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Police Research Series
Paper 147

Flexible Working Practices in the Police Service

Rachel Tuffin
with the assistance of
Yasmine Baladi

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*Rachel Tuffin
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Yasmine Baladi*

*The views expressed in this report are those of the
authors, not necessarily those of the Home Office
(nor do they reflect Government policy)*

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Policing and Reducing Crime Unit: Police Research Series

The Policing and Reducing Crime Unit (PRC Unit) was formed in 1998 as a result of the merger of the Police Research Group (PRG) and the Research and Statistics Directorate. The PRC Unit is now one part of the Research, Development and Statistics Directorate of the Home Office. The PRC Unit carries out and commissions research in the social and management sciences on policing and crime reduction, broadening the role that PRG played.

The PRC Unit has now combined PRG's two main series into the Police Research Series, containing PRG's earlier work. This series will present research material on crime prevention and detection as well as police management and organisation issues.

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Foreword

Flexible working practices are fundamental to the work of the public sector in the 21st century. They need to be considered as part of any strategy which seeks to recruit and retain high quality staff and manage diversity successfully. The police service, although a flexible organisation in many ways, has yet to take full advantage of the benefits which varied working patterns can bring for individuals and organisations.

This report highlights the benefits of flexible working practices and explores the barriers to their use in the police service and how these can be overcome. It provides practical suggestions as to how flexible working practices can be introduced and managed in the future and supports the government's agenda of promoting a better work-life balance for all.

Lawrence Singer

Head of Policing Group

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Executive summary

Background

The need to explore flexible working practices in the police service was originally raised by the ACPO Equality sub-committee in the light of concern that women officers were still more likely to resign than men, despite the introduction of part-time working and job-share policies specifically intended to improve the retention of women officers. An HMIC thematic report 'Developing diversity in the police service' (1995) had found poor take-up of these schemes and suggested that middle management needed to gain understanding of the business case for the retention of experienced staff, if the situation was to improve.

In early 1999, the sub-committee created a working group to develop guidelines for the service on flexible working practices. This group intended to focus on current good practice. They found that a broad range of complex issues were raised by force central contacts, yet they could usually only provide policy documents without details of the working patterns on offer, and taken up by staff, at basic command unit (BCU) level. The research aimed to provide detailed information on patterns and how they were used, and to concentrate on the most common types of flexible working practice and practical issues which staff, managers and forces needed to resolve. Data were collected, where possible, on less well-known types of flexible working practices, and the potential for them to be used more widely was explored.

The overall aims of the study were to establish the benefits of flexible working practices and barriers to their use, identify types of flexible working practices suitable for different employee groups and employee roles and suggest good practice in the introduction and ongoing management of flexible working practices in the service. It had four main components:

- literature review and analysis of existing data;
- telephone survey of all forces in England and Wales;
- case studies of divisions and departments in four forces, involving interviews with staff working flexible patterns, their managers and personnel staff; and
- focus groups with middle managers in the service.

Key findings

- Flexible working practices can include annual hours, flexitime, term-time working and homeworking as well as job share and part-time working. However, in the police service, and particularly for police officers, the main options are part-time

and job share. Forces have other options in their policies, but they are often unable to say whether they have any officers currently working these patterns, principally because of devolved management and limited central monitoring. There is some scope for informal flexibility, but this is often available only for officers above sergeant rank, and in some specialist roles.

- The most common type of flexibility for police officers is described as part-time work. However, the reality of part-time work in the police service does not follow practices in other organisations. Outside the service, posts are often identified as suitable for part-time work and staff are recruited to them accordingly. In the police service, common practice is for staff to reduce their hours in a post which they previously occupied full-time.
- Part-time officers remain a small minority in the service; the proportion of average strength has risen from just under one per cent in 1995/96 to just over two per cent in 2000/01. The number of men is growing at a faster rate, although women constitute the great majority, nearly 94 per cent of part-time officers. Support staff have more access to flexible options than police officers and greater proportions of support staff's overall strength have taken them up. The difference is due to a far higher proportion of support staff being found in administrative roles.
- Part-time staff, i.e. those working reduced hours, were found in a wide variety of roles and working a great variety of patterns on basic command units (BCUs), and 'part-time' was frequently an inadequate description. Managers were often not aware of the variety unless they had direct personal experience; if this was negative they generalised it to all part-time staff. They often perceived part-time workers to be inflexible staff, who did not work night shifts or provide short notice cover; this was directly contradicted by the patterns of some part-time staff interviewed, who worked until midnight or two o'clock in the morning and were able to cover at short notice.
- Part-time working was introduced, and has been managed, with a focus on its potential to retain women, as an equal opportunities measure, rather than as a means of improving efficiency and effectiveness. This history seems to have led to managers being inclined to think of part-time working as a potential problem and an administrative burden, rather than as a means of gaining more flexibility in the staffing of a sector or department. There is little evidence in devolved management areas of flexible working being applied strategically, to improve retention, efficiency, effectiveness or quality of service.

- The outcomes of the few police service cases regarding part-time working which have reached tribunal under the Sex Discrimination Act, suggest that both the individual and the organisation should try to be as flexible as possible in balancing their demands. Tribunal hearings criticised both individual members of staff, and divisional managers or forces for being obstructive or insufficiently open to negotiation.

Benefits of flexible working

- Difficulties were encountered in collecting systematic and quantifiable evidence of the benefits of flexible working practices, as force central departments did not collect suitable monitoring information or conduct research to provide evidence of the benefits of flexible working practices. Forces saw other priorities for collection and use of management information, for example best value reviews and recruitment from minority ethnic communities, and these were perceived to be separate issues distinct from flexible working practices.
- Most force central contacts in human resources and equality roles thought the benefits were clear, however some line and senior managers displayed negative attitudes towards flexible working and had not been convinced by the business case. Their attitudes may have remained negative because the case had only been put to them in very general terms, without convincing costed evidence. Provision of such evidence may be an important means of changing attitudes.
- Human resource managers and supervisors mentioned benefits in matching staff to demand profiles and overcoming recruitment problems in control rooms. Middle managers of inspector and superintendent rank tended to agree that they only began to appreciate the benefits of flexible working when they took on a role where they had to manage support staff, who unlike police officers cannot be obliged to work. Non-standard patterns were essential to staff these areas, such as in control rooms.
- There was also a positive effect on the retention of women police officers as a result of the introduction of part-time working, job-share and career breaks, according to the evidence available in this study. Of those interviewed who were working less than full-time hours for childcare reasons, half said they would have left the service if they had not been able to reduce their hours. Each officer retained with more than five years' service saves their force a minimum of £23,000. This sum does not take into account the impact of loss of experience on quality of service, nor does it cover opportunity costs. It provides a modest estimate of the replacement costs of recruitment, probationer and ongoing training for an operational officer.

Barriers to flexible working

- The context of flexible working at BCU level is extremely complex with a bewildering variety of shift patterns in use throughout the service, and staff working across them and around them in many different ways. Managers' considerations in setting working patterns were within an operational context of minimum staffing levels, 24-hour cover, service level agreements and demand profiling. They rarely considered flexible working as a fundamental aspect of resource management and views varied as to whether it was a burden or an advantage. BCU managers also tend to prefer to manage teams working three eight-hour shifts because it covers 24 hours easily. They need support and encouragement to introduce and manage different patterns.
- Some legal restrictions were identified in Police Regulations, including the lack of provision for part-time working in higher ranks. These have already been addressed in some forces where part-time working during probation and at inspector ranks is permitted. These forces took legal advice which suggested that they would be unable to defend the refusal of access to part-time working if challenged at tribunal.
- A range of concerns were expressed about management fairness and consistency of approach for full-time and part-time staff and for officers and support staff. These concerns were sometimes found to be based on hearsay or the potential for difficulties, rather than on actual experience. Individual negotiation of working patterns was often seen to create unfair advantages for part-time staff. However, all of the staff working reduced hours in the study felt that it had a negative impact on their career development. They felt this was the result of lack of management support, insufficient flexibility and lack of opportunity across the force.
- Tensions were found between devolved management responsibilities and central force management procedures, particularly with regard to the setting of establishment figures – the number of officers available to a BCU – and central payroll and finance management. Shift patterns were also described as a bargaining tool. The Regulation shift systems with seven nights, seven 'earlies', seven 'lates' is still operating fairly rigidly in some forces, whilst others have a more flexible approach with local negotiation at BCU level.
- Some of the staff interviewed who worked reduced hours did not want to work part-time as such, but wanted more control over their hours in order to meet caring responsibilities. Standard rotating shifts and short notice cover were

barriers for those who did not have family or friends to fall back on. Finding care providers at different hours every week, or emergency cover is difficult as there is a national shortage of these types of provision.

Conclusions

The barriers to flexible working did not seem to be insurmountable although many were cited during the study, particularly in terms of part-time or reduced hours working for police officers. For the most part, barriers seemed related to stereotyped perceptions of the availability and flexibility of part-time officers, although there were issues to address in terms of continuity and handover. The need for better resource management and flexibility in the police service is unlikely to be addressed through a continued piecemeal approach of tackling perceived problems with specific schemes, such as part-time working, as and when they arise. Rather, flexible working, in all the different forms identified in the report, needs to be viewed as a fundamental aspect of the work of the service. Such an approach could be incorporated into forces' reviews under best value legislation.

Points for action

Best value, resource management and Police Regulations

- All best value reviews should challenge existing working patterns and practices and consider the potential for a variety of new practices, which meet organisational needs whilst allowing staff the possibility to improve their work-life balance. A checklist of issues is included in the appendices. Management systems and procedures should be checked to ensure that they are suited to the needs of a flexible workforce. HMIC could check whether best value reviews were covering the issue of flexible working practices. The range of 'part-time' working patterns should also be set out for managers and staff, so they can explore the potential to balance conflicting needs within a framework.
- To facilitate this approach in reviews, a practical guide to the introduction and management of flexible working practices should be produced, along similar lines to that produced for the NHS with the Cabinet Office 'Working lives: programmes for change'. It should include examples of demand profiles, risk assessments and fully worked out flexible patterns. This could be co-ordinated by the Home Office and developed in consultation with interested police service representatives. Previous research recommendations on shift patterns (Mason, 2000), if taken forward, should involve consideration of flexible options as a fundamental aspect of resource management.

- Changes to Police Regulations for part-time staff are needed if flexibility is to increase for police officers. The Police Negotiating Board is currently in the process of ratifying the agreement for part-time working up to the rank of chief inspector and there is a consensus that changes to Regulations should allow for part-time working at all ranks. The potential for flexible practices must be included in any review of Police Regulations which pertains to shift patterns or pay. The most controversial change would be to allow for different rates to be paid to police officers according to hours they work, which was suggested by part-time staff and equal opportunities contacts during this study.

Building an evidence base, improving communication and providing guidance

- Human resource monitoring systems need to be linked to duty programmes showing the patterns staff work if central management are to gain a clear idea of the development of flexible working in the force. Forces could also use staff surveys to ask questions about the extent to which informal flexibility is made available to their employees. The need for evidence to back up different working patterns was cited by many managers in the study. There are systems and packages now available which make it easier for this information to be collected and analysed. However, forces should be aware that much shift planning software does not allow for reduced hour patterns. Likewise the Police Information Technology Organisation (PITO) should take this into consideration, within the National Strategy for Police Information Systems (NSPIS).
- Providing costed evidence of the benefits might be the only way to convince managers to use flexible working proactively and could be worth the investment of resources. Best value reviews might be one way in which some of the necessary evidence would be produced. Otherwise more basic information could be used, such as showing differences in levels of sickness absence between part-time and full-time staff (if correctly recorded) and the cost of recruiting new staff compared to retention of those in post.
- One way to address concerns about consistency of working patterns could be to ensure that information on posts, hours and patterns worked across the force was readily available, using force intranet facilities or highlighting case studies in internal newsletters or magazines. Human resources staff could also consider a central co-ordinating role to provide information on flexible working, which could link to a proactive approach, where managers set out the flexible options and staff are recruited into the roles accordingly. Handover and continuity procedures should be clearly set out for all staff and considered alongside work allocation systems.

- A practical guide for supervisors and staff, developed by the ACPO Equality working group on managing part-time and flexible working practices, should be circulated to all staff to provide some guidance on negotiating working patterns (electronic copies are available from the author). BCU personnel managers could be more proactive in exploring issues for part-time staff and managers before they become problematic. Finally, forces could pilot less common working patterns and form partnerships with other organisations to provide childcare support. These pilots should be assessed and the results made available to other forces.

Supporting and promoting access to flexible working

- Career development, personnel staff and line managers need to provide proactive encouragement for staff in part-time roles to move post and access specialisms and promotion. Their career progression is otherwise likely to suffer in the long term. One way of promoting movement would be for forces to advertise all posts as open to part-time working. More flexible training options for all ranks are currently under consideration by National Police Training and by many force training departments. Force senior managers, police authorities and the Home Office should encourage and support these developments.
- Chief officers, heads of central force departments, police authorities and BCU commanders need to agree to support the introduction of flexible working practices. They need, for example, to set out clear guidance on how budgets can be managed flexibly when staffing levels are reduced as a result of staff working fewer hours. Finance and payroll departments, for example, should be instructed whether to make payments relating to flexible working which do not reflect Police Regulations, but have been locally agreed to be fair and appropriate by the Police Federation, line managers and individual officers.

Contents

	Page
Foreword	(iii)
Acknowledgements	(iv)
Executive summary	(v)
List of tables	(xiv)
List of figures	(xv)
List of boxes	(xvi)
1. Introduction	1
Background to the research	1
Aims and objectives	3
Issues to be considered	3
Methodology	4
Defining flexible working practices	8
Structure of the report	9
2. Police service use of flexible working practices: an overview	10
Police service strategy and influences on policies	10
Availability and take-up of flexible options	14
Informal flexibility	19
Points for action	19
3. Working options at basic command unit level	21
Determining working patterns: managers' considerations	21
Flexible working patterns in basic command units	26
Managers' awareness and attitudes	29
Points for action	32
4. Putting the business case: benefits for the organisation	33
Meeting organisational requirements effectively: tactical use by managers	34
Staff retention and recruitment: improving efficiency and diversity	37
Work-life balance: benefits for employees	42
Points for action	42

5. Identifying and addressing the barriers	44
Legal barriers	44
Attitudinal barriers	44
Organisational barriers	45
Barriers to maintaining quality of service	53
Central management procedures	57
Barriers to maintaining a successful work-life balance	58
Points for action	63
6. Improving the management of flexible working practices	65
Negotiation: the ‘give and take’ balance	65
Communication	66
Training	66
Guidance and support for staff	67
Introducing less common working patterns	68
Childcare support	70
Points for action	71
7. Conclusions	73
Points for action	74
References	75
Appendix 1: Research design issues (including HMIC categorisation of posts)	78
Appendix 2: Working patterns from the government’s work-life balance discussion document	83
Appendix 3: Types of shift pattern in the police service	85
Appendix 4: Example questions for assessing the scope for flexibility in police service roles	87
Recent PRC publications	89

List of tables

Table No.	Caption	Page
1	Case study interview participants	6
2	Focus group managers' profiles	7
3	Patterns that focus on how much time an employee works	16
4	Patterns that focus on when employees do their work	17
5	Patterns that focus on where an employee works	18
6	Options that give employees a complete break from work	38
7	Options that offer increased choice and security to employees	19
8	Common ways in which 'part-time' or reduced hours working varied	27
9	Basic details of case study forces	79

List of figures

Figure No.	Caption	Page
1	Wastage controlled for ordinary retirement as a percentage of male and female full-time equivalent strength 1990 – 2000/01	38
2	Officers rejoining as a percentage of female and male full-time equivalent strength 1992 – 2000/01	39

List of boxes

Box No.	Caption	Page
1	Reduced hours working on a murder team	29
2	Judging part-time staff using full-time systems	36
3	The minimum cost of replacing police officers	41
4	Part-time or flexible working?	47
5	Work allocation and fairness for part-time staff	52
6	Term-time working for a uniform patrol officer	69
7	Innovative childcare – the Dundee Sitter Service	71

1. Introduction

Background to the research

The need to explore flexible working practices in the police service was originally raised in the context of a continuing disparity in male and female police officers' resignation rates; women were still more likely to resign than men according to HMIC matrix data in 1997/98. This difference was despite the introduction of part-time working and job-share policies in police forces between 1992 and 1996, which were specifically intended to improve the retention of women officers.

Research into the piloting of part-time working (Stone et al.,1994) had found that middle managers were likely to believe many operational police officer posts were unsuitable for part-time working or job-share, despite the change in force policy. An HMIC thematic report on equal opportunities (1995) found poor take-up of part-time work, job share and other schemes described in the report as retention or family friendly policies. Many staff in specific divisions and departments were not encouraged to take advantage of the available options, or were not made adequately aware of them.

The thematic suggested that middle management needed to gain understanding of the business case for the retention of experienced staff, if the situation was to improve. The spread of devolved financial management, the introduction of efficiency planning and from April 2000 the statutory duty of best value, have since heightened the need for managers to consider the business benefits of non-traditional patterns of work.

Flexible working practices, though often linked to the retention of women, also have impact for other groups of staff. These groups might include anyone with main caring responsibilities for children or other relatives, or staff undertaking further education. Thus, the scope for implementing a full range of flexible working practices can be seen as part of a wider debate on the recruitment and retention of qualified, high quality staff seeking to balance their work with other commitments and as a key element in any strategy for managing diversity. Issues connected to the introduction of more unusual flexible working practices are also closely linked to issues arising from the civilianisation of posts previously carried out by police officers.

In early 1999, the ACPO¹ equality sub-committee created a working group to develop guidelines for the service on flexible working practices. This group intended to focus on current good practice and to identify the most widespread types of flexible working, for police officers and support staff. They soon found that the term flexible working covered a broad range of complex issues, which could include

¹ Association of Chief Police Officers.

INTRODUCTION

temporary contracts and shift working. Moreover, when seeking information from forces, they discovered that central contacts could provide policy documents but not details of whether different working patterns were offered and taken up by staff at divisional level. Contacts also had difficulty in providing detailed information about the practicalities of managing flexible working as experienced by line supervisors.

To support the development of the guidelines, the Policing and Reducing Crime Unit agreed to conduct research concentrating on the most common types of flexible working practice in use in the service and the practical issues which staff, managers and forces needed to resolve. The research also sought to explore the potential impact of flexible working practices in terms of effective and equal recruitment and retention and career development practices; and more effective and efficient staffing of sectors and departments. There was also interest in the scope for introduction of a broader range of practices, including tele- or home- working in a police service context.

The issues connected with flexible working practices are extremely complex and wide-ranging. Many, such as the impact of different shift patterns, have been the subject of research in their own right. This project sought to strike a balance between the need to explore complex issues and to provide clear messages from the findings.

During the course of the study, the government launched its work-life balance campaign with a discussion document entitled 'Changing Patterns in a Changing World' (DfEE, 2000). This sets out how the UK Government, National Assembly for Wales and the Scotland Office 'intend to help bring about that better balance between work and other aspects of life'. It provides definitions, evidence for the business case, advice, good practice case studies and checklists for organisations.² This report makes considerable use of documents produced by the DfEE and the Cabinet Office; details of their definitions are contained in Appendix 2.

² The DTI have now taken over responsibility for work-life balance issues. A report on the business case was recently produced and is available on their website, listed in the references.

Another term in common use with regard to work-life balance is family friendly policies or practices which include, for example, childcare support and adoption leave. This report takes the more inclusive approach favoured by the government's work-life balance initiative and seeks to explore practices which allow more flexibility for all employees whilst at the same time providing employers with the staff they need to meet demand.

