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**An explorative study of the relationship between  
police officer morale, behaviours, and the delivery of  
public value services.**

**by**

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**Thesis submitted  
for the degree of MSc by Research**

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# **An explorative study of the relationship between police officer morale, behaviours, and the delivery of public value services.**

## **ABSTRACT**

**Aims:** To examine the relationship between the workplace morale drivers of police officers and the delivery of public-facing policing services.

**Design and participants:** One qualitative study in England involving semi-structured interviews with 10 police officers of federated rank.

**Measurements:** A preliminary survey asked Participants to choose from a series of known morale drivers, and to state additional drivers not captured. Six broad categories of driver subsequently formed the guiding framework for participant interviews.

**Findings:** Four types of morale driver were found to be most relevant to rank-and-file police officers: (a) leadership; (b) target/performance culture; (c) supportive networks/role models; and (d) force systems/processes. Police leadership comprising Superintendents, NPCC ranks and a small number of police-related agencies, was the primary factor. Police morale and legitimacy were found to be associated in the context of public encounters and partnership working.

**Conclusion:** The research suggests that London-based, federated officers are expected to be uncommonly stoic, tolerant, selfless and morally courageous in a working environment which subjects them to unrealistic expectations and frequent undermining, where functional support systems and authentic role models are difficult to find. It appears that the politicisation of policing, weaknesses in leadership and elements of workplace dysfunction combine to underpin a seemingly widespread disregard for the physical and psychological needs of the workforce. The research suggests a transactional working environment exists where officers are subject to micromanagement tactics that directly conflict with and prevent the official expectation that each police officer, regardless of rank, will lead by good example.

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I am also grateful to the individuals who agreed to provide additional viewpoints with regards to police leadership and professional standards. In some cases, arrangements to meet took place with little notice, and in each instance an aspect of learning (on my part) was needed. I am similarly grateful to Professor Robin Bryant, for generously sharing his bountiful research wisdoms, and providing ongoing advice and guidance to me throughout the research period.

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## INTRODUCTION

The nine principles of policing that were attributed to Sir Robert Peel nearly 200 years ago continue to act as the primary benchmark for police conduct, authority and values which are now collectively referred to as the British *policing by consent* philosophy ensuring police legitimacy (Home Office, 2012).

The seventh of Peel's principles describes police officers as being no better or worse than any member of the public, except that officers have chosen to give full and professional attention to a responsibility which is incumbent upon everyone (Home Office, 2012).

### **Workplace morale versus job satisfaction**

This paper relates to the concepts of workplace morale and job satisfaction, which are closely related but not entirely the same thing.

Workplace morale is a concept borne predominantly from the emotions, professional attitude and overall outlook of the worker. Workers who possess a positive view of their employer, and who are generally happy at work, are described to have high levels of morale.

In its simplest form, job satisfaction relates to the degree in which a worker perceives that his or her employer has met its expressed or implied contractual<sup>1</sup> obligations (Schmitt and Dorfel, 1999; Business Dictionary, 2016). A dissatisfied worker may feel aggrieved by perceived or actual injustices that are observed in the workplace, or which pertain to the hygiene factors<sup>2</sup> of employment. Sexual inequality, harsh disciplinary penalties, lack of necessary resources, unsafe working conditions, etc. may add to a growing sense of contractual disregard by the employer, which in turn corrodes the worker's job satisfaction.

<sup>1</sup> In which each party agrees to satisfy the other, whether by monetary compensation, provision of labour services, or some other means. In addition to expressly stated contractual factors, implied factors such as workplace conditions, health and safety also contribute to job satisfaction

<sup>2</sup> Aspects of a worker's job that will not motivate the worker if present, but will cause increasing job dissatisfaction if removed or diminished (Hertzberg, 2003)



A worker's job satisfaction, and indeed the perceptions they have of their employer, are contributing factors in establishing a sense of workplace morale. Other factors also exist, many of which are examined in this paper.

It is more difficult for workers to sustain positive emotions, attitudes and outlook indefinitely in working environments where job satisfaction is consistently lacking. Organisations that maintain a substantive percentage of workers who are dissatisfied at work, or who possess a negative view of their working environment, are considered to have low levels of worker morale.

### **Organisational citizenship, performance effectiveness and morale**

Organisational citizenship comprises of worker behaviours that are discretionary (based on a sense of belonging), and which go beyond the formal requirements of one's role. Included in these behaviours are obedience, loyalty and participation (Van Dyne and Graeme, 1994; Coetzee and Botha, 2012), perceptions of the customer and customer handling behaviours (Hoffman and Ingram, 1992), and the ability to self-regulate (Chan and Wan, 2012).

Organisational citizenship is robustly linked to the effectiveness of any organisation (Organ, 1997) and its levels of workforce morale (Noblet, Maharee-Lawler and Rodwell, 2012).

Where morale is low, there is a greater likelihood of deviant and egoistic behaviour which is counterproductive to the legitimacy of the organisation (He, 2012). Schmitt and Dorfel (1999) identify that job dissatisfaction arising from a belief that the employer has failed in its contractual obligations, may lead to the worker questioning his or her professional obligation towards the employer. Even where there is no negative intention towards the customer, ongoing job dissatisfaction can produce automatic actions or inactions by the worker which begin to define the manner in which customers are perceived or handled, and which may collectively contribute to customer belief that neglect, disregard and/or poor performance prevails within the workforce.

Stereotyping, cutting corners, and attitudes of indifference are example behaviours that, when attributed to the worker, can impact perceptions of legitimacy (Hoffman and Ingram, 1992; He, 2012).

## **A workforce reliant upon perceptions of legitimacy**

The idea that the policing profession is comprised of a workforce no different to any other, and thereby as likely to experience levels of morale that respond to direct and indirect job-based influences, has held my interest for some time. There is an assumption, from both inside and outside the Police Service, that a policing workforce and in particular police officers, should remain stoic and generally unaffected by their circumstances (Pogrebin and Poole, 1991; Parnaby and Leyden, 2011).

Empirical studies on deviant behaviour amongst police officers show that the pressure to live up to high expectations is coupled with an unsupportive, disabling or dysfunctional environment of job components to create systematic conditions that increase the probability of deviance. This deviant behaviour may be criminal, self-destructive or otherwise culturally perceived to be illegitimate (Parnaby and Leyden, 2011).

Police legitimacy is based on the general principles of authority, cooperation, shared values and fairness (Tyler, 2011; Tankerby, 2013). Police legitimacy is determined by perceptions of the public in two key ways. The small percentage of individuals who are in direct contact with police officers at any given time make first hand observations based on individual circumstances and police officer behaviours (Tyler, 2011). The wider public viewpoint of what makes policing legitimate and thereby valuable to its customer base (ie, the public) is represented and communicated by politicians (Moore, 1994).

Politicians also affirm the value of the policing 'product' when they decide to invest public resources into the sector. The political dynamic is such that any fluctuations in value and legitimacy viewpoint, or increase/reduction in financial investment may sit outside the area of direct police control but this does not detract from the fact that whilst the public is the largest customer set for policing, politicians are the most influential (Moore, 1994).

## **Political influence and sector reform**

The dilemma caused by the political influence over policing is that it tends to only generate efficiency-based initiatives that fall within the hygiene factors of job satisfaction. The numerous proposed changes to working conditions, salary, pensions and job security that appear in the recommendations made by Winsor<sup>3</sup> are an example of such hygiene factor-based changes and have resulted in wide scale claims of plummeting police morale (Police Federation, 2014).

Reform measures affecting hygiene factors only, and which result in a smaller workplace without also implementing motivational counter-measures for the workforce, are at risk of being counterproductive (Hertzberg, 2003), and of diminishing levels of organisational citizenship (Organ, 1997; He, 2012). The reason for this is that much like a dieter who sheds weight without exercising, policing may weigh less after politically-based reform, but the percentage of fat that manifests as stress, low morale and less than optimal productivity may have actually increased (Shahu and Gole, 2008).

## **Finding a balance**

I wish to return briefly to the topic of legitimacy as articulated in Peel's Principles, thereby trusted upon as one of the longest standing philosophies for policing (Home Office, 2012). Police legitimacy in the context of Peel's Principles relies heavily on a police officer's ability to self-regulate their instinctive responses during stressful encounters with members of the public. However, people, including the police, have a finite ability to self-regulate their behaviour. When confronted with stress, morale and performance factors arising from significant change such as hygiene-based sector reform, the requirement for self-regulation in order to cope with these factors directly impacts a person's ability to self-regulate in other areas. A correlation has been shown to exist between stress, morale levels, and customer handling behaviours (Chan and Wan, 2012).

Having raised the topic of political influences over policing, it is important to note that

<sup>3</sup> Commissioned by the Home Secretary, Tom Winsor carried out a landmark review of police pay and working conditions during 2011-12, which resulted in more than 100 reform recommendations (source: [www.gov.uk/police-pay-winsor-review](http://www.gov.uk/police-pay-winsor-review)) [accessed 26/09/2015]

politics and government are not the only influencers of police officer morale, nor can the impact of politically-based decisions be judged in isolation. Organisational policy and process, supervisory and peer relationships, recognition and status, growth opportunities, along with numerous other job components personal and cultural factors are also powerful workplace morale stimulants, whether good or bad (Hsu and Wang, 2008). In fact, a worker's direct experiences of process and policy, supervisory competence and organisational justice<sup>4</sup>, can have a greater impact on morale than the political landscape or even the worker's own personal and professional characteristics (Minor and Wells, 2014). Identification and prognostic balancing of as many identifiable morale drivers as possible can prove highly reconstructive (Hertzberg, 2003). Just as any other workplace, policing must have mechanisms in place to counter-balance the 'negatives' with 'positives'.

### **Moore's strategic triangle**

In order to progress the idea of counter-balance, it is necessary to identify and examine the various job components that exist in policing. Mark H. Moore (1995) arranged the public sector workplace into three interdependent requirements<sup>5</sup> that he argues must be aligned in organisational strategy in order for any of them to be effective.

#### **Moore's Strategic Triangle**

##### *Public value aims:*

- The value criteria of the public service provider. This is where legislative boundaries, statutory roles, responsibilities and strategic targets apply.

##### *Authorising environment:*

- The ongoing dialogue with key stakeholders for the purposes of building a coalition of support that comes from above (via sector partners and government), below (via management and operational lines), and outward (via the public). An organisation's ability to successfully lobby for increased funding from government, or inspire positive worker or public perceptions through effective communications, would apply to this area.

<sup>4</sup> A worker's perceptions of their organisation's behaviours, decisions and actions. Organisational justice is based on the concept of equity (ie, how much the worker gives of themselves vs. what they receive in return from the employer), and can influence a worker's sense of fairness, their workplace behaviours and attitudes (HRZone, 2015)

<sup>5</sup> Moore's Strategic Triangle

*Operational capacity:*

- An organisation's investment and practical expectations of its people, finance and technical resources. Organisational process and the robustness of its policy framework, along with efficient budget utilisation would apply to this area. Moore goes further to describe organisational process as a necessary component of effective public service, but only when aligned to the public value outcome.

Collectively, Moore's three public service requirements comprise of the various job components that make up the working environment. Within the context of the police working environment, Moore's model shows that if the politically-generated job components for police officers (*public value aims*) change, then counter-balancing strategies that fall within the *authorising environment* and *operational capacity* job-components may be necessary in order for the police service to meet its commitments to public value services.

### **The question of a unique workforce**

Any worker, regardless of the profession, will have cognitive, affective and behavioural responses to most aspects of their working environment. A worker's cognitive response is their perception/appraisal of the existence or change in existence of a work-related matter, while the affective response relates to the feelings that they have about the matter (University of Rhode Island, 2014). Cognitive and affective responses work together to produce worker attitudes that are *likely* to be positive, neutral, negative or mixed in nature (Smollan, 2006).

Subject to various moderating factors, cognitive and affective responses also shape a worker's behavioural responses (Smollan, 2006). When workforce morale is sufficiently diminished as a result of negative cognitive and affective responses, the likelihood of adverse attitudinal behaviours increases (Katz and Kahn, 1966). This may have a detrimental effect on organisational citizenship.

Police officers are provided a regulatory status<sup>6</sup> which includes powers and responsibilities not afforded to other types of workers, and which has led some to believe that the police are a unique workforce that cannot be fully compared to other

<sup>6</sup> The *office of constable*, whereby a police officer has an original and not a delegated jurisdiction, and is himself directly answerable to the law for his actions (Winsor, 2012)

workers (Winsor, 2012). Empirical studies exist, however, which show that organisational citizenship amongst police officers is as responsive to direct and indirect stimulus as any other workforce (Noblet, Maharee-Lawler and Rodwell, 2012). I argue that closer examination of the associations between police working conditions, morale and the attitudes and behaviours that link to police legitimacy is required, so that police employers and government can anticipate and manage morale-related trends in policing, to maximise workforce performance and in turn better serve the public.

**Research question:**

**What associations, if any, exist between police officer morale and the delivery of public value services?**

## METHODOLOGY

I began my research planning activities with the belief that Government austerity was the primary factor leading to diminished police morale, which in turn led to degraded public perceptions of police legitimacy. I have gone into some detail as to the reasoning for my beliefs in the discussion area of this paper<sup>7</sup>.

### Choosing the correct approach

Consequently, my original plan was to follow a deductive approach of research by developing hypotheses which would allow me to empirically test my beliefs and construct a theory which conclusively proved or disproved those beliefs on the basis of metric and/or otherwise quantifiable analysis of research data (Rasch, undated; Bryman, 2004).

Considering a deductive approach presented immediate obstacles when I commenced a review of existing research literature in the hopes of identifying suitable hypotheses. Firstly, existing research generally falls short of providing a framework with which to move beyond perceptions, and towards the development of grounded theory<sup>8</sup> (Connelly, 2013). There is also a wide body of empirical research within the broader contexts of occupational and organisational psychology, which confirms that numerous variables can influence morale (Schaefer, 2014; Xi, undated). To prove that austerity diminishes morale which in turn diminishes perceptions of legitimacy, the study must first isolate austerity for empirical testing (Bryman, 2004).

Interestingly, Yom (2015) notes that research of a political nature, such as that commissioned by governments to evidence the basis for policy implementation, generally follows a deduction-based prescript. Sceptics argue that the prescriptive nature of politically-based research hints at selective evidence gathering so as to fit a specific future vision (Levidow and Papaioannou, 2015; Levidow and Neubauer, 2014; Boden and Epstein, 2006). Yom acknowledges that prescription to test hypotheses, as opposed to exploratory research, can result in fear of hypothesis failure in the

<sup>7</sup> See *Researcher Participation*

<sup>8</sup> A method by which a theory is determined by, rather than imposed upon, the data collected

creation of research-led public policy. Yom also notes that *real-life* researchers frequently travel back and forth between deductive and inductive paradigms, particularly in new research areas of lesser known associations. If I continued with a deductive strategy, there would be an opportunity for induction to occur. A disproved hypothesis, new information or interim findings provide scope for revised theory and development of new hypotheses (Bryman, 2004). However, the time and cost implications presently made this an unrealistic option for my research.

## **Strategy and design**

Since forming an interest in police morale, my key concern has always been that existing research only goes so far as to cite officer perceptions of increasingly low morale. This is worrying and directly conflicts with the principles of police goodwill (Hoggett et. all, 2013; PFEW, 2014). But few research studies test the associations between officer perceptions, force performance, and customer handling behaviours (Galesic et. All, 2012; Zelenski et. all, 2008; Brooke and Price, 1989).

Once I commenced my early desk research I realised that an exploration of police officers experiences in the immediate and extended workplace, and how those experiences are perceived, would allow me to identify the key drivers that influence shifts in morale. Whilst this was not an entirely new concept, contextualising the known associations between morale-based responses and police officer behaviours is new for UK policing, despite already being recognised by organisational psychologists to impact service-user perceptions (Parnaby and Leyden, 2011; Noblet et. all, 2012; Rix et. all, 2009; Ashcroft et. all, 2003; Tremoglie, undated).

Adopting an exploratory strategy meant that I would be conducting research of a primarily inductive nature (Bryman, 2004). However, having collected data to inform a generalised theory, I was also likely to question the theory with secondary research, which inferred a trace of deductive process (Yom, 2015).

### **Research method adopted**

Literature review and other desk-based research to identify potential morale-influencing variables

Development of pre-interview survey

Semi-structured interviews



Follow up desk-based research to triangulate data

Analysis of results\*

Development of dissertation and operational report

\* Desk-based research data was manually processed, whereas NVivo software was used to process the large quantities of qualitative data collected during the interview process.

## Managing interpretive bias

For the past 10 years I have worked on a combination of local and national policing topics and have consequently formed strong viewpoints of my own that are based on personal experience of the workplace and the wider sector. A brief explanation of the relevance of my professional background is included in the discussion section of this paper.

In light of my career history and the viewpoints I possessed upon commencement of this project, I recognise the importance for me to follow a qualitative path of research. It fits well with an interpretivist epistemology<sup>9</sup>, but does have its challenges. Interpretivist research relies on a subjective interpretation of data through interview and observation. Researcher participation can undermine the reliability and representativeness of results (Bryman, 2004). The results will also be rich with in-depth and subjective detail which makes generalisations far more difficult than in typically positivist research wherein the researcher is clearly separated from the subject (Research Methodology, 2015).

Williams (2000) states that interpretivism allows greater room for researcher bias leading to skewed data results, but also argues that reliability weaknesses can be overcome with the introduction of *moderatum*<sup>10</sup>. Policing is certainly a profession in which shared perspectives could be explained and cultural similarities can be identified (Sklanski, 2007).

Chiovitti and Piran (2003) list eight methods of research *credibility, audit-ability and fittingness*, which demonstrate rigour and improve reliability. To moderate the risk of

<sup>9</sup> Although the terms 'qualitative' and 'interpretivist' are often used interchangeably (Williams, 2000)

<sup>10</sup> Cultural consistencies borne from shared experience and which represent a 'baseline truth' that applies generally to a group on the basis of its commonly shared experiences (Rabinow and Sullivan, 1979, p.6)

unconscious bias I may possess as researcher I have been mindful to incorporate each of these methods into my study:

#### **8 Methods of research credibility, audit-ability and fittingness**

1. Articulating the researcher's personal insights about the topic of research
2. Specifying the criteria built into the researcher's thinking
3. Clarifying the scope of the research
4. Specifying how/why participants were selected
5. Allowing participants to guide the inquiry process
6. Using participants' actual words on matters related to theory
7. Checking for theoretical construction as a means of explaining perceptions
8. Describing how the literature relates to each category emerging from the theory

A key advantage of the interpretivist epistemology is that it allows the researcher to gain not only an understanding of *what* occurs, but also *why* it does so (Research Methodology, 2015). The depth and richness of results supports a high level of validity and tends to be trustworthy and honest (Morrow, 2005).

#### **Finding research participants**

Sourcing a small but representative group of participants proved to be one of the most challenging aspects of this project. Due to time and budget constraints, I originally intended to interview only 6 participants. As recruitment progressed, it became apparent that the sample size may impede upon representation and reliability.

A common criticism of qualitative research is its reliability (Bryman, 2004), which is divided into *external*<sup>11</sup> and *internal*<sup>12</sup> criteria (LeCompte and Goetz, 1982). As the sole researcher in this study, my primary concern in this respect has been whether the results can be replicated. Schwandt, Lincoln and Guba (2007) also explain that interpretation of qualitative research is attributable to the observer (p.11). In addition to acknowledging my values and preconceptions about police morale it was therefore important to ensure that with each step in the research process, I considered how to

<sup>11</sup> The degree to which a study can be replicated, and whether it is representative enough to provide reasonable generalisations about a group (Williams, 2000)

<sup>12</sup> Applies when more than one observer involved in a study, and refers to whether there is consensus about the meaning of the observation

maintain *trustworthiness*<sup>13</sup>.

Participant selection and sourcing affects reliability of results. This aligns closely to the dependability criteria of trustworthiness, particularly with small participant groups. Therefore, my expansion from 6 to 10 participants helped to improve representation. I also wanted to consider participant sources, and whether sourcing might impact reliability. I determined that in order to meet the minimum representation requirements, the participant group would need to include a broad base of policing disciplines<sup>14</sup> and lengths of service, and would also need to reflect a representative gender split of 80% male and 20% female (Home Office, 2013).

I began the search for participants within my existing personal and professional networks. This resulted in a small number of direct recruits plus additional expressions of interest via word of mouth. I also placed invitations on social media websites, but found the response rate to be low. After 4 weeks, I only had 2 confirmed participants, which was unacceptable.

#### **Non-partisan selection of participants**

Whilst the study was funded by the Metropolitan branch of the PFEW, none of the participants were sourced via PFEW or any of its regional branches. Similarly, participants' employers were not approached to provide participants. This slowed the recruitment process but was ultimately favourable in that the risk of political or corporate bias was kept to a minimum [Soard, 2014].

By focusing my research onto London-based police officers, I also found that I had unwittingly created a small community of prospective participants with anxieties about whether they could be easily identified. This was especially the case for those who worked in small teams in which colleagues or direct line managers may be able to guess their identity with very little descriptive information (Kaiser, 2009). I wanted to carry out a style of interview that de-constructed the personal perceptions, motivations and belief systems (Tong, 2011) of a group of workers who had an explicit and implied requirement to keep their political views to themselves (Brodeur, 1983; Worthy, 2013; Winsor, 2012; Luscombe and Walby, 2014, GlosPolFed, undated).

<sup>13</sup> The criteria for which include credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Bryman, 2004)

<sup>14</sup> Including front line, back office and investigative roles

To overcome this I published a series of themed blogs on LinkedIn<sup>15</sup> to raise the profile of my research. Each blog discussed a different aspect of police morale and included an invitation to get involved in the study. The blogs were made available to the wider public and were shared on other networking sites to diversify readership. It proved to be a successful strategy, attracting hundreds of new followers within a very short space of time.

Twenty-three expressions of interest were verified. Of these, 12 met the participant criteria. I subsequently selected 10 participants for interview, on the basis of their broadly different primary<sup>16</sup> disciplines and shift patterns<sup>17</sup>. Two additional participants were kept in reserve, in case of drop-out, or to interview on specific matters that had produced unclear or conflicting results.

### **Deciding on participant criteria**

I wanted the group of study participants to closely reflect the most common viewpoint in policing. This would always be a challenge in light of an equal desire to gather the richest possible data. I needed to invite a broad range of viewpoints without overcomplicating the research process.

I considered inviting Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs), part-time and Specials (volunteer officers) to participate in the study and made a point of having early discussions with a handful of potentially suitable participants from this range of workers. However, very early into these discussions it became clear that the day-to-day experiences of these groups, make them 'exceptions to the rule' in such a way as to potentially skew the study's findings.

To give a few brief examples, a part-time officer I spoke with immediately described the value to her levels of stress to have the majority of her week focused on non-policing duties. The Special did not appear to have the same degree of paper-work associated with his role, and one of the PCSO's I spoke with made it clear that whilst

<sup>15</sup> Networking site in which individuals with similar disciplinary interests congregate and share business ideas online ([www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com))

<sup>16</sup> In some cases subjects were 'double hatted' and qualified to respond to other disciplinary requirements, such as public order, firearms, etc

<sup>17</sup> Shift patterns are known to have a negative impact on employee morale. I consequently endeavoured to balance the number of subjects who work irregular/unsociable hours, with those who work a static day

PCSOs in general have a high degree of contact with the public, the nature of contact is likely to be less confrontational than that of warranted police officers.

I quickly developed the viewpoint that by being 'too inclusive' I may jeopardise the reliability of the research results. I decided therefore to focus on a specific range of police officers, which appear in the following table.

<p><b>Participant criteria (inclusions)</b></p> <p>Warranted police officers</p> <p>Federated substantive rank and current role</p> <p>Working for Metropolitan Police (MPS), City of London Police or British Transport Police (BTP)</p> <p>Operational or administrative role (at least one administrative role is required)</p> <p>Post-probationary status</p> <p><b>Participant criteria (exclusions)</b></p> <p>Probationary or student officers</p> <p>Within 2 years of retirement (later modified)</p> <p>Non-federated ranks</p> <p>Non-warranted officers</p> <p>Presently working in non-London areas (later modified)</p>
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Two points of modification were eventually made to the original participant criteria:

- (a) Early research identified slightly differing views of officers soon to retire. One participant was subsequently selected despite being within 2 years of retirement, for comparative purposes and in light of the cross-disciplinary breadth of their policing career.
- (b) For comparative purposes two non-London officers were also sourced, one from a large<sup>18</sup> force, and one from a small force (Home Office, 2013). Of the non-London participants, one had previously been employed by a London force for 10+ years.

