The Gender Agenda in an Age of Austerity

Abstract

This article reports on a research project undertaken to assess the implications and consequences of the Comprehensive Spending Review and associated Force Change Programmes upon the female police workforce in England and Wales, alongside wider policing reforms across the United Kingdom. The research examines the views of female and male police officers and staff with a view to updating and reviewing evidence of progress in relation to the continued development and achievement of the gender agenda aims (BAWP, 2006) and the Home Office 2010 report 'Assessment of Women in the Police Service'. Focus groups, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were undertaken between November 2012 and June 2013, across fourteen force areas, in addition to national policing bodies, local and national representative staff support associations and diversity and equality practitioners. The findings underpin the recommendations Gender Agenda 3 launched in October 2014 by the British Association for Women in Policing.

The Gender Agenda in an Age of Austerity

Background

Policing policy and practice has witnessed the gradual alignment of the twin agendas of 'public reassurance' and 'workforce representativeness' within policing in England and Wales (Johnston, 2006). This convergence is based upon the assumption that a representative police service will enhance public confidence in the police, with real consequences for police effectiveness and legitimacy (Home Office, 1991; HMIC, 1992; Home Office, 2003; Home Office, 2004; Casey, 2008; Flanagan, 2008; Home Office, 2008; ACPO, 2010; Jackson and Bradford, 2010; Tyler, 2011). For example, with regard to the issue of police effectiveness, 'fair and equitable treatment' of all members of the Service has been acknowledged as impacting upon the external quality of service delivered by the public (HMIC, 1992), with Equality, Diversity and Human Rights viewed as central to the provision of excellent public service (ACPO, 2010). Representativeness has also been identified as significant for recruitment, ensuring that the Service is drawing on the broadest range of people, skills and experience available to it (HMIC, 2004), facilitating innovation and creativity in problem-solving and decision making, enhancing performance and community-police relations, factors presented as central for acquiring public trust, confidence, cooperation and effectiveness. Workforce representativeness has also been associated with staff satisfaction, with consequences for reported staff grievances and complaints alongside retention (Flanagan, 2008).

Despite the existence of an aspiration towards representativeness, it is evident that the history of female employment within the police service has historically been subject to periods of expansion and retraction (Joyce, 2011). However, key developments have taken place over the past fifty years resulting in the creation of 'a gender equality architecture' with significant gains for both female officers and staff within the service; and for vulnerable communities and under-represented groups externally. The ambition for a representative police service may however be under threat due to fundamental changes to the policing landscape. These changes were initially 'prompted by the global financial crisis that erupted in 2008' (Waddington, 2011: 197) but also resulted from a change in government. In May 2010, the Coalition government announced details of its five year policy programme which committed to cutting bureaucracy, granting police forces greater freedom from Ministerial control, reviewing police terms and conditions and local accountability (HM Government, 2010). This was quickly followed by the Home Office (2010) consultation document 'Policing in the 21st Century: Reconnecting Police and the People' which proposed scrapping Police Authorities and the phasing out of the National Police Improvement Agency; two key bodies tasked with the monitoring and oversight of diversity progression under the previous accountability structure.

In October 2010, HM Treasury published its Comprehensive Spending Review, which awarded that police spending would fall by 4% each year of the spending settlement. The review proposed 20% cuts to the police budget, front loaded for the first two years and ignored the government-commissioned report by Sir Denis O'Connor 'Valuing the Police' (HMIC, 2010) which warned that policing cuts over 12% would not be achievable without damaging the frontline (Federation News, May 2011).   As part of the comprehensive spending review the Women's National Commission and Women in Policing Steering Group were abolished, whilst the remit and budget of both the

1

Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), along with the Government Equalities Office also suffered significant reductions (Fawcett, 2013).

In March 2011 Tom Winsor's Independent Review of Police Officer and Staff Remuneration and Conditions was published, with a remit to enabling the police service "to manage its resources to serve the public more cost effectively, taking account of the current state of public finances" (Winsor, 2011: 5). A second report published in 2012 covered police entry into the service, pay progression and service length and officer and staff pay and conditions (Winsor, 2012). Lord Hutton's (March, 2011) 'Independent Public Service Pensions Commission: Final Report' (HM Treasury, 2011), Peter Neyroud's (2011) 'Review of Police Leadership and Training' and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (2011) 'Demanding Times; the Front Line and Policing Visibility' followed shortly afterwards.

More recently, the HMIC (2013) report 'Policing in Austerity: Rising to the Challenge' and HMIC (2014) Policing in Austerity: Meeting the Challenge' analysed the financial, workforce and service delivery impact of the budget reduction upon the 43 Home Office funded forces in England and Wales. The 2013 inspection concluded that 'overall, the response of police forces to the financial challenge has been good', maintaining 'most forces have plans in place to balance their books by the end of the spending review period; and while they have had to make some substantial changes to the way they work in order to achieve this, they have succeeded in increasing the proportion of the workforce on the front line' (HMIC, 2013: 14-15). Forces, the report argues 'have risen to the challenge of austerity', balancing their books, protecting their front line (as best they can), whilst remaining efficient and effective (HMIC, 2014: 33).

