

The Thin Blue Line

A Study of Stress Appraisals and influence of Resources in explaining well-being in Senior Investigating Officers

SIO (Online Surveys and Follow-up Interviews) Well-being Participant Information Sheet, Online Consent, Interview & Debrief forms

You are being invited to take part in this research study.

Before you decide it is important for you to read this leaflet so you understand why the study is being carried out and what it will involve.

Reading this leaflet, discussing it with others, or asking any questions you might have will help you decide whether or not you would like to take part.

What is the Purpose of the Study

Senior Investigating Officers (SIOs) progress serious crime investigations within United Kingdom (UK) policing, and to do so they must make effective, insightful critical-decisions, this role is described within the SIOs Handbook (Cook, 2019, p.3) as: “*a craft and art form that is not the easiest to learn and master. It most certainly carries with it a sizeable amount of reputational risk and personal accountability*”. Being an SIO can be considered the pinnacle of professional investigators’ career aspirations, and ultimate test of investigative skillsets (Tong, 2011). Cook (2019) notes the challenges facing SIOs when seeking to provide leadership and impact in serious crime investigations, whilst simultaneously forcing them to occupy lonely, publicly accountable positions, attracting significant personal pressure.

This provides an opportunity and need to more clearly understand the SIOs role (Smith *et al.*, 2000) and focus on their individual well-being and recovery mechanisms (Foster, 2024).

The interconnected studies contained within this research aim to address the following research questions –

- *What are the stressors experienced by SIOs?*
- *What is the mechanism in which stressors influence the workplace well-being of SIOs?*
- *What are the boundary conditions for the influence of stressors on the workplace well-being of SIOs?*

This will be focused at an individual rather than organisational level through theory-led research, in order to understand stressors impacting on contemporary SIOs, along with their ability to recover including the mechanisms influencing workplace well-being.

Why have I been invited?

This doctoral study is seeking the participation of police detectives who undertake the role of SIO within UK policing, and for you to share your perceptions of the individual stressors experienced as an SIO, along with influences on workplace well-being outcomes.

Do I have to take part?

No, participation in this project is voluntary and confidential. It is up to you whether you would like to take part in the study and this participant information letter will help you make that decision. If you do decide to take part, remember that you can stop being involved in the study whenever you choose, without stating why and without any consequences. You are completely free to decide whether or not to take part, or to take part and then leave the study before completion. Please note that the completion of the online survey will be taken as consent to participate in the survey. At the bottom of the survey, you will be asked to provide your consent by answering “Yes” or “No” to the statement “*I have read and understood the information letter and I agree to participate in this research project*”. By answering “Yes”, you agree that the research team can collect and use information that you provide in this research project. By answering “No”, you will not progress to the survey.

What will happen if I take part?

Your participation in this research project will involve completing two online surveys each lasting approximately 20 minutes and separated by a time interval of three weeks, after this you can then also choose to support the research further by electing to complete a short MS Teams follow-up interview. In this project you will be asked about your perceptions of individual SIO stressors, your ability to recover and mechanisms influencing workplace well-being.

If you complete the follow-up interview and arrange an MS Teams meeting you will once again be provided with a copy of this form with the above consent statement, acceptance of the meeting request and attendance at the meeting will be taken as consent to proceed within this study.

What are the possible disadvantages of taking part?

There are no known risks to participating in this research project. If completing the survey causes you any concern about your feelings or work, you should contact your

workplace Welfare or Well-being Department, [The National Police Wellbeing Service](#) or [College of Policing](#) for advice and individual support.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

It cannot be guaranteed that you will personally receive any benefits from this research, however this project seeks to enhance overall understanding of factors that influence well-being outcomes within the SIO community. Results from this study will achieve real-world impact by reporting analysed findings back to the National Police Chiefs' Council, Homicide Working Group, Wellbeing of Investigators - SIO Subgroup, feeding into national debate and the development of more-informed practice to improve overall SIO well-being.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential and anonymous?