<sup>18</sup> Pertaining to total resource strength. Described as <2,500 (small); 2,500-7,500 (mid); and 7,500+ (large). For illustrative purposes the MPS is a large force (50,000+ total strength), whilst BTP is mid-sized (circa 4,500 total strength)

## Protecting participant identities

A number of the participants voiced their early concerns about how open and honest they could realistically be about many of the issues affecting their morale. Following discussion with all potential participants, I decided to apply the relevant gender, rank and generic role description to each participant, but indirectly apply all other defining characteristics. This was to ensure that participants could not be identified, particularly in the case of those who worked on small, specialist teams.

Participant profiles relating to gender, rank and role type were as follows:

	Gender	Rank	Role Type (*shows double-hatted duties)
P1	Male	Sergeant	Roads and transport*
P2	Male	Sergeant	Roads and transport*
P3	Female	Sergeant	Neighbourhood policing
P4	Male	Sergeant	Strategic oversight*
P5	Male	Inspector	Neighbourhood policing
P6	Male	Constable	Response
P7	Male	Constable	Covert
P8	Female	Constable	Operational support*
P9	Male	Inspector	Operational oversight*
P10	Male	Constable	Neighbourhood policing*

### Breakdown of other participant characteristics:

- Force – Metropolitan Police (5); BTP (3); Non-London (2)
- Police Federation involvement – National (1); Local (1)
- Detective ranks (2)
- Ethnicity – White British (9); Other (1)
- Range of service – 5 to 26 years
- Family status – Domestic partnership w/kids (5); Domestic partnership only (2); Divorced (1); Single (2)

## Conducting a preliminary survey

Workplace morale is a subject that traditionally attracts research and analysis of the person rather than the environment (Van Harrison, 1993; Harrison, 2005). Consensus amongst traditional theorists is that fluctuations in stress and morale result from an individual's adaptation to their working environment, referred to as *person-environment fit theory* (Harrison, 1978; Selye, 1956). Summarising this theory, an individual's interaction with a mismatched working environment (Van Harrison, 1993), including mismatch to the social environment or the job's physical design (Demerouti et. all, 2001), causes stress-based reductions in morale.

As already mentioned in this paper, contrary schools of thought have developed in recent years (Minor and Wells, 2014). Dollard, Osborne and Manning (2013) contend that an individual's macro-environment<sup>19</sup> should also be considered for its indirect but nonetheless significant influence over worker distress and morale and that analysis is incomplete or unbalanced unless macro and micro influences are taken into consideration (Schaufeli et. all, 2009).

I am extremely surprised by the traditional viewpoint. It seems logical (at least to me) that a person's immediate working environment is not the only influence over their perceptions. It seems reasonable that an organisation's *response* to direct influences (which are indirect for the worker), will directly impact the worker. In light of there being a debate on this subject, I decided to ask police officers what the variables were that they perceived had the greatest influence over their morale, taking micro and macro environments into consideration. This required the development of a simple quantitative survey by which to qualify, disqualify or add individual variables.

The inclusion of a preliminary survey had its distinct advantages. It allowed me to consider morale in the broadest possible context. The survey also encouraged participant interview content that went beyond the operational/political topics that usually dominate *police-speak* (Ankony, 1999). The survey was quick and easy to administer, and participants were able to respond at their convenience and in a standardised format (Bryman, 2004). To overcome gaps in research the survey also prompted participants to identify variables that they felt were unique to their

<sup>19</sup> *Organisational-environment theory*

circumstances, or had been missed by the researcher.

### Identifying the survey format

There was the need to locate a framework to help me identify and categorise variables. Two commonly used frameworks are SWOT and PESTLE. I gave consideration to each framework as follows:

SWOT Analysis	STEEPLE Analysis
<p>SWOT stands for <i>strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats</i>. SWOT analysis allows an individual/organisation to identify and focus on accumulating strengths and minimising weaknesses, and to take advantage of opportunities and consider threats (CIMA, 2007; Mind Tools, undated).</p> <p>Considered to be a powerful tool in aiding a person's self-analysis, SWOT relies on the <i>single-person</i> perspective only and does not take the differing perspectives of groups into account.</p> <p>When used as an organisational tool, SWOT can help to identify some factors with indirect influence over workers, but its focus is primarily directed towards the organisation. SWOT is generally suitable for individual or organisational case studies but provides a limited framework in which to generalise a workforce (Silva,</p>	<p>STEEPLE is a derivative of PESTLE<sup>20</sup> analysis, the primary difference being the rearrangement of acronym letters, plus the inclusion of an addition 'E' letter to allow for wider exploration into the area of <i>ethics</i>.</p> <p>STEEPLE/PESTLE are exploratory by nature and aid the identification of external factors with potential, rather than definitive, influence over an organisation or person (University of Strathclyde, undated). Predominantly tools used by organisational strategists, STEEPLE/PESTLE are also appropriate means of identifying external factors that influence individuals (Burke, 2014; Holmes, undated).</p> <p>When using STEEPLE/PESTLE to analyse an individual's environment, Holmes recommends (i) dividing factors into one of two categories (ie, internal<sup>21</sup></p>

<sup>20</sup> A mnemonic title comprising of the target areas for macro-analysis (ie, political, environmental, socio-cultural, technological, legal and economic factors) (CIPD, 2013; Process Policy, 2015)

<sup>21</sup> Within the individual's control to change, whether directly or by use of collective strategy (eg, relationship-based variables)



<p>2015). Tiduko (undated) notes that as simple and useful as SWOT is its structure is such that important influencing variables may be easily missed.</p>	<p>or external<sup>22</sup>); and (ii) defining each factor by one of three possible degrees of perceived impact<sup>23</sup>. This seems an attractive method of providing definition and hierarchy to influencing variables, and may allow for isolation of variables for empirical tested at a later time.</p> <p>A disadvantage to STEEPLE/PESTLE is its tendency to focus mostly on macro-variables (Tiduko, undated).</p>
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I considered STEEPLE/PESTLE to be most appropriate for my study. In light of the regulatory conduct framework that governs policing and military disciplines (Walden, 2011), I expanded the framework to STEEPLE so that *ethical* influences could also be considered. My study was time-constrained which limited the opportunity to analyse individual perceptions pertaining to degrees of impact as suggested by Holmes. However, I did use Holmes' suggestion as a guide to measure impact by degrees of participant consensus. For example, a variable chosen by all participants was considered more impactful than one chosen by few.

To populate the preliminary survey, I conducted early desk research which identified 91 variables that are known to influence morale<sup>24</sup>. These were sourced from occupational and organisational psychology studies, police stakeholders<sup>25</sup>, and a variety of social media sources. The variables were a mix of personal, professional and workplace components. The preliminary survey arranged the variables within a nominal framework, and in accordance with the STEEPLE mnemonic.

### **Allowing questionnaire recipients to lead the direction of research**

I originally anticipated that I would be able to populate the STEEPLE framework with variables collected via desk based research alone and that this would provide me with a complete source from which to add qualitative data from interviews. As I

<sup>22</sup> Outside of an individual's direct or collective control (eg, weather conditions)

<sup>23</sup> Comprising high/medium/low perceptions of importance, priority or significance

<sup>24</sup> See Appendix A (preliminary survey)

<sup>25</sup> A body of literature published by the following organisations was considered: Home Office, PFEW, College of Policing, HMIC, Skills for Justice, plus Police Oracle and Policing Insight magazines

began researching I found that my personal biases and frames of knowledge, about policing and organisational/occupational psychology outside of policing, was creating a false first step from which to follow with primary research. To overcome this, I 'flipped' my methods so that my primary research (interview) completed the list of influencing variables, which would then be triangulated with further secondary research. This meant that my early desk research was reasonably superficial, generating headline data to stimulate topics of interest. This allowed participants to create their own 'research frameworks' by identifying (and suggesting) variables that they felt were most relevant to them.

Rearranging my methods reduced the 91 contributing variables to 6 key themes for interview discussion<sup>26</sup>.

### **Gaining participant consent**

Approximately 2 weeks before interview and once all participants had completed the preliminary survey each was sent an introductory briefing sheet<sup>27</sup> and a consent form<sup>28</sup> to read. I also spoke briefly to each participant about how best to gain consent and to answer any questions about the interview process. Some participants returned signed consent forms, which confirmed their agreement to be tape recorded during the interview, whilst others were happy to tape record their agreement to be interviewed, immediately prior to the interview commencing. All participants ultimately confirmed their consent on tape, regardless of whether they had previously signed a consent form.

### **Preparing for interviews**

#### **Grindsted, 2005**

“Those who are opposed to qualitative interviewing argue that it is an interviewer-biased and very costly data gathering method. Those who are against using survey interviewing argue that such studies suffer from serious problems of validity, since the interviewer, in order to act in a neutral fashion, is prevented from clarifying

<sup>26</sup> See Findings

<sup>27</sup> See Appendix B (introductory briefing sheet)

<sup>28</sup> See Appendix C (consent form template)

issues of comprehension.”

Above all else, I wanted clarification of issues pertaining to police morale so that a step forward could be taken towards resolving the issue in the future. It was therefore important to ensure that I find ways to achieve research validity. Bryman (2004) notes four main types of validity, three<sup>29</sup> of which are most relevant to qualitative research.

*Internal validity* relates to the question of whether one variable can cause another. In the context of my research, this would relate to whether one of the variables contained within the STEEPLE framework is perceived to have influence over morale. *External validity* is concerned with the researcher's ability to generalise beyond the context of her research. For example, if participants unanimously conceded that a certain variable was highly influential, and triangulation across a broader base of professions also occurred, then it may be valid to associate the variable with changes in morale.

*Ecological validity* interests me with regards to the Government's austerity measures as a key negative influence over police morale. Bryman describes ecological validity as a test of whether the social research is not only 'technically' valid, but also has meaningful accuracy in everyday lives. In my research, the question might be whether austerity is the root cause of low morale, or if day-to-day factors have greater influence but are somehow camouflaged amidst the trumpeting protests against government decision-making. I want to create the most natural, relaxed and open interview environment possible, to support an easy flow of honest discussion from participants. Choosing the right interview venue and format, building rapport, and stimulating as much 'true life' discussion as possible, would help to strengthen the validity of my research outcomes.

Spark (2011) notes that successful participant interviews often arise from thorough preparatory activity whilst remaining semi-structured in their delivery. I liked the idea of semi-structured interviews that allowed participants to determine the direction of discussion within a loose boundary of topics. I hoped that this would keep interview content on track but give participants the freedom to share experiences that are relevant to them.

<sup>29</sup> The 4<sup>th</sup> (measurement or construct validity) relates to the stability of the concept being measured, which is primarily a point of reference for quantitative rather than qualitative research

### **How I prepared for participant interviews**

- Use of an interview guide<sup>30</sup> rather than a list of questions. The guide included broad topical areas for discussion, open-ended prompts, and allowed me to *tick off* topics of discussion as they occurred.
- I provided broad topical headlines to participants a few days prior to interview, to help stimulate discussion.
- A standard introductory script and warm-up question were incorporated into the interview guide. This allowed natural entry into discussion areas, on the basis of what interested each participant.
- Permission to tape record was gained from all participants. This freed my time to give full attention to participants and observe moderating factors.
- Participants were asked to describe how they felt about topics. This often led to side discussions I hadn't anticipated during preliminary research.

To minimise any residual sense of corporate obligation, I asked participants to meet me outside of working hours, and in venues that did not require use of employer-sponsored transport. Interviews took place in cafés, pubs, and in the case of one participant who I already knew well, in my home. Five of the interviews took place via Skype<sup>31</sup> and were particularly successful. They achieved excellent sound recording quality, and allowed participants to speak openly from a safe and comfortable environment of their choosing.

### **Considering the individual being interviewed**

Job stress, perceptions and workplace morale are also states of mind which are moderated by an individual's characteristics (Smollen, 2006). During the interview process I paid close attention, not only to what participants said, but how they said it (Bryman, 2004). I looked for clues (ie, posture, gesturing, expressions) that might indicate affective response, and asked questions that might highlight moderating factors (Smollen, 2006; Williams, 2000). Whilst my observations were superficial they did help me to identify a few examples of known *rank-and-file* sub-culture which can be found in the discussion section of this paper.

<sup>30</sup> See Appendix D (interview guide)

<sup>31</sup> A web-based conference facility which allows real-time video discussion ([www.skype.com](http://www.skype.com))

### **Smollen's 6 moderating factors affecting an individual's cognitive and affective response**

- Perceptions of line manager's level of operational competence.
- Perceptions of manager's communication style.
- Perceived scale of impact relating to each variable.
- Similar experiences, if any.
- Overall disposition.
- Emotional intelligence.

With regards to an individual's overall disposition, sub-factors may include tendencies towards narcissism, agreeableness, machiavellism, empathy towards others, and numerous other individual or collective personality traits. A person's overall disposition indicates the likelihood of their responding to a variable in a certain way. Whilst I was able to include my observations with regards to each of these traits, I should acknowledge the risk of unconscious researcher bias and the superficiality of any observations.

### **Follow up research and analysis**

The participant interviews produced over 20 hours of tape recordings, all of which was transcribed. Following data coding, which was done with the use of qualitative software (NVivo), I also conducted a second round of desk based research to see if participant consensus (and non-consensus) could be triangulated against other sources of information.

My early research identified potential morale drivers relevant to a wide range of professions. However, I focused on the variables which participants felt were most relevant to them as a group in light of how they had responded to the preliminary questionnaire, and the direction of interview discussions. For this reason the discussion section of this paper focuses on the most relevant and/or impactful issues arising from the study, and the strongest themes that emerged during the research process.

In light of the requirement to follow up my research dissertation with an operational

report for PFEW, I want to ensure that my findings could be translated into operationally viable (and sector-relevant) recommendations. The use of Moore's *strategic triangle* as a framework for data analysis allowed me to examine my research findings according to 3 interdependent categories known to be applicable to public sector organisations (University of Rhode Island, 2014).

**Note about the structure of this report:**

I wanted to take advantage of the large amount of directly quotable data collected during the study. Consequently, this paper includes numerous direct quotes from participants. As often as possible I have also tried to include the direct phrasing of at least one participant to illustrate consensus amongst numerous participants. For this reason, a number of sections of text confirm agreement by all or most participants, but only include a single quotation which has been chosen because it is the most representative example of the collective viewpoint.

# FINDINGS

## Themes of discussion

During interviews, I maintained a semi-structured framework which consisted of 6 broad themes for discussion: (a) role complexity; (b) values and preferences; (c) working relationships; (e) leadership; (f) infrastructure and supporting frameworks, and (g) government and legislation.

I also asked each participant to describe the “best and worst” aspects of their job “what UK policing does well and should never change”, and the changes they would make if they could “rewrite the book on policing from scratch”.

The four most impactful influences over police officer morale were considered to be police leadership; target and/or performance culture; supportive networks and role models; and systems and processes. Interview participants also raised a number of topics relating to police officer welfare, and matters that are perceived to breed dysfunction within the Police Service working environments.

Text marked with quotations refers to a verbatim quote by one or more of the police officers interviewed. Unless doing so posed a risk to the reputation or anonymity of the participant, each quotation of text includes an identifying marker<sup>32</sup>.

## Police Leadership

In light of the fact that I set out to research the Federated policing ranks specifically, I did not anticipate during the design of this research project that the police leadership (and its numerous perceived dysfunctions) would become a prominent feature of my research findings.

The earliest indication that this may be the case occurred at the preliminary survey stage. When asked to confirm which of the 91 identified (plus any self-defined) morale drivers had a perceived impact on their own level of morale, police leadership was the only driver in which a unanimous score from participants was achieved.

<sup>32</sup> For example, *P1* refers to Participant 1, *P2* to Participant 2, and so on

Further, and despite the survey requirement to simply 'check' the box for any driver perceived to be relevant, half of the participants made a point of adding leadership-related dialogue in the 'any other comments' section of the survey.

Following are some of the comments that were received:

“Issues pertaining to operational overload and attitude of senior leaders”  
(P2)

“Simplistic and militaristic management style. Preference for knee jerk, reactive style of management... no appetite for reflection or thinking anything through. Need to [be] seen as 'strong' leader over all other concerns, reducing effectiveness and disempowering staff” (P5)

It is worth noting that the only other morale drivers which generated comment during the questionnaire stage pertained to Direct Entry<sup>33 34</sup>; design and fit of police uniforms<sup>35</sup>; and increased opportunity for professional development following transfer to a new force<sup>36</sup>.

When asked to provide a definition of the term *leadership* during interview, participants unanimously referred to the Superintendent and NPCC<sup>37</sup> ranks as falling within the definition, and a few also included whichever Federated ranks were higher than their own. When asked to discuss the impact of leaders on their level of morale, there were also numerous unanimous references made to certain police-related organisations<sup>38</sup>. This indicates that whilst the definition of leadership is accepted to be one which describes *individuals*, officers also view certain *organisations* as having a role or degree of influence within the leadership context.

There was no significant distinction to be made between gender, role or rank of

<sup>33</sup> A police recruitment programme in which the focus is “to bring in individuals with exceptional leadership from outside policing [to a] senior management” role (College of Policing, 2015)

<sup>34</sup> Two comments were received (P3, P7), one of which made direct negative reference to leadership capability of direct entry candidates of Superintendent rank (P7)

<sup>35</sup> Expressing a negative influence over morale (P8)

<sup>36</sup> Expressing a positive influence over morale (P6)

<sup>37</sup> A police coordinating body whose membership include police officers “at the rank of Assistant Chief Constable or above, Commander in the Metropolitan Police Service and City of London Police, and senior police staff equivalents” (NPCC, 2015). Also refers to its predecessor body, ACPO, reference to which may appear in participant quotes which apply to NPCC ranks

<sup>38</sup> PFEW and its regional branches, College of Policing, IPCC, HMIC and the Home Office



participants and how they felt about police leadership. Discussion centred around 8 points of influence on morale:

### ***Qualification and competence***

Three of the participants perceived the direct entry programme as having an undermining and thereby negative effect on the morale of officers seeking merit-based career advancement. In one instance a participant explained what she felt was the “unfairness” of allowing promotion from Constable to Inspector ranks within 3 years under Direct Entry, whereas possession of a university degree, over 20 years service and experience acting up in the role of Inspector had not been enough to get her promoted to a substantive Inspector rank (P3). Other participants spoke of *Direct Entry* posing the risk of a disingenuous process of rewarding merit.

“Constables are recruited on their merit not on the fact that they've got a degree or relevant supervisory experience. I don't know what processes they put them through... my view is they are creating a 2-tier system. So you've got the guys coming in at the bottom rung like me, on merit... And then you've got the Superintendent rank which doesn't seem to be adhering to what the whole thing is about.” (P7)

P10 also raised the point that *Direct Entry* officers who are appointed to decision making roles during high risk operations (eg, public disorder), have no practical experience to draw from and will therefore “lean on the support of more experienced colleagues”. The perception of this was that it posed a risk to policing operations, and ultimately cast doubt on the logic behind assigning that candidate to operational policing matters in the first place.

Remaining participants had less of an issue with direct entry as a concept, but with caveats as to when and why it should be applied with most raising the point that non-policing skills were what made a *Direct Entry* candidate attractive to the Service (eg, business strategy, finance) and therefore, the candidate's role should focus on what they bring which is different, leaving operational policing matters to those who have practical experience.

“It isn't difficult to understand why it shouldn't be at Inspector level... it's

massively important that Inspectors have a sound knowledge base for operational work... you have to appear credible. The people you work with will know if you have practical experience and a real understanding of what they do... But something like Chief Superintendent level where you are starting to become more detached from the operational and are more in strategy and finance... there is a mixture of politics and business involved within that rank... I think it's important to see what a candidate can bring to the service. Just because they have been successful in private industry doesn't mean to say that will automatically cross over into operational policing. It is an entirely different work and concept... [but] I think there is an argument for it." (P9)

There was a significantly higher percentage of dissatisfaction with how and why police leaders are seemingly chosen, with all participants expressing concern as to whether police leadership in its current form was operationally or administratively competent.

"We get people who have all these leadership qualifications and I often think how are they qualified? Just because they can put pen to paper and write it up doesn't mean they can lead people. To lead people you don't need qualification, you just need to be a person and have a human being way of thinking... It's not always the party line and what the police want you to say, it's about doing the right thing..." (P6)

Participants were divided in their views as to whether the perceived lack of competence related to *operational* or *administrative* areas of responsibility. They generally conceded however in the view that Command and Control<sup>39</sup> styled leaders often exhibited a lack of administrative, management or strategic competence, and that operational competence and/or confidence was similarly lacking in leaders exhibiting primarily academic or corporate skill sets.

There was a significant amount of overlap in discussions about leadership qualification, competence and the underlying principles of eligibility.

<sup>39</sup> The authority and capability of an organisation to direct the actions of its personnel and the use of its equipment (College of Policing, 2015A). Over recent years the phrase has also increasingly been used to describe outdated, traditional and notably rigid methods of management (Old, 2014)

## ***Eligibility***

Once again, all of the participants were in agreement to question the eligibility of current police leaders. Comments ranged from allegations of “under-performing” candidates being chosen over better performing candidates for the purposes of making up diversity shortfalls (P7), to a shift in perceptions as to whether leaders should “show you the way” or demonstrate that they “meet the expectations placed upon them” (P9). The issue of cliquishness in the police service was also a prominent discussion point.

“I've seen it a few times where you get a group of people... once they get to sort of Inspector and above, it's not uncommon for a group of people to seem to go up the ranks together... You will get this little close knit group, and each one of them effectively is each other's evidence to make them all go up together. And they always end up working together and I happen to see this at an ACPO level where someone will go and become Chief Constable and then actually all of their, I will say cronies, I don't like the word cronies, but all of their cronies end up going up there working with them... Because they complement each other and appreciate the way each other work.” (P4)

## ***Strategy and decision making***

When it came to the topic of leadership decision making, officers were again unanimous in their perceptions that police leaders had a tendency to impose unrealistic and at times illogical direction onto front-line services. This was something that participants described as particularly frustrating and disheartening. In fact, one participant became emotional as they described their desperation to serve the public, in the face of what they perceived to be continuously preventative redirections. Other participants spoke of continuously working against chaotic decision changes:

“Leadership is about 2 halves. One is about moving the organisation forward and this is the failure half of it. It's not just about delivering the now... we seem to always be on a treadmill. We are always running

around catching our tails around day-to-day business and never looking up and thinking hey, are we doing this efficiently, effectively.” (P5)

There was consensus among participants that seemingly illogical decision making by senior officers was a product of their overall “detachment from operational reality” (P10), refusal “to take criticism or be questioned” (P2), individualistic mindset, and failure to stand up to external influencers – the latter 2 points are described in greater detail below.

### ***Individualistic mindset***

There was another prominent perception that senior ranking officers frequently gave operational directives that supported their own career aspirations by either (a) creating an identifiable legacy, or (b) helping them to avoid criticism. At times, this included sudden changes in direction, which were perceived to serve no purpose other than to realign the senior officer's image so that it fit with a new political or influential trend. Some participants spoke of “fads”, “slogans”, and “superficial” or diversionary strategies that had no foundation or were designed to barely skim or altogether avoid the “core issues” (P1, P3, P9). One participant also highlighted his belief that the tendency for many police leaders to react to political or popular trends diminished perceptions of leader ‘strength’ in the eyes of lower ranks:

“I have no objection to the idea of them as a benevolent dictator. It's his or her police force and [it's] how they wish the policies and strategies to be. Strong leadership, yes I think the police service benefits from that, from senior officers who are prepared to take positions and stick to those decisions. But what tends to happen when there are emerging situations... junior officers look towards decision making by senior officers, which has suddenly changed.” (P10)

Some participants described an unjustified “lack of trust” which progressively amplifies with each rank level, due to the rank’s increased focus on their own career aspirations and the risks associated with being criticised (P2; P4). There was also a perception that in some cases, a *micromanagement culture*<sup>40</sup> has become prevalent in the

<sup>40</sup> Pertaining to performance culture, the findings for which are provided on later in this paper

workplace in order to justify the existence of some of the Superintendent ranks:

“... with the recession and how it is with cutbacks, it makes the bosses look busier than they would ordinarily be so that they can keep their role as opposed to our role. That's what it looks like and it's a perception that's generated across our office in general.” (P7)

### ***Standing up to external influences***

Closely entwined with perceptions of individualistic mindset was the collective view that police leaders are not doing all they can to *take a stand* against external influences. In particular the relationship between NPCC ranks and Government was perceived to be one where senior officers frequently placated Government at the expense of lower ranks, or only challenged matters that posed a risk to them personally. This was coupled with the view that a growing number of lower ranks feel obligated to step in where senior ranks have failed to challenge unfair criticisms of policing.

