

Dr Psychologist

**COPY**Covert Services Review**Health and Wellbeing Issues**

- Maximum Time In Position (MTIP) and other interventions such as job and staff rotation are common management interventions that are used to support staff learning and development
- There is no available research that demonstrates that the use of MTIP specifically has a causal effect on positive health and wellbeing outcomes, or the prevention of health and wellbeing issues
- There is a range of international literature that documents the inherent risks of covert policing as well as its possible adverse impacts
- Length of covert assignment is not linearly predictive of higher reported frequencies of clinical symptoms
- Some risks appear to be a combination of personality and environmental factors (e.g. corruptibility re drug use), therefore are more appropriately dealt with through assessment, selection, monitoring and management/leadership behaviour
- Most research suggests the importance of selection, training, supervision/leadership, support, monitoring, transition/reintegration, retraining for subsequent role as strategies for risk mitigation.
- There are numerous psychosocial and leadership/management factors that have been demonstrated by research to affect staff health and wellbeing (such as leader and staff attributes and behaviours)

Therefore, any implementation of MTIP would have to be **one of** a range of tools to support health and wellbeing of members.

The implementation of MTIP would have to be balanced with procedures and policies that currently act to mitigate risk, to ensure these are not compromised. That is, in determining the appropriate length of MTIP, its potential impact on factors such as unit stability, staff continuity and cohesion and the retention of expertise need to be considered to ensure that MTIP does not in fact create instability or lack of expertise.

Some research suggests that aspects of the covert working environment can act as a buffer to mitigate distress (such as working within a cohesive team, and feeling that the work is of highest priority and importance to society).

**UCU**

The controllers in this area are not directly exposed to some risks, such as the risks on deployment, that are faced by their operatives, or by the SDU, which limits their exposure issues, and they spend no time on assignment, as per the definition used by the research literature.

To a large extent, the processes involved in their work with the operatives keep them connected to Victoria Police - through working jointly with operatives, liaising and working with investigators, completing requisite paperwork and processes for deployments by operatives, and at times appearing in court, all help keep them "connected".

Like many work areas, working long term in an area that is decentralised from the core of the organisation may come with risks, such as de-identification with the organisation, complacency, or burnout. It is possible that such changes in a person may have a negative effect on those around them, however this would not be unique to the covert area.

Possible risks of not implementing MTIP:

- long term disconnection from police identity and the organisation, which may result in rigidity of thinking, resistance to change, or possible complacency over the long term (which may create a risk for operatives under their control)

Possible risks of implementing MTIP

- loss of expertise
- loss of stability/continuity if not structured well
- lack of time to build up expertise by controllers if tenure is too short
- reintegration risks if a structured reintegration plan is not put in place

} not area of expertise

### SDU

SDU may have higher risks than the UCU controllers, as they are not operating under [redacted] and operating largely as "sole" practitioners, with sources who are often dangerous and unpredictable. As a result they may be at higher risks of things like increased familiarity with criminals (and therefore possibly erosion of values, and corruption).

Further, they are regularly available to sources outside of work time, which can encroach on family/personal life, and reduce any required "rest and recovery" time.

Possible risks of not implementing MTIP

- direct exposure to physical and psychological risks from long term exposure to criminal or dangerous sources
- invasion of personal/private life and impact on self and family due to constant availability to sources
- longer term disconnection from police identity and organisation

Possible risks of implementing MTIP

- loss of expertise
- loss of stability/continuity if not structured well
- lack of time to build up expertise by controllers if tenure is too short
- reintegration risks if a structured reintegration plan is not put in place

} not area of expertise

In summary, the UCU and SDU have some risks that are similar (i.e. those risks involved in general policing), whilst their exposure to more specific risks of covert policing differ due to the requirements of their individual roles. A review of the available research literature speaks to the use of selection, training, supervision, support, monitoring, transition/reintegration, and retraining for subsequent roles as the methods that are used to mitigate health, safety and wellbeing risks.

Another category of risk is organisational stressors. Organisational stressors can be just as, if not more, problematic than operational stressors associated with the work, and implementing a MTIP would not necessarily address these. Other interventions, as well as good people management and supportive leadership are required.

Whilst there is no direct evidence to link MTIP with mitigation of psychological risk, it will reduce the length of time members are exposed to the work. However, the impact of MTIP needs to be weighed against the current practices that are in place, that help to increase

physical and psychological safety, so that things such as unit stability and expertise, which support wellbeing, are not compromised.