

Detective Sergeant's experiences of complex demand,
competing pressures and resilience

Research Report

Abigail Salter (Project Supervisor: Dr Zoe Walkington)

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Abstract

Modern day policing demands have increased and changed, with more complexity, scrutiny and high public expectations. Detectives in particular are now dealing with crime associated with high risk linked to vulnerability, public protection and safeguarding. This research explores the experiences of Detective Sergeants in handling complex demand the competing pressures they face and considers resilience in this setting. This qualitative study utilised semi structured interviews with 8 Detective Sergeants all working in a Safeguarding Command. Thematic analysis was carried out and resulted in 4 key themes comprising of 'Role and Function', 'Spinning Plates', 'Social Support' and 'Adapted Resilience'. It was concluded that strategies such as refocussing what counts as success in the role, and creating physical and emotional 'micro-climates' within teams, led to more resilient working in this demanding environment.

Introduction

'If you're a leader, a fellow that other fellows look to, you've got to keep going'.

Ernest Shackleton

The role of the Sergeant within policing is seen to be the closest to the front line staff and likely to have the most impact on officer wellbeing. Also called a 'line manager' in most organisations, this role is considered an important source of support to staff during difficult times and individuals in this role are expected to make notable efforts to protect their staff from demands of more senior managers (NHS employers, 2014). Policing has however, become particularly complex with the rise in crime, demand, risk and complexity, just as the numbers of police officers and resources are reducing (Sutherland, 2018). Particularly in areas of 'protective demand', associated mainly with vulnerability, public protection and safeguarding, there is high scrutiny and high public expectation adding to the pressures. Ultimately, Sergeants have the demand of managing people which is a task that requires continuing interaction to include resolving conflicts, establishing priorities, managing workloads and dealing with conflicting personalities (Levinson, 1996). Lots of research has been focused around what a line manager can and should be doing to improve their staff wellbeing. However, there is little research literature based in police settings that focuses on the line manager / Sergeant themselves. This research project aims to contribute to a better understanding of the demands and pressures from the perspective of a Detective Sergeant within a 'protective demand' role (Safeguarding) and also considers how resilience is used within the role.

The Police Service in the UK is undergoing the most significant change in its recent history (Hesketh, 2013), with what appears to be a series of competing complex problems. Whilst front line uniform policing is never to be downplayed, it is those in a Detective role who are managing very considerable caseloads, where the risk is particularly acute and there may be catastrophic consequences if something is missed (Winsor, 2018). Reports, analysis and police chiefs claim that the Police Service spends the majority of time now dealing with calls for services linked to vulnerability (Veale, 2018; College of Policing, 2015; Hartley and Hesketh, 2016, PEEL, 2016). Mental health, violence, child sexual exploitation and missing persons are all issues where public expectations of the police are also high (Hartley and Hesketh, 2016) and which require Detectives with specialist skills. Another example is that in the post Saville and Weinstein era, it has encouraged people to report sexual crime leading to high public expectation and media interest.

Home Office analysis suggests that there was an increase in public reporting of sexual offences due to the publicity around 'Operation Yewtree' (College of Policing, 2015).

With demands rising, resources in policing have been falling due to the Comprehensive Spending Review (Treasury, 2010) which has seen significant reductions in officer and staff numbers. There is a 20% shortfall in Detectives or people occupying positions without adequate training (Windsor, 2018) yet complex crime linked to vulnerability is rising and therefore placing even more risk management responsibility on less well-resourced teams. This new type of increased demand has been referred to as 'protective demand' (College of Policing, 2015) which is associated mainly with vulnerability, public protection and safeguarding. There is limited national data available on the resource required to respond to this type of crime but due to the complexity, generally it requires more policing resources (College of Policing, 2015).

The increase and complexity of demand and decrease of budgets and resources has put a considerable amount of pressure on officers dealing with crimes. It is a recent acknowledgement that the Police Service needs welfare and wellbeing support for its officers as highlighted in the 2017 PEEL report. It has also just been launched by the Home Office, that there is to be a 'Wellbeing Goal' where police leaders pledge to create a culture in forces that focuses on early intervention, including occupational health and effective line management and signposts to providers such as police charities (Oscar Kilo, 2018).