“As far as I can see the relationship is that the Government tells ACPO what they need to do, and ACPO says yep, we'll do that. Right up to the point where it starts to directly affect ACPO and then it's like hang on a minute! Don't want to pull the drawbridge up too far because my feet are getting wet, so now we'll start to stand our ground. But by that time, it's too late. (P1)

A similar viewpoint was raised with regards to taking a stand against open criticism of policing:

“Sometimes ... where police have been criticised, say in the use of force, there's a sense that senior officers aren't fighting the corner of lower ranking officers by explaining the circumstances in which use of force occurs. To use one example... where officers who are on twitter either anonymously or openly using social media, [they] often perform a much better job of explaining why police officers behave a certain way in situations of say disorder, or when deploying firearms officers. Regardless of the issues that police may be criticised for.... I think the greyness of the

people formally known as ACPO... Chief Constables come across more as bureaucratic managers than they do leaders.” (P10)

In one instance, a participant went so far as to articulate what they perceived to be a clever manoeuvre by Government in which it used the individualistic nature of senior ranks against them, by encouraging division between ranks:

“I think we have almost got to the point where the rank and file of policing has been broken... This has been over 30 years and isn't just this government, it's a long process and unfortunately I think ACPO have been an intrinsic part of it. But now we are coming to the end of that process where the rank and file have lost their power, the only power left in policing was ACPO. But ACPO has been a pawn... in the Government's agenda to effectively bring policing down to the point where they can do what they like with it. They let ACPO sort out the rank-and-file, and now they have sorted out ACPO. And there is really no strength left to resist change.” (P4)

In another instance, a participant explained that even in the wider context, there is no support for the rank-and-file in policing to draw from:

“I have no confidence in HMIC<sup>41</sup> and its current incumbent I should say. I don't feel that the Home Secretary is aware of the issues surrounding policing. I think they have imposed their own agenda and frankly aren't listening to contrary voices. I think with the Police Chiefs and the College of Policing, again no one is seen to be fighting the corner of ordinary officers. (P10)

### **Communication**

It transpired during the interviews that perceptions about leadership communication pertained to 3 issues specifically: (a) inappropriate styles of communication; (b) the use of ineffective communication methods/forums; and (c) failing to communicate at all.

<sup>41</sup> Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary

When asked to describe the quality and relevance of existing communication methods nearly all participants spoke of the over-reliance on generic emails, systems and articles, with one participant labelling the issue “death by email” (P3). There were also points raised that the generic nature of communications was a way to avoid crucial topics of discussion and/or distance the senior person/people from issues of personal accountability.

“No, no it's dreadful, generic and patronising... There is a real feeling of worry because of potential compulsory redundancies after all the financial changes that have happened. Nobody really feels as though the Met has come out to date and said anything substantive about it. It's the elephant in the room that no one will talk about, and we'll talk about all these other things but we don't actually talk about the thing that's bothering 90% of the workforce... people think that the management have got something to hide... it makes people feel insecure. As police officers we are naturally inquisitive and even suspicious people because of the job we do. And once you've got some service in the job you can spot a lie, you know, because that's what we do. So, you then start to think well, that's odd. And it's undermining, very much so.” (P1)

In a few instances, the circumstances surrounding the Winsor Review was cited as an example during which failure to communicate with lower ranks allowed anxieties to heighten and resentments to “fester” (P7).

When questioned about perceptions of leadership communication style participants spoke of the need to “balance command and control leadership with listening to people” (P10), and expressed frustration that police leaders had a tendency to impose their will onto lower ranks as would be expected in a transactional<sup>42</sup> style of leadership. This was an issue that was particularly seen to be prevalent amongst Superintendent ranks with a number of participants claiming to have never met the Superintendent in their direct line of management. When asked whether there was any direct communication between ranks:

<sup>42</sup> Before choosing to use the term ‘transactional’, I gave it great consideration. Whilst the word itself may be offensive to some as it implies an outdated management model, even so far as draconian in nature, it does appear to be an accurate description for the purposes of this study. Use of the term confirms the perceptions of those who participated in this study and is therefore true

“No. The only time you will hear from a Superintendent is if an order is being given, or to tell you that your leave has been cancelled... Two new Superintendents sent out emails introducing themselves, with a short biography... but they never came onto shift and we’ve never been introduced... it’s usually just an email from a Chief Superintendent saying, no leave authorised on this day thank you.” (P6)

Referring specifically to the senior ranks at MPS, for which appointment of the force Commissioner was perceived to be the driving factor of cultural change:

“[They] pushed this ‘value’ thing through which was pretty much get in your troops’ face, get in your constable’s face and let them feel like they are not trusted and bullied. And that’s their style [of] supervision now. Whereas pre-Winsor, pre-recession pre-Coalition we were all pretty much trusted and felt semi-valued for the work we did. Now we don’t feel valued at all we just feel like the whole regime has gone from a pretty comfortable atmosphere of doing a hard day’s work, to being over-supervised and bullied. You can’t really concentrate on the work you are doing. And you don’t know where it’s going to come from - the next issue to fear.” (P7)

This viewpoint was supported by other participants with describing the cultural shift as “due to London’s close proximity to the political hub... it’s like the politicians can’t be bothered leaving London, so all eyes are on the Met... whoever they appoint Commissioner is going to be a political type” (P8).

### ***Setting an example***

Each of the participants was aware of at least one investigation pending with respect to the conduct of an NPCC ranked officer. A few of the participants referred to what they felt was the ‘double standard’ in policing, in which lower ranks are far too rigidly held to account for even the most minor infractions, while positive role models are disproportionately scarce amongst the senior ranks<sup>43</sup>. One participant referred to the national status of investigations into senior officer conduct:

<sup>43</sup> Role models in policing are discussed later on in this paper



“There are 20 vacancies in ACPO at the moment. And 12 Chief Constables out of 43 are being investigated.” (P9)

### **Empowering others**

The 7 preceding points of influence have seemingly culminated into an 8<sup>th</sup> point – a sense of disempowerment, which is borne from both a collective lack of trust in police leadership and an equally prevalent lack of *organic*<sup>44</sup> respect.

Whereas, an element of fear-generated<sup>45</sup> respect or respect for hierarchal norms was evidenced by some of the officers’ responses, there were no clues given as to there being an element of reverence involved.

When asked the direct questions “do you trust police leadership”, and “do you feel trusted by police leadership”, responses were as follows:

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10
<b>Trusting leaders</b>	No	No	Yes	No	Yes <sup>46</sup>	Yes	No	No	No	No
<b>Feeling trusted</b>	No <sup>47</sup>	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No

In some cases, participants clarified their responses as follows:

“... there is an absence of trust. Many lower ranking officers feel that senior officers don't give a shit about us and only care about figures and targets and statistics. The individual is lost amongst it. Sometimes you see that relationship when police officers are sick, or when officers get complaints. They sense that frankly the job loses interest in them and they have become almost an embarrassment.” (P10)

“There is a dividing line from when I transferred out of the Met... the micromanagement, you were always being watched. You weren't trusted with what you were doing, and that came from quite high up... the county

<sup>44</sup> Pure or naturally occurring (eg, admiration-based) as opposed to enforced or officiated by the hierarchal structures within policing

<sup>45</sup> Relating to performance and targets which are discussed later in this paper

<sup>46</sup> The verbatim response was “Cautiously”

<sup>47</sup> This participant then added the point that they did feel trusted with financial decision making, up to £1,000.

police force where I am now, you are trusted to work on your own and are given far more responsibility to make your own decisions when dealing with something.... It's a lot more political in London... and it cascades down from the top... they try to blame you... but it isn't necessarily your fault...<sup>48</sup>

"I trust some individuals more than others. The organisation creates performance measures that undermine trust and creates perverse incentives that aren't necessarily good. The area I least trust police leaders in is staff management... the attitude of looking at people as suspects, so they are poor at [managing] attendance, sickness and motivation. [They] focus on suspecting the worst in officers and punitive response to situations that could be far more developmental. A lack of appreciation of what [they] ask of staff. [When] sat around a table frequently with members of the leadership team, they often say, *oh the officers are here working for us* - hammering them because they want to do less... and as though the workforce have to be beaten into submission as opposed to led." (P5)

It should be noted that my original intention had been to look at force culture<sup>49</sup> as a morale component which was separate from police leadership. However, as interviews progressed it became clear that the introduction of prevalent leadership styles and methods had a direct impact on workforce culture and were perceived to be based on a hierarchal, transactional management model.

### **Target and/or Performance Culture**

Another morale driver that scored very highly in the preliminary survey was the perceived target-driven *performance culture*<sup>50</sup> which participants felt was constantly being pushed onto them by the corporate centre. Interestingly, participants were unanimous in their view that not only did the centrally controlled performance culture have an acutely negative effect on their morale, but that it was also operationally

<sup>48</sup> Participant's identifier has been deliberately omitted to prevent identification

<sup>49</sup> As opposed to 'police culture' which is not within the scope of this study but is briefly discussed as a moderating factor later in the discussion section of this paper

<sup>50</sup> For the purposes of this paper, *target culture* and *performance culture* have the same meaning and refer to the culture of numerically-driven targets to measure performance

counterproductive, continuously directing officers away from serving the public in more meaningful ways.

Almost all participants expressed some frustration at the fact that using numerical performance targets encouraged officers to chase numbers thereby neglecting the *softer* policing skills that help to reassure the public and inspire confidence in policing. It was seen to encourage deviant behaviours such as the manipulation of performance figures and public handling behaviours that negatively impact perceptions of policing.

Coupled with this was the view that some performance targets appeared to serve no purpose and gained no benefit, going so far as to leave officers questioning why they were bothering with the activity at all, when they could be doing something more productive.

“Now we are getting these all the time, constantly coming in. Some of them are coming from ACPO level. Things like operation CUBO which is the operation where everybody is out at a fixed location, pulling over vehicles looking for no insurance. That happens once a month for everyone. And in fact I think I've got that on Wednesday. And sometimes we get things like operation PRESENCE which is an operation where the Superintendent wants the entire team out and about, riding up and down on the buses in yellow jackets and literally just riding up and down on the buses in yellow jackets... So the whole team goes out and everybody does those... I am getting my PCs coming up to me and saying look I've got outstanding suspects in a crime report. Or I'm trying to do some work around antisocial behaviour in this area but because we keep getting put on these operations I am not able to go to the areas to go and do the work that I need to do.” (P2)

P2 went further and described having recently raised this as an issue to the relevant NPCC rank:

“I started complaining about the number of operations being directed by the centre, and [the NPCC rank] said, *what were you going to be doing if you weren't being told what to do?* ... I thought, well we've got police work to do. My team have got crimes that they are investigating and even if

that isn't the case they will go out on patrol and start doing traffic stops themselves. They are proactive. But there seems to be this feeling that if the centre isn't controlling what we are doing we won't do anything." (P2)

There was also a prevalent perception amongst participants that the culture of performance target setting was linked to a fear of failure that subsequently breeds an impossible standard of *success at all costs* which is paradoxically a standard set by senior ranks who are not performing in the role, but who want to appear to be in control of the outcome and therefore *micromanage from a distance*. On this point, participants linked performance targets, and the resultant micromanagement techniques, to a lack of trust in the ability of officers to develop their own discretionary methods of working proactively that will benefit the public and the force. Participants complained of being subject to a continuous "churn of work" that "feels very top-down driven" (P5).

Almost all of the participants felt that they were being micromanaged unnecessarily, and in ways that actively diminished their capacity to provide a meaningful service to the public. One participant spoke of performance culture as a relatively new phenomenon (<10 years), which has quickly become a fully acceptable method of management in some policing environments.

"Officers who are experienced don't need prompting. They've done the job for years and do it on autopilot. When I first started I thought policing was a breath of fresh air. It wasn't intrusive, encroaching or stifling. We did our own decision making and if we chose to go down the discretion route we were supported. I didn't have to step out of situations to get advice from my supervisor just to cover my back. But now the buy-in is for intrusive supervision... I even had that written into my sick log once by an ACPO officer who said *I fully support intrusive supervision and will not reduce that just because this individual is sick.*" (P7)

One participant attributed 100% of their present state of morale to the micromanagement of performance targets by senior ranks, some of whom he had never met in person (P7). Another participant attributed their perceived increase in the police performance culture to a significant drop in colleague camaraderie and trust, claiming that "people just want to promote themselves and their ability to reach performance targets, even at the detriment of anyone else" (P9).

Participants were unanimous in their view that performance culture bred micromanagement techniques and that officers were increasingly lacking the autonomy to use their own discretionary powers and as a consequence were feeling “undervalued” (P7):

Towards the end of each interview I asked each participant to visualise that they had the opportunity to *rewrite the book on policing*, and then asked them to explain something they would have police do differently. One participant chose to refer to the performance culture as follows:

“If I was to rewrite the book completely, I would incorporate into the promotion process a mandatory question: *Give an example of an operation or an initiative or a piece of work that you did which failed, and what did you learn from it?* Because I think this job at the moment suffers massively from *doomed to succeed*. There is no room for failure and even if something does fail, it is always reported on as a success.” (P2)

Political pressure leading to reactive senior decision-making was conceded to be the primary driving force behind the target-driven performance culture.

### ***Politics-led policing***

Participants agreed that political influence or *politics-led policing* is often responsible for seemingly illogical directives and lack of strategic consistency. Participants shared a number of practical examples, two of which are as follows:

“It was awful, we had 6 [bicycle related accidents] in 10 days... I knew that it was a statistical blip. I knew it didn’t require a knee jerk reaction. We should have carried on as normal... there was political pressure from Transport for London, from the Mayor, from the cycling lobby. All these groups putting on pressure, saying *why aren’t the police doing something about this? This is terrible carnage on the streets...* And so the Commissioner made a public announcement about a complete change in strategy. The reality was actually that by the end of that year, fatalities averaged no more or less than previous years. But the pressure was

coming in, it was political pressure.” (P4)

“It’s spend a pound to save a penny... the focus is on appearing to do the right thing even if it doesn’t work out that way in reality... a brilliant example is we wanted some laptops and they were £200 each. We couldn’t buy them on expenses and claim back because people can’t do their own procurement, they can’t be trusted can they. Something funny might go on. So instead our central procurement team got authority for the same laptops at £800 each.” (P1)

Most participants felt that the most influential stakeholders in policing were also those who had the least practical understanding of what policing entails and that an issue of *political control* rather than police partnership was negatively affecting force effectiveness. Participants spoke of “too many people trying to set policy” (P2), and a “punitive approach by politicians who try to link it to the public... the Home Office in particular appears to be staffed with very bright and talented people who don’t have much knowledge of what policing is really like and so the stuff coming from them is often impractical and unrealistic” (P5).

One participant gave an example of the push to close police stations and set up police enquiry desks at coffee shops and libraries:

“It’s a stupid idea and the public know it’s stupid. But rather than be honest and admit that we can’t afford to keep stations open, they lie and mislead and say *oh, but a coffee shop is just as good or only 1 person has been to the front counter of the police station recently*. I’m sorry, but have you ever been to Lewisham police station? The queue is around the corner with packs of people wanting to talk to police on a personal level rather than just an operator with a computer. This is typical of the strategists who just aren’t fully aware of the realities of what they want to initiate.” (P10)

One participant questioned whether policing had the authority to make its own decisions at all, regardless of rank, and spoke of his previous experience working as a staff officer<sup>51</sup>:

<sup>51</sup> The role of Staff Officer applies to policing and military appointments and is a role which works very closely to support a senior policing rank or other official. The staff officer role is generally demanding and varied in nature, and includes shadowing the senior rank, providing policy advice, acting as delegate

“It didn’t take me long to work out how little influence Chief Superintendents have from an organisational point of view... most Commanders don't seem to have the authority to do much... Deputy Assistant Commissioners don’t have much power to do anything... so much is dictated from an ACPO level. But even ACPO and now the NPCC seem to be dictated to as well... under the old tripartite system the Home Office had lots of control and I certainly think it still does. I’m not sure how much senior police leaders can make proper strategic decisions, most of the time they have no choice, it’s the only decision available with the constraints that are on them. And that filters down.” (P4)

### ***Professional standards***

Another prominent theme of discussion was that around the Department of Professional Standards (DPS<sup>52</sup>), which investigates complaints and allegations of misconduct.

There were 3 participant concerns about DPS. Firstly, the process of investigation was seen to be extremely stressful for officers due to its lagging bureaucracy and lack of transparency, in itself perceived to be responsible for “de-motivating, over constricting and subsequently creating an effectual workforce” (P5) and “igniting” officer subversion (P8). This was particularly the case for officers who had been removed from frontline duties for the duration of an investigation of potential misconduct. Participants with supervisory roles spoke of the negative impact, not only on the morale of the officer under investigation, but also any colleagues working in close proximity. There was also claims of extreme difficulty in motivating teams in which one or more members may be subject to a lengthy process of investigation, whether removed from frontline duty or not:

“Some of them are literally waiting for a central board to see if they are going to keep their job or not. It’s really hard to motivate people who are in that position, whose future is so uncertain.” (P4)

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when required and/or managing a number of office-based staff.

<sup>52</sup> Depending on the force, the acronym use may have been either PSD or DPS

Secondly, participants shared a sense of distrust as to what the true motivation of the investigative process was, perceiving it to be a lazy way to reduce force numbers in light of budget cuts (P9), or transfer line management responsibility onto someone else and that this had bred a target-driven mini-culture within DPS itself, so as to be seen as a crucial element of force performance:

“A lot of decisions are made around staff that are unduly harsh... managers are quick to jump to a conclusion. They make up their minds and are entirely convinced that it’s right, rather than going a bit further and saying *let’s speak about this*. There is too much pressure on resources so decisions are made too quickly. Forces tend to favour rapid decisions over good decisions. It’s easier to blame someone and move on... Simplistic, easy and lazy... I’ve felt pressure as a middle manager to do it because there’s no time to do anything else.” (P5)

“Especially in the Met Police that is the case. The whole ethos of [DPS] and shame... I know they have their own target culture within [DPS]. Like a mini police force within a police force. They are more likely to over-investigate now, and you are more likely to be disciplined now, even for something that doesn’t need discipline.” (P6)

The third concern was that the process of investigation by DPS, which was perceived to have evolved in the past 5 or so years, has closed the door on officers being able to learn from their past mistakes. Participants spoke of earlier methods of handling standards and conduct issues, in which informal, supervisor-led communications and management was a key element. This may have resulted in the officer at the centre of the issue being *fined a day’s pay* (P1) and provided with learning points to adhere to as they continue forward in the role. By contrast, the current method of investigation is perceived to be one in which the officer waits to hear if an allegation of misconduct has been founded, with only the official word of DPS to look forward to. In the event that the investigative outcome is not dismissal from the Service, the officer is left without any learning points to draw from, other than to know that getting into trouble will cause tremendous anxiety and uncertainty over a prolonged period. (P1)

One of the participants identified links between what he felt was an *offloading* of



conduct management responsibility to DPS, the centralisation of HR support<sup>53</sup>, and reduction in training budgets. He felt that budget restrictions were leading to a loss of supervisory skills and/or confidence:

“Unlike section 1 of the Theft Act, which I use all the time and is obviously permanently scratched into my brain... learning how to do a UPP<sup>54</sup> was last taught to me 6 years ago, so I haven’t got a clue now. And the toolkit<sup>55</sup> isn’t very helpful. I find it very hard to follow.” (P2)

### ***Independent Police Complaints Commission***

As an extension of the discussion relating to Professional Standards, some participants made reference to the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC), which oversees the police complaints system in England and Wales and sets the standards by which the police should handle complaints (IPCC, 2015).

In direct contrast to the published IPCC self-description as a body, “independent, making its decisions entirely independently of the police and government”, almost half of the participants perceived it to be “very anti-police... the whole mood music of the IPCC in the eyes of many officers is that we are guilty... they are always seen to be taking the complainant’s side”. (P10)

To support this view, one participant described an instance wherein a member of his team was found to have no case to answer following an internal investigation by the force’s DPS. A concurrent investigation by the Crown Prosecution Service had also found that the officer had no case to answer. However, a subsequent investigation into the same incident by the IPCC found that the officer in question should be subjected to a disciplinary process, and thereby overturned the findings of the two previous investigations (P4).

When asked to explain their understanding of how the IPCC is positioned in the landscape affecting police officers, almost all participants offered a response that implied that the IPCC, despite being independent, may not be entirely impartial.

<sup>53</sup> Further discussion about the centralisation of human resources appears later in this paper

<sup>54</sup> Unsatisfactory performance procedure

<sup>55</sup> A series of policy and process documents available to people managers and which forms part of a centralised HR system

## ***Policing Code of Ethics***

Participants were asked to provide their understanding of the role the College of Policing's *Code of Ethics*<sup>56</sup> within the context of policing professional standards and conduct.

On the day of the interview, only 2 of the participants were able to confirm having previously read the Code in its entirety, and 1 participant confirmed having searched for a specific topic within the Code on at least 1 occasion. A further participant claimed to have "started reading it recently" (P6), since its publication 1 year prior<sup>57</sup>. Further, participants who carried out a people management role confirmed their doubts that many of the officers in their teams had heard of the Code.

The primary concerns about the Code were a perceived lack of practicality, and duplication of purpose with existing standards of conduct:

"Not a particularly practical document. On its own it won't be relevant and it needs to be interpreted at force level. But it's great to have a positive bit of work about what the right thing is to do as opposed to the negative disciplinary regulations which is about what you can't do. I refer to it, not as much as I should do as a manager. I sometimes refer to it as a police officer too." (P5)

"I think it's just shifting responsibility away from the organisation. So that when you mess up on a later day they can say, oh well there was a code of ethics. You know clearly here, paragraph 7, subsection 4, paragraph 3 says you should have done this. Well I've never read it. Well, it's been published. That is what the policing world is like. If it's written down you must have read it. And if you haven't read it well that's your fault." (P1)

"It is effectively just a rehash of the Disciplinary Code, slightly reworded to

<sup>56</sup> "The written guide to the principles that every member of the policing profession of England and Wales is expected to uphold and the standards of behaviour they are expected to meet... to be used on a day-to-day basis to guide behaviour and decision-making..." (College of Policing, 2015B)

<sup>57</sup> The Code of Ethics was published by the College of Policing on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2014; all interviews for this research project were concluded by end June 2015

give it a slightly different edge.” (P4)

Those who had read the Code all confirmed that they were introduced to it as a result of their exposure to extra-curricular activities or non-front line duties. One participant admitted having no awareness of the existence of the Code prior to interview (P7). Another participant confirmed being aware of the Code but was unable to describe its purpose (P8).

### ***Breeding dysfunction and disregard***

Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of discussions around performance culture related to the perceived effect it was having on force culture in general.

Participants were evenly split in their views that police officers were more likely than ever before to place themselves and their own needs ahead of duty.

“That sense of *we are all in it together* was definitely there when I first joined and even 10 years ago. But in the last 4-5 years the *every man for himself* thing has become more prevalent. I know a lot of people with escape plans in the pipeline... they don't feel the same allegiance now... or strict adherence to orders... and don't have the same moral qualms... because they know they will be gone in a year to 18 months. There's a sense of entitlement now. Everybody wants to be Sergeant... they feel betrayed... and that sense of loyalty has been tarnished.” (P1)

Police officers are trained to hide their emotions and I cannot be certain of how much depth of feeling was hidden from me during the interviews. What I did encounter in 3 of the interviews was a noticeably stiff first hour of discussion, followed by a 2<sup>nd</sup> hour of equally noticeable relaxation and subsequent openness. However, every single participant was either unwilling or unable to hide what I believe to be a *sense of loss* of what was conceded to be the policing family-styled solidarity.

This is not to say that such solidarity no longer exists in policing, but I did get a sense that things have changed in recent years, and that the effects are two-fold in that there is (a) an element of fear in the workplace that breeds self-preserving behaviours; and (b) a strong sense of betrayal among police officers with 5+ years of service that has resulted in wide-spread, subtle corrosion of citizenship behaviours. Examples shared

by participants included foregoing process requirements, overlooking a policing matter that might result in more paperwork or encroach into unpaid overtime, not answering the phone, tick-boxing an activity not actually/properly performed, and choosing not to intervene/act for fear of being unsupported.

