

Demand Capacity & Welfare Survey 2020 The Officer Uplift and Sergeant Impacts January 2021

Author: Mary Elliott-Davies

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Executive Summary

- In 2019, after many years of declining officer numbers, the government announced additional funding for the recruitment of 20,000 new police officers by March 2023.
- Similar to the findings in the recent PFEW Pay and Moral Survey, approximately a third (32%) of respondents believed their force will be able to recruit the number of officers allocated as part of the officer uplift programme.
- Almost half of respondents (49%), however, do not believe their force will have enough Sergeants/line managers to supervise all of the new officers it recruits.
- On average, Sergeants reported being responsible for eight officers during a typical shift.
- 32% of Sergeants expected the average number of Constables they are responsible for during a typical shift to *increase* due to the uplift programme; with over half of these respondents also indicating that it is *unlikely* or *extremely unlikely* that they will have enough time and resources to manage this increase in their shift management responsibilities (54%).
- On average, Sergeants reported having line management responsibilities for six officers.
- Similar to the results in relation to shift management, 31% of Sergeants expected the average number of Constables they have direct line management responsibilities for to *increase* due to the uplift programme; with over half of these respondents also indicating that it is *unlikely* or *extremely unlikely* that they will have enough time and resources to manage the increase in line management responsibilities (55%).
- Over a thousand Sergeants left comments in an open-text box to tell us about the impact that the officer uplift programme might have on their rank in particular. Many comments indicated that inadequate training for the new recruits had led to additional burdens being placed on Sergeants and Tutor Constables, and some Sergeants highlighted that the sudden influx of inexperienced officers could also pose a risk to officer safety. Comments left by respondents also raised issues with limited resources (such as a lack of facilities, equipment and space for the new recruits to use), whilst others used the opportunity to raise concerns over the general impact of the officer uplift on Sergeant workloads and the negative consequences that this could have on their wellbeing.

Introduction

The PFEW Demand, Capacity and Welfare Survey is a biennial survey that was launched in 2016 in response to unprecedented budgetary cuts and a 14% fall in officer numbers over the previous seven years.¹ Though officer strength has increased slightly between 2018 and 2020, the total number of officers in England and Wales is still far below those recorded before the austerity programme was initiated in 2010. Further, although officer strength has increased slightly, it can take time before new recruits are able to police independently. As the findings below demonstrate, anticipated improvements that may ultimately result from increasing the numbers are not yet fully realised.

This is the third iteration of the Demand, Capacity and Welfare Survey, and this report provides a summary of key findings in relation to the officer uplift programme, and the impact this may have on Sergeants in particular.

The survey was open between the 5th of October and the 23rd November 2020; receiving 12,471 viable responses after data cleaning.²

The response rate for Demand, Capacity and Welfare Survey 2020 was approximately 10% of all federated rank officers in England and Wales.³

This year, 32% of respondents identified as female, 63% identified as male, and 5% indicated that they would prefer not to say or identified in another way. The average age of respondents was 42 years old. The majority of respondents were Constables (71%), 20% of respondents were at the rank of Sergeant, and 9% of responses were from those in Inspecting ranks. Further details on respondent demographics can also be found within the Technical Annex which is available on the PFEW website.

This report begins by presenting officer views on whether their force will be able to recruit and manage enough officers to meet their allocated uplift targets and will then explore the impacts that these officer uplifts might have on Sergeants in particular.

¹ Home Office. (2020). *Police Workforce, England and Wales, 31 March 2020: data tables* [Dataset]. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-workforce-england-and-wales-31-march-2020>

² Data were removed where the respondent gave implausible answers: e.g. Length of time in role exceeded length of service etc. For more information, please see the 2020 Demand, Capacity and Welfare Survey Technical Annex, which can be downloaded from the PFEW website.

³ For information on the respondents, representativeness (including margins of error) and data weighting, please see the 2020 Demand, Capacity and Welfare Survey Technical Annex, which can be downloaded from the PFEW website.

Results

Officer uplift

In 2019, after many years of declining officer numbers, the government announced additional funding for the recruitment of 20,000 new police officers by March 2023 to help redress the imbalance between policing demand and capacity.⁴

As such, the Demand, Capacity and Welfare Survey asked officers whether their force would be able to recruit the number of officers they have been allocated for the uplift, and whether their force will have enough Sergeants/line managers to supervise all of the new officers it recruits.

Similar to the findings from the 2020 PFEW Pay and Morale Survey,⁵ respondents were somewhat ambivalent about whether their force would be able to recruit the number of officers they have been allocated for the uplift; 26% of respondents did not feel that their force would be able to recruit the number of officers allocated for uplift, compared to 32% of officers who said that their force would be able to recruit the number of officers (please see Table 1).

