



Police Superintendents' Personal Resilience Survey 2016

Joint survey of the members of PSAEW, ASPS and SANI

Summary of overall results

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Summary

A. Introduction

The 2016 Police Superintendents' Personal Resilience Survey is the first survey conducted jointly by the Police Superintendents' Association of England and Wales (PSAEW), the Association of Scottish Police Superintendents (ASPS) and the Superintendents' Association of Northern Ireland (SANI). Each of the Associations had conducted personal resilience surveys before, but they had not joined forces to conduct a survey of all members at the same time. The survey aims to: gather information, provide a tool for the three Associations to support national lobbying and encourage members to reflect on their own health and wellbeing.

The survey was conducted using an online questionnaire, the link to which was made available to members of all three Associations during the period from 23rd November 2016 to Tuesday 3rd January 2017 (and responses were accepted until 9th January). 1077 respondents across the three associations submitted a sufficiently completed questionnaire to be included in the results, a 75.6% response rate.

B. Findings from the survey responses

1. Health and wellbeing

The results show that a quarter of respondents report mild levels of anxiety symptoms, 19% report moderate symptoms and 6% report severe symptoms. 18% report mild levels of depression symptoms, 8% moderate symptoms and 1% severe symptoms. Therefore approximately half of respondents report some level of anxiety symptoms and just over a quarter of respondents report some level of depression symptoms. The number of respondents reporting mild, moderate and severe levels of anxiety and depression symptoms was higher amongst those who report being treated for stress, anxiety or depression compared to the overall PSA results.

Examining treatment for health conditions, half of the respondents said that they had not been treated for any of the 14 health conditions included in the survey in the last 5 years. Of those that reported being treated for health conditions, just over a quarter (28%) reported being treated for one condition. The most frequently reported health condition was neck or back pain of at least three months duration; stress, anxiety or depression was the second most frequently reported health condition; and high blood pressure was the third most frequently reported.

2. Absence, leave and rest days

The average number of sick days taken in the past 12 months was 1.81 days; however 88% of respondents had taken no sickness absence. (Note: Members who were on long-term sick leave during the period of the survey would not have been in a position to respond, so these figures do not include them, suggesting that the actual levels of sick leave may be higher.) Of those who had taken sickness absence, 86% had taken one spell of absence and a minority had taken more than two spells; with regards to the number of days taken, this varied from 1 day to more than 10 days. 33% reported taking leave/rest days to avoid sickness absence and 31% reported taking leave/sick days due



to caring responsibilities in the past year. 94% said that they still carried out work or ensured they were easily contactable when on leave in the past 12 months.

73% had not taken all their annual leave in the past 12 months and 16% had lost annual leave days that they had been unable to take; also 32% could not take all of their leave and had concerns that they would be unable to take their annual leave days in the future. The most frequently reported number of days annual leave lost was 5 days although 14 respondents had lost more than 10 days. Qualitative responses regarding reasons not taking annual leave suggest that primarily it was due to work commitments.

77% of respondents had not taken all their rest days in the past month and 15% said that they had lost rest days that they had been unable to take; also 30% said that they could not take all their rest days and had concerns that they would be unable to take them in the future. Qualitative responses regarding reasons for not taking all rest days mainly related to work load and operational commitment. The most frequently reported number of rest days people had been unable to take was 6-10 days, within that the most common was 10 days although 49 people had been unable to take more than 20 days. The most frequently reported number of rest days lost was 5 days, although 8 respondents had lost more than 10 days. Additionally, 29% of respondents reported currently being owed 10-20 days.

3. Working hours

60% of respondents reported working 50-60 hours per week, 17% reported that they worked 60-70 hours, and 1% reported working more than 70 hours per week; although 22% reported working 40-50 hours, 78% are therefore working 50 or more hours per week which is in breach of the Working Time Directive (which specifies a 48 hour working week).

62% reported that they did not accurately log their working hours; the most frequently selected reasons for this were: 'It is not possible to accurately record the hours worked (e.g. at home or elsewhere)' (49%), 'There is no point as my hours are not monitored' (48%) and 'I am too busy/it is not a priority' (47%). Qualitative data suggests that many respondents have problems with the system provided for logging working hours, it's only possible to access it from the office and it doesn't allow split hours or time spent working at home. Exploring whether the proportion of respondents logging their work hours varied depending on the respondent's line manager, the data showed that 67% of those managed by a Chief Officer (Police Staff) logged their work hours accurately, whereas only 36% of those managed by a Chief Superintendent and 39% of those managed by Chief Officer (Police Officer) do; 42% of those managed by 'other' do.

