

POLITI

CHALLENGES IN COMBINING WORKING LIFE AND PRIVATE LIFE

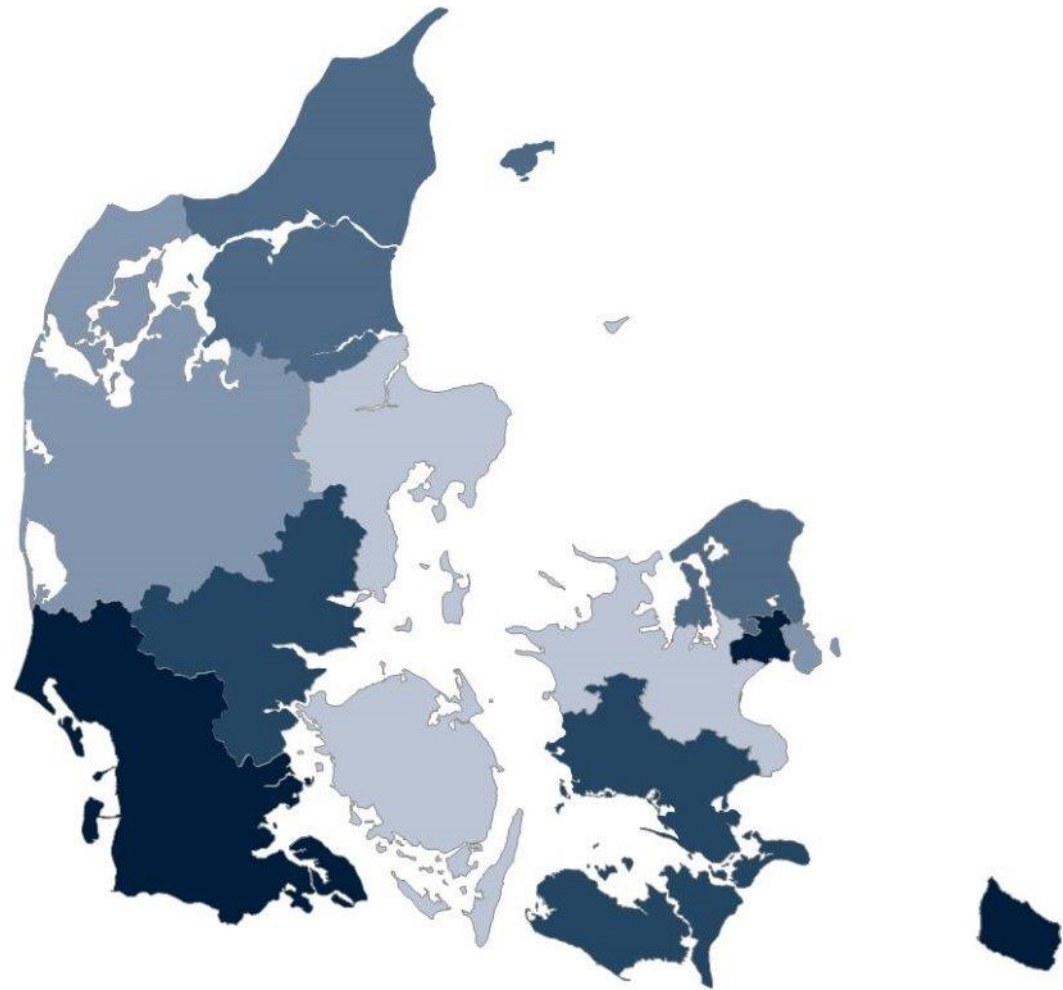
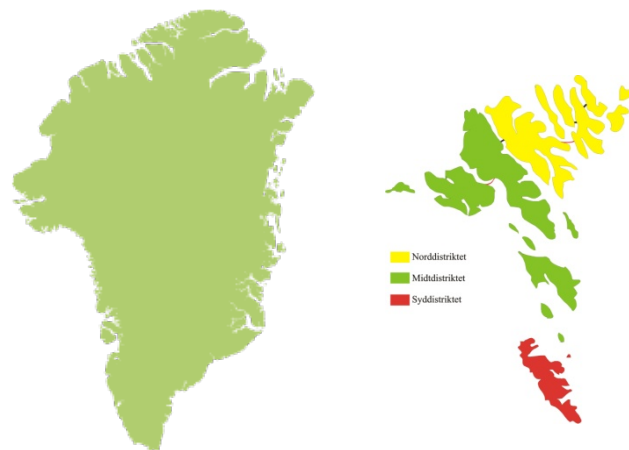
Nordic-Baltic Seminar 2017

