For this segment the objective of the author is to discuss their findings and document the data collated through the research conducted. The author will provide analytical feedback of the results to establish if in fact the findings uncovered by the author support the current published literature or is in fact contradictive. The author has previously acknowledged that although there is a vast amount of literature available on the selected topic feels the root causes are not widely established, as such this research hopes to provide insight into this field.

Upon the commencement of this research study the author initially believed that a questionnaire of 10 questions from 15 participants conducted in a one to one interview would provide enough data to be gathered. However, it has now since become evident to the author that due to complexity of the chosen subject this would not be a suitable means due to time constraints and lack of detail.

As such to establish whether the demand of frontline policing has a detrimental impact on mental health, the author has decided that the best approach to be able to comprehensively provide in depth data would be to conduct a questionnaire comprising of a mixture questions using a Likert scale and open questions utilising both Quantitative and qualitative research methods. McLeod (2019) claims "*Quantitative data is information about quantities, and therefore numbers, and qualitative data is descriptive, and regards phenomenon which can be observed but not measured, such as language".*

The decision was made to increase the number of participants from 15 to 40, in addition the questions increased from 10 to 18. The increase in questions will allow for richer data to be gathered that would not be possible with limited questions. The participants were made up from 26 men and 14 females under the age of 44 ranging from 1-13 years of job experience of various ranks and departments.

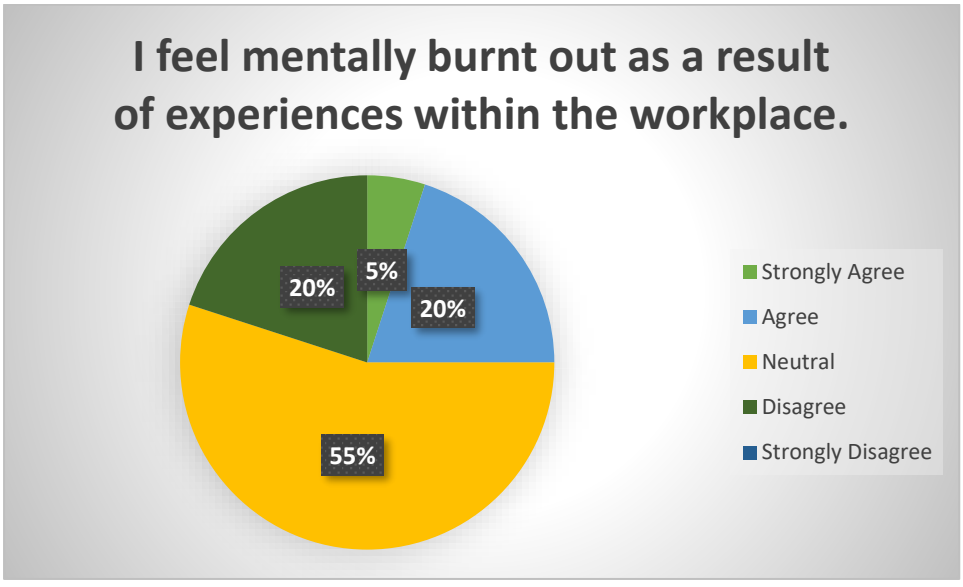
In response to the question **"The thought of returning to work for my next shift leaves me with a sense of anxiety"** 48% of participants remained neutral with this statement as shown in Figure 1. Despite this a combined 42% agreed that returning to work does carry a negative aspect which supports the findings that work does factor into stress amongst officers. Police Oracle (2021) state *"Nearly 8,500 police officers in the UK were signed off due to stress, depression, anxiety or post-traumatic disorder (PTSD) in the past year".*

Figure :1



To build upon this the author then asked the question **"I feel mentally burnt out as a result of experiences in the workplace".** Similarly, 55% stated that they remained neutral on this matter in contrast to only 25% in agreement as shown in figure 2.