As well as being able to effectively manage more complex demands with less staff, detectives and staff in a safeguarding command are often subjected to very traumatic work such as adult and child neglect / death, online sexual images and brutal sexual assaults of both adults and children. There is a duty of care expected from a supervisor and in a study by Mitchell and Stevenson (2000), it was shown that supervisors are pivotal to an officer's sense of being supported at work with a large proportion of officers describing that a good, supportive supervisor is the best means through which they can be assisted following an incident causing high stress. However, although supervisors are critically important resources for preventing and identifying burnout and trauma in front line workers, they are often forgotten about themselves and can suffer from secondary traumatic stress (Collins-Camargo, 2012).

The transformation in policing currently is extensive, which makes the supervisory role especially vulnerable (Collins-Camargo, 2012). There is however, scant literature which describes or explores experiences of the Sergeant role itself and particularly within the area of complex safeguarding crime in a period of austerity. Senior management ranks are often cut off from the more emotive feelings that front line workers experience from such pressures. A closer understanding should be explored and this must be recognised when looking at wellbeing local strategies where importance is placed on the front line manager role. To fail to take care of the care givers compounds the problem and puts the entire system at risk (Collins-Camargo, 2012).

Resilience

Stress has now become a common and accepted reason for employees to be absent from work (Fineman, 2003). There are said to be three causes of stress related absence within the police according to DCC Sara Glenn (Glenn, 2018), who spoke at a College of Policing Wellbeing event. She proposed that stress related absences came down to workloads, management and non-work factors (Glenn, 2018). Personal resilience is broadly viewed as the antidote to stress, with resilience being a combination of personal characteristics and learned skills (Hesketh and Cooper, 2018).

Research in the area of resilience within the police, mainly seems to be based in the USA with a heavy focus on the front-line uniformed constable level and those who are armed. There is little resilience research focused specifically around Detective work and research is particularly lacking in focus on resilience within the Detective Sergeant role. A study by Sollie, Kop and Euwema (2017) conducted an in-depth analysis of the resilience of crime scene investigators and how they cope with the impact of demanding work situations. It concluded that mental resilience is clearly determined not only by the individual capacities and their ability to apply coping strategies but also factors in their environment. Therefore, personal resilience was found to be something that wasn't a static condition or would necessarily last forever. Tensions in their personal life, a lack of support from colleagues, or inadequate resources meant that a preferred coping strategy could not be used and lead to a negative outcome such as sickness. It was recognised in the results of this study that the ability to cope came from a combination of resources at the level of the individual, the team, the organisation and private – i.e. family/friends (Sollie, Kop and Euwema, 2017).

The purpose of this study is to gain a better insight and understanding of the demands and pressures of a Detective Sergeant within a 'protective demand' role (Safeguarding) and how resilience is achieved.

This study will focus on the two research questions:

RQ1 How does a Detective Sergeant perceive the competing pressures of modern-day investigative demand, performance and wellbeing of their team?

RQ2 How can resilience be built in the role of DS?

Method

Research Design

The approach to the research was qualitative which allowed the researcher to delve into the perceptions, perspectives, understandings and feelings of the interviewee who has experienced the situation without background theories or explanation pre-determining the direction of the research. This means that there were no pre-conceived ideas about the topic which made the focus exploratory. The study was a descriptive study into a phenomena that is not yet well understood. Qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted and subsequently analysed using thematic analysis.

