

Identifying well-being challenges and solutions in the police service: A World Café approach

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Introduction

There is evidence that police officers are at high risk of mental and physical strain (Gill et al., 2018; Houdmont and Elliott-Davies, 2016; Maran et al., 2018; Shane, 2010; Violanti et al., 2017). Common health problems include cardiovascular disease (Magnavita et al., 2018), musculoskeletal symptoms (Berg et al., 2006) and poor sleep quality (Ma et al., 2019) as well as mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, burnout and post-traumatic stress disorder (Foley and Massey, 2019; Klimley et al., 2018; Violanti et al., 2016). Furthermore, first responders such as police officers are at greater risk of suicidal ideation (Stanley et al., 2016) and the actual suicide rate in the profession is particularly high (Violanti et al., 2018b; Violanti and Robinson, 2013).

Police officers encounter a range of operational stressors, such as negative interactions with colleagues and members of the public (Adams and Buck, 2010), conflict with communities (Can et al., 2018), court visits (Violanti et al., 2016), exposure to threats (Andersson et al., 2017) and violence (Ellrich, 2016; Lennings, 1997; Wilson, 2015) – including the risk of killing or injuring others (Komarovskaya et al., 2011). Certain tasks may be particularly damaging to police well-being, such as investigations of child abuse (Tehrani, 2018) and witnessing violent death, for example, at crime scenes (Mrevlje, 2016; Salinas and Webb, 2018). Police also experience organisational stressors, such as having insufficient resources to meet role demands (Shane, 2010), which are exacerbated by austerity measures and enhanced public scrutiny (Duran et al., 2019; Lumsden and Black, 2018) and a perceived lack of career advancement opportunities (Juniper et al., 2010). Other studies have found that work–life conflict is

particularly high among police resulting from unsocial hours, unpredictable working patterns (McDowall and Lindsay, 2014; Scholarios et al., 2017) and pressure to volunteer free time (McCreary and Thompson, 2006).

Organisational stressors may have a greater impact on the well-being of police than operational stressors because they occur more frequently (Violanti et al., 2018a). However, some organisational stressors may increase the risk of operational hazards; for example deploying unaccompanied officers due to understaffing heightens the risk of verbal and physical attack (Houdmont et al., 2019a). A survey of 16,842 police officers across England and Wales (Houdmont and Elliott-Davies, 2016) found high workload and short-staffing were both perceived as barriers to proactive police work. Sixty-five per cent of participants reported experiencing mental health problems, 90% continued to work during physical illness and more than a third reported working during their annual leave to keep up with their workload. Stress in the police has been associated with poor health (Garbarino and Magnavita, 2015) and sickness absenteeism (Svedberg and Alexanderson, 2012) as well as turnover intentions (Brunetto et al., 2012, 2017; Sui et al., 2015). There is also evidence that specific organisational stressors experienced by police officers, such as job demands and poor working relationships, are particularly likely to increase stress, that in turn encourages leaving intentions (Allisey et al., 2014).

Although useful insight has been gained into the well-being challenges faced by the police, most existing studies use quantitative designs. Qualitative methods can provide greater understanding of the social context of well-being challenges and identify potential interventions in organisations (Abildgaard et al., 2016). They can also help engage

employers in recognising problems and shaping change initiatives (Pescud et al., 2015). Our research reports the findings of a study using qualitative methodology to explore well-being challenges among police officers and civilian workers. Much qualitative research on well-being uses semi-structured interviews (Abildgaard et al., 2016), so our use of the World Café method is novel.

The World Café is an approach to generating ideas and strategies based on the assumption that diverse groups of stakeholders can generate collective wisdom when discussing questions that matter to them (Brown and Isaacs, 2005). The World Café method can be used as a dialogic approach to organisational development, similar to appreciative inquiry and action learning (Bushe and Marshak, 2009; Bushe and Paranjpey, 2015). It aims to produce democratic and participatory discussions (Jorgenson and Steier, 2013) and has previously been used to engage entrepreneurs in strategic planning (Chang and Chen, 2015), develop learning cultures (Tan and Brown, 2005) and involve staff (Burke, 2010) and service users in service development (Terry et al., 2015). However, we are unaware of any published research that has used World Café methodology to address the well-being needs of policing or similar occupational groups.