Despite such progress in relation to individual forces' spending requirements, the impact upon the equality and diversity infrastructure, including dedicated resources and strategy has not been without consequence. While the 2014 HMIC report comments that 'The profile of the police workforce in terms of rank mix and diversity (such as gender and black and minority representation) has remained largely unchanged over the period of the spending review', attention continues to be directed towards the underrepresentation of women across the rank and role structure of the Service and within Specialist Posts. Thus, the Stevens report launched in November 2013 'Policing for a Better Britain: Report of the Independent Police Commission', recommended greater use of the powers within the 2006 and 2010 equalities legislation, to 'review data on discriminatory treatment and disproportionate representation' with a view to correcting what was described as 'the still poor' representation of women and ethnic minorities in the police (p.18). The Stevens report further suggests that the EHRC consider initiating legal compliance action where explanations from forces are inadequate.

Taken together, the developments and reforms affecting policing, listed above, have led to wider concerns being raised regarding the new model of accountability introduced by the Coalition government, which is based upon requirements to publish information about decision-making and equality data underpinned by the assumption that transparency and public scrutiny will be adequate to drive public sector performance on equality. Whether the new model of diversity is able to facilitate real evidence of progress within the police service remains to be seen, but has been called into question by participants in the authors' research, to which we now turn.

2

The Gender Agenda

In 2000 and 2001, The British Association for Women in Policing (BAWP), a national representative staff support association supporting the needs of women police officers and staff, was actively involved in a partnership of several organisations in the development of "The Gender Agenda". The document sought to highlight the working environment experienced by women in the police service, identifying barriers to progress and leading to a number of good practice recommendations on what the Service and individuals could do to improve the situation. This work was updated by BAWP and the National Police Improvement Agency (NPIA) leading to the publication of the Gender Agenda 2 which sought to 'develop a common agenda of the issues affecting women and female potential to progress within the Service'(BAWP, 2006).

The Gender Agenda 2 set out anticipated challenges and long term aims for the organisation over a five year period up to 2011. These included the aim for the police service to demonstrate consistently that it values women in policing; to have women's voices represented within key policy forums; the achievement of a gender, ethnicity and sexual orientation balance across the rank and role structure and specialisms (workplace representativeness); the achievement of work/life balance and a successful career, appreciating the competing demands placed upon the female police workforce; and finally, to ensure women are provided with a working environment and equipment of the right quality and standard (BAWP, Gender Agenda 2, 2006). Action points were identified under each of these aims, relating to strategies which included further research, awareness-raising, and training and development. Following its publication, The Gender Agenda 2 was cited as an example of good practice within the Home Office report 'Assessment of Women in the Police Service' (2010). BAWP continues to contribute to national police task forces dedicated to a range of gender and diversity related issues and remains an active member of the European Network of Policewomen (ENP) and The International Association of Women Police (IAWP).

In a jointly funded project by BAWP and Manchester Metropolitan University, the authors worked to update and review evidence of progress in relation to the continued development and achievement of the Gender Agenda. In particular, the research examined some of the implications and consequences of austerity measures and associated force change programmes upon the female police workforce in England and Wales, and wider policing reforms across the United Kingdom. This article presents the main findings resulting from the research.

Methodology

The present study entailed a mixed methods approach. Initially, an online survey was sent to Representative Staff Support Associations in July 2012, followed by a series of diversity and equality practitioner interviews. Finally, 31 focus groups were conducted, in forces across the United Kingdom. The research team selected forces to include representation from those forces identified by HMIC as planning to reduce their workforce by more than the national average of 13.3%, alongside representation of forces planning lower than average workforce reductions. Participating forces were also selected to ensure coverage across the United Kingdom, with both rural and urban forces included within the sample.

Within each participating force, focus group sessions were divided between;

1. Diversity and Equality Practitioner, Female Staff Support Network Representatives and Human Resources participants;
2. Male and Female Parent and Carer sessions;
3. Male and Female Specialist Branches / Units / Roles

The objective throughout was to identify and develop a common agenda of the issues currently affecting women within the Service. The aim of the research was to allow respondents to discuss their opinions and views regarding the outcome of policing reforms upon women and their ability to achieve their potential.

Over two hundred and fifty individuals took part. Assurances of anonymity were given for research participants to ensure that they could express their opinions freely. The findings are not representative of the general population of officers and staff within the police service as a whole, but explore complex issues across a broad cross-section of the ranks, grades and roles including specialist posts. Focus groups and interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed. In order to ensure confidentiality, names of respondents were not recorded on the transcripts, and instead transcripts note the rank/grade and role of the officer or staff member as a means of identifying them for the purpose of data analysis. Transcripts were analysed using NVivo in order to identify core research themes.

Findings

A representative police service?

As noted in the 'background' section of this paper, the goal of the police service is to represent the communities it serves, and has therefore aimed for representative recruitment. Indeed, proportional increases in female police officers are commonly presented either as indicators of progress in relation to the goal of achieving a representative police service (see Home Office, 2010), or alternatively, as evidence to challenge concerns regarding the impact of austerity upon the representativeness of police forces. For example, in 2014 HMIC reported a lack of change in the percentage of both female officers and minority ethnic officers between 2010/11 and 2014. According to HMIC's report, women constitute 28% of police officers, compared with 39% of the entire workforce. Similarly, people from minority ethic backgrounds make up 5% of police officers, compared to 6% of the entire workforce, the same figures as those from 2010/11.

