

Police Wellbeing in the UK: Ensuring police officers are fit to deliver justice

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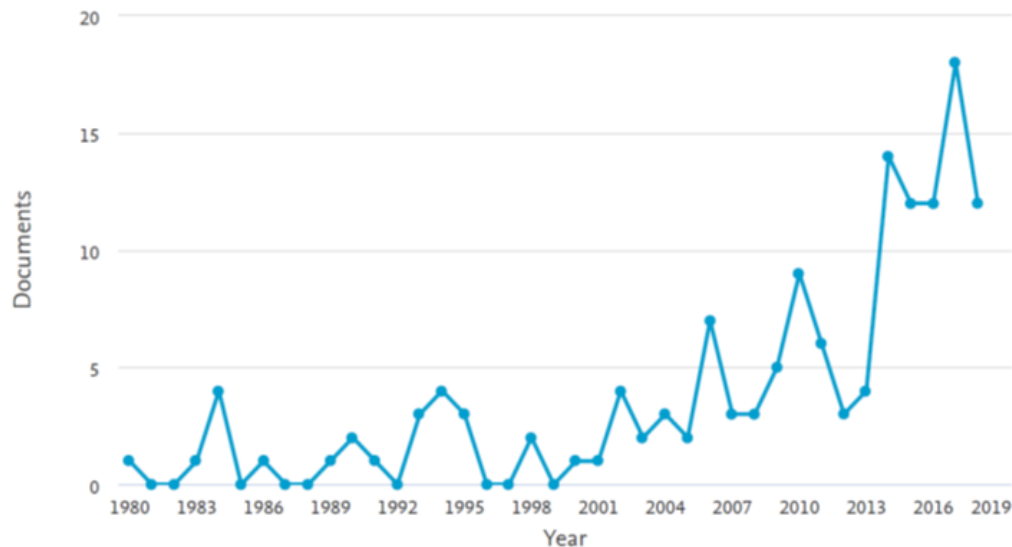
Police Wellbeing in the UK

- UK Policing → a reduction in staff numbers and resources
- Change in the type of police demand after years of austerity
- Traditionally → policing responded to public demand (i.e. enforcement, arrest)
- Today's society → protective and societal issues (i.e. safeguarding, vulnerable adults)
- Must recognise, we're in a rapidly changing environment with shifting and increasing demands
 - Impact at both an organisational level (i.e. time away from investigations) and an individual one (i.e. increased stress and anxiety)



Police Wellbeing in the UK

Documents by year



- Organisational wellness is not new
- ‘Police wellbeing’ - not a widely acknowledged concept in policing
- The past decade → a gradual increase in awareness and initiatives targeted towards workforce wellness
- ‘New’ focus on police wellbeing → reflected in practice, with a variety of reports, and the roll-out of the National Police Wellbeing Service across 2019-2020
 - Launched April 2019



The National Police

WELLBEING Service

The National Police Wellbeing Service is a **unique** service, **specifically designed** to meet the needs of policing

The Eight Areas in our 'model of care'

Line Management

Trauma, Post Incident Support and Disaster Management

Psychological Screening

Individual Resilience

Executive Leadership

Wellbeing at work

Peer Support

Outreach Service

The national police wellbeing service

- Dr Ian Hesketh (College of Policing) and Chief Constable Andy Rhodes (Lancashire Constabulary)
 - NPCC wellbeing working group in 2013
 - Put the findings on wellbeing into practice
 - Establish a National Police Wellbeing Programme
 - Assists forces in supporting the wellbeing of their officers and staff following the psychological and mental challenges experienced daily
 - Sets out to maintain a police wellbeing framework that is fit for both current and future purpose
- Oscar Kilo