Figure :2



To establish the causes for the responses and to provide qualitative data the open question was asked **"What factors do you believe contribute towards you feeling anxious and burnt out?".** This question elicited a range of responses that have been well documented throughout

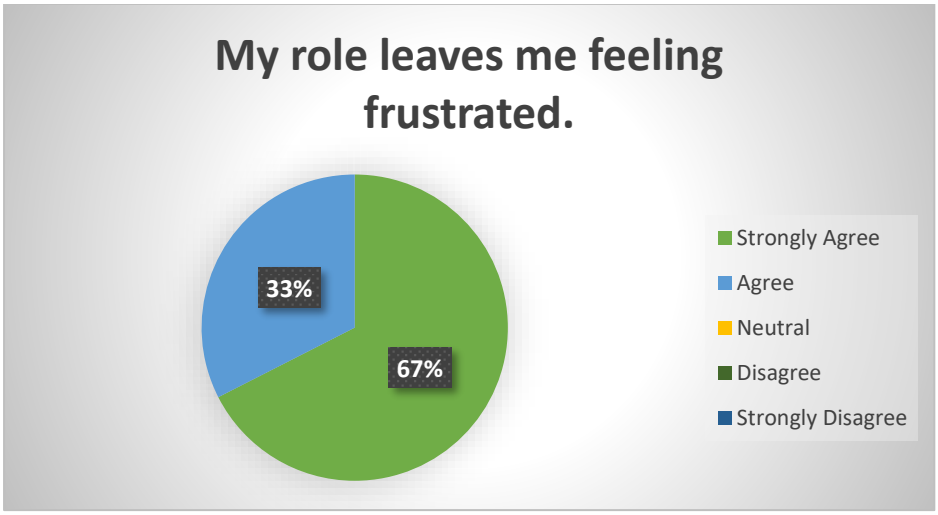
the research conducted and is supportive of the findings, such as the vast amount of paperwork, time constraints and low staffing levels. Mind (2019) claim "*There's a misconception that those working for 999 services are immune to developing mental health problems, but this couldn't be further from the truth. The challenging fast-paced nature of the job, with its unique pressures and frequent exposure to difficult incidents, actually puts officers at a greater risk of poor mental health".*

This was highlighted by participant 14 who stated "*Every month there's a new form to complete or a new process to follow. An incident that takes 20 minutes to deal with at the scene end ups taking hours to complete due to the long-winded paperwork required".* In addition to this participant 38 stated "*I feel burnt out as I'm doing my own work and others for them as they are to lazy to answer calls which increases my workload and stress".*

This is an important aspect as it shows that without a strong team ethos additional stress is present. Purba and Demou (2019) will say "*Organisational stressors suggested to contribute to the manifestation of stress include lack of support, heavy work load , interpersonal conflict with colleagues and supervisors, inadequate resources, time pressure, and an overly bureaucratic organisational system".*

Which leads to figure 3 where 67% stated that they are left feeling frustrated as a result of their role.