These figures therefore suggest that the police service is continuing to be representative in spite of staff losses due to austerity measures. Our findings advocate caution with respect to the arrival at such a conclusion. In particular, we suggest that the rhetoric regarding proportional advances masks variation and complexity including numerical workforce reductions in the total police strength, losses in female and minority ethnic officers, reductions of women within particular ranks and reductions in female joiners. To illustrate this, it is useful to examine Police Service Strength data, which in 2009 revealed that, excluding British Transport Police, the total police service strength stood at 144,274 (FTE officers), of which 36,187 were female (25.1% of the total) (Home Office, 2009). By March 2013 the total police service strength stood at 129,956 (full-time equivalent officers), of which 35,471 were female, representing 27% of the total (Home Office, 2012). Thus, although the number of female officers reduced during this time (by 716), the proportion of police

4

officers who are women actually increased, marking a move towards the achievement of the APA and Home Office aspiration to reach a 35% representation of women (see Brown and Woolfenden, 2011). However, it is frequently the significant reduction in the number of male officers which masks the reduction of female officers, and in turn raises the proportion of female police officers. For example, in 2012 the proportion of female constables increased from 28% in 2009 to 29% in 2013, however this figure masks a reduction of 1125 female officers, due to the very high number of male officer losses within this rank (9347 male officers) (Home Office, 2013).

There has also been limited progress in terms of the number of women within ACPO ranks, although we suggest that this data must be placed within the context of continuing under-representation of women at senior ranks, significant individual force variation and alongside the extremely heavy workforce reductions to the female staff workforce. Again, Police Service Strength data reveals that in 2013, 37 women were in ACPO ranks (0.1% of female officers, comprising 18% of ACPO ranks) (Home Office, 2013). This represents an increase in women in ACPO ranks when compared to 2009 data (35 women in ACPO ranks, comprising 16% of ACPO ranks). However, 16 of the 43 forces in England and Wales remain without female officers within ACPO ranks, whilst 13 forces have witnessed a reduction in female ACPO officers since 2009. Interestingly, of these 13 forces, only 2 of these forces observed corresponding reductions within their male ACPO ranks, with 7 of these forces actually increasing their male ACPO membership.

Under the new model of diversity discussed above, Police and Crime Commissioners are no longer required to publish an annual plan on female recruitment, retention and progression, and they are not directed to include targets to increase representation within specialist units. Questions were consequently raised within the focus groups regarding current Police and Crime Commissioners' appreciation of; and commitment to, 'equality and diversity'; with several participants expressing doubts regarding the adequacy of current monitoring and accountability structures (issues set to become reiterated in the light of anticipated changes to the PCC structure in 2017). Participants raised concerns about the considerable cuts to national representative police support associations, force level diversity units, dedicated equality and diversity resources within forces and support networks. Evidence from our research therefore suggests that the diversity and equality accountability and monitoring mechanisms at national and force level are currently under threat. This view was expressed by a female equality and diversity practitioner, who observed that, whilst under the public sector equality duty there remains a responsibility on the Police and Crime Commissioners to publish data; "how forces publish is up to them". Consequently, in the absence of a legal requirement (and adequate monitoring structures), this participant identified potential barriers in requiring forces to put together an action plan based on the data published, stating: "the problem that we do have is that there is no legal, you know, forces will have to make up their mind where they are going to prioritise".

Equality and diversity practitioners reported diminished capacity and remits, and reduced services towards staff and vulnerable communities. An example of this can be seen in the reduced ability of support organisations to organise conferences, workshops and personal development events due to a lack of funding. In response to the online survey distributed in 2012, the National Association of Muslim Police reported only being able to deliver approximately 20% of the services previously offered to members and communities, relying heavily upon external funding. Further, BAWP and NTPA reported that they had similarly been unable to provide professional development workshops

5

during 2012. In addition to this, research participants reported a downscaling of aims alongside potential failure to deliver on equality and diversity commitments both internally and externally:

> **[Female Equality and Diversity Practitioner]** The same amount of work can't be delivered...I think when you see the cuts, and mainstreaming hasn't happened as quickly as maybe it could have. There will be issues for the service in terms of meeting some of those obligations we were committed to and that is external, an external impact but I actually do think for most officers and staff they see that impact in the sense that they see that the support isn't there when it is needed. It is not something that affects us hugely in day to day but it is when there is issues, when there are problems that the group simply isn't there to provide individual support the way it was.

Indeed, for some, dedicated equality and diversity resources/units had reduced their remit to such a degree that participants reported that their units had been transformed and subsequently limited to merely 'providing returns'. According to one equality and diversity practitioner, the work has become "about dealing with issues and queries from the Home Office or the Equality Commission, rather than actually implementing initiatives". On this basis then, participants reported that whilst the data is being collected, action on the data "isn't actually happening". As such, a number of participants working in the areas of equality, diversity and inclusion argued that there was a "lack of commitment" and "a lack of leadership from the government" with regard to these issues. This view is apparent within the following comment made by one National Representative Staff Support Organisation member who stated; "I am not aware [of] a single piece of work/strategy/initiative by the Home Office which shows a real commitment".

