



Safe Crewing Policy

2021
Version 1

Policy Refresh
Policy Department, PFEW

The PFEW Policy Department has embarked on a concerted effort to formulate and/or revise policy documents, titled "Policy Refresh", on key topics concerning its members.

These strategic documents are evidence-based, aligned with PFEW's Business Areas, as well as championed by National Board members.

It is aimed for PFEW to maintain clear policy positions on key topics, that allows members to have clarity on PFEW's official position statements that are backed by evidence.

This project was initiated in the first quarter of 2021 and we welcome your comments or questions. Please direct your email to: Nameerah.Hameed@polfed.org and Gemma.Lofts@polfed.org



SAFE CREWING POLICY

Version 1

Policy Principles / Rationale

Representing the wishes of the membership, a new policy is required to ensure that officers' physical and mental health needs are prioritized. In many forces the current default crewing mode appears to be single crewing. This is of serious concern to the PFEW, as we believe that the default position of single crewing officers in the name of visibility and public perception is having a negative effect on the welfare and wellbeing of its' members.

Not only this, we believe this also effects retention and development of younger in-service officers, the majority of who populate our front-line roles. We also believe that driving for long hours while dealing with complex and difficult situations leads to fatigue and put simply, is dangerous. We also believe that a default position of single crewing officers is likely to represent a false economy due to the financial impacts of the human costs associated with the practice (such as increased officer assault). Instead of crewing practices being driven by response targets or visibility, the PFEW advocates that the Health, Safety and Wellbeing of officers should be the primary focus for any Chief Constable in their decision to deploy officers either in the crewing of Police vehicles, cycles or on foot Patrol.

This policy was developed in response to the concerns raised by the Police Federation of England & Wales (PFEW) Health and Safety leads.

Policy Statement

PFEW believes that the default position of single crewing officers in the name of visibility and public perception is having a considerable effect on the welfare and wellbeing of its' members.

PFEW believes that it is not in the best interests of the officer or the organisation to have a default position of being single-crewed, rather that the line manager responsible for deployments should be allowed to make their decision based on the following, in order of prioritisation:

- officer welfare,
- threat to harm and risk posed,
- current demand,
- officer development.

PFEW would like to see the needs of the officer put first and for front-line managers to be given the freedom to make decisions based on the suggested metrics above.

PFEW will work with Forces and key stakeholders to provide guidance and feedback on constructing a suitable risk assessment process to aid front line supervisors when considering deployments.

We believe that by putting the officer first in the decision-making process, it will:

- increase officers' morale for them to be able to collaborate over problems faced during a shift which will assist in their personal development,
- identify welfare issues sooner,
- provide the line manager with the opportunity to partner up a vulnerable officer,
- make officers feel safer attending violent situations,
- allow officers to be more productive working as a team.

Evidence

Single crewing appears to be fairly common within the Police Service of England and Wales, with 75% of respondents to the PFEW's 2018 Demand, Capacity and Welfare Survey¹ reporting that they were frequently single-crewed (i.e. reporting that they were '*often*' or '*always*' single-crewed). The role with the largest proportion of the officers reporting that they were frequently single-crewed was Response (83%), followed by Neighbourhood policing (73%), then Roads policing and Criminal Justice (both 75%).

The most recently published UK-based evidence indicates that officers that are frequently single-crewed also report higher rates of violent victimisation from the public.²

Results from the 2018 PFEW Demand, Capacity and Welfare Survey³ also indicated that significantly larger proportions of officers who are frequently single-crewed report lower job satisfaction, higher workloads, and higher levels of job-related stress than their colleagues that are not.

