

Centre for Policing Research
and Learning



Investigating Police Families' Wellbeing and Support Needs

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Executive Summary

This document reports on the College of Policing commissioned project 'An Investigation into the wellbeing and support needs of police families with the UK'.

The key aims of this research were to:

1. Explore with family members the perceived influence of police occupational experiences on the wellbeing of their families, including resilience, coping and sources of support
2. Explore the influence of occupational stressors on family functioning and dynamics among policing families
3. Identify key areas of need in terms of family support.

The wellbeing and support needs of police families in the UK is a largely under research area and this project represents one of only two pieces of research conducted in the UK.

The research comprised of a large-scale survey that engaged 'non-police' family members, this obtained 1406 responses. Four focus groups were conducted, three with 'non-police' family members, one with serving officers. Four biographical interviews were also carried out with serving officers. Within this data the study captured the perspectives of partners, parents, grandparents, adult children, and serving officers.

Focus Groups:

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis was used on the focus group data and four superordinate themes were identified:

- Single parenting
- Logistics
- Psychological impact
- Support needs.

Each Superordinate Theme is broken down below into subordinate themes:

Superordinate Theme: Single Parenting

Subordinate Themes:

- Can't rely on officers to be there for the family
- Separation erodes family
- Partner's wellbeing impacted through lack of access to social support and self-care options

- Partner isolated – loneliness
- Partner burned out by being only reliable adult
- Grandparents picking up officer's role in childcare and are key to family survival
- Complicated shift patterns make it difficult to plan
- Job comes first – police parent's sacrifice family over job

Superordinate Theme: Logistics

Subordinate Themes:

- Lack of flexible / affordable childcare
- All officers on duty – what about both parents in the job?
- Lack support from HR and lack of consideration of application of policies
- Over accommodating the job/expectations of organisation lack balance and consideration
- Lack of family time
- Single persons career
- Making a choice – stepping back from career, stepping away from the job
- Balance not possible – something is going to lose out

Superordinate Theme: Psychological Impact

Subordinate Themes:

- Secondary trauma of partner
- Partner putting officer mental health first and actively being their mental health support
- No psychological support for partner or children (either formal or social)
- Officer change in character – emotionally shut down
- Eroded relationship with children due to mental health
- Family walking on eggshells
- Officer too emotionally exhausted by work to support partner
- Social relationships of partner suffer due to exhaustion and police connection– reducing social support network, increasing sense of isolation for partners
- Partners assuming police identity
- Changes to social network

Superordinate Theme: Support Needs

Subordinate Themes:

- Police Families want to engage with other police families (non-police families don't understand)
- Safe spaces for police families (police social clubs)
- Peer support networks/communities – for parents (partners with children) for parents (of officers) for partners, for grandparents, for children
- Flexible childcare that supports shifts and emergency childcare (Police creche)
- Recognition and Support - Officers to be seen as more than numbers and resources – as humans with human relationships and families
- Regular and meaningful engagement
- Mental health support needed for families who are dealing with traumatised officers in family
- Mental health support for families (to include police officers)
- Couples therapy to cope with burden of job
- Counselling offered to families and partners needs to be tailored to police and unique challenges of police family

The four focus groups demonstrated how police life impacts on family life. The unpredictable nature of police work fails to reflect the rhythms of 'non-police' family life. Childcare is a significant issue for families, and leads to a detrimental burden on police partners, drawing in extended family to pick up where officers are absent in their parental role. Non-police partners feel isolated and struggle with loneliness brought about by the unusual challenges of being in a police family that also lead to a reduction in social support networks through reduced tolerance and understanding of policing. Non-police partners put their police-partners mental health and wellbeing before theirs and are very active in monitoring and intervening when they feel support it needed. Non-police partners are exposed to the trauma that police officers experience in their working lives. Mental health support for police families is key – not just to support partners with their experience of secondary trauma and isolation, but also in living with officers who are displaying the behaviours of poor mental health and stress.

Interviews

There were four participants for the autobiographical interviews and the interviews were analysed using narrative analysis. The four participants were:

- P1: Male police officer, son of a police officer, children
- P2: Female police officer, wife of police officer, children
- P3: Female police officer, wife of police officer, child and pregnant
- P4: Female police officer, wife of police officer, child

The four interviews bring into sharp focus the challenges police families face, particularly highlighting the impact on children, but also how occupational trauma is redirected into family life and towards partners and children. The complexity of shift work and absent parents is also explored, that coupled with an almost intolerant attitude toward the families of police officers by the organisation leads to a challenging life for police families who are often torn between the love of their jobs and their love for the children and partners.

Survey

The survey design was informed from the information obtained in part one of this project, the desk top study. The target population was restricted to 'non-police' family members of police officers and staff. Results showed the greatest concerns for respondents was their police family members psychological wellbeing and the impact of day-to-day policing on family lives. It was also found that non-police partners wellbeing is linked to their serving family members wellbeing in line with the findings of the focus groups. The survey also indicated a relationship with the respondent's psychological wellbeing and conflict between their serving members work and their personal relationship and also increased family work conflict.

Findings

The findings are broken down into four areas:

- Family/Work Conflict
- Psychological Wellbeing
- Children – Intergenerational Trauma
- Support Needs.

Family/Work Conflict

Work/Family Conflict and Work/Personal Conflict were third and fourth (respectively) of the most pressing concerns for partners in the findings of the survey. This was strongly supported by the findings of the focus groups and interviews. Single parenting was consistently mentioned within the focus groups. The burden on non-police partners to arrange and manage childcare and to run the household in the absence of their serving police partner, who typically worked shifts but also had unreliable finish times, led to exhaustion and burnout. This leads to non-serving partners putting themselves secondary to the needs of their serving partner and their children. This came through the strongest in the focus group where participants repeatedly talked of feeling isolated, from social support and family, but also their serving-partner.

Serving police officers also talked of feeling isolated from their serving-partners as the 50/50 split of childcare led to a sense of solo-parenting.

It was clear from both the focus groups and the interviews that the role of grandparents is key in keeping police families afloat.

Serving officers feel that there is no compatibility between a career in the police and having a family, leading them to believe that policing was a single person vocation. Indeed, there is a strong sense of organisational in-justice, where non-serving and serving parents felt that families and children were viewed as a burden to the organisation.

HR and wider organisational policies do not assist officers and their families, and often exacerbate return to work anxieties. Families and non-serving partners make all the compromise to accommodate the police organisational needs, whilst all the time still being isolated from the wider police family and support.

Psychological Wellbeing

The greatest pressing concern for survey respondents was the psychological health of their serving family member, followed by the concern for their serving family members physical health. It was clear from the focus groups how much time and emotional energy non-serving partners committed to the wellbeing of their serving partners – so much so that it had a detrimental impact on their psychological wellbeing. This was reflected in the survey results where there was a direct correlation between

respondent's psychological wellbeing and that of their serving partners. Non-serving partners are actively putting in place strategies that involve counselling their partners.

In recognising their serving-partners mental health struggles non-serving partners also feel unable to discuss their own mental health struggles with their serving-partners. This has a silencing effect on non-serving partners, adding to their increasing sense of isolation

This active role that non-police partners are playing in supporting their serving partners is exposing them to the risk of secondary trauma. Despite taking on a significant emotional burden in support of their serving-partner and the wider police service, and suffering significant isolation as a result, non-serving partners feel further isolated from the police service as they are rarely recognised as being part of the police family.

The impact of unaddressed mental ill-health of serving family members can have a direct on all family members. Both non-police partners and serving partners expressed concern over redirected stress and mental ill-health towards children as well as partners. Officers themselves admitted to irritability and agitated behaviours redirected towards children when they didn't have time to process the events of a working day, and non-serving and serving partners both witnessed aggression from serving-family members. This was echoed by the serving children in the study who both articulated changeable and irritable moods.

Children – Intergenerational Trauma

The unresolved mental health issues of serving parents can have an impact on police children through redirected behaviours and emotional intolerance. It is also clear from the interviews and focus groups that children are very aware of their police parent's work, and they are very interested in this. Many express the desire to become police officers, and IV1 demonstrated this, and went on to replicate his father's behaviours with his own children to the point of resentment towards the police service for the damage that it had done to him and his children. This is a demonstration of intergenerational trauma that is worth considering for all children of police officers with unresolved mental ill-health.

Both the focus groups and interviews described concerns with what their children were aware of, in terms of the risks that their police parent's occupations entail. One participant articulated concern for her child's mental health and anxiety, stating that if he doesn't speak to her before he goes to bed he

has trouble sleeping – a point reflected in the research of Agocs et al (2015) and Uchida et al. (2018). This results in her face timing her child from work to let them know that she is safe. Children recognise the absence of their police-parents and recognise that this is different from other children’s parents. IV1 talked of feeling abandoned or secondary to other children and families who their police-parents were out protecting, which leaves children wondering - are they secondary to police work too?

Children learn to recognise the behaviours of their police parents and chose when – or sometimes never – to talk to them about their own worries. With some children asking the non-police parent not to disclose conversations, or simply recognising that their police-parent is not emotionally accessible

Support

The question of what support families would like and how they would like to access this was asked across all data collection methods. Three main areas came up: Social Support Networks, Psychological Support and Childcare.

Social Support Networks

Focus group and interview participants stated that they would like to be connected with other police families. Focus group participants spoke of the validation and support they felt from speaking and hearing from other police family members within the focus groups and would like to see something similar replicated on a more regular basis, by their partners police organisation. Similarly, three quarters of survey respondents stated that they either might or would be interested in networking with other police families. In more nuanced conversations participants spoke of different networks, such as networks for parents of police officers and networks for partners of police officers, as well as creating a space for children to meet to normalise their experiences.

Participants spoke of the lack of safe spaces for families to meet either as a group (or couple) away from the wider non-police public and spoke about the difficulty in relaxing and speaking in spaces where they maybe overheard

Overall families, partners, children, grandparents, parents of police officers, all wanted to be recognised by the police service, either through direct communication from their serving family member’s police organisation or at a wider level.

Psychological Support

Almost half of survey respondents considered accessing support services, again their greatest concern is for their serving family members psychological wellbeing, but when it comes to actually having accessed support is for their own psychological wellbeing. However, survey respondents had very limited awareness of what support services are available, with Police Mutual (financial support) being the most recognised service.

Focus Group participants and interviewees also talked about the need for psychological support for their families, both as a regular intervention but also as an aspect of a serving partners treatment when diagnosed with mental ill-health. As one participant stated, it is naïve to think that if a family is not affected if a serving family member is suffering with their mental ill-health. However, it would also be reasonable to suggest that police families (and their serving family members) are in need of regular preventative psychological support. Participants talked of family therapy to bring the family together in discussing the challenges that they face collectively, but also as a way of drawing serving-family members into psychological therapy, a way for non-serving partners to access therapy without feeling uncomfortable in blaming their partners job, and a way for children to express themselves to their parents and to normalise the difficulties of being a police family.

There is also clearly a need to support parents in helping their children with their worries about their parent's careers. With parents expressing concern for their children's anxiety levels, both in response to their worries about the risk that their parents faced in the daily work but also in their response to their police-parent's behaviours at home, and their relationships with them.

Childcare

Childcare and the incompatibility with police shift work and unreliability of work hours had a significant impact on the practical and emotional wellbeing of families. The concept of in-house nursery provision or a creche came up in all focus groups, with partners and officers suggesting that this would be a way to ensure that opening and closing times aligned more with the needs of shift workers and those that were often kept on at work. Participants suggested that this would help not only with the stress of childcare but the stress of those returning to work after maternity and paternity leave. Participants also spoke about emergency childcare access, which one participant stated they were provided through their own organisation and suggested that this would at least help with those times when the prospect of children home alone loomed due to operational requirements.

Recommendations

- Police Service/Police Families Connections

Individual organisations should actively identify and connect with the families of their staff. This should be carried out directly and not through employees. Regular communication should be carried out that is aimed specifically at families. When recognising officers and staff for good work, families should be included.

- Networks

Individual organisations and the College of Policing should develop active networks for families and specific family groups: partners, children, parents/grandparents. These should be run on a regular basis and be seen as a place for people to connect and develop relationships where they can share the unique experience of being in a police family. This should be considered as preventative aspect of wellbeing support.

Further research should be considered into what works in terms of engaging and connecting with families at a local and national level, and how these impact on family wellbeing.

- Safe Spaces

Individual organisations should look to re-establish social spaces that are exclusive to police families and therefore, provide a safe space for people to come together.

Consideration should be given to the benefits to the organisation of providing this, and balance this with the costs.

- Psychological support

Psychological support should be made available to police families as a matter of course and as a preventative intervention. When police officers and staff are identified as suffering from mental ill-health, psychological support should include the employee's family. Inter-agency work should be undertaken to understand what external health agencies can provide in terms of support.

Further research should be conducted into mental health provision for families to establish what is effective, and what is preventative.

Further research should be conducted into to the secondary trauma of the partners of police officers and staff. Linking in with the next recommendation, this should also consider the impact on child mental health.

- Study into the effects on children

Further research should be conducted into the effect on children's mental health through having a serving police parent. This should not be restricted to cases where the serving family member has an identified mental health concern, though this should form part of future studies, along with engagement with wider social services including health and education in consideration of preventative support measures.

- Childcare

Serious consideration should be given to the provision of childcare for police officers. Consideration should be made of in-house provision, emergency arrangements and police specific agreements with third party childcare providers, potentially at a national level.

Research should be carried out into the benefits to the organisation (cost/benefit analysis), the family and the individual officer. This should also link into research on retention of women within the organisation.

- HR policies

All HR policies should take into consideration the impact of the families of officers. Individual organisations should be encouraged to review all policy and procedure and work in conjunction with support groups active within their organisation. Research should be conducted with international partners to identify practice which might benefit and inform UK practice.

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Chapter One Introduction

The empirical study reported here follows on from an initial desk top study into the literature of the police families' wellbeing and support needs in the UK, and provision of those needs. The original desk top study found a distinct lack of research conducted on police families' needs in the UK. In response the current empirical study undertook a mixed methods approach to capture data using a national survey aimed at 'non-police' family members, this obtained 1406 responses. Four focus groups were conducted, three with 'non-police' family members, one with serving officers. Four biographical interviews were also carried out with serving officers. Within this data the study captured the perspectives of partners, parents, grandparents and adult children, and serving officers. The following chapters report on the analysis and findings of this data and discuss the context and relevance to UK policing and make recommendations for further research and potential intervention ideas.

For context of this current report the review of the current literature is summarised below:

[Summary of the current research into police families' wellbeing and support needs](#)

The initial desk top study identified that there is a paucity of UK studies on the health and wellbeing of police families, with only one study looking at police families in the UK (Willis, O'Connor and Smith, 2008). As most research is US-based, the initial desk top study employed widened inclusion criteria to include other emergency responder families, including from other countries, capturing what was felt to be a related perspective within an emergency services context and enabling some understanding into the challenges that these unique professions face.

What was found was that the occupational demands experienced by emergency responders, such as police officers and staff, can have negative influences on family functioning and on their health and wellbeing. Incident related trauma, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), organisational stress, and work-family conflict have been shown to be associated with negative relationship satisfaction and wellbeing outcomes (Gibson, Swatt, and Jolicoeur, 2001; Shreffler, Meadows, and Davis, 2011; Porter, and Henriksen Jr., 2016), poor mental health in partners and children (Davidson, Berah and Moss, 2006; Duarete et al., 2006), and changing family roles and responsibilities due to the frequent absence of the ER worker (Roth and Moore, 2009; Brodie and Eppler, 2012; Karaffa et al., 2015).

The extant literature is broken down into four main areas: Work Family Conflict, Work Related Stress, Intimate Partner Violence and Violence Against Children, and Children.

Overview of Literature:

Work Family conflict

In their exploration of the literature on work family conflict, Sharp et al. (2020) found that partners of emergency responders experienced extreme pressure due to their partner's day to day role. In particular, spouses of US police officers and paramedics described feeling like a single parent, with sole responsibility for the management of the household and children. Indeed, issues such as long working hours, unpredictable shifts and reduced quality relationship time had a negative effect on family life (Roth and Moore, 2009, Brodie and Eppler, 2012, Karaffa et al., 2015), a point that was also raised in the consultation on the UK Police Covenant (The Home Office, 2020). Of consideration for future research into police families, Amendola et al. (2021) have developed a Work Family Conflict Scale specific for spouses and partners of police officers.

Work Related Stress

The work-related stress experienced by emergency responders is shown to have a direct impact on the stress of partners and families. Sharp et al. (2020) identified several studies where partners of emergency responders suppressed their own emotional needs to balance the mental health needs of their emergency responder partner. For example, the findings of Davidson et al. (2006) highlighted how Australian police officers scored highly for hyperarousal whilst their partners scored low on arousal, whereas Roberts and Levenson (2001) found that when police officers experienced high stress, their partners avoided conflict through their own emotional regulation. It was argued by the Roberts and Levenson (2001) that work related stress was more detrimental for marital interaction than physical exhaustion and created an environment for future marital distress.

This last finding is of particular concern when we consider the early discussion of the role of partner support in stress moderation and coping. Indeed, emotional withdrawal by either emergency responder or partner is found to have a negative effect on spouse/partner wellbeing, and lead to an increase in marital tension (Davidson et al., 2006; King and DeLongis, 2014).

Intimate Partner Violence

Considering studies on Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) of police officers, Sharp et al. (2020) found them to be based wholly on self-reporting but nevertheless indicated the incidence of physical aggression against a partner to be between 7% and 10% (Ryan, 2000, Gibson et al., 2001, Anderson and Lo, 2011, Zavala, 2013), and just over 8% for physical aggression against children (Gibson et al.,

2001; Zavala, 2013). Where police officers used their authority from their police officer role (authoritarian spill over), they were more likely to engage in IPV, which increased through work related stress or exposure to violence (Johnson et al., 2005; Anderson and Lo, 2011).

Children

Continuing their review of the literature into emergency responder's families, Sharp et al. (2020) found child mental health was influenced by the level of trauma their parents and wider family were exposed to, as well as the trauma the child is exposed to individually. Studies also show that symptomology displayed by police parents is associated with children who are more fearful and dependant and who display externalised behaviour and increased somatic problems (Uchida et al., 2018). The authors go on to state that children experience anxiety over their parents' safety and are at increased risk of developing PTSD and behavioural problems when their emergency responder parent experience PTSD themselves.

Sharp et al. (2020:118) clearly establish through their summary of the evidence, 'how crucial informal social support is for ER spouses/partners and families to deal with day-to-day pressures of ER life (Roth and Moore, 2009, Brodie and Eppler, 2012, Karaffa et al., 2015)'.

This report will highlight how the current project has built on these findings and added a wealth of information to the current landscape, deepening greatly the understanding of police families within the UK.

The key aims of this study were to:

1. Explore with family members the perceived influence of police occupational experiences on the wellbeing of their families, including resilience, coping and sources of support
2. Explore the influence of occupational stressors' on family functioning and dynamics among policing families
3. Identify key areas of need in terms of family support.

Chapter Two Methodology

This chapter details the methods of data collection and analysis employed to answer the aims and objectives. This was a mixed methods study using two qualitative data collection methods comprising four focus groups and four interviews, supported by a large-scale, quantitative survey.

The key aims of this study are to:

1. Explore with family members the perceived influence of police occupational experiences on the wellbeing of their families, including resilience, coping and sources of support
2. Explore occupational stressors' influences on family functioning and dynamics among policing families
3. Identify key areas of need in terms of family support.

Ethical Approval

Ethical approval for this project was obtained from the Open University Human Research Ethics Committee and all documentation and recorded decisions are located under the reference HREC/4254/Lennie.

Mixed Methods

The traditional concept of mixed methods as a cross paradigm combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods has become more readily accepted within the research community since its conception some 30 years ago (Creswell, 2015; Bryman and Bell, 2015). The benefits of employing multiple methods to address limitations in one data collection method with the strengths found in another are widely recognised as producing stronger and richer research outcomes (Creswell et al., 2007; Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2003; Morse, 2003).

This study utilises three data collection methods, two qualitative: focus groups and four interviews, and one quantitative: survey. The data collection methods are further broken down by population (serving police members and non-police members). Originally, the research design did not include serving officers and staff, but the research team were approached by a number of serving officers and staff and it felt appropriate to include them in the research design, therefore focus groups and interviews with serving officers and staff were included within the data collection phase. Initially it

had not been intended to include interviews in the data collection, but there were a number of individuals who approached the research team that had unique stories and it was felt more appropriate to interview these individuals than include them in a focus group.

Data Collection Method: Focus groups

Focus groups as a method of data collection are positioned between observation methods and individual interviews. They are used to obtain rich detail and explore specific concepts or phenomena, and they are often paired with other data collection methods (Seal et al., 1998). In this case they are supported in this study by interviews and a large quantitative survey.

Participants

Participants for the focus groups were recruited using the Twitter, Linked-In and Face Book social media platforms. Recruitment was initiated by the PI but picked up on and re-circulated by several police charities. In some circumstances the 'advert' that was created (Appendix 1: Focus Group Advert) was emailed to groups of staff – one example being the Police National Lead for Perinatal Mental Health, who circulated to their Metropolitan Police advocates. As already identified, though the target population was non-police family members, a number of serving officers and staff with families approached the research team and wished to have their experience captured, so interviews and a second focus group were arranged with police officers though, these numbers were ultimately depleted due to operational demands.

There were three non-police family members focus groups held totalling 11 participants, 9 of which were female, one male child (over the age of 18) of a police officer, and two grandmothers. In the end there was only one 'serving-police' focus group, totalling 2 participants, both male, with one partner being a serving officer and the other recently retired as an Inspector due to childcare needs.

A schedule of questions (Appendix 2 Focus Group Schedule of Questions) was used as guidance for the focus groups for the two researchers who held the focus groups. This was to encourage consistency and ensure coverage of areas of interest.

Analysis: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis was chosen as the analytical tool for the focus groups as it seeks to capture participants lived experience of a phenomenon, and the meaning that sits beneath this experience; in this case that of having a family member serving within the police and how police life intersects with family life (Alase et al, 2017). IPA seeks to 'tap into a natural propensity for self-

reflection on the part of participants' and the focus groups became reflective spaces for the participants to discuss their experience (Smith et al., 1997:6).

