College of Policing

# Going equipped

Issue 1 Summer/Autumn 2020

Issue 1 | Summer/Autumn 2020

# Contents

# Editorial

**Superintendent Katy Barrow-Grint ◆ Thames Valley Police**

I am delighted to be able to bring you the first issue of 'Going equipped', the new College of Policing publication aimed at sharing experience, learning and practice across the policing family.

I see a real thirst for knowledge in our forces, both academically and practically. Many of our officers and staff are undertaking research, discovering what works in policing or looking to share ideas, reflection and examples of practice without a mechanism to do so. 'Going equipped' is here to help solve that problem, to ensure we can learn from each other and continually improve policing for our communities. 'Going equipped' has been created to allow a wide range of peer-to-peer insights across policing at all roles and ranks, with a clear operational and frontline focus. It is written by you, for you. Anyone can contribute and that is why this publication will be so valuable going forward.

This first issue is full of interesting contributions – there is something for everyone, whatever your role in policing. Ali Heydari's long read, which is based on her PhD research,

picks up on the value of procedural justice in policing domestic abuse and introduces concepts such as vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue, which may feel familiar. Contributors also tell us about bitcoin, the role of the Forward Intelligence Team in the Extinction Rebellion protests in London, the use of body-worn video in voluntary attendance interviews during COVID-19 and the work done by a specialist tactical firearms commander, plus much more.


While much of this issue of 'Going equipped' was written prior to the pandemic, many of the pieces of writing have been updated to include the authors' reflections on the significant changes to society in the past few months. These have been challenging times for policing, with the COVID-19 pandemic affecting how we serve our communities, both now and into the future. This, coupled with the focus on Black Lives Matter following the death of George Floyd, has meant that delivering an effective and fair police service is more important than ever. I believe that continuing to share experiences and learning within policing will be critical as we move forward.

I hope you enjoy reading this issue as much as I have enjoyed editing it. If you are interested in writing about your ideas, your role, something you have done or would like to be a peer reviewer, get in touch at **Goingequipped@college.pnn.police.uk**

PRACTICE NOTE

# Using BWV in voluntary attendance interviews during the pandemic

**Sergeant Adele Ward ◆ Merseyside Police**

It's rare to come across a change in practice that has been put into general police use at pace during a crisis, but we've managed it in Merseyside.

In 2019, we launched a pilot allowing staff to record suspect interviews for all offences on body-worn video (BWV) camera at flexible locations, where it was appropriate and safe to do so. We created a step-by-step workbook to ensure that this was quick and easy to do while maintaining the appropriate risk and legal considerations. This followed a change in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE) that enables chief constables to authorise BWV as approved devices for interviews, if set criteria about the environment are adhered to.

As the pilot drew to an end, an independent review team spoke to staff involved and the feedback was some of the most positive we've ever received. Even staff who usually struggled with voluntary attendance (VA) or technology – or at 4am on their last night shift – were able to breeze through the process. Word began to spread about this new, simple, efficient way to deal with suspects. Teams that we had not anticipated wanting to be involved, started to request authority to use the process as well.

As the COVID-19 pandemic hit the UK, Chief Constable Andy Cooke provided official authority for a full rollout. After an initial Skype training input, staff can now use the process to protect themselves and the public from the spread of the virus, and to assist with social distancing while still progressing investigations to a timely outcome for victims.

The key to this project's success has been the culture of empowerment and trust, which has allowed innovation to thrive. Staff feel empowered to make decisions for the right reason, to help keep communities safe. Staff have been able to interview shielded persons at their home address with full personal protective equipment (PPE). In one instance, officers saw a known juvenile out during lockdown and found them in possession of drugs. The youth was returned home to their parents and an interview was conducted on BWV. That family did not need to travel outside, which reduced exposure to the virus, and

officers were able to finalise the matter efficiently.

The commitment by staff to continue a high level of service during these troubled times has been astounding. Hundreds of audio-visual interviews have been recorded by setting the camera up on a coffee table, mantelpiece or desk in all sorts of locations, including empty police stations, partner agency offices, the suspect's place of work and home addresses.

There are wider benefits too. Staff are able to manage their own demand more efficiently, avoid VA at custody suites during peak times, combat suspect transport problems and return to their frontline duties more quickly. The process is also more cost-effective than custody or station-based VA, and is much better when dealing with vulnerable suspects. It has enabled us to interview juveniles and those with mobility, mental health or learning disability concerns at locations more convenient for them, away from police stations. This has assisted with safeguarding and has maximised the potential of each interview.

During a recent staff survey on general VA, numerous free-text responses were received singing the praises of the new process and requesting that it never be taken away as an option, such is the overwhelming enthusiasm in Merseyside. Perhaps your force could benefit too?

For further information, please contact Adele Ward (**VA.Manager@merseyside.pnn.police.uk**). Adele is happy to share implementation documents, training and ideas.

## Spotlight on a role

# Specialist Tactical Firearms Commander

### Inspector, anonymous


Authorising a firearms entry into premises where a hostage is being held, or where a terrorist cell is planning an attack, is at the highest end of the police use of force. In my role as a Specialist Tactical Firearms Commander, I was responsible for the planning and command of complicated and high-risk firearms operations.

The rank required for the role varies across the country (being Inspectors in the Met, and generally more senior elsewhere). Assessment via the Specialist Tactical Firearms Course requires commanders to conduct a detailed review of a complex firearms operation based on the National Decision Model. Commanders must carefully consider probing and exploring the available intelligence, the threat and risk, and the range of tactical options and contingencies in order to inform a working strategy, while taking appropriate powers and policies into account.

In the real world, this can translate into the rapid deployment of significant overt and covert firearms officers in response to rapidly changing information about a terrorism or crime threat. This involves working closely with Senior Investigating Officers in some of the most fast-moving and challenging operational environments. The role requires in-depth understanding of the capabilities of different firearms officers and teams, and the ability to weigh up intelligence from potentially covert and secret sources to prevent serious crimes.

So how do you progress to this role? A broad experience of managing critical incidents is essential, so that you can calmly make decisions in pressurised operational environments where your approach could save lives. As well as quick decision-making, this role requires the ability to assimilate large quantities of intelligence and match that with the tactical options available to you. A calm, professional and experienced operational police officer in command of the highest end of police use of force may have to justify their decisions for years later, particularly where failing to act could lead to loss of life. A fascinating role.