Aims and objectives

The overall aims of the study were to:

- establish the benefits of flexible working practices;
- identify types of flexible working practices suitable for different employee groups and employee roles; and
- suggest good practice in the introduction and ongoing management of flexible working practices in the service.

The objectives of the study were to:

- examine the extent to which the availability of flexible working practices can impact on the recruitment and retention of specific groups in different areas of employment;
- explore the potential business benefits of, and barriers to, the use of flexible working throughout the police service;
- draw up a set of recommendations on flexible working in the police service;
- disseminate findings in the form of a widely distributed PRC publication;
- inform future research into flexible working practices, and the recruitment and retention of police staff; and
- support the ACPO Equality sub-committee working group to develop guidelines on the management of flexible working.

Issues to be considered

A clear focus was to be maintained on:

- a full range of flexible working practices, not only part-time work and job share;
- the needs of specific groups of staff, such as main carers, those with disabilities, and those studying for further qualifications; and
- the extent to which all posts within the police service, including support, operational and management roles, are open to a range of flexible practices.

INTRODUCTION

The following areas were explored for employers in general and the police service in particular, within the context of the recruitment and retention of under-represented groups:

- the business benefits of flexible working with regard to retention of greater numbers of experienced staff, potentially lower rates of sickness, and the implications for training and recruitment costs;
- attributes considered by applicants in selecting potential employers and the range of considerations which inform decisions by members of staff to leave a specific post or employer;
- structural, cultural, attitudinal and organisational factors which impact on the levels of availability and demand for different types of flexible practices in different areas of the workplace; and
- the profile and motivations of staff who take up available flexible options and any impact on their career development.

Methodology

The complexity of the issues and the differing perspectives offered during initial discussions about the study led the research team to select a three-stage approach. This allowed information from secondary analysis of policy documents and monitoring data to be compared with findings from a survey of force central contacts in human resource and equality roles. It also enabled police service staff to provide detailed information about their own specific working patterns and conditions, and for their views and experience to be compared with those of their managers. Three principal complementary stages were conducted after the initial literature review:

- a telephone survey of the 43 forces in England and Wales carried out between September and November 1999;
- case studies with forces with reasonably well-developed policy approaches to flexible working carried out between November and March 2000 and;
- focus groups with part-time workers and police service managers (principally inspector and superintendent ranks) carried out in January and February 2000.

The research team also attended five seminars, three national and two force specific, held to discuss problematic issues and to seek solutions regarding part-time and flexible working in the police service. Equal opportunities, personnel and operational staff from forces across England and Wales attended these seminars. The following sections provide brief information about each stage; further details can be found in Appendix 1.

Telephone survey

The aim of the telephone survey was to discover the availability of different flexible practices according to force central policy, the extent of monitoring patterns actually in use and any knowledge of the extent of current demand for flexible practices amongst staff. In addition, respondents were asked about their awareness of the different profiles of staff using flexible practices, what future plans the force had for introducing other options and what other issues were important to them at the time the research was undertaken.

The interviews, with human resources or equality staff, were also intended to highlight suitable forces for later stages of the research. Thirty-four of the 43 forces in England and Wales responded to the survey (79%). The survey was conducted using a semi-structured questionnaire and the resulting data were recorded and analysed using Excel.

This response rate compares unfavourably with other PRC projects where all forces responded (see Leigh et al., 1999). It was difficult to identify the right contact person in forces and many that did respond were unable to provide answers to the survey questions. Most contacts, for example, had difficulty answering questions concerning the numbers of staff actually using flexible options, and the year policies had been introduced. The majority of forces were unable to separate out staff working job-share roles from full-time or part-time staff.

Case studies

Given the difficulties encountered obtaining data from central contacts, a case study approach was chosen to examine how working patterns and accepted practices related to force policies and the opinions of headquarters staff about flexible working, and to identify relevant benefits and barriers. The case study approach was deemed the most appropriate to gain a detailed understanding of the working practices in forces and to use this information to evaluate the responses of interviewees in different roles. The participating forces are not named or described because the research team could not then have offered anonymity to participants, some of whom were the only member of staff working a particular pattern in their division, department or force.

INTRODUCTION

Table 1 shows the profiles of staff interviewed for the research. They cover the majority of the key areas of policing and support staff roles. In addition to the 41 staff shown below, interviews were conducted with six force central contacts from human resources or equality departments.

Hours worked		Full-time	20
		Reduced hours	21
Roles	Support staff	HQ Department	3
		Area support	6
		Other	2
	Police officers	Uniform patrol	9
		Other operational staff, division or area* ¹	15
		Non operational staff, division or area* ²	4
		Operational staff, HQ dept* ³	2
Police officer ranks		Constable	11
		Sergeant	11
		Inspector	7
		Superintendent	1
Age		Under 29	1
		30-39	12
		40-49	4
		50-59	1
		Not known	23
Length of service		1-5 years	2
		6-10 years	5
		11-15 years	9
		16-20 years	6
		21-25 years	4
		Not known	15
Ethnicity		Asian	1
		Black	1
		White	39
Gender		Female	27
		Male	14

*E.g.: 1 = custody, child protection; 2 = criminal justice unit, community safety;
3 = communications.

Focus groups

The telephone survey and case study work highlighted potential discrepancies between positive central force policy and negative local attitudes to flexible working. HMIC (1995) had previously noted the need for middle managers to understand the business case for flexible working. The research team felt there was a need for particular attention to be paid to managers' viewpoints. Through focus group discussion and comparison with the information from other sources in the research, the team hoped to identify communication gaps and differences of opinion which were likely to cause difficulties in the day-to-day management of flexible working practices. The managers were principally in inspector and superintendent ranks, or equivalent. Their profiles are shown in Table 2.

Roles	Support staff	HQ Department	1
		Other – linked to central government	3
	Police officers	Other operational staff, division or area	33
		Non operational staff, division or area	10
		Non operational staff, division or area	3
		Operational staff, HQ dept	9
		Not answered	3
	Police officer ranks	Inspector	7
Chief Inspector		32	
Superintendent		19	
(Detectives)		(16)	
Age	Under 29	1	
	30-39	12	
	40-49	46	
	50-59	1	
	Not known	2	
Length of service	1-5 years	1	
	6-10 years	1	
	11-15 years	6	
	16-20 years	16	
	21-25 years	28	
	26-30 years	10	
Ethnicity	Asian	2	
	Other	1	
	White	59	
Gender	Female	5	
	Male	56	
	Not answered	1	

The topic guide began by seeking information on the working patterns in the areas managed by participants and the considerations behind their use. Particular attention was then focused on any 'non-standard' patterns such as part-time working, reduced hours and split shifts. In the second stage, the topic guide covered the potential application of a full range of flexible working practices including, for example, term-time working, home-working, flexi-time, and voluntary reduced hours as well as part-time work and job-share. Barriers to the introduction or successful management of these were elicited along with consideration of the potential benefits to the organisation and the individual. Possible implications were discussed, particularly in terms of communication needs within forces.

Defining flexible working practices

Flexibility in the workplace can be understood in a number of different ways. Armstrong (1996) sets these out, from a personnel management perspective, as follows:

- contract-based: forms of contract which specify flexibility as a key aspect in terms and conditions;
- time-based: shift working and flexible hours (e.g. flexitime and annual hours);
- job-based: job-related flexibilities where employees move between tasks;
- skills-based: multi-skilling;
- organisation-based: use of contract workers and part-time staff; and
- pay-based: more flexible reward systems.

Flexible working practices, as examined in the present study, can be seen as falling within contract-based, time-based and organisation-based categories. From this perspective, the police service has operated flexible working practices for many years; shift work has always been the main means by which the organisation provides policing services. However, part-time work, as it operates for police officers does not fit with the personnel management perspective, where part-time staff are 'peripheral' to core business.

Definitions in this report have been taken from the DfEE document on work-life balance (see Appendix 2) to reflect the government emphasis on this area. The use of temporary contracts, for example, has not been included in the main body of the

study, partly because such practices were considered to constitute a minor and essentially unproblematic aspect of police organisations' work. Staff employed by contracted services such as catering and cleaning are another group who fall within the broad definition and again have not been included. The role of voluntary staff (including special constables) in the police service is another area which this study did not consider. The primary focus of the report is on the main operational and support functions staffed by permanent police service employees.

The feasibility of using bank staff in the police service has been considered in some detail in earlier research conducted under the Police Research Award Scheme (McCullough, 2000). Bank staff had been used for some time in the National Health Service at the time this study was written, although concerns were being raised that the inclusion of bank staff under annual leave requirements in new legislation would make them too costly. There were also issues to be addressed around ensuring that bank staff had relevant and up-to-date training. At the time of writing, the Metropolitan Police Service had recently concluded an agreement with an organisation called the Police Associates Register, which appeared to be somewhat similar to a bank staff arrangement. Other forces might wish to explore this option further (www.registerpoliceofficer.co.uk) but it was not covered in any detail in this study.

Support staff, personnel and police managers interviewed were generally positive about support staff's flexible working patterns in administrative roles, and therefore we have not explored this area to any great extent. However, where they performed direct operational support roles, for example in control/communication rooms, many of the issues and difficulties that needed to be addressed appeared to be the same as for police officers. In these situations, part-time officers and support staff had more in common with each other than with their full-time colleagues. The key distinction appeared to be whether staff were performing roles where public demand played a part in dictating the amount of work. This report tries to ensure that distinctions are made between police officers and support staff in different roles, where appropriate.

Structure of the report

Following this introduction, Chapter 2 sets out the national police service context with regard to flexible working and briefly summarises the relevant legislation. Chapter 3 looks at flexible working in its locally managed context at command unit level. The benefits of flexible working practices are considered in Chapter 4 whilst barriers to their use and ways of addressing these are covered in Chapter 5. A summary of ways to improve the management of flexible options follows in Chapter 6 and the final chapter briefly sets out the overall conclusions. Each chapter ends with a series of points for action.

2. Police service use of flexible working practices: an overview

Police service strategy and influences on policies

The research found little evidence of a coherent national strategy for the introduction and management of flexible working in police forces, nor did forces appear to have any strategic aims connected to work-life balance. Flexible working, in general, was seen as something which individual members of staff required to help them manage their home lives rather than as an essential tool for the efficient and effective provision of police services. This approach seemed to be directly related to views about part-time working and the police service approach to this option is considered below.

The origins of part-time working for police officers and their implications

The Police Advisory Board agreed to the establishment of an experimental pilot scheme to introduce part-time working and job-sharing for police officers in December 1990. According to interviewees for this study, the agreement arose as a result of tribunal proceedings on grounds of indirect sex discrimination, brought by a female police officer. Six forces took part in the pilot which began in 1992. Research was commissioned to evaluate the scheme and the findings were mainly positive, although there were no applicants for job-share. The report concluded that 'it should be possible for part-time working to be applied successfully in most if not all roles at constable level and in non-supervisory roles at sergeant and inspector level, provided that the scheme is well managed and unit strength is maintained'. There was felt to be a need for 'more experience of part-time working in some specialist and supervisory posts' before conclusions could be drawn (Stone et al.,1994).

Part-time working was clearly introduced as an equal opportunities measure, with a focus on its potential to retain women, rather than as a means of improving efficiency and effectiveness or as part of an overall strategy to improve the work-life balance for all staff. For police officers, it is the most common type of flexible practice involving a reduction in hours. The authors of the pilot research mentioned above noted that there would be a need for police managers to 'fully understand and utilise this resource' and overcome their doubts about supervisory and specialist roles. The report went on to set out 11 recommendations designed to aid the implementation of the scheme in forces throughout England and Wales. At the time of writing it would appear that few, if any, of the recommendations have been addressed in a consistent manner.

Part-time working in the police service does not follow practices in other organisations (Stone et al, 1994; Edwards and Robinson, 1999) where posts are

often identified as suitable for part-time work and staff are recruited to them accordingly. Common practice instead is for staff to reduce their hours in a post which they previously occupied full-time. Case study research found this had been the case for officers on operational shifts, and officers and support staff in communication rooms and forensic support roles. In some cases, office-based jobs had been found for uniform patrol officers who reduced their hours, such as enquiries officers. Both interviews and focus groups found confusion amongst managers, some of whom believed that staff had a right to work part-time rather than a right to have their request considered.

Resulting attitudes to part-time work

These features of the management of 'part-time' work have implications for the way in which it is viewed by other members of staff, and for the staffing levels of sectors and departments. Furthermore, because a reduction in hours is often linked to a change from a rotating to a fixed shift pattern, part-time work has been equated with the capacity for individuals to have a little more control over their working hours than is the norm in the police organisation. The way in which the relevant legislation is phrased makes it clear that part-time working is considered to be a 'fraction' of a full-time post and this also has implications for the way in which it is managed. These issues will be further explored later in the report.

Police regulations

Police officers' conditions of service are set out in statutory legislation known as Police Regulations. Changes to these regulations are negotiated through the Police Negotiating Board (PNB), which has representatives from police staff associations (known as the staff side), police authorities and the Home Office (known as the official side). In addition, central consultation is conducted through the Police Advisory Board, which has also advised the Home Secretary about the introduction of part-time working. Processing changes through this system, and making regulations to implement negotiated agreements, can be time-consuming. Changes to restrictions on part-time working agreed by the PNB in 1998 are only now being implemented in regulation changes, which are due to come into force on 1 November.

The changes will allow part-time working by probationers and the inspector ranks. At the time of this research, above the rank of sergeant, the regulations only allowed for job sharing, and this only up to the rank of superintendent. Some forces, for example the Metropolitan Police Service, were already allowing part-time working during probation and at inspector ranks, having taken legal advice which suggested that they would be unable to defend the refusal of access to part-time working if

challenged at tribunal. In one case a tribunal found in favour of an inspector whose request to work part-time had been refused by her force. The reason for the delay in implementing the changes agreed to the Regulations was that staff and official sides found it difficult to agree how the proportion of an inspector post could be calculated. Inspecting ranks did not have a nominal number of hours in their working week since the changes to their conditions after the Sheehy inquiry (1993).

The other main restriction which arises from Regulations is that they incorporate the agreement that all police officers are paid to work a full range of shifts involving unsociable hours as part of their salary. There is currently little scope, therefore, for the introduction of practices such as permanent night shifts which exist elsewhere in the public sector, for example for nurses and prison staff; staff are paid allowances according to their working pattern. It should be noted, however, that there are full-time officers who already work in roles which do not require them to work a full range of shifts. This issue gives rise to concern about fairness and consistency, which is discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Other restrictions contained within Regulations regarding part-time staff include lack of access to variable shift arrangements, that is arrangements outside the 'Regulation shift pattern' based on a five week shift pattern of 'earlies' (6am to 2pm), 'lates' (2pm to 10pm) and nights (10pm to 6am). This, however, could be seen as a lesser difficulty in some respects because part-time staff are able to negotiate directly with their managers to change their pattern, whereas other staff have to negotiate with force management via their staff association. Finally there were a number of other issues in the regulations for part-time workers which have caused difficulties since 1992. These include entitlements to pay increments, pension increments and bank holidays.

Other legislation

Some force contacts mentioned that they tended to work within the spirit of employment legislation, rather than sticking to the letter of Police Regulations. This is a difficult area for forces, as Police Regulations constitute statutory legislation and should not be breached. However, in certain cases, adherence to Regulations can make them vulnerable under other legislation, particularly the Sex Discrimination Act. Most force policies state that every post is open to part-time working unless managers can prove otherwise, but this policy is not usually set out when posts are advertised. Instead, individuals have to find out whether the post is open to part-time working when they apply.

Support staff have always been in a different situation compared to police officers, principally because they are included under general employment legislation and their terms and conditions are often a legacy of the fact that they were originally employed by local authorities. They tend, therefore, to be much more likely to be recruited directly to part-time roles. However, one key aspect of police officer conditions, that they can be required to work subject to the 'exigencies of duty' is now being considered in changes to their contracts. This was mentioned for control room or communications staff in two of the case study forces.

Other legislation which is relevant when considering flexible working include the following which apply to police officers and support staff, except time off for dependants:

- the part-time working regulations (July 2000), which make less favourable treatment of part-time workers illegal;
- the working time regulations (October 1998) which provide a limit of an average of 48 hours per week, calculated over 17 weeks or more if agreed between workforce and employer and a limit of an average of 8 hours work in 24 for night workers. Staff can choose to work more hours if they wish. They also provide a minimum entitlement to 11 hours rest per day and one day's rest per week.
- parental leave (December 1999) and entitlement to 13 weeks unpaid leave in total per child, to be taken in blocks to be agreed with their employer; and
- time off for dependants or so-called emergency leave (December 1999) which does not, in law, apply to police officers.

The Department of Trade and Industry website (<http://www.dti.gov.uk/er/regs.htm>) provides useful guidance and contact points on all the legislation above. At the time of writing, confusion about whether or not to apply certain directives to the police service abounds. Many managers interviewed for this study, for example, were unclear as to how much rest police officers and other staff should have if they were working ten hour shifts or seven nights in a row. Gooch (2000) has argued that the European Working Directive has not been properly and effectively implemented for the police service, and other work carried out on shift systems (Hicks and Whiddett, 1999) also suggested that many of the patterns currently used by the service were not in the spirit of the directive.

Other relevant legislation affects officers at higher ranks. The requirements for decision-making under PACE mean that 'on call' duty is an aspect of operational supervisory roles at inspector and superintendent rank. On call duty is also required for certain specialisms and for firearms incidents. This can evidently create difficulties for those with caring responsibilities. Research conducted for the Superintendents' Association (Davies, 1998) questioned the need for on call decisions to be taken by superintendents, and suggested that many chief inspectors felt that such requirements were archaic and did not fit with the strategic role of superintendents in modern policing. In fact, operational superintendents already involve chief inspectors and headquarters-based superintendents on rotas for on call 24-hour requirements.

For the purposes of working time legislation, it is not yet clear whether on call duty should be included. The government had been advising that it was not, however an interim judgement in a recent European Court case suggested that on-call is working time if the employee is restricted to their workplace, but is not if they are free to pursue leisure activities.

The Disability Discrimination Act is to be extended to the police service, probably in 2004. This suggests that the pressure to find part time work for police (not just restricted and light duties) will increase. Tribunals have taken the view in several cases that part-time work is a 'reasonable adjustment' which an employer ought to be expected to make for an employee who has a disability e.g. someone returning from a major illness.

Grievances and tribunal findings

Grievances regarding part-time working are not uncommon, although few cases go as far as an employment tribunal. The outcomes of these suggest that both the individual and the organisation must try to be as flexible as possible in balancing their respective demands. Tribunal hearings have criticised both individual members of staff, and divisional managers or organisations for being obstructive or insufficiently open to negotiation. As mentioned above, a tribunal in August 2000 found against a force who had refused a request for part-time working from an inspector. One of the case study central contacts underlined the fact that tribunals tended to take the view that police organisations must be able to find a role for a part-time officer, given their size.

Availability and take-up of flexible options

This section sets out the different types of flexible working pattern and provides limited information on the extent of their use in the service. It is based on Home

Office police personnel statistics, findings from the telephone survey and information provided during national seminars and interviews with force contacts. During the telephone interviews, it became clear that force contacts were often not familiar with the definitions of the less common options such as ‘permanent part year’ or ‘annualised hours’ (see Appendix 2). In some cases, examples of flexible practices exist in the service but with different names, for example the Ottawa shift system involves a compressed working week of four shifts of ten hour days rather than five shifts of eight hours. In a few forces, other options were being used but with different names, for example a ‘variable working hours’ policy was in fact very similar to flexitime. This is a common problem when trying to compare police force practices; the name they use for a specific type of working pattern or practice is frequently unique to their force.