Table 1: My force will be able to recruit the number of officers they have been allocated for the uplift	% of respondents
Disagree	26%
Neither agree nor disagree	42%
Agree	32%

The results regarding the second question, however, were much more definitive; with almost half of respondents (49%) indicating that they do not believe their force will have enough Sergeants/line managers to supervise all of the new officers it recruits, compared to only 15% who indicated believing that their force would have enough Sergeants/line managers (please see Table 2).

⁴Home Office. (2019). *National campaign to recruit 20,000 police officers launches today*. Government website. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/national-campaign-to-recruit-20000-police-officers-launches-today>

⁵ Chandler. N. (2020). *Pay and Morale Survey 2020 – Officer Uplift Report November 2020* [Report R074/2020]. Available from the PFEW survey Hub: <https://www.polfed.org/resources/survey-hub/>

Table 2: My force will have enough Sergeants/line managers to supervise all of the new officers it recruits	% of respondents
Disagree	49%
Neither agree nor disagree	36%
Agree	15%

Impact on Sergeants

Given the potential impact of the uplift programme we asked Sergeants a series of questions about the number of officers they are responsible for. The first group of questions were in relation to the number of officers that the respondent was responsible for *during a typical shift*, whilst the other was in relation to the number of officers that the respondent had *direct line management responsibilities* for.

Shift management

Sergeants were asked to indicate how many Constables, on average, they are usually responsible for *during a typical shift*; with the average (trimmed mean)⁶ being eight officers. However, it must be noted that the range was extremely broad, with a few Sergeants reporting responsibility for much larger numbers (e.g. 20 officers or more).

Moreover, 32% of Sergeants expected the average number of Constables they are responsible for during a typical shift to *increase* due to the uplift programme; with over half of these respondents also indicating that it is *unlikely* or *extremely unlikely* that they will have enough time and resources to manage this increase in their shift management responsibilities (54%).

Line management

Sergeants were asked to indicate how many Constables, on average, they have *direct line management responsibilities* for; with the average (trimmed mean) being six officers. However, it must be noted that the range was extremely broad with a few Sergeants reporting line management responsibilities for a much larger number of officers (e.g. 20 officers or more).

Similar to the results in relation to shift management, 31% of Sergeants expected the average number of Constables they have direct line management responsibilities for to *increase* due to the uplift programme; with over half of these respondents also indicating that it is *unlikely*

⁶ The mean after removing the top and bottom 5% of responses to reduce the likelihood of outliers skewing the result. This is only provided for questions which required a numerical response and where no upper or lower limits were imposed by the researchers and to control for outliers.

or *extremely unlikely* that they will have enough time and resources to manage the increase in line management responsibilities (55%).

However, it is also important to note, that the qualitative data from the 2020 PFEW Demand, Capacity and Welfare Survey also highlighted that Sergeants may not only be responsible for the management of other officers, but civilian staff too:

- *“The uplift has already hit us. We have taken on many more recruits but no more supervisors. I have been responsible for over 100 staff and new recruits that report directly to me.”*
Sergeant, 15 years’ service
- *“I don’t manage any officers but manage 13 support staff”*
Sergeant, 11 years’ service
- *“I have 6 civilian staff for whom I have direct first line management.”*
Sergeant, 28 years’ service

Other impacts

Given the potential impact that the officer uplift programme might have on Sergeants in particular, we gave Sergeants the opportunity to tell us about any other impacts that the officer uplift might have on their rank via an open-text box. Over a thousand Sergeants left a response, with many highlighting negative impacts on Sergeant to Constable ratios, as well as the additional pressures being placed on Sergeants (and tutor Constables) by an influx of new and inexperienced officers combined with inadequate training and mentoring opportunities:

- *“A larger number of inexperienced PC’s [Police Constables] on response groups will put extra pressure on PS’s [Police Sergeants] as they will have reduced numbers of Officers to deal with incidents as experienced PC’s will be busy tutoring the uplift officers.”*
Sergeant, 19 years’ service
- *“A few years ago, Response Sergeants were a 1:7 ratio, now they’re 1:10, this will only increase with the uplift. There will need to be more sergeants as 1:10 is already too many.”*
Sergeant, 11 years’ service
- *“A greater demand on Sergeants to act as development officers for young in-service PCs [Police Constables]. My team has gone from being 30% student officers a year ago to 60% now. There are less PCs around with experience and the officers coming through are*

receiving less initial training meaning there is an ever-increasing demand on supervisors to fill this gap in training and experience.”