Furthermore, our participants suggest that recent developments relating to austerity measures and the shifting policing landscape, alongside the mainstreaming of equality and diversity within forces, threaten the progress made to date and raise questions regarding the value of women within the police services of England and Wales in particular. Moreover, further developments associated with the impact of austerity and policing reforms upon training and development; changes to recruitment and progression; shift pattern alterations; and collaboration, raise a number of additional challenges for forces. These developments raise questions regarding the sustainability of any progress made to date and the commitment of government, Police and Crime Commissioners and police forces to equality and diversity issues. Projection regarding the cumulative impact of these developments in relation to service provision is evident within the following comment made by a female officer:

> **[Female Officer]** You have to then look at as a public service where we are then actually representing an extremely diverse culture, much more diverse than what we had ten years ago, that actually, if our own organisation and the government is allowing it to fall by the wayside, actually as a service, what are we providing to our diverse community? And I think in five years' time, the actual demographics of the police service, their own staff, police officers in particular, will change dramatically … because by then, only then, will the public realise that they have gone back to this white male police service of the 1960s and they won't have what was a fantastic police service that we all worked so hard to generate over the last ten years.

Three Decades of Progress Under Threat

To begin this section on a positive note, in canvassing the perspectives of officers and staff with longer policing careers, it became evident that there was overwhelming agreement that times have changed and that the treatment, opportunities, working conditions and equipment provided to the female police workforce had improved over the last thirty years. Female officers discussed examples of the progress that had been made within the service during the course of their career, with several participants noting that they "do not get called Plonks anymore" and with other female officers noting the removal of menstruation-related questions from the interview process. For example, one female specialist officer recalled being asked; "when you have your period, are you able to carry on normally or are you going to have to…?" As revealed within these accounts, the focus group data suggest that female officers (and some staff) continue to recognise advances made by the service in relation to the general treatment of the female workforce. Nonetheless, despite clear narratives of progress, participants also reported that significant difficulties remain for many women, particularly once they had caring responsibilities. Moreover, these difficulties were viewed by male and female officers and staff (across the rank and grade structure), as becoming more prevalent as forces responded to challenges driven by austerity.

It is significant therefore that, while gender per se was no longer perceived as a barrier to career progression, the overwhelming consensus from participants was that family circumstances and caring responsibilities could:

> **[Female Officer]** Most female constables in this force don't think there is a problem with being female, they feel that they have got equality and everything is fine until they start looking for promotion or start a family and then suddenly they start feeling these hurdles around.

Thus, as females are proportionally more likely than males to hold the primary role for childcare and wider caring responsibilities, the barrier created by caring responsibilities is more likely to impact on females and their career development. Focus group participants gave examples of females, either themselves or individuals known to them, who had taken the decision not to seek promotion, not to attend certain training events, or to shape their career in a certain way, due to caring responsibilities. For instance, one male officer stated that whilst he had attended courses and his career had progressed as a result, his wife had taken a "back-step in her career", having not applied for training courses due to childcare commitments. However, "now the children are older and going to school, she's been able to take up her career after sort of ten years of sitting at the back." The impact of residential training was felt by a large number of participants as being "very challenging for a lot of women, in particular those with caring responsibilities" (female trainer). This participant stated that this is a significant barrier to applying for posts because "if you are going to apply for a lot of specialist posts, one of the conditions of getting in is that you pass the training course and a lot of people won't even apply because they think 'I can't possibly go to the college'."

Significantly, caring responsibilities were considered to pose a whole range of difficulties for staff and officers (of both sexes) in relation to training, maintaining fitness, personal development, and opportunities for vertical and horizontal progression and as such, comprised a key theme within the focus group transcripts. For example, one participant described the personal and professional "conundrums" faced as a working parent:

7

> **[Female Part-Time Officer]** You do have to keep swimming with the tide because the minute
> you dip out of that… all the degrees I've done, the work, the professional qualifications I
> have done, working my way up, does feel…like that is a total waste of the last…fifteen years
> of my life and you do end up with thinking, how does having a child make me feel that way?

It is interesting to note that whilst examples were provided of female colleagues reaching senior
ranks and grades across the service and within specialist posts, participants frequently commented
on the family circumstances of such individuals, notably that those female officers in more senior
ranks "don't have children, they don't have to care for elderly relatives, they can take work home"
(female officer). This was often compared to their own situation, in that career ambition was not
always viewed as feasible for females in the police service once they have children:

> **[Female Officer]** Before I had kids I gave everything to the extent that my husband was
> asking me, you know, you have got to spend more time at home. I was very into my work,
> very ambitious and those are the females that can get through the ranks but not many of
> them. If you are on high potential development or accelerated promotion then yes you get
> through the ranks but normal people that aren't on that scheme, you will never get through
> there because the only people that are high ranking female officers are on accelerated
> promotion and don't have children.