PRACTICE NOTE

# Recruiting for diversity

**Chief Inspector Tony Alogba ◆ Greater Manchester Police**

I am currently working as Head of the Positive Action team. Our work involves trying to level the playing field and encourage people who would not otherwise consider a career in policing to apply to join us. Our primary focus is on increasing Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) and female representation in policing, acknowledging that 7% of all officers identify as BAME and women represent only about 30% of officers (Home Office, 2019). The recent George Floyd protests in the US, and their impact on the UK Black Lives Matter movement, act as a reminder of why fair and equal policing and better representation is critical to our consent-based policing system.

Historically in policing, we have not fully represented the communities that we serve. We have only had around one-third of the number of BAME officers we would need to be representative of our communities. Colleagues have said to me, 'Well why don't they just join then?', which ignores the disadvantages that many BAME candidates endure throughout their life – for example, socioeconomic

issues, such as poverty and racism – as well as unconscious bias and a lack of role models in policing. Most officers might not know that, compared with their White British counterparts, BAME candidates often have a lower chance of passing the **National Police SEARCH Recruit Assessment Centre** (College of Policing, 2019). There are lots of reasons for this disproportionality, and the College and police forces are working hard to overcome this.

In GMP, we have been bold in our use of positive action legislation, carefully using section 158 of the Equality Act 2010. By delivering a series of recruitment support events, we have been able to support BAME and female candidates to perform at their best. We do not advertise our vacancies generally and instead use what we call 'targeted community recruitment events' to promote our vacancies. This is often labour-intensive and involves volunteers from our staff support networks, who work alongside my team to deliver leaflets and signpost people to our recruitment vehicle in diverse communities. Individuals visit the recruitment vehicle and meet our staff to have a detailed conversation about a career in policing. My team have good cultural awareness and reassure people around race, gender and general equality issues.

We reviewed our recruitment process to ensure that the strongest candidates, regardless of background or work experience, have an equal chance of being able to answer the questions. For example, we removed criteria and questions about prior experience in volunteering, as this was identified as discriminating against people from certain communities. We provide advocacy and support to candidates, and we focus on building confidence and practical skills.

We now recruit around 20% BAME staff, exceeding the BAME proportion of our local population (based on the 2011 census), and we are widely regarded as being among the national leaders in this area. We have recruited 346 BAME officers out of approximately 1,700 officers, and we have doubled the number of BAME female officers within the last three years. Our most recent intakes have had the largest proportion of female officers that GMP has ever had. Most recently, nearly half of our 54 recruits were female.

We won the 2017 Guardian Diversity in Recruitment Award and the STARS Award in GMP, and we were nominated for a College of Policing award. We provide support to other agencies, including GCHQ, the Cabinet Office, the NHS, Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority. We have been carrying out peer reviews with the Metropolitan Police and Leicestershire Police, which have been really positive experiences.

## References

College of Policing. (2019). '**Police SEARCH Recruit Assessment Centre test scores by ethnicity (2017)**' [internet]. [Accessed 8 July 2020].

Home Office. (2019). '**Police Workforce, England and Wales, 31 March 2019**'. Home Office Statistical Bulletin, March 11/19. London: Home Office.

# Five things about bitcoin

**Detective Sergeant Paul Taylor, North West Regional Cyber Crime Unit ◆ Greater Manchester Police**

1 **Bitcoin is** the world's first digital currency that allows users to send value on a peer-to-peer basis, with no need for a bank, service provider or any other authority to be involved. Transactions are verified and shared by members of the global bitcoin network.

2 **Legitimate uses** include the transfer and storage of value without trust or reliance on others, such as banks. Bitcoin is also used for trade, with payment services becoming increasingly common for services and goods – even those as mundane as clothing and beer. Value is sustained by the finite number of bitcoins 'mined' and by the need for a user's private key(s) to access them. Users simply need a device with a data connection, rendering access and use for up to two billion people who do not have access to banks.

3 **Criminals take advantage** of the seemingly anonymous nature of bitcoin. They can transact for illicit goods and services, then store the proceeds of their crime in digital form away from bank accounts. They can then launder the proceeds by converting them to other cryptocurrencies or cash.

4 **Law enforcement** dedicate specialist officer resources into developing guidance and sharing best practice. Investigation guidance is provided by the NPCC and shared on the police Knowledge Hub. Collaborative working with industry and academia is key to providing an effective response.

5 **If you want to buy bitcoin**, there are plenty of resources online. You can get 'hands on' with the technology available by installing a wallet, creating an account with an exchange, and then purchasing and transferring a small amount.

For more information contact your regional cybercrime unit or read the NPCC guidance on Understanding and Investigating Cryptocurrencies.

LONG READ

# Diverse perceptions and experiences of domestic abuse

**Superintendent Dr Alison Heydari ◆ Hampshire Constabulary**


Alison's varied 19-year police career has included working in CID, holding three District Command roles, being seconded to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary Fire & Rescue Service (HMICFRS) and teaching at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York. Her interest in domestic abuse has spanned many years, during which she has worked closely with survivor support agencies, as well as other strategic partners, to improve the policing response to victims of domestic abuse. She has previously carried out research on the police response to managing domestic abuse in the public housing complex in Brooklyn, New York and, more recently, in the UK for her Doctor of Philosophy.

## Introduction

In October 2019, I was awarded a doctorate based on research in which I examined the experience of domestic abuse from different perspectives. My interest in domestic abuse stemmed from my role as a detective sergeant in CID, where I supervised the investigation of some impactful and wretched assault cases. Later, as a District Commander, I was very interested in understanding how officers managed those high-risk, emotionally charged situations.

I wanted to know the impact that dealing with those incidents had on officers, and how officers could be better supported.

The aim of my research was to analyse domestic abuse victims' experience of the initial face-to-face policing response. I tested two theories. The first related primarily to a researcher called William Muir. In 1977, Muir published a book called 'Police: Street corner politicians', in which he described different types of officers. He argued that 'good policing' could be identified in the behaviour and values of a certain type of officer, who he called the 'professional'. I combined this theory with procedural justice theory, which Epstein (2002, p 1876) has summarised as follows:

> '[P]rocedural justice theory holds that allowing a person to state his case, taking his opinions seriously, communicating that officials maintain an open mind about him and his case, and treating him with respect, all enhance his perceptions that authorities are moral and legitimate. Compliance, even if it is counter to one's immediate self-interest, then stems from a sense of duty or morality.'