As mentioned earlier, it is extremely difficult to obtain a national perspective on the extent of take-up of different flexible options due to variation at basic command unit level and lack of developed central monitoring. One force contact noted that there were 19 different shift patterns operating within their force. The tables which follow show flexible options divided into initiatives which focus on:

- how much time an employee works;
- when an employee works;
- where an employee works;
- a complete break from work; and
- increased choice and security.

For definitions of the different patterns, see Appendix 2. In addition to those shown in the table there are also some options which are specific to the police service including light, restricted and recuperative duties. These are available for pregnant staff, and for staff who are not considered to be fit for operational duties. Data were not collected for these categories of staff.

Full-time work is the normal situation for staff in the police service, although the percentage of part-time staff has increased steadily since 1995/96 (see Table 3). Availability, in policy terms, and take-up of patterns involving reduced hours, is extremely low for police officers and not a great deal higher for support staff. In the case study forces, only one example was found of a planned job share at inspector rank. The most striking finding from the telephone survey was that forces did not always use the same terms for different types of flexible working, whilst the case studies showed that types of flexibility not set out in force policy had nonetheless been negotiated locally.

Table 3: Patterns that focus on how much time an employee works

	Number of forces offering (phone survey findings n=27)		What is known about take-up in the service	
	Officers	Support staff	Officers	Support staff
Full-time	27	27	The vast majority (over 97 %) of police officers work full-time. (Home Office Police Service Personnel Data, 2001).	A smaller proportion but still the majority (83%) of support staff work full-time. (HOPSP, 2001).
Part-time (constable and sergeant ranks for police officers)	27	27	Just under 2% of average strength in 2001 was part-time, including job share. Proportions of strength varied between forces from 0.7% to 2.8%. (HOPSP, 2001).	Part-time staff, including job share were 17% of full-time equivalent (FTE) strength. Strength of part-time staff varied in forces from 4.2% to 37.7% (phone survey findings).
Job-share (available to all ranks for officers)	24	25	Only half the forces who offered job share were able to isolate these staff in their figures, one force had just two police officers working in this way (phone survey findings).	Only half the forces who offered job share could isolate data for these staff. There was a great deal of variation in strength from 1.2% to 29% of support staff (phone survey findings).
'V-time' or voluntary reduced hours (short-term)	Not known	Not known	This was perceived to be equivalent to part-time working for a short period of time for most force central contacts. They did not have separate 'v-time' policies (phone survey findings).	
Term-time working	2	4	Very few forces had term-time working policies. Of those that were able to provide data (3), one had one support staff member and two others had one police officer each on term-time working. Term-time working (see Chapter 6) had been worked out as a variant of part-time working under the Police Regulations (phone survey findings).	
Permanent part year	0	1	Most force central contacts were unaware of the term and it did not figure in any formal policies for police officers. Anecdotal information indicated that one force had allowed this for police officers who played sport at national competitive level.	
Working overtime	27	27	Overtime is commonly available for staff in operational or direct operational support roles.	

Many force contacts did not identify shift working as a type of flexible working, a term which often tended to be understood only as part-time work by police service participants in the study. However, the standard use of shift working and the informal use of shift-swapping indicate that the police service has a more flexible workforce than some other public sector employers (Table 4).

	Number of forces offering (phone survey findings n=27)		What is known about take-up in the service
	Officers	Support staff	
Flexitime (also known as variable working hours)	1	22	All support staff in the organisation usually have access, except those in direct operational support roles such as control rooms. Few police officers have access, although informally they may be able to negotiate at higher ranks.
Compressed hours (In the police service appears to be available as the Ottawa pattern, using ten hour shifts)	Not known	Not known	The Ottawa shift pattern was not identified as a flexible pattern at the time of the phone survey. Subsequently, it became clear that many forces took up the Ottawa pattern from 1993 but more recently many had abandoned it and changed to other patterns because it was considered too costly and not suited to peaks and troughs in demand.
Annualised hours	1	4	Many force contacts were not aware of the term. Forces that offered it were not able to say how many staff were working in this way.
Shift-working	27	27	Shift working is the norm for uniform patrol, traffic and many direct operational support roles. There is a regulation pattern, which some forces or divisions still operate, along with a wide variety of 'VSAs' or variable shift arrangements, for example: Regulation + changeover; Continental block; Ottawa; Ottawa b; v99; Bournemouth 3; and fast forward rotating (see Appendix 3). It was beyond the scope of this study to ascertain numbers of staff working the different patterns.
Shift-swapping	0	0	According to force contacts this happens informally, but there are no formal systems. Police Regulations take into account special payments for short notice changes of hours.
Working outside 'normal office hours'	27	27	This is standard for many police service employees, for example uniform patrol and communications staff.
Self rostering	0	0	There were no examples of this given in the phone survey, although an example appeared in the case study work (see Chapter 6).

There were very few examples of home- or tele-working given in the phone survey, and no examples were found during the case studies (see Table 5). Concern was expressed by some managers that it would be difficult to measure what was being produced by staff who were not office-based, although this is the case for most patrol officers.

Table 5: Patterns that focus on where an employee works

	Number of forces offering (n=27)		What is known about take-up in the service and current limitations
	Officers	Support staff	
Working on employers' premises	27	27	The vast majority of police staff are considered to be based at police premises.
Working in mobile/detached office	0	0	No examples of 'tele-working' were given during the phone survey.
Working from home	2	5	Very few forces offered home working and of those, few could provide data on take-up. Some force contacts said it was available informally. One force had two support staff working from home.

Short breaks from work were not yet part of formal policy in some forces, although there were some indications in the case studies that these are allowed in a different way by some managers, as special leave (Table 6). Career breaks were offered by most forces, and at the time of writing, the Home Office was in the process of preparing guidance for all forces on the provision of career breaks.

Table 6: Options that give employees a complete break from work

	Number of forces offering (n=27)		What is known about take-up in the service	
	Officers	Support staff		
For a short period (Parental or dependants leave)	Not known	Not known	Parental leave applies to police officers but dependants leave does not. None of the forces mentioned having officers on parental leave.	None of the forces mentioned having support staff on either of these breaks from work.
For a longer absence (Career break)	27 ¹	25	In forces able to provide data on take-up, career break staff formed between 0.1% to 0.9% of FTE strength (phone survey findings).	In forces able to provide data, staff on breaks made up 0.1% to 3.2% of FTE strength (phone survey findings).

¹One force said they were ending access to career breaks.

There are restrictions in Police Regulations which affect the provision of some types of benefit to police officers although this does not apply to support staff. Table 7 shows that caring benefits were not offered at the time of the phone survey, although subsequent case study and seminar work indicated that some forces were introducing them. Formal phased or flexible retirement was not identified by force respondents to the phone survey as a type of flexible working.

Table 7: Options that offer increased choice and security to employees

	Number of forces offering (n=27)		What is known about take-up in the service
	Officers	Support staff	
Benefits such as childcare or eldercare vouchers	0	0	At the time of the survey forces contacts said they had considered offering direct childcare in the past but had found it was not feasible. Subsequently Staffordshire began offering childcare vouchers.
Phased or flexible retirement	Not known	Not known	Where present is usually considered to be a form of part-time working. Arnott and Emmerson (2001) provide further details of retirement schemes.

In summary, it can be said that the police service does not have a wide variety of flexible options to offer its staff, and particularly not to police officers. Support staff have access to more flexible options than police officers and that greater proportions of support staff overall strength have taken them up. This is likely to be connected to their presence in greater numbers in administrative roles which are not operational or direct operational support.

Informal flexibility

The findings of the survey also showed that the extent of informal flexibility was likely to be as important as the contents of force policies. Force central contacts were aware of some scope for informal flexibility, particularly with regard to officers working at home at inspector rank and above. It was likely to be more common in specialist roles according to officers in two of the focus groups. Forces should attempt to gauge to what extent some of the flexible patterns shown above are in operation without central management being aware of them.

Points for action

- Changes to Police Regulations for part-time workers are needed if flexibility is to increase for police officers. These changes should include access to part-time work for ranks above sergeant and for probationers.

- Human resource departments need to link systems showing staff work patterns with their personnel monitoring, if central management are to gain a clear idea of the development of flexible working in the force. Forces could also use existing surveys or consultation mechanisms to find out about the extent to which informal flexibility is made available to staff by their supervisors.

3. Working options at basic command unit level

As noted in the introduction, it was difficult to describe what patterns of work were being used force by force, because arrangements were often made at basic command unit (BCU) level and there was little central monitoring. Most forces did not have a central department or fixed contact point for the monitoring of working patterns, or for the provision of guidance on how to introduce and manage different options. In most forces, the only clear requirement for central involvement was if there were pay or pensions implications related to different working options. This chapter examines practices at BCU level through evidence from the case studies and focus groups. Firstly, senior teams' considerations when determining working patterns are explored. Then, within this context, the flexible options worked by staff in this study are set out. Finally, senior managers' and line supervisors' awareness of flexible options and their attitudes towards them are considered.

Determining working patterns: managers' considerations

During the focus group discussions, mention was made of a wide variety of working patterns considered to have potential for different ranks and roles in the police service. Participants often did not use formal terms, such as those shown in the definitions earlier. However, the seminar discussions and case study interviews suggested that individual officers who wished to work outside the recognised standard for their role, frequently received discouraging responses from managers. These negative reactions occurred despite central contacts' view that force policy was for managers to be open to requests for different practices.

This section examines BCU managers' considerations with a view to exploring how these might fit with flexible working patterns. A key theme in this area was the tension between central and devolved management. Difficult issues were raised more frequently about shift patterns than office hour working patterns.

Setting working patterns for operational staff

Changes in shift patterns can be the source of a great deal of controversy and disagreement between staff and managers, who have been described as lacking the required experience and expertise in resource management to negotiate and take decisions (Mason, 2000). Some managers in the focus groups explained that they had learned how to negotiate through having to manage support staff – because they cannot be obliged to work as police officers can. Managers' level of skill in setting patterns for a shift can be directly linked to their capacity to consider and introduce other flexible working options.

Managers said that shift patterns in the study were usually worked out on the basis of a number of different considerations, including local demand for rapid response,

³ For a detailed list of considerations for setting shift patterns see the Appendices of Stone et al. (1993) *Effective Shift Systems for the Police Service*.

health and safety, sickness absence, productivity, risk assessment, staff pressure and financial settlements³. For most police officer patterns, part-time working was not considered at the outset. In a few cases, difficulty in recruiting and retaining staff or high sickness rates had led to changes in patterns, particularly in communications or control rooms. However, as one manager pointed out, these were not the only influences:

I don't think you can understate the significance of culture... just the organisational expectations or over expectation. The fact that it has always been done that way, those sorts of factors....

White male full-time detective inspector, specialist squad. Focus group discussion.

A wide variety of shift patterns are currently in use in the service. There was considerable variation across BCUs and forces in the operation of variable shift patterns, i.e. patterns not standard under Police Regulations before 1992. When participants in the study mentioned variable patterns, they were often talking about the compressed working week, or Ottawa pattern. However, the following patterns are all currently in use in the service: Regulation; Regulation + changeover; Continental block; Ottawa; Ottawa b; v99 (Merseyside); Bournemouth 3. Another pattern mentioned was a fast rotating pattern: two 'earlies', two 'lates', two nights, two rest days. Examples of three different shift systems are shown at Appendix 3. Fast rotating shift patterns have been found to be the healthiest (Mason, 2000) but they are frequently not as popular as patterns with blocks of nights:

CID were the last ones to take part in it, but like people... it was like the difference between an apple and a packet of crisps, I mean you might enjoy one more, but the other one's actually better for you. The three nights is actually better for you to work... it gives you a longer working life and a happier retirement. As opposed to working seven nights... which is actually not healthy to do.

White male full-time detective chief inspector, crime manager.

Focus group discussion.

Shift patterns for uniform patrol were often different to those for specialist areas, because of the need for night work in response teams. Most specialist departments had patterns with a mixture of 'days and twilights' with one or two staff on overnight call. In some forces, variable shift patterns, involving compressed weeks, were made available to specialist departments, although they were not necessarily perceived to be appropriate:

In the force the Chief has said that he will only accept 10 hour shifts and people that are on core sections, like uniform, so that doesn't include control rooms, but he wants to have a perk for people who are on shift work. Rather than a 10 hour shift, because a 10 hour shift you get more days off, rather than it being a perk for CID for various units who also have it..... There's somebody that's trying to make him change his mind because he's absolutely got no authority to announce what other stations are doing.

White female full-time chief inspector, headquarters operational department.
Focus group discussion.

The extent of flexibility in terms of variable shift arrangements was dependent on whether local negotiation with the staff associations took place. Nationally accepted patterns are set out in Police Regulations and managers do not have the right to impose other shift patterns on police officers. The Regulation system was still in common use in many forces, although others saw it as archaic. A frequently mentioned use of the pattern during the focus groups was a five shift system, with four main shifts and a spare shift which would be assigned to proactive work. Some managers mentioned having skeleton staff working a basic 24-hour cover pattern, with others on a flexible or variable pattern.

Some managers in focus groups said their forces had been advised by HMIC to have shift patterns which were broadly similar across BCUs, rather than patterns which varied greatly across the force. Similar shift patterns are important when staff are required for public order events in other divisions. One manager noted that although they could not have variable shift patterns, they were able to be flexible with start and finish times for shifts. This could be allowed according to demand, for example, beginning the early shift at 7am rather than 6am for the majority of staff, given the low levels of demand for response in the early morning. The extent of differences at command unit level was felt to be a source of tension between central and local management who might see control over setting shift patterns as a means of bargaining:

'It [...] goes against devolution which is the other pressure where a BCU commander is responsible for his or her performance and the only management tool you have got with your staff is the shift pattern. It is the only one you have any control over.'

White male full-time chief inspector, headquarters project manager.
Focus group discussion.

Demand and the need for evidence

Although there were widely varying patterns, managers in the focus groups did not feel that they were necessarily in possession of sufficient evidence to show why the pattern needed to vary from that of another BCU. Some mentioned that they had no bank of information at BCU level which would assist them in evidencing the need for certain types of pattern. They identified a need for better statistical information and better software in order to be able to fit shift patterns to demand profiles. Without evidence, managers tended to state that their preferred pattern, whatever their role, was for staff to work three eight-hour shifts. This is understandable given that it is easy to cover 24 hours using this system.

Service level agreements (SLAs), resilience and 'the bottom line'

Where management of sectors or divisions is devolved, commanders often had an SLA with the force central management which set out what they would provide in case of a major public disorder or critical incident in another division. Although SLAs are a relatively recent phenomenon in the service, the need for short notice cover has always been seen as the 'bottom line' in police work. Staff in all roles in the study, part-time, line managers, senior managers and personnel staff, referred to the need to be able to plan for contingencies if 'the bomb goes off', 'the plane drops down' or 'something kicks off'. Police officers can be obliged to cover at short notice (they are subject to the 'exigencies of duty' as set out in Police Regulations) for which they receive enhanced pay. Support staff as mentioned above, do not usually have such a requirement in their contracts which led to concern about fairness.

Establishment

Despite having devolved management, commanders were often not in control of their staff budget. Force central management still set establishment (i.e. the amount of staff allocated to a BCU) on the basis of actual numbers of staff rather than taking into account the number of hours they worked using full-time equivalents (FTEs). In some forces, inspectors and superintendents also claimed to have very limited flexibility for going over or under budget in the short term to increase their resilience.

Minimum staffing levels

The number of officers or establishment was directly linked in many cases to a division or department's minimum staffing levels, i.e. the number of officers who should be on duty at any given time. These were agreed with force central management although not all forces had them. They were not statutory

requirements and were thought by some to be unrealistic, for as one respondent put it 'what do you do if you don't have enough officers?'. In some departments they were worked out in an ad hoc fashion rather than using appropriate management information. The respondent explained that they were not changed provided the amount of work for staff seemed 'about right'. One or two managers mentioned that they used a minimum staffing level to set the core shift pattern, as mentioned above, so that all other staff could then be on flexible rostering.

Rosters and duties

In the past, rosters were set for officers on uniform shifts at least a year in advance, so that they could see when they would be working or on rest days. Although this has advantages, it does not sit comfortably with the desire for flexibility from both managers and individual members of staff or with the increased use of local negotiation. According to participants in this study, rosters tended to be set around three months in advance.

Much of the practical day-to-day management of rosters was carried out by duty sergeants. Staff in these roles played an important part in determining whether or not the working pattern staff had agreed with their manager would work in practice. They would also determine duties such as who, on a response team, would be driving the area car. They kept records of abstraction due to training and court and might refuse requests from officers to take leave depending on the available staff.

Civilianisation, light and restricted duties

Force central contacts also identified difficulties with the impact of large numbers of posts being civilianised, and the requirement for restricted posts for pregnant officers and light duties for those returning from long-term sick leave. There was concern from police managers that using support staff for 24-hour cover had serious financial implications due to payment of enhanced rates for unsociable hours. Line managers see a conflict between paying more and their perception that increased civilianisation in the police service is driven by a desire to decrease the costs associated with officer salaries, in roles not requiring police powers. The need to provide light and restricted duty roles for officers was perceived by support staff as bad for their career development and by other officers as being bad for morale. All staff working reduced hours were viewed similarly by colleagues, whether they were part-time because of caring issues, studies or injury, so the presence of police officers in roles seen as 'cushy' was not appreciated in station culture.

Supervisory roles

Many of the managers in the study emphasised the long hours and on call rota commitment, required in their posts. Outside their rostered hours, they were available 'on call' for specific types of incident according to their role. These rotas covered the requirements of PACE for senior officers to take decisions on specific issues relating to suspects in custody, and the need for supervision in incidents involving firearms. Senior investigating officers (SIOs) were also on call for serious crimes, such as murder. The number of times that officers were actually called out would depend on the nature of the area they policed, the types of incident which occurred and the number of officers available for the rota. A particularly onerous requirement mentioned in one of the focus groups was due to colleagues' illness and involved the participant being on call one in every two weekends.

Flexible working patterns in basic command units

As mentioned earlier, responsibility for decisions and negotiation of 'non-standard' working patterns was, in practice, held at BCU level. In most forces, information about the different patterns was not centrally collated, communicated or advertised, and even staff in the same BCU were not always aware of each others' patterns. There was an exception in the case studies where one central contact had records of all the patterns worked by part-time staff.

The lack of information and communication may be one of the reasons why 'part-time staff' were often perceived by full-time staff to work either mornings or afternoons in office roles and hours, Monday to Friday. They were perceived not to work full shifts, not to provide short notice cover and not to do on call duty. This could also be due to the tendency for non-operational roles to be seen as the only appropriate place for reduced hours staff when part-time working was first introduced for police officers. Since then, increased demand for light, restricted, or recuperative duties has led to administrative roles in office hours being assigned away from part-time staff. They are now more likely to be required to work in operational roles which usually involve shift work, night duty and short notice changes in their working hours.

Patterns of work

Interviewees working reduced hours in the case studies and focus groups worked a great variety of patterns, principally between the hours of 7am and 2am, except for a term-time worker who worked full shifts including nights. There were few who worked half days or only during office hours; they tended to work full days, but fewer of them, were often on the late shift, or working across shifts and some varied

their hours according to the needs of their division or department. Understanding the extent of variation would seem to be vital if staff in the service are to view ‘part-time’ working in a more positive light; Table 8 below is an attempt to summarise.

