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To Stay or Go? A Study of Police Officer Turnover Data and the Drivers

behind the decision to remain in or leave the Police Service

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Section 6 – Recommend Policing as a career to others

Title: To Stay or Go? A Study of Police Officer Turnover and the Drivers behind the decision to remain in or leave the Police Service

1.1 Abstract

The main aim of this paper was to explore changing police officer turnover patterns within the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), as well as to gain a broader understanding as to the motivations behind remaining in service or taking the decision to resign voluntarily. A quantitative approach was taken to assist with the understanding and interpretation of turnover data, with the results being interpreted in light of previous literature with an emphasis on the influence of demographic factors. The results indicated that the MPS has seen a slighter higher than average voluntary turnover rate in the last three years compare to other Police Forces across England and Wales. Overall voluntarily turnover has increased, with female turnover significantly higher than male turnover, BME turnover has increased but this is not significantly higher than the average voluntarily turnover rate. The exploration of the motivations behind an officer's decision making process required a qualitative approach. Nine officers who had voluntary resigned from the police service as well as nine serving officers who had considered resigning but decided to remain were interviewed. The motivating factors leading to dissatisfaction for former and serving officers were broadly the same; pay, pensions and conditions, lack of opportunity, lack of support and increased pressure. However the current research indicates that the decision making process and the way individuals assess the impact of these changes is different for former and serving officers. These differences are potentially linked to an individual's original motivations for joining the Police Service.

1.2 Introduction and Aims

The aim of this research is to understand the key drivers behind voluntary turnover of police officers. This research aims to identify the factors affecting serving police officers as well as officers who have resigned from the police service in the last three years. This research has been commissioned by the Metropolitan Police Federation (MPF) and funded through the Paul McKeever scholarship with the aim to inform future policy decisions around reducing police officer turnover and improving retention. I would like to thank all of the former and serving police officers from across the county who participated in this research.

The key aims of this research are to answer the following questions:

 ➢ If voluntary turnover from the MPS has increased over the last three years

 ➢ Why the officers who are still in service remain in service even after they have considered quitting

 ➢ Why police officers who have voluntarily left the police service in the last 3 years chose to do so

At this point it is important to clearly define what is meant by the turnover rate for the purposes of this research. The **Turnover rate** is defined as the net number of employees who leave and join an organisation as a percentage of the overall number of employees in a set period. The **Voluntary turnover rate** (which will be the main focus of this research) is calculated by taking the number of individuals who have chosen to leave (via resignation for example rather than redundancy or retirement) as a percentage of the overall number of leavers in a set period.

1.3 Literature Review

It is interesting to note that employee turnover and retention has been a much studied phenomena for a number of years, it is not an issue that emerged for the first time when the UK entered its latest economic downturn in 2008. Taylor (2002) highlighted that in the early 2000's difficulties around employee turnover, recruitment and retention were considered a top priority too many Human Resources departments in various organisations across the UK. It has been estimated that the average UK employee turnover rate is approximately 15% a year (XpertHR 2013), however this is known to vary drastically between industries. The Chartered Institute of Personal Development (CIPD) indicate that the highest levels of employee turnover are found in certain private sector industries with retail, catering and call centres seeing some of the highest turnover rates. These industries appear to attract temporary employees more than others, further pushing up an already high turnover rate. In 2013 the CIPD conducted a Resourcing and Talent Management survey which indicated that there has been a general reduction in turnover since 2008 but this varied across industries with a third in fact reporting an increase in employee turnover. In many cases any increases in turnover were attributed to voluntary turnover rather than redundancies bought about by the current economic climate.

Taylor (2002) identified that the public sector has traditionally had a low turnover rate compared to the private sector, however there is some concern that this has been increasing in recent years. This is supported by employment figures provided by the Office of National Statistics. What is interesting to note is that the finding of the XpertHR survey are widely published and relied upon in relation to measuring employee turnover, along with CIPD surveys. It should be noted that the information in these surveys is based on responses from a limited number of companies across the UK therefore not necessarily wholly representative of the turnover picture across all industries in the UK.

Interestingly there is a lack of official government statistics on employee turnover however there is a wealth of published statistics linked to employment figures available. This appears to be the key measurement reported in government documents in relation to the employment market in the UK. Figures taken from the ONS website (2015) indicate that at the end of 2014 the lowest ever number of people employed in the public section was recorded. Since 2012 the levels of people employed in the public sector has taken a sharp decrease which therefore suggest increased turnover levels.

The impact of employee turnover – Is there an ideal rate?

There is a large amount of literature exploring employee turnover and key factors leading to increased turnover. Glebbeek et al. (2004) noted that within the literature discussing employee turnover, there are many studies focusing on the reasons for turnover but not the impact turnover has upon an organisation. If the impact of turnover upon an organisation is not understood, then establishing what could be considered, an acceptable turnover rate becomes more difficult. It has been widely accepted that a certain level of turnover within an organisation is required and can be beneficial to an organisation. There are both positive and negative effects of employee turnover on an organisation. Taylor (2002) highlights that a very low level of turnover can lead to, what has been described as "organisational decay." An appropriate level of turnover can be good for an organisation because with new staff comes fresh ideas and the potential to break negative cycles of work thus potentially reducing the impact of organisational decay. Dalton et al. (1981) state that turnover can be positive for an organisation, especially if higher performers remain within the organisation and low performers leave.

Whilst arguing some level of turnover can be good, Taylor (2002) also states that turnover affects different organisations in different ways, an optimum level, specific to the organisation or even the department within the organisation, needs to be established. If the

level of turnover is functional for the organisation and has a minimal negative impact then varying rates should be accepted and expected. Every organisation has an acceptable turnover rate and this can even vary between different departments in the same organisation. Identifying and understanding an acceptable turnover rate for your organisation is the first step to understanding if turnover is an issue that needs addressing within your organisation.

There appears to be a general consensus within the literature is that companies should aim to have low turnover to become more successful. A certain level of turnover is required however excessive turnover cannot be ignored due to the potential impact on the organisational performance and the remaining staff. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (2014) state that turnover is costly in terms of staff replacement as well impacting upon organisational performance in a negative way. Ongori (2007), Taylor (2002) and Bradock & Mitchell (1992) all highlight the financial implication of high turnover, including advertising, paper sifting, interviewing, training and other cost associated with recruitment. Financial cost aside, Balfour & Neff (1993) argue that high turnover causes greater problems within organisations where human capital is key to the service provided. That is where the knowledge and experience of the staff is key to providing a good and sustainable service to customers, if this is lost through high turnover it can be costly to the organisation. Mitchell et al. (2001) also argue that high turnover is costly in terms of knowledge and expertise. Powell & York (1992) stated that high turnover leads to an increase in the number of inexperienced staff within an organisation, which is likely to have a negative impact on the remaining staff as well as the productivity and performance of the organisation.

Whilst a high turnover rate is generally considered to have a negative impact on the remaining staff and the company's performance, it should be noted that this can be very much dependent on the industry and type of organisation being considered. Those that rely

heavily on human knowledge and expertise, whom have invested heavily in their staff, are more negatively affected by high turnover compared to other organisations. As Taylor (2002) highlights high turnover does not always mean that an organisation will not be successful, success is measured in many different ways in different organisations. For example, the fast food outlet McDonalds have a turnover rate of over 50% with the average term of employment being only 4 months (as quoted in Taylor 2002), however they are one of the most successful fast food companies in the world. (That is, if success is based on profit and brand recognition.) It seems clear that a high turnover rate is likely to impact financially and in terms of productivity and human cost in many organisations to varying degrees. Therefore it is important for individual organisations to understand the impact that high turnover may have on the specific organisation to identify if there are turnover and retention issues that need addressing.

What factors influence Employee Turnover?

There is a vast amount of academic literature discussing the causes of employee turnover within various organisations, sectors and countries. However the findings and methods used can be of varying quality which creates some of the identified conflict. One thing that is evident is the numerous variables that have been considered and investigated as having a potential impact on employee turnover. In a study conducted by Cotton et al. (1986) it was argued that all 26 of the variables investigated could potentially impact on employee turnover. In a later meta-analysis by Matz et al. (2014), a total of 65 variables across 13 studies were found to potentially have an impact on satisfaction and commitment, which in turn are known to influence turnover. When considering turnover much of the literature focuses on what can be defined as avoidable or voluntary turnover rather than unavoidable or involuntary turnover. Avoidable turnover is the area in which it is believe organisations or management can have the most impact. Dalton et al. (1981) state that if an individual quits

for organisational based reasons, this is avoidable turnover. If an individual quits for non-organisational reasons, this is unavoidable turnover.

Early theories of employee turnover, such as those proposed by Mobley et al. (1979) argue that job satisfaction and organisational commitment were the key factors in the individuals decision making process when considering whether to quit the organisation. Mobley (1982) argued for the importance of keeping staff satisfied, if staff aren't satisfied then the intention to leave increases which can have a negative impact on behaviour, making them less efficient and productive in their job role. Muchinsky & Tuttle (1972) reviewed 39 separate turnover and retention studies and discovered that only four studies found that there was little relationship between job satisfaction and turnover. As research has developed overtime other such as Campion (1991) have argued that many factors affect an individual's decision to quit and it can be difficult to assess the impact that each individual factor may have on that decision. This is supported by Boxall et al. (2003) who argues that the motivation for job change can be described as multi-dimensional rather than linked to an individual factor. As research into this field developed, it has become more widely accepted that numerous factors or variables interact when it comes to understanding or predicting employee turnover. Lee & Mitchell (1994) described employee turnover as a process that is complex in nature, with people assessing how they feel, their personal situation and the work environment as a whole, making a decision based on a combination of these factors.

A review of the available literature has revealed many competing theories and variables impacting on employee turnover. See Cotton (1986), Ongori, (2007), Maertz (1998) and Griffeth et al. (2000), for comprehensive reviews on employee turnover. Due to the fact that numerous literature reviews on employee retention and turnover have been completed exploring the various retention theories this literature review does not aim to recover old ground by discussing these theories individually. The author is not attempting to test a pre-existing theory of turnover but rather to identify key influential factors, therefore an in-depth

explanation of the various models is not considered necessary. It has been widely accepted that there are a number of factors that repeatedly feature as having an impact on employee turnover, or an employee's intention to quit. It is these factors or variables that will be reviewed further to assist in understanding how they influence an individual's decision to quit.

The literature indicates that various personal/demographic, organisational or economic variables are believed to have an impact on employee turnover or the decision to quit. There are numerous types of these variables that have been identified as affecting turnover. An example of a personal variable would be job satisfaction or the psychological contract, between the employer and employee. An organisational variable could be linked to the type of work or the values upheld by the organisation and economic variables refer to alternative employment opportunities and unemployment rates, for example. The majority of the variables identified broadly fit into one of the three above identified categories.

In early employee turnover theories there was a focus on analysing the reasons given by employees who had already left an organisation. The emphasis was on trying to understand these reasons retrospectively. As research developed a greater emphasis was placed on examining current employee's intentions to quit. Alexander et al. (1998) and Hendrix et al. (1999) argue that the intention to quit is the single strongest predictor of turnover in an organisation. It can be argued that the study of employees who have already left an organisations employ may lead to an attempt to justify this decision when answering questions retrospectively, therefore creating a hindsight bias in the results. By studying those still employed by an organisation it was hoped that this bias can be somewhat reduced and future turnover patterns can be predicted and influenced.

Ramlall (2004) identified one of the key reasons behind an employee's decision to leave was based on the fulfilment or not of basic needs. This needs theory was based on the premise

first introduced by Maslow and is commonly referred to as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943). This is based on the notion that if all the basic needs of an individual are fulfilled, then higher needs (such as emotional needs) can be fulfilled until the ideal state of self-actualisation is reached. Ramlall (2004) comments that if an employee feels these basic needs are not being met then they will leave the organisation in order to seek fulfilment elsewhere. In support of this theory, Dibble (1999) argues that people will often change their jobs to achieve what is best for themselves. This could be interpreted to support Ramlall's needs theory, if an individual's needs are fulfilled then staying within that organisation or role is likely to be what is best for the individual. In contrast Mitchell (2001) believes that people often leave their jobs for factors and reasons that are unrelated to their job. For example an individual may have other family commitments that have become more important to them and there is nothing that the organisation could do to retain them. These can be described as personal factors affecting turnover. In contrast Miller (1996) states that organisational factors are more influential on employee turnover than personals ones. Therefore it could be argued that no matter how much a job may fulfil the needs of the individual, other factors may cause them to quit. It does seem probable that the organisation can play a large part in reducing employee turnover, if key factors are identified.

As previously stated job satisfaction and organisational commitment were identified as two of the original factors affecting an employee's decision to quit. If job satisfaction is low then employees are more likely to quit, this is similar with the organisational commitment variable. Whilst there have been numerous studies to support the fact that these two variables have an influence on the decision to quit, the strength of this influence has been widely debated. Mobley (1979) argues that job satisfaction is a key factor which influences employee turnover rate. The higher the levels of dissatisfaction amongst employees the higher the rate of employee turnover. Many studies since have been in support of the

impact employee satisfaction/dissatisfaction including Cotton et al. (1986), Moore (2002), Firth (2004) and Hausknecht (2008). Lambert et al. (2001) conducted a study which concluded that job satisfaction is a key predictor of turnover intent. In contrast Lim et al. (1998) argued that employee satisfaction/dissatisfaction had an indirect impact on the decision to quit. Maertz and Campion (1998) also argue that other factors apart from employee satisfaction are key in the employee's decision to quit. From a review of the literature it seems evident that there is little disagreement over the fact that employee satisfaction has an impact on turnover but it is yet to be agreed as to the strength of influence this variable exerts over the decision to quit.

As previously stated throughout the years a number of new variables besides organisation commitment and satisfaction have been considered to have a key impact on employee's intention to quit as well as those who actually quit. Barak et al. (2001) conducted a study into social work employees and identified a number of key factors considered by employees when deciding to quit. These include the phenomenon described as burnout, stress, job dissatisfaction, job alternatives, low commitment and lack of managerial support. Asumen et al. (1997) considered what factors affect or influence job satisfaction, it is often not just the organisation that influences satisfaction but the attitudes and characteristics of the individual also have an influence. Firth (2004) argued that stress had a similar impact on satisfaction and commitment. The more stressed an individual feels within their role leads to greater dissatisfaction and lower levels of commitment. In contrast Hom & Griffith (2000) argue that personal attitudes only play a small part in employees resigning, only 4-5% of turnover is down to attitudinal variables.

Another theory that is influenced by both personal and organisational factors is termed as organisational fit. Organisational fit is used to describe how the individual feels they fit within the organisation, this may be personal attitudes, values, beliefs, lifestyle, gender, race and other personal variables. Koeske & Kirk (1995) argue that those who are different to

others within the organisation are more likely to leave. O'Reilly et al. (1991) identified that misfits are likely to leave an organisation faster than those who are fully involved with others employees. Mitchell et al. (2001) discussed the impact of job embeddedness which can be linked on organisational fit. Those who fit within an organisation are likely to be more involved with other employees and the organisation itself creating an overlap between their professional and personal life. When a job or an organisation is embedded into an individual's personal and family life they will be less likely to leave that organisation because of the impact on both their personal and professional life. In support of this Shaw (1998) argues that the more personal sacrifice an individual has to make when leaving a job, the less likely they are to leave.

It has been widely accepted that stress and factors causing stress, known as stressors, can have a negative impact on turnover. In a study by Kim (2004) in the American public sector, stress and burnout were two of the most commonly cited reasons which caused employee turnover. Various research indicates that the effects of stress can be negated by social support. Abelson (1987) argues that if an individual has good social support the impact of stress is likely to be reduced. This is further developed and supported by Joyaratne & Chess (1984) who argue that support from co-workers and managers is key to reducing stress and therefore turnover. Firth at al. (2004) also identified the lack of support from managers as a key factor in increasing job dissatisfaction thus increasing an individual's intention to quit. Dobbs (2001) identified that the relationship with managers affects the length of stay within an organisation. The more supportive the relationship, the greater the length of service with a specific organisation, regardless of its link to job related stress.

Ongori (2007) argues that organisational instability can lead to high turnover because people feel less stable within their role and organisation. If individuals are uncertain about their future they may seek a job in an organisation with more stability. Taylor (2002) states that reorganisation has an impact on how loyal an individual feels to the organisation, which

could potentially influence their commitment to that organisation. Zuber (2001) found that if the work environment is stable, then people are more likely to stay. It has been argued that turnover is more likely to be impacted by factors outside of organisational control. For example Gouaerts (2010) argues that the employment market is affected by social change. Manu et al. (2004) goes further and argues that people quit their job for economic reasons. Trevor (2001) states that turnover interacts with unemployment rates. If unemployment is high turnover is reduced, and if the economy is strong and there are plenty of alternatives available then turnover will increase. In a report commissioned by the Office of Deputy Prime Minister (2005) findings indicate that push and pull factors are particularly influential on turnover and the quality of life is key. These quality of life factors push key workers out of more expensive areas such as London and the South East. Beech (1990) argues that people analyse many factors and various reasons to make a rational decision to leave or stay. Rusbult (1983) identified that it is a process of change that leads to declining commitment to a role or organisation thus impacting on the decision to leave.

It is clear from the literature that numerous personal, organisational and economic factors interact to influence employee turnover. Different factors affect different people in different ways, some of which are within the organisations control and some of which are only within the control of the individual. It should be remembered that different factors are more or less influential across different organisations. Hausknecht (2008) states that high satisfaction, good rewards, organisational prestige and commitment to an organisation are all key reasons to stay. However Steel (2002) highlights that the reasons people stay aren't always linked to the reasons people leave. So understanding both of these factors is key, especially as there is very little literature that explores why people remain with an organisation if they have recently considered leaving. It seems that turnover and retention are always going to be issues crying out for further investigation. There have been numerous studies of a

quantitative nature in this field but very little qualitative research into individual motivations and how certain factors may interact at a personal level.

The key point to note is the fact that turnover has different effects on different organisations, this may mean that individuals may choose to leave for numerous different reasons. The next section will focus on turnover in police as this is the main driver of the current research

Turnover and Policing

Many countries, like the UK have experienced retention issues within the public sector and policing in recent years. Police officer turnover has received an increasing amount of attention in the academic literature and has made headline news repeatedly for various reasons in the last two years. Much of the research is based on studies of serving law enforcement officers in the United States or Australia, there have been fewer studies in the UK. The role of the law enforcement officer in the US and Australia is comparable to that of police officers in the UK. Both the US and Australia have also been impacted by economic change and austerity measures similar to those seen in the UK making this research valuable for the study of officer turnover in the UK.

Policing across Europe and the US has experienced times of unprecedented change over the last five years since the introduction of austerity measures, and with the continuation of these austerity measures, especially in the UK, this change is likely to continue. It is not only policing that has experienced change, it could be argued that the labour market as a whole has changed significantly in the last 30 years. Employment in the UK has shifted away from the manufacturing industry and towards the service industry. There are more educational opportunities and the nature and variety of available work has changed and grown, along with a large growth in the number of graduates in the employment market.

As with the general turnover studies discussed earlier, there are two key factors considered in research into Police turnover, job satisfaction and organisational commitment. As many other retention studies, turnover is considered a multi-dimensional decision and this appears to be no different. Brunetto et al. (2012) argue that commitment has a direct impact on turnover in the police environment. Rivera (2011) goes further and argues that organisational commitment is the strongest predictor of turnover in a policing environment.

When considering satisfaction and commitment it is important to establish which is actually meant by these terms. Chan & Doran (2009) highlight the importance of understanding the different meaning that can be applied to job satisfaction and commitment. For example an employee may be satisfied with the work that they do but not the way in which they are treated by management. McElroy et al. (1999) notes that various types of commitment can be measured including commitment to the work conducted, commitment to your career or commitment to the organisation. These multiple meaning must be considered when attempting to measure satisfaction and commitment. It has been established, that as with other organisations, the intention to quit is one of the biggest predictors of turnover and this is obviously influenced by job satisfaction and organisational commitment. Both Jaramillo et al. (2004) and Johnson (2012) state that whilst job satisfaction and commitment are important factors in turnover intentions and actions, they only account for between 13% and 25% of variance in turnover. Therefore there are other factors in play that influence turnover that are yet to be determined.

Whilst job satisfaction and organisational commitment are good predictors of turnover, the factors influencing these are key to understanding and predicting turnover intentions. Therefore knowing what factors affected commitment and satisfaction in policing are key to understanding turnover. It has been argued that turnover can be broken down into three main areas, as defined by Johnson (2012): Personal/Demographical characteristics, organisation/work environment and job characteristics/ attitudes. Matz et al. (2014) provide

a breakdown of the types of measured variables that fall into these different categories. Personal/demographic characteristics include an individual's age, gender and ethnicity but also rank, education level and length of service. The organisational/work environment characteristic include policies, procedures and processes, management communication, promotion routes, stressors crested by the organisation and the amount of input into decision making by the individuals. Job characteristics include the variety of work, alternative employment opportunities, work/life balance, role conflict, autonomy and the perception of employee involvement. This highlights just how many variables that could potentially have an impact of job satisfaction and commitment indicating that understanding turnover within an organisation is a complex process. Various studies have focused on different variables and their impact on turnover, however there is disagreement within the literature as to which variables are most influential in the decision making process that leads to voluntary turnover. It could also be argued that breaking down turnover decisions and intentions into these three main categories is too simplistic. Whilst they are quite broad, they do not cover external factors such as the economy and wider social factors. Therefore the current research will take a broader approach to establishing the key factors behind decision making, but exploring these factors within previous literature is highly relevant.

When considering the impact of demographic characteristic the main focus of previous literature has been around gender and ethnicity, however in the policing literature the length of service and the impact of rank have also been explored. There appears to be some confusion in the literature as to the impact of gender and ethnicity on voluntary turnover or turnover intentions. A recent HMIC report (2014) indicates that whilst the number of female and ethnicity minority officers is growing in police forces across England and Wales, so is the rate of voluntary turnover within these categories. Doerner (1995) argues that men and women join the police service for similar reasons, but women leave for different reasons. Doerner's study highlighted that in the policing population, women and those of Hispanic

origin (ethnic minority) saw a higher rate of turnover. Women also reported increased levels of stress compared to males and there is evidence to suggest that stress can impact upon turnover. This is supported by Lynch & Tuckey (2007) who also report that women resign at a higher rate than males. Copper & Ingram (2002) conducted a survey for 10 forces in England and Wales and found a higher resignation rate amongst women, ethnic minorities and probationers. So it appears that there is some level of agreement within the literature around the fact that women and those from ethnicity minorities resign at a faster rate that white males. However there is little research to suggest that gender or ethnicity are the driving forces behind the decision to leave.

Johnson (2012) and Allisey et al. (2014) argue that personal demographics such as age, gender and rank have little impact on the variation in measuring job satisfaction or the levels of stress experienced. This is further supported by Matz et al. (2014) who findings indicate that demographic variables are of little importance when measuring turnover intent. Zaho (1999) and Dick (2011) recognise that in some cases demographics such as gender can play a role in job satisfaction but no consistent relationship or correlation has been established. Interestingly whilst there is little support for the impact of gender and ethnicity on satisfaction, commitment and turnover intentions there is support for the influence of rank and the length of service on commitment and satisfaction. Metcalfe & Dick (2000) state that in a policing environment, rank does affect the levels of commitment, commitment varies with the length of tenure. It appears from the literature that the relationship between rank, tenure and commitment or satisfaction is not a linear one. Dick (2011) discovered that officers who had served for 10 years are more had higher levels of commitment, however this effect can be negated by other variables. In contrast Gachter et al. (2013) argue that the longer an officer is in service their quitting intentions actually increase. Chan & Doran (2009) state that satisfaction varies throughout an officers career, many long serving officers are cynical and are potentially dissatisfied with the organisation but remain

committed to the work they undertake. Brunetto & Farr –Wharton (2003) identified that different ranks are dissatisfied with different aspects of the role or organisation and the types of dissatisfaction change with rank. Therefore demographic factors are important to consider when looking at commitment, satisfaction and turnover intentions. However rank and length of service are more influential than gender and ethnicity, however these factors can still be negated by other variables.