World Cafés offer some advantages for our research over 'traditional' qualitative methods. Firstly, its strong participatory focus can result in more effective well-being interventions, as drawing upon employees' insights will increase their ownership of, and investment in, change initiatives (Abildgaard et al., 2018; Nielsen and Randall, 2012; Tafvelin et al., 2019). Secondly, World Cafes can engage larger groups of participants, and are therefore less time intensive than other qualitative methods such as interviews (Cameron, 2005; Slocum, 2003). Interviews and focus groups may also constrain participants' responses to researchers' agenda, whereas the World Café approach enables participants to have more influence over the focus of conversations (Estacio and Karic, 2016). Another advantage is the ethos of the World Café approach, as it aims to foster an equitable, non-threatening atmosphere that encourages all participants to contribute equally to discussions regardless of their background (Brown and Isaacs, 2005; Fouché and Light, 2011). The use of World Cafés therefore allowed us to gain a breadth of views from police of varied ranks and civilian staff.

While police organisations have attracted considerable attention by researchers, studies have typically focused on officers rather than civilian staff (Dick and Metcalfe, 2001; Lumsden and Black, 2018). Some research has suggested civilian staff have lower status in police organisations leading to tensions with officers, or managerial neglect (McCarty and Skogan, 2013). Depending on their role, civilian staff may also encounter distressing situations, as in the case of call handlers (Lumsden and Black, 2018). While the majority of the UK police service comprises police officers, as of 31st March 2019, over 60,000 civilian staff were employed in England and Wales

(Allen and Zayed, 2019), compared to approximately 125,000 officers. The present study included civilian staff as well as officers to provide a more complete perspective of the organisational challenges that forces face. We anticipated that the informal and inclusive atmosphere of the World Café approach would encourage officers of mixed ranks and civilians to participate equally and share their well-being experiences and opinions.

This article reports the findings of a project undertaken with two police organisations in the South East of the United Kingdom (UK), both of which had reported concerns with

sickness absence and staff turnover. The first organisation was a collaborated team comprising specialist units across multiple counties, hereafter referred to as CT (Collaborated Team). The second organisation was a county police force, hereafter referred to as CPF (County Police Force). Contacts representing the CT and CPF wished to identify priorities for improving well-being in their organisations. Previous organisational surveys that had attempted to gain insight into the well-being challenges faced by staff had achieved poor response rates, so we were asked to use an alternative method for data collection. We adopted the World Café methodology. The choice of method therefore was both purposeful and pragmatic, responding to both survey fatigue and the need to obtain richer data using collaborative methods.

Our theoretical approach was broadly grounded in the Jobs Demands-Resources (JDR) model (Demerouti et al., 2001). This takes a flexible approach to categorising aspects of work as either demands, requiring some kind of response, and resources, that enable people to perform their job and facilitate well-being and growth. Resources can be physical, psychological, social or organisational aspects of the job. There is extensive evidence that job demands are key predictors of poor well-being (including burnout) whereas job resources are strongly linked with job engagement (Hakanen et al., 2008; Hu et al., 2011). There is also some evidence for gain spirals, where engaged employees tend to acquire further job resources that can help reduce job demands over time (Bakker and Demerouti, 2017). Our research question was therefore 'what demands do police employees face and what are the resources and strategies that might help address them?'

Method

The World Café methodology

World Café events are arranged much like a café, with participants discussing key topics in small groups sitting around tables in a comfortable and welcoming setting (Tan and Brown, 2005). Several tables are used to accommodate large numbers of participants while still facilitating conversations in small groups. World Cafés take place over a series of rounds, each lasting a specified period of time where participants engage in conversations in response to a question and record their ideas using materials provided. At the end of each round, participants move separately to new tables to enable conversations to be shared across the wider group (Brown and Isaacs, 2005). In the World Café, questions may be divided between tables, so that participants discuss new issues as they move around, or between rounds, so that all participants discuss the same question simultaneously; we adopted the latter approach. A common feature of World Cafés are table hosts (Brown and Isaacs, 2005) who encourage participation from others, summarise discussions at the beginning of each round and can help record the products of conversation.