I wanted to understand both the victim and the police officer experience of policing domestic abuse, and to answer three research questions:

- Can characteristics of 'good policing' be identified in the police response to domestic abuse?
- What are the issues and barriers that prevent officers from being consistently 'good'?
- Can the experience of procedural justice for victims of domestic abuse be enhanced?

I used mixed research methods to address the research questions, with a particular focus on generating and analysing qualitative data through interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). This is described as being 'committed to the examination of how people make sense of their major life experiences' (Smith & Flowers, 2009, p 1). Data was generated in the following ways: surveys completed by 20 domestic abuse survivors and 157 police officers; two police officer focus groups; and semi-structured interviews with four domestic abuse survivors, five senior officers, one police constable and two Independent Domestic Abuse Advocates (IDVAs).

The large number of research findings were divided into five intertwined research themes. In this article, I will focus on the challenges of responding to domestic abuse,

the impact of doing so and what we can do to support officers to provide the best service possible to victims.

## The challenges

My research found that victims associated good policing with high levels of satisfaction. Characteristics of good policing were associated with 'softer' skills including empathy, understanding, respect and civility. Signposting to support services was highly valued. However, victim satisfaction was inconsistent and officers faced a number of challenges that made delivering good policing difficult.

Expectations of the police are also constantly changing, which is challenging for officers. In their own words:

> 'It's the feeling of ever changing policy or systems that confuses people. [...] Individual policies change and we seem to be in constant flux.'

> "Change is good, too much change is just counterproductive"

> 'Change is good, too much change is just counterproductive, and it's like just shaking the whole system up.'

Austerity has hit policing hard. More work for less people can result in difficulty in prioritising tasks. Officers commented:

> 'Staff are constantly doing that juggling act. [...] I don't think we provide the best service that we can do because there's always conflicting priorities.'

> 'There are some people who are incredibly well intentioned, but their workloads are too high.'

A significant number of officers and IDVAs commented on the small amount of time that officers have to commit to meeting victims' needs and assessing risk. Time pressure includes high workloads and service requests from the control room. As one officer explained:

> 'I will listen to the victim and the more you listen, the more idea you get about what has happened in the past, and they might make a flippant comment which is to them normal. But to you, you then realise, ah, actually that's ringing a few alarm bells.'

Victims consistently commented on the importance of spending time with officers. This was given as a factor that resulted in disclosure being more likely and a positive experience of procedural justice. For one victim, investing time resulted in the generation of police legitimacy, compliance and prosecution of the perpetrator, as well as a significant reduction of future call-outs.

Some officers felt that regular training would help officers keep up with legislation, policy and procedure, and would influence their behaviour. An officer explained that opportunities to reduce risk were missed, due to lack of training:

> 'We went to domestics, we recognise there was no evidential criteria met, therefore we didn't arrest. However, we could have secured a DVPN [domestic violence protection notice] and then lead onto a DVPO [domestic violence protection order]. So there was [sic] missed opportunities [...] If the officers were equipped with that knowledge then we might have arrested more.'

This officer reflects the theory of 'working rules' established by a researcher called Carolyn Hoyle and how those 'rules' can be shaped over time. Hoyle (1998) argued that there are a number of factors that affect officers' decisions on how to use their powers and that these 'working rules' act as a framework for decision making. The actions that officers take are linked to their experience of observing patterns of behaviour, which act as benchmarks that assist in decision making. An officer may decide to arrest based not on bias or stereotype, but as a result of an assessment of many factors, including availability of evidence, training or willingness of the victim to cooperate. The focus on task and measurable 'outcomes' means that an officer may use the power of arrest, based on whether the action taken will contribute to what gets measured. If an outcome includes the number of DVPNs, would that have an impact on officer behaviour?

## The impact of responding to domestic abuse

Existing research shows that professionals who work with victims who have suffered from traumatic events can suffer trauma even when they have not directly experienced the event. This is referred to as vicarious trauma. This impact is starkly reflected in the comments from one officer:

> 'I think the organisation has knocked the stuffing out of those officers a little bit to do that just one job, one job, one job, one job.'

This sensation is exacerbated by the feeling of not always being successful in protecting victims, impacting the way they see themselves (their 'self-legitimacy'). A senior officer commented that:

> '[Victims] may not support prosecution but for lots of complex reasons, we can find that quite difficult. Because we're focused on catching bad people and stopping bullying.'

Officers draw on their emotional resilience to manage challenging domestic incidents. One officer likens self-protection to 'encasing' the mind in a 'shell' reminiscent of a vulnerable creature being shielded by a protective barrier. The following comments from a frontline officer make a convincing argument for the presence of vicarious trauma:

> 'You do start going to [incidents] and form pre-conceptions and you sort of stereotype and you know, sort of you make yourself making [sic] your mind up about things before you get to certain jobs. But that is, you know, the way I see it that is your mind kind of encasing itself in a shell that says, "I'm not going to allow you to be, you know, have your blood pressure sort of sent through the roof by doing this, you know ten times a day, for six days in a row or you know whatever it is" [...]
>
> We do go to just job after job after job, it's just weighing you down 'cos obviously we're people as well you know, [we] have got the same limitations and frailties and everything else.'

Another officer said that, 'unfortunately we are all human, we're not robots', and called for understanding and recognition of how difficult policing is. One frontline officer described a disconnect with senior officers, and perception of organisational and procedural injustice:

> 'It feels like you are being hit with a big metaphorical stick. But at the same time, and I think unfortunately, some senior managers need to realise that we try our best'.

Any perception that the frontline role is not supported can result in an experience of organisational and procedural injustice, lack of legitimacy for policing and a lack of buy-in to organisational goals. An organisation that provides support to officers could create greater perceptions of self-legitimacy. If an officer feels that they are being supported, they will be

better equipped to have a positive impact on victims' experience of procedural justice.

## Supporting officers to provide a better service for victims

My research indicates that if policing wants to meet the needs of victims of domestic abuse, officers need to be supported in their role.

