The relationship between demand & capacity (reduced numbers) and officer welfare

Quantitative and inferential research

Ché Donald and
Dr. Joan Donnelly Head of Research and Policy
Police Federation of England and Wales
Joan.donelly@polfed.org
Demand and welfare

National police officer numbers

- According to the March 2016 Home Office data on Police Workforce, there has been a 13.7% \( n=19,668 \) reduction in total No. of officers since 2010; from 143,734 to 124,086. We are awaiting the March 2017 figures from the Home Office (available 20th July 2017).

- This is the equivalent of; losing more officers than were employed across the following 11 forces in 2010:
  1. Devon & Cornwall
  2. Avon & Somerset
  3. Wiltshire
  4. Gloucestershire
  5. Northamptonshire
  6. Warwickshire
  7. West Mercia
  8. Gwent
  9. Dyfed-Powys
  10. Bedfordshire
  11. North Wales
National research

Background

- Previous research by PFEW (Elliott-Davies et al 2016) highlighted that officers currently feel that there is a imbalance between demand and capacity, and that this is having an effect on
  - officers’ wellbeing
  - the level of service officers believe they deliver to the public

- These results led the PFEW to start a new research project to look at the relationship between demand, capacity and officer welfare

- **Dr Jonathan Houdmont**, University of Nottingham, co-ran the national research in partnership with the PFEW research team
Aims
1. To explore the current psychological and physiological welfare profile of police officers within England and Wales, compared to others.

2. To explore whether the following are related to demand & capacity:
   - Increased physical risk for officers
   - Increased stress and fatigue
   - Increased sickness, and
   - Reduced morale
National welfare survey

Methodology

- An online survey was developed and open to all police officers in England and Wales during February 2016

- 17,434 responses were received

- Analysis conducted on 16,841 cases after data cleansing
  - Some respondents did not answer (or were not expected to answer) every question
  - Some graphs in this presentation therefore contain fewer responses

- All 43 Forces from England and Wales are represented in the data set

- Respondents were broadly representative of the national federated officer population in terms of their socio-demographic composition
An initial report of the **descriptive results** was produced; reporting frequency data for all questionnaire items and benchmarking against comparator populations, such as the Armed Forces, when additional data were available and appropriate.

**Summary reports** were produced for the 9 topic areas below; providing a national summary of responses to key questions from the descriptive report.

1. **Capacity**
2. **Demand**
3. **Mental health**
4. **Organisational support**
5. **Accidents, injuries and violence against officers**
6. **Physical wellbeing**
7. **Work patterns**
8. **Officer absence behaviours**
9. **Attitudes and evaluation**
Reports

- A report on the inferential results is being produced; reporting the associations found between demand, capacity and officer welfare.

- Associations between these variables were determined using stringent inferential analysis.
Statistical Thresholds for Inferential Analysis

- Correlations were used to identify **meaningful** associations between aspects of demand and capacity pressures and the welfare dimensions.

- A conservative threshold was applied to determine which associations were **meaningful**:  
  - Statistical significance: $P < .001$
  - Moderate effect size or higher: $r = \geq .3$

- Associations that met this threshold were then subjected to logistic regression to:
  - quantify the strength of the relationship after controlling for socio-demographic, personal, and occupational-demographic variables, and
  - present these findings in the form of easily interpretable odds ratio
Presentation of Inferential Analysis

- An odds ratio (OR) is a measure of association between an exposure (demand and capacity pressures) and an outcome (welfare)

- The OR represents the odds that an outcome will occur given a particular exposure, compared to the odds of the outcome occurring in the absence of that exposure
RESULTS
Demand, capacity and performance
Demand, capacity and performance

- Capacity to meet demand was generally viewed as insufficient.

- And there were concerns over officers’ performance due to insufficient time/numbers.
I have been told how our officer staffing levels are determined

- Strongly agree/Agree: 64%
- Agree: 19%
- Neither disagree nor agree: 18%
- Strongly disagree/Disagree: 11%

The way officer staffing levels are determined in my team/unit seems to be effective

- Strongly agree/Agree: 71%
- Agree: 11%
- Neither disagree nor agree: 18%
- Strongly disagree/Disagree: 11%
Demand, capacity and performance

We have time to engage in proactive policing in my team/unit
- Strongly Disagree/Disagree: 13%
- Neither Agree nor Disagree: 17%
- Agree/Strongly Agree: 70%

We generally have enough officers to manage all the demands on us as a team/unit
- Strongly Disagree/Disagree: 9%
- Neither Agree nor Disagree: 7%
- Agree/Strongly Agree: 85%

There are enough officers in my team/unit for me to do my job properly
- Strongly Disagree/Disagree: 11%
- Neither Agree nor Disagree: 11%
- Agree/Strongly Agree: 78%
Whenever the pressure builds up we are expected to work faster, **even if it means taking shortcuts**.
RESULTS