Table 8: Common ways in which ‘part-time’ or reduced hours working varied	
Pattern of hours worked	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fixed within 7am – 7pm ‘daytime’ ● Fixed hours pattern including evening or night work between 7pm – 7am ● Rotating hours pattern ● Flexible hours according to availability and demand
Which days worked	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fixed within Monday to Friday ● Fixed days including Saturday and/or Sunday ● Rotating days ● Flexible days according to availability and demand
Number of hours worked	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fixed (usually 4, 6, 8 or 10) ● Variable
Relation to department or team pattern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Independent of team ● Aligned with team ● Crossing team standard pattern ● Variable
On call	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Not required ● Not covered ● Pro rata ● Flexible to cover full-time abstraction
Provision of additional hours to cover shortfall*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● At short notice ● With at least one day notice

*Police officers can be required to do this according to Regulations. Whether part-time officers are required to work was unclear during this study, and seemed to be negotiated with immediate supervisors.

An example of a typical pattern could be a uniform patrol officer who worked 10am – 6pm, Wednesday to Friday, every week, and stayed regularly at short notice until later in the evening, whilst other officers in the team worked the Regulation Shift Pattern. The officer’s working time could be described as a daytime only pattern with three fixed eight-hour periods, crossing team shifts, without a requirement for on call cover and providing short notice cover.

The extent to which part-time staff are viewed as working outside normal patterns seemed to be affected by the ways in which shift patterns were determined at force and sector or BCU level for the majority of front-line staff. As a general rule, police

officers on patrol or response worked in teams on rotating shift systems rather than on fixed early, late or night shifts. Part-time staff in the study usually worked a fixed pattern and therefore were not aligned to any specific shift team. Concern was expressed by managers in the study about part-time staff having access to the compressed working week pattern, for example, because it was felt that the lengths of absence between working days would marginalise them further.

Roles

One of the case study forces conducted a survey of staff working fewer than full-time hours which showed that police officers occupied a full range of posts from uniform patrol to CID, mounted branch and traffic. There were differing opinions expressed by managers in the study as to whether there should be restrictions on roles occupied by those working reduced hours. Where these restrictions were suggested, there were differences of opinion, and contradictions, in terms of which roles should not be accessible to part-time staff. The majority view was that there should be no restrictions, which fitted with the policy approach of most forces.

However, there still appeared to be a gap between what was held to be desirable in principle and what could be managed in practice. Managers noted that staff tended to be pushed into specific types of role, and this was also mentioned in the seminars with part-time police officers. This was not the case for support staff according to contacts in the study, who were working in all possible support roles. Operational manager roles and specialist squads were often mentioned as areas where part-time working was difficult to introduce. There was some agreement from staff interviewed during the study that working on a specialist squad would be particularly difficult. This may have been because they did not know of any staff working reduced hours in these areas. During one of the case studies, however, an example was found of a part-time staff member working on a murder team and details are shown below:

Box 1: Reduced hours working on a murder team

According to the local personnel manager, when the request was first made by a woman officer to work part-time on the squad, managers were concerned that they would not have the necessary flexibility, and would not be able to call her in when they needed her or use her in certain roles because continuity was required. The personnel manager noted that ‘if I am honest they were very sceptical about having a part-time officer on the murder team, and needed a lot of persuasion from me to say this can work if you can sit down and think about it’. The officer was working three days per week, eight hours per day but had been flexible, and come in to work on non working days and the manager felt it had ‘worked well’. The key barrier to overcome was that managers like to be able to call officers in at any time, day or night and it was seen as something new. However, one way of overcoming the barrier had been liaison between two senior detectives, because there was already a part-time officer working on a squad elsewhere in the force.

Six of the staff working reduced hours in this study were in supervisory ranks or roles and of these, three had staff to manage. One of these staff was a ‘supernumerary’ police supervisor and shared their responsibilities with another officer. The two others were a police officer with responsibility for staff on a crime desk and a member of support staff in a personnel department. There did not appear to be any major problems for these interviewees with their staff management duties. Other participants in the study gave examples of part-time supervision working well in specific areas such as the control room or in a community safety department. An example from one of the case study forces showed responsibility for staff being shared between a full-time and part-time DS in CID. However, practices in forces varied, in another example from a focus group, a force had moved a DS from CID to Custody because it was felt he could not be accommodated in an operational supervisory role.

One possible explanation for the variation and the general limited use of flexible working practices, when they were present in force central policy, could be a lack of information about the practicality of available options and a lack of interest in their introduction. The following section examines respondents’ awareness and attitudes.

Managers’ awareness and attitudes

As the previous section suggested, flexible working practices are often understood as flexible for the individual or for the organisation, but not for both at the same time. Managers interviewed for the study varied as to whether they felt that flexible

working was, or could be, aimed at meeting the needs of the organisation. One manager in a focus group gave the following definition, 'flexible working practices means no administrative staff in the office at half past three on a Friday afternoon', whilst his colleague in the same group had a different approach:

I've been amazed actually, if you approach it with a flexible mind and you've got support from HQ in terms of being able to be absolutely flexible, then I've been amazed how you've been able to accommodate those who want to work part-time, and the needs of the organisation.

White male full-time chief inspector, operations. Focus group discussion.

In the police service, and particularly for police officers the main options understood to be flexible were part-time and job share, and for support staff in non-operational roles, flexitime was commonly available. The introduction of part-time working was already perceived by some to have caused difficulties; one superintendent described it as 'very, very difficult to manage'. Job-share tended to be the preferred option for many managers because they saw it as avoiding many of the problems associated with part-time work. Flexitime was perceived negatively by some managers in that it meant that employees, rather than the employer, had control over the working pattern.

Flexible working practices can be seen to include many other options, shift work, additional hours, compressed hours, annual hours, term-time working and homeworking. Shift work is an essential part of the police service organisation, and because it is seen as standard, is not considered by managers to be a flexible working practice. Another standard aspect of police flexibility is staff in operational roles working extra hours at short notice, for which full-time staff are compensated with enhanced pay. The reactive nature of much police work means that operational staff may have little opportunity to be in control of their working hours.

The idea of introducing any of the less common flexible options was greeted with laughter in one focus group of police managers, although opinions varied greatly within and across groups, particularly as to whether or not other innovations, such as short shifts of four or five hours would be a positive step. In general, though, whilst forces may have other options in their policies, they were rarely taken up and implemented in devolved management areas. Policy documents set out the general framework, but did not usually provide examples of how individual managers might use the patterns in their area. This was a cause for concern for both supervisors and staff who found it difficult to apply general information to the specific roles they were considering, and might be another part of the explanation for the low take-up of flexible options.

The equal opportunities background to the introduction of part-time working, its use as a means of reducing hours in existing posts, and gaining more control of working hours seems to have led managers to think of part-time working as a potential problem and an administrative burden, rather than as a means to gain more flexibility in the staffing of a sector or department. This attitude is generalised to all patterns which are not those currently in use. A manager of a specialist task force in a focus group explained how pleased he was to have been able to refuse part-time working in his area and added 'equal opportunities has caused immense problems'. A participant in another group stated that although it was 'not their fault', part-time officers tended to be in 'cushy office roles' whilst another interviewee suggested that the police service was too flexible already and needed to control its staff more. On the other hand, managers who had positive experiences of part-time work tended to have a different understanding of flexibility. The differences in managers' roles did not provide a plausible explanation for the variation in their attitudes to flexible options.

A great deal of resource and effort has been devoted to deciding shift patterns in different forces (see for example, Hicks and Whiddett, 1999; Mason, 2000) but it seems that the potential for forms of flexibility within these, such as part-time or term-time working are not considered at the same time, or as a matter of course. Although types of working pattern mentioned in the case studies and focus groups, either in use or planned, were highly diverse, the perception remained that 'real' police work involved working full shifts and that any other patterns were 'cushy numbers'. Managers in the focus groups also showed a preference for three blocks of eight-hour shifts as the ideal working pattern to manage for 24 hour cover. Evidently most of the organisational systems in use were set up with an eight-hour shift pattern in mind, and this makes it the easiest pattern to manage. However, changes to regulation shift patterns were increasingly common, and their use can be linked to demand profiles and the other considerations mentioned earlier.

There was some evidence that police managers were more positive about flexible working at higher ranks, although superintendents varied a great deal in their willingness to consider flexible working practices as key to service delivery. During both the seminars for part-time workers, it was noticeable that, whilst the Chief Constable and Head of Human Resources gave very positive messages to staff about their support for part-time working, the behaviour and attitudes of line managers at sergeant and inspector ranks, as reported by participants, did not reflect senior staff views. This importance of senior management messages being translated into middle management and frontline action has been highlighted regarding other issues in the service, for example the introduction of problem-oriented policing (Leigh et al., 1996 and 1998).

Given the context explored earlier, it is perhaps not surprising that the use of flexible working practices to date in the organisation has been essentially reactive rather than proactive as far as managers are concerned. Managers in one of the focus group discussions agreed that there was tremendous scope for greater use of part-time working but that barriers, such as the need for childcare, did exist. In the case studies and focus groups there were few examples of flexible working being applied strategically, to improve retention, efficiency, effectiveness or quality of service. One exception was in the management of communications or control room staff, which is explored in more detail later in this report.

Points for action

- Any review or consideration of resource management should explore the potential for non-standard working patterns at the outset.
- The range of 'part-time' and other flexible working patterns and suggestions for their implementation should be set out for managers and staff, so they can explore the potential to balance conflicting needs within a framework.

4. Putting the business case: benefits for the organisation

Force central departments did not collect suitable monitoring information or conduct research to provide evidence for the benefits of flexible working practices. Most force central contacts said they thought the benefits were clear and they mentioned other priorities for collection and use of management information, which they perceived to be distinct from flexible working, for example, best value reviews and recruitment from minority ethnic communities. However, line and senior managers with negative attitudes towards flexible working were not convinced by the business case and this might be because they had been given general statements rather than costed evidence. Even those with a broadly positive attitude to flexible working identified more disadvantages than benefits. One local personnel manager suggested that the only way to persuade managers to change their practices was if by doing so they could save money, a view which is borne out by the following:

When you get above PC level or in the civilian grades there are other issues that arise for supervisors and managers in terms of continuity, appraisal and general management and administration issues. Now what you've got to weigh in the balance is whether the cost of the investment is going to be repaid depending on how long they're going to be in that part-time role. Certainly it should affect loyalty, you would expect, so there are going to be benefits. But the CBA (cost-benefit analysis) in the early stage is perhaps very much erring on the side of cost, practical difficulties with the management of part-time, job share.

White male full-time chief inspector, operations. Focus group discussion.

Research commissioned by the DfEE also found that very little detailed quantitative work had been carried out to highlight the benefits of 'family friendly' working (Bevan et al., 1999). However, they did find that employers offering flexible options perceived the business to have benefited in the following ways:

- reduced sickness absence;
- improved retention;
- improved productivity;
- improved ability to attract potential recruits; and
- improved morale and commitment.

An evaluation carried out by management consultants on effective shift systems for the police service found no conclusive evidence that compressed shifts (the Ottawa pattern) led to cost advantages or significant improvements in quality of service

(Stone et al., 1993). The evaluation of the part-time working pilot found no evidence that part-time working had negative cost implications for the service (Stone et al., 1994).

In addition to the lack of evidence, managers' responsibilities – issues for which they were answerable to force central management – also had impact on their approach to flexibility. Their awareness of the benefits which might be gained varied, according to their role and level of management responsibility. The business case is perhaps most convincing for force central management, including headquarters-based superintendents, support staff managers and chief officers, because the types of benefit that can be demonstrated are more likely to be the responsibility of staff at the centre. The retention of women, for example, is usually a concern for central management, as is the cost of recruiting new staff, and the costs and resources involved in tribunal cases. Managers in BCU command teams, for example, are more likely to perceive their priority as the operational 'bottom line', for example the burglary rate, or cover provided for major incidents.

The extent of devolved financial control was therefore likely to have a considerable impact on attitudes to flexibility, as seen earlier. Managers in the focus groups frequently mentioned that devolved management to sector or BCU level had not coincided with increased control over the budget. They mentioned being obliged to stick within the budget set and lacking flexibility to change the staffing levels in their area of responsibility.

Line supervisors and senior managers in the case study forces and focus group discussions had a crucial role in setting and influencing work patterns in sectors and departments. They were often key to the negotiation process with staff working non-standard hours, but frequently perceived staff demands to be at odds with the need for the BCU to deliver on operational objectives. They also had an important role to play in challenging comments reflecting inappropriate attitudes to part-time staff. In this context, it seems vital that they be convinced of any benefits of flexible working in their own management areas, and this was rarely evident during the study.

Meeting organisational requirements effectively: tactical use by managers

This section seeks to provide evidence of the benefits for managers at different levels of the organisation. Many of the examples are based on part-time or reduced hours working as the most common flexible practice in use. Where possible, other practices have been highlighted.

Reducing overtime costs: a tricky balance

An increase in staff working at peak demand times on shorter shifts, such as on a 4pm – 10pm, or 5pm – 11pm shift in a control room, can cut down the need for other staff to work overtime. These staff were known as 'key timers' in one of the case study forces. In some cases this may be unpopular if staff rely on overtime hours to boost their wages.

Part-time staff are not paid overtime until they have worked over eight hours in one day and more than 40 hours in a week or the equivalent hours for support staff. This conforms with case law from the European Court of Justice. Any extra hours which part-time staff work are therefore less expensive to the organisation than for full-time staff. However, this does not mean they should be used for overtime more frequently, because of the potential for unfair treatment. Extra time worked by part-time staff does not count towards their pension which means that the hours they work under 40 hours provide less benefit than for full-time staff. Several force policies noted that part-time staff's hours should be reviewed regularly in order to ensure that they were not being used to supplement cover.

Fitting staff to demand profile

Many organisations use shorter or split shifts and part-time staff to meet demand at their busiest periods (Kandola and Fullerton, 1998) and shorter shifts were one option which some managers identified as being advantageous for the organisation, although views varied widely. In practice, short or split shifts could mean having four part-time staff rather than two full-time with more flexibility for overlap and assigning to key hours. For example, four police officers, rather than two, could be used to cover the period between 6pm and 10pm which might be the busiest time in a commuter belt, or between 10pm and 2am for an entertainment area in a city centre. Numbers of staff on the night shift, when demand is lowest, could be cut. Managers' descriptions of working patterns in the focus groups and interviews and previous research (Hicks and Whiddett, 1999) showed that it was rarely necessary for all officers on a team to work a full night shift. Staff on the night shift were frequently dropped back to the late shift to fit demand. Staff preferences for certain shifts could sometimes easily be accommodated in specific areas of a force, for example a shopping centre might require peak cover between the hours of 10am and 6pm.

Improving staff attendance and productivity

Another aspect of the business case can be made around a better work-life balance leading to improved morale, higher productivity, a healthier workforce and greater

commitment to the organisation (Kandola and Fullerton, 1998). Most staff interviewed who were working fewer hours mentioned these benefits spontaneously when asked for their opinion as to the organisational benefits of flexible working. They believed they were more productive, took less sick leave and were more loyal than some of their full-time colleagues.

However, managers varied in their opinion as to whether these benefits existed. In two focus groups, managers cited similar benefits, whilst in others managers seemed less sure. In the case study interviews, there were some very positive views, although there was concern that although staff could be more productive if they worked fewer hours, they were 'harder to get up to speed'. One case study interviewee assumed that a question about the quality of part-timers work was about whether this was worse than full-timers work. Managers needed to be aware that they may not be able to judge part-time staff fairly using systems set up for full-time staff (see Box 2).

Box 2: Judging part-time staff using full-time systems

One of the inspectors interviewed believed that a part-time beat officer on the sector was a poor performer compared to full-time officers. Further analysis of this officer's poor performance showed that she was likely to work more late shifts, when crimes tended to be reported (particularly burglaries by those returning from work) and fewer day shifts, when officers tended to carry out some of the follow-up work. In effect, the officer had less time to clear up the crime reports received, skewing the performance indicators used by the inspector, and marking out the part-time worker as a low achiever.

Part-time staff believed they were working productively, 'I'm doing a full-time job in part-time hours' was a frequent comment from staff interviewed for the study, and those participating in seminars. The key issue seemed to be that there were rarely standard systems in place to allocate work and measure productivity, so managers found non-standard patterns, such as job share, hard to manage because they could not assess productivity in 'three hours here, four hours there'.

American studies have shown that increased access to flexible options reduces absenteeism (see Kandola and Fullerton, 1998). Stone et al. (1994) found that part-time workers sickness records were better than those of full-time staff. One study cited by the DfEE in their summary of work-life balance evidence, found that employers who provided childcare referral services for employees saved an estimated £2 for every £1 they spent due to reduced sickness absence (Dex and Scheibl, 1999). There were varied views, however, amongst force contacts, line and senior managers

as to whether part-time workers were likely to have better sickness records than their full-time colleagues.

There were two main reasons for negative views of part-time staff's sickness absence, both of which are the result of recording practices rather than actual sickness levels. The first was that part-time staff were perceived to be more likely than full-time staff to take time off when their children were ill (which staff claimed, or the force counted, as sick leave), and the second that force management systems did not count sickness per days usually worked, but rather on the basis of a standard working week. In this case, a part-time officer due to work Monday to Wednesday but not Thursday or Friday, with their rest days on Saturday and Sunday, who reported sick and returned the following Monday, would be counted as having taken five days sick leave, even though they were not due to work for two of them.

Another contributory factor is that flexible practices in the sense of light or restricted duties, or phased retirement have been used in the service in order to retain staff who might otherwise remain on long-term sick leave or need to take medical retirement. This may heighten the impression that part-time staff do not have good sickness records. However, stress is one of the major causes of long-term absence amongst police officers (Arnott and Emmerson, 2001) and more flexible patterns may assist in reducing stress levels amongst staff, particularly where they give employees more control over their working pattern.

Providing development opportunities for full-time staff

One BCU manager described how, when a shift sergeant had reduced their hours, the management team had covered the remainder of the post with another full-time sergeant, who spent the remainder of their hours on a Custody shift. This arrangement not only allowed the part-time sergeant to work in an operational role, but afforded the full-time sergeant experience of custody which was important for career development, and successfully addressed concerns which were raised in focus group discussions, about 'losing' part of a post.

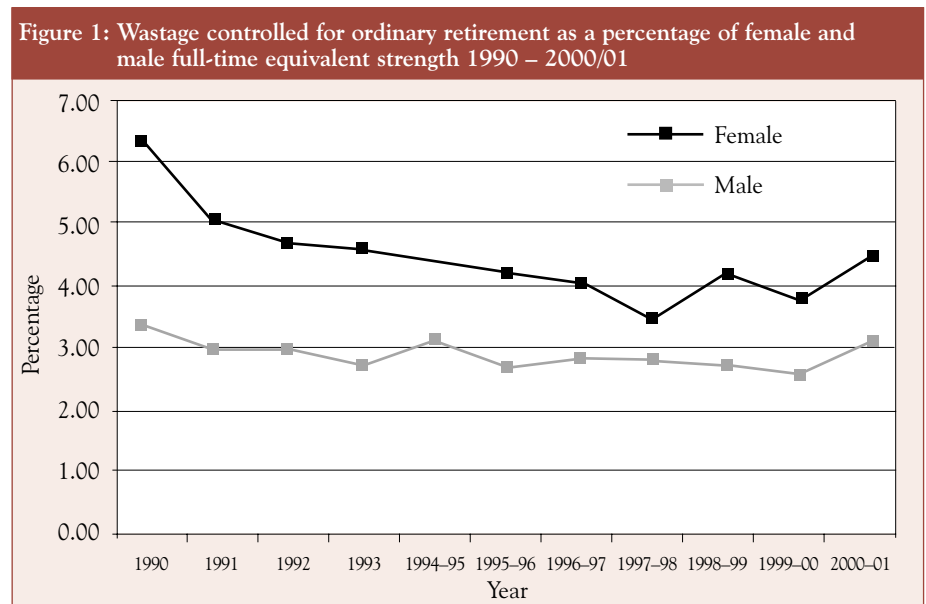
Staff retention and recruitment: improving efficiency and diversity

Retaining staff and saving on recruitment and training costs

The simplest and most common way of putting the business case is to set out the cost of introducing new individuals into the organisation against the cost of introducing a flexible system. This assumes, of course, that flexible working practices can prevent premature wastage of experienced staff from the organisation or attract them into rejoining if they have already left the organisation. The great majority of

staff working reduced hours or 'part-time' are women, and it was their retention which should have been affected.