Both sergeants and constables expressed a need for training and education to build capacity to help victims of domestic abuse. Speaking of the importance of communication through training, one officer said, 'I need regular inputs to prevent myself being overcome by compassion fatigue'. This view was supported by an officer who recounted the positive impact of effective training on her future policing response, linking with the concept of 'working rules'.

> 'Hearing from a victim herself about the issues she encountered with officers who had dealt with incidents involving her [...] was particularly hard hitting and certainly made me consider my approach'.

One IDVA went further, recommending joint training with victim support agencies to help develop long-term thinking in policing.

Respite from the traumatic and repetitive nature of domestic abuse through a rotation policy was cited by one officer as a positive move for mental health: 'I needed a rest from response patrol personally. Did this and I feel great again.'

Muir (1977) refers to the influence that the sergeant has in educating and mentoring team members, schooling them in policing and forming them into professional police officers. The importance of the sergeant was evidenced in my research.

All participant groups felt that effective leadership at all levels of the organisation was required to enhance officers' experience of organisational and procedural justice. Scrutiny was welcomed by junior ranks, with a plea from a police officer that poor practice is addressed when it occurs: 'please deal with the supervisors and staff who do not take it seriously and let the rest of us get on with it'. Muir spoke about the pivotal role that sergeants play in supporting their staff, negotiating moral dilemmas and mentoring their staff to be good police officers. For this reason, I believe that we need to ensure that our sergeants are well equipped for the important role that they play.

Team performance was considered within the constraints and influence of organisational culture, typified as short-term, task-focused and crisis-led. One senior officer said, 'there is a sense where everything has to be done yesterday'. In order

to optimise opportunities to break the cycle of abuse, the organisation must present opportunities for development, promoting a mind-set that encourages officers to think about safety in the long term, as well as the here and now.

## Conclusion

Many factors influence and impact the ability of the frontline officer to meet the needs of domestic abuse victims.

Characteristics of good policing could be found in the police response to domestic abuse, but there were a number of issues, including high workloads and continuous change, that made it difficult for officers to deliver a victim-focused service. Officers want to protect others but find their intentions are seemingly thwarted by victims, so are sometimes unable to achieve a positive criminal justice 'outcome'. This can lead to feelings of powerlessness, resulting in a negative impact on self-legitimacy.

Vicarious trauma can trigger survival mechanisms, resulting in a 'hardening effect' on emotions over time. A lack of support leading to organisational and procedural injustice may be an issue that prevents officers from being effective.

A central finding of my research was the importance of leadership in the sergeant role, as that position appears to be very influential, setting the expectations for service delivery. Sergeants are key to establishing 'working rules', driving an uplift in performance and effectiveness through scrutiny, mentoring and education.

My theory is that the experience of procedural justice for victims of domestic abuse can be enhanced by supporting officers to be professional and demonstrate 'good policing'. This results in the victim experiencing procedural justice, which in turn legitimises police authority to the extent that the victim is more likely to engage with the police. However, in order to be 'good', police officers need support. They need clear communication, mentoring, effective leadership, training and scrutiny to improve their ability to identify, assess and manage risk. This will have a positive impact on their own perception of organisational justice and self-legitimacy, which will help them to treat victims well. This, in turn, leads to an enhanced experience of procedural justice for survivors of domestic abuse, increasing the likelihood of victim compliance. This has a very positive impact on the officers, increasing self-legitimacy, as they see that their intention to protect is being fulfilled.

If you are interested, please dip into my thesis on the **experience of domestic abuse from different perspectives** to learn more about the findings.

## Recommendations

1. That the Domestic Abuse Matters training, which many forces will have delivered, is followed up by a long-term training plan, facilitated face-to-face as recommended by HMICFRS (2014).
2. That the concept of the psychological contract is explored in order to transparently account for the obligations of leaders and followers, in terms of provision of training, guidance, expectations and leadership. The psychological contract could form the basis of strengthening a leadership commitment at all ranks, reducing the rift between junior and senior ranks, and formulating a suite of expectations at sergeant rank to address inconsistency in service provision.
3. That further IPA studies are carried out to investigate the impact of domestic abuse trauma on police officers and other staff (such as PCSOs). How this impacts their ability to respond to victims of domestic abuse appropriately, and in accordance with policy and legislation, is an important component of cultural change. There is an increasing interest in wellbeing in police forces, and the results would be valuable to feed in to police force wellbeing strategies.
4. That forces consider discussing the findings of this thesis and agree on how the findings can be used to inform a number of issues, including wellbeing strategies, the response to victims of domestic abuse and leadership initiatives.

## References

Epstein D. (2002). '**Procedural Justice: Tempering the State's Response to Domestic Violence**'. William and Mary Law Review, 43 (2001-2002), 5(3), pp 1842-1905.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary Fire & Rescue Service. (2014). 'Everyone's business: Improving the police response to domestic abuse' [internet].

Heydari, Alison Claire. **Enhancing the Experience of Procedural Justice for Domestic Abuse Survivors by Improving the Policing Response: A Mixed Method Study Utilising Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis**. PHD thesis, Portsmouth University. Portsmouth: University Of Portsmouth, 2019.

Hoyle C. (1998). '**Negotiating Domestic Violence: Police, Criminal Justice, and Victims**'. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Since contributing this article Ali Heydari has joined the Metropolitan Police Service as a Commander.

# Shift in the life of a Forward Intelligence Officer

**Sergeant Michael Richards ◆ Metropolitan Police Service**

**Date:** Monday, 7 October 2019
**Role:** Forward Intelligence Officer, Metropolitan Police Service
**Event:** Extinction Rebellion 'Autumn Uprising', day one

With the event being well-advertised, and as we had learned lessons from a similar event in April, I was aware of my very early morning deployment weeks in advance. Forward Intelligence Team (FIT) officers were asked for their availability on working days, as well as rest days, for the event. Due to the limited number of available FIT officers, I knew that I would be deployed. The role of each FIT was to gather intelligence that could help the public order commanders to form a strategy and allocate resources. There were six FITs staggered over three start times, and we all knew that we had a long two weeks ahead. The shortest day over the fortnight was 12 hours and some were as long as 18 hours.

