Overcoming the barriers to flexible working in the police organisation: Is there another way?

By Rivka Smith

Canterbury Christ Church University

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Abstract

This research examines if there are alternative ways to overcome the barriers faced by police officers seeking flexible working given that ongoing reforms in the police organisation have failed to do so. Data was collected from ten in-depth semi structured interviews with police officers varying from the rank of Police Constable to Police Chief Superintendent amounting to a total of 18 hours of material. The research has highlighted that trying to differentiate between logistical and cultural barriers is problematic. Barriers to flexible working although often perceived as logistical, for example the design of police work underpinned by police systems and procedure, only remain so due to enshrined police occupational culture.

For flexible working to no longer be viewed as problematic, the organisation is in need of *radical reform which would support the notion of a 'flexible force'.* The research reports that senior managers need to show a demonstrable commitment to flexible working instead of the practice merely existing by law. This could be attained by educating senior leaders thoroughly in the tangible business benefit of flexible working to the organisation. At present barriers remain due to the inability to reconcile the demands of the organisation and the employee since trying to manage what is a flexible practice by nature in to the current rigid systems is the same as trying to fit the proverbial square peg in to a round hole.

<u>Acknowledgements</u>

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Chapter I: Introduction

This research seeks to examine if there are alternative ways to overcome the barriers faced by police officers seeking flexible working given that ongoing reforms in the police organisation have failed to do so. The research takes an exploratory approach in determining whether the research question can be addressed by drawing upon the creative and innovative thinking of police officers within the organisation.

The barriers to flexible working are underpinned by the conflicting needs of the organisation and the employee, yet trying to reconcile the two is problematic. A review of the literature in Chapter II is explicit in detailing the current understanding of the reasons as to why this remains the case. This research has not however been conducted with the aim of producing a findings section that seeks to solely strengthen or negate from the established evidence base around the problematic nature of flexible working. Instead, one seeks to evidence findings from an open exploration of the issue and this is reflected in the broad nature of the research question and aims. A detailed discussion of the philosophical considerations underpinning this research is included in Chapter III.

Flexible working has been described as an 'irresolvable conflict' (Dick and Caswell, 2004) for officers seeking a work-life balance in the police organisation. The seeming acceptance of such a problematic issue within the organisation initiated the alternate line of thinking as to why this remains the case. With some innovative and creative thinking from within the organisation itself, are there ideas being generated that would indicate the barriers are perceived as problematic rather than factually problematic?

The research question arising out of this thought process which reflects the exploratory nature of the research is:

> **Considering ongoing reform within the police service has failed to eradicate the barriers purportedly faced by police officers seeking flexible working; is there another way to overcome such barriers?**

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Research Aims

- To engage with police officers who have personal or managerial experience of flexible working to identify any creative and innovative ideas they may have that might overcome the barriers to flexible working routed in the design of police work and routine working practices

- To determine whether it is possible to view logistical and cultural barriers to flexible working as separate entities

- To determine whether there is either any desire and/or any commitment to challenge the existing barriers to flexible working within the police organisation

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Background to the research

The police was exclusively a full time profession until 1992 when flexible working was introduced by the organisation in response to equal opportunity legislation; high profile legal victories on the grounds of discrimination and perhaps more commonly understood as an attempt to deal with the lowering female officer retention rate. Forces were recognising the costs incurred with the loss of highly skilled and qualified female officers (Dick, 2003; Home Office, 2001). Flexible working within the Police organisation is interpreted broadly and encompasses part time working; job sharing; term time working and compressed or staggered hours (The College of Police, 2013).

Flexible working for police officers is legally governed by the legislation displayed in the box below. The legal existence of flexible working for police officers is then formally integrated into the organisation by way of:

1. Organisational policies and guidance documents
2. Electronic police systems and software used to generate working rosters
3. Management facilitating the practice within the parameters of police work

> • Police Regulations and Determinations 2003 (as amended) • Equality Act 2010 • Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and Police (Health and Safety) Act 1997 • Maternity and Parental Leave Regulations 1999 • Part Time Worker (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000 • Working Time Regulations 1998 •

Police occupational culture is a well documented, although loosely defined concept attributing to the reasons why the police organisation fails to reform known problematic practices such as flexible working. Occupational culture has in itself been purported as the biggest barrier for officers seeking flexible working. The research seeks to draw upon the knowledge and experience of police officers to examine if there are any creative or innovative solutions that can be generated from individuals within the organisation to go some way in addressing the issue. In doing this, one seeks to explore the relationship between officer perceptions of the barriers to flexible working and the barriers arising out of its formal construction within the organisation. The research is seeking to address whether they can in fact ever be viewed as two separate entities and if not, the extent to which the logistical and cultural barriers may overlap.

Finally, the research seeks to examine the extent to which there is a desire within the organisation to overcome the barriers to flexible working. Writing at a time when the police organisation is continuing to develop new initiatives, such as Direct Entry and graduate development schemes, the research seeks to explore the extent to which recent changes to the policing landscape may impact on the acceptance or desire for organisational culture change.

The research findings are based upon ten in-depth semi-structured interviews each lasting up to 120 minutes with police practitioners and police management from four provincial and metropolitan police forces in England and Wales. The data generated from these officers refers to their experiences of employment from a total of ten provincial and metropolitan police services. All but one participant had experience of varying ranks, roles and responsibility within the police organisation. The findings are presented jointly in chapter IV as a results and discussion section since it was felt presenting the findings this way enabled more effective cross referencing with the existing knowledge base.

Chapter II: Literature Review

The inception of Flexible working within the police organisation was nearly a quarter of a century ago, yet the competing demands of the police organisation and the police officer remain problematic (Dick, 2005). In the more recent decades of policing research, academics and practitioners alike have questioned why it is so difficult to reform known problematic police practices such as this one. The answer to the question originally emerged from early ethnographic studies of routine police work which uncovered a layer of informal occupational norms and values operating under the rigid hierarchical structure of the police organisation (Cain 1973; Manning 1977; Holdaway, 1983) otherwise referred to as 'police culture'(Reiner, 1992).

The persistence of police culture has been considered a serious obstacle to reform yet the concept itself has been loosely defined within the literature. The concept of flexible working is problematic for policing in terms of the difficulties associated with managing a flexible practice within what are rigid police systems. Consequently, it is reported that officers who work a flexible arrangement are hindered in terms of their career progression. The above barriers subsist and remain due to what are archaic routine working practices and procedures (Reiner, 1992). Discussions and commentary around the existence of a police culture are by no means sparse. In brief, the police organisation has been described as 'one old fashioned machismo', a 'local drinking club' and encompassing a 'highly masculine core' (Reiner, 1992). Smith and Grey (1983) described their findings from their research into the existence of varying subcultures within the organisation as in many ways like that of an all-male institution such as a rugby club underpinned by a 'cult' of masculinity.

Aspects of well documented police culture such as the social isolation of police officers and close knit working practices are riddled with this sustained strong macho canteen culture ideology and have been identified as a barrier to developing a more open police working environment (Reiner, 1992; Fielding, 1994). Connell (1995) describes a culture of hegemonic masculinity that is ubiquitous in forces (Smith and Grey, 1983; Westmarland, 2001) in which the 'ideal' police officer has been constructed as being ever available and wholly flexible (Dick and Caswell, 2004; Charlesworth and Whittenbury, 2007; Dick, 2009; Silverstri, 2003). Flexibility as a cultural prerequisite for the role of a police officer in terms of practical requirements in the design of police work, such as the rotating week shift patterns, the routine use of overtime to complete tasks and the need for continuity on jobs, are justified through

the cultural conceptions of policing and police work, yet these are not policing 'facts' (Dick and Caswell, 2004).

Dick and Hyde (2006) discuss hegemony of childcare and the assumption that women are naturally more likely to assume responsibility for caring responsibilities. The College of Policing (Flexible working guidance, 2013) states 'flexible working cannot be seen as just being for the benefit of the individual or the force, nor is it just about childcare needs or desire for part time working, but it is about gaining a balance that provides an opportunity for people to give their best at work and at home'. This guidance seems at odds however with the hegemony of childcare assumption given that in 2011, only 6% of police officers worked reduced hours and of these 93% were female (APA, 2009). Naturally, since it is primarily women utilising flexible working it is also women who are disproportionally affected by its implications. The present research is not however concerned only with the female workforce, since although the issues associated with flexible working are disproportionally concentrated here, it does not follow that the barriers themselves are essentially gender specific.

This hegemony of childcare spans beyond a singular organisational culture and exists more as an embedded assumption in western society. Cockburn (1991) noted the common perception that women are the most natural parent, thus if it is childbirth alone promoting this hegemony that women assume 'natural' responsibility for childcare after birth, then challenging it spans far beyond the police organisation. Furthermore, Hackim (1997) spoke about women inevitably preferring childcare duties over career development. These types of assumptions coupled with the theory that an evident male breadwinner ideology is sustained through government policies, render it increasingly viable for women to assume the childcare role (Fagan, 2001).

 It is standard that all organisations function through every day practices and while these may be standard protocols within an organisation, Smets et al (2012) noted that these practices have to be adjusted, adapted and modified to enable actors to respond to unforeseen exigencies, disruptions or changes that are brought about by external circumstances. It has been said that cultural change cannot be forced but can happen either due to an external crisis or internal pressure to change (Bacon, 2014) and at present this is lacking in relation to the need to reform flexible working.

Professional part time and flexible working employees are reportedly disadvantaged to their full time counterparts in terms of career advancement (Dick, 2009). As Calles (2011)

described, the journey to senior ranks in the police is a series of methodological, systematic and well-timed promotions. Culturally, the 'ideal' type of police worker is one of full time status with a long and uninterrupted career profile (Silvestri et al, 2006). This 'ideal' therefore is not considered compatible with employees who seek flexible working, thus leaving them disadvantaged against a full time counterpart. This attributes to what has been described as an 'irresolvable conflict' which exists between women balancing family commitments and their career in policing. It subsequently leaves those employees who seek this balance by way of flexible working as less able to display the 'right' amount or correct 'type' of commitment and credibility necessary for progression in to management roles (Archbold and Hassel, 2009; Dick, 2005; Silvestri, 2006; Turnbull and Wass, 2012).

Many commentators on female police leadership highlight the advantages that women in management positions bring to the police service. Silvestri (2003) and Whittred (2008) describe how senior police women adopt a more holistic, participative, consultative and inclusive approach to managing police officers and this approach is likely to bring the much needed successful long term change in policing. There is also a considerable emerging dialogue in relation to what has been described as a distinct change in the culture of police leadership, whereby modern police leaders are viewed as business managers due to a heightened pressure to engage in multi partner relationships (Casey and Mitchell, 2007) in addition to the growth of a target and performance based leadership culture in policing (Guilfoyle, 2015; Long, 2003). Hartley et al (2002) found that women regularly outperformed men in OSPRE examinations and that women showed greater potential to perform as managers in the current climate. Heidensohm (2003) articulates that in moments of crisis, the service often lean to a need for more women in senior ranks as a 'desperate remedy' to offset staffing shortages, advocate communication or alternatively, to demonstrate a 'softer' side to policing.

 Despite this recognition of the positive attributes that women in police leadership roles contribute to the police service, the 'part time-part committed' attitude is still impeding their progression and development in the organisation. Direct Entry to ascertain a more representative management body within the police was suggested as a novel way the organisation could seek to address issues around women's fairness and equality in the service (Silvestri et al, 2003). At the time Silverstri et al commented on the Direct Entry provision, it had not come to fruition. Now as a newly implemented initiative however, its level of success is still unknown.

Sheridan and Conway (2001) distinguish between two types of flexible working, namely supply and demand. The latter was the norm archaically utilised in low paid, low skilled employment where organisations deliberately introduced flexible working to reach the demands of resourcing within a business. The extension of flexible working to professional roles such as that of a police officer is supply based largely in response to equality legislation. An inherent theme in the literature depicts that professional organisations and employees have different needs, priorities and expectations and trying to reconcile these is problematic (Dick, 2003).

Police managers have very little control, if any, over the timing of an individual's request for flexible working. This creates conflict with the organisational demands by then deploying employees to roles that are compatible with their alternative working patterns (Edwards and Robinson, 1999). Research has found that many part time and flexible workers believe their managers don't deploy them in ways that enable them to use their skills to full capacity or their appropriate level of training. This concept of marginalising flexible workers is a recurrent one in the literature, whereby flexible workers feel they lack status, access to knowledge and have hindered career development opportunities (Sheridan and Conway, 2001; Skinner, 1999).

Skinner (1999) described how manager's attempts to reconcile the competing demands of flexible workers and the organisation were operating a form of unintended afferent action in which the needs of the employee became the pivotal point, often at a disadvantage to the employer. Dick (2006) highlighted the problematic issue for managers when trying to manage staff within systems that were originally structured on a full time employment basis. These difficulties subsequently lead to inconsistent supervision (Kropf, 1999), communication difficulties (Edwards and Robinson, 1999) and difficulties in full deployment of part time workers (Brewer, 2000). As a collective result of these issues, managers tend to deploy flexible workers to tasks and roles compatible with work plans but not that meet the needs of professional deployment.

In recognising the problematic nature of flexible working, the British Association for Women in policing (BAWP) has throughout the last 13 years commissioned three independent pieces of research looking broadly into women in policing (2001; 2006; 2013). These have subsequently informed the release of three reports, namely Gender Agenda 1, 2 and 3 which

have highlighted issues hindering female officer integration in addition to making recommendations for improvement.

Gender Agenda One (2001), described how the police service needed to demonstrate consistently that it valued women officers and highlighted that there was a perpetuation of dated stereotypes and myths. The subsequent reports (2006; 2013) recognised and credited the police organisation for the positive changes it had made over the previous decade but that a macho culture remained and this needed to be acknowledged as it intensifies some of the barriers to progression, including that of flexible working.

The 2013 Independent Police Commission produced some concerning results in relation to the development of flexible working. A survey showed that 18% of workers described flexible working within their organisation as discouraged or not tolerated; 50% described it as 'tolerated'; and only 7% agreed it was encouraged. These findings correspond to management perceptions highlighted by Laverick and Cain (2014), in which many managers expressed feeling out of their depth in dealing with flexible working requests due to the absence of any specific training

Laverick and Cain (2014) commented on how forces had seemingly moved backwards in relation to facilitating flexible working and that inaccurate perceptions remain rife across the organisation. They reported that flexible workers were feeling devalued in relation to their contribution to the service. This is impacting on lowering force retention and progression rates, as was the case 25 years ago. The Home Office (2007) directly commented on the relationship between flexible working and its impact upon the retention of female police officers and staff and recommended forces should monitor flexible working and should tackle discrimination against reduced hour employees in accordance with equality legislation.

The 2013 College of Policing guidance on flexible working states it is of primary importance for the Chief Constable to ensure their commitment to flexible working is successfully communicated throughout their force. Laverick and Cain (2014) comment on how this reflects the need for forces to return to the organisational literature which highlights the role of top management in driving the change. They note training for managers and senior leaders should address alternate working pattern calculation methods and explicitly address the business case for flexible working facilitation and the risks and costs faced by organisations who fail to respond to the needs of all staff.

All forces have made shift pattern alterations and this has also been shown to have a disproportionate effect on female officers and flexible workers (HMIC, 2013). The Winsor report (2011) stated it is the Chief Constables responsibility to deploy resources in the most effective and economical way and they should consult rather than agree variable shift arrangements with the joint branch board and individuals involved. Flexible working was reviewed by forces alongside decisions about shift pattern alterations and concerns have been noted about the disproportionate impact this will have on female police officers.

Laverick and Cain (2014) commented how many officers were concerned that an increase in the lack of flexibility would result in 'chaos' and 'turmoil'. They noted how staff in one force were required to work different shifts in different locations and this resulted in lower morale and officers showing a preference to enter into the voluntary redundancy programme. Late notice for changes to shift patterns were reported, often officers receiving less than 24 hours notice of a change which led to a perception that it was impossible to rely on shift patterns. Where an individual was not able to accommodate shift pattern alterations they were looked upon unfavourably. This suggests that flexible workers are still falling short of the ever available 'ideal' social construct of a police officer.

The literature seemingly reveals a twofold parallel challenge for the police service. On the first strand there is the challenge to continue to increase diversity in the service in respect of female officers both at ground level and in management ranks. The second strand of the challenge is exasperated by successful completion of the first, although by no means wholly dependent on this. Even in the absence of impending gender parity, this paper depicts the existing difficulties arising from flexible working practices within the police organisation. The creation of gender parity within the organisation will create a sub-strand to the above in that the second challenge will inevitably become increasingly difficult to achieve with gender parity. Given 93% of flexible workers in the organisation are female; an increase in the female workforce is likely to bring with it an increase in those on alternative working patterns. This suggests that in the future the issue of flexible working is likely to become more, not less problematic for the organisation if steps are not taken to try and overcome the existing barriers.

Brown (2011) discussed the impact on deployment and the prospect of women achieving disparity by 2020. Projected increases in the number of female officers' means by 2020 women are estimated to make up 39.5% of the service population. This is therefore over the

35% critical mass rate as established by the APA (2009) in which a group no longer maintains a minority status. She depicts that the percentage of working days lost to sickness (which is inclusive of pregnancy) is expected to increase for women and decrease for their male counterparts.

