

Introduction:

During this chapter I will be reviewing the answer from the submitted questionnaire (appendix 1) in order to answer the main questions set forth within this dissertation, have police officers and staff attended critical or major incidents? Have they been offered mental health support for attending these incidents, and if that support has been taken. This chapter will review the participants that have participated within the questionnaire, if they have attended a critical or major incident; if they have been offered mental health support following a policing incident and what further support they require from the police.

Participants:

A total of 33 participants took part in the questionnaire that was made available on the Gwent Police intranet which was available for a period of two weeks. Of the 33 participants 27% of those were aged 40-50 years old, 39% were aged 29 – 39 years old and 18% were aged 18-28 years old.

67% of the participants were males with 30% being female, the remaining 3% either identified as something else or preferring not to say. The length of service in the participating officers was 42% of participants with less than 5 years' experience and 39% having over 15 years policing experience. The remaining 18% were made up of officers having between 6 and 14-years' service. Most responses to the questionnaire came from response officers or specialist team officers such as firearms, CID, traffic etc. Most of the participants worked within the Newport area, however 33% identified as preferring not to say. Many of the participants were police constable or staff ranked at 69% with the remaining responses coming from sergeant rank or higher.

Attending critical incidents and the effects on mental health:

Of the 33 participants 88% had responded that they have attended a critical or major incident and part of their role. With 94% of participants agreeing to being a part of a policing incident that has resulted in serious injury or death. When asked if attending a policing incident has left participants feeling their mental health has suffered, 61% have answered yes, 31% have answered no, and 3% have preferred not to say.

Mental Health Support:

Of participants that have attended critical or major incidents and feeling their mental health has suffered, only 24% of participants have sought mental health support. Of those who answered yes to seeking mental health support, all mental health support has been police sponsored (TRIM referral). Following the attendance of a critical or major incident, 85% of participants have been referred to a TRIM practitioner. Out of the 85% who have been referred to a TRIM practitioner only 33% of participants have taken the TRIM mental health support offered to them. When participants were asked if the TRIM process was helpful in dealing with mental health issues, 31% answered not applicable for not taking the support. 25% answered that the TRIM process was helpful. 19% answered that the TRIM process was not helpful, and 25% answered that they would prefer not to say. Of participants that have had a TRIM referral, 12% have sought further mental health support. The further mental health support was all police sponsored (further TRIM referrals or counselling).

21% of participants have sought mental health support outside of Gwent Police after dealing with a policing incident. With 18% of participant seeking mental health support without being offered a TRIM referral.

Other Mental Health Stressors for Police Officers and Staff:

70% of participants thought that the longer ones length of service, the more at risk you are to mental health problems. 76% of participants believe that mental health issues arise within police officers and staff regardless of dealing with traumatic incidents. The majority of participants believe that it is high workloads that cause police officers and staff to have adverse mental health issues. Only 27% of participants believed that attending traumatic incidents was the biggest cause to mental health issues within police officers and staff.

Confiding in Others Accessing Support:

82% of participants stated they would feel comfortable in confiding in a mental health specialist for mental health support. 70% of participants would feel comfortable confiding in family or friends for mental health support. 61% of participants would feel comfortable talking to a colleague about their mental health. Only 36% would feel comfortable in confiding in a supervisor for mental health support. 67% of participants believe there is still a stigma around policing and talking about mental health.

Accessing Support:

Half of the participants believe it is easy to access mental health support within Gwent Police, with even less, at 27% thinking it easy to access support for mental health outside of Gwent Police. Only 24% of participants feel that the processes set within Gwent Police are enough to help officers deal with any mental health issues that might arise whilst policing.

Further Support and Mitigation of Mental Health Issues:

In the last three questions participants were given free rein to answer how they pleased. The most popular responses are shown as below.

What can Gwent Police do to further support officers and staff requiring mental health support? The most popular answers were time to deal with traumatic situations and decompress and adapting mental health to police officer and make it more easily accessible. Some have suggested incorporating team building days to deal with stress within shifts and others have advocated for a 24/7 mental health service for officers to contact.

What do you do within work to mitigate mental health issues?

A lot of responses revolve around humour and trying to see a funny side to things to relieve stress and mental health issues. Another highly used answer would be to speak with colleagues to decompress, as they are experiencing the same things as you or something similar. Answers then begin to relate to the management of workloads to help deal with the stress of working within policing.

What do you do within your personal life to mitigate mental health issues?

Answers to this question mostly relate around speaking to family and friends, as well as conducting physical exercise and / or going out drinking.

Conclusion:

During this chapter I have met the objectives set within the introduction by reviewing the answers from the submitted questionnaire (appendix 1) in order to answer the main questions set forth within this dissertation, have police officers and staff attended critical or major incidents? Have they been offered mental health support for attending these incidents, and if that support has been taken.

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