I arranged to meet my FIT partner at Lambeth at 0600hrs. The day started with me getting my uniform and shower kit ready, so I could shower at work and avoid waking my two-year-old son. I had told him that I wouldn't see him much over the next two weeks, and I had made sure that I spent as much time as possible with him the week before. My son often became a conversation piece with protestors when they told me that they were protesting for my kid.

Our patrols officially started at 0700hrs. We were tasked with some of the iconic sites and major central London junctions that were suspected targets for the Extinction Rebellion (XR) and Animal Rebellion 'Autumn Uprising'. We met our first customer before we'd even made it to our assigned ground! A vehicle crossing Lambeth Bridge, destined for The Mall, was fully loaded with XR paraphernalia, flags and artwork. The occupants were quite open about their intention to use the contents for a family-orientated tent where children could produce artwork.

A quick lap of iconic sites on foot and by vehicle highlighted the vast number of protesters present in and around central London. At about 0900hrs, blockades began to emerge on bridges, major junctions and iconic sites, including outside the Home Office. We engaged with the protestors throughout. Many were reluctant to offer up specific information regarding intentions and locations, but reiterated that any

actions would be peaceful. Several cafés became popular pit stops for protestors and police alike!

As time went on, more complex methods of blockading roads were used, such as parking a heavy goods vehicle near the Home Office, and numerous tents and temporary structures appeared. Throughout the day, we continued to take a tour of different encampments and discovered hundreds of very simply devised wooden boxes with holes in each end. These became commonplace over the fortnight, and they were used to build structures and to enable protesters to lock themselves to each other through the boxes.

Later, we were tasked to attend the Animal Rebellion protest at Smithfield Market, where the protestors had set up an impromptu vegan market with a few hundred people present. On arrival, we liaised with City of London Police, who were dealing with the low-key event. The protestors were very peaceful and courteous, and I lost count of how much food I was offered! After a final lap of the blockades, we were dismissed from the event. In this role, experience is more important than rank. My FIT partner was an expert in recognising the event organisers, so I happily followed his lead.

* * *

Since contributing this article, I have been promoted to Inspector, working in Westminster on a permanent basis. The planned XR spring protests were cancelled due to the emergency of the COVID-19 outbreak. In recent months, we have had to balance police presence at Black Lives Matter, anti-lockdown and far-right protests, among others. As a Police Support Unit (PSU) Commander, this has presented some interesting problems to solve around balancing the facilitation of peaceful protests with the necessity for social distancing.

I continue to look forward to the challenges ahead.

# What I learned from...
## being a first responder to a rape, early in my career

**Police Constable, anonymous**

I've been a police officer for just short of 18 years and I'm currently working on immediate response. This role is demanding and vast. There is always learning, reflection – sometimes on our own failures and mistakes – and room for improvement. I often think back to a job where I went away feeling like I could have done more.

Looking back to when I had only just finished my probation, I was double-crewed with another officer on a night shift. I was asked to attend a report of a female stating that she had been raped. Back in the day, there were very few women in the police then, and if an incident involved the term 'sexual', you knew you'd be deployed. I had no specialist training, which I'm lucky to have now, but I was pretty confident I knew what to do.

I remember that, before I attended the rape, a few of the older bobbies had told me that this woman was an alcoholic and was always ringing in. I realise now that these comments clouded my judgement when approaching her as a victim. I remember walking into the woman's house with a preconception of her, which I now believe restricted my core instincts, such as empathy and understanding. I feel that, at the time, I was more just going through the motions and completing tasks in line with general training. I didn't engage with her at a level that meant I got the full picture of her complex life and needs. Even on that evening, I walked away feeling that I had not only let myself down, but also, and most importantly, I had let the woman down by not giving her the very best service that I knew I could have delivered. I am personally reassured that this complaint was followed up by CID shortly after my visit.

Sometimes it can be hard to avoid making preconceptions. So, when I'm heading to jobs, for example, with repeat callers, I just go back to that one job and picture the woman sat drunk on her sofa in her dark lounge. I remember that she was, and is, one of the reasons I do my job. Even if she only rang to tell her story and all she needed was a hug, how hard could that be? I vowed that this was a feeling I never wanted to feel again, that I would avoid that unconscious bias and that I would deal with every job and every person on their own merit. I like to think this learning has helped me to become the officer I am today, and has held me in good stead for the past 17 years.

MY IDEA

# Putting fraud protection advice into prescriptions

**Fiona Price, Fraud and Cyber Protect Officer**
**Nottinghamshire Police**

My job is to protect victims of fraud, and to work proactively to ensure that people are not scammed in the first place. The Crime Survey of England and Wales estimated that there had been 3.8 million incidents of fraud for the year ending March 2019. Sadly, I have found that many victims of fraud are vulnerable and often elderly. This led me to think about how we could get our fraud protection messaging out to this demographic.

I began by asking GP surgeries if I could leave advice leaflets in their waiting rooms. Most agreed, but I didn't know if people were actually picking up the leaflets and reading them. I then took a bundle of leaflets and went into Nottingham city centre.

I visited a pharmacy and asked if the leaflets could be displayed. The pharmacist agreed to put one into each prescription bag that was dispensed, until the leaflets ran out. When I returned to the office, I updated my sergeant and detective superintendent about my idea, and we agreed that I could develop it further.

I have now started contacting other pharmacies to see if this is something they would be interested in working with us on. This is particularly relevant now, with criminals taking advantage of people's uncertainty around the pandemic by using fake COVID-19 services and products as a lure. This simple idea could help us to get scam warnings and fraud protection messaging out to a large number of people, especially older people who are alone and self-isolating, to help keep them safe.

If you have tried this idea locally, tell us about it by emailing **Goingequipped@college.pnn.police.uk**

Or if you have a good idea, why not add it to the **National Map of Police Ideas**?

BEST PIECE OF ADVICE

# Be the change

**Sergeant Ben Forbes**

When I joined policing as a regular, having been a special constable in the Metropolitan Police Service, I really was one of the lucky ones. As a special, I had a fantastic support network of regular and volunteer leaders, and the Met supported me in gaining a number of specialist skills. This afforded me a great start to my career when I joined Barking and Dagenham as a regular in 2013.