Organisational environment and job characteristic have a more influential and complex relationship with job satisfaction and commitment compared to demographic characteristics. Johnson (2012) identified that there are multiple factors linked to the job and the organisation that affect satisfaction, commitment and turnover. Some of the key variables considered throughout the literature include promotional opportunities, stress, support, role clarity, communication and organisational change.

Wilson et al. (2010) conducted a systematic review of turnover/attrition and concluded that there was no overarching theory as to why officers leave, this is supportive of the previous literature that identified leaving as a multi-factored decision. Howes et al. (2014) conducted a study of Australian officers, giving consideration as to why officers join, why they remain in service and why they take the decision to leave. There are very few studies identified in the UK that take all three aspects into consideration. Howes et al. identified that the reasons for becoming a police officer were similar for both men and women and that there were very few cultural differences. It was identified that, at some point in their career, up to 70% of those who participated in the research had considered leaving but the turnover rate was much lower than this. It was argued that as time progresses career priorities changed and therefore the feelings towards leaving the service changed overtime. Those who had considered leaving reported feeling unsupported by management and highlighted unfair promotional process but they often remain for practical reasons. Those who had already left the service were more likely to report that policing no longer met their practical needs.

McIntyre et al. (1990) is an early US study into police officer turnover and retention focusing on both why officers stay and why officers leave. McIntyre et al. (1990) found that those with lower job satisfaction were more likely to have left the service. Lower satisfaction was caused by the lack of promotional or advancement opportunities, bad management, frustration with the department and stress amongst other things. This is interesting due to the fact that many similar reasons were also highlighted in later studies suggesting that there had been little change for the drivers behind dissatisfaction. Whilst this is an interesting study, looking at reasons for leaving there are a number of drawbacks, the researcher is over 20 years old therefore some factors may have changed since this time. The research was only conducted in one policing department in the US creating some issues with generalizability. Participants were presented with 32 reasons for leaving being asked to rate them on a scale, this did not leave any scope to discover other undefined factors or allow the researchers to explore the participants answers in any great depth.

Howes et al. (2014) argue that retention may be more successful if initial motivations for joining the service were understood. This study is useful due to the combined quantitative and qualitative approach, which is rarely seen in retention research. It is also one of the few studies that looked at the difference in motivations between serving officers and officers who have resigned. Raganella & White (2004) conducted a study of US officers and discovered the main reasons officers joined were altruistic (serving the communities) and practical (job benefits/security). Raganella & White (2004) found little difference between the motivations for joining the job across the officers they interviewed. Howes et al. (2014) discovered that officers who had considered quitting but remained in service were more likely to have joined due to their desire to contribute and the potential enjoyment the role can officer. Whereas former officers were more likely to have reported that they were influenced by others or were facing a lack of alternative opportunities when they joined the police service. For the purposes of this study, this is a really interesting finding, the current

study will involve interviewing both current and ex-officers so similar questions can be posed to participants.

There is very little similar research exploring if there are any differences in the motivations for joining between serving and ex-police officers. It should be noted that the sample size used in Howes et al. (2004) study is small and there were no in-depth explanations as to why attitudes may have changed overtime. There is also no consideration given to the idea that ex-officers answers as to their motivations for joining were influenced on reflection by their decision to leave the service.

Allisey et al. (2014) discovered high levels of stress amongst UK based police officers, organisational stress appears to be affecting officers in a more negative way than operational stress. Issues such as low role clarity and increased role ambiguity were leading to increased levels of stress. Jaramillo et al. (2004) also found that stress linked to the organisation played a key role in commitment however in contrast increased role ambiguity was not found to be influential. Allisey et al. (2014) and Jaramillo (2004) both agreed that increased support from the organisation and from superiors reduced stress and increased commitment. Burke & Patterson (2006) further studied the impact of organisational stress vs. job stress for police officers. Interestingly negative operational experiences (job stress) had little effect on overall satisfaction however negative organisational experiences (organisational stress) had an overall negative impact on job satisfaction. Gauchter et al. (2013) agreed that traumatic job related events do not lead to higher intentions to quit. These are potentially being mitigated by other factors.

Many studies have found that lack of promotional opportunities or the perceived lack of fairness in the promotional process can have a negative impact on satisfaction and commitment. Brunetto & Farr-Wharton (2003) argue that dissatisfaction with the appraisal and promotion process leads to decreasing commitment amongst officers. This is further

supported by Jaramillo et al. (2004) and Parsons et al. (2011) who argue that the lack of development and promotional opportunities lead to lower levels of commitment and satisfaction. Dick (2011) highlights that there is a perceived lack of openness and honesty in the lower ranks around senior management and the decisions taken. Harris & Baldwin (1999) identified that one of the key reasons officers left employment was due to an unfair promotional system. The perceived fairness of organisational processes such as promotion and appraisals can be a key factor in organisational commitment and satisfaction.

Another key factor identified is the perceived levels of organisational support and cohesion between officers, those who feel supported in their role are often more satisfied. Jaramillo et al. (2004), argue that good organisational and management support has a positive impact on satisfaction. Many studies including, Allisey et al. (2014), Johnson (2012), Brunetto & Farr- Wharton (2003) and Parsons et al. (2011) recognise the important of organisational and managerial support. Parsons et al. (2011) goes further to say that individuals need to feel valued and supported by the organisation and recognised for the good work that they do. Brunetto & Farr-Wharton (2003) recognise that good communication especially around feedback, performance and expectations, between the organisations, through managers to employees is a key to improving satisfaction and commitment.

Dick (2011) states the importance of involving staff in key decision making, to influence satisfaction. Metcalfe & Dick (2000) also give support to the idea of the impact of good communication but also the influence of the individual management style used. Kiely & Peek (2002) go further and argue that the attitudes of senior officers towards the role and organisation have a direct impact on the on the ranks below, especially those new in service. If there is a high level of cynicism and dissatisfaction in the higher ranks, this can be passed down through the ranks. Allisey et al. (2014) report a direct link in UK policing between the support from peers and managers and quitting intentions. This is supported by Copper and Ingram's (2002) finding which indicate those who feel more supported and

valued were less stressed and more likely to report an intention to stay with the organisation.

Policing across Europe and the US has gone through times of unprecedented change over the last five years and with the continuation of the austerity measures, especially in the UK this rate and scale of change is likely to continue. Therefore the impact of organisational change and its influence on satisfaction, commitment and turnover needs to be considered. Chan & Doran (2009) identified that organisational change has increased accountability and scrutiny and has reduced promotional opportunities which has had a negative impact on satisfaction. Therefore a focus on supporting officers and creating development opportunities is even more important in times of change. This is supported by Parsons et al. (2011) who argued that those under increased scrutiny are more likely to stay with the organisation if they feel supported. This can be linked to general retention studies that have found that organisational instability has a negative impact on job satisfaction and commitment, (Ongori 2007, Taylor 2002 & Zuber 2001). Allisey et al. (2014) argue that in UK policing organisational and system change have increased stress levels and negatively impacted on satisfaction. In contrast Disney (2008) argues that policing reform, specifically in the UK has not had a significant impact on officer turnover.

Numerous variables have been identified as affecting police officer job satisfaction and commitment and therefore are inferred to influence the intention to quit. It seems clear that there are multiple factors that influence job satisfaction and commitment these interact with one another and certain combinations of factors are more impactive than some in isolation. Whilst many of the factors considered are comparable with findings in general retention research policing is often considered a unique occupational undertaken by certain types of individuals and therefore there are likely to be factors specific to policing that affect turnover. This is supported by Taylor (2002) who highlights that different organisations need to understand the specific reasons individuals leave because no two organisations are the

same. Metcalfe and Dick (2000 pp. 815) highlight the uniqueness of police culture stating that police culture "nurtures low commitment." Parsons et al. (2011) argue that officers leave due to the build-up of a number of negative experiences. Cooper and Ingram (2002) also found that the decision to quit is affected by many factors and often is a decision that is taken overtime rather than an instant decision.

Bradford et al. (2012) and Hoggett et al. (2013/14) conducted large scale surveys across police forces in England and Wales to assess the current views of officers. Bradford et al. (2012) identified that a large proportion of officers surveyed did not feel aligned with their current force values, with over half of officers reporting that they had considered leaving the service. Hoggett et al. (2013) identified that officers had a strong sense of organisational identity but expressed negative views towards the recent reforms and changes especially the Winsor review (2011). The Winsor Review (2011) was commissioned as independent review of police officer and staff remuneration which make various recommendations in relation to pay and pension reforms as well as other non-pay related recommendations. The government has acted upon many of the recommendations especially in relation to pay and pensions. Many officers reported that they would not join the service if they had their time again. In both surveys officers report feeling a lack of support from management and government. Bradford et al. (2012) also found high levels of dissatisfaction with the promotion process, the available training and lack of involvement in key decision making. Hoggett et al. (2013) discovered that officers were not opposed to change or reform but they felt they should be consulted over changes and there should be less political involvement. Whilst these surveys don't directly refer to the impact on satisfaction or commitment it seems clear that a number of the issues identified in the literature as negatively affecting satisfaction and commitment such as dissatisfaction with the promotional process and lack of managerial support are present in police forces across England and Wales. A recent study conducted by the Police Federation (2014) identified that

over 50% of officers who responded to the survey expressed an intention to quit in the near future. The results of this survey are yet to undergo significant statistical testing therefore the strengths of the relationships cannot be fully understood.

Many of the studies identified focus on the impact of various factors, such as demographic or organisational characteristics, on job satisfaction and commitment. Gachter et al. (2013) highlight that in policing literature there is little research that focuses on the direct intention to quit as a specific variable. Intention to quit is often interpreted from the levels of satisfaction and commitment rather than as a direct measure. Therefore there is the opportunity for further research in this area.

There is also little qualitative research in this area which examines why certain factors affect officers decisions to quit by asking more probing questions it may be possible to uncover some key variables that have not been previously defined. Howes et al. (2014) conducted a mixed method approach to the study of officers reasons for joining, staying and leaving the Australian police service. Open-ended survey questions allowed officers to express their opinions and reasons behind the decisions made. There is very little research into retention in the UK Police service of this nature.

There is also little research focusing on the reasons people remain in service, even after they may have considered quitting. As mentioned previously there are also fewer studies based on satisfaction, commitment and quitting intentions in UK policing whilst there is a greater amount based around policing in the US and Australia. Whilst finding from countries such as US and Australia are comparable in this country there is an opportunity to expand the knowledge for UK based research.

1.4 Research Questions

From reviewing the available literature the following three research questions were identified, each with more focused sub-questions.

1. **Has voluntary turnover, as a proportion of the total number of police officers, in the MPS increased in recent years?**

2. **What are the key themes or reasons given by those who leave voluntarily resigned from the police service in the last two years?**

3. **Why have serving officers, who have previously considered resigning, decided to remain in service?**

These are some of the key questions that could be addressed to give a better understanding of the reasons behind the voluntary turnover rate in the MPS and assist in achieving the identified aims of this research.

1.5 Key Definitions

It is important to understand and be clear about the meaning of the turnover rate for research purposes.

Turnover rate – the net number of employees who leave and join an organisation as a percentage of the overall number of employees in a set period. Lynch & Tuckey (2007, p.7) state that it is "important to measure turnover as a percentage of the current population as this allows for staff level variations at different points in time."

All three studies will focus on voluntary turnover, as this is the area in which the organisation can have the biggest impact.

Voluntary turnover rate – when the decision to leave has been made to leave by the individual employee as opposed to by the organisation. Lynch & Tuckey (2007, p.8) state that the degree to which an individual has control over the exit decision is "the key

distinction between voluntary and in voluntary turnover." Allisey et al. (2014, p.753) define involuntary turnover as when "the organisation choses to terminate the contract of employment."

Clearly defined terms are important in any type of research. From the literature review there is much disagreement around the influence of demographic variables such as gender and ethnicity and within the police environment rank and length of service, on turnover and the decision to leave. For this reason it is important to include these variables to help identify the relative impact of each of these variables in Study one.

1.6 Theoretical Perspective

When a researcher is considering which methodology to employ, it is important that various philosophical paradigms are considered and the researchers' philosophical stance is clear before making a final decision on collection methods. Holden (1999) argues that the methodology chosen should be as a consequence of the researcher's philosophical belief. Crotty (1998) highlights that there are numerous theoretical perspectives and methodologies which are often confused and described inconsistently, this could lead to confusion especially for researchers in the early stage of their career. The researcher is approaching this research from an epistemological perspective.

There are many different terms for the various theoretical research perspectives, but they generally fall into three categories objectivism, subjectivism and constructivism, as described by Grey (2009). Often the methodology a researcher will choose will depend on which theoretical perspective to which they feel most aligned. Certain philosophies tend lend themselves to either quantitative or qualitative methods. Silverman (2000) argues that it is not always the cases that qualitative and quantitative methods are opposing, with one being more valid than the other. What is important is to ensure that your methods are based upon the aims of your research.

There is debate in the literature and in the real world application of research as to which approach is the most appropriate and in some cases most valid, this is linked closely with research paradigms and theoretical perspectives. For example when considering recent research in Policing, the College of Policing appear to add more value to research that utilises Randomised Control Trials (RCT's), this is especially evident when looking at the research that forms the new 'What Works' centre (available on the College of Policing website). Therefore, it could be argued that this approach links closely into objectivism, with the studies used more likely to have employed quantitative approach. Whilst there has been no specific statement as to the value the College of Policing places on different approaches to research, it could be suggests that as the College continues to work to 'professionalise' policing, they are drawing on the successful professionalization in other areas such as medicine. Research in this area mainly sits in the objectivism camp and relies heavily upon research involving RCT's to discover an objective reality which exists externally from the participants and researchers.

Tewksbury (2009) argues that qualitative research is a more superior method when conducting meaningful criminological research, providing a greater depth of understanding that statistics cannot achieve. In spite of this it appears that quantitative methods are still favoured in academic journals. Tewksbury et al. (2005) identified that in a review of top tier criminological journals less than 11% of articles published employed qualitative methods. Worrall (2000) argues that statistical methods are still favoured due to their predictive capacity and the strength of the ability to predict and identify relationships. When selecting research methods it is also important for the researcher to consider how well the research will be received within the community towards which it is aimed. The researcher may need to be prepared to justify the methods used when challenged by others. Jick (1979) argues that in fact social science, due to the nature of the issues explored, often lends itself to a mixed methodology approach which could ultimately assist with triangulation.

In the current research, emphasis is placed on the importance of understanding and exploring the individual's perceptions around turnover, retention and remaining within the police. Emphasis will be placed on rich contextual information and how individuals experience and interpret the world around them, this has led to the researcher to select primarily qualitative methods. Despite the researcher deciding that gathering qualitative data is the main approach to be utilised in this research, the quantitative analysis of secondary data also features. As Ritchie et al. (2013) highlight numerous different factors play a role in how research develops, there is no one specific theory or paradigm that applies to qualitative research. The researcher is primarily coming from a constructivist interpretivist position. This will involve taking individuals perceptions and interpreting these in the context of academic retention literature. The review of previous literature has been used to inform the design studies two and three, but does not involving testing a pre-existing theory.

Section 2

Study One – Voluntary Turnover Patterns of Police Officers in the MPS

2.1 Aim: To understand the picture of turnover and voluntary resignations from the MPS.

The aim of study one is to understand the changing picture of police officer turnover in the MPS. This study will establish if there has been an increase or decrease in police officer turnover over the last three years or if any patterns can be identified. Consideration will be given to demographic factors, including gender, ethnicity and rank as well comparisons with the turnover rates for other police forces across the county for background information. Understanding if the turnover picture is changing and how it is changing will give a good insight as to whether the MPS should be concerned about the current turnover of police officers.

2.2 Critique of data collection technique

Study one involved the collation and analysis of secondary data to provide a background picture concerning police officer turnover in the MPS. The analysis of secondary data is common practice in many areas of research. Secondary data can be defined as data that has been collected by someone other than the primary researcher. There are a number of well-known secondary data sets that are used regularly in criminological and other research including census data and the Crime Survey for England and Wales (formerly the British Crime Survey). The use of secondary data in criminological research is common, Nelson et al. (2014) highlight that there is a heavy reliance on secondary data in this field. There are a number of advantages and disadvantages to the use of secondary data in research.

One of the main advantages of using secondary data is the time saving factor, Nelson et al. (2014) highlight that the use of secondary data saves time in designing a project and data collection. There is not only the time saving element there is also the reduced financial cost of using data that has already been collected by another individual or company. Secondary data can also be useful for longitudinal studies, for example datasets such as the census or the Crime Survey for England and Wales can be compared and analysed over time. The use of secondary data in Study one of this research project allows the researcher to gather longitudinal data in relation to workforce strength and attrition. Windle (2010) highlights that the use of secondary data also allows for new discoveries and insights into previously analysed information, further adding to the literature base. Due to the often low cost of collecting such information, it makes data more accessible to a larger number of researchers which in turn allows for repeated testing.

Whilst there are a number of advantages to the use of secondary data, there are also a number of drawbacks that need to be taken into consideration. One of the main drawbacks to secondary data is the fact that is has not been collected with the specific purpose or

research question that the researcher has in mind. If the researcher has no control over what and how data is collected, then the quality and validity of the information cannot be fully ascertained. If the quality and validity of the data is in question then any conclusions drawn from such information must be viewed with some caution. Mince & Wilson (2004) state that using crime statistics can give an indication about correlation but does not explore or explain causation. Secondary data is useful for assisting in understand the 'what' questions but not the 'whys.' For the purposes of the current study, the data will be able to paint a picture of what turnover in the MPS looks like but not why it looks the way it does. Often secondary datasets contain a large amount of information which can, in some cases be over ten years old. If secondary data is to be analysed and the results used to inform policy as in this case then the information needs to be relevant and current. The use of secondary data in research is valid however it may be best to use in conjunction with primary data collected by the researcher, to provide further validity and triangulate results.

2.3 Method

The overall number of MPS police officers broken down by rank, gender and ethnicity was requested from the MPS for a five year period via the Freedom of Information Act 2000. The total number of leavers broken down by rank, gender and ethnicity was also requested for the same period also including the reason for leaving, broken down by categories defined by the MPS**.** The focus of the analysis will be on those who voluntarily left the service as this is the proportion of turnover that can potentially be reduced**.**

Further data was also requested from Her Majesty Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) in relation turnover for all police forces in England and Wales. It was highlighted that the requested data was available on the HMIC website, accessible by the public, including information relating to police officer strength, broken down by rank, gender and ethnicity for all 43 forces across England and Wales between March 2007 and March 2014. This data was

collated as it was considered important to put the turnover patterns in the MPS into a national context. All of the data provided was in the form of an excel spreadsheet with information broken down into quarterly segments. Of the data provided by the MPS only that covering a three year period could be used fully for the purposes of this study. HMIC collate turnover data based on Home Office requests made to each individual force, therefore the data collection methods may vary, which in turn affects the validity of the results.

Previous research has identified that female and BME officers are often over represented in the turnover of police officers and that rank can also have an impact on the decision to leave. The data that has been collated will identify if these amongst other hypothesis can be verified. The data was quick and easy to collect and saved a significant amount of time for the researcher due to the fact that the MPS and HMIC routinely collected this information and could provide it in a timely fashion. Whilst from the researcher's perspective it was quick and easy to collate, there is no way to independently test the reliability and validity of the information provided. Whilst the pits falls of the data provided under the Freedom of Information request from the MPS can be assessed directly against their HR system, it is hard to assess these issues with the data collated by the HMIC via the Home Office Annual Data Requirement. These data requests are sent to individual police forces across England and Wales, the data may be collated by these Forces in different ways and in some cases by be misrepresented by direct comparisons. The Home Office does provide guidelines to Forces around the collection of such data, The User Guide to Police Workforce Statistics, which states that it is working with Forces to improve the quality of the data provided with the Home Office employs various checks in an attempt to ensure the validity of the data. But as expected with 43 police forces recording data in potentially 43 different ways there is a high potential for data quality issues

Once the data was collated, it was subjected to statistical testing to establish if there was a significant difference in turnover rates over the last three years and between different defined groups. Basic descriptive statistics including the mean, median and mode across the categories identified were calculated as well as trends and changes. The data was then tested to establish the significance of any patterns identified. For the reasons, including the strengths and weaknesses discussed above, the collation and analysis of secondary data was considered the most appropriate method to utilise to test the following hypotheses:

H1: The total number of police officers has decreased in the MPS over the last 3 years, with the MPS seeing a higher than average turnover rate

H2: The strength of female and BME police officers has increased as a percentage of total officer strength over the last 3 years in the MPS

H3: Despite the increase in strength, the voluntarily turnover rate for female and BME police officers is higher than the average voluntary turnover rate in the MPS

H4: The voluntarily turnover rate varies by officer rank, up to and including the rank of Chief Inspector in the MPS

2.4 Results

At this point it is important to define two further terms that will be used alongside turnover and voluntarily turnover, already defined above which are wastage rates and decreasing numbers. Wastage rates can be defined as the number of leavers (police officers only) from the organisation in a set period of time as a percentage of overall number of police officers in the same period regardless of their reason for leaving. In some literature wastage rates and turnover rates are used as interchangeable terms. In this context decreasing numbers can be defined as the decrease in the overall total number of police officers employed by the organisation between specified time periods.

As with all 43 forces across the country, austerity measures have affected the size of the MPS officer workforce and a reduction in the overall number of officers is to be expected. As of March 2014, there were 127,909 police officers in the 43 police forces across England and Wales. This represents a decrease of 1.3% or 1,674 officers in total when compared to March 2013, as demonstrated in Table1 below. Whilst this decrease may not be as large as some would expect, it should be considered in the context of year on year reductions for a number of years preceding this. The previous year saw a decrease of 3.4% or 4516 officers across England and Wales.

	ACPO	Superintendents (inc Chiefs)	Chief Inspector	Inspectors	Sergeants	Constables	Totals
31st March 2007	206	1456	1848	7034	21949	109400	141893
31st March 2008	202	1497	1869	7169	22240	108884	141861
31st March 2009	217	1496	1916	7398	22664	110080	143771
31st March 2010	223	1502	1974	7258	23109	109669	143735
31st March 2011	215	1368	1889	6764	22265	106609	139110
31st March 2012	209	1270	1727	6589	21371	102934	134100
31st March 2013	201	1185	1798	6283	20499	99619	129585
31st March 2014	204	1121	1778	5932	19767	99107	127909
Change between 31.03.11 to 31.03.14	-11	-247	-111	-832	-2498	-7502	-11201
Change between 31.03.13 to 31.03.14	3	-64	-20	-351	-732	-512	-1676

Table 1 – 'Total number of serving officers by rank between March 2007 and March 2014'

Since 2011 there has been a year on year decrease in the total number of police officers across England and Wales. When comparing 2011 figures to 2014 figures, there are over 11,000 fewer police officers. Despite experiencing rapidly declining numbers between 2011 and 2013, levels continued to fall into 2014. HMIC indicate that the proportion of women and ethnic minorities represented with the police force has increased since the 90's. However these proportions are still not representative of the population whom police forces serve. The Office of National Statistics (2011 census data) indicate that that the population of London is currently over 8 million, with 40% of London's population being from a black or

ethnic minority background and over 300 languages are spoken. This highlights the diverse nature of London alone. However BME officers do not account for 40% of police officers in the MPS.