Participants

We invited officers and civilian staff to participate in a series of World Café events to discuss well-being challenges in their organisation. Three events were arranged for the CT; these were embedded in leadership training days, so participants were typically of

sergeant rank or above or had expressed interest in being promoted to ranks with supervisory responsibility. By contrast, a single event was conducted for the CPF that was not embedded within a wider training context.

Approximately 150 individuals took part in the CT events, and 36 in the CPF event. Our contacts identified individuals willing to volunteer for the table host role at each event. We did not keep a record of hosts at any CT event, so the number of CT participants is approximate. Demographic information for participants was not collected because data were collected at a group rather than an individual level and also to avoid concerns about confidentiality and encourage open and honest discussion.

Procedure

We developed a guidance document for table hosts based on principles set out by Brown and Isaacs (2005) and briefed them before each event. At the beginning of each event, we told participants that the aim was to identify ways to improve well-being in the police service, and that we were performing this work on behalf of the CT and CPF. In the spirit of the World Café participatory approach, the potential to gain important insights into the challenges they faced and potential solutions was explained. In an effort to promote openness of information sharing between participants, they were informed that we (the researchers) were acting as facilitators and would not be directly observing conversations. Participants were asked to record the content of their discussions on A4 card (CT events) or on paper table cloths (CPF event). Both are commonly used to record data in World Café events (Brown and Isaacs, 2005). Participants were provided coloured pens to record their ideas in written or visual form (most chose a written format).

Café events typically lasted approximately 2 hours, with individual rounds taking between 10 and 15 minutes. The first event that we conducted with the CT consisted of four rounds of questions. We developed questions about well-being in collaboration with contacts in the police organisations. It is important that a sample of participants are involved in generating World Café questions to ensure they reflect the issues that are important to them, as focusing on researchers' or leaders' priorities can lead to disengagement of participants during the event, and the quality of data collected is therefore compromised (Prewitt, 2011). Consequently, we requested feedback from participants at each Café to help shape questions for the following event. One criticism of the World Café method has been that it can encourage discussions to focus on the positive (Aldred, 2011). Our participants in the first event identified a need to discuss problems in order to find solutions, so we therefore adapted the questions. Feedback also led to the number of questions increasing from four in the first event to six in subsequent events. A representative set of questions used were:

- What does well-being at work mean to you?
- What are the well-being problems we need to address?
- What is already working well (to support well-being at work)?
- What could the organisation do to improve your well-being at work, within the next 12 months?
- What could you do to improve well-being at work?
- We also asked, 'What questions should we have asked today?' We posed this final question following advice by Brown and Isaacs (2005) to identify important themes that might not have been captured through set questions. Insights gained from this process were also used to inform revision of questions between events.

World Café events allow for the cross-pollination of ideas from stakeholders of different backgrounds to inform practice and policy (Halsall and Marks-Maran, 2014; Jorgenson and Steier, 2013). As our participants moved table after each question, discussions had the potential to connect all in the room and allow them to discuss about issues 'that matter' with colleagues they might not otherwise engage with, therefore creating a sense of community united by shared well-being issues and solutions. Following the final round of each event, we asked participants to share the products of their discussion, which often resulted in further discussion, producing additional data.

Ethics

Ethical approval for this research project was gained from the local university psychology ethics committee as well as from senior management in both the CT and CPF. Before each event, participants were given the opportunity to ask questions about the research and provide written informed consent. Participants were informed that they had the right to participate in the World Café event without contributing data to the research project by marking any notes that should be excluded. No participant exercised this right. We emphasised that data would be strictly anonymous, because ideas were to be recorded by the group rather than individuals. We did not record participant identities, and therefore could not identify specific groups of individuals as having made particular comments.