Figure :3

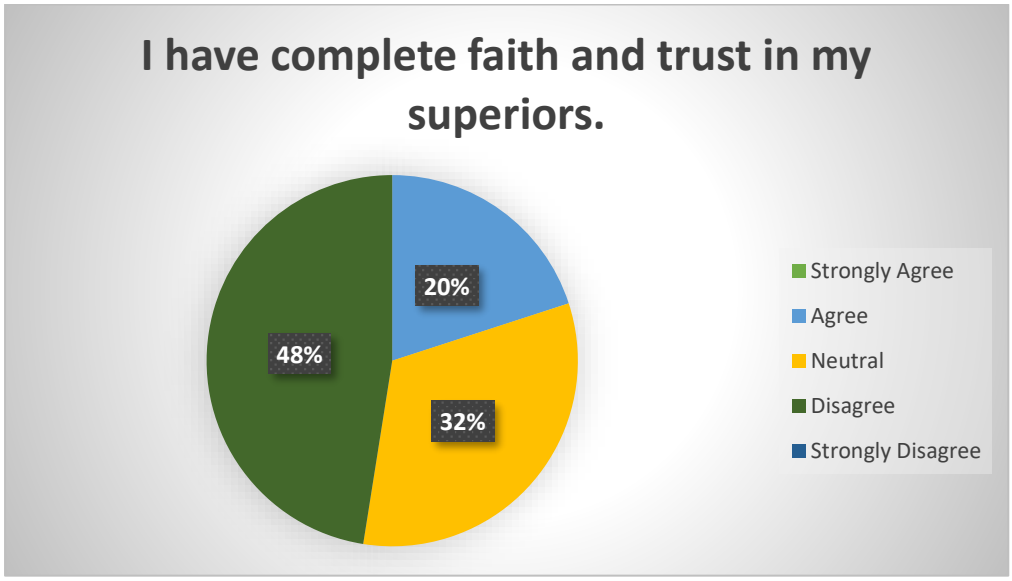


In order to gain insight as to why the majority felt this way the question was asked **"What causes you to feel frustrated and why"?** A common theme present was due to a high workload, limited time and conflict between departments which are aspects that have been

regularly documented by both the author and the supporting literature. However, it was the lack of faith in senior rank that was a prominent talking point .Participant 24 said *"Anyone above a Sargent forgets what its like to answer a call or deal with an ongoing investigation. They are more concerned about politics and budgets than the welfare of their staff".*

This supports the literature that shows a clear disparity between rank and file officers and is again documented and supported in figure 4 whereby 48% of participants disagree that they have faith in their superiors. Abdollahi *(2002) states "In contrast, organisational stressors (such as managerial structure, inadequate support from superiors and inefficient resources) are often not considered by officers before entering the occupation, yet they pose constant and routine pressure which can contribute significantly to an officer's psychological distress".*

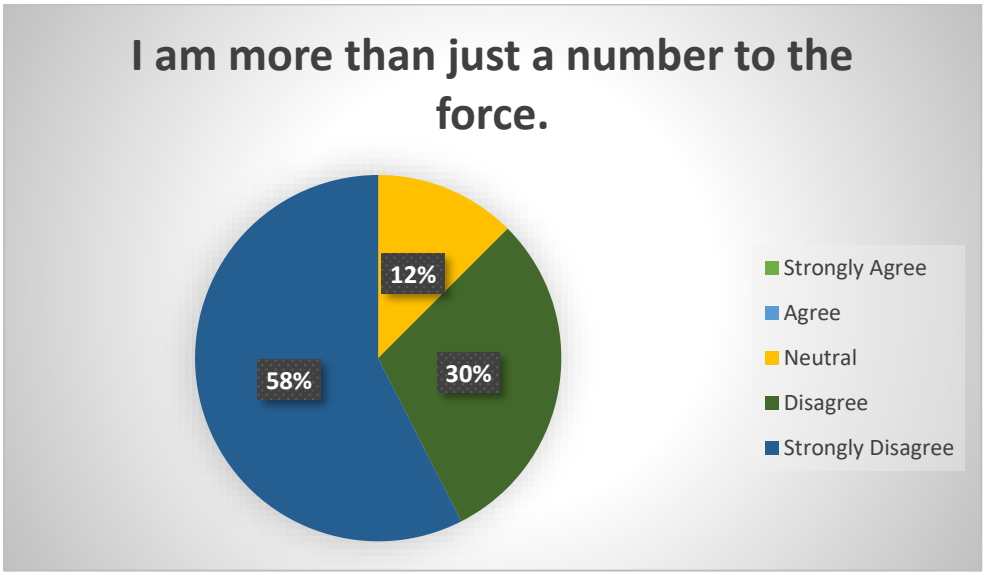
Figure :4



Although the vast majority of participants talked about rank structure for the cause of frustration, participant 33 stated "*It frustrates me that members of the public compare me to the bad officers, I joined to make a difference but due to their past experiences they tar me with the same brush".* This response highlights the numerous failings within law enforcement worldwide that is heavily publicised and shows the new generation of officers are still dealing with the mistakes of the past, such as the public failing of Fiona Pilkington. Walker (2011) claimed "*An Independent Police Complaints Commission report into the Leicestershire force's dealings with Pilkington concluded that the main failure was in not identifying the family as vulnerable, which meant police did not provide a structured, cohesive response to the prolonged antisocial behaviour they endured".*