Although there is no prescriptive method for conducting IPA, Smith (1999, cited in Dima and Bucuta, 2016:74) recommend the following stages to follow for IPA:

- Reading and Re-reading
- Initial Notes
- Developing Emergent Themes and Patterns
- Searching for Connections Across Emerging Themes
- Matrix a Table of Themes
- Move to Next Case

The focus groups were conducted via Microsoft Teams online meeting platform and the transcription option was used. The transcriptions were read, and then re-read, by the first researcher and descriptive notes made in one margin. Once this initial element of the process was complete the process was repeated by the second researcher and conceptual notes were made in a second margin, these notes highlighted the emerging themes. Together both researchers identified clusters of themes which were drawn out of the notes and double checked against the original text. This was an iterative process establishing an intensive relationship between the researchers and the text. A table of themes was drawn up for each transcript, and the clusters were named. These represented the subjective superordinate themes; and a summary interpretation of each participant text (Smith and Osborn, 2008).

Once all of the focus groups were analysed using this process the first researcher, and principal investigator, interpreted the themes across the groups, beginning the analytical process of interpretation and reflection across the whole; identifying and prioritising the Superordinate and Subordinate themes across the data, and selecting textual excerpts as illustrations for the reader.

[Data Collection Method: Autobiographical Interviews](#)

The interviews were conducted with individuals who have approached the project and wished to offer their story but were either not appropriate to engage via focus groups or could not join a focus group due. The project used autobiographical narrative interview technique to collect data from single participants. Therefore, there is no interview schedule; the interviewer explained the general theme of the research and encouraged the participant to tell their life story in the context of the theme, but in so much explained that they may mention anything that they feel made them the person that they

are today. In the first section of the interview the researcher remained quiet, only speaking to encourage and support the participant. In the second half of the interview the researcher asked questions about themes that had arisen in the account and in the third phase the researcher asked questions that were more particular to the research project (Domecka et al., 2012). The reason for choosing this approach was two-fold, with limited research conducted in this area it was desirable not to restrict participants to particular areas of interest, and it a more natural insight into the complexity of the intersection of family and police life.

Participants

There were four participants for the autobiographical interviews. None were actively recruited by the research team for the purpose of an interview but either contacted the PI directly themselves or did not appropriately fit the criteria or ethos of a focus group. The four participants were:

- P1: Male police officer, son of a police officer, children
- P2: Female police officer, wife of police officer, children
- P3: Female police officer, wife of police officer, child and pregnant
- P4: Female police officer, wife of police officer, child

Narrative Analysis of Autobiographical Interviews

Narrative analysis has proved to be useful in the study and understanding of the complexity of human experience, social and cultural identity and human relationships. It is also useful in the study of power and moral complexity within organisations. (Rhodes and Brown, 2005; Bryman and Bell, 2015; Sharp et al, 2019). Individuals use stories to make sense of the world around them and their places within it. These stories are a way for individuals to communicate this meaning and understanding, for themselves and with others, via a narrative form (Sharpe et al., 2019). Through story telling individuals also reflect social and political relations and the placement and experience of power. The structure that an individual uses for their story, the sequence of events and actions and interpretation of theirs and other's roles, the inclusion and exclusion and emphasis all create the stories of their life, as seen through their eyes (Rhodes and Brown, 2005). With the use of autobiographical interviews, which actively encourage participants to tell 'their story' (or stories) it seems appropriate to honour this process and analyse the narrative used to create their stories. This approach also helps to understand the roles played within, and between individual family relationships and the social and structural relationships identified with the police service as a social concept and organisation.

Data Collection Method: Survey.

The survey design was informed from the information obtained in part one of this project, the desk top study. The majority of questions were closed and used a rating response though there were some open text responses. A pilot of the survey was carried out prior to going live, with minor changes made. The schedule of questions created can be found at Appendix 3: Survey Questions.

The target population was restricted to 'non-police' family members of police officers and staff. It was anticipated that it would be challenging reaching the target population due to the very reason that this study is being carried out – a lack of direct communication and identification of police families as a distinct group. Therefore, numerous police organisations were contacted directly and their support with distribution obtained. The following groups were contacted and agreed to circulate the survey to their members via webpages and/or newsletter

- Oscar Kilo
- National Police Federation
- BTP
- BTP Federation
- Fast Track Inspectors (October 2022 cohort)
- CPRL Membership Group, The Open University (24 police forces)
- GMP Association for Women in Policing
- GMP
- He for She Police National Network
- Police Treatments Centres
- Police Care UK
- Scottish Police Benevolent Fund
- Blue Lamp Foundation
- CoPS (Care of Police Survivors)
- Dorset Police Federation
- South Yorkshire Police
- West Mercia Police
- The Police Children's Charity
- National Counter Terrorism Network
- Merseyside Police
- Lancashire Police

The advert provided for the survey can be found at Appendix 4: Survey Advert. The survey was live from 21st September 2022 to the 31st December 2022. This was longer than had originally been anticipated but it allowed for some of the larger organisations (eg The Police Federation) to include the survey in their quarterly newsletters.

The responses to the survey were downloaded from the Qualtrics online platform (n=1,406), and initial descriptive statistics of each item were presented to understand the level of engagement with the survey. A preliminary two-step cluster analysis was undertaken using a mix of categorical and ordinal/interval data within the survey. The number of clusters was based on a statistical measure of fit (Schwarz's Bayesian Criterion).

Response and Engagement

As with many online surveys of varying degrees of complexity, the levels of engagement with the survey waned as it progressed. From the initial 1,406, around half (n=776-792, 55-56%) completed the early stages of the study (overview and socio-demographic questions), excluding some low responses for 'other' responses. The following sections also saw some decline in completion, dropping to around half (n=615-678, 44-49%) for sections examining respondents' most pressing issues and needs. Further sections in perceptions to access services also saw more attrition in responses, with response rates ranging from 484-570 (34-41% of the total responses). The final section on awareness of specific services ranged from 472-493 (34-35%).

Chapter Three: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Focus Groups

This chapter looks at the findings from the focus groups. There were four focus groups in total, three were made up of 'non-police' family members from partners to parents of police officers, and children. Quotes from these focus groups are represented by the prefix 'FG', the fourth focus group was made up of police officers and is represented by the prefix 'FGP'. The research team used Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis to understand the findings and capture the lived experience of these police families. The findings are broken up into four Superordinate Themes:

- Single Parenting
- Logistics
- Psychological Impact
- Support Needs

Each section of superordinate themes discusses the subordinate themes and the phenomenon described is illustrated with quotes from the participants.

Overall participants expressed overwhelming pride for their officer and their work. However, this work took a significant toll on partners, particularly the non-police partners who took sole responsibility for childcare, but also the wider family of children and parents of officers. Often grandparents stepped in to take the strain where police officers were routinely absent from their children's lives. Often it was felt that the needs of the family were placed second to that of the organisation, and partners and children sacrificed both careers, relationships and mental health to accommodate the demands of policing. Police officers themselves recognised this and the impact it was having on their families and children and described policing as a single person's career. Partners took an active role in monitoring their police partners mental health and intervening personally to support them. There is a clear indication of secondary trauma for partners who are routinely absorbing the tales of traumatic incidents that their police partners are exposed to in their duties. However, it is not just partners whose mental health and wellbeing suffer as a result of having a loved one in the police service, parents of police officers are also exposed to the worries and anxieties of policing, though less directly, but they are exposed to the external behaviour of officers struggling with their mental wellbeing – often learning to navigate agitated and emotionally closed behaviours,

but also losing relationships in some cases. In response to their experiences participants talked about the need for more practical support – specifically with childcare, police friendly creches were something brought up by all focus groups with the idea passionately supported. Family mental health support and counselling were also requested – with participants eager for mental health issues of officers to be treated for the whole family, suggesting that what an officer was experiencing was impacting the family as well. In a less direct practical sense, participants welcomed the chance for formalised support networks with other police families, citing the loss of police environments (such as police social clubs) as an erosion of the ‘police family’ concept with families seen as outsiders to the organisation. Although significant supporters of the police service and their loved one’s careers, participants felt that policing was significantly damaging to them and their family:

FG1 P2 ‘...they use the term police family, don't they as a way to try and get people into the job...but it's kind of, yeah, become part of this family because you're about to destroy your one at home...’

Superordinate Theme: Single Parenting

Superordinate Theme: Single Parenting
Subordinate Themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can't rely on officers to be there for the family• Separation erodes family• Partner's wellbeing impacted through lack of access to social support and self-care options• Partner isolated – loneliness• Partner burned out by being only reliable adult• Grandparents picking up officer's role in childcare and are key to family survival• Complicated shift patterns make it difficult to plan• Job comes first – police parent's sacrifice family over job

Both non-police officers and serving officers talked of single parenting, though non-police officers were clear that they felt that they were single parents, whereas serving officers talked more of solo-parenting experiences, essentially sharing the parenting responsibility between them, with rare episodes of joint parenting and whole family experience. The complexity of shift work and the irregularity of finish times led to a lack of a cohesive family structure, and an erosion of meaningful relationships. Non-police partners seemed to exist in survival mode, navigating from one challenge to the next, whereas police partners seemed to have a less demanding role, even when living with another officer.

Non-serving participants spoke of not being able to rely on their police partner for any childcare responsibilities, leaving them to plan their lives around other childcare options, without which career options for the non-police parents might be limited:

FG3 P5 'We can't be reliant on my husband at all, so if he's there to help with pick up and drop off and things, it's lovely. And that's like a bonus. And obviously if it's at home at the weekend, that's great. But it all kind of falls on me and I find that very overwhelming because my job is also very demanding and I love what I do and, and everything else. But it's that juggle. It's just, yeah. But because we have the support, it's, it is manageable without it. I know I wouldn't be able to work, and I thought I would have had to give up work with the kids.'

Not only is this an added mental burden on the one parent, it also impacts on the same parents' wellbeing through reducing their own self-care opportunities:

FG2 P3 '... when you're thinking about your own well-being and things being able to get out and do stuff, so really challenging. So, like I know like some of my friends will go to the gym class every single week or they'll sign up for a block of something. But that's impossible when you're married to a policeman because you, you know, one Tuesday night they're on nights the next Tuesday night, they're on afternoons. The next Tuesday, they're on days great. I can go and do something. But the next Tuesday, they're back on, so you can't commit to anything. You can't do anything on a regular basis. And like I've got a really, like, lovely network of friends who, like, go out in the evenings and stuff. But you're constantly like, well, I need to check what shifts

Andrews on. And I don't know if I can come or I can I come and put Spencer to bed at your house so that I can. I can join in.'

This level of added responsibility can actively erode mental health as non-police parents are exhausted by being the only adult taking on the responsibility.

FG2 P3 'Oh, I need to sit down and plan what's fun club drop offs I'm gonna do. Or when do we need breakfast club. And it's never. It's not like a nice predictable pattern like that. You can be like well there needs to go to fun Club every Thursday doesn't work like that. You have to like sit and like literally like match. Everything. So you definitely like you carry around this extra burden'

FG3 P5 'Being alone, feeling lonely, feeling exhausted... I mean, me personally, it's a struggle. I had two days off last week on Thursday and Friday because with the run up to Christmas and everything else and but everything that's going on in Tom's just been at work, so I was just. I can't take this anymore. I need. I need a break... It does it I it does impact on me personally. Impacts on my mental well-being because it's the constant mental load of what else needs to be done and and because Tom isn't here..'

With police parents typically working a number of weekends and having weekdays off, but reduced childcare responsibilities, this can cause resentment for both the police parent and the police service:

FG3 P2 'Our partners have no choice really, and by default we have no choice but to support them, and usually that does mean sacrifices from us or us running ourselves into the ground to try and just make things work somehow, and you can't help but resent the job sometimes for putting you in that position..'

FG3 P5 '... the negotiating of just everything after I've been at work for a week. If I then got the children on the weekend by myself, it's hard, it's and I'm tired and it's draining and you know, Tom then has days off in the week and I'm really resentful about that. And we have to talk about that quite a lot because then he just gets to be on his own at home and does whatever he likes. The kids are wherever they are. I'm at work and in my mind. He sits around all day and does nothing. I know that isn't the

case. Like he goes for coffee and like generally has a nice time. And then on a Saturday, I'm like, pulling my hair out at 7:00 AM after being awake for however many hours...'

The single parent narrative links with the erosion of family relationships, both between partners and with children as the police parent is living a different rhythm to that of their family. A point not lost on a police parent:

FGP P2 'I get days off during the week. I'll have a Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday for example, in between my work and weekends I have three days off in the middle of the week. Personally, that's fantastic. I've got loads of time to myself. I can do what I need to do, I can hobbies and whatnot shopping, just get things done. It's great. The impact on family, however, is I'm here [work] for your weekends, working late shift as well. You know, I tend to do all the cooking around the house and so just organizing that with the family and so and it's my wife. Then there's more of a burden on her to, to manage things'.

Or non-police parents and children:

FG2 P5 '...now we've got children that I find more difficult than ever because we will plan things in and then we have to miss out. Oh I go with the kids and then like Daddy can't come and then the boys are sad...'

What was found consistently within the focus groups was the reliance on Grandparents to pick up the absent police parent's childcare responsibilities, with an obvious impact on their lives as well, particularly where the grandparents were older or working full time themselves:

FG3 P4 '.. I mean, they were sort of having to really kind of step in, especially in sort of primary school, you know, where normally it would be, you know, kind of picking up from school, dropping off all this sort of stuff. It was all kind of loaded onto them. They were sort of having to kind of do that. And they, you know, they're sort of older...'

And where both parents were police officers and the grandparent still working, the burden was greater:

FG2 P2 'with her husband being in the Met as well, and doing what he does, his shifts are all over the place, so it's juggling around with the childcare and I'm supporting

them as much as I can in and out of my own full-time job to to help out. Obviously with the grandchild. And we have a very close bond, but there's also the fact that I'm not getting any younger. So when I finish my work, I'm going to look after my grandchild to whatever and then having to get up at the crack of dawn to go and do my own job...'

Superordinate Theme: Logistics

Superordinate Theme: Logistics
<p>Subordinate Themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of flexible / affordable childcare• All officers on duty – what about both parents in the job?• Lack support from HR and lack of consideration of application of policies• Over accommodating the job/expectations of organisation lack balance and consideration• Lack of family time• Single persons career• Making a choice – stepping back from career, stepping away from the job• Balance not possible – something is going to lose out

Building on the first theme of the challenges of juggling childcare alone, and the impact this had, both police officers and non-police parents talked about the logistical impact police work had on family life. Access to normal support services and networks were limited by the unique nature of policing, and how the organisation accommodates (or not) officers with families has a direct impact on families, relationships and officer's careers.

Typically, police work, with variable shift patterns and unreliable finish times leaves the burden of childcare on a single parent, often this is not compatible with that parent's own work commitments. Therefore, police families, like many families within the UK, look to professional childcare to assist. However, again due to the complexity (rolling shift patterns, unreliable finish times) of police life this still proves a challenge as professional childcare does not offer the flexibility that police families require, and where it does there comes a significant financial burden:

FGP P2 '...we tried to opt for a childcare approach outside of our family environment doesn't work. Lack of understanding financially impacts on you, as well as no flexibility.'

This is particularly problematic when shifts are changed at short notice, or rest days cancelled, as families often meticulously plan their lives to accommodate their childcare and working needs, and in the absence of flexible relatives they live precariously, managing from one moment to the next. This is particularly problematic when both parents are police officers and are expected to both be on duty, either through shift changes or significant events such as the Queens funeral. There is no consideration for the needs of the family and the caring responsibilities of those officers:

FGP P2 'It all of a sudden you find yourself and we're both at work and the police are telling us we both have to be at work. They don't care that we've got children and they expect that we are going to make plans for those children to be cared for by someone else.'

FGP P1 '...there's no immediate childcare and it almost negates the need for you to work because you'll end up spending on childcare. If you can afford childcare, if you can get it at the last minute. Not necessarily always. You know, the warnings come in a week, two weeks, sometimes, sometimes some child carers can't do it.'

For one family this meant that one parent had to give up their career in the police service as they recognised, with the death of their grandparent who was supporting their childcare needs, they could no longer meet the needs of the organisation with both parents working for the organisation:

FGP P1 'We don't have that resilience to just drop everything and go into work. We can't do it so...' [wife left]

If families do manage to work their childcare arrangements with both parents working (whether as police officers or one external to the police) this leads to an erosion of relationships as parents are often working opposite work patterns to ensure that someone is present for their children, leaving them to live as 'ships in the night' as they seek to accommodate the needs of the organisation first, with their home relationships coming second. Non-police parents talk of how policing permeates

every aspect of family lives, and how they feel that the police service is put before the needs of the family, to the detriment of the family:

FG 1 P2 'the police dominates every aspect of our lives in one way or another, really... his job kind of dominates every aspect. So every decision we have to make or I make or make around the kids, it's got to kind of run through his work and his shifts or his commitments and so on.'

This is reinforced by the implementation of Human Resourcing policies that have a direct impact on police families, and yet there appears to be a lack of recognition of this impact by policy writers. Most obvious is the process of flexible working applications, but also for officers transferring into the organisation, where a last-minute change of posting can see families split up for long periods of time as parents juggling organisational needs with housing and schooling needs. This sends a clear message to families that they are *less than* the needs of the organisation and this is how families feel:

FG 1 P2 'We had to move down at different times and he's living in an empty house. I was still in London with the kids. Do you know it was just they just didn't care?'

This sense of the devaluing of families is also experienced by serving officers, in particular officers talked about the lack of support on return to work from maternity.

FGP P1 '[organisation] was like, well, yeah. Welcome her back. Open arms. We'll just stick her in frontline. [It] was like, no, that's not going to work because we've got, you know, four kids trying to juggle. I I haven't got immediate childcare... I went to HR, pleaded with him and told him our circumstances. They essentially said it's not our problem. You have to speak to your line managers... But she didn't get that support. HR was dreadful. She never got contacted, and then she left...'

From this comes a real sense of loss of balance between family and the organisation, and with this a realisation that active choices need to be made. There was a real feeling with officers that policing

was a single person's career, and that you couldn't be the police officer that you wanted to be or have the career that you wanted when you have a family:

FGP P2 'The closest I can imagine to really loving the job is on major crime...and every day you're coming in and you're excited about what's the new intelligence, you know, who are the new witnesses? How are we going to develop this investigation? Throwing yourself into it? And you can't wait to get back to work. But then the knock-on effect is. But I haven't seen my kids feel like 8 or 9 days. And apart from a couple of FaceTime calls and you always have that reality check of, that's not right. You know, live to work or work to live. And I'm very much more now coming round to. Well, I work to live.'

FGP P1 'And then one day, my son had said to me our daddy's always sleeping at the weekends and that broke my heart...my son saying dad's always sleeping at the weekends because I was on always on nights. So I needed to make a change.'

But for FGP P1 this change came at the loss of career as he knew it:

FGP P1 'With work aside, actually I'm happy with my life. My kids see me all the time and with good, much better report. I know more about their activities than I ever did before....Umm, but it's not what I signed up for...I signed up to catch bad people and do my best to get them through the criminal justice system and put away for wrongdoing. So my life is completely different to what it was when I signed up. So yeah, has impacted me mentally, massively and it still continues to do so.'

All focus groups discussed either pulling back from their job and prioritising their family commitments or leaving all together, with many discussions around 'exit strategies' for officers, and with one police officer leaving the service so that they could meet the family's childcare needs.

FGP P1 'my wife has left the organization after a career of 20-year service. There's no there was no issues in her performance. This was solely down to personal reasons as to why.'

FG1 P1 'I think of exit strategies for (partner), where I'm working hard to try and think is there an exit strategy here that I can get her out of this mess. You know, for her well-being and for us.'

Superordinate Theme: Psychological Impact

Superordinate Theme: Psychological Impact

Subordinate Themes:

- Secondary trauma of partner
- Partner putting officer mental health first and actively being their mental health support
- No psychological support for partner or children (either formal or social)
- Officer change in character – emotionally shut down
- Eroded relationship with children due to mental health
- Family walking on eggshells
- Officer too emotionally exhausted by work to support partner
- Social relationships of partner suffer due to exhaustion and police connection– reducing social support network, increasing sense of isolation for partners
- Partners assuming police identity
- Changes to social network

There is much secondary trauma experienced by police families and it would appear that everyone within a police family has the potential to have their mental health impacted, particularly if the serving officer is struggling with their own mental health, but also from the impact policing life has on a family, as discussed in the first two superordinate themes. This includes parents of officers who, like partners, identify changes in their serving family members personality as they appear to shut down emotionally and, consequently, relationships erode or are broken. Often police families feel that they are considered as outside of the organisation, and a burden, but psychologically they come to assume the police identity as they are identified as 'police' by wider society accompanied with all the judgement that brings. Being unaccepted within the organisation, and isolated outside of the service increases a

non-police partner's level of loneliness and increases emotional and physical exhaustion as they lack access to meaningful support.

It is clear from speaking with the non-police partners that they are very active in supporting their police-partners mental health – regularly putting their wellbeing before themselves, and actively identifying 'flags' and patterns in behaviour that indicate a decline in their mental health.

FG1 P2 'So I always try and put measures in place to make sure that he can offload, like after every shift, we always speak when he's on the way home from work and he offloads and he, I can do the same with him. But I know if we didn't talk about his day, at least then I know what kind of day he's had when he walks in. Before he's even got into the house and we find that really works for us.'

FG3 P5 'But he can't let it go, so he'll come home and he'll be going and going and going. And I think you're not being paid for this. You don't need to be doing this. This isn't. You know, determined in you need to kind of wind down and let go of things and which he's finding more difficult. So I'm encouraging him to. Yeah. To seek support when needed because, like we were saying, it then impacts on me and impacts on us and as a family and things like that, which isn't positive for anybody...'

