

Your Voice Matters: The 2024 NARPO Members Survey

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1. Acknowledgments

NARPO would like to acknowledge and thank the Liverpool Centre for Advanced Policing Studies, Liverpool John Moore University (LJMU) under the supervision of Dr Carol Cox for their help and support in the production of this report.

2. Executive Summary

The National Association of Retired Police Officer (NARPO) is a company limited by Guarantee. Established in 1919 NARPO aims to safeguard the rights of members and promote measures for their welfare with particular regard to police pensions. Through growth of its membership NARPO now works on behalf of over 93,000 former police officers, staff and their families.

As one of the largest welfare organisations NARPO supports its members through strong advocacy, ensuring their voices and views are heard.

It aims to do this by proactively campaigning on behalf of members, with their backing and support; one crucial aspect being to help shape and develop the Police Covenant, making sure the needs of those who have served in the police are provided for.

The organisation is active throughout England and Wales and delivers member services and the provision of welfare support through a network of 105 local branches, each working autonomously to deliver the most appropriate service to its members under the control of a local branch committee.

There is a headquarters based in Wakefield, West Yorkshire that undertakes the coordination of the IT infrastructure, Conference planning, Marketing and financial accounts as well as maintenance of databases, member records, a call handling facility and general administrative functions.

NARPO has strategic partnerships with the Police Treatment Centres (England and Scotland), Flint House Rehabilitation Centre, Police Care UK, Disability Rights UK and other such charities as well as leading welfare organisations including the College of Policing (Oscar Kilo) and Police Mutual.

In 2018 NARPO facilitated research conducted by De Monfort University, around the impact occupational experiences had on mental wellbeing during retirement, the survey receiving 870 responses.

A lack of support for mental health and wellbeing for officers once they had left the force was found, NARPO greatly expanding the Welfare resources available to members through ensuring welfare representatives across the NARPO branches were fully supported by the organisation. There was with an upgraded training program, best practice guide and additional courses. A welfare hub was created on the National website containing a variety of guides on mental health, physical health, illnesses, and bereavement. This ensured our members had free 24-7 access to support resources.

A decision was made to undertake a second survey to capture the views of those that had transitioned from the police service, however this was to adopt a more holistic approach and would seek to uncover the things that were important to our members. The aim of this approach was so that as well as delivering outstanding service to our existing membership we could look to develop our services, strategies and collaborations to enhance the experience of those officers about to, or in the process of transitioning from the police service.

The survey was launched through the organisation's quarterly magazine, NARPO News and a total of 3201 responses were received. Responses from the survey were reviewed and analysed by staff at Liverpool Centre for Advanced Policing Studies, Liverpool John Moore University (LJMU).

Results from the survey showed a large number of areas where officers felt that the transition process prior to, during and after leaving the force could have been better in providing more information and support to ease the transition.

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3. Introduction

The National Association of Retired Police Officer (NARPO) is a company limited by Guarantee. Established in 1919 NARPO aims to safeguard the rights of members and promote measures for their welfare with particular regard to police pensions. Through growth of its membership NARPO now works on behalf of over 93,000 former police officers, staff and their families.

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Through previous engagement with members, conducted through two comprehensive surveys, it is apparent that not only inconsistencies exist but there is a lack of advice, support and continued care available to those transitioning form the service.

It is NARPO's wish to address this gap through continued high levels of support and service delivery to our members and to use the evidence gained to secure a voice on the Police Covenant Oversight Board. It is hoped that this will allow the organisation to be fully engaged with the process, to reach and best serve those members of the police family transitioning from their role.

The survey was intended as a tool to capture the lived experiences of those having transitioned, to include good and bad aspects of the transitioning process as well as identifying voids in the transitioning process. It was hoped that by this data NARPO strategies could be enhanced or developed to address the emerging needs for future leavers.

4. Methodology

The survey was based around a mixed methodology approach with both quantitative and qualitative style questions. The rationale behind this was to elicit as many responses from within our membership whilst capturing as much data as possible to inform and shape the future direction of the organisation.

The use of this mixed methodology allowed for ease of completion by the respondents by making the survey user friendly and quick to complete whilst also allowing for the capture of more detailed rich data through the lived experiences of respondents.

To ensure that results were as inclusive and representative as possible, the sampling method took account of the full organisational membership with no filtering or exclusion of any demographic groups.