In addition, new evidence produced by the College of Policing as part of the officer safety review commissioned by the National Police Chiefs' Council indicates that the odds of officers being assaulted and/or

¹ Elliott-Davies, M. (2019). PFEW Demand, Capacity and Welfare Survey 2018: Headline Statistics December 2018 (Report: R101/2018). The Police Federation of England and Wales. <https://www.polfed.org/media/14060/demandcapacityandwelfaresurveyheadlinestatistics2018-06-02-19-v1.pdf>

² Houdmont, J., Elliott-Davies, M., & Donnelly, J. (2019). Single crewing in English and Welsh policing: frequency and associations with violence towards and injuries in officers. *Policing and Society*, 29(7), 820-833. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2017.1417990>

³ Elliott-Davies, M. (2020). Single Crewing: Brief Evidence Review March 2020 [R011/2020].

injured were increased when they were single-crewed (compared to when they were crewed with another officer who did not use force); as were the odds of the officers drawing and physically using equipment or weapons, and going ‘hands-on.’⁴

Although there is undoubtedly a role in policing for both single and double crewing, the needs of the service should not be met at the expense of the health and wellbeing of the officers themselves.

Detailed Evidence attached as [Annex 1](#).

Objectives of this Policy

- To ensure our members are crewed in a safe and effective manner, with the primary focus being on the members’ welfare, wellbeing and professional development.
- For Chief Officers to accept responsibility that members may face increased levels of anxiety, stress, social isolation and loneliness as a result of single crewing.
- For safer crewing responsibilities to be devolved to local supervisors to implement and consider safer crewing opportunities within their team and patrol strategies.
- To ensure obligations under Health and Safety are met.
- To be able to inform and assist branches in local discussions to promote change from default single-crewing to safer crewing.

Background

i) Legal and Regulatory Context (Best Practice)

Chief Constables have a responsibility for all aspects of the *Health and Safety at Work Act 1974*, and the continual exercising of their duty of care as an Employer including the maintenance of a safe system of work. This also includes the Management of Health and Safety at Work Act 1999 and the Police (Health and Safety) Act 1997 for maintaining safe systems of work, by which all staff are required to co-operate and support the application of this legislation in the workplace.

Single crewing does not fit with best practice for many incidents, especially if they are high risk for e.g. domestic violence and incidents where ‘stay safe’ warnings are applied. In these instances, two officers are required as a minimum in order to employ ‘contact and cover’ procedures.

ii) Political Context

⁴ Quinton, P., Dymond, A., Boyd, K., & Teers, R. (2020). Police use of force: Tactics, assaults and safety. Retrieved from: https://whatworks.college.police.uk/Research/Documents/Use_of_force_report.pdf

The recent *Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill* contains elements in line with the views of PFEW, Specials Membership, Driver Protections, the Covenant etc. This indicates that politically there is a will to recognise some of the issues in the workplace for PFEW members.

iii) Economic/Funding Context

The 20,000 Police Uplift Programme has significant funding.

Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to all Police officers.

Key Stakeholders

- [The National Police Chiefs' Council \(NPCC\)](#)
- [The Association of Police and Crime Commissioners \(APCC\)](#)
- [Home Office, UK Government](#)
- [PFEW Membership](#)
- Local Branch Chairs and Secretaries
- [Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire Service \(HMICFRS\)](#)
- [College of Policing](#)
- [Police Superintendents' Association \(PSA\)](#)

This is not an exhaustive list.

Policy Review

Recommend to review every 2 years.

Policy Document – Versions

Version 1	Drafted by PFEW Policy Department with supporting evidence from Research Department	Policy Approved on 16/06/2021	Policy to be revised in 06/2023
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Approved by National Board on 16/06/2021

ANNEX 1:

EVIDENCE SUMMARY

In early 2020, the PFEW Research and Policy department produced a briefing on the impacts of single crewing to support the ongoing work by the Health and Safety Committee and the Operational Policing Committee (*Single Crewing: Brief Evidence Review March 2020 [R011/2020]*). Key points from the report can be found below and the corresponding evidence tables are on pages 7 to 9:⁵