Challenges to Health & Wellbeing

- ‘Psychological health and wellbeing in policing: A roadmap to excellence’ (National Police Wellbeing Service, 2018)
- The roadmap identifies the main challenges as:
 - a **culture** which attracts stigma and discrimination, which may impede officers and staff’s willingness to seek psychological support;
 - the **lack of a consistent** service model for supporting wellbeing;
 - the **psychological needs** of police officers and staff generates significant demand on police resources;
 - consistent **occupational exposure** to trauma; and
 - working with the **NHS**: “NHS services vary in their levels of awareness of the particular challenges facing officers, staff and their families” (p.5)

The challenges, when regarded collectively, provide “a compelling operational, economic and moral case for change”



The Research

- A UK-wide understanding of police wellbeing is essential to recognise the moral and social challenges posed to policing
- Commissioned by College of Policing (2018-19) to conduct a national review
 - **Aim:** understand wellbeing in policing → current position, what works and gaps in knowledge
 - To identify best practice, opportunities, facilitators and inhibitors, and inform the National Police Wellbeing Service
- A mixed methods approach → ‘Blue Light Wellbeing Framework’, ‘National Police Wellbeing Service Executive Workshops’ and a ‘HR Policy Review’



Blue Light Wellbeing Framework

- Six sections:
 - Leadership (15 statements);
 - Absence management (12 statements);
 - Creating the environment (14 statements);
 - Mental health (19 statements);
 - Protecting the workforce (20 statements);
 - Personal resilience (14 statements).
- Each statement:
 - The self-assessed level of development: FD, ID, UD
 - Notes to support their self-assessment level and the option to upload evidence (e.g. policy document)
- The overall, self-assessed level of development is also determined for each of the six sections

College of Policing

Absence management

Absence management	Self assessment level	Peer assessment			Notes and evidence	Location of evidence
		FD	ID	UD		
A clear attendance management policy is in place and procedures are known to staff						
The organisation maintains contact with absent employees to provide support and aid return to work						
Documented return to work procedures are in place and followed						

	Fully developed (FD)	In development (ID)	Under-developed (UD)
Leadership			
Absence management			
Creating the environment			
Mental health			
Protecting the workforce			
Personal resilience			



BLWF

- 18 forces completed the framework
- 'Development score' → scored the self-assessment for analysis → UD = 0, ID = 1, FD = 2
 - Potential for a score: 0-188
 - Scores ranged from 17 to 147, median average of 118.5
- Examined association between the development score and themes of the BLWF
 - **Absence management** and **creating the environment** were significantly more likely to be fully developed in comparison to all others
 - **Leadership** was significantly more likely to be in development
 - **Personal resilience** and **protecting the workforce** were significantly underdeveloped



Theme Subtheme	Absence management	Creating the environment	Leadership	Mental health	Personal resilience	Protecting the workforce
Development	X	X	X	X	X	X
In progress	X	X	X	X	X	X
Areas for development	X	X	X	X	X	X
Organisational learning	X	X	X	X		
Engaging in discussion			X			
Implementing change	X		X			
Maintain good practice		X				
Monitoring	X					
Prevention and proactivity		X				
Policy and process	X	X	X	X	X	X
Initiatives	X	X			X	X
Training	X	X		X	X	
Staff support and the working environment	X	X	X	X	X	X
High-vulnerability roles and specialist support	X			X		
Encourage healthy lifestyle				X	X	X
Management responsibility and support	X	X	X	X	X	X
Opportunities and recognition			X			
Person-centred			X			
Prevention	X					
Response				X		X
Methods of communication		X	X	X	X	X
Creating a safe space		X	X	X		
Personal and shared responsibilities		X				
Physical environment		X				

BLWF

- Aware of the importance of developing resilience and positive coping strategies
 - Understanding of the causes and signs of stressors was observed → essential to be effective and successful
 - **Good practice** was noted in the proactive nature of many forces
 - Identify signs and risk factors to ensure appropriate *early* support
 - Importance of listening to employees and receiving feedback to inform and implement change
 - Communication within the organisation → up and down the chain of command, through databases and websites, and through advocates
- Inconsistency in the actual use of the framework (e.g. variations in evidence and content provided)