The survey was launched through the quarterly magazine, NARPO News which is received by approximately 85,000 members. The magazine shared information about the purpose of the survey, as well as a link to an electronic version of the survey to allow completion online. The feature was printed in a 2 page pull out format to allow those members who were less technically proficient or preferred to complete a paper form to partake in the survey, again to maximise responses and representation.

A realistic completion deadline for responses was agreed for both electronic and paper postal forms to be received.

A total of 3201 responses were received in relation to the survey. These were collated and the results logged accordingly. All responses were anonymous and did not collect identifying data of the participants.

Once collated a review of the survey and its responses was kindly undertaken by research staff at the Liverpool Centre for Advanced Policing Studies, Liverpool John Moore University (LJMU) under the supervision of Dr Carol Cox BSc(hons), MSc, PGCE, FHEA, PhD, MBACP. This review not only validated the research method used but also added a level of rigour and support to the findings.

There was no exclusion criteria or filtering applied and so all responses received were included in the results.

Following completion of the review the findings of the survey were provided to NARPO by the LJMU team.

5. Ethical Consideration/Approval

Following due consideration no ethical approval was sought. The survey was initially designed as an internal tool to seek the experiences and needs of existing members, deemed to be a low level of risk associated with the survey due to the anonymised data capture.

6. Results

From the responses received back from our members it was disappointing but not unsurprising to see that there was not one particular aspect of the leaver process that was seen to be lacking; results suggested that there was disaffection across the whole process and at all stages.

It was possible to identify some obvious trends around the demographic of leavers and reasons for transitioning from the police service as well as discovering variances in levels of support offered.

All data received was subsequently made available to research staff at LJMU who produced an overview of findings, which can be seen below.

a) Quantitative Responses

When responses to the quantitative style questions were analysed it was possible to identify the following information.

i. Age left

The age at which officers left the police force shows that the majority of departures occur between the ages of 45 and 54, with 71.9% of officers leaving during this period. An additional 19.5% of officers left between the ages of 55 and 64, meaning that over 90% of all departures occur between the ages of 45 and 64. Younger officers, particularly those under 45, make up a small portion of departures, with only 7.8% leaving before this age. 0.8% of departures, consists of officers who leave between the ages of 65 and 74.

Age	Ν	%	
18-25	8	0.2	
25-34	57	1.8	
35-44	185	5.8	
45-54	2301	71.9	
55-64	625	19.5	
65-74	25	0.8	

ii. Reason for Leaving:

The reasons why officers leave the police indicates that a significant number of officers retire after reaching the standard retirement age, accounting for 69.4% of departures. While an additional 6.4% leave after serving 30 or more years in the force. Medically retired officers represent 18.4% of the total, highlighting healthrelated concerns as a significant factor in early departures. A smaller percentage of officers leave for other career opportunities, making up 3.4% of the total. Mental health issues, though a less frequent cause, still account for 0.2% of the departures, which, along with the 0.8% of officers citing a lack of support, underscores the impact of workplace conditions on retention. Other reasons, including injury and unspecified collectively contribute 1.3% factors. to of departures.

	N	%	
Reached Retirement	2222	69.4	
Medically Retired	590	18.4	
Served 30+ Years	205	6.4	
Other Career Options	110	3.4	
Mental Health	7	.2	
Other	35	1.1	
Lack of Support	26	.8	
Injury	6	.2	

iii. Support when leaving:

How supported officers felt when preparing to leave the force shows a concerning trend. A significant majority of officers felt under-supported, with 39.2% indicating they received "Little Support" and 32.0% stating they received "No Support" at all. Only 7.0% of officers reported feeling "Very Supported," and 21.9% felt "Supported."

	Ν	%	
Very Supported	223	7.0	
Supported	701	21.9	
Little Support	1254	39.2	
No Support	1023	32.0	

iv. Disability support on leaving:

The data regarding NARPO members' experiences with disability or long-term health condition declarations before leaving the police force reveals notable insights. Of the 3,169 respondents, 72.7% did not declare any disability or long-term health condition prior to leaving. Among those who did declare a condition, a significant portion (20.0%) felt they were not supported during the transitioning process. In contrast, only 2.3% of those who declared a condition felt supported. Additionally, 4.0% were unsure about whether they declared a condition or the impact it had on the support they received. A small fraction, 1.0%, did not answer the question.