By 2020 therefore, women will be approaching 40% of the police service population but responsible for a 50% sickness rate. Tuffin and Baladi (2001) state that the remedies to this 'problem' lie in better management of sickness and flexible working arrangements. Literature however on how this is to be achieved is sparse, although the more stable and consistent the way requests are made within organisations, the more likely the employee develops an unambiguous and competent perception of their obligations and entitlements (Milward and Hopkins 1998).

From the perspective of managing flexible working, Edwards and Robinson (2001) suggest that the current patterns of work need to be adapted in order to facilitate the full integration of flexible working. This in turn would allow all needs to be properly acknowledged which is central to effective service delivery. They suggest that the marginalisation of flexible workers undermines the business case for flexible working and therefore without challenging this marginalisation, flexible working will remain a problematic issue for the organisation.

 The literature also describes the need for the development of a central strategy since the current reactive response employee's demand for reduced hours is a key feature in the inability to reconcile the demands of the employer and employee (Edwards and Robinson, 2001). There is a need for employees to manage flexible working in a strategic manner instead of the existing react and replace approach (Edwards and Robinson, 2001; Lee, 2000; Sheridan and Conway, 2001). Sheridan and Conway (2001) suggested that Human Resource departments needed to make the needs of the employer and employee much more explicit by acknowledging the different needs of both parties and constructing outcomes that are mutually satisfying.

Other attempts by the organisation to integrate flexible working has been to allow individuals to work across shifts (Dick and Collins, 2012) and emphasising the need for managers to be increasingly concerned with quality over quantity of work. It has been suggested that the design of police work needs a fundamental rethink around issues of individualised workloads and the process of police handovers. Finally, the literature proposes that the hegemony of childcare must also be challenged if flexible working is ever to become fully integrated

within the police service (Dick and Hyde, 2006). Given Browns findings in 2012, which suggested that many police officers would welcome and indeed desire an occupational culture change, it is suggested that the organisation is now facing a window of opportunity for police reform (Dick et al, 2013).

Chapter III: Methodology

Philosophical Considerations

 Research strategy is deeply embedded in epistemology and the epistemological basis of all projects informs the methodological decisions (Crow and Semmens, 2009). Ordinarily one would be of the opinion that the various philosophical schools of thought are not mutually exclusive in research, however, here the phenomenon of flexible working is constructed by cultural and structural dispositions (Dick, 2005) and as such, one has markedly favoured that of pragmatism over empiricism and rationalisation. I bear the ideology that 'true' reality cannot be conceived by the human mind when looking at human perceptions. Truth is simply what works in the present day and is susceptible to change as indeed is the world we live in is. Although the invaluable contribution that human creative and innovative thinking could make to achieve the current research aims by generating ideas as to the 'how', one is very aware that human thinking constantly evolves and it is simply not possible to generate a universal law as evidence of this phenomenon like I might if I was researching a natural science.

Coherent with the nature of the collaborative degree programme for which I am part of, it seemed viable at the outset of the programme that an action research project may be appropriate. Action research has been defined as scientific social research which is participatory in nature and practice orientated aiming to find solutions to social problems and to emancipate individuals and groups confronted with such problems (Boog et al, 2006). Participatory action research (PAR) has been defined as a process in which the researcher and the stakeholder work together in all elements of the research process, thereby making its objective to take action to resolve the problem that is at the root of the research context (Graves 1991; Whitney- Thomas 1997). As is detailed further below, due to unforeseen circumstances arising part way through the project which impacted upon the proposed methods, although still assuming the position as an action researcher, this position is taken less rigorously than originally anticipated.

Theory is not new to Action Research as early work valuing theory and practice integration (Dewey, 1916) and work with the intention that action research would contribute to more precise theories of social change (Lewin, 1946) demonstrates. The idea that theory can't be developed in action research is according to Stringer (2009) not the case; however it has been done so archaically without detail (White, 2004). The lack of detail may signal that theory is

a presumed concept and few action researchers fail to expand upon the term. In reality it would appear commonsense that action researchers consider the theoretical considerations of their work since theory is part of action and thus action research.

In relation to the current research, although reference is made to a theoretical framework I am of the view that value-laden concepts usually considered as a recognised weakness of the pragmatic philosophy are in fact best to inform the methods used in this research and will conversely strengthen the validity of the results. I had originally intended to use deductive reasoning by way of testing Chan's theory of occupational culture using a qualitative strategy but as detailed below, an inductive approach to the research has been taken.

Chan's (1996) framework recognized the interpretative and creative aspect of police culture; allowed for the existence of multiple cultures and took in to account the political context and cognitive structures of police work. The framework drew upon Bourdieu's (1992) concepts of 'Field' and 'Habitus' from the relational theory and adopts the framework on cultural knowledge in organisations developed by Sackman (1991).

Bourdieu's concept of 'Field' (structural positions) and 'Habitus' (cultural dispositions) explain police culture by way of interaction between the two. In its simplest form, unless this interaction exists reform is likely to be unsuccessful in overcoming the barriers faced by flexible workers. Changes to Habitus (e.g. negative perceptions of flexible working) also affect policing, but unless the Field is also adapted to reinforce the new Habitus, Habitus itself may revert to its old disposition. It is therefore fruitless to debate whether new structures for policing are more or less important than attempting to reform practice since both are necessary components hence this would have formed a testable hypothesis for the current project.

About two months in to the project however, a reassessment of the research design was required and so the aims of the project were revisited. An inductive reasoning approach seemed more suitable to the research aims and design. Since the primary focus of this research is not about rigorously testing a hypothesis based upon a theoretical framework, it was decided I would complete the data collection and later draw themes from the analysis. Although therefore mindful of this theoretical framework, any links to existing theories would be developed through the findings.

The Contemporary Landscape of Policing Research

It has been said that traditional police research perpetuates a 'dialogue of the deaf' (Bradley and Nixon, 2009) to the organisation. Historically both practitioners and researchers have been dissatisfied with the research relationship but both have been unable to communicate their concerns. For practitioners, policing research has been viewed as damaging or at best, immaterial (Rosenbaum, 2010). It seems part and parcel of the job that senior police management work within the realms of ongoing systematic internal and external scrutiny and governance which generates huge pressures often associated with the role. Consequently, the organisation has not archaically been forthcoming in its acceptance of external research (Bradley and Nixon, 2009). If individuals and organisations have a perception that they will be unduly criticized, it is natural that they would not be forthcoming in granting non-obligatory unprecedented access to those they may perceive to be 'fishing' for reasons to criticise.

Even in circumstances where the organisation has been forthcoming, communication difficulties have arisen when translating 'research jargon' into language than could be used to inform operational decisions (Rosenbaum, 2010). Consequently, from a researcher's perspective the organisation has been viewed as defensive and unwilling to critically engage with its existing practices. This somewhat dysfunctional research relationship has however improved with the emerging global dominance of evidence based policing (Sherman, 1999; Skogan and frydl, 2004) and in an operational sense through the development of the College of Policing 'What Works?' Centre. This contemporary development may support the emerging approach to policing research such as police/academic collaborations like the one for which I am part of. With organisations such as the Society of Evidenced Based Policing being developed which recognise and encourage the mutually positive benefits of policing research, the traditional research relationship is somewhat changing.

The traditional police research position which I spoke of above has often enabled traditional policing research to be criticized in that it is deficient in the contextual information which explained social relationships between variables in empirical research (Bradley and Nixon, 2009). Contextual information is more likely to be obtained when a researcher is embedded within the organisation and consequently organisational reform is much more probable when undertaken by evidenced based policing and action research since research findings are less likely to fall on the once 'deaf ears' of senior police decision makers.

Evidenced based policing undertaken by action research is not however short of scepticism. A primary criticism of evidence based policing is that it firmly embraces a particular paradigm about how policing science should be validated and more generally that it neglects the morally social and cultural elements of police practice (Rosenbaum, 2010). These concerns are however much more applicable to research undertaken within a positivistic and empirical framework. It would be difficult to criticise this research on these grounds since this is a non-experimental study and I fundamentally disagree with the standardization of measurements in relation to human creative and innovative thinking. It is difficult to accurately depict with high certainty that relationships between these types of social contexts would remain unchangeable in any given situation. Research such as this is consistent with an interpretivist stance given that it is not tied by fixed methods nor does it attempt to standardise data collection. Instead the methods of data collection are reflective of a solution focused approach to overcoming the barriers to flexible working.

The focus of this research is therefore to extract the meaning of action rather than calculate frequencies and its subjectivity does not necessarily equate to invalidity. For the phenomenon of flexible working therefore, this research strategy and design is both appropriate and compatible with the contemporary landscape in which evidence based policing and action research are recognised.

The Position of the Researcher

According to Brown's researcher typologies (1996) I may be considered an 'outsider insider'; that is a researcher with 'official' access or rights to ask questions and obtain information for the benefit of the organisation for which the research would benefit. As is reflected upon further below, due to unforeseen circumstances affecting 'official' gatekeeper access, I would consider my researcher position to be that of an 'outsider outsider' since I am not a police officer or part of the police organisation, but instead conducting research externally as part of a University.

In consideration of researcher values, as with the researcher's position one must not simply reflect on my own personal research biases as this could render the research unreliable. Durkenheim advocated how preconceptions must be eradicated yet in modern writings there is a growing recognition that this will never be wholly possible due to the nature of human research. In the context of the current paper, exploring women's equality and fairness as a female researcher may prompt some to argue that my gender could bias the results in some

way; equally however, had I been a male researcher I could find myself subject to the same criticism. There are therefore numerous elements of the research process where bias and the intrusion of values could occur and as such, there is acknowledgement and acceptance from the researcher in this project that research will never be wholly value free since human nature doesn't allow it to be. As Bryman (2012) advocates, as long as the researcher has ensured that there is no untrammelled incursion of values in the research process and they remain aware of their personal values and continually reflect upon them; it will not negate from the validity of the research.

Ethical Considerations

This project was carried out in accordance with Canterbury Christ Church University research ethics and governance requirements and has followed the policies and procedures set out in the research governance handbook. Participant data has been stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. Confirmation of ethics compliance for this study was received in September 2015 and once submitted may be randomly selected for scrutiny by the ethics audit panel. Informed consent was gained from all participants by way of a signed consent form which also confirmed they had read and understood the participant information sheet which was sent to participants in all cases at least a week before interview and read out to them again in the preamble to the interview.

Often all research involves some elements that are at least ethically questionable (Bryman, 2004). Ethical transgression is persuasive; if a researcher is completely honest with people about his activities, they may try to hide attitudes undesirable and so will be dishonest (Gands, 1962). To some extent there will always be debate around how much information is too much information to avoid giving participants who may not themselves have an academic interest, a whole lecture on the subject area. In this study for example, had in the preamble I read to participants even just the literature review and they then became aware of what the current evidence base is and how the research questions were formulated, it could not be said that they would have responded in the same way that they would have without this information. That is not to say however that the participants themselves could not have performed their own academic literature search and thus nothing was withheld or concealed from them regarding the project aims or methodology. All participants have been offered a copy of this paper upon its completion and were informed at interview that they could

withdraw consent at any time by contacting me and having their data removed from the project.

Confidentiality is often treated as a separate ethic in its own right since if researchers did not adhere to the principle of confidentiality when collecting data from participants, then 'who would talk to them in the future?'(Israel and Hay, 2004). In addition to the moral wrongness of not keeping confidences and the consequentialist argument of how breaches of confidentiality might jeopardize the future of research (Bryman, 2004), in the present study it was paramount to promote honest and candid responses from participants within the interview setting which in turn would generate the rich data required to fulfil the aims of this research. Personal and organisational anonymity were guaranteed to participants and throughout this paper each police service and individual has been allocated a reference number in place of their name. All references to individual forces have been removed and it should be noted that any references to individuals in the subsequent sections are pseudonyms and have only been included where necessary to provide context to the text.

Data Collection

The research strategy is reflective of the epistemological position in that the data collected will be purely qualitative in nature. Beyond providing numerical policing figures such as how many police officers work flexible hours, numerical statistics do not provide the context for these numbers nor do they generate the desired data required in addressing the research aims for this project. Qualitative data collection here enabled the researcher to acquire this contextual information by engaging with police officers whilst looking for meaning in the data they provided. This strategy has enabled the development of emergent themes from the data through the analysis of qualitative data which would be impossible to achieve from quantitative data collection (Hammersley, 1992).

Many would advocate that a multi-strategy approach is necessary to validate research results and in many circumstances one would agree. Due to the same reasoning above however, it is questionable whether there is any benefit or indeed a necessity for numerical data to validate the results in this project. Advocates of this view may argue the embedded methods argument in which different strategies are underpinned by irrefutable epistemological commitments and since such schools of thought vary in so many respects it would be fruitless to combine them. Furthermore, because quantitative and qualitative methods are wholly inconsistent with each other due to generating different assumptions and methods; the two are incompatible. Whilst

one does not see the need or place for quantitative data collection in this research, I am by no means an objector to multi strategy approaches. In many circumstances it is recognised the benefit that such an approach could bring, however the phenomenon in the current research does not make this project one of them.

Modern criminological researchers often use a combination of methods, theories and data (triangulation) in a single study to promote validity of the results by accounting for the weaknesses of any singular approach (Denzin, 1998). Whilst one would ordinarily be in agreement with Denzin, the current findings are based upon a singular approach. Bryman's (2012) comment that 'all social research is a coming together of the ideal and the feasible' is one particularly appropriate to this discussion since gatekeeper access which arose as an issue after the project had commenced largely influenced a re-evaluation of the research as described above in relation not only to my researcher position, but also in relation to the proposed methods.

At the outset of the project it was proposed that one police service would be the case study police force and access would be facilitated by this force in line with the relationship between the organization and the researcher; largely indicative of an action research project discussed above. Due to a change in organisational management in the proposed case study police service however, this access was no longer unprecedented or indeed facilitated. As such, the issue of gatekeeper access regularly encountered by policing researchers, was now an issue potentially affecting the continuation of the project. Participatory action research by its very nature and process can't be planned and requires constant adaptation (Checkland, 1981) and the required adaptation to the project at this stage was a necessity to ensure its continuation and to achieve the research aims and purpose for which it was intended. The three notable changes are firstly to ones position as a researcher (discussed above), secondly to the demographic recruitment of participants and thirdly to the research methods used.

Once the issue of official gatekeeper access in the intended provincial force became apparent, with the backing from the National Police Federation of England and Wales it became possible to open up recruitment to participants from all of the 43 police forces in England and Wales. Although initially cautious of the change in direction, the demographic changes to the participants and the new multi-force sample brought with it a new dimension which one recognised had the potential to actually increase the validity of the data collected whilst benefiting a wider group of people within the police organisation. It would no longer serve to

benefit just one provincial force but instead had the potential to benefit the organisation as a whole. As the principle researcher, an informed judgment was made based upon the level and speed of recruitment thus far, that time and resources would allow for this expansion. In turn, the research would no longer exclude participants who were able to provide valuable information from outside the provincial force. In keeping with the aims of the study, generating this rich data was far more important than the demographics of those able to offer it.

Sampling, Selection and Recruitment

The research method used has both retrospective and prospective elements to it as reflected in the participant selection criterion which was that participants must:

A) Have served as a Police Officer or be a member of Police Staff from any force within England and Wales (Including the British Transport Police) after 1992

B) Currently or previously have worked flexible hours// Currently or have previously considered flexible working // Have prominent views of flexible working policies through knowledge gained from a spouse or colleague

...OR...

C) Be undertaking a police or staff management role (Sergeant or above for officers) and have or have had the responsibility for managing flexible working requests.

The rationale for this is in inline with participatory action research aiming to generate rich solution focused data on the barriers faced by flexible workers by listening to participants recruited from within the organisation. The data becomes 'rich' in the sense that it is generated from varying practitioner perspectives and thus the likelihood of finding real viable solutions to the problem of flexible working is more probable than if only senior management were recruited.

The 'bottom up' approach adopted in the research is reflective of the desire to give the officers on the ground the opportunity to participate in a piece of research aiming to improve police practice. Flexible working is utilised more by those in the position of Police Constable but for every constable requesting flexible working there is substantial management involvement. If I focussed solely on the perspectives and solutions from the ground, the data

may be of very little practical use if those with the responsibility for managing flexible working have knowledge allied with their position of responsibility which would show the solutions to be unworkable in practice. The participant selection criteria therefore enhanced the results more than could have been achieved had the project been deficient in for example management perspectives. This ensured that the research did not ultimately produce some creative solutions to the issue of flexible working but which would be wholly unworkable in practice and thus of very little use to the Police organisation.

In relation to participant recruitment for this study, probability sampling would have created a major assumption of homogeneity which is reflective of a positivistic framework and is by no means necessary in achieving the aims of this particular research project. By opting for non probability sampling it was accepted that there will be no way of predicting the probability of different subjects and thus no generalisation of the findings can be made to all individual officers. As a non-experimental study however it has never been the aim of such a piece. The participants recruited for the study have been obtained through availability sampling and as the name suggests, were those willing and available to participate in the given circumstances.

Participants were recruited by the use of social media; Women's Policing Network Groups; and word of mouth. Where a potential participant expressed an interest by one of these mediums they were then emailed the participant information sheet and were asked to reply to this email if they wanted to participate or required further information. A mutually convenient time was then arranged for interview. Even if this were a study using a quantitative research strategy and a generalisation of findings had been intended; intention aside there will always be an element of availability sampling involved whether it be to data sets, participants or organisations since all must be available to access for any ethical research project to be completed. As such, the recruitment methods or sample size of this research does not negate the validity of the data generated. In total 12 participants were recruited, two of whom were used to pilot the study and then the data generated from the further 10 interviews have formed the basis of this research.