“People are less likely to go the extra mile now.” (P3)

“When I started I worked in a very close-knit team. I wouldn't say that I would have died for them but I certainly would have put myself in danger if a colleague was in danger. I would have jumped right in because I wouldn't want to see my colleague or skipper or governor hurt. Now, I don't feel like I trust them... it's all the over-supervision. Everybody sits every day and talks about the next thing that could go wrong... makes you feel paranoid... claustrophobic and uncomfortable. People have their backs up now.” (P7)

One participant gave his insight into how a *politics and media generated performance culture* actually camouflages what he believes to be a real problem with *cynicism* in policing. This cynicism was described as “continuously neglected” despite being the key contributing factor behind many high profile policing oversights and/or failures:

“There is a real lack of leadership when it comes to tackling cynicism [which is] about the nature of policing and investigative work that naturally makes officers begin to see the world differently... For example, take the Rochdale<sup>58</sup> sex grooming thing.... It's been all about coppers short-cutting or performance failure. But a real reason why we've neglected, missed or not taken seriously some of the complaints of grooming by young girls in the past has been that cynicism. But I don't think the word [cynicism] has been mentioned in any of the forums... Instead it comes from government and the public saying *corrupt bobbies*... and saying *forbid this, punish that, catch people and hold them to account*... another punitive approach that exacerbates the culture of cynicism. Instead they should be looking for ways to counter the root cause of cynicism instead of the symptom of poor

<sup>58</sup> Referring to a report by the Rochdale Serious Case Safeguarding Board which claimed serious failings by police and other agencies allowed the sexual grooming of 6 young people to occur over an extended period (RBSCB, 2013)

service.” (P5)

In addition to cynicism affecting how officers deal with the public, it was also seen to have a negative influence over how forces manage staff. Cynicism leading to a lack of transparency featured strongly in discussions regarding HR policy and process:

“If you completed an Unfairness at Work Form, which then goes to an [anonymous] adviser... it would never be found in your favour. It would always be in the favour of what I would call the official side. There is no faith in it. The whole process isn't worth the paper it's written on. The adviser might even know you and that's unfair in itself. (P6)

Closely linked to cynicism was the issue of bullying at work. Most of the participants claimed to have been directly bullied by a supervisor (6 out of 10). Four of these cases decided not to report the issue due to their belief that it might activate a cynical and thereby counterproductive response from their force. Instead, they each applied for transfer to roles that were outside the bully's area of control. One participant spoke of their experience having previously been a local Federation Representative, during which he presented 15 witness statements about a single individual, all of which were disregarded by the force (P6).

One participant said she did report the issue and that it was resolved by the force, to her moderate satisfaction<sup>59</sup>. In another example, a group complaint of bullying was made against a single supervisor. The force's remedy was to transfer the entire group to other duties, whilst keeping the bully in place. (P8)

An emerging theme that almost all participants identified was the growing tendency for colleagues to compensate for the performance culture by offloading issues onto someone else. The example below comes from an officer working in a 'high risk policing' discipline who has since resigned from the Service due to stress:

“I work a fixed shift... but carry a phone 24 hours a day, 7 days a week,

<sup>59</sup> Whilst the remedy was not considered to be entirely satisfactory, the participant understood and appreciated the force's swift and decisive handling of the issue and therefore considered the matter to have been sufficiently dealt with (P3)

365 days a year. This means that I'm always worried about whether I've missed a call because the phone has to stay on all the time. If it rings I have to answer it... Up to a few years ago it only rang for legitimate [operational] reasons. Yeah, it means that family life is always chaotic and can be interrupted at any time. It can be positively chaotic if there is an end result and your family around you don't know what's going on but can see there is a resonance of you coming out of the call with a smile on your face because something positive has come out of it. But what occurs now is it's more likely to be a phone call that's some administration rubbish that could wait until Monday morning, and you come out of that with a negative chaos that impacts the rest of your time off, and your family."<sup>60</sup>

Each participant was asked if they felt "valued" by their force. Only one answered positively and their response offered a clue that even when officers are valued by their employer, the appreciation may not be easy to spot:

"Do I think they always show it and express it properly? No I don't think they do. But I do feel valued." (P9)

In some ways however, force culture was considered to have markedly improved in recent years, particularly in respect of its acceptance of a diverse workforce:

"When I joined, not everyone, but a lot of people in force were racist, homophobic, sexist. I have never been. I am gay and I've never been out comfortably at work but now I'm quite happy to be completely out. So from that point of view it's definitely moved on for the better." (P3)

### **Supportive networks and role models**

I asked each of the participants to describe the types of supportive networks and role models that they felt existed in policing (or should exist), and to explain how they felt about each of the examples provided.

Initially none of the participants was able to answer this question and further

<sup>60</sup> The identifier for this participant has been omitted to prevent identification

prompting from me was required. This was a noteworthy contrast to any of the other subject areas in which very little additional prompting was required. Consequently, I asked participants to describe the supporting relationship, leadership element, role model example, or opportunities for police officer empowerment or enablement that they felt each of the following sub-categories represented.

### ***Employer Force***

All but one of the participants claimed to feel disempowered by their force in a variety of ways, which are dealt with individually within this paper. The primary causes of this perceived disempowerment related to failures in operational infrastructure or process<sup>61</sup>, line management and leadership weaknesses, and the target-driven performance culture.

The participant who had transferred to a county force after approximately a decade working in London was the exception, and made a point of stating that they felt far better supported by the new employer. In particular, the areas of improvement related to “greater amount of professional discretion”, “more realistic operational expectations”, and “improved informal communications”.

### ***Partner agencies***

Participants expressed concern about what was perceived to be a profound mismatch of expectations arising from policing working with partner agencies. Some participants made a direct connection between increasing pressure on police to compensate for gaps in other public services, and a narrow acknowledgement of policing activities by Government.

“If it isn’t responding to or investigating crime and can’t be measured against crime figures, then police forces don’t get any funding for it. Some of our partners, like say the NHS or schols, are having their budgets ring fenced and protected even though the reality is that police might be doing some of that work ourselves” (P8)

<sup>61</sup> Relating to centralisation of HR systems and perceived weakness of occupational health, communications and performance/conduct-related processes

“The mantra of the Home Secretary and the Policy Exchange think-tank has been that police only deal with crime. That claim has a sort of ignorance about it. Most of policing is nothing to do with crime. There are a whole range of social functions that police perform without having the officer numbers to deal with it. It has a profound impact on us. We shouldn’t be filling all the gaps of people better qualified than ourselves to deal with these complex social issues. Mental health professionals are the best to deal with mental health. Social workers are the best people to deal with children from very disordered backgrounds. But police are often the only ones there. The others have nice 9 to 5 jobs even though many, probably most situations happen outside of these hours. This is why the police increasingly having to deal with these situations. This means that the police role has changed beyond all recognition.” (P10)

There was also some discussion about the positive and/or negative influences that working with specific partners has. It was not possible to cover all possible partnership scenarios, and in some cases only brief mention was made of various partners. The most notable references were as follows:

### *Security Services*

Only one participant had a close working relationship with the UK Security Services, and noted the complete contrast in levels of process-led bureaucracy when compared to policing. An example of the processes required to gain approval to engage a member of the public known to be of assistance for matters relating to national security.

“Absolutely no bureaucracy from their side. Dealing with them on a one-to-one basis, they always want to help you out. Easy to have an adult conversation with and to agree the terms of any business case that we work on together. Where it falls down is the bureaucracy on our side. The amount of paperwork that we generate far exceeds what the Service generates for the same authorisations. Just one bit of paper<sup>62</sup> from them. But we have a [14 step<sup>63</sup>] process for the same authorisation.” (P7)

<sup>62</sup> The participant acknowledged that the paper was lengthy so as to capture all necessary information, but only involved a single stage of approval

<sup>63</sup> Steps were described but are omitted from this paper



Further, this participant explained his view that the senior management ranks in policing had a tendency to mistrust the security service as a partner, but after multiple years of service to covert policing disciplines, he believed the lack of trust to be unfounded.

### *Transport for London (TFL)*

Participants who worked in partnership with TFL generally described a positive relationship where the mutual desire shared by police and transport agencies was to keep the public use of transport infrastructure safe from crime and disorder.

The politicisation of TFL was perceived by some to influence the tasking of police in some respects, although it was conceded that any political aspects were far less than for policing overall:

“TFL hold the purse strings so they will set objectives which the police or wider public may not see as objectives. It creates a bit of conflict and might be for the benefit of TFL. I mean, if they pay x amount for us to do what we do, to some degree they direct where we go... Normally it's not the end of the world because no organisation wants an increase in road deaths, everyone wants reduction. We are all going towards the same goal, but sometimes their priorities aren't our priorities. The flip side is that I don't get messed around quite so much. If my boss or someone else [from force] says *I want you to do this*, I can just say *no*, *TFL have asked us to do this and they pay the money so you will have to speak to them*. So there's good and bad in it really.” (P1)

Despite having ample opportunity to discuss numerous police partners across a broad spectrum of societal issues, very few issues were raised about specific partners. In fact, participants generously offered very positive feedback on almost all partner agencies, which resulted in the topics of discussion identifying very few issues of concern. There was however, a single exception to this rule, highlighting numerous ongoing frustrations for policing.

### *Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)*

Some of the participants had more direct involvement in CPS issues than others. Those with frequent involvement expressed numerous frustrations, ranging from broad generalisations to specific case matters.

One frequent perception was that the wide sweeping accusations of “corruption” and “police failure” which now appear in Government and media reporting, have produced a by-product that “makes prosecution of criminals more difficult” (P7). Participants made comparison against previous years and claimed that police officers are no longer treated as expert witnesses, with defendants directly taking advantage of the *diminished trust in policing* defence and “Magistrates” not believing police testimony unless it can be backed up by CCTV<sup>64</sup> (P1).

Similarly, there was a general frustration that defendants frequently take advantage of court leniencies that appear to serve little purpose other than to waste time for both the courts and police officer witnesses.

“I’ve been to numerous trials where the police officer turns up but the defendant doesn’t. Court says *Defendant is reported to be ill* and so matter is adjourned. Next time, police officer turns up but defendant says, *Oh, I haven’t got this piece of paperwork that proves blah blah*. So court says in the interests of fairness we will adjourn again. Cycle keeps repeating until one day, for whatever reason, the police officer isn’t available on the day. Defendant turns up and says, *Oh, well if the police aren’t bothering to show then there’s no case to answer*. The matter gets dismissed, and you’re left wondering what was the point of doing the policing bit.” (P1)

Further, there was concern that a number of prosecutors cannot speak sufficient English to proficiently put the policing point across in what is likely to be an adversarial matter. This was perceived to immediately disadvantage the police side. Participants also believed CPS to have a similar, if not worse state of “IT and process support systems, bureaucracy and inefficiency as policing” (P10), which bred an overall “unhelpfulness” of CPS staff (P6).

<sup>64</sup> Closed circuit television

Participants were highly critical of the CPS 'quality assurance test' which involves a preliminary review of the evidence to see if a case is likely to be prosecuted successfully and therefore worthy of bringing to court. A number of instances were highlighted in which CPS refused to prosecute on matters such as domestic abuse, where the victim fails to provide a witness statement (possibly due to fear/intimidation factors). The police, knowing that the victim is vulnerable, are left with very limited options of support for the victim. One participant participants felt quite strongly that the CPS had on at least one occasion in his experience, refused to pursue a matter, "despite sufficient evidence to achieve a successful prosecution, even without witness testimony" (P6).

"If CPS decides not to pursue prosecution, it always falls to the police officer to break the news to the victim and their family, which gives the impression that the police rather than the legal system, has failed the victim. The fact may be that the police officer in question has been pushing for prosecution all along, but the victim will never understand that when the only person they see is the officer. The CPS person who made the decision is safely at a distance." (P7)

Participants conceded that the court system immediately improved once a matter reached the Crown Court. The reasons for this were the tighter control over process by Crown Court judges, and the introduction of barristers that gave both sides better (and more equal) representation.

### ***Role Models***

I wanted to understand what other types of leadership may exist in policing that offered role model examples outside of the Superintendent and NPCC ranks. In particular I was interested in whether the various agencies and other authorities that collectively govern and influence policing were perceived to positively shape policing and act as good role model examples.

### ***College of Policing***

In addition to the Policing Code of Ethics that was discussed in terms of its

relationship to police performance, the matter of membership to the College of Policing was also raised. Participants varied significantly in their understanding of the College of Policing as a whole. Three participants had a reasonably good understanding of the role of the College, which was gained as a result of having undertaken university studies in which the College's research activities were known. There was also 1 participant whose involvement in national Police Federation business put them in contact with the College, either directly or indirectly from time to time.

The remaining 6 participants had little to no understanding of what the College's purpose was or what College membership meant for policing. Prompting about how the College may fit into the role model/support network criteria affecting morale raised five main points. Firstly, those who knew or had heard of the College described it as a good concept 'in principle' but ineffectively branded and thereby an organisation with nothing identifiable from which to draw from. One participant articulated this point as follows:

"I do believe what they are trying to do, but they are just not hitting the ground level. They are not engaging with people and not getting out there to tell them what they are all about. So, no I wouldn't say that they are doing a good job of taking people with them which is what you need to do when you are a leader." (P3)

Secondly, there was a shared concern that the College was a 'manufactured' organisation that had not grown organically from necessity "like other professional bodies" and was therefore "imposed upon police officers" rather than for the benefit of police officers. (P4, P5, P7, P9, P10). On this point some participants felt strongly that the College and indeed the "professionalisation of policing agenda" was "a concerted effort" by Government to "break the influence and status of ACPO" in particular with respect to "national guidance, national guidelines and the national position of policing" (P4).

"They are operating behind the veil of something that's supposed to be there to assist you. And I think that's been the case for some time. On the public face of it the College has never criticised any Government policy or Government direction within policing. I think it's seen to be a bit of a puppet of whatever the

Home Secretary wants. But it's packaged nicely and neatly to look as if it's something for you and that's not it. It's what the Government wants to give for policing.” (P9)

Thirdly, some participants felt that the College of Policing was “out of touch” with grass roots policing issues “getting their ideas from senior officers who haven’t been out there in reality for 20 years” (P6).

On the fourth point, one participant described what she believed to be the impossibility of self-financed police officer professional development in light of what could be unpredictable life-style adaptations, working hours and disciplinary deployments experienced by police officers for years at a time:

“What am I meant to self-finance for my own self-development? I’ve been redeployed with no choice of my own to so many different types of roles that by the time I finish one professional certification, it will already be obsolete.” (P8)

This was supported by P5 who stated: “A real culture change is needed for officers to think of their own development rather than have it spoon fed for them in accordance with what a force wants them to do.”

Finally, the issue of how membership to the College of Policing can add value to police officers was discussed, with the following viewpoint conceded amongst most participants:

“The Federation already exists so my concern would be why the College of Policing is there other than as a think tank. Is it there as a professional body, does that mean that they represent officers? Is it just basically to impose the Home Office view of policing on officers? Is it there to challenge and question the way, or to represent the way that the Federation does? If they basically said that the only way to continue serving as a police officer was to receive your professional qualifications or status and pay subscriptions to the College of Policing the way that nurses or doctors do, I think that would be seen as divisive and highly controversial. I think there is reluctance from officers, certainly including myself, to pay anything to the College of Policing. I would have to be

convinced as to why I need to pay.” (P10)

### *Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary*

Participants were asked to explain their understanding of the role of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) and their perceptions of HMIC in terms of its leadership in the policing landscape. In their majority (6 out of 10), responses indicated that there is a lack of clear understanding as to what the purpose of HMIC is, although it was understood by all participants that an element of scrutiny and reporting was involved. Two participants (P2 and P3) felt that most rank-and-file officers would not fully understand the role of HMIC or be able to describe it accurately.

The two primary perceptions about HMIC affecting morale were 'lack of independence' and 'diminished credibility'. Contextualising both of these perceptions:

“I used to have a very positive view of HMIC as a sort of steadying, sensible body to temper some of the more extravagant and strange things that odd Chief Constables or forces did. They would come in and say *actually you are not really doing this very well, have a look at your systems*. It was the sort of body that was trying to even out the playing field, so the public could get a similar service across the country. Unfortunately, what has happened now is that HMIC is being used as a stick for Theresa May to beat the remaining ACPO powerbase... and this has resulted in the credibility [of HMIC] being significantly reduced.” (P4)

A lack of 'fairness' and perceptions that HMIC is too focused on finding negative outcomes featured strongly in the discussion, with most participants attributing this to the appointment of Tom Winsor as Chief Inspectorate.

“I completely understand the principle behind having an inspectorate. But that inspectorate should not just come in to pick up on poor stuff, it should also comment on good stuff. Promoting the good things we do with thematic reviews of what works and what doesn't, so that forces can use these reviews as a source for workable solutions found in other forces. It used to be like that but now it's just a lot of negativity and then they leave

you to it to sort out on your own. Until they come back, like the Grim Reaper's return." (P9)

In each instance that participants made reference to the 'past' v. 'present' HMIC, clarifying questions ascertained that comparison was being made between Mr Winsor's leadership of HMIC against that of his predecessor<sup>65</sup>.

### *Home Secretary*

The role of the Home Secretary was generally understood by participants to be to "balance the public funds [and] oversee the legislative framework" with respect to policing (P8).

Most participants felt very strongly (and negatively) towards the Home Secretary, and attributed drops in morale to "broken promises" (P1, P10) that occurred in recent years and which have resulted in significant changes to pensions, pay and other working rights and/or privileges that they believed to be protected at the point of recruitment to the police service.

Not surprisingly, the Winsor Review featured strongly in perceptions of "unfair" changes to what is believed to have been "contractual rights". None of the participants believed the Review to have been 'independent' of the Home Office, and conceded in their belief that the Home Secretary had controlled the Review's outcomes indirectly through appointments and policy controls<sup>66</sup>.

What did surprise me was the frequency with which participants referred to the negative impact of what they perceived to be "undermining" behaviours by the Home Secretary which are believed to have little to do with the role of Government, but which have featured very strongly in recent years. Even where the Home Secretary herself is not cited, clarifying questions ascertained a perception that the Home Secretary failed to intervene when colleagues (believed to be the Home Secretary's political colleagues) behaved "unprofessionally" (P8) towards policing in such a way as to taint public perceptions and produce a counterproductive impact on policing as a whole.

<sup>65</sup> Sir Denis Francis O'Connor, Chief Inspectorate of Constabulary between May 2009 and July 2012

<sup>66</sup> My conflict of interest as a former adviser to the Winsor Review (and author of Chapters 2, 4 and 9 of the Final Report) should be noted

“Around the time of Plebgate<sup>67</sup> and the Federation conference is when Teresa May made this highly publicised speech where she attacked police<sup>68</sup>. Then we went through a whole phase of Hillsborough<sup>69</sup> and other scandals. There was the phone hacking thing. And Winsor and that period when officers felt attacked and besieged and disparaged. There were also people on the side of Andrew Mitchell who were writing articles about how fat police officers are and how lazy they are and how they didn't know their place in society. And to me the Plebgate thing with Andrew Mitchell was all about officers getting above themselves. How dare you stop this man, even if it [the ‘pleb’ comment] was wrong, police should know their place and just let him go by. And that was the mood music, and I was pleased when it went to court and was found that Andrew Mitchell was a liar. God help us if it had gone the other way. But I think that whole debate was about police are all a bunch of liars and it was very low period.” (P10)

The perception of most participants was that undermining the police is a growing political tactic that proves counterproductive in the long term because it fosters an increasing lack of respect towards front line police officers by members of the public that consequently makes police work more difficult and less effective.

#### *Police Federation (local representation)*

Perceptions of the role of the Police Federation were clearly divided between ‘local’ and ‘national’ representation. On the local level, 9 of the 10 participants had a positive view of the local representatives that they themselves have dealt with. The single person who did not have such a positive view, clarified this by

<sup>67</sup> Plebgate refers to an incident in 2012 when a Parliamentary Minister (Andrew Mitchell, Conservative Party) allegedly called police “plebs” during a disagreement about a property exit route. Mitchell admitted swearing at police but denied using the word “plebs”. The incident resulted in numerous high profile debates, police conduct investigations, and ultimately a libel suit by Mitchell which ultimately failed “on the balance of probabilities” that he did indeed use the phrase (BBC, 2015)

<sup>68</sup> Annual Federation Conference 2014 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BmPNwf03qV0>) [Accessed 28/11/2015]

<sup>69</sup> Refers to the Hillsborough disaster during which 96 people dies when a spectator stadium collapsed during a football match between Liverpool and Nottingham Forest at Hillsborough Stadium in Sheffield in 1989. Police were apportioned a majority portion of blame for allowing too many people to enter the sporting event. (BBC, 2009)



stating that he believed it to be due to the actual representative, and confirmed being aware of an alternative representative that he did think quite highly of and would trust to offer good quality support where needed (P3).

Positive feedback about local representation included being (a) available to act as a sounding board for things that might be at risk of turning into an issue; (b) strong enough to question Leaders when they come up with something “unreasonable” (P2); (c) a steadying presence with no personal interests in the issue so can offer sensible advice; and (d) “a credible person with operational experience of their own” (P9).

Some local Federation reps were perceived to be fully released from operational duties, although I did not seek to confirm whether this was the case. The one participant who did provide local Federation support to officers explained that he also retained his operational duties (which included shift-work). He described having supported officers in matters of a professional and domestic nature, and on issues ranging from disciplinary and grievance support, family and relationship issues (personal and work-related), by providing general advice, accompaniment and clarification of regulatory matters.

#### *Police Federation (national representation)*

The Police Federation’s national work was perceived to be less effective, with 6 out of 10 participants making reference to there being a need for the Federation to spend a greater percentage of its time pushing for increased industrial rights.

“I think what the Federation should do is look for industrial rights. Get the lawyers on it. Not many officers will openly say it, but there's only so far you can let a bully push you before you have to fight back.” (P1)

“I don’t think the previous vote for the right to strike was publicised enough, which is why it didn’t get the response.” (P3)

The practical obstacles to increased industrialisation were captured by one participant:

“The Police Federation nationally is not seen by officers as being

sufficiently assertive in protecting the rights and terms and conditions of service. In its defence I would say that most officers are also aware of the limitations that the Federation has. Not being a union for example, so not having a natural legal right to withdraw labour.” (P10)

Seven of the participants expressed concern about how the Federation is staffed at the national level, which led to numerous comments that the method of *national election* generally resulted in the most ‘operationally effective’, rather ‘strategically effective’ representatives populating the majority of national representative posts:

“It's difficult because they come from Federated ranks. Strategic thinking is more likely to come natural to strategic roles, so from outside the Federated ranks... but there does seem to be a lack of vision when it comes to recruiting the right people. At the local level you want reps who have been there with officers and can emphasise with them... but a totally different skill set needs to move strategy and politics forward.” (P5)

One of the participants was a full time national representative and conceded with this by saying:

“You do have a strategic role, absolutely, but you get no training for that. You can literally be a PC on the Friday and then overnight get dropped into a senior manager’s role... responsible for thousands<sup>70</sup> of members. Suddenly you are focusing on things like finance, investment, strategy, negotiation, training, and will spend your time writing to MPs rather than carrying out operational duties<sup>71</sup>. There’s an awful lot of responsibility, none of which comes natural to you.”

Almost all participants made a point of stating that the Federation, on a national level, appears to have lost ‘confidence’, which is evidenced by its reduced media exposure and overall ‘assertiveness’.

“There is passivity within the leadership of the Federation at the national

<sup>70</sup> An exact figure was given but has been removed to prevent identification of the participant

<sup>71</sup> The participant’s identifier has been omitted and the role responsibilities have been generalised to prevent identification of the participant

level. I cannot remember who the national chairman is. I don't see them on TV or in articles much. In the past they were quite public figures... but that's disappeared now, and there seems to be a lack of confidence in fighting the corner of the rank and file... There is a lack of confident, charismatic figures at the national level... people who like to be on TV and who like to fight and debate issues." (P10)

One participant suggested that the criteria for national selection should be reviewed to ensure that "strategic dexterity", and "appetite to influence change" were the primary measurements used to identify and retain the best national representatives. (P8)

Two of the participants also raised concern about "bickering" between the local and national levels of the Federation, which was perceived to further weakened the Federation's strength overall. (P2, P7)

### ***Media and Public***

A number of participants expressed a mixture of appreciation towards a supportive public, and frustration that the level of public respect for policing was continually being diminished by media bias. What I was able to ascertain from participants was that in its majority, the law-abiding public are perceived to be highly supportive of policing and thereby at complete odds with public confidence reporting.

Further to this however, members of the public who are more inclined to come into contact with police were perceived to increasingly take advantage of negative media reports about policing 'failures' and disproportionately high reports of 'human rights' violation, which has resulted in a growing lack of respect for officers and a distorted sense of the policing by consent model:

"Criminals are always pushing the boundaries and they know our hands are tied in a lot of cases. If they had respect they wouldn't commit the crime in the first place, but if they do and get dealt with they won't do it again. Police are more aggressive and direct in other countries. Our human rights processes and transparency means we are unable to take action as they would, say in France. If you play up a bit over there the

police will use a baton on you and there is no come back whatsoever. If we hit someone here with our baton and a member of the public doesn't like it, we get subject to a complaint, taken off frontline duties, and it could play out in the media for over a year... That lack of respect has an impact... people commit more crimes because of it." (P6)

"People are misunderstanding their rights within society, with all this great training on TV and in schools. They think they can't be searched for example. Well actually the truth is that you can be searched and you will be searched with reasonable force. But on the street you'll get somebody who's misinterpreted something they've seen or been told and so immediately they create a confrontation. I've seen it a number of times where people refuse to listen. If they did then the copper's discretion would kick in and it would be resolved quickly and easily. Spitting on the footway, not wearing a seatbelt... the copper doesn't want to take it to the next level, but if [the public] go in at an antagonistic level, the copper has to react." (P7)

I observed a repeated cycle of discussion from most participants, in which frequent negative publicity about policing, coupled with hard-talking Government politics and a lack of mainstream visibility of strong police leadership and/or official rank-and-file representation, was fuelling a growing lack of respect for policing that participants felt strongly was contributing to a rise in antisocial behaviour.

