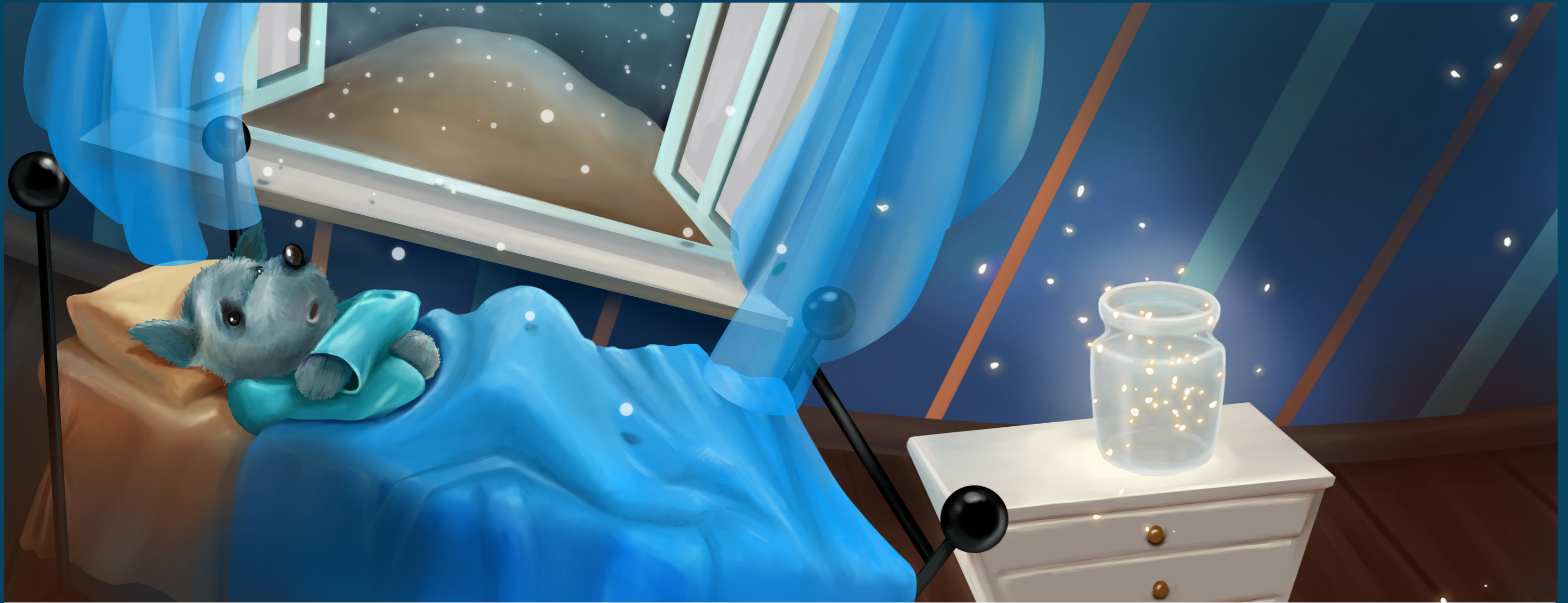




The Wolf Was Not Sleeping

Survey Findings 2021 - 2022





The Wolf Was Not Sleeping

Police Care UK have launched a special UK edition of a children's book called *The Wolf Was Not Sleeping*, written by Avril McDonald and illustrated by Tatiana Minina. This book is 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.

Police Care UK is a national charity which supports members of the police family who have been harmed as a result of policing, including the children of officers and staff.

We understand that some children of police families may feel anxious when their parents are at work and we want to help allay those concerns. The book also reinforces the pride felt by having a first responder in the family and helps strengthen the connections between our families and the teams we work with.

Wolfgang's dad works as a helper: when the wolves sound the alarm, he has to leave to help the other creatures in the forest. Each night Wolfgang worries about what might happen if his dad gets the call. His worries are so bad that they keep him awake, and he is falling asleep in the daytime instead!

Spider leaves a note for Big Dad Wolf to show him how worried Wolfgang is. Big Dad Wolf realises he needs to sit down with Wolfgang to reassure him, and tell him about what happens when he goes to help in the forest. Wolfgang learns that things aren't always as bad as they seem.

There are lots of ways in which we can tell or show people how we are feeling – and if we can name a feeling, then we can tame a feeling.