A proportion of the interviews conducted, if not all of the data set (dependent upon personal interpretation) could be described as 'elite' (Moyser and Wagstaffe 1987). Often social research would ordinarily recruit from the 'normal' population, for instance this may be interpreted widely as meaning the whole of world. Here however the 'normal' population has been interpreted narrowly to mean every police officer in England and Wales that fitted the

participant selection criterion. Within this narrow interpretation, the 'elite' population could be considered be to those in management positions at varying levels in line with the police rank structure.

Adopting Mawby and Wright's categorisation of rank structure (2008), the participants involved in this project ranged from practitioner (Police Constable) through to middle management (Chief Superintendent). There may have been a benefit in the recruitment of strategic management (ACC/DCC/CC) since the study is notably absent from participants above the rank of Chief Superintendent. Due to the gatekeeper issues and the position of the researcher discussed above, it was inevitably going to be challenging to recruit officers of this rank in the time allocated to undertake this project. Previous experience has proved a lengthy process (one year) in securing an interview with strategic management and although it may have been deemed beneficial to have an input from every rank within the organisation, the contributions from the Chief Superintendent were arguably more beneficial given their role in strategically managing flexible working at the highest level.

As will be discussed below and in line with the research aims above, this research is more

	Provincial and Metropolitan forces	The Metropolitan Police Service	City of London Police
The federated ranks ▪ Practitioners ▪ Supervisors ▪ Managers	▪ Constable ▪ Sergeant ▪ Inspector ▪ Chief Inspector	▪ Constable ▪ Sergeant ▪ Inspector ▪ Chief Inspector	▪ Constable ▪ Sergeant ▪ Inspector ▪ Chief Inspector
The Superintending ranks ▪ Middle managers	▪ Superintendent ▪ Chief Superintendent	▪ Superintendent ▪ Chief Superintendent	▪ Superintendent ▪ Chief Superintendent
The ACPO ranks ▪ Strategic managers	▪ Assistant Chief Constable ▪ Deputy Chief Constable ▪ Chief Constable	▪ Commander ▪ Deputy assistant commissioner ▪ Assistant commissioner ▪ Deputy commissioner ▪ Commissioner	▪ Commander ▪ Assistant commissioner ▪ Commissioner

concerned with the quality of the data generated rather than numerically categorising participants due to rank at the detriment to the richness of the data. The inclusion of strategic management would perhaps make the methodology appear more appealing to those favouring positivist ideologies, however, their absence does not undermine or indeed affect the quality of the data collected. Although the recruitment methods for this study would not have excluded those from strategic management, they were not effective for reaching out to officers of that rank and had their participation been deemed more essential in achieving the research aims, one would have needed to have followed a different procedure and contacted individuals directly.

(Police Rank Structure (Mawby and Wright, 2008)

<u>Interviews</u>

Two one hour pilot interviews were conducted initially to 'test' the interview style to trial its effectiveness in terms of achieving the research aims. These interviews have not been analysed for the purposes of this project since changes were made to the interview style after the pilot that would render their information inconsistent with the interview style subsequently adopted.

The first participant was recruited directly as an acquaintance of the researcher and so the interview was conducted at her house in an informal setting. When I arrived the participant had a colleague there who was not known to the researcher but who was eligible for the study and wished to participate. Although in hindsight it would have been beneficial to arrange another time and formal setting to interview the second participant after reflection had taken place on the pilot interview and the appropriate changes made, at the time it was deemed better to pilot twice. This was prior to gatekeeper access been withdrawn and it was unbeknown to the researcher at that time that recruitment would become more challenging once access to the initial case study force was no longer being facilitated as it was originally intended.

The benefit of conducting these two interviews however was incredibly worthwhile since it became apparent that a structured interview was not the best way to generate the information required in addressing the research aims. After some reflection on the pilot interviews, an interview 'guide' was created in place of a rigid set of interview questions that addressed some of the issues the researcher was keen to discuss but that hadn't been achieved in any great detail or with the required contextual information due to the structured interviewing.

Data was collected from a further 10 semi-structured interviews lasting between 60-120 minutes each. There were no predetermined time limits for the interviews and each interview continued until it was mutually agreed between the researcher and participant that neither the participant or researcher had anything further to contribute to the interview. The depth and richness of the data was of primary importance in achieving the research aims and the interview style taken was deemed to be the most effective in examining the complex phenomenon of flexible working and police occupational culture.

Keeping in line with the contemporary landscape in which the researcher was operating, structured interviewing could not have achieved the research aims in the same way since the absence of any deviation from structured questioning would have likely resulted in relevant contextual data being automatically excluded. The flexibility of being able to encourage participants to speak freely and openly in a confidential setting to generate thinking was favoured over stringent questioning

Of the further ten interviews, two were conducted electronically via Skype; seven were conducted in a police building and one was conducted in a non police building. A similarity however between them all was that they were conducted privately in the absence of anyone else. The interview setting was not a variable of major importance in a qualitative study of this kind; however it may be useful to consider the implications of such. Skype was used as an alternative to face to face interviews due to the difficulty the researcher faced in attending the given police forces at a mutually convenient time with the participant. Due to distance and other research commitments during the short time frame available to complete the data collection; it was not going to be feasible to visit the participant in person. Skype was cost effective and research has shown there are no noticeable differences between responses given and there are similarities in the quantity, nature and depth of responses (Hanrahan, 2004).

A disadvantage of interviewing electronically is that these interviews lacked the same atmospheric value of a face to face interview and it was not as easy for the interviewer to respond to a participant's body language or pick up on physical cues which would have been more noticeable in a face to face setting. There is somewhat of a sterile feel to electronic interviews and perhaps negated slightly from the aims of this project in that the other interviews seemed more personal and the researcher was able to get a 'feel' for the information being provided to them.

There are however also comments to be made about the settings in which the face to face interviews were conducted. By visiting participants in their place of employment to talk about employment practices, the data may have been influenced in some way by this. It would not be unusual for people to speak with the mentality of 'work mode', even if interviewed before or after a shift. This could have both positive and negative implications, for instance had the participant had or suspected they were going to have either a particularly good or bad day, these emotions may be reflected in their attitudes and opinions given on employment related issues during interview. Equally however, it could be said that had all interviews been conducted in a non police setting then their attitudes and emotions could be more or less relaxed than if they were interviewed at work. There will inevitably be debates about what is the best environment to interview and individual in and all are subject to their own merit and criticism. What is perhaps the most central thing to note in this project however is that the setting variable did not visibly affect the responses in any one particular type of interview and it would be difficult to make any assumptions about the extent the setting had on the responses due to this.

A pre prepared document was created which contained seven standard introductory questions, followed by some key issues surrounding flexible working as highlighted from the literature review. This document however was by no means a rigid interview structure and instead acted more as a prompt for the interviewer to ensure the issues that she was keen to discuss further with the interviewees were not excluded. It was explained to participants in the preamble to the interview that it would be very much conversational as their knowledge and experiences were favoured over a series of structured questions and answers. This proved to be an effective mechanism since many interviews naturally followed the semi structured interview 'guide' by generating responses to the questions without the need to break away from a previous response to ask the question directly. If the participant had seemingly answered a question indirectly, this was followed up with the researcher asking an interpreting question (Kvale, 1996) to gain clarification and to ensure that there were no assumptions made by the researcher in that the information offered indirectly was in fact the information they would have offered in response to structured questioning.

Previous experience of conducting qualitative police research highlighted a recurrent issue in interviewing middle management and command officers. I was mindful of this in this project and so was keen to avoid. Previous experience showed that during approximately the first ten minutes of those interviews (which followed a similar style to the method in the current

project in which they were participating in) participants were providing the interviewer with corporate responses to important questions which did not touch upon the issues for which they were intended. As these interviews progressed and there was an evident rapport established between the interviewer and participant, the data became much richer yet the initial questions were not revisited again, thus raising the issue of consistently truthful or representative data. In preparing the interview guide for this project, Kvale's 1996 categorisation of nine types of questions were considered and it was decided the introductory questions would be utilised as an opportunity to build up a rapport with the participant whilst collecting contextual data about the interviewee (questions 1-4) and some of their personal experiences of flexible working(questions 5-7). The introductory questions asked of all participants were as follows:

1) Could you start by telling me how long you have worked for the police?

2) What is your current role?

3) Have you always had this role? If not could you just elaborate a little bit on previous roles within the police you've had?

4) In what aspects of your current role or throughout your previous career have you encountered flexible working? (I.e. have you yourself ever worked flexibly or have you ever had the responsibility of managing requests or ever represented officers who have?)

5) Could you think back during your time in service and give me a specific example or examples if you can that have stuck in your head, of a time when you think flexible working has worked really positively for either an officer or a team?

6) So the flip side to that is going to be can you do the same and think of a specific example, or examples, where you think flexible working has not worked so well for an officer or team?

7) In your opinion which of the two cases you've just described would you say is more common place within the police organisation?

After the introductory questions, the interview continued with either a follow up question or probe based upon a response given from questions 5-7 (above). Very generic examples of this include but were by no means exhaustive to:

'So what was it about the first case that you think made it positive?'

'Was there anything that could have been done to change the second case?'

'Why do you think this?'

Using the interview guide as a prompt, the interviews continued in a free flowing and flexible manner, all of which were conversational in nature. The following issues identified per the literature review were asked about during each interview to address the research aims. Whilst much data was contextual, this was an opportunity to encourage creative and innovative thinking as to the solutions to the issue of flexible working in the police organisation.

- Perceptions of flexible working
- Shift pattern structure
- Management
- Suitability of flexible working in the police
- The process of requesting flexible working and appeals
- Experience of good practice sharing
- Lip service to policy
- Women's equality and fairness in policing

Interviews were audio recorded using a high quality small Dictaphone that was capable of picking up audio even in busy environments. In case the Dictaphone failed, backup voice recording software on the researcher's phone was available however this was never needed. Audio recording was essential for transcription and analysis purposes since the nature of the interview style meant during interview the researcher had to be totally alert and engaged with the participant; available to ask questions and probe on earlier points. Notes were not made throughout the interview since this may have been disruptive to the flow of conversation and off putting for the participant. As with any use of technology there was the risk of it faulting or a non recording, however, once confident with the equipment the absence of note taking during interview was a worthwhile one since it enabled the continuation of free speaking with minimal disruption. As Herritage (1984) suggested, the audio recording helps to correct the

natural limitations of the human memory whilst enabling thorough examination of the data generated and permits this to be repeated by revising participant's responses more than once. Additionally, the fact the interview transcripts can be requested by future researchers can help rebut accusations of researcher biases and generally allows for an additional level of scrutiny to be applied to the current project.

Permission was gained from participants to record on the Dictaphone at the beginning of each interview. I was mindful that the use of a recorder may intimidate participants due to it preserving their thoughts and opinions on issues that could be considered contentious or at the very least things they might say that they wouldn't want anyone else, particularly their management to hear. As Bryman (2012) commented, even when permission is gained to record, some participants will not get over the alarm at being confronted with a microphone which in turn may affect the quality of the interview. There were no refusals to record and when participants were asked for permission to record it did not appear to faze them, rather it was encouraged. The recorder ran right through to the end of the interview since it is not unusual for interviewees to start 'opening up' when the interview is on wind down. These audio recordings were then uploaded on to the computer ready for transcription to begin.

<u>Analysis</u>

Transcription was conducted manually by the researcher. Although time consuming, this allowed the researcher to become increasingly familiar with the data set. Almost every word spoken was transcribed (exceptions discussed below) even when data appeared to be irrelevant and unfruitful in the first instance. The only exception to the above was during two interviews where the researcher became privy to information regarding recent developments within the organisation and representative bodies that were not yet available in the public domain and whereby she were respectfully asked to exclude such information from this project. In line with the principle of confidentiality this information was therefore excluded from transcription and the subsequent analysis.

Thematic analysis involves discovering, interpreting and reporting patterns and clusters of meaning within the data. Working systematically through the texts the researcher identifies topics that are progressively integrated in to higher order key themes, the importance of which lies in their ability to address the overall research aims (Boyzatic 1998; Joffe, 2012). A substantive approach has been favoured over a structured one, since the researcher was concerned with capturing meaning within the data by focussing on what the text says as

opposed to focussing on what the text does (structure of talk and text). Non variable analysis is used since one is of the view that it is not possible to reduce a data set of this type to standardised categorisations. Those favouring variable analysis (Dey, 1993; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Robson, 2002), would argue that categories derived from the text can be conceptualised and used as variables in relation to their given phenomenon.

The current phenomenon of looking to overcome the barriers to flexible working, allows for the use of categories as a way of grouping data thematically and then drawing out conceptual relationships within the data. It would have been possible to count particular phenomenon to add to the description of the nature of the sample, for example how many times the issue of police culture arose overall. Some would advocate that calculating frequencies such as these in relation to particular terms might provide context for the data, however, one is of the view that any quantification of frequencies detracts from the true nature of an exploratory piece of qualitative work. The value of the approach taken in this research lies in its ability to address the research aims by providing meaning in the presentation of the results and it is felt that there was no need to quantify human thinking in addressing the aims.

The thematic analysis approach adopted is reflective of the framework strategy developed at the National Centre for Social Research which has been described as a matrix based method for ordering and synthesising data' (Ritchie et al, 2003). Although presented as a two part process of analysis, namely data management and interpretation, it should be noted they undoubtedly overlap since an element of interpretation is required for data management and similarly an element of data management is required in interpretation. Returning to the theoretical considerations, Chan's theory of police culture has somewhat influenced the broad aims that were to be adressed in this project, however when approaching the data analysis stage such themes remain tightly grounded in the data. As will be seen in the subsequent sections of this paper, as higher order themes were derived from the data, there is a gradual return to existing theoretical ideas and knowledge.

Part one: Data management

The idea of data management relates to the process of making the sheer quantity of data generated from the interviews presented in word processed transcripts manageable. The first thought upon completing hours of transcription and approaching the data analysis stage was 'now what?' and this is where part one of this process helped to provide a

logical structure and 'building blocks' that affords transparency to others in the event secondary analysis should be carried out in future.

Ritchie et al (2014) identify five key steps involved in data management:

1) Familiarisation

2) Constructing an initial thematic framework

3) Indexing and sorting

4) Reviewing data extracts

5) Data summary and display

Familiarisation was achieved initially by self transcription of all interviews followed by considerable time spent reading over the interview transcripts in order to gain an overview of the substantive content and highlighting areas of interest. After noting a list of potential areas of inclusion from these areas of interest, they were refined into a set of themes and subthemes that equate to the initial thematic framework. This framework was then used to 'label' the data which in this project involved applying headings to sentences/paragraphs/quotes from the transcripts that seemingly related to the same thing. This has been referred to as 'topic coding' and although the interview style naturally encompassed the key areas the researcher was keen to discuss, these did not necessarily appear in the same order in all interviews and so this was important to generate well ordered thematic 'piles' of data. Reviewing data extracts then came by revisiting the initial thematic framework and assessing whether in fact the data extracts were in fact about the same thing and where it was not, refining the data themes the ensure the data was labelled correctly. Finally the data summary and display was conducted by presenting the data in a way similar to the matrix based format that was used initially by Ritchie et al (2003), but was presented manually on an A3 sheet of paper without a set grid.

Part two: Abstraction and Interpretation

Once data management had been completed and was presented in such a way that made it easy to navigate through raw data, it became possible to extract what have become the main findings of this research. Description and explanation again although addressed separately often interlinked as will be presented in the subsequent sections. Description

has been used to create a qualitative research account and is fundamental to the interpretative process. Taking each theme in turn, all relevant data extracts have been reviewed and have been subject to categorisation which enables the transition of data from surface features to the identification of the its analytical properties. After a comparison of interview responses in relation to emerging solutions to the issue of flexible working, relationships between these singular aspects of data have been explored in relation to how these aspects of data 'hang together' (Dey, 1993). The accompanying explanation to the description offers information such as why and how these singular aspects of data 'hang together' and interrelate. An attempt has been made to make a logical sense of patterns within the data that relates back to pre-existing research, theories and knowledge.

<u>Computer- assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS)</u>

Nvivo was the qualitative data analysis software used to aid the analysis in this project. In relation to data management, Nvivo enabled the data to be stored neatly in one place; allowed for the use of memos to be attached to parts of the data; developed the thematic framework and allowed for the coding of text to be inputted to this. The interpretive stage of analysis was again assisted by specialist features on Nvivo which were not as accessible by manual paper based analysis. Like many search functions associated with computers, Nvivo enabled searches for words and phrases in the context of the transcript; facilitated the extension of the initial thematic framework to higher level concepts and finally stored easily accessible notes documenting the researchers thinking at the time. The decision to use Nvivo was founded due to its well reported benefits over manual paper based analysis. Perhaps the key benefit in this project was the volume of data that was to be analysed and the time frame in which was allocated to complete it. Nvivo facilitated the presentation of data in a logical, structured and coherent way much quicker and neater than could be ac. By doing this, Nvivo helped increase the rigour of analysis and enabled the demonstration that all data has been looked upon and not just that which the researcher may favour in achieving the research aims.