Data analysis

Over a series of World Café rounds, consensus emerges (Carter et al., 2012; Halsall and Marks-Maran, 2014). Some studies using World Café approaches do not explain how themes are produced (e.g. Jorgenson and Steier, 2013) and others refer to synthesising participant responses (e.g. Whybrow et al., 2011) but, following Braun and Clarke (2006), we acknowledge that themes are not passively 'discovered' in data. In order to synthesise participants' insights gathered through discussion, we used thematic analysis, following guidelines by Braun and Clarke (2006). Following a process of familiarisation with the data, we coded the data set and progressed through iterative cycles of refining the codes, before settling upon our final themes. Themes were checked by two members of the research team. In keeping with the participatory ethos, we were guided by participant contributions and sought feedback from several participants on our analysis. Our findings were reported to the CT and CPF organisations, where they have since been used to inform the development of well-being action plans (see discussion).

Results

Drawing upon the consensus generated by participants, we identified four key themes: workload, occupational health, management and mental health stigma.

Workload

Participants' feedback was often achievement focused when discussing what 'good work' looked like. For example, achieving targets, providing 'victim' or 'customer' satisfaction and 'locking up criminals'. Performance could be seen altruistically, in that participants emphasised the importance of being able to help others. A further social dimension to performance was demonstrated by participants who described their colleagues as competent, which could reflect an awareness of the interconnectedness of achievements. Nonetheless, while participants wished to achieve targets, they often emphasised that many targets imposed on them were unrealistic in terms of quantity and deadlines. Indeed, when recommending changes to improve well-being, participants frequently highlighted the importance of 'realistic expectations' and 'reduced targets' from senior leaders. Participants frequently attributed their high workload to a combination of high expectations from their managers and the impact of short-staffing. Given this situation, it was unsurprising that a strong sense of 'fire-fighting' emerged from discussions, that is, an emphasis on reactive rather than proactive problem-solving. Several participants argued that an investment in more front-line police officers was required to meet the high level of job demands, while others questioned whether this was a realistic expectation under current budgetary conditions. Participants therefore sometimes argued for greater use of prioritisation to manage workload, which was often seen as lacking in the current situation. As well as being given unrealistic targets to achieve noted above, some participants also highlighted unrealistic deadlines, resulting from last minute requests for information that did not take into account rest days; as one table commented 'nothing can wait'.

Email. Email practices were commonly discussed. In both CT and CPF events, participants referred to expectations that they would read and send emails while off-duty. There were indications that participants experienced, as one

described, 'death by email', that is, email overload. Some participants perceived that the quantity of emails was the result of efforts to create an audit trail, referred to by some as 'arse covering'. The need for some changes in cultural practices regarding email management was widely recognised as a way to improve well-being. Suggestions included, encouraging officers and staff to disengage from email on rest days, minimise use of 'reply all' functions and consider whether face-to-face discussions might be more appropriate.

Impacts on well-being. Participants often appeared overwhelmed by the demands placed upon them. Their consensus was that their work impacted on their well-being in several ways, such as a lack of opportunity to recover from work due to pressure to work through meal breaks and working during rest days, for example, answering emails and managing requests, as discussed above. Indeed, some felt 'guilty' if they did not work on their rest

days and that they worried about work while off-duty. Participants indicated that short-staffing presented difficulties for work-life balance, due to the need to cover shifts, resulting in requests for annual leave frequently being denied due to short-staffing.

Occupational health

Another common issue raised was the negative impact on employee well-being of reduced support services. For example, participants in the CT noted that resources for the Occupational Health Unit (OHU) and Human Resources reduced when the collaborated service was formed, with one person estimating that the size of these teams had halved. One of the consequences of this reduced service was that well-being support, previously available across a number of sites, was now considered less convenient to access. Similarly, a small number of participants in the CPF commented that contact with support services was primarily by telephone, which was considered inappropriate for some problems. When contact with the OHU was made, participants across both CT and CPF events indicated that referrals took a long time to be processed, so health often deteriorated further. Some CPF participants stated, however, that the speed of referrals had improved, but this view was not unanimous. Some also commented that the OHU service tended to be reactive rather than proactive, which also led to their problems escalating. Participants highlighted the need for better support of health promotion, such as the provision of a gym and time to use it, in order to facilitate physical health as well as support for healthy eating at work.