To further support the findings that officers have little faith in their superiors the question was **raised "I am more than a number to the force"** as shown in figure 5.

Figure :5



As expected from the previous responses 58% strongly disagreed and not one participant agreed with the statement. Participant 24 stated that officers of rank caused them to feel frustrated, they went on to say, "*We are literally referred to by our collar numbers by rank, if that doesn't tell you what will".* This statement again highlights the findings by the author from the literature and documents the clear divide between frontline police officers and superiors.

It has been clear that the demand placed upon frontline officers, the lack of co operation between departments and the disparity in hierarchy are common themes for the cause of stress upon officers which were heavily touched upon by participants. Participant 5 stated *"Everyone is looking to pass the buck and will not take ownership of investigations, there's no teamwork between departments".*

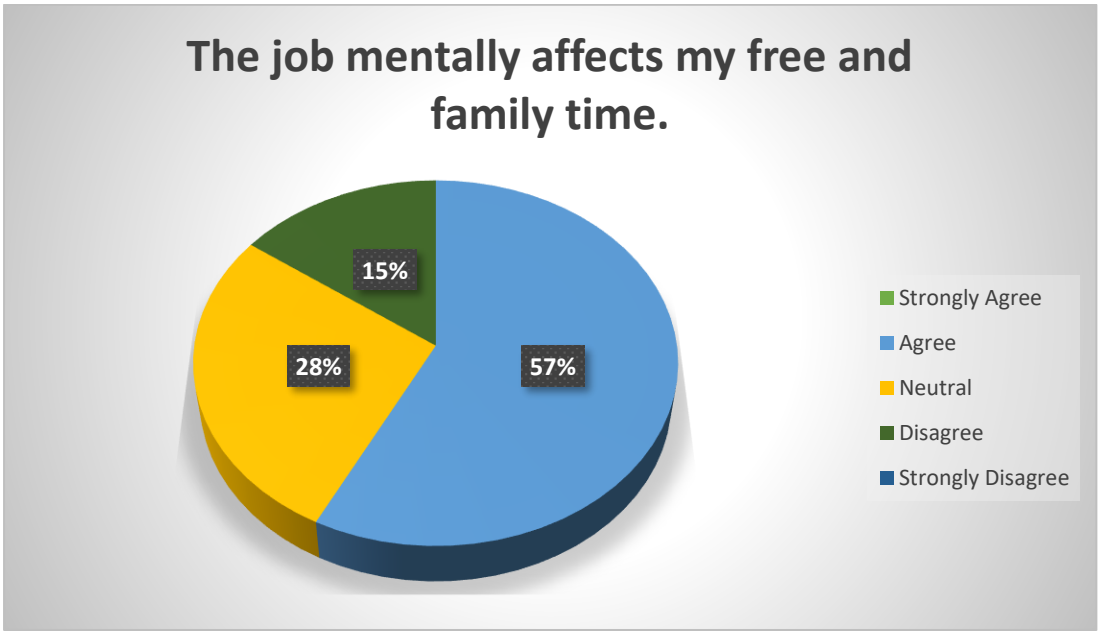
As it was evident that workplace issues were a cause of stress participants were asked **"How does stress from the workplace affect your personal life".** The answers received from this question only strengthened the argument raised by the author that being a frontline officer has a detrimental affect on mental health and highlights the immense pressure and stress that the role carries. The answers ranged from common concerns such as officers taking work home with them due to the limited time on shift and often work on their rest days. Participant 13 stated *"I end up doing most of my updates and prepping for the next set on rest days as I don't*

have enough time throughout my set. I've also got the university work to do on top, so it feels like I have no escape from work".