Although the use of CAQDAS has been subject to some criticism, for instance that it allows for researchers to take short cuts (Weitzman, 2000), it is important to note that its use does not detract from the role of the researcher within the process of data analysis.

Nvivo like most CAQDAS, does not perform analysis automatically and therefore remain dependent upon the issues that the researcher defines as analytical.

'

Chapter IV: Results and Discussion

Given the breadth of literature highlighting the problematic nature of flexible working, it is unsurprising that those seeking an unequivocal answer to the research question will be frustrated with the intricacy of the result which in its most simplistic form is yes. There are other ways to overcome the barriers faced by police officers seeking flexible working.

The results show that the structural governance of flexible working needs be addressed in tandem with cultural dispositions, rather than viewing the two as separate entities. Therefore, to overcome the barriers faced by police officers seeking flexible working, any future reform to the practice should also be understood in terms of the relationship between the formal construction of flexible working and the organisations informal working practices which are commonly encompassed in to the loosely defined notion of police culture. It is problematic to view them as separate entities because they do not exist as such.

The organisational policy guidance (College of Police, 2013) goes much further beyond citing the legislation that the organisation must abide by. It provides a very clear and substantial business case for flexible working in the organisation. Whilst recent developments to the formal construction of flexible working can be evidenced by the existence of such guidance which seemingly promotes and facilitates the practice, the absence of any simultaneous challenge to the informal governance or working rules has resulted in a complex situation inhibiting any 'real' reform.

In returning to the theoretical framework set out by Chan (1996), if there were some change to the habitus (e.g. management perceptions of flexible working) which went some way to overcome the cultural barriers to flexible working, unless the Field is also adapted to reinforce the new habitus, the habitus itself will revert to its old disposition. It is therefore fruitless to view the solutions presented in this section to the barriers faced by officers seeking flexible working as practicable ones on their own, since each is dependent upon either a change to the field or to the habitus of policing- we cannot view each concept in isolation.

Like Dick, Silverstri and Westmarland (2014) noted the potential and possibility for police reform, the results in this section support the evidence that suggests many police officers welcome and indeed desire an occupational culture; one which emphasises collaboration and the chance to participate in steering and shaping the future of the police. The results support the notion that we are indeed now facing a window of opportunity for police reform. Whilst it

is clear that at present there are individuals within the organisation who clearly demonstrate their commitment to challenging the cultural barriers faced by flexible workers, they are David in the David and Goliath narrative and are bucking up against a much bigger enshrined organisational culture which is been driven top down by command and control leadership.

The organisation as a whole is developing this and getting better with the use of evidence based practice and the encouragement of innovative practices, however, they must continue to do so if the organisation is to ever overcome the barriers to flexible working. Whilst some of the quotations cited in this section appear lengthy, they are necessary to evidence actually what this paper sought to achieve- that there are individuals within the organisation that are seeking cultural change to improve the working environment for officers. Presenting officers innovative and creative thinking is thus far more effective at demonstrating this, than the researcher summarising such views could possibly be.

<u>Electronic devising of rosters</u>

In an austerity climate, how resources are allocated needs serious consideration and indeed HMIC (Policing in Austerity, 2015) made reference to this in relation to considering unexpected future events. The current requirement that rosters be devised a year in advance allows for little flexibility in facilitating alternative working patterns. Informed decision making when submitting rosters based upon demand profiling twelve months in advance is not the same as precognition and thus such rigidity creates a barrier for police officers seeking flexible working. One officer commented on the difficulty that occurs with the current regulations:

'...what I know is that our systems and our process and regs [regulations] do not allow you to do anything sensible or clever or desirable or even nice, so our flexible working is you submit a roster twelve months in advance. You create a roster, we have an argument about it *and that's it, then you come in and fill that roster. Well that has some flexibility but it has very little if you think about it...'*

This was supported with frustration from a Superintendent who highlighted how the rigidity is problematic in terms of the responsibility they have for submitting rosters in line with the current regulations and then balancing this with trying to incorporate any flexibility in to this system to suit demand:

'...you can change the roster at any point but it has to be set out in advance so I have to *today, we're Tuesday today, so I* have to predict Monday next year. I have no idea what will happen between now and then but I have to predict what demand I will require on that day and have a roster that is there... *and it's a repetitive roster so essentially it makes it very* difficult then to say well actually what I need is, I need some people working ten hours that *day and people working four hours on that day and that's not there, that's the imp*ediment I *think...'*

In addition to the barriers created by the requirement of predicting demand, the system is reliant upon the regulation for officers to work percentages of their time over varying shifts e.g. days/afternoons/nights. The current systems often means that human common sense is overlooked in favour of a computerised system which is not always effective at reflecting the present demand of the organisation. For one police officer, she recalled how the electronic devising of her roster meant her shift lost her for two hours during peak demand, not because she wasn't willing to work them, but because the electronic roster was showing she needed to work the two hours on a day shift to allow her pattern to be authorised on the system:

'...*I don'*t know because I *know the current working hours now on flexi working they're done on computer so it's not even like there's a person doing it. So they couldn't see that I* was *doing 12 hour nights, they now want me to do 10 hour nights which doesn't make sense...'*

In the advanced technological era the police are operating within, instances such as the above demonstrate how reliance upon a computerised system less than perfect means opportunities for utilising flexible workers to bolster demand are lost. If the business case for flexible working as presented in the policy guidance is to be understood fully, then there needs to be a system that incorporates flexible workers in to the demand resource allocation so this benefit can be seen by others in the organisation. The rigidity of the current electronic system also presents as misleading information on the number of resources available to managers, thus creating difficulties for resource allocation:

'...*I anecdotally know of examples of shifts where managemen*t look on paper and say oh *we've got 20 people but actually 8 of them are part time so again sometimes it's about the* way the resources are reflected properly in the way we record things as an organisation so *actually people understand you 'aint got 20 you've got 12...'*

The way the data is presented to managers coupled with insufficient knowledge to interpret the data accurately contributes to this misunderstanding of the resources available to them:

'...it's more of a HR recording issue but not just that, it's also about presentation and how things are presented. You can take a fairly superficial look at our systems, our HR system, *and take a snapshot of that and depending on how you look at it because it's very complicated, if you don't look at it right y*ou will get the wrong impression so you need *someone who knows what they're doing to actually interpret that data, so there s* a bit about presentation there...'*

Emerging literature has detailed the issue of the organisation using binary comparisons to inform decision making processes. The way data is presented to management, whether that be to prioritise or as in the case here to identify what resources are available to begin with, can act as a catalyst for unwarranted assumptions (Guilfoyle, 2015). It is therefore suggested that managers need to understand the way data is presented and the organisation could look to alternative methods for doing so to give managers accurate knowledge, thus easing the process of resource allocation and demand shift profiling. It was reported that a current difficulty with demand shift profiling is that managers do not know what the current benchmark is and if they had an accurate perception of this, it would be easier to fill the demand. This in turn could lend itself towards flexible working arrangements:

'...It's a really difficult one, you need some sort of an understanding of what your benchmark and baseline is now, which I *don't think we've got, and when you've got that yo*u can look at how best...to fill the demand that y*ou have...'*

A sergeant commented on how it is those who work with their teams that have the most accurate knowledge of when the actual peak demand is for those teams and that consultation should be inclusive of front line managers within the roster design process. Front line managers have been described as policy makers (Engel and Peterson, 2014) since their decision to invoke or not invoke departmental policy can affect the form that such policy or law takes in practice (DeJong et al, 2001; Engel and Worden, 2003):

'...Well it comes all the way down. As a sergeant, me, personally, I'm aware when my shifts are busy and when they wer*en't so...obviously I* was working them with the team... normally *when it hits the team inspector, the inspectors aren't working* with the team normally or *working directly with the teams so their handle on demand isn't as good as your front line sergeants...'*

As will be discussed further below, the role that line management should take in enforcing changes to the practice of flexible working is paramount. An important element of leadership is involving staff in decisions and change programmes are more successful when staff are actively involved in the change that affects them (HMIC, 2014). By involving those with knowledge of peak demand gained from performing operational duties with their team in the rostering consultation process, the consultation could also serve to alleviate the cultural barrier officers face at this level.

If an alternative system were to become available, this of course would then have to be reflected in the current police regulations that require a roster to be devised twelve months in advance. While this remains a regulation the organisation reverts to the chicken and egg parody whereby the regulations can't change without an alternative system in place and an alternative system can't be created when the regulations do not allow it to be operated. Barriers preventing a change to the current system include the inevitable cost involved in doing and the current absence of an alternative software package available that is able to better facilitate flexible working arrangements. The speed of technological advances today mean this is something that could become available if the resources were allocated to either devise such software or seek out an alternative existing package from either the private or another public sector organisation. The alternative system would better reflect the peak demand times and allow for the inclusion of alternative working patterns which could subsequently better fill this demand and give managers an accurate perception of resources available to them when managing their staff. The difficulties were acknowledged by officers but they were welcoming of change:

*'...with the right soft*ware if there were no regulation constraints we could try all sorts of weird and wonderful things to play around with this and I *would be delighted to do so...'*

If the electronic software were to facilitate them, solutions were presented as to ways alternative working arrangements could be used to the benefit of the organisation with the better managing of demand which in turn would benefit the public. Respondents welcomed a discussion about short term fixed contracts and recognised the benefits that the formal introduction of such working arrangements could have on those seeking or who were already on a flexible working arrangement. The introduction of the Police Now programme is one example of a short term police contract which may pave the way for the introduction of more general short term or short hour contracts throughout the organisation. Although the officer

below comments on how police culture won't allow such a change at present, the implementation of the Police Now programme in some forces actually evidences otherwise. It was suggested these sorts of organisational changes may serve as the gateway to a more flexible force in the future:

*'...The Leadership R*eview said all jobs now to be *advertised nationally so there's go*ing to be increased movement in between forces and short term contracts and short hour contracts are in the pipeline I think. It could be that people will leave the job but people will take up a 20 hour post. It*'s not there at the minute but I* think it will be. I think it will help culturally... if I give you an example, you can keep all our shifts rigid which people might be happy with until Friday or Saturday night and Friday between demand times you offer optional flexible working. All of a sudden people are bolstering your shift *and they're coming on to help you* out and oh my god this is great and at times of high demand we have people that will come *and help that's the way it could work but culture at the minute won't allow it now. I t*hink in time it will get there I *just don't t*hink we*'re there yet...'*

Two recurrent ideas were generated which both involve the notion of increased flexibility for officers in the organisation or a 'flexible force' that better suits the needs of the organisation, its employees and the public. The first idea involves taking advantage of what was reported to be the case now in that many officers feel they are already running on skeleton staff due to austerity. If a system were created whereby there remains the necessary degree of rigidity to cover minimum staffing levels but then to open up the additional desired spaces to officers who were available and wished to work them, the system would lend itself to flexible working and it would effectively create a flexible working 'force' that better deals with demand:

'...I've got this new project moving forward and one of the things I said was wouldn't it be nice if we could offer an arrangement where we have core working hours that we have to cover by shift and we could then sort of allow the staff to create their own rosters amongst themselves so in other words we have these slots that needed to be filled and they would fill *the slots that were required so their flexibility then met our demand...'*

When asked if this project was moving forward, the barrier to preventing it was that the current policing regulations didn't allow for it:

'...No, in the too difficult tray because police regs particularly don't allow for it, rosters have to be published a year in advance so straight away your write offs there. Our systems are entirely inflexible so for me to do that I would almost have to launch another project but it just seems to me that in an office environment where I have a lot of staff, providing I have a sufficient number of staff covering what I wanted, then actually filling in other bits and pieces of time we could give a profile of what we actually wanted and allow people to operate it...'

A Superintendent summarises the concept of developing a 'flexible force'. For it to be effective some rigidity needs to remain, however empowering all staff in the organisation to take control of their working arrangements could go a long way to eradicate the sense of hostility towards those who currently seek flexible working.

'...If you change the aspiration of what it was designed to deliver then there are things you *could do to make a better process. Within what we've got at the moment which is people* seeking to work flexibly within what are rigi*d requirements, it's very difficult to see how it* would make a better system. If your requirements were more flexible I *think you'd get a very* different outcome or you would have very different decision making. To illustrate that, if I could say I need 100 people across the day to run my business and I know that in order to meet the contemporary demand by the public I needed 20 people in the morning and 20 people in the afternoon, as long as I filled that 20 morning and 20 afternoon slot, why would it bother me what on those days how I *filled that other 60 slots? It shouldn'*t bother me whether everyone comes in at 6am in the morning and 5pm in the afternoon or quite frankly *after the pubs shut at midnight and work in the night it just shouldn't bother me but we just* *don't have that flexibility. Our systems don't allow us to d*o that. Now if we could do that the decision making would be entirely different because would I need to make so many decisions? I would just say just come in to work, your job on a day is to deliver x y and x output and as long as you deliver that and you show a willingness to deliver it and your attitude is right and we can see that you're working hard and you're open to criticism and you develop, and you fulfil your core slots when it is your responsibly to fulfil a core role, why should any of that bother me and would I then need to be running a process to determine *who's alou*d to do these things? Actually I would say here is a percentage that is rigid and *there's x amount of flexibility that is in your role. So, it could be a very different environment* a*nd very different decision making process so that's my answer. Change our approach you*

could change the process in its entirety but at the moment we don't have the magnitude for approach and there*fore the process we've got is bureaucratic…'*

The second idea which is not too dissimilar from the above, would be in the current climate to create a staff bank like the NHS operate to give officers the option to pick up shifts during peak demand:

'…if you were to keep the skeleton on, the minimum staff is on 8 ideally we'd like 12 officers on and you open up those 4 spaces in between 8 and 12 open to voluntarily overtime, I'm not talking about overtime [rate] *or time and a half or anything, we just open it up and say we'd like people to decide if they'd like to come and work or not. I've got no doubt at all that certain people whether they're on rest day or whether they're flexible work*ing would volunteer for those. Our money is dropping every year so for us to afford things like holidays and all those sort of *things offering that flexibility and autonomy would be ace, plus you've got all the research that says autonomy is one of the key three pillars of work and that's* giving people more control when they work….so when *you switch to autonomy it works…'*

The idea of a staff bank is coherent with the idea of a 'flexible force' in that again the negativity experienced by flexible workers from both colleagues and management would be overcome by there no longer being the indifference to marginalise those who seek flexible arrangements:

*'…So my point being if they went out to everyone in the force and said like the NHS do, you have an off duty don't you, I've always said why can't we be like the NHS and as long as there's a bum on a seat doing that job at the tim*e it needs doing why does it have to be the same I*nspector in charge? It doesn't. As long as there's a function being* carried out why does it need to be that team that does it? It would I think certainly with response policing and CID to a certain point, why would you need that? So offer it out to everyone…'*

An officer spoke about the impact that developing such ideas would have on negative perceptions of flexible working:

*'…*If you continue making the distinction between flexible worker and a normal worker you set up a divide and all of a sudden if you make everyone flexible workers its less of a problem and I *suppose that's about really organisational culture change but enabling people to work* from home and enabling people to have some control over the hours they work and all that

sort of thing it all involves the dissolution of rules but that requires negative capability and normally that involves education so its *chicken and egg situation really...'*

The officer talked here about changing occupational culture and indeed the remainder of this section discusses this in detail. As referred to in the introduction, Chan's theoretical framework of police culture is seemingly applicable to this research given that logistical and cultural barriers cannot be viewed in isolation. One does not exist without the other and both need to be addressed simultaneously when considering how the problematic nature of flexible working could be overcome.

The design of police work

Effective resourcing in the police organisation is paramount in meeting public demand and the design of police work has to reflect the need for this to be done efficiently. One of the key issues surrounding the suitability of flexible working within the current design of police work however comes back to the practice being counter culture, so although presented as a logistical barrier, the only thing keeping it so is driven by culture. The cultural construction of police work exists due to the fact that the 94% of officers who work full time 'fit' the standard design and flexible workers are the anomalies who present therefore as counterculture.

This once more is a chicken and egg situation since the only way to overcome the barrier would be if the organisation were to exist as a 'flexible force' whereby a sharp increase in the number of officers on alternative working patterns would compel the design of police work to change in line with successfully meeting public demand. It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss every individual element in the design of police work which collectively formulate what is described as 'the job' and indeed it is not the aim to do so given how widely documented the barriers created by the 'job' already are within the literature. Instead, using non mandatory residential training as an exemplary element of the job reported by flexible workers as problematic, the results offer some creative thinking as to how the general rigidity in the design of police work could be adapted to overcome some of the barriers faced by those seeking flexible working.