People who know me say I have always been a passionate and energetic type of person – some say 'full on', which at times I can't argue with! As soon as I become a PC, I wanted to help change how we engage with, support and tackle gang issues involving young people. From my own experience, as a mixed race young man from Newham, East London, I knew there were feelings of distrust and disconnect by the local community and the police. One example (of many) springs to mind: when I was 17, I was walking to meet a friend in Stratford when suddenly I heard a large bang. That bang was the side door of a Territorial Support Group (TSG) carrier opening quickly. Before I knew it, I was grabbed up into the van and detained for search.


At the time, I was clearly told that the reason for being detained was my age, my skin colour and because I was in a high-crime area. The police were gentle and were not rude, but it just didn't feel right.

Now, as someone who upholds the same law as those officers did, I have a greater understanding and appreciation for the powers available to us in policing. However, these experiences are what drove me to apply to become a police officer and help bring about change that sees our diverse communities represented in the rank and file of today's police services. As a young

officer, I wanted to change the world within the first 72 hours of landing in my borough, and I was given one piece of advice from an experienced sergeant, who has become one of my closest friends. It was:

> “Be you and only you. Bring the change you and I want you to bring. Use your community skills and experiences to bridge gaps, but make sure you understand the bigger picture. Take each day as it comes and be strong when judged, as you will be judged for being different. Represent how you would want to be represented and tackle negativity in an open, engaging and understanding way.”

Years later, following the death of George Floyd, I feel empowered and remain committed and determined to promoting and sharing this advice. I have a passion for celebrating our differences and bringing about change to allow our diverse communities to feel empowered, supported and included.

LONG READ

# The impact of viewing indecent images of children on police wellness and wellbeing

**Superintendent Neil Ralph ◆ Devon and Cornwall Police**

Neil has had a varied 19-year career completing uniformed and detective roles, including working in general duties, CID environments, response, proactive teams, neighbourhood policing, public protection unit and covert policing. He is currently the Partnerships Superintendent for Devon. He has been the force lead for child sexual exploitation (CSE), and is the South West lead for the Society of Evidence Based Policing. He works closely with the University of Exeter and has been involved in research projects that have been awarded funding approaching £1 million. He has a master's degree in Police Leadership and Management.

## Introduction

My interest in this research area stemmed from my time as a DCI in the public protection unit. At that time, I was the force lead for child sexual exploitation (CSE), and our understanding of the investigative complexities surrounding these crimes were less well researched and less well understood. I managed our Paedophile Online Investigation Team (POLIT) and Local Safeguarding Teams (LSTs), and was

also the force lead for the largest paedophile operation that Devon and Cornwall Police have ever run. All of this meant a lot of interaction with staff whose job it was to view indecent images of children (IIOC) on a regular basis.

Sadly, this was a growth area due to the explosion in internet technology and internet-enabled applications. This inevitably meant that someone from a law enforcement perspective would have to view images that could be extremely distressing. At this time, the Child Abuse Identification Database (CAID) was very much in its infancy. This led to a relatively small number of staff viewing huge volumes of distressing content. I was acutely aware that, due to the sheer volume of what was being discovered, these investigations were no longer being held by specialists. Increasingly, officers were investigating these crimes with little or no specialist training or insights into the levels of safeguarding required.

This was very much in the midst of austerity, with reduced staffing numbers and budgets. A greater understanding of investigator wellness and wellbeing was required if we were to sustain our commitment to investigating this tide of abuse. I wanted to build a greater understanding of the potential impact of viewing these distressing images, as well as the effect on investigators themselves.

Initially, I set about trying to identify what research was available locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. I was surprised to find that very little research regarding investigator wellbeing existed in this bespoke area. As a result, I decided to design a questionnaire to be used among investigators, with the hope that a better understanding would improve police wellbeing responses for staff viewing IIOC.

## The Findings

**Officers and staff with experience of internet child exploitation (ICE) work reported negative measures of self-reported wellbeing.**

The findings indicated that 49% of investigators viewing IIOC felt that the work had a negative impact on their life away from work. Furthermore, 24% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the stress of viewing IIOC reduced their productivity at work, and 23% agreed or strongly agreed that they had harmful intrusive thoughts concerning IIOC investigations when not at work. Interestingly, less evidence (18%) was found to support investigators wanting to change their role within the police.

Therefore, it seems clear that staff experiencing ICE work reported negative consequences on their wellbeing. These findings support the limited available literature,

which indicates that a proportion of investigators exposed to ICE work may suffer detrimental effects to their wellbeing (for example, Brady, 2017; Wortley et al, 2014; Perez et al, 2010).

**Officers and staff with experience of ICE work report taking sick leave, or other forms of leave, to help them cope with the impact of viewing IIOC.**

There is clear evidence that viewing IIOC can result in medical symptoms that are likely to necessitate investigators taking sick leave as respite from their work. Wortley et al (2014) found that a proportion of ICE staff reported a clinically significant post-traumatic stress profile. Perez et al (2010) reported that over 30% of ICE investigators developed symptoms of secondary traumatic stress disorder (STSD). ICE investigators are at increased risk of developing STSD and burnout (Bourke and Craun, 2014; Burns et al, 2008; Sprang et al, 2011). These can result in a variety of negative individual and organisational outcomes, including depression and anxiety, both often leading to sickness absence, as well as increased rates of absenteeism and staff turnover (Bourke and Craun, 2014; Pryce et al, 2007; Travis et al, 2015). Despite work to identify negative impacts on ICE investigators, there is limited literature indicating how this transfers into workplace absenteeism.

In my study, it was identified that 5% of staff reported that viewing IIOC had contributed to them taking sick leave. In addition, 4% reported seeking medical help to deal with the effects that they felt resulted from viewing IIOC. While these are relatively small percentages, the impact on individual wellbeing may well be significant. Furthermore, if these impacts were scaled up to a regional or national level, the organisational impact is increased, as is the potential ability of law enforcement agencies to effectively deal with this abuse.

Powell et al (2014, p 555) have noted that 'stressors place physical, psychological and social restrictions on investigative capacity'. This has clear implications on the implicit reduction of individual and organisational capacity. Wolak and Mitchell (2009, p 11) have also highlighted this issue:

> 'The wellbeing of personnel who investigate child pornography cases is a matter of concern, not just for compassionate reasons, but also because unrelieved stress can reduce productivity and retention of the specialised and highly trained staff who investigate these crimes.'


