

## **Flexible Working**

### **Driver – Social**

Related Drivers – Equality, Diversity & Human Rights, Demand Management, Efficiency, Public Sector Productivity, Police Funding, Talent and Personnel Management, Ageing Population

### **Background**

The Ipsos MORI Sigma Scan (November 2006)<sup>1</sup> considered flexible working to be a key driver in the coming years. It was suggested that the uptake of non-standard working patterns is likely to increase across the labour market through such activities as flexible hours, multiple jobs and working from home.

More and more people want or need flexible working arrangements in order to meet the changing demands in their domestic lives. It can be particularly valuable for parents of young children and people who are carers, but flexible working can benefit a wide range of people who may simply prefer a better work/life balance. One type of shift pattern will not suit every person and, with the changing needs of policing, it no longer meets the operational demands on police forces.

Women make up 23% of police officer ranks whilst they constitute 44% of the economically active population. Historically the proportion of women officers resigning has been twice as high as men. Research on resigning officers found that over a quarter of women mentioned domestic responsibility as a key reason for resigning.<sup>2</sup>

According to Flexible Working in the Police Service Guidance:

- There are 7 million families with dependent children – 5.2 million families headed by couples; 1.6 million headed by a lone mother and 180,000 headed by a lone father
- By 2026 10% of the population will be over 75 and many will have caring needs. Two thirds of women carers and less than three quarters of men carers are in employment
- 45% of all workers – 12.3 million people – work some form of flexible hours. The most common form of flexible hours working is part time, used by 42% of women workers and 9% of men
- A woman is eight times more likely to work part time if she has two children than if she has one
- 3% of all police officers are part time – and 97% of them are women
- 22% of all police staff are part time – and 86% of them are women.<sup>3</sup>

Studies on rostering and flexible ways of working have shown that many forces continue to deal with individual requests for flexibility, rather than taking a strategic and proactive

approach to resource management which might improve retention, work-life balance, efficiency and / or quality of service.

Jayne Monkhouse, equality adviser to the Superintendents' Association, which represents more than 1,600 superintendents and chief superintendents, said force managers still show a "grudging acceptance" of staff who wish to work flexibly. Monkhouse said that "Flexible working is unpopular because it is complicated."<sup>4</sup>

In 2004 the Home Office published a study of Police Resource Management and Rostering Arrangements. The study, which was undertaken by Accenture showed that better management of shift arrangements can reduce fatigue and increase officer's health, energy and efficiency. More effective resource management within a framework of flexible working options will produce a better work/life balance for individuals, enhancing both recruitment and retention.

### **Potential Skills Needs**

<p><b>Management and leadership skills</b> – actively manage employee well being by supporting flexible working</p>
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<sup>1</sup> [Ispos – MORI \(2006\) \*Sigma Scan\*.](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Flanagan, Sir Ronnie \(2008\) \*The Review of Policing: Final Report\*. London: Home Office.](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Home Office, APA, Police Federation, ACPO & HMIC \(2007\) \*The Flexible Working in the Police Service\*. London: COL.](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Personnel Today Press Release, 26 February 2007, 'Superintendents' Association equality adviser accuses police of paying lip service to flexible working'.](#)