National Police Wellbeing Service Executive Workshops

- Three workshops held in locations around the UK
- Individual definitions of wellbeing varied
- ‘Future focus’
 - Priorities: communication, monitoring and identifying need, education, early intervention, outreach and engagement
- Improvement areas:
 - Reducing and controlling demand, culture, making wellbeing a priority, and absence management
- To implement change → importance of leaders and management
- Support required → using an evidence-base, embedding practices into daily business and creating a peer support environment

Positive aspects of wellbeing:

- becoming embedded within the organisational culture
- promotion of the wellbeing agenda

Wellbeing inhibitors:

- a lack of a shared understanding
- a problematic culture
- limited management support and awareness
- a lack of resources



HR Policy Review

- Four UK police forces
- Positive policies:
 - i. 'None'
 - ii. Flexible working
 - iii. Leave entitlement and support RTW
 - iv. Mental and physical health support
- Negative policies:
 - i. Absence management
 - ii. Promotions
 - iii. Recruitment
 - iv. Grievances

Poor understanding and implementation, ambiguity, provoking negative personal wellbeing, a lack of transparency, consistency, fairness and communication, failure to consider individual circumstances, and limited support.

- Four key areas for policy improvements:
 1. Appropriate, individualised and flexible policy implementation;
 2. Fairness, transparency and timeliness of policy implementation;
 3. Improved training and performance of management; and
 4. Personalised approach and improved communication with HR.

A lack of awareness, poor personal experience, and a disconnect within the organisation.
Ability to manage work-life balance, enhancing positive personal wellbeing, clear guidance, provision of support, consideration of individual circumstances, and communication and encouragement.

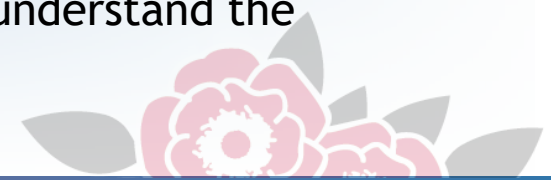
Findings

- Encouraging progress and attitudes towards police wellbeing, yet also highlighted the inconsistencies, limitations and progress to be made
- BLWF suggested absence management was fully developed
 - May be developed in terms of the policy being well-established, but doesn't necessarily imply that it was supportive to police wellbeing
 - Qual findings = absence management policy had an adverse impact on employees
 - Imbalance between organisational, or managerial, and employee perspectives illustrates the current gaps in police wellbeing
- National Police Wellbeing Service workshops → a desire to support police wellbeing



Findings

- **Traditional management structure/policies do not align with the modern, complex and diverse demand experienced**
 - Long-established organisational approach → compounding the negative wellbeing experienced by employees
- **Inconsistencies nationwide re. names of policies and initiatives, and an awareness of what works and what resources are available**
 - Difficult to determine specific processes and policies that may be missing or require attention
 - Increased consistency (accepting individual nuances within forces), will ensure a supportive and uniform approach
 - Lift and shift ??
- **Evidence based understanding and intervention is essential**
 - Unclear how much of the wellbeing-related activity was research-informed
 - To provide the best value for money and to reduce unintended consequences → understand the evidence base such policy and procedure is founded



Recommendations

Align
organisational
and individual
perspectives: A
shared
understanding
of wellbeing
and success

Organisational
investment
and a
sustainable
wellbeing
culture

Need for a
consistent and
evidence
based
approach

Implementing a
targeted and
proactive
approach

→ Positive
health and
wellbeing



Conclusion

- Recent focus = share best practice and build an evidence-base to inform future work
- Extent and diversity of demand → impact on individual wellbeing and organisational performance
- Range of individual and organisational factors influence the facilitation/inhibition of wellbeing
 - Must acknowledge to eliminate stigma or negative culture
- To change culture and attitudes towards wellbeing → organisational shift
 - Support and buy-in from leaders
 - Routed within policy and practice
 - Personal ownership, responsibility and accountability
- **To successfully embed wellbeing within the centre of UK policing → top-down and bottom-up engagement and cooperation is vital**





Thank you

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