Participants were also critical of OHU processes and procedures. Those in the CT wished for more uniformity, as the type and availability of support differed across the forces that were represented in the CT. On the other hand, participants in both the CT and CPF desired greater flexibility in the sickness absence trigger system. For example, some CT participants with line manager responsibility expressed a wish for the freedom to 'manage' people as individuals rather than being forced to follow a standard process for supporting a subordinate. The use of triggers was also considered stressful for staff who had been absent; some CPF participants noted that sickness could result in a 'firmly worded' letter warning about further steps that would be taken in the event of future sickness. This could be worrying, especially if they were at home recovering from serious illness or surgery. In general, therefore, participants expressed a wish for OHU processes to shift from reactive triggers to more proactive support.

Management

Participants identified management as playing an important role in supporting wellbeing at work. There were some perceptions, however, that well-being received 'lip service' from some senior leaders and genuine investment or action was often lacking. The senior management team (SMT) was generally seen as more focused on employee performance than on their well-being, and participants from the CT often described their senior managers as distant, lacking care and compassion, and seemingly unaware of the role that they play in impacting the well-being of officers and staff (e.g. in relation to frequent requests for urgent action with little notice). Negative perceptions of the SMT

were sometimes communicated via scepticism that any action would be taken to address the findings of the World

Cafés. The perception of SMT as distant appeared to relate to their lack of visibility, with one participant describing them as 'visitors' who should be 'part of the team'. Visibility was also widely thought to engender a sense of appreciation among staff that could improve well-being, with one participant remarking that 'you can't be appreciated for things that people don't know you do'.

The hierarchical nature of the police was considered to create distance between SMT and frontline employees, which seemed to be partly due to a lack of communication as well as a more physical absence. Participants commonly expressed the view that communication by officers and staff should be two-way, and the importance of managers listening to staff was emphasised. In CT events, calls were made for more consultative approaches to decision-making, with a preference for employees at all levels to be involved. However, some participants expressed the belief that speaking out could be viewed negatively by management. Therefore, as well as increasing opportunities to speak, participants tended to see the need for management to create a culture of psychological safety to encourage open and honest discussion about well-being.

The desire for a more caring and compassionate management appeared to be linked with the wish for better communication by some participants. Some reported that one-to-one meetings with their managers had made them feel more valued, which can be contrasted with the lack of care that participants more frequently associated with the SMT. A number of participants also suggested that well-being checks could be integrated into one-to-one meetings that currently focused exclusively on performance targets. Participants also proposed that well-being could be made a routine part of team meetings, as well as a discussion of performance.

Mental health stigma

Participants raised some concerns about organisational culture. As has been noted previously, there was a sense that high workload had resulted in working through breaks and during personal time becoming the norm. Broader concerns about the culture as it related to mental health were also identified. A number of participants across events highlighted a powerful stigma associated with disclosing mental health issues, which one group noted could inhibit 'speaking truth to power'. In other words, they expressed concern about being able to openly discuss the impact of working practices on well-being. Psychological safety was thought to be a key aim, with a number of participants arguing that management should be encouraging staff to openly discuss health and well-being rather than see it as a weakness. Indeed, some participants with supervisory responsibility also felt that they should be engaging in more open discussions to help change the organisational culture.

When asked how they could contribute to positive changes in well-being, many participants suggested that they could themselves speak more openly about the subject. Some also called for more honest conversations about challenges facing the organisation, including well-being problems, but opinions were conflicted about how this could be accomplished. At two events, participants considered 'moaning' to be 'boring' or 'unhelpful'. They contrasted complaints about negative aspects of work with

constructive criticism or, as one group put it, 'solution-based moaning'. At one event this subject was discussed extensively; some noted that 'venting' was an essential and healthy way of coping with difficult work that could not be discussed at home, whether due to security requirements (e.g. during major crime investigations), or because family would be ill-equipped to cope with aspects of police work. It was also mentioned by one participant that the admonishment to avoid complaining could itself reinforce mental health stigma by encouraging an unrealistically positive view of the job and, in turn, overlooking the need to take action to improve well-being. Participants agreed that balance might be needed between the ability to complain when required and the benefits of not dwelling exclusively on negative aspects of work.