When asked about whether the design of police work is a barrier to flexible working, the most common response was that certain roles and departments (CID was the most frequent

example) didn't allow for it. This is not due to the tasks involved with the role itself, but rather due to the inability or willingness of management to accommodate it because of the workers inability to fit in with the standard design:

'.. It would be it, would be far easier for flexible workers to work i*n CID but we don't allow* that to happen. Often flexib*le workers can't ev*en get past the application process to get in to *CID mainly because CID see flexible working as a pain in the backside and don't want them to manage and that's a big cultural blocker because that's probably going to be the best kind* of work for a flexible worker that will allow them to raise their children. So I would say the *biggest blockers for improvement are cultural...'*

In relation to whether there are any roles within the organisation that could not be completed by a flexible worker, one Chief Inspector commented:

'...I actually think that every single role in the organisation is a possibility. There are some roles where you have to have a bum on a seat at a certain time of the day. So if you want to *start work at ten o clock then you probably can't be a FIM [force incident manager] because the shift goes off at 7 so that means they'll be no FIM for 3 hours and there's no other way of* managing it other than making him stay on or getting someone else on to cover you. So *there's certain roles that absolutely aren't suitable for flexible working but any role where there's more than one of you doing the same stuff then I don't think that's a problem at all but I wouldn't say there's any particular roles [where the work itself isn't suitable], open it up by a case by case basis...'*

In responding to austerity, many officers are now moving away from specialised roles and there has been a restructuring of shift patterns so that officers previously in specialised departments are available to perform additional response officer duties. Forces have started to recognise the need for having a flexible multi-skilled workforce which helps build resilience, e.g. roles can now be covered by a number of officers (HMIC, 2014). In terms of the impact on flexible working, having a multi-skilled workforce has the potential to ease some of the barriers faced by officers historically hindered in attaining specialist status due to their working arrangements. It should be noted that HMIC recognised different forces had adopted different responses to dealing with austerity and building a multi-skilled workforce has not been consistently adopted across the organisation. Although recognising how such a response may benefit flexible workers, a debate around the other implications of this is outside the scope of this paper.

All of the participants who had personal experience of working a flexible pattern commented on how and why they felt flexible working has hindered their career progression in the organisation:

Police Constable: *'...I couldn't do the assessors course so in that respect it hinders your progress because if you apply...say I'm interested in doing safeguarding in the future, they* advertise jobs for 40 hours so someone who says I *can work 30 hours you've got that barrier* and that battle again. A good example actually, I was going to apply for the team upstairs less than 18 months ago, applied for it and was told via email that they wanted someone full *time and that was that...'*

Chief Inspector: *'...The higher up you get it becomes certainly much harder and in terms of career progression it's a real problem. I kind of feel I'm giving up hope of any kind of* progression because the role that I had here p*reviously is what I'd have had to go on and do other things so what's even the point in even considering. That clearly not an option for me...'*

The above relates to the design of the promotion procedure and is consistent with the notion that part time officers are not able to show the right amount or type of commitment to get promoted. When looking then to what is considered to be the right amount or type of commitment, specialist training which in many instances is provided on a non mandatory residential basis is one reported way to further your career prospects within the organisation. Although the design of the promotion procedure is to an extent logistical based upon OSPRE examinations and meeting minimum standards, the cultural expectation needs to change and rebut the part time part committed attitude to ensure those who work flexibly are not disadvantaged next to their full time counterparts. This is considered further below in relation to management culture, but in brief, the current situation is a full circle of management continuing to recruit management like the management that have gone before them which provides very little scope for change. One Chief Inspector commented on a lack of creativity in thinking:

*'...If someone's on flexible working an*d they have career aspirations there should be some *element of how can it be done rather than assumed it can't be. What options are available?* For myself, most CI posts are in [other districts], the travelling itself makes it unworkable. Do those posts have to be in those locations or can they become somewhere else? I think very *often we're very much afraid of making that decision in case someone else will cease on it. If*

a decision is transparent what's the problem? It shouldn't be with 6 years to go that this is *what I'm going to do for the next 6 years...'*

Although only an exemplary aspect of problems in the design of police work, non mandatory residential courses were widely reported to be a barrier during interviews and are the subject focused upon in relation to the broader notion of how to incorporate flexibility into rigid systems:

'...It's hideous. I have today for the first time since I've had kids, 11 years I'm going on a residential for 3 nights but the logistical nightmare that involves for me to try and sort out *whose doing my pick up and drop offs...I've still never been on a course and I've had to say no. And so I've limited my development by saying no definitely.* There are loads of courses I coul*d have gone on but they're either* on a non working day so on a Friday and even if *they're not residential and they were in force and they ran for a week, and it says on the joining instructions make sure you can attend every day of this course, well no I can't. So I've turned down so many courses i can't even tell you...'*

Given how objectively the participants were in speaking about the notion of police culture, when asked about the logistics of residential courses a common justification arose from managers which seemingly demonstrates a widespread attitude deficient in an understanding of the wider picture of flexible working:

'...I mean if its causes so much of a hardship for somebody then....[laughs loudly]...Well I suppose I'm thinking why is that person applying for something they can't do physically?...'

The jovial nature of the above response seemingly demonstrated in this instance a lack of understanding of why people may request flexible working. This was echoed by another manager whose demeanour seemed to indicate a firm belief in their opinion of residential courses:

'...people put themselves up for these courses they're not mandatory, so you know full well if you're going to go for it that actually you're going to be away for 2 weeks in December and you can work around it... I would struggle to *find a residential course that's mandatory for everyone, unless you can think of one? So actually you're going to expect some disruption aren't you?...'*

The managers in this instance had been through the process of promotion at least twice in their career thus far and had been able to demonstrate how the experience gained from their

respective residential courses contributed to securing such promotion or a specialist role. There was a lack of understanding around those people who seek flexible working because there is no alternative but to leave the organisation without it. Planning is irrelevant for a lone parent for example, who is without support from friends or family in terms of providing a source of overnight childcare for any prolonged period of time. This seemed to be overlooked in favour of a view that people who worked flexibly for a better work life balance could always attend these courses if they wanted to which unfortunately is not always the case.

One sergeant commented on how the current financial climate meant that this was no longer an issue for the officers on his team since courses of this type have been reduced to such an extent anyway that they were no longer available to anyone and so austerity had inadvertently but perhaps temporarily eased this barrier:

'...Because we don't send front line staff on residential courses they don't worry about them. If I was sending them for example on CID courses and they were away 2 or 3 weeks away then yes it would be a big problem. But then again you*'ve got that really big question saying* why they need to be residential anyway? Why can we not put a video link in there because *you're still going to be able to interact with the classes and do the same learning but again that's critical thinking and again thinking outside of the box...'*

The sergeant also discussed whether there could be some increased flexibility in relation to whether in future these courses did in fact need to be residential or whether there could be some form of remote learning put in place to facilitate flexible workers who would otherwise not be able to access the training. An Inspector drew attention to one instance where he deemed flexibility in attending residential courses impracticable:

'...Some courses you need that [residential element]*,* some courses that really test you under stressful situations, a classic example would be a hostage negotiator course where 8-*4 isn't* going to cut it because you need to keep testing people 12-14 hours a day, work in the evening etcetera and actually *as a duty of care to the students you don't want them commuting 2 hours there and back to a residential course like that...'*

The inspector then went on to say however that although there are some instances such as the hostage negotiator course which he deemed did need to be residential, other courses should be reconsidered on an individual basis:

'...I think depending on the individual course there is room to look at whether or not some of that can be outsourced, whether that person has to do the whole entire 7 days or whatever it might be, is there part of that 7 days that can be done at home or is it something that can be *deferred for another time. I don't know what the implications would be..the whole point of the* exercise really is to get somebody train*ed up and in that role so don't know how* practicable that would be but I *don't see why it isn't something that can be looked at on a individual basis and could be managed locally...'*

The logistics of being able to offer increased flexibility around the requirement to attend residential courses in full do not appear insoluble given technological aids such as participation by the use of a live link. For this to be implemented and become available there needs to be some creativity within the organisation from someone who is empowered to implement such an initiative:

'...The only thing you'd need is a secure link for security purposes and to ensure you were in an environment to ensure you were the only person who could hear the training and we should be trusting our cops to do that and if they needed to we should be proving them with a laptop which can give them that secure link and then they can give that back*, it really isn't* difficult stuff. I guess the issue we might have is the speed of the internet and the connection and whether the IT department could figure it out but universities do it all over the world so it would be one of those questions you ask and people would shut you down straight away but *really there's not that many actual real blockers in the way it's just something we've never done before so we don't do it so it would be empowering someone with critical thinking to actually do something about it...'*

The idea of empowering someone with critical thinking to address cultural barriers enabled by the design of police work could be achieved easily if senior management were to support them by dedicating the resources and demonstrating their commitment to the 'cause'. This theory forms the final section of this chapter. As Bacon (2014) advocates, reform initiatives should utilise the capacity of individuals to develop police culture and bring about transformation. It is possible to define new ways of working and then inculcate a new set of assumptions to create new working models. The relationship between police culture and police practice has been described as a 'concept of style' (Chatterton, 1983) and if there were to be changes to such established elements of the job then this concept of style would change to accommodate them. It has been said that cultural change cannot be forced but can happen

either due to an external crisis or internal pressure to change (Bacon, 2014). As the officer comments below, there are legal implications to the current system that could easily become intensified in future. For example, a sharp increase in legal action brought against the organisation could lead not only to a financial crisis but also one which would leave the organisation open to criticism about their legitimacy and accountability:

*'...I know and you know wh*en it comes to flexible working, to offer those courses that flexible *workers can't attend is illegal....If we don't fulfil that requirement your looking down the* barrel of employment tribunal after employment tribunal and you know what some of them [police services] will have that, they can lose hundreds of thousands of pounds for the force *but in reality the same opportunity has to be there for flexible workers....'*

The idea of developing a flexible force may be rebutted by some as being vague and lacking any real substance. What I would say to those people at this point is that in returning to the narrative of David and Goliath, the biggest barrier to flexible working as we know has already been widely and repeatedly reported, is police occupational culture. Neither I nor the officers that have generated these ideas for this project profess to be business consultants or indeed people with enough technological knowledge to possibly know with any certainly the feasibility of the suggestions presented. The fact I view this as irrelevant given the aim of the project was to see if there were alternative solutions to overcome the barriers faced by flexible workers may surprise those readers.

However, if one takes a step back from the content of the ideas and instead looks to their meaning in terms of how they have been generated and by whom, a much more significant finding has been evidenced. The above demonstrates a willingness by police officers to challenge the culture that all who participated in this research recognised is having a fundamental impact on not just those officers seeking flexible working but actually as a much bigger picture of officer wellbeing in the organisation.

<u>Police Leadership</u>

Issues surrounding police leadership in the organisation are well documented in the literature. The matter of command and control leadership is an enshrined aspect of police culture and it was reported frequently in this project that it does not allow for creativity or progressive thinking in the very ranks that have the ability to facilitate change:

'...Anyone I've ever rubbed up against in relation to flexible working has always been somebody 25-30 years in and always had a set view on what flexible working is and what it brings to the force and they will shoe horn in to that view and it doesn't matter what that person puts forward but if that's what they want to happen that's what they want to happen so it's like its watching command and control really from your ranks above dictating, which is a complete theme because command and control and flexible don't go together, at all, it doesn't make sense at all. So when you've got command and control leaders who rule everything with an iron fist and you ask them to supervise and check of flexible working, you but up against each other...'

In relation to many of the logistical changes suggested above, it was explicitly reported that the reason such changes are not happening is due to a management mentality entrenched with cultural constructs that do not encourage progressive thinking:

'...I imagine that our current culture would say there's big logistical issues to enabling it [flexible working] properly, I think the biggest logistical issues are in their heads. I don't think it's anything to do with logistics I think it's a lot do with cultural constructs and their ability for negative capability so their ability to think outside of their current mode of thinking and look at something that's really new. I don't think we've got enough leaders able to do that and look at it as an opportunity and not a pain in the ass...'

Accompanying command and control leadership is the notion of learnt helplessness from front line officers which was a common concept reported by officers:

'...we keep talking about changing leadership in the organisation and one of the biggest problems is we have a real lack of leadership top down but because of command and control that brings about learnt helplessness so people feel like they're helpless within the police construct. If you feel like you're helpless you're never going to push for change and that's what command and control does, so the first thing you've got to do really is step outside your command and control construct and realise it really it doesn't matter and anybody can enforce change. Are there a lot of people who are like that who I've met, definitely not...'

One officer identified simply but effectively how a change in leadership mentality would reduce the stigma faced by those seeking flexible working:

'...this is chicken and egg because if you're in a command and control culture and all you know is command and control leadership, if I ask you what a good leader is it's a command

and control leader that's good so until you know the alternative you're always going to go with what you kn*ow. This happens with flexible working so because all we've ever known is* 7-3 shifts, the minute someone steps outside it you use that framework to criticize that to say *'oh they're not working 7-3'. When you start to remove those barriers and you open out* the *possibility to work you don't have that framework and the criticism but at the minute it's there, so the more rigid we have our work environment the more you've got really to have a* go at flexible work*ers. The more flexible you make your workforce the less impact a flex*ible *working arrangement will have. It's tough. But, some of that's from leadership they've got no understanding, half of them are ex military and they don't even listen. While we've got leaders like that and we don't do anything with them you're always going to have that and it's unfortunate. It's tough and it's tough for people working there...'*

The notion of helplessness within the organisation in a situation which the officer above described as 'tough' for front line officers was reported by other respondents who were reluctant to become a champions or known advocates of flexible working due to the negative implications this would have on them:

'...Yeah. the trouble is with been a champion when it's not commissioned by the senior comma*nd team then you're not a champion are you you're a trouble causer or a fed rep or something like that...'*

In response then to the above comment, it would be relatively simple and beneficial to the organisation if the senior command team went further to ensure that such champions exist in every force. Another respondent echoed the sentiment when commenting on how the current culture meant that those trying to implement change would effectively commit 'career suicide':

*'...I suppose someone who's put themse*lves up to be a fed rep could be a champion but *there's only so far that you can stick your head above the parapet and if you're the lone voice and the only one that's speaking it's a really lonely place to be and people have had the*ir heads chopped off fo*r less, so it's okay if your careers over...'*

It would seem that officers need to feel supported and there needs to be recognition and positive reinforcement from management for those who desire occupational culture change. The above seemingly demonstrates this culture of 'learnt helplessness' preventing officers from challenging culture in the current climate. It was reported by a sergeant that in his force

he had developed an initiative that sought to counteract this feeling of 'learnt helplessness' and although in its early stages, the initiative was proving popular with front line officers:

'...I've just done a session in my force on promotion and selection looking at the way we promote and we select. I opened it out and it was advertised internally to everybody and it *said look if you want to discuss the future of select and promotion then come and we'll have this discussion and then 26 out of 5000 turned up so that's to give you an idea of the level of* disengagement in the force, its nuts. But within that there was probably 10 that I would say are real creative innovators and part of me having that workshop was to record what was said and then take it up to the bosses and act as their voice because they will not, those guys *won't speak out, they won't go* and speak to the bosses, they feel their career is at risk or their position is at risk, so there as to be some sort of conduit within forces when people are empowered to speak on behalf or for those people who want to talk and that give them an open door *a little bit, that's what I would say. That's what's happening in my force and I'm* watching it happen and I *know it's working. So even from the back of that I've had 30 or 40* emails from people in force saying sorry I *couldn't make it but can i give you s*ome feedback *and I've said yeah go for it and all of a sudden this conversation happened on the front line* that would never have happened otherwise, so I *think the will is there but someone's got to open the door on it...'*

The development of such an initiative is the work of someone who can only be described as an innovator or 'driver' who was not afraid to speak out, although he recognised himself that this was only enabled with the support of his executive management and he was a unique position because of this:

'...Middle management aren't liking a lot of stuff I'm doing now and they're certainly not liking what I'm talking about now [culture] but I'm not actually that lucky because I've got a lot of depth behind me and a lot of the support is coming through the DCC, but the reason I have that support from the DCC is because I went and booked in with him and had 2 hours *with him...so that result came from my doing, it didn't fall in my lap and that's probably what* we need more of in the service in general. The problem is that the environment is such that pe*ople don't want to do that and I completely understand why, there's so much risk attached to it. unless we take that risk or the people at the bottom start to take that risk you're never* going to get that change that you want because the leaders at the top are so far detached from the front line that even if they wanted to enforce change they would really struggle, so

it's got to come bottom up but the only way it can come bottom up is if we start to tell people *that suffering learnt helplessness go and get of your backside and do something about it...'*

The Gender Agenda 3 document recommended an increase in good practice sharing between forces to promote flexible working. The workshop initiative if proved successful appeared to be a practice that the organisation as a whole could benefit from given it could serve to 'close the gap' between command and control leaders and front line officers. If it is indeed the case that front line officers are the people in the current climate that can coerce a cultural change, then these officers need to be given the tools to do so i.e. enabling them to break away from the feeling of learnt helplessness. When officers were asked about their experience of good practice sharing they commented widely how although on an individual level officers often learnt from one another, at force level this was also dependent on management willingness to engage:

'...In terms of sharing good practice, the only reason sharing good practice is useful is if the *people you're sharing it to actually want to listen. So you'll have a lot of forces that think they're doing fine in this area and it won'*t go anywhere unfortunately...'

It has been identified above that the command and control culture in police management is restricting creativity and innovative thinking to allow for changes in the service that would benefit those seeking flexible working. To understand the cultural barrier as a whole, it is important next to consider this in the context of the political landscape in which managers operate.

