



Meeting	People Committee
Date	25 February 2025
Location	MS Teams
Title of Paper	Workforce Survey – Thematic analysis of open-ended responses
Presented By	Patrick Brown, Acting Director of Strategy & Analysis
Recommendation to Members	For Discussion
Appendix Attached	Appendix 1 - Thematic analysis of open-ended responses

PURPOSE

The purpose of this update is to provide People Committee with results from the thematic analysis of open-ended responses from Police Scotland’s refreshed 2024 workforce survey.

Members are invited to note and discuss the contents of this paper.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Our 2030 vision for Police Scotland is of an organisation focused on safer communities, less crime, supported victims, and a thriving workforce. The voice of our officers and staff is critical to the successful delivery of our 2030 vision. A refreshed workforce survey was commissioned in 2024 to ensure that our officers and staff are heard and continue to help shape genuine change across the Service.
- 1.2 Following publication of the headline results of our 2024/25 workforce survey in November, survey provider Progressive Partnership has undertaken analysis of free text comments by colleagues.
- 1.3 The following emerging themes have been identified as areas officers and staff identified for improvement:
 - The treatment of officers and staff who are verbally and physically assaulted in the line of duty
 - A disconnect between Police Scotland's values and the lived experiences of some colleagues
 - Grievance procedures for incidents involving colleagues
 - Senior leader communication
 - Resourcing
 - Wellbeing

2. WORK UNDERWAY TO IMPROVE COLLEAGUE EXPERIENCES

- 2.1 Work to improve colleague experiences across these key themes is already being taken forward including:

Resourcing

- To strengthen the frontline, reconnect with communities, and respond to emerging threats when the outlook for public finances is challenging, we are progressing the next phase of police reform under Operation Evolve.
- Key milestones already progressed include Police Scotland's role in the implementation of the Digital Evidence Sharing Capability, the contract award for a national roll out of body worn video, and the establishment of a Mental Health Taskforce. With the support of partners, this will deliver the necessary system-wide efficiencies in the criminal justice system and in the care for people in mental health crisis required to enable sustainable and effective policing.

Safety

- Your Safety Matters brings a focus to violence and abuse experienced by police officers and police staff. The programme is led by a strategic group chaired by Deputy Chief Constable Alan Speirs and includes experts from across the service.
- Under the programme, we've delivered a clear message that violence and abuse is not simply part of the job. Improved operational safety training, a Taser uplift and partnership with the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service to introduce impact statements is some of the work that has been driven to support officer and staff safety.
- We're using data and in-depth analysis to identify key areas that can be targeted, for example by updating course content in operational safety training and more effectively identifying prolific repeat offenders.
- The Chief Constable has proactively raised the issues of assaults on Police Officers with the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service.

Culture

- Policing Together was established to drive the sustainable, meaningful change required to become an anti-racist and anti-discriminatory police Service which stands against sexism, misogyny, homophobia and all forms of discrimination. Much has been delivered across four areas: leadership, training, professionalism and prevention, and communications. We're building on what has been done with refreshed energy and work to bring Policing Together to life.

Communication

- The Chief Constable has personally led visible and direct communication with regular updates and frequent meetings with officers and staff on the frontline across Scotland. Other Executive members are making frequent visits across the Service, including locally held ceremonies and awards. Senior leaders are being encouraged to engage with officers and staff.
- The Strategic Leadership Board will be held in different divisions across the course of this year. This will afford the opportunity for the Chief Officers Team to attend musters and engage locally during this time.
- We are increasing our internal communication with the intention of launching a weekly executive blog in late February.

Wellbeing

- We have invested almost £17million over four years to support the health and wellbeing of the workforce. The investment has provided colleagues with an improved Employee Assistance Programme and new occupational health services. Improved services include:
- 24/7 access to a safe and effective clinical assessment, helping to reduce the number of working days lost
- Enhanced, professional assessments for neurodiverse colleagues to consider how best to support them in delivering their duties
- A new delivery model for mental health interventions to ensure the least intensive clinical treatment is provided, including immediate access to counselling
- Trauma and critical incident support to identify colleagues at higher risk and ensure they receive the appropriate care
- Help and support in managing the menopause
- Complex health assessments to help understand the contributing factors to colleagues' health

2.2 The thematic analysis of free text comments is captured within **Appendix A**.

Next steps and key considerations

2.3 Our focus continues to be alignment of emerging insights with our 2030 Vision and Three-Year Business Plan.

2.4 Each division/department have been asked to identify three key improvement activities for their division/department to progress in the year.

2.5 We have committed to running the survey on an annual basis. A lessons learned exercise of the process will be conducted to deliver improvements and timeliness of the survey and results ahead of the launch of the 2025 survey later this year.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 There are financial implications in this report.