Despite the decreasing number of officers, the number of female and BME officers across forces has increased slightly 0.6% and 0.2% respectively. HMIC estimates that total officer strength across England and Wales will stand at 128,400 by March 2015, which represents an 11% decrease compared to March 2010. With current officer numbers standing at 127,090 an increase in officer numbers will be needed to meet this target.

Due to the fact that the MPS is the single largest police force in England and Wales, the total number of leavers is expected to be higher than other forces, however there is no reason that the turnover rate should be significantly higher than other forces.

H1: The number of police officers in the MPS has decreased over the past three years with the MPS seeing a higher than average turnover rate

Average Turnover Rate

For the FY year 13/14, the average turnover rate (all leavers) across all 43 forces was 5.4%, with Bedfordshire seeing the highest at 9% and Devon and Cornwall seeing the lowest at 3.4%. The average turnover rate for the MPS in FY 13/14 was 5.9%, 0.5% higher than the national average. Statistical testing, using a z-test method indicates that the overall turnover rate in the MPS is not significantly higher than the average turnover rate for all forces at a 95% confidence interval[1]. It is also not significantly higher than the force seeing the lowest turnover rate in England and Wales, Devon and Cornwall.

Further analysis was conducted to identify if when the MPS data was removed from calculating the average turnover there was a significant different in MPS turnover compared

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[1] The z score is 0.9852, the P-value is 0.32218 this is not significant at P <0.05

to the average of the remaining 42 forces. For the FY 13/14 the average turnover rate for 42 forces (this excludes the MPS) was 5.2%, 0.7% lower than the turnover rate in the MPS. Statistical testing, using a z-test method indicates that the overall turnover rate in the MPS is significantly higher than the average turnover rate for all forces at a 95% confidence interval.[2]

A number of forces saw a lower turnover rate when compared to the MPS in the financial year 13/14 which it indicates that it is possible to keep turnover lower in times of austerity. However moving forward the key focus should be on voluntary turnover. Information on the reasons for leaving, broken down into predefined categories was provided by the MPS but was not available for the remaining 42 forces in England and Wales without the researcher making a specific FOI request. Due to the sheer volume of data and the time constraints placed upon the researcher it was not feasible to collate and analyse all of this data. Therefore the comparison with other forces is not included from this point forward.

Total Police Officer Strength

Chart 1 demonstrates the total police officer workforce for the MPS broken down by quarter between March 2011 and September 2014.

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[2] The z score is -4.4286, the P-value is 0.00 this is significant at $P < 0.05$
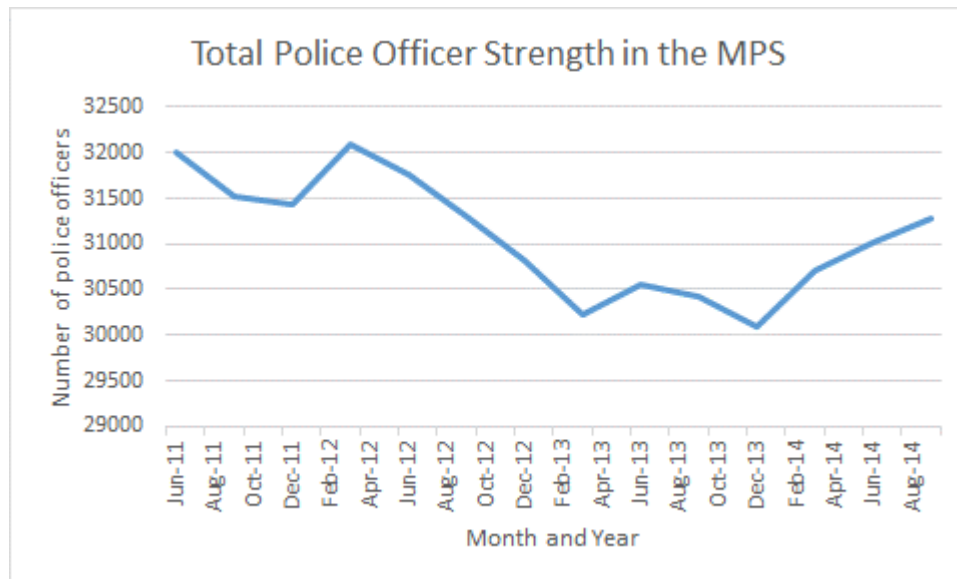
Chart 1 – 'Total officer strength in the MPS from June 2011 to August 2014'

Between March 2011 and September 2014 the overall police officer workforce in the MPS decreased by 1084 officers, a reduction in total officer numbers of 3.3%. The numbers of officers were at their highest in March 2011 and reached their lowest point in recent years in December 2013. Numbers have slowly begun to increase since December 2013. Whilst numbers are increasing they are not yet near levels seen in 2011, therefore it seems that the overall number of police officers within the MPS has decreased over the last three years. In the current climate, a decrease in overall officer totals is unsurprising and therefore focus will now move to changes within certain groups of officers to see if the results present any significant differences in officer levels.

H2: The strength of female and BME officers has increased as a percentage of total strength over the last 3 years

Total workforce

Table 2 below demonstrates the breakdown of male, female and BME officers and the proportion of overall officer strength made up by each of these groups.

Month	Total officer strength	Male officer strength	Female Officer strength	BME officer strength	% male officers	% female officers	% BME officers
Mar-11	32372						
Jun-11	32015	24465	7550	3067	76.42	23.58	9.58
Sep-11	31526	24037	7490	3035	76.25	23.76	9.63
Dec-11	31428	23931	7496	3046	76.15	23.85	9.69
Mar-12	32094	24350	7743	3232	75.87	24.13	10.07
Jun-12	31759	24090	7709	3241	75.85	24.27	10.20
Sep-12	31305	23691	7614	3202	75.68	24.32	10.23
Dec-12	30811	23284	7527	3179	75.57	24.43	10.32
Mar-13	30235	22817	7419	3163	75.47	24.54	10.46
Jun-13	30550	22972	7577	3242	75.19	24.80	10.61
Sep-13	30413	22838	7575	3252	75.09	24.91	10.69
Dec-13	30085	22567	7518	3244	75.01	24.99	10.78
Mar-14	30713	23011	7701	3369	74.92	25.07	10.97
Jun-14	31005	23203	7802	3440	74.84	25.16	11.09
Sep-14	31288	23354	7934	3493	74.64	25.36	11.16

Table 2 – 'Total officer strength by gender and BME categories March 2011 to September 2014'

As a proportion of overall workforce strength the number of female officers has been increasing over the last three years. In June 2011 23.58% of all officers were female by September 2014 this had increased to 25.36%. A z-test indicates that this represents a significant increase in female police officer strength between 2011 and 2014 at a 95% confidence level.[3]

Numbers of BME officers have also been increasing, in June 2011 9.58% of the total workforce was classed as BME by September 2014 this had increased to 11.16%. Again this represents a significant increase in BME officer strength between 2011 and 2014 at a 95% confidence level.

As a proportion of overall constable strength, the number of female officers has been increasing over the last three years. In June 2011, 26.51% of all constables were female by September 2014 this had increased to 27.38%. The same can be said for BME officers, in

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[3] The z score is -5.1952, the P-value is 0.00 this is significant at P <0.05

June 2011 11.13% of all constables were classed as BME by September 2014 this had increased to 12.48%. This does represents a significant increase for female[4] and BME[5] representation in the constable rank between 2011 and 2014.

As a proportion of overall inspector strength, the number of female officers has been increasing over the last three years. In June 2011 15.24% of all inspectors were female, by September 2014 this had increased to 25.48%. There was a large jump in the proportion inspectors that were female as a proportion of total inspectors between June 2014 and September 2014. The increase in female inspectors between 2011 and 2014 is significant at a 95% confidence level.[6] Overall the number of BME inspectors as a proportion of overall strength has increased. In June 2011 it was 4.53% by September 2014 this had increased to 5.43%. This number peaked earlier in the year and now appears to be decreasing, when comparing 2011 to 2014 there has not been a significant increase in the proportion of BME officers.

As a proportion of overall Chief Inspector strength, the number of female officers has been increasing over this last three years. In June 2011 12.80% of all inspectors were female, by September 2014 this had increased to 18.44%. The proportion of BME CI's as a proportion over overall CI strength has in fact decreased in June 11 it was 4.56% and by September 2014 it had decreased to 3.35%. Neither the increase in female representation nor the decrease in BME representation has been assessed as statistically significant.

H3: Despite the increase in strength, the voluntarily turnover rate for female and BME officers is higher than the average voluntary turnover rate for white male officers in the MPS

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[4] Z-score -2.1696, the P-value is 0.03 this is significant at P < 0.05
[5] Z-score -4.6188, the P-value is 0.00 this is significant at P < 0.05
[6] Z-score is -6.9257, the P-value is 0.00 this is significant at P < 0.05

The proportion of white males in the police forces across England and Wales has always been higher than the number of female officers or officers from black or minority backgrounds, the MPS is no exception. It has often been argued that the Police service should be diverse as the community that it serves and many forces have conducted specific recruitment campaigns targeting women and individuals from ethnic minorities in an attempt to encourage individuals from these groups to join the police service. London has one of the most diverse populations in the county and whilst the numbers of female and BME officers joining the police service has increased in the last few years, little attention has been paid to the length of service or turnover rate for these officers.

Male officers: In June 2011 just over 76% of all MPS officers were male, by September 2014 this had decreased to just over 74%. On average around 376 male officers left the MPS per quarter, that is an overall turnover rate of around 1.61% per quarter. On average 111 male officers left the MPS voluntarily per quarter, around 30% of all turnover of male officers per quarter is voluntary.

When comparing male voluntary turnover as a percentage of total male turnover in 2011 and 2014 there is a significant difference in the levels of voluntary turnover at a 95% confidence interval level.[7] It is interesting to note that even though the overall number of male officers has decreased over the last three years, the number of leavers and the number of voluntarily leavers has steadily increased.

Female officers: In June 2011 just over 23% of all MPS officers were female, by September 2014 this had increased to just over 25%. On average around 68 female officers left the MPS per quarter, that is an overall turnover rate of around 0.89% per quarter. On average 35 female officers left the MPS voluntarily per quarter, around 49% of all turnover of female officers per quarter is voluntary. Therefore the average voluntarily turnover rate

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[7] Z-value -4.5659, p value is 0.00 this is significant at P <0.05

for female officers is higher than for male officers. So whilst the number of female officers has been increasing, the number leaving voluntarily are also increasing and at a higher rate than their male counterparts.

When comparing total female turnover as a percentage of total male turnover in 2011 and 2014 there is a significant difference in the levels of turnover at a 95% confidence interval level.[8] When comparing female and male turnover and a percentage of voluntary turnover in 2014 there is also a significant difference with female voluntary turnover being significantly larger than male voluntary turnover.[9]

BME officers: In June 2011 just over 9% of all MPS officers were identified as BME, by September 2014 this had increased to just over 11%. On average around 29 BME officers left the MPS per quarter, that is an overall turnover rate of around 0.85% per quarter. On average around 14 BME officers voluntarily left the MPS per quarter, around 47% of all turnover of BME officers per quarter is voluntarily. Therefore the average voluntarily turnover rate for BME officers is higher than for male officers but lower than that of female officers. So whilst the number of BME officers has been increasing the number leaving voluntarily is also increasing and at a higher rate compared to all male officers.

When comparing BME voluntary turnover as a percentage of total BME turnover in 2011 and 2014 there is not a significant difference in the levels of voluntary turnover. When comparing the percentage of BME turnover with both male voluntary turnover and female voluntary turnover in 2014, the difference between BME turnover and male or female turnover does not indicate a significant difference.

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[8] Z Value 2.0912, P-value is 0.3662 which is significant at P <0.05
[9] Z Vale 3.8899, P-value is 0.0001 which is significant at P <0.05

H4: The voluntarily turnover rate varies significantly by officer rank, up to and including the rank of Chief Inspector.

Table 3 indicates that, when comparing March 2011 to September 2014 the overall number of sergeants, inspectors and chief inspectors in the MPS have seen a decrease, whilst the number of constables has increased.

	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Variance	Range	Number 1 SD above	Number 2 SD above	Number 1 SD below	Number 2 SD below	Change from Mar 11 to Sep 14
Total Workforce	31173	31288	705	497047.8	2287	5	3	4	3	1084 (-3.3%)
Constables	23770	23394	459.3	210990.8	1584	4	2	5	4	623 (2.5%)
Serg	5215	5117	488.6	23891.6	1422	3	4	5	3	1339 (-22.4%)
Insp	1467	1522	170.8	29156	491	5	3	4	3	475 (-28.5%)
Chief Insp	433	449	37.3	1394.1	110	10	0	1	3	107 (-23%)

Table 3 – 'Change in officer strength by rank between March 2011 and September 2014'

Levels fluctuate widely throughout the years, especially within the ranks of constables and sergeants, however this is to be expected due to them being the two largest groups of officers within the MPS. After calculating the mean for each defined rank, the standard deviation was also calculated to identify the frequency of the deviation from the establish mean. Both constables and inspectors saw the greatest variance.

Police Constables

As the overall number of police constables has decreased over the last 3 years, the number of leavers has in fact been increasing. In June 2011 68 police constables were recorded as leaving the MPS that month, in September 2014 194 police constables were recorded as leaving. General turnover of police constables has increased from 0.87% of total constable strength in June 2011 to 1.33% of all constable strength in September 2014.

Voluntary turnover has increased as a proportion of overall strength as well as a proportion of all turnover. In June 2011 voluntary turnover account for 33.1% of all police constable

turnover, by September 2014 his had increased to 59.33%, this percentage change has been identified as significant at a 95% confidence level. [10]

On average over the last three years it has been calculated that around 120 police constables a month left the MPS, there are 5 month that are 1 standard deviation above this mean and 2 months that are 2 standard deviations above this mean. There are 4 months that are 1 standard deviation below this mean and 3 months that are 2 standard deviations below this mean.

Sergeants

The overall number of sergeants has decreased over the last 3 years however the level of turnover has fluctuated in a pattern that is different to that seen with police constables. Turnover as a proportion of overall strength has increased from 1.26% in June 2011 to 1.41% in September 2014, however it has reached its highest point in December 2012 at 2.49%.

Voluntary turnover as a proportion of all turnover has also seen similar fluctuations and is slightly lower in September 2014 compared to June 2011. However again this peaked in December 2012 and March 2013 where voluntary turnover accounted for 19.4% and 26.2% of all turnover respectively. Analysis of the percentage fluctuations in voluntary turnover is non-significant.

On average over the last three years it has been calculated that around 15 police sergeants a month have left, there are 5 month that are 2 standard deviation above this mean and 2 months that are 2 standard deviations above this mean. There are 5 months that are 2 standard deviation below the mean and 3 months that are 2 standard deviations below the mean.

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[10] Z value -5.9181, p value is 0.00 this is significant at $p < 0.05$

Voluntary turnover levels for Inspector and Chief inspector rank over the last 5 years are too low to conduct any meaningful statistical testing. This is interesting in itself due to the competing literature on the influence of rank and tenure on satisfaction and turnover intentions. This study found that number of voluntary resignations from those at the rank of Inspector or Chief Inspector were so low no meaningful test could be conducted on the results.

2.5 Discussion

Turnover as a whole presents a changing picture over the last 3 years, this is unsurprising considering the vast cuts faced by all Police forces across England and Wales. Salaries often account for the biggest proportion of any companies out-goings therefore a reduction in staffing levels, in this case police officers is not to be unexpected. Different police force across England and Wales have varied turnover rates with the MPS seeing slightly higher than average voluntary turnover. Some may argue that in time of austerity increased turnover can be expected, however low levels of turnover still remains in other forces suggesting that there may be other factors at play. Taylor (2002) highlighted that turnover in the public sector is traditionally low, but is potentially increasing. This study would support that fact that overall turnover in policing is increasing but remains lower that the 15% average across other industries.

Overall the expected picture of workforce strength emerged, there had been an overall increase in police constable strength, which has possibly been affected by the government and the police services' desire to protect 'frontline' policing. The numbers of Sergeant and Inspectors have both decreased, whilst it can be argued that both of these ranks, especially sergeants, are vital to frontline policing, they don't represent the numbers of 'boots on the ground' in the same way that the number of police constables do. Often popular media stories and government statistics use quotes in relation to 'bobbies of the beat' which in the

main is represented by the number of police constables within the police. However, the role of sergeant and to some extend inspectors is vital to facilitate, coordinate and enable police constables to conduct their roles effectively. Therefore showing an increase in police constables without acknowledging the decrease in other areas doesn't not represent a truly effective police service.

There has been much disagreement in the literature of the impact of demographic variable such as rank and gender on turnover, the results of this study further add to that debate. The link between rank and turnover is often tied up with length of service. Some literature suggested that the longer an officer has served the less likely they are to resign. The available data did not include the length of service so no conclusions can be drawn in relation to that variable. However it could be inferred that there are a larger proportion of PC's may be more junior in service than higher ranks but this would be a large generalisation. The results indicated that the number of PC's resigning voluntarily from the police service has increased significantly since 2011, however the number of sergeants resigning has not increased significantly. There were also very few resignations at the inspector and chief inspector level, presenting mixed picture. Dick (2011) highlighted that the relationship between rank, tenure and commitment is not a liner one, however this research suggests that those at the rank of PC have seen the biggest increase in voluntary turnover and this decreases through the ranks. Further research into the links between rank, tenure and turnover would be needed to test this relationship further.

Literature indicates that those of lower ranks and of shorter service are more likely to leave the service because they are not as tied to the organisation and haven't invested as much in the role as those in a higher rank and longer in service. It seems that this study supports the idea that those of a lower rank are more likely to leave with a significant increase in turnover over the last three years, however the reasons for this cannot be assess further with the information available. Gachter et al. (2013) argued that those who are longer in

service actually have higher quitting intentions. If rank was taken as a reflection of tenure then the current research could not support that theory. However rank is not an accurate measure of tenure, without this information it is very difficult to discuss the results of the current study in this context.

A recent report by the HMIC (2014) indicated that female officer strength and BME officer strength were continuing to grow. The results of study one supports these findings, with a growing proportion of the MPS being made up of female and BME officers. This study supports some literature in the fact that gender may have an impact on turnover with a significant increase in female turnover. Cooper and Ingram (2002) highlighted that women and ethnic minorities saw a higher resignation rate that other groups. Lynch and Tuckey (2007) also found that women resign at a higher rate than men. Whilst this study confirms this finding in relation to female turnover, BME turnover has not seen a significant change.

The results indicate that voluntary female turnover has increase significantly over the last three years and is higher than male turnover. However an assessment of whether this variable is having the largest impact on the decision to leave cannot be made. Allisey et al. (2014) argue that demographic factors have little influence on job satisfaction and therefore turnover. Most of the literature in this area looks at the impact of demographics on job commitment, job satisfaction and the intention to quit. However there is very little research to link demographics as a cause of turnover, it is still unclear what turns intention in actions and how this is influenced or not by someone's gender, ethnicity or rank. Whilst this study has found a number of changes in turnover and overall officer strength as statistically significant, this can only represent a correlation and does not identify causation. Further investigation is needed to identify why voluntary turnover especially is increasing.

 As with other studies the impact of demographic variables is somewhat inconclusive with other factors likely to be in play when the decision to leave the police service is made.

Female and BME officers can be identified as two groups more vulnerable to resignation however further research would be needed to established if the reasons these officers leave are different to other groups of officers. It should also be noted that whilst female and BME officers resign at a higher rate, an increasing number of white male officers are also resigning, therefore the reasons for dissatisfaction and what translates quitting intention into action rather than focusing of personal demographics would be a valid study. Matz et al. (2014) highlighted that demographics are of little importance when measuring turnover intent. The current study identifies that there may be patterns linked to demographic variables and turnover but whether these factors played a part in the turnover decision is yet to be established. Factors other than gender, ethnicity and rank will be explored further in the remaining two studies in this paper.

2.6 Drawbacks

The data provided was broken down into three monthly segments and only covered a three year period. However, the number of people who leave or join an organisation is fluid and can potentially vary from day to day, therefore a more accurate picture of turnover could have been established if the number of officers leaving and joining was available on a daily or weekly basis. To establish a more reliable trend, turnover data and officer strength for a longer period of time would be required and will assist in drawing stronger conclusions. It would have been useful to have the voluntary turnover data for all forces in England and Wales to aid with comparison purpose placing the MPS data within further context. HMIC gather data by making requests to all of the Police forces in England and Wales, this will further affect the reliability of the data collected because there is no set data collection method and no way to verify the accuracy of the data.

There are other factors aside from rank, gender and ethnicity which would have been interesting to explore. Previous research has indicated that the age of an individual as well

as their length of service could potentially have an impact turnover decisions, if this information was made available it could have also been subjected to further exploration and statistical testing.

A further drawback is that due to the quantitative nature of the information collected, reasons/drivers behind the decision to resign cannot be identified or understood. Whilst it has assisted in identifying key populations within the leavers, it will not assist in identifying best practice to improve retention. The data available for this study does not provide a complete picture of the factors affecting police officer turnover, it does not take external factors or individualisms into account.

Section 3 – Motivations for Joining the Police

During the process of Studies Two and Three it became clear that participants motivations for joining where frequently mentioned and may potentially have an impact on their decision making process when it came to leaving the police service. Therefore the researcher felt it was important to explore these motivations where possible. This section will cover the data gathered in relation to these motivations from both Study two and three and the associated results. Data from both Study two and three was gathered via the use of semi-structured interviews. Please see sections 4.3 and 5.3 for the associated methodology.

Motivations for joining the Police

There is little research in the UK comparing serving officers and former officers' motivations for joining the police service or if there are any distinct differences in these motivations. Much of the research into motivations for joining the police service has been conducted in the US and is somewhat outdated. More recent US based research into motivations focuses on sub-categories such as gender and ethnicity and the potential impact these may have on motivations to join the police service and future recruitment strategies.

Much of the literature in this area focuses on identifying if there are differing motivations in relation to gender and ethnicity for joining the police service, whilst this study doesn't specifically explore these factors, the findings from the previous research are still relevant. Exploration of motivations for joining the police service began in the late 1960's and has continued to be a much discussed topic, however not so much in the UK. Reiss (1967) argued that around 30% of officers were motivated by the fact that they had a lifelong ambition to serve as a police officer. Meagher & Yentes (1986) identified that two primary motivators for joining the police service were the opportunity to help others and the excitement of the role. Moon & Hwany (2004) identified that the most important motivating factors were steady salary and job security. However the differences between the above two studies in terms of culture, one links to the USA and the other to South Korea must be considered.

Ragnella & White (2004) identified various motivating factors, including; helping others, job security, lifelong aspirations, recommendations from others as well as those who had 'drifted' into the role due to perceiving it as an easy opportunity. In a later study White (2010) identified that job satisfaction has a link with the original motivations for joining the service, thus having implications for retention. In more recent work by Jones (2014), a number of typologies in relation to police applicants were observed. These included, the Childhood Dreamers, The Excitement Chasers, The Good Samarians, The Sensible Seekers, The Graduates, The Dysfunctional, The Drifters and The Specials. These typologies appear to reflect the findings in relation to motivations for many previous studies discussed above. This would support Foley et al. (2008) notion that motivations for joining the police service have remained relatively stable overtime. Again it is worth noting that with the exception of the study by White et al. (2010) and a study by Howes et al. (2004) there has been little focus on changing motivations over time or the difference, if any in motivations between former and serving officers. Howes et al. (2004) did identify some differences in the

motivations for joining the police between serving and former Australian police officers who participated in their study.