- Single crewing appears to be fairly common within the Police Service of England and Wales, with larger proportions of officers within *Response* roles reporting frequent single crewing, followed by *Neighbourhood policing*, and then *Roads policing* and *Criminal justice*.
- Although the merits and demerits of single crewing has long since been a topic of hot debate within the policing sector, the available evidence is fairly sparse, often dated, and often only examines the outcomes in very specific circumstances or contexts.
- Existing evidence can be grouped into three key categories relating to the impacts of single crewing; i) officers impacts ([see page 7 for corresponding evidence](#)), ii) service impacts ([see page 8 for corresponding evidence](#)), and iii) the public impact ([see page 9 for corresponding evidence](#)).
- Much of the existing evidence concentrates on outcomes relating to performance, such as: response times, on-site capture rates, incident clean-up rates, and ability to engage with modern tech resolutions. Although the results of these studies are not entirely congruent, there is some evidence to suggest that single crewing might be beneficial in a few specific situations if systems are in place to support the management of resources.
- Officer safety is another focal point of the extant literature, with the resulting evidence being largely inconclusive due to incongruent findings. However, the most recently published UK-based evidence indicates that officers that are frequently single-crewed also report higher rates of violent victimisation from the public.
- Bespoke analysis was conducted using data from the 2018 PFEW Demand, Capacity and Welfare Survey. Results indicated that significantly larger proportions of officers who are frequently single-crewed report lower job satisfaction, higher workloads, and higher levels of job-related stress than their colleagues that are not.

In addition, new evidence has emerged since the briefing (referred to above) was completed. This new evidence has been produced by the College of Policing as part of the officer safety review commissioned by the National Police Chiefs' Council. Results indicated that the odds of officers being assaulted and/or injured were increased when they were single-crewed (compared to when they were crewed with another officer who did not use force)⁶; as were the odds of the officers drawing and physically using equipment or weapons, and going 'hands-on.'⁷

Although there is undoubtedly a role in policing for both single and double crewing, the needs of the service should not be met at the expense of the health and wellbeing of the officers themselves.

⁵ For more information see the Report R011/2020 in full: <https://www.polfed.org/media/16824/singlecrewingreport-27-03-20-v2.pdf>

⁶ Officer And Staff Safety Review 2020, published by the National Police Chiefs' Council and the College of Policing: <https://news.npcc.police.uk/resources/cop-npcc-officer-staff-safety-review-010920>

⁷ Quinton, P., Dymond, A., Boyd, K., & Teers, R. (2020). Police use of force: Tactics, assaults and safety. Retrieved from: https://whatworks.college.police.uk/Research/Documents/Use_of_force_report.pdf

Evidence tables from Report R011/2020

1. Officer Impacts		
Safety	Preference	Wellbeing and Work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • According to the UK Health and Safety Executive, lone working increases the vulnerability of workers (Health and Safety Executive, n.d.). • A recent UK study showed that officers that were single-crewed more frequently also experienced a range of violent victimisation more frequently (Houdmont, Elliott-Davies & Donnelly, 2019). • An American study in the 1990s found that although the likelihood of being assaulted was no higher for single-crewed officers, the likelihood of sustaining injury during an assault was statistically higher for those patrolling alone compared with those patrolling in pairs (Wilson, Brunk & Meyer, 1990). This might indicate that although the rates of assault may appear similar, the severity of injury could be greater for those officers working alone. • Australian research has shown that two officers were likely to resolve conflict in a more confrontational manner (i.e., arrest rather than warning) and experience increased resistance from the public – and perhaps by implication an increased likelihood of assault or injury – associated with the two as opposed to one-officer patrol mode (Wilson and Brewer 1993; 2001). • An American study by Decker and Wagner in 1982 found no significant difference between one- and two-officer units’ likelihood of injury when responding to incidents. • An older study found that single-crewed units had less involvement in incidents of resisting arrest, and equal involvement in office assaults, injuries, and vehicle accidents (Boydston et al. 1977). • Although some evidence suggests that single-crewed officers are no more at risk than their double-crewed counterparts, it is possible that the absence of a notable increase in risk may in fact reflect greater prudence and restraint on the part of the lone officer (Decker and Wagner 1982; Elliott-Davies et al. 2016). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Officers from Thames Valley were surveyed in 1992 with the findings overwhelmingly in favour of 24-hour double crewing (although officers with ten or more years’ service were less dogmatic about double crewing: Bailey, 1992 as cited in Bailey, 2008). • Australian research has identified that officers have a clear preference for two person patrols. However, some officers also indicated a number of tasks that might be considered appropriate for single person patrols (Brewer & Karp 1991 as cited in Anderson & Dossetor, 2012). • Results from the 2018 PFEW Demand, Capacity and Welfare Survey indicated that 76% of respondents (who reported that single-crewing was applicable to their role) reported that they want more access to double crewing than they currently have (Elliott-Davies, 2019b) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% of officers that reported being frequently single-crewed also felt that their jobs were very or extremely stressful; 15 percentage points higher than their colleagues who did not report being frequently single-crewed (bespoke analysis for this report). • 62% of officers that reported being frequently single-crewed also reported low job satisfaction; 11 percentage points higher than their colleagues who did not report being frequently single-crewed (bespoke analysis for this report). • 81% of officers that reported being frequently single-crewed also reported that their workloads were too high or much too high; 21 percentage points higher than their colleagues who did not report being frequently single-crewed (bespoke analysis for this report).