Yes, any information obtained in connection with this research project will remain confidential. Confidentiality is ensured by creating the anonymous survey on Northumbria University's online survey platform that requires a Northumbria login password. The electronic data collected will be securely stored in such a way that only the research team will be able to gain access to it by using the secured password. The process of recruitment and data collection assures that there will be no relationship between you and the research team, or between you and Northumbria University unless you choose. By indicating on the online consent form, you consent to the research team collecting and using your demographic information, such as age range, gender, level of service, rank, and policing area (This will utilise as a basis the established eight Police Federation [regions](#), rather than individual force areas in order to preserve your anonymity) and cater for non-geographic force SIOs.

Any information obtained in connection with this research project that can identify you in any way will and must remain confidential. Participants will be provided with a unique identifier (ID) to preserve confidentiality. Your information will only be used for the purpose of this research project, and it will only be disclosed with your permission, except as required by law. The data collected from you in this study will be confidential. It is anticipated that the results of this research project will be published and presented in a variety of forums and in any publication or presentation, information will be provided in such a way that you cannot be identified, except where requested for specific reasons, and then you will be asked to provide electronically written consent.

How will my data be stored and how long will it be stored for?

All electronic data will be stored securely on the Northumbria University Shared Drive, which is password protected. All data will be stored in accordance with University guidelines

and the *Data Protection Act 2018*. Data collected from this research will be retained on the Northumbria University secured Shared Drive for a maximum of three years following the completion of the doctoral project. All Identifiable information such as contact details will be deleted once the research project has been finalised.

What categories of personal data will be collected and processed in this study?

In this study, data will be collected on your perceptions via an anonymous online survey. Your name will not be asked for, or written on any of the data collected, the information you provide will have an ID identifier not your name. Your name will not appear in any reports or documents resulting from this study.

If you complete the follow-up interview and arrange an MS Teams meeting your email address will be used solely for this purpose, your responses will be anonymised with no identifiable information featuring in my thesis or any future publications.

What is the legal basis for processing personal data?

Under the *General Data Protection Regulations 2018*, the legal basis for processing your data is *Article 6(1)e*: processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest; and *Article 9(2)j*: processing is necessary for scientific and historical research purposes.

Who are the recipients or categories of recipients of personal data, if any?

The data is collected for research purposes only and there will be no commercial use that will be made of the data. Only the research team will be able to gain access to the data.

What will happen to the results of the study, and could personal data collected be used in future research?

The results of the research project may be presented at conferences, and published in reports, book chapters or journals. The results will not include any information that is identifiable to individual participants or organisations. You and the data that you provide will not be personally identifiable unless your specific consent for this has been requested beforehand. A summary overview of the analysed findings from the completed study will be uploaded online at [SIO Well-being Research](#) in an easily digestible format.

Who is Organising and Funding the Study?

This is an internally funded project by Northumbria University.

Who has reviewed this study?

The study has been reviewed in order to safeguard your interests as a participant. The research project submission has been approved at Northumbria University by Members of the Ethics College of Reviewers as reference – **Dimelow 2024-8017-8559** via the Ethics Online System.

What are my rights as a participant in this study?

You can withdraw your consent at any time during this research by emailing the principal researcher [Mark Dimelow](#). You have a right to access a copy of any personal data that Northumbria University holds about you, a right to have inaccurate personal data rectified and a right to complain to the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) if you feel dissatisfied with the way the University has processed your personal data. If you would like to receive a copy of your data, or have any questions or concerns, please contact Northumbria University's Data Protection Officer.

Contact for further information:

PhD Researcher email [Mark Dimelow](#)

PhD Supervisor email [Dr Diep Nguyen](#)

University Data Protection Officer Duncan James dp.officer@northumbria.ac.uk

You can find out more about how your information is used by visiting the Northumbria University [General Data Protection Regulation](#) webpage, or by contacting a member of the research team.

FOR USE IN ONLINE STUDIES WHERE NO PERSONAL DATA IS COLLECTED

Project Title: The Thin Blue Line - A Study of Stress Appraisals and influence of Resources in explaining well-being in Senior Investigating Officers.