Although establishing a difference in the motivations for joining between serving and former officers is not an explicit aim of the current study, motivations for joining have the potential to impact on an individual's decision to remain within or resign from the service. Therefore the researcher asked each participant to articulate their own motivations behind joining the police service to help understand if there were any notable differences between serving and former officers. It could be argued that motivations for joining are intrinsically linked to the decision making process when it comes to remaining in or resigning from the police service, so discussions around this area would have formed a natural part of the interviews with participants. If motivations differ between serving and former officers then this may help inform future recruitment and retention processes.

3.1 Results - Serving officer's motivation for Joining

Data analysis revealed three different overarching themes linked to officers motivations for joining the police service. These have been grouped by the researcher as; *childhood ambition*, *variety and challenge* and *helping others*, in line with key motivators identified in the literature discussed above. These motivators along with any linked sub-themes have been explored within the context of the interviews conducted.

Childhood ambition – A number of participants identified with the fact that becoming a police officer was something that they always wanted to do. In many cases it is a career they had always wished to peruse since childhood. There appeared to be various motivations for this including family members who had been or were serving officers and early positive interactions with the police. Despite the varied reasons for these childhood ambitions the researcher felt that it was an important motivation in its own right due to the

fact that becoming a police officer was realising some participant's childhood dreams which provides strong motivation.

"My dad was in the police...I never studied to do anything other than join the police...it was what I always wanted to do" (Participant 10)

There were others who found it difficult to articulate their feelings as to why they wanted to be a police officer with officers stating;

"I just always wanted to be a police officer" (Participant 6) and "I always fancied joining" (Participant 14)

It appeared to the researcher that the motivations for joining the police service ran deeper than just wanting to be a police officer. The desire to become a police officer was driven by other factors, such as previous experience, family ties or the underlying desire to help the community. It is likely that what the job involved and what being a police officer means personally to each individual was a keep part in the decision to join although this was not always articulated in such a way. It seems that for these participants being a police officer becomes part of their identity as a person and some feel this close affiliation with the police prior to joining which motivates them to seek a career in this area. It should be noted that what a police officer is and represents is a very personal thing to different individuals making the appealing factors harder to pinpoint. But what does seem clear is that being a police officer is a big part of an individual's life and it is something that will never leave them even after they retire or move to a different career. As described by one participant;

"Once you have been a police officer, you are always a police officer...even when you leave you -become an ex-police officer...you are never truly a civilian...you will always look at things in a certain way" (Participant 15)

Variety, Challenge and Enjoyment – As in previous retention studies, the type and variety of work people imagined would be on offer within the police service was a big draw in people's decision to join the service. Variety, challenge and enjoyment can be linked closely with job satisfaction as well as personal development, two key factors in retention. Therefore it seems that individuals join the service with the perception that the role of a police officer offers what they seek from a job on a personal level. As one participant articulates;

"I imagined variety…doing an active job with different challenges" (Participant 1)

Another participant goes on to state;

"I was interested in the type of work…investigating was something that appealed to me" (Participant 11)

It is interesting to note that a number of participants had little or no experience of the police prior to joining. The decision to join was based on the perceived role of a police officer and the type of work that they imagine police officers do. This is an interesting point, turnover can be impacted in a negative way if the reality of a role doesn't meet original expectations. With many participants indicating little understanding of the actual role and work that would be undertaken as a police officer when joining, this lack of knowledge maybe having a knock on effect on turnover.

Not only was the variety and type of work on offer considered a motivating factor, but the perceived challenge of the role was also an important factor. Both mental and physical challenges seemed to be important motivators on a personal level. This again can be linked to job satisfaction and having the perception that becoming a police officer will provide personal challenges that fulfil a need in the individual.

"I'm a do'er…an outdoors person who likes physical and mental challenges…I thought the police would provide this opportunity" (Participant 14)

"I thought I would be good (mentally) at outwitting criminals" (Participant 17)

With the idea of the challenge came the personal sense of enjoyment that participants imagined came with the role;

"I was 19 I just wanted to have fun" (Participant 16)

"Who doesn't want to drive fast cars?" (Participant 9)

The variety, challenge and the enjoyment of the role appear to play a big part in the motivations behind the participant decision to join the police. The idea of the variety and the challenge is something that personally appeals to the individual as something that they would enjoy and something that suited them and that would provide them with job satisfaction.

Helping others – Aside from the motivation element of seeking personal challenge and enjoyment from a role, there was also a strong motivational aspect based on helping others. Public service and doing good is intrinsically linked to the role of the police officer and is what most people expect from the police. There was a strong representation from participants around this theme;

"Helping people was the most important thing" (Participant 9)

"The idea of the work involved…making a difference and helping people" (Participant 10)

Helping people and making a difference were mentioned in detail and appeared to tie together all the other individual motivations for joining the service. The combination of factors involving what participants thought they would get out of being a police officer personally, in the sense of enjoyment, variety and challenge as well as a sense of helping others are the key motivating factors behind joining the police service.

All of the participants in study two stated that when they joined the police they imagined that they would serve a 30 year career in policing. Interestingly the ability to retire after 30 years, job security and a good pension package were barely touched upon as motivating factors for joining the service in the first place. What is interesting note is the fact that factors liked to pay, pensions and conditions feature heavily as area of dissatisfaction which is covered in more depth in sections four and five.

3.2 Results - Former officers' motivations to join

Data analysis revealed three different overarching themes linked to former officers motivations for joining the police, these have been defined by the researcher as; *childhood ambition*, *variety and challenge* and *helping others* which are the same as those seen in serving officers motivations. There was also a further motivation that was identified which has been defined as *influenced by others*.

As with serving officers, former officers had little or no experience of the police prior to joining. There were three participants that had been in the Army or considered joining the Army prior to their policing career.

"I had been in the Army…so I joined because it was a similar type of job" (Participant 7)

This may indicate that there was a different level of expectation about the role of a police officer compared to those officers that were still in service or those who have not has previous experience in the army. The differing levels of expectations may be due to having previously been involved in a role that they perceive as similar, if this turns out not to be the case then this could have more of a negative impact than it would on those who have not experienced other roles previously. This factor was not explored further.

Childhood ambition – A number of officers identified with the fact that becoming a police officer was something that they always wanted to do, it is a career they had always wished to peruse. One participant states;

"I joined at 19…I intended to stay for 30 years…I gave up opportunities to go to university and play sport…so it was quite a big thing" (Participant 4)

Another participant highlights that even though they had previously been put off joining the service despite having these aspirations from a young age, they still joined later in life.

"I always wanted to be a police officer…I had a bad experience with the police as a youngster and it put me off…I got made redundant in my 20's, I thought I would apply and see what happens" (Participant 3)

It is interesting to note that those that fell into the *'being a police officer'* category, only one participant joined the police service at the first available opportunity (straight from school) others joined after working in different job roles. There were various reasons given for the delay in joining, these reasons were personal and appear not to be linked across participants. The fact that these former officers joined with a wider variety of employment experienced and therefore perhaps expectations compared to the serving officers may have had an influence on the levels of dissatisfaction and the decision to leave. It is not possible to generalise from this study the influence of previous employment on job expectations and turnover but it is a factor that warrants further exploration.

Variety, Challenge and Enjoyment – As in previous studies, the type and variety of work people imagined would be an offer within the police service was a draw in people's decision to join the service, but this motivations were not cited as frequently as with officers still serving. Those comments that were made about variety and challenge paint a similar picture;

"I was the sort of person who liked a challenge…I got bored easily so I was looking for variety" (Participant 5)

"I thought…it was an interesting job…some action, some chances to use your brain" (Participant 7)

"I get bored easily so the police meant I could change my job…stay under the umbrella…but try a new challenge if you wanted to" (Participant 12)

Although not cited as frequently as with serving officers, the desire to perform a role where variety and challenges were key to the daily routine still appeared to be important. There was a stronger emphasis on the personal enjoyment and the role being able to offer them what they needed to be satisfied. The researcher also noted the choice in language in relation to describing the importance of the variety by former officers compared to serving officers. It is interesting to note that more than one former officers made reference to being 'easily bored' and hoping that the variety of the job would keep them engaged. There was no mention by former officers of a specific interest in the type of work that would keep them motivated, such as conducting investigation as there was with serving officers.

Helping others – As with serving officers helping others feature as a motivation to join. It seems unsurprising that this features as a motivation due to the intrinsic view that many people have about the role of a police officer.

"I wanted to do something that was helping people so I figured the police would suit me" (Participant 12)

"There was an element of wanting to serve my community and do good but it wasn't just based on that" (Participant 15)

"I wanted to be out there protecting people" (Participant 5)

It seems from the researcher's interpretation that wanting to help people was a less important original motivating factor for former officers than it was for serving officers. Participants who were former officers were more likely to use helping people phrases in conjunction with personal enjoyment factors as opposed to a key motivation when compared to serving officers. Former officers were more like to discuss helping people as a factor alongside the personal fulfilment they gained from being a police officer. It seemed that former officers were more willing to recognise that helping others wasn't as important as other motivating factors.

Influenced by others – This is a motivating factor that did not feature with the serving officers interviewed. This was more often linked to individuals who has been in or had considering being in another service such as the Armed Forces and had either left there employ or decided to join the police instead. Perhaps those who were motivated by others were at a crossroads in career terms, looking for a new opportunity for the next career move, the police may have presented some of the opportunities they were seeking.

"Another job fell through…some friends made the police sound really interesting so I joined" (Participant 13)

"I wasn't intending to join the police…a friend of mine joined and convinced me it was really good" (Participant 15)

Joining the police service on the recommendation of others indicates a potential lack of buy in to the role, in comparison to others at the outset. This is not to say that any individual who joined the police service on the recommendation of another was any less committed to their work during their service, but perhaps there was less emotion conflict when leaving the role due to the fact that joining to police was not always an ambition that they wished to realise. It may be that becoming a police officer was a career move that was right for them in that moment in time rather than any burning desire to serve in the police service.

3.3 Discussion

There are very few academic studies that explore or compare former and serving officer's original motivations for joining the police service and the impact this may have on turnover in the UK. A study by Raganella & White (2004) identified that across the spectrum that the reasons for becoming a police officer were similar in most cases. A follow up study by White et al. (2010) identified that such motivations had remained steady over time, Foley et al. (2008) Howes et al. (2014) support this finding to some extent but also highlight that former officers were more likely to report that they were influenced by others or faced a lack of other opportunity when they originally joined the police service.

 In many cases during this study, it appears that both former and serving officer's report joining the service for the same or similar reasons. It should be recognised that some former officers may be still be coming to terms with or processing their decision to leave and still trying to justify to themselves their decisions. Therefore they may reflect on their motivations for joining in a different way to serving officers. In similar way officers who are still serving after making the decision to remain rather than leave may also be trying to process that decisions therefore the way these different group reflect back on their original motivations may be different. This effect can potentially be seen in the helping others motivational factor. Former officers were more willing to identify the fact that the motivation to help others wasn't as key as other motivators when compared to former officers. This may be a genuine difference between individual personalities or it may be that the different groups add more or less weight to such altruistic motives in an attempt to help them make sense of the decision they have made to remain or leave. A study by Asumen (1997) whilst not directly related to police officer turnover identified that it is not the organisation alone that affects job satisfaction but the individual's attitudes and characteristic also play a key role. This could support the idea of individual differences between serving and former officers.

As with the previous literature reasons for joining for both serving and former officers were primarily based in altruistic motives as well as the prospect of an exciting and varied job offering a high level of personal satisfaction. A study by Ridgeway et al. (2008) found that the desire to help others, stable employment, status and a good level of benefits were amongst the key motivations for joining. The current research found no mention of status or stable employment as specific motivating factors, however this sample size for the current study was far smaller than other studies examining motivations most of which use large scale survey methods. White et al. (2010) identified that job security benefits, early retirement, promotional opportunities , helping others and the excitement of the role were all key motivating factors. The current research offers some support to the helping others, excitement and promotional opportunities factors identified in this earlier study. Again a survey method was used where potential motivations were presented to the participants. In the current research participants were ask to articulate their motivations without any guiding statements therefore not all motivating factors may have been touched upon in the current research.

Jones (2014) conducted research to identify if sexuality had an impact on the decision to initially join the police service and from this research created various 'typologies of police recruits.' Jones (2014) identified 8 different types of joiners with different initial motivations for joining the police service. Four of these typologies were supported in the current research; The Childhood Dreamers, The Excitement Chasers, The Good Samaritans and The Drifters. There were however just as many typologies that were not supported and on a number of occasions in the current research these motivations were not present in isolation from one another but were interlinking motivations leading to the overall decision.

What was interesting to note is that the majority of the former and serving officers had little or no experience of the police before joining the service, only the perception of what the job would be like. Previous literature suggests that if a job role does not match the expectations

of the individual then this will impact on their decision to leave. In this case both former and serving officer articulated similar expectations of the job so when reviewing the decision making process for the former officers it will be interesting to note if the job itself met their expectations and if this is different to the officers who have remained in service. White et al. (2010) identified that there is a link between low satisfaction and unfilled motivations.

In a similar fashion to the study conducted by Howes et al. (2004), analysis revealed that being influenced by others was a motivation expressed by some former officers, but not in a strong way by serving officers. It is important to note that serving officers were likely to have expressed influence from others if they were a close family member such as a parent or sibling, whereas the influence from others in relation to former officers was more likely to be friends or acquaintances. Being influenced by others may indicate a lower level of personal buy in to the role of a police officer which may have made the decision to leave less emotive compared to those who couldn't imagine themselves being anything other than a police officer. White et al. (2010) identified that officers who were more dissatisfied were less likely to have expressed a strong commitment to the role when discussing their original motivations. This could provide support to the current study in relation to the theory that former officers were more likely to have come from others roles or joined the service on the recommendation of a friend rather than due to a lifelong ambition.

Whilst there was no indication that a lack of alternative employment was a motivating factor in joining the police service, with former officers there was a proportion of individuals who entered a career in policing after a career in the army citing that it was the 'next logical step'. In fact most of the former officers had experience in other careers whilst the officers serving do not have as much experience. White et al. (2010) identified that those who drifted into policing were more likely to have resigned between the first study in 2004 and the study in 2010 because there were fewer 'drifters' identified, but there presence was still noted. It may be that the length of service plays an important factor in the likelihood of the

decision to resign as well as the original motivating factors. To establish if these factors are influential some further research would need to be conducted. Some also saw policing as an alternative to joining another public service similar in nature. Literature suggests that those employed in the public sector differ in motivations from their private sector colleagues (Houston (2000), Lyons et al. (2006)), however it may be these individuals share these motivation factors but policing was not the right public service for them personally. This could indicate a lack of personal investment and a lower emotional attachment to serving as a police officer in particular. The lack of personal investment should not be confused with the lack of personal commitment and responsibility to fulfilling the role and duty of an officer when in service but may have an impact on the decision making process when considering to remain in or leave the police service.

A study by Foley et al. (2008) concluded that overtime there has been little change in the factors that motivate individuals to join the police service. The current research does support previous research in some aspects when exploring the motivations for joining the police service, however there are also some noticeable absences such as any supporting evidence for pay and status being motivating factors. As stated previously much of the research in this area relates to the US with some being very historic and focused in on the potential influence of key demographic factors such as ethnicity and gender. There is certainly a large amount of scope to build on this research within UK policing.

3.4 Drawbacks

This research was not conducted with the original aim of examining the motivations for joining and any differences in these motivations between current and serving officers. Therefore the data collected whilst of interest cannot be used to draw any firm conclusions. Further research and testing is required to establish the key motivations for joining and well as the different impact these motivations may or may not have on career length. It is

suggested that a larger sample of participants is needed to assess the significance of these motivations. There is also very little qualitative literature from the UK to which results can be compared. Much of the previous research is from the US which is valid however comparisons to the UK police service would be more beneficial. Much of the previous research is survey based, with statements presented to the participants to either agree or disagree with, there was no such process in the current research therefore there is a possibility that not all motivations were touched upon in the current research. There is also very little mention in previous research if motivations for joining have a significant impact on the decision making process around remaining in or leaving the police service.

Section 4 - Study Two – Serving Officers reasons for Dissatisfaction and Remaining in Service

4.1 Aim: To understand the reasons behind officers decisions to remain in service even if they have considered leaving, what factors influenced their thoughts to leave, why did they decide to stay?

The aim of study two was twofold, firstly it was to understand why serving officers had considered resigning from the police service and the drivers behind their dissatisfaction. Establishing why officers chose to remain was the second key aim because establishing what keeps an officer in service is pivotal to improving retention and reducing turnover.

It is worth noting here that study two along with study three were expanded to include officers outside of the MPS. There are a number of reasons for this, firstly some access issues were present when the research process began. The researcher felt that police officers from other forces across the country are likely to be faced with similar issues and perform a similar role to those in the MPS. All police forces are also affected to varying extent by recent changes and reforms therefore the researcher felt that gathering data from other forces is just as valid in the research process. This will also make the research more applicable to forces other than the MPS.

4.2 Critique of data collection technique

Study two involved interviewing serving police officers from various police forces across England to understand why some officers had recently considered resigning from the police service but also importantly to establish why they chose to remain. Initially this study was to take the form of a large scale online survey, however as the researched developed so did the methodology. The reasons for changing the data collection method used including strengths and weakness of the previous method are discussed below.

Kumar (2011) highlights that the use of surveys or questionnaires is a common method used to gather information in social science research. Surveys/questionnaires allow a large amount of information to be gathered from a large number of participants. They can be distributed in a variety of methods including post, email, website or by an interviewer. Crow & Semmens (2011) highlight that surveys can be used to collect a variety of information either qualitative, quantitative or both. With surveys, questions are usually asked in the same order and the participant often responds by marking their answer, this can make data analysis of the information collected much easier. May (2005) states that this makes surveys a method that can be easily replicated. However this process can be time consuming and participants may not always read instructions fully and could potentially mark answers up in the wrong place. This may leave the researcher with the decision to exclude the information or attempt to interpret what the respondent meant. A well designed survey can eliminate this to a certain extent. Designing the layout of the survey, selecting and wording of questions carefully and choosing how you would like your participants to respond (e.g. Likert Scale or free text) are all key factors in survey design. Marshall (1994) highlights the fact that questionnaires can potentially be received in a negative way by the required participants due to the sheer volume of surveys people are asked to participate in modern life. If participant response is poor this can have impact on the ability to generalise the

findings to the wider population. Getting the initial 'buy in' at the first point of interaction and having clear and concise questions is key to ensuring a good participant response rate.

In the early stages of designing study two, online surveys administered via an email link was the method chosen to gather information. The aim was to establish the 'intention to quit' amongst serving MPS police officers as well as establishing the key reasons behind the individual's decision to remain in service. This quantitative and qualitative survey method was to be pitched at every serving police officers in the MPS, up to and including the rank of Chief Inspector. The survey was designed, making use of key factors affecting retention identified in the literature. Prior to the role out of the survey on a larger scale, a smaller scale pilot was run and feedback from participants collated and reviewed. The feedback from the pilot was positive, however even from the small sample involved in the pilot the variety of answers in the free text of the survey was quite wide.

Once the data was gather it would have been subjected to various statistical tests using the computer package SPSS. The intention to leave the service was considered to be the dependent variable with different organisational and demographic factors, such as feeling supported, fair promotional process, rank or gender being considered independent variables. This approach was based on previous similar studies that had been conducted in this area and the key factors affecting retention as identified from an extensive literature review.

The population for this study would have been any serving MPS officer up to the rank of Chief Inspector, which is around 30,000 individuals. As the research developed, it became clear that due to the size of the population a large sample would be needed to ensure significant results could be obtained with a good degree of accuracy. The nature and scale of the original research design was potentially out of the scope and time scale in which the current research was to be completed. It also became clear that the reasons why officers chose to remain in service in the current climate, even if they may have considered quitting,

was a more relevant and appropriate research question. Understanding the individuals' point of view, their thoughts, the drivers behind their behaviour and decisions was considered crucial and more in keeping with the researcher philosophical approach. Therefore the researcher took the decision to refocus the research question and adjust the methodology accordingly.

The decision to conduct semi – structured interviews with a smaller sample of serving police officers was taken due to it being considered the most appropriate way to gather the in-depth information required. By gathering qualitative information, this study will help the researcher understand and interpret the key drivers behind the decision to remain in service. It will also aid the researcher in understanding why serving officers may have considered quitting. By understanding what inspires officers to remain in service and the factors that affect an individual's decision to remain or leave, senior management and policy makers can be better informed about key retention strategies.

4.3 Method

Interviews took place either face to face in police stations, participant's home address or via Skype. The interviews were semi-structure with very few direct questions, the researcher had a number of themes that were covered in the interview which were derived from a comprehensive literature review and social media researched which took place prior to the interview process. A full list of topics covered can be found in section 9.4, however some of the key questions covered motivations for joining, the main reasons individuals decided to stay, the main reasons the individual considered leaving and well a question in relation to policing being a career for life or not.

Once the interviews had been conducted and transcribed, the researcher created an open coding framework and analysed the interviews within the framework. As the interviews were transcribed key themes and sub-themes were identified and verified by cross referencing

across interviews. Responses were assigned to the most appropriate overarching theme in the first instance, with the second round of coding breaking these down further into sub-themes. Themes were assess as valid by taking consideration of the inter-relation of the themes between participants and the emphasis the words and the body language noted by the researcher as to the important of the issues discussed. Key overarching themes that were reflected across the interviews were identified and these will be the focus of the results. Individual themes or differences that weren't repeated across interviews were also noted.

Selection criteria

Participants in this study were included based on the following criteria: A police officer who holds a rank between police constable and chief inspector (inclusive) who has been in service for a minimum of two years who has recently considered leaving the police service.

Participants were recruited in various ways including though social media appeals, though the researchers own contacts as well as via the snowballing method where other participants recommended those who may be willing to take part. The table below demonstrates the demographics of the participants including rank, gender and length of service. The demographics indicate that 7 out of the 9 participants were male with the average age being 40 years of age and the average length of service being 14 years.

Gender	Age	Length of service (Yrs)	Rank	Imagined serving 30 years?
M	40	16	DS	Y
F	56	24	PC	Y
M	47	27	DCI	Y
F	36	10	PS	Y
M	30	7	PC	Y
M	35	14	DI	Y
M	38	6	PC	Y
M	39	18	PS	Y
M	37	8	DC	Y

Table 4 demonstrating Study one participant demographics

4.4 Results

Why have serving officers considered leaving the police service?

With the most recent PFEW survey (2015) identifying that around 16% of officers who responded to the survey are considering or intending to leave the police service, understanding why officers have these thoughts is more important that even. However the turnover rate is considerably lower than this, therefore study two aims to understand not only why officers intend to quit but what actually keeps them in service if they have considered quitting.

Data analysis revealed a number of motivations behind these feelings with some shared consistently across participants and others less so. These themes were elicited from the coding of the interview data they are overarching themes that cover a wide range of data that can be linked to the overall concept. The four key themes have been identified by the researcher, under which most responses can be classified. They are; *Changes to pay, pension and conditions, lack of opportunity, lack of support* and *increased pressure*.

Changes to pay, pensions and conditions – Changes to pay, pensions and conditions have affected all officers to varying degrees, some officers have found that their pensions have been reduced and they are going to have to work, what they consider a significant

amount of extra time, other officers have been affected by the introduction of a fitness test or pay freezes. It seems the response by individual officers to the various changes to conditions under the Winsor (2011) review as well as changes introduced by individual forces, is very personal to them.