A commitment has been made to deliver our workforce survey annually and commission Progressive Partnership to undertake the survey again in 2025. Funding has been incorporated into budget planning for 2025/26.

4. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no personnel implications in this report.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no legal implications in this report.

6. REPUTATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are reputational implications in this report.

If we do not acknowledge, listen, and respond to our workforce survey results, organisational legitimacy and public confidence in the police service is negatively impacted.

7. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no social implications in this report.

8. COMMUNITY IMPACT

8.1 There are no community implications in this report.

9. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no equality implications in this report.

10. ENVIRONMENT IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no environmental implications in this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are requested to note and discuss the contents of this paper.

OFFICIAL

YOUR VOICE MATTERS 24/25

OPEN-ENDED ANALYSIS

POLICE SCOTLAND | ORGANISATIONAL INSIGHTS



OUR ORGANISATION



OUR CULTURE



YOUR ROLE



OUR LEADERS



YOUR TEAM



YOUR WELLBEING



POLICE
SCOTLAND
POILEAS ALBA



YOUR VOICE MATTERS

WORKFORCE SURVEY
24/25

Within the survey there were several open-ended questions to enable respondents to provide further details and insights in relation to their experience and views. The questions are summarised below:

In relation to respondents who had experienced abuse from the public

Q38 - Why were you satisfied/dissatisfied with the support received? **1,063 responses**

Q39 - Please could you describe the reasons for not reporting or discussing the incident with peers/supervisor/manager?
1,164 responses

In relation to respondents who had experienced bullying/harassment/discrimination from colleagues

Q44 - Why were you satisfied/dissatisfied with the support received? **724 responses**

Q45 - Please could you describe the reasons for not reporting the incident? **525 responses**

In relation to opportunities for the organisation to make improvements

Q47 - What areas do you think we as an organisation can improve upon? **6,503 responses**

In relation to recommending Police Scotland as an employer to friends and family

Q49. Please could you describe your reasons for recommending/not recommending the organisation as an employer?
6,450 responses

Please note that the responses from Q46 – “What are the positives about working in the organisation that the organisation must continue to do or do more of?” have **not** been included in this summary report.

The responses from Q46 were similar to the responses of Q47 (above). Colleagues may have used this opportunity to suggest areas for improvement, not knowing there would be a question on improvements to follow. Learning from this will be taken into account for the 2025 survey.

Support when reporting an incident with the public

Q38 - Why were you satisfied/dissatisfied with the support received?

Summary of responses



Analysis suggests there are deep-seated frustrations regarding the treatment of officers and staff who are verbally and physically assaulted in the line of duty, all highlighting calls for better support mechanisms, effective management engagement, and accountability within the justice system.

Key themes

Supportive Line Managers

Immediate line managers often show support after incidents, with many respondents feeling comfortable discussing their experiences with line managers and praising the support received.

Peer Support

Comfort found in sharing with colleagues that have also experienced it.

Ineffective Justice System

There is a strong sentiment that the judicial system does not effectively penalise assaulting police officers. Many respondents noted that assaults are often pled away or seen as low priority by the courts, leading to feelings of futility in reporting such incidents.

Support when reporting an incident with the public

Q38 - Why were you satisfied/dissatisfied with the support received?

Key themes (continued)

Normalised in the role

Numerous comments indicate a culture where being assaulted is viewed as part of the job, leading to a lack of urgency or seriousness in addressing these incidents.

Ineffective support beyond Line Manager

Indication that support becomes less effective or disappears at higher management levels, where communications often feel impersonal or are just routine check-ins/tick box.

Additional mental health support needed for some

While some respondents claim to be unaffected by the daily incidents of abuse, others reflect on the accumulative emotional toll these experiences take, emphasising the need for more substantial mental health support.

Satisfied when reporting an incident with the public

Q38 - Why were you satisfied/dissatisfied with the support received?

Of those who were satisfied with the support received when reporting an incident involving a member of the public, **720** chose to leave an open-ended comment. The below themes are based on what people have chosen to include in their response.

It is important to note, that although this section focuses on what respondents were satisfied with, there were also comments that highlighted 'areas for improvement'. The key themes below include respondents who selected 'satisfied' and 'fairly satisfied' with the support they received. Respondents may have mentioned both positive and negative themes within their response which accounts for the mix of both positive and negative themes below.

Key Themes - Satisfied	% of respondents who gave comment
Good/adequate support from immediate Line Management/supervisor	49%
Good/adequate support from immediate Colleagues	20%
Normalisation/Expectation of Abuse/Part of the job	18%
Lack of Court Action/Punishment	13%
Support offered but not needed	7%
Support from Supervisor/line manager but not Senior Management	5%
Generic/Impersonal support from management	4%
Perception of lack of consequences	4%
Personal impact/Mental Health	3%
Apathy from Organisation	3%
Base (all PS who reported incident and was satisfied):	720

Dissatisfied when reporting an incident with the public



Q38 - Why were you satisfied/dissatisfied with the support received?