The Wolf Was Not Sleeping is a great bedtime read for young children whose parents work within UK policing.

Survey Findings

The first survey was circulated in December 2021, inviting those with children aged between 3-7 years old to receive a free copy of *The Wolf Was Not Sleeping* book and to answer some questions on their perceptions and experiences of children's worries or concerns about their parents or guardians working for the police service. A follow up survey was distributed in January 2022 to those who received the book, asking recipients what they thought of the book, how it has been received by their young ones and what its potential impact may be.

Sample and methods

A sample of 680 responders to the first survey (the 'Pre Book' survey) provided a clean sample of **583** participants, and sample of 119 responders to the second survey (the follow-up 'Post Book' survey) provided a clean sample of **107** participants. Surveys were distributed using Qualtrics software, hosted by **The University of Cambridge**. Data was analysed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) and open comments were coded using NVivo software (see appendix).

Pre-survey findings

The first survey secured a population derived of currently serving police officer or police staff families with children between the ages of 3 years and 7 years old. Respondents were asked if they'd like to receive *The Wolf Was Not Sleeping* and 100% affirmed they did.

Children's worries

83% said their children expressed worry or concern about them (or their partner) going to work as a police officer or police staff, 13% of which said a lot or a great deal.

The survey asked about the nature of those worries and **94%** of the worries fell into the following categories:

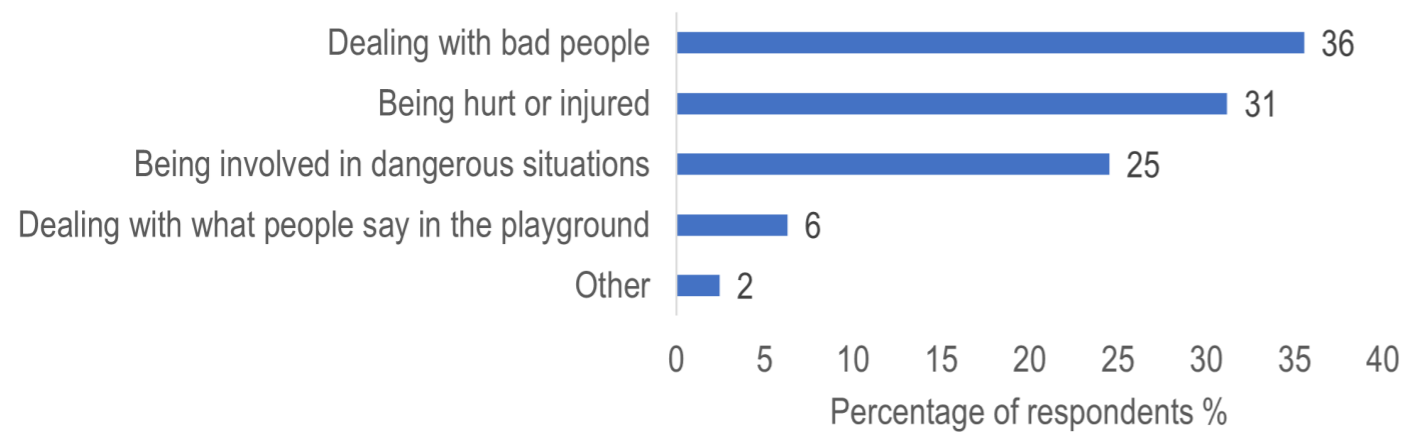


Figure 1: Pre-Survey perceptions of police family children's worries and concerns (n=583)

Another **6%** of respondents (34 people) provided *other descriptions of worries*.

- 20 of these comments were worries about working time. The worries pertained to parents working at night, being late home, missing 'normal' family time such as meal times, missing special family occasions and changes in hours or shifts.
- A further seven comments described some fear of death or threat (including one relating to contracting Covid).
- Five comments expanded on concerns over what others think, such as parents of other children, the media and the local community.

How prepared parents felt to deal with children's worries or concerns

As parents (or partners of parents) in policing, respondents were asked if they felt they were prepared to answer any worries or concerns their children may raise about their work.

