

Stressor – An event that triggers the **stress response**.

Stress Response – (The fight or flight response aka hyperarousal or acute stress response.) - A physiological reaction that occurs in response to a perceived harmful event, attack or threat to survival.

There are many factors that will cause a person stress, and some may impact more on certain individuals than they do on others - the STRESSORS.

Stressors are many and varied and can take many forms – They can be real or perceived but never the less they can have a devastating effect on an individuals wellbeing and ability to function effectively.

Last week I decided to conduct some live research and whilst at the South Wales Police Federation Statutory meetings passed around some sheets of paper asking for my colleagues to think about what cause’s them stress in their individual roles within South Wales Police. Around the table we had a good snapshot of roles – Response Constables, Sargeants and Bronzes, A Major Crime Supervisor, Hub PCs/DCs and PPU PCs/DCs.

Here’s what I got back.

Work based activity that causes stress “STRESSOR”	What is it about this particular activity that causes <u>YOU</u> stress?	What is your current Role?
PPNs – Dash questions and completion process	Too many, don’t read well, don’t make sense – unable to complete at point of asking which you then have to duplicate onto Niche as there is no ability to cut and paste from the DASH template on the lpatrol app.	Response Supervisor/Acting.
PPNs – whole process	Niche PPN is poorly designed. Such a small space to input observations. Questions are too far away from the answers making it difficult to read and complete. Uncertainty of when to complete PPNs so end up completing them for nearly EVERY incident.	Response Supervisor/Acting.
Mobile Devices	Number of Passwords you have to input to access the content, emails, and just to enter anything into your ebnb,	Response Supervisor/Acting.

Mobile Devices	Current call facility – When you press the maps button on the current incident it opens the MAPS program but the data populated is often duplicated ie duplicated address and postcode so google maps is unable to find the address. You then have to delete certain sections which should be unnecessary.	Response Supervisor/Acting.
Technology	Computers are very slow – Especially when you have various applications and windows open -Control Works, Niche, outlook and Firms etc	HUB PC
Files of Evidence	File deficiencies from Response causing clock to tick down	HUB PC
High Workload/Pressure of Safeguarding	No time to complete tasks in the working day when there is no one else to replace you when you have leave etc.	Response/PPU PC
High Workload/Demand versus Safeguarding from Risk, Threat & Harm and Scrutiny	There is too much work to negate TRH in the demand and those who scrutinise do not appreciate it.	NPT Supervisor.
Property	Booking in process long and laborious especially for a lot of exhibits. No clear training given and no clear direction as to the proper process.	Response PC
Property	Process for returning property. Have to send request, property then returned to nearest property store and officer then has to travel to the property store to collect to return to the owner. Laborious and serious consideration should be given to getting property store staff to arrange on officers behalf once authorisation provided.	Response PC

Workload	Unmanageable -Workload with No time to do it and work being added even though you have high lighted that you have a high workload!!	HUB PC
Software eg Niche	Still not effective or efficient, too much duplication, sometimes takes longer to complete work than if we used slate & chalk!!	PPU PC
Too much work/ not enough People	Often hear G1s going unanswered or officers from furthest sides of BCU to attend call.	PPU/ Response PC.
RDS/AL	Persons going sick with stress reducing police levels thus officers are getting AL/RRDs refused due to low Nos.	HUB PC
Weekly FT51 Vehicle Checks	Checks to be conducted on Monday morning, vehicles often leave first thing therefore unable to complete checks as required. As a result the admin takes a number of days to resolve.	DS MCIT
Vehicle checks – POWDER – daily checks	No way of knowing who has previously submitted a vehicle defect form and no way of knowing what damage has already been found on a vehicle and reported.	
Mental Health Assessment Forms	Why are two lots of Forms Necessary?	Response PS
Annual Leave Planning Process	With so many Role and Post Changes Plans quickly dissolve	Response PS
Trying to match Resources to meet the demand	Lack of Resources	Bronze Inspector
Having two bosses, Bronze and Sector Inspectors.	Differing Priorities Between the Two	Response PS.
Constant Leave Embargos	Seems to be when AL is at a premium anyway	PC

Lack of resources which in turn causes larger workloads also CPS making Poor decision of No Decision.	Unable to manage workloads satisfactorily	Response PC

There are some common themes that arose, for instance high/ever increasing workloads and not enough time or resources to complete them which in turn increases the workload.

Some very specific to a particular role or activity. Issues around technology and its failings which hinder work that should be easier to complete.

A whole host of “stressors” and that was just from a dozen and a half of us.

So what do we do or more importantly what do South Wales Police do about these work place “Stressors?”

Well the Health and Safety at Work Act is quite specific about this. There is a clear link between workplace activities and stress and where stress has a negative impact on its employees’ health and wellbeing, the employer, namely South Wales Police, have a duty to put measures in place to reduce the amount of stress being placed on individuals in the work environments. The organisation creates the risks and they must therefore control the risks.

However, as employees we also have a duty to take care of our own health, safety and wellbeing and if you are feeling stressed at work by your work then your first port of call must be to point the issues out to your supervisor. You could have a chat with him or her or you could document it in an email. That is entirely your call but I always repeat the same mantra; if it ain’t written down, it didn’t happen.

What are the federation doing about it?

The PFEW have drafted a set of nine “Stress Management Standards” that when finalised they will be asking chief constables to sign up to to declare their commitment to the standards.

This work is ongoing and an update will be published when the details are finalised.

The Health and Safety Executive have their own set of “Stress Management Standards”. They identify six key areas -

- **Demands** – this includes issues such as workload, work patterns and the work environment.
- **Control** – how much say the person has in the way they do their work.
- **Support** – this includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues.
- **Relationships** – this includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour.

- **Role** – whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that they do not have conflicting roles.
- **Change** – how organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation.

From this list you can clearly see similarities in the list of stressors identified from a snapshot of federation representatives.

Going down the list it is clear that South Wales Police has some way to go to address these key areas identified by the HSE. How much Control can you honestly say you have in the way you work? What **is** the force's plan to address the workloads of officers that we all seem to be screaming about?

It can't have gone unnoticed from the various articles on "BOB", numerous Twitter feeds about "wellbeing Wednesday" and other initiatives that the force are seemingly trying to address the imbalance that has accrued over years of lack of investment in its most valuable asset – its staff.

It is vitally important that this work gathers momentum and delivers to service providers and isn't just a flash in the pan which can easily get consigned to the "too hard to do" pile that David CAMERON's "Big Society" currently tops.

It needs substance and investment and it must reach to all the hard to get areas of the force; the response teams in the remoter locations around the force area, the neighbourhood teams working most weekends to provide for the night-time economy, hub teams and CID teams , all struggling with the increased demands.

Time will only tell and failure is not an option.

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