Women in police – changes and challenges

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The Psychological Service at the Danish National Police

- 3 Psychologists in the National Police
- 13 psychologists in the 12 Police Districts across the country and in the Faroe Islands



The Psychological Service at the Danish National Police

We do:

- Psychological debriefings after critical incidents
- Individual counselling concerning work-related issues
- A range of other psychological support actions

2016:

287 psychological debriefings

516 individual sessions



Police work 2017 is influenced by....

- Acts of terror in Europe and terror-related shooting incidents in CPH February 2015: increased operational awareness in all police districts
- Refugee crisis/patrolling at the borders
- Organizational changes to meet the new challenges and demands



Police life

What makes it all worth it:

Action, excitement, team spirit, helping one another,
professional enthusiasm etc...



Work pressure

- Constant shortage of people - the duty schedule cannot be completed
- Lack of long-time-planning which creates unpredictability: cancellation of free weekends, family plans postponed, etc.



Police family life....

- Double pressure: Dissatisfaction on the home front, difficulties with keeping family together, "you promised that your were free next weekend and would be with us, but ..."
- Couples who are both employed in the police cannot both be on alert at the same time
- Divorces: young single fathers/mothers cannot keep things together



Organizational changes

- Less influence on own placement than earlier
- Uncertainties about future placement, future colleagues, working tasks, leader
- Unclarification over time, anxiety spreading to the home front
- Practical problems, for instance with transportation to new workplace



Leader's support

The general experience:

- Supporting of each other on the same level and on the nearest level of leadership
- The leaders do what they can – a difficult task to meet demands and at the same time show individual considerations. Necessary, however, to avoid more sick reports
- Leaders further up the chain of command have less understanding of the circumstances of the work, and lack appreciation of the effort and the personal costs



Police tasks

- The vulnerability, faced with the usual, sometimes psychologically demanding police tasks, increases when you are otherwise completely overworked
- “When on top of this, you are faced with death, accidents and other pressures, you give up – perhaps it’s not worth it any more”.
- Lack of meaning – what is seen as the most important is downgraded in relation to what is conceived as less important
- Your professional pride is hurt



Alice

Child abuse investigator

Has been drawn out of investigation to fill in sponsor duty at the border and other patrolling assignments

Feels guilt over having to put investigating tasks aside – there are child abusers out there and cases of abuse that need to be investigated



When people become vulnerable

- When people become sick from work related stress: to a larger degree than earlier, people are transferred or dismissed
- Coming back after calling in sick because of stress: experiencing the expectation of a quick return to full time
- At an earlier time they could more easily be accommodated in an administrative position