"You know what the package is when you join…but when you work 15 years and then all of a sudden they change it…you are like hang on a minute…all my plans are suddenly changing….these things are massive…life changing" (Participant 1)

"Without the changes to pension and retirement I can definitely say I would be doing 30 years." (Participant 1)

"it's not a 30 year job anymore due to the way that the government have changed the pensions…there is a little wedge of us who have gone from a 30 year career to a 40 something year career that means my plan career change can no longer take place…I have lost a good pension" (Participant 16)

However what is really interesting to note is that although every participant involved mentioned pay and conditions in one form or another, they assessed the impact such changes have in terms of their colleagues around them rather than just upon themselves. There appeared to be the perception that the changes to pay and pension were more impactive on those around them than upon themselves directly. Or it could be argued that as serving officer, they did not want to appear selfish due to the role of a police officer being consider an altruistic one.

"Some people planning to retire at 50, they were planning a new career…for self-fulfilment, not money…they could draw on their pension to support them…you may not be able to do these things now" (Participant 11)

"The recent changes haven't affected me greatly…it's a major source of moaning for my colleagues…the changes in pay and conditions have really stressed some people out" (Participant 14)

"What the government are doing in terms of pay will drive people away…I am not really worried I have something else that motivates me" (Participant 9)

"The changes in pension affected morale but not really for me" (Participant 10)

"I think the pension, not that I know a lot about them, has been the biggest hit for a lot of PC's, it's the biggest grip" (Participant 14)

So it seems whilst changes have affected these officers, there perceptions are that the impact on others is greater than the impact upon themselves, and whilst it is an area for dissatisfaction the attitude towards such changes is a pragmatic one. The perceived impact on others and how others view the changes appear to be how the participants reflect on the impact of the changes. Whilst they acknowledge that they have been affected in some way by the changes they view themselves as being less affected than others and more able to rationalise the impact.

"it's a bit gutting that I will have to work longer than 30 years , but it's a long way off, I could get pissed off about it but it's not going to change" (Participant 9)

"No point getting worried about it…I just go with it and look ahead" (Participant 14)

"The pension was a bonus but not really a selling point" (Participant 10)

The researcher was able to establish a number of key points in relation to changes to pay and conditions and their impact:

- Changes to pay and conditions were a source of dissatisfaction but not a sole reason for considering leaving the police service.

- The biggest source of dissatisfaction came from the extra years to be spent in service with a greater impact on those slightly more senior in service, with young families or those who have a career change planned after 30 years' service.

- It seemed, to the researcher, that participants were not as well informed about the impact that changes to pensions had on their career length, many knew that they would be serving for longer, but had not explored this in finite detail. This may be because the information is complex or not readily available or because these changes alone were not enough for them to seriously consider exploring other employment options.

- It was interesting to note that whilst most participants stated they had seriously considered leaving, only one had made significant inroads into job hunting. Other participants used expressions such as *I have been considering other employment but I don't really know what" and "My head has been turn by other jobs."*

- The breech of the moral contract was another source of dissatisfaction, the fact that officers signed up to one contract and this was changed, a process participants feel they had no say in and no consideration was given to the impact of such changes. *"They don't think about the impact (of the pensions changes) on the people" "they realised the government won't back down…now the organisation is just treading on people". (Participant 6)*

So whilst the changes to pay and conditions have affected the participants, and have potentially played a part in them reconsidering their career options, these changes were not a tipping point for them to make the decision to leave. As one participant sums up;

"The cuts are a small part of the issues affecting retention." (Participant 8)

Lack of Opportunity – The lack of opportunity especially in relation to the promotional process is something that was a source of dissatisfaction. They key issue appears to be

around the perceived lack of fairness in relation to the promotional process. There is a mixture of reflections in relation to personal experiences with failed and successful promotional processes as well as the impact that promoting 'the wrong people' has overall. On a personal level these issues have affected officers;

"Getting through the promotional process was a nightmare...I failed more that I passed...but I do think in some ways the process is fair" (Participant 8)

"If your face doesn't fit you won't get through" (Participant 1)

"Your face has to fit and mine doesn't" (Participant 8)

"Personally the lack of promotion and achieving my career aims has led to frustration and me considering leaving the service" (Participant 16)

"Being older ...with a family hinders you when you have to study for six months...there needs to be more support" (Participant 1)

"No one got promoted out of working 9 hours a day...you have to work 12 hours a day 6 days a week...you can't be a family man and get promoted" (Participant 16)

Apart from the personal frustrations with the promotional process, participants also reflected on the overall exam and board process.

"Not geared around experience...it is about how well you can study and if you can pass an exam...I don't remember all the things I learnt for the exam...everyone in the country refers back to their books...so it makes a bit of a mockery of it really" (Participant 1)

"Some issue with the promotional process, no one asks how that person treats others around them...I have awful supervisors yet they have gone up through the ranks" (Participant 6)

"I think some people who can answer a question well can get through…they aren't always the best leaders" (Participant 9)

"There are a lot of good people who didn't get through because they didn't say the right thing, but they would make good leaders" (Participant 10)

"Not always do the right people get promote…anyone can learn subject matter, sit an exam and say the right things…that doesn't make a good leader" (Participant 10)

Participants show a level of concern beyond the personal impact of an unfair promotions process, their concerns appear to be around the impact on the organisation and others around them. This could reflect their association or affiliation with the police service and perhaps their job embeddedness. Changes and unfair process lead to dissatisfaction on a personal level but the same amount of concern is shown in most cases towards the impact on the organisation as a whole.

As with the impact of the pay and pension changes, participants rationalised the impact of the promotional process, highlighting what they thought was good about the process and in some cases attempted to understand why the promotional process is done in a certain way.

"I quite like part 2 (sergeants exam)…that's a bit more about aptitude" (Participant 1)

"the process is no more unfair that any other process in the organisation…the right people for the organisation get promoted…if that's right objectively that's a different story" (Participant 8)

"Largely its fair but I know a few good people who have been turned down" (Participant 10)

"It's a much better system that it was…it's never going to be perfect obviously" (Participant 11)

The researcher was able to establish a number of key points in relation to the promotional process and its impact;

- All participants had an opinion on the promotional process regardless of whether they had first-hand experience of the process or not.

- The perceived lack of fairness of the process was one of the main sources of dissatisfaction on a personal level, especially for those juggling family life and a career.

- Another major source of dissatisfaction is the impact of promoting what could be termed as 'bad leaders' on the organisation as a whole. It could be argued that the organisation and serving officers have a different opinion on what makes a 'good leader.'

- The researcher picked up from the participants that despite the frustration that the promotional process causes, it is not a key tipping point that would cause participants to leave in itself. Opportunities in other areas, such as specialist roles and areas of personal interest were mentioned as important alongside promotion.

The dissatisfaction caused by the lack of opportunities other than promotion were not articulated by all participants. It appears that a number of participants, whilst acknowledging that there were fewer opportunities, they were still available for those who really wanted them and those willing to work to achieve them. Those who did touch upon this issue highlighted the following points;

"The opportunity to move around and try new things is reduced …it's not the same as it was, there isn't much movement" (Participant 9)

"it's important that they develop you into a role you want to do…with no tenure in the more specialist or more enjoyable jobs…people don't tend to come out of these roles…that reduces opportunity for others" (Participant 11)

"Only way to get certain roles is if someone dies or retires" (Participant 11)

"I think there is still the opportunity to move laterally...but due to restructuring there is a lot of uncertainty in departments so the opportunity appear reduced...I think that is temporary" (Participant 16)

Again the perception appears to be around how this impacts others or how it may impact them in the future rather than having any direct impact on a decision to leave at the current time. Not one participant expresses how a lack of opportunity laterally has affected them directly, only how it could affect them or how they perceive it to affect others in the organisation.

Lack of support – The perceived lack of support can be further broken down into two categories. There is the lack of support from the organisation itself but also the perceived lack of external support from others such as the public or the government. The perceived lack of support from the organisation is by far the most impactive on dissatisfaction levels of the two categories and was an area of dissatisfaction covered by all participants. The lack of support also links in closely with the feeling of being valued and rewarded by the organisation so those issues will also be explored. Some of the issues highlighted include;

"when I started it was a family environment...I felt cared for...it's not like that now it is very cut throat" (Participant 1)

"They are waiting to make an example out of someone" (Participant 14)

"There is a lot of work that goes unrewarded which is quite demoralising" (Participant 10)

"doing what's best for the people rather than just making decisions on what is best for the organisation has been lost over the last few years" (Participant 6)

"You aren't treated like you are valued...there is a culture of blame from senior officers...the odds are at some point something will go wrong and the culture of blame will bite me." (Participant 14)

"They need soldiers on the ground…so they force people out of roles…some people don't want to do it so they are just told to leave" (Participant 6)

"If you wanted to leave, years ago they would encourage you to stay…now it's like they want to get rid of you" (Participant 1)

"I am quite dismayed at how little the police service values its officers, you are just a resource…both of my line mangers have been supportive but that is a rare thing" (Participant 14)

Throughout the interviews the researcher got the impression that feeling valued and supported by the organisation was very important to all of the participants. Many struggled to conceptualize what they meant by 'feeling valued' and 'feeling supported' but in many cases they just know that they didn't feel this way. It was difficult for any participant to describe how this has changed and what could be done to bring those feelings back. Not being able to qualify what it means to feel supported and valued make understanding dissatisfaction and improving in these areas far more complex.

Despite the mention of the blame culture within senior ranks, none of the participants report experiencing this directly, in fact one participant admits;

"I don't know where that culture has come from…officers see others getting into trouble and think it will be them" (Participant 9)

Another identified that

"I think the way the organisation treats people has changed, some things have got better and some things have got worse" (Participant 8)

It is more the perception of a blame culture or how they may be treated if something goes wrong rather than based on first-hand experience. How the organisation is perceived to be treating individuals seems a key factor to the participants, this may be linked to their job

embeddedness and how they feel about being part of the organisation as well as if personal and organisational values align.

There have been a large number of negative media stories around policing in general however negative public perceptions and the lack of support from the public did not present itself and a large area of dissatisfaction for serving officers.

"I think we get a rough ride from the public…I think if they really knew how we felt and what was going on….they would understand…I don't think the force manages public expectations" (Participant 1)

"Negative media attention affects retention at the moment" (Participant 8)

Lack of support from the public does not appears to have been a factor in these participants decision to quit or remain but again it is acknowledged that it may have an impact on others or even on potential future recruits. It appears that much of this section is based on perceptions which appear to be influenced by those interactions around you. Those surround by more positive colleagues and management appear to have a more positive outlook.

Increased pressure – a number of general and police specific retention studies identify increased pressure/stress or 'burnout' as a contributing factor to employee turnover. Whilst it was acknowledge by participants that workloads may have increase, there is very little mention to stress and pressure being an area of dissatisfaction for them personally and no mention of this having an impact on making a decision to remain or leave the service.

"I don't think the work itself has got more stressful…I mean it's a very stressful job but not more stressful" (Participant 14)

"I don't think the job has really changed" (Participant 16)

"People are starting to feel the pressure" (Participant 9)

There was no indication to the researcher in any of the interviews that increased stress and workload was an issue affecting any of the participants. Again there was acknowledgment that others may be feeling this way but none of the participants in the current study cited stress or pressure in relation to policing work as an area of dissatisfaction. However undoubtedly the culture of blame, mention previously created certain organisational pressures again these were view with a certain degree of pragmatism.

Individualisms – Due the nature of qualitative research and using interviews as a research method there are always factors that affect individuals that aren't mentioned by other participants. These individualisms, as the researcher has termed them, are still important to understand adding further value to the research. Some of the issues identified include; lack of information provided by the Federation, discrimination due to race or sexuality, bullying culture, differing expectations, training and the performance culture.

"The Fed are a toothless tiger really…no one tells you what is going on…they consult with the Fed but that is pointless really" (Participant 1)

"In my service there had been a bullying culture" (Participant 8)

"My expectation of what I thought I was going to do and what I actually do are quite different" (Participant 9)

"Training is not what it used to be" (Participant 14)

"The performance culture and hitting targets really made me consider my career in policing a few times" (Participant 18)

"For the first time in my career I feel discriminated against for being a white male" (Participant 16)

Whilst these things were only mentioned on an individual level in the current sample, it is possible that with a larger sample, these themes may be repeated. Therefore they are still valid points for consideration and still add to the dissatisfaction of serving officers.

Why do officers who have considered resigning remain in service?

Understanding why officers remain in service is key to understanding how to improve retention and potentially reduce turnover, this is an area of academic research that has been somewhat neglected in the area of policing. Participants found it somewhat easier to express what factors had made them consider quitting compared to identifying why they remain in service.

Retention literature identifies that that job satisfaction is one of the key reason for an individual to remain in a role and improves organisational commitment. The researcher identified two key overarching themes which encompass the various drivers behind officers' decision to remain in service. These are job satisfaction and identifying as a police officer.

Job satisfaction – It is widely accepted that those with higher levels of job satisfaction are more likely to remain with the organisation. In this case job satisfaction appears to be influenced by three key things; role satisfaction, variety of work and doing good/helping people.

It seems clear that the impact of the specific role on job satisfaction cannot be under estimated.

"all the time I enjoy my role I will stay…if I was put into a different role that I didn't like I would leave…satisfaction is the only thing that keeps me going" (Participant 1)

"The role that you do really adds to your job satisfaction" (Participant 6)

"The roles have been very important to me and overall have kept me satisfied" (Participant 8)

"I am very happy in my role…even if there were no promotion opportunities for a while as long as I am happy in my role I will stay" (Participant 9)

"Job satisfaction is the most important thing to me" (Participant 16)

"I think that the role that you do and job satisfaction is more important than other things" (Participant 11)

"I enjoy my job and job satisfaction is paramount" (Participant 14)

Variety is also a key factor in sustaining interest, affecting job satisfaction and keeping people in the service. The fact that the participants in this study perceived that the variety of the role still remained and played an important role in the overall satisfaction that the job gives them. Participants identified that they felt the variety was still available, with many recognising that although opportunities were reduced the variety is still available and this is really important to those remaining in the role.

"I have looked outside the police but there isn't anything with the variety we get" (Participant 1)

"One thing that has sustained me is the variety…overall I have stayed because of the variety" (Participant 8)

"I get lots of variety…when the time come and you stop enjoying your role you are able to move and do something different" (Participant 9)

"Promotion isn't a deal breaker….variety and satisfaction are" (Participant 10)

It seems that the current job role of all of the serving participants was key to their job satisfaction and remaining within the service. Taking personal enjoyment from the role which challenges them and provides the required variety has a large impact on their decision to remain. Serving officers were also more likely to seek out different roles and see development opportunities if their enjoyment levels and satisfaction were waning. They

were also more likely to be accepting of the limited promotional opportunities and seek development in other ways.

Helping others and doing good also helps improve job satisfaction and is identified as a key factor keeping people in service. This is linked in closely with the role of a police officer or described in other words what it means to the participants to be a police officer. The personal challenges, enjoyment and satisfaction play a huge role, but it is heavily supplemented by the positive feelings of helping, protecting and serving others.

"I genuinely care about the police and the public we serve" (Participant 1)

"The job itself…assisting the community, prevention and detecting crime…is still a worthwhile job" (Participant 6)

"The most important this is that you are doing the right thing…it's about helping others…if you can do good you should" (Participant 10)

"I enjoy helping and protecting people" (Participant 11)

"I get a shiver down my spine when I get to tell a victim what they really want to hear" (Participant 17)

I am a police officer – Identifying as a police officer appeared to be a key factor whilst the majority of participants accepted that they could perform other jobs they couldn't imagine doing anything else. Being a police officer gave them a strong sense of social identity and was part of who they were as a person, not just a job role.

"Being a police officer is important to me…any other job would just be a job" (Participant 1)

"I am proud to be a police officer…I can't really see myself doing anything else" (Participant 9)

"Being a police officer is not something I would give away easily" (Participant 11)

The personal investment in the role of a police officer and identifying as a police officer further adds to satisfaction. Identifying as a police officer seemed pivotal for these participants when considering their motivations to stay, there wasn't the sense that the participants felt they couldn't do anything else but that they wouldn't because it was part of their moral code, or duty to serve the community.

4.5 Discussion

There are very few academic studies that have considered the reasons behind an individual's choice to remain in a job role even after they have seriously considered quitting. Understanding what keeps people within an organisation and why they continue to perform certain roles even if other around them are leaving could be key to further understanding employee turnover and retention. Various studies and research have identified a relatively high level of officers in the police service who express the intention to quit in the near future (PFEW 2014, Cooper and Ingram 2002). What is interesting is the fact that the high level of intention has not yet translated into similarly high levels of turnover. Study one indicated that turnover is in fact increasing it is nowhere near the 50-70% level expressed as an intention in some of the previously mentioned studies. Understanding why intention doesn't always translate into action and if the organisation can have an influence on this is more important than ever due to the increasing voluntary turnover rate.

What was interesting to note during this study was the participant's ability or not to articulate why they remained in the police service as opposed to leaving. Voicing their dissatisfaction with certain aspects of the job and organisation in detail seems to be far easier for the participants when compared to articulating and explaining in details the reasons they choose to remain in service. Many retention theories (Mobley 1982, Moore 2002, Lambert et al. 2001) identified that job satisfaction was key to retaining employees within an organisation. It could be argued that the results of study two supports the notion

that job satisfaction was a key factor in the reasons behind an individual's decision to remain in service. Three of the key factors identified as influencing the decision to remain were the variety of work, being able to help others and enjoying the role they performed all of these things are linked closely with job satisfaction. There is no doubt that job satisfaction is a personal thing, one individual may enjoy doing something different everyday whilst others may like repetition therefore understanding what job satisfaction means and how to deliver it on a large scale is not an easy task.

There is also some support for Ramhall's (2004) theory around the fulfilment of needs and Mitchell et al. (2001) theory around job embeddedness. There was a strong sense that individuals identified as police officers that they couldn't imagine performing another role and in many cases being in the police service was the fulfilment of a childhood ambition. It could be argued that performing the role of a police officer fulfils a personal need within the individual and as Ramhall (2004) argued people seek the fulfilment of needs and all the time these needs are being met then they will remain. This could also link in closely with Mitchell's theory of job embeddedness. Those who are more committed to the role are more likely to be involved on a personal as well as professional level with the organisation making the decision to leave perhaps harder due to the impact that it will have on both a personal and professional level.

Whilst the levels of satisfaction and the commitment to the role of a police officers are no doubt key factors in the decision to remain this does not mean that these officers will remain to serve the rest of their career in the police service. Satisfaction is an individual thing that can change with time and what people are seeking from a job or organisation is fluid and can change overtime, therefore what people need to be satisfied can also change. Howes et al. (2004) identified that there will be a certain proportion of people who remain in a role for practical reasons and the results of this study identified that there were some practical aspects in play for some participants. In fact there were not only some practical

aspects such as finances in play but there were also some officers who were still re-evaluating their decision to remain on a very regular basis. Most of the participants in the current study indicated that if their levels of satisfaction or enjoyment dropped, especially in relation to the specific job role they performed, they would consider moving on. Therefore understanding what is meant by satisfaction and monitoring satisfaction levels is key.

Undoubtedly factors that cause dissatisfaction and reasons for remaining in service are complex and often cannot be viewed in terms of their impact in isolation from one another. However there are some key factors that themselves are more influential than others that should form the focus of future research and policy.

In the current study there seems to be three factors that were most influential in an officer's decision to remain in service. These were the specific role the current held, the perceived opportunity for development and identifying as a police officer. Although there were various areas of dissatisfaction identified including changes to pay and conditions, lack of opportunities and feeling unsupported by the organisation none of these factors alone appeared to be what can be described as a 'deal breaker' for these participants. However what did become clear when discussing reasons for dissatisfaction as well as reasons for remaining in service was the importance of the current role the participant was performing. In some cases participants articulated that if they were to find themselves in a role in which they were really unhappy, that did not provide the variety, mental challenge and level of satisfaction they currently were experiencing this would lead towards increased dissatisfaction and potentially resigning from the service quite quickly.

The impact of the job role was slightly negated by the perceived level of opportunities that remained for serving officers. If the time spent serving in a role with which they were unhappy was limited with further opportunities in the near future available this somewhat reduced the desire to resign. As well as being an area of dissatisfaction, there was also the

flip side of the coin, the specific job role the participants were currently in was one of the key reasons for higher levels of job satisfaction and therefore a key motivating reason to remain in service. Therefore specific job role and perceived opportunities, not just promotional ones, can be described as two of the most important motivating factors behind an officer's decision to remain in service.

The other key factor identified by the researcher was the importance participants placed on identifying as a police officer and how this impacted upon them as an individual shaping or aligning with their moral code. The importance placed on this as a motivating factor could be linked back to the motivations for joining to police service. When considering the results in section two, serving officers were more likely to have fallen into the 'childhood ambition' category as a key motivating factor for joining the service compared to former officers. They were also more likely to place a greater emphasis on the importance of serving the community and helping others than former officers. These two factors demonstrate how closely serving officers identify with the role of a police officer and how this fulfils a personal need and links in closely with who they are and who they aspire to be as an individual. Therefore identifying as a police officer and maintaining this consistent motivation and belief throughout their career is a key motivating factor behind an officer's decision to remain in service.

4.6 Drawbacks

With the researching being qualitative in nature the sample size was limited which has some implications for generalizability. It also became clear throughout the process that job satisfaction and the factors that influence job satisfaction are very personal to the individual meaning there may be many other factors that were not explored within this research. Participants also found it quite difficult to articulate the reasons behind their decision to remain with much emphasis placed on beliefs and feeling not always tangible concepts

which impacts on future recommendations. Participants may have also been reluctant to discuss more personal issues such as finance or culture issues with the researcher who was in the main unknown to them.

Section 5 Study Three – Former Officers Motivations for Leaving

5.1 Aim: To understand the key drivers affecting the individuals decision to voluntary leave the Police Service

The aim of study three is to, following of from the information analysed in study two, establish the key motivations behind the decision of officers to voluntarily resign from the police service. Understanding which factor or combination of factors led to the actual decision to resign and identifying if this can be influenced by the organisation in any way will be key to any future retention policies.

It is worth noting here that study three along with study two was be expanded to include officers outside of the MPS.

5.2 Critique of data collection technique

This is a qualitative study in which the researcher conducts semi-structured, in-depth interviews with a cross section of individuals who have voluntarily resigned from the police service. Originally the researcher was going to use data from exit interviews to inform this study, however due to access issues the data was not available.

By taking a completely qualitative approach, the researcher will be able to develop a better understanding as to the key influences on individual officer's decisions to voluntarily resign. This information will help inform policy makers of some of the key issues affecting the turnover and retention of police officers. By combining the results of this study with study two a wider understanding of the reasons officers stay or go can be established to help inform and improve retention strategies. Whilst conducting in-depth interviews is a good

way to gain a more holistic picture about an individual's decision to leave they can be time consuming and finding participants was on occasion difficult.

The use of interviews is a common method of gathering information for social scientist with the key focus being on gathering qualitative information. There are many types and styles of interview including structured, semi-structured, un-structured, face to face, telephone, email involving an individual participant or a group of participants. Kumar (2011) argues that the theoretical roots of interviewing are based in the interpretist tradition. Jupp (1989) highlights the importance of selecting the right method of interviewing to elicit the information you need to gather is key for successful research. For example if the information you wish to gather is of a personal or sensitive nature, group interviews are not likely to be appropriate as participants may not be willing to express their true feelings within a group setting. Davies et al. (2011) argue that interviews allow the researcher to explore key issues and themes allowing people to open up and express themselves which is not possible with many questionnaires. Gill et al. (2008) state that interviews are used to explore the views and beliefs of the participants, this provides a richer picture as to the key issues being explored. Noaks & Wincup (2010) highlight the importance of the relationship or rapport between the interviewer and interviewee. A good rapport will encourage the interviewee to open up and disclose key information. Gill et al. (2008) state the importance of beginning an interview with more neutral or easier questions to give the participants confidence and help with establishing a rapport. With this in mind the researcher was fully aware of their interviewing skills including body language, appearance and their active listening skills. Where possible interviews were conducted one on one, face to face giving the researcher the best opportunity to build a rapport with the participant and be able to pick up on non-verbal cues. Individual face to face interviews can often be time consuming, involve travelling, increasing cost with potentially fewer people willing to participate.

