

Welcome to the team

What to expect
when someone in
your family joins
the police

adida

This booklet has been
produced in partnership
with Oscar Kilo, the National
Police Wellbeing Service.



This booklet is for family members of those that work in policing, to let you know:

- Families are important
- A little more about policing
- How to manage any concerns
- How to support their wellbeing
- Spotting any signs
- Available support

We understand the importance of our officers and staff having a wider support network both in and outside of work.

Whilst there is significant support in force, as a partner, relative or friend, we know that you could be the first to notice the way their job can be affecting them day to day.

We encourage you to have a read of this booklet and then sit down sit down and chat about it.

It's a great way to make sure everyone's on board with what's involved and how you can work together to make the transition into policing as easy as possible, whilst managing all the other responsibilities of careers and family life. Having those conversations early can really reap benefits later on.

Introduction from the Chief Constable



Families are important

It does not matter the shape and size of your family, for the vast majority, our family is a source of mutual love, strength and support. They can be the wheels that keep life moving, even when things get tough. Family members are often very proud to have a loved one in the police, they appreciate how important the job is and the difference it can make.

Family members of those that work in policing do have to put up with a lot at times. Changing plans, bedtimes missed, special occasions rescheduled. It's recognised that 'the job' has an impact on the family of an individual working for the police. This includes those living in the same home and those sharing caring responsibilities.

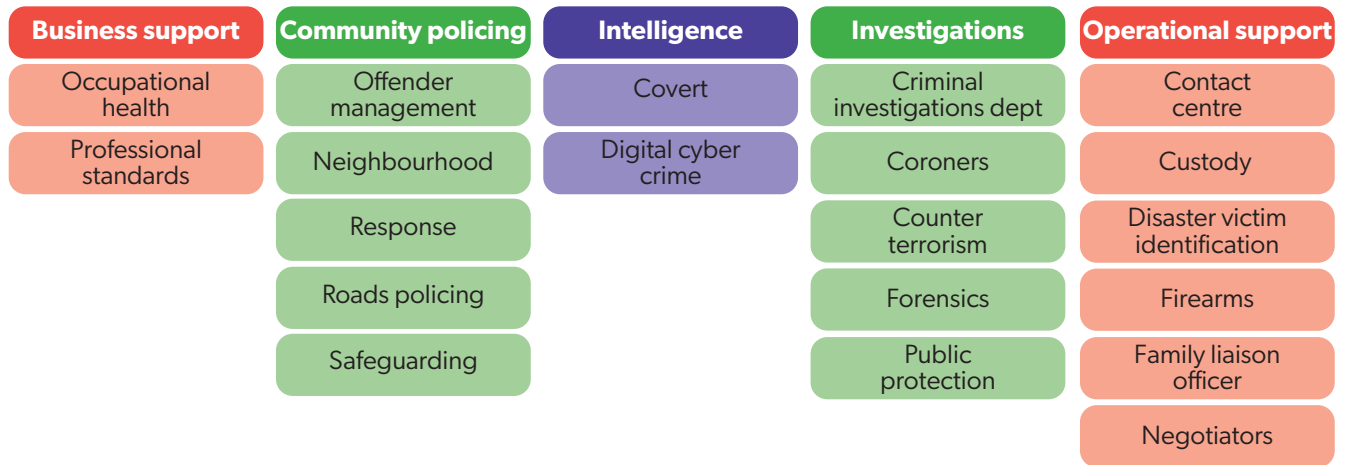
For the first time through the Police Covenant police families are getting the recognition they deserve. Recognition of the sacrifices made by those in our police forces. The Police Covenant is intended to ensure that officers, staff, volunteers and their families are not disadvantaged as a result of their service and it is enshrined in law.





A little more about policing

The five policing role families



As you can see from the previous diagram, policing in the UK is incredibly complex. In almost every department, officers, police staff, specials and volunteers work side by side to protect the public and keep them safe.

Policing works across communities by engaging with other Bluelight services, the NHS, Local Authorities and many more organisations who are working to improve the lives of their citizens.

Of course they could not do any of it without a wide range of services that are there to support them. Policing has a wealth of talent in information technology, human resources, estates, fleet management and project management, to name but a few, all of whom are a vital part of policing and very much a part of the team.

Dependent on role, your family member will be fully trained to do their job and keep themselves safe as they deal with whatever comes their way. In time they may be asked to respond to a wide variety of emergency situations, whether in person or by taking a call from a member of the public, every incident is different and that is what makes policing such an exciting and varied career.

For many joining or volunteering in the police is a new way of life and the whole family feels that too.