Alfred

43 years old

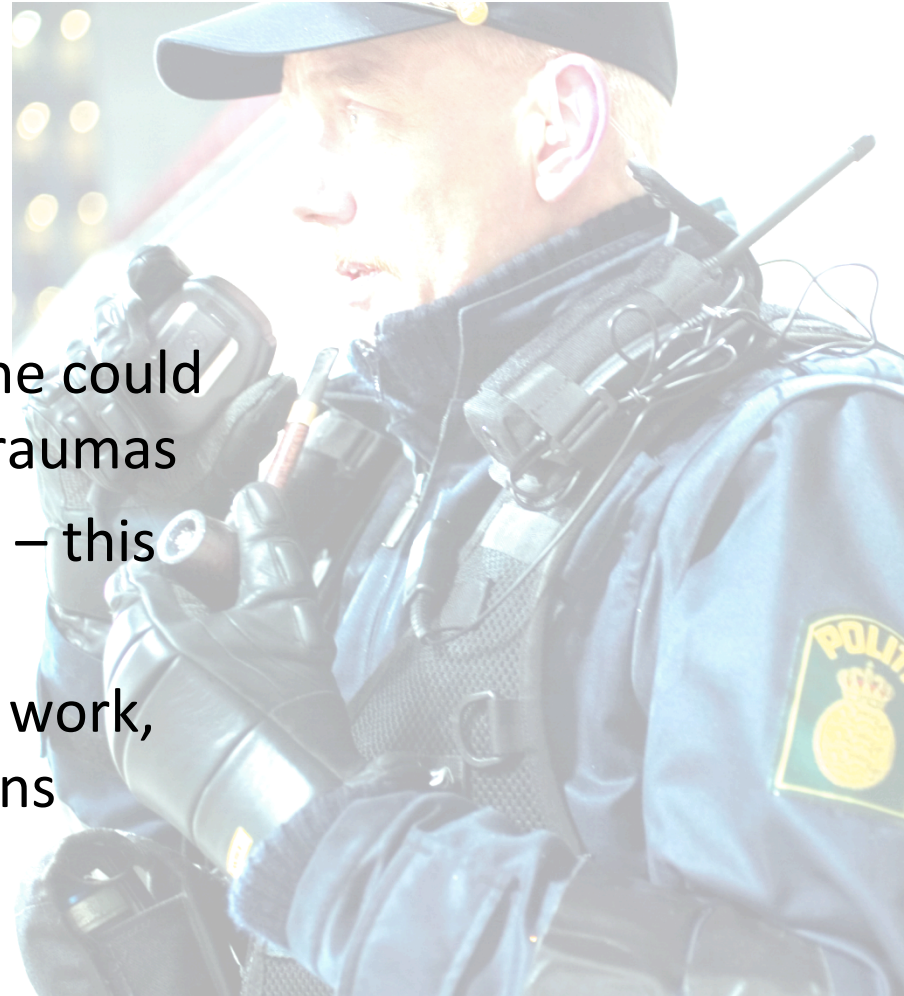
Suffers from PTSD

For some years he has done all he could
to manage his work in spite of traumas

He and his wife become parents – this
triggers a mental breakdown

He has still enough resources to work,
but not with police confrontations

He is on his way to retirement



How do people react?

- You try to look after yourself by not answering the phone on weekends for fear of being called for extra duty
- Many consider looking for a job elsewhere
- Several colleagues either quit or apply for leave and get jobs outside the service with fewer weekend duties and higher pay



How do people react?

- Some report satisfaction
- Others return because they haven't found that "extra" that made them choose the police in the first place (fellow-feeling, the assignments, to be able to make a difference)



Women and men

Women:

Policerelated:

Do not want to show signs of weakness, they struggle to manage the work, instead of giving up, they work even harder. They feel that it is necessary to show strength, perhaps as a compensation for their gender.

General issues for women:

They make great demands on getting their family life to function. They take on the main responsibility for making things work at home

For some a solution to this dilemma is to apply for leave, and take a jump into life outside the service