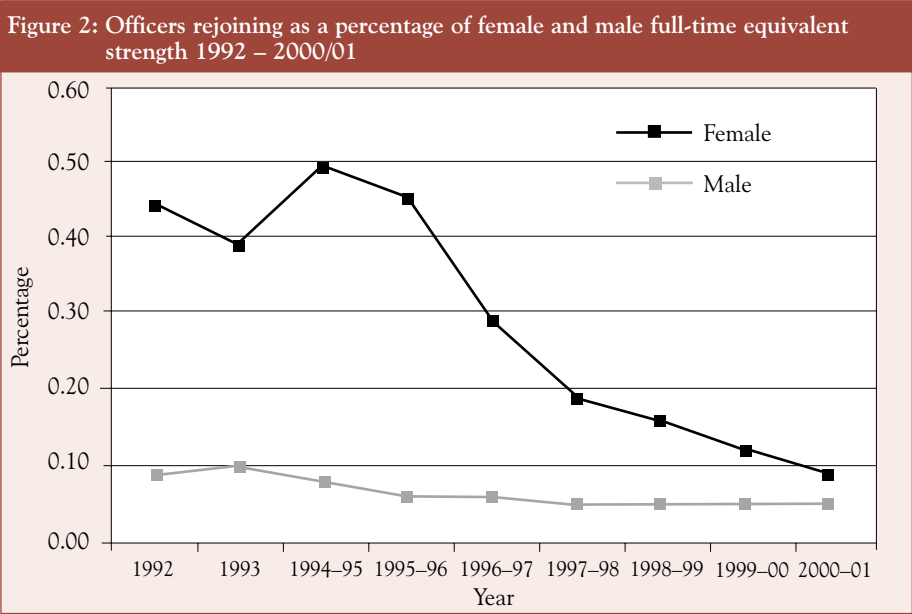
The numbers of women and men working part-time overall increased steadily from 1205 in 1995/96 to 3002 in 2001 when they constituted just over two per cent of average strength (Home Office Police Service Personnel figures). The number of men grew at a faster rate, although women still constituted the great majority, nearly 94 per cent of part-time officers. Analysis of HMIC data cannot confirm that the introduction of part-time working and job-share has had an impact on the wastage figures since 1992, although they show that wastage for female officers reduced steadily from 1990 to 1997/98 before beginning to rise in 1998/99. At the same time, figures for male officers reduced, but less markedly and rose only in 2000/01 (see Figure 1).



Source: HMIC matrix

However, forces which introduced part-time working as part of the pilot scheme in 1992 attracted a higher proportion of their strength from women 'rejoiners' than other forces, over the next four years. Many of these women would have required limited, if any, retraining or assessment, and would therefore have been less costly

and more experienced than other recruits. Figure 2 below shows that the proportion of female rejoiners reached a high point in 1994, with a substantial decrease over the years to 2000/01 as compared to the figure for men which was substantially lower and has declined gradually since 1993.



Source: HMIC matrix

Police forces introduced career break policies between 1990 and 1999 with, according to data collected in the telephone survey, the greatest proportion being introduced between 1994 and 1996. HMIC matrix data cannot show any link between availability of career breaks and lower numbers of voluntary resignations. Many forces still required officers to resign in order to take a career break at the time this study was carried out, which was a cause of concern for some force central contacts. National guidelines on career breaks were being agreed at the time of writing between staff and official sides at the Police Advisory Board.

Forces do not have data stored locally which would show whether or not the return rate of women police officers after maternity leave improved, or wastage went down after the introduction of part-time working. Most force central contacts we spoke to believed that all women police officers returned from maternity leave since 1994, although they were not able to provide monitoring data as evidence.

⁴ During the phone survey, of 34 respondents, 14 said exit questionnaires were automatically administered, whilst 11 said they offered exit interviews as a matter of course. Responses were mainly used to identify issues which required immediate attention, very few forces regularly collated the findings and only two forces mentioned using them to identify trends. The remaining respondents said the force only recorded a basic reason for leaving in accordance with HMIC requirements, such as voluntary resignation; or only used these processes for special constables; or had procedures which varied substantially between divisions and departments.

The researchers intended to use findings from exit interviews to explore whether retention could be affected by the availability of different flexible options, but this proved impracticable.⁴ Central contacts frequently mentioned that their exit interview procedures were under review or had recently been overhauled because of reservations about the quality of the questions asked and the utility of the replies. As one respondent put it ‘reasons for leaving usually say things like “found another job” which is fairly hopeless... the new policy should help to dig down behind the simple’.

Interviews with existing staff suggested a clear positive impact on retention. Of those interviewed during the case studies working less than full-time hours for childcare reasons, half said they would have left the service if they had not been able to reduce their hours. Of the remainder, a quarter said they were unsure and a quarter said they would have returned to full-time work. The majority of those who said they would resign had more than ten years’ service. These findings fit with those in a study conducted in South Yorkshire Police (West, 1998). One other interviewee said they would have been pushed into long-term sick leave.

Although not conclusive, the available evidence suggests that there has been an impact on the retention of women police officers as a result of the introduction of part-time working, job-share and career breaks. Box 3 provides an estimate of the savings to the service where experienced officers are retained.

Box 3: The minimum cost of replacing police officers

The PRC team tried to collect data to compare recruitment costs against the cost of introducing flexible patterns but forces found it difficult to provide the data required (for pro forma see Wooding, undated). One case study force was able to provide data on the cost of their recruitment process which showed the force spent £2,000 per successful candidate; a sum which can then be added to the cost of training a new recruit. Using figures from the Managing Learning thematic inspection (HMIC, 2000) provides an estimate of the cost of initial training to be £13,770. This figure uses a midpoint between the two daily rate estimates of £88 and £218 and assumes 18 weeks (90 days) initial training. The cost of the remainder of the two years' probation, including tutor constable opportunity time, is difficult to include, but the cost of at least 10 days subsequent training per year should be included; the average for all police officers. Estimating that a recruit will be replacing an officer with five years' experience, each year of training would cost £1,530, using the mid point between the daily rates shown above, and for five years this would be £7,650. In total, a conservative estimate is that losing a police officer with five years' experience and replacing them with a new recruit will cost a minimum of £23,420. Evidently the figure for training days, and thus the cost, would be much higher for specialist officers. An officer with five years' experience might, in any case, be expected to provide a more specialised or higher quality of service, and be more skilled than a new recruit (see Smith and Flanagan, 2000). Their loss would be likely to have an effect on the organisation's service delivery, but the PRC team were unable to find any force who had attempted to measure impact in this way.

The minimum cost of replacing an officer with five years' service shows how much is lost, in training and recruitment costs alone, if officers are refused access to flexible working, and subsequently leave the service.

Recruiting for diversity in a competitive labour market

Recent research on attitudes of people from minority ethnic communities towards the police service as a career (Stone and Tuffin, 2000) suggests that the current image of the service is of a white, male, military and institutionalised organisation, where discriminatory behaviour is rife. Women and people from minority ethnic communities are not being recruited according to their proportions of the economically active population and the service has been set targets for recruitment from the latter group. Women from minority ethnic backgrounds are particularly under-represented. Targets could be difficult to achieve if the police force is seen as an inflexible organisation (Kandola and Fullerton, 1998).

The police service is certainly unlikely to attract recruits who have sole or main caring responsibility for young children or other dependants. This group is more likely to be female than male and case law recognises that women are usually the main carers for children. None of the women officers working part-time for childcare reasons in the study had joined and trained with a childcare responsibility. They had usually joined when they were in their early 20s and single and had not thought at that time about the potential need to work part-time later in their career.

One of the major barriers for potential recruits might be the provision of initial training in a block and at residential sites, rather than in modules, with facilities for distance learning. One example came from correspondence reported by a Home Office police policy unit which indicated that whilst potential recruits who had sole parental responsibility for young children felt able to make arrangements to allow them to work shifts, they were unable to do so to meet the requirement for 18 weeks initial residential training.

Work-life balance: benefits for employees

Many of the staff interviewed for the study who were working fewer than full-time hours did so because they had childcare commitments. Others were studying, doing voluntary work or reducing hours for health reasons. In general, interviewees were extremely positive about 'part-time' working as the only way they could continue to work with outside responsibilities. However, in many cases 'part-time working' equated to a small reduction in hours but a substantial increase in the amount of control they had over their working hours and this was the essential factor.

Having more control over working hours meant that some were able to fit in with a partner's working pattern and cover caring responsibilities. These interviewees felt that their children benefited from their working part-time. They also gained from not needing to use formal childcare, or using it to a very limited extent. Many of those with children were keen for the police service to do more in terms of childcare support, and as we saw earlier, costed benefits have been shown for organisations who provide some form of support.

Less positive views came from officers who had clear ambitions for later in their service and who felt that apart from allowing them to cover their childcare requirements, there were only negative aspects to working part-time with regard to the job itself. Almost all the staff interviewed felt that working reduced hours had a negative impact on their career development and for some, their motivation had been reduced because they felt isolated.

Points for action

- Providing costed evidence of the benefits might be the only way to convince managers to use flexible working proactively and could therefore be worth the investment of resources. Best value reviews might be one way in which some of the necessary evidence would be produced. Otherwise more basic information could be used, such as showing differences in levels of sickness absence between part-time and full-time staff (if correctly recorded) and costs of recruiting new staff compared to retention of existing staff. BCU command teams would need to be accountable for ensuring that this monitoring was carried out.
- More flexible training options for all ranks are currently under consideration by National Police Training and by many force training departments. Force senior managers, police authorities and the Home Office should encourage and support these developments.

5. Identifying and addressing the barriers

As in the previous chapter on benefits, many of the examples of barriers in this chapter are based on reduced hours or part-time working; the principal example of flexible working involving the number of hours worked which is currently used in the service. Overall, the management of 'part-time' work in the police service is seen as difficult, particularly for operational staff and police officers generally. A wide range of difficulties were suggested during the interviews and focus groups. Many of these are still the same issues which were identified in research on the part-time working pilot which took place seven years ago (see Stone et al. 1994). This chapter attempts to determine whether or not the issues causing difficulty are really a result of part-time work itself or whether other factors, such as staff shortages or misinformed perceptions, were more important.

The chapter sets out the barriers raised by participants in the study alongside identified ways of addressing them. During the research, positive signs were found that some managers and staff perceived that they had achieved a balance in their use of flexible working practices between the needs of the individual and the needs of the organisation. Drawing on these examples, this chapter sets out a summary of suggestions for improved management of flexible working practices in the future.

Legal barriers

Police Regulations are cited as a barrier to variable shift patterns, as well as restricting access to part-time work to ranks below inspector. Regulations are frequently perceived to be inflexible and somewhat outdated by managers, whereas the Federation view them as minimum standards of protection, necessary to avoid abuse of individual officers. Some of these barriers to part-time working were set out in Chapter 2 and there are currently steps being taken to overcome many of them at the Police Negotiating Board.

Attitudinal barriers

Managers' awareness and attitudes to flexible working varied to a great extent, as noted earlier. One of the staff in a part-time police officers' seminar commented that 'on one area command I was treated like a leper whilst now I get to work with CID and put on incidents'. However, there was a strong tendency for managers to perceive part-time staff, and especially police officers, as inflexible rather than flexible members of staff. This was linked to perceptions that they did not work nights, provide short notice cover or work 'hard' shifts. They were seen not to fit in the culture of a disciplined organisation in which officers could be 'handed their jacket and told to get out there at any time'. These attitudes seem to result from staff throughout the service not having a clear idea of the patterns currently worked by part-time or reduced hours staff.

Managers' individual experiences tended to be important in influencing their attitudes, so, for example, control room managers with recruitment problems tended to be quite enthusiastic about 'part-time' work. One of the few full-time managers who had a mainly positive attitude had knowledge of his wife's 'fight' to job share, an experience which meant he was well-versed in both sides of the argument. Managers who worked with highly motivated, productive staff working reduced hours were positive about part-time working and flexibility in general, whereas managers who had a member of staff who they thought 'difficult' tended to believe that all part-time workers would behave in the same way. Both personnel staff and part-time workers described some part-time workers as 'spoiling it for everyone else'.

In annual seminars, part-time staff said that most of their full-time colleagues were supportive, but one or two participants said they were addressed in derogatory ways, suggesting that they were not considered to be real working members of the department.

Attitudes from full-time colleagues were affected by the long hours culture, according to respondents in the study. In many areas, staff regularly worked well beyond 40 hours a week, the rostered amount for a full-time officer, or the equivalent for support staff. If other staff were regularly working 50 hours, rather than 40, a member of staff who reduced their hours to 20 was likely to be perceived as doing less than half as much work as others.

For line and senior managers, the so-called 'fear' culture was seen to have impact in that they would be concerned about being 'bashed' by management for doing something wrong. Managers at sergeant and inspector levels were said to be particularly worried about what would happen 'if the bomb went off' and they were not able to provide the necessary cover. Evidence from the case studies suggested that if they did not get support from the senior team, locally or centrally, they were reluctant to take risks with new working practices. They were concerned that if they introduced a new system and 'set a precedent', they might find themselves 'in trouble' if it caused legal problems or staff discontent. They did not usually have examples of this occurring, the discouraging factor was the possibility. They were keen to have more guidance as to how they should go about negotiating with their staff.

Organisational barriers

The importance of attitudinal barriers, and the individual experience of managers makes it difficult to assess to what extent the barriers are part of the organisation's core business (for example, the provision of public order policing) and would be

affected by flexible options, and to what extent they involve established practices which managers do not think could be managed in a different way. Some attempt to assess the scope of organisational barriers has been made in this section.

There was a great deal of concern about fairness and consistency amongst staff throughout the process of carrying out the research, and this may have more impact than any other issue. In some cases part-time staff were perceived to receive better treatment than full-time staff, or support staff were perceived to be better off than police officers. Concerns were expressed with differing intensity by staff association representatives, personnel managers, line managers, senior managers, part-time and full-time staff in different roles.

Setting and controlling working hours

In order to set a pattern of work, line supervisors and part-time staff were required to negotiate. The result of these negotiations would often lead to a non-standard pattern being agreed, which might be a fixed shift or involve a compressed working week, and might be unrelated to that of full-time staff. Line supervisors and command teams frequently mentioned that they felt it unfair for part-time staff to have more control over their working hours, and for example, be able to work ten-hour shifts when full-time staff could not. However, non-standard patterns can usually be accommodated within departments and divisions with more than ten members of staff and, according to tribunal findings, managers are rarely able to provide convincing evidence that such a working pattern is not possible.

The standard approach to setting full-time work patterns is that of a 'disciplined organisation', a phrase mentioned by many managers in the study. Police officers' patterns are set within the bounds of Police Regulations and can vary only according to local negotiation with staff associations. In other words, most full-time police officers on shifts do not negotiate their hours individually, and the majority of managers in the study felt that this was appropriate to the demands of police work. This can cause some difficulties when they also manage support staff, as the following quote illustrates:

*'[I]t is still fairly new to police officers to actually be in charge of civilians and of course we used to, it sounds horrible, but we are a disciplined organisation and usually you speak to an officer and you say, you **will**, then they have no choice, when with a civilian it is slightly different tactics because you can't order them to do something, you have to request that they do it. So it has been a bit of a cultural shock for some supervisors to actually change their sort of management technique because they have [...] two different types of staff. [...] My style has always been*

[...] negotiation as far as possible, then I become slightly dictatorial, because that is the only way we can do it.'

White female full-time sergeant in Communications centre. Case study interview.

The situation described in Box 4 illustrates how negotiations can uncover the 'grey areas' in part-time working particularly well; in this case where part-time working ends and another type of flexible arrangement begins.

Box 4: Part-time or flexible working?

One manager had a request from a part-time officer who wanted to increase their hours back to 40, but to work four shifts of ten hours. The area inspector refused because the area was operating a regulation shift pattern. 'There was no way that I could accommodate that request, particularly in light of the knowledge that there were other female officers here who weren't part-time officers but that would have wanted to do the same thing, and obviously I can't have a double standard'. The officer then asked to do 39 hours to qualify as a part-time officer and then work three shifts of ten hours and one of nine hours. The force had subsequently decided, according to the inspector, that part-time officers should be willing to give up at least half a day a week, in order to have access to individual negotiation of their working practices. Given that in other contexts, it would be best for staff to work as many hours as possible, this would seem to be a counter-productive decision.

The indication is once again clear; it was not the number of hours but the shift pattern which caused the problem. This example also illustrates how line supervisors and local managers can be put in quite difficult situations when they are required to react to 'part-time' staff who want to work full-time hours, but do not want to work the standard shift pattern. The term 'part-time' working is a poor description of what these officers are trying to do, which is in fact, to compress their working week.

Providing short notice cover

This is a key flexible requirement in the police service for which the BCU might have a service level agreement with force central management. Once again, as we saw earlier, the main group of 'flexible workers' – part-time officers – were perceived by many managers to be unable to provide cover. The staff interviewed for this study varied greatly in their capacity to provide cover at short notice. A few could not provide it without severe difficulties in terms of childcare arrangements, a few were

always able to provide it, and a few could provide it depending on the day of the week or the working pattern of their partner. However, those who said they were flexible, were not often asked at short notice by their managers because it was assumed they would not be able to work. A small number of staff who found it difficult to stay on at the end of a shift most of the time, said they would be able to provide cover at specific times, for example at weekends, if there was a need for extra staff to cover a long-running public order situation, for example a series of demonstrations against road building or animal experimentation.

In the day-to-day management of a shift or a department such as CID or communications, some full- and part-time staff are better able to cover, and informally are usually those who are asked first by managers. A clear statement of which staff can cover at what times on what days would assist managers and could even develop into self rostering teams (see Chapter 6).

In another of the case studies, the local personnel manager of a control room also expressed concerns about fairness, because officers could be required to work at short notice to cover unforeseen staff shortages, whereas support staff could not. Changes to the contract for support staff were being initiated in the case study force mentioned whereby support staff could also be required to work. However, managers in the focus groups who had worked in departments with a large proportion of support staff, without any consideration of 'exigencies of duty' written into their contracts, said they found it difficult to adjust to the need to negotiate, but that it made it easier to manage staff overall once they had adapted.

Providing 24-hour cover and working nights

Examples given during the case study research also indicated that it was a matter of principle for some managers that reduced hours staff should work nights, on grounds of fairness, whilst others believed that part-time staff did not work night shifts. When demand is taken into account, however, neither part-time or full-time staff all need to work a full rota of nights. On many divisions, full-time staff on the night shift were regularly 'dropped back' to the late shift because the peak demand on staff tailed off after 2am. Rather than 10pm to 6am, officers were working 7pm to 3am. Demand also varied according to days of the week, with entertainment areas, for example, having peak demand on Friday and Saturday evenings.

Some shift patterns in use in forces meant that officers already worked nights one week in nine, rather one week in four (see also Hicks and Whiddett, 1999; Mason, 2000). Also, it was clear from interviews with staff for this study that, although having to work seven night shifts in a row on a regulation pattern may have

stopped them working full-time, it would not be impossible for most of them to work a small proportion of nights on a different shift system, in accordance with their hours, such as one or two per month.