New Public Management and Target Culture

The unintended consequences of new public management (NPM) were reported widely by interviewees as negatively influencing management decisions on flexible working. NPM performance management has developed over the last quarter of a century stemming hugely from the 1997 Labour government. The literature reports that the paradigmatic ideological shift had far-reaching consequences for operational policing, and although gradually moving away from this target culture, the respondents talked widely about its continued impact and its relationship to flexible working:

'...It's probably increased even though the rhetoric is that it's reduced. The bottom line is la*zy man*age*ment if I'm talking about management co level. They just see figures and graphs* and then raw data and invariably a couple of them are okay about it but the majority will say

*why is it in red? All they're looking at is 48 percent instead of 50 but they don't under*stand the context behind it and I *think there's a lack of willingness to get involved in that context or* to realise that you know what, crime figures go up and down, sometimes we can work out *why sometimes we can't...'*

Mangers themselves identified attitudes in colleagues which stemmed from NPM because flexible working and target culture were not compatible. Managers reported how they viewed flexible working applications unfavourably since they viewed any deviation from the standard design of police work as a handicap to their resourcing:

'...Senior leaders go on and say actually there are no targets but middle management get in the way and there will be targets for units. At my last place you could say actually considerations around flexible working were affected by performance and meeting targets because the argument was why am I going to handicap myself further? If that person wanted to move fair enough but for that person to stay in that role it wasn't suitable...'

HMIC (2014) confirmed that the aspiration to remove targets is not translating in to an operational reality. Similarly, one manager recognised the developments the organisation had made in relation to targets, however, there is still a long while to go before the front line officers will see the benefits of moving away from a target based culture:

'...When you're chasing targets you get frustrated with 'I need the resources to that', I'm not going to change my resource base to manage that....There's certainly that performance culture *but we are moving, but let's be honest we're battling against it. I've done it myself, I've been in a culture where we've had on a division we've had to hit 20 local targets and* you need to be chasing the numbers rather than providing the service. I think the chief has *moved away from that slightly but not there yet...you're always got to have targets in mind but if you get the workforce right they'll follow. Work ethos and the way people work, if that's right the rest will follow...'*

It was also reported that target culture impacted negatively on management ability to focus on officer wellbeing generally when trying to meet divisional objectives:

'...There's other supervision who will just stick to the targets they have so the targets that have been set...*hitting that target may be a divisional objective and they're more concerned* about hitting a divisional objective than they are with the wellbeing of the individual staff and *that is common. That is not acceptable...'*

It was evident from speaking to all recipients of flexible working arrangements that seeking flexible working (from the initial application through to work pattern reviews) had had a fundamental impact on their mental health. Many described the psychological effects of the process as having caused them stress, depression, low self esteem and guilt. It is acknowledged that people with higher levels of psychological wellbeing are happier, more positive and from an organisational perspective are a more valuable resource (Robertson and Cooper, 2011).

In a wider context, austerity has been attributed to creating a working environment that can be particularly stressful for employees and as such, lower performance levels may be experienced (Wright and Cropanzano, 2000). In a time then when many officers feel they do not have control over the responses to austerity implemented in their forces, management need to take control where possible and work to increase officer wellbeing where they can. One way this could be achieved in relation to flexible working is to ensure officers seeking a work life balance by way of flexible working no longer feel marginalised and lack self worth for doing so. This could come by challenging occupational culture and enabling more officers to take action without what they believe are inevitable negative repercussions in terms of their future career development in the organisation.

Officers reported a relationship between police occupational culture, officer wellbeing and this target culture. This relationship exasperates the cultural barriers for those seeking flexible working:

*'...the issue I have is even having that discussion with senior management now, it's so counter culture that they can't get their head roun*d *it at all so if for instance I was to say we've got a really great Chief Inspector she's got great emotionally empathy and intelligence, they'd give her flexible working then see that their targets weren't been hit for the percentage of time of shift then they'd just take it of her because they're losing the contro*l *unfortunately and they don't like it...'*

The police can benefit from creating an environment where employees can successfully prosper, have a sense of purpose and enjoy a fulfilling working life. If the organisation succeeds in this they can expect optimum dedication and productivity from its officers (Robertson and Cooper, 2011). Many officers spoken to made reference to the fact that flexible workers were often more productive than their full time counterparts because they felt a need to continuously prove their worth to colleagues. Management need to recognise

this and actually communicate the benefits and business case for the practice to their teams if the organisation is to be successful in challenging this barrier.

Tenure

Given that politically the NPM era has somewhat diminished, the career tenure of police officers can become problematic in terms of challenging culture. It was reported that the management who were promoted during that era continue to manage in a way attuned to this, regardless of subsequent contemporary changes to the policing landscape. It was suggested that this is because their promotion reinforced to them that their success is due to performing the job the 'correct' way. Cockcroft (2013) highlighted how senior officers tend to be cut from the same cultural cloth as lower officers and this may well be true due to the select and promote procedures in operation throughout the organisation. This issue is not exclusive to target culture but in fact applies to police occupational culture as a whole and should be considered also in relation to the other aspects of police culture highlighted from this research that are discussed below.

Unlike private business whereby if an organisation wants to reimage itself it will bring in management to reflect the new image, the average thirty year tenure of police officers is responsible for the difficulties in adapting police management culture to reflect contemporary policing. The promotion procedure of working through the ranks over several decades to reach executive management level inevitably creates a situation where the transition period from police constable to police leader takes longer than societal developments both inside and outside the police organisation. This subsequently creates a 'detachment' from front line policing since by the time the 'creative and innovate thinker' from twenty years ago reaches the top, society has changed and the traditional leadership route does nothing to ensure its leaders evolve with society:

'...I think the issue you've got at the moment is based round tenure. So if a private company wants to change its culture they will come in and they will sack people and they will get *people who represent the new culture in to their position and the force can't do that be*cause *they've got a twenty year tenure on all our leaders, so you've got Chief Inspectors with* *fifteen to twenty years in who were promoted during that NPM era and they're sticking* *around for ten plus years before they can retire and they're been given fl*exible working to be *managed and they just sit there and do what they've always done but with flexible working.* How can it change? I would say if people do what the Leadership Review is asking and they

work to something called strength based leadership and collective leadership where people are put in the organisation where they fit best...'

As the officer described, the Leadership Review addresses many issues surrounding leadership in the organisation but in returning to Chan's theory of police occupational culture, no matter how well intended the review may be, it is in itself unlikely to bring successful change to leadership in the organisation without simultaneous change to the habitus. Interestingly, many of the recent initiatives that have been introduced or are currently under consultation, for example the Education Qualification Framework, Direct Entry programmes and Police Now programme are not concerned with tenure at all and appear therefore to be incredibly counterculture. It is unsurprising then that all of these initiatives have been met with much controversy from within the organisation. These kinds of innovative initiatives or programmes may however be the change to the habitus that previous attempts at reforming problematic policing practices have lacked. It will be interesting to see in future what level of success, if any, these have been met with and this is certainly an area for future research.

Risk aversion

Respondents commented that target culture caused management decision making to be risk averse and this affected management decisions to facilitate flexible working requests. It was reported that their priority becomes meeting divisional objectives and management know that these are attainable by maintaining the status quo so therefore diametrically oppose any deviation from this. One manager commented:

'...organisations tend to be risk adverted and we tend to look at it in a very narrow way and so it does affect your decision making there's no doubt about it...'

As Heaton (2010) highlighted, risk aversion stems from the actions of central government. The rigidity of both police systems and the design of police work keep the uptake of flexible working statistically low and therefore the practice exists contrary to the status quo. This then exasperates the belief that granting an officer flexible working will make it more difficult for them to resource effectively and meet divisional targets. The risk and regulation advisory council (2009) described risk aversion as a 'corrosive influence' as it leads to officers adopting excessively bureaucratic and rule based working patterns which is incompatible with contemporary policing. As one Chief Inspector simply commented on the decision making process:

'...it's safer not to be flexible, than flexible...'

Smith (2009) suggested that to evade risk averse decision making the organisation should promote 'entrepreneurial policing' which is a concept that balances risk averse policing with innovation. It was noted that at present the current hierarchy of leadership stifles entrepreneurism and privileges the politically acute networker. Participants suggested that the only way to challenge risk aversion would be for the organisation to empower someone who isn't risk averse to facilitate and drive forward a process of logistical reform. Cockcroft (2013) stated how police officers are now increasingly viewed as less likely to engage in innovative policing and are increasingly controlled in a culture where they feel inadequately supported to make decisions for themselves. Therefore, the organisation needs to develop a culture where officers do feel adequately supported and this is discussed further below in relation to implementing change. For the organisation to be successful in moving away from risk aversion, an officer commented on how the officer driving change needs the ability to manage uncertainty:

'...the first thing that you have to deal with is a lack of control; you don't know what's going to happen. Some of those staff it may work for some of the*m won't, some of the policies will* work some of them wont, what happens if the system crashes, all these uncertainties that are *out there, we're horrific at managing them and we don't like them culturally so it's like* stepping in to the unknown and stepping in to the unknown is something again that command *and control leaders don't like, its massive risk aversion, one of the big things of command* *and control leadership is that you have control over the variables and you can't have control* over the variables *of flexible working, otherwise they wouldn't be flexible! The police* environment is really badly locked in to a particular style and mindset and that stopping all *sorts of good things happening...'*

In an independent review of policing (2008), the relationship between a decrease in police discretion and the subsequent increase in bureaucracy was highlighted. It was reported that there was a growing tendency for officers to allow themselves to become overly directed by policies and this was further supported by police occupational culture. If the organisation is committed to developing occupational culture and can better manage uncertainty and support officers in being innovative, then it is likely that discretion could be utilised to better support officers seeking flexible working and the level of bureaucracy could be reduced.

A culture of masculine solidarity well reported from the inception of policing research remains evident from the respondents in this project. Although more recent research including the Gender Agenda documents (2001; 2006; 2013) has documented the progress that the organisation has made in relation to equality and diversity over the past decade, one Chief Inspector spoke widely about her experiences and believed although the organisation is doing much better, gender myths and stereotypes are still commonplace:

'...I think they [management] just assume that everyone who's female and got kids obviously wants to a) work part time and b) has obviously had their brain removed and c) go and work in that department [PPU or desk based roles]. *I just think it's bonkers...'*

When asked about whether the fact more women were in leadership positions now than there were twenty years ago meant this culture of masculinity had changed, one officer commented on how the negative attitudes were not gender exclusive to men, but rather exclusive to a management mentality generally:

'...I think some of the more senior women because they had to deal with it back then when you couldn*'t flexibly work, they're judging today's standards by that...'*

When police constables were asked how they thought management perceived their flexible working, it was reported they felt undervalued and were viewed unfavourably:

'...As a whole they think you're lazy, you have too much time off. With me it's a little bit different becau*se they know I'm around* their shift. Generally they see it as a cop out and they *think you're taking the piss a bit really with the system when really you're not...'*

Part of this perception was reported as existing because flexible working is inconsistent with a command and control leadership style. It was widely stated how managers perceived flexible workers to be telling the organisation what they were working and this was deemed to be unacceptable. It was described as signifying a lack of respect of the disciplined hierarchical organisation which employs them:

'...I know that there are colleagues out there including really senior management that think part timers are te*lling the organisation what they should work...'*

This particular perception appears to mirror many of the cultural issues lower ranking officers face and reinforces the notion of learnt helplessness as discussed above. The sergeant who

was described above as a 'driver' for innovative thinking, commented on how he often viewed line manager colleagues decisions for refusing a flexible working request as silly:

'...I think I set the barrier like here [signals hand high] and most people set it right over there [signals hand low] so sergeants will say to me 'oh I've knocked so and so back because of this or this' and I'll be thinking that's a silly reason...'

A Chief Inspector recalled an occasion from her previous role whereby she experienced such attitudes from colleagues in relation to flexible working and demonstrated how actually challenging these perceptions could be achieved:

'...an Inspector on an SNA said to me you've been in legal services, you've been part time what do you think to this? He told me about 2 PCSO's who were husband and wife on his team and one wanted to have Mondays of and one of them wanted to have Fridays of so they only have to get and pay for childcare on the other days... so I went well that sounds reasonable is there anyone else on that can do his job on a Friday and hers on a Monday? 'Well there are other PCSO's on yes', well what's the problem then? 'Well I'm not having them telling me what they're doing'. So I had this massive discussion with him saying how short sighted, you tell me why they have to be there on those days. I said if you can tell me that there's no one else that can do that job, there's no one else that can take the heat or there's a huge risk to the organisation or public safety then I'm all ears and he couldn't justify it. So he agreed it in the end and it was in, I think the penny dropped with him eventually it's not my job to say no, my job is to say yes and try and make it work and actually I shouldn't be saying no because if ever it went to an employment tribunal id be on sticky wicket...'

Discretion of policy

Discretion in many areas of policing provides the context in which police culture can influence the use, manipulation and circumvention of the laws, policies and directives that are flexible, indeterminate or deemed situationally inappropriate for the exigencies of police work (Bacon, 2013). Given negative perceptions towards flexible working were reported as widespread amongst colleagues and management, respondents were asked whether such perceptions could influence management decision making for flexible working requests when logistically their decisions were governed by law and policy. Respondents reported that management perceptions did affect the decision making process:

*'...ultimately it will come do*wn to the personalities of people who make those decisions really because you know as well as I do, you can ride with anything whichever wa*y you want to suit your argument...'*

One manager described how the perception of an individual from management affects their decision making process:

*'...It depends on their take on it as in...*I say that...I think generally if people are prepared to *show a willingness to be flexible then...it depends on them as an individual but if they're* a hard working professional...I *know its again subjective and shouldn't in theory dictate the* outcome... *but if you get a really hard working individual who says you know what I've* got some issues at the minute I need to do this, *rather than a lazy person who just doesn't want to* work *then yeah they might take a different view...'*

One Inspector suggested that management discretion could also favour those seeking flexible working; however this was very much dependent on individual attitude:

'...Yeah that's just human nature anyway really isn't it? It depends what business you're in. If your first line manager is taking a particular approach to something that's going to affect everything from how you deal with an investigation all the way through to *I'd like every* Christmas of please beca*use I'm a big family person'...* Whereas my manager might hate *Christmas and have worked every one for the last 25 years and can't see why...*So it just *depends on them as an individual...'*

At middle management level, a difficulty was reported in that management decisions on flexible working were influenced by the fear of repercussions from subsequent applicants if they were to grant a flexible working request that could not be replicated throughout the team:

*'...*The problem is you have a framework, everyone gets treated on their own merits. But the minute you make one decision, that then becomes the new standard for the next decision you *have to make, so for example the individual I'm looking at at the minute*, I might think well you know what I would wear that [would accept their request], but that then sets a precedent for the next person that I *wouldn't be able to wear and that's the problem. So you can't truly* treat people based purely on their case, because based purely on their case they may be given a fl*exibility that you wouldn't want to routinely apply*, then you find other people 3 or 4 other

people will apply to have that same flexibility then complain about *that you're not acting equally...'*

<u>Centralisation of decision making</u>

Centralising the decision making process in theory was suggested to ensure applicants had an equal chance of success, however respondents commented on how this does not equate to fairness or prevent individual discretion influencing a decision:

'...Well that's luck isn't it as to who you get? If you get a woman with no kids or a woman *who's palmed their kids off to a nanny and wasn't interested in looking after them then she's* going to have an entirely different view to someone who has childcare issues, understands the issues and t*ried to facilitate some discussion...'*

It is recognised that many forces do have some element of centralisation of decision making and this is usually a Superintendent who will oversee all requests. Issues were raised however about the relationship between the person making such decisions and their personal view on flexible working:

*'...every district has one person that makes decisions on flexible working so there's continuity but you've got continuity of one person and if that one person doesn't like flex*ible working *then you're knackered aren't you because they're the only person making those decisions...'*

The need for discretion in the decision making process was not disputed since respondents felt the rigidity of the policy itself would cause issues without interpretation due to managers having to use to the same tool kit to make decisions in different departments:

'...Instead of considering every application in its own right, you're considering something that might not work in uniform but it might work in CID or it might not work in PPU but it might work in Intel and your judging all flexible working applications by the same *standard...'*

Respondents recognised that discretion in decision making would have to remain, however there needed to be more checks and balances on the person empowered to make such decisions to dispel negative attitudes influencing decisions:

*'...I think you need someone with an overview because you can't end up w*ith or want a situation like PPU *where everybody goes in that's part time and then you think oh shit there's*

nobody here between 8 and 10am because that's bonkers isn't it. So it just needs someone with an overview of the district who can say yeah we can manage that because we can do it elsewhere but we need the right person to be doing t*hat not just because they're a* S*uper* [intendent] *. It needs the right person to consider. I suppose it's about training that person to consider the grey areas...'*

One officer commented on how in his force they had done this successfully by empowering a sergeant who had personal experience of flexible working to coordinate decisions on flexible working and this was successful in that she gave an oversight that the previous system was lacking. The post however was a twelve month secondment and did not continue, although the officer commented on how he believed the only reason for this was financial and that the organisation would benefit from making this a permanent post:

*'...T*hey bought in someone who managed flexible working across the force. It was a female sergeant who had issues with flexible working herself. They empowered her to become the coordinator for a secondment of 12 months. She dismantled all the...from all divisions in [force]. She found there were massive discrepancies between the *3 BCU's depending on the* management. So in my division we had an absolute nobhead and it was a nightmare but in another *division it was great. Obviously you'd have cops on one side saying it's never then a problem and officers in another saying it's a* huge problem. Big issues there. The *centralisation gave a perception and oversight that wasn't there before. They've actually stepped away from that now because they think they've got it about right and everyone's kind* of equal and that twelve months is over...'