Difficulties were evidently compounded for part time officers and staff, dual police families (where
both partners were employed within the Service within officer or staff roles), members of the older
police workforce and those on alternative working arrangements. A female officer within a dual
police family described how the management of shift patterns between her and her husband
"ultimately stopped me, held me back because I didn't get that 'Acting Inspector' because I couldn't
be there fore the briefings". Similarly, a part-time officer with caring responsibilities for her father
and brother, as well as her child, stated that being part-time is "frowned upon…my manager has
actually said to me: 'you are part-time, term-time, come in when you like it time.'" Part-time officers
and staff frequently discussed feeling that they needed to do more, and work harder when they
were at work, in order to demonstrate their value to their colleagues. As an example, this participant
went on to explain that, although she manages a larger workload than her full-time colleagues, being
part-time is "not something they want to allow you to have, they want to have bums on seats in
officers and if you are doing a quality job they are not interested as long as your bum is on that seat
on that day." As a result, concern was raised by participants that policies relating to change within
the police service are not "gender-neutral" and "have a really adverse impact on the people with
care needs, who need flexible working and…these people are feeling really undervalued and feeling
like they are being managed out of the organisation" (female officer).

Accounts therefore highlighted both an increasing loss of flexibility as austerity measures have been
implemented within forces, alongside a lack of respect for the work undertaken by those working
part-time, or on alternative working patterns. Indeed, the key theme which dominated most of the
sessions and generated the most emotive responses relates to the common perception that forces
had moved backwards in relation to their flexible working implementation. Female focus group
participants, equality and diversity practitioners and Union representatives reported a general
unwillingness on the part of line managers to accommodate alternative working arrangements
within their departments. These developments were described as generating considerable practical

8

difficulties for parents, carers and those with complex domestic lives (including for those within dual police families). As a result there were reports that some officers, including those with considerable experience were leaving the service, as they were unable to secure flexible working conditions. From a managerial perspective, the line manager participants (who often wore multiple hats as mothers and supervisors) expressed difficulties in finding solutions. This serves to highlight the continuing need to reduce bureaucratic negotiation of terms and conditions of flexible working, advocating greater access to HR support, and encouragement from superiors to facilitate creative solutions.

Importantly, while the value attributed to alternative working patterns was not hard to spot in the accounts of those applying for them, the business case for flexible working including the retention of valuable officers and staff, namely reduced recruitment and training costs along with reduced sickness absence and improved morale and commitment, was often missed in the accounts of line managers themselves. This serves to reiterate the Gender Agenda 2 (2006), Home Office (2010) and College of Policing (2013), and Stevens (2013) findings regarding the need to revisit this issue once again.

Several focus group participants therefore questioned the value attributed to the contributions of individuals within these groups, by the Service, and individual forces. A lack of respect towards some members of the older police workforce was also highlighted by participants, with members of the older police workforce keen to highlight their continuing need for role mobility, progression and opportunity, even within the current climate of financial constraint. Older officers and staff were not ready to be 'written off' or viewed as 'on the wind down', advocating a need to consider career pathways for older men and women. Older officers voiced concerns that the Service might be "overlooking [or] missing those opportunities for the older worker" (female officer). Indeed, a distinction was frequently made by participants regarding the disparity between the rhetoric of a police service committed to equality, diversity and workplace representativeness, and the reality of individuals' experiences of working in the police service at this time. Participants, both officers and staff, suggested that whilst the policies were in place, the level of commitment to enacting the policies was not. These were often described as "tick box activities, saying things but whether it [the police service] goes along and means it is another" (female officer).

Training and Development.

Job insecurity, increased workloads and remits remained the major concerns articulated by police staff, whilst police officers described anxiety generated in relation to potential redeployment and role insecurity. Despite their differences, it is significant that both officers and staff acknowledged the continuing salience of difficulties faced by a reported inflexibility and lack of creativity regarding the length, duration, timing and location of much training. These are issues previously identified within both the Gender Agenda 2, (2006) and Home Office (2010) report.

> **[Male Officer]** I still think they have got a long way to go with training, they are still doing the residential courses, a friend of mine has just gone on mounted section and he has had to go away for sixteen weeks, well you can imagine that if you were a female with young children that would just be virtually impossible and to be honest for him it has been virtually impossible, sixteen weeks away, and another person, the five day intelligence course, that

9

has created an issue because it is so far away from his house and again it is just, it is still four nights away from home.

Focus group accounts described increased centralisation of training, less-flexibility, and less advance notice provided for training. These have clear implications for access, providing those with caring obligations, those on part-time and flexible working arrangements, and dual police families with practical difficulties which impact their potential for career progression, individual development and role mobility.

