Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this inquiry.

The Scottish Police Federation (SPF) is the statutory staff association representing police officers up to and including the rank of Chief Inspector. It also represents police cadets and special constables. The membership extends to almost 99% of all police officers within the Police Service of Scotland (PSoS). I have attached a single general information sheet outlining some factors relating to police officer terms and conditions as they affect equal opportunity issues.

The information I gathered does not fit neatly into each area of your inquiry. The comments below are collated from responses I received from officers in both the federated ranks and superintending ranks.

On the whole respondents, from across all parts of Scotland, stated that they believed the provision of services and support offered to them as single parents outside of work were easily accessed and that this had improved in recent years. However, there was a general feeling that PSoS did not fully understand the difficulties faced by single fathers or those who had shared responsibility for the care of children.

Many expressed a view that the attitudes of both police managers and HR representatives were ambivalent at best and that there was a gulf in the compassion shown to male officers compared to their female colleagues. The suggestion being that the culture of the organisation was more understanding of the needs of female officers to exercise their parental responsibilities.

Not surprisingly the biggest day to day challenge experienced by officers who are lone fathers was balancing the expectations of a 24/7 emergency service with the need to commit to childcare and support. Frequent short notice changes to duty hours caused havoc and extra, unforeseen, expense in relation to childcare. These challenges are not lessened by the uncertainty of on-call duties and the possibility of transfer to a different shift pattern or even to another part of the country at the requirement of the Chief Constable.

Many respondents, especially those who carried a higher rank within the organisation, felt obligated to put the job first, leaving them feeling guilty when they could not satisfy the needs of their children.

The reduction in the number of Welfare Officers employed within PSoS has also had a detrimental impact on the support available to these officers.

While senior officers acknowledged that their positions within the service allowed them to operate more flexibly than junior colleagues, they believed that any formal approach to PSoS for a flexible arrangement would be met with a negative response and would be detrimental to their careers.

One respondent praised PSoS as a whole for the way he was supported when his wife died suddenly. He was immediately afforded appropriate time off and subsequent compressed hours working. Unfortunately there was an expectation
after only a short period that he should return to full duties having had sufficient
time to put his affairs in order and make necessary arrangements for his bereaved
children.

There was a general feeling that the PSoS did not fully embrace the benefits of
flexible and part-time working. Further, it did not seem to accept that male officers
could also have main child caring responsibilities and frustrations existed as a
result. Male officers within PSoS do not expect to be afforded special treatment but
they do seek an appreciation that it is not just females who require special
arrangements at times to facilitate the care of their children.

The SPF will continue to work with PSoS in an effort to achieve fairness for male
officers with child caring responsibilities and hopes that the Scottish Parliament will
play their part by supporting better flexible working arrangements organised through
the Police Negotiating machinery for all within the Police service.

General Information

Figures published by Police Service of within their Equality & Diversity in Police
Scotland 2013 document on 30th April 2013 shows that 72% of the 17,830 regular
officers and 63 % of Special Constables were male.

Police officers terms and conditions are detailed within the Police Service of
Scotland Regulations 2013 and the accompanying Determinations. These include
details of part-time appointments; paternity leave and adoption leave and outline
the availability of “special leave” due to unforeseen circumstances.

Part-time/Flexible Working within the PSoS

Part-time working is permitted by virtue the Police Service of Scotland Regulations
2013 and accompanying Determinations. On 29th November 2013 PSoS published
Flexible Working (Police Officers & Authority/Police Staff) Standard Operating
Procedure. This document is the view of PSoS and at the time of publishing the
Equality Impact assessment had not been completed.

The SPF has submitted to the Scotland Standing Committee of the Police
Negotiating Board a Guidance document regarding part-time and flexible working
with the aim of achieving a workable document that is agreed by, and committed to,
by all constituent parts of that body which includes both the Official (employers)
Side and Staff (workers) Side. To date PSoS has resisted the agreement of the
document and therefore the Standard Operating Procedure is the only reference
document which the SPF has already highlighted to the Force is, in some areas
incorrect and misleading.

PSoS published details in 2013 showing that between April 2012 and February
2013 19% of requests for flexible working were submitted by male officers – 64% of
those being for a variance in shift pattern.

There are no current or recent details available of the number of male officers
currently working on a part-time or flexible basis but Scotland’s census 2011
evidenced that 64.2% of male lone parents were in employment.

Jackie Muller
National Equality Secretary
Scottish Police Federation
12 February 2014