



# Scottish Police Federation

5 Woodside Place Glasgow G3 7QF

## JCC Circular 58 of 2016

Ref: CS/DH/LS

16 November 2016

Attachments: Letter from SCC Chair  
Sergeants Survey Results

Dear Colleague

### **Sergeants Survey Results - Information**

Please find attached an entirely self-explanatory update on the above from David Hamilton, Chairman of the Sergeants Central Committee.

Yours sincerely

**Calum Steele**  
General Secretary

Tuesday, 16 November 2016

Dear Colleague

### **Sergeant Survey Results**

Please find enclosed the Sergeants Central Committee Survey results, collated in Police Scotland in 2015.

This report was the product of a nationwide workshop at the Sergeants Central committee in 2015, supplemented by a survey of Sergeants across the country. The purpose was simply to do what we do best, identify problems and come up with solutions. The detail and the articulation of the issues was remarkable and the solutions creative but realistic. The returns helped us group the results into themes and produce the summary report attached.

There has been widespread recognition this has been one of the most accurate and succinct presentations of the issues affecting Sergeants and indeed many other officers in Police Scotland. There are no surprises in it.

The results of the survey were presented to the Force Executive and to Leadership and Professional Development in October 2015 and also to the Scottish Police Consultative Forum in early 2016. It is disappointing then that progress in tackling them has been woeful. Meanwhile, we have seen cuts in Sergeant and Inspector numbers and additional workloads such as Personal Development Conversations. Please be assured that from the earliest stages we have flagged capacity as an issue in both these projects.

On a more positive note, the Force's "10 Quick Wins" work stream is now up and running and you will recognise a lot of crossover between what Sergeants in the organisation highlighted 18 months ago and what has now just been evidenced by the team there. For that reason I welcome the work and effort of the group trying to deliver those "wins".

For me it is the outcome that matters and for all the disappointments of the length of time it has taken to get to this point, I am more optimistic than I have ever been that some of the issues that affect you, now have a chance of being addressed. This survey has given us a clear mandate on what needs to be done and I can assure you that as members of the "10 Quick Wins" group, that we will be pushing for a re-profiling of the Sergeant role and an organisational change that cuts bureaucracy and returns empowerment.

Yours sincerely



**David Hamilton**  
**Chair of Sergeants Central Committee**  
**Scottish Police Federation**



**The Scottish Police Federation**

**SERGEANTS CENTRAL  
COMMITTEE**



**Sergeants  
Survey  
2015**

In April and May 2015 the Sergeants Central Committee conducted a survey of its members seeking views on the rank of sergeant.

Three questions were asked and responses were free text. Over 100 respondees came back to us,. The quality of responses was remarkable with busy Sergeants taking the time to give detailed written views and opinions.

This questionnaire supported the Sergeants workshop at the Biennial Sergeants Central Committee workshop where these same topics were discussed.

The three questions were

- **How has the Sergeant role changed and what difference can Sergeants make within the Police Service of Scotland?**
- **What obstacles do we face in making that difference?**
- **What changes, training, assistance or tools do we need from Police Scotland to make that difference?**

The answers have all been analysed and the main threads are pulled out in the following pages. The original returns have been retained and are be available for review.

The Sergeants Central Committee does not wish this report distributed widely. Its purpose is to act as an initiator to direct further work with the Force Executive to address and solve the problems we have identified. Once these actions are agreed we will feedback to officers on the survey findings and how we are working to help the Force to address these issues.

**Question 1. How has the Sergeant role changed and what difference can Sergeants make within the Police Service of Scotland?**

**Increased Bureaucracy**

Many officers stated that new processes in PSoS such as VPD, Briefing documents etc had given them more admin work to do and therefore less time to manage their teams

**Lack of control/influence in team duties**

Sgts felt very much out of the loop when it came to managing their teams. They felt disempowered and had no opportunity to have a say in their team resources.

**Inexperienced Constables**

The number of probationers and low level of service on Community/ Response Teams was highlighted. Many officers needed reassurance and were less inclined to make decisions as they feared getting it wrong.

**Less autonomy**

A significant number of Sgts felt that they had less autonomy in Police Scotland. Centralised units and micromanagement meant that they couldn't make decisions the way they used to.