Both officers and staff acknowledged a reduction in training and personal development opportunities (including a reduction in structured attachments and secondments), with all but two forces reporting significant cuts or the cessation of non-mandatory training for officers and staff, in addition to the withdrawal of financial support from forces for personal and professional development. It is therefore worth highlighting the value attributed to such opportunities by our research participants in relation to retention and progression. Female officers and staff considered such experiences to be essential for recruitment, particularly within specialist branches and roles. We were informed that attachments, secondments, shadowing and 'taster days' enabled participants to assess their suitability for roles, providing insight into the functioning of departments, opportunities for 'myth busting' and providing transparency regarding the realities of role activities and requirements. These development opportunities were additionally viewed as key methods for obtaining experience within different roles, which was considered essential for promotion and for horizontal progression. Having a 'taster' of such roles gives individuals the opportunity to confirm whether or not they are suited to the role, which as a result means that the more suitable candidates apply for the posts when they appear.

However, once again parents, carers, part-time and flexible workers, particularly those without established support networks, identified additional barriers in accessing such opportunities, highlighting the need to support and recognise the needs of all women, regardless of working pattern. There were reports of people leaving the service because they are unable to attend residential courses, and as a result are unable to progress. Single parents were particularly concerned about the "impossibility" of attending residential training, with one female officer asking "what do I do with my child while I am away for the night?" As a result, a significant number of participants who are parents and carers reported that they "do not apply for training courses because you know that you are not going to be able to attend them because of your personal circumstances" (female officer). In addition, the inflexibility of training was identified as a particular barrier for part-time officers and staff. From an employee's perspective, booking a training day "that fits in with the hours that you want to work at the location you want to go" was described as 'traumatic' (female part-time officer), whist from a line management perspective, there is a very real difficulty in balancing mandatory training requirements with the reality of shift work:

> **[Female Line Manager] V**ery often I think, yeah they are asking me to send eight staff on that training, I've got four coming on shift but it is mandatory training. It is absolutely unbalanceable and with the shift, there is always a natural assumption that they are always going to be there, Monday to Friday 8 till 4 and ours is not. So training generally, we are always scraping the barrel…which means that people aren't getting developed.

10

The findings therefore suggest that there is a need for innovation and creativity to respond to the different challenges facing women (and increasingly men) throughout their career life course, providing pathways with variable entry and exit points to prevent wastage of skills and experience. This might be for example through attachments or secondments. Such opportunities would allow individuals to move into different roles according to their changing needs, and could allow those facing incompatibilities in their working patterns and role requirements to move into alternative posts with more suitable conditions. This would serve to enhance retention and to enable officers to reach their potential whilst at the same time maintaining a healthy work-life balance.

Line Manager Professional Development and Support

The marked reduction in training provision did not just affect women with aspirations of horizontal and vertical progression. Focus group participants suggested that these developments impacted upon the adequacy of the service to fulfil its duty of care and responsiveness in relation to the welfare needs of women. Hence, a further significant issue identified by our participants referred to a perceived lack of support, training and personal development available to line managers, who frequently expressed feeling ill-equipped to deal sensitively with a host of welfare issues for staff under their care. There is, they reported, an "expectation that you are promoted and you just get on with it" (female officer). In particular, line managers consistently articulated concerns that they lacked knowledge of, and confidence in, applying a whole range of policies affecting the experiences of many sections of the female police workforce. Explicit reference was made within the accounts to flexible and part-time working, maternity issues (including pregnancy and support for those on maternity leave and returning to work), surrogacy and adoption, sickness, support for the older police workforce (including menopause, eldercare, bereavement and career development) and managing mixed teams (comprising staff and officers) and dual police families.

Male and female line manager participants frequently expressed their desire for the provision of training, mentoring and/or coaching within these areas, also alluding to the current inadequacy of the HR support available to line managers, resulting from police staff workforce reductions, force restructure, centralisation and regionalisation. There were calls for the provision of mentoring for those moving into senior management roles, reflecting the common assertion within the focus groups that; "you carry on and just do what you have got to do and figure it out for yourself'. This situation was reported by participants as generating considerable anxiety on the part of those involved; "I sit here and question myself 90% of the day, have I got that right?" (female officer).

 These findings are also particularly salient in the light of recent moves to increase spans of control (namely, increasing the number of people supervised by each manager) (see HMIC, 2013). Indeed, with the reduction in the numbers of senior ranks, our findings suggest that this development may well have unanticipated consequences (particularly for parents, carers, part time and flexible workers). Women (and of course men) within senior ranks are finding themselves on call more often, less able to take rest days, and increasingly carrying multiple responsibilities. This in turn has significant consequences in terms of work-life balance, and the management of complex home lives; an issue which is set to become more pressing as the workforce gets older.

Conclusion

In 2006, the Gender Agenda 2 questioned whether the Service and Government really wanted to make its rhetoric of a diverse representative workforce a reality. While it is evident that much progress has been achieved in relation to gender diversity within the police service over the past thirty years, our findings direct attention to a number of recent developments which, cumulatively, ought to sensitise police leaders and policy makers to the imminent threat to equality gains made to date, resulting from a climate of austerity and associated force change programmes (see also Silvestri, 2015). Reflecting the observations of Holdaway (2015) in relation to BME recruitment, retention, and related matters, it seems that following a period of investment and commitment into making the vision of representativeness a reality, interest has waned resulting in an urgent need for a reinvigorated long-term strategy for policy and action, for both diversity and equality.