Of those who were dissatisfied with the support received when reporting an incident involving a member of the public, **343** chose to leave an open-ended comment. The below themes are based on what people have chosen to include in their response.

Key Themes - Dissatisfied	% of respondents who gave comment
Lack of Court Action/Punishment	35%
Normalisation/Expectation of Abuse/Part of the job	31%
Apathy from Organisation	22%
No follow up from Supervisors	16%
Personal Impact/Mental Health	11%
Support from Supervisor/line manager but not Senior Management	10%
Low Resources/High Workload	8%
Perception of Lack of Consequences	8%
Generic/Impersonal Support from Management	8%
No support received / management didn't care	8%
Base (all PS who reported incident and was dissatisfied):	343

Not reporting an incident with the public

Q39 - Please could you describe the reasons for not reporting or discussing the incident with peers/ supervisor/ manager?

Key themes

Normalised in the role

Many respondents expressed a thick-skinned attitude toward verbal abuse, indicating they are accustomed to it as part of the job.

An expectation that it is an accepted part of policing, leading to a culture where such incidents are rarely reported as they happen so frequently.

Not worth reporting

Sense that if reporting it is not taken seriously and takes up a lot of administrative time for all involved.

Ineffective Justice System

A feeling that the judicial system does not adequately protect or support respondents and therefore it is not worth reporting.

Not reporting an incident with the public

Q39 - Please could you describe the reasons for not reporting or discussing the incident with peers/ supervisor/ manager?

Of those who did not report an incident involving a member of the public, **1,164** chose to leave an open-ended comment to describe their reasons why. The below themes are based on what people have chosen to include in their response.

Key Theme – Reasons for not reporting	% of respondents who gave comment
Normalisation/ Expectation of abuse/Part of job	33%
Regular occurrence/High frequency of incidents	27%
Culture of acceptance	18%
Frustration with system	12%
Not worth reporting / not worth the admin	10%
Verbal abuse deemed minor	10%
No action taken by Courts/Management/Procurator Fiscal	10%
No significant impact on wellbeing	8%
Belief it's ineffective	5%
Lack of support from superiors / they don't have time to deal with it	5%
Base (all PS who did not report incident):	1,164

Support when reporting an incident involving a colleague

Q44 - Why were you satisfied/dissatisfied with the support received?

Summary of responses



Responses highlight a disconnect between the values of Police Scotland regarding respect, dignity, and supporting staff welfare, and the lived experiences of some officers and staff who feel that these values are not reflected in practice when reporting an internal incident.

Key themes

Supportive Line Managers for some

For some, feelings were acknowledged and empathy shown from line managers.

Peer Support

Comfort found in sharing with colleagues.

Lack of Action

The overwhelming sentiment from respondents was that many complaints were not taken seriously, leading to a feeling that issues were often "swept under the carpet" without further investigation.

Support when reporting an incident involving a colleague

Q44 - Why were you satisfied/dissatisfied with the support received?

Key themes (continued)

Ineffective grievance procedures

Described as lengthy, and burdensome, with many respondents feeling that they led to little resolution or change.

Unfair resolution

Some described themselves being moved to a less desirable position/location rather than the subject of the grievance/complaint.

Ineffective support from line managers for some

For others, there was a lack of support from management and on several occasions, it was the manager that was causing the issue/involved.

Satisfied when reporting an incident involving a colleague

Q44 - Why were you satisfied/dissatisfied with the support received?

Of those who were satisfied with the support received when reporting an incident involving a colleague, **163** chose to leave an open-ended comment. The below themes are based on what people have chosen to include in their response.

It is important to note, that although this section focuses on what respondents were satisfied with, there were also comments that highlighted 'areas for improvement'. The key themes below include respondents who selected 'satisfied' and 'fairly satisfied' with the support they received. Respondents may have mentioned both positive and negative themes within their response which accounts for the mix of both positive and negative themes below.

Key Themes - Satisfied	% of respondents who gave comment
Incident investigated / handled well / resolved	34%
Peer Support / Felt supported / support put in place	18%
Lack of info or updates about incidents / incidents not dealt with properly	13%
Bullying experienced	13%
Management don't care / disagreed / at fault	12%
Lack of support	12%
Dismissal of concerns / not listened to	8%
Discrimination	8%
Base (all PS who reported incident and was satisfied):	163

Dissatisfied when reporting an incident involving a colleague

Q44 - Why were you satisfied/dissatisfied with the support received?

Of those who were dissatisfied with the support received when reporting an incident involving a colleague, **561** chose to leave an open-ended comment. The below themes are based on what people have chosen to include in their response.