### ***Individual and/or personal networks***

I was mindful that participants may not wish to divulge too much about their personal lives. Nonetheless, I wanted to get a sense of whether police officers were able to rely upon personal networks such as family, friends and recreational groups, to provide emotional support and stress release. What I found is that each of the participants had an entirely different way of utilising their personal time, and with varying degrees of success:

A few of the participants commented that they were "never off duty". When combined with shift work this was perceived to have an enormous impact on the individuals' ability to maintain social networks outside of policing. There was also a sense that the ability to form such networks inside policing was equally

difficult due to the issues pertaining to performance culture. In some cases, participants described a sense of 'isolation' from 'normality' that they didn't expect to have been so prevalent upon signing up to become a police officer.

"It invades your family life... bringing the job home with you. Getting on the train, walking from the station, you'd think it would be enough time to switch off, but it isn't. We have a young boy and when I come back into the family environment and see the house in chaos with his toys everywhere... it's the perfect excuse to blow up, even though my family are the innocent parties." (P7)

"There's been a drop in camaraderie and the dynamics of the police family... Whereas before there was more socialising off duty... going out for a few pints or a curry after work. That's changed [now]... people are reluctant to go out in groups together." (P9)

"It makes you more cautious as a parent, because you've seen the results of what happens when people aren't cautious... but you also come home, hugs the kids and realise just how lucky you are." (P1)

"I find it difficult to socialise with non-coppers because as soon as I say I'm a police officer, no matter who is it they have an opinion or a story to tell. I talk policing all day at work... don't want to do it in my social life too." (P8)

One participant described her ability to "compartmentalise" her life in such a way as to make the most of her personal time:

"Part of the beauty of being a uniformed officer is that once you take [the uniform] off... you are finished being a police officer until you put it back on again... you do take some stuff home with you, it's inevitable and you can't help it. But the majority of stuff you can leave at work." (P1)

Generally speaking, the participants who were in a domestic partnership with another police officer described being able to release work-related stress by confiding with their partner, more so than participants in any other type of domestic situation. This was even the case in partnerships where both partners worked different shift cycles.

## ***Career opportunities***

Some of the participants expressed an element of frustration about their own prospects for career advancement, which was perceived to have diminished since introduction of the *Direct Entry* programme. Further, there was a majority perception that a type of *lottery system* existed in policing whereby performance and achievement standards did not necessarily match a person's access to opportunity and advancement.

“If your own Chief Super says to you that it's a lottery, how demoralising is that? And then on top of that, you see somebody else parachuted in who's... I don't know... well unworthy I suppose is a good way to describing it. That's even more demoralising.” (P1)

However, one participant explained his view that 'climbing the ranks' was a relatively new concept for policing, applicable to the last 40 years only. He explained that historically there has always been a likelihood that once recruited to a rank-and-file post, a police officer rarely advanced above it, and where necessary a senior ranked officer would be “parachuted” in without need to look at lower ranks to potentially fill the post. Further, the participant described *Direct Entry* to be, in his opinion, merely a return to the traditional system. (P10)

A few participants described feeling as though they were 'treading water' in policing. In a number of these cases, the participant had turned to academic study as a means of developing knowledge outside of policing, and as a prelude to either transferring out of operational duties, or out of the Police Service entirely.

When asked whether they considered themselves to be a vocational<sup>72</sup> police officer most participants responded with either “yes” or “yes, I did originally”. One participant who answered “yes”, qualified his confirmation response as follows:

“When I joined I never even considered promotion and didn't get promoted until I had 16 and a half years service... I took promotion because I needed a new challenge, but never considered it a step up the

<sup>72</sup> Defined by the job holder to be a calling to perform in a role that they feel particularly well suited to, trained for or have received qualifications to perform

ladder. I tend to get good performance out of people, because if I expect them to do it I will go out and do it too. But equally, if people have aspirations, I try to enable and fulfil those aspirations for them. For example, when I took over my safer neighbourhood I had a standard Met local<sup>73</sup>. By the time I finished my Constables had been promoted to Sergeant, and the PCSOs had all become Regulars<sup>74</sup>.” (P4)

Of those whose sense of vocation had waned since becoming a police officer, almost all expressed a sense of disillusionment with the career in general and confirmed their plans to leave the service within the next 2 years. In one case, the participant was counting the days until his pre-planned departure. Another participant had in fact resigned from the Service prior to the completion of this study and is pursuing an entrepreneurial career, drawing from his policing experience but in the private sector.

### **Systems and Processes**

Much of the interview discussion involved numerous examples of bureaucracy, contradictory decisions making and issues with day-to-day policing activities that are required to adhere to process. In many cases each participant had a certain issue of dislike or preference, which was specific to them and therefore of minimal relevance to this study.

The following issues however were more prevalent in discussions and perceptions were often shared across the entire group.

#### ***HR centralisation***

One of the most unpopular recent changes to how forces operate internally was the ‘centralisation of HR’ which is believed to be the result of budget-cuts, but which participants felt was actually counterproductive in financial terms, and the cause of numerous negative knock-on effects operationally.

Participants collectively explained that until around 2010-2011, London forces employed local HR specialist staff to undertake personnel related back-office

<sup>73</sup> Comprising of 1 Sergeant, 2 Constables and 3 PCSOs

<sup>74</sup> The participant was referring to paid police constables, as opposed to volunteer special constables

functions, such as keeping track of duty rosters, sickness absence, monitoring adherence to staffing process and policy, and logging local staffing data as required. The change to a centralised HR management system eliminated the need to employ specialist HR staff who were subsequently made redundant, in some cases at significant cost to the force. The responsibility for staff data management fell predominantly to first-line managers, with second-line managers also bearing a smaller level of responsibility, and became entirely IT-systems based. Participants were in agreement as to 3 key areas of concern as follows:

### *Training and competency*

In the case of police officers with first or second-line management duties, the source of training was the National Centre for Applied Learning Technologies (NCALT)<sup>75</sup>. Participants did not have a positive view of NCALT overall, describing it as “training on the cheap” (P1) and “ineffective” (P8). The knock-on effect was perceived to be line managers who lack confidence when dealing with HR-related issues, and who subsequently neglect or shy away from dealing with minor issues, which then fester and become unnecessarily big issues.

“You’re trying to struggle your way through lots of complex regulations, some of which almost contradict each other, without any training and without any HR people. As a consequence a lot of stuff that should be dealt with just ends up in the ‘too difficult’ box. It doesn’t get dealt with until it gets serious and then the ball starts automatically rolling. By that time it’s become a UPP or whatever and has taken on a life of its own. It’s really bad because the real problem was the system, not the people.” (P1)

“What support we do get is inadequate. It’s not easy to access or understand, especially around HR stuff. We have an HR Support Services department which is centralised, but I’m not confident that they provide what we need. There are online tools which I find very difficult to navigate, and very difficult to read. Plus, I’m not trained to be an HR manager.” (P2)

### *Dehumanisation of staff*

<sup>75</sup> A collaborative online training system managed in collaboration between the College of Policing and the Metropolitan Police Service ([www.ncalt.com](http://www.ncalt.com))



Of equal concern to participants was the perception that centralisation of HR systems has removed a valuable layer of 'humanity' to the line management relationship between police officers. Participants with line management responsibility complained of being largely desk-based, with most of their time spent dealing with automated 'system prompts' that are meant to remind them to carry out a particular HR-related task.

When assistance is sought from the small centralised HR team of support staff, participants felt that the quality of support provided was generally "remote or anonymous" in nature, and of a generally "low quality" (P3). This was perceived to be due to the caseload volume now being managed by centralised HR workers who cope by dealing with issues in terms of their "numbers instead of seeing it as something happening to a person" (P8).

"There is no personal contact, especially along the lines of discipline and unsatisfactory performance. You could, in the old days, go to your own HR team that was based in your borough... you knew them, you popped in there and you said *right, I need help with this*. And they would take you through it. There's none of that now. It feels like sink or swim." (P2)

"I experienced it personally when my training record wasn't updated properly. I went to HR and said that my record isn't up to date. They just said *that's tough* and just closed the request. It turned out that I was the only one to know what qualifications I had worked to get." (P4)

### *Financially counterproductive*

Ironically, participants were generally in agreement that whilst the centralisation of an IT-based HR system was pursued by forces as a means of cost-cutting the reverse is likely to have occurred. Explanations related to the lump sum payments made to HR staff who were made redundant from 2010 onwards, the ineffective allocation of highly paid police officers to deal with reasonably low-level staff data management activities, and the ineffectiveness of line managers leading to over-complication of otherwise minor or simple issues, lengthy compensatory processes, and the effects of increased stress, anxiety and dissatisfaction of staff as a result.

“My unit is all about engaging directly with people and that’s what I expected to be doing, but my promotion means that I spend more time sitting at a desk doing work that someone else could be doing much cheaper than me. And every hour I’m desk-bound is an hour away from front-line duties.” (*Inspector rank*<sup>76</sup>, *basic salary range £50,000-£67,000 approx (Police Oracle, 2015; Glass Door, 2015).*

### **Resource allocation**

Six of the participants had some form of line management responsibility, which became relevant to the wider issue of how forces allocate desk-based duties. As an extension to the issue of HR-related duties, participants expressed frustration about the degree of paperwork and other desk-bound duties they were expected to carry out, particularly at Inspector rank. In almost all cases in which participants were carrying out desk-based duties, they perceived the duties to be more suitable to a low to mid-level staff management role at a significantly lower salary than their own.

Interestingly, a few of the participants were also quick to comment that since the Government’s austerity measures came into place, prompting forces to make large numbers of police staff redundant in order to save money, police officers had been left to deal with significantly more administrative tasks thereby spending less time on front-line duties. Ultimately, some participants felt that they were being paid to be ‘police officers’ but that the day-to-day reality of their job has little to do with being a police officer.

In one instance, the *anomaly* of resource allocation had in fact discouraged a participant from seeking further promotion:

“I am frustrated that I can’t go out and do police work. I know there is an element of administration that comes with being promoted but it makes it very difficult to lead from the front. I am leading from the office; I’m not out on the street where a sergeant should be. I look at what inspectors have to do... the only time my governor gets out of the office is when he’s going

<sup>76</sup> Participant’s identifier has been replaced by rank to prevent identification and to illustrate salary range.

to a meeting.” (P2)

“A lot of my day is taken up with admin, partly because we’ve lost all the civilian, back-office staff. I’m stuck in front of a computer, the endless emails are incredible. It’s impossible to keep on top of it. If I get out for 1-2 hours a day I’d be lucky. I rarely get to walk around and talk to people, or go out on parade with my PCs, and as a supervisor that’s what I think I should be doing.” (P3)

Target-driven performance culture was also perceived to be responsible for resource allocations that primarily served the purpose of ‘making an appearance’ rather than delivering effective policing services to the community. Some of the participants admitted to having carried out a task “superficially” in order to “tick the box” and move onto something else. The fact that a task could be tick-boxed at all was perceived to be evidence that the task in question was a waste of police resources and should be eliminated entirely.

The length of time required by Professional Standards investigation, during which officers may be removed from front-line duties, along with mismanagement of officer welfare matters<sup>77</sup> was also perceived to add to inefficient resource allocations:

“At the police station we should have 19-20 on shift, but there is never any more than 12-13 at any time, never ever.” (P6)

“I got people on restricted duties who were often off the street because of complaints. They would come and work for me doing administrative functions, but there wasn’t that much for them to do so they were on odd job, bits and pieces. At one time I had 7 people doing that, and there was always at least a core of 4 during my 3 years in that job.” (P4)

In one instance, a participant explained that she was required to attend 1-2 hour training sessions that involved 12-13 hours of travel to attend, during which she was mostly being paid to sit on a train (P8).

<sup>77</sup> Discussed later on in this paper

## ***Force communications***

When asked to describe 'force communications', 4 of the 10 participants used the word "appalling" in their first descriptive sentence (*P10, P3, P7, P9*).

Detailed explanations showed that email and force intranet were the primary methods of communication<sup>78</sup>, that are perceived to be 'dumping grounds' for excessive and overly-prescriptive communications of a generic nature. This made it necessary for individual officers to spend time actively searching through communications<sup>79</sup> to find whatever piece of information may be operationally useful, or specific to their circumstances.

When asked why forces allowed communications of such a generic nature to become commonplace, around half of the participants expressed their belief that excessive workloads had caused individuals to want to get information 'off their desk', thereby giving rise to the frequent practice of purging as much generic information as possible in a highly prescriptive form, so as to place responsibility for the information onto someone else. Ironically, this practice was perceived to result in 2 general responses from police officers and staff alike: (a) apathy and a growing disregard for generic communications; or (b) information overload leading to difficulties coping, undue stress and error.

"We focus on controlling officers to make sure they fit into a prescription instead of developing their potential and ability to make decisions for themselves... traditionally we are very much based on discipline... so if you want to deal with someone you just show that they didn't follow [the prescription] and then you discipline them. What we should do is give people more space but then hold them to account if they made bad decisions, and develop their decision-making ability so that they can then be let go to decide for themselves. Instead we have a plethora of [information] that people don't understand or have never seen, but they are expected to know it all." (*P5*)

"The information is not always cascaded down properly and so if an officer isn't fully aware of what they need to know they can fall foul of it. If they do fall foul, there's no learning or reflection encouraged. They are given a

<sup>78</sup> Consisting of policy information, updates and reporting

<sup>79</sup> In some cases, this included hundreds of communications at a time

sanction and that's it. Very rarely does anybody get hold of it and say *this is a learning curve and this is what you should have done.* (P9)

Other than Police Regulations, which are seldom subject to change, one of the perceived issues perceived to exacerbate the communications issue was the frequent, and politically-generated, change of policy and instruction. One participant<sup>80</sup> explained that in his capacity as national Police Federation representative, he felt under pressure to get a good sense of awareness of information that was constantly changing, sometimes unexpectedly, and often in a broad context, in the event that he is ever relied upon to give advice to other police officers.

“It could be anything from stop and search procedures, to driving regulations, or the powers of PCSOs, grievance processes, expense claims. The communications just keep coming and you can never tell what the next one will be about, but we are all expected to stay on top of it, even though the most valuable information is likely to be hiding in pages of less relevant text.”

### ***Supporting technology***

Participants were divided as to the state of police technologies, with around half describing technology as “archaic” (P10) or “in the dark ages” (P1), and the remainder expressing a general satisfaction with the functionality of current systems. The difference in viewpoint may have been related to which force a participant worked for. However, this was not immediately evidenced by looking at participant demographic data and unfortunately I did not ask a clarifying question so as to determine whether this was the case.

Those who spoke favourably of police technology described having access to reasonably modern hand-held devices of a portable nature that assisted in logging incident information without the need to return to an office or police station. Police radios were also classed as “very good” (P6).

<sup>80</sup> Participant identifier omitted to protect the individual's identity

Those who spoke less favourably, referred to out-of-date operating systems (eg, Windows 7), that resulted in frequent glitches and slow IT response times. Three of the participants expressed some frustration at having to use their personal mobile phone as a camera to capture incident information, but in 2 of these cases, there was also the clarification that forces did supply cameras previously, but that over time the cameras had all been misplaced.

### Best and Worst aspects of the job

I asked each of the participants what they considered to be the 'best' and 'worst' aspects of being a police officer. Verbatim responses are set out in the table below<sup>81</sup>:

	Best part of the job	Worst part of the job
<b>P1</b>	Driving around fast.	The endless paperwork of weariness that results from 10 seconds of action.
<b>P2</b>	When you have a team that's working well together the camaraderie is excellent. Conversely though, when you haven't got a team that is working well together and I've seen this from other teams, it can be hell on earth. As the supervisor on a team, I've got a good team at the moment so that helps. So yeah. I think it's probably the best thing.	Not being trusted by my ACPO senior leadership.
<b>P3</b>	Dealing with the public.	Dealing with the public. Actually, the worst part of the job is all the admin and the rubbish political correctness and worry that I'm going to step out of line and get myself into trouble for doing something really stupid.

<sup>81</sup> Sections of text removed or modified to prevent identification of any particular participant

<b>P4</b>	The satisfaction of knowing I've helped someone.	All the doom and gloom that's around at the moment.
<b>P5</b>	Helping people. Directly, and by helping colleagues to help others.	The organisational bit, the way we do work. The leadership and managerial approaches and the cynicism within the organisation.
<b>P6</b>	Getting results and being able to help people. I still find it amazing when I get a letter of thanks. To know that someone is actually pleased with what I did for them. It means I must be doing my job well, and I think that's really good.	The relentlessness of the calls coming in. They just keep coming in with very few people and all the paperwork. Sometimes nothing ever goes away. Plus the bureaucracy.
<b>P7</b>	Interacting with the public. At ground level with the dynamics, it's great stuff. Makes it the best job in the world.	The office environment. Office politics and people with their backs up. Managers who act like buffoons, thinking they are leaders but in fact they aren't even good managers.
<b>P8</b>	Interacting with the public, and I try to do that as much as I can and with as many people as I can without it being for negative reasons.	That sense that the people leading us are in it for themselves. Not all of them, but enough for it to seem like those of us on the front-line are the only people who care about what this job is really about – people and caring for the public.
<b>P9</b>	Being approachable with the public. Comparing it to other countries like North America or Canada, they are very standoffish and it's about bench-pressing and hiding behind a firearm. Nobody here needs to be afraid to come up to me when I'm in uniform. I like that.	Political influence. And those people who just don't like you because it's ingrained into them no matter how you portray yourself. I think that's quite sad and a frustrating part of the job. No matter how hard to try to be honest and open, some people just won't have it.
<b>P10</b>	People. Serving people.	Dealing with tragedy. Things like suicide. The people who want to die and who do it in a particularly bloody way.

What the table shows is that some of the best aspects of policing are dealing directly with the public and working in a dynamic environment. Further, issues such as excessive workload, management culture and bureaucracy are prevalent in the minds of participants, and are perceived quite negatively.

### **Officer welfare**

A part of me is disappointed that I didn't focus more on the subject of police officer welfare, as most topics of discussion had a welfare link of some kind. Collectively, the discussion points highlighted that police officers (and staff) are frequently left to fend for themselves, without adequate support mechanisms in place to protect their welfare. This is particularly the case for psychological injury caused by repeated exposure to trauma, and lengthy periods of excessive work-related stress.

The feedback collected and which has populated this paper so far demonstrates that police officers feel that they are insufficiently represented and lack role models, policy or process to gain a sense of professional empowerment. They also have a sense of isolation, blame and criticism. Their workloads are more than likely to be excessive, and unsuited to the prerequisite qualities of a police officer, or the types of training that most officers have received. The workplace is prescriptive and target-driven, which breeds apathy, cynicism and force inefficiencies. In addition to this, police officers are routinely exposed to traumatic situations, conflict and close public scrutiny. Yet, there are barely any support mechanisms in place for police officers, and those which do exist are perceived to exacerbate rather than alleviate stress and anxiety.

### ***Occupational health***

In addition to very high levels of dissatisfaction with centralised HR systems, participants voiced concern about the process of Occupational Health (OH), the purpose of which is to manage, in a supportive way, the recovery of individuals suffering from illness or injury.

Nine of the ten participants explained that the present system of OH does not benefit their recovery, and in many cases is responsible for causing additional



anxieties for officers who may already be suffering stress-related symptoms. The primary cause of issues pertaining to OH was perceived to be the downsizing of OH specialists, in response to force budget cuts, leaving remaining OH specialists with enormous caseloads<sup>82</sup>. The result was high turnover of OH advisers, and an OH management process that was as 'dehumanised' as other HR processes, with little to no consideration of individual circumstances, particularly if they do not fit exactly into generic recovery timescales.

Participants complained that officers were treated like numbers, and that first-line managers were under pressure to comply with strict timescale requirements that predicted 'time to recovery' based on generic health data. In one example, a participant spoke of a member of staff who suffered a compound fracture:

"The occupational health person put an entry on his records saying that he should have been back at work full time. But he was still in bed in traction with broken bits of bone in his leg that hadn't healed yet. His leg was still in plaster. There was a complete lack of understanding... instead of leaving him some space to focus on healing, it was putting him under a lot of pressure to come back to work to avoid a management action." (P4)

In another example, a participant spoke of his own experience dealing with work-related trauma which he contends to be typical of many officers working in police response roles (this quote contains graphic detail):

"I recognised that I had a problem and went to my GP who referred me to out of work counselling and medication. I was diagnosed with post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). I never told anyone at work what I was going through because management was very poor and I was afraid of what might happen to me and that my supervisor wouldn't keep it confidential. It began one night when I was sent to a call about ten minutes into my (night) shift, because someone had fallen into a canal. It was a 30 year old gentleman, and due to ambulance protocol he couldn't be pronounced dead. We had to do CPR until his body temperature reached 37.5 degrees. I was the continuity officer because the death was

<sup>82</sup> A single OH adviser may be responsible for as many as 400 cases at any one time (P4)

suspicious. The CPR was vigorous and it damaged a lot of internal organs, causing blood and kidney bulbs to come out of his nose. It took 2½ hours before they pronounced him dead. Someone mistakenly escorted his family into A&E to view him, but I got there just in time to stop them from seeing him in that state. And while I was unclothing him, I found a load of drugs which I obviously had to book in. I thought for a second that I should just throw the drugs in the bin to save his family the hassle, but then I thought no it needs to go in for the Coroner to complete our investigation. I was fine for a few weeks, but then I got sent to a high risk missing person thing. There was no one else to deal with it so I spent 8 hours investigating 4 tower blocks in this estate, searching every nook and cranny myself without any dog unit to help, no helicopter and no operational support. It took an entire shift. I couldn't find him and while there was CCTV, it wasn't on at the right time of day. The next day I got phoned up. [The missing person] was found dead a couple of hundred yards from where I had been looking. He'd slit his own wrists and I started getting sleepless nights, blaming myself that I didn't do enough. It just became a big mess. Everything got scrambled in my head. I self-referred quietly after talking to my wife because I didn't have any confidence in my force's occupational health. I know colleagues who have tried occupational health and have been treated very badly. I also know a few colleagues who are still suffering like I was, and they are hiding it because they are too afraid to try and get help." (P6)

Participants also highlighted the generic OH system giving rise to incorrect transfer to restricted duties<sup>83</sup> when recuperative duties<sup>84</sup> would have been more effective.

"The fixed time limits that exist in the IT-system counteract my attempts to be compassionate and understanding. For example, if someone has been off sick for 30 days, it doesn't matter what they are sick with, you have to deal with them a certain way. If they haven't fully recovered within 8 months they are not allowed to be on recuperative duty, and so will

<sup>83</sup> Restricted duties involve taking an officer away from front-line duties, which generally results in desk-based duties

<sup>84</sup> Recuperative duties involve a phased return to operational or front-line duties, and may include a shorter working day/week, gradually increasing to full time duties in accordance with recovery timescales

automatically go onto restrictive duty. It means they are stuck in an office when they would be better off gradually going back into operational duty.”  
(P4)

Even when OH appears to be working, performance culture is perceived to override the process, as shown in the following example:

“From the admissions of [OH advisers], they will tell you that they find it very frustrating when they have identified a back to work plan for someone going through a disciplinary or anything like that. If they find an adjustment should be made to allow them to carry on in the role, they hit a brick wall because they are undermined and the force won’t accommodate it. They either can’t put the measure in place because the policing culture doesn’t accept it, or they are overburdened with so many cases that they can’t cope.” (P9)

As previously mentioned, one exception expressed complete satisfaction with the OH management process, and described his experiences after having suffered a family bereavement. This highlighted a question as to whether the circumstance itself had given rise to an exceptional level of support, due to the OH adviser being able to identify with the officer’s personal circumstances, and consequently empathising more readily than with other officers whose circumstances had not struck a chord. This may be a cynical view on my part, but the stark difference in viewpoint of a single officer, coupled with the details of his particular circumstances, it seems a reasonable curiosity.

### ***Other welfare issues raised***

Two additional welfare issues were raised in isolation of other factors in this study.