Participants

Permissions were sought from a UK Police Force to approach Detective Sergeants who worked within their Safeguarding Command. An invitation letter was sent out by email to all identified Detective Sergeants ($N=17$) within the Safeguarding Command. The inclusion criteria required the participant (i) to be the rank of Detective Sergeant and (ii) held in the role of managing particularly complex crime linked to vulnerability, public protection and safeguarding (iii) to be willing to openly and honestly share information concerning their experiences. The letter invited people to participate in an anonymous audio recorded interview, in a confidential room, taking approximately one hour, on a convenient time and date. This followed with 9 positive replies back via email where

suitable dates, times and locations were arranged with each participant. No further emails were sent to 'no-replies' and the person's non-response was taken as their declining to participate. The convenience sample comprised of 5 females and 3 males, with a broad range of units represented across Safeguarding Command.

Procedure

Participants were invited to a secure, confidential room in order to conduct the interview. A consent form and information sheet were handed to each participant at the start of each interview. Participants were fully briefed at the start and debriefed at the end, which included a reminder of the contact information for occupational health. It was also briefed to each participant that they could withdraw at any time or up to 7 days after the participation in the interview. Personal data was stored on a secure university password protected database and will be stored by the Open University for five years, before being destroyed. No names of participants were stored with the recording and instead, a unique code to identify each participant was used. Participants were reminded that while quotes might be used from the interviews, they would be anonymised.

Analysis procedure

Thematic Analysis was used, using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis approach to analysing qualitative data. Thematic Analysis is a method of identifying themes can be used to develop a detailed descriptive account of a phenomenon (Braun and Clarke, 2013).

The process of using thematic analysis involved six stages (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Usually, transcription of the interviews are involved in the first stage however, as the research was time restricted, this was difficult. Instead the first stage involved making notes of the discussion by listening to each interview without pausing. The second stage was to listen again and pick out key topics which were of importance to each participant, direct quotes and to listen to meaning and consider how it related to the research questions. The third stage then examined initial coding by the researcher picking out interesting topics. The fourth stage searched for themes whilst stages 5 and 6 reviewed, defined and named the themes. This was in line with the main aim of the research which was to explore and deepen our understanding of Detective Sergeants experiences of complex demand, competing pressures and resilience.

The method aimed to capture what was important to the interviewees rather than to focus solely on the researcher's agenda which is why a semi – structured interview format was used. The findings were from the perceptions of the interviewees and aimed to be objective however, I recognise that there will be subjectivity due to my own experience in the same role.

Reflexive analysis

Reflexivity as a process is an examination on the role of subjectivity in the research process (Palaganas et al, 2017). It is important to include 'reflexive analysis' as it recognises how "social background, location and assumptions affect research practice" (Hesse-Biber, 2007, p.17).

I am a Detective Sergeant who has worked for two Police Services since 2001. Within my career, I have also had two short breaks from operational policing and worked for two different academic

institutions. In 2015, I took career break for 2.5 years to live in Australia where I worked as a Lecturer in Policing for Charles Sturt University for approximately 18 months. During this particular research project, I have been on a 12 month secondment with the Open University, holding a position as a Lecturer in Policing Practice. I recognise however, that I still have a lot to learn and consider myself junior in the field of academia.

Due to my career background, I have worked within the Safeguarding Command and have experienced the increasing demands and competing pressures. I view myself as having a strong resilience and have a high sense of self-awareness of how to manage my own wellbeing and feel I have managed teams in a strong supportive role to staff.

I have really enjoyed the interviews and analysis in this research during which it was interesting to hear about the perceptions of others in the role. There were moments during the interviews and analysis however, which I found quite difficult due to the heartfelt struggles of people who really care about making a difference to people.

I believe that this research is valuable for Senior Officers to have an evidence-based understanding of the demand and pressures felt on front line. I also believe that peers will find the analysis interesting to read. Learning from each other about how resilience is used is also of key importance. The research serves its purpose in helping us gain a better understanding of demand, pressure and resilience within complex crime from the experiences of the Detective Sergeant rank.

Materials

The semi-structured interviews utilised limited interview prompts to allow the participants to convey what they felt were the most important aspects of their experience. The interview prompts were focused on the experience of their current role in regards to their duty to manage modern-day investigative demand, performance and the wellbeing of their team, as well as exploring their own resilience in the role of DS.