Like the logistical challenges of childcare and shift patterns, non-police partners do the heavy lifting when it comes to supporting their partners mental health, but it also takes a significant toll on their mental wellbeing. It is clear that there is a high level of secondary trauma experienced by partners as they are exposed to the most traumatic aspect of their police-partners working life:

FG 1 P1 'Yeah, it is interesting (partner) went to a particularly gruesome, umm, uh incident on a on Christmas Eve once, and then you'll wake, waking up on Christmas Day and the thing that you, you know, you you're talking about and or, you know experiencing is actually somebody who's lost their life and you know you 3 hours ago you were face to face with somebody who was lifeless and, and now you're sitting in front of your family whilst they're

all open presents and yeah that that's such a tricky environment. There's no way around that. That, you know, offloading's the best thing, but then it impacts everyone's Christmas Day.'

FG2 P3 'he's seen some really awful stuff. And I'm his, like, go to outlet. So I very often have to listen or always will listen to everything that's happened. And it's really hard. It's UM, it's quite it's like quite like he once went, you know, he's seen somebody mauled to death by a dog, like had to stand and watch it while they were waiting for a RV's To come. Umm. And he has been the first responder to a police officer who was beaten up in the city at center of ***** on a night out and had to stand and watch them do CPR on someone who was on his next block because this fellow got recognized as a police officer and then got beaten up... And say stuff like that is really is really hard and then you've just got like, yeah, all the like, when you're absorbing all the bad stories and listening to the badness and having to, like, take that on that, like, takes an emotional toll.'

Secondary trauma has a significant impact on mental wellbeing but again families struggle to find support and don't feel that they are able to approach the police service or don't feel that there would be any support for them if they did. One partner, a General Practitioner accessed their own in-house support services as there was nowhere, they felt, for them to go in the police service:

FG2 P3 'When I, when I was unwell myself and went off with burnout, we have very good, like, you know, there's the specialist practitioner health service...You know quite a lot of my stress and pressure comes from being married to Andrew, but there was nowhere. Nowhere to go through his work. And that's so I was just lucky that I was in the position that I was in the position that I was in, to be able to access it through mine.'

Partners often took their understanding of levels of support available from observing how their partners were treated:

FG2 P1 'when (partner) himself has sought support, he hasn't gotten any. So I figured if he can't get it then. Well, sure. There's probably nothing for me.'

Even when there is support for the officers there is no consideration of the impact on the family and provision support for them, despite the mental ill-health being a direct result of their officer's health.

FG3 P2 'And he's also been diagnosed with PTSD at work, and I very much share in a lot of his trauma. And again, there's no. Reach out or just consideration for how it affects families UM, and I'm aware that as my children get older, these are all risk factors for them as well.'

Non-police partners have a clear sense that they are not part of the wider 'police family' despite the impact that policing has on their family, from a logistical and emotional perspective. Therefore, they do not consider the police service for support. This adds to the sense of isolation and of being an unwanted outsider – and when there are children involved there is a sense of being a burden. Non-police partners also identify the police service as the cause of their challenges. It appears to be a complex relationship when police family lives are immersed and governed by policing, yet are not recognised by the police service as warranting support:

FG1 P2 'I don't feel like I'm part of that organization. So why would I call their assistance program even as a family member? if policing is the cause of my issue, why would I go to seek, support from them ... but also, I suppose it depends what support, definitely when I when the kids are little and when I was pregnant, I would have really welcomed some kind of support.'

The impact that policing has on an officer's outward behaviour and personality is identified by families, and for those that knew their police officers before they joined the organisation, they identify a distinct change. Participants talked about their officers becoming hardened emotionally, becoming detached and short tempered. Partners, parents and children all talk about walking on eggshells and again it is the families that do the work on relationships, gauging moods of officers and making the effort to ensure that the relationship isn't lost, as often officer become switched off to any emotional engagement with their loved ones.

FG2 P3 'But sometimes he has an incredibly short temper. You can tell when there's stuff going on. You do have to sometimes be on eggshells. And he does. He carries this shift around with him that he shouldn't have to be like his job. His job is damaging him like he is not the person that I was in my teenage years in 20s with.'

FG3 P1 'A lot of the time he's a very angry man and it can. It can make life very difficult at home. You know, you can start walking on eggshells sometimes, you know, can just cross their path and you're in my way you all that sort of. Because they're not. They're not. They're not dealing with the root cause of something, so they're taking it out on you.'

This has a direct impact on relationships, from the inability to maintain romantic partnerships, to wider familial relationships with parents:

FG2 P4 'there is a real emotional detachment from things which has impacted his relationship with his dad and his last two relationships, one of which just ended last week because he's accused of being unemotional. And I can he didn't used to be like that...'

Sadly, this also has a direct impact on officer's relationships with their children and a child's emotional development. A point of great concern to partners:

FG2 P3 'I worry about his relationship with my little boy because, like, there will be times when [child], like, Mommy, don't tell Daddy that or is Daddy home or is Daddy in bed or don't tell Daddy this happened. Umm. Because he's worried about him, like snapping or getting cross or...And then other times I do worry about [child's] ability to express his emotions, cause if he's. Umm, like [partner] just doesn't deal with emotion that well generally. So he tends to be told to be like your stop being silly or you know it doesn't hurt that much or. Some, and I mean we all, we all do it... But I feel like it happens in our house, maybe more than it should..'

This was also echoed by the child in the group, who recalled the quick changes in mood from their officer parent:

FG3 P4 'Just kind of being able to kind of just turn just completely be fine sort of one minute and then kind of the next something, to me at least, seems sort of like nothing can kind of really have kind of an effect, you know, I don't know, say...so it's sitting down watching the news on the television, having dinner. And so it was. Something will come on and it will just, you know, being kind of jovial and happy before and it just kind of immediately just becomes very kind of cold and *oooff* kind of this this very kind of firm. It's over, I suppose a bit kind of, yeah, just kind of very, so a bit in kind of impersonal and just sort of very kind of stern, and he's not always like that. You know, most of the time he is. And so it's kind of a bit of a just sort of, yeah, just kind of able to just switch.'

In contrast to the work that non-police partners put into their officer's wellbeing and acting as their mental health support, officers are unable to reciprocate. So again, non-police partners are isolated from any support, including that of the person closest to them:

FG3 P3 '...is so much for you to carry, because then you feel like you have to be the person that has everything together and you can't. And then you can't offload back onto them.'

All of this has a cumulative effect on partners, with their own wellbeing eroded through need to take on the full responsibility of parenting from a logistical and emotional perspective, and impacts both their physical ability to seek support from others (formal or informal), and practically their energy to emotionally engage with other potential social support networks:

FG3 P5 'There's certainly no time for myself, but things like my work as I suffer or you know my relationships with other people just because I don't have the time or the energy to spend with them and so yeah.'

There is a lot that non-police partners take on in support of their serving-partners and their family. This is a significant burden for them to carry, all whilst feeling isolated and as an outsider from the police organisation and family. Often it is the organisation itself that they see as the greatest threat to their family and police loved one:

FG1 P2 'I always say the greatest threat to police officers' well-being is actually the organisation itself and I say I support police officers, not actually policing. And when [partner] was in the Met. I became like a paranoid father. I was like, get off those WhatsApp groups, get off this, get off if you're not on WhatsApp

or you're not on this...Get off that because I was so paranoid about the organization in terms of, I see a massive threat and anything can happen at any time. And that's the anxiety that absolutely anything can happen to turn your life upside down. And you you're, you know, you are in a real pickle. You're talking prison.'

There then is a cruel irony in how society views and treats the families of police officers. Often non-police partners assume the identity of the wider police family (but without the inclusivity and support benefits of being a police officer):

FG1 P1 'When people know that you're in policing, you know that that they're suddenly look at you differently, treat you differently'

Whilst also receiving abuse from the public:

FG2 P3 'mm and like...I've had Facebook messages sent to me before now telling tally, like anonymous ones, telling me that (partner's) like horrible person and he's scum.'

This also leads to a loss of friends and external support networks:

FG3 P1 'when he became a police officer, there were one or two that they didn't want to know us because of the job that he did...'

However, this becomes a very physical aspect of police families and non-police partners lives when their police partners become involved in off-duty incidents, drawing their partners in with them. And despite not being considered by the police service as a member of the police family, and worthy of support, they are considered as different to other members of the public and expected to deal with threat and risk in a similar manner to their police partners:

FG3 P2 'I've been involved in a few traumatic incidences with [partner], and when I was six months pregnant, I had to wrestle a, [partner] ended up getting involved in a DV situation outside our doorstep. umm and got himself pinned and was about to be

kicked in the head and I had to step in and on the phone to 999, 6 months pregnant and I had to wrestle a woman to the ground and to save my husband and Yeah, Again, there was no there was no follow up. There was no, check in. I didn't even get because my husband was a police officer. I didn't even get Victim Support. That that was just brushed over. She's a police officer's wife. She doesn't need any of that, uhh and it was. It was awful and...'

This has led to an anxiety for this non-police partner as they, like a serving officer, become alert to the potential threats to themselves and their children that they may encounter when in public.

FG3 P2 'And you know that you can't escape it and it's you do have to put things in place to protect yourself... we now have this sort of unspoken language I if, when we're out and about, I almost I can see Kieran's ears prick up if something gets his attention and I immediately just walk off with the children.'

From the three superordinate themes that we have identified within this data we can see a high level of impact on police partners and their families. Police partners are single handed co-ordinating the childcare and day to day running of the family, whilst juggling careers of their own, and at the same time actively monitoring their police-partners mental health and acting and intervening as their mental health support, all the while being emotionally impacted themselves due to a sense of isolation from both their own support networks and from being an outsider to the organisation, and their partners are unable to offer them the support they need due to the psychological and logistical demands of the police role.

The following superordinate theme discusses the support needs of families, and what they feel they need in terms of support from the police service.

Superordinate Theme: Support Needs

Superordinate Theme: Support Needs
Subordinate Themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Police Families want to engage with other police families (non-police families don't understand)• Safe spaces for police families (police social clubs)

- Peer support networks/communities – for parents (partners with children) for parents (of officers) for partners, for grandparents, for children
- Flexible childcare that supports shifts and emergency child care (Police creche)
- Recognition and Support - Officers to be seen as more than numbers and resources – as humans with human relationships and families
- Regular and meaningful engagement
- Mental health support needed for families who are dealing with traumatised officers in family
- Mental health support for families (to include police officers)
- Couples therapy to cope with burden of job
- Counselling offered to families and partners needs to be tailored to police and unique challenges of police family

There is a general desire for police families to be recognised for the role that they play in supporting police officers and accommodating the needs of the organisation before the needs of their families and non-police partners careers. They would like to be communicated with directly by the organisation and wider service, rather than reliance on their officers. They wish to be recognised as party of the police family in a meaningful way. It was quite apparent to the research team how active police families were in the support of police officers and the police service, and the lengths that they went to in providing this support. Even with some partners becoming involved in police through volunteering as trustees in police charities to researching policing in their academic studies. Many non-police partners came from a policing family themselves and they felt that they had lost the connection to the wider police family and wished to re-establish this, again stating that they themselves would act in a voluntary capacity to support making this happen. But they did ask for recognition of the role they play in policing, as well as support in this.

Throughout all of the focus groups it was commented on how other families that were not involved in policing or the emergency services did not understand police life or had incompatible views or had a distrust or dislike of police officers and the service.

FG2 P4 'when you talk to them about some of the sort of things we've talked about, they nod and they go and that's hard or that's difficult isn't it and they don't have a

clue. They don't have a clue about the impact on him as an individual and the way that then makes, I think makes him behave.'

As a result, they are keen to engage with other police families who understand the challenges of being a police family but also where they don't have to explain aspects of police life (eg last minute cancelations due to shift changes).

FG2 P1 'I only like, I think only two of the people whose partners are in the police and they're the people I usually reach out to because they've gone through, they understand what it's like and it's usually like virtual support, like they're not local. So just having a chat on WhatsApp is about the end of the extent of it.'

FG3 P5 'It can be very lonely. And I think, Pete, so I've got some, some of my very close friends have got husbands that are also police officers. In differing roles and I've made friends with some of my husband's colleagues. Wives. It's a sort of try and you know, find other people, who understand...'

Participants were clear that they would like support from the service in creating these connections and networks. Participants commented on how helpful it was to meet other police family members in the focus s groups and to hear from other participants, who had been in a police family longer, how things changed and progressed, particularly as children got older. It was clear that there was a need to connect families so that they could provide support for one another:

FG1 P1 'It's creating those nourishing environments whereby quality conversation can, can happen between likeminded individuals in and, and I think some of the informal environments are some of the most healthy and we're just nowhere near that because they don't exist for police officers yet, never mind inviting family members...'

And this includes a place for children to meet other children with police parents, recognising that they needed to connect to others who shared their experience as a way to validate that experience. With this, participants (often from police families growing up) reflected on the loss of police social

clubs, and the erosion of the wider police family through this but also how the loss of safe environments reduce the opportunity for police families to speak openly about their challenges actively creating barriers for coping opportunities that all families need:

FG3 P2 'It does just create an obstacle, UM and likewise as partners. Uh, me and my husband have occasionally when things have been sort of tough at work, we've gone out for a drink to just discuss things and we've ended up having to find a quiet corner somewhere. And we've been talking in whispers so that we're not over heard because. The things you want people overhearing and you don't really want to broadcast or bunch of strangers, particularly not in the local pub that you're the police officer.'

And this demonstrates the unique challenges of police family life that are not acknowledged or addressed by the police service. When talking about need for social connection with police families, participants talked about the need for different communities to be developed, reflecting the unique challenges of different family roles, for example, different social networks for partners of police officers, and parents of police officers and children of police officers.

FG1 P2 'People who are parents but not an actual police officers, but [whose] partner are, because it was, you know, having to go to appointments on your own or, you know, and the shifts, like I said before, when they're working shifts and you've got a screaming baby and so on and so forth and it is a bit unique in that sense and it would have been good to have that kind of support network from other people who going through a similar thing.'

FG2 P1 '...no matter how old they are, they're always your kids and you always want to help them to get the best from life and you know to maximize the opportunities and you know, I certainly don't feel that's the case for him. And I'd wanna be able to try and help him... So if there was something I would absolutely connect to it, definitely that's without a shadow of doubt.'

However, there was one overriding practical suggestion that was dominant in the conversation around support needs and that was related to childcare, and in particular for flexible, police sympathetic creche's. This is driven by the complexity of shift work, and extended shift patterns that can run up to a 16-week rota, to the irregular start and finish times that require unusual drop off (6.30 am) and collection times, and also unreliable finish times, and shifts that change a short notice. Currently participants report no childcare arrangements (other than family members such as grandparents) that can flex to support these needs. The conversation progressed in different focus groups to in-house

provision of childcare, one participant citing previous employment (Broadmoor Hospital) that provided a creche for staff, which also provided a social support aspect as families got to know one another when dropping and collecting their children:

FG2 P2 'Because I used to work at as a just as a healthcare assistant on the ward at Broadmoor Hospital, the Mental Health Institute, and they used to have a creche there, a childcare sort of on site, not obviously in within the hospital, but outside and all the staff would go and you know, mix and mingle and things like that.'

In the police focus group the participants actually discussed the practicality of a police in house creche:

FGP P2 'But if every police station over a certain size and imagine most most local police areas will have at least one larger, larger police station, my LPA has got a larger police station where I work with custody with the LPA commander. With active reception desk, etcetera... but say one at least one per LPA of an in house creche. The difference that would make around the flexibility of dropping a child off at a time that suits us as police officers, and because well, no nursery is going to be open to drop your kids off at 6:30.'

There is clearly a real need for very specific childcare support for police families, and an in-house creche is something that participants were activity thinking of, and although this would be meeting the unique challenges of police life, it is not a unique requirement for families. There are other walks of life that provide access to emergency childcare, which suggest that it does exist and could be provided in different formats:

FG3 P3 'I have like private healthcare I get, we have access to emergency childcare through bright horizons, which is a nationwide like nurseries. Like and I think that I know that there are some benefits like 24 hour GM and stuff that you get through the Police Federation and there are those things but being able to connect to the childcare, and so actually if you are called up by like with 24 hours' notice and you need that support them being able to go OK well actually I can call on this number and I get this.'

Alongside the importance of affordable and flexible childcare, mental health support was key. As already discussed, there are clearly cases of secondary trauma occurring for police partners and an impact on the wider family and child wellbeing as a fall out of living with a police officer who is struggling with mental health issues or generally poor mental wellbeing in terms of displayed

behaviours. Non-police partners stated the best way to help them would be for better mental health support for their police officers, providing two-fold relief in improving their officer's mental health and outward behaviours to the family, but also in reducing the vicarious trauma to partners who stepped in, in providing listening counsel. However, they were clear that if a police officer was receiving mental health support that families needed to be included in that support, recognising the impact that officer's poor mental health had directly on partners and children's mental health:

FG3 P2 'I think if a police officer is having to go through counselling, I think some sort of counselling or therapy needs to be offered to their immediate family. I think it's completely naive to think that an officer might be dealing with these mental health issues and that his family are absolutely fine.'

And vice versa, participants talked of the need for family therapy – that should include officers, as a way to engage officers in mental health support (who are typically reticent in seeking support) but also as a way for families to access support without burdening partners with the complication of explaining to officers the effect that policing was having on their family. Participants felt that this should be something that was proactive and provided for families:

FG3 P2 'I think police forces need to be. Putting in a bit more effort and offering that support out to partners and families and children as well. And in the first instance I think.'

There was also a recognition that this should be tailored to policing and the unique challenges that this presented for families and police officers.

FG3 P2 'I had severe postpartum mental health issues after my youngest and some of it was related to my, quite a bit of it was related to my husband's job and the therapist really struggled with that because she just couldn't sort of comprehend what I was going through on that side of things because it's such a unique world.'

Not only was there a desire to be understood, there was also the desire for support in helping children to understand their police parents work, and to manage their understanding of this without negatively affecting children:

FG2P1 ‘...how I would explain to them or something if you did get badly injured or he came home with a black eye, you know? I don't know how I'd tell ...I don't want him to worry, but I feel like I feel like they have to understand, but...’

FG2 P3 ‘I sometimes worry that we're telling [child] too much, like he's 6 and he's quite, he's interested in both our jobs and he loves he loves hearing what [police partner] has been doing and similarly he's been told that he that [police partner] catches badies. But then very often he'll be he'll be like. But why? Or what happened? ... uh, but do like, children go to prison..’

FG1 P1 ‘I think from my perspective it brings or it raises a conversation that you would have to have with your partner. That then puts pressure and your relationship in terms of right now can't cope with your situation to a certain extent. So I was just thinking about ...how would we do it together in our household? ... Be something that we could go to together and talk about...’

Summary

The four focus groups analysed here have been useful in showing how police life impacts on family life, in a very practical as well as emotional way. There is a complexity and compounding of issues as the unpredictable nature of police work fails to reflect the rhythms of ‘non-police’ family life. Childcare is a significant issue for families, and leads to a detrimental burden on police partners, drawing in extended family to pick up where officers are absent in their parental role. Overridingly non-police partners feel isolated and struggle with loneliness brought about by the unusual challenges of being in a police family that also lead to a reduction in social support networks through reduced tolerance and understanding of policing and physical access to friendship groups due to their police-partners working hours. Despite the mental toll being the sole responsible parent can be on partners, they still put their police-partners mental health and wellbeing before theirs and are very active in monitoring and intervening when they feel support it needed. In doing so non-police partners expose themselves to the trauma that police officers experience in their working lives. Therefore, mental health support for police families is key – not just to support partners with their experience of secondary trauma and isolation, but also in living with officers who are displaying the behaviours of poor mental health and stress.

Chapter Four: Narrative Analysis of Interviews

This chapter presents the stories of four individuals who are all police officers, who all see how their families are affected by policing in some respect. The data presented reflects the elements of their lived experience that they saw as affecting them and their families' lives, how they and their families have sought to adapt to the requirements and nuances of a police family life. These stories also present what they would like support with, and what they would like to see change. These stories contain regret and resentment, but also pride for what they do. Much of what is said mirrors what was heard in the focus groups, though there is the added belief that having a family is not compatible to having a successful career as a police officer, unless the family is sacrificed to enable this.

Interview One

Interview one was conducted with a male Sheikh serving police officer, who is the son of a retired officer. IV1 began his story with the history of his family moving to the UK but centred around his father. It was important to IV1 that the story of his father was heard in detail – not just because of the impact that it had on his childhood, but because he saw history repeating itself in himself and his relationship with his children. This was a cause of sadness and regret to him.

At the age of 8 IV1's mother left the family home due to his father's multiple affairs. As a result, IV1's father brought up him and his older sister and brother alone. Prior to this point IV1 recalls a happy childhood where he very much felt part of the police family, regularly attending the police social club with his family, engaging with other police families even to the point of having Sunday dinner at the police social club.

'...as a child of a police officer, it was. It was wonderful. We used to go to the various different police social clubs...you really felt like part of the family, you'd go there for a Sunday roast, been running around playing with other kids. That would just randomly there or kids that my dad knew their parents, because they were on the same team together. And you know, just really fond, fond, great memories of being part of this wider family.'

This is a point that is also brought up in the focus groups and is clearly a change in the way that police families engaged with the policing organisation, and enabled them to connect with other police families and find support from them, but also helped them feel connected and part of the police service.

This sense of belonging is a motivating theme for IV1 and something he seeks to replicate throughout his life. Throughout the story telling of IV1's upbringing he makes comparisons between himself and his father, for example he boxed for the police whilst his father trained as a boxer to protect himself as an officer, IV1 becomes an undercover officer as did his father – despite this being a cause of distress and hardship for the young IV1 as his father spent months away from the young family due to working under cover. IV1 describes how his father thrived in the police and was 'sucked into the job' – again something he recognises in his own behaviour.

IV1 felt that he and his siblings had to become very independent to cope for the long periods that their dad (and sole carer) was away. He reflected how his Grandma would come and look after them but how she didn't speak English and they didn't speak Punjabi, which made things difficult.