The focus group and questionnaire data from our research suggest that while gender, in and of itself, is no longer viewed as a barrier to a successful career and the achievement of female potential, the service is currently failing to address the needs of several sections of the female (and male) workforce. The findings therefore raise questions regarding the value placed upon parents and carers, part-time workers, police staff, dual police families, the older police workforce and those on alternative working arrangements. These findings cast doubt upon the potential for these groups to achieve a work/life balance and a successful career, with consequences for retention, progression and representativeness across the rank and role structure of the Service in addition to specialist posts.

The findings from our research have informed the Gender Agenda 3 publication launched at New Scotland Yard earlier this year. The strategic plan comprises a workable document which details how the British Association for Women in Policing will work with the service, individual forces and with individual officers and members of police staff to support and progress women within the police service. While the comprehensive list of recommendations emerging from our research findings may be accessed within the original report and within the Gender Agenda 3 strategy (Laverick and Cain, 2014; BAWP, 2015), we detail the key recommendations below.

The most significant finding to emerge from the focus group data and individual equality and diversity practitioner interviews relates to the urgent need to strengthen top-level commitment to equality and diversity issues. This article has suggested that there is a pressing need for the newly elected Conservative government, senior police leaders and police and crime commissioners to rearticulate the recognition that equality, diversity and human rights remain central to the provision of excellent public services. It is imperative that the communication of this message is disseminated throughout forces and across rank and grade structures to ensure workforce appreciation regarding the link between internal workforce diversity and external service provision, public confidence in policing, police legitimacy, effectiveness and police-community relations.

With this recommendation in mind, our research findings indicate the need to review the current model of diversity. We suggest in particular, the re-establishment of a national framework for improvement, to be delivered locally through the equality objectives of individual forces and Police and Crime Commissioners. The new framework must have national oversight through the process of HMIC, College of Policing, Human Rights Commission inspection, in consultation with National Representative Staff Support Associations and Equality and Diversity Practitioner Networks.

12

Given the reduced capacity of dedicated equality and diversity resources within forces and human resources departments, as detailed within our findings, there is a pressing need to enhance the transparency of equality and diversity related issues, including the need for enhanced measurement and monitoring. We suggest that there is an urgent need to ensure that all forces collect, analyse and monitor a wider range of data to enhance strategic workforce planning and to guide police and practice. This data should include service strength data, representativeness within specialisms, pre-join application data, the monitoring of exit data, intake into the organisation, leaver surveys/exit interview findings, absence monitoring by protected characteristics, family friendly policies, flexible working applications and utilisation, home working utilisation, grievances/fairness at work, tribunals, progression data, mentoring and coaching initiatives and gender pay analysis.

With regards the existing equality structures in policing, our data suggest revision is necessary, with participants advocating the requirement for Police and Crime Commissioners to publish local targets within policing plans identifying priorities for action on female recruitment, retention, progression and representation with ranks, grades, roles and specialisms. Associated with this proposal, an action plan should set out measures that will be used to deliver improvements attached to the reestablishment of national standards, monitoring and assessment.

We recommend an immediate review of the existing funding arrangements of national representative police staff support organisations and force level support associations to enhance the capacity of such bodies to perform their functions fairly, effectively and independently, to provide strategic direction within forces and to strengthen accountability and oversight of equality and diversity issues within the police service.

Given the workforce losses and changes to flexible working implementation detailed within our findings, alongside the associated changes within shift patterns, spans of control, training and personal development, we advocate careful monitoring of female and minority ethnic officer progression. In particular, we recommend directing attention to the continuing under-representation of women and minority ethnic men and women at senior ranks, noting variation between force areas and examining both numerical and proportional data.   Consistency is required in force definitions of 'specialist posts', data collection methods and criteria. Consequently, we caution against the merging of male-heavy and female-heavy units, which, may serve to distort figures in relations to the representativeness of specialist posts.

Our final recommendation advocates the urgent need to review national, regional and force-level training and development provision, including the training given to line managers and senior leaders in equality and diversity related issues. Given the considerable challenges noted within this article and the competing imperatives and demands upon leaders, we suggest it is imperative that the new professional development approaches (linked to the Neyroud recommendations) appropriately develop management skills among police supervisors focusing specifically upon managerial training and commitment to diversity and equality issues. In particular, managers should be required to demonstrate and evidence their understanding regarding the different needs of women under their management (at different points within their life cycle and careers), and the barriers that existing procedures and attitudes may create. A programme of practical support should also be developed to assist managers in this goal to develop their knowledge of policy and issues affecting women and to provide assistance in the implementation of employment policies.

13

Reiterating the recommendations of the Gender Agenda 2 (2006), Home Office (2010), we advocate an urgent review of existing training provision more generally, again, asserting the need to facilitate greater flexibility in relation to training and development opportunities to achieve representativeness across the rank and role structure and within specialist posts. In particular, there is a need to remain sensitive to life course trends, and childcare provision within contemporary society.