Discussion

In this article, we set out to apply the World Café methodology to identifying well-being challenges and solutions within the police service and demonstrate the value of a participatory approach. While this method has been used in

a variety of contexts (Chang and Chen, 2015; Tan and Brown, 2005), its use in developing well-being strategies within police organisations is novel. Our findings, co-produced by participants, have informed the development of an action plan that includes demonstrating greater care for subordinates, changing cultural practices relating to email use, making better use of prioritisation and addressing personnel needs. Although previous research has focused on operational hazards of police work such as encounters with crime, violence and legal processes (Andersson et al., 2017; Violanti et al., 2016; Wilson, 2015) and the impact of particular police roles (Salinas and Webb, 2018; Tehrani, 2018), reflecting the findings of research conducted by Houdmont and Elliott-Davies (2016), our participants predominantly focused on stressors that were organisational in nature. This may be because police officers tend to see operational hazards as 'just part of the job', whereas organisational challenges may be experienced as hindrances to fulfilling their job role. Including the views of civilian as well as operational staff may also have made organisational challenges to well-being more salient. Applying JDR theory (Demerouti et al., 2001) to participant insights, we saw signs of high job demands and job resources that might either be considered insufficient, or poorly aligned with organisational needs. Given the link previously identified between high demands and work-related stress, health problems and burnout (Hakanen et al., 2008; Hu et al., 2011), this may help to explain the challenges of absenteeism and turnover reported by the CT and CPF.

To some extent, the challenges identified by participants were interrelated. The high workload reported by participants was often linked with concerns about low staffing levels. Further, perceptions of demanding and unsupportive management behaviours were likely driven by the same environment of high demands and low resources experienced by our participants. The impact felt by participants was consistent with previous research showing a link between police understaffing and work-role overload (Duxbury et al., 2015). Since 2008, the number of police officers leaving the service in England and Wales has largely exceeded the numbers joining each year, with a reduction of 20,000 officers during this period (Allen and Zayed, 2019). Our participants recognised the need for increased investment in staffing, or an approach to workload based on prioritising

some tasks over others. There is evidence that to be effective in protecting well-being, job resources need to be closely matched to the nature of the demand (Häusser et al., 2010). For example, employees experiencing high workload demands require additional staff or other resources for managing workload, while employees managing emotional demands will require emotional forms of support.

Participants acknowledged that increasing staffing levels in the current political climate may be challenging. While the government has recently announced plans to recruit 20,000 police officers over 3 years (Home Office, 2019a), there are concerns about the logistical challenge of recruiting and training a large number of recruits in a short time (House of Commons Library, 2019). Attempts to prioritise some aspects of policing over others might also receive a negative reaction from the public. Concerns have already been raised about attempts to reduce the cost of policing by reclassifying certain types of crime, such as shoplifting, car crime and criminal damage, in response to austerity (Lumsden and Black, 2018). Research conducted in the United States suggests that increasing staffing may not necessarily result in reduced crime rates (e.g. Spelman, 2017), and improved police strategy will also be required. However, we are unaware of research that has examined the impact of police staffing levels on crime patterns in the UK and this could help inform the development of an evidence-based staffing strategy. In addition, the reductions to police staffing levels due to austerity may pose long-term challenges to managing personnel. Research from the United States has highlighted the impact of hiring freezes and relative proportions of junior and senior staff on skill structure in the police workforce (Wilson and Heinonen, 2012). Police services in the UK are likely to experience similar challenges and therefore a long-term strategic perspective is required. The combined pressures may force a change to how policing is delivered in the UK and we call for further debate on how this might be accomplished.

Our participants proposed several solutions to the challenges that they identified. In order to consider how these might be implemented, it is helpful to first consider the level at which interventions are targeted. Interventions can be at primary, secondary and tertiary levels (Halperin, 1996). Primary interventions aim to prevent exposure to stressors by addressing them at source (Montano et al., 2014), secondary initiatives seek to improve individuals' ability to cope and tertiary interventions mitigate the impact of stressors already encountered by individuals (Lamontagne et al., 2007). Research has supported the use of multi-level interventions where organisational and

individual initiatives (i.e. secondary and tertiary) are combined (Lamontagne et al., 2007). For example, one study found that workers who had engaged in an intervention to enhance their ability to adapt to changing demands at an individual level tended to benefit more from an organisational intervention aimed at improving job control (Bond et al., 2008).