To properly understand organisational wellbeing, it is vital to have accurate records regarding absenteeism. However, if employees take a form of leave such as annual leave when in reality they are unwell, or take re-rostered rest days instead of taking sickness leave, this masks the problem. It also restricts our ability to deal with the early onset of problems such as PTSD or symptomatic depression. This has been termed as 'leavism'. Hesketh and Cooper (2017, p 58) have found that 'leavism undoubtedly and significantly skews the true picture of workforce wellbeing'. A recent study by Houdmont and Elliott-Davies (2017) identified that leavism is a significant issue facing UK policing. The authors reported that 42% of officers developing adverse psychological health symptoms had, on one or more occasion, taken annual leave or rest days when they should have taken sick leave.

The findings of my study support the emerging picture regarding policing and leavism. In all, 12% of respondents reported taking another form of leave as a coping mechanism to deal with viewing IIOC, as they didn't want to take sick leave. There are a number of consequences to this. It is harder to identify issues and gain investment to facilitate wellbeing interventions, and it may also have a detrimental effect on individuals. For example, if an individual uses up leave when they should be sick, this means they cannot take annual leave at other times to recuperate. Additionally, the cause of the sickness may never be addressed, and so symptoms are likely to return. This has a

negative impact on wellness and, in the long term, it is likely to increase absenteeism and reduce organisational productivity. A reduced staffing wellness profile might lead to reduced quality of service and a reduction in organisational ability to protect the most vulnerable in our society.

## Recommendations

1 All investigators in specialised ICE departments, or those investigating ICE crime, should receive counselling support, as well as some form of psychological assessment, to identify any issues harmful to their wellbeing.

2 All staff and supervisors involved in ICE work should receive bespoke training that covers technical elements of the work and outlines coping strategies to facilitate dealing with negative emotions, as well as IIOC viewing strategies. Supervisors should have additional training in mental health first aid.

3 General workload stressors should be reduced, including a particular focus on the management of workload, access to resources and partner agency engagement. Workload should be managed so that investigators do not carry caseloads entirely or largely consisting of those indicators known to be the most detrimental to investigator wellbeing. Senior officers should have a clear strategic vision on this matter and should clearly articulate how they value the officers and staff that complete this work.

4 Officers and staff involved with ICE investigations should have access to a programme to raise awareness of their wellbeing, with a clear focus on key elements, such as their mental health and the importance of physical exercise and a healthy work-life balance.

5 Organisations should focus efforts on strength-based and ergonomically suitable working environments. A culture should be promoted whereby informal and formal social support mechanisms are encouraged within an open environment. The discussion of wellbeing issues should be seen as a sign of strength, not weakness.

6 ICE investigators should have access to the technology that enables them to complete their work. Technological limitations can contribute to

reduced employee wellbeing (Wortley et al, 2014). In the technologically dynamic arena of ICE investigation, access to the right technology is key not only to wellbeing, but also to identifying perpetrators in a timely manner.

## The impact of the research

I was very lucky to receive support from my force to improve conditions for officers and staff viewing IIOC. First, I wrote a paper for the force business board highlighting what I had identified, with recommendations for wellbeing-inspired change. These recommendations were accepted. I organised a multi-departmental group of key individuals, who were tasked to implement the recommendations across the force area. I was able to recruit committed and passionate people to this group, who were able to facilitate the wellbeing-based change needed. Over the course of 12 months, the group met regularly to implement the recommendations and reflect on how these new measures were having an impact.

A booklet was produced for all officers and staff viewing IIOC as part of their role. This highlighted viewing and coping strategies, and also gave advice and guidance regarding some of the more technical elements of ICE investigation. Training inputs and advice regarding wellbeing were included in detective training programmes, and privacy screen filters were added to bespoke monitors that were used to view IIOC in open-office environments. This enabled staff to be in contact with colleagues while viewing IIOC, while ensuring that no-one else viewed the images at the same time. This improved the ergonomics of the social space in which the ICE staff operated. Psychological screening assessments were promoted among ICE investigators, staff and supervisors. IT equipment was adjusted to equip investigators with the tools they needed to do the job, reducing stress and frustration. Senior officers recognised the potential negative impact of viewing IIOC and provided key messages recognising this to staff and officers.

## Conclusion

My work and this study provided evidence that viewing IIOC and taking part in ICE investigations can have a negative impact on wellbeing for some police officers and staff. The severity and volume of exposure can be extreme and appears to be increasing. This could result in greater harm to the officers and staff involved. Police officers and staff have reported that the impact of viewing IIOC had required them to seek medical interventions, and this was most acute when bespoke wellbeing

support had not been provided. Officers and staff also took forms of leave other than sick leave when they were mentally or physically unwell. To continue to safeguard the most vulnerable in our society, we must look after the people protecting them. The wellbeing of staff involved in the traumatic and complicated work of ICE investigation, both specialist and non-specialist, must continue to be a priority for law enforcement organisations moving forwards if they are to successfully achieve their safeguarding mission.

## References

Bourke ML and Craun SW. (2014). 'Coping with secondary traumatic stress: differences between U.K. and U.S. child exploitation personnel'. Traumatology: An International Journal, 20(1), pp 57–64.

Brady PQ. (2017). 'Crimes against caring: exploring the risk of secondary traumatic stress, burnout and compassion satisfaction among child exploitation investigators'. Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology, 32(4), pp 305–318.

Burns CM, Morley J, Bradshaw R and Domene J. (2008). 'The emotional impact on and coping strategies by police teams investigating internet child exploitation'. Traumatology, 14(2), pp 20–31.

Hesketh I and Cooper CL. (2017). '**Managing Health and Wellbeing in the Public Sector: A Guide to Best Practice**'. London: Routledge.

Houdmont J and Elliott-Davies M. (2017). '**Officer Demand, Capacity and Welfare Survey: Absence Behaviours**' [internet]. Police Federation of England and Wales.

Perez LM, Jones J, Englert DR and Sachau D. (2010). 'Secondary traumatic stress and burnout among law enforcement investigators exposed to disturbing media images'. Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology, 25(2), pp 113–124.

Powell MB, Cassematis P, Benson MS, Smallbone S and Wortley R. (2014). 'Police officers' perceptions of the challenges involved in internet child exploitation investigation'. Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies and Management, 37(3), pp 543–557.