The findings and recommendations detailed within this article serve to highlight the need for action in the form of renewed investment and commitment in order to transform rhetoric into reality and to ensure that the Service truly represents the communities it serves. With four more years of austerity on the cards, with projections estimating a further cut of £55bn by 2019, the public sector is likely to be squeezed more tightly over the coming years. The impact of such cuts upon the police service, both in terms of resourcing and demand, are likely to compound the challenges identified within this article, making the generation of a long-term strategy to counter these consequences all the more important. In an effort to transform the relationship between the police and the public, the newly elected Conservative government included a commitment within their manifesto to take action with a view to boosting public confidence and trust in the police focusing upon diversity within police recruitment 'especially of black and ethnic minority officers'. Given their additional commitment to scrap the Human Rights Act, and the proposed evaluation of the Public Sector Equality Duty scheduled for 2016, we conclude by suggesting that progression and retention are further included within this commitment, with women as both officers and staff added within the remit for action. With 2015 marking the centenary of women in policing within Britain, the coming months will reveal whether we are set to witness another period of retraction within the history of female employment within the service or, conversely, whether Chief Officers take up the challenge of demonstrating the value of women within the service – even within a climate of austerity.

14

References

ACPO. (2010) Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Strategy for the Police Service. London. ACPO, APA and Home Office.

Bradford, B., Jackson, J., and Stanko, E. (2009) 'Contact and Confidence: Revisiting the Impact of Public Encounters with the Police', *Policing and Society*, 19/1: 20-46.

British Association for Women in Policing (2006) The Gender Agenda 2. London.
http://bawp.org/GA3 [Date Accessed: 04 November 2014]

British Association for Women in Policing (2014) The Gender Agenda 3. London.
http://bawp.org/GA3 [Date Accessed: 04 November 2014]

Casey, L. (2008) Engaging Communities in Fighting Crime. Cabinet Office. London.

College of Policing. (2013) Flexible Working in the Police Service.

Conservatives (2015) The Conservative Party Manifesto 2015. London. https://s3-eu-west
1.amazonaws.com/manifesto2015/ConservativeManifesto2015.pdf

Fawcett Society. (2013) Red Tape, Red Line: Five reasons why government should not 'drop its duty' to tackle women's inequality, Fawcett Society.

Federation News. (May 2011) Criminal Intent - The Consequence of the Cuts?
http://www.polfed.org/documents/Federation_News_May_2011_2.pdf [Date Accessed 04 November 2014]

Flanagan, R. (2008) The Review of Policing Final Report. Home Office. London.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary. (1992) Equal Opportunities in the Police Service. London: Home Office.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary. (2010) Valuing the Police, HMIC, London.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary. (2011) Demanding Times: The Front Line and Police Visibility, HMIC, London.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary. (2013) Policing in Austerity: Rising to the Challenge, HMIC, London.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary. (2014) Policing in Austerity: Meeting the Challenge, HMIC, London.

Holdaway, S. (2015) 'What Do We know? Lessons from the History of Race Relations within Constabularies', Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice, 9/1: 5-14.

HM Government. (2010) 'The Coalition: Our Programme for Government', London: Cabinet Office.

HM Treasury. (2010) 'Spending Review 2010' Cm7942. London: TSO.

HM Treasury. (2011) 'Independent Public Service Pensions Commission: Final Report'. London: TSO.

Home Office . (1991) Career Development of Police Officers in England and Wales Guidance to Forces on Good Practice. HO-CIRC—104/1991 London: Home Office.

Home Office. (2003) Civil Renewal: A New Agenda. The CSV Edith Kahn Memorial Lecture, 11th June 2003. London: Home Office Communication Directorate.

Home Office. (2004) Building Communities: Beating Crime: A Better Police Service for the 21st Century. Cm 6360. London: TSO.

Home Office. (2010) Assessment of Women in the Police Service. London: TSO.

Home Office. (2010) Policing in the 21st Century: Reconnecting the Police and the Public. London: TSO.

Jackson, J., and Bradford, B. (2010) 'What is Trust and Confidence in the Police?' Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice, 4/3: 241-248.

Johnston, L. (2006) 'Diversifying police recruitment? The deployment of Police Community Support Officers in London", *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*, 45/4: 388-402.

Joyce, P. (2011) Policing: Development and Contemporary Practice. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Laverick, W., and Cain, L. (2014) 'Policing Reform: Consequences for the Gender Agenda and the Female Police Workforce'. Manchester Metropolitan University and the British Association for Women in Policing. http://bawp.org/GA3

Neyroud QPM, P. (2011) Review of Police Leadership and Training. Home Office, London.

Silvestri, M. (2015) 'Gender Diversity: Two Steps Forward, One Step Back…', Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice, 9/1: 56-64.

Stevens QPM, J. (2013) Policing for a Better Britain: Report of the Independent Police Commission. Anton Group, Essex.

Tyler, T. (2011) 'Trust and Legitimacy: Policing in the USA and Europe', European Journal of Criminology, 8/4: 254-266.

Waddington, P. A. J. (2011) 'Editorial', Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice, 5/3: 197-198.

Winsor, T. P. (2011) Independent Review of Police Officer and Staff Remuneration and Conditions. Part 1. Cm8024. London: TSO.

Winsor, T. P. (2012) Independent Review of Police Officer and Staff Remuneration and Conditions. Volume 2. Cm8325-II. London: TSO.