In addition to staffing discussed above, our research findings indicate that management behaviours should be targeted for change in order to enhance well-being and address concerns about psychological safety. Although work-related stress is the second most common occupational health problem in the UK and is particularly prevalent in the 'helping' and uniformed services (Health and Safety Executive, 2018), it continues to be heavily stigmatised (Moffitt et al., 2014; White et al., 2015). Mental health stigma is thought to be a particular problem in the police (Stuart, 2017) and this was confirmed by the findings of the present study. The stigmatisation of mental health problems was

identified by participants as a cause for concern, although some thought the culture was slowly improving. The findings of a systematic review suggest that barriers to seeking support for mental health problems often stem from fears that disclosure will not be treated with confidentiality, and that seeking help might have negative repercussions for one's career (Haugen et al., 2017). The findings of a study of Canadian police officers (Stuart, 2017) indicated that 85% of participants would avoid disclosing mental illness to a supervisor/manager or colleague and more than half (62%) would expect to face discrimination at work. As yet, however, research into mental health stigma in the police has generally focused on how attitudes might influence encounters with members of the public who have mental health problems. There is some evidence that training can improve police attitudes towards mental health in general (Hansson and Markström, 2014), but to the best of our knowledge the impact of such training on attitudes towards mental health among peers in the police has not been examined. Such research should be prioritised in order to identify strategies to reduce stigma that are congruent with policing cultures that, in turn, will encourage engagement with mental health services.

Leadership training might serve as a useful primary-level intervention to enhance well-being and to make conversations about well-being feel safer. The UK Health and Safety Executive has developed tools to help managers assess whether they have the behaviours identified as effective for preventing and reducing workplace stress. A self-assessment tool is available, together with tools that require input from the manager's staff, senior managers and peers, and guidance on strategies to improve stress management competencies (Donaldson-Fielder et al., 2011; Health and Safety Executive, n.d.). Recent research has shown that police officers who highlighted shortcomings in their line manager's stress management competencies were at higher risk of psychological distress (Houdmont et al., 2019b). These tools can inform selection and training strategies for staff and help foster an organisational culture that prioritises well-being.

Research also suggests that people-oriented approaches to management, such as transformational leadership and high quality leader-member exchange (LMX) – leader-subordinate relationships incorporating care for well-being and attention to personal development, can improve employee well-being (Arnold, 2017; Gregersen et al., 2016). A study of Dutch police officers found that high-LMX relationships can foster more resourceful working environments that, in turn, can enhance engagement and job performance (Breevaart et al., 2015). Further, there is evidence that transformational leadership behaviours can be developed (Brown and May, 2012) suggesting that this should be prioritised. At the same time, it is important to consider the well-being of leaders themselves, which is likely to be dynamically linked with the well-being of their subordinates (Skakon et al., 2010), for example, as a result of leader behaviours. As noted above, we suspect that the SMT were themselves experiencing high levels of stress, so future research should examine the kind of stressors faced by police SMT and how they impact on their management style over time, and the subsequent effect on subordinate well-being and performance. The findings could advance our understanding of how to develop more precisely targeted interventions to improve well-being in the police.

Changes to the way work is organised could be paired with secondary interventions aimed at enhancing individual well-being. For example, previous research has supported

the use of mindfulness training (Fisher et al., 2019; Kaplan et al., 2018) and resilience training (Hesketh et al.,

2019) in supporting well-being within the police. However, the findings of this study suggest that initiatives that seek to enhance organisational resources are required. An intervention that has been often investigated in the context of JDR theory is job crafting, a process whereby individuals adapt their work, for example, what kind of tasks they perform and how they perform them (Bipp and Demerouti, 2015; van Wingerden et al., 2017). There is evidence that the job crafting behaviours that individuals perform influence different well-being outcomes; while enhancing job resources is associated with greater well-being (Harju et al., 2016; van Wingerden et al., 2017), reducing hindrances (a form of job demand that represents barriers to meeting goals) can increase turnover intentions (Rudolph et al., 2017). Guidance should be offered to individuals to help them engage in job crafting to ensure that well-being is promoted rather than disengagement. Because police work is highly interdependent, it would be appropriate for job crafting to be explored at a team level to ensure that changes to the work of one employee does not negatively impact others.