4. Flexible working and health screening and advice

Only 3% had asked for a flexible working arrangement. Of those that responded 69% had been given the flexible working arrangements they wanted completely, 10% had partly been given the working arrangements they wanted and 21% hadn't. Respondents were asked why they did not ask for flexible working arrangements and 78% responded that they did not want flexible working.

23% said that their organisation provides them with annual or bi-annual health screening; and 53% said that their organisation provides them with easily accessible health advice.

5. Working conditions and individual factors

Long working hours seem to be the accepted norm: only 30% agreed that working less than 48 hours is the accepted norm in their organisation; and only 9% agree that the demands placed on Superintending ranks are commensurate with normally working less than 48 hours each week. Additionally, 55% of respondents agree that they work hard



because they don't want to be seen as weak. However, positively, 67% agree high performance is linked to outcome and achievements and not long hours spent at work. Regarding hours worked by the Chief Officer team and line managers, 48% agree that their Chief Officer team work reasonable hours themselves and 51% agree that their line manager works reasonable hours themselves.

With regards to work-life balance, 79% agree that the Chief Officer team say that work-life balance is important, but unfortunately only 38% agree that they are reinforcing this importance through their behaviour. Similarly, 85% agree that their line manager says that work-life balance is important, but only 58% agree that their line manager reinforces the importance of this through their behaviour. The Chief Officer team also don't successfully manage to stop the pressure they are under being passed onto those that work for them (62% disagree) although this is better for line managers (only 35% disagree). Only around half (51%) agree they that are able to balance the demands of work with what they want/need to do in their non-work life. Only 12% agree that the demands of their role ensure they do not need to take work home to complete outside of normal working hours. Furthermore there is evidence of intrusion of work into non-work: 33% agree that they only receive work phone calls at all times of the day when they are on call; 64% agree they are expected to perform on call duties on their rest days; and only 11% agree that they ensure they are rarely contacted outside the normal working day. Only 26% agree they ensure they are rarely contacted when they're on a rest day and only 49% ensure they are rarely contacted when they are on annual leave.

While 74% agree that their Chief Officer Team show supportive behaviours rather than bullying behaviours, this suggests that 26% feel that their Chief Officer team is showing bullying behaviours. Similarly, while 89% agreed that their line manager shows supportive behaviours rather than bullying behaviours, this still suggests that 11% of respondents are experiencing bullying behaviours from their line manager. Positively, 70% agree that their Chief Officer team shows appreciation of them and the work that they do and 84% agree that their line manager shows this appreciation.

The survey responses show that the demands on Superintending ranks are high: 96% agree that their role places them under high levels of demand; 91% agree that their role involves regular tight deadlines, so they have to work fast; 82% believe that their role involves an excessive breadth and depth of responsibility, leading to excessive working hours; and 87% agree that they receive an unnecessarily high volume of emails. Additionally, only 37% agree that the meetings that they attend are productive and have real purpose, and 73% agree that they have been exposed to a large number of traumatic incidents whilst working for the police service. With regards to driving, the majority (31%) spend 5-10% of their day driving. Although only 24% agreed that they rarely spend time talking on (handsfree) phone when driving.

Regarding increases in demands, 39% said the demands of their job had 'increased by an excessive amount.' Furthermore, 74% agreed that they are expected to take on additional responsibilities for public order, firearms, CBRN cadres etc.; and of those who agreed, 50% disagreed that there was appropriate consideration of the impact on their workload. In terms of Gold level command duties, 37% stated they are required to undertake them; of these, 60% agreed that they are given appropriate support and responsibility to carry out Gold command, and 45% agreed that they are given appropriate levels of administrative support to achieve their goals.

The resources to help manage these demands are challenging: only 28% agree that they have sufficient resources/staff to do their job; and less than half (45%) agree that they have the necessary HR guidance and support to handle the difficult human resources issues they have to manage. Additionally, only 55% report they receive all the training they require to do their job, and only 56% report receiving helpful feedback on their



performance. 61% report they have a say over their working location and 59% report they have a say over how their career develops.

Positively, nearly three quarters (72%) of respondents are ambitious to do well and gain promotion; 92% get a buzz from working in the Superintendent ranks; and 94% agree that being in the police is a vocation for them. In addition, 80% agree that being a Superintendent is an important part of who they are. 85% agree that looking after their health is a priority for them, however, 73% agree that they have a tendency not to say 'no' to anything, additionally only 56% agree that they are very good at managing their time.