A consent form and information sheet were prepared and sent by e-mail to each participant a few days before their interview to read. These were then presented again at the start of each interview, with the consent form being signed by participants willing to take part.

Analysis

A number of themes were found in relation to the two research questions regarding competing pressures of modern-day investigative demand, performance wellbeing and resilience. These themes are labelled as follows: *'Role and Function'*, *'Spinning Plates'*, *'Social Support'* and *'Adapted resilience.'*

Role and Function

The theme of 'role and function' is important to a police officer as it clearly defines that their purpose is to maintain law and order. When a police officer is asked why they joined the police, it is often found that the answer relates to reasons connected with role and function such as 'to help people, 'to lock up bad people' and so on.

The theme of role and function appeared to be common throughout many of the interviews but opinions on this theme were divided into two. It was strongly evident however, that the role and

function and its acceptance seemed to be of key importance and connected to resilience and job satisfaction.

On one side, some DS's appeared frustrated with their role and function within safeguarding teams, due to appearing fixated on success being focused on convicting offenders and achieving measurable results. Their role and function to achieve high conviction rates was not being met, which created negative emotions such as defeat and even broken resilience.

'You tell yourself the criminal justice process is just part of what we do and the support and moral rewards of helping people are good enough but it gets to a point where that's not good enough. For me, it's when someone is charged of offences against vulnerable people or children' (Participant 5)

There was a sense by some, that there was a feeling of being worn and torn by demands of victims and those who reported crimes which weren't achieving an end result of a conviction. Instead, the identity of bringing offenders to justice appears now confused and outweighed by having to take on a heavy weight of other demands and needs that are being viewed as non-police related. Some mentioned that cuts in other services or even incompetence of partner agencies were often to blame for extra demands which caused resentment.

Those who took the view that reward came through focussing on conviction results, appeared to find satisfaction instead in being able to help their staff through support.

'I get most job satisfaction from assisting my colleagues as that's where it seems based and not much job satisfaction from the average case as it ends up being not charged so it doesn't bring me great job satisfaction. So the job satisfaction from crimes I deal with is low' (Participant 6)

'I used to really like the reward of getting a result. I think more recently that just doesn't interest me at all. What interests me is seeing people progress, seeing people happy, seeing my officers feel as if they are supported and understood and having them know I'm there to help them and keep them afloat. The things I like now is when I get positive feedback' (Participant 2)

On the other side, some DS's seem to have overcome their focus on their role and function being about convictions and results and was more about helping people. These feelings were presented as if talking about a journey which was described almost like growing up and becoming wiser. This appeared to have helped their sense of function and therefore found a new sense of reward. Another reason may be that the challenge has shifted from fighting crime to fighting demand.

'sometimes I feel I do help but more so now later on in my career I see things differently. I used to feel if no detection, then...(pause) but now I see I have done things for a victim and not just about detections and convictions' (Participant 8)

The majority of interviewees however, appeared to have an elevated sense of achievement and reward when they felt they were helping the most vulnerable of victims and making a difference, which reminded them of reasons why they joined the police in the first place. A strong sense of doing moral good appeared an important aspect of identity, role and function to most and especially within protecting the most vulnerable above other types of victims. To work in the area of vulnerability seemed held as a privilege and a positive responsibility.

'it's quite a privilege to deal with that type of offending in the community' (Participant 4)

Another key area of discussion, also linked to the theme of role and function, was the importance of stepping outside of this role and function when off duty. What was interesting here however, was the reason behind a felt need to step outside the role. It did not appear to come down to anything

other than the requirement to become disconnected from demand and responsibility for the sake of wellbeing and mental health. DS's mainly spoke about 'switching off' and disengagement rather than having another role or external identity outside policing.

'I sometimes will take a day off just to take a day off to spend on my own' (Participant 5)

'I have a very supportive wife and family, they are very understanding. If I come home and I'm wiped out and sitting there not engaged they understand why' (Participant 2)

One DS spoke of the demand which has motivated a need to explore a non-policing activity outside the police in order to feel fulfilled again where previously, policing gave that.