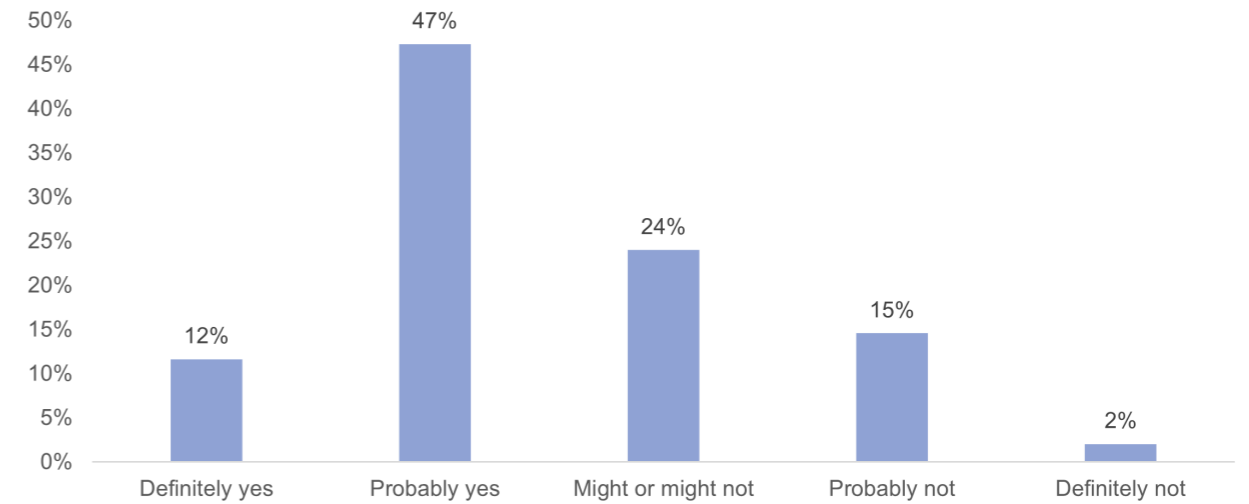


Figure 2: Parent's views on being fully prepared to respond to their children's worries and concerns, before receiving the book, *The Wolf Was Not Sleeping* (n=583).

41%
of parents expressed doubt as to whether they were fully prepared to respond to their children's worries or concerns about their work in policing



67% percent of respondents offered suggestions for what might further reassure children about their parents being in the police service.

Suggestions of what might help reassure children of police families

All respondents were offered the chance to suggest what they thought might help to reassure the worries and concerns of children of police families. A graphic summarising common phrases in these 393 suggestions is offered below:



Figure 3: Pre-Survey comments and suggestions about providing children with reassurance about their parents being in the police service (n=393)

- More detailed analysis revealed that just under half (48%) of suggestions were about explaining what police 'actually do'.
- A further 18% of suggestions were to offer reassurance that policing parents have the back up and support of the wider **Police Family**, plus the **training and equipment to keep themselves and each other safe**.

- There was a call in nearly 1/5th (19%) of the suggestions to counterbalance negative or danger-focussed depictions of police work.
- There was an **appetite for creativity** (including having a book) among 15% of the suggestions, with one in ten suggestions offering their own ideas for offering reassurance to children, such as interacting with or **getting to know parents' colleagues and teams** at their own station and reaching out more to schools.
- An interesting point of note was the dominant discourse of good and evil throughout the parents' descriptions (there were 75 references to children's fears about **'bad people'** across the 393 cases) and a counter-emphasis from parents' on the role of the police in **'helping people'** (51 specific references). **17%** of suggestions highlighted how police **keep people safe**, many of which added *'including bad people'*, noting that some people were vulnerable or make bad decisions.
- Night-time worries** about parents' not being there, not coming home or being injured featured in one in ten comments. Parents' wanting to better navigate being honest about their work and yet reassuring and protecting their children from reality was made very clear in 11% of the text.
- Fewer than 1% of suggestions made any reference to the concept of being "heroic". Whether this is reflective of newer generations of police having more social responsibilities in their workload than their predecessors may be worth considering for young families to talk about how policing is not just about 'law and order' (which may be portrayed in other child-oriented media).





Post Survey Findings

Only **17.5%** of book recipients completed the follow up survey asking them what they made of *The Wolf Was Not Sleeping*.

Book use

Those who did get back to us were asked how often the book has been (or will be) used, This means their responses represent intention as well as experience. Over half said they read or intended to read the book to their children at least weekly, and **93% at least once a month**. Those who said they wouldn't ever use it left comments explaining that the book would be upsetting.