Some part-time police officers and central force contacts suggested that the fairness of night working could only be addressed if police pay varied according to the shifts worked. Changing this would require fundamental changes to Police Regulations and, as one interviewee put it, would 'open up a real can of worms'. Some managers in the study felt that such an approach would be a major threat to resilience, because too many officers would be unwilling to work nights. The only way to resolve such an issue would be a feasibility study and a pilot scheme at a divisional or BCU level, although the available evidence suggests that officers would have widely different preferences (see West, 1998).

Providing on call cover

On call duty was already identified as a serious burden on managers at inspector and superintendent ranks and there was concern that any member of staff working reduced hours at that level would not be able to contribute to the rota. On call was in fact a key example of a requirement which was seen to rule out the possibility of certain specialised and management roles being worked on a less than full-time basis. However, whilst it was also seen as a clear barrier by numerous staff working reduced hours, there were a number of interviewees working part-time, including a detective inspector, who were able to provide on call cover, either on a pro rata basis, or to cover absences of full-time staff. Again this shows the danger of generalising about staff working reduced hours. Another indication of flexibility was found in a study conducted for the Superintendents' Association (Davies, 1998) which showed that headquarters staff were involved in rotas to provide operational cover.

Balancing all staff's needs

Some personnel professionals and managers were also concerned about where to assign priority if several staff wanted to work a similar pattern and only one could do so. They wondered whether it should be done on a first come, first served basis, and whose needs should be considered first, if all patterns were being renegotiated, and part-time members of staff were respectively studying, doing volunteer work, caring for children, or for an elderly parent. These were usually hypothetical concerns, which had not yet given rise to any real difficulties for managers. The fear of the same patterns being requested is not supported by evidence in previous research on the police and in other organisations, which shows that people vary to a great extent in their preferences for work patterns (see West, 1998).

In one of the annual seminars attended by the research team, the message from human resources was that those with caring responsibilities would get priority consideration. This could be hard to defend legally and could also be difficult for staff to accept. One of the other central contacts in the case study research said that priority would have to be decided on a 'first come, first served' basis, which was seen as unsatisfactory but the only defensible method. This is also the result of the reactive approach to managing part-time work.

Addressing inconsistencies

Many of the concerns of part-time staff and managers about their working patterns were also related to perceived inconsistency in terms of part-time staff's working patterns from one division or department to the next and from one police organisation to another. Examples were found in seminars where part-time staff had been able to work a three x ten-hour shift pattern on one sector whilst others were refused on a sector in the same force. For full-time staff, any agreement to change shifts (to a variable shift arrangement) for a whole division requires local negotiation and agreement from the majority of staff. For part-time staff, the situation is less clear, because of the opportunity they have to individually negotiate their pattern, and we saw earlier that they do sometimes have access to variable shift arrangements, even though this is not provided for in Regulations.

In legal terms, the key consideration is the extent to which the pattern meets the requirements of the business. This might mean that some force areas would have different patterns to others, but the evidence required to prove the need for these is not always available. Managers and part-time staff found it difficult to accept what were perceived to be inconsistencies if there did not appear to be a clear case with supporting evidence for differences in working patterns. As one force central contact noted, common practice to date had been for staff to get their patterns agreed one by one until a critical point was reached when all staff had to renegotiate their hours because a key requirement, such as night cover, could no longer be met without unfair burdens on full-time members of staff.

Managing existing agreements

This was relevant to both part-time and full-time staff, support staff and police officers. When new managers arrived or demand levels changed, working patterns would often be reviewed and a process of negotiation followed in order to balance individual and organisational needs. Managers saw this as hard work, as one put it 'trying to get them to change is a real pain'. The following quote shows that this can even result in a part-time post being changed to full-time and a member of staff being moved as a result:

'It depends on your bosses really, because the person that gave me the job has now left and obviously it was his idea to put me there and somebody else comes along and said oh I come from a different area that was done by a full time role... and we will change it and they are going to give my job to a full time officer now.'

(Part-time white female Detective constable in crime files quality assurance role, about to move to a specialised victims unit)

As a result of reactive approaches to part-time or reduced hours working, there were a number of instances mentioned in case studies and focus groups where managers felt the need to review working patterns. One manager in the focus groups said that virtually every member of his communications team was working a different pattern and that he was about to review all working patterns according to demand profiles which had recently been produced. In another control room environment, a shift supervisor had found at least four part-time staff who worked fixed shifts between 9am and 5pm. He wanted to be able to employ them on a flexible period between 7am and 11pm and move them around according to demand, but thought it would be too difficult to negotiate the change.

Duties, rosters and allocation of work

There was clearly tension between maintaining access to a full range of roles for staff working reduced hours, and for them to carry out a full range of duties within that role. There were differing views on these issues expressed by all staff interviewed during the research. For the most part, managers in the research tended to believe that part-time staff should carry out all the duties associated with the role they carried out, and that they should not be restricted in terms of deployment to different roles, as a DS in child protection stated 'it is unfair on the officer and the service as a whole to say, well no, you're going to do something slightly different to the rest of us because you're part-time'. This may have implications for workload however (see Box 5 below). In general staff working reduced hours said they had access to the full range of duties associated with their role, although there were some concerns from control room staff, which are explored later in this chapter. In one control room, staff were already deployed in limited role posts because they had reduced their hours, and this meant that their access to certain types of work had been restricted.

Box 5: Work allocation and fairness for part-time staff

Systems which have been set up for full-time staff may lead to unfair pressure on part-time members of a team. In one of the case studies, in a specialist area, members of staff would pick up everything which came into the office during a half day session each week, and this would then constitute their workload for the week. There was no redistribution of work according to how many different tasks came in, as there had been in another type of post where the officer concerned had worked when part-time. This meant that the officer could pick up as much work or more than a full-time member of staff, whilst only being present, and paid, for half the time. Although in principle, members of staff could ask for help, the part-time staff member said the 'nature of the beast' for police officers was not to do so and to try and cope. Although the supervisors seemed to be aware that the system was more likely to be unfair for part-time members of staff, they felt that it was an individual rather than a departmental issue. When asked whether another work allocation system could be found the supervisor replied: *'Not actually with the work we do, other than when you start looking at, say, changing the way the office runs and having a referrals officer, who [...] takes the referrals and then they get re-allocated'*.

Duties for uniform patrol officers have been traditionally published a year in advance and the change to a more flexible system did not always seem to be appreciated by officers or managers. However, staff in one of the communication rooms in a case study force worked out their duties monthly and staff and managers were apparently highly satisfied with this arrangement (see Chapter 6). The role of duty sergeant is key in the day-to-day management of rosters, and they varied quite significantly in their attitudes to rostering part-time staff, according to case study interviews. Some seemed to make it extremely difficult for staff to get their agreed patterns implemented whilst others were supportive. This may have been linked to the amount of work involved, for example, if variable shift arrangements were in place. Several personnel managers noted that most of the difficulties arose around working out the duties of part-time staff, a problem noted in previous research (Edwards and Robinson, 1999). The software packages used by duty sergeants did not lend themselves to rostering staff working fewer than full-time hours.

In areas of work other than patrol, with more proactive work, systems had to be in place for work allocation. Innovative working patterns made work allocation difficult according to managers in the focus groups and case study interviews and this seemed to be because there was a lack of clear standards and measurement of how much work should be covered by an individual in a specific time period.

Managers could tell whether full-time staff were performing reasonably or not by comparing them with other full-timers, but this was not possible for staff working reduced hours. Instead, part-time staff did seem, as they argued, to be frequently expected to do a full-time job in part-time hours.

Barriers to maintaining quality of service

Supervision

The need for consistency and basic access to supervision was cited as a barrier by managers in the case study forces and focus groups, particularly if staff worked across the patterns of the shifts or teams with which they were nominally aligned. A few managers in the focus groups felt that limited supervision meant that a team of staff would be less focussed on the task at hand. However, as some interviewees pointed out, full-time staff did not always have supervisors present when they were working their shift. Moreover, certain roles were seen to require much less supervision than others, particularly if officers had a number of years experience and were, for example, working a community beat. One senior investigating officer in the focus groups felt that reduced hours working on a murder investigation would be difficult, but an example was found in one of the case study forces which appeared to be working well (see Box 1, Chapter 3).

Staff interviewed who worked across teams said they had few difficulties in asking any available supervisor for answers to immediate queries, although they had to be proactive to find out about changes in procedure. A few staff interviewed did not have an allocated supervisor, which also meant they were often missed out when information on new procedures or policies was passed to shift teams. Two examples were given in interviews and focus groups of dedicated supervisors being assigned to part-time staff in order to prevent these difficulties arising. This role, however, was described as being unattractive to full-time supervisors. There might be potential for relief Sergeants, who do not supervise staff and are therefore disadvantaged in career development terms (Hicks and Whiddett, 1999) to take on responsibilities in this area. A manager in one focus group said weekend only working caused difficulties for supervision, although a manager in the case studies had part-time staff working in this way and did not highlight difficulties in this area. In another focus group, 'floating' Saturday night shifts were seen as difficult to supervise but necessary operationally.

A further cause for concern highlighted by managers was that staff could 'play supervisors off against each other' and manage to get a manager to agree to something their colleague had refused. A few part-time workers in seminars said

they ‘played the system’ in this way, in order to try to get their needs addressed. However, it would appear that this would not only be an issue regarding part-time staff’s working practices, but rather emphasised the need for consistency of approach amongst managers.

Parade or team briefing

Managers in one focus group noted a conflict between using staff at peak times, often across shifts, and ensuring that they could be included as part of a shift team. This issue was highlighted in the previous report on part-time working (Stone et al., 1994). When police officers worked across teams (these were mainly part-time staff according to respondents) they would, for example, usually miss ‘parade’ when officers were given information they might need for their shift, for example, the likelihood of a continuing spate of burglaries on their ‘patch’. The idea of a focussed briefing was described as particularly important to encourage staff to use any ‘downtime’ proactively, for problem solving approaches to policing in their area. In focus group discussion, some managers felt this could be covered by e-mail or intranet access for staff arriving at different times but others did not feel that this would have the same impact as face-to-face delivery with the opportunity for questions and feedback.

Ensuring continuity and handover in different roles

According to managers, the easiest way to ensure that continuity was maintained and handover carried out was for all staff to be working a fixed standard pattern. There did not seem to be formal systems in place which allowed for staff working varied patterns and although full-time staff, if abstracted, caused similar problems, their abstraction was more likely to be considered a one-off issue, not requiring any special solution. Staff working reduced hours found it hard to hand work over to full-time staff. Although both full- and part-time staff might have childcare commitments and need to leave promptly at the end of a shift, part-time staff felt they were seen as trying to ‘skive’ whilst other members of the team would be happier to accept work being handed over from another full-time member of staff:

[Y]ou had your own workload and so no matter how you approached things with the best will in the world, you are never going to treat someone else’s work with the same conscientiousness as you do your own, you know. I used to get as wound up as everybody else, you know, then I can see now why it happened.

Part-time white female constable; working weekend late shifts in a city centre unit. Case study interview.

For most roles, this highlighted a need for better management of continuity and handover rather than a clear failure by members of staff to meet an organisational requirement, although there were exceptions with regard to specific agreed service standards, such as trying to keep to a minimum the number of staff working with young children who have been victims of abuse. Of similar concern was arrests, and the need to deal with the process after arrest. Although an officer in one of the case study interviews had been able to leave the situation to a colleague but there could be no guarantees as the following quote shows:

[I]f you end up arresting somebody you go into custody you are expected to deal with that job from beginning to end and sometimes you're on overtime and at one point I had to stay on until midnight. I was supposed to finish at six and my little boy had to stay at the childminder's all night.

Part-time white female constable working on the crime desk as a call handler, previously worked part-time on a shift. Case study interview.

Proactive squads, such as surveillance or burglary, were identified by both managers and part-time staff as being difficult for those who needed to know at what time they would finish work. The general impression was that there would be many occasions when staff would need to continue working beyond the end of their shift, particularly in small burglary squads of only two or three people. Staff unable to continue working at short notice would, according to managers, create additional and unfair burdens on other members of the team.

CID staff did not expect to hand over any work to other staff but to have their own caseload. This meant that part-time staff's work, if they were in the office for two days per week, would be left until they returned the following week. Continuity has also been given as the reason for forces ending use of the Ottawa compressed shift system, a change which in most cases is said to be unpopular with staff. The need for continuity might lead to longer or shorter periods of handover in certain roles according to the workload. For sergeants in custody suites, the need for handover would depend on the number of people in the cells. This number would vary according to the day of the week and the time at which they finished their shift.

Continuity, although obviously important, is not always clearly defined by those who cite it as a reason for difficulties with staff working reduced hours. It was given as a reason for not assigning part-time communications staff to the radio by one shift supervisor, who explained that there was a strong preference for one member of staff to cover an eight-hour period and fully brief the member of staff following them. After follow up questions, however, it became clear that continuity was broken on a

regular basis. Full-time radio operators had to be covered during meal breaks and were sometimes replaced for one or two hours if they needed to leave early.

Minimum effective training levels

Maintaining minimum effective training levels for staff working flexible patterns was perceived to be difficult by managers, particularly where they might be working permanent part years or term-time only. However, these issues were not highlighted by staff working these patterns. Force contacts raised some practical problems with regard to training for staff working across shifts, although for the most part, provided they were given enough notice, staff were able to attend training outside their negotiated pattern. One related problem was whether staff took time in lieu if they increased their hours for a training course, or whether they were paid for the hours. There was a strong preference for them to be paid, in order to limit their abstraction from duty, but in one of the case study areas, the overtime budget had been spent in this way, and other full-time staff were annoyed that it impacted on the potential they had to earn overtime.

There were also difficulties with getting flexible training for all staff, including those working full-time on shifts. One respondent had suggested changes but found that there was some resistance from the training department:

I mean my personal view is that training centres should be on 24 hours a day, and save shift officers having to suffer the drop backs and then drop forwards again to get back in line because they came on a one-day training course in the middle of their night duty, but the culture within my training department is that it can't be done.

White male full-time superintendent, Head of Training and Development.
Focus group discussion.

Other aspects of roles and responsibilities

Supervisory roles were seen as difficult, as were certain specialist roles, for reasons mentioned earlier. However, increasingly, examples were appearing of ways in which forces had managed to accommodate staff in these roles. Part-time staff were found in the murder squad and in mounted branch, for example. Supervisory staff had been able to work part-time by sharing their role with full-time staff. There was a strong sense arising from all the evidence in case studies and focus groups that as roles were tried, they were found to be adaptable to reduced hours working.

There appeared to be a great deal of resistance remaining with regard to small squads, where long hours, the team ethos and the need for short notice cover, were

all seen to mean that part-time staff would not be suitable. However, as seen earlier in this section, many of the stated barriers to part-time working arise from generalising about what reduced hours staff are able to do, or from poor negotiation, rather than from experience.

Central management procedures

Many internal force systems and procedures were created with full-time staff in mind, and do not facilitate the development of rosters, or any other administrative task for part-time or reduced hours. Part-time staff and those who manage them or deal with their paperwork, frequently have the impression that extra work is involved, which has a negative impact on part-time workers' access to opportunities, and on their morale:

I do the statistics for the office, I am trying to adapt the system the best I can but it would be a nightmare. [The] system which is now what has been developed which sort of runs the whole sort of [...] budgets and everything, where people are on certain days and all this, that doesn't lend itself at all to part-time working.

Full-time white male detective sergeant; child protection team.

Case study interview.

The balance between devolved control and central management

Some managers were extremely reluctant to take on part-time staff unless they were 'overhold'; also described as supernumerary or surplus to the establishment numbers. The way in which the establishment was managed was perceived to be fairly rigid and managers felt they would be poorly viewed if they went over budget on staff even for a short period. Indeed supernumerary staff or overspend usually required central agreement. If a member of staff asked to reduce their hours to 0.6 of a post and the management team could not easily recruit for the exact proportion left over, this amount of hours in staff time was lost. At shift management level, it would be understandable for the shift supervisor to see part-time working, rather than force establishment policy, as the reason for the loss of time to the team, with subsequent negative impact on perceptions.

In one of the focus groups, on the other hand, managers referred to having a proportion of a post 'in their back pocket' and felt they could use it in flexible ways as seen in the previous chapter. There was some discussion in the focus groups as to how this could best be managed. One or two managers mentioned that the force should be better able to oversee the allocation of odd proportions of posts centrally and through co-ordination, make it easier for staff to be used more flexibly across divisions or sectors and departments. Some managers were fearful:

Interesting to hear you say that you have a part-time sergeant because, it hasn't happened but I've been warned that it's going to happen next month. There's one of my sergeants is going to be making an approach to go down to 50 per cent of the hours. Now because we've had to cut back, cut back and cut back so many times in the last four years for financial reasons, I've got 28 sergeants, I have jobs for 28 sergeants, so my fear is, that come this report in February, how do I then cope with 28.5 sergeants because I can't go out and recruit, I can't go out and promote point 5 of a sergeant.

White Male full-time superintendent operations. Focus group discussion.

Contacts in forces with substantial rural areas also said that staff reducing hours in core shift roles would lead to a loss of hours and make it difficult to maintain 24-hour cover, however one force had found a way round this by assigning the remaining proportion of the post to a full-time member of staff.

Finance departments in some forces would, according to central contacts, refuse to authorise payments not explicitly allowed for in Police Regulations, saying that equal opportunities staff, for example, did not have the authority to change the way the system worked. Force central contacts were then apparently unable to address issues which might make them liable under part-time working or sex discrimination legislation. This would need to be addressed at the highest level of management in these forces. Changes to address all of the points above were recommended in the pilot report on part-time working in 1994.

A number of managers in the case study interviews and focus groups felt that they had more than their 'fair share' of part-time police officers. Previous research on the Metropolitan Police Service (Edwards and Robinson, 1999) showed that part-time officers were not equally distributed across divisions but rather that they tended to be concentrated in specific parts of the force. They suggested that this was a product of the desire of officers considering starting families wishing to work outside inner city areas. However, it may also be a product of specific divisions being perceived to have a more positive attitude to part-time staff, and because of the lack of advertising, officers choosing to apply to divisions where they know of other officers working part-time.

Barriers to maintaining a successful work-life balance

During the focus groups, the long hours culture was seen as an important barrier to maintaining a work-life balance. Many full-time managers, who were not working shifts, felt that if they went home before half past eight in the evening, it was viewed negatively, and they were seen as 'wimpy'. Some of the barriers identified in this section were also likely to be similar for full-time staff.

The staff working reduced hours in the study were rarely entirely satisfied with their position, for a variety of different reasons. Many of these related to difficulties with maintaining a rewarding career and allowing time for their other responsibilities. For the majority, 'part-time' work was seen to restrict progression and led to decreased motivation and postings to roles where they felt they were marking time rather than developing. 'Part-time' work was not really the preferred option for many in the study; both police officers and support staff noted that it was less a need to work fewer hours which motivated a change to part-time work and more a need to avoid difficulties with shift patterns as the following quote indicates:

I mean you were talking seven nights in a row that was the biggest hurdle. The odd night here and there I can manage a babysitter for, but to get a babysitter to commit to seven nights in a row (...) every month, firstly is just too costly and secondly, you know, it's almost impossible to find somebody to do that.

Female communications room operative, working five-hour day shifts, Monday to Friday, in central force control room. Case study interview.

Deployment and lateral development

Most officers and support staff interviewed did not envisage moving posts whilst they were working reduced hours. In many cases, they did not believe they were eligible if vacancy advertisements did not explicitly state that part-time workers were welcome to apply. There was no proactive advertising mentioned in the research, one seminar participant said that part-time staff were only asked if there was no-one else to fill a vacancy. The policy common to most forces – that all jobs are open to part-time work – is not set out when jobs are advertised and this puts the onus on individual members of staff to put themselves forward, and challenge the system if they feel they have not been fairly considered.