'...they seemed like a week or two weeks at a time where I wouldn't see him and my grandma couldn't speak very good English so.... She was lovely, grandma, but she didn't speak much English. We kind of just raised ourselves. So remember, like having to make my own lunches... And so we'd have a rotor at home. We'd have a cleaning rotor that we'd have to do because my dad was very much I'm the breadwinner of the family and the most important person in this family, because if you don't have me, yeah, we're homeless and we've got no food. And so you is the kids. So it's me, my sister's a year older than me and my brother, four years older. So we had a rotor of like, who would do the cleaning of the toilets, the dusting, the hoovering. We'd have wrote a of who would have to make the school packed lunches...'

IV1's main memories of his dad were all related to his work, which it seems dad often brought home with him, despite being undercover:

'...my memories of my dad, really, certainly from maybe the age of, I don't know, 8 till 11. Maybe, maybe. I can't really remember. He's like him coming home in like a, I don't know, a brand or a Ford Granada or something. Not our family car... I was obsessed with cars or like a brand new Audi or something. And it'd be like 9:00 o'clock

at night. And I'd be in my pyjamas and bare footed. I was a sharp kid, you know, this this is not our family car. You're not wearing the clothes that you normally wear, you know...'

'My dad used to bring the police van home sometimes and we all the kids would pile in. We drive up and down our Rd...'

IV1 also noticed the change in his dad as he threw himself more and more into his work and he and his siblings saw less of him, they were left to do their own thing while their dad thrived on police work. IV1 recognises now the conflict that he felt as a child – proud of his father for the job that he did, but resentful that whilst he was out protecting other people, he didn't have the time to look after his own children:

'So I guess the positives being that we had this extended family. You know that you felt we felt as a child. I felt like I was part of something else, and something else that was good because it was for a good cause. Um from a negative side, I felt. I guess I didn't know it was that at the time, but resentment, resentment for the fact that my father cannot be a father to me because he is out saving other people.'

And put more emphatically:

'So yeah, he saves other people but by the same time he's destroying his own own family.'

IV1 also recognised the impact his dad's work had on him psychologically. He identified his dad's coping through alcohol abuse, that led to his aggression towards his children:

'So alcohol, alcohol would probably, you know, dad's never violent towards us as a result of alcohol, as in you know, er highly aggressive and very scared of my dad...'

And there were recognisable highs and lows where his dad was unpredictable in mood:

'Big highs and real big lows as opposed to this being steady in the middle...You know, there's almost, like lots of tension around. So. Yeah, so it wasn't this steady, normal life. It was just either really good because he was happy or he was really trying to make a conscious effort versus sometimes. Yeah. He just couldn't do it. He couldn't make that effort...'

This is a point that was raised by the adult child in Focus Group Three who talked about the unpredictability of moods.

This loss of support from his dad made IV1 feel vulnerable himself:

'I didn't. I didn't really...You know, I felt like I didn't have anyone to protect me...I suppose I couldn't be honest with him. I couldn't. like I didn't want him to think that I was weak... But he was never really there to, to talk to and didn't.'

However, IV1 also recognised how stressed his father was, and as a result, didn't wish to burden his father. Again, demonstrating how quickly he had to grow and become self-sufficient as a child, both physically and emotionally:

'...Is this only stress is going on and then I'm gonna add to them by telling him I'm really unhappy. So I didn't really talk to him about what was going on, but all of this stuff was going...And here I am in secondary school now being racially abused on a daily basis and fearing that I'm gonna have to fight in the playground over race wars. And then I get stabbed...'

And this then turns to resentment:

'And it's like, well, who's protecting me? You know, where, where do I go to? You know, you're, you're out there protecting everyone else. You're living a different life to take guns off the streets and, you know, infiltrate gangs and do all of this stuff. And yet you can't even look after your own child.'

Despite all of the resentment and a difficult childhood IV1 followed in his dad's footsteps and joined the police. A lot of this was driven by a desire to belong, to be part of the police family again as he had experienced it as a young child:

'...just a, just a lot of wanting to kind of to, to wanting to fit in like I I guess I saw that what my dad had in the police. And I kind of wanted that for my upbringing. As in, I wanted to have this close circle of friends or what? See what he seemed to have... and then I felt myself becoming my dad.'

But IV1 also picked up his father's habits of womanising and avoiding going home:

'I remember I used to take the unmarked police car home because I'd be on call and park at the bottom of my roads, just smoking cigarettes, hoping for a call out. And invariably there was. So I do like, 28 hour shift on to 26 hours onto 18 hours, just so I wouldn't have to be at home because home was horrible.'

Eventually realisation dawned on IV1 when he recognised how much of his children's upbringing he had missed, just like his own father had missed his:

'I missed years of my children's upbringing, so like I remember *****, , my oldest. So he's 9 now. I remember when he got his story book from nursery, you know, from to go from nursery and to reception. I remember looking at it, crying, thinking, you know, I can't remember him that age. Of course, I can remember him that age, but his pictures of him throwing his first ball at school and I can't remember any of it. You never went to any of the plays such as throw myself, into work. I've got sucked into it...'

On reflection feels that the job takes more than it gives particularly for the children of officers:

'I feel like the police is taking away too much? More than it's given. I Feel really sad that I have done this to my children. I feel sad that I I pick this career because...I'd seen the enjoyment and my dad had got out of there...and I wanted to be part of something.'

'I'm starting to hate the police because of what it's done to me. I'm starting to hate it because what I have turned into and what it's doing to me and my life and my children.'

IV1 articulates the impact of being a child of a police officer and the conflict between the sense of loss and distance from a police officer parent, but also the pride and being inspired by their parent's work. This interview directly highlights the issue with intergenerational trauma, as a father's behaviour affects their child's mental wellbeing, but also their future behaviours and relationships, not least with their own children.

Interview Two

Interview two was conducted with a female serving police officer, who is married to a serving police officer and has children. IV2 begins her story with a quick family tree of her relations in the police service (brother and sister-in-law and their grandparent) but quickly moves on to talk about her concerns for her own children, and the impact of her work on her children's mental health, and this was the main concern of her story though early on she does reflect on the impact her work has on her parents:

IV2: 'So we're obviously two parents of police officers on our children and I don't think it's sort of ever been looked into or recognized the effects it can have on our children and even our, my parents. I've got a sister as well, so...They probably worry a lot more than I realise.'

Initially IV2 reflects on how her perspective changed when she became a parent and how she looked for a less risky role when she returned to work from maternity leave, but IV2 puts this in the context of her children understanding the risks and the impact that has on them, rather than the actual risk to herself:

IV2: 'as they've got older, they do understand the risks they, you know, they're interested in our jobs, they want to know what we do, who we work with, things like the weapons that we carry, people we come across. They are quite fascinated by it. And I know that especially my eldest son, he thinks a lot about it. And when I'm not

home at night-time, I know he's sort of wondering where Mommy is and you know, is she OK?'

IV2 talks about how shift work means that she is not always and recognises the impact on her children and the need to reassure them:

'Sometimes I will call them from work as well if they are particularly sort of missing me. Just to assure them that I am OK and you know, they always ask me what time I'm gonna be back, so I try and give them that sort of reassurance.'

IV2 goes on to talk about her concerns for her oldest child, whom she suspects as having anxiety:

'My my job because they know what I'd go out, particularly the eldest one. He he is a bit of a worrier anyway. And I'm not sure how young you can suffer with anxiety, but I think he definitely does. And he will always says he will ask, you know, are you gonna be OK at work tonight? I can get, you know that he needs to know. That I'm OK and sometimes if I'm not back on time or just later then that will affect his thought process maybe going to sleep.'

IV2 attributes both her and her husband's jobs as contributing to her child's anxiety, as he understands the risks and dangers involved in their work. As a result IV2 worries about the effect their jobs have on their child's mental health and if she weren't in the police if the child would be different and less anxious. This leads to thoughts about leaving the police service, although she feels she doesn't know what else she would do:

'It does make me worry about them a bit more, but I don't know what else I would do actually. It is hard to leave a job at this sort of age now and know what else I could actually do.'

Her children's mental health, now and in the future, is clearly of great concern to IV2 and she feels her job plays a significant role in their worries.

IV2 talks about working opposite shifts to her husband and the need to be very organised, use breakfast clubs and family to help out, but again she shows her own anxiety over her children when

she talks about unpredictable finish times and how this affects her, knowing that there is no one to collect her children:

‘...sometimes you don't know whether you're gonna finish work on time and then therefore, you don't know who maybe picking up your children if it if it was gonna be you, that's some sort of panic or oh, no. You know, you might be stuck at on a motorway and you know you can't just leave. It's practically impossible. And just that sort of, I guess, fear factor and panic. That's who's gonna pick my children up?’

IV2 states that this is why she went into her current role, which is non-operational and has a secure finish time, but she says that her getting the role on return from maternity leave was luck and that the organisation would not look to accommodate her, and her family's needs otherwise:

‘... they are a business, they are organization, they have police officers they need in roles. And I think that they expect you to have someone or something else organized in the background so that they can have you back in, in the workplace. I mean I think things have got better over the years, but I think it's very dependent on who your line manager is. And how supportive they are of your flexible plan, and also what department you work and whether you can be a bit more flexible or not?’

There is also a recognition from IV2 that a supervisor's understanding and empathy towards a family situation is key in getting support for a working plan that works for the family as well as the organisation. IV2 reflects on how her supervisor couldn't understand why she wasn't working the weekends to reflect the team shift patten:

‘He thought why don't you work at weekends? Because you've got husband at home. But it was just difficult to explain to him that, you know, he still works full time. He'd be working Monday to Friday and then having their kids full on Saturday, Sundays. Well, they go back to work Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday. And, you know, he just said I need some a bit more. Why just need you around a bit more to be at home.’

Discussing flexible working plans, which she has, she talks about the difference in attitude towards male family roles and how the organisation, culturally, is less supportive of men playing an active role in family responsibilities:

‘I think being a man been this sort of rank and the peer pressure I think from around him, I don't think he felt he could or would put a flexi plan in. So therefore, it was relied on me that so my shifts would dictated sort of around what we could fit around the childcare.’

Other than her own working arrangements, she relies on grandparents to help with the childcare when neither her or her husband are available. A similar theme that is found in the focus groups, where grandparents step in to support with childcare.

Speaking of support within the organisation for parents, IV2 recognises the improvement in the organisation but feels there is still a gap in the support of parents. IV2 feels that she would benefit from being connected to other families and parents in a similar position as hers:

‘And maybe it would be nice to have just other people to chat to, to moan to, to get at the advice or tips from especially coming back from maternity it is all quite new and your head is in a different place. You know you're on parent mode and then you gotta get back into police mode and that takes time. And I think it's sort of underestimated how much you do have to change.’

For herself she feels that her support network is limited due to her work, citing friends outside policing not understanding the challenges of her role, and the restriction in being able to talk about work which is confidential. She states that her main source of support is her husband, but due to their childcare arrangements, they are often not together long enough to speak. Other than her husband she feels she has nowhere else to turn for support:

‘I guess the only person that really, fully understands would be my husband, but then I sometimes said see him for a few days. Like I'm on latest at the moment, so I probably won't see him because he's in bed when I go back home, he's gone in the morning and sometimes you can go for days when you don't actually have a proper chat. And you I do find sometimes you do need. I need it, but I don't actually know where to turn to.’

Very openly she speaks about how a lack of support and outlet affects her, and how this bleeds out at home as it affects her relationship with her children:

‘Sometimes not venting my feelings and views and then may be taken out my children. When I shouldn't and I don't understand why I might be a bit more snappy with them.’

IV2 directly attributes this to her work as a family liaison officer, which she is resentful about as she feels that the job should do more to support her and her mental health, rather than it being taken home to the family environment:

‘We don't get enough support. I don't think. I don't think we we're not checked up on. That's what I feel we're not, you know, checked up in a bad way. Just checking. Are you OK?’

Something she also identifies in her husband's stress levels and subsequent behaviours:

‘I definitely see my husband becoming stressed because he's in a high-ranking role and I see it quite frequently and I sort of say to him, OK, that's good that you recognize you are stressed. But what you gonna do about it and he doesn't do anything about it. And again, he will just take it out in a negative way in the home with me or my children and that's, you know, I know when he's stressed because he will be become what agitated...’

But feels unable to support him with:

‘But I don't know what I I feel kind of helpless because I want to sort of help him, but I'm not the person to help him. Someone else needs to.’

But also recognises the affect on her children:

‘And I think I definitely have that. They're obviously affects our children because they will. They, you know, they're very good at feeding off the vibes of us and that isn't good for their mental health.’

With the worries over her children's anxiety in mind, IV2 is keen for support in helping her children cope with having both parents in the police service, but feels that this support is not available or she is not readily aware of it:

'I'm quite happy to talk to people or just, you know, talk about ideas or tips you know, 'cause I'd do anything to sort of try and look after my children and make sure they are OK. But sometimes you don't know where to go.'

And the option of group therapy that support both her and her husband and children would be something that would help them as a family, but most importantly her children and understanding how her and her husband works impacts on them and their future mental health:

'I think that definitely would be beneficial. And also good for children to talk about it openly so that they then go into their adult heads to know that we should be talking about it more and recognizing it.'

'Where we all openly talk about, so we meet up in person as well. Not online because I don't think that works so well for children. It's because it's, it will seem more real if we're in a room together and for them to openly and honestly talk about. How they feel having their parents as police officers and how it affects them and what we can do to make them feel OK.'

'I think my biggest interest and passion is more the effects on the children, and knowing how they can because they, deal with it, obviously not really realizing it's, but maybe they're not dealing with it well and we and this isn't being dealt with and recognized and it might come out later on in their lives and I think that's the bit that worries me the most is the effects that our jobs may have on them later on in life.'

On a more practical level she raises the idea of an in-house creche or nursery that would work hours that supported police officers with their shifts and unpredictable finish times, again reflecting her own anxiety about being able to collect her children and not having others to rely on but also citing a wider idea that people are able to return to work without the added anxiety around childcare:

'I mean, ideally be great if there's some sort of nursery or childcare, like within Thames Valley police. Yeah, yeah, for like, not necessary 24 hours, but like maybe 7 till ten 7:00 AM to 10:00 PM. I mean, I don't know whether it's in practical or even exists, but that would be that would I think that would enable police officers to come back to work probably more and also to not feel that pressure of worrying about childcare because you know that you'd have that on site, not necessary on site your police station but within like terms of only grounds. You know your child was, and it didn't matter if you finished half an hour late. Yes, that would be great.'

Along with this she talks about the benefits of police families coming together in a safe environment such as a police social club, where they can talk and be relaxed and not worry who is listening and whether you are understood. Reflecting this at the end of the interview she commented on how the interview itself had been a beneficial opportunity to talk about these matters:

'it has been good to talk about it because you don't get the opportunity to talk about it very much.'

IV2's interview really highlighted again the impact of policing on children's lives, from a practical impact of shift work but more so the emotional impact. IV2's demonstrates great concern for her son's anxiety levels directly related to her work, but also her and her husband's own emotional struggles in relation to their work, that are redirected into the family home. As a result, she welcomes the idea of family therapy as a way to address all family members wellbeing needs.

Interview Three

Interview three was conducted with a female police officer who is married to another officer, they have one child and at the time of interview she had just found out that she was pregnant with her second. Like most officers, IV3 is very passionate and proud of her career as a police officer, she is also proud of her work ethic. She starts by talking about her career in the police and how much she loved her job and excelled at it, this was important for her to state and becomes apparent through her story that she still feels some guilt or shame or judged at taking time out to bring her family up, her way.

She talked about the stigma in the police towards pregnant women, and how this affected her decision when to start trying for a family.

‘... being female and having a family was something people would always roll their eyes out. No, that's the end of her career sort of thing. Oh, there we go. She we won't see her, see her again. That's another good officer lost sort of attitude.’

And the cultural attitude was backed up by what she saw around her:

‘And you can't help be around that and then actually see that those people don't, they don't really very often go on to continue working frontline or indeed just leave the police and not sort of think actually well, yeah, you know, having a family does kill your career.’

And IV3 really worried that that stigma would be applied to her, despite her commitment to her role and excelling in her work she still felt the moment she became pregnant she would be judged as less than:

‘The minute I stepped away from that and I was the one then being pregnant, those, those, exactly that sentiment would be applied to me. So I was a little bit worried about that because I very much prided myself on being, you know, an excellent officer go to, I could be relied on. I worked very hard. I worked all the hours, ridiculous hours and all the rest of it would be ridiculous hours.’

As a result, she waited until she was much older and had been through the promotion process, and as a result, struggled to fall pregnant and turned to IVF.

‘Because I've worked very hard to get promoted and I wanted to be signed off and it all be sort of sealed before I then started try and have your family, I was worried that they that I'd be predicted that that that's something would, that would jeopardize my promotion basically.’

However, rather than seeking support through her IVF IV3 kept it a secret as she didn't want any one to judge her for trying for a family. Unfortunately, the hours that she was working, working nights and the stress she experienced from both work and the process meant that she went through several failed rounds of IVF until she struggled so much emotionally that she couldn't keep going. At this point she spoke to her supervisor and as a result was given great support, taken off nights and reduced hours, and six months later she became pregnant:

'I had let my fears about not being able to be the officer I wanted to be and perform at the level that I wanted to continue to perform, get in the way of my immediate goal. You know, I was, I was more concerned about the loss. I suppose my loss of identity and the loss of my colleague's respect then I was about getting bloody pregnant, which, of course, which was the wrong way round, and it and it, and it ended up and it ended up sort of, you know, really causing me problems anyway so.'

It is clear from IV3 story that the stigma and culture around having a family member in the police not only delayed her trying for a family but also jeopardised her potential success at having a family. During the course of the interview IV3 reflects on the culture of the police and how it conditions employees to putting the organisation first:

'...the culture is there to impose upon people, to keep people in line, to help them feel like that, so that we all, you know, follow suit, and we all do as we're told and all the rest of it. So it's not, I don't think I'm unique in that. I think. I think there's plenty of people who, who feel like they're lots of decisions are taken out of their hands or they're they don't even consider other options because they think, well, this is what the job wants me to do.'

But the conflict between the police culture, IV3's work ethic and her family planning did not stop after conception, and continued work pressures contributed to her developing preeclampsia and having an emergency C-section at 32 weeks.

'And again, I just thought, I wondered, had I not been killing myself at work, would that have happened? You can't say for sure, because, you know you can't, can you? But I do wonder like, preeclampsia is basically high blood pressure and I do think well,

that sort of goes hand in hand with stress, doesn't it? You know, when I was under at the, I was under the most stress I've ever been under in the police. And I've had some fairly stressful times ... but, but nothing like that for a sustained period'

Even though IV3 had a premature baby, and she was in hospital for two months with a poorly baby, her wife was not afforded the time to spend with them. She was granted the two weeks parental leave:

'Which is not enough, you know, because we were in hospital for two months and they were very unsympathetic and unhelpful, and she ended up going to the Superintendent and sort of crying in his office, and even then, I think she was given an extra week or something, you know, it was just ridiculous.'

Once her baby was safely arrived and well IV3 states that she spent the rest of her maternity leave worrying about going back to work. Both her and her wife are police officers and because of the way she saw the stigma around parents and the expectations of the organisation, she couldn't see her way through:

'I spent a long time worrying about because I my again, my sort of attitude, how we were going to manage? Being a family and working police officers, 'cause my wife is in the police as well... How we were going to manage childcare and raising our daughter while still working in the police...'

IV3 began to realise that she no longer wanted to return to work full time, and she didn't want to use third party childcare – her and her wife wanted to manage the childcare between them, and for them this meant both of them going part time.

She contacted a colleague in the Met Families, a programme in the Metropolitan Police that provided peer support to new parents and those going through pregnancy, or adoption and suragacy. The colleague she knew well and was herself a DI with children and her attitude was that you can't be a DI and not work full time, which made IV3 really anxious as she couldn't see how she was going to return back to work now she had a child:

'you just gotta think of something else then cause cause two days a week just isn't gonna work is, like, not even a job share.. And she was really, really close minded about it, which disappointed me because and made my anxiety even more... because I thought, well, she would know she's done this three times, you know.'

IV3 was clear that she didn't want to source third party childcare – her and her wife wanted to do this themselves, and again she felt isolated in this and not the norm.

'I don't want subsidized childcare. I want to be able to afford not to work so I can care for her myself or not to not to work full time. So I can care for myself. That's where I. That's where I sit with this so'.

Instead IV3 attended some workshops on her KIT days that taught her about building self-confidence and how to negotiate your return to work, and she also took up a coaching opportunity, all through Met Families. This made all the difference for her return to work:

'So they have these workshops for half day workshops on these subjects, which I found hugely useful as well as a coaching program which was just completely invaluable. I don't know if I'd gone back to work, if it hadn't been for my coach.'

As a result she felt able to speak to her supervisor about her preferred return to work pattern – two days a week, which was agreed, very much to IV3's surprise:

'I was like, what? So you let me work two days a week and I've been on two days a week for the last two years, and I just couldn't believe it. I just couldn't. And it's like, right, so. But I'm. I'm gonna get you to do this, this and this. And that will probably feel about two days a week. Does that sound right to you?'

After much anguish and worry IV3 was actually supported in her return to work that worked for her as well as the organisation, but it wasn't without being subjected to pressures and cultural stigma around families and parenting as a police officer. It wasn't all a bed of roses for IV3 as she felt torn

between her child and her career, like a lot of parents, but the job supported her to make it work the best she could.

However, IV3 acknowledged that this isn't the way for everyone:

'... do think there's been some privilege that's come along with rank in my case...there is a PC back on response team ...who's going back full time because they need to financially I don't I imagine their experience is awful.'

IV3 reflected on how inconsistent the support and attitude to parenting in the police was, and how, in reality she had been lucky in her journey.

'it's a total lottery, isn't it? As to one, whether you get on with your boss. And I've been lucky enough that I've. I've got on with the boss. And that, you know, your face fits and all those sorts of things if you didn't get on with your boss or they didn't like you so much, then it could just be you could so easily have a bad experience based on nothing other than a personality clash, which doesn't seem fair.'