Principal Investigator: Mark Dimelow

Department of Leadership and Human Resource Management,
Northumbria University Newcastle

Student ID: W23023821

Email: mark.w.dimelow@northumbria.ac.uk

If you would like to take part in this study, please read the statement below and tick 'I agree'.

I understand the nature of the study, and what is required from me. I understand I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, without having to give a reason for my withdrawal, and without prejudice. I understand that I cannot be identified from the information that I will provide. I understand that my contribution will remain confidential, and the information will be confidentially stored on the platform of Northumbria University Newcastle with password protection for up to three years from the date of collecting data to the date of disposal. I also understand that the information is collected only for the research purposes set out in the participant information sheet supplied to me, and not for any commercial or political purposes.

I agree to provide information to the researcher, and my consent is conditional upon the University complying with its duties and obligations under the UK's Data Protection Act 2018 which incorporates General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). (You can find out more about how we use your information at [Privacy Notices](#))

☐ **I agree**

CONSENT FORM WHERE NO PERSONAL DATA IS COLLECTED

Project Title: The Thin Blue Line - A Study of Stress Appraisals and influence of Resources in explaining well-being in Senior Investigating Officers.

Principal Investigator: Mark Dimelow
Department of Leadership and Human Resource Management,
Northumbria University Newcastle

Student ID: W23023821

Email: mark.w.dimelow@northumbria.ac.uk

*Please tick or initial
where applicable*

I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet. ☐

I have had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study and I have received satisfactory answers. ☐

I understand I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, without having to give a reason for withdrawing, and without prejudice. ☐

I agree to take part in this study. ☐

I also consent to the retention of this data under the condition that any subsequent use also be restricted to research projects that have gained ethical approval from Northumbria University. ☐

I agree to the University of Northumbria at Newcastle recording and processing this information about me. I understand that this information will be used only for the purpose(s) set out in the information sheet provided to me, and my consent is conditional upon the University complying with its duties and obligations under the *Data Protection Act 2018* which incorporates *General Data Protection Regulations* (GDPR). (You can find out more about how we use your information at [Privacy Notices](#)). ☐

Name/ Signature of participant:

Date:

PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW AND DEBRIEF FORM

Participant code:

Name of Researcher: Mark Dimelow

Name of Supervisor: Dr Diep Nguyen

What was the Purpose of the Study

Senior Investigating Officers (SIOs) progress serious crime investigations within United Kingdom (UK) policing, and to do so they must make effective, insightful critical-decisions, this role is described within the SIOs Handbook (Cook, 2019, p.3) as: *“a craft and art form that is not the easiest to learn and master. It most certainly carries with it a sizeable amount of reputational risk and personal accountability”*. Being an SIO can be considered the pinnacle of professional investigators’ career aspirations, and ultimate test of investigative skillsets (Tong, 2011). Cook (2019) notes the challenges facing SIOs when seeking to provide leadership and impact in serious crime investigations, whilst simultaneously forcing them to occupy lonely, publicly accountable positions, attracting significant personal pressure.

This provides an opportunity and need to more clearly understand the SIOs role (Smith *et al.*, 2000) and focus on their individual well-being and recovery mechanisms (Foster, 2024).

This interview phase is the culmination of three interconnected studies contained within this research which aims to address the following research questions –

- *What are the stressors experienced by SIOs?*
- *What is the mechanism in which stressors influence the workplace well-being of SIOs?*
- *What are the boundary conditions for the influence of stressors on the workplace well-being of SIOs?*

This will be focused at an individual rather than organisational level through theory-led research, in order to understand stressors impacting on contemporary SIOs, along with their ability to recover including the mechanisms influencing workplace well-being.

How will I find out about the results?

If you wish to receive feedback about the findings of this research study then please contact the researcher at mark.w.dimelow@northumbria.ac.uk or via the engagement website markdimelow.com where a general summary of findings will be posted.