Schedules may need to change, commitments might get missed and you may wonder if your police family member is safe.

This can be hard to get used to and can put pressure on families. But there are ways to manage this and have support in place for when things get stressful.



How to manage any concerns

A member of your family has decided to join the police. You know it is a difficult and sometimes dangerous job – who wouldn't worry about that? It's totally normal to be concerned for their safety.

This is especially true when an emergency requires their complete focus and attention – which means they are not always free to let you know that they're okay. This can make it extra tough for family members.

But it's important to remember that police officers, staff, volunteers and specials are fully trained to deal with the situations they'll find themselves in. And that training isn't just focussed on saving lives and resolving crises – it's focussed on keeping themselves safe, too.

What factors could affect you as a friend or family member?

We do not assume that families are there simply to bend to the will of policing or that family members and partners do not have careers of their own which are equally important if not more so. We do however recognise that there are some aspects of a policing career which can have an affect on those closest to us.

- Hearing about or viewing media coverage of police officers or staff being killed or injured in the line of duty. This can trigger shock, fear and anxiety.
- Finding yourself worrying about the wellbeing of your friend or family member.
- Over time you may experience anger at the police force for not managing your friend or family member the way you feel they should be managed or anger at the way the press report on policing incidents.

- You may become resentful about the hours the job demands or shift working and the impact it is having on the family unit. You may see less of them than you did before.
- If you notice changes in the behaviour of your friend or family member after difficult incidents, you may worry about the long-term impacts of this exposure on their wellbeing. You may feel helpless or frustrated at your inability to make things better, or how to help them during these times.
- You might worry that they have become more emotionally distant over time, showing less emotion than they used to, and wanting them to return to the person they were before they joined the police force.

There can be other sources of stress, too. As a partner or family member, you may find yourself feeling envious/angry – as policing can become a real passion for some, a true vocation and at times it may feel that you are in competition with your loved one's job, that it impacts your own career and takes time away from your relationship and family life.

If you do find yourself worrying and it's affecting you, the sooner you have a conversation with your partner family member the better, to step through how you are both feeling. It may help to write things down before you talk so that you do not forget anything important.

In force help is available – take a look at the resources at the end of this booklet.

Supporting wellbeing

Those closest to us are well placed to spot changes in behaviour that could indicate something is wrong with their loved one. We want to equip families and friends to spot issues and help them access the right support.

The family and friends of those working in policing, can act as a valuable support network for the benefit of an individuals' wellbeing. Whilst forces work hard to minimise the impacts, those working within a police environment may be exposed to both physical and psychological hazards in the course of their work.

This booklet explains some of the factors that may have an impact on wellbeing, how to spot the signs that someone might be struggling and what to do to support your friend or family member.

What is wellbeing?

Wellbeing could be described as 'the state of being comfortable, healthy or happy'. It encompasses how we feel in ourselves physically, mentally and emotionally and how confident we feel to express ourselves. It is about engaging in life and with those around us and how we cope with day-to-day stresses, change and challenges. Our wellbeing changes day to day depending on what happens in our lives.

There are multiple factors that influence our wellbeing:

- **Healthy Body** – fitness, healthy lifestyle, awareness of health conditions.
- **Healthy Mind** – mental health and wellbeing, resilience, mindfulness.
- **Healthy Worklife** – balancing work and home, family support, flexible working.
- **Healthy Finances** – support to manage finances, including debt, tips for reducing costs.

The five ways to wellbeing is another useful way to keep our wellbeing in check.

1

Connect

Find ways of connecting with the people around you – family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. Meet up. Join in. Listen

2

Be active

Go for a walk or run, cycle, play a game, dance, do some gardening. Choose something to do that you enjoy.

4

Keep learning

Try something new. Rediscover an old interest. Sign up for a course. Learn to play an instrument or how to cook your favourite food.

3

Take notice

Be curious, notice the changing seasons. Be aware of the world around you and what you are feeling.

5

Give

Do a favour for a friend. Thank someone. Offer a smile.

What factors may affect the wellbeing of your friend or family member?

› Hearing details of distressing incidents

Someone working in our Force Contact Centre taking an emergency call, someone listening to recordings of interviews or someone reviewing evidence for a prosecution file.

› Seeing distressing incidents

Attending road traffic collisions, sudden deaths and violent attacks; reviewing video footage of incidents or indecent acts; attending a crime scene or processing evidence from an incident.

› Dealing with verbal and physical aggression and being assaulted

They may face verbal and physical aggression and there is a risk of assault, particularly frontline officers responding to incidents.