2. Service Impacts

Efficiency	Cost-Effectiveness	Judgment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patrol modelling in the UK has previously suggested that switching all double-crewed units to single officer units would increase on-scene captures at in-progress burglaries from 10% to 21%, by reducing the number of incidents and area covered per patrol (Coupe and Blake 2005). • An older study found that single-crewed patrols typically travelled more quickly to incidents and emergencies (Chelst 1981) but that without an automatic vehicle monitoring system a switch to a single-crewed patrol would most likely have mixed results; with shorter average travel times for the first-arriving officer and longer travel times for the second-arriving officer (Chelst 1981). • Green & Kolesar (1984) found that an equivalent level of response time could be achieved with significantly fewer police officers through single-crewing – but they had not examined whether or not a dangerous incident would suffer a staging delay (i.e. the delay between deploying the first single-crewed officer and the second single-crewed officer). • Another American study found that two one-officer cars are faster than one two-officer car. Although, the reasons for this were not apparent, they theorised that pressure among officers may provide different incentives for rapid response in one- and two-officer cars (Kessler, 1985). • Although some studies have found that a single-crewed unit may arrive at an incident faster than a double-crewed unit, single-crewed officers may be reluctant to engage in violent incidents until ‘back-up’ has arrived (Elliott-Davies et al. 2016) • Del Carmen & Guevara (2003) found that more could be observed by double-crewed units, and that officers disagreed that more could be accomplished by two single-crewed units. • A study from the 70s found that single-crewed units took longer to deal with incidents, and serviced fewer calls alone (Boydstun et al. 1977). • The use of some modern tech solutions, such as the Mobile Data Terminal, whilst single-crewed appears to be impractical (Lindsay, Cooke, & Jackson, 2009). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An American study in 1977 found that single-crewed units produced equivalent amounts of officer-initiated activity and at substantially lower cost (Boydstun et al. 1977) • However, these cost-savings may be a false economy, especially if single crewing places officer’s health and wellbeing at higher risk (and thus lead to sickness, burnout, resignation etc). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highways England produced a report in 2011, which found that single-crewed traffic officers were more likely to score lower in relation to judgement and compliance to operational guidelines when driving than their double-crewed counterparts (Highways Agency, 2011).

3. Public Impacts	
Visibility	Approachability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any increase in patrol frequency will impact upon police patrol visibility, and it can therefore be argued that one-officer patrols serve a greater deterrent role than two-officer patrols. However, such an interpretation is probably more a statistical than a behavioural reality. Kaplan (1979) argued that, since absolute visibility is generally very small, even if the percentage increase in visibility that they found was large, the actual visibility still may be too low to serve a deterrent function. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Officers patrolling alone were approached significantly more often when patrolling alone than when 'paired' (McKenzie and Whitehouse 1995).