Sergeant, 14 years’ service

- *“Additional officers will assist, however there are insufficient tutor constable and insufficient experienced constables to provide adequate mentoring and training - therefore the supervisor needs to perform this function as well.”*

Sergeant, 19 years’ service

- *“Due to poor training, no training schools and lack of interest or standards, I can see a tremendous impact for core policing Sergeants coming.”*

Sergeant, 25 years’ service

In addition, several respondents highlighted that the current health crisis was exacerbating the issues with training:

- *“Due to the current COVID restrictions most of the students are taught via Skype and arrive on shift with much less training than those last year.”*

Sergeant, 20 years’ service

- *“Training in the [Force redacted] has been poor for years, with the current COVID issues it is woeful. We are being given people who are (generally) willing but unprepared. Due to people with any experience fleeing for specialisms or leaving the job the new people are being trained by the more experienced probationers.”*

Sergeant, 7 years’ service

- *“We don't have the time to train and mentor new officers. Their foundation training is not good enough, even worse now with COVID. Probationers are left to train other probationers. We can't effectively supervise the officers we already have.”*

Sergeant, 7 years’ service

Sergeants were not only concerned with the impact that inadequate training had on their workloads, however, as comments also raised concerns over officer safety and increased risk due to a lack of experience and knowledge:

- *“Current new officers joining my teams have very little training - e.g. 1 hour’s total ELS [Emergency life support] training, lack of knowledge of law and procedures leading to numerous near misses and requiring intensive close supervision”*

Sergeant, 21 years’ service

- *“Trying to find suitable tutor constables is a real issue. Currently 75% of my shift have less than 3 years’ service. It is not safe or healthy to have such inexperience.”*
Sergeant, 35 years’ service
- *“The sheer number of students coming through on attachment. We work on the fast roads and they have no training. Some days I have more students than I do green drivers. This is dangerous.”*
Sergeant, 24 years’ service
- *“There are so many probationers that come into custody with prisoners and they don't have the support of an experienced officer. It raises risk in custody”*
Sergeant, 22 years’ service

In addition to training issues, many respondents also spoke about the general impact on their workloads and the negative consequences of this on their own welfare:

- *“The uplift of new officers needed a raft of measures to support it, especially from our training dept; there have been none. This additional workload may break some of my fellow supervisors, or they will stop giving a damn”*
Sergeant, 18 years’ service
- *“Additional PDR'S. Additional welfare issues. Additional paperwork around variable shift pattern. Additional supervision of crime reports, searches, airspace etc. Additional work around duty changes.”*
Sergeant, 19 years’ service
- *“Increased workload, increased welfare to manage, additional stress”*
Sergeant, 15 years’ service
- *“Already overstretched workload will get busier. No time for welfare and more Sergeants off sick through stress”*
Sergeant, 11 years’ service
- *“I will be less able to complete my tasks to a good standard. Supervision will suffer. The main concern is that welfare of myself and my teams will suffer, ultimately increasing stress/sickness and lower performance”*
Sergeant, 10 years’ service

Other issues raised through the comments were in regard to a lack of facilities, equipment and space for the new recruits to use:

- *“Greater demand on IT”*
Sergeant, 28 years’ service
- *“Not enough vehicles, lockers or space in the station to accommodate them”*
Sergeant, 16 years’ service
- *“Lack of resources/tools to work and qualified staff. This has been a constant theme for the last few years”*
Sergeant, 18 years’ service
- *“Lack of space to house new recruits in light of the force selling and closing a number of stations and police buildings.”*
Sergeant, 20 years’ service
- *“Lack of vehicles for new officers and existing.”*
Sergeant, 26 years’ service

However, it is also important to note that many Sergeants did not anticipate an increase in the number of officers in their own teams and/or units; with many highlighting that this was either due to regular turnover, or because they work within a specialism which requires additional training and experience:

- *“Had no impact at all we are still 20% under strength.”*
Sergeant, 32 years’ service
- *“I do not believe uplift will increase numbers due to those leaving for various reasons (retirement/resignation, etc. Etc.)”*
Sergeant, 27 years’ service
- *“It won't have any impact whatsoever as we are losing at least the same amount of officers through natural wastage or leaving for other reasons. I am in a specialist detective function and even if police numbers go up in real terms it won't filter through to my area of work for some years.”*
Sergeant, 20 years’ service

- *“Don't believe this will have any as none are allocated to the neighbourhood policing team as yet.”*
Sergeant, 20 years' service

Regardless of the issues identified above, some Sergeants were still keen to highlight the importance of the uplift and the positive effects they hope it will bring:

- *“Additional officers will assist in the spread of workload amongst teams.”*
Sergeant, 20 years' service
- *“Hopefully the impact will have a positive impact and provide more PCs where it is needed. The fact that a PS [Police Sergeant] may have more to supervise can only be good.”*
Sergeant, 20 years' service
- *“Extra resources will allow us to better manage the demand without placing existing officers under more stress.”*
Sergeant, 14 years' service

Appendix A

Further information on this survey can be found in the 2020 Demand, Capacity and Welfare's Technical Annex, including:

- Background and context
- Content overview
- Distribution of the survey
- Details of respondents, response rates and representativeness
- Demographics
- Analytical approach
- Weighting
- Grouping and aggregation of response options
- Benchmarking
- Uses of the survey data

The Technical Annex for the 2020 Demand, Capacity and Welfare Survey can be found here:
<https://www.polfed.org/support/demand-capacity-welfare/>.