Sarah

32 years, married to Peter, a police officer

2 children of 5 and 7 years

Is in the department

Has had sponsor duty at the border and many extra duties during the last year

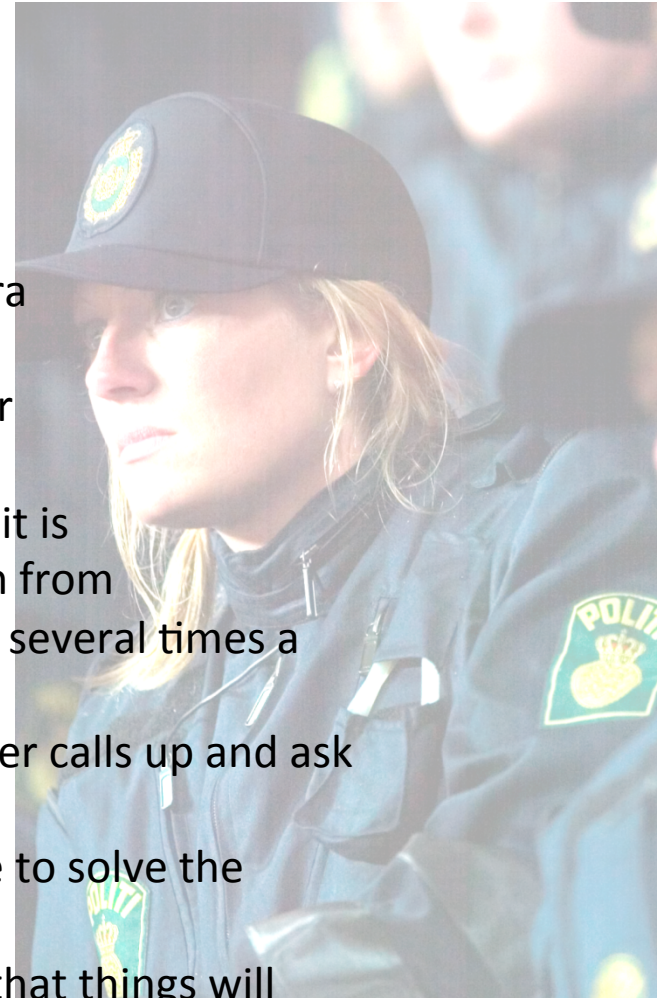
Has taken on duties on her free weekends to cover holes in the duty schedule

Her husband, Peter, is also on the alert, and often it is not possible for any of them to fetch their children from kindergarten. The grandparents fetch the children several times a week

So far, Sarah has always responded when the leader calls up and ask her to take on an extra duty

But now she has chosen to apply for 1 year's leave to solve the family's problems

After that, she hopes to return to her old job and that things will have changed by then



Women and men

Men:

The man looks after the economy and do not run a risk economically

Instead of leaving, he applies for another job within the organization with fixed duties, for instance in investigation



Sebastian

30 years old, has 2 children of 2 and 3 years

Was divorced from the mother a year ago.

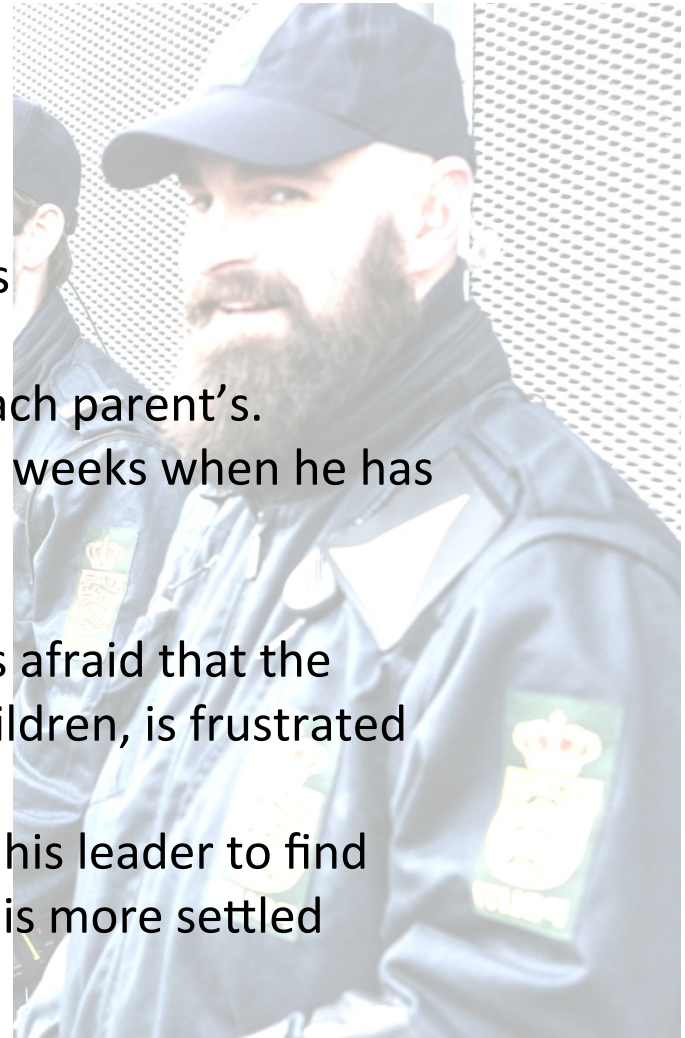
The children spend one week by turns at each parent's.