#### ***Single patrol***

In the case of single patrol, the issue related to risk to safety. One participant confirmed that fear of attack had led some officers to avoid walking into situations that presented a risk to their safety, particularly in the case of female officers working alone and encountering groups of men. It should be noted

however, that male officers were perceived to be at similar exposure to risk when patrolling on their own. The risk was also perceived to be elevated at night. The single patrol method is relatively new and was introduced by some forces as another cost-saving measure to cope with austerity.

“There are times when I am happy to patrol alone, say on a morning or early shift. When evening darkness falls, I prefer to work directly with a colleague. Certainly when you are stopping people, there are some people who feel they shouldn’t be stopped. The way I was taught was to have a ‘contact and cover team’<sup>85</sup>. People can react very quickly to being stopped by police and for safety reasons you need a 2<sup>nd</sup> officer. You might also walk into a situation where you haven’t got time to call another officer for assistance. It boosts your confidence to have a 2<sup>nd</sup> officer with you.” (P10)

### *Unsocial shift patterns*

The stress factors caused by years of working unusual shift patterns were also raised as a welfare issue:

“For 13 years I was doing shift work, but around a year ago I began working office hours. Now I just feel happier. I sleep better. I’m more social. I see my friends more. Shift work had a really big impact in my life, certainly in terms of wellbeing, the degree to which I’ve only realised since switching to days.” (P1)

### **Matters that breed dysfunction**

Any matter with a negative effect on employee morale has the ability to influence compensatory practices that are dysfunctional in nature. Previous studies show that this is very much the case for police officers, particularly those who may be experiencing symptoms of burnout<sup>86</sup> (Goodman, 1990; Bakker and Heuven, 2006; Beehr, Johnson, and Nieva, 1995; Burke and Mikkelsen, 2006;

<sup>85</sup> The contact officer deals directly with the member of the public, while the cover officer watches the interaction and observes the scene

<sup>86</sup> Goodman (1990) associates police officer burnout with the following phenomena: job turnover (including frequent changes in deployment), high absenteeism, marital dysfunction, alcoholism, depression and suicide.

Martinussen, Richardsen, and Burke, 2007; Mostert and Rothmann, 2006).

As can be seen earlier in this paper, participants identified a number of matters that affected their morale. Below, some of these matters are explained in further detail particularly in terms of how police officers may adjust their behaviours to cope with their working environment, avoid criticism, or advance their career.

In particular, the following matters were perceived by participants to have a particularly detrimental effect on their perceptions of organisational justice, and their natural affinity to remain loyal to their employer, obedient to policy, process and supervisory requirements, and to fully participate in, and beyond, the expectations of their job. In some cases, matters raised also had practical implications on how police dealt with designated duties and handled members of the public:

### ***Emergency service of last resort***

When asked whether I had missed anything of particular importance to police officer morale and its impact on behaviours, the first 5 participants I interviewed<sup>87</sup> made some form of reference to external agencies *hiding behind the police* or relying on the Police Service to fill non-policing service delivery gaps. This prompted me to ask whether this was the view of all participants, to which the answer was invariably *yes*<sup>88</sup>.

Participants were particularly vocal about what is perceived to be a rise in cases where the police are left to manage matters relating to public health in the absence of either mental health professionals or ambulance response.

“The ambulance service is stretched like we are. But it has gotten itself into such a state that the default position now is that everything bottom line is for the police to deal with. And so we spend more and more of our time doing what seems to be other people’s jobs, when we are barely keeping our heads above the water doing our own job... it’s getting hard and people are getting pissed off with it.” (P3)

<sup>87</sup> P3, P4, P5, P6 and P7

<sup>88</sup> I wish to note here the point I make of having asked *whether each participant felt likewise* which in itself may have positively skewed responses.

Participants expressed concern that police officers are ill-equipped to deal with certain health-related issues that they are being left to deal with nonetheless, due to restriction of powers or lack of training. Some felt that when things went wrong as a result, the police were most often blamed in public forums, when in fact the primary cause of failure was absence of appropriately trained and equipped health-related response. One participant made the link to an example dysfunctional response by police who are under pressure to “at least try to do something” (P4):

“Our powers in the Mental Health Act only pertain to public spaces. So, in order to deal with someone... officers get tempted to coax a person out into a public space, so we can arrest them... the corruption of process is for a good cause and it’s a necessary manipulation of powers in order to deal with some things effectively. Arrest might not be what that person needs, but it’s the power we have to work with and we are dealing with it alone. Problem is, once you start breaking the rules even little ones, or telling a few white lies, it starts to reflect on policing doesn’t it?” (P5)

In a non-health example, one participant spoke of being called to schools to deal with low-level fighting incidents among pre-teenage students. An issue previously left for teachers and school administrators to resolve with some kind of *restorative justice* outcome, the officer is expected to misleadingly record this type of incident as a *detection of crime* in order to satisfy bureaucratic performance targets (P4).

The phenomenon of *police as last resort* is believed to breed resentment between police officers who feel overburdened, often blamed for the mistakes made by other agencies, and consequently tempted to *cut corners* in order to get beyond the incident quickly. Participants also felt that there was an ongoing struggle to keep up with official police business when non-police business was continuously competing for officers’ attention.

“The range of what we deal with is infinite, but our ability to respond is limited. Sometimes it’s not about which incidents belong to us, it’s about who got to us first. Either way, somebody is going to lose because there just aren’t enough of us to do everything people expect of us.” (P8)

### ***Keeping up appearances***

Eight of the participants confirmed having witnessed firsthand the manipulation of data by proximity-close colleagues in order to satisfy “arbitrary” (P10) performance targets.

In one instance, a participant spoke of “bonuses” being paid to Superintendent ranks whose teams met number-based performance requirements<sup>89</sup>.

A few of the participants also claimed that the manipulation of targets was a common practice across their entire force. Interestingly, in every case this was said, the participant in question was also quick to clarify that the practice was not based on a force-wide strategy, but was in fact a regular method by which overstretched force functions were able to cope with the pressure of delivering unrealistic outcomes.

A link was made between the pressure to achieve targets and customer handling behaviours:

“Judging officers by how many arrests they do is deeply negative and a simplistic way of measuring an officer’s performance... but you can’t measure soft skills like you can measure arrest figures... I think how [officers] interact with people changes with performance measures. If they are being judged on how many people they arrest or report then they are going into situations almost looking to arrest people. If officers are under pressure to produce figures it can impact negatively on their relationship with the public.” (P10)

Stop and search was the most common example given by participants when I asked them to explain how performance targets impact officer behaviours.

<sup>89</sup> This participant’s identifier has been deliberately omitted to prevent identification

There were two key behaviour types that were noted by more than one participant:

**Type A:** Striving to achieve the target. “Rather than officers feeling they have an individual discretionary judgement in exercising stop and search powers, it is more like *you will stop and search loads of people*. Concepts like reasonable grounds or suspicion are diluted.” (P10) “If you are spending your time worrying about numbers, you might find later that there weren’t enough grounds to stop that person in the first place.” (P6)

**Type B:** Avoiding the situation. “There has been so much change to stop and search powers and complaints by the public. Scrutiny by the Home Secretary and HMIC has been ongoing for years on this. Some officers are just saying they won’t use the power now, because of the risk to themselves.” (P9) “Officers feel under attack for using the powers. All the emails about the new guidance on stop and search doesn’t give you any encouragement. It’s an example of how the big issues affect day-to-day performance.” (P10) “PCs actually feel that there’s no point doing it because we just keep getting told that we are doing it wrong” (P3).

Participants also felt that performance culture actively prevented them from exhibiting the very behaviours that have a positive effect on public perceptions. One participant spoke of her own experiences as a response officer, and that of others in her team:

“They don’t realise how difficult it is at ground level. We are run off our feet, going from call to call. Sometimes we are not necessarily doing the things we should be doing 100%. Sometimes we should spend an extra 10 minutes on a call to make sure everything is fine, but we may not be able to do that, so instead we have to do our job in a superficial way instead. What drives me mad is the S-call and I-call [system]<sup>90</sup>. We are constantly trying to find units to deal with these calls, which is fine. But quite often

<sup>90</sup> A coding system which relates to the urgency of police response following a call from the public. S-calls require police response within the hour whereas I-calls require response within 15 minutes



they need to go to the next call, then the next and the next. Quite often my PCs are sitting in a victim's house and just need an extra few minutes to reassure the victim, but they can't and have to get to the next call. What kind of message does that send someone who's just been the victim of a crime?" (P3)

### ***The mediocre empire***

Participants provided a wide range of feedback to indicate that they do not believe the present police leadership frameworks are working effectively and that politicisation of the senior ranks creates a trickledown set of behaviours at all ranks and grades which are wrongfully being rewarded and reinforced.

The issue appears to begin with senior ranks catering to political influence. Participants described being frequently deployed to high profile, superficial activities that actually prevented them from carrying out meaningful public service. P2 gave the example of being sent to "stand on a particular street corner to give out tickets all day" and similar calendarised deployments that do not appear to respond to an identifiable incident of crime or disorder.

P4 and P8 both described being frequently instructed to change direction in order to cater to a new "change initiative" that is later replaced with another initiative, and then another, ultimately resulting in continuous flux but very little meaningful change.

"There is no foundation or reasoning for it and in many cases what I've seen is a worse result. Within a year or 18 months someone new arrives and they want to replace that legacy with their own legacy, so it gets changed back again or onto something new. My view is don't change it unless it's broken and not unless you can show that the new way will be better than what we had." (P4)

Most of the participants made reference to a culture of cliquishness in policing in which the 'best and brightest' were becoming increasingly frustrated by micromanagement and a pressure to conform to a more acquiescent model, and in some cases admitted to "shying away" from anything that might fit into the "political box" for fear of being subjected to unfair criticism, undeserved

complaints or even bullying. The response by some officers was to focus their energy on things like *networking* and *evidence-gathering for promotion*, because the common perception is that 'making friends' in policing will get you further up the career ladder than being a good police officer.

"The worry is that you get paid the same whether you go out and give 100 tickets a day or just one. So, all you get for working harder is more court dates, more complaints and more grief. You get paid exactly the same if you sit around all day, drinking tea and coffee, and do the bare minimum. Mediocrity is still being rewarded. Winsor hasn't dealt with that." (P1)

Participants largely felt that the majority of police leaders had become very good at selling themselves within a cliquish culture, rather than demonstrating leadership talent and capability, and that the practice of rewarding mediocrity was sending the wrong message to lower ranks.

"If an individual has made it to the very top, what it means is that they are good academically... they are good at sitting exams and very astute about getting around interview boards, driving their portfolio and that type of thing... They knew what's going to get them where they need to be, but in the meantime they probably didn't do anything of substance for very long all the way through their career." (P9)

Combining the above with recent changes to pay and pensions and what is perceived to be a *push for shorter term contracts*, some participants felt that the modern policing environment was in fact producing a new style of police officer who enters the sector with a view to getting the most benefit for themselves in the short term, before moving on to something else.

"It is breeding a different mindset in officers. If you think that this is just a job for 5 years or so, what is the point of doing your best? Why do a good job at all? You aren't going to get paid any more. You know you are off in 5 years so you come in, get what you can and then go and do it privately for more money. I think we are producing a poorer service to the public and a less dedicated workforce." (P4)

Additionally, all of the participants felt that there was a lack of management capability

prevalent in policing that was being exacerbated by lack of funding for training and the culture of reinforcing mediocrity. The reality was seen to be a large percentage of transactional leaders, who micromanage, bully and hoard information for their own benefit.

It should be noted that as prevalent as the issues in this section were perceived to be, none of the participants aligned their own behaviour to those they were describing. Generally speaking, each participant also tended to speak quite positively (and perhaps protectively) about the PC and Sergeant ranks, describing what they perceived to be a greater tendency for behavioural dysfunction with each step up the rank structure.

### ***Avoidance culture***

Each of the participants cited examples of a tendency for their force (centrally and at department level) making 'snap decisions' in order to avoid criticism. The result is an overall failure to deal with dysfunction, which subsequently re-manifests in another form further down the line. One participant expressed this shared viewpoint quite succinctly and used examples of dealing with underperformance, inequality, bullying or any other matter that could invite scrutiny:

“You are absolutely petrified of bad press... so just want to deal with it very quickly. No real thought process goes into it and it becomes a case of finding the line of least resistance... and then you make up a story to explain [the outcome]. You haven't actually addressed the issue.” (P9)

One participant described the practice of presenting obstacles so to deliberately avoid dealing with certain issues:

“There is a lot of bullying that goes on in London and it's difficult for the victim to be believed. The service will make it very hard for you to report that and for your complaint to be believed. Even if you report an official wrongdoing, they will make it a very uncomfortable experience for you.” (P6)

### ***Procedural overload***

Participants were in 100% agreement that policing, regardless of the role performed, comes with too much paperwork, confusing or contradictory processes, and a lack of logic as to why it remains this way. It therefore becomes very tempting for an officer to cut corners by omitting a step or by avoiding the matter entirely.

A few participants also commented on how a great deal of information is becoming lost and/or diluted due to the practice of relying on multiple specialist teams to manage various stages of a single incident. The practice was seen to add to the complexity and bureaucracy of policing, and was a key factor in policing error and manipulation of the legal process by defendants. One participant spoke of how officers managed single incidents of crime in earlier years:

“When I joined you had response reliefs who pretty much dealt with everything. You had home beats who dealt with the community and CID<sup>91</sup> who dealt with serious stuff. That was it. You were either a response PC or a detective.” (P4)

It seems that not all forces have adopted the practice of splintering out case management responsibilities. One participant makes a comparison between his experiences at the Metropolitan Police Service vs. his current county force:

“In the Met you won’t [do the] arrest yourself. You hand it over to someone else. Up here you deal with it yourself. In the Met if you report a crime it goes to another unit. Up here you can keep the responsibility for that crime unless it’s a serious crime like rape... that still goes to CID. But if it’s a low value crime or assault you can deal with it from start to finish. That doesn’t happen at the Met.”<sup>92</sup>

<sup>91</sup> Crime investigation division

<sup>92</sup> Participants identifier has been deliberately omitted to prevent identification

## DISCUSSION

### Researcher participation

In 2011 I was a Policy Advisor to Tom Winsor's review of policing<sup>93</sup> (Winsor, 2012). I was the only member of the team who worked in the Police Service at the time and was therefore the only one at risk of being impacted by the Review's outcomes. Not surprisingly, my advisory perspective and approach to stakeholder feedback and influence was frequently at odds with others on the team and I believe that this is reflected in the policy areas I managed<sup>94</sup>.

#### **Winsor, 2011**

“There is a considerable degree of goodwill in the police, in making sacrifices – personal and otherwise – to protect the public, deter crime, disrupt criminal networks, apprehend criminals and so make communities safer. Nothing should be done which might jeopardise that.” (p.10)

As a Review insider, I believed that the preciousness and fragility of goodwill that Winsor acknowledged early in the Review, was ultimately forgotten amidst the ever increasing pressure to conform to centrally-driven principles and restrictions. It is not for me to determine whether any bias was reasonable or necessary, merely that I believed it existed. I still hold this belief, but having concluded my research I can see that in some ways the Police Service is its own worst enemy.

I am acutely aware of the ground-swell of anecdotal reports of plummeting police morale in direct response to the Review's recommendations. Equally, I consider there is an ideological and political (Innes, 2011) debate taking place on the matter of reform, between the Police Federation, the Home Office, and the NPCC, with peripheral agencies such as HMIC, the IPCC and the College of Policing, also becoming involved at times.

That said, there appears to be a distinct lack of police leadership when it comes to morale, its causes, manifestations, harmful side-effects and potential remedies

<sup>93</sup> The Independent Review of Police Officer's and Staff Pay and Conditions, commissioned by the Home Secretary

<sup>94</sup> And which produced Chapters 2, 4 and 9 of the Final Report (2012)

(Trautman, 2004; Wolf et. all, 2013). As a result, police morale has continued its slow and steady decline into an atmosphere of unresolved indifference across the public sector. The most likely outcome, when widespread issues of morale are left unattended, is diminishing officer health and performance, increased civil liability and public moneys wastage (Weiss, 1991; Cruickshank, 2012; Kohen and O'Connor, 2002; Violanti, 2004; Trautman, 2004).

The erosion of goodwill warned by Winsor is now well under way. Without it, UK policing stands to lose an aspect of its humanity. Diminished humanity breeds diminished consent and approachability which are fundamental criteria in the identification of police as inferential of the diverse public to which they serve (Jackson and Bradford, 2009; Herbert, 2006; Reiner, 2010).

I acknowledge my views and admit to the preconceptions that I possess as Researcher. At the time of preparing this document I am independent of the Police Service and wider public sector. As such I am no longer directly impacted by Winsor's reform recommendations or other matters of public sector austerity. Nevertheless, my belief in the bias against rank-and-file police officers remains steady. Whilst my interest in researching police morale is based on a keen desire to provide a non-partisan account that I believe is sorely lacking, I must be mindful of my preconceptions, and cautious in my management of this project so as to avoid eliminating one bias by inadvertently introducing another (Sica, 2006).

My interest in police morale is deeply rooted to my values and philosophical construct. As this links to the ontological and epistemological considerations going forward, I have followed an interpretivist, and at times distinctly constructionist, path of data analysis. Andrews (2012) states that the two theories are closely similar. They share the goal of understanding the world from the perspectives of those who experience it. Whilst an interpretivist researcher will establish an objective science to study and describe it, a constructionist tends to align with the realist's perspective. The distinction for constructionism, however, is that whilst there is agreement that reality exists in the world, realism considers it to be an object reality whereas constructionism refers to subjective experiences of everyday life and how the world is *understood* as the definition of reality (Hammersley, 1992)<sup>95</sup>.

<sup>95</sup> Advantages and disadvantages of these methodologies appears in the next section

My values ultimately led me to the choice of research topic, which in itself was once considered to be evidence of researcher bias (Durkheim, 1938). Bryman (2004) disagrees and cites Turnbull (1973) who states:

“... the reader is entitled to know something of the aims, expectations, hopes and attitudes that the writer brought to the field with him, for these will surely influence not only how he sees things but even what he sees.”

Perhaps my values and constructivist viewpoints make me the ideal person to bring the research data to life. That said they required that I continually balance the realist<sup>96</sup> and relativist<sup>97</sup> interpretations of data, considering along the way any researcher influences I must keep sight of, and which I must suppress.

### **Moderatum of the rank-and-file**

As with any profession policing has its own distinct culture that is made up of the various subcultures that exist within individual and collective policing organisations. Historically speaking, the policing culture was deeply rooted in a sense of distrust of the public, and developed police officers who were consequently suspicious, secretive and psychologically separated from the communities they served (Westley, 1956; Manning, 1977). Between police officers however, there was a sense of loyalty and ‘brotherhood’, some of which was organically derived through teamwork and acts of bravery, some developed as a way of coping with the stress of the job (Paoline, Myers and Worden, 2000), and the remainder was enforced by unwritten social rules and harsh penalties for infraction (Westley, 1956). Rank-and-file police officers were almost entirely white males of low socio-economic background with only rare graduate qualification.

I wish to point out that the idea of a limited formal education being preferred for modern policing sits uncomfortably with me particularly as I draw this study to a close. Out of the 10 participants I met, some of them were university educated, others were not. It made very little difference to their ability to express their knowledge and understanding of policing issues, had no discernable effect on

<sup>96</sup> The ‘true and faithful’ (ie, strictly objective) interpretation of independent reality (Andrews, 2012)

<sup>97</sup> The conclusion that knowledge can never be definite, and the acceptance of multiple and equally true realities

their ability to cope with sudden redeployments, long hours, challenging public encounters or complex work environments. It did at times appear to affect their levels of confidence, and I recall in particular a participant apologising to me for his lack of formal education, which at the time went over my head. It was not until I had begun to piece together the associated data I had collected that I recognised the push for university educated police officers as a potential way of saying that what the UK already has isn't good enough. I agree that education is good, and that it comes in many forms, some formal and some through life experience. Policing is an education in itself, and it is my belief that those who have the richness of time served are as valuable to policing as any university graduate.

Compared to many other professions, policing continues to be one which is dominated by white males<sup>98</sup>, but the traditional characterisations of policing as insular, overprotective and mutually dependent (Westley, 1970) are being increasingly challenged due to significant shifts in the gender, ethnicity, socio-economic and educational composition of the workforce (Paoline, Myers and Worden, 2000). I certainly found that each of the participants I interviewed was very different to the next in terms of educational background, lifestyle, family status, personal interests and in how they coped with stress, and socialised in and out of work.

I did however observe evidence of some shared characteristics that are known to form part of the police culture. A general distrust for senior ranks, and a converse protectiveness over colleagues of similar rank was observed. Further, while most participants confirmed the existence of a rather prevalent manipulation of data, reporting and deviation from established policy and process, they were all reluctant to give examples of such deviance. There was an element of 'us v. them' across all participants<sup>99</sup>, and subtle clues of the cynicism that was raised for discussion by some participants.

<sup>98</sup> In England and Wales, 20% of police officers are female and 5% are from ethnic minority backgrounds (Home Office, 2013)

<sup>99</sup> During discussions about police leadership, professional standards, partner agencies and occupational health



### ***Smollen's moderating factors affecting cognition and affective response***

During the interview process, and even as I had some of my preliminary conversations with participants I made a point of being aware of the person I was speaking with to see if I could pick up on any of Smollen's moderating factors. There were some factors that all participants appeared to share, and others in which they noticeably differed:

#### **Observations:**

*Perceptions of line manager competence:* All of the participants expressed a lack of confidence in the competence of at least one person in their line of management, and all participants specifically voiced concerns about the operational or administrative competence of police leaders.

*Perceptions of manager's communication style:* Participants expressed dislike for the way in which senior police officers generally communicated to them, claiming that communication was insufficient, infrequent and reinforced perceptions of superiority and detachment. Participants frequently spoke of being treated with disregard, in particular by NPCC and Superintendent ranks. Bullying was raised as an issue in the workplace.

*Emotional intelligence:* To set a baseline for my observations, emotional intelligence "comprises the interrelated skills of self-awareness, managing emotions, motivating oneself, empathy and handling relationships" (Brunetto, Teo, Shacklock and Farr-Wharton, 2012). Each of the participants demonstrated a notable degree of emotional intelligence. Throughout interview discussions participants frequently exhibited an overt mindfulness of how police behaviours potentially impact public perceptions. Each of the participants also voluntarily recounted an experience that demonstrated empathy towards a victim of crime, and in every interview there was at least one reference made to the participant's sense of empathy towards a colleague or colleagues experiencing difficulties at work. Other observations I made in this respect were frequent acknowledgements of working well within a team, and the keen desire of all participants to *appear to be in control of their emotions and behavioural responses*<sup>100</sup>.

<sup>100</sup> I have italicised the latter part of this sentence to acknowledge that emotional intelligence influences

*Shared experiences and perceived scale of impact:* In light of my having designed this study on the basis of what participants conceded were shared experiences and perceptions, I found it unnecessary to observe this further. For this reason there may have been subtle variations in perception that I did not pick up on during the interview.

*Overall disposition:* Eight of the participants were reasonably similar in disposition, which might have been due to police officer training and the artificial environment of an interview. I encountered an early period of polite and careful professionalism in response to my questions. This was particularly the case with the 2 Inspector ranks. One of the participants began the interview by explaining that he was very stressed out about a personal issue at the time, and I did observe symptoms of stress, which I believe may have been for mixed reasons, including work. One participant was slightly more flippant in his responses, and when I pointed this out to him he explained that he was about to resign from policing. He subsequently did resign a few weeks later. Whilst I found all of the participants pleasant to speak with, one stood out for me and I found that I sensed myself developing a sort of 'soft spot' for him during the discussion. I have reflected on this and believe it to be due to the exceptional openness of this participant about very personal experiences he had on the job and the way in which those experiences affected his life.

## **The transactional workplace**

Whilst UK policing understands the value of the transformational leadership, it continuously struggles to move beyond its transactional attitudes (Hawkins and Dulewicz, 2009; Vito, Higgons and Denney, 2014). This is largely due to the *Command and Control* tasking methods that are used in operational policing situations where strategic decision making by senior police officers informs tactical planning and which in turn results in operational tasking of lower ranking officers (Vito, Higgins and Denney, 2014).

There are certain situations where command and control tasking continues to be effective, such as during incidents of public disorder, or national mobilisation<sup>101</sup>.

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the person's desire to want to appear a certain way, and that the interview itself would not be sufficient means to test whether ongoing self-regulation occurred.