This supports the literature which shows that time constraints are a main contributor towards workplace stress. In addition to this participant 4 stated "*When I'm in the house I worry about the decisions I make, if they were the rights one and will I be supported if they weren't. Every update and action I do is open to criticism and it stresses me so I can't switch off".*

When asked the question **"The job mentally affects my free and family time".** Within figure 6, 57% agreed in contrast to only 15% who stated they do not allow their role to affect their personal lives. This again documents that the majority of officers are dealing with the pressures no only in their professinal lives but personal too. Sadulski (2017) say's *"In most professions, there is some level of stress. However, the demands placed upon police officers and ongoing threats of – and exposure to – violence leads to extremely high levels of stress on a daily basis. Such stress can do more than affect an officer's job performance; it can also seep into and damage their personal life".*

Figure :6



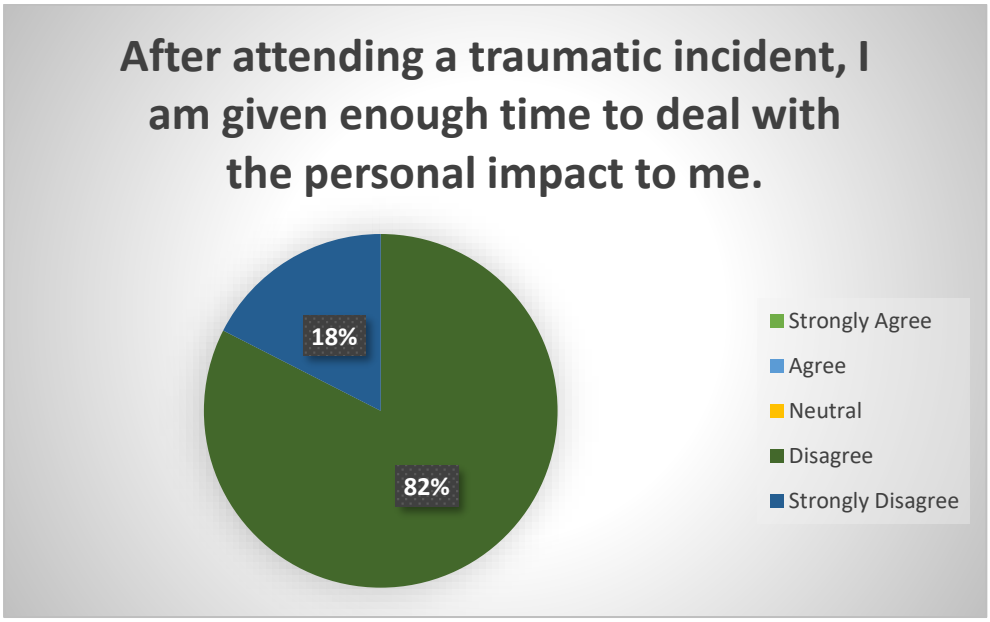
With this data in mind participants were asked **"What coping mechanisms do you implement to deal with stress"?** As expected the tested methods that have been researched in depth such

as exercise and talking about problems were the most predominant answers, Flavin (2018) has said "*Physical exercise is one of the most important preventative measures you can take against stress and burnout. "Aerobic exercise reduces stress while also preparing you better for your job".*

*How*ever, several participants stated that they feel their only option is to escape. Participant 10 said "*I always leave annual leave available so when my workload gets to high or other things begin to get on top of me, I'm able to book a set off so I can not think about work for a while".* This response documents that due to the stress experienced as a result of their role they feel their only option is to take work out of the equation entirely to be able to reduce their stress. Unfortunately for some this is not an option and they have no choice but to return to work despite not being in the correct mindset. Police Federation (No date) claims "*More than a quarter of officers who have taken sick leave attributed it to stress, depression or anxiety, while 65% said they still went to work even though they felt they shouldn't have because of the state of their mental wellbeing".*

Lastly participants were asked a series of questions on the most researched aspect of the published literature concerning the current available support for traumatic incidents. The author asked the question **"After attending a traumatic incident, I am given enough time to deal with the personal impact to me".** As represented in figure 6 the overwhelming response was negative.

