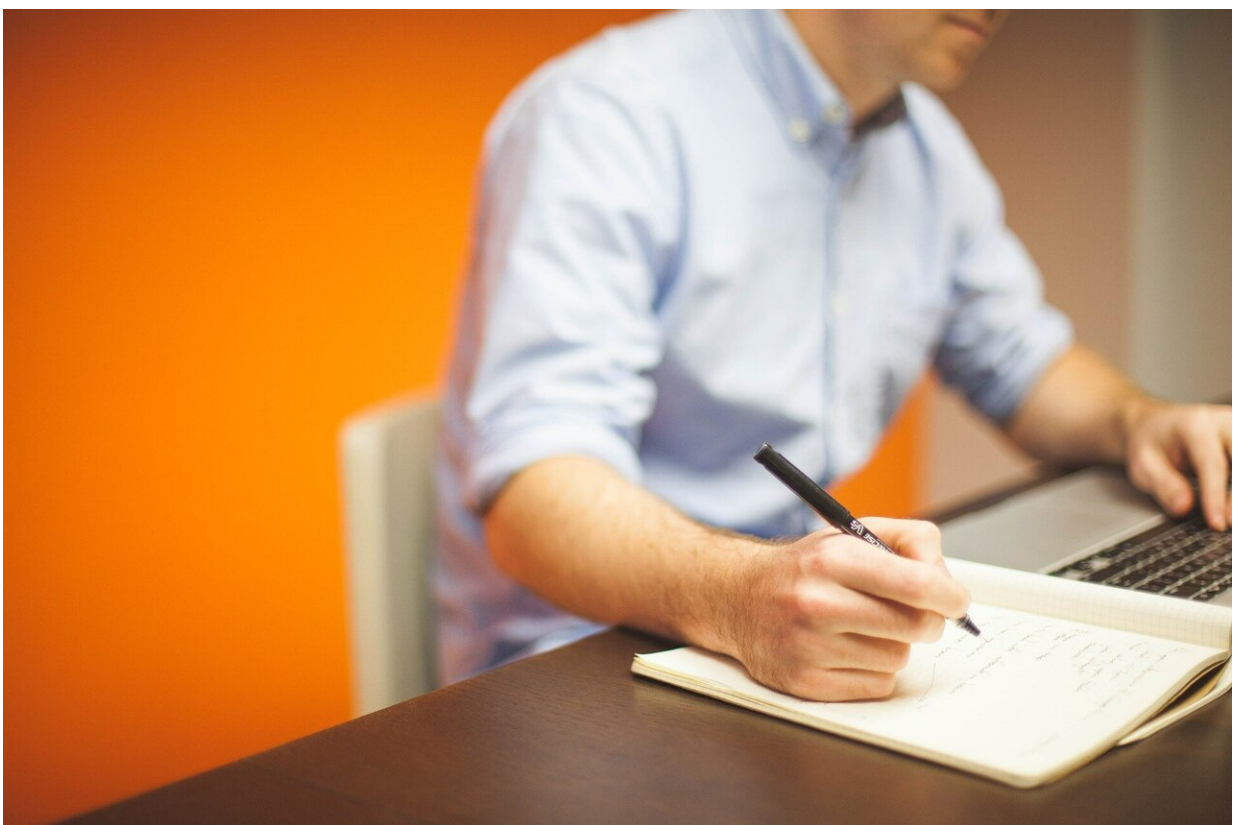


# Police and law enforcement 'back-office' staff dealing with traumatic material need extra support when working from home

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Analytical and intelligence professionals in back-office as supportive staff working with traumatic material during the pandemic have reported

feeling anxious, sad, lonely and exhausted. Additional support is needed to help them manage working from home or commuting into work, according to new research.

A team of psychologists from the University of Birmingham carried out interviews at an early stage of the pandemic to find out how workers in these sectors had been affected—in terms of their [work](#) and their mental health—and what [support](#) they had received from employers.

The team recruited 16 volunteers from police forces throughout the UK. Five were male and 11 were female and all reported being of White ethnicity. All were working in intelligence and analytical roles.

Almost all the interviewees reported some positive effects of the pandemics, such as valuing the efforts made by employers to provide a safe working environment, and the pandemic causing fewer crimes overall to be committed.

But, alongside this, working from home with fewer job resources made working with traumatic material more challenging and time-consuming. In addition, colleagues were less able to access informal conversations with colleagues, losing out on additional expertise as well as informal social support.

"While many law-enforcement officers will have to leave home to carry out their duties, others in more analytical or research roles, may find themselves working remotely and potentially on distressing topics such as sexual violence or homicide," said lead researcher Dr. Fazeelat Duran. "For [staff](#) working from home, this means bringing such material into the home, blurring boundaries which can be important for mental well-being. It also often means additional careful management is required to ensure other [family members](#) do not come into contact with the material."

The team recommended a number of interventions that employees could consider:

- Although security considerations make informal support is less accessible, scheduling in time for virtual cafes or lunches and ensuring [work demands](#) allow opportunities to be taken up would help maintain informal support networks.
- To help maintain barriers between work and home, employers and line managers could consider:
  - facilitating access to on-line group activities, for example by providing vouchers for online classes
  - Encouraging new hobbies by sending home activities for employees
  - Provide access to CPD activities and courses that could give work-oriented employees a sense of achievement as well as a break from distressing material.
  - Avoid exhaustion amongst workers by deciding the work schedule and performance level according to where the staff member is based (work or home).
  - Recognise and respond to the needs of their staff who take traumatising material into the [home](#)

"Although we recognise the nature of the work done by these analysts/intelligence professionals, their roles put some constraints on what measures can be put in place, there clearly needs to be some consideration of how to support staff carrying out this vital work in particularly challenging circumstances," added Dr. Duran.

The study is published in *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*.

**More information:** Impact of the current pandemic on analytical and intelligence professionals working in police and law enforcement organisations, *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, 2022.

Provided by University of Birmingham

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