	N	%
Did Declare - Supported	74	2.3
Did not declare	2327	72.7
Did Declare - Not	639	20.0
Supported		
Unsure	129	4.0

v. Support from departments:

A significant proportion of respondents in each case reported receiving no support, with the highest dissatisfaction seen in the Welfare department (53.3%) and HR department (48.1%). Additionally, a large number indicated they received only minimal support, particularly in the HR (27.3%) and Pensions (28.1%) departments.

	HR	Pensions	Welfare
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)
Supported	551 (17.2)	984 (30.7)	444 (13.9)
Little Support	875 (27.3)	901 (28.1)	718 (22.4)
Offered			
No Support Offered	1540 (48.1)	1164 (36.4)	1705 (53.3)
No Support Required	235 (7.3)	152 (4.7)	334 (10.4)

vi. Resources to assist on transitioning from the Police Service:

Respondents were asked which resources they felt could have been included or improved to assist their transition from the Police Service. The majority indicated that additional information on tax implications (52.5%) and pensions (51.0%) would have been beneficial. Support on transitioning (47.7%) and information on member benefits (48.9%) were also noted as areas needing improvement, though to a slightly lesser extent. Meanwhile, fewer respondents identified a need for more resources related to mental health (30.5%), physical health (36.7%), and police charities (36.2%).

	Yes	No
	N (%)	N (%)
Information on my Pension	1633 (51.0)	1568 (49.0)
Information on Mental Health Resources available	975 (30.5)	2226 (69.5)
Information on Physical Health Resources available	1174 (36.7)	2027 (63.3)
Information on the Police Charities	1158 (36.2)	2043 (63.8)
Information on Tax Implications	1682 (52.5)	1519 (47.5)
Support on transitioning into a second	1528 (47.7)	1673 (52.3)
career		
Information on member benefit services	1564 (48.9)	l1)

vii. Pre-Retirement Courses

Respondents were asked to outline their experience of any pre-retirement course they attended. Of the total respondents, 30.3% reported having attended a course that they felt was good, while 29.5% rated their experience as average and 12.7%, found the course to be poor. Additionally, 2.5% were offered a course but chose not to attend, and 25.0% indicated that no pre-retirement course was offered to them.

	N	%	
Attended, Good	969	30.3	
Attended, Average	945	29.5	
Attended, Poor	407	12.7	
Offered but did not	81	2.5	
attend			
Not Offered	799	25.0	

viii. Support since leaving

The data reveals that only 4.9% of respondents received additional support and resources from their former force, while a substantial 95.1% did not receive any follow-up support.

	Ν	%
Yes	158	4.9
No	3043	95.1

ix. Mental Health since leaving

Respondents were asked to describe their mental health since transitioning from the Police Service. The results show that 45.4% of individuals reported their mental health as remaining the same, while 30.2% noted an improvement and 11.2% felt it had significantly improved. However, a notable 13.2% of respondents experienced a decline in their mental health, with 9.8% reporting it as worse and 3.4% describing it as significantly worse. This distribution highlights that while a majority of respondents have either maintained or seen improvements in their mental health, a significant minority have faced deteriorations in their well-being following their transition from the force.

	N	%	
Highly Improved	357	11.2	
Improved	966	30.2	
Equal	1454	45.4	
Worse	315	9.8	
Significantly Worse	109	3.4	

x. Availability of resources since leaving

Respondents were asked to evaluate the resources available to them since leaving the Police Service. The data reveals that the majority of individuals, 53.7%, found the resources to be the same as before, while 8.5% experienced an improvement and 1.2% found them to be highly improved. In contrast, a significant portion of respondents reported a decline in the resources available to them, with 24.7% describing them as worse and 11.8% as significantly worse.

	Ν	%	
Highly Improved	39	1.2	
Improved	271	8.5	
Equal	1720	53.7	
Worse	792	24.7	
Significantly Worse	379	11.8	

xi. Services and benefits to aid in transitioning from the Police service

Respondents were asked about the services and benefits that could address gaps after transitioning from the Police Service. The results highlight several key areas of need: 48.0% of participants indicated that financial planning and will writing services would be beneficial. Pension advice and updates were desired by 55.0% of respondents, suggesting a strong need for ongoing support in this area. Mental and physical health resources were identified as important by 39.6% of respondents. Additionally, 34.8% expressed a need for information on disability, state, or career benefits they may be entitled to. In contrast, there was less interest in social network opportunities, with 26.3% finding this beneficial, and healthy guidance, with 26.0% value such living seeing in support.