'I now see it as a job and not a career and not my calling. And that has led to me maybe not feeling as fulfilled at work and I don't feel that sense of fulfilment now helping people but it's helped me with my mental health and my own general wellbeing that I have life outside the police and I need to look after myself more. I realise the damaging effects this work has had on me and it is so damaging in some respects to your health.' (Participant 4)

The theme 'Role and Function' has highlighted the perception that there is a significant shift in identity of policing. There appears to be some loss of sense of what the purpose of policing now is; on one hand, traditional responsive results based goals whereas on the other, completing tasks for the purpose of risk management, safeguarding and supporting other agencies.

Spinning Plates

Literal 'plate spinning' is a common circus act where the trick is to keep as many plates spinning on the top of poles. If a plate stops spinning then it will fall and break and so this then also slows down each plate. The phrase 'plate spinning' was used in one interview by a DS however, it seemed to explain an overall concept that was being discussed in most interviews. DS's felt a heavy sense of personal responsibility to keep all the 'plates spinning' without dropping any. This meant that many tasks and demands (plates) were being managed at the same time, with no intentional means of any of them going wrong (smashing). If a plate did smash however, there was a view that there would be blame by Senior ranks, rather than support and understanding.

'But, it was like spinning plates. I used to find myself trying to keep them all up in the air and not let any of them drop down and smash. I was never convinced if any of these plates did fall down and smash that I would never get any support from my senior managers. Because it's very much a culture of being held to account if you make a mistake. Because if I'd have had made a mistake it would have been due to rushing things, or lack of training, might have been some other reason but never would have been deliberate' (Participant 7)

Fear of scrutiny and feelings that senior officers and/or Professional Standards don't understand the amount or type of demand, were a regular key area of discussion when explaining why working into rest periods would be a motivation. It was sensed that many DS's did not feel any safety net around them for even non-deliberate mistakes.

Many of the DS's spoke about keeping up with their own work by mainly detailing the need to work longer hours in order to keep up and/or catch up. This meant mainly, working before and/or after the start and finish times of their shift, rest days and working at home. It was also very much apparent that working through lunch and not taking any or many breaks throughout the day was felt to assist them with completion of work rather than hinder it.

'I come in early when its quiet. I can look at the systems without anyone asking me a question. I get an hour to myself. Sets me up for the day and know what my priorities are. I do it just for peace of mind' (Participant 3)

'As soon as I fall behind I catch my tail. I went through a phase where I used to do a lot of work at home and that annoyed my wife. I did that for quite a while until my wife told me I am doing it too much. I still get worried that I don't get things done. I will still check emails at home. I just want to be able to have a clean slate when I come in' (Participant 8)

An awareness that this wasn't good for wellbeing or productivity did appear to be recognised but this was seen as being outweighed by not enough hours in the day to get things done. Despite a lot of apparent feelings of resentment and defeat due to the demands, it's apparent that most of the DS's take on a huge amount of personal responsibility to keep the plates spinning. To them, the risk of smashing a plate comes with high costs...

'I can't be in a position to say I am really sorry your honour, I'm 3 months behind on my work. It's just not an excuse I can use' (Participant 4)

Another key area of discussion was not having the most appropriate tools, skills and systems to enable DS's to meet these new felt demands. Again, adding to the number of 'plates to spin' at a cost of creating a weaker, more exposed system. Inexperienced staffing was a key area of discussion, causing hindrance to the DS role.

'I think it's very unfair on Sergeants to be expected to bring inexperienced staff up to scratch in a highly complex area of investigation' (Participant 7)

There was a strong sense that DS's felt it was a rewarding part of their role to develop their staff however, within the current demands, it was felt inappropriate within complex areas of crime and left them feeling more vulnerable in not having the time which would impact on scrutiny.

'Staff want decisions made – reassurance, priorities around their work, buffer between them and anyone further up, councillor, mentor, welfare provider. I feel if everything went wrong, I have the responsibility of my staff' (Participant 5)

It was also discussed throughout that tools to support their job were also often found a hindrance, mentioning unfit IT systems, lack of appropriate working environments and insufficient / lack of training.