Is still working hard to make ends meet the weeks when he has the children.

Often he has to ask the ex-wife for help

This creates conflicts, and Sebastian, who is afraid that the mother will try to limit his time with the children, is frustrated

He loves his job on the alert, but has asked his leader to find him a job in investigation where work time is more settled



What can be done?

The organisation

The long-term perspective: strengthen the resources of the department through more people being trained as police officers, delegating administrative police tasks etc.

Here and now: Recognition of the extraordinary pressure, both on the people and their relatives

Call for meetings with relatives where the management explains the conditions of work, recognize that there is a cost at home, supplemented with input of how to support each other in relations networks etc.

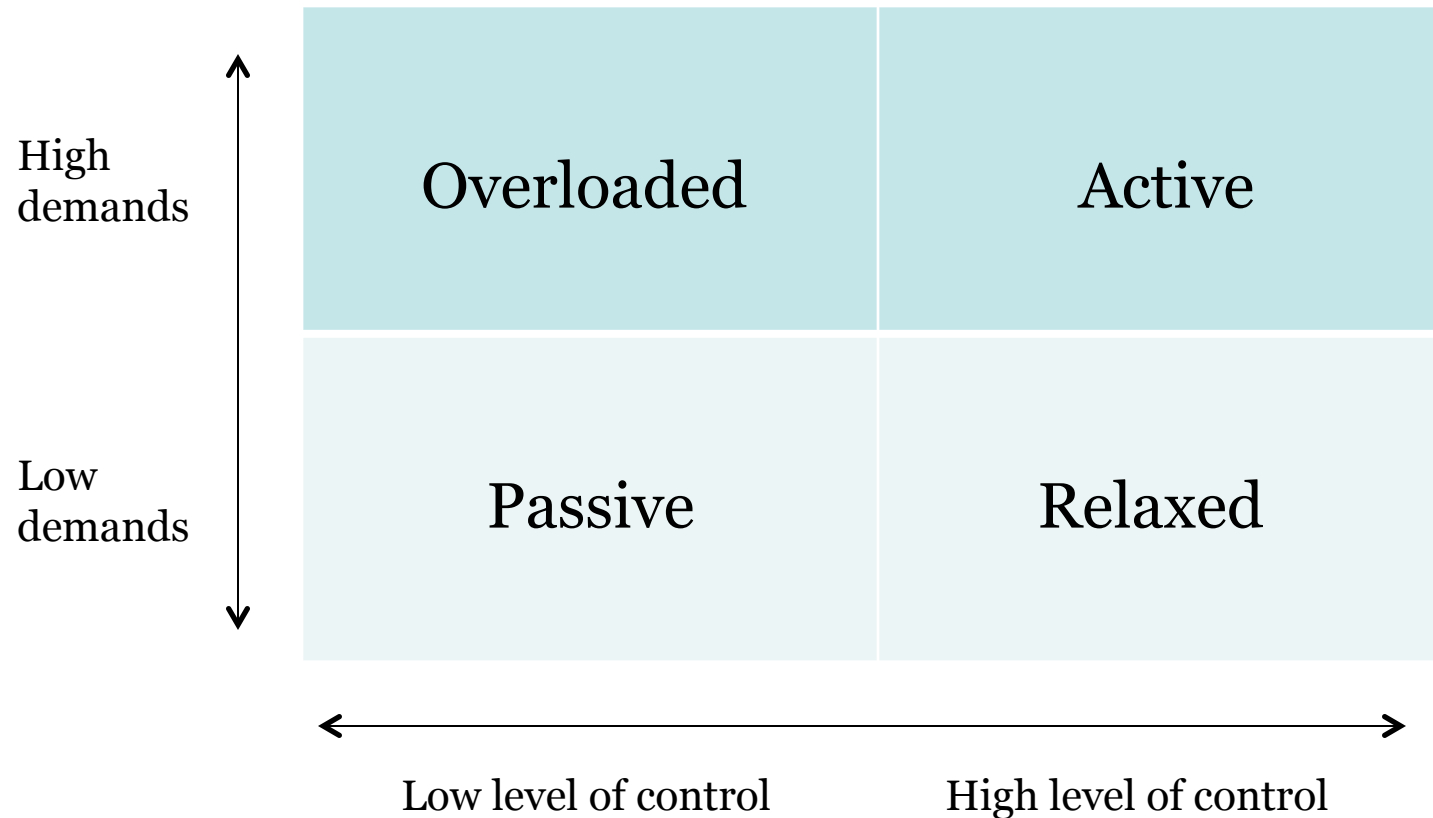


What can be done?