	Yes	Νο
	N (%)	N (%)
Financial Planning/Will Writing	1535 (48.0)	1666 (52.0)
Discounts on Goods/Services	905 (28.3)	2296 (71.7)
Pension advice	1760 (55.0)	1441 (45.0)
Mental and Physical Health Resources	1266 (39.6)	1935 (60.4)
Social Network Opportunities	841 (26.3)	2360 (73.7)
Healthy Living guidance	832 (26.0)	2369 (74.0)
Information on any disability/state/careers	1114 (34.8)	2087 (65.2)
benefits		

b) Qualitative Responses

Due to the mixed methodology design, the survey allowed for some more in-depth evidence, gained through capturing the perceptions and lived experience of the participants. This allowed for a more detailed understanding of issues, expectations and needs to be obtained.

The qualitative responses, when analysed by the LJMU provided the following points to be considered as a result of this survey.

• Lack of support or contact from the force after retirement.

- Issues with retirement processes and information
- Varied experiences with pre-retirement courses
- Importance of NARPO and other support networks
- Health-related concerns, including mental health issues like PTSD
- Mixed feelings about the force and overall police service
- Financial concerns and advice
- Desire for better communication and support systems
- Appreciation for welfare checks, especially during the pandemic
- Importance of maintaining connections with former colleagues

Support from Police Forces:

- Many respondents felt abandoned by their former police forces after retirement, with little to no contact or support.
- Phrases like "no support whatsoever" and "no contact at all to ensure that everything is going ok" were common.
- Some felt that the police force showed little interest in their well-being postretirement.

Role of NARPO (National Association of Retired Police Officers):

- NARPO was frequently mentioned as a key source of support for retired officers.
- Respondents appreciated the social connections, information, and assistance provided by NARPO.
- NARPO was described as providing "excellent" support and a "feeling of belonging."

Mental Health and PTSD Support:

- Several respondents highlighted the lack of mental health support, particularly for conditions like PTSD.
- There was a sense of being in "limbo" due to the lack of support from both the police force and other organisations.
- Comparisons were made to the support available for military personnel, with a desire for similar resources for retired police officers.

Welfare Checks and Social Media:

- Some respondents mentioned welfare checks conducted by their former forces, especially during the pandemic, which were appreciated.
- Social media platforms like Facebook were used to maintain connections with former colleagues and receive support.

Desire for Better Communication and Liaison:

- There was a call for better communication and liaison between the police force, Police Federation, and NARPO.
- Respondents wanted to be informed about significant changes, health advice, and monetary offers.

Enhance support for officers dealing with trauma and mental health issues:

- Provide better support for officers who have dealt with traumatic experiences during their service.
- Offer specialised support for conditions like PTSD, similar to what's available for military personnel.
- Improve access to mental health services, both through the NHS and other providers.

Inconsistent Retirement Preparation:

- Experiences with pre-retirement courses varied widely among respondents.
- Some officers received helpful courses, while others felt the preparation was inadequate or non-existent.
- There were mentions of courses being outsourced to private companies, sometimes focusing more on selling financial products than providing comprehensive retirement guidance.

Financial Concerns and Pension Issues:

• Several respondents expressed concerns about their pensions, particularly those affected by the "Immediate Detriment" situation.

- There were complaints about lack of information or updates regarding pensionrelated matters.
- Some mentioned the importance of financial planning and the need for impartial financial advice.

Feeling of Abandonment:

- Many respondents used strong language to describe feeling "dumped,"
 "abandoned," or treated as "just a number" after retirement.
- There was a sense of disappointment in the lack of recognition for their years of service.

Importance of Social Connections:

- Maintaining connections with former colleagues was highlighted as crucial for many retirees.
- Social media platforms like Facebook were mentioned as tools for staying in touch.
- NARPO events and gatherings were valued for providing opportunities to socialize with other retired officers.

Varied Experiences with Force Leadership:

- Some respondents mentioned a lack of acknowledgment or thanks from senior management upon retirement.
- Others had more positive experiences, with some forces providing welfare checks or support during difficult times.

