Officer Demand, Capacity and Welfare Survey
Descriptive Statistics Summary Report
ORGANISATIONAL SUPPORT: MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING
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1. FOREWORD

INTRODUCTION

In recent times policing in England and Wales has experienced unprecedented budgetary cuts, amounting to an 18% real-term reduction since 2010.[i] The impact on police officer numbers has been considerable, with a 14% fall in officer numbers over a seven-year period from a high of 143,734 in 2009,[ii] to 124,066 in 2016.[iii] Evidence from a focus group study conducted by the Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW)[iv] highlighted that these reductions may be having a negative effect on officers individual wellbeing. It was within this context that the 2016 PFEW Officer Demand, Capacity, and Welfare Survey took place.

This document is derived from the initial descriptive report[v] and provides a national summary of responses to key questions regarding **organisational support for mental health and wellbeing** from the 2016 PFEW Officer Demand, Capacity, and Welfare Survey. Where additional data are available and appropriate, the national results are benchmarked against other comparator populations such as the Armed Forces.[*]

Please be aware that the total number of responses for each item may vary slightly as not all items were answered by all respondents, in addition the actual differences between groups may be quite small and these details should be considered when interpreting the data.

RESPONSE RATES AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Survey responses were gathered on-line, over a four-week period in February 2016. All officers of federated ranks in England and Wales were eligible to participate. Analyses were conducted on a sample of 16,841 responses drawn from all 43 forces across England and Wales.[**]

14% of eligible officers completed the survey. The respondent sample was broadly representative of the overall federated officer population.[***]   Although this is lower than the response rate attained by the annual PFEW workforce survey in 2016, this may be due to the sensitive and specific nature of the survey topic.

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[*]Please note that question wording and sample sizes between populations may differ – for full details, please see Houdmont & Elliott-Davies (2016).

[**]Data were removed where the respondent indicated they were not currently a police officer or they gave implausible answers – for full exclusion criteria, please see Houdmont & Elliott-Davies (2016).

[***]Although some significant differences were observed between the survey sample and the federated ranks population, in percentage terms these differences were small, allowing for the conclusion that the respondent sample was broadly representative of the national federated officer population in terms of its socio-demographic composition – for full details, please see Houdmont & Elliott-Davies (2016).
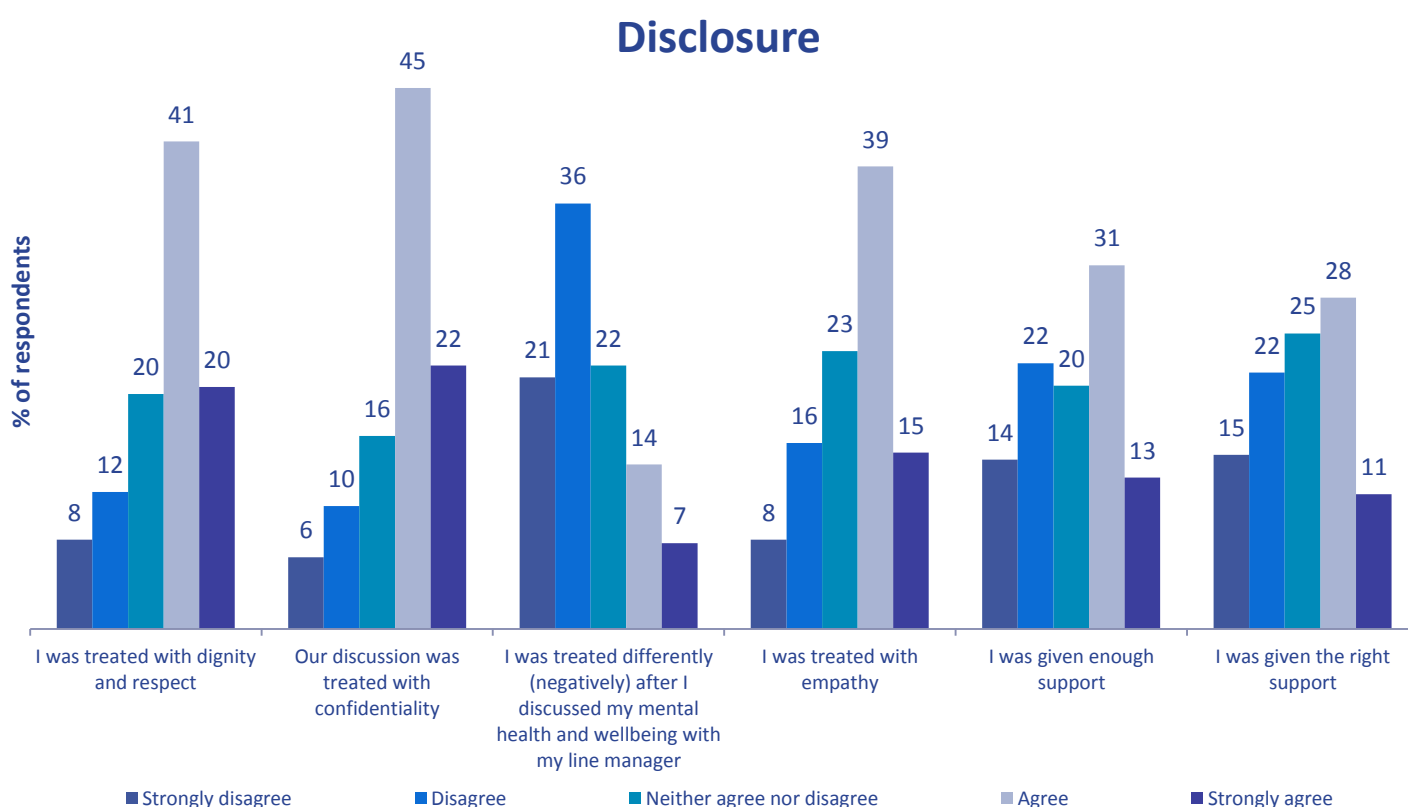
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2. ORGANISATIONAL SUPPORT: MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING

2.1. DISCLOSURE AND RESPONSE

Respondents who had reported seeking professional help regarding their mental health and wellbeing were presented with additional questions concerning disclosure and support. [*]

Just under two thirds (**63%**) of respondents who had sought professional help had informed their line manager**. Of those who had informed their line manager, **61%** felt that they were treated with dignity and respect, and **68%** felt that their discussion was treated with confidentiality.

However, **42%** of respondents reported that they were *poorly* or *very poorly* supported by the police service. Only **43%** felt that they were given enough support and **even less (39%)** felt that they had been given the *right* support.

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Of those respondents who indicated that they had decided not to disclose seeking help for mental health and wellbeing difficulties to their line manager, the most frequently cited reason was *'I did not want to be treated differently (negatively)'* (**28%**, *N*=928), followed by *'I thought it would negatively affect my opportunities for promotion and/or specialisation'* (**23%**, *N*=780).
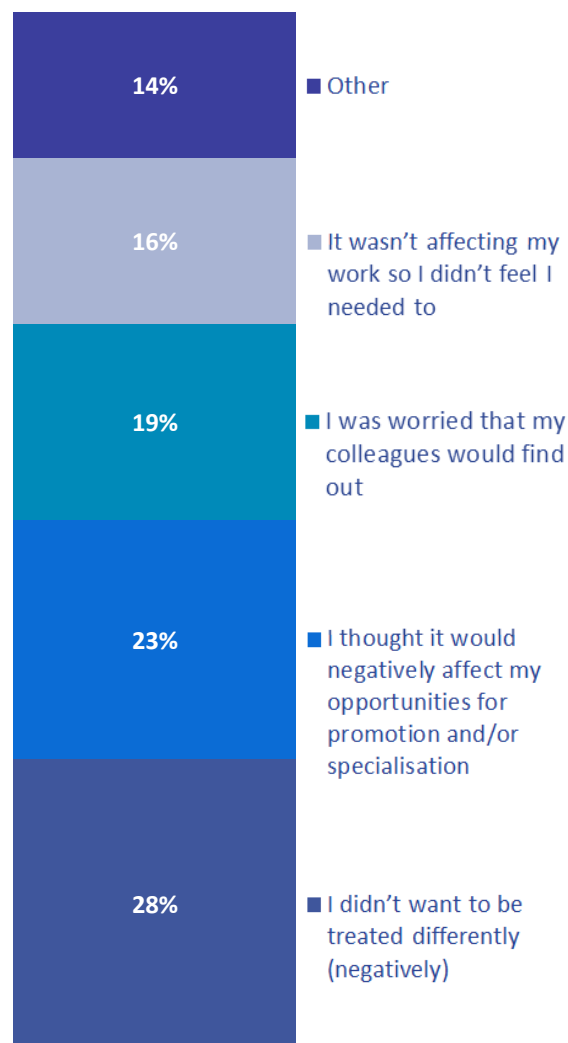
2.2. POLICE SERVICE ATTITUDES

A range of questions were asked to *all* participants in relation to attitudes towards mental health and wellbeing within the police service.