 Other researchers have made use of telephone or online interviews which allows for a larger sample as well as saving time and money on travel. However there is the potential for none verbal cues to be missed using these techniques and a lower likelihood of a rapport being build leading to less disclosure by the participants. This will potentially impact on the nature and quality of the information that can be elicited from the participants. However in some cases this was considered the most appropriate method of communication in the current study.

Jupp (1989) indicates the importance of the structure of the interviews that are conducted as this my influence the type of response given. Structured interviews, Jupp argues leaves less or little opportunity for the participant to express themselves. However such interviews, due to their structured nature often allow for a large sample to be gathered. It could be argued that conducting structured interviews allows you to have a large sample size from which the more generalizable conclusions can be drawn, however they may lack detail in areas that are left unexplored which could be key to the research process.

 Consideration was also given to how the information elicited from the interviews is to be recorded for use by the researcher, there are three main methods. First being the recall of the responses, no or very few notes are taken during the interview and the researcher writes the interview up after it has ended from memory. Noaks & Wincup (2010) argue that this method creates various issues with the quality of the data, the researcher may not be able to recall all of the information accurately, especially non-verbal cues and the participants body language. The two most common approaches to data recording during interviews are comprehensive note taking and audio recording. Note taking allows the researcher to highlight key information acting as an aide memoir when writing up the interview at a later time. However note taking during an interview can affect the rapport due to the fact that eye contact is reduced and the interviewee may feel that they are not being listened too. Audio recordings allow the researcher to fully engage with the participant

ensuring that body language is observed, eye contact is maintained and active listening is apparent. However there appears to be some stigma attached to being recorded, this can potentially make participants uncomfortable. There is also the time consuming issues of transcribing the audio recordings at a later date. This has been somewhat reduced by the advent of software packages that can transcribe from an audio file however these packages cannot always be 100% accurate and it is still important for the researcher to note non-verbal cues and key reactions from the participants.

As a researcher you are not going to conduct a perfect interview every time. Ensuring that you have basic interview skills, knowing what approach you are going to take and making sure your participant is comfortable is key. May (2005) highlights that personal skills are important when interviewing. Tewksbury (2009) states that people often see qualitative research as the easier option, however a great deal of emphasis is placed on the skills and abilities of the researcher. The researcher needs to make sure the participant understand why you are gathering information, what it will be used for and make them aware they can discontinue their participation at any time. Much of this can be covered by providing a clear and concise information sheet and consent form. Being aware of any potential personally sensitive issues that may cause the participants emotional distress is also important.

For the purposes of study three, semi structured, face to face interviews with individual participants were conducted where possible, which was deemed appropriate due to the qualitative nature of the data required. The researcher intends to enter into the interview phase with no preconceived ideas as to the reasons behind the decision to quit. It is hoped that a theory can be built from the information gathered. Grey (2009) highlights that qualitative research can be used to identify new issues or provide different perspectives on known issues. Due to the fact that individuals' reasons behind the decision to quit is a key aim, interviews were considered the most appropriate method to use. By conducting face to face interviews it will allow the researcher to build a rapport with the participant which be

more difficult via an online or telephone interview. By only having semi structured questions, the participant will be able to express themselves about issues that may have not been considered or identified by the researcher. Group interviews were considered due to time and financial constraints, however this may discourage participants from full disclosing any personal reasons behind the decisions made and actions taken. It is hoped that initial interviews can be conducted and key themes establish, these themes will then direct further questioning in a second round of interviews ensuring the information gathered can be triangulated.

5.3 Method

Interviews took place either face to face in public locations, participant's home addresses or via Skype. The interviews were semi-structure with very few direct questions, the researcher had a number of themes that were covered in the interview which were derived from a comprehensive literature review and social media researched which took place prior to the interview process.

Interviews took place either face to face in police stations, participant's home address or via Skype. The interviews were semi-structure with very few direct questions, the researcher had a number of themes that were covered in the interview which were derived from a comprehensive literature review and social media researched which took place prior to the interview process. A full list of topics covered can be found in section 9.4, however some of the key questions covered motivations for joining, the main reasons individuals decided to leave, how long did it take you to make the decision to leave and well a question in relation to policing being a career for life or not.

Once the interviews had been conducted and transcribed, the researcher created an open coding framework and analysed the interviews within the framework. As the interviews were transcribed key themes and sub-themes were identified and verified by cross referencing

across interviews. Responses were assigned to the most appropriate overarching theme in the first instance, with the second round of coding breaking these down further into sub-themes. Themes were assess as valid by taking consideration of the inter-relation of the themes between participants and the emphasis the words and the body language noted by the researcher as to the important of the issues discussed. Key overarching themes that were reflected across the interviews were identified and these will be the focus of the results. Individual themes or differences that weren't repeated across interviews were also noted. Individual themes or differences that were repeated across interviews were also noted.

Selection criteria

Participants in this study were included based on the following criteria: A former police officer who holds a rank between police constable and chief inspector (inclusive) who resigned from the service for voluntary reasons in the last three years.

Participants were recruited in various ways including though social media appeals, though the researchers own contacts as well as via the snowballing method where other participants recommended those who may be willing to take part. The table below demonstrates the demographics of the participants including gender, rank and length of service. The demographics indicate a relatively even split between make and female with the average age being 38 years of age and the average length of service being 13 years.

Gender	Age	Length of service (Yrs)	Rank	Imagined serving 30 years?
F	36	14	DI	Y
M	41	11	PC	Y
F	39	19	Insp	Y
F	33	6	PC	Y
M	35	10	PC	Y
F	35	10	DC	Y
M	37	11	PS	Y
M	38	8	PC	Y
F	51	28	PS	Y

Table 6 demonstrating demographics for study three participants

5.4 Results

Why did officers voluntarily resign from the police service?

Despite the levels of turnover being far lower than the intended 16% identified in the latest PFEW survey, voluntarily turnover has increased over the last three years and could potentially continue to rise. A vast amount of time and public money is spent training police officers, it takes a number of years to build up knowledge and experience to become an effective police officer. For these reasons it is important to understand why officers are choosing to leave the police service and to establish if the organisation can do anything to reduce the number of voluntarily leavers should they wish to do so.

Interestingly data analysis revealed the same four key themes covering the motivation behind the decision to leave as established in study two. These themes were elicited from the coding of the interview data they are overarching themes that cover a wide range of data that can be linked to the overall concept. The four key themes have been identified by the researcher, under which most responses can be classified are; *Changes to pay, pension and conditions, lack of opportunity, lack of support and increased pressure*. There was also the additional theme of *impact on family life* identified.

Changes to pay, pensions and conditions – Changes to pay, pensions and conditions have affected all officers to varying degrees, some officers have found that their pensions have been reduced and they are going to have to work, what they consider a significant amount of extra time. Other officers have been affected by the introduction of a fitness test or pay freezes. It seems the response by individual officers to the various changes to conditions introduced after the Winsor review as well as changes introduced by individual forces, is very personal to them, with difference changes having varying personal impact.

"I went from having 16 years to retirement to 24 years all of a sudden…having an extra 8 years made me feel like I had joined the police all over again" (Participant 2)

"the Hutton review knocked me for six…I knew my body wouldn't last the extra 9 years…it really upset me that they could just change something I had been working towards for the last 15 years." (Participant 4)

"at one point I knew how long my career would be…all of a sudden I had to work longer for less and pay more…it really affected the way I felt about the job" (Participant 15)

"Rather than sit back and moan about the cuts and the changes I though right I'm off" (Participant 2)

"It was a combination of everything really…a pay cut, lack of pay rises, it really started to affect me" (Participant 7)

"The last 5 years of my career, my money was frozen…left me worse and worse off…I was working harder, getting less and not able to afford the things I wanted to do socially" (Participant 13)

"for me it was the change in terms and conditions…I was like hang on a minute…I signed a contract…if I worked for private company you couldn't do this…it really put my back up" (Participant 15)

Former officers expressed similar levels and reasons for dissatisfaction with the changes to pension pay and conditions as expressed in study two by serving officers. The main areas of dissatisfaction come from:

- The increased length of service that would be required seemed to create greater dissatisfactions than the reduction in money. The idea of not having the opportunity to retire at a relatively young age after serving the community for 30 years was identified as a key issue.

- The second issue appears to be around feeling that the changes were unfair on serving officers, contracts were broken and changed, in some cases dramatically, and there is no reason for officers to believe that this won't happen to them again. With one participant stating "it would be naïve to think that they wouldn't make more changes in my remaining 24 years." This could reflect the feeling that officers lack control and fear facing a continuing uncertain future.

- Whilst changes to pensions, pay and conditions seems to be a motivating factor that impacted on participants decision to resign, rarely did it feature as the sole motivating factor. Not all participants made reference to it being a motivating factor in their decision to leave, however the changes and their impact upon the individuals is still considered an important factor, which influenced the decision making process.

Lack of opportunity – The lack of opportunity and the perceived unfairness surrounding the promotional process was a key motivating factor in the decision to resign. Participants described some very negative personal experiences in relation to development opportunities and the promotional process.

"I was discriminated against…I wasn't from the groups they wished to promote…I was acting up…when it came to promotion it was all about promoting people from other

groups…they seem happy to promote people who aren't as good just to fill diversity quotas" (Participant 13)

"People are promoted for the wrong reasons…it really bugs me…people are promoted based on gender and that is wrong…I wanted to be promoted based on talent" (Participant 12)

"It seems those that are worst at their jobs get promoted and those that look after their teams don't get anywhere" (Participant 5)

"at the interview board I scored in the top 4 out of 39 people…but someone who was number 30 on the list got promoted 2 years before me…there is no process" (Participant 4)

"in some cases there were over 200 sergeants applying for 20 posts…it isn't geared towards promoting leaders…I acted up loads of times but when I came to promotion I was unsuitable" (Participant 3)

"I was relied upon to do important work…attend meetings in place of senior officers…but when it came to being supported for promotion I wasn't" (Participant 2)

All of the participants that expressed dissatisfaction with the promotional process had direct negative experience of the process on most occasions over a period of time. Two main areas of dissatisfaction where identified:

- The perception of an unfair process based on gender or ethnicity, participant accepted that the police should represent a diverse community however not at the expense of other candidates. As one participants states "good people should be encouraged not just certain types of people" Regardless of whether this perception is accurate or not, it is potentially a belief that is widely held, which may create tension within the service as well as detract from those who are promoted from certain groups due to their skill and leadership ability.

- A second source of dissatisfaction appears to come from being allowed to 'act up' at the rank you are hoping to achieve but being passed over for promotion when the time comes. This is not something participants express as an isolated incident but occurring on more than one occasion. This causes a level of frustration for participants when they are expected to do the role filling in for others but do not achieve promotion in their own right.

Lack of support – Lack of support mainly focuses on the lack of support provide by the organisation itself. Interestingly when looking at the promotion process and pay and conditions, not all participant touched upon these reasons as motivating factors. When it comes to the lack of support as a motiving factor all participants articulated this as a factor in the decision to leave the service. The lack of support covers a range of issues from the most personal to the more general feeling at organisational level, but they all seem to be linked into the overall treatment of officers by the organisation.

"I would have been quite happy to carry on working for the police if I felt better supported or rewarded…not necessarily financially…I think I may have worked my way through all the horrible changes if I had been valued" (Participant 2)

"In the police you are not valued as a person…among your peers and immediate line manager you are but above that level no one really gives a monkeys" (Participant 3)

"I think people aren't looked after anymore…I was like what am I doing putting my life on the line and they don't really care for me" (Participant 4)

"You feel like you are just a number and no one cares" (Participant 5)

"A senior officer walked into a briefing and said I am fed up of all the moaning about cuts…if you didn't like it you can leave" (Participant 7)

"my senior management didn't care, you were a small cog in a big machine…it felt like no one cared…there was no taking care of wellbeing " (Participant 15)

"Quite simply it is budget driven…there is no support no one cares" (Participant 18)

The change in roles for some officers also had an impact, the role and its enjoyment is an important factor in the decision to leave. Whilst the type of role was a key factor, dissatisfaction with the role could be somewhat influences by other factors such as appropriate training and relevant moves after a certain amount of time. In these cases the dissatisfaction tended to arise from how officers were told of moves and the lack of training, support and recognitions of skills sets after such moves were made.

"I was booted out of my role…I was put in a role that I hadn't done for 5 years and expected to pick it up like a pro with no support or no training" (Participant 5)

"I was put on a team I hated, I had no interest, experience or training in that area…I really struggled and I had no support from the force at all" (Participant 12)

"I had a great role that I really enjoyed…I was treated really badly…I wasn't even told it was coming to an end…I got an email one day…that was the first I knew about it…I was moved to just about the worse job you can get" (Participant 15)

In one way or another the majority of participants expressed their dissatisfaction with the role they were in at the time they took the decision to leave. Role enjoyment contributes to job satisfaction, if job satisfaction is low, combined with other factors, this may be a tipping point in the decision to resign. Role enjoyment and satisfaction appeared to play a key part in retaining serving officers who had considered leaving. However it seems that former officers were in some not all cases, less inclined to seek out other roles or see other developmental opportunities.

Impact on family life – The impact that being a police officer has on family life did feature as a common theme in both male and female participants. It seemed that there was a threshold in people's careers when the importance of putting personal priorities first or even on equal standing came to the fore.

"I was getting a bit fed up of the shift work and the impact on my family life…I didn't always want to not be there (with my family) on Christmas day and New Year's Eve" (Participant 3)

"I joined the police with a long term partner, we are still together but only just…I could hardly see them due to the hours I worked" (Participant 5)

"the job affected my home life…I lost a couple of good relationships…there are only so many times you can be late home before they go I'm sick of this, I'm leaving" (Participant 7)

"The type of work I was doing was affecting my relationship with my partner and my child" (Participant 12)

"the first few years all you do is work long hours…you don't really have a life…when you introduce a partner and children all of a sudden that balance is off and you realise how much of your life you have been devoting to the job" (Participant 15)

Whilst the impact on family life was an area of dissatisfaction, it was not impactive enough in itself to cause resignation in any case. Many of the participants identified ways in which they worked around these issues where possible and were willing to sacrifice some family time to remain in the job if the organisation could be more flexible. In some case the organisation was able to support the changes needs and in other cases there appear to be no attempt to support their staff. It seems the impact on family life could be negated with a suitable role and job satisfaction. However in this case it does seem clear that police forces differ widely in the policies around flexible working to support family life which can have a huge impact on certain individuals.

Could the organisation have encouraged you to stay?

One of the ultimate aims of this research is to help inform future retention policies for the police service and understanding if the organisation could have done anything to stop individuals from leaving the service is a key part of that. Therefore participants in study three were asked to articulate if there was anything they felt the organisation could have done to encourage them to remain. The results were an interesting mixture of views.

Around half of the participant's stated categorically that there was nothing the organisation could do that would have made them stay.

"Nothing…absolutely not its take two years to get my life back but it has been worth it" *(Participant 18)*

"If things hadn't been so bad I may have stayed a bit longer…they just speeded up an inevitable process" (Participant 5)

"It got to the point where it was a thankless task…there were no incentives to stay" (Participant 4)

There were also a proportion of participants that recognised that they would have stayed if, in some cases very minor adjustments or allowances by the organisation could have been made.

"if I could have moved to a department where I was happy…something I was more suited too there was someone who wanted to do a swap with me but they just wouldn't allow it" (Participant 12)

"If they had assisted with flexible working it would have made a real difference" (Participant 7)

"If I had been able to go part time that would have been perfect…a bit more work life balance was needed" (Participant 5)

"if the quality of officers still coming through had remained high I might of stayed but what you get now is under trained under confident officers for which you are responsible"(Participant 13)

In some cases it is clear that some level of organisational change would have prevented some officers from resigning. There will also be occasions where the decision to resign cannot be influenced by the organisation in anyway, but recognising where the decision can be influence and how to stop people reaching the point where they are considering resigning is important for improving future retention. Most participants expressed that they were unhappy and dissatisfied for a long period of time before they took the decision to leave the police service. Despite voicing their concerns and asking for adjustments they were not listened to or supported. In some cases line managers and senior officers expressed surprise and shock when resignation letters were presented making some participants feel even less valued and further confirming for themselves that leaving was the right decision. Such treatment at the point of resignation undoubtedly had an influence of the response to the question about returning to service in the future.

Other factors

As with any research involving semi-structured interviews and accounts of people's feelings and experiences there are certain factors that emerge that only appear important to an individual or a small number of individuals. Acknowledging these individualism and sub-themes is just as important as recognising common themes, adding to the validity of the current research process. The topics briefly covered in this section were mentioned by one or more or the participants but were not presented as having a large impact on the decision to resign from the police service.

Chasing targets/Performance culture – Some participants expressed concerns that the police service has become too heavily embroiled in chasing performance targets at the

expense of the integrity of police work. The pressure of hitting these targets and the consequences of not hitting them were reportedly have an impact on some participants.

"My bosses where chasing figures and targets...I was at odds with them all the time because I didn't agree with what they were doing...everyday was about numbers not about people" (Participant 4)

"even though the government said targets had been removed...you were still going on an action plan if you didn't arrest enough people or give out enough tickets...how can you make a decision on someone's liberty or not based on a target" (Participant 7)

Those participants that did touch on this seem to emphasise how such a performance and target driven culture was going against their own moral code or culture and their views on the role of a police officer.

Negative public & media perceptions – Some participants expressed frustration and disappointment in relation to how they perceived the police service to be viewed by the wider public. Serving the community is a large part of police work and helping others was a key motivation for joining for the participant in this study. Therefore negative public perceptions of the police have had a knock on effect of the morale of some officers.

"It does pain me to see the negative press the police get...I read it and I think it's not right...it's just not true" (Participant 3)

"I was in an organisation where I am hated by the public as a police officer in general...you get attacked due to the uniform you wear" (Participant 2)

So it seems the media coverage and perceived view of being held in low-esteem by the public did not go unnoticed or without impact on some individuals.

Influence of Low morale – In some cases participants reported feeling the negative effects of low morale in colleagues and how this impact upon them. Being surround by

others who were expressing negative thoughts and attitudes influenced the morale of the participants.

"Morale was so bad...I am a happy go lucky person and I was struggling to motivate my team...I couldn't see a light at the end of the tunnel" (Participant 2)

"The force was full of very negative people... you have to work with these people on a daily basis...they drain the energy out of you" (Participant 15)

It seems that being surround by negative people exaggerated the negative views held by the participants further adding to their dissatisfaction.

5.5 Discussion

Understanding the reasons behind voluntary turnover from an organisational point of view will no doubt assist in reducing this type turnover in the future. Understanding turnover in an organisation such as the police is vital due to the heavy reliance on the human capital in such an organisation. Balfour and Neff (1993) identified that high turnover in any organisation where human capital is pivotal cause's greater problems and a vast number of issues for that organisation. As Taylor (2002) highlighted, turnover and the reasons behind it are often different for individual organisations therefore getting a good understanding of why officers, who participated in this study resigned is an important first step in improving officer retention. What does seem clear is that there was no one specific or individual factor that led to the decision to quit, but more a combination or culmination of events. The idea that the decision to resign is a multi-dimensional one (Boxall et al. 2003) is not new and not only linked to decisions made by police officers, research by Campion (1991) identified that there were many factors the affected the individual and their decision to quit.

Changes to pay and conditions was one of the most commonly cited reasons for dissatisfaction with the main focus around the increased length of service and the affect the

pay freeze had on their personal life. Key changes made under the recommendations of the Hutton and Winsor reviews were frequently mentioned but the focus was, unsurprisingly how the changes affected the individual's personal circumstances, rather than an overall dislike for change. There is very little research into the overall effect of the recent changes to pay and conditions, this is likely to be due to the fact that the changes are in fact very recent and it is not yet possible to understand the full longitudinal effect and impact of such changes. Recent research by Hoggett et al. (2013) identified that there were widespread negative views towards the changes brought about by the recommendations made from the Winsor review. However the impact these have had on officer's decision to leave the police service is still not yet clear. Ongori (2007) identified that organisational instability has an effect on turnover across various sectors, no doubt the current austerity measures and reforms have unsettled many police officers.

An unfair promotional process and the perceived lack of promotional and development opportunities also appears to be a contributing factor in the decision to resign from the service. Many of the participants in this study perceived the promotional process to be unfair and lacking in future opportunity. There appears to be an acceptance that the promotional process has been unfair in its selection and subsequent success of candidates for a number of years but the opportunities have been further reduced since the cuts to police budgets have really set in. There is a vast amount of academic literature within policing that has identified dissatisfaction with the promotional process as a factor contributing to voluntarily resignation. Studies by Jaramilo et al. (2004), Parsons et al. (2011) and Brunetto & Farr-Wharton (2003) all identified that dissatisfaction with the promotional process and the perceived lack of opportunity decrease levels of job satisfaction therefore contributing to the decision to resign from the police service. Therefore it is unsurprising that the perceived lack of promotional opportunity and the perceived unfairness of the process featured as a factor contributing to the decision to resign. Nether the less understanding that this is still an issue

for some officers gives an insight into current feeling, however this should be seen in the context of study two whereby some serving officers do not hold this perception. Officers in study two may not view the promotional process as perfect but are more accepting of the complexity of achieving the best process. There is more acceptance that such processes are run for the benefit of the organisation rather than the benefit of the individuals amongst serving officers. Therefore understanding why serving officers view this process differently and why some can be more accepting of this process and see opportunities that others can't will further aid the understanding in relation to officer's decision making processes.

The impact of feeling valued and support, or not cannot be underestimated. Dobbs (2001) identified that the relationship an individual has with a manager directly affects the length of employment within an organisation. It seems that the impact of stress or the negative impact on family life were two factors that could be negated with better support however when individuals felt unsupported and undervalued the influence of other factors came to the fore. There are numerous retention studies both within policing and more generally that recognise the importance of the perceived levels of support and it seems that in these cases the lack of support was noticeable. Parsons et al. (2011) identified that individuals need to feel supported and recognised for the good work that they do, this will add to their satisfaction. Jarmillio et al. (2004) also highlighted that good support has a positive influence on satisfaction. In a more specific UK policing study Cooper and Ingram (2002) identified that those who felt more supported and valued were less likely to leave the police service. Study three identified that the perceived lack of support and feeling undervalued contributed to the decision to leave the police service, in light of previous literature this is not a surprising factor. The issues comes when trying to conceptualise what support and feeling valued looks like. Understanding what being supported and feeling valued looks like at an individual level but also at a more general workforce level is likely to be a significant challenge.

There are some who have previously argued that organisations cannot affect turnover because people leave exclusively for personal or in some cases economic reasons. Mitchell (2001) for example argues that people leave due to factors unrelated to their job, this could be seen as supporting the finding in relation to those who stated that there was nothing the organisation could do to keep them. Whilst there is some support for this, there was also support for the fact that the organisation could have made changes to retain some participants in this study. Miller (1996) identified that organisational factors were key in the decision to leave and there are changes that the organisation can make to retain individuals. The impact that the organisation could have had on encouraging the participants to remain in this study appears to be varied and dependent on the needs of the individual. Again there is very little research specifically into this area in relation to policing, so it is difficult to interpret these results in relation to previous research nether the less the results paint an interesting picture.

