



## Improving staff well-being at Lancashire Constabulary

The police service in the United Kingdom has a global reputation for the quality of the service it provides to the public at a time when all police forces face a complex and growing range of pressures. In recognition of these pressures, The Home Office launched a Strategy for a Healthier Police Service in 2002 to encourage the Police Service to be more proactive and systematic in its assessment of well-being at work, and build structured interventions to help staff deal with the pressures they face.

Lancashire Constabulary is a medium sized police force in the North West of England employing approximately 5,500 people. Lancashire is a mixed urban and rural county with densely populated towns alongside large, sparsely populated rural areas.

When the Constabulary approached Robertson Cooper the aim was to understand and manage stress in the workplace more effectively in order to prevent mental illness and decrease sickness absence. Ashley Judd, Acting Head of Human Resources said:

*“We were looking for an established approach for objectively measuring stress at an organisational level so that we could start to understand and proactively deal with the stress situation in the force.”*

The first task Robertson Cooper was asked to carry out was a Well-being Audit of all police officers and civilian staff (known in the police service as police staff). An all-staff survey was conducted using ASSET, a short questionnaire designed to highlight the stress hotspots and allow a comparison with other UK police forces. This was followed up with focus group and one-to-one discussions with staff in hotspot areas in order to balance the quantitative results with qualitative feedback.

The result of conducting the ASSET survey was that Lancashire Constabulary were able to see how staff perceptions of well-being, commitment and health compared with others in the general working population and elsewhere in the police service. By using the online ASSET software that comes with the survey, trained Constabulary representatives were able to interrogate the survey results to investigate the specific issues facing different groups within the organisation. This independence facilitated a much more proactive approach for the force, whereby, for example, they could compare the results for different departments or job levels.

In terms of findings, the ASSET audit revealed many positive aspects of the working environment as well as some negative perceptions. For example, Organisational commitment was found to be generally good across the Constabulary. However, some specific staff groups reported issues such as work overload, feeling isolated, and health problems associated with shift working.

Lancashire Constabulary was fully committed to acting on the findings of the ASSET audit and worked in partnership with Robertson Cooper to design a full action plan, linked to the HSE Stress Management Standards. This plan is now being implemented across the organisation and it is likely that they will conduct repeat



audits in selected hotspot areas in order to measure the effectiveness of their interventions.

After the audit Robertson Cooper provided specific support to Lancashire Constabulary including:

- Consultation with managers in different units on the best way to enhance staff well-being in their areas.
- Resilience training in five specific areas revealed as “hot spots” in the survey. This focused on helping staff to help themselves through better lifestyle management, working smarter, and changing the way they think about and approach pressures at work.
- Delivering e-learning designed to enable staff to learn how to cope better with the pressures they face using Robertson Cooper’s *Under Pressure* multi-media package.
- Working with a management team in one Division to focus on building resilience through more effective leadership

Ashley Judd said of the project, *“Our work with Robertson Cooper has enabled us to become proactive in managing well-being in the force - understanding the stress situation. ASSET provided a reliable means of measuring stress in Lancashire Constabulary and the follow-up work we have conducted has brought about real and positive changes for working life here.”*