Figure :6



The author wished to delve deeper into the experiences of the participants by asking **"How many traumatic experiences have you been to in your length of service"?** The research supports that officers will attend more traumatic incidents in their role than civilians will in a lifetime and instances such as these are commonplace. Frith (No date) has said "*It's the nature of the trauma they are being exposed to, and the relentlessness of it – and a lack of resources means they don't have the time to decompress after one traumatic incident before being exposed to the next. It's just a reality of the job. It's not actually about 'them'.*This is emphasised by participant 23 who said "*I stopped counting a long time ago, what's traumatic to me may not phase another. You either become numb or it gets to you".*

The author wished to gain an understanding of officers thoughts of the current support available after dealing with a traumatic incident and asked **"What are your thoughts on the current support available for officers dealing with mental health issues? (Trim)"?**

The general response from the participants were not supportive of the process, as the literature confirms officers are generally unwilling to accept the help offered due to matters such as stigma. This was confirmed by participant 16 stating *"Sounds like a waste of time, all they do is take you for a coffee and a chat".*

To ascertain how many of the 40 participants have experienced the process the author asked, **"Have you ever agreed and participated in a Trim Referral, if not why"?** Out of 40 participants none had engaged in the service. The author was able to identify common themes such as participants stating that they do not require the service as although they are stressed they don't think Trim is suitable, participant 1 stated "*Everyone is stressed about something, I'm not stressed enough to moan about it to someone"*. This is further supported by participant 36 who says, "*It's totally pointless, what's the point in talking to someone who's had no experience in the matter and hardly any training".*

This again supports the current available literature which supports that officers are simply unwilling to engage in the available support, often with drastic results. Zoe (2020) will say "I couldn't tell anyone because of the stigma at work. For many people, if you've got depression, anxiety or stress then you're weak, you're a "sicknote", everyone gets stressed and tired, that sort of thing".

The biggest development from the research came from the question **"From your personal experiences, what is the one aspect that needs to be addressed to ensure officers wellbeing is being protected"?** Although the majority of the literature concentrates on traumatic

experiences being a main factor of workplace stress, throughout the course of this study it is evident that most officers believe that the main cause of stress emanates from the paperwork aspect of things and the lack of faith in superiors. In response to the question participant 17 said *"Things need to be simplified, there's no need for countless forms to be completed for trivial matters. Its time consuming and adds pointless stress".* This was again backed up by participant 39 who said *"Senior management need to remember they were once frontline staff too, they need to understand that half of what they expect is unreasonable given our time and staffing issues".*

In summation it has become evident to the author that before this research was conducted it was the authors hypothesis that the main contributing factor for frontline officers suffering with their mental wellbeing would directly emanate from being heavily involved in traumatic experiences that are commonplace due to the duties that they carry out. There is a vast amount of literature to support this theory and as such has been documented and analysed by the author.

However it is apparent from the data gathered by the author from their independent study that although being involved in traumatic experiences can carry negative connotations which may affect an individual officers mental health, it is the daily challenges that have the biggest impact.

The 40 participants from the study gave frank and honest feedback about the challenges they face that contribute to their workplace stress which ultimately has a detrimental effect on their mental health. The research from this study suggests in fact that in most cases it is not one singular traumatic experience that is the cause of ill mental health but the culmination of several factors such as an unmanageable workload due to demand, conflict between colleagues and a lack of support and faith in superiors that is the main contributing factor that has a detrimental effect on officers mental wellbeing.