Key Themes - Dissatisfied	% of respondents who gave comment
Management don't care / disagreed / at fault	42%
Dismissal of concerns / not listened to	28%
Lack of info or updates about incidents / incidents not dealt with properly	24%
Bullying experienced	21%
Lack of support	20%
No action taken once reported / not resolved / still ongoing	19%
Ineffective grievance procedures	17%
Unfair treatment	15%
Discrimination/Positive discrimination	14%
Base (all PS who reported incident and was dissatisfied):	561

Not reporting an incident with a colleague

Q45 - Please could you describe the reasons for not reporting the incident?

Key themes

Sense of hopelessness

Many respondents expressed a sense of hopelessness regarding the reporting process, feeling that complaints will not be taken seriously or that doing so will result in personal repercussions, including being labelled as a "troublemaker" or facing career setbacks.

Perceptions that nothing will be done

Numerous responses highlight a lack of faith in the organisation's ability to handle complaints properly. Many believe that nothing will be done about their reports, which discourages individuals from taking action.

Senior management

For some, the incident originates from senior management, which leaves individuals feeling trapped and without recourse.

Not reporting an incident with a colleague

Q45 - Please could you describe the reasons for not reporting the incident?

Of those who did not report an incident involving a colleague, **525** chose to leave an open-ended comment. The below themes are based on what people have chosen to include in their response.

Key Themes – Reasons for not reporting	% of respondents who gave comment
Fear of repercussions / being identified / ignored	30%
Harassment/bullying from line/senior managers	22%
Lack of confidence in complaint procedures	14%
Lack of support from management	14%
Mistrust in senior management	11%
Psychological isolation / stress	7%
Incident already reported by another / being dealt with	6%
Positive discrimination towards other groups (e.g. Minorities or Women)	5%
Negative personal experience from previous reports	5%
Base (all PS who did not report incident):	525

Opportunities for Improvement

Q47 - What areas do you think we as an organisation can improve upon?

Key themes

Senior Management Communication

Numerous comments point to a failure in communication from senior management. There is a sentiment that important decisions are made without adequate consultation. This was a key priority area.

Resourcing

Respondents mentioned many improvement areas, however lack of staffing, especially on the frontline was critical.

Wellbeing

Despite acknowledging the importance of wellbeing, many respondents felt that the support offered is inadequate. There is a perception that while wellbeing is discussed, it is not genuinely prioritised within the organisation

Opportunities for Improvement

Q47 - What areas do you think we as an organisation can improve upon?

6,503 respondents chose to leave an open-ended comment, on how they think the organisation can improve. **5,119** comments were from Police Officers and **1,368** comments were from Police Staff. The below themes are based on what people have chosen to include in their response.

*of the 6,503 responses, 16 respondents chose not to disclose if they were a Police Officer or Police Staff.

Key Themes	Police Scotland	Officer	Staff
Communication & Transparency	30%	26%	41%
Staffing Levels / Recruitment / Resourcing / Workloads	28%	30%	24%
Wellbeing / Support / Protection / Pay	23%	25%	16%
Resourcing frontline policing specifically	20%	24%	7%
Work-Life balance and rest days	18%	19%	14%
Training and development Issues	13%	13%	13%
Equipment / Uniform Quality / Vehicles	10%	11%	3%
Unfair / Not fit for purpose promotion processes	9%	10%	4%
Technology and digital systems	8%	8%	10%
Base (who gave a comment):	6,503	5,119	1,368

Recommend the Organisation



Q48 - Would you recommend the organisation as an employer to friends and/or family?

Q49 - Please could you describe your reasons for recommending/not recommending the organisation as an employer?

Two fifths (**40%**) would recommend the organisation as an employer due to a sense of purpose, career opportunities and job security. Just over half (**52%**) said they wouldn't recommend and that was primarily due to lack of support, poor management and high workload.

Would you recommend the organisation as an employer to friends/family?

Yes = 40%

No = 52%

8% Prefer not to say

Top 10 reasons for recommending	% of respondents who gave comment
Sense of purpose & public service	26%
Career opportunities & development	24%
Job security & stability	23%
Supportive management & environment	21%
Good pay & compensation	20%
Varied & interesting work	19%
Positive working environment	15%
Team spirit & camaraderie	12%
Good benefits (pension, holidays)	12%
Pride in the job / organisation	9%
Base (all who said yes and gave a comment):	2,393

Top 10 reasons for not recommending	% of respondents who gave comment
Lack of support	39%
Poor management	37%
High workload	30%
Negative public perception	25%
Poor work-life balance	25%
Poor pay	20%
Mental health impacts	17%
Career progression issues	15%
Understaffing	14%
Low morale	14%
Base (all who said no and gave a comment):	4,057