

MANAGEMENT OF NEW & EXPECTANT MOTHERS WITHIN STRATHCLYDE POLICE: CASE STUDY

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Abstract

Historically law enforcement was perceived mainly as a male preserve with the notion that policing was unsuitable for women. However, the introduction of gender equality legislation, family-friendly policies and an increased commitment to the principles of equality and diversity has resulted in the percentage of female officers within forces increasing significantly.

This gender-shift has created a significant impact on resources, through high levels of maternity related abstraction and the re-deployment of pregnant officers onto “protected duties”. Police establishment numbers have routinely been formulated against an exclusively male demographic profile with no factoring for abstraction rates due to maternity leave and “protected duties”

The main aim of this research, utilising a single Case Study methodology, was to examine the potential impact the demographic shift in male: female officer ratios is having on the Police Service, and assess if the current method of managing new and expectant mothers within Strathclyde Police is adequate and sufficient to meet the demands and aspirations of not only the force and the communities it serves, but also that of its female officers. The research also aimed to establish whether the risk assessment process in place within Strathclyde Police is suitable and sufficient to manage the deployment of the increasing number of officers who are new or expectant mothers.

The literature review involved a focussed examination and analysis of the literature relating to the key areas, identified as greatly influencing and shaping the targeted outcome of successfully managing new and expectant mothers within Strathclyde Police.

The primary data was elicited through survey based, structured questionnaires and semi-structured informal interviews, supported through the analysis of secondary data in the form of historical data on training records, personnel and recruitment statistics.

Analysis of the data indicated the current method for managing new and expectant mothers within Strathclyde Police is neither providing managers with the skills and knowledge in which to carry out suitable risk assessments, necessary for the effective deployment of officers who are new or expectant mothers, nor utilising innovative flexible-working arrangements and support mechanisms essential for improved retention of female officers, and improved work-life balance.

Finally, the research identified a negative perception or change in attitude by colleagues towards new and expectant mothers, who were on “protected duties” or flexible working arrangements, which had resulted in a number of female officers not fully utilising available support mechanisms.

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