- ‘Buffers’: Good management, good collegial relations, meaningfulness to the assignments, and not least a bit of room for planning!
- Some leaders succeeds against odds in creating
 - a bit of flexibility for the individual
 - taking personal considerations
 - signal recognition of the personal costs and the willingness to ‘go the extra mile’ for the sake of the group



Demand – control

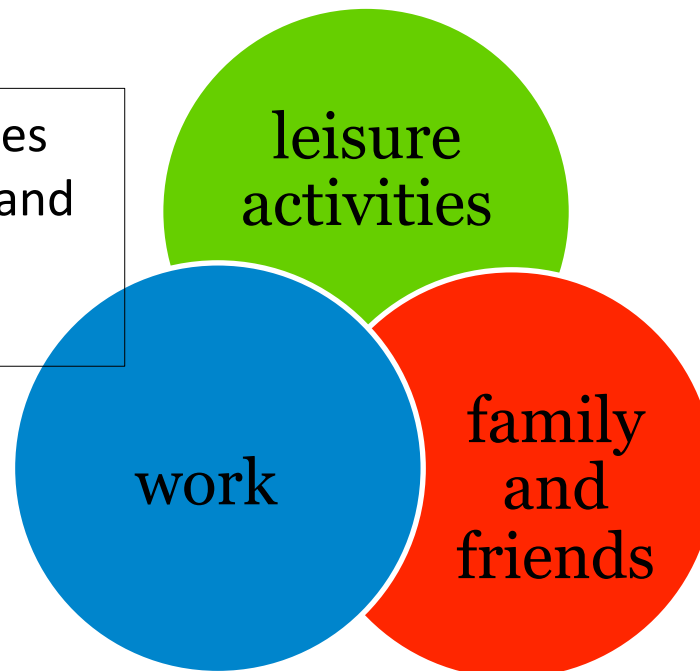


What can you do?

People work on

- Differentiating between what you can influence and what you cannot
- Looking better after themselves
- Exchange short-term personal strategies with long-term

Balance activities
that drain you and
activities that
energizes you



What can you do?

People work on

- Including family networks to make ends meet, possibly establishing supporting networks among equals
- Making use of the limited time off duty by making better routines to separate work-time and family/restitution-time: to mentally shut down work before going home