5.6 Drawbacks

Due to the time consuming nature of conducting and analysing interviews conduct only a limited number will be completed making wider generalisation more difficult. There may also be the issue that after the decision had been taken to resign the interviewee will feel the need to justify this and therefore not necessarily provide and accurate description of the real reasons behind their decisions to leave the service.

Section 6

Recommend as a career to others

Whilst not a key aim of the research to understand if current or former officers would encourage others to join the police service it was considered an interesting notion to touch upon. The reasons behind the recommendations to others were not fully explored therefore

any conclusions drawn from this information should be tentative but interesting nether the less.

6.1 Serving officers

Interestingly serving officers, were not a keen to recommend the job to others as one may have expected despite many of the participants stating how much they love and enjoy their job as a police officer. The emphasis was placed upon making recommendations to a certain type of individual only as opposed to a general career recommendation.

"I have recommended it to others but it needs to be right for you" (Participant 8)

"There are certain people I would recommend it to but it's not for everyone" (Participant 9)

An interesting point to note is that even though participants would recommend the job to certain people, it was clear that they were not recommending it as a whole of life career which is the expectation many themselves joined the service with.

"It's a good job but not a career…join for 10 years to get experience then move on" (Participant 1)

"I would encourage people to really think about what they wanted to do and prepare themselves for different things, not just one career" (Participant 10)

"Policing isn't a vocation anymore, it is a time limited job" (Participant 14)

Again as the researcher has seen throughout this study, serving officers were also able to apply a certain level of practically around recommending the job to others. There was some recognition that the causes of dissatisfaction for current officers especially in relation to pay and conditions and nostalgic views of the organisation will not be applicable to new starters.

"I have recommended it, new comers won't know any different, changes only affect current officers" (Participant 6)

"We have been through the biggest changes...those joining now won't know any different so there is no reason for them not to join" (Participant 16)

6.2 Former officers

Unsurprisingly, former officers were less likely and less willing to recommend policing as a job to others, in many cases there was outright refusal to recommend the role even if they had taken personal enjoyment from their career.

"I wouldn't recommend it, I would say no stay away" (Participant 4)

"I have friends who want to join and I'm like please don't it will ruin your life" (Participant 5)

"Not at all, sweep streets for a living you will have more fun" (Participant 7)

Asking if participants would recommend the role to others was quite emotive for the participants who were former officers, many were quite emphatic in their viewpoint around not recommending the role. There was some support for recommending the role to others, however as with the serving officers, it was highlighted that the job was no longer a career or a job for life and should be used to gain experience and move on.

"I would recommend the job but would tell people to enter with their eyes wide open...don't think you can make a career out of it, join at 21 do five years and get out" (Participant 13)

Whilst the fact that many former officers wouldn't recommend the role may seem a serious concern on the face of it, the negative impact of this may not be a great as it could be in other areas of employment. When looking at motivations for joining the service 'recommended by others' featured as a motivation for former officers but not for serving officers to the same extent. It could be that those joining the service on the recommendation of others are in fact more likely to leave sooner and are therefore not the individuals the police service wishes encourage to join at this point in time. Therefore whilst the negative views of former officers may deter some individuals from joining the police

service, they are less likely to have an impact of those identified as having a 'childhood ambition' of joining the police service.

Section 7

7.1 General Discussion and Moving the Research Forward

Whilst three separate studies have informed this research, the links between them are no doubt intrinsic in nature and it is important to bring all three studies together to inform this final discussion and reflect upon the original research aims.

Study one was designed to establish if voluntary turnover had increased as a proportion of overall turnover of police officers in recent years. The evidence clearly indicates that voluntary turnover has increased over the last three years. Much of the previous literature has focused on turnover with specific demographic variables in mind such as gender and ethnicity. Whilst taking time to explore these groups the researcher mainly focused on turnover as a whole with the results indicating that voluntary turnover with in the MPS was increasing regardless of these demographic factors. This is not to say that demographic variables do not have an influence, this research was not designed to make such judgements, but that future scholars should perhaps focus more attention to the wider factors outside of demographic remit when exploring turnover within policing. This is further supported by the fact that neither studies two or three identified demographic factors as influential in dissatisfaction or the decision to leave the police service.

Understanding the reasons officers in service where dissatisfied yet chose to remain as well as understanding the key factors that influenced an officers decision to leave were the remaining two aims. Wilson et al. (2010) argued that there was no overarching theory as to why officers resigned from the police service and whilst this research can support this to some degree there were some interesting links made that could be further explored as the basis of a turnover theory.

It became clear throughout both studies two and three that there were important links between current feelings and attitudes and participants original motivations for joining the police service. When talking to officers about the decision to remain or leave, some of the variables identified were intrinsically linked to the motivations for joining. There is not enough evidence to build a theory in relation to the links between motivations for joining and the decision to stay or leave but some tentative inferences can be drawn and future research developed based on these initial findings. It is suggested that future retention research focuses on motivations for joining specifically looking for the impact of 'childhood ambition', 'previous employment' and 'recommended by others' themes as identified in this paper. This research began to indicate that those people who were dissatisfied with their current role and who had joined the police on the recommendation of a friend or after experiencing what they perceived to be similar employment, in the army perhaps, were more likely to leave that those officers who had joined due to a childhood ambition. This was especially evident if this was coupled with feeling unsupported and undervalued by the organisation. Further exploration of these factors in combination with one another and independently and the influence they have on an officers decision making process would greatly add to the literature base in relation to turnover in policing.

What is really interesting to note is that both former and serving officers expressed extremely similar reasons for their dissatisfaction which led them to consider leaving or in some cases actually leaving. It seems that former and serving officers process their dissatisfaction and the causes of this dissatisfaction in different ways. This is supported by research conducted by Asumen et al. (1997) who recognised that it is not just the organisation that influences satisfaction but the characteristics and attitudes of the individual also plays an important role. This could further add weight to the suggestion that original motivating factors and the apparent differences in processing information and dealing with change play a role in the decision making process. However it has to be considered that

some factors linked to dissatisfaction do not appear on the surface to be link to motivations for joining. For example neither former or serving officers mentioned pay, conditions or pensions as key motivating factors when they took the decision to join the police service. It seems that these factors may be important in the decision to remain or leave but not in the original decision to join the service. The changes to pay, conditions and pensions were the potential catalyst for individual to start considering their options in relation to remaining or leaving but not necessary influential enough in many cases to be the sole driving factor behind the decision to leave the service.

There appear to be many factors that cause dissatisfaction amongst police officers which ultimately impact upon their decision to remain in service or leave. It seems that the influence of these different factors is linked to individual's motivations and attitudes towards the role of the police officer and the organisation itself. This research provides a good foundation for building a theory in relation to police officer turnover which is likely to continue to change in years to come.

There are a number of ways in which this research could be progressed to further add to the growing literature base in relation to police officer turnover and retention. Study one could be expanded to include a wider dataset over a greater number of years with an increased focus on other variables such as the influence of the length of service. This could also be expanded to include other police forces outside of the MPS to give a better understanding of the differing turnover pictures across the country. Understanding if different forces are affected by turnover in different ways may give a further indication as to the different factors that influence turnover and retention. Further research is also needed to continue to explore the motivations for joining and any potential links between the subsequent decision to remain in or leave the police service. Understanding these links could be crucial to developing future recruitment and turnover polices and shaping the future of policing across England and Wales.

Prior to making any decisions in relation to recruitment and retention police forces really need to make some difficult decisions in relation to what they are hoping to achieve in relation to recruitment, retention and the future of policing in general. The literature often indicates that high levels of turnover in organisations where human capital is key, such as the police force has a widespread negative impact. However not all turnover is negative and police forces need to establish what an acceptable level of turnover is and how close they are currently to this figure. It seems that today's police officers would no longer recommend policing as career, but rather a time limited job which offers the opportunity to gain a wealth of experience before moving onto a different job outside of policing. Prior to making any major decisions forces need to establish if this is an acceptable and appropriate way to run a police force and fully understand the risks that an increased level of turnover can bring. This may become evident if police forces move towards employing graduates only, this may increase turnover or have an impact on the number of officers who are willing to serve at PC level for the whole of their career.

In summary there are a number of interesting findings from this research that can be used to better understand police officer turnover and retention and inform decision makers around future polices. It is clear that police officer turnover has increased, this is not only affecting specific groups of individuals such as females or those from a BME background but can be seen as an overall trend affecting all officers. The reasons for officer dissatisfaction leading to resignations are perhaps unsurprising but the difference in the decision making process between serving and former officers as well as the interesting links back to the original motivations for joining are important areas ripe for further research development. As policing moves forward its seems clear that to improve retention, there needs to be a holistic focus on the selection process from the recruitment stage as well as the treatment of officers throughout their career. Policing is undoubtedly changing and by having a clear

understanding and direction in relation to what an acceptable level of turnover is for police forces, strategies and polices can be introduced to reflect this.

7.2 Why Qualitative Methods are appropriate for this research

It could be argued that the researcher is hinging too much on one method, interview and due to the potentially subjective nature of the chosen process, the ability to generalise the results will be somewhat limited. Also due to the time consuming nature of interviews the sample size will be small, compared to the large amount of data that could be gathered if a survey method was employed. Grey (2009) argues that the quality of the data is key, the quality plays a more important role than the quantity. When gathering qualitative information it is important for the researcher to consider data saturation when establishing sample size. That is, in this case, conducting enough interviews so that themes discussed repeat themselves across interviews and no new relevant information comes to light. Given (2008) highlights that when a researcher reaches what they identify as data saturation this is the point at which data collection can be stopped. This is why selecting and defining specific sample size in qualitative research is more complex than identifying the sample size required to achieve meaningful results in a quantitative study.

The use of purely qualitative methods may leave the research open to some criticism from those who favour methods more suited to objectivism and the belief in an objective reality. However Burke & Onwvegbuzie (2004) argue that it is time to narrow the gap between quantitative and qualitative research, different methods do not always have to represent competing paradigms. Creswell et al. (2003) highlight that all data collection will have limitations, therefore it is important to recognise and reflect on these limitations when conducting research. The key aim of the research is to establish the 'whys' behind the decision making and actions of the individuals involved, which is a more interpretivist

approach, hence the emphasis on qualitative methods. There is potential, in the future for some of the conclusions that will be drawn by the researcher to be tested further using both qualitative and quantitative methods, to further develop the research.

It was concluded, based upon the critical examination of methods, that face to face interviews were the best and most appropriate way within the time and financial restraints to produce the best quality and most comprehensive results. The researcher does accept that some of these interviews may not be conducted in the most appropriate setting. Due to dealing with ex-officers in study three, there is no way to confirm the identity of these participants unless they are known to the researcher. So taking the researchers safety into consideration some of these meetings may have to occur in a public place or with the use of technology such as Skype. Whist this may not be considered the most ideal of settings, the researcher will ensure extra time is spent rapport building to ensure that the relationship is as strong as it can be. Karnieli-Miller et al. (2009) highlight the importance of ensuring that research is an on-going reflective process and as long as the researcher continually reflects on the research, the findings will be strong regardless of a quantitative or qualitative approach.

7.3 Barriers between Policing and Research

Historically there have been a number of issues affecting the relationship between policing and research. On many occasions it has been difficult for researchers to work with the Police to implement new techniques based on academic research. What has been coined as insider/outsider bias is important to consider when interviewing research participants, but this may be even more relevant when interviewing Police officers. Researchers have often been viewed with some suspicion by officers, in fact this appears to be the case for many 'outsiders' that interact with the Police service. There are numerous papers that cover issues surrounding insider outside bias, including Schopmeyer & Fisher (1993), Mehra (2002) and

Dwyer & Buckle (2009). There is little need to re-explore these issues that have been well documented by others. However the researcher felt it was important to note and consider this in the research process due to the potential impact it may or may not have on the interview process. Whilst the researcher is not a police officer, they have worked in a policing environment for 8 years and will have formed their own opinions on some of the issue being discussed, the researcher was mindful of this throughout the process.

Other barriers to research in Policing include the lack of 'buy in' or belief in the value of research in senior ranks, it can be difficult to provide operational recommendations if senior officers and policy makers see little value in academic research. Due to the nature of Police work, access to the required data or individuals may also present an issue. In the current research access to potential participants has been a stumbling block despite the research being funding by a Police Federation. This list of barriers is by no mean exhaustive however these are all issues that the researcher has encountered throughout the current research process.

It is important to understand that there are strengths and weaknesses to any research that is conducted. However by ensuring that these are reflected upon, understood and the methods used to collect and analysis information have been carefully considered, the researcher can be confident that the research is valid and will stand up to scrutiny.

Section 8

8.1 References

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Section 9

9.1 Reflective Journal

The idea of this journal is to reflect on my journey through out the process of completing this MSc by research which is sponsored by the Paul McKeever scholarship and to understand how I as the researcher may have influenced the process. When I was selected as a candidate for this programme I was thrilled if not a little surprised at being successful. I have been out of formal education for a little over eight years so was slightly worried I would be out of touch with the others in the group. As a person I am very organised and efficient and like to always be one step ahead of the game so returning to higher education was very daunting.

Prior to beginning the programme I spent the summer reading around my chosen topic of retention worried that I did not know enough and would be behind everyone else at the start of the programme. I spent the summer reading books and journals around general retention theories and any research specifically in relation to public service employees and police officers. I made a lot of notes and began to formulate ideas for my specific are of research. However at this point I feel that I started moving in the wrong direction. I began to procrastinate, spending too much time on articles and information that were not going to be relevant to me. I was spending time collating references that I did not need just to try and increase the number of references that I had. I also attempted to write a literature review without understanding what a good review was and what it should focus on. I ended up writing and submitting nearing 9,000 words to my supervisor prior to any meetings with them!

After attending the first study weekend with the other students, I realised that I had raced ahead and had not given enough thought to the quality of the content or attempting to ground my decision in research theory. I also realised that we were all in the same boat. We

were all daunted by the task that we were facing and we all in need of some guidance and structure to help us move forward. For me I was able to reflect and see that due to my need to be one step ahead I had not produced a review or proposal that was going to be anywhere near good enough to move my project forward. The inputs from Tom Holdcroft on the first weekend made me understand that I need to slow down and take my time in understanding my subject but also think about various research methods and criminological theory and how I will be able to apply these to justify the way I chose to conduct my research. I realised that I needed to develop my project more closely with my supervisor and take time to develop my proposal to ensure that my project is successful. Below is a blog I wrote to reflect my feelings after the first study weekend:

A Mountain to Climb

With a mixture of excitement and fear the students aligned to the PM scholarship attended their first study weekend in the beautiful city of Canterbury. Previous meetings as a group have been brief, so the chance to get together and learn as a group filled us all with excitement. Most of us did not know what to expect, but after sharing our thoughts and feelings with one another were realised that we were all in the same boat. This allowed are smiles to grow somewhat knowing that we were facing the challenges ahead together.

CCCU, Emma Williams and the team were very welcoming making us feel at home immediately, we knew that we were going to get all the support we needed in the months ahead. Our first evening was spent at a lecture, with many first year Policing students, given by Simon Guilfoyle. Simon's input covered the Performance culture of the Police and the damage that chasing targets has done too many of our Forces. This was a fascinating input which challenged the thinking of many people in the room and created a health debate. It was in the most part a refreshing take on the performance culture in the Police.

Day 2 saw an input from Tom Cockcroft on subjects such as ethics in research, project planning and research proposals. Whilst these titles may seem somewhat bland, they don't do justice to the enthusiastic and informative day that we spend covering these subjects. Some of the topics covered generated interesting debates and many questions were asked and answered. The inputs answered may of the fundamental questions we had as a group on the next steps to take. By understanding how we were all going to move forward over the coming weeks made the whole process feel all the more real.

At the beginning when we were accepted onto the PM Scholarship we all knew that we had a mountain to climb over the next 12 months. Explaining to people that we were undertaking a full time master of research alongside our full time roles elicited looks of sympathy from even the most hardened academics. However after our first study weekend together and some fabulous inputs we realised that we have taken a big step up that mountain together.

I had my first meeting with my supervisor, Robin on 26th September and our first meeting was a successful one. I was slightly apprehensive about the feedback that I was going to receive from the rambling I had submitted prior to meeting. However I was pleasant surprized at how positive Robin was and that all of the work I had completed so far was relevant. There were some issues highlighted around my sample questionnaire and how some of the questions were phrased in a negative way. I recognised that this was potentially down to my bias around some of the reforms and restructuring process I have been through during my police career. I was able to recognise this bias and see how it may have affected my choice of questions as well as answers I would expect to receive. It was very important that I picked up on this at an early stage. We established that the basic research questions that I had in mind were a good foundation that required further

refinement and development. I also needed to give more thought to my population size and sampling methods that I would need to use to complete the research and make it valid.

After this first meeting with my tutor I focused on completing further reading in the area of police officer retention and turnover. Prior to that time I had not had access to the CCCU library search facilities, however after being granted access to the online search tool linked to CCCU library I was able to broaden my literature search further. This access was invaluable and has led to me finding numerous articles of great relevance that I could not access freely over the internet searches I had previously conducted. This really assisted with my understanding of the topic and gave me ideas for key measures and questions to ask during the survey and interviews that I planned to conduct. At this point I was still struggling to understand and develop appropriate statistical test from the results that I would have gathered in my survey however I have developed my knowledge further in the area of qualitative analysis especially around coding.

At our second meeting I was able to submit a more concise and focused first draft of my research proposal in which I had identified a number of research questions and ideas as to appropriate methodology to test them. After reviewing such a vast amount of literature I had numerous questions buzzing around all of which I wanted to investigate. At our second meeting my tutor was able to offer me some guidance on how to further refine and group some of the questions in which I was interested. We also discussed the various methodologies that I wanted to use to collect data, from this discussion it was clear that my knowledge around sampling and confidence levels needed refreshing. With this in mind I was set the further tasks of refining my research questions based on the key literature identified as well as researching appropriate sampling techniques and confidence levels.

In December after a number of re-drafts and consultations with my tutor I submitted my research proposal. To occupy myself during the dreaded marking delay, I applied under the

freedom of information act for information around police officer attrition. This data was to be used to inform my first study which was going to focus upon the analysis of secondary data. When I received the data I spent some time formatting and understanding what this information could tell me as well as familiarising myself with SPSS. I also began broadening my knowledge around different research methodologies include their strength and weaknesses. It took me quite some time to become comfortable with the statistical testing that I needed to conduct and in fact I considered removing this section entirely due to this issue. However the analysis of the turnover patterns really added to the research therefore I persevered and was able to improve my statistic knowledge and conduct the appropriate test on my data.

After consulting with my tutor I was able to begin some basis analysis of my secondary data which we discussed in our third meeting. I was able to identify some basic patterns and we discussed how I would be able to take this further after our upcoming study weekend when quantitative and qualitative research methods were to be discussed. Unfortunately I fell ill and was unable to attend the whole of the study weekend. It was also around this time after meeting with researchers at PFEW that I really started to reflect on my choice of method to address the research questions that I had developed. In fact after consultation with my fellow scholars and my tutor that the questionnaire method would not in fact give me the answer that I was seeking in relation to serving officers and that I needed to change my methodology to something more appropriate. Making the decision to do this was a difficult one, because I had put a lot of work into developing my questionnaires and had already run a pilot study however I knew that to ensure I produced the best possible research that added to the literature based and addressed my specific research questions the change needed to be made.

In January, we were lucky enough as a group to have Peter Neyroud speak about how to write a publishable piece of research for a top journal. Peter was very interesting to listen to

and had very strong views on research and how it can be operationalised within the Policing environment. After listening to Peter speak, I began to reflect upon my own research and what I was trying to achieve. I realised that, due to the time constraints, I was perhaps trying to achieve too much by conducting three studies using three different methods to investigate various aspects of retention. After email discussing with my tutor, I decided to focus on refining these down so I could focus on fewer key points in more detail. After these experiences I was inspired to write a further blog about being a student on the PM scholarship which was published on twitter. It read as follows:

Being a student on the Paul McKeever Scholarship

As a student undertaking an Mres as part of the Paul McKeever scholarship, I am already 4 months into a 12 month programme, as they say time flies when you are having fun! As a group we have been extremely lucky to be addressed by some top class speakers including Simon Guilfoyle, Mike Rowe and more recently Peter Neyroud as well as having representatives from MOPAC and the Collage of Policing pitching in too. These input have been informative, exciting and in some cases challenging for both students and lecturers alike!

We have also received great lectures from the staff at CCCU covering topics such as criminological theory, research in policing as well as inputs on conducting qualitative and quantitative research. Having such fantastic inputs in such a short space of time makes me wonder what the next 9 months will hold and I am sure I won't be disappointed.

There is no denying that the task ahead of us is a difficult one but no one said being a fulltime student and a full time employee would be easy. However when I look back at what has already been achieved in the last 4 months, I already know that all the hard work is well worth it. As a group we have our first assignment under our belt, the Research Proposal, so we know where we are going and now we are currently focusing in on the methodologies

we will use, so soon we will know how were will get there. However the most exciting part of the journey it yet to come, well for me anyway, which is the 'what will we find?'

For me, understanding what your research is telling you is the most exciting and reward part of any project, however I am under no illusion that collecting the information from which conclusions can be drawn isn't without its problem, especially in a Policing environment.

It is important to remember that the finding from these research projects may go some way towards changing Policing for the better and if you get involved you will know that you have had your say. So for those of you reading this blog if you encounter a student who wishes to have 10 minutes of your time to complete a survey or perhaps a little longer for an interview PLEASE take pity on them and help them out because if this programme inspires you and you are lucky enough to become involved in the future, you may be in that students shoes one day.

By producing this blog I was also hoping that the numerous officers who may have been exposed this this on social media will be more open to being involved in any upcoming research projects they may encounter.

After Christmas, my research project really started to gather momentum and it wasn't long until I was ready to begin my interviews. Conducting the interviews had been a long time coming for me after all of the background preparation and the continuous tweaking of the research questions. I was nervous about conducting the interview because my only previous experience had been interview individuals for job roles but I was eager to get into the swing of things. The first bump in the road experienced by myself as well as others in the group was access to participants. Due to a number of issues the MPS Federation were unable to facilitate access at the time it was required, this obvious cause me some concern. Whilst I no longer needed to identify a predefined statistically significant sample, as I would have done if I had not adjusted the study two methodology, I still needed access to both serving

and ex-police officers. By utilising my own contacts and those of my colleagues as well as putting out social media appeals via Twitter I was able to gather participants of both of my studies.

I found the interview process very enjoyable and something I know that I would like to do more of in the future. However the process was tiring and at one stage caused me significant stress. Completing a master programme full time alongside a job in which you regularly work 50 hours a week is difficult and stressful however conducting interviews as part of this processes really ramped up the pressure for me. When interviewing ex-police officers especially some of the subject matter could be distressing in relation to their own mental health or colleagues who had committed suicide as well as hearing the way some participants had been treated by the policing organisation. In some cases it was hard to hear all of the negative thing participants had to say about the police service when I am an individual who still devotes a large proportion of my life working for the police. Whilst all the participants I interviewed weren't from my home force, I as a person feel very much part of the wider policing family and I found the listening to the negative experiences hard to hear in some cases. I took the decision to cut down the number of interviews I was conducting to only two a week to give myself a chance to process the information and take a break from so of the stress created, this allowed my judgement to become clearer. Allowing more time between interviews certainly improved my outlook.

Overall interviewing was an interesting an enjoyable experience, however transcription was a different story. I decided to remain 'old school' and transcribe my interviews, field notes and observations by hand. This was an extremely time consuming and painstaking process, however I gained a lot from doing it this way and got to know my data extremely well in the process. I was able to pick up on things I had previously missed, really got a chance to listen and digest what my participants had to say and was able to get a good grip of the reoccurring themes which helped no end when I came to producing a framework in which to

analyse my results. The interviews and transcription was quite a reflective process for me, being a police employee myself I also held views on many of the things my participants commented upon but from a somewhat different standpoint. Whilst my views didn't change over the process of the interviews, I become far more understanding of the viewpoint held by the officers I interviewed. My thoughts are expressed in the blog below which is yet to be published.

