that demand and capacity pressures have serious implications for the health and welfare of officers, and are contributing to the creation of a workforce that can be characterised as *'tired, tense, and targeted.'*

More specifically, officers who experienced any of the following 11 demands and capacity pressures were statistically *more likely* to experience poor wellbeing in *one or more* welfare aspects measured by the survey:

- Unpaid overtime;
- Insufficient officers to do the job properly;
- Inability to meet conflicting demands on time at work;
- High overall workload;
- Insufficient time to do a job to a standard to be proud of;
- Frequent single crewing;
- Frequent neglect of tasks owing to having too much to do;
- Frequent unrealistic time pressures;
- Frequent unachievable deadlines;
- Frequent refusal of annual leave requests;
- Frequent pressure to work long hours.

The survey results also indicated that the psychological well-being of officers was found to be considerably poorer than that of the general public, with high levels of job-related stress and the vast majority of officers reporting stress, anxiety or other difficulties with their mental health and well-being. More worrying, was that 92% of respondents who were experiencing these sorts of difficulties said that these feelings had been *caused by, or made worse by, work*. The results also indicated that mental health and well-being support services provided by the police service were often inadequate, hard to access, or severely cut.

Andrea Breeze Chair of Cleveland Police Federation commented that this is not a surprise that officers are under pressure and their wellbeing is suffering when police officer numbers have continued to fall. Locally we continue to remind the executive officers at Cleveland of the need to look after their officers and provide them with an occupational health department that is fit for purpose.

On Monday 5th February 18 we had 97 officers on sick leave and 55 officers that day who have been on the sick for more than 28 days this cannot be right. The top 3 causes sickness been stress/operation, depression/anxiety.

As a local federation we are working with the force to improve its provision of occupational health services and remind them of their responsibilities under Health/Safety legislation.

Notes to editors:

The first workshop will take place on Friday 9 February with senior officers, including Chief Constables, Superintendents and Chief Inspectors. Two further workshops will take place on Friday 9 and Friday 16 March with key stakeholders.

*The PFEW Demand, Capacity and Welfare Survey was open during February 2016, and attracted over 17,000 responses from officers. A [full descriptive report and nine summary reports are available here](#). They look at [Officer absence behaviours](#); [Accidents, injuries and violence against officers](#); [Attitudes and evaluation](#); [Capacity](#); [Demand](#); [Mental health](#); [Organisational support](#); [Physical wellbeing](#); and [Work patterns](#).

The work was undertaken in partnership with Jonathan Houdmont, an Assistant Professor from the University of Nottingham.

Some of the results from this work were shared at our 2017 Annual conference but this is the first time the latest report has been shared in full. [You can read the full report here](#).

Since 2010 there has been a 14% drop in officer numbers, approx. 21,000 fewer. The Demand, Capacity and Welfare Survey will be run again this year to monitor and track the trends.