Health and Wellbeing Concerns:

- Beyond mental health issues like PTSD, there were mentions of other health problems that officers face as they age.
- Some respondents expressed a desire for better health advice and support postretirement.

Desire for Ongoing Communication:

- Many retirees expressed a wish for better communication from their former forces about changes in policies, health advice, or monetary offers that might affect them.
- Some mentioned not knowing who to contact for pension queries or support after leaving the force.

Positive Aspects of the "Police Family":

- Despite challenges, many respondents still felt a strong connection to the "police family."
- Some mentioned re-engaging with the police service in different capacities, such as becoming cadet leaders.

Generational Changes and Technological Advancements:

- A few responses touched on how circumstances have changed since their time in service, particularly regarding technology and internet use.
- This highlights the need for retirement support to evolve with changing times and technologies.

Value of Welfare Checks:

- Particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, some forces conducted welfare checks on retired officers.
- These were generally well-received, even by those who didn't require assistance, suggesting the importance of such gestures.

7. Discussion

Analysis of the results confirmed the initial hypothesis that experiences and perceptions of the leaving process highlighted a perceived lack of consistency, information and support at all stages. One area of particular concern highlighted was the lack of information and support available to those leaving by non-traditional retirement routes. In particular those leaving on injury and ill health grounds as well as resignations, none of these groups generally receiving pre-retirement courses, which although not perfect in their delivery do offer some form of planned interventions for leavers.

The information and results gained have allowed NARPO to develop a range of recommendations as part of its longer term strategies, to not only support current members but also raise awareness of the organisation by reaching out to those who may be embarking upon the transition process, by whichever route.

8. Key Findings

Analysis of member responses provided useful insight into the transition process for those leaving the police service. Findings although sometimes saddening to read were not totally unexpected, supporting anecdotal feedback and social media posts in relation to the experiences of those officers have left the police service.

Due to the significant number of responses and large amount of information received, only headline findings will be discussed in this section; however, the results section of this report provides a comprehensive resume of the trends discovered through analysis of both quantitative and qualitative responses to the survey.

It was interesting to note that the age group of 45 to 54 was significantly the most common age for those transitioning from the police service, accounting for over seventy per cent of those having left the service. A further nineteen percent left between the ages of 55 to 64, meaning that over ninety percent of leavers left prior to the age of 65. This age distribution highlights the typical retirement pattern, with most officers having retired in their late 40s to early 60s. It is worthy of note that over eighteen percent of respondents were medically retired, another area of interest from the survey.

The reason for leaving, when analysed again provided some interesting detail for consideration. Whilst over sixty nine per cent of leavers left through the 'traditional' retirement process, over thirty per cent left through other routes. This data suggests that while most officers leave due to retirement, health and career concerns also play important roles in the decision to exit the force.

There was an overwhelming trend in the number of former officers who indicated that they had felt a lack of support when transitioning from the service, over seventy one per cent expressing a perception that had received little or no support. This would suggest that over three-quarters of those having left the service experienced inadequate support and highlights a critical area for concern.

Support from departments including HR, Pensions, and Welfare revealed a consistent pattern of officers feeling inadequately supported during their transition into retirement. The overall trend indicates a widespread perception of insufficient support across all departments, with relatively few officers feeling well-supported in their retirement preparations. This points to a systemic issue in the provision of retirement-related assistance across the police force. This may in part be due to force structures and the 'buying in' of pension administration and third party HR services, manifesting in an inconsistent approach.

Respondents were asked which resources they felt could have been included or improved to assist their transition from the Police Service. The majority indicated that additional information on tax implications and pensions would have been beneficial. Support on transitioning and information on member benefits were also noted as areas needing improvement. This suggests that while there is a general consensus on the importance of improved support and information, the specific areas of tax , pensions and member benefits were considered the most useful element from a force input point of view.

Respondents were asked to outline their experience of any pre-retirement course they attended. On the whole the courses were found to be useful and adequate with only twelve percent of respondents feeling they were poor. An area of greater concern is that a quarter of respondents indicated that they had not been offered a pre-retirement course

prior to leaving. This highlights that while a significant portion of respondents had positive or neutral experiences with their pre-retirement courses, there remains a notable percentage who found the courses lacking or did not have access to them.