When asked how this could be addressed IV3 talked of a need for policy, to ensure that provision is afforded to people in difficult circumstances and that it should be left to the whim of the individual whether that was going to happen. She herself said that she had written her own risk assessment as a way of protecting herself during her own pregnancy:

'You know as good as my as good as my boss is I've still written a risk assessment for myself protecting myself around this pregnancy because I'm pretty sure that whatever I ask him for he will say yes to, but I still need to protect myself with that policy because if anybody hire up queried well, why is **** working from home and why she got been given that afternoon off, blah blah blah. I need something in place that says: this is why... I feel like I need that protection still.'

IV3 talked of speaking with the people that had the life experience that we were discussing, using them to inform policy to ensure that people got the support that they needed, when it mattered. She then referred back to people who are still operating within the stigmatisation of pregnancy and

parenting and the pressures that that brings within the organisation, giving one example of a colleague her wife was supervising who had hidden several miscarriages from the organisation:

‘...one of her officers was a bit under the weather. Not particularly well. And for a couple of weeks, kept saying he was fine. Fine, fine. And then eventually there's got it out of it that she'd had, like her 4th miscarriage in a row. And just but hadn't wanted to say anything because she didn't want to upset the apple cart because she kept having miscarriages and didn't wanna keep going off with. It was just managing by herself, struggling on.’

IV3 talked about the need to support people and for the police to change it's approach to parents and families, to find them meaningful work and accommodate them so that they can remain in work:

‘I can see colleagues around me have terrible experiences and we've got to sort of iron [it] out.’

Although IV3's experience has a positive ending, it is clear that they have been affected by the attitude towards parents and families within the police culture, and she has clearly witnessed poor behaviours being displayed by other colleagues within the organisation that has led to her anxiety around her own family planning. It is of concern that she delayed her family plans as she felt that she would be discriminated against in her promotion aspirations. It is an important point she raises regarding third party childcare and job sharing within the organisations. The first assuming that all parents are happy for their children to be looked after by professionals rather than family (similar to assuming that third part childcare and family are available to look after children) and that job share is not an option in policing.

Interview 4

Interview 4 was conducted with a police officer who is married to a police officer, they have a young daughter together. Her story focusses on her relationship with her husband, his mental ill-health as a result of his work, and how this impacted on her and her daughter. The main point that she wanted to get across in her story was how a lack of care for officer mental health can have significant

repercussions on police families, but also on how police families are treated differently from non-police victims, and how they lack support by the organisation.

IV4's story began with a precis of her own career, as a demonstration of her own professionalism and commitment to her work. She then talked through a high profile, large scale, violent incident that led to her husband's mental ill-health and the point where his mental health took a turn for the worse:

'I was dealing with a prisoner, and he called me. And he was like I can't shave. I'm trying to shave my face and I've had to stop and he just couldn't go on. And I was like, OK, I was like, put the razor down. Don't worry, I'm just going to process this prisoner and I'll be with you.'

At this point her husband goes off sick for three months, during this IV4 had two weeks compassionate leave where they went away together for a break. Her husband received a diagnosis of PTSD, but only received the standard 6 counselling sessions. As IV4 didn't think that this was enough and they explored going for EMDR privately but struggled financially to meet the costs, and family members were unable to help, her husband was also reluctant to engage with the process. As a result he went back to work after his three months:

'And he went back to work. But when he went back to work, there was no provisions put into place and he was straight back on the front line.'

IV4 was really concerned with the way that her husband returned to work, there was no phased return and no consideration of how he may react to being back at work. She puts this down to the mental health of his supervisor who also had PTSD:

'So the supervisor also had PTSD and they kind of had this. Ohhh yeah, I've got it. You've got it kind of thing and you know, but he never said, Chris, you know what? You should take a step back...'

Her husband was posted back to the same area that the incident occurred, and by this point she found out that she was pregnant with their daughter. Their baby arrived early and they moved into their new house, which was further away from their families and support network but initially they coped.

IV4 struggled with post-natal depression but her husband supported her with the baby and they got into a routine, but she started to notice her husband getting more and more agitated with her and the child though not really understanding why, and this quickly escalated to the point where they got into another argument and he broke the glass feeding bottle:

‘...he got so angry that he kicked the milk bottle and her milk bottle was a glass bottle. And, you know, it flew off and everything.... And I was just like, what? What is this about like, never seen this one. My husband never, never been aggressive. Never behaved like this. My husband's like a very gentle person. So I was like, what is this about?’

Things continued to escalate at home to the point that IV4 became fearful of her husband and his reactions:

‘We had another argument, but I was too scared to say to him or bring it up that I actually wrote him a letter. And because I wrote him a letter that made him more angry, and I just wasn't used to seeing this side of him and my mum wasn't happy because she knows my husband, my mum loves my husband and she was like, this isn't him.’

IV4 then describes everything as ‘melting down’ where the situation at home deteriorated to an intolerable point, but at the same time IV4 has returned back to work and struggling as she was acting as the main carer for her daughter and balancing a full-time job in the police and managing her relationships with her volatile husband.

As a result of her home situation with her husband, her distance from her family and being back at work part time IV4 had to rely on third part childcare for support, and because of her location and the need for reliability she had to opt for the more expensive option of nursery (rather than childminder).

‘I had to have, you know, someone reliable. So the nursery was like, even though it's expensive at that was the most reasonable. But because I was commuting and then also had to work part time hours.’

As a result, money was very tight and the childcare was taking most of her salary, but she was managing and budgeting, but she notice money was starting to go missing:

‘...[we had] lot of our arguments are over money and he would say to me. Why is there no money? And you know where is this money going from? And I used to think, I don't know. I I budget so well. I'm so good with my money. And I couldn't understand why we didn't have money. And I remember I was buying clothes off people. I was even getting nappies off people.’

IV4 began to suspect something was not right:

‘And there was something and I couldn't put my finger on it. And I was like, it's not right. Something's not right. I don't know what's going on with him, and I don't know, like, why? We just don't have money, because before we'd have like, 304 hundred pounds disposable income. And I was like, something's not right. I was like, even if we had 100 pounds disposable income, then I'd be happy.’

The arguments continued and IV4 continued with avoidance and focussing on her daughter, but she began to notice her husband drinking more. She talked about a relaxed attitude to drinking for herself – never finishing the bottle, getting distracted and forgetting her drink, whereas her husband would make sure he finished the bottle:

‘...my friend brought me a bottle of Gin and I was like, ohh, I'll open it, you know, on my birthday I'm and I left it and my husband started drinking it’.

Then she started noticing more and more alcohol in the house and finding hidden alcohol, and when she asked her husband about it he would respond with aggression:

‘...And if I ask my husband, he would go off the handle like, literally he would. And my mom was like, why don't you record it? Why don't you put a secret Canberra and just built a lot of fear inside me and I was just like, how do I do that?’

Life was very difficult for IV4 and her daughter as her husband struggled with PTSD, even his work know that he was struggling with PTSD but didn't address it or consider the impact on his wife or child:

'So we struggled for a long time... It was a PTSD. So work understood to the work we're always like, oh, it's OK, you know, you take it easy, you got PTSD and they kind of just left him to it, but he would have really raging arguments with me, where he'd be swearing at me, he'd be like... he'd be like and you're a ***** **** and stuff like out of nowhere...'

Things escalated to a point where IV4 took the very difficult decision, particularly as a police officer and wife of a police officer, to call the police:

'And I remember it was just near my birthday and I called to the police. And then he was like, you wanna get me ***** naked. And all of this crap anyway, when he used to have these fights with me, he would then go to sleep and be completely passed out.'

But when the police arrived, she lost confidence in telling them the truth and made excuses. As it turns out, IV4 was afraid of what her job would say:

'And I was like ohh sorry I'm you know, I was putting my little one down complete accident and you know they sort of bought it but they weren't buying it but because I hadn't really horrible DCI at the time I was more worried about what my DCI would say to me or put and I shouldn't have looking back I shouldn't have been scared of her because she's a really nasty woman.'

'I was always scared of what work would say. But the report, because it's a different force from [force name]. It didn't go or, I don't know if it went to [force name] or not, I don't know.'

At one point one of IV4's friends who knew her situation offered for her and her daughter to come and live in her house and leave her husband, but IV4 was too scared that her husband would find out where she was:

‘And she was like don’t have to pay me anything...Stay in my house. And but I was too scared, you know? And I was just like, what if I log on for work and then he calls me on teams or something? so I did get help from a friend to say look you can live here. But I was so scared, you know, I felt like I was almost like in hiding or something.’

And the violence at home carried on and the work at work carried on, but her husband went sick for eight months, but the situation got worse until she asked her husband to leave:

‘But it carried on and it carried on. I carried on working. I carried on doing my job... My husband went off sick for eight months and every so often here to argue with me, same old things, throwing things and towards me like he threw back and towards me and I told him That's it get out of the house and then I got in a hotel nearby...’

By this point things had really escalated and with the violence and aggression her husband also sunk into depression, and he attempted suicide a number of times. On this occasion he went to the hotel and attempted suicide, again IV4 called the police:

‘a lot of the times when I've had to call police, he's tried to hang himself in the house or hang him or even when he went to the hotel, he tried to hang himself, he'd call me and be like I'm doing it. I'm going to, you know, sort of like, almost, like, blackmail. So I called the police. Police found him. Police found the belt. And then the police were, like, ohh, let's take you home.’

IV4 is rightly incredulous that they have brought her husband back when she has sent him away due to his violence towards her. This is when she began to see a difference in the way that she was being treated than she would expect for a non-police family, and through it all her own supervisors were aware of the situation but did nothing to support her or to intervene.

‘I was like, do you not understand why I've sent him away? I don't want him here. I don't want him here...they came back to my house the next day and

they gave him, gave me his belt because they seized him. They gave it back to me. And I was like, wait, giving it back to me for, you know. But it was so awful. And this time the police, my supervisors, were aware, but they didn't really do anything or nothing really came about it.'

It wasn't until IV4 had a change of supervisor that she started getting some support and questioning the police response when she called them:

'He was like, hold on. Do they ever speak to you? And I was like, no, they come, they deal my husband, they know he has PTSD. Then they talk about how great he is because he's a trainer and you know, they've never asked me any questions. And there was a time where I left they never speak to me.'

It is clear from this that there is a conflict of interest from the police officer's attending the calls from IV4 – her husband is being treated as the victim in the situation as he has PTSD from a high-profile job and is working in training and a respected officer.

All of this takes it toll on IV4, to a point where she become so scared in her own home and she recognises the impact that it is having on her daughter, so eventually she makes the decision to leave her husband with her daughter:

'And it was just again, you know, you're ***** count. And all of this. And it made me shaky and it made me nervous. And just so scared. And I actually said to my mom, I said I can't do this. I've gotta leave. And I just left and I went straight to my sister's house when my daughter and I left with the clothes on my back and I left with my daughters nursery bag. So I'm talking. No nappies, no, no bits. It was just literally what she has extra clothes. I didn't have a bra. I didn't have sanctuary where I didn't have. I didn't have anything.'

Her husband's reaction is to put it on his work social media group, but yet again her husband is seen as the victim and no support is given to IV4:

'He yeah, he calls me swearing at me and then he I think he put it on his work WhatsApp group and then two colleagues, yeah. Then two colleagues from work turns up and over here because they knew he had issues. But it was always like [husband] is the victim. [husband] is going through PTSD.'

[husband] has got the problem. And you know, they came over and they stayed with him that night because they were worried he would do something.'

However, things became nasty when IV4's husband reported that his wife had kidnapped his child but fortunately this was the point that the police realised that something wasn't right:

'And the police came looking for me, but not looking for me in a sense of like, yeah, we know [IV4's] done it, like, more like, something's not right here. Let's figure it out. And I met some officers. And they were like, is your husband working. And I was like, yeah, he works at training school and they couldn't believe it... I was like, yes, I was like he drinks, he shouts. And, you know, he just gets really agitated and angry and frustrated. And I was like, I can't live like that.'

After this the situation changed for IV4, her and her husband spent six months apart, he got support and got into rehab, but it took five or six times for the police to attend before they focussed on IV4 and her child and the situation for them prior to that it had all been about her husband:

'the police, I think they've been to our house about five or six times and all of those times that they've been, they have always been. And just talking to my husband, laughing and joking, and then kind of go. And it was on the last occasion that police came, and this was a point where I was like, they've gotta do something or I'm going.

The most disappointing aspect for IV4 is that she kept asking for help, even before her husband's behaviour escalated:

'And I kept saying I need help and I said to my husband I was like, how many times do you ask for help until you get it? You know, how many people did I say, like, supervisors? I need help. Can I cause before when he had the PTSD? I was like, look, can I just amend my shift? Can I just do mornings earnings for a few weeks while he goes into a center? I was taking him back and forth to the mental health team. I was doing all his appointments. I was making him

food. He wasn't eating like my husband. I didn't know how much she was drinking. I didn't know he had an alcohol problem.'

And through it all IV4 was working as a police officer, but she found no support from the people around or her initial supervisor:

'There was no support, there really wasn't and you know to keep working like this year...And I remember my DCI just yelling at me and I was like well Sarah. But you know, if I didn't have my husband, I wouldn't have these problems. And she's like, well, we told you to leave him. You haven't left him'

Not only did this add to IV4's isolation, she herself also recognised that her husband didn't have the mental capacity to understand that she was leaving – despite him still being a serving officer. During the interview she reflects on how much police officers give to the job, but there is no support for them or their families when their mental health is damaged due to that very same job:

'...so much of our lives are saying to someone like, you know, we don't have tattoos, we don't take drugs. We don't strike. There's just so much we abide by to be who we are. Yeah, we get no recognition. And no support like OK, I understand my husband's got the issues. But what about me? Like no one has ever said to me. Are you OK? Like the night that the police left, you know, the last time they came and they left. And I was so disappointed. And I think the female officer saw that a disappointment in my face. Like, Ohh, you're leaving him at home. Are you?

Inevitably it was just IV4 that her husband's ill-health impacted, her daughter too was affected. Though this wasn't picked up as a risk by any of the police officers that attended IV4's house, or any of the supervisors of either her or her husband, social services were eventually made aware on the final call to the police and they became involved:

'...a lot of a lot of management I had to do on my own, you know, looking my daughter and then at work, there was intense amount of pressure. And like, you know, considering they knew had social services involved and everything

else, you know, there was no consideration or not there was no one checking in and saying, are you OK?’

For IV4 the intervention of social services with her daughter was very stressful and upsetting and really brings home the gravity of her situation and the impact this experience has had:

‘we got interviewed by social services. It was awful. You know, they line up little cartoons and they’ll say, who is this and who’s that? And then she’ll say Daddy and daddy’s angry. And it was heart-breaking. And to hear that and then she goes, have you ever heard Mommy and Daddy shouting loud voices? And she said yes. The argument was because of the, but to hear it from a child. I never thought that would ever be me. I never thought, you know.’

Although what IV4 describes may be an extreme example, it reflects many of the issues that are brought up in the focus group and the other three interviews. Her husband’s mental health is severely affected by an incident at work, and though he is diagnosed as having PTSD the support given is not adequate enough and gives no thought to the family living with the officer. When his behaviour does deteriorate as a result of his poor mental health, it is the family that are suffering, including a small child. Despite asking for help from supervisors and phoning the police and other services on several occasions, IV4 is treated differently to other members of the public when they call the police. She is given no support, but neither is her husband and so the cycle continues. IV4 also talks about the challenges of childcare and the expectations around working and childcare commitments. Although an example of police family life at the extremes, it does reflect issues that police families regularly face, and one they could all potentially experience whilst there is a lack of support and consideration of the impact of policing on police families.

Summary

These four interviews bring into sharp focus the challenges police families face, particularly highlighting the impact on children, but also how occupational trauma is redirected into family life and towards partners and children. The complexity of shift working and absent parents is also explored,

that coupled with an almost intolerant attitude toward the families of police officers by the organisation leads to a challenging life for police families who are often torn between the love of their jobs and their love for the children and partners.

Chapter Five: Analysis of Survey

This chapter presents the analysis of the survey of 'non-police' family members. The questions of the survey were designed to capture the concerns experienced by police families and the support options that they have engaged and those that they would consider engaging. Initial descriptive statistical work was carried out on the responses to understand who engaged with the survey. Moving on from this cluster analysis was carried out to understand the relationship between the indicators and also with the responder themselves.

Demographic Distribution

The following section describes the basic demographic distribution of the respondents. All police forces were represented, including the College of Policing, Police Scotland and the Police Service of Northern Ireland. The largest contributors were: Greater Manchester Police, Merseyside Police, the Metropolitan Police Service, Thames Valley and West Mercia.

- Serving or Retired

Of those who responded to the survey, 85% (n=671) stated that their serving family member was a current police officer or police staff, with 9% (n=74) stating that they were retired (see table 1 below).

Table 1: What is the current status of your serving family member?

	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Current serving police officer or police staff	671	84.7
Has left policing, but is still in employment	27	3.4
Retired	74	9.3
Other, please specify	20	2.5
Total	792	100.0
Total	1406	

- Rank

The largest group of respondents identified their serving family member as a Police Constable (47%, n=374 see table 2 below).

Table 2: What is the current (or if no longer in service, the last) rank or grade of your serving family member?

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage
Probationer (year 1)	22	1.6	2.8
Probationer (year 2)	17	1.2	2.2
Police Constable	374	26.6	47.4
Sergeant	144	10.2	18.3
Inspector	44	3.1	5.6
Chief Inspector	22	1.6	2.8
Superintendent	5	0.4	0.6
Chief Superintendent	7	0.5	0.9
ACPO rank	2	0.1	0.3
Other, please specify	152	10.8	19.3
Total	789	56.1	100.0
System	617	43.9	
Total	1406	100.0	

- Length of Service

Of those who responded to this question, the largest grouping stated that their serving family member had served for more than 20 years (32%, n=251 see table 3 below).

Table 3: How long did your family member serve in the police?

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage
Less than 1	14	1.0	1.8
1 to 2	39	2.8	5.0
3 to 5	122	8.7	15.7
6 to 10	128	9.1	16.5
11 to 15	97	6.9	12.5
16 to 20	125	8.9	16.1
Over 20	251	17.9	32.3
Total	776	55.2	100.0
System	630	44.8	
Total	1406	100.0	

- Relationship to police service member

Of those who responded, three-quarters (75%, n=586) stated that they were married, in a civil partnership or in a long-term relationship (see table 4 below)

Table 4: My relationship to the above person is:

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage
Married, civil partnership, in a long-term relationship	586	41.7	75.2
Son or Daughter	78	5.5	10.0
Other, please specify	115	8.2	14.8
Total	779	55.4	100.0
System	627	44.6	
Total	1406	100.0	

Clustering of Responses

Based on a preliminary analysis of individuals who completed the early stages of the survey, it was possible to discern segments of participants. Two main clusters emerged that show a larger group (62%, n=361) who were more likely to be older (aged 35-44 years); over 20 years of service in policing (44.3%); who were more likely to provide care for children or other dependents (75.1%); more likely to be married (90%); less likely to be a Police Constable or related to someone of that grade (44.9%), with one-in-ten of this group from Merseyside Police (9.7%). In contrast, Cluster 2 (38%, n=220) were more likely to be younger (aged 25-34 years, 57.5%); with a shorter length of service of 3-5 years (35.9%); not likely to provide care for children or other dependents (67.3% do not provide any care); less likely to be married relative to Cluster 1 (61.8%); more likely to be a Police Constable compared to Cluster 1 (55.9%), with 13.6% of this cluster reported from the Metropolitan Police Service. No variables relating to need or pressures formed any of these clusters.

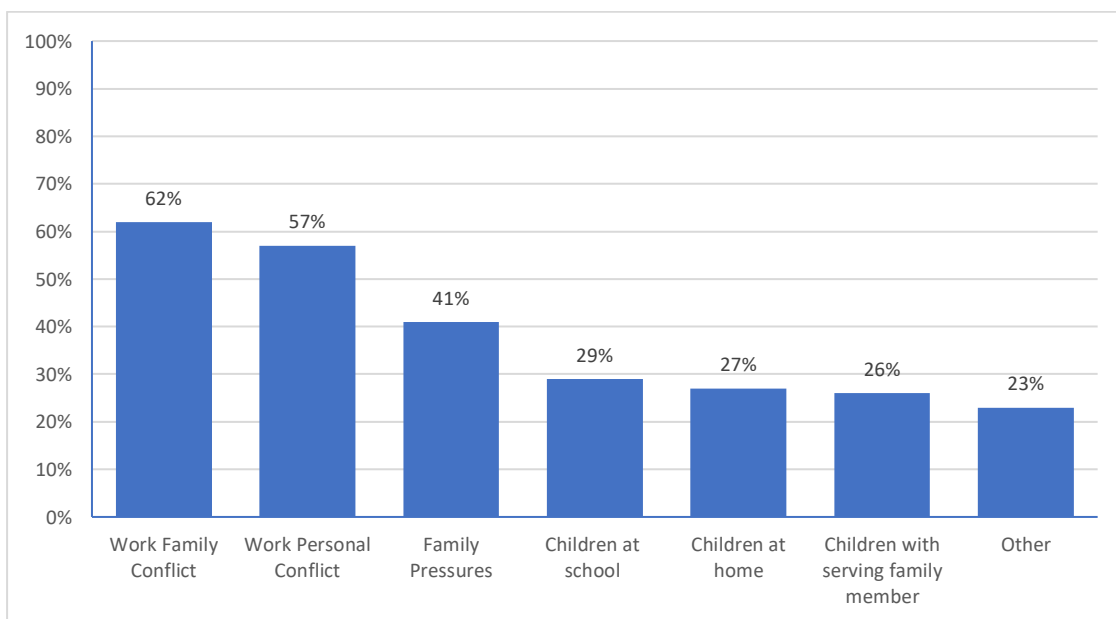
The following analysis presents the data using Likert-scale responses converted into binary answers for ease of analysis. For responses that examined, for example, a pressing concern, scores of 1-5 were

considered not immediately pressing, while 6-10 were deemed more urgent. Therefore, the following percentages reflect Likert scores of 6-10.

Summary of Pressing Issues A

A wide range of factors was perceived as a pressing issue or concern (based on scores of 6-10 on the Likert scale), including work-family conflict (62%), work-personal conflicts (57%), and family pressures (41%). Children or schooling issues were raised by 23-29% of respondents.

