



ACPO and ACPOS Women's Forum

Response to the Review of Remuneration & Conditions of Service for Police Officers and Staff

The ACPO/ACPOS Women's Forum meets through out the year to discuss and enhance the positive experiences of women working within chief officer teams and the provision of policing services to women within our communities. It also seeks to enhance and manage the skills and talents that women in the police service possess, thereby assisting progression to higher ranks and grades. Much of its work is not gender specific and benefits both the Service and those requiring or accessing our services. There are around seventy members of the Forum – both police staff and police officers.

As members of chief officer teams, we have had an opportunity to provide general feedback to the Home Office paper via the formal response from the Association of Chief Police Officers. This response focuses on issues pertinent to women. The Chair and individual members of the Forum are able discuss these points further if required and this can be arranged via the contact details on the accompanying email.

Entry Routes & Deployment

There are differing views relating to how officers start their policing career and there is not a universally shared position. The viewpoints include:

- All officers should continue to start as Constables. A national selection test could be administered at regional centres which are also used as regional police training establishments. Advertising for recruitment should be focused on all parts of the community, particularly the hard to reach. When an applicant achieves a 'pass' they should apply for a preferred Force with a second choice in a similar way to applicants for University. This would require some form of centralized co-ordination matching vacancies to applicants. This process could then potentially be repeated for promotion processes or some specialist posts.
- Multiple entry posts - The service is becoming dangerously close to going back in time in terms of gender and race and this could potentially be averted by looking at multiple entry posts in a similar way to the military to encourage 'high flying' women and individuals from minorities to enter the system. This could be combined with multiple exit posts i.e. service bands like the military 3/7/22 years etc.

Relating to the deployment of officers a greater emphasis needs to be placed on the needs of the community and the frequency/timing of "calls for service". Work life balance is important but the community must come first. Shift patterns must be modelled around demand with inbuilt flexibility to enable a wide range of individuals to work for us within communities. That said, it is only right and proper officers are given adequate notice of the tours of duty they are required to work. Often they need to fit in with their partner's work patterns which may be outside of the Police Service and have responsibility for planning child/adult care. A national work force planning model would be very beneficial for Forces, in particular one model for determining appropriate shift patterns, demand management processes etc.

All staff should have reasonable notice of the tour of duty and day they are to work. When this has to be changed at very short notice then there should be some sort of recompense. Policing needs to become more flexible in its approach to keeping the skills acquired of those members of staff who need to balance their work with life commitments such as raising a family or looking after relatives. Compressed and annualised hours need further exploration as does a similar system to the "nursing bank" and "supply teacher" system, particularly given the increasing numbers of serving women officers who frequently bear the greater amount of caring responsibilities.

The issue of mutual aid and the Hertfordshire agreement may appear mercenary on face value, but officers who are deployed away from their home Forces, living in poor conditions with little privacy need recognition. Requirements to work away from home have a significant impact on those with caring responsibilities and again this is more likely to have a disproportionate impact upon women.

Currently there are difficulties and dilemmas that people are facing with promotions at Senior Management levels meaning moves to another force. The provision of a relocation package should be offered as standard terms & conditions and this could be set on a national scale rather than down to the decisions of individual Police Authorities.

Specifically, relating to ACPO Officers it is the current rule that an ACPO officer has to leave their current force for a period of two years before taking on a third ACPO promotion in the same force. It is difficult to see the legitimacy of this rule and it could be seen as a disadvantage to senior female officers as moving to another force is not always an option. The likelihood of having caring responsibilities for teenage children during important examination years is likely to affect officers in relocating to other forces to adhere to the rule.

Pay Progression and Length of Service

The introduction of fitness testing is complex and fraught with pitfalls although it could be gradually introduced. There would be concern about what would happen to the individual if they failed the testing for health reasons, as the reasons could be many and varied. In relation to this point, it is an important factor to raise that there is a significant potential to discriminate against female officers with pre-post maternity issues or the menopause.

Exit Routes & Pensions

The reduction from full police pay to Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) is significant for a police officer and as a consequence the take up rate for extended maternity leave as per the statutory provisions is not high. A consideration would be to raise the extension of the police occupational maternity pay to provide full payment for 13 weeks and extended payment at half rate for 13 weeks. This could reduce the number of officers that report sick as officers would be more encouraged to utilise the extended maternity scheme than report sick, they would have more time to recover from child birth and be ready to return to the full range of duties and shift patterns at the end of 26 weeks. (The full evidence base for this proposal has been submitted by the PSNI to the Review in a separate submission).

Further work relating to the disparity between ill health pensions between male and female is an area which may be relevant and a consideration.

Relating to the provision to 'buy back' pension contributions when a female officer or member of staff has been on maternity leave or a career break, there could be a more empathetic approach to female employees.