The theme 'Spinning Plates' has highlighted role overload but with it, comes a sense that dropping any, came at too high cost. This seemed to encourage personal resilience and problem solving however, this was often also at a cost to their own wellbeing such as working into rest periods.

Social Support

The theme of social support was a key area and also one which was heartfelt. Despite the sea of demand and pressures felt by DS's, it was heavily sensed that there was an overarching connected emotional bond between the DS and their team of constables.

'Managing people to emotionally and physically conduct the role is one of our key responsibilities' (Participant 2)

Taking it on themselves to create micro cultures and safe environments to create less pressure appeared a constant aspiration. This was done by examples of cooking and eating meals together at work, creating more flexible practices against regimental processes within the team including

examples such as authorising occasional annual leave for an officer despite it being centrally refused due to staff numbers.

'The vast majority of officers give more than they take so sometimes just giving them a little goes a long way..... 'If I can keep them stress free it helps me' (Participant 3)

Responsibility for a team of staff was candidly described by more than one by being like a 'mother'. The 'people' responsibility and emotional bonds of connection between DS's and their team appeared to be perceived as very disconnected from ranks above the DS.

'Always putting other people first, certainly as a Sergeant, you have victims to deal with, offenders, solicitors and then have your staff. As Sergeants we have more staff than other ranks. As people go up your pyramid gets smaller. Have more staff than other ranks. People forget that. You shoulder that burden – day to day we have a lot on our plate. That becomes a challenge' (Participant 5)

The theme of social support was also key because it seemed the primary role that a DS felt they should offer within their ability to manage staff. This means that other functions such as being a 'leader' or inspiration to their team were not really discussed.

'I struggle because I can't be an effective manager anymoreI find that I resent the position that I'm in as a manager because I can't be a good manager anymore. And that's because there are so many administrative demands on managers that I have become an administrator, not a leader, not a manger, not any sort of inspiration at all to my team' (Participant 4)

Social support seemed to also run two ways and was a need by the DS to receive this from their team which appeared to make the day to day work more enjoyable.

'I work with a good team of people so I enjoy the team working and rapport in the office' (Participant 6)

'I have laughed a lot. This has made me look forward to work due to the laughs I can have' (Participant 5)

The need for the social support and connection with the team in regards to sharing emotions about work, seemed favoured above talking with friends and family outside the police. This may be being able to talk freely about subjects that are not normal to most and in some perspectives, were felt to be inappropriate to talk about to anyone outside. Those that did talk to someone at home mentioned that it was only their partner they would do this with.

The responsibility felt by DS's to look out for signs of stress and trauma in their staff appeared large. This was described by some as being a difficult task in relation to spotting signs due to the sheer unpredictability of experiences.

'The people that you think are strong one week, you just can't take anyone for granted. You think they are strong and robust and then something happens in their personal life and then work becomes the catalyst. You have to be so on it all the time' (Participant 2)

The management of the sickness process which has now been shifted from HR to the duty of a DS to manage was heavily criticised by one DS who described it as 'inflexible and insulting'. The DS felt it was conflicting to be both in a support role and then be inflexible with an organisational administrative process with an additional lack of guidance on HR matters.

'It's not just an oversight, it's disgusting frankly, that you get promoted and you find yourself completely out of your depth trying to deal with situations that have arisen which are highly

personal, highly sensitive, and there's no guidance really except you can print off the forms and read them' (Participant 7)

There was a heavy sense of 'hopelessness' that came through in all interviews with the DS's. It was very much heartfelt that they wanted to support their staff as much as they possibly could. Despite this, it was also acknowledged that despite trying to take away pressure, there was no stopping the demand coming in which created competing role conflict. This gave most a sense of hopelessness.