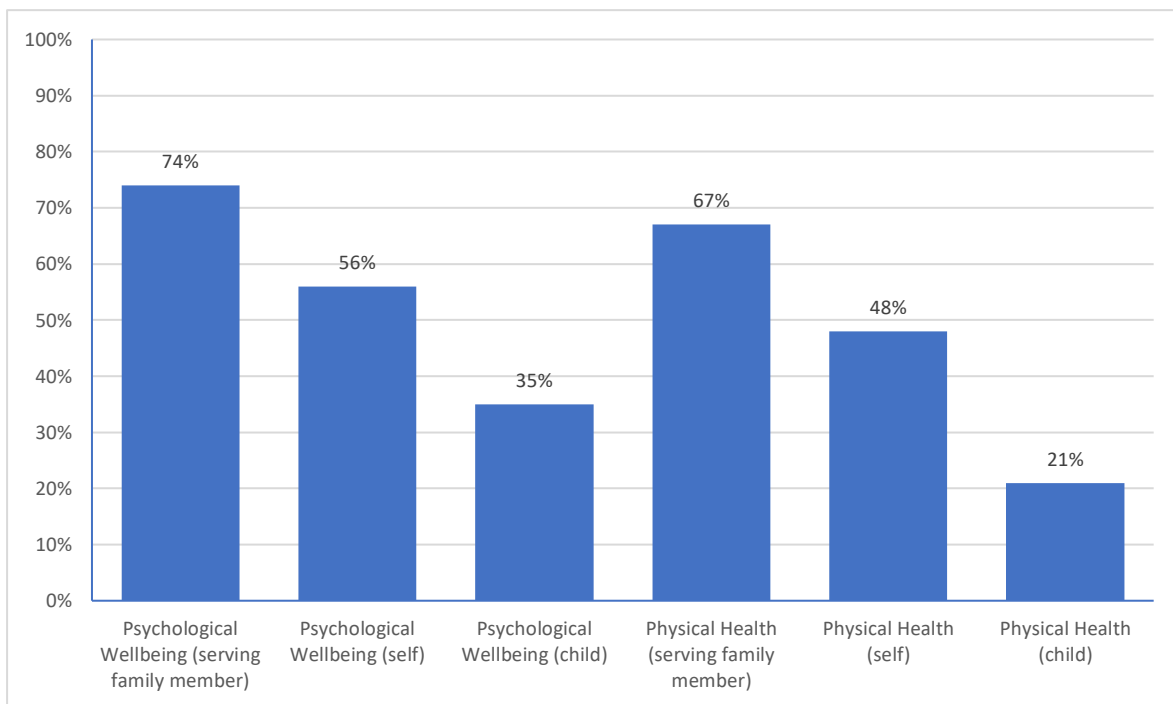
Figure 1: Summary of Pressing Issues, valid responses



Summary of Pressing Issues B

Of the valid responses, nearly three-quarters (74%) reported a pressing concern of psychological wellbeing [PWB] for their serving family member.

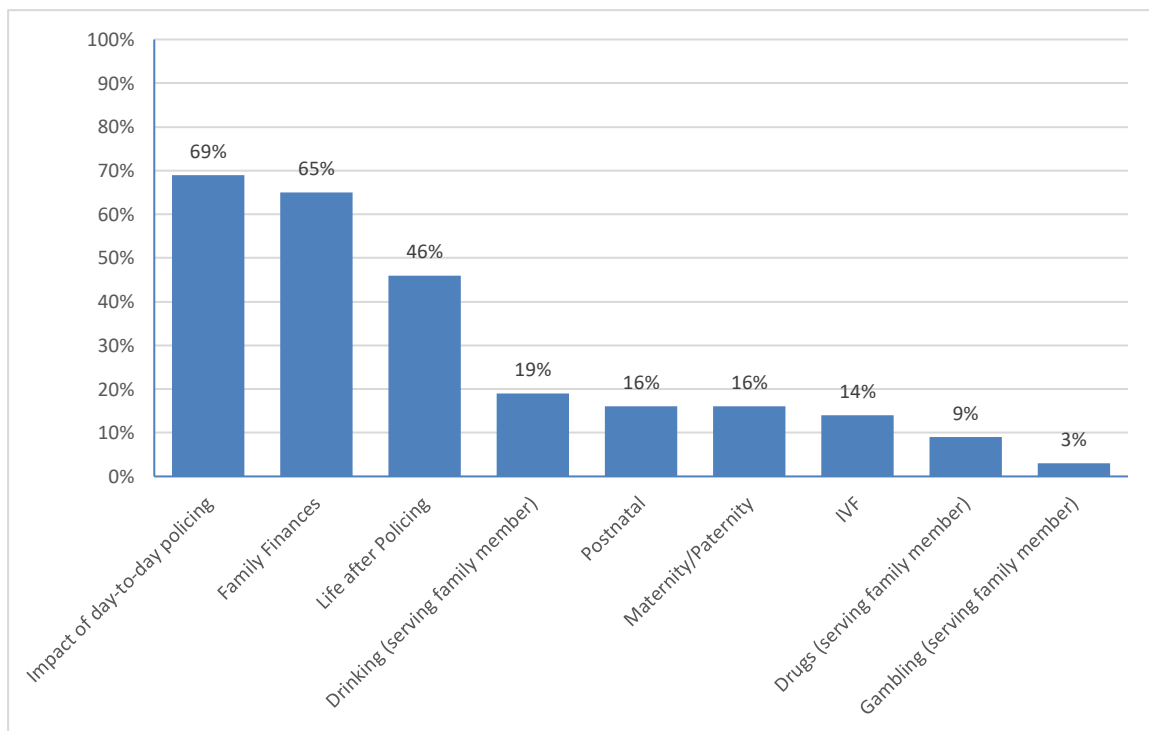
Figure 2: Summary of Pressing Issues, valid responses



Summary of Pressing Concerns C

Around two-thirds of respondents stated that the impact of day-to-day policing (69%) and family finances (65%) were pressing concerns, with 46% also highlighting concern over life after policing. Nearly one-in-five (19%) responses highlighted concern over the serving family member's alcohol consumption, with a further 9% stating concerns over drug misuse (illicit and licit, such as the use of prescribed medication).

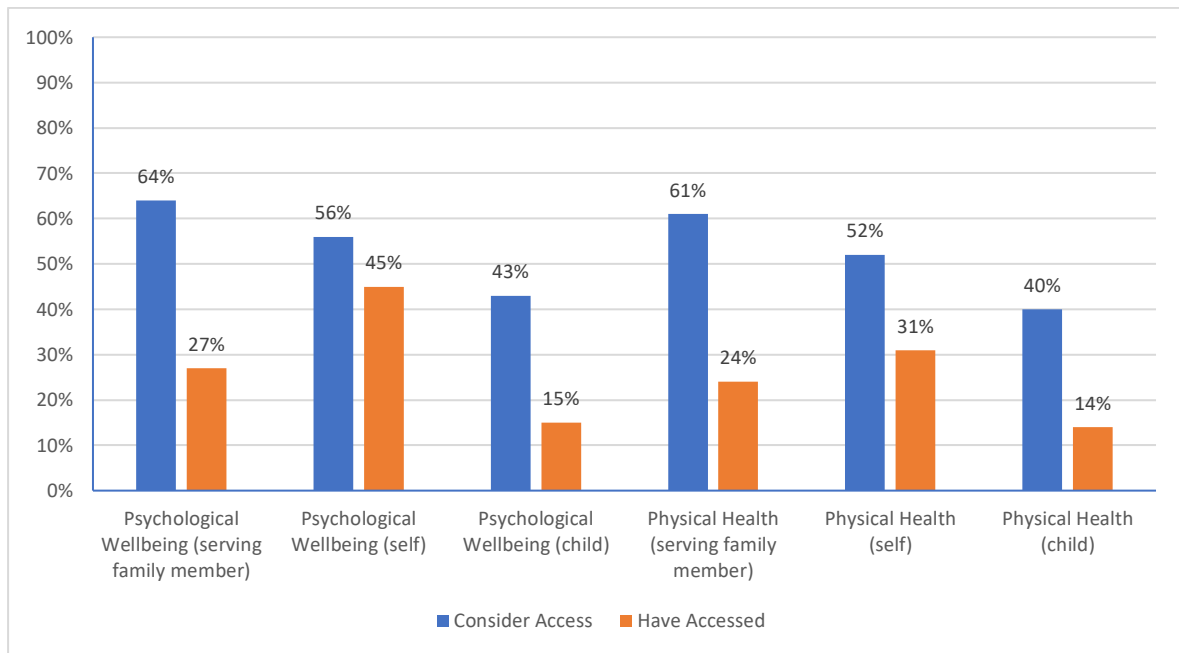
Figure 3: Summary of responses identifying pressing concerns, valid percentages only



Access to Support Services – Psychological and Physical Wellbeing

There are wide disparities between respondents that perceive a need to access services (have considered accessing a service) and those that have accessed a service. This disparity includes 64% who have considered accessing a PWB service for their serving family member compared to 27% who have accessed a service and 61% who have considered accessing services for their family member's physical health needs (against 24% who had accessed a service). This finding compares to 56% of respondents who had considered accessing a service for PWB for themselves, against 45% who had engaged with services for this need.

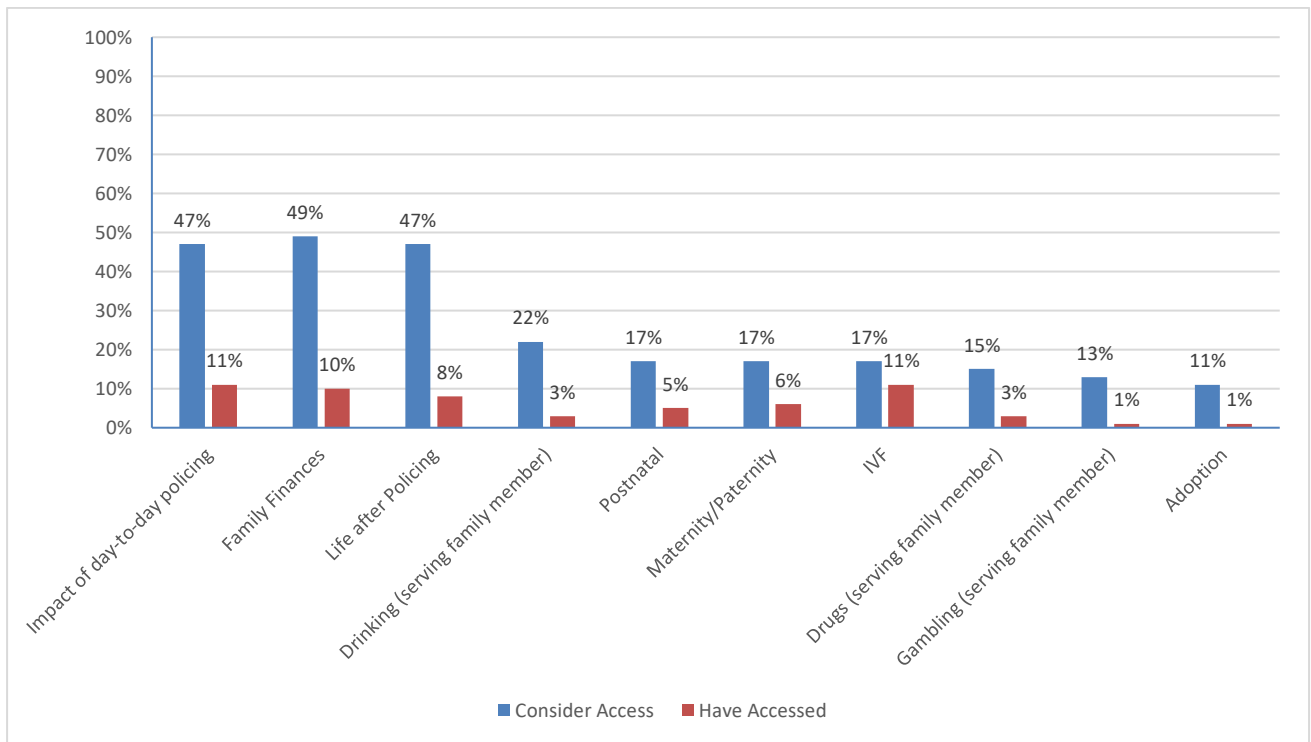
Figure 4: Comparison between respondents who considered accessing services and respondents who had accessed specific services, valid percentages only



Access to Support Services – Other

Similar notable disparities between considering accessing services and having accessed a service were noted across a range of topic areas, including the impact of day-to-day policing (47% considered, 11% had accessed a service), family finances (49% considered, 10% had accessed a service) and life-after-policing (47% considered, 8% had accessed a service).

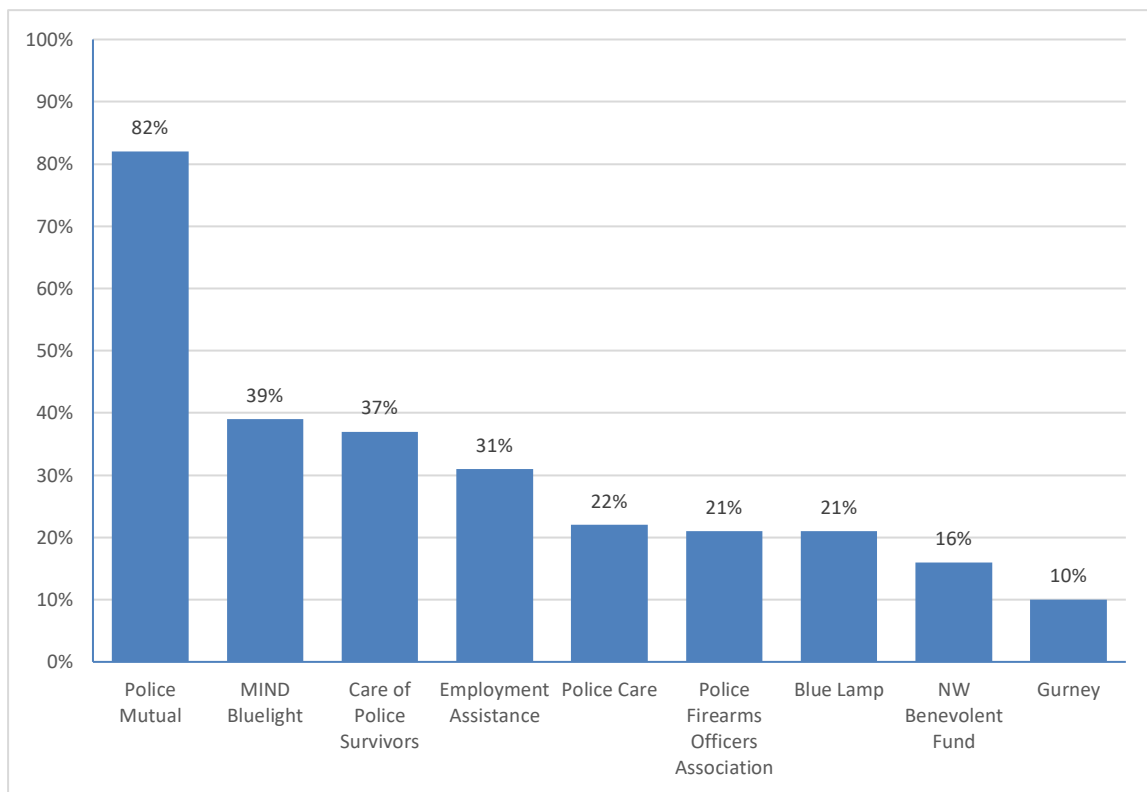
Figure 5: Comparison between respondents who considered accessing services and respondents who had accessed specific services, valid percentages only



Awareness of Support Services

The majority of people who responded to this question were aware of Police Mutual (82%), dropping thereafter to much lower levels for MIND Bluelight (39%) and Care of Police Survivors (37%) to Gurney (10%).

Figure 6: Respondents' awareness of police-related services, valid responses only



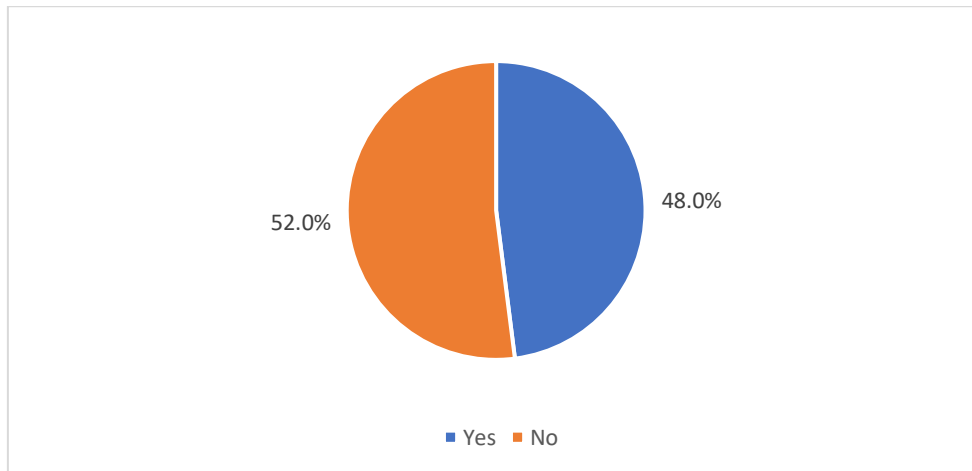
Access to Support and Networks

The following section examines the extent and nature of social networks available to police families.

Table 6: Social Networking, n=1406

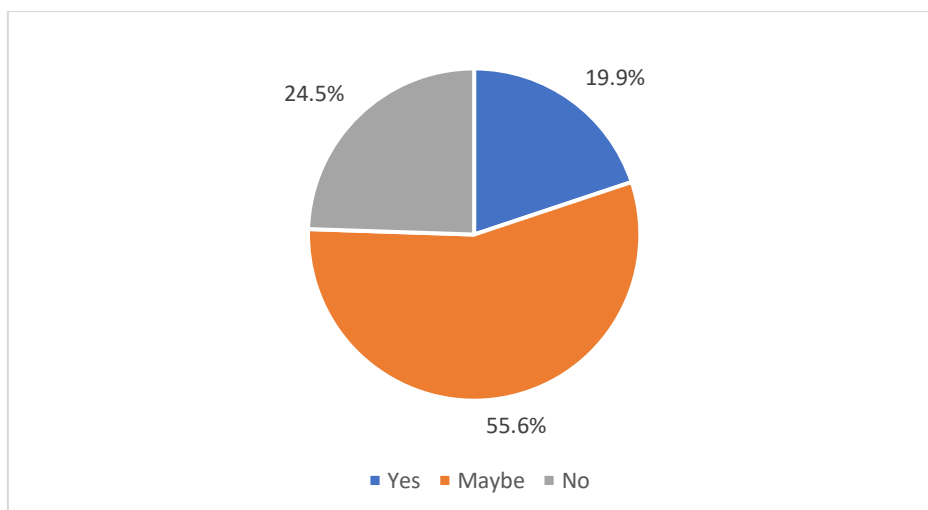
	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage
Yes	398	28.3%	82.4%
No	85	6.0%	17.6%
Total	483	34.4%	100.0%
System Missing	923	65.6%	
Total	1406	100.0%	

Figure 7: If YES (n=398), does this network include members of other police families?



Of all respondents who replied 'yes' to whether they had a social network to go to for support, there was a near even split between those who have access to social networks with no police families (52.0%, n=207) and those with social networks that include other police families (48.0%, n=191).

Figure 8: Extent to which respondents stated that they were interested in connecting with other police families



Of those who replied to this question, over half (55.6%, n=266) stated that they might be interested in connecting with other police families. One quarter (24.5%, n=117) stated that they did not want to

connect with other police families, and one-fifth (19.9%, n=95) stated that they would be interested in making this connection.

Associations with Psychological Wellbeing (PWB)

An exploratory analysis was undertaken to examine prognostics associated with changing perceived PWB for the individual (self) completing the survey. A stepwise linear regression model was run with PWB (self) as the outcome variable, including measures for perceived pressure and levels of access to services alongside socio-demographic measures. The findings from this model should be considered indicative at this stage. The final model explained 63% of the variance.

Table 5: Linear regression coefficients examining prognostics associated with perceived levels of PWB need,

<i>Coefficients</i>							
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
(Constant)	0.016	0.258		0.064	0.949	-0.490	0.523
Considering your family life, what are the most pressing issues you currently face? - Physical Health: For self	0.451	0.034	0.454	13.347	0.000	0.385	0.518
Considering your family life, what are the most pressing issues you currently face? - Psychological Well-being: For serving family member	0.355	0.043	0.354	8.299	0.000	0.271	0.439
Again thinking about these issues, would you consider accessing support or help to help address these matters?.	0.304	0.031	0.363	9.777	0.000	0.243	0.366

- Psychological Well-being: For self							
Would you consider accessing support or help to help address these matters? - Psychological Well-being: For serving family member	-0.168	0.032	-0.199	-5.189	0.000	-0.232	-0.104
What are the most pressing issues you currently face?. - Work/ Personal Relationship Conflict	0.129	0.040	0.138	3.195	0.001	0.050	0.209
Considering your family life, what are the most pressing issues you currently face?. - Physical Health: For serving family member	-0.139	0.039	-0.150	-3.554	0.000	-0.215	-0.062
What are the most pressing issues you currently face?. - Work/Family Conflict	0.103	0.041	0.110	2.518	0.012	0.023	0.183
Would you consider accessing support - Impact of day-to-day policing (shifts, overtime, cancelled rest days etc)	-0.060	0.024	-0.081	-2.487	0.013	-0.108	-0.013

Positive Association with Respondents Psychological Wellbeing

The model was worked to understand how the respondent's psychological wellbeing related to other measures within the model. This was in response to the focus group participants who talked about their personal psychological wellbeing, and that of their children, being linked to that of their serving family member.

It was found that there is a positive statistical relationship between the respondents concern for their own psychological wellbeing and that of their serving family member. Suggesting that indeed, non-police partners wellbeing is linked to their serving family members wellbeing in line with the findings of the focus groups.