Although diversity is recognised (76% agree), only 42% agree that everyone is seen as part of the greater organisation/team (rather than there being 'in' crowds and cliques). Although more than half (66%) agree that they enjoy work as much as they did a year ago, 38% of respondents report being more concerned about their career progression than they were a year ago. 52% aspire to move from Superintendent to Chief Superintendent; and 26% aspire to move into Chief Officer Ranks; however, 30% aspire to move into another organisation or sector to develop their career.

6. Greatest concerns

The questionnaire asked respondents to indicate their areas of particular concern. 35% chose 'increased work demands' as their greatest concern and 29% chose it as their second greatest concern. 'Reduced work resources' was the greatest concern for 17% of respondents and the second greatest concern for 24%.

7. Pension arrangements and security

60% of respondents are covered by 'full protection', 22% are covered by the four year 'tapering' period and 18% are covered by neither. 38% needed to serve 1-4 years to achieve a full pension and 37% needed to serve 5-9 years. 67% said that they would complete all their service as a member of the 1987 pension scheme and 42% said they would become or are already a member of the 2015 pension scheme.

82% said that they had not been subject to personal threat (OCG, security threat etc.).

8. Influence of working conditions and individual factors on wellbeing

Multiple regression was used to explore the issues that had the strongest association with anxiety and depression.

Responses linked to higher levels of both anxiety and depression symptoms:

Disagreed with:

- I am able to balance the demands of work with what I want/need to do in my non-work life
- I enjoy my work as much as I did a year ago

And agreed with:

- I have a tendency not to say 'no' to anything
- I work hard because I don't want to be seen as weak
- I am more worried about my personal finances than I was a year ago

Responses linked to higher levels of anxiety symptoms:

Disagreed with:

- It is acceptable for people to admit errors, be seen as fallible, seek support, admit they can't cope etc.
- I receive all the training I require to do my job
- I am very good at managing my time



Responses linked to higher levels of depression symptoms:

Disagreed with:

- High performance is linked to outcome and achievements and specifically not to long hours spent at work
- Everyone is seen as part of the greater organisation/team (rather than there being 'in' crowds and cliques)
- My Chief Officer Team stop the pressure they are under from being passed onto those of us that work for them
- My line manager reinforces the importance of work-life balance through their behaviour
- The meetings I attend are productive and have real purpose
- I ensure that I am rarely contacted when I am on a rest day
- Looking after my health is a priority for me

And agreed with:

- The demands of my role ensure I do not need to take home work to complete outside of normal working hours

9. Links between working hours and wellbeing

The data suggests that those who work longer hours are more likely to have mild, moderate and severe anxiety symptoms, and mild and moderate depression symptoms. They are also more likely to take zero sick days, and have lower average days sick. They are more likely not to have taken all their annual leave in the last 12 months or taken all their rest days in the past month. Those working 60-70 hours a week are also marginally more likely to have taken leave/rest days to avoid sickness absence in the past year. The data suggest that respondents are avoiding taking time off despite their symptoms, which could result in presenteeism (being at work but not being productive) which can be costly to organisations and may result in burnout.

C. Findings from comparative analyses

Comparisons by gender suggest that a higher proportion of women than men report moderate and severe anxiety symptoms, whereas a higher proportion of men than women report mild symptoms. A higher proportion of men report mild symptoms of depression and a marginally higher proportion of men report moderate depression symptoms. The proportions being treated for zero health conditions were very similar: approximately half of both men and women. Women reported taking more average sickness absence days than men, and a slightly smaller proportion of women took zero days sickness absence. Similar proportions of men and women said that they took leave/rest days to avoid sickness absence and that they took leave/sick days due to caring responsibilities. A higher proportion of men than women reported not taking all their annual leave in the past 12 months and not taking all their rest days in the past month. A higher proportion of women are working 40-50 hours per week and a higher proportion of men than women are working 50-60 hours and 60-70 hours per week. A marginally higher proportion of women than men are working more than 70 hours.