When asked if this was something that he believed could be implemented across the organisation, he commented that yes it should be and could be by raising awareness of the legal implications that discrepancy may cause:

'...Yeah, and I can tell you how to sell that, the fact that discrepancy exists is a raft of *employment tribunals waiting to happen there's no doubt about it and if any of those cops* wanted to they could probably sue the hell out the constabulary because of *the process...'*

Individual needs v. Organisational needs

The competing demands of the organisation and individual needs are well documented in the literature. When talking to all officers, this was highly reported as an issue still in existence and the inability to balance the need remains a huge barrier for those seeking flexible

working. One manager expressed their views on this difficulty and spoke of how individuals know what they sign up for when they join the organisation and therefore need to adhere to the systems in place:

'...people sometimes give you tales of woe when actually variably it is about childcare or could be that you're wanting to take a business interest. Well you've chosen to do that, 9 times out of 10 you've chosen to have kids, you've chosen to pursue a business interest. You currently work for this organisation you know what the rules are. We've all got issues going on in our lives and therefore don't expect the organisation to try and fit around you, you need to fit around them...'

In response to the issues laid out above, the only way to overcome to competing demands of the organisational needs and the individual needs would be to create a situation whereby they no longer inevitably have to compete and instead were two of the same thing. Flexible working should not be seen as problematic but instead operate as something with a tangible benefit to both the organisation and the individual. If police occupational culture is the barrier preventing such a situation, then relating back to Chan's theoretical framework there needs to be analogous changes to culture and practice driven from within the organisation. A superintendent commented on how this would be achieved:

'...the starting point is why do we want flexible working? Is it because legally we have to have it and therefore it*'s available for those people that want to avail themselves and we'll* do it within our awkward systems or is it because we recognise there is a tangible benefit to this and if so what is that tangible business benefit and then how do you start saying to people there is a business benefit? How do we demonstrate this and how much of it do we want? Because we say how much we wanted out because we articulate our business is about *solving crime and so we want to reduce crime this much and the way we'*re going to do it is to involve this amount of our work force in preventative activities and have this amount of *our workforce out at night and this amount of our activities around licensed premise's* because we know alcohol and violence go hand in glove. Well where is the articulation of any *of this that says this is something that ought to be doing, we're not actively promoting it we're just actively saying it's an option. There's a distinct difference. So you want this to* work, you want this to become a flexible employer then someone has to say, someone has to prove to the organisation there is a tangible business benefit because all businesses operate around tangible business benefit. Even those that have really good terms and conditions have

a lot more than the flexibility than we do. I mean you can talk about Google that have pool tables and this that and the other, well we can ever have these flexibilities not least because of the legislation but also because the public perception of officers lying all round all day and *pouring themselves tequila sunrises, you just can't do it...but Google has got something that* says this delivers a business benefit. It delivers a business benefit because we have staff that *like to be in the office, they're* creative staff so actually if I can have them sitting in the office *for 12 hours a day and they're only paid to come in for 8 hours a day I'll probably have 9 hours of work out them while I'm only paying them for 8 hours because I've put on tequila* sunrises this that a*nd the other...because they feel good about it they'll buy in to it and they'll* do x y and z. It is also cost calculation, no business is actually friendly especially when they have shareholders but sometimes what they do are friendly things because they see attachable benefit from it and I thin*k we've got to find our place. I*f flexible working is very good for policing and I *don't know if it is, but if it is we need to connect it to business benefit* and then start investing in it...you know, how much of i*t do we want? What's the best model* of it? What support do we need to put behind it? T*hat's how you change the culture...'*

Respondents commented on the difficulties that management faced in dealing with flexible working requests, particularly in certain departments such as PPU where culture has reportedly created a dominance of flexible workers in 'female' roles:

'...My DI, she used to manage PPU and she was given a load of part time female staff basically and they said so if you come back of maternity and you want part time then you go *in to PPU. So she then had a nightmare because she'd got 20 different flexible working arrangements that had been agreed elsewhere, they'd all come in to her unit and she'd end* up with nobody there between 8-10am on a Monday when there was loads of meetings with social services and she had kids to *so...'*

When asked how this particular manager dealt with this situation, it was reported that she didn't and was put on an action plan:

*'...Well she didn't she sunk. She ended up be*en put on an action plan for not managing her unit, yet she was given the staff so there was no choice, they were put in there. She was told *to manage it. Well she couldn't manage them and she couldn't manage the workload so she sank...'*

The cultural construct of 'female friendly' roles certify the continuation of barriers faced by flexible workers because they become part of a circular notion of culture that the organisation can not break out from without becoming a flexible workforce, thus overcoming cultural barriers. The perception that flexible working is for women coupled with the perception that women are more suited to certain types of police work strengthen the cultural barrier, since while this remains the situation there is nothing happening to force a cultural change throughout the organisation.

<u>Communication</u>

During interviews officers were asked if they had any knowledge of the Gender Agenda documents or if they were aware of any information or recommendations that had previously been made in relation to barriers faced by those seeking flexible working. Three had heard of the Gender Agenda documents (Superintendent, Chief Inspector and Sergeant) but could not offer any further information as to their purpose or content. Many of the officers contributing to this project have evidenced their vision of change and consider themselves to be more progressive in their thinking than the organisation is demonstrating. These respondents were discontented but not surprised that given they considered themselves to be in the minority of officers actively expressing their desire of cultural change, they were unaware of some of the progressive work already been done by representative organisations such as the BAWP. They commented widely that this is due to a lack of communication throughout the force which is reflective of an organisation deficient in prioritising workforce development:

'...it comes back to that issue we were discussing about our lack of organizational work force development. Communication from t*he centre's appalling, it's appalling about everything it isn't just about gender it's just appalling. So the officers come in they have their briefing then answer their radio for 10 hours then go home, so where's the organisational interaction* there? It d*oesn't happen and the only way people would normally hear that is through an enterprising sergeant who gives a shit and there's not many of them...in terms of the organisation they're so disengaged and even if s*omething did come out about the Gender Agenda *its very unlikely they'd read it unless they had some personal interest in it. Putting something out like that in to an infrastructure that doesn't work already is going to result in* poor take up and poor engagement with it because our general workforce development is so *poor...'*

When an Inspector was asked whether he believed this type of document would be welcomed by officers should there be better communication of them in future, he commented on how they would be viewed negatively unless their relevance and importance was made explicit:

*'...Yeah with all these things, I think there's human nature a bit of human psychology here where people will only take interest in something if there's something in it for them, instinctively, like my team well you've se*nt me stuff about ANPR but so what happens, how is that going to affect me? And unless people make it relevant, and undoubtedly with the gender *agenda there's some really important stuff in there no doubt about* the role of women policing and I get that, so *actually if that's spun around to be made relevant to people they'd* be a take up on it but I *think we're guilty of doing these reports a disservice and okay you must implement this and these recommendations and people are like oh great that's* something el*se I've got to deal with now as opposed to engaging with people...'*

As the Superintendent comments above, to make flexible working explicitly relevant to the organisation it needs to understand the tangible business benefits that accompany it. It then needs to be demonstrating a commitment to flexible working, rather than the practice existing because legally it has to exist. Police officers must believe that there is a need to change, be convinced that the proposed policies of reform are both necessary and appropriate and equipped to introduce and maintain support for the changes in their everyday activities (Bacon, 2014).

The current policies on flexible working could theoretically remain unchanged (in the absence of logistical change to working practices and procedures) given they already describe well the tangible business benefits of flexible working. It is becoming increasingly assured that the barriers to flexible working are either underpinned by culture or exist culturally on their own and these at present are the problematic issue for any future reform.

In relation to Chan's theory however, if there is to be any success in cultural reform then it is likely the policy needs to be revisited and/or revised simultaneously with any attempt to develop the culture. There is an understanding of the benefits of flexible working that is shown to exist by way of formal construction (policy), but is lacking greatly throughout the organisational workforce due to the absence of any demonstrable commitment to flexible working. Foster (2003) highlighted how cultural change could be successful if supported by appropriate leadership strategies. Only when this commitment is demonstrated, will line

managers feel supported and indeed enabled to act in a way coherent with organisational strategy.

Changing culture

For the culture to change, respondents commented upon how all members of the organisation needed to be involved, however the starting point should be at executive level management because initiating any culture change must come from executive management empowering their subordinates with a voice to counteract the feeling of learnt helplessness. A starting point could be to positively 'exploit' the current risk aversion leadership style and highlight to executive management how much organisational risk is actually associated with the barriers faced by the organisations employees seeking flexible working:

'...It has to be greater understanding. A really good way to do it would be to get an external consultant who was a specialist in flexible working to come in to the force and actually listen *to them. That would be a really good way to do it because they'd probably highlight a load of* *organisational risk they're running that's worth hundreds of thousands of pounds and* say *they need to sort it out quick...'*

Respondents were asked if they believed at present there is a difference between the rhetoric of the Chief Constables commitment to flexible working and the reality in practice. The project is absent from any input of executive level management (Assistant Chief Constable or above) and interestingly, all but one participant (a police constable) inadvertently addressed the question in regard to middle management instead of the Chief Constable. Given the small number of individuals at the rank of Chief Constable it is not possible to speculate whether these officers have a 'real' commitment to flexible working or not but it is futile to debate here anyway given that respondents were diverting their attention to the middle management rank of Superintendent. Lack of effective communication throughout the ranks was reported to be the real barrier, rather than the personal views of executive management:

'...The message quite often doesn't filter down so even if the Chief said I fully support flexible working and everyone needs to be doing what they need to do, by the time it filters down to inspector level the inspector *'s still thinking how can I be doing my job if I've got to give* *everyone flexible working? So therefore I'm go*ing to resist it and its only when the appeals *go through and it gets considered by a panel much further up the food chain that there's any* *kind of revocation of that decision, but it is ignorance...'*

One way to improve communication between management ranks would be for the organisation to recognise the value that front line management can have in implementing change and unite with executive management in doing so. Operational line managers play a part in the extent to which front line officers engage in behaviours that reflects the strategy of the organisation (DeJong et al, 2001; Engel and Worden 2003). There is little research on the role of front line managers and certainly scope for future research on how they can be utilised in overcoming problematic policing practices such as flexible working. At an operational level, line managers are capable of influencing the behaviours of front line staff and therefore theoretically have the capability to drive change at this level in relation to the cultural barriers described by those undertaking alternative working arrangements.

How you measure 'good' leadership is complex and is a paper in its own right. In relation to NPM and target culture discussed above however, Schafer (2010) highlighted how supervisors with good leadership qualities might not produce the expected results, whilst poor leaders can get the job done. This is true when organisational strategies remain constrained by the political landscape in which they operate and different levels of management are singing from different hymn sheets. Communication of the need for sergeants to become innovative and creative thinkers is therefore paramount. Front line management need to become 'free' from such restraint and to achieve this, the organisation needs to recognise that cultural reform has to be driven at every level. Front line managers need to believe they have executive management support and to achieve this, the belief has to be based on reality.

The starting point is therefore to educate middle management (CI/Supt/CSupt). A key organisational issue for improving the potential influence of Sergeants and Inspectors is to find the right people for the job and then provide them with the tools to deliver e.g. adequate training (Engel and Peterson, 2014). Depending on what the vision and commitment of middle management is will influence who they then deem to be the 'right' person for the job. Participants were confident in stating that middle management needed to embark on innovative reform and at present the biggest barrier was a lack of creativity at senior level. The starting point for any reform should therefore be focussing upon this level:

*'...It sits in between... it's sort of m*iddle to senior management and I think it sits with divisional Superint*endents rather than ACPO level. I think that's the level the change needs* to be driven at. I mean policy can only be changed by people up there but the people to *influence and can push that upwards are the divisional commanders...'*

Similarly, an officer commented on communicating the wider notion of procedural justice:

'...re-educate senior managers in procedural justice and when they realise that being fair as part of this service actually means getting more out of your workforce all of a sudden they have a motivation to do it and at the minute that understanding isn't there. If at the minute I said to one of my senior managers how is that procedurally fair just they'd look at me and say bugger of please end of conversation...'

One officer, who had previously commented on the role of their line management in implementing change, also supported the idea that targeting executive management needed to be the initial driver:

'...the decision will be made much higher up [than line management], so I think if that's going to be something you want to influence it needs to be at the right level and you need to be hitting the divisional commanders...'

Officers were asked about whether if a change in occupational culture were to be successful at middle manager level and this was driven top down throughout the organisation, would line management consequently take personal responsibility for their own continued development in terms of training and educating themselves on the benefits of flexible working or would it requires an additional input? It was noted that although there were individuals who would take personal responsibility for their own continued development, the organisation should not in future take for granted that they would since this very much comes down to the individual:

'...Very difficult, I think the sergeants role has changed fundamentally in the last few years with a lot of responsibility pushed down and not actually with the tools they need to manage that level of responsibility. If there was a way, some individuals will find time and make time *and some individuals' wont. It's like anything and in any organisation. If that's the way forward for policing we're going to make sure they understand that and it's never been, certainly there's an expectation t*hat people keep up to date on law and procedural issues but *there's no real way to check or ensure that's actually been done and just saying that's your* responsibility to do it, i think some central support is always a good way to ensure that is get done c*ertainly for important things...'*

As one Chief Inspector noted, local cascade training would be effective only if first executive and middle management were actively demonstrating their commitment to flexible working.

Once this was being achieved it would be easy to communicate the message top down. Mangers at every level in the organisation can influence perceptions of flexible working through the specific direction they give to their subordinates about what types of behaviour are expected (Engel and Peterson, 2014). If for example managers at every level firmly believed and communicated that negative attitudes towards officers on alternative working arrangements will not be tolerated, then they have the capability influence the views of their portfolio:

'...Almost cascade training because how many people have you really got to change the mind of? Who's making the decisions about flexible working? Well it's HR, its Superintendents and probably people like me and Inspectors. You know, train them to train them and train them *and actually it doesn't take that long then because really your just looking after your portfolio. So for me it's easy because I'd just get all my DI's in a room and just say 'flexible* working, this is my vision this is how we ought to app*roach it'. I think we should approach it that way and that's all you need to do. You don't need an NCALT to do that...'*

When the idea of formal training was discussed, all managers commented on how they had never received any specific input on flexible working but some had covered it briefly as part of the leadership programme at some point in their career. There is the argument that culture is not something that can be taught and instead exists as an 'ethos' of the organisation. Given the complexity of occupational culture I value this point; it does not however undermine the thinking that educating leaders whether that be through training; good practice sharing or any other method would be paramount in developing the culture. The input officers reportedly received on flexible working was procedure driven regarding the policy and did nothing to educate leaders on the business benefits of flexible working:

'...I mean they do it as part of the sergeants leadership programme now and I know that it's in there, b*ut it's this is the policy on flexible working, not really selling the benefits of it and showing what you could with it...'*

One officer commented on how this level and type of input reflected the production driven processes of the organisation and in fact did not promote the business benefits of flexible working. Nor did it do anything to encourage managers to demonstrate a commitment to it and thus its continuation in its current form is not the right type or amount of education or training necessary to challenging the barrier of police occupational culture:

'...We've got...very, surprise surprise the police has a very production driven process. Yes because good decisions are not always about ticking boxes and filling in and doing it because the form says *you do it a certain way...'*

A manager suggested that the current situation did not prevent him making sound balanced judgments within the policy, however with more training he could have made them more easily:

*'...Do I think I make sound balanced judgment*s within the policy, yes. Do I think I would have made them more easily with more training- probably yes...

Alternative training methods were discussed in detail, including the use of podcasts, electronic learning and increasing accessible information available on police systems. There was an overwhelming response to such alternative training methods and it was widely reported that electronic learning or any alternative methods would not achieve the desired outcome and would do little to change police occupational culture in the absence of human input. It is fundamental therefore that managers communicate directly with officers and the level of education required to create a situation whereby managers develop a real commitment to improving flexible working will only be achievable with a human input from someone with real knowledge and a belief in the positive business benefits of flexible working. Human resource advisers were suggested but this is subject to them also being educated and passionate about change:

'...I think sterile publications however well intentioned or people sitting around been round been filmed in a public liked fashion turns people off. The best people to talk to and the best people to deliver any kind of training on this are either peo*ple who've dealt with it on a regular basis or the HR advisors because they're the people we go to and they're very good by large and they're the people we go to and say look we've got this application this is a bit* abnormal what do you think? And generall*y they're very good to advise you based on their experience because if anyone's dealt with that before they have. So they're the best people. You know if they were going to do a podcast i think people would listen to it but don't get* someone like me to do *it don't get some senior officer to do it no one will take the blind bit of* notice, you have to get a practitioner, someone who kno*ws that they're talking about...'*

In order for employees to understand which behaviours are most worthy of their effort, they must perceive that certain behaviours are desired by their supervisors (Engle and Peterson, 2014). This applies at every rank of the organisation; from how police constables perceive their Sergeants desires, to how chief inspectors view their Superintendents.

One officer described the current climate as a cultural revolution in the making, whilst another made a comparison to the pied piper narrative whereby once you have the foundations of educated leaders passionate enough about workforce development, the rest will follow naturally. Although perhaps wider cultural change would indeed follow naturally, once leaders understand fully the business case for flexible working and are impassioned enough to develop a demonstrable commitment to it, reinforcement of the message at every level of the organisation would be one form of ensuring its success.