The wider study into SIO well-being outcomes is due to be finalised in September 2026, after which findings from this doctoral research will be shared with the professional practitioner body the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) Recruitment, Retention and Wellbeing of Investigator (RRWI), Investigator Wellbeing Sub Group, with the aim of positively informing the ongoing debate on future SIO welfare provision.

If I change my mind and wish to withdraw the information I have provided, how do I do this?

You can withdraw your consent at any time during this research by emailing the principal researcher [Mark Dimelow](#). You have a right to access a copy of any personal data that Northumbria University holds about you, a right to have inaccurate personal data rectified and a right to complain to the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) if you feel dissatisfied with the way the University has processed your personal data. If you would like to receive a copy of your data, or have any questions or concerns, please contact Northumbria University's Data Protection Officer Duncan James at dp.officer@northumbria.ac.uk.

If you withdraw from this study, then the data you have given up to that point will be deleted. However, once anonymised data set has been created it will not be possible to remove my anonymised data from analysis.

The data collected in this study may also be published in scientific journals or presented at conferences. Information and data gathered during this research study will only be available to the research team identified in the information sheet. Should the research be presented or published in any form, all data will be anonymous (i.e. your personal information or data will not be identifiable).

All information and data gathered during this research will be stored in line with the Data Protection Act and will be destroyed within 36 months following the conclusion of the study. If the research is published in a scientific journal, it may be kept for longer before being destroyed. During that time the data may be used by members of the research team only for purposes appropriate to the research question, but at no point will your personal information or data be revealed. Insurance companies and employers will not be given any individual's personal information, nor any data provided by them, and nor will we allow access to the police, security services, social services, relatives or lawyers, unless forced to do so by the courts.

This study and its protocol have received full ethical approval from the Northumbria University Faculty of Business and Law Research Ethics Committee. If you require

confirmation of this, or if you have any concerns or worries concerning this research, or if you wish to register a complaint, please contact the Chair of this Committee Professor Louise Bracken at laura2.hutchinson@northumbria.ac.uk stating the title of the research project and the name of the researcher as recorded at the start of this document.



FOR USE WHEN INTERVIEWS ARE INVOLVED

Principal supervisor: Dr Diep Nguyen – Department of Leadership and Human Resource Management, Northumbria University Newcastle

Researcher: Mark Dimelow – Department of Leadership and Human Resource Management, Northumbria University Newcastle

Student ID: W23023821

Email: mark.w.dimelow@northumbria.ac.uk

***Please tick or initial
where applicable***

- ☐ I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet supplied to me
- ☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study and I have received satisfactory answers
- ☐ I understand that this study is not for any commercial or political purpose, and participating in this study does not harm my work-related benefits, rights, and career opportunities
- ☐ I understand that notes will be taken during the interview, and my response will be tape-recorded then transcribed into words where I will be pseudonymised. All information that might identify me or my organisation will be removed from the transcripts.
- ☐ I understand that the recordings will be destroyed permanently after the data analysis is completed, and the word documents will be eventually deleted within six years from the date of data collection
- ☐ I understand that my information will be kept confidential. I and my organisation will not be named in or identified from any output of this study (e.g., PhD thesis, conference papers, journal articles)
- ☐ I understand that only researchers of this study can access the information I provide, and it will not be given to any third party
- ☐ I understand that I am free to leave the interview at any time before its completion, without having to give a reason, and without prejudice. If I leave, I understand that all relevant information including tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed. I understand that I can also withdraw my data within one month of fully completing the interview.



- ☐ I agree to take part in this study
- ☐ I also consent to the retention of this data under the condition that any subsequent use also be restricted to research projects that have gained ethical approval from Northumbria University.

I agree to the University of Northumbria at Newcastle recording and processing this information about me. I understand that this information will be used only for the purpose(s) set out in the information sheet supplied to me, and my consent is conditional upon the University complying with its duties and obligations under the Data Protection Act 2018 which incorporates General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) – [Privacy notices](#)

Please indicate whether you wish to receive a copy of the report from this study:

☐ Yes

☐ No

Name/ Signature of participant:

Date:

Contact Information *(If applicable):*