Police Officer Turnover and Retention

As a civilian who has been in the police service for a number of years, I too have experienced first-hand many of the recent changes that have affected policing. It seems changes to pay and conditions, especially pensions have left many officers feeling let down by the government. Some have resigned and no doubt the thought of resigning has crossed many serving police officers minds. As a civilian employee, cuts to policing have also had an impact on me and my colleagues. A large proportion of savings made by forces has come from a reduction in the number of civilian staff.

I must confess when my civilian colleagues around me were being reduced in numbers, some taking redundancy after numerous years of service I found some police officers gripes hard to hear. Yes pay had been frozen, pensions had been changed and a fitness test was now mandatory. Perhaps you had been moved to a different role or a different location but ultimately you still had a job and a pay packet each month where so many of your civilian colleagues did not. So when the opportunity came up to study police turnover and retention under the Paul McKeever Scholarship I jumped at the chance to put myself in those officers' shoes.

I have always had the upmost respect for police officers, the commitment and dedication of the officers with whom I have worked is second to none. No one seemed to work just for a pay cheque, it was deeper than that, officers really cared about the work they did and the

communities they served. Being a police officer was part of who they were. Therefore exploring the reasons behind the increasing number of resignations is something that is close to my heart.

Over the last few months I have conducted a number of interviews with ex-police officers from across the country in an attempt to understand what caused their resignation from the police service. Spending time with these officers reminded me of one very important fundamental thing, police officers are people just like you and me. They have hopes, dreams and plans for the future, they have families, friends, children, social lives and hobbies, they are not machines they are husbands, wives, mothers and fathers. Not only do they have to find capacity to care about all these things in their personal life but also in their professional life too and care they do.

Many of the officers to whom I have spoken joined the police service with the intention to serve their community for 30 years and the pension that they would receive at the end would be a reward for the sacrifices they have made in that time. Many people in other forms of employment will have to work much longer than 30 years before we can receive a pension, however we all knew that when we started in the world of work. I know how I would feel if I had plans for my retirement and someone suddenly told me that I had to work an extra 10 years and that I would receive less money for working longer. Many of the officers to whom I spoke did have plans for their retirement, many had wanted to peruse a hobby such as writing or painting something that was purely for them after all those years of service. Having that carrot dangled before you and for it to be so suddenly taken away quite literally changes people lives, and their futures.

It was comforting that most officers to whom I spoke talked warmly about policing and the work that they did. I certainly heard the phrase 'I loved my job' many times over, the decision to leave cannot have been easy or quick adding further stress and uncertainly to an

already difficult time for officers. The decisions that these officer took to leave goes much deeper than changes to conditions and pensions many have personal stories to tell but they are not always heard. Many felt they had no choice but to leave to ensure that they and their families have a happy and safe future too. The police service really needs to spend some time understanding why good, experienced officers are choosing to move on.

I think the point I am driving at is this, when governments and policing organisations make significant changes they are changing people's lives. The police should indeed provide the best possible service at the lowest cost to the public however police officers are people too and it seems the impact on them as people has been all but forgotten. Officers who love serving the community who love their job are leaving, to me that tells a scary story. If the government and policing organisations don't take care of the people who take care of us who is going be there when we need help?

There is no doubt that I was faced with many challenges throughout the research process, including challenges that required further development of my skill set to challenges that required me to put my own thoughts feels and opinions about certain aspects of policing aside. Throughout the research processes I have recognised and faced these challenges which has helped ensure that the research that I have conducted is reliable and valid and can be used to inform policing policy. By putting a significant amount of hard work into the planning of the project and the execution of the interviews it made writing the final dissertation document all the more enjoyable. Bring together and articulating my findings was perhaps the easiest step of the process for me and the most rewarding one. As a researcher I have played a very important role in this process and my personal opinions and experience at times will have come through but I was able to understand when this was happening and ensure that I did not reflect this on to my participants or the interpretation of the results. The process was a long and at time difficult one, but the end result was certainly worth the effort.

9.2 Example Consent from and Information Sheet

A Study of Police Officer Turnover and Retention

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

A research study is being conducted at Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU), on behalf of the Metropolitan Police Federation, as part of an Mres thesis by Naomi Bennett. Professor Robin Bryant, Director or Criminal Justice at CCCU is the co-researcher.

Background

The role of a Police Officer is an important one, the training, knowledge and experienced developed by officers overtime are a valuable asset to any Police force. Therefore retaining officers is considered key to developing an effective Police force, which provides the best possible service to the public.

The purpose of this study is to understand the drivers behind the decision of police officers to remain in service and if the plan is to do so long term. This study has been approved within the University by the Faculty of Criminal Justice and Social Research Ethics Committee.

What will you be required to do?

Participants in this study will be required to participate in an interview, approximately 1 hour in length, with the researcher.

To participate in this research you must:

- An police officer who holds a rank between constable and chief inspector inclusive who has been in service for a minimum of two years

Feedback

The results will be collated and used to inform future policy on police officer retention in the MPS.

Confidentiality

All responses and personal information will be stored securely in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and the University's own data protection requirements. Data can only be accessed by Naomi Bennett and Professor Bryant. All data at the time of collection will be anonymous, no words or statements will be attributed to individuals.

Deciding Whether to Participate

If you have any questions or concerns about the nature, procedures or requirements for participation do not hesitate to contact me. Should you decide to participate, you will be free to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason.

Any Questions?

Please contact **Naomi Bennett** on 01227 767700 or email n.k.bennett330@canterbury.ac.uk

CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: To stay or go: A study of Police officer turnover and retention

Name of Researcher: Naomi Bennett

Contact details:

Address:

Canterbury Christ Church University

North Holmes Road, Canterbury

Email:

n.k.bennett330@canterbury.ac.uk

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

3. I understand that any personal information that I provide to the researchers will be kept strictly confidential

4. To my knowledge I have not taken any substances that will adversely or otherwise affect this study

5. I agree to take part in the above study.

9.3 Example Transcript

Participant 1

I'm am interested in your current rank, how long you have been in the job how old you are and things about why you joined what imagined you would be doing, if it's like that, what you enjoy and don't enjoy

When I joined I always imagined the variety wasn't a permanent office based job, which I couldn't face, I don't like being in, I imagined an active job this is why I joined I like doing different things and different challenges don't like to be office based , that is why I wanted to join in the first place.

Interrupted by the children, went to see to them

Prompted by researcher to pick up description of why you join

That why I joined initially my view of the police has changed over last 16 years, didn't for about 10 years, never sure what department I would want to work in, after 4 years I joined CID I love these roles, love investigating, never imagined I would stay in these roles love these roles, find this the most interesting and varied.

After around 10-13 years, my opinion began to change in line with recession, I found to be honest when I started, it was a real family environment, I felt cared for and looked after, I really felt that I was proud of my force, never leave for another force, I don't feel like that now, the force is not like that now, now it's very cut throat, everyone is on edge, they don't care for you any more they don't care if you leave, they would be happy if you wanted to leave, just an excuse to get rid of you, years ago if you were going to leave there would be people encouraging you to stay, want to find out why that wanted to resign, now they don't care, it's like they want to get rid of you, like a tick in the box, If you say I want to leave they are like ok sign here you know

Have you considered leaving?

Yes, not sure of reasons, not driven by money, I'm driven by happiness , wouldn't leave for money or stay for money, not driven to go up the ranks for money, I could earn 1 million and I would just want to be happy. It changed the police now, people coming in now people wouldn't know what it was like before, new people will coming in knowing what it was like and perhaps start with the negative perceptions. However if you joined perhaps 6 to 8 years ago, I would suggest that other people who have felt it was a family environment, it was

warming if you had a problem someone would help you out and care for you, now it's like tough get over it or you can leave

Do you think that's similar, I mean you mentioned you have got your inspectors, do you think promotional process is fair?

We have loads of chats with this, about exams, somewhere in the middle, some sort of support or sponsorship, some dangers because if you face doesn't fit you won't get through. However I think it should be based a bit more on your successes in roles. Because, and I don't think, I totally disagree with people getting promoted too early because they haven't got any experience, I find it really impossible that someone could motivate you when they have only been in the role for 4 years and they haven't done those roles. I have decided that I want to be a really good inspector when I get promoted and so I am building the blocks now going of getting different experience in different roles so when I am an inspector I will hopefully get that respect that comes with experience , you know I have been there and done those roles, done all the DC roles and DS roles, so I have that experience and managed different people with different personality and different issues, so I have done it and this will help me be a good DI

So from that point of view the current promotion process isn't really geared around experience obtained in the police more about if you can pass an exam and how well you can study. I had to study when I was 38, I have only studied once in my life so the promotion process hinders you the older you get.

It doesn't support someone older, so yeah I think there needs to be some tweaking there are aspects that are detrital to family life, I mean to study for 6 months I am not saying you shouldn't have to do it, coz you need a general law base, but to be honest I don't remember all the stuff I learnt from my exam, in your job you refer back to books you don't need to know everything. Every officer in the county refers back to the books even to know one piece of legislation off by heart is impossible, so I think that makes a bit of a mockery of it.

Part 2 I quite like, I think that is a bit more about aptitude, about working under pressure and working with people, communicating is key so that part is quite good, it is really difficult but good.

You know we discussed that you had considered leaving, so why haven't you gone, what is it that keeps you in the force?

Participant pauses, thinking and states that's a really good question, umm

Pause

I think purely it where I am at the moment all the time I enjoy the job role that will keep be staying, I don't think the grass is greener necessarily, so where I am at the moment I still enjoy investigating, managing the team, I love investigating and the team, so that's where I am in that role. However maybe if I was put in a different role seriously I'd consider that, I seen that happen a lot, seen people moved in to a role in which they have no skill set and no interest, and I know you sign up to be a police officer in any role but when you are forced into something a role that you really don't want or like people are just going to leave.

So the satisfaction is really important to you?

It is yeah, it's the only thing that keeps me, I have tentatively looked outside the police, but there isn't anything with the variety we get still. That probably, coz I like the post at the moment and I can think of other post I would enjoy, so If I am allowed to do them then that would probably keep me in.

I get the impression that being a police officer and being part of that is quite important to you, can you imagine yourself doing anything else? Would another job just be a job?

It would just be a job, I do know another reason actually why I stay, and I always hope that we will get back to where we were 10 years ago. Because that was really good and I really hope this is a tough time we are going through, I don't blame it on anyone, I don't blame it on government, chiefs my inspector, I don't think there is anyone just the way we are at the moment in the country, people a quick to blame a particular person. But that's just rubbish. I just hope that maybe we can get that loving feeling back, we have lost that and when we had that. I really notice it day to day, I did a bit of acting (acting up) about 10 years ago, so I managed a team for 6 to 12 months, and but the difference even then people would help you out at a drop of a hat because they felt cared for, the police looked after them, felt part of a family. I don't think they feel like that now, I think they feel very individual, I think they think they are a DC PC, talking at the level I manage, umm as part of a big family force, they feel like a number.

I understand you are saying they don't feel supported or loved by the force, but what about your colleagues, is there still that relationship that support there?

Yeah for me my priority, I work as hard as I can every day for one thing and that for my team, it's the only thing. My only motivation, I'm sure it will be criticised by some, I've told my inspector actually, my only drive, well my main drive to get up and work as hard as I can

is to protect my team, I am responsible for 10 officers and in these tough times if I can avoid them dreading coming into work then that is a success for me.

You protecting them from too much pressure and scrutiny from the force or from the job they have to do?

Both

So you think there is pressure coming from both sides?

Oh yeah, pressure on their back is a difficult one, we aren't really governed, the work either comes in or it doesn't it's a very unique role. Whereas in other roles you can take on extra work and make massive jobs for no reason other than people just fancy it whereas here you can't, we had a massive influx of historic cases,that affected our workload by a 300% increase. So I don't think the force put the pressure on detecting that stuff but now and again you do. For example it came of the radio only a couple of days ago police officers could now be arrested or prisoned for failing to investigate child sex offences, so straight away everyone was like oh my god.

So they feel under pressure from that point of view but that's external, not from the chief.

Do you get the feeling that the force would support you or protect you or stand up for you.

No

So it's not the pressure but the worry if you did something you wouldn't be together 'backed up'

Yeah and that's not against our chief or anyone in particular, but it's against the hierarchy and just the way it feels now at the top I couldn't honestly say that I speak from experience on that.

Interrupted by the children bickering

Umm, so I don't feel like they are personally doing that

So potentially it's like they have got pressure on them

Yeah maybe and you do feel now that someone is just waiting to make an example of someone.

You know so I feel even more protective of my team, I take all the flak for everything, if they do anything wrong I put my name on it and take responsibility, I have done it just this

week actually, I am there supervisor so it's me who's responsible, because I think they have enough pressures and their workload is huge, mine is but I think as a supervisor I learn to cope with it better. So I think personally I cope with that quite well so I just think that protecting my team is the most important thing. They do feel under pressure so I try to protect them.

So going back to when you joined, I know things change, but did you think I am going to be in this job until I retire and that's what I am going to do?

I did,

Do you still think that way?

No, definitely thought I would, never crossed my mind that I wouldn't do 30 years, the biggest thing that changed, I mean if now, it had stayed the same as it had when I joined, without the changes in pension and retirement, I would definitely being say now if it was still only 30 years I would definitely be staying for those 30 years. But to be honest I am not stupid, I have tried reading all these hundreds of pages of literature on pensions and things and things like that I have to look for a future, when you are 24 you don't think about pension and retirement you think I will stay in the police, but when you get half way through you think, or you get young kids, pensions are important and when I retire and mortgages and stuff. So one of the biggest things is the uneasiness of know, I mean I don't even know now and I have read some much stuff, I don't even know when I can retire.

What age can I retire on a full pension, I don't know, so that why I think a lot of people are leaving.

Would you join again knowing what you know now?

Pause, no if I knew what I know now I would have taken a different path, if it was to stay the same as it was then yes, but after the last five years, then no I don't think I would

Would you recommend it to others as a good career?

I would say it's a good job but not a good career, so I think if you are going to come in for 10 years to get experience or something I still think it's a good job but I don't think it's a good career simply because they have messed about with pensions and retirement age so much. No it is so confusing

So do you understand from a long serving officer's point of view why youngsters come in and doing 5 or 6 years and then leave again?

Definitely, I think they come in with the perception I did, which is normal, some come in for power I totally hate that but they do, they want to be an officers, now days officers don't get the respect or kudos. That is how much public perception has changed, it is no longer seen as a proud job by the public don't think, may be the older generation.

Does that affect your motivation if you like because you are working so hard to protect the public?

I think we get a rough ride with the public, but I don't think we are honest with the public, some of it I accept because you don't want public scare mongering or the fear factor you know, more so you don't want criminals knowing the truth about the number of officers working. But when I speak to officers day to day, uniform officer, for assistance they say they have 2 people on all night and you go oh my god. Officers are saying I can't cope with this anymore I am getting sent to domestics on my own with a man armed with a knife. And there was a colleague that was 40 mins away that would happen once in a blue moon years ago now it's often.

Now if the public knew that, I think they would be a lot more like bloody hell we now see what they go through, but now all they see is bloody police whinging, they have enough resources because we have been told they have enough officers, they keep getting told they can cope so why didn't they turn up to my house for 2 hours, they keep getting told there are enough people. So I think there is a real disparity about what the public hear and truth, this creates issues between the public and the police. Rather than support the police there are very few, those few often know an officer of officer in a family, they will know how hard or how tough it is, if my mum called the police and they did arrive for 2 hours she would be like its ok I know what pressures you are under.

But if my neighbours or someone who had no idea, they would be moaning or complaining, they would be like bloody police, so their expectations aren't managed properly. That is part of our attitude, we are told as officers to manage expectation of victim, we are getting better, and we totally work for our victims. We are getting better a managing individual's victims expectations but I don't think the force manages the public. So we are expected to manage them at our level but the force doesn't manage the public which is going to cause problems.

That's really interesting, with the Winsor literature saying loads of people joining its ok, but you are telling me you can deal with it but you are seeing colleagues that can't cope, how do you feel?

I am tougher mentally now, I couldn't have coped with some of these situations 10 years ago, but that is my experience I think it's imperative that the experience stays, coz to have been through it and appreciated it and therefore look after your staff more and get more out of them making the force more successful the public happier, domino effect. It clearly the best way to go about it rather than losing all of that experience and having someone who hasn't gone through that and isn't tough mentally.

So to lose that mental toughness that comes with experience could be really damaging for the force future

Do you think the force can do anything to stop people leaving or do you think it's a wider issue?

You do ask tough questions!

There are always things you could do, it's tough I would never say there isn't anything. Just off the top of my head when I worked in north Kent we had some great officers, their motivation was superb, still in the start of the tough period, they would still change shifts and work nights even though they had young children. They felt unappreciated and they left for the Met, not one person asked them to stay or spoke to them. I found that really disappointing, I said I know you are leaving but someone will ask you to stay and they said no, when we said we were leaving they just took our thing and that was it. Umm and didn't bat an eye lid, I wrote to the chief on his blog and I said, cause I was curious, I have heard another couple of officers are leaving, I am interested to know what you are doing about retention, I said to know these officers, they were so enthusiastic and keen , and to lose that experience without anyone making an effort, so I asked what plans are in place when this happens. It is worrying that I had noticed personally about 16 people who had left for the Met in a fortnight, and that was just me. I only know about a small amount and that really worried me.

We are just losing all these people and no one is saying anything, just letting them go, seem like excellent tick another one gone. I just think that is wrong. And so I got a reply and can remember the words, but it was like the grass isn't always greener, this is what these officers think. Then I was told some weeks later that the chief doesn't even respond it's his secretary. He doesn't even read them, now that straight away is out there, loads of people have told me it, so you start thinking really they don't even care enough, it's now a double edge thing and other people have been told this.

Interrupted by children

I felt like, one you have done nothing to keep these people and two you can't even be bother to reply and it just made me disappointed and another example of being hugely disappointed in the way the force is and 10 people were told this and then another so people feel like there is no point, you aren't getting a real response, it's not a family thing it just doesn't happen. So I think things like that are really worrying.

Interrupted by children

I think we have covered some really good stuff, how do you feel talking about it, has it clarified things you have thought about.

We talk about this in work in snippets it brings it all together and I think also when you are outside of the job there are a couple of reasons for thinking of leaving, one is that you feel like no one would care if you left you know, umm although money isn't an issue I got a mate in London, he doesn't have any qualifications, he is in insurance underwriting and he on double my wage and doesn't get real pressures but he sort of feels care about and he is like you know, there doesn't seen any urgency in his work. When you reflect to the police there are days when I stay on, not that they demand that, I mean I can get overtime but I don't, I was down in Cornwall the other day, I did it for my team I have kids it's not ideal but I did it for the team and I went down and dealt with him

Did you get any thanks?

No one would even know about it, I don't advertise it but they wouldn't even bat an eye lid

Now we have talked about it in one go, has it given you a new perception on if you have considered leaving or do you feel despite all of these things this is what I will carry on doing?

I have spoken about this before, I still have the same thoughts, and you look at it and you consider it, what would I really do. There is nothing out there that really interests me and I wouldn't say I am really unhappy I like working for my team and I am in a role that I really like, always been in roles I really like. But I suppose I feel lucky that I have got jobs I have gone for and made a reputation but if there is another change, CSR 200 or whatever and everyone gets relocated and moved departments and centralised units and all that then I think umm if I got moved into a role because of that that I hated yeah I would leave, there wouldn't be enough for me to stay for other reasons. Umm I would do everything to find

another role coz I would be unhappy so if I am going to be unhappy I will do it in another role for more money or give myself chance of being happy.

Everyone is saying the pension and the 30 years is what kept people and made it a career now that has been taken away like what is our reason to stay, it's just a job. I think there is a danger zone now, about say 25 years they were protected, that ok, near retirement, then between 10 and 25 years that is a tapered version of pensions and longer, that is the danger zone, people with less that than they won't think about pension age. If they join knowing that, then they know where they are at, again it comes back to managing expectations. They know what the package is when they join, but when you join and work 15 years and then they say we have changed it you have to work another 5 or 10 years and you're not getting your pension you know you're like hold on a minute my mortgage and my kids and my plans that I have been making are all of a sudden changing, and you have no control so they don't care what you want or what you think about these changes or how it affects you or what stress it causes. It's a huge huge thing, it is totally unfair, fine change it for new people but you can just change someone's life in the middle of their career. Without expecting repercussions and loosing experience and loosing officers, change it for new comers but not fair to mess about with someone's life, it's those sort of things that are massive, they are huge life changing decisions being made for you and when you have children and mortgages and when people made those decisions they didn't think about the impact on the individuals or the person, they look at the finances they don't look at the people. That not only reflects pensions and the years you work and the changes this is what I am saying about the family side, not being treated like a family, before decisions that were made we made around the peoples and the staff and obviously the business, but decisions were around the people, what are we going to do for the team to get this job done and everything else came second, you felt important and cared about. Now it's like well financially what are we going to do we don't give a damm what people think about it we don't give a damm if people are happy or unhappy and that's why people don't feel as cared about.

Do you feel less informed?

Yeah, no one tells you, they consult with the Fed but I find all that a bit, well not useless, I don't go to the meeting, truthfully I feel it is just pointless, it's not like voting for the election, it feels like people will do what they want regardless of what we think and do, we can argue it but they will still do what they want, so it feels like it's a bit pointless.

Do you think the Fed stand up to policy makers?

I think they are a toothless tiger, but that really comes from what I hear rather than what I know, but that may be wrong, maybe I will go to a fed meeting. I feel that I can say all this stuff, any other service would go on strike based on how they are treated, we aren't allowed, but what would happen if 1000 of us did this, what would they do sack them all, of course not but what they would do is single people out saying you're the ring leader and get rid of them, make an example of them. That's why there are not protective they aren't looking at why you are doing it but just punishing those who did it so I think people live in fear. Rather than feel they are going to do it because they care about the police, people care, maybe they forget these people who do go on marches and rallies it's because they care about the police and public they serve, I genuinely care, I enjoy work and like a laugh but I genuinely like putting away criminals to stop victims of crime. So the purpose of those rallies and marches are because people care about it but we aren't allowed.

I think we have touched on loads of issues that have come to the surface, it has been really interesting for me to hear you express yourself and how you feel about these things. Reassurance about confidentiality. I won't quote you or anything, participant's states that I don't mind if I am quoted, gave the opportunity to withdraw.

9.4 – Example interview questions

Whilst the interviews conducted were semi-structured meaning direct questions were kept to a minimum, there were a number of key topics covered in each interview. These topics were covered by the use of the following questions.

Have you considered leaving the police service?

What were the main reasons you decided to leave?/What were the main reasons for considering leaving?

How long did you take to make the decision to leave?/How long have you been thinking about leaving?

Did you consider this to be a job for life when you joined the force?

Did you/Do you feel valued as a police officer?

What were your motivations for joining the police service?

Did you/Do you feel supported by the public/senior management/government?

Do you/Did you feel supported/valued by the organisation?

What did you/do like about your role?

Would you consider returning in the future?

Is there anything the Force could have done/changed to make you stay?

Did you feel under added stress or pressure over the last 2 years of your job?

Did you/Do you feel under increased scrutiny or pressure in more recent times?

How did the changes to pay, pensions and promotion influence your decision to leave?/your dissatisfaction?

What are your feeling and views towards your time in the police service?

Would you recommend the job to others?