Conclusion

The vast majority of forces have restructured their entire organisation and at the very least have started some initial demand analysis (HMIC, 2014), the impact of which on flexible working is at present unknown and further research is required to specifically address this point. HMIC also commented on how the time is now right for an open and constructive debate across policing on the fundamental aspects of how policing is organised and resourced in the future. I think this point is possibly central to overcoming the problematic nature of flexible working. The organisation is facing a window of opportunity which although perhaps has occurred as an unintended consequence of austerity, is a window of opportunity none the less. It is paramount under these circumstances that leaders consider how they can utilise flexible working to aid the process rather than hinder it.

In many debates I have had with policing practitioners over the last three years, a discussion about the impact of austerity on their working environment has been unavoidable. It has often been suggested that austerity might be the catalyst for cultural change but that it is pushing the right things to be done but for the wrong reasons. Flexible working has many a time been considered as something that is almost coming in through the back door because austerity is forcing it, rather than it been a product of improved workforce development.

At the time of writing there are many proposed changes been made to policing as we know it including the Education Qualification Framework (EQF), Police Now and Direct Entry to name but a few. In what I believe to be a window of opportunity for reform, I would discourage the cynicism of officers who fail to see the value of new innovate ways of working. Arguably this opportunity is twofold, there are undoubtedly changes on the horizon arising directly as a result of austerity measures but there are also changes arising from innovative thinking. It is important to view them both as drivers of change and try to optimise their success mutually. Trying to fit innovative initiatives in to an organisation not optimising the current opportunity to reform from responses to austerity could see both been met with little success.

Bacon described how criticisms of police attitudes and behaviours and attempts to correct them are often perceived as a direct threat to their integrity and authority. Historically it has been said that this reinforces rather than diminishes the persuasive influence of police culture

(Crank, 1998). To an extent it is possible that this remains true, however the transparent decisions that the organisation have made by engaging with external institutions and supporting an increase in evidence based policing should be recognised. This is evidenced on a daily basis by new working relationships formed with academic institutions; societies such as Evidence Based Policing (SEBP); the College of Policing and continuing to develop research partnerships such as the N8 policing collaboration.

The attendance at such events by officers of varying ranks and departments signifies that there is a distinct change to the 'way things have always been done' given such working relationships have not always existed in the form they do today. Although further research is required to look at the impact of this change, the findings from this paper seemingly indicate that the rise of evidence based practice may go some way in developing the culture and assist in overcoming problematic policing practices such as flexible working.

<u>Summary of findings in relation to research aims</u>

To engage with police officers who have personal or managerial experience of flexible working to identify any creative and innovative ideas they may have that might overcome the barriers to flexible working routed in the design of police work and routine working practices

- The regulations requiring rosters be devised a year in advance is problematic for managers trying to incorporate a flexible practice in to a rigid system. Human commonsense is often overlooked in favor of a computerized system when accommodating alternative arrangements and often this hinders effective resourcing in peak demand. A system is needed that incorporates flexible workers in to the demand resource allocation so that the business benefits as specified in the policy guidance can be seen across the organisation

- The way resource data is presented to management can lead to unwarranted assumptions. The organisation could look to alternative methods of presenting such information thus easing the process of resource allocation and demand shift profiling. Managers need an accurate perception of what the bench mark is when managing demand. This would make it easier to fill demand and would lend itself to flexible working arrangements.

- The roster consultation period should be inclusive of front line managers since they have the most accurate knowledge of peak demand on individual teams. The role of front line management needs to be valued and change is likely to be more successful if staff are actively involved in the change that affects them.
- If an alternative rostering system were to become available then this would have to be reflected in the policing regulations. It is something that could become available if the resources were dedicated to it and the organisation sought out an alternative package.
- The introduction of the Police Now programme is one example of how short term/short hour contracts in the organisation could be the gateway to a more flexible force in the future.
- The organisation could create a system whereby there remains the necessary degree of rigidity to cover core slots but it could open up optional spaces for officers to manage their own working patterns. The creation of a staff bank similar to the one the NHS operates may lend itself to the development of a flexible workforce and bolster resources in times of peak demand. The idea of a flexible force could reduce the stigma that flexible workers are subject to. By making the whole force flexible and offering workforce autonomy, it reduces the indifferences used to marginalize flexible workers.
- Developing a multi-skilled workforce may ease some of the barriers faced by officers historically in attaining specialist status due to their working arrangements
- Management need to be educated on the reasons why people may request flexible working and understand that sometimes individuals have no alternative but to leave the organisation without it.
- There could be increased flexibility introduced in to the design of police work. Residential courses for example need not always be residential. The organisation could develop access to these courses through the use of technological aids. The organisation is lacking creativity from someone to drive forward such ideas.
- To empower individuals in the organisation senior management need to dedicate the resources and commitment to doing so. The organisation needs to overcome to feeling of learnt helplessness experienced by police officers. Senior management could do more to ensure there are champions of flexible working in every force.
- Culture target is corrosive. Managers need to understand that granting a flexible working request does not hinder their resource base. Managers have become more

concerned with meeting divisional objectives than officer wellbeing. The organisation would benefit from no longer marginalising flexible workers.

- Many issues arise from the average tenure of police officers. New working models such as Direct Entry may counteract some of these issues. To counteract risk averse decision making the organisation should promote entrepreneurial policing. Mangers need to get better at dealing with uncertainty and feel supported by their superiors.

- Discretion in the decision making process for grating flexible working requests can be problematic but also needs to remain. Centralisation of decision making may benefit the organisation but the individual empowered to undertake the role should have an understanding of the issues.

- There is the perception that individual and organisation needs are incompatible. They need to be viewed as two of the same thing. There needs to be better communication of the business benefits of flexible working.

- To attain a change in culture executive management should be the starting point although all members of the organisation would be involved. It is possible to positively exploit the current risk adverse management style by recruiting an external specialist to highlight the organizational risk that the current system carries.

- Communicating the desires of the organisation could be achieved by cascade training. Alternative training methods may support physically communicating the business case for flexible working but should not be in place of it.

To determine whether it is possible to view logistical and cultural barriers to flexible working as separate entities

- It is problematic to view the logistical and cultural barriers to flexible working as separate entities because they do not exist as such

- Future attempts at reform should consider the relationship between the formal construction of flexible working and the informal working practices or occupational culture

- Barriers presented as logistical e.g. elements in the design of police work including shift patterns, residential courses, select and promote procedure are underpinned by culture

**To determine whether there is either any desire and/or any commitment
to challenge the existing barriers to flexible working within the police organization**

- The officers involved in this project clearly expressed their desire for occupational culture change. They remain in the minority, particularly the front line officers who are willing to drive such change

- The organisation as a whole is at the start of a process of change and is facing a window of opportunity to do so. Although an inadvertent consequence of austerity, the responses to austerity have opened this window. New creative an innovative ideas have been suggested and the organisation if willing, could utilize this to overcome to problematic nature of flexible working.

Personal Reflection

Upon gaining a place on the programme for which I am part of, I was allocated the subject area of women's equality and fairness to research. The end result I would say is very different to the specification initially proposed. During the initial weeks that I started reading around the broader literature on women in the organisation, flexible working was an aspect that I found myself particularly drawn to. My thought process was whether this was a gender issue at all or whether it was an organisational one. Undoubtedly it is disproportionately centred on women, but upon reflection it is clear to me that the barriers to flexible working stem from wider organisational issues that are not gender exclusive. Police culture was not in the specification, nor did I anticipate that occupational culture would become the focus of my paper. The exploratory nature of the research meant that as I had hoped, the issues discussed were those arising from talking to individuals with operational knowledge of policing.

I am aware of the shortcomings of this research. The saying 'spreading yourself too thin' may apply due to the breath of issues that this paper has touched upon. Due to the word limit, the decision to include or not include certain issues when I knew many of them were worthy of more discussion was a difficult one. To ensure a true representation of the findings were presented, I needed to include as much as I have but I recognise that readers may be frustrated with the lack of cross referencing with the existing literature. I am also aware that elements of the methodology may be criticised. The number of individuals spoken to is not enough to generalise or say with any certainly that their views are completely reflective. I

have therefore placed a greater emphasis on the meaning behind their participation and what this signifies within the contemporary policing landscape.

In terms of the research process, there were circumstances beyond my control that meant my methodology was not as sound as I would have liked. Having gatekeeper access withdrawn a few months in to the project meant I had to re-evaluate my proposed methods. Initially I had intended for there to be two phases to the research; a series of focus groups followed by the in-depth interviews. It was hoped that the focus groups would be a forum for generating ideas around overcoming the barriers to flexible working and then such ideas could be put to management in interview for discussions about their feasibility.

This may have provided a more defined set of proposed logistical reforms to the design of police work. Instead, the interviews had to serve to generate ideas and then a discussion which is obviously constrained by the length of the interview. It wouldn't have been practicable or fair to participants to arrange interviews lasting any longer than two hours and so ultimately using only interviews meant less time was spent generating data than would have been with the two phase approach.

Overall, the process has been enjoyable despite the difficulties that I have encountered and I hope the research will be of some use to the organisation.

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<u>Appendices</u>

<u>Appendix 1:</u> Ethics compliance letter

<u>Appendix 2:</u> Consent form

<u>Appendix 3:</u> Participant information sheet

<u>Appendix 4:</u> Interview guide

23 September 2015 Ref: 15/SAS/230C

Ms Rivka Smith
c/o School of Law, Criminal Justice and Computing
Faculty of Social and Applied Sciences

Dear Rivka

Confirmation of ethics compliance for your study *"Police culture and flexible working within the police organisation."*

I have received an application for proportionate review of the above project. Because you have answered "No" to all of the questions in Section B of the Ethics Review Checklist, and have submitted appropriate supporting documentation, no further ethical review will be required under the terms of this University's Research Ethics and Governance Procedures.

In confirming compliance for your study, I must remind you that it is your responsibility to follow, as appropriate, the policies and procedures set out in the *Research Governance Handbook* (http://www.canterbury.ac.uk/centres/red/ethics-governance/governance-and-ethics.asp) and any relevant academic or professional guidelines. This includes providing, if appropriate, information sheets and consent forms, and ensuring confidentiality in the storage and use of data. Any significant change in the question, design or conduct of the study over its course should be notified to the **Research Office**, and may require a new application for ethics approval. You are also required to inform me once your research has been completed.

Wishing you every success with your research.

Yours sincerely

Roger Bone

Research Governance Manager
Tel: +44 (0)1227 782940 ext 3272 (enter at prompt)
Email: roger.bone@canterbury.ac.uk
cc: Dr Dominic Wood
Ms Emma Williams

Canterbury Christ Church University

CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: Flexible Working within the Police Organisation

Researcher: Miss Rivka Smith

Contact details:

Address:
Canterbury Christ Church University North Holmes Road Canterbury Kent CT1 1QU

Tel: _____

Email: _____

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

3. I understand that any personal information that I provide to the researchers will be kept strictly confidential

4. I agree to take part in the above study.

_____   _____   _____
Name of Participant   Date   Signature

_____   _____   _____
Name of Person taking consent   Date   Signature
(if different from researcher)

_____   _____   _____
Researcher   Date   Signature

Copies: 1 for participant
            1 for researcher

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET
Project: Flexible Working

A research study is being conducted at Canterbury Christ Church University by Rivka Smith in association with The Metropolitan Police Federation. The purpose of the study is to examine to what extent the Police organization can utilize creative and innovative thinking from police officers to challenge the existing barriers faced by those wishing to adopt flexible working patterns.

This research project has been funded by the Metropolitan Police Federation and is supported by the Police Federation of England and Wales. The results of this research may be used to inform policy for the Police Federation and shall be used to suggest ways of improving the accessibility to flexible working practices within the Police Service. The research is being conducted by a research student under supervision of the School of Law, Criminal Justice and Computing at Canterbury Christ Church University as part of the Paul McKeever Scholarship to enable police practitioners to study for a Master's Degree in Policing Research.

What will you be required to do?

Participants will be required to attend a one to one interview with Rivka OR attend a focus group with other participants; both lasting for approximately one hour. The decision as to which type of session you attend is for you to make but there is the possibility to attend both should you wish. The interview is informal and semi-structured which means that the questions have been prepared in advance but you will be able to speak freely on the issues raised during the interview. The focus group will involve an informal and open forum for discussion on the issues faced by flexible workers and I aim to encourage creative thinking as to how the current issues could be addressed.

To participate in this research you must:

A) Have served as a Police Officer or be a member of Police Staff from any force within England and Wales (Including the British Transport Police) after 1992

B) Currently or previously have worked flexible hours// Currently or have previously considered flexible working // Have prominent views of flexible working policies through knowledge gained from a spouse or colleague

...OR...

C) Be undertaking a police or staff management role (Sergeant or above for officers) and have or have had the responsibility for managing flexible working requests.

Procedure

When we meet I will introduce myself and offer you an overview of the research that I am conducting. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have at this stage. For interviewees, I will then ask you a series of questions about your experience of flexible working and give you the opportunity to put forward your views to any of the issues surrounding flexible working that you may have encountered during the course of your employment. There is the opportunity for you to speak freely in response to the questions asked and I welcome your views and opinions. Once the interview has finished I will again be happy to answer any further questions and will ensure you have my contact details should you wish to contact me after our meeting.

The focus group will follow a similar procedure but there will be other flexible workers present and will involve an honest and confidential group discussion about the issues currently facing flexible workers. Again, there is the opportunity for questions after the session.

Feedback

Feedback from the research including information about the results will be available from early September 2015. Please feel free to email me on the address below after this date for a summary report of the research.

Confidentiality

This research is totally independent of any individual police service or team. You will become anonymous and anything we speak about during the course of the interview or focus group will not be traceable back to either you or your employer.

All data and personal information will be stored securely within CCCU premises in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and the University's own data protection requirements. Data can only be accessed by the principle researcher for this project (Rivka). After completion of the interview and focus groups, all data will be made anonymous (i.e. all personal information associated with the data will be removed) including your name and police force.

Dissemination of results

The results will be reported in an operational report for the Police Federation to be submitted no later than January 2016. It is possible that the research will also form a contributing chapter to a forthcoming book for Police practitioners.

Deciding whether to participate

If you have any questions or concerns about the nature, procedures or requirements for participation do not hesitate to contact me. Should you decide to participate, you will be free to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason.

Any questions?

Please feel free to contact Rivka with any questions via the following email address or contact number:

CONTACT DETAILS

Flexible Working Interview Structure

Quick fire Introductory Questions

Could you start by telling me how long you have worked for the police?

What is your current role? Have you always had this role? If not could you just elaborate a little bit on previous roles within the police you've had?

In what aspects of your current role or throughout your previous career have you encountered flexible working? (i.e. Have you yourself ever worked flexibly or have you ever had the responsibility of managing requests or ever represented officers who have?)

Personal Experiences of Flexible Working

Could you think back during your time in service and give me a specific example or examples if you can that have stuck in your head, of a time when you think flexible working has worked really positively for either an officer or a team? What was it about that situation that you think made it positive?

So the flip side to that is going to be can you do the same and think of a specific example, or examples, where you think flexible working has not worked so well for an officer or team? What do you think the problem was with that situation?

Do you think there was anything that could have been made different in that situation that would have made flexible working work in that situation better?

In your opinion which of the two cases you've just described would you say is more common place within the police organisation?

How would you say your colleagues and/or management view flexible working in the police? Do you think this is a view that is generally accepted within the police organisation as a whole...OR...How do you think flexible working is viewed by the organisation?

Logistical Aspects

Do you think the practicalities of police work i.e. aspects of the job itself are suitable for officers that choose to work flexible hours?

Could you give me the top three practical aspects of the job that you think work well for flexible workers? Could you do the same for practical aspects of the job that you do not think are suitable for flexible working?

If you had the power to change these unsuitable aspects of the job, what would you suggest be done to make them suitable? What difference do you think this would make to the job?

The Process

Do you think the process for officers requesting flexible working is fair? Do you think your colleagues would consider this to be the same? Do you think the process needs to change at all to make the process fairer/better? How and what?

Gender Agenda 3

Have you heard of the Gender Agenda 3 Document? Have you noticed any changes of any kind in relation to force actions or attitudes towards flexible working since the start of this year?

Good Practice Sharing

Lip Service

Do you think there are any discrepancies between the rhetoric and reality when flexible working is discussed in senior management settings (i.e. lip service)?

Equality

Do you believe your force is dedicated to the mainstreaming of equality and diversity? Do you know of any dedicated equality and diversity resources within your force? Has there been a change in any of these dedicated resources post austerity? How much of equality and diversity mainstreaming do you think is influenced by the PCC? Do you think the PCC engages with the objectives and   obligations that your Force has to mainstream equality?

Management Training

Could you tell me whether you have ever had any specific training on managing flexible working requests? Do you know whether your force has adopted any alternative training methods for those who manage flexible working requests? So, by alternate I mean anything not involving a standard powerpoint training course or NCALT package?

If you had the resources, what alternative training methods can you think of that might improve a gap in the knowledge on flexible working- what would it look like?

To what extent do you think line managers are currently able to take personal responsibility for their own training? Why do you think this? Do you think it's a good thing?

One alternative training method that has been suggested is the idea of podcasts and online seminars that officers can access at a time that's convenient for them. Do you think these could work? Why do you think this? What would you say are the most important things that would need to be communicated through these

Shift Patterns/ Design of police work

Do you think variable shift arrangements which are built around accurate demand profiling could work? Why do you think this? What difference do you think they would make to the job?

Identify elements in police work. Can you suggest anything that could be adapted or put in place to improve the situation that these officers have described