Stress and mental wellbeing
Long term sick leave

Number of officers on long-term sick leave
31 March 2014 to 31 March 2016

- 2014: 1,835
- 2015: 2,179
- 2016: 2,429
Benchmarking stress

- **Work-related stress** was assessed with the question: *In general how do you find your job?*

- **Non-work-related stress** was assessed with the question: *In general how do you find your life outside of work?*

- Each involved a 5-point response scale: *not at all stressful, mildly stressful, moderately stressful, very stressful, extremely stressful*
Benchmarking stress

% of respondents that find their non-work life very or extremely stressful

West Midlands Police 2014

Devon and Cornwall Police 2015

UK workforce 2010 (HSE figures)

UK civil servants 2014

Policing studies

% of respondents that found their job very or extremely stressful

Non-policing studies

% of respondents that found their job very or extremely stressful

Demand, Capacity and Welfare Survey
Mental wellbeing was assessed with the Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental-Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS) – a scale already proven to be reliable and valid, that enables benchmarking.

This scale is made up of 7 questions about positive aspects of mental wellbeing, and how frequently the respondent has felt that way over the past two weeks.

Each question had a 5-point response scale: None of the time, Rarely, Some of the time, Often, and All of the time.
Benchmarking mental wellbeing

% of respondents indicating they experienced these positive aspects of mental wellbeing rarely or none of the time over the previous two weeks.

- Feeling optimistic: 62% (19% rarely), 19% (rarely)
- Feeling useful: 60% (10% rarely), 28% (rarely)
- Feeling relaxed: 60% (11% rarely), 6% (rarely)
- Dealing well with problems: 20% (6% rarely), 4% (rarely)
- Thinking clearly: 60% (16% rarely), 6% (rarely)
- Feeling close to others: 34% (6% rarely), 3% (rarely)
- Able to make up own mind: 13% (3% rarely), 6% (rarely)

Stress and wellbeing

39% of Officers Reported High Job Stressfulness
These Officers Were....

Morale
7 X more likely to report low morale

Fatigue
4 X more likely to experience fatigue that interferes with work duties
4 X more likely to experience fatigue that interferes with home life

Leaveism
3 X more likely to use annual leave or rest days instead of sick leave for mental health problems

Presenteeism
4 X more likely to attend for work when feeling mentally unwell
3 X more likely to attend for work when feeling physically unwell

Mental Health and Wellbeing
11 X more likely to report poor overall mental wellbeing
6 X more likely to never or rarely feel relaxed
5 X more likely to have experienced mental health and wellbeing difficulties in last year
4 X more likely to never or rarely be able to think clearly
4 X more likely to never or rarely deal with problems effectively

3 X more likely to never or rarely feel optimistic

Police Federation
RESULTS

Links between demand, capacity and officer wellbeing
58% of officers reported insufficient time to do their job to a standard to be proud of. These officers were...

- Over 7 X more likely to report low morale
- Over 6 X more likely to report never or rarely feeling relaxed
- Over 5 X more likely to report poor overall mental wellbeing
- Over 5 X more likely to experience fatigue that interferes with work duties
- Over 5 X more likely to experience fatigue that interferes with work duties
35% of officers reported often or always experiencing unrealistic time pressures.

These officers were...

- Over 6 X more likely to report low morale
- Over 5 X more likely to experience fatigue that interferes with work duties
- Over 5 X more likely to experience fatigue that interferes with work duties
- Over 5 X more likely to report never or rarely feeling relaxed
- Over 5 X more likely to report poor overall mental wellbeing
% of respondents reporting that their workload was **too high or much too high** over the previous 12 months.

**66%** of officers reported **high overall workload**.

**66%** of officers reported their workload over the last 12 months as 'Too high'.

Recent non-policing studies - % of respondents that found their job very or extremely stressful

- **2014 Pay and Morale Survey (PFEW)**
- **2015 Pay and Morale Survey (PFEW)**
- **2016 Demand, Capacity and Welfare Survey (PFEW)**

- **2014 Continuous Attitude Survey (Armed Forces)**
- **2015 Continuous Attitude Survey (Armed Forces)**
- **2016 Continuous Attitude Survey (Armed Forces)**

- **66% of officers reported high overall workload.**

Over 3 X more likely to report **never or rarely feeling relaxed**

Over 3 X more likely to experience **fatigue that interferes with work duties**

57% of officers reported frequent single crewing. These officers were...

- More likely to be verbally insulted.
- More likely to be verbally threatened.
- More likely to be physically attacked.
Next Steps...

- Thought provoking?
- Worth action?
- Workshops, to gather ideas and solutions
- Need a broad range of stakeholders
- Need to be willing to consider cause and effect (it’s not all about welfare...)
What we want today

- Your commitment to engage in this work going forward
  - by agreeing to attend the workshops