Part-time staff in the study tended to want to stay in areas where they had previously worked full-time because they felt it was easier to be accepted and remain part of the team. The need to prove themselves was therefore another discouraging factor in taking up a new part-time post because officers felt it would be difficult. A member of staff at one of the annual seminars said they returned to working full-time on shift when they changed teams in order to prove themselves before returning to part-time work.

Some police officers had taken a decision to move from a uniform shift role to positions such as 'crime desk call handling' or 'enquiries officer' because of difficulties with work which overran and created a need for emergency childcare provision (see below). There were numerous examples of staff being posted to

'created' roles when they reduced their hours. A detective sergeant had been posted to the crime desk because she was working part-time, although she needed operational experience at that rank. One officer had been refused a request to try a job-share role in the training department on reducing her hours from 30 to 20 and had been found another post in the communications room.

Maintaining an agreed working pattern

Part-time staff who had negotiated hours and a pattern which they could balance with their other activities and responsibilities were very pessimistic about being able to negotiate the same pattern in any other role or posting. They preferred to remain where they felt sure they could keep to the same pattern until they sought to renegotiate. However, given that most force policies allowed for agreements to be reviewed according to organisational requirements at least every year, they had no real guarantee of continuing with the same pattern. As mentioned earlier, new managers joining departments or sectors often felt the need to change the existing agreements according to levels of demand or because of perceived or potential unfairness to full-time staff. When part-time police officers realised the likelihood of changes, they became worried, particularly if they were in a relationship where two shift patterns were being balanced with childcare. Managers did not seem to realise that staff required some reassurance when working patterns were renegotiated if they were to react well to the changes.

Gaining promotion

Force systems cannot show what proportion of staff have previously worked part-time and what impact there has been on these officers' career progression. At the time of writing, police officers can have worked part-time for a maximum of six years, counting from the beginning of the pilot schemes. This might seem a short period of time, but evidence from interviews suggests that part-time police officers and support staff systematically deselect themselves from a whole range of posts and possibilities, including promotion. Some emphasised that it had been their own choice but then added that it was their inability to work full shifts which informed the 'choice'. Returning to shifts was said to be obligatory on promotion from constable to sergeant or from sergeant to inspector.

Support staff in one of the case study control rooms did not believe they could apply for a supervisory role whilst working part-time, because it had never happened before; perceptions were the key barrier. However, whilst the personnel manager of the control room was keen for the lack of part-time supervisors to be challenged, they did not want to encourage part-time staff explicitly because of the negative attitude of police officer control room managers and the impact this might have on their working relationship.

Training and development for progression and promotion

Some of the interviewees emphasised the need for reduced hours staff to be proactive if they wanted to access training. There were examples of staff who had experienced no difficulties in accessing specialised training for lateral progression, but there were also examples of staff being turned down informally by their supervisors, and being told they were not considered to be a good investment as a part-time officer. Access to developmental opportunities such as a tutor role were perceived by many interviewees to be closed to staff working less than full-time hours.

Force central contacts also identified the six-month block requirement on the Senior Command Course at the Police Staff College Bramshill as a barrier to senior ranks for officers with main caring responsibilities. This course provides the only route to chief officer ranks. The format of the course is currently under review and more flexibility may be under consideration. Informal reports from attendees suggested that it was possible for attendance to be relatively flexible, but unless this is formally made clear to potential applicants, the perceived requirement for a period of six months away from home will remain a barrier.

Restricted roles

Consideration of duties and rosters in a previous section showed that most staff felt that they were able to perform all the duties associated with their role. However, in one of the annual seminars, part-time communications staff raised concerns that they were only trained for call taking and not radio work. They felt de-skilled, and also could not cover for full-time colleagues on the radio. Radio work was perceived to require a higher level of skill than call-taking, and personnel managers in one of the case study forces were considering creating a restricted role in the same way, because staff who were part-time on joining were thought to be slower at picking it up. However, in this force, they offered occupational diplomas, which allowed staff to gain competencies in stages, and this was seen to offer the potential for staff to choose at a later stage to gain skills in radio work.

Being part of the team and avoiding isolation

One or two of the police officers interviewed felt completely isolated in their work. They had very little contact with any other staff and felt they were ignored by their managers. Staff who were working at the same time as other part-time staff found they were able to avoid isolation and share information. Part of the reason for this could have been that they had moved into the roles they were in as part-time staff and had not been 'part of the team' as a full-time officer previously. The following quote is typical of the most negative experiences from the interviews:

'it's the way the part-timers are treated on our shift [...] we just come in and do our bit and nobody seems to take any notice [...] I could sit at home for eight hours and nobody would be any the wiser because nobody has any interest in what I am doing from one day to the next'.

Part-time black female constable; moved from Child Protection to uniform patrol, working three fixed eight-hour shifts, with occasional lates to follow shift. Case study interview.

Meeting caring and other responsibilities

The majority of staff interviewed for the study cited childcare as their reason for working part-time (18/21) with one interviewee each mentioning ill health, voluntary work and studying as their main reason. These reasons lead to different working pattern preferences and differing capacity to be flexible. For the most part, it was not a need to work fewer hours that motivated them, but more because they were having difficulties with a rigid shift system.⁵ It would be helpful for managers and staff if supervisors were aware of the reasons for staff members seeking to work reduced or non-standard hours.

⁵ Officers with religious commitments might also have difficulties with rigid shift patterns.

If staff have reduced their hours because of childcare, they may well find it difficult to work on a rotating shift pattern if they may have to employ someone or use a nursery or other option on a regular basis. Staff interviewed for this study were often unable to draw on support from family or from a partner, and were therefore bound to use formal childcare. Childcare provision at different hours every week is extremely difficult to come by, as is emergency cover. The Regulation pattern, along with possible short notice cover, make both flexible and emergency childcare necessary for officers without family or friends to fall back on. There is a national shortage of shift friendly childcare provision, according to the Daycare Trust, and there is very little emergency childcare available.

Staff may often prefer to avoid using formal provision if at all possible, particularly when their children are below school age. National research has shown that women have a preference, where possible, for a member of the family to take responsibility (Bryson et al., 1999). If the member of staff and their partner are both working shifts in the police service, it can become extremely difficult to arrange rotas, in different sectors or departments, which allow them the possibility of caring for the child between them. Sometimes formal and informal childcare are required and the logistics can become extremely difficult as the following quote illustrates:

I had to find something that would work round what my husband did, what a childminder could do and I couldn't tell the childminder what I wanted until I had the job and I couldn't tell the job what I wanted until I had a childminder so I was in a bit of mess really.

Part-time female constable; working fixed day shifts on the crime desk.

Case study interview.

Comments in the focus groups suggested that managers perceived women to change their priorities once their children were born and to no longer be as dedicated to their career. This was the case for some women interviewed for this study, but others said they remained as ambitious as before, and would have continued to work full-time if they had been able to find affordable, suitable childcare. The perception that all women want to stay at home with their children when they are young should be challenged, given that it may lead to assumptions which engender unwitting discrimination.

Dealing with guilt

Many of the officers in the study who had reduced their hours felt guilty for two reasons. On the one hand, they felt they were not able to give as much as they had done to the police service, yet on the other hand they were not devoting all their attention to their children in their formative years. A few officers explained that they had to make difficult compromises on both sides, which they found hard to tolerate. The guilt about their work for the police was exacerbated by the feeling that other officers did not respect or understand their difficulties and would be likely to perceive them as not committed.

Points for action

- The need for evidence to back up different working patterns was cited by many managers in the study. There are systems and packages now available which make it easier for this information to be collected and analysed. However, much of the shift planning software used does not allow for reduced hour patterns and forces should check before they buy. Likewise the Police Information Technology Organisation (PITO) should take this into consideration, where possible, within the National Strategy for Police Information Systems (NSPIS).
- The requirement for best value reviews would provide an ideal opportunity for working patterns to be a standard consideration when the work of any department or sector is under review. A full range of flexible options should be an automatic part of a best value review, given the potential to challenge existing working practices. Under best value, there is impetus for reviews of all force

systems and procedures. These reviews could take into account the potential for increased flexibility, and the need to ensure efficient treatment for existing part-time staff.

- One way to address concerns about consistency could be to ensure that information on posts, hours and patterns worked across the force was readily available, using force intranet facilities or highlighting case studies in internal newsletters or magazines. Successful ways of working may be shared in this way. Human resources staff could also consider a central co-ordinating role to provide information on flexible working, which could link to a proactive approach, where managers set out the flexible options and staff are recruited into the roles accordingly. Handover and continuity procedures should be clearly set out for all staff and considered alongside work allocation systems.
- Chief Officers, Heads of central force departments, police authorities and BCU commanders need to agree to support the introduction of flexible working practices. They need, for example, to set out clear guidance on how budgets can be managed flexibly when staffing levels are reduced as a result of staff working fewer hours. Finance and payroll department should be instructed, for example, whether to make payments relating to flexible working which do not reflect Police Regulations, but have been locally agreed to be fair and appropriate by the Federation, line managers and individual officers.
- Career development, personnel staff and line managers need to provide proactive encouragement for staff in part-time roles to move post and access specialisms and promotion. Their career progression is otherwise likely to suffer in the long-term. One way of promoting movement would be for forces to advertise all posts as open to part-time working.

6. Improving the management of flexible working practices

Whilst the approach to flexible working practices remains principally reactive, the situation for managers and individual members of staff will continue to be problematic. These working practices require a flexible culture in which to operate and in the long-term there are two difficult issues which have to be addressed. Firstly the service needs to find ways to allow management by negotiation and consensus to thrive in a culture with a tendency to focus on planning for the 'bottom line'. Secondly, the service needs to explore how legislation which exists to protect individuals at national level can be reconciled with a management system which seeks local adaptation and local conditions.

Such developments will require a great deal of thought, negotiation and time to filter through the organisation, and ways in which they could be incorporated into the current management framework are set out in the concluding chapter. The following sections set out some of the principal ways in which management of flexible working could be improved and developed in the short-term, drawing on examples provided in the case studies and focus groups.

Negotiation: the 'give and take' balance

Many of the staff working reduced hours in this study were able to negotiate a balance between their needs and the busy periods for the team. Most of the officers and support staff interviewed tried to ensure that they worked as often as possible with their team so they were not 'left short'. They were keen to emphasise that they understood the need for flexibility on both sides and most managers acknowledged that at least some part-time staff were very flexible:

'They've been pretty good here to allow me to have that flexibility and allow me to choose my own hours... but it helps them when they are short.'

Part-time white female beat patrol officer, working three eight-hour and one six-hour shift; 'earlies' and 'lates'. Case study interview

Managers were also increasingly proactive in trying to work out a balance with staff, and were tackling difficult issues such as negotiating changes to patterns involving no night work. A very fine balance was required here between fairness to all members of the team and accommodating individuals' situations. Such negotiation requires good communication between line managers and staff, but there are also other areas where improved communication could make a difference to the current situation.

Communication

Many of the negative attitudes towards part-time and other flexible options seem to arise from generalisations as to what these options mean in practice. The service needs to ensure that all staff are clear about the variations in pattern and how these can be distinguished from one another. Provision of information to all staff about how to improve flexibility for all members of the organisation could help to address some of the attitudinal and cultural barriers towards flexible working options. Forces need to take central responsibility for advertising case studies of part-time and flexible workers who do not fit outdated stereotypes and advertise any good practice which develops on divisions and departments. This should also help to address the low levels of awareness of most flexible practices, which must impact on availability and take up at divisional level:

I think they should also explain that it is possible and I think the thing that isn't explained, that it is possible to do shift work and to do part-time. It seemed very much between those two don't mix and I personally find that they do very much, I think shift work and part-time is a very good combination. And promote it positively, that is probably what they have never done, they have nipped it in the bud as a bit of a girlie thing, you know, and they should positively promote it within the service, the benefits. This day and age the crisis in manpower, they should promote it.

White female constable, term-time worker. Case study interview.

Suggested ways of improving communication about flexible options included the following:

- notice boards;
- in-house newspapers and magazines;
- intranet and internal e-mail where available ;
- a networked database; and
- seminars involving groups of full-time and part-time staff, and line supervisors.

Forces might also consider suggestions made during the research for a standard policy to advertise all posts in-force as open to part-time working.

Training

There were some examples given during case study interviews where fairly simple changes to training programme timetables had led to staff working reduced hours

finding them much easier to attend. For example, a training course for administrative staff had been started slightly later, and the lunch break shortened, to allow for staff to take children to school or childcare before attending the course. The course was also held at staff's place of work, rather than at the force training centre which was a considerable distance away and would have created travelling difficulties. Another recent example of tailored training was a course in leadership for senior policewomen. This was modular, and held at two sites, in the south and north of England to improve access.

Guidance and support for staff

A central co-ordinating point was frequently suggested, in order to disseminate good practice and to provide supervisors and staff with advice and information. One force already had such a contact and staff found it useful to be able to have queries and suggested patterns reviewed by the same person. If forces wish to have a consistent approach, guidance should come from one point in the service. Central co-ordination and advertising might also allow for more job-sharing to take place.

A clear message from central senior management was also required as to the value placed on good resource and people management skills. Managers did not receive, nor apparently want, training on how to manage flexible working or in resource management, but many were keen to have more detailed guidance on how to negotiate with part-time staff and how to assess suitability of posts for part-time working. Recommendations made with regard to better management of shift patterns (Mason, 2000) are also relevant here, in that resource management requires some central co-ordination and support, but in addition, flexible working should be considered as a fundamental part of any resource management activity.

Personnel managers need to be proactive if they are to find out about difficult issues from staff before they become more problematic. In one of the case studies, officers who were having difficulties with their supervisors took the opportunity to speak to personnel staff when they came to their office for an interview with the researcher. The personnel staff expressed surprise that problems were occurring. In another case study, the personnel manager only found out that none of the part-time staff had line managers when she went to the department and asked them face-to-face.

Instances were also described in focus groups and interviews where staff had been advised not to apply for part-time work or had been refused without the knowledge of personnel departments. In one case, the personnel manager only found out at the exit interview stage that the member of staff leaving had wanted to work part-time and been refused by their line manager. One of the personnel staff believed (rightly

as subsequent interviews showed) that part-time officers did not perceive personnel to do anything in their interests; she argued that personnel did play a regular preventive role in advising managers not to attempt fairly heavy-handed management of part-time staff.

Introducing less common working patterns

Personnel managers also had an important role to play in terms of encouraging flexibility and challenging existing practices. However, there were difficulties highlighted in the case studies due to conflicting views and confrontation with local departmental or divisional management. Personnel staff were often reluctant to challenge accepted practices if it meant they would damage the day-to-day working relationship. Furthermore, they often lacked the ‘insider’ knowledge which would allow them to judge whether what they were told by managers was an organisational or legal requirement, or simply standard practice. A personnel manager at one of the national seminars described being told by police supervisors and the management team that police officers had to work with their own shift, and asked those present whether this was true. Although this was clearly not a direct job requirement, other personnel managers had also been told this by operational staff.

Local personnel managers can also be used to consult with staff on proposed new working practices and to assist in overcoming managers’ concerns prior to implementation. One of the managers in the focus groups expressed concern that new flexible policies, such as homeworking were imposed from the centre with no consultation. Homeworking, like many of the flexible options discussed earlier, was perceived to be more difficult to manage than standard working practices. Managers are fearful that they will not be able to judge staff productivity, nor be sure they are working when they should. They are likely to require support in developing different means of measuring staff output.

Long-term projects intended to develop flexibility were also cited as a way forward. In one of the case study control rooms, there was an awareness that the department needed to come away from fixed, structured shifts because they had staff working at times when they did not need them. The main idea was to have a limited core staff to cover the 24-hour period, and then all other staff working flexible hours. This provided an advantage in reducing the number of staff having to work full shifts, with the potential for subsequent impact on their health and in recruiting staff where full-time shifts, particularly regular nights, were seen to discourage potential applicants.

One of the managers in the focus groups felt that seasonal working could work well in the parts of the force where additional staff were required for summer seasons in holiday areas. Annual hours were also considered to be a viable option for seasonal peaks and troughs by another manager with, for example, staff working ten-hour shifts during peak seasonal demand, and reducing six-hour shifts or less outside these times. Term-time working is another option which has been worked out as a variant of part-time working under Police Regulations by one officer in a case study force (see Box 6). There were also a number of examples, mentioned in Chapter 3, where part-time staff shared their responsibilities with a full-time member of staff who was able to spend the rest of their hours in another role, and in so doing improve their breadth of experience.

Box 6: Term-time working for a uniform patrol officer

The member of staff was originally prompted to find out about term-time working from an article in a police magazine. At the time she and her husband would take annual leave in order to cover the school holidays and were unable to take holidays together. The pattern set out in the article contracted the officer to work a 35-hour week on average over a 12-month period, which entitled them to 32.5 free days. During term-time, the officer would work a normal 40-hour week and the free days would be slotted in with annual leave to cover school holidays. The officer in the case study took 14 days annual leave at Easter and Christmas and used the 32.5 days in the summer holidays giving six weeks. She described sitting down for two hours with the part-time working regulations for police officers and a wall planner and working out when the holidays would fall, and how her pattern might work. Understanding regulations, and having the holidays recorded in her diary and in the duties office was seen as essential.

The only difficulty still arising was with half term but the officer said they were able to 'muddle through'. The system was described as 'perfect' in that the officer did not want to work three days a week and wanted to continue with her career as a response officer, despite not having achieved promotion. She felt it was the ideal way to avoid the 'stigma' attached to part-time workers in the service. She also identified advantages in having a break from shift work. Having worked shifts for 20 years, she felt that having a longer break stopped her from burning out. 'I am a much nicer mother, not a screaming lunatic, because I am far more rested, you know as a family it is a far better system, conversely as a police officer I must be better because I am a happier person.'

Box 6: Term-time working for a uniform patrol officer (continued)

However, she still felt very concerned each year when submitting her contract that it might be refused, until a central contact underlined that it was a positive step and a piece of good practice. During interviews with other staff in this case study, it became clear that questions were in fact frequently raised by duty sergeants and middle managers as to whether the pattern was fair to others and within regulations.

Self rostering for some staff members was another example of a more innovative way of working, which had been introduced in one of the case study forces by a superintendent on a command unit, rather than centrally. Rather than setting a regular duty pattern, supervisors showed the roster to their part-time staff at the beginning of each month, explained where cover was short and asked them to decide when they could work. Explaining the reasons for extra cover led staff to be willing to negotiate rather than managers having to impose duties. The scheme was working well for part-time staff and managers. Overtime costs had been reduced and one police officer had returned from long-term sick leave as a result. The initiative had been partly driven by a shortage of staff and difficulties in recruiting which meant managers were keen to retain trained and experienced staff who wanted to work part-time. One of the personnel managers was particularly pleased that they could then pass on information about the benefits to other police managers rather than putting forward theoretical good practice and having to 'ram it down people's throats'.

Childcare support

Managers' views varied as to whether or not childcare should be in any sense the responsibility of the organisation but some agreed with part-time staff in the study, who felt that the police service should provide some assistance with childcare. Recent reports in the press show that there can be some resentment from non-parents if they perceive staff with children to receive 'special' treatment. However, childcare support could be considered as part of a 'menu' of flexible options. Staffordshire Police has introduced a childcare voucher scheme for staff, whilst other forces are following the approach of West Yorkshire police in appointing a childcare co-ordinator.

A national shortage of shift friendly childcare has been identified by the Daycare Trust, who are carrying out a study to determine how this could be addressed. They provided contact details for the scheme described in Box 7 which provided a more flexible service than childminding.