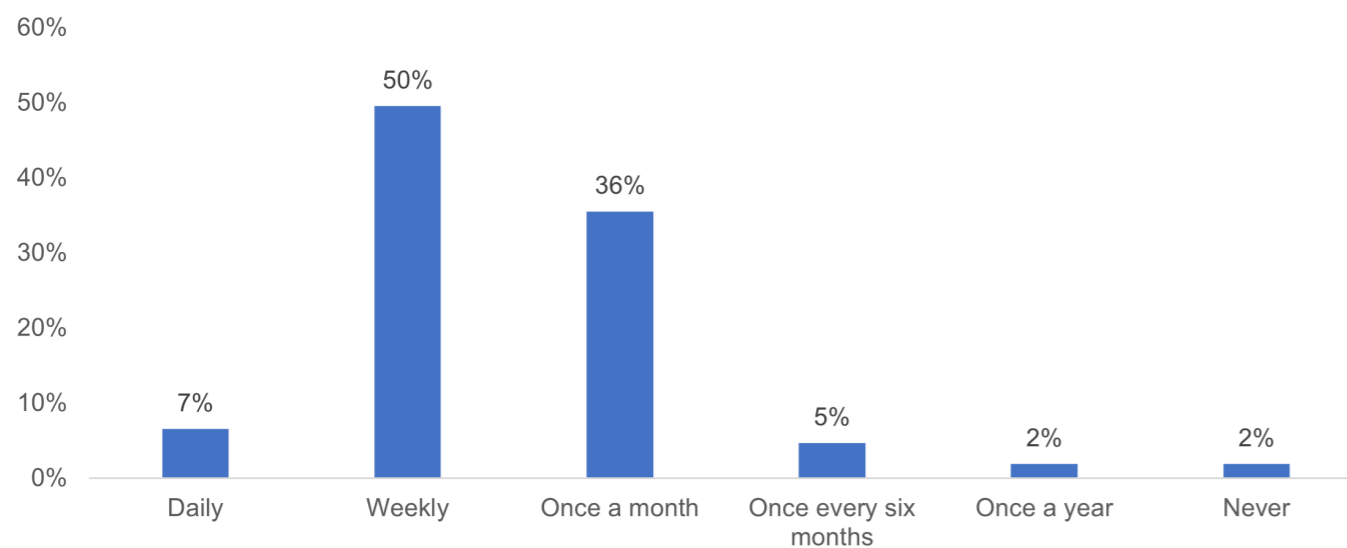


Figure 4: Post Survey figures regarding the parent's readership of (or intention to read) *The Wolf Was Not Sleeping* (n=107).

How the book helped families address children's worries and concerns

90% of those surveyed agreed with the statement "The book helped me have conversations about my policing role with the children (or child) in my family" with 61% agreeing very much and strongly.

Parents were asked if they felt any more prepared, equipped or comfortable answering questions or concerns their child may have about their (or their partner's) job with the police, as a result of having *The Wolf Was Not Sleeping* to hand. **78%** said definitely agreed with 17% as yet unsure (this may account for those only just starting to read the book or reading it less frequently than others).

General feedback on the book

Of the **80** open comments where respondents were invited to talk freely about the book **91%** (n=73) of the comments were positive, five were neutral and just two were negative.

"The book was pitched at the right level for me to speak to my children about my job and what it entails."

"A fantastic book. My wife is a preschool teacher and she thought it was very well written and both my children loved the book. We have read it several times already and they have spoken about things that worried them and what I do at work, especially on a night shift.... The book seemed to have a real impact on her and she is so much more relaxed at night and not had a nightmare since."

"My daughter really enjoyed it, and now wants to have pictures of mine and my husband's teams on her wall!"

"Even my older child loved the story (aged 9 almost 10 years) and helped develop the same conversation. I would say it is not just for the younger ones"

"It is such a lovely book that really helps my little ones to understand the role we both do and to allay their fears"

"Lovely book that helped my child to understand the impact of both parents jobs especially over the last 2 years with Covid and having to juggle work around homeschool and not being always available to them."



Figure 5: Post Survey open comments from police parent's about *The Wolf Was Not Sleeping* (n=80). More detailed coding of these 393 descriptions is available on request.