Comparisons by number of years in the Superintending ranks shows that as years in the Superintending ranks increases, mild and moderate anxiety symptoms decrease however, there is no clear trend for depression symptoms or health conditions. Those who have been in the Superintending ranks for 2 years or less have the lowest average sickness days; the pattern shows an increase with years in the ranks except for those in the ranks for 7 years or more who have a lower average sickness than those in the ranks for 5-6 years. The proportion of individuals taking zero days sickness absence doesn't vary too much by years in the Superintending ranks; however, those who have been in the Superintending ranks for 3 or 4 years have the highest proportion taking zero days sickness absence. The higher the number of years in the Superintending ranks, the higher the proportion taking rest days to avoid sickness absence in the past year, but

there was no clear pattern in terms of the proportion not taking their rest days or annual leave according to the number of years in the Superintending ranks. The percentage of respondents who look leave/sick days due to caring responsibilities was highest amongst those who had been in the Superintending ranks for 7 years or more, but there was no clear pattern. Amongst those who work 40-50 hours and 50-60 hours per week, the hours worked does not seem to show a clear pattern according to number of years in Superintending ranks however, the data suggest that the proportion working 60-70 hours each week decreases with the number of years in the Superintending ranks.

Comparisons by number of years pensionable service show that there is little variation in anxiety symptoms across the different years of pensionable service, although a higher proportion of those who have 20-24 years pensionable service have mild levels of anxiety symptoms. Similarly, a higher proportion of those who have 20-24 years pensionable service have mild levels of depression symptoms. The proportion who have normal level depression symptoms decreases as years in pensionable service increases. The proportion of respondents being treated for none of the health conditions decreases as years of pensionable service increases. Average sickness days appears to increase with the increase in years' pensionable service and the proportion of individuals taking zero sick days decreases as years' pensionable service increases. The proportion of respondents not taking all their annual leave in the past 12 months, and not taking all their rest days in the past month, the proportion taking leave/rest days to avoid sickness absence, and the proportion taking leave/sick days due to caring responsibilities shows no consistent pattern. The proportion of respondents working 50-60 hours per week seems to decrease with increase in years' pensionable service.

Comparisons by function suggest there is no clear pattern in terms of anxiety and depression symptoms. A higher proportion of those in 'Operational – Prevent' functions report being treated for none of the health conditions included in the survey. On average those in 'Business Support/Project' functions appear to take more sickness days than those in other functions. The proportion taking zero sickness absence is very similar amongst 'Operational' (94%), 'Operational – Prevent' (95%) and 'Seconded' (95%) functions. The proportion taking zero sickness absence amongst 'Operational – HQ' (86%), 'Operational – Local' (88%) and 'Business Support/Project' (89%) is also similar to each other, but less than the other three functions. A higher proportion of those in the 'Operational' than other functions reported taking leave/rest days to avoid sickness absence; and a higher proportion of those in the 'Operational' function than other functions reported taking leave/sick days due to caring. A higher proportion of those in the 'Operational' function had not taken all their annual leave in the past year, and a higher proportion of those in 'Operational – Prevent' function had not taken all their rest days in the past month. With regards to working hours, a higher proportion of those in the 'Seconded' function reported working 40-50 hours, while a higher proportion of those in the 'Operational' function reported working 50-60 hours and a higher proportion of those in 'Operational – Prevent' reported working 60-70 hours per week.

Comparisons by rank showed similar levels of anxiety and depression symptoms across the different ranks, but a slightly higher proportion of Temporary/acting Superintendents report both mild levels of anxiety and depression symptoms. A slightly higher proportion of Superintendents report being treated for none of the health conditions provided. The proportion of Temporary/acting Chief Superintendents taking zero sickness absence is slightly higher than for other ranks, and average sickness absence days are higher for Chief Superintendents than other ranks. The proportion of respondents taking leave/rest days to avoid sickness absence is highest amongst Temporary/acting Chief Superintendents; and the proportion taking leave/sick days due to caring responsibilities is similar across ranks, though slightly higher for Superintendents. Regarding annual leave and rest days, the proportion not taking all their annual leave in the past 12 months and not taking all their rest days in the past month is similar across ranks,



although a slightly higher proportion of Chief Superintendents report both. A higher proportion of Superintendents and Chief Superintendents report working 50-60 hours compared to those who are Temporary/acting, whereas a slightly higher proportion of those in Temporary/acting roles report working 60-70 hours.

D. Recommendations

The 2016 results show that, generally, respondents in the Superintending ranks are under high levels of demand, are working long hours, are not taking all their rest days and annual leave and that there is a lot of intrusion of work into non-work time.

The survey results highlight a number of areas on which the associations can focus when lobbying for improved working conditions for members. Particularly:

- Long working hours
- High demands and low resources
- Recovery time and intrusion of work into non-work time
- Culture
- Support for health

The areas identified by the survey findings in which individual members could take action, and be supported by their association are:

- Reducing working hours
- Demands and low resources
- Recovery time and work-life balance
- Health and wellbeing