

The Wolf Was Not Sleeping – a picture book for children

Introducing a picture book as support to children aged three to seven years, who may be concerned about their parents going to work as police officers.

First published
5 December 2024

Key details

Does it work?	Untested – new or innovative
Focus	Organisational
Topic	Diversity and inclusion Organisation including workforce
Organisation	Merseyside Police
HMICFRS report	PEEL 2023–25 Police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy: An inspection of Merseyside Police
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Region	North West
Partners	Police

Key details

Stage of practice	The practice is implemented.
Start date	March 2023
Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	Adults Children and young people Workforce

Aim

Merseyside Police aims to provide support to new recruit's families through the children's book 'The Wolf Was Not Sleeping' by Avril McDonald, illustrated by Tatiana Minina.

The book is aimed at children aged three to seven years who may be concerned about their parents going to work as police officers.

Intended outcome

The intended outcomes of the book are to:

- improve care and support for the wellbeing of the workforce, recruits, and their families
- improve children's understanding of the roles of police officers and staff
- address feelings of anxiety children may have about parents going to work as police officers

Description

The 'Wolf Was Not Sleeping' was commissioned by the charity Police Care UK following research conducted by the University of Cambridge. The book was first published in April 2022 and

reinforces the pride felt by having a first responder in the family, strengthening the connections between families and policing teams.

The book is described by Police Care UK as “a heartwarming bedtime story specially written to soothe the anxiety of children whose parents work as first responders and to help initiate conversations about working in policing. Our UK edition of The Wolf Was Not Sleeping comes with a very special foreword from His Royal Highness Prince William, who dedicates the book to all the children of police families.”

The force purchased an initial batch of 100 copies of the book, which were distributed internally on a first come first served basis. Copies were provided at no cost, to new recruits with age-appropriate children and their families during attestation ceremonies. The ceremonies include a ‘welcome to the police’ family stall, highlighting other support available such as details of the Employee Assistance Programme.

The force obtained the author's permission to make a video based on the book, which is published on the Merseyside Police YouTube channel. This allows families to download the video at home and watch together. The author provided high resolution images from the book to form the backdrop, and the video is narrated by a group of officers and staff.

The first 100 books were paid for by partner contributions. As a result of the positive feedback from officers and staff, the force invested in further copies at a cost of £6.99 per item. To date, a total of 400 copies have been distributed within Merseyside Police.

Overall impact

Feedback in Merseyside Police has been unanimous that the book has helped alleviate anxiety for children. A formal survey has not been conducted, but a request was made for all officers who received a copy in the first tranche to provide feedback. All feedback that was provided was positive and indicated how the book had impacted families.

Feedback has included the following anecdotes:

“I’ve now read the book to my daughter a few times, she loves it! she’s 8 and we spoke about if she had felt like the young boy in the book, she told me that she has felt scared when I’m on lates, we spoke about what I do and the team/s I’ve worked with, I honestly think this has helped her process

some fears and given her the confidence to let me know if she is worried when I go to work. She looked more relaxed and happier after we spoke, she has also asked me to get the other books on the back (via a note next to my bed), so this means she really liked it! I also have a 19-month-old son and she has said that we can both read this to him, and she will explain what I do... I would recommend it for anyone in the job with kids.”

“My kids love the book especially my 3-year-old son. It arrived just before I was about to start a set of nights so I think he could relate to it. Most bedtimes I get asked for “the wolf one. I thought it might be a little old for him at first but that doesn’t appear to be the case and he’s really interested in the illustrations. He asks me to explain who each of the police officers are and what they do.”

Learning

- The book has been hugely successful in promoting support for families under the Police Covenant and was commented on favourably in the Merseyside HMICFRS PEEL Inspection report 2023-2025.
- The book has yielded positive feedback from recipients and demands for copies continues. The book is still distributed at all Attestation Ceremonies, showing new recruits how they are valued as part of the wider police family from day one of their appointment.
- The force recommends that other forces should give this serious consideration in their approach to Police Covenant, and wider inclusion work. It is advised to purchase the book in larger numbers as this is more cost effective.
- Merseyside Police advertised the book through a link in the weekly People and Policy Matters Intranet page. The force has noted that a more substantial launch would have been more beneficial for uptake and impact.

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