Ralph, N. **Impact of Viewing Indecent Images of Children on Police Wellness and Wellbeing**. MSC Thesis in Police Leadership and Management, University of Warwick Business School. 2017.

Sprang G, Craig C and Clark J. (2011). Secondary traumatic stress and burnout in child welfare workers: a comparative analysis of occupational distress across professional groups. Child Welfare, 90(6), pp 149–155.

Travis DJ, Lizano EL and Barak MEM. (2015). '**'I'm so stressed!': a longitudinal model of stress, burnout and engagement among social workers in child welfare settings**'. British Journal of Social Work, 46(4), pp 1076–1095.

Wolak J and Mitchell KJ. (2009). 'Work exposure to child pornography in ICAC task forces and affiliates'. Durham, NH: Crimes Against Children Research Center, University of New Hampshire.

Wortley R, Smallbone S, Powell M and Cassematis P. (2014). '**Understanding and Managing the Occupational Health Impacts on Investigators of Internet Child Exploitation**'. Griffith University and Deakin University.

If you would like to find out more about the welfare support offered by the National Police Wellbeing Service, please go to **oscarkilo.org.uk**

# With thanks to

## Editorial board members

Superintendent Katy Barrow-Grint, Editor-in-Chief, Thames Valley Police
Detective Constable Keri Alldritt, Greater Manchester Police
Sergeant Caroline Hay, City of London Police
Detective Superintendent Julie Henderson, Bedfordshire Police
Nichola Rew, Analyst, City of London Police
Nerys Thomas, Knowledge, Research and Practice Lead, College of Policing
Sergeant Paul Williams, Chair of Cumbria Police Federation, Cumbria Constabulary

## Peer reviewers

Chief Inspector Kate Anderson, Cambridgeshire Constabulary
Inspector Paul Cumbers, Northamptonshire Police
Detective Sergeant Rob Ewin, Cumbria Constabulary
Sergeant Caroline Hay, City of London Police
Detective Superintendent Julie Henderson, Bedfordshire Police
Inspector James Hoyes, Metropolitan Police Service
Detective Sergeant Brian Kelleher, Metropolitan Police Service
Rebecca Lewis, Knowledge Exchange Manager, Sussex Police
Police Constable Bryn Walsh, Metropolitan Police Service
Andrew Whinney, Improvement and Evaluation Manager, Suffolk Constabulary
Melanie Wiffin, Senior Research Officer, Cambridgeshire Constabulary
Police Constable Jessica Wilkins, Hampshire Constabulary

For any other enquiries about the content of the document please email **contactus@college.pnn.police.uk**

College of Policing Limited
Leamington Road
Ryton-on-Dunsmore
Coventry
CV8 3EN

Contact us if you would like to be a peer reviewer or get involved by writing about your role, sharing an idea or telling us about something you have done.
**Goingequipped@college.pnn.police.uk**

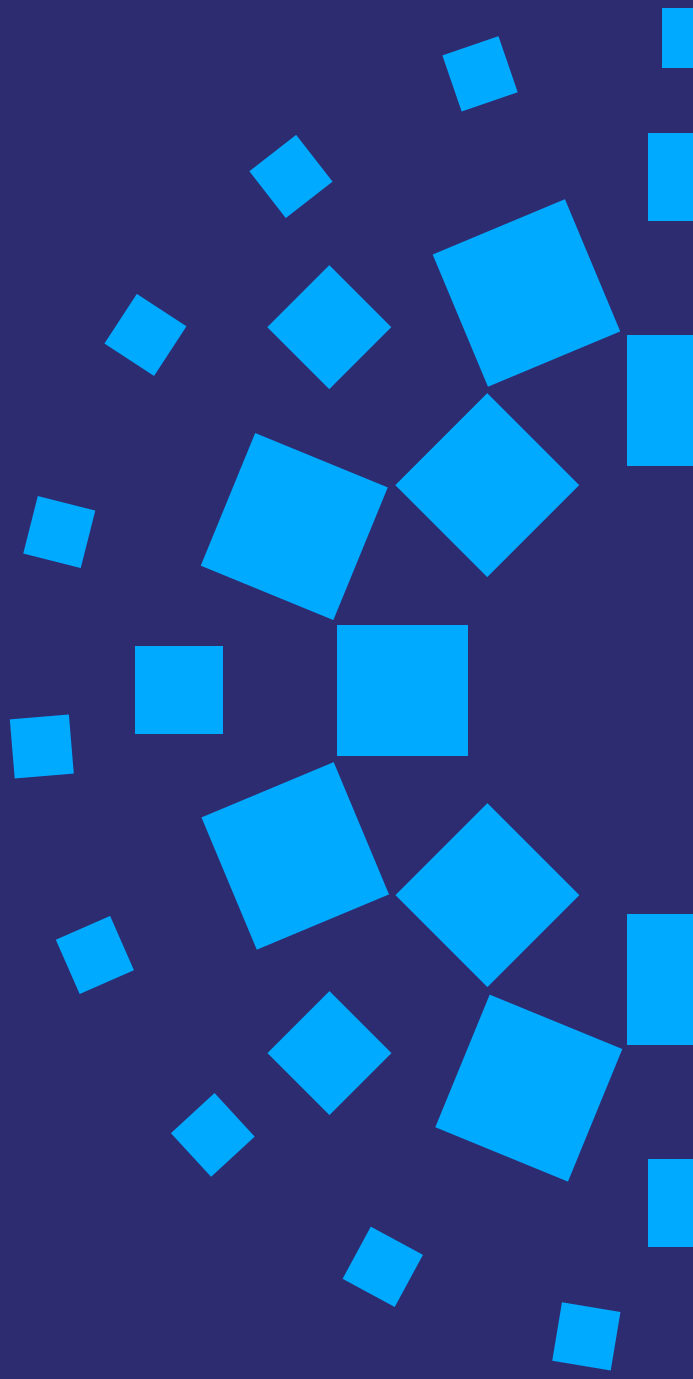
## About the College

We're the professional body for the police service in England and Wales.

Working together with everyone in policing, we share the skills and knowledge officers and staff need to prevent crime and keep people safe.

We set the standards in policing to build and preserve public trust and we help those in policing develop the expertise needed to meet the demands of today and prepare for the challenges of the future.

college.police.uk



Follow us
**@CollegeofPolice**

C134I0720