**Fewer Sergeants**

Fewer Sergeant and increased areas of responsibility was stretching Sgts and they weren't able to do the job as effectively as they once did.

**Temporary Sergeants**

Many Sergeants feared the effect of having so many Temporary Sergeants and the inexperience that they brought to such a critical role.

**“Very often it's difficult to get out of the office due to the amount of paperwork to be completed - much of it duplication.”**

**“More is expected of Response Sergeants over the last two years in that we are being asked to do more and more by all the other units around the force.”**

**“The role of Sergeant has changed tremendously with more responsibility being placed upon us to meet targets with ever decreasing resources”**

## Question 2. What obstacles do we face in making that difference?

### **Lack of trust and understanding from Senior Management**

A number of officers felt that their commanders had no idea about the current demands on the role of Sgts. They also felt that there was a lack of prioritising, micro-management and a back covering culture.

### **Bureaucracy, form filling in duplicate and triplicate.**

A stand out theme has been the amount of work required to supply numbers, statistical returns, data etc. Many responders said they saw no point to it as it didn't change policing practice just meant that senior managers were able to defend themselves.

### **Poor IT**

Forms, systems and processes are poorly designed hard to find and a lack of automation means constantly duplicating field entries.

### **Lack of Constable Resources**

There is a real frustration over the lack of constables "on the ground" and a criticism of the multitude of teams that have been created that return very little.

### **Lack of Sergeant Resources**

Many Sgts report covering the work previously done by 4. Particular problem is abstractions to cover Custody Division but a general lack of supervisors is apparent

"Senior management who will not challenge upper senior management's policies that we are enforcing."

"Never have I seen the content of these forms change the policing in the subsequent days or weeks, though if I don't submit these awful forms, I get negative feedback"

"Less operational officers brings a pressure to deal with incidents quickly. Less experienced officers don't get the same time after incidents to discuss and take learning points."

### Question Three. What changes, training, assistance or tools do we need from Police Scotland to make that difference?

#### More Frontline resources

The recurring theme in this survey is the lack of resources in Community and response policing. The Sergeants do not see the 'benefits' of the teams, squads and units that have abstracted so many from policing. They want their staff back on the frontline.

#### Practical Local training/workshops for Sergeants

The e-learning package is seen as a tick in the box response from PSoS. The National Sergeants course is viewed as acceptable but only in a national perspective. Local training and workshops where operational sergeants can work through or talk through practical problems and examples in some protected time are requested.

#### Re- Empowerment of Sergeants

Many Sergeants feel that they have been disempowered and need that autonomy back to service communities.

#### Honesty from force on what we can and can't do with less

The financial challenges are understood, but the apparent lack of willingness to say ask what the public do not want us to do is not.

"I feel that more emphasis should be placed on increasing frontline police officers and reducing the ever increasing paperwork which has grown significantly in the last few years"

"Micro management and a requirement to record everything is a sign of mistrust and in effect weak management skills of senior managers."

"Police Officers are humans and the people we deal with are not machines, thus the unpredictability of the service needs a more flexible model."

## Summary

The stand out themes that run through this questionnaire are a lack of resources in Local policing, far too much bureaucracy of processes and counting, unreasonable and ill-informed expectation to do more with less resources and less support.

The solutions from the Sergeants perspective, more Sergeants and Constables in frontline policing, more autonomy and empowerment to Sergeants, less bureaucracy and figure recording and more localisation.

The SCC hope that The Force will acknowledge the findings of this survey and use these findings to inform the thinking on the shape the future direction of the Force. The SCC are keen to develop any of the themes identified in this questionnaire further to look at practical solutions and options that will improve the role of Sergeant and deliver better quality policing in Scotland.

"I actually love lots about my job but have been struck by the apathy brush in the current methods and systems deployed by PSOS."

"In summary, it appears a culture of 'policing by numbers', combined with fewer operational staff, has resulted in me producing neat reports for my command team to read to their managers in morning meetings - which doesn't appear to ever change anything..., but means I struggle to get out of the office."

"The job is not broken but its breaking. Our policing needs to be localised again and properly supported Sergeants with properly resourced teams are the key to delivering that "