› Witnessing the assault of a colleague

This may happen and can be difficult to deal with.

› In depth involvement in protecting vulnerable people

Dealing with vulnerable victims including serious sexual assaults, dealing with child protection issues, domestic abuse cases, managing sex offenders and cyber crime.

➤ Exposure to police intelligence

Researching and analysing intelligence may expose our people to information which affects them negatively

➤ Pressures of workload, long hours and shift work

This can make it difficult to find time for wellbeing activities and also lead to stress and fatigue

➤ Being unable to talk with family and friends about work

Because of the sensitive nature of our work, your friend or family member may not be able to discuss details, which can make them feel isolated and difficult for them to seek support.

➤ Not looking after themselves, unhealthy lifestyles

Self-care offers numerous benefits for your overall well-being. Engaging in activities like regular exercise, getting enough sleep and eating nutritious meals can enhance your physical health, boost your energy levels and strengthen your immune system.

➤ Finances

Culturally it can be difficult for officers and staff to talk about financial struggles and this can prevent them from seeking the help that they need. Problems with finances can lead to significant stress and anxiety.



What can help?

Everyone's circumstances are different but here are some ideas to work through.

Whilst this information is about supporting your partner/family member, we appreciate family support is mutual and it may be that there are times when it is you who needs this kind of help from them.

Reflecting on whether they are stressed

They may not recognise the signs that something is affecting them, but you may notice changes in their behaviour, or see physical symptoms, so tell them you see a difference and ask how you can help

Listen to how they are feeling

Just being there for someone can make a difference

Help them learn and practise relaxation techniques

There are exercises they can do to help them relax and activities that could help such as mindfulness and yoga

Encourage them to look after their physical health

Maintaining good physical health also supports positive mental wellbeing

Accept that they might not be ready to seek help

If this is the case just remain patient, don't force them to do anything, be supportive and be there for when they are ready to talk.

Help them identify mood triggers

Share observations on their mood in a gentle and non-judgemental way. If they are happy to talk, your perspective might help them identify what is triggering their emotions.

Look after yourself

You may be affected if your friend or family member is struggling. Ensure that you are looking after yourself so that you are more able to help others.

Support them with routines to maintain their wellbeing

For shift workers this could be ensuring they have a peaceful environment if they are trying to sleep, or ensuring they can build in time for wellbeing alongside family commitments.

Signs that someone might be struggling with their wellbeing

Be alert to any changes in the behaviour of your friend or family member. Particular events such as a change of role or promotion, getting married, getting divorced, bereavement, having children or a health scare/illness can all affect our mental health.

Examples of indications that something may be wrong include:

- Missed deadlines or forgetting tasks.
- Erratic/unpredictable behaviour.
- Irritability/aggression or being tearful.
- Complaining of a lack of management support.
- Being fixated with fair treatment issues.
- Complaining of not coping with workload.
- Withdrawn and not participating in conversations.
- Being adamant that they are right and know the right way to do things.
- Increased consumption of caffeine / alcohol / smoking / sedatives.
- Inability to concentrate.
- Being indecisive.
- Memory loss / confidence loss.
- Conflicts with manager / colleagues.
- Increased errors / accidents.
- Taking on too much work / volunteering for extra work / working too many hours.
- Louder and more exuberant than usual.

How to offer emotional support

Just being able to listen and talk with your friend or family member can help.

Here are some tips for having these conversations:

- To offer support, use open questions such as 'How are you doing at the moment?'
- Have an open conversation by explaining why you are concerned and give the individual the opportunity to explain to you how they feel.
- Keep the chat positive and supportive.
- If using video link, keep your body language open and non-confrontational.

- It's important to validate an individual's feelings. Don't validate negative behaviours but instead focus on the feeling behind the behaviour, so things like 'It's normal to feel overwhelmed when you are juggling multiple tasks' or 'It's understandable that you would feel anxious returning to work' etc.
- Words such as reasonable, normal, makes sense, understandable are all good validating words.
- Try to focus on 'testifiers' so instead of 'you're feeling lonely' say something like 'it sounds like you're feeling lonely' 'you seem to be feeling lonely' or 'I'm hearing that you're feeling lonely' These are helpful when you are trying to get someone to share more and helps to avoid you sounding like you are making assumptions.



- Use words such as brave and proud to strengthen a visible action, so for example 'you've made a brave step reaching out for support'.
- Explore the individual's feelings and identify what their goal is for the end of the conversation. Don't make promises, be open and honest. So for example, give them a time frame when you can call them back rather than a specific, I will call on Friday at 12pm (in case you can't make that) use, 'I'll call you before the end of the week' or 'I'll make contact sometime next week'.
- Explain that support is available and you're there if they need you.
- Don't judge them or make any assumptions about why they may be feeling unwell or how they may be feeling.
- Remain calm even if the person may be tearful and upset.