<sup>101</sup> The coordinated deployment of police resources in complex operations (College of Policing, 2015C)

For the most part, however, policing has diversified to become reliant upon the ability of individual police officers of any rank to demonstrate the soft skills necessary to reassure others, the professional discretion to effectively manage complex circumstances, and the day-to-day versatility to meet ever-changing demands. There is consequently only an infrequent need for transactional management methods in modern policing. When utilised without operational necessity, command and control styled people management techniques have a similar impact on the individual as the *coercive authority*<sup>102</sup> seen in many domestic abuse situations.

Participant feedback indicates that transactional police leadership and/or management attitudes are still prevalent and result in micromanagement, bullying and hoarding of information. These collective behaviours are defined as *social undermining*, and constrict an employee's ability to establish and maintain effective interpersonal relationships in the workplace, achieve success and build a positive professional reputation (Duffy, Ganster and Pagon, 2002).

Social undermining at a group level increases, over time, the tolerance for undermining behaviours (towards others) in the immediate workplace, and its peripheral environments (Duffy, Ganster, Shaw, Johnson and Pagon, 2006). This may go some distance to explain quite a lot of the participant feedback.

For example, participants highlighted that complaints of bullying and/or wrongdoing are avoided or even actively obstructed by their employers, and that they felt they had nobody speaking up on their behalf in the face of criticism. Participants also raised concerns that politicians frequently shifted blame onto police, even if such blame rightfully belonged elsewhere, and did so in the name of the public which was perceived to give the public license to act increasingly disrespectful of policing.

I sensed that many of the participants were working in environments that did not positively reward individuals who stood out from the crowd, unless relating to the official mandate of policing. Paoline, Myers and Worden (2000) identified the *laying low* sub-cultural characteristic to exist in policing in direct odds with the

<sup>102</sup> Patterns of behaviours that strip away a person's individualistic sense of self. Coercive control is a term used to describe such patterns relating to domestic abusers (Scottish Women's Aid, 2015) and can take similar form in other situations where conformity and group-think are valued (eg, military, policing) (Paoline, Myers and Worden, 2000)

concept of continuous organisational improvement, which may in part explain feedback from participants that their employers were continuously in a state of flux, but very slow to change in any meaningful context.

### **Other sides of the story**

There were three topics of discussion that I felt required counter-interview in order to provide some balance. These were police leadership, professional standards and occupational health.

### ***Police leadership***

In June 2015 the College of Policing published its intentions to conduct a review of police leadership (College of Policing, 2015D). The publication defines leadership as, “the quality which connects an understanding of what must be done with the capability to achieve it”, and lists ten traits of what the College of Policing considers to be the “ideal police leader” (p.6).

#### **The ideal police leader:**

- Is driven by the core values of policing;
- Seeks out challenge;
- Is quick to adapt;
- Has an ability to understand and exploit the benefits of technology and good business practice;
- Empowers, trusts and supports every individual to succeed among their peers, within their teams and across their organisations;
- Copes with the challenges of emerging crime and public safety issues;
- Values difference and diversity;
- Readily accepts personal accountability;
- Retains the trust of communities; and
- Demonstrates resilience in responding and adapting to high pressure and complex situations.

Today’s police leadership is perceived by the rank-and-file to be at odds with many aspects of the ideal. There is also no mention of strategic competence in

the ideal, which further supports participant feedback that police leaders frequently jump into solutions without giving sufficient consideration to long term strategy and that this may be a symptom of the “insular attitudes” (p.17) cited in the College of Policing report which are likely to prevent police leaders from looking outside their own frame of reference for answers to problems affecting forces and the wider policing sector.

The College of Policing report (2015B) concludes that command-orientated hierarchy and management style unduly favours senior ranks, disempowers the workforce, and results in superficial strategic decision making, which further supports participant feedback (pp. 18-20).

The report also recommends that the recruitment and selection process for senior police officers should be examined in light of feedback from numerous stakeholders that it lacks fairness and transparency (p.20). Over-bureaucracy is also explained to be partly due to the hierarchal structures in policing. The College of Policing also argues that the “distance between the majority of the workforce and senior leaders created by the rank hierarchy can reduce the willingness of some to adhere to best practice or seek development opportunities” (p.22).

I was concerned about the acute sense of distrust and what almost seemed to be a lack of organic respect for police leadership. I clarify this by adding that I certainly sensed an official respect from participants, but this related to the organised structure of policing where it is operationally necessary to have respect for senior ranks and to reliably follow senior command. What I found lacking was the naturally evolving respect that comes from observing a person’s actions over the course of time.

On this point I decided to interview one serving NPCC officer and one retired Chief Superintendent. The focus of these interviews was to get a sense of what the lack of trust and respect may be based on, and any counter-views that could be noted.

In both cases, I got a sense early into the interviews that I was being given the official word by an individual who was keen to project a positive image onto policing. I did manage to identify subtle contradictions in feedback however, which supported

participant feedback and after some firm prodding on my part, the discussion became more fluid. For example, in response to questions about the type of person who is likely to be promoted to the most senior police ranks, my earliest notes contained the following direct quotes:

“Bright”	“Quick to learn”
“Emotionally intelligent”	“Influential”
“Impressive”	“High achievers who do not alienate themselves from others”
“Can fit into any environment”	“Incredibly talented”

Towards the end of our 90 minute discussion however, the retired Chief Superintendent stated the following:

“The degree of nepotism was such that my failure to conform to group-think resulted in my failing to successfully get a promotion further. Obstacles were put in my way.”

He later went on to say that the subsequent appointment of a new Chief Constable resulted in positive changes to force culture, and allowed for greater movement between roles and ranks.

The Chief Superintendent and NPCC officer appeared to agree that the most senior police officers have a “lonely existence”, and tend to “distance themselves from the troops”, although the two did not agree on why this is the case with the NPCC rank officer attributing “long hours and national remit”, whilst the Chief Superintendent felt that the most senior ranks tended to be “remote in their demeanour, resulting in suspicions of unfairness... and hating the boss even though they don’t know the boss”.

The Chief Superintendent was ultimately more forthcoming with his viewpoint, which was likely to be due to having recently retired from policing. He revealed the following viewpoints as to why trust may be lacking between the highest and lowest ranks:

- There is a tendency for the corporate centre and in particular the NPCC ranks to set theoretical outcomes that translate into overcomplicated and inconsistent tasking for those on the frontline.
- Police leaders tend to ignore underperformance or bad behaviour, or

alternatively apply “the full weight of seniority” unnecessarily. What lacks is a greater admission of being human<sup>103</sup>.

- Visibility of NPCC ranks is low and “the occasional royal appearance” is perceived to be self-promotion, or for the purposes of giving out “good performance certificates and a handshake from someone wearing a crown”.
- Many police leaders seem to “forget that they were once at lower rank” and are perceived to be politically self-serving and detached from the realities of policing.

### ***Professional standards***

I met with an ex-Head of Professional Standards from one of the larger county force, and also conducted desk-research to gain a sense of the history of how police complaints and discipline came to be.

Under the Labour Government, Lord William Taylor was appointed to lead a review of police complaints and disciplinary procedures<sup>104</sup>. Taylor’s recommendations resulted in the following Rules and Regulations which all took effect from 1<sup>st</sup> December 2008:

- The Police (Performance) Regulations 2008
- The Police (Conduct) Regulations 2008
- The Police (Complaints and Misconduct)(Amendment) Regulations 2008
- The Police Appeals Tribunal Rules 2008
- The Police Amendment Regulations 2008

The Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) was also launched in 2004 and worked with the Home Office and Police Advisory Board for England and Wales to develop the new regulatory arrangements (Home Office, 2008). The overall outcome was a revision to rules and regulations that result in statutory guidance on how forces should manage complaints and allegations of underperformance and misconduct.

<sup>103</sup> Similar feedback was shared by P2 who described policing to be “doomed to succeed” without any room for failure and that this placed unrealistic expectations onto the workforce.

<sup>104</sup> The Taylor review of police disciplinary arrangements (2005)

A number of issues were highlighted during my interview with the professional standards specialist, relating to weaknesses in the current arrangements in 7 separate areas:

- (a) ***The statutory guidance*** – forces are required to adhere to statutory guidance published separately by the Home Office and the IPCC. Feedback from the specialist was that the 2 guidance documents conflict with each other in numerous cases, which causes confusion and error in the management of cases.
- (b) ***Officer response to investigation*** – there is a tendency for officers to repeatedly deny wrongdoing, even on minor matters and under encouragement of the Police Federation, which hampers progress of investigations and often results in over-complication of what may have originally been a simple matter.
- (c) ***Line management of police officers*** – professional standards reform was not intended to affect the management of minor/low level issues of conduct or complaint, but due to “failure of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> line managers to deal with issues”, they are frequently escalated to a force’s Professional Standards Department. This causes unnecessary delay and escalation of matters and causes undue stress for officers under investigation.
- (d) ***Professional standards department (PSD) capability*** – due to budget restrictions, professional standards investigators are often improperly or inadequately trained for the roles they are expected to perform and consequently use criminal investigative techniques and processes which are “unsuitable, too forensic and far too cynical” to produce professional standards outcomes.
- (e) ***Professional standards appointment*** – professional standards staff tend to be reluctant appointees, and PSD leads/heads are generally appointed for short periods only, which results in a lack of continuity in how cases are managed and outcomes are achieved.
- (f) ***Lack of wellbeing consideration*** – professional standards



investigation can range from 3-6 months (minor) to 1-5 years (major) in duration. Throughout the process there is little regard given to the wellbeing of the officer under investigation, and very rarely is Occupational Health management consistency incorporated into the investigative planning process.

- (g) **Independent Police Complaint Commission (IPCC)** – there was some concern that the IPCC was not well staffed for the role it performs, is highly bureaucratic and too close to Government to be fully impartial.

### **Occupational health**

Unfortunately I was unable to recruit an occupational health specialist for interview in the space of time available for this study. I put a lot of effort into locating at least one person that I could speak with and contacted forces directly, made announcements in social network forums and requested assistance from existing professional contacts.

After speaking to a number of HR specialists within policing and conducting desk research into the occupational health job market, I found that two types of occupational health adviser generally exist within policing (and the wider public sector)<sup>105</sup>:

- (h) High volume case handler, realistic caseload 400-750 cases per year. Key role requirements include managing online sickness management systems and acting as single point of contact to occupational health enquiries and guidance. Average salary £41,250 (London), £32,500 (National)
- (i) Low volume case manager, realistic caseload 150-300 cases per year. Key role requirements include direct management of single cases, working with other health professionals (eg, physiotherapists, counsellors) to develop recovery and return to work programmes. Average salary £52,000 (London), £42,750 (National)

<sup>105</sup> Source of salary information: <http://www.totaljobs.com/salary-checker/average-occupational-health-salary> and up-to-date vacancies information from <http://www.reed.co.uk/jobs/occupational-health-manager>

## **Tape recording and transcribing interviews**

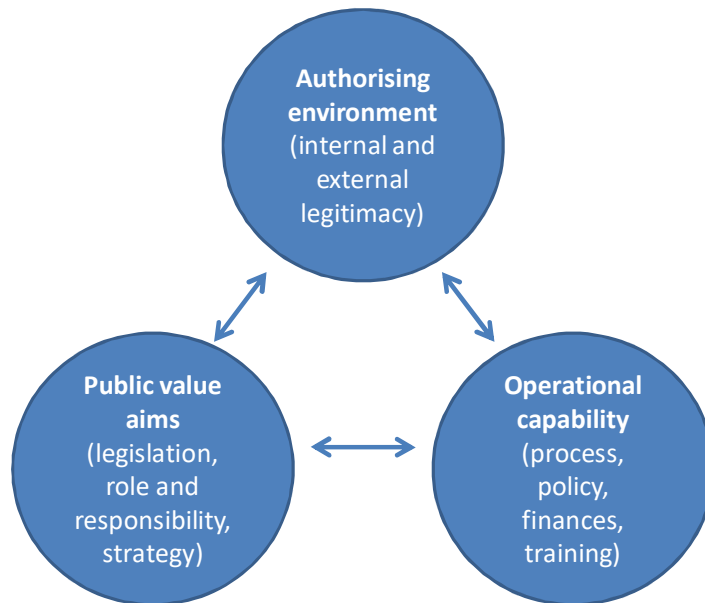
I chose to tape record as many of the interviews as I was able to, and indeed all of the participants agreed to be tape recorded. This resulted in more than 20 hours of sound recording that I personally transcribed so that I could annotate with any observations I had noted as I was doing so.

Transcribing alone took more than 100 hours to complete, which placed me under considerable pressure for a number of weeks. However, in hindsight I believe that given the findings, some of which were not anticipated and may be difficult for sections of the policing community to hear, it was particularly helpful to have a wealth of verbatim participant statements to draw from.

Participant interviews averaged 2 hours in duration and during this time I was able to focus my attention on observing participants, keeping track of the direction of discussions, and of course repeatedly checking my recording device to ensure it was still on!

## **Evaluation of findings against Moore's strategic triangle**

The premise behind Moore's *strategic triangle* is that an organisation's operational capabilities and sources of legitimacy and support combine to enable the organisation to deliver its public value aims (Moore and Khagram, 2004). The strength of each individual area of the triangle has a direct influence over the ability of the remaining areas to perform effectively. Therefore, if a single area suffers neglect for extended periods, it will eventually impact the effectiveness of the other two areas (Moore, 1995).



**Moore's Strategic Triangle (1995)**

An evaluation of findings against Moore's *strategic triangle* theory highlights repeated misalignments between the public value aims of policing, and the authorising environment and operational capacity that make realisation of those aims possible.

### ***Authorising environment***

The *policing by consent* philosophy (Home Office, 2012) strongly supports the premise that policing must continuously work to meet public expectations, which relies upon perceptions of police legitimacy and stakeholder influence. However, legitimacy within the context of Moore's *strategic triangle* derives from both internal and external sources, and means that the perceptions and support of the workforce is as relevant to an organisation's authorising environment as the perceptions and support of its external stakeholders (Moore, 1995).

Much of the participant feedback relates to feelings of disconnect between rank-and-file police officers and their leaders, representatives and influencers. For example, participants expressed a belief that police leaders are unfairly selected, aloof and unapproachable, and are consequently flawed decision-makers who are often lacking competence and compensate by strategising in their own self-

interests. These perceptions directly undermine the confidence of the worker, risking justification of deviant behaviours (He, 2012; Parnaby and Leyden, 2011) and corrosion of citizenship behaviours (University of Rhode Island, 2014).

In another example, positive role modelling of citizenship behaviours and strong workforce advocacy has a directly positive influence over the workforce, and the absence of visible role models and advocates can lead to perceptions of invalidity of the workforce, and corrosion of citizenship behaviours (Tal and Ronit, 2011; Ogunfowora, 2014; Gould-Williams, 2007 ). Indeed, not only did participants raise issue with a distinct lack of role model and visible advocacy, they also claimed that an individualistic mindset has crept into policing in recent years, which is increasingly evident amongst the senior ranks, and that this mindset has corroded what was once a sense of 'brotherhood'<sup>106</sup> that was fundamental to policing.

There is a push towards police officers taking personal responsibility for demonstrating desired behaviours, regardless of whether those around them are doing so. For example, the College of Policing's *Code of Ethics*, places an expectation onto police officers to act with "moral courage" in "challenging" police colleagues who fall short of behavioural standards. There is also an element of fear-based control strategy<sup>107</sup> (Walton, 1985) that takes place in policing, which participants highlighted during discussions of performance culture, Government and media communications, management style and professional standards investigation. It has been shown, however, that fear-based compliance does not work beyond the short term, and in fact produces a curvature of what might have been positive behaviours, resulting in the worker 'doubling back' towards the very behaviours that the fear-based strategy was attempting to prevent (Lam, Liang, Ashford and Lee, 2015).

This would indicate that making or implying threats to police officer job security does not effectively prevent negative behaviours which arise as a consequence of feeling isolated and unsupported at work and may in fact breed deviance.

<sup>106</sup> The term 'brotherhood' refers to solidarity of the workforce rather than gender

<sup>107</sup> *Control strategy* is one of two HR strategies used to achieve compliance and performance requirements by enforcing policy restrictions, and using measurement criteria to reward or punish workers. Control strategy is an element of transactional leadership and directly conflicts with a transformational leadership which used commitment-generating techniques such as encouraging personal discretion and fostering trust and shared goal-recognition (referred to as *commitment strategy*) (University of Rhode Island, 2015)

What participants have said, which appears to be supported by previous studies, the desire to go 'above and beyond' the official requirements of the role are dependent upon a sense of job security, trust, strong advocacy, and are further encouraged when it is easy to identify leaders and other types of authority figures who are leading by example (Gould-Williams, 2007).

### ***Operational capacity***

Participants described continuously working to deliver unrealistic expectations in a highly bureaucratic, process-driven environment. This included flawed or short-sighted strategic decision making, improper/inefficient allocation of people and finance resources, obstructive and bureaucratic policy frameworks, ineffective communication forums, and competing partnership priorities that even went so far as to leave police officers frequently delivering on the responsibilities of other agencies (and being blamed for the failures of other agencies).

There are few cases in which research has identified firm links between workplace inefficiencies and job satisfaction (Gachter, Savage and Torgler, 2013) and participant feedback also made no direct association between the two. Rather, the message from participants was that widespread inefficiencies were more likely to encourage widespread deviant behaviours which develop as a means of achieving (or appearing to achieve) unrealistic expectations. Deviance of this kind diverts worker focus from organisation-led goals, and towards a more self-preserving mindset (He, 2012; Parnaby and Leyden, 2011; University of Rhode Island, 2014).

The examples in which participants described frequent operational overload and a cultural or otherwise routine disregard for worker welfare issues were of concern, and are supported by previous studies. Edwards (1992); Bakker, Demerouti and Euwema (2005) also purport that workers who regularly reach the threshold of their internal resource capacity, begin to exhibit stress responses that manifest by way of health-related absence and diminishing performance levels. High expectation of workers must be matched by sufficient levels of investment in work-related resources and support mechanisms (Bakker, Demerouti and Euwema, 2005).

Using the example of force centralisation of HR systems and processes, participants unanimously raised the point that the police officers allocated to HR-related duties were paid at much higher rates than the specialist HR staff before them, but were also of a comparatively low skills capacity for the HR tasks required of them. This links to concerns which were raised relating to professional standards investigation, in which delays and over-processing of complaints and misconduct allegations was due to a failure by line managers to mitigate earlier on.

Consequently, forces were paying significantly more for a lower quality result, which also caused undue stress for officers who were attempting to unravel the complexities of a process-based system that they were insufficiently trained to utilise due to budget-based training limitations. In many cases, this leads to the avoidance of minor issues that subsequently grow into substantial issues. In the context of protecting and preventing similar consequences, the American Psychological Center for Organizational Excellence (APA Excellence) suggests that consideration should be given as to whether finance-based efficiencies really are what they claim to be, or whether they carry the by-product of creating new inefficiencies that cancel out their viability (2010).

I recognise that forces are presently under pressure to do more with their existing resources, and are under constant threat of further Government-based budget restrictions. However, there is evidence of operational inefficiencies that cannot be apportioned to Government restrictions, and which may benefit from further analysis.

### ***Public value aims***

I gathered additional participant feedback specifically relating to the *public value aims* of policing which I have decided not to include in my findings. The reason for this is that I wanted to examine whether the *public value aims* area of Moore's *strategic triangle* was directly associated with the other two areas of the triangle. It seems that it could be, with a number of *consequences* having been borne from issues pertaining to the *authorising environment* and *operational capacity* areas of the triangle.

Participants explained that performance culture led to deviant behaviours that

are designed to give the appearance of public value. The actual purpose of the behaviour, however, is to protect the reputation of individual police officers, departments or forces in the face of Government reliance on crime figures as a measurement of police performance. In this regard, performance culture is counterproductive and deviates from the delivery of *public value aims*. Equally counterproductive is the use of crime figures to measure police performance (Gorby, 2013), which fosters a reactive response and the desire by forces to protect their own interests. This is also the case for some of the planned exercises designed to demonstrate visibility when in fact officer perceived them to be a diversion away from meaningful police activities.

Two issues that have a profound impact on public perceptions of police legitimacy are (a) the lack of visibly strong police advocates (specifically supporting the rank-and-file); and (b) the increased blurring of police 'official' responsibilities. In this regard, the *public value aims* area of the *strategic triangle* relates to the need for policing to counter and actively discourage unfair criticisms of the rank-and-file, including generalisations by media, government spokespeople and other high profile individuals.

Goldsmith (2015) contends that gaps in the structured use of social media is leading to unofficial representation by off-duty police officers, which is also a point specifically made by participants of this study and further observed by me directly. Goldsmith's view is that increased visibility of policing through unofficial use of social media is potentially damaging to the reputation of the police service, operational confidentiality, and the career of individual police officers. This study barely skimmed the question of whether the use of social media is relevant to police morale and the consequential behaviours of individual police officers, however, other studies of worker behaviour demonstrate that lack of visible advocacy will give rise of compensatory behaviours by individuals who feel the need to counter unfair criticisms and restore the 'balance of justice' (Gould-Williams, 2007; Tal and Ronit, 2011; Ogunfowora, 2014; University of Rhode Island, 2014/2015).

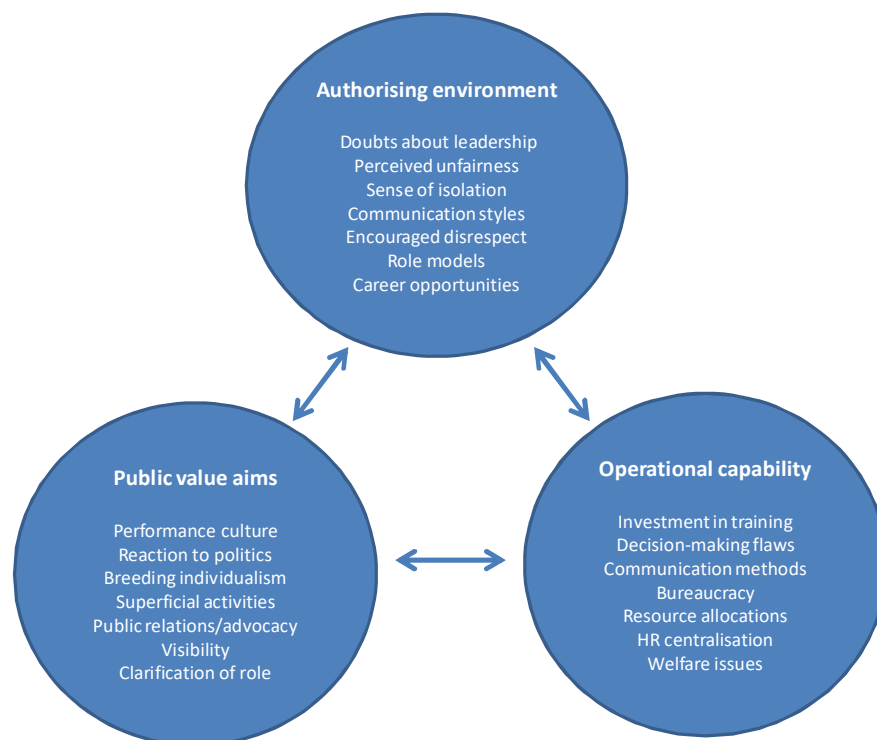
The risk of unfair criticism is also elevated by a propensity to take unofficial responsibility for the official requirements of another public sector organisation. With this in mind, I sought out a police officer job description, which was sourced through Police Scotland (Appendix E), but which is a statutory list of

role requirements and would therefore be similar for most UK police officers. What the job description demonstrates is that the police link to partnership activities is limited to a “commitment to partnership working”, and bears virtually no resemblance to participants’ claims of being left to carry out the role of ambulance crews and mental health professionals.

I believe that this study shows an increased risk of police officer burnout, resulting from the combination of unrealistic expectations, lack of advocacy and practical support, and which is not only supported by previous studies, but is shown to have a direct impact on worker performance and delivery of *public value aims* (Bakker and Heuven, 2006; Goodman, 1990; Burke and Mikkelsen, 2006).

### ***Police morale and the Strategic Triangle***

The following diagram shows the headline findings of this study as they would apply Moore’s *Strategic Triangle*. What can be seen from the triangle is that each of the issues pertaining to each area, has a confirmed association with each of the other areas.



**Police Morale and the Strategic Triangle**



## CONCLUSION

My motivation for this study was to explore the associations that may exist between police officer morale and the delivery of public value services. By allowing participants to lead the discussion, what I found was a complex arrangement of political and organisational components that place unrealistically high expectation on the rank-and-file police officer, whilst simultaneously undermining the officer at every turn.

London police forces continue to be largely transactional workplaces, in which performance targets (whether official or not) provide the basis for unduly stressful and at times unsound (micro) management direction of the workforce. This is not to say that non-London forces operate in an entirely transformational way. However, I did get a strong sense that the perceived dehumanisation of the workforce is increased as the proximity between force and political hubs shorten.