Perceptions of the attitude of the police service towards mental health and wellbeing were generally negative.

Slightly more than half (**51%**) of respondents *disagreed* or *strongly disagreed* with the statement *'The police service encourages its staff to openly talk about mental health and wellbeing,'* and **57%** of respondents indicated that they would **not** feel confident disclosing any difficulties with mental health and wellbeing to their line managers.

Reasons for non-disclosure

- 14% ■ Other
- 16% ■ It wasn't affecting my work so I didn't feel I needed to
- 19% ■ I was worried that my colleagues would find out
- 23% ■ I thought it would negatively affect my opportunities for promotion and/or specialisation
- 28% ■ I didn't want to be treated differently (negatively)

2.3. SUPPORT SERVICES

60% of respondents indicated that they were aware of mental health and wellbeing support services offered by their force, and **over five thousand** respondents (*N*=5,072) provided textual feedback with additional detail. Feedback broadly divided into four themes: appraisal of support provision; availability of support; type of provision, and; locus of support.*

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*Please see Houdmont & Elliott-Davies (2016) for more details of qualitative (textual) data.
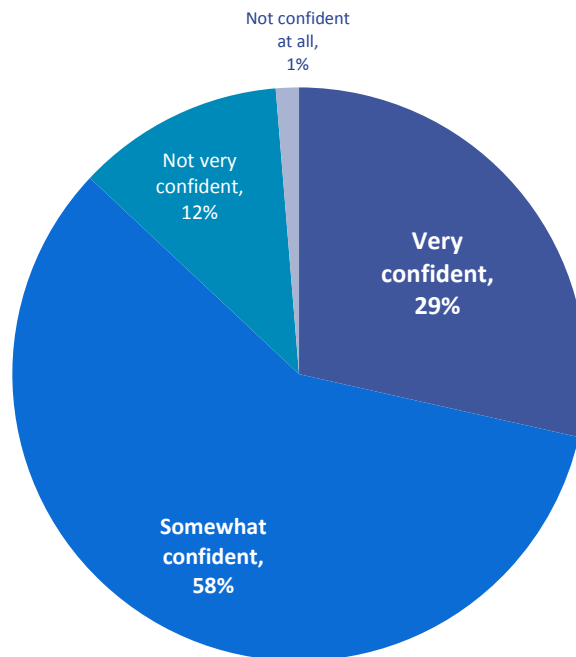
2.4. LINE MANAGEMENT

A screening question was applied to identify respondents with line management responsibility. These respondents were presented with a set of questions concerning training received to support those with mental health and wellbeing difficulties and their confidence in supporting such individuals.

Although **only 21% could remember being given training**, the vast majority (**87%**) felt *somewhat* or *very confident* in their ability to support someone they line managed if they disclosed having difficulties with their mental health or wellbeing.

Almost 500 respondents (*N*=470) also provided some textual feedback in regards to how confident they would be supporting someone with mental health and wellbeing difficulties. Feedback broadly divided into three themes: policy and practice; factors that may enhance confidence, and; factors that may inhibit confidence.*

If someone you line managed disclosed that they were experiencing problems with their mental health and wellbeing, how confident would you be in your ability to support them?

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* Please see Houdmont & Elliott-Davies (2016) for more details of qualitative (textual) data.

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[i] National Audit Office (2015). Financial Sustainability of Police Forces in England and Wales. Retrieved September 12, 2016, from https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Financial-sustainability-of-police-forces.pdf

[ii] Home Office (2010). Police Service Strength: England and Wales, 31 March 2010. Retrieved September 12, 2016, from https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/115745/hosb1410.pdf

[iii] Home Office (2016). Police Workforce, England and Wales, 31 March 2016. Statistical Bulletin 05/16. Retrieved September 12, 2016, from https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-workforce-england-and-wales-31-march-2016

[iv] Elliott-Davies, M., Donnelly, J., Boag-Munroe, F., & Van Mechelen, D. (2016). 'Getting a battering' The perceived impact of demand and capacity imbalance within the Police Service of England and Wales: A qualitative review. *The Police Journal: Theory, Practice and Principles, 89, 2*, 93-116.

[v] Houdmont, J. & Elliott-Davies, M. (2016). *Police Federation of England and Wales 2016 Officer Demand, Capacity, and Welfare Survey: Initial Report - Descriptive Results.*

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