It was also found that a statistical relationship with the respondent's psychological wellbeing and conflict between their serving members work and their personal relationship and also increased family work conflict. There is no surprise then that there was a statistical relationship between the respondent's psychological wellbeing and concern for their physical health, and an increased consideration in accessing support services for their personal psychological wellbeing.

There were also negative associations with an increase in concern for the respondents own psychological wellbeing and concern for the physical health for their serving family member, suggesting that where the respondents concern increases for their police family members physical health, their concern for their personal psychological wellbeing decreases.

Open Text Responses

There were two open text boxes included in the survey. The first (at section 3) asked the respondent if they had ever been treated in a way that violated their dignity, or created a hostile, degrading, humiliating environment because they were a member of a police family. Only 158 responded yes to this question, with 32% of this number indicting that they had suffered public abuse and/or threats.

What came across was a sense of isolation, exclusion and judgement:

'People don't necessarily mean to - but by believing all they read in the media I feel very excluded and stigmatised.'

'lost friends and some family members, and the rhetoric now is that most officers are bad so i dont tell anyone that i am married to a police officer as i find it embarrassing and i use to be proud to say.'

'I have had negative remarks made, been called a 'pig lover' and had people distance themselves from me. I tend to avoid mentioning my husband's career unless to people I know well.'

Some described criminal acts committed against them:

‘Putting washing out in the summer months - a neighbour I assume has noticed police uniform on the line and has thrown paint all over the washing on the line and then scratched the side of our cars due to being a part of the police’

‘spat at in the street’

And children have also been the victim of hate as a result of their parent’s career:

‘Bullied throughout school especially secondary. Also shunned in two previous working environments .’

‘Son in school was bullied because his father was a police officer.’

‘Child proudly stated about family members job in the police and was called a "rat"’

The second open text box was the final question and asked if there was anything else that the respondent would like to add. There were 48 responses, taking out comments about the survey. A number talked about the impact of their serving family member’s own stress levels and the way the service treated them:

‘Wellbeing services are a joke. Police/Government do not care at all about wellbeing. Stop giving out helpline numbers and eliminate the need for officers to need to seek help themselves, it should be part of the job.’

‘As a military leader and commander, when I compare the differences between the mental support we get compared to the police I am shocked and disgusted at the lack of support for my serving spouse. The lack of immediate TRiM is a travesty, a time bomb, a complete shambolic pretence of pretending to care. Every team should have a handful of TRiM practitioners. It should not

be farmed out to external teams, if you want police on the front line, active and mentally resilient you need to look after them.'

Many also talked about financial support needed for officers:

'I have a child in the force who is sinking and feels the support isn't there, they live on the bread line and I often have to pay their mortgage or bills as she is on a low wage for what she is doing going into the job was to help people and support our community's but they have to many work cases and can never see a way forward, we in courage her every day and most days she will call and be up set over work and not getting the support please look after your police officers as the good ones are leaving.'

But also about how police families are treated, which reflects a lot of our findings:

'A very anti family organisation. I have experienced an incredible burden of managing home/children and my own job since my partner signed up which has been further exasperated by covid. Everything falls to me now. The shift patterns, partners constant tiredness, unpredictable nature of each shift end time - it's hard work. We cannot plan holidays or days out. His leave can be cancelled and we have no say. Important training courses are staged over half terms with no regard to impact on families. He loves the job, he's brilliant at it and we support him - but it's had an immeasurable impact on family life and my personal well-being. I often feel like a machine now and my children miss out on many things without their Dad. He is also constantly torn between a career that is his passion and the family he loves. It is a hard life - I have never felt so lonely.'

It was reassuring to find that the survey results reflected that of the focus groups and interviews, and important to note the statistical relationship between respondent and police partner wellbeing. There is clearly a need to look further into the secondary trauma of partners of officers and the impact on children. Unfortunately, the survey did not ask a direct question about childcare. However, an inference can be drawn from the high level of concern over the day to day impact of policing on family life.

Chapter Six: Findings and Discussion

This chapter draws together all the data through triangulation of the findings across the three data collection methods and draws on extant literature to compare and expand the points raised. In doing so this report answers the overall aims of the project: Police Families Wellbeing and Support Needs in the UK.

Key Aims:

1. Explore with family members the perceived influence of police occupational experiences on the wellbeing of their families, including resilience, coping and sources of support.
2. Explore occupational stressors' influences on family functioning and dynamics among policing families.
3. Identify key areas of need in terms of family support.

The themes identified overall reflect that of the desk top study but are slight nuanced. Intimate Partner Violence was not a strong theme, there was only one incident of domestic violence, and this was detailed in interview IV3. Officers and non-serving partners did talk about angry and irritable behaviours displayed towards children and family, but this is captured under psychological needs as this is seen as a symptom and redirection of poor mental health as a result of occupational stressors. The findings are broken down into four areas: Family/Work Conflict, Psychological Wellbeing, Children – Intergenerational Trauma, and Support Needs.

Family/Work conflict

Work/Family Conflict and Work/Personal Conflict were third and fourth (respectively) of the most pressing concerns for partners in the findings of the survey. This was strongly supported by the findings of the focus groups and interviews. Single parenting was consistently mentioned within the focus groups, reflecting the extant literature which found that US police officers and paramedics too described themselves as single parents ((Roth and Moore, 2009, Brodie and Eppler, 2012, Karaffa et al., 2015). The burden on non-police partners to arrange and manage childcare and to run the household in the absence of their serving police partner, who typically worked shifts but also had unreliable finish times, led to exhaustion and burnout. This led to an atypical life rhythm that had a

compounding impact on the non-serving partners ability to stay well and to practice self-care behaviours such as networking with friends and family and accessing social support, also limiting their ability to engage with wider social and physical activities such as attending a regular gym class. The complexity of police working patterns and occupational demands sees non-serving partners putting themselves secondary to the needs of their serving partner and their children. This also impacted on their own career choices as they were seen as the ones needing to have a flexible career that had fewer demands and that could flex into the gaps that third party childcare left. This came through the strongest in the focus group where participants repeatedly talked of feeling isolated, from social support and family, but also their serving-partner.

There is a gendered nature to this finding as all of the non-serving parents were female and were clearly working the 'second shift' as described by Hochschild and Machung (2012). Although this is a skewed data sample it is worth further consideration as policing is recognised as a typically male dominated industry, but it is also recognised that there is a retention issue with women in the police service with women leaving citing work conflict with caring responsibilities (Charman and Bennett, 2022). The impact of police work on motherhood is further explored in Agoecs et al. (2015) and is echoed by much of what participants have said in this study.

Serving police officers also talked of feeling isolated from their serving-partners as the 50/50 split of childcare led to a sense of solo-parenting. Rarely did families sit down together for meals, or enjoy activities as a whole family, particularly as one parent would typically be working a weekend (again, reflected by Agoecs et al. (2015). Again, family lives were planned in meticulous detailed – often spread sheets were employed and holidays and Christmases planned 18 to 2 years in advance. This led to a lack of spontaneity and flexibility that non police families couldn't grasp, and again this led to a lack of social connectivity as friends were lost over time.

The one person external to the immediate family that did remain connected was the grandparent. It was clear from both the focus groups and the interviews that the role of grandparents is key in keeping police families afloat. The role of grandparents was spoken of in relation to the conflict of police working patterns with third party childcare provision. Although grandparents were often still in employment, and also feeling exhausted by full time work and childcare responsibilities at an older age, they were keen to be involved and to support their children and grandchildren – and were often pivotal in the success of the police family.

The impact of police life on family life is clear, and this led to serving officers feeling that there was no compatibility between a career in the police and having a family, leading them to believe that policing was a single person vocation. Indeed, there is a strong sense of organisational in-justice, where non-serving and serving parents felt that families and children were viewed as a burden to the organisation. Indeed, becoming a parent and the need to support a family is stigmatised within the police service, with officer's fearing impact on their promotion prospects, with serving parents feeling shamed for their desire to have a family and/or being pregnant – with the pregnant female body seen as unwanted within the organisation, a concept that is supported by current industry research (Gatrell, Cooper Kossek, 2017). Often becoming a parent is seen as the end of a woman's career, but often sees parents of both sexes taking roles that better support the needs of their family (whether that be emotional or physical) but in doing so greatly reducing their career opportunities and also their sense of engagement with their chosen vocation – often cited as saying 'this isn't what I signed up for' (IV4 P2). The lack of compatibility of a police career with impact of on careering responsibilities one of the top three reasons for officers choosing to resign from the police in a 2022 study conducted by Charman and Bennett.

HR and wider organisational policies do not assist officers and their families, and often exacerbate return to work anxieties. Flexi-plans are a particular issue, with negotiation and acceptance of a plan that supports the family seen as a supervisory lottery and down to luck and compassion of the individual making the decision. This can lead to officers compromising their career aspirations, or even leaving the organisation. Often wider organisational policies don't consider the impact on families – with promotion processes often falling at Christmas, and a complete lack of consideration for families with both parents serving when 'all officer on duty' situations occur. Without policies that accommodate or consider police families the pressures mount, and it seems that families and non-serving partners make all the compromise to accommodate the police organisational needs, whilst all the time still being isolated from the wider police family and support.

Psychological Wellbeing

The greatest pressing concern for survey respondents was the psychological health of their serving family member, followed by the concern for their serving family members physical health. It was clear from the focus groups how much time and emotional energy non-serving partners committed to the wellbeing of their serving partners – so much so that it had a detrimental impact on their psychological wellbeing. This was reflected in the survey results where there was a direct correlation between respondent's psychological wellbeing and that of their serving partners. Non-serving partners have

learned to identify the signals that their serving partners display when they are struggling with their mental health, and they have also learned how to intervene, often putting in place strategies that involve counselling their partners either on their way home from work, or once at home. Non-serving partners recognise that their serving-partners have nowhere else to process their work experiences, and actively step in to fill this role.

In recognising their serving-partners mental health struggles non-serving partners also feel unable to discuss their own mental health struggles with their serving-partners as they feel that this would unduly burden them whilst they are in a vulnerable position. This has a silencing effect on non-serving partners, only adding to their increasing sense of isolation brought about by the complex demands of police shift work and childcare. This suppression of non-police partners emotional needs reflects that found in the extant literature of emergency responders and Australian police officers, where it was also found that emotional suppression by the partner led to a negative impact on non-police partner wellbeing and an increase in marital tension (Roberts and Leveson, 2001; Davidson et al., 2006; King and DeLongis, 2014).

However, this active role that non-police partners are playing in supporting their serving partners mental health is also having a direct impact on their wellbeing through exposing them, second hand, to the trauma that officers are exposed to, leaving them vulnerable to secondary trauma. Non-serving partners are clear that their serving-partners ill-health has a direct impact on their own, as they are able to describe in detail the very scenario's that led to their serving-partners un-addressed PTSD. The increased risk of secondary trauma of spouses of serving soldiers with PTSD has already been established within the literature (Herzog, Everson and Whitworth, 2011) and therefore it is considered unsurprising that the partners of serving police are also at great risk of secondary traumatic stress symptoms.

The need for emotional suppression around their partners, the exposure to secondary trauma through counselling their serving-partners, the sense of isolation brought about by the complexity of police shift patterns and meeting childcare demands, and the burden of addressing this as a single parent has led to non-serving partners engaging psychological support services for themselves, for what they see as a direct result of their serving-partners occupation. Despite this, there are limited (in some forces non) psychological services provided for families, and even when an officer is treated for an episode of significant mental ill-health, the impact on families is not considered – and this sends a clear message to families – you're not part of the team.

Therefore, despite taking on a significant emotional burden in support of their serving-partner and the wider police service, and suffering significant isolation as a result, non-serving partners feel further isolated from the police service as they are rarely recognised as being part of the police family. Often non-serving partners assume the identity of their serving-partner, and receive abuse or intolerance from friends and strangers alike – however, they are never directly communicated with by the organisation they are perceived to represent, nor are they included in events or recognised for their contribution. In fact, they often receive an atypical level of support from the police compared to other members of the public.

The impact of unaddressed mental ill-health of serving family members can have a direct on all family members, this was articulated in both the focus groups and the interviews. Both non-police partners and serving-partners expressed concern over redirected stress and mental ill-health towards children as well as partners. Officers themselves admitted to irritability and agitated behaviours redirected towards children when they didn't have time to process the events of a working day, and non-serving and serving partners both witnessed aggression from serving-family members. This was echoed by the serving children in the study who both articulated changeable and irritable moods. This is a point raised in the extant literature which found that children subject to trauma symptomology as displayed by police parents were more fearful themselves and displayed externalised behaviour (Uchida et al., 2018). However, it should be noted that other studies into the children of serving soldiers identified internalised behaviours for children who parents suffered PTSD (Herzog, Everson and Whitworth, 2011), a point worth considering in future studies.

Grandparents/parents of serving children also discussed the changes in their loved ones – similar to that described by non-serving partners who knew their serving family members before they joined the service. They talked about an emotional shut down, where there was a distinct lack of empathy and lack of tolerance to other's emotions, a point of concern for non-police partners who were concerned for the upbringing of their children and the child's relationship with their serving-police parent. In all, unresolved psychological issues of serving family members have an impact on the rest of the family, though this impact is not recognised or addressed by the police service.

Children – Intergenerational Trauma

As already discussed, the unresolved mental health issues of serving parents can have an impact on police children through redirected behaviours and emotional intolerance. It is also clear from the interviews and focus groups that children are very aware of their police parent's work, and they are very interested in this. Many express the desire to become police officers, and IV1 demonstrated this,

and went on to replicate his father's behaviours with his own children to the point of resentment towards the police service for the damage that it had done to him and his children. This is a demonstration of intergenerational trauma that is worth considering for all children of police officers with unresolved mental ill-health. Intergenerational Trauma has been studied in different settings from residential schools to aboriginal communities but Phillips' (1999, cited in Menzies, 2010, p. 67) best summarises the potential issue we see in the police population as described in this study:

'If we do not deal with our trauma, we inadvertently hand it down to the next generation. We often take out our pain and hurt on those we love the most – which is ourselves and those closest to us – our family and friends. So, intergenerational trauma is trauma that is passed down behaviourally to the next generation: if we're angry and act angry all the time to others, our kids will think that's normal and do the same. If we ignore each other and deprive each other of love and affection in our relationships, our kids see and feel that deprivation of love and might think it's normal (p. 6).'

Both the focus groups and interviews described concerns with what their children were aware of, we have already discussed being subject to police-parents redirected behaviours, but children are also aware of the risks that their police parent's occupations entail. One participant articulated concern for her child's mental health and anxiety, stating that if he doesn't speak to her before he goes to bed he has trouble sleeping – a point reflected in the research of Agocs et al (2015) and Uchida et al. (2018). This results in her face timing her child from work to let them know that she is safe. Children recognise the absence of their police-parents and recognise that this is different from other children's parents. IV1 talked of feeling abandoned or secondary to other children and families who their police-parents were out protecting, which leaves children wondering - are they secondary to police work too? A thought their non-police parents will likely recognise. Like non-police partners, children learn to recognise the behaviours of their police parents and chose when – or sometimes never – to talk to them about their own worries. With some children asking the non-police parent not to disclose conversations, or simply recognising that their police-parent is not emotionally accessible for support. Again, this all adds to the child's own emotional challenges growing up in a police family.

Considering the number of children of police parents who go on to join the police service themselves there is a concern here for the cyclical nature of intergenerational trauma being perpetuated through

the organisation. If the service is looking to better support the mental health of its officers and staff it should consider the wellness of its future recruits.

Support

The question of what support families would like and how they would like to access this was asked across all data collection methods. Three main areas came up: Social Support Networks, Psychological Support and Childcare.

Social Support Networks

Non-police parents talked extensively of being isolated, through complex work and childcare issues and also through assuming the police identity and losing connection with non-police families and friends, however, they also felt outside to the police organisation. As a response, focus group and interview participants stated that they would like to be connected with other police families. Focus group participants spoke of the validation and support they felt from speaking and hearing from other police family members within the focus groups and would like to see something similar replicated on a more regular basis, by their partners police organisation. Similarly, three quarters of survey respondents stated that they either might or would be interested in networking with other police families. In more nuanced conversations participants spoke of different networks, such as networks for parents of police officers and networks for partners of police officers, as well as creating a space for children to meet to normalise their experiences.

In particular participants spoke of the lack of safe spaces for families to meet either as a group (or couple) away from the wider non-police public and spoke about the difficulty in relaxing and speaking in spaces where they maybe overheard. In discussing this point children of police officers lamented the loss of the police social clubs where families could go and often met other families in a shared safe space, often sharing stories of meeting other children over a shared Sunday roast dinner at the police social club.

Overall families, partners, children, grandparents, parents of police officers, all wanted to be recognised by the police service, either through direct communication from their serving family member's police organisation or at a wider level. They were keen that they were recognised as a valid part of officer's lives and recognised for the impact policing life had on them, and the contribution that they made to the police service. They also wanted to contribute towards creating this connection,

with many actively becoming involved in police life – either through research or working with police charities.

Psychological Support

Almost half of survey respondents considered accessing support services, again their greatest concern is for their serving family members psychological wellbeing, but when it comes to actually having accessed support is for their own psychological wellbeing. This reflects discussion in the focus groups over serving family members willingness to access psychological support services for themselves due to the stigma around mental health in the police service. However, survey respondents had very limited awareness of what support services are available, with Police Mutual (financial support) being the most recognised service.

Focus Group participants and interviewees also talked about the need for psychological support for their families, both as a regular intervention but also as an aspect of a serving partners treatment when diagnosed with mental ill-health. As one participant stated, it is naïve to think that if a family is not affected if a serving family member is suffering with their mental ill-health. With recent research showing that 1 in 4 police officers and police staff have PTSD (though two thirds are unaware) (Brewin et al., 2022), it is reasonable to suggest that many police families are in need of psychological support as a form of therapy. However, it would also be reasonable to suggest that police families (and their serving family members) are in need of regular preventative psychological support. Indeed, recognising the secondary trauma that non-partners are experiencing and the intergenerational trauma that children are facing there appears a need for regular support and an organisational imperative to provide it. Participants talked of family therapy to bring the family together in discussing the challenges that they face collectively, but also as a way of drawing serving-family members into psychological therapy, a way for non-serving partners to access therapy without feeling uncomfortable in blaming their partners job, and a way for children to express themselves to their parents and to normalise the difficulties of being a police family. Therefore, regular family therapy is seen as a way of addressing many of the psychological issues identified within this study.

There is also clearly a need to support parents in helping their children with their worries about their parent's careers. With parents expressing concern for their children's anxiety levels, both in response to their worries about the risk that their parents faced in the daily work but also in their response to their police-parent's behaviours at home, and their relationships with them. The charity Police Care UK have conducted their own research into this area and commissioned a children's book that talks

children through the worries of having a parent as a police officer (Police Care UK, 2021). This is certainly something that needs to be expanded on and support provided for parents to understand the needs of their children and to provide for them in the unique environment of a police family.

Childcare

It was really apparent that childcare and the incompatibility with police shift work and unreliability of work hours had a significant impact on the practical and emotional wellbeing of families. The concept of in-house nursery provision or a creche came up in all focus groups, with partners and officers suggesting that this would be a way to ensure that opening and closing times aligned more with the needs of shift workers and those that were often kept on at work. They also suggested that this would be an ideal opportunity for other family members to meet – rather like meeting at the school gates, but knowing that everyone is in a police family, this also provided an opportunity for children to make early years connections with other police children. Most importantly participants suggested that this would help not only with the stress of childcare but the stress of those returning to work after maternity and paternity leave. Participants made very practical suggestions around divisional buildings being used for the location of in-house nursery provision. Though this might sound ludicrous the reality of one of the participants having worked at Broadmoor hospital and having witnessed the in-house creche and how it supported hospital staff, it certainly seems an option that needs serious consideration bearing in mind that it would potentially solve so many very serious issues for police families. Participants also spoke about emergency childcare access, which one participant stated they were provided through their own organisation, and suggested that this would at least help with those times when the prospect of children home alone loomed due to operational requirements.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion and Recommendations

This research is the largest study on the wellbeing and support needs of police families in the UK and highlights the significant challenges that families of serving officers and staff face. This project has demonstrated that there is a need for the police service and individual police forces to connect with the families of police officers and staff and recognise them as part of the wider police family. It is clear from our research that families play an enormous role in enabling officers and staff to continue in their careers, despite the numerous challenges presented to them whether that be balancing childcare with the support of grandparents, or counselling officers and staff through the traumatic experiences of their work. This needs to be recognised. There was significant pride expressed by families for their serving loved ones, and they were incredibly committed to their partners careers – often becoming involved in the police service themselves either through research or volunteering with police related charities. Partners placed themselves and their children second to their partners careers, and often having a serving family member present with the family was seen as an added extra, not something that could be relied on. Something that weighed heavy on both children and partners.

However, of biggest concern is the impact of serving-family members mental health on the immediate family. There is a clear risk presented to partners and children when a serving-family member is suffering mental ill-health, with partners exposed to the risk of secondary traumatic stress and children developing anxiety and facing challenges to their emotional development. There are implications here for the police service, and also wider health services, in the prevention, identification and treatment of mental ill-health in police families.

There are very practical steps that can be taken by the police service, but this project has its limitations and takes a broad overview of the lived experience of police families, therefore it is recommended that further research is undertaken to explore the areas of concern and need that are identified here.

Recommendations

- **Police Service/Police Families Connections**

Individual organisations should actively identify and connect with the families of their staff. This should be carried out directly and not through employees. Regular communication should be carried

out that is aimed specifically at families. When recognising officers and staff for good work, families should be included.

- **Networks**

Individual organisations and the College of Policing should develop active networks for families and specific family groups: partners, children, parents/grandparents. These should be run on a regular basis and be seen as a place for people to connect and develop relationships where they can share the unique experience of being in a police family. This should be considered as preventative aspect of wellbeing support.

Further research should be considered into what works in terms of engaging and connecting with families at a local and national level, and how this impacts on family wellbeing.

- **Safe Spaces**

Individual organisations should look to re-establish social spaces that are exclusive to police families and therefore, provide a safe space for people to come together.