A common tertiary intervention is the provision of an employee assistance programme (EAP). EAPs have become widespread as a result of validation of the concept of work stress (Kirk and Brown, 2003). Systematic reviews have suggested well-being benefits for workplace counselling (McLeod, 2010), and limited evidence that cognitive behavioural therapy reduces sickness absence (Odeen et al., 2013). However, participants in our study perceived the occupational health function as having become less accessible, both in terms of physical distance and in terms of lengthy referral processes. One approach that has been recommended for use in law enforcement is the use of a hybrid model in which an external EAP is combined with the use of internal peer support (Goldstein, 2006).

Limitations

We argue that the use of the World Café methodology enabled the identification of police employee priorities for well-being, as well as identifying directions for potential solutions in collaboration with our participants. This offers an innovative alternative to interviews and focus groups (Estacio and Karic, 2016). However, there are several limitations to our chosen method. The World Café approach has been criticised for potentially suppressing dissent (Aldred, 2011) and failing to consider power imbalances between facilitators and participants, and structural inequality within the Café (Lorenzetti et al., 2016). Lorenzetti et al. (2016) note that there is a lack of consideration for how the external world (e.g. pre-existing hierarchies) may influence discussion within the World Café. While members of the SMT did not participate in discussions at Café events, there was otherwise a mixture of hierarchy in the events that we facilitated. Data were collected at group level, and in such a way that it was not possible to determine group composition for a given round. This limits our ability to critically consider how power relations influenced participation, particularly from civilian staff, and influenced the topics discussed, or whether the issues highlighted by civilian staff differed to those expressed by police officers. To ensure all groups within the police workforce are represented, future work could supplement Café events with personal interviews aimed

at those from civilian and other minority backgrounds (Henderson et al., 2008; Lu and Gatua, 2014). At present women and people from BME backgrounds are underrepresented among police officers (Home Office, 2019b) and may therefore benefit from specific attention.

The characteristics of our events should also be considered. The majority of data were collected from events embedded within leadership training, compared to the single CPF event, and therefore this may have influenced the priorities that were identified. Further work incorporating a more representative span of the policing hierarchy is recommended in order to minimise the impact of roles and status. Similarly, while a mixture of police officer and civilian roles were represented, because specific well-being issues are linked to particular roles (Mrevlje, 2016; Tehrani, 2018) future research could focus on well-being strategies in collaboration with staff doing different types of work.

It is important to recognise the limitations of qualitative findings, which cannot be generalised to a wider population. While qualitative methods can allow insight into complex issues (Niaz, 2007), participant perceptions of 'what would work' may not necessarily be accurate. Further research could therefore test interventions based upon the recommendations. While the randomised controlled trial is often considered the 'gold standard' (Antonakis et al.,

2010), critical realist evaluations of interventions that gather data on context, the content of interventions, and the processes involved in implementation in addition to the outcomes can be useful (Nielsen and Miraglia, 2017). The combination of qualitative and quantitative methods can provide insight into different elements of interventions (Abildgaard et al., 2016). Further, the use of mixed-method approaches can draw on the strengths of each, while mitigating for the limitations of single method designs (Östlund et al., 2011).

Conclusion

Our research drew upon the collective wisdom of CT and CPF employees using an innovative participatory approach. Key challenges facing the police organisations identified by our participants include understaffing coupled with high work demands, which may contribute to managerial behaviours experienced as unhelpful. In combination with this, mental health stigma and under-resourced occupational health units may present barriers to supporting the well-being of police employees. We argue that interventions are needed to help enhance police resources for coping with demands. While improved resourcing should be considered as part of this strategy, addressing management behaviours and offering individuals opportunities to adapt their work strategies may also contribute to enhanced well-being. In the long-term, however, we believe that there is a need for debates regarding how policing is transformed, whether as a result of economic policies or through more deliberate strategic decisions, and how this will support the sustainability of the police service mission.

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