These findings are contrasting to the current literature that has been published on the matter, moreover the current literature does touch upon the fact that daily challenges do have an impact on mental wellbeing but does not delve into the matter enough to provide comprehensive data to be analysed. In order to be able to provide a working strategy in future it is the authors belief that further research into the matter is crucial if officer's wellbeing is to be protected and improved before it has a lasting negative impact.

Word count - 1725

Appendix 1

Thank you for your time and for agreeing to participate in this process. You are being invited to participate in a research study to establish the detrimental effects on mental wellbeing and the impacts that they have towards modern day frontline police officers.

This study is being conducted and supervised by Michael Alyn Price from the University of Wales Trinity St David who is currently undertaking an undergraduate project.

Before the commencement of this process the questions that will be discussed in this informal interview has been risk assessed to assure the participants, anonymity and safety There are no known risks if you decide to participate in this research study. The information you provide will analysed and will help the author to be able to ascertain what known and unknown aspects that are present in modern day policing that have an adverse effect on mental health.

The interview will take about approximately 20 minutes to complete. The information collected may not benefit you directly but is invaluable to the author who greatly appreciates your time and efforts in aiding with this research topic.

This interview is anonymous to all other apart from myself, however if you disclose information to me that will directly result in harm towards other or yourself, I am duty bound to report this information for your own safety and the safety of others.

Should the data be published, no individual information will be disclosed, and the author can personally assure each participant complete anonymity.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. By completing the interview, you are voluntarily agreeing to participate. You are free to decline to answer any question you do not wish to answer for any reason.

1) **What is your sex?**
   - **Male**
   - **Female**
   - **I do not identify as either**
   - **Prefer not to say**

2) **What is your age group?**
   - **Under 20**
   - **25 – 29**
   - **30 – 34**
   - **35 – 39**
   - **40 – 44**

- **45 – 49**
- **50 – 54**
- **55 and above**

3) **What is your length of service?**
   - **Under 1 year**
   - **1 – 2 years**
   - **2 – 5 years**
   - **6 – 10 years**
   - **11 – 15 years**
   - **More than 15 years**

4) **- "The thought of returning to work for my next shift leaves me with a sense of anxiety"**

5 Strongly Agree	4 Agree	3 Neither Or N/A	2 Disagree	1 Strongly Disagree

5) **- I feel mentally burnt out as a result of experiences within the workplace.**

5 Strongly Agree	4 Agree	3 Neither Or N/A	2 Disagree	1 Strongly Disagree

6) **- My role leaves me feeling frustrated.**

5 Strongly Agree	4 Agree	3	2 Disagree	1

		Neither Or N/A		Strongly Disagree

7) - I have complete faith and trust in my superiors.

5 Strongly Agree	4 Agree	3 Neither Or N/A	2 Disagree	1 Strongly Disagree

8) - I am more than just a number to the force?

5 Strongly Agree	4 Agree	3 Neither Or N/A	2 Disagree	1 Strongly Disagree

9) - The job mentally affects my free and family time.

5 Strongly Agree	4 Agree	3 Neither Or N/A	2 Disagree	1 Strongly Disagree

10) - After attending a traumatic incident, I am given enough time to deal with the personal impact to me.

5 Strongly Agree	4 Agree	3 Neither Or N/A	2 Disagree	1 Strongly Disagree

11) - What factors do you believe contribute towards you feeling anxious and burnt out?

12) - What causes you to feel frustrated and why?

13) What coping mechanisms do you implement to deal with stress?

14) - How does stress from the workplace affect your personal life?

15) - What are your thoughts on the current support available for officers dealing with mental health issues? (Trim)

16) - How many traumatic experiences have you been involved in within your length of service?

17) - Have you ever agreed and participated in a Trim Referral, if not why?

18) - From your personal experiences, what is the one aspect that needs to be addressed to ensure officers wellbeing is being protected?

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