Support offered since leaving the service was highlighted as an area for concern, with over ninety five per cent of responders stating that they did not receive any follow-up support. This indicates a significant gap in the continuation of support services posttransition, with the majority of former officers not benefiting from further assistance from their previous employer.

Data revealed that the majority of individuals found the availability of resources available to them since leaving was the same as before, a small saying they had experienced an improvement. However, a significant portion of respondents indicated a decline in the resources available to them, with approximately one on four describing them as worse and one in ten saying they felt it was significantly worse. This indicates that a substantial number of former officers have experienced a deterioration in the support and resources available to them having left the police service.

Respondents were asked about the services and benefits that could address gaps after transitioning from the Police Service. The results highlight several key areas of need with a large proportion of respondents feeling that financial planning and will writing services would be beneficial. Pension advice and updates were considered important by over half of respondents, suggesting a strong need for ongoing support in this area. Access to health resources and information on state, disability or career benefits were highlighted by a large proportion of participants. Overall, the data reveals a clear demand for enhanced financial and pension support, as well as mental health resources.

9. Recommendations

The survey has confirmed the belief in the need for greater collaboration with partners and stakeholders to improve awareness within the wider policing community of the services and support that NARPO can offer. It aims to do this through undertaking the recommendations below to ensure that the support it offers is readily

available, at the right point for all those leaving the police service.

- Continual development of the NARPO welfare strategy to enhance training and management of welfare officers, signposting opportunities and better collaboration with partner agencies and service providers.
- Continual development of the NARPO membership plan as part of the membership strategy to ensure we reach those officers and staff who are transitioning from the police service at an appropriate time in the process with due regard to age groups and demographics.
- Development of the NARPO marketing plan to raise brand awareness and promote the services and products that we can offer to support members on their journey. Consideration to target groups including serving officers.
- Improved collaboration with government bodies, police forces, staff associations, partners and stakeholders to improve communications to officers and staff and showcase the services and support offered by NARPO, whilst continuing to seek representation on the Police Covenant board.
- Improve capabilities at HQ, branch and regional levels to promote the organisation and raise awareness of the organisation and its benefits in a positive manner.
- Regular review of actions, progress and partnerships to ensure changes in trends and demographics.

Appendix 1: Survey Questions

General Information

0 1971-1980	0 1991-2000	0 2011-2020	
0 1981-1990	2001-2010	0 2021+	
ou leave the service?			
options		O Other	
eave the service?			
0 35 - 44		55 - 64	
O 45 - 54		0 65-74	
	 1981-1990 Du leave the service? Left to pu options Dismissed Dismissed axe the service? 35 - 44 	 1981-1990 2001-2010 2001	

Support Available Pre-Retirement

. Overall how support	ed did you feel by yo	our force in preparing	for leaving the servi	ice?
O Very supported	O Supported	d O L	ittle support	O No support
. We know a number term health condition during the transitioni	n prior to leaving the	report having a disab force, and if so, did t	ility, did you declare his factor into the su	e any disability or long pport offered
	ability however this was	not considered in the tr d further support to beth		
. Overall how support	ed did you feel by yo	our force HR departm	ent in preparing for	Retirement?
O Very supported	Supported	 Little support offered 	 No support offered 	No support required
Overall how support	ed did you feel by yo	our force Pensions de	partment in preparir	ng for Retirement?
O Very supported	O Supported	 Little support offered 	O No support offered	 No support required
Overall how support	ed did you feel by yo	our force Welfare dep	partment in preparir	ng for Retirement?
O Very supported	O Supported	 Little support offered 	No support offered	 No support required
0. Which of the follow to assist your transi	ing resources do you tion from the Police S	ervice?	en included or impro	wed upon
 Information on Phy Information on the Information on Tax Support on transition 	ental Health Resources o ysical Health Resources Police Charities, for exe Implications oning into a second car	available to me ample The Police Treatm		louse
O None O Other				

We kindly request that you take 5 to 10 minutes to share your experience of leaving the job with us, so we can gain a better understanding of your needs. Please complete this survey, tear out the page, and send to: NARPO House, 38 Bond Street, Wakefield, West Yorkshire WF1 2QP Tel: 01924 362166 Email: hq@narpo.org Website: www.narpo.org