Consideration should be given to the benefits to the organisation of providing this, and balance this with the costs.

- **Psychological support**

Psychological support should be made available to police families as a matter of course and as a preventative intervention. When police officers and staff are identified as suffering from mental ill-health, psychological support should include the employee's family. Inter-agency work should be undertaken to understand what external health agencies can provide in terms of support.

Further research should be conducted into mental health provision for families to establish what is effective, and what is preventative.

Further research should be conducted into to the secondary trauma of the partners of police officers and staff. Linking in with the next recommendation, this should also consider the impact on child mental health.

- Study into the effects on children

Further research should be conducted into the effect on children's mental health through having a serving police parent. This should not be restricted to cases where the serving family member has an identified mental health concern, though this should form part of future studies, along with engagement with wider social services including health and education in consideration of preventative support measures.

- Childcare

Serious consideration should be given to the provision of childcare for police officers. Consideration should be made of in-house provision, emergency arrangements and police specific agreements with third party childcare providers, potentially at a national level.

Research should be carried out into the benefits to the organisation (cost/benefit analysis), the family and the individual officer. This should also link into research on retention of women within the organisation.

- HR policies

All HR policies should take into consideration the impact of the families of officers. Individual organisations should be encouraged to review all policy and procedure and work in conjunction with support groups active within their organisation. Research should be conducted with international partners to identify practice which might benefit and inform UK practice.

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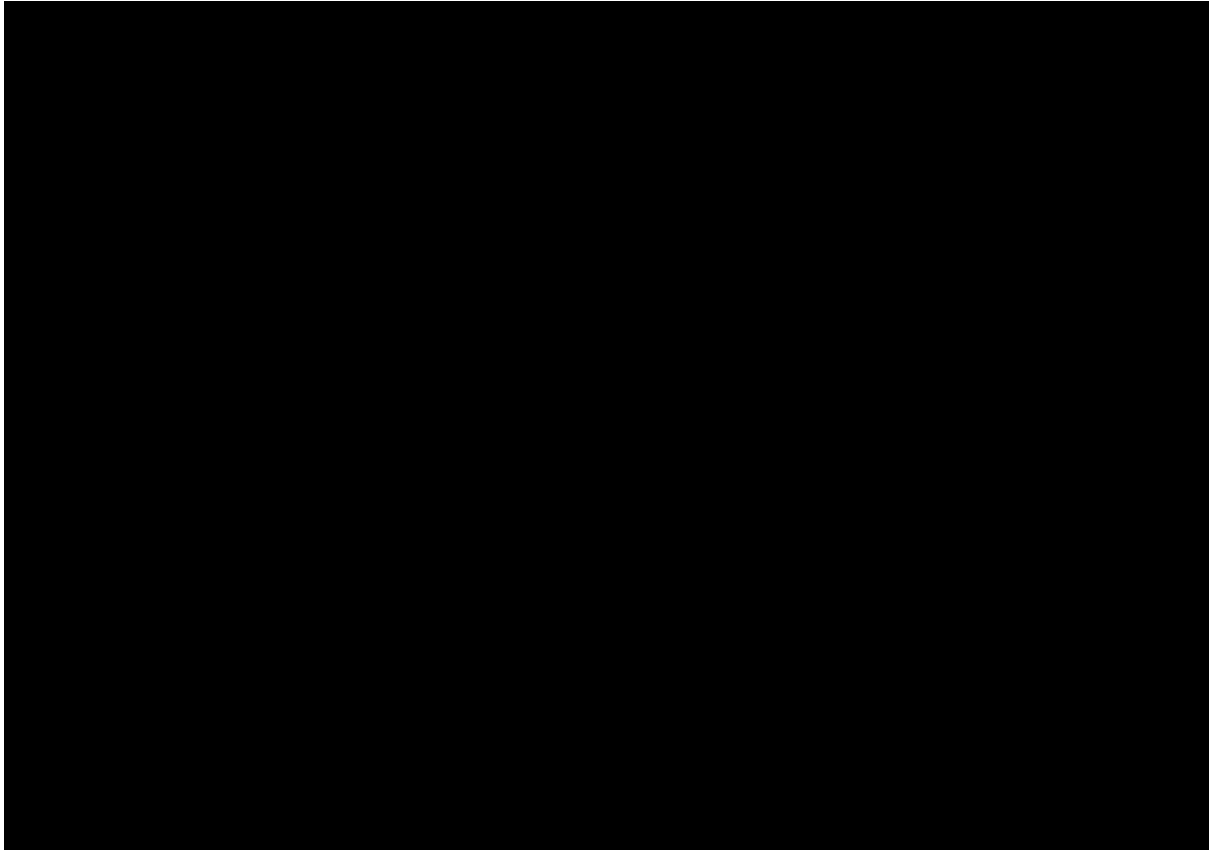
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Appendices

Appendix 1 Focus Group Advert



Appendix 2 Focus Groups Schedule of Questions

Police Families Wellbeing Needs

Questions and Prompts

Focus Group Structure:

1. Welcome and Introductions
 - *Invite participants to say how they are related to the police officer(s) in their family; and why they chose to take part in the research*
2. What is it like having a police officer in the family?
 - What are the good things about it?

- What are the drawbacks?
 - How do other people react / respond to you once they find out?
3. How does having a police officer in your family affect life as a family?
 - *Draw out any differences in experiences across gender/ ethnicity etc*
 4. What are the biggest challenges for you and your family (as the result of having a police officer in your family)?
 - Work/Family conflict
 - Relationship with serving member
 - Children (school, home, with serving member)
 - Family planning
 - Mental Health (anxiety, stress, PTSD etc., you, children serving member)
 - Negative behaviours (alcohol abuse, prescription drugs, drugs gambling)
 - Life after service (retirement/career change)
 5. Given some of what we have talked about just now, what kind of support do you currently draw on or feel able to draw on if needed?
 - Formal vs informal support
 - What is helpful
 - What is not helpful
 - Any gaps
 6. Are there issues you feel / would feel more comfortable to seek support with? Any issues or types of things that would feel more difficult?
 - Any areas that feel more 'taboo', either as result of more generic societal pressures or specifically to do with being a police family
 - Formal vs informal support (i.e. family and friends vs charitable or other organisation)
 - Any access issues (knowing where to go and so on)
 7. What kind of support would you like to see available?
 - Advice and Information-provision vs Counselling /emotional support vs Support networks / communities
 - Accessible on person vs online (via chatroom, messaging, or meetings)
 - Regular vs ad-hoc
 8. Where would you like to see support come from?
 - Local police service
 - Oscar Kilo/College of Policing
 - Charity sector
 - Other
 9. What kind of a relationship would you want with the police force where your family member serves?
 - Regular communication / updates
 - Acknowledgment/ appreciation of their support roles as family members

- Updates / reassurance in case of incidents/ working late etc
 - From top / strategic level or more individually (e.g. shift sergeant)
10. Do you have a network of people that you can go to for support?
- Does this include other police families?
 - Do you socialise with other police families?
 - Is it 'easier' to be with other police families?
11. Would you be interested in connecting with other police families?
- How would you like to do this? Online? In person?
12. Any other points you would like to make?




13. Thank you and Debrief sheets!

Appendix 3 Survey Questions

9/30/22, 10:04 AM

Qualtrics Survey Software

Introduction



Centre for Policing Research and Learning

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KCMHR
KING'S CENTRE FOR MILITARY HEALTH RESEARCH

Can you help?

Are you a member of a family that includes a police officer or police staff member? This maybe a husband, wife, partner, child, brother, sister, father, mother, carer or another close relative. You are being invited to take part in a questionnaire looking at the needs of the families of police officers and police staff.

What's this for?

Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being conducted and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully. This study is seeking to understand the well-being needs and concerns of the family members of police officers and police staff, and to understand how families would prefer to receive support in those areas of need or concern.

The key aims of this study are to:

1. Explore with police families the influence of police work on the well-being of families, including resilience, coping and sources of support.
2. Understand how work stress influences family functioning and dynamics among policing families.
3. Identify key areas of need in terms of family support.

This research is being undertaken in partnership between The Open University's (OU) Centre for Policing Research and Learning (CPRL) and King's Centre for Military Health Research (KCMHR) and is being funded by the College of Policing.

The Principal Investigator is Dr Sarah-Jane Lennie CPsychol (Lecturer, Department Police, Organisation and Practice: sarah-jane.lennie@open.ac.uk).

Complaints

If you have any complaints regarding this study, you may contact Dr Emma Williams, via email (emma.williams@open.ac.uk). Dr Williams is the Director of Research at the Centre for Policing Research and Learning, and is independent from this project.

The work has been reviewed by and received a positive opinion from the OU Human Research Ethics Committee – HREC reference number 4254.

The questionnaire is in four parts and will explore the well-being needs and concerns of you and your family, and how you may like to access support in these areas. The questionnaire should take approximately ??? minutes to complete.

Taking Part

Participation is entirely voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time during your participation and you can do so by exiting the survey. However, what questions you have completed will stay within the survey. This is due to participation being anonymous and there being no way to distinguish your data from that of someone else.

What are the benefits and risks of participation?

The benefits of this research include both contributing to a body of knowledge that is unique in its approach focusing on the well-being and support needs of police families and delivering recommendations to the College of Policing as to what support should be made available to police families. The study findings will be made available to all participants on request. We do not anticipate any risks to you in taking part in this study.

Confidentiality for you and serving family members

All data collected will be anonymized and confidentiality will be maintained for all participants and their family members. If you find any of the questions upsetting there are details of support services for you to access at the end of the questionnaire. At any point within the questionnaire, you can opt to move to the end and access the support service details, if you so wish.

How will the data I provide be used?

Information gathered as part of this study will be provided as anonymised summary data and analysis to participating organizations (Open University, Kings College London and the College of Policing and the Police National Wellbeing Service). This will be to inform their decision-making and activity for the benefit of further research and policy considerations. The raw, unanalysed data will remain solely with The Open University. Anonymised reporting in verbal,

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written and electronic formats is envisaged alongside the publication of data extracts and derivative analytical products in scientific journals, conference proceedings and other publicly accessible fora.

I understand that my data will be stored on servers owned by or used by the Open University for up to 10 years after which time it will be destroyed. Data will be managed in accordance with the CPRL privacy notice:
<http://www.open.ac.uk/about/main/sites/www.open.ac.uk.about.main/files/files/CPRL-%26-POP-Privacy-notice.pdf>

Your right to withdraw from the study

You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and you can do so by exiting the survey. Whatever questions you have completed will stay within the survey, this is due to participation being anonymous and there being no way to distinguish your data from that of someone else.

How do I agree to take part?

To take part you need to confirm that you have understood the information relating to this study, and that you give your consent to participate voluntarily within this study. Please confirm the below before continuing to the questionnaire:

Questionnaire Consent:

Please read the following statements and indicate whether you are willing/able to take part in the questionnaire:

- I have read and understood the information provided and understand what is involved in taking part in this research and how the information I provide will be used
- Project findings may be published in various forms, including project reports, academic journals, conference papers and blog posts
- I know who/where to ask any questions about the research or my participation
- I am aware that I can withdraw from the study by closing my browser
- I am aware that I am unable to withdraw from this study once submitted as my responses are collected anonymously
- I understand that the data will be anonymous and only relevant information (such as age, ethnic background) will be used and analysed collectively
- I understand that my data will be stored securely in line with the OU's Data Protection Policy and handled securely in line with the Data Protection Act 2018

- I am willing/able to voluntarily take part in the following questionnaire and support this research study
- I am not willing/able to take part in the questionnaire

If you wish to be provided with a short report highlighting the findings of the research, please provide your email address:

There is a £50 prize draw for completing the survey. If you wish to be considered for the £50 prize, please enter your email address below:

1: About you

In order to better understand your views, we would like to ask you a few questions about yourself.

What is the current status of your serving family member?

- Current serving police officer or police staff
- Retired
- Has left policing, but is still in employment
- Other, please specify

What is the current (or if no longer in service, the last) rank or grade of your serving family member?

- Probationer (year 1)
- Chief Inspector

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<input type="radio"/> Probationer (year 2)	<input type="radio"/> Superintendent
<input type="radio"/> Police Constable	<input type="radio"/> Chief Superintendent
<input type="radio"/> Sergeant	<input type="radio"/> ACPO rank
<input type="radio"/> Inspector	<input type="radio"/> Other, please specify <input type="text"/>

How long did your family member serve in the police?

<input type="radio"/> Less than 1	<input type="radio"/> 11 to 15
<input type="radio"/> 1 to 2	<input type="radio"/> 16 to 20
<input type="radio"/> 3 to 5	<input type="radio"/> Over 20
<input type="radio"/> 6 to 10	

What police organisation does/did your family member serve in?

My relationship to the above person is:

<input type="radio"/> Married, civil partnership, in a long-term relationship
<input type="radio"/> Son or Daughter
<input type="radio"/> Other, please specify <input type="text"/>

What age were you on your last birthday?

How would you describe your ethnicity?

Regarding gender identity, do you identify:

<input type="radio"/> As a woman
<input type="radio"/> As a man
<input type="radio"/> In some other way
<input type="radio"/> Prefer to self-describe (please provide more details) <input type="text"/>
<input type="radio"/> Prefer not to say

How would you define your sexual orientation?

<input type="radio"/> Bisexual
<input type="radio"/> Gay/Lesbian
<input type="radio"/> Heterosexual
<input type="radio"/> Do not wish to say

The Disability Discrimination Act defines a person as having a disability if he or she 'has a physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal or day to day activities'. Do you have such a disability?

How would you describe your religious belief?

2: Day-to-Day Stressors/Identifying Needs

Please can you tell us if you have, or provide care for any children or other dependents?

Yes
 No

We want to know about the pressures you and your family life. Over the next series of questions we want to know what are the most pressing issues you currently face? Please indicate level of concern on a scale of 1-10.

	No Concern at all (1)	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Of Significant Concern (10)
Serving family member relationship with children/dependents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Work/Family Conflict	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Work/ Personal Relationship Conflict	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Children: At school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Children: At home	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Children: With serving family member	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other, Please state below: <input type="text"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Considering your family life, what are the most pressing issues you currently face? Please indicate level of concern.

	No Concern at all (1)	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Of Significant Concern (10)
Psychological Well-being: For self	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Psychological Well-being: For children/dependents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Psychological Well-being: For serving family member	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Physical Health: For self	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Physical Health: For children/dependents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Physical Health: For serving family member	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other, Please state below: <input type="text"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Considering your family life, what are the most pressing issues you currently face? Please indicate level of concern.

	No Concern at all (1)	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Of Significant Concern (10)
Family Planning: Fertility (including IVF)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Family Planning: Adoption	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Family Planning: Maternity/ Paternity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Family Planning: Post Natal	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Impact of day-to-day policing (shifts, overtime, cancelled rest days etc)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Family Finances	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Alcohol consumption: Serving family member	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Alcohol consumption: Children/Dependents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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	No Concern at all (1)	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Of Significant Concern (10)
Alcohol consumption: Family	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Drugs (including prescription use): Family	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Drugs (including prescription use): Serving Family Member	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Drugs (including prescription use): Children/dependents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gambling: Serving family member	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gambling: Children/dependents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gambling: Family	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Life after service in the police (retirement, career change etc)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other, Please state below: <input type="text"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Again thinking about these issues, would you consider accessing support or help to help address these matters? Please indicate the to which you might consider accessing support on a scale of 1-10.

	Definitely would not consider (1)	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Definitely would consider (10)
Serving family member relationship with children/dependents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Work/Family Conflict	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Work/ Personal Relationship Conflict	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Children: At school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Children: At home	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Children: With serving family member	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other, Please state below: <input type="text"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Again thinking about these issues, would you consider accessing support or help to help address these matters? Please indicate the to which you might consider accessing support on a scale of 1-10.

	Definitely would not consider (1)	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Definitely would consider (10)
Psychological Well-being: For self	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Psychological Well-being: For children/dependents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Psychological Well-being: For serving family member	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Physical Health: For self	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Physical Health: For children/dependents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Physical Health: For serving family member	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other, Please state below: <input type="text"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Again thinking about these issues, would you consider accessing support or help to help address these matters? Please indicate the to which you might consider accessing support on a scale of 1-10.

	Definitely would not consider (1)	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Definitely would consider (10)
Family Planning: Fertility (including IVF)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Family Planning: Adoption	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Family Planning: Maternity/ Paternity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Family Planning: Post Natal	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Definitely would not consider (1)	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Definitely would consider (10)
Impact of day-to-day policing (shifts, overtime, cancelled rest days etc)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Family Finances	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Alcohol consumption: Serving family member	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Alcohol consumption: Children/Dependents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Alcohol consumption: Family	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Drugs (including prescription use): Family	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Drugs (including prescription use): Serving Family Member	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Drugs (including prescription use): Children/dependents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gambling: Serving family member	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gambling: Children/dependents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gambling: Family	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Life after service in the police (retirement, career change etc)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other, Please state below: <input type="text"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Have you ever accessed support for the following concerns?

	Yes/No	Where/Which Organisation Support received from (please write in below)
		Answer 1
Serving family member relationship with: children/dependents	<input type="text" value="v"/>	<input type="text"/>
Work/Family Conflict	<input type="text" value="v"/>	<input type="text"/>
Work/Personal Relationship Conflict	<input type="text" value="v"/>	<input type="text"/>
Children: At school	<input type="text" value="v"/>	<input type="text"/>
Children: At home	<input type="text" value="v"/>	<input type="text"/>
Children: With serving family member	<input type="text" value="v"/>	<input type="text"/>
Other, list below <input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="v"/>	<input type="text"/>

Have you ever accessed support for the following concerns?

	Yes/No	Where/Which Organisation Support received from (please write in below)
		Answer 1
Psychological Well-being: For self	<input type="text" value="v"/>	<input type="text"/>
Psychological Well-being: For children/dependents	<input type="text" value="v"/>	<input type="text"/>
Psychological Well-being: For serving family member	<input type="text" value="v"/>	<input type="text"/>
Physical Health: For self	<input type="text" value="v"/>	<input type="text"/>
Physical Health: For children/dependents	<input type="text" value="v"/>	<input type="text"/>
Physical Health: For serving family member	<input type="text" value="v"/>	<input type="text"/>
Other, list below <input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="v"/>	<input type="text"/>

Have you ever accessed support for the following concerns?

	Yes/No	Where/Which Organisation Support received from (please write in below)

	Yes/No	Where/Which Organisation Support received from (please write in below)
		Answer 1
Family Planning: Fertility (including IVF)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
Family Planning: Adoption	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
Family Planning: Maternity/Paternity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
Family Planning: Post Natal	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
Impact of day-to-day policing (shifts, overtime, cancelled rest days etc)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
Family Finances	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
Alcohol consumption: Serving family member	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
Alcohol consumption: Children/Dependents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
Alcohol consumption: Family	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
Drugs (incl prescription use): Serving family member	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
Drugs (incl prescription use): Children/dependents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
Drugs (incl prescription use): Family Member	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
Gambling: Serving family member	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
Gambling: Children/dependents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
Gambling: Family	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
Life after service in the police (retirement, career change etc)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
Other, list below	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>

Existing Support

We would like to ask you about existing organisations that provide support for police officers and their families. Which of the following organisations are you aware of, and also, which have you or your serving family member accesses services from before?

	I am aware of this organisation	I, or my serving family member, have accessed their services before
Police Mutual	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Police Firearms Officers' Association	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Gurney Fund	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Police Care	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Care of Police Survivors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
PC David Rathband's Blue Lamp Foundation (Blue Lamp Foundation)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
North West Benevolent Fund	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
MIND Blue Light	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Employee Access Programme	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please tick here if you or your serving family member have never accessed services before. If you have previously accessed services, click on the arrow below

I, or my serving family member, have never accessed services before

Are there any other organisations that provide support to families of police officers that we haven't listed. If YES, please write their name below:

Did you seek support from this organisation

- No
- Yes

If you feel comfortable, can you share what you were seeking help for? (All answers are anonymous)

You states that you received support from one or more of the peer-led organisations for police officers and their families. On a scale of 1-5, how satisfied were you with the support you received?

	Extremely dissatisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Extremely satisfied
Police Mutual	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Police Firearms Officers' Association	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Gurney Fund	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Police Care	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Care of Police Survivors	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3. Your Communities of Support

The following section looks at different communities in your life and how they may, or may not, provide support to you and your family.

Do you have a network of people that you can go to for support?

- Yes
- No

If YES, does this network include members of other police families

- Yes
- No

Do you socialise with other police families?

- Yes
- No

Would you be interested in connecting with other police families?

- Yes
- Maybe
- No - If NO please say why below

If YES, how interested would you be in meeting other police families?

	Not Very Interested (1)	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very Interested (8)
In-Person	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Online via a chatroom (in the style of mumsnet)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Online messaging (e.g. WhatsApp)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Not Very Interested (1)	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very Interested (8)
Online meetings (Zoom, Teams)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other, please state below <input type="text"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Have you ever been treated in a way that violates your dignity, or creates a hostile, degrading, humiliating environment because you are a member of a police family?

Yes

No

if YES can you tell us more about your experiences?

4. Future Support

If you were able to access support direct from the police service, who would you prefer to receive that support?

Directly from the local organisation that employs your serving family member

National Police Well-being Service (run by the College of Policing)

Would you prefer to access support through your serving family member, or directly yourself?

Serving Family Member

Self

Depends - If Yes, please state why below:

Final Comments

If you have any other comments, please complete the free text box below:

The Open University

Does someone in your family work for the police?

The Open University is carrying out research into the wellbeing and support needs of police families.

Complete our survey and enter the chance to win a £50.00 gift voucher.

All information is confidential for both you and your serving police family member.

Click on the link below...

https://openss.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_1Zmxi53sL4PsIKu

Centre for Policing Research and Learning

KCMHR
KING'S COLLEGE MILITARY HEALTH RESEARCH

The National Police Wellbeing Service
oscar@npsw.org.uk
contact@oscar.kilo.org.uk
@OscarUK
Oscar Kilo UK

Police Covenant

Caring about police families...