What practical support can you offer?

If your friend or family member is open to receiving help you could help by:

- Research information that might be helpful such as explanations of mental health conditions and what can help; self-help guides; Apps that might help such as Calm, Headspace etc.
- If your friend or family member is going to visit their GP you could help them write down questions to ask and key points about how they have been feeling and anything that might have triggered poor health.
- Help organise appointments or paperwork such as prescriptions.
- Support them by going to appointments with them to provide reassurance.
- Offer to help with practical tasks such as helping with childcare, getting some shopping in if they are struggling to get out or running errands for them.

What support is available locally?

Occupational Health

Our Occupational Health (OH) team promotes physical, mental, and social well-being of our employees by proactive management of the interaction between health and work.

We provide independent, impartial advice to line managers, employees and provide assurance that our employees are fit to undertake their roles and when they are not, provide advice in returning them to work at the right time with the right support.

We also work closely with other teams across the force such as wellbeing, health and safety and people teams to maintain the health of our workforce and ensure employees are able to do their job safely, effectively and without harm to themselves or others.

Mental Health Peer Support

We have over individuals in our workforce who have been trained to provide peer support – a confidential, neutral friend to listen and signpost.

All police personnel can view details on our intranet, on the health and wellbeing pages.

Employee Assistance Programme

Our Police Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) offers support on a wide variety of issues, helping you to work towards realistic, achievable solutions. It is provided by

Service Overview:

Welfare Support Team

Our welfare support team is the next level of support after mental health peer support. The team offer one to one support, including advice on difference mental health disorders, welfare assessment and referral to other support if necessary. Contact them:

Phone

Email

Counselling

We have a team of counsellors with expertise in a variety of areas including CBT, trauma, relationships, NLP, mindfulness, addiction, hypnotherapy and more.

Your friend or family member can self-refer for counselling by contacting our Occupational Health Team:

Phone

Email

Volunteer Chaplains

Our volunteer chaplains are there to provide support to those who seek assistance, irrespective of their religious background. They offer a friendly confidential 'listening ear' about whatever situation or subject.

Email



Police Federation

The Police Federation offer welfare support to Police Officers. Police Staff can also take advantage of the different discounts and schemes that they offer.

Phone

Email



Unison

UNISON offer welfare support to Police Staff who are members.

Phone

Email



**POLICE TREATMENT
CENTRES**

Police Treatment Centres

The Police Treatment Centres is a registered Charity providing treatment and support, including intensive, police-specific, physiotherapy and rehabilitation, for injured and ill Police Officers, Retired Officers, and Police Staff. Contact your nearest centre:

Phone

Email

Oscar Kilo

Oscar Kilo, the National Police Wellbeing Service has a wealth of resources and services specifically aimed at the families of officers, staff, volunteers and specials, to improve family life.

oscarkilo.org.uk



OSCAR KILO

Police Care

Providing practical, emotional and financial support for serving and former police officers, staff and volunteers who suffer harm as a result of their policing role that is confidential and impartial.

Phone: **0300 012 0030**

policecare.org.uk



Shout

Shout is the UK's first 24/7 text service, free on all major mobile networks, for anyone in crisis anytime, anywhere. It's a place to go if you're struggling to cope and you need immediate help.

By texting '**SHOUT**' to '**85258**' you will be put in touch with a trained Crisis Volunteer (CV) who will chat using trained techniques via text. The service is designed to help individuals to think more clearly and to take their next steps to feeling better.

shout
85258

here for you 24/7

Mind

Urgent help tool, information and support, booklets about mental health, online community, personal stories, resources for emergency services.

Infoline: **0300 123 3393**

mind.org.uk



Samaritans

24 hour listening service

Freephone: **116 123**

samaritans.org



Cruse

Offering support, advice and information to children, young people and adults when someone dies.

Phone: **0808 808 1677**

cruse.org.uk



Police Benevolent Fund

Helps serving and retired officers, police staff and their families suffering from hardship or distress. Contact your local branch

Phone

Email



College of
Policing



**The National Police
Wellbeing Service**

If you have a family member or close friend who works in the police,
we're here for you too. It's a role that throws up unique challenges
and this can have a wider impact on the wellbeing of families.

You'll find more resources and support
for families and friends on our website:



oscarkilo.org.uk/family-life