'The challenge is managing my staff's welfare but knowing I have to keep loading them up with more work. So I don't have ability or capacity to be able to take away the demand that's putting them under pressure. Knowing people are struggling but not having the power to do anything about it' (Participant 5)

'As a supervisor I'm seeing where I can load them up without crossing that fine line between breaking them. That's a difficult equation to work out sometimes, I think they're the challenges' (Participant 2)

The role of social support seems a key role taken on by a DS and appears to have overtaken more traditional roles of a Sergeant such as direction, control and monitoring of work. There appears to be a close emotional bond between a DS and their team which seems distinguished from the relationship between other more senior ranks. It appears to feel that senior ranks lack a true understanding of the day to day struggles with demand and resources and one way to manage this is to focus on social support to keep their staff afloat.

Adapted Resilience

A key strength of 'adapted resilience' was really apparent in all of the DS's interviews. Despite a heavy feeling of struggle to wade through the demand, DS's were able to adapt and find individual ways to cope. Some were able to see demand and challenges in a positive light through being able to find solutions and feel reward in doing so, rather than feeling overcome and defeated.

'I do like finding innovative solutions to things. This keeps me going a bit' (Participant 2)

Physical exercise was a prevalent way of clearing the mind and helped better focus which is not just conducted on rest days but adapted around shifts such as before / after work and very occasionally used with peers at lunch times.

'I spend a lot of time at the gym. I run and use gym at work and also a gym at home.... It's probably my outlet I don't really do anything else to destress' (Participant 1)

'Running helps me work off some of the stresses' (Participant 7)

'I normally go to the gym before I start work – give you a bit of thinking time and time to look after yourself physically' (Participant 2)

Family and a 'good home life' was viewed as important to most and talked about as a much required support network outside of work. The ability to detach from work demands in their free time was a key way of being able to cope. To have a better work/life balance however, was often raised and that the amount of work required due to demand, did impact on less rest time at home.

One DS spoke about having an adapted mindset to offset the resentment felt around the amount of demand. The need to explore a non-policing activity outside the police in order to feel fulfilled again was an interesting perspective on adapted resilience.

'I now see it as a job and not a career and not my calling. And that has led to me maybe not feeling as fulfilled at work and I don't feel that sense of fulfilment now helping people but it's helped me with my mental health and my own general wellbeing that I have life outside the police and I need to look after myself more. I realise the damaging effects this work has had on me and it is so damaging in some respects to your health' (Participant 4)

The organisational ability to offer wellbeing services was mostly viewed in a good light. Services such as TRIM, Occupational Health and counselling were seen as a symbol that culture is changing in the police and DS's encouraged their staff to ask for help if resilience was broken. There was no discussion however, of resilience training and it was only services that responded to stress and broken resilience that were being offered and nothing preventative. Instead, DS's appeared to take it very much upon them as individuals to create a less pressured micro environment as much as they could to keep resilience of staff strong.

Finally, using adaptive resilience in what was viewed as often an insufficient working environment for a DS, was a common discussion. Although it was agreed that it was a positive thing for DS's to work in the same office and cluster of desks of their teams, it was also of key discussion that often this would also cause problems of distractions, diversions and reduce the ability for DS's to get on with their own work when needed. It was also said to be difficult to hold confidential one to one staff meetings or take a sensitive phone call. The availability of being able to retreat to a quiet environment when required was a strong aspiration in this role. Adapted resilience was used to overcome this need by DS's sometimes finding other quieter spaces to temporarily do some of their own work. This was also linked to coming in early before staff got to work, as it seen as time for no or little distraction. Continuing work at home on a job laptop was also common as it was away from other distractions in the office. In one interview, a DS even spoke of finding a quiet space to cope better with mental focus when a live investigation first came in...

'In terms of the staff, my approach is when a job lands, I take myself out of the office for a few minutes – not long – but just taking myself out so I can think about the best approach. Because when you are sitting in an office surrounded by people and the phones ring, you can't do that. That's worked for me. I can come back and have a team scrum down...The only place to get 5 minutes where nobody can see you or disturb you, is the loo' (Participant 7)

The theme Adapted Resilience highlighted the ways how DS's adapted their ways of working to be able to cope with the demand or stressful tasks. Never did it come across in the interviews that any challenge simply meant defeat. Instead, the ability to work through and find ways to cope was a real key strength in the ability of the DS role.