Box 7: Innovative childcare – the Dundee Sitter Service

This scheme was set up by One Parent Families Scotland to address the need for more flexible childcare experienced by many parents in work, education or training. It is staffed by a co-ordinator, an administrator and a register of flexible sitters. The key innovation in the scheme is that rather than a childminder's home address being assessed, the Sitter Scheme assesses and approves the parents' residence as suitable, to the satisfaction of the local Social Services department. Sitters are recruited, vetted and police checked, receive training from the sitter service and qualify as registered childminders. Sitters may be other working parents or students, for example, and their hours of work can be very varied to fit in with their own commitments. Parents then enrol with the sitter service, and book sessions as far in advance as possible. The service is available from 7am to 10.30pm, 7 days per week. A member of the sitter service staff is on call throughout the hours when the service is available. The net cost of the service for one year, after allowing for fee income, was projected to be £70,518 for 2000/01. The sitter service was successful in obtaining grants from European and local fund-giving bodies to cover over half of this amount. Such a scheme might be possible in partnership with other local employers, either public or private sector.

Suggestions made by staff interviewed for this study included direct crèche provision and the development of emergency childcare locally, in partnership with other relevant organisations, such as other emergency and 24-hour service providers including NHS trusts, fire and ambulance services. Direct provision has been considered by a number of forces in the past, but has been found not to be viable because of the huge variety in preference and demand from staff. A partnership project could provide the necessary flexibility for staff who are blocked from certain areas of work because of infrequent but key requirements for them to be available at short notice on call. Partnership projects also fit with the increased focus on sharing resources in innovative ways arising from the Crime and Disorder Act and the best value legislation.

Points for action

- A practical guide for supervisors and staff, developed by the ACPO Equality working group on flexible working practices has been circulated to all forces to provide some guidance on negotiating working patterns (electronic copies are available from the author).

- Personnel managers could be more proactive in exploring issues for part-time staff and managers before they become problematic.
- Forces could put in place communications policies regarding working patterns and flexible working; consider a central co-ordinating role for flexible working; pilot less common working patterns; and form partnerships to provide childcare support.

7. Conclusions

The police service is, in many ways, already a flexible organisation, although it is often not perceived in this way. However, the use of flexible working practices in the police service does not form part of a coherent strategy. Specific schemes such as part-time working have been introduced or revised in an ad hoc way in response to specific pieces of legislation or short-term organisational needs. This study has found that this type of approach can be linked to difficulties with:

- recruitment, retention and development of skilled staff;
- day-to-day management for individual members of staff and their line managers;
- management of divisions, command units, sectors and departments for command teams; and
- central management functions such as pay and pensions.

The police service needs to take a proactive approach to flexibility if they are to retain staff and meet organisational requirements. One of the force central contacts in this study described managers as overwhelmed by the number of requests for non-standard shift patterns and this demand is likely to increase rather than decrease.

It was somewhat discouraging to find that none of the recommendations from a previous report on part-time working in the service (Stone et al., 1994) had been consistently addressed six years later. The resolution of problematic issues with flexible working practices throughout the service is unlikely to be achieved through tackling them piecemeal, as and when they arise. Rather, flexible working, in all the different forms identified in this report, needs to be viewed as a fundamental aspect of the work of the service. Such an approach need not be introduced as a separate initiative but could be incorporated into forces' reviews under the best value legislation which came into force in April 2000.

These reviews, in a rolling five-year programme, must cover every aspect of the police organisation and provide the ideal opportunity to challenge existing practices and consider other possibilities. The feasibility of flexible working and scope to improve staff's work-life balance could be seen as an ideal means of challenging existing working practices, if considered alongside operational requirements. Process mapping, an essential part of many forces' approach to best value (see Leigh et al., 1999) could also be used to assess the potential for flexibility and in order to highlight any issues to be addressed regarding continuity or handover, which were of concern to managers in the study.

Points for action

Points for action relevant to specific sections of the report are summarised at the end of each chapter. The following points attempt to address the need for a more embedded approach to flexible working practices.

- All best value reviews should challenge existing working patterns and practices and consider the potential for a variety of new practices, which meet organisational needs whilst allowing staff the possibility to improve their work-life balance (see appendix 4). Management systems and procedures should be checked to ensure that they are suited to the needs of a flexible workforce. HMIC could check whether best value reviews were covering the issue of flexible working practices.
- To facilitate this approach in best value reviews, a practical guide to the introduction and management of flexible working practices should be produced, along similar lines to that produced for the NHS with the Cabinet Office 'Working lives: programmes for change'. It should include examples of demand profiles, risk assessments and fully worked out flexible patterns. This could be co-ordinated by the Home Office and developed in consultation with interested representatives from, for example, the Police Advisory Board, the ACPO Equality sub-committee, the ACPO working group on Organisation Health and Welfare, and the Home Office working group on Police Performance and Best Value.
- Previous research recommendations on shift patterns (Mason, 2000), if taken forward, must include considerations of flexibility as a fundamental aspect of resource management. The recommendations, which were based on research focussed on healthy patterns of work included: a national working party on resource management; a work scheduling unit in each force; training in resource management for managers from the rank of sergeant; a resource manager on each command unit; and a national network of these managers.
- The potential for flexible working practices must be included in any review of Police Regulations which pertain to shift patterns and pay. The most controversial would be to allow for different rates to be paid to police officers according to the unsociable hours they work. This is entirely contrary to the existing approach, but was suggested by part-time staff and equal opportunities contacts during this study.

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Key websites

<http://www.dti.gov.uk/work-lifebalance>

<http://www.dti.gov.uk/er/regs.htm>

<http://www.dti.gov.uk/er/publications>

<http://www.employersforwork-lifebalance.org.uk>

Appendix 1

Research design issues

Telephone survey: monitoring data availability

Nearly all forces (33/34) had databases for their personnel information, but ten found it difficult to manipulate the available data and would have had to carry out time-consuming manual analysis to answer specific queries. For these latter forces, the analysis of management information was focused only on key force priorities, such as the position of staff from minority ethnic backgrounds or data required for best value reviews.

The only data which all forces collated on a regular basis was that required for the annual statistical return to HMIC. Twenty-two forces planned to change their systems in the near future, to give them more detailed management information which could be used to inform decision-making. Most forces could not supply historical information concerning the numbers of staff working different options over time, nor could they determine how many of their full-time staff had ever worked part-time.

Those who had more powerful and easily manipulated databases said they were able to give information, for example on part-time staff's rank or gender but did not usually have access to information on part-time working patterns, for example whether or not they worked shifts. Automatic monitoring of the position of police officers was more wide-ranging than for support staff, for whom monitoring often relied on manual records.

Case study

The extent of devolved management in the service meant that force personnel policies were often implemented and monitored differently at divisional level. Force central contacts in the case studies could not usually provide information regarding hours and patterns worked or deployment within sectors and departments. Most could not point to specific benefits or barriers which had emerged at these levels. To overcome this issue, a small number of example divisions in four forces were chosen and relevant data were collected from them. The selection of divisions attempted to ensure that a variety of policing contexts were present in the sample; urban and rural mix, for example, might be particularly important in terms of transport issues and policing activities. The presence of male officers in part-time strength was also checked, given their very small numbers nationally, and the need to include them in the interviews. Basic information about the forces chosen for the case study stage is shown in Table 9:

Table 9: Basic details of case study forces

	Number of officers	Metropolitan or Provincial	Number of BCUs ¹	Percentage part-time strength 98/99	Part-time male officers
Force A	2 – 3,000	P	10+	2.3	Yes
Force B	5,000+	M	5 –10	2.0	Yes
Force C	1 – 2,000	P	5 –10	2.6	Yes
Force D	5,000+	M	10+	1.8	Yes
Force E	1 – 2,000	P	1 –5	1.6	No
Force F	1 – 2,000	P	5 –10	1.5	Yes

¹ Basic command units

In the first stage of the case studies, interviews were conducted with central personnel and specialist equal opportunities staff in the participating forces to explore sources of data and local circumstances. Following these interviews, existing data were drawn from a variety of sources, such as personnel monitoring systems and examined in the light of changes in policy and uptake of flexible practices over time. Attempts were also made, unsuccessfully, to acquire data on the resources required to implement flexible working practices at divisional level.

There was little information available on the ways in which police service staff viewed flexible working practices and how they were managed on a day-to-day basis, except that they were thought to be ‘unsuitable’ for certain roles in the service (Stone et al., 1994). There was a need to uncover in what ways such practices were thought to be suitable or unsuitable and to try to judge whether the reasons given were perceptions or real obstacles. The intended outcome was to provide a greater understanding of the ways in which forces can use flexible working and manage it for the benefit of the individual and the organisation.

Further interviews were therefore conducted in the second stage of the case studies using purposeful sampling to engage with staff in specific groups: police officers and support staff working part-time or other flexible patterns in different roles, divisional and departmental personnel managers, staff in direct line management roles and divisional managers. Some of the flexible patterns of interest to the research team were not worked in these forces, so these were addressed in the focus group stage of the project.

Data from the case studies were recorded and analysed in a variety of software packages including Word, Excel and Nud.ist. A coding framework was developed using Nud.ist to facilitate analysis of the interviews. Thirty-six of the interviews were recorded and transcribed in full and the remainder were written up from contemporaneous notes. Attempts were made during the analysis to check policy and central contacts' information against the practices used and experienced by individuals according to the interviews.

Focus groups

During the case study interviews with managers, the research team also appreciated a need for managers to compare and contrast their experience with others. One-to-one interviews would also have provided less opportunity to explore a range of flexible working options, relevant to different staff and employee roles (see below for the HMIC categorisation of police service roles). Previous research on part-time working in the police service highlighted 'positive benefits' in working with groups (Stone et al., 1994); police participants were able to challenge each other and provide examples to stimulate debate.

The research team also wished to explore issues with a group of part-time staff. A pilot focus group discussion was held with seven part-time staff in one force. In addition, the research team observed and recorded the discussions and issues arising during two sessions of two hours at a seminar for all part-time police officers in one of the case study forces, and during two workshop sessions lasting one and a half hours at an annual seminar for all part-time officers and support staff in one of the pilot forces. After these had been transcribed and set against the findings of the interviews during the case studies, the research team found that the issues raised were broadly similar and that the main issues for part-time staff related to the attitudes and actions of line and senior managers.

Accordingly six different focus groups were conducted with managers at inspector and superintendent ranks, or equivalent. Officers were asked to participate whilst on courses at the Police Staff College, Bramshill. The sample of courses from which officers were drawn was selected to include managers in a wide variety of management roles. These ranged from mainly administrative staff, such as performance review team leaders, to shift inspectors, communications room managers, senior investigating officers, divisional commanders and task force managers. Participants' roles were checked against HMIC matrix categories to see whether they covered the main categories of operational and functional staff. Participants' age, gender, ethnicity, length of service and force area were recorded, and these were also checked against HMIC matrix data to determine whether they were broadly representative of managers' profiles in the police service.

Using a semi-structured topic guide, 1½ – 2 hour sessions were facilitated. Each participants' contribution was identified by a code in contemporaneous note taking during the discussion which allowed subsequent identification of individual speakers. The dialogue was recorded, transcribed and analysed partly using Nud.ist, a qualitative data analysis package, and partly manually using the same coding framework.

HMIC categorisation of roles

According to HMIC (although there are numerous examples of officers employed in C roles):

- 'A' are roles where only police officers would be expected to be employed;
- 'B' are roles suitable for civilianisation but where a recognised need for some police presence exists; and
- 'C' are roles in which only civilians would be expected to be employed.

1 Chief Officers and Miscellaneous

- A ACPO ranks
- B Staff officers
- C Drivers

2 Planning and Performance

- B Inspectorate
- C Research/Planning/Analysis; Statistics

3 Functional Support

- A Recruits training; Staff associations
- B Career development; Recruitment; Training
- C Buildings; Computers; Equal opportunities; finance; personnel; property; stores and supplies; vehicle workshops; welfare; Other administrative/Clerical

4 Indirect Operational Support

B Community relations; Complaints and discipline

C Alien registration; Coroner's officer; Court liaison; Court security; Criminal records officer; Firearms and explosives; Juvenile liaison; Licensing; Plan drawing; Prosecutions/Administration support units; Warrants

5 Direct Operational Support

A Departmental heads; Dogs (handlers) Marine; Mounted; Ports; Task force; Custody; Firearms tactical; VIP protection; Special branch

B Air; Control room; Crime prevention; Enquiry/Station; Technical support unit; Football liaison

C CCTV/Audio visual; Communications; Dogs; Gaoler; Marine; Mounted; Underwater

6 CID

A Burglary; Child/Sex/Domestic; CID; CID Aides/Trainees; CID other; Drugs; Fraud; Stolen vehicles; Vice; Asset confiscation

B Holmes unit; Intelligence

C CID support; Fingerprint/Photographic; Scenes of crimes

7 Traffic

A Traffic patrol

C Fixed penalty; Traffic support; Traffic warden supervision

Appendix 2

Working patterns from the government's work-life balance discussion document

*Patterns that focus on **how much time** an employee works*

- Full-time work. The employee works, typically, 40 hours or so a week.
- Part-time work. The employee works fewer than the standard number of hours per week. Some examples are working mornings, or afternoons or school hours only, working on only certain days of the week or working alternate weeks. Types of part-time working may involve:
 - job-sharing. Traditionally two employees share a full-time job, although now with the growth of evening and weekend work there may be scope for more than two people to share particular functions. How the job should be divided depends on the type of work. Job shares work best where the partners communicate well together and where they can both be relied on to do their part of the job well.
- 'V-time' working. The employee works reduced hours for an agreed period at a reduced salary and with a guarantee that he or she can return to full-time working when that period ends.
- term-time working. The employee does not work in the school holidays.
- permanent part year. The employee works only during the summer, for example.
- Working over-time. The employee works more than the standard number of hours, in return for more pay.

*Patterns that focus on **when** employees do their work*

- Flexitime. Employees choose within certain limits when to start and end their working day. There are usually one or more periods of 'core' time each day when the individual must be at work. Employees may be able to take leave for a day or a half day, if they have worked more hours than required; this is called 'flexi-leave'.
- Compressed hours working. This allows an employee to do a full-time job in, say, four days a week, instead of five. He or she may work from 8am to 6pm on Mondays to Thursdays inclusive, and then have a long weekend starting on Thursday evening.
- Annualised hours working. Employees have to work a required number of hours each year. The hours worked each week vary throughout the year. It can also be linked with greater employee choice, within business constraints.

- Shift working.
- Shift-swapping. Two employees work each other's shifts, so that one or both can attend to other concerns when they would normally have been at work.
- Working outside 'normal hours'. Some organisations – such as hospitals – have to keep going at nights, on Sundays or on public holidays. So they expect at least some employees to work at such times. Employees accept this as an integral part of the job. Some may even prefer to be at work when their partner is at home or at times that attract premium rates of pay.
- Self-rostering. Staff can choose the patterns they want to work, within agreed parameters, while meeting the needs of the business.

*Pattern that focus on **where** employees work*

- Working at the employer's premises. Employees often have to work at their organisation's office or factory, for example if they provide a face-to-face service for customers at a branch office or they work on a production line. Even where the work does not have to be done at the employer's premises, many employees prefer to work from there for a variety of reasons.
- Working from home. Employees do some or all of their work from home. This is most successful where there are good communication links between the home and office, and when the employee does not need close supervision. Types of work that can be especially suited to home-working include sales and marketing, editing, accounting and providing a telephone answering service.

*Patterns that give employees a complete **break from work***

- For a short period. Examples are paternity, maternity and adoption leave, where parents take time off around the time when a child is born or adopted, and parental leave, which they can take in the years following the birth or adoption.
- A longer absence. Examples are an unpaid career break or a paid sabbatical.

*Packages that offer **choice and security** to employees*

- Company benefits such as childcare or eldercare vouchers.
- Phased or flexible retirement.

Appendix 3

Types of shift pattern in the police service

Regulation (8 hour shifts, 4 week rota)							
	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
1	Night	Night	Night	Night	Night	Night	Night
2	Rest	Rest	Late	Late	Late	Late	Late
3	Late	Late	Rest	Rest	Early	Early	Early
4	Early	Early	Early	Early	Rest	Rest	Rest

Early: 0600-1400. Late: 1400-2200. Night: 2200-0600.

Ottawa (10 hour shifts, 5 week rota)							
	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
1	Night	Night	Night	Night	Rest	Rest	Rest
2	Rest	Rest	Rest	Late	Late	Late	Late
3	Rest	Rest	Morning	Morning	Morning	Rest	Rest
4	Late	Late	Rest	Rest	Morning	Morning	Morning
5	Morning	Morning	Rest	Rest	Night	Night	Night

Morning: 0700-1700. Late: 1400-2400 or 1700-0300 (Thurs, Fri, Sat). Night 2230-0700 or 2300-0700 (Friday)

A variant on Ottawa, known as VSA 99, was developed by Merseyside Police with faster rotation in order to 'minimise the degree of adaptation to the night shift' which research has shown can be harmful (see Mason, 2000).

VSA 99 (10 hour shifts, 5 week rota)							
	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
1	Night	Night	Night	Night	Rest	Rest	Rest
2	Morning	Morning	Morning	Rest	Rest	Late	Late
3	Late	Late	Rest	Rest	Night	Night	Night
4	Rest	Rest	Rest	Morning	Morning	Morning	Morning
5	Rest	Rest	Late	Late	Late	Rest	Rest

APPENDIX 3

Dorset police had conducted a study which allowed them to select a shift pattern based on demand profiling. They used a software package called WORKPLAN. On this rota, night duty staff were 'abstracted' from the day shift, in order to allow for higher levels of demand on the late shift. Short term cover, for sudden absences would be provided from the late shift. Eight hours of extra duty per week 'overlapping' between shifts allowed for an 'extra' rest day.

'Bournemouth 3' (Eight hour shifts, 3 week rota)							
	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
1	Early/Night	Early/Night	Early/Night	Early/Night	Early/Night	Rest	Rest
2	Rest	Rest	Late	Late	Late	Late	Late
3	Late	Late	Rest	Rest	Rest	Early/Night	Early/Night

Appendix 4

Example questions for assessing the scope for flexibility in police service roles

A key overarching principle is that posts should not be assessed as unsuitable for flexible working only because they require, for example, an on-call rota. Some staff who reduce their hours or who are seeking more control over them, are able to be more flexible than others, generalising about part-time or reduced hours staff is unhelpful. All officers would appreciate a better balance between their work and home lives, with the opportunity for more control over their hours.

- Who set the shift or work pattern and how was it worked out? Was it reviewed against known demand profiles? Can a variety of patterns be used?
- What other patterns might be appropriate in this area of work? Is there potential for use of split shifts, for example?
- Do the patterns fit with, or impact on the following :
 - peaks and troughs in demand;
 - staff turnover;
 - levels of sickness;
 - local geography;
 - composition of neighbourhoods;
 - seasonal variations; and
 - public order requirements and volatility.
- Is there a minimum staffing level or service level agreement? Who set these and when were they last reviewed? Are they core requirements of the type of work? Are they realistic?
- Does the provision of an appropriate quality of service in this area of work require:
 - emergency cover;
 - on call rota;
 - team briefings;
 - service level agreements regarding officer contact;
 - continuity;

- reactive work allocation; or
- short notice additional hours?
- Who decided that they were required, on what evidence and when was this last reviewed?
- Do full-time officers provide continuity? Do all full-time staff attend every briefing? What happens when they need to leave work early? What happens when they have a lunch break or take annual leave? How do the rest of the team cover their work? Could this be achieved with other working patterns? Would there be long-term implications?

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