



## **City of London Police get the measure of stress Major improvements in quality of working life in just two years**

The City of London Police Force (CoLP) is responsible for policing the square mile that forms the financial hub of London. The Force employs around 1,100 police officers and staff and its main policing priorities include anti-terrorism and combating economic crime. CoLP is committed to providing a working environment that supports all employees in delivering a world class policing service to the public.

It was this commitment that led the force to ask Robertson Cooper to conduct a Quality of Working Life (QWL) audit in 2003 using ASSET (Robertson Cooper's validated stress risk assessment tool).

After the initial audit, Steve Clarke, Force Health and Safety Co-ordinator said,

*"...The results have been reassuring. As an organisation, we come into the 'reasonably healthy' category. But that's not to say there are no problems. The survey has been invaluable in identifying areas where we could improve on how we look after our staff and each other, and managers will be working with staff to achieve that."*

Drawing on the output from the audit, and in consultation with Force representatives, Robertson Cooper put forward tailored recommendations for improvement. A dedicated Working Party then formulated an action plan for the Force to prioritise, implement and integrate with other change initiatives. A wide range of recommendations were proposed and, at the time of writing, the key actions implemented were as follows:

- Reviewed and established ongoing monitoring of resources available to front line staff
- Undertook a new round of Performance Development Reviews (PDRs), reviewed the quality of completed PDR documentation and related it to role profiles
- A staff suggestion scheme was put in place to increase participation and consultation.
- Communication was reviewed in relation to the management of change and actions included a new intranet design and a Management of Information policy.
- A policy to ensure that project leaders remain with projects regardless of tenure was introduced to ensure continuity and completion of change initiatives.
- A Workplace bullying policy was developed and mentoring and welfare services were heavily promoted, along with associated training.
- A flexible working pilot initiative was run and a flexible working policy was prepared.

Other key actions which are ongoing include extending Occupational Health/Welfare initiatives to encompass stress management through training or self-help groups, reviewing the staff reward scheme and considering the introduction of change management training for line managers and staff.

### **Two years on and a second audit to measure improvements**

CoLP acknowledged from the outset that they wanted to make an ongoing commitment to the well-being of their staff. In line with this, they were keen to measure the impact of the interventions they put in place after the initial audit. and so the Force asked Robertson Cooper to carry out a second QWL audit in September 2005.



By now, technology had moved on significantly and the Force, like many others, were now able to run the audit online using Robertson Cooper's web-based version of ASSET, as opposed to using traditional paper and pencil questionnaires. This led to substantial cost savings for the Force, as well as more efficient data collection and reporting of the survey results.

Having been one of the first police forces to undertake a QWL survey with Robertson Cooper, CoLP were pleased to discover that two years on, the opportunities for benchmarking their data against that of other forces were now extensive. Not only was Robertson Cooper able to compare the Force's results to a general working population sample of 16000, but there was also a large database of responses from other Police personnel available. In addition, it was also possible to undertake a detailed comparison of CoLP's results from the first and second audits. All of this work was made possible by the sophisticated online ASSET software, which also enabled trained representatives from the Force to independently interrogate the QWL data. The ASSET software provided the Force with a powerful management information tool.

### **Improvements across the board**

CoLP's investment in well-being was rewarded when the survey results showed major improvements compared with the 2003 audit. For example, significant reductions in perceived risks to physical health and psychological well-being were reported, as well as significant increases in organisational commitment. Every source of pressure measured by ASSET was reported as being less of an issue than in 2003. Specifically, perceptions of work life balance, job security, and pay and benefits had all markedly improved.

In terms of comparisons with other Police Forces, CoLP employees generally reported better health, stronger organisational commitment and less concern around the sources of pressure, than is typical of Police Service personnel.

CoLP also included Robertson Cooper's recently developed Motivation questions as part of their audit, to help them gain an understanding of the levels of motivation within the Force. They saw this as an important opportunity to focus on what motivates staff, as well as what troubles them and to enable positive performance-focused outcomes from the project. They were pleased to find that employees reported enthusiasm and dedication towards their work and will go the extra mile when required, with most reporting strong commitment to achieving their goals. Interestingly, team working aspects of the job were seen as being the most significant personal driver for staff, with financial rewards coming much further down on the list. A learning point for the Force was that staff wanted them to articulate these goals more clearly.

Looking at the project as a whole, CoLP has taken a major stride forward in terms of implementing performance-focused change. This initiative has demonstrated the effectiveness of measuring levels of well-being at an organisational level and then implementing interventions designed to reduce stress and increase motivation. By using ASSET to objectively measure the levels of well-being post-intervention, CoLP have been able to evaluate the effectiveness of their actions and found that they have been successful in improving QWL in the Force. All of the research literature indicates that this will have a corresponding positive effect on performance and productivity. Carolyn Woolley, HR Services Director at CoLP, summed up the QWL initiative by saying:

*"We're delighted that the investment of time and money that City of London Police has made in staff motivation and well-being has paid off. We have always seen this as a long-term commitment and results from our latest audit have shown that the action plan and interventions we implemented following the first audit have started to have an impact. However, we know that this is an on-going challenge and Robertson Cooper has been working with the stress 'hotspot' groups from our latest audit. Overall though, we're confident that the work we have done is having a positive impact on the well-being, motivation and ultimately the productivity of our people."*