Conclusion

The research sought to answer two research questions. The first question explored perceptions of competing pressure and demand, and was answered by drawing out four key themes of *Role and Function, Spinning Plates, Social Support and Adapted resilience*. Detectives in this Safeguarding role are dealing with crime associated with high risk, linked to vulnerability, public protection and safeguarding. This type of crime is often complex, whilst also centred on high levels of risk, trauma and victim care. In addition, Detectives are now carrying a considerable high caseload along with an increase in scrutiny and high public expectation. The results showed that the rank of Detective Sergeant was a balancing act described as 'spinning plates'; a concept of balancing lots of competing demands, with the perception that stakes were high if any were 'dropped', which included a sense of

a lack of support at an organisational level. The fear of scrutiny appears to be a key pressure perceived by Detective Sergeants, leading them to focus more on managing administrative tasks but often to the detriment of other things which included wellbeing and looking after themselves. A lack of breaks and working outside of core hours/shifts was a key topic discussed by the majority of interviewees.

There is a significance in a 'traditional' view of policing, compared to current day crime complexity and of which is proposed as 'new' crime' (College of Policing, 2015). It appears recognised at a National level, that the 'new crime' has increased 'traditional crime' due to an overstretched justice system bringing a decreasing number of charges (House of Commons, 2018). With confused National priorities and lack of focus by the Government of where limited resources should be focused (House of Commons, 2018), then the impact on front line investigative officers has created role ambiguity and conflict. The role and function of the DS role was strongly felt to be conflicted at this more local level of a Safeguarding Command, with the perception of a 'reward' becoming increasingly hard to achieve. The majority of interviewees expressed reasons why they joined the police, which in most explanations created a philosophical sense of a moral sense of duty and purpose. This was compared to perceptions of their current role, in which most felt a lack of that same reward they strived for upon joining. The Safeguarding role was not at all perceived as one which brought a straight forward sense of capturing offenders and locking up the bad people and therefore creating a sense of moral reward. Of course, on occasions when this did take place, the perceptions of reward appeared elevated due to the link to vulnerable victims. However, overall, the Safeguarding Detective Sergeants viewed the role as a lot more complex, which often created many obstacles to prevent high charge and/or conviction rates. Topics which included too much demand, being let down by other partners and services, low resources, insufficient technology, too many changes in leadership which created inconsistency and inexperienced investigators, all helped to create the perception of challenge and ability to strive for a reward.

To achieve a sense of purpose and reward, more achievable expectations seem to need clarity, with perhaps more recognition for tasks other than just those that are results based. Another key perception of Detective Sergeants was that there was little support or true understanding of the impact of demand being felt by those outside the circle of the DS and their team. This appeared to create a strong emotional connection between the DS and their team and the role of social support acted in both ways to make day to day challenges easier to cope with.

The second question was answered by gaining a better understanding of how resilience was being used to cope with this demand. It is in agreement with the study by Sollie, Kop and Euwema (2017) that personal resilience was not a static condition or would necessarily last forever. DS's recognised this in their own staff that often it would take them by surprise when staff perceived to be of a strong character, came to breaking point due to a certain trigger. Again, just as in the study by Sollie, Kop and Euwema (2017), it was recognised that important coping strategies came from a combination of the individual, the team, the organisation and the private life of the officer.

The supervisory role of a Sergeant is often seen as being a mediator and source for reducing stress amongst the team. By conceptualising success as 'helping people', rather than a focus solely on the achievement of particular Criminal Justice outcomes; by balancing social support and competing demands for themselves and their teams; and by creating both emotional and physical "micro climates" in which DS's can be more effective the conflict and demands of this role can allow

resilience to emerge in this challenging environment. This study adds to the understanding of modern day police demand and has explored the role of a Detective Sergeant within a Safeguarding Command.

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