The rank-and-file in policing feel as though they are surrounded by double standards which leave them “doomed to succeed”, despite inadequate or misallocated resources, and lack of support when they need it. Budget restrictions on training have produced a “lottery system” leaving many officers insufficiently trained for the roles they actually perform every day. This has a detrimental impact, particularly on line managers and the police officers who report to them. It results in a lack of confidence to deal with minor staffing issues that ultimately grow from neglect to become costly and complex, unnecessarily breeding discontent and removing precious operational resources from meaningful public service for lengthy periods of time.

When the rank-and-file look to leadership for practical guidance, what they see is a privileged group of individuals (and agencies) who preach from the *ivory tower*, and are rarely seen to abide by their own rules. In fact, the entire sector appears to lack visible, powerful and constructive role models or advocates. Those who do exist are either hidden from view or have become disempowered. Consequently, most frontline police officers feel that there is no-one *fighting*

*their corner*. When taken at face value, the perception by officers also suggests a direct conflict between day-to-day reality and the official expectation that all police officers, regardless of rank, will “lead by good example”<sup>108</sup>.

It further appears that the official mandate of policing has become distorted, as has the relationship between Government and policing as defined by legislation. This has led to frequent, longstanding and highly publicised criticisms about police legitimacy, some of which are in fact better directed at other agencies. Tough-talking politics and misdirected criticisms have in themselves, affected public perceptions and potentially fuelled what appears to be the beginning of an unfounded disrespect for rank-and-file policing. Some of this disrespect is based on misconception, and some of it is conveniently manufactured for political gain. There is also a belief on the frontline that the combined lack of visible advocacy, and learned disrespect of policing has contributed to a rise in antisocial behaviour.

In addition to the many practical obstacles and frustrations that make up the day-to-day working environment, many police officers still feel bitter about promises they believe have been broken and which formed a large part of why they joined the service in the first place. I believe that this can be largely explained by Hertzberg’s *hygiene factor theory*<sup>109</sup> in which workforce morale responds negatively to the removal of the types of occupational benefits affected by sector reform changes, such as was seen during the Winsor Review. As Hertzberg explains, taking such benefits away but failing to compensate with positive changes that are designed to counter the negative, provides no means by which to stabilise workforce morale.

Police officers feel as though they have lost tangible, contractual benefits that were understood to be in compensation for the multiple discomforts and disadvantages of being a police officer. The most obvious method by which to counteract this perception of loss is to lessen the discomforts and disadvantages in some way, thereby demonstrating that something has been gained which equalises any loss. As shown by Moore’s *strategic triangle*<sup>110</sup>, strengthening of one or more of the triangle areas has the potential to achieve

<sup>108</sup> Policing Principle of “Leadership” as found on page 3 of the Policing Code of Ethics (College of Policing, 2014).

<sup>109</sup> See *Introduction (Political influence and sector reform)*

<sup>110</sup> See *Introduction (Moore’s strategic triangle)*

this balance. However, weaknesses in police leadership, lack of practical support, and dysfunctional systems and methods provide no equalising measures by which to compensate for loss. In fact, what I found was that police officers consider their working environment to have decayed in each of the *strategic triangle* areas, which further compounds any sense of loss.

As a consequence, the police workforce consists of numerous people who feel betrayed. Some of them are looking for an exit. Others are looking for ways to compensate their losses. This aligns to Organ's theory of *organisational citizenship* which confirms associations between workforce morale and worker behaviours that begin to splinter towards self-gain rather than group-gain<sup>111</sup>. There is also a section of the workforce that is fed up but lacks the innovative spirit or skill to do something about it (the mediocre and disenchanting). These are the people that policing is most at risk of retaining and who will be inflicting their disaffection upon every aspect of their working life unless a fundamental change occurs to resolve the issue of police morale.

More than 2 years ago the decline in police officer morale was noted by the Home Affairs Select Committee (HASC) in a report about police leadership and standards (HASC, 2013):

“We are deeply concerned by the decline in police morale and in particular by Lord Steven's finding that 95% of the service do not feel they have the support of the Government. When major organisational change is underway it is vital to have the support of the workforce. In policing, this is particularly important because morale in the ranks can have a real impact on public safety. We are concerned that some chief officers may now be paid ten times more than an ordinary constable on the front line. The Chief Constables' Council and the Minister of Policing should publish a list of actions they intend to take to address the issue of police morale during the course of this year... [and]... rebuilding police morale must be a central priority for the College of Policing”. (*Section 3, paragraphs 24 and 31*)

Having enquired with NPCC, the Home Office and College of Policing during the design of this study in mid to late 2014 and again with the NPCC in mid 2015,

<sup>111</sup> See *Introduction (A workforce reliant upon perceptions of legitimacy)*

none of these bodies have followed up on the recommendations of HASC. Perhaps this is due to the daunting question of how to improve morale in the absence of a deconstruction of the issues.

A key aim of this study was to perform just such a deconstruction, and I believe that it has been largely successful in this respect. What can be seen from the research findings is that police morale drivers can be attributed to factors of *operational capacity*, *authorising environment* and *public values*. This allows morale drivers to be closely examined and better understood as they apply to policing.

The primary shortfall of this study, in my view, was that the participant group was relatively small and the study itself limited by finance and research timescales. I would encourage further qualitative studies of a similar nature, but with repeated observations over a longer timescale, and a larger study group.

There is also scope for empirical research into single morale drivers. The issues pertaining to occupational health and professional standards concern me a great deal, as does the idea that a distortion of the official mandate for policing is negatively impacting operational outcomes. I would strongly recommend, for example, that further research be conducted into how many police hours are spent compensating for the non-attendance of mental health professionals or ambulance crews.

In terms of what to do with the results of this particular study, I am already preparing an operational report for the Police Federation, which will include recommendations for consideration arising from the findings of my research. Equally, I would hope that the Metropolitan and British Transport police services welcome similar reports that tailor to the specific issues relating to their force areas.

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## **APPENDICES**

Appendix A (preliminary survey)

Appendix B (introductory briefing sheet)

Appendix C (consent form template)

Appendix D (interview guide)

Appendix E (police officer job description)

Appendix F (ethical approvals)



## Appendix A - Participant Preparatory Questionnaire

Thank you for expressing interest in participating in this research study. Briefly, the purpose of the study is to find out which police officer job components have the greatest negative and positive impact on morale, and how morale is likely to affect police officer behaviour.

When we meet I will be asking you 8-12 semi-structured questions which will be partly chosen on the basis of your answers in this document. The interview questions will allow you to respond in any way you wish, and in as much detail as you like. For this reason, we may find that numerous topics will be covered in each question. The purpose of this type of interview is to maintain a basic level of control over the discussion, but also allow it to move naturally into topics that are important to you.

Please note that the researcher has allocated you an identifying number which she will use to separate your answers from other participants. From this point on, and throughout the study, you will be referred to in any written documentation by your identifying number only. The only aspect of your actual identity that will be shared with others in this research will be your rank, gender and role type.

<b><u>SECTION 1</u></b>	
Please respond to the following general questions about yourself.	
What is your police rank?	
What is your gender?	
What type of primary police role do you have, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Response Unit</li><li>• Neighbourhood Policing</li><li>• Investigation</li><li>• Air support</li><li>• Non-operational (eg, office-based)</li><li>• Firearms</li><li>• Canine Unit</li></ul>	
<b><u>SECTION 2</u></b>	
During the interview I will be asking you a series of questions about a number of these topic areas. However, I would also like to be sure to include questions about topics that are most relevant to your situation.	
Take a look at the topic headings below. Please indicate which of these topics have the biggest impact on your overall job satisfaction (morale). Please try to pick a mix of <b><u>POSITIVE</u></b> and <b><u>NEGATIVE</u></b> topics.	

<b>Society and Culture</b>	<b>Tick</b>	<b>Technology and Infrastructure</b>	<b>Tick</b>
Health and fitness		Basic infrastructure capabilities at work	
Educational attainment		Reliability and ease of use	
Attitude to work and career		Degree of necessity	
Rate of pay		Communications infrastructure	
Professional status and rank		Access to newest technology	
Safety at work		Impact of social media	
Lifestyle		HR processes	
Religion and beliefs		Force policies	
Age		Employer transparency and trust	
Life expectancy		<b>Economy</b>	<b>Tick</b>
Disability		Austerity measures	
Ethnicity		Pay	
Gender		Pensions	
Social class		Viable alternatives to policing	
Marital and/or parental status		Increased complexity of role	
Length of service		Reduction in officer numbers	
Period to retirement		Residential district	
Blue wall of silence		Mortgage or rent	
Best part of the job		Overall economic confidence	
Worst part of the job		Force resilience	
Biggest worry at work		Mutual aid	
The single biggest wish re job		Multi-hat police roles	
<b>Environment</b>	<b>Tick</b>	<b>Ethics</b>	<b>Tick</b>
Weather and seasons		Corruption (internal)	
Air quality		Code of Ethics for Policing	
Issues specific to London		Disciplinary processes	
Police role type		Grievance processes	
Police leadership		Fairness and Equality	
Direct line management		Bullying	
Relationship with other officers		Whistle blowing	
Relationship with other colleagues		Loyalty to/from Force	
Other work relationships		Minor but necessary infractions	
Level of support available if needed		Struck off list	

Shift patterns		Laziness	
Preferred working style		Secondments and/or advisory roles	
Pressure and/or stress		Police officer types	
<b>Politics</b>	<b>Tick</b>	<b>Legislation</b>	<b>Tick</b>
Current government		Police Regulations	
Previous government		Police Conduct Regulations	
Next government		Discrimination Law	
Bureaucracy		Employment law	
Corruption (external)		Health and safety law	
Police Federation		Data Protection	
Police powers and responsibilities		Human Rights	
Professional body membership		Immigration	
Nation-wide initiatives		International	
Crime-related partnerships		Policing values of the UK	
Relationship with the public		Wider Justice system	

### **SECTION 3**

Are there any topics that do not appear above which you believe contribute to your positive or negative morale? If so, please add them to the space below.

### **SECTION 4**

Think about your level of morale in the job today. On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you describe your level of morale? 1 = Extremely low; 10 = Extremely high. Please write your answer in the space below.

Please return your completed form by email to [e.collins409@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:e.collins409@canterbury.ac.uk) within 2 weeks of receipt. You will then be contacted so that a day, time and location for the interview can be agreed.

If you have any questions about this form or the study, please contact Elena Collins at [e.collins409@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:e.collins409@canterbury.ac.uk) or 0781 866 1260.

## **Using cognitive and affective response to measure police officer morale and its behavioural elements.**

### **PARTICIPANT INFORMATION**

A research study is being conducted at Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU) as part of a Masters thesis by Elena Collins (the researcher).

#### **Background**

The purpose of this study is to explore what serving police officers understand about the different components that make up the policing workplace. This study aims to research operational and administrative police officers of federated ranks and with varying day-to-day tasks to perform, who are based in London and employed by the Metropolitan, City of London or British Transport Police. A small number of police officers who are based outside London have also been included in the study for comparative purposes. The study has been approved by the Metropolitan Police Federation, and within the University by the School of Law, Criminal Justice and Computing.

#### **What will you be required to do?**

Participants in this study will be required to meet with the researcher for an informal but semi-structured interview about a number of job components shared by police officers working in London. The meeting is likely to last for between 1-2 hours and will take place in a public location convenient to you and the researcher (eg, café). If appropriate, the interview may alternatively take place via teleconference (eg, Skype).

#### **To participate in this research you should be:**

- a police officer in possession of a warrant card
- of federated substantive rank and role
- currently working for Metropolitan, City of London or British Transport Police (this criteria has been amended to allow for comparative viewpoints)
- carrying out an operational or non-operational role
- post-probationary
- working in a role within the London perimeter (revised as stated above)

#### **Procedures**

You will be asked to complete a brief online questionnaire that includes a few demographic questions and additional questions to better understand your role. You will be provided with the questionnaire via email and should complete the questionnaire at least 1 week before the meeting.

You will also receive this pre-interview briefing document which will give you some high level information about the topics that will be discussed with the researcher. You will need to have read this briefing document before the interview.

The time and place of the interview will be agreed between you and the researcher. It is likely to take place in London, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire or Essex, depending on which is most convenient. Alternatively, teleconference interview may be appropriate.

The interview itself will consist of between 8-10 discussion topics. The researcher would like to tape record the interview to assist with her note-taking.

### **Confidentiality**

Tape recorded discussion will be used for note taking purposes only and will then be destroyed. All documented data will be stored in a locked cabinet. Data collected for this study can only be accessed by the researcher. After completion of the study, all data will be anonymised (ie, all personal information associated with the data will be removed).

### **Deciding Whether to Participate**

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

### **For those who have already registered an interest in participating in this study**

If you already have an agreed interview day/time, there is no need for you to re-register your interest in participating in this study.

At the commencement of the interview, the researcher will spend a few minutes explaining the process of interview, and in particular the protection of your personal information.

### **The topics that the researcher is hoping to discuss with you**

The following is a guide of the overall topics for discussion:

- the dynamics and complexities of your overall working environment
- your work-related values and preferences
- your internal/external working relationships, partnerships and influencers
- police leadership, infrastructure and supporting frameworks
- the impacts of government and legislation
- your perceptions of workplace behaviours

### **Any Questions?**

Please contact **Elena Collins** on 0781 866 1260 or email [e.collins409@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:e.collins409@canterbury.ac.uk)



## Appendix C



# CONSENT FORM

**Title of Project:** Using cognitive and affective response to measure police officer morale and its behavioural elements.

**Name of Researcher:** Elena Collins

**Contact details:**

**Address:**

25 Chiltern View Letchworth Garden City Hertfordshire SG6 3RJ
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**Tel:**

0781 866 1260
---------------

**Email:**

e.collins409@canterbury.ac.uk
-------------------------------

**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. To my knowledge I have not taken any substances that will adversely or otherwise affect this study                                 |  |
| 5. I agree to take part in the above study.   |  |

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Person taking consent  
(if different from researcher)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

**Copies:** 1 for participant, 1 for researcher

## Appendix D

### Interview Guide

#### Introduction Script:

Firstly, thank you for agreeing to be interviewed today. Two hours sounds like a lot of time, but it might move quickly, so I'm just going to jump right into it. To give you an idea of what to expect from today's interview I'd like to spend a few minutes describing the process.

This is a semi-structured interview. That means that I do not have firm questions that I will ask you. Instead I have a checklist of topics that I will be wanting to cover. Because of this, my questions might sometimes sound more like prompts rather than questions. The purpose of semi-structured interviewing is to let you speak about the things you visualise and think about, in the way that is relevant to you.

During the interview, I will be looking for cognitive and affective responses. The cognitive element is about your understanding of a topic. It's not about how well you understand it, so there are no right or wrong answers. It's about what it means to you.

The affective element is about getting a sense of how you feel about the topic. It's very important to my study that I get to learn about what is important to you as an individual.

This kind of interview is about searching for depth of meaning, style of expression and personal perceptions. For this reason, what I would like to do with your permission is to tape record the interview, after which I will transcribe the discussion myself, and then destroy the tape recording. The transcript will not include any personalised references, and your name, force, location or anything else that identifies you will be excluded from the transcript. Instead, your transcript will just be labelled with a unique identifying number so that your interview can be compared to other interviews.

When I am writing my report, I may refer to your unique identifying number, your gender, the type of policing unit you work in, and your rank. I will not include any information that will allow you to be identified. I wanted to emphasise this message to you because my study relies heavily on allowing participants to speak openly and freely without having to worry about how the information you provide me will be used. It is in the best interests of my study to ensure your confidentiality is protected.

With this information that I've given you, are you happy for me to tape record this interview? If so, I will turn the recorder on now.

\*\*\*

**Once recorder is turned on** – Okay, now that the recorder is on, I just want to confirm again that you are happy to be tape recorded. Thank you.

**OR** – Okay, because you have asked not to be tape recorded, I may need to write quite a few notes. The interview might progress a bit slower because note taking is quite time consuming. I may also ask you repeat certain things that you've said if needed. And I will probably try to summarise your views at the end of the interview to make sure I've got the messages right.

### **Warm Up Question:**

So the next thing before we begin is a warm up question that I'd like to ask you. The warm up question is not part of the interview. It is just to get you used to describing out loud what you are visualising in response to my questions. This should also get you accustomed to the types of prompting I may give you to expand on your answers. And when it seems right I will probably just slide straight into the actual interview questions. Okay, ready?

- So this is the warm up question. Think about the process you undergo to get ready for work. You can pick any day or night, whatever seems natural to you. I want you to describe the steps it takes to get ready for work, how you travel to work, and what you visualise when you arrive at work. Take your time, and just say whatever pops into your mind as you are visualising the process.
- To start things off, do you generally wake up in the morning and go to work or is it some other time of the day?

### **Complexity of the role:**

I'd like you to describe the kind of job you do.

- Degree of contact with public?
- Primarily work alone? With a partner? In a team?
- Is there anything noticeable about the team? Genders? Ethnicities? Ages?
- How long doing that role?
- Noticed a change in officer numbers?
- Percentage of time doing paperwork?
- Office politics?
- Support available?
- Bureaucracy?
- Stress and pressure?
- How do you feel about the job overall?

### **Values and preferences:**

I'd like to get a sense of what your values and preferences are regarding work.

- Consider work a vocation, or a series of steps on the career ladder?
- Reason for joining Service?
- Operational personality or hoping for non-operational opportunities?
- Views on powers and responsibilities of police officers?
- Views on rank and status?
- Policing as a lifestyle?
- Impact on family life and friendships?
- Is the job what you thought it would be when you joined?
- Best part of job?
- Worst part of job?

### **Policing relationships:**

I'd like to get a sense of what the relationship frameworks are around your job and the levels of support you expect from these relationships.

- Police officer colleagues
- Other colleagues
- Direct line management
- Police Federation
- College of Policing Membership
- HMIC, IPCC, Home Office
- Members of the Public
- Are these relationships meeting your expectations?
- How do you feel about each of these relationships?

### **Police Leadership:**

I also want to better understand what your expectations are from Police Leadership.

- What do you consider to be police leadership?
- ACPO ranks?
- Police Federation?
- What about the Home Secretary, HMIC or the College of Policing?
- What do you expect from these leaders?
- Are they meeting your expectations?
- How do you feel about that?
- Do you trust police leadership?
- Do you feel trusted, by your leaders, by your force?
- What are your view on Direct Entry for leaders?
- Do you have a sense of loyalty towards your police leadership?
- Do you believe that your leaders are loyal towards you?

### **Infrastructure and supporting frameworks:**

I'd like to get a sense of the technology, policy and process structures that surround your job.

- HR processes, including grievance and disciplinary procedures?
- Other force policies?
- Has the Code of Ethics for Policing had an impact on HR process that you know of?
- What are your expectations around policy support from your force.,and in particular HR?
- Is this expectation being met?
- How do you feel about that?
- Have you been bullied at work?
- Did the outcome resolve the problem?
- Do you feel as though you are being treated fairly at work?
- How does that make you feel?
- Do you feel as though your working environment is reasonably transparent?
- Have you ever seen something inappropriate take place?
- Did you blow the whistle and why or why not?
- What about how your force communicates with you?
- Do you think policing is a modern workplace?
- What are your views on the technology you use for work?
- Do you generally feel supported at work?
- Have you ever felt a need to compensate for a lack of support?
- Have you ever broken the rules out of necessity?
- What do you think about police officers who break the rules?

### **Legislative context:**

I'd like to get your views about the wider legal parameters that generally affect your job.

- Have you ever had to refer to the Police Conduct Regulations 2012 with regards to your work?
- What do you expect from the Police Conduct Regulations and does reality match your expectations?
- What about your views regarding the wider criminal justice system?
- How do you feel about the overall values of policing in the UK?
- What is the one thing that UK policing does 100% right and should never change?
- What is the thing that worries you the most about UK policing?

### **Government:**

So after everything we have discussed, let's speak about the influence government has on how you feel about your job.

- What do you consider to be the official relationship between government and policing?
- How do you feel about the present government?
- In light of everything we've discussed today, what percentage of your morale relates to the recent austerity measures?
- Do you think your views on government are generally representative across policing?
- Is there anything else about government or the austerity measures that you feel are important to your morale?

### **Behaviours:**

We've talked a lot about what you think and feel about aspects of your job as a police officer. But I would also like to know about how your feelings about work might affect your actions.

- What do you think is the relationship, if any, between how you feel about your job and how you behave at work?
- What do you think causes a police officer to be disobedient or disloyal at work?
- Have you ever wanted to be disobedient or disloyal and did you act on these feelings? Why or why not?
- Have you ever wanted to avoid participating in a required work activity and did you act on those feelings? Why or why not?
- Have you ever wanted to take out a work frustration on someone unrelated to the problem, like a member of the public or a colleague? Did you act on those feelings? Why or why not?
- Do you ever find it difficult to regulate your own behaviour at work?
- What kinds of circumstances are likely to affect your ability to self-regulate your behaviour?
- Can you think of a time when you recall your feelings about your job actually causing you to behave in a way that you normally wouldn't?

**Wrap up:**

We are reaching the end now. I have 2 more questions for you.

- If you could rewrite the book on policing, what would be the single thing that you would change to increase the level of morale amongst the majority of police officers?
- And finally, thinking about everything we've discussed today, how would you rate your morale right now (between 1-extremely low, and 10-extremely high)?

\* Don't forget to summarise from notes if not tape recorded.



**NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED**

### **POLICE CONSTABLE – JOB SPECIFICATION**

**THIS JOB SPECIFICATION IS INTENDED AS A GUIDE ONLY. IT SHOULD NOT BE REGARDED AS A DEFINITIVE DOCUMENT. THE NATURE OF POLICING REQUIRES FLEXIBILITY AND THEREFORE A RIGID FRAMEWORK IS NOT INTENDED**

**Post: Uniform Patrol Constable**

**Rank: Constable**

**Responsible to: Sergeant (Patrol, Station or Department)**

### **PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVE OF POST**

**To perform the statutory role of protecting life and property, preserve order, prevent crime and detect offenders. To effectively patrol a designated area providing an efficient response to matters arising. To identify with the community and foster and maintain close and courteous relationships and be committed to keeping people safe. To provide a quality service at all times.**

### **MAIN JOB ACTIVITIES**

- To provide an immediate response, or as soon as practicable, to calls for assistance from the public. To deal directly with any incidents or occurrences, either personally encountered or as directed by a supervisory officer or other authorised person.**
- To conduct full and thorough enquiry or investigation into matters or offences coming to his/her attention, seeking advice or assistance of specialists or supervisory officers where required.**
- To prepare for and attend any court, hearing or enquiry to give evidence as required by the Procurator Fiscal or other authorised person.**
- To serve and execute when required any warrant, citation or summons.**
- To keep abreast of all current crime trends/patterns, complaints and occurrences affecting his/her local area, liaising with specialist departments on matters pertaining thereto. To ensure that any relevant information during the course of his/her duties is logged on the Scottish intelligence database.**
- To provide a high quality of service to the community and build strong relationships.**

- To have a commitment to partnership working
- To be responsible for the safety and wellbeing of all prisoners/detainees in his/her custody.
- To provide basic crime prevention advice when appropriate and, if required, ensure that further support is made available.
- To be responsible for the acceptance and safekeeping of all items of found property handed to him/her by members of the public. To seize, record and lodge, in accordance with Force Procedures, all items intended as productions.
- To be responsible for the maintenance and safekeeping of police property, including vehicles, radios and other equipment.
- The post holder will comply with the Force Health and Safety policy and be responsible for their own health and safety, applying safe working practices that will minimise incidents of injury and ill health in the working environment.
- The post holder will have knowledge of, and promote procedures and practices that comply with the Equality Act 2010 and Employment policies.
- To give practical advice and take an active interest in the training needs and requirements of probationary constables, including formally reporting on such activity as required.
- To actively pursue meaningful and harmonious working relations with colleagues and other police personnel ensuring that a positive team spirit is achieved.
- To prepare thoroughly and dispatch timeously, to the appropriate recipient, all reports and correspondence, ensuring the highest possible standards are achieved at all times.
- To carry out all other duties as instructed by supervisors or as dictated by circumstances.
- The post holder must comply with Data Protection Act legislation.

**NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED**



## Appendix F



15 June 2015

Ref: 15/SAS/225C

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

Dear Elena

**Confirmation of ethics compliance for your study *"Using cognitive and affective response to measure police officer morale and its behavioural elements."***

I have received an application for proportionate review of the above project. Because you could 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

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Roger Bone".

Roger Bone  
Research Governance Manager  
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Email: [roger.bone@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:roger.bone@canterbury.ac.uk)

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Professor Rama Thirunamachandran, Vice Chancellor and Principal