

## Proud Of Our Pandemic Policing



### Norfolk Police Federation Chairman Andy Symonds looks back on how officers have coped with a changing policing landscape and a year of the COVID-19 pandemic.

I have been astounded by the dedication, bravery and selflessness shown by my colleagues throughout this past year, which has presented the most challenges I've ever seen in the police service.

In the initial stages of the pandemic, the lack

of PPE really worried officers, who are uniquely vulnerable to this virus as they cannot police from a two-metre distance. They were scared they would take this deadly virus home with them and infect their loved ones.

there was a 21% increase in people assaulting officers. Spitting became even more abhorrent when people started weaponising COVID.

Through all of this officers, have continued to protect the community by enforcing the lockdown laws that have changed so many times

and were often far from clear.

We all saw the negative headlines in the press about officers overstepping the mark and issuing unfair fines. But, despite being portrayed as the bad guys, the public overwhelmingly support the police.

This matters because we police by consent and through this crisis that's exactly what we've done.

We also have to remember that policing work continues despite the extra demand placed on officers. My colleagues simply got on with

protecting the vulnerable by preventing and detecting crime – searching for missing people, protecting victims of domestic abuse, supporting people in mental health crisis and much more.

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**“I have been astounded by officers’ dedication and bravery”**

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My detective colleagues are often forgotten, but they have continued to work under immense pressures. They deal with high-risk cases every day. There's a rising amount of processes and administration. We have a shortage of officers in the detective role, so that's why we've introduced direct entry detectives.

My police officer colleagues hold a unique role in society. We've answered calls from both A&E and mental health units when patients have become violent.

We get called to social care homes to support the staff with residents who are agitated. We've sat in hospitals for long periods on bed watch of

a person who is under arrest.

We've attended reports of people who've stopped breathing and we've given CPR and first aid before the ambulance arrived.

Now all of our NHS and social care colleagues on the frontline have been vaccinated, but not police officers.

The Government has hidden behind the JCVI in refusing to prioritise officers because it may delay the vaccine roll-out. I think this is rubbish.

The Government could allocate vaccines to the forces, who could administer the vaccine to their officers without having any impact on the vaccine priority list.

I can only thank our NHS colleagues in various GP surgeries and vaccine hubs who have been

fantastic in making calls to our control room offering us spare vaccines.

Sadly, we're not out of this yet. We have the summer fast approaching and the road map dates that will open up the country again. We'll see demand for police services increase.

We have a number of local events planned that need policing and some national events that will require officers to provide mutual aid to other forces, such as Devon and Cornwall for the G7 Summit. We have the first three-week leave embargo in place for the mutual aid commitment for COP26 in Glasgow this November.

But as we go forward I want to say how proud and humbled I am at how my colleagues have performed during this most challenging period.

## Detectives Feel The Pressure

**D**etectives are under an increasing amount of stress and strain, two Norfolk Police Federation Detective Representatives have said.

Detective Lead Kevin Maskell and Detective Sergeant Chris Hobbs were discussing the Police Federation's 'Detectives In Crisis' campaign – a month-long focus on the pressures of the role.

Chris said: "There are a number of issues, from recruitment and retention of detectives, to increasing levels of administration and our welfare. We also want to highlight the difficulties

Both Kevin and Chris explained how, in their view, there is not enough of an incentive to be a detective, saying "there aren't any enhancement allowances" and that "there is effectively a loss in remuneration", as colleagues lose payments they might receive such as shift allowance.

Kevin said: "It's not easy to do some of the investigations that we do, so colleagues think 'Why don't I just go and earn the same, if not more money, policing streets, going to domestics, going to schools?' Unfortunately that's putting people off from becoming detectives

lower proportion of our time actually doing the work that we love and that we've been highly trained in, and more time sat in front of a computer making sure schedules are completed."

On a more positive note, Kevin said there were schemes to try tackle recruitment issues.

He said: "We're trialling a direct entry scheme to run alongside our normal progression into the world of CID. We've got to be visionary – looking at other public sector colleagues. We know there are teachers and other specialists who would fit into the world of an investigator."

**"We want to highlight the difficulties we face in the workplace"**

we face in the workplace to perform our role to the best of our ability."

Kevin added: "Being a police officer and detective is great – we help some wonderful people and make a lot of difference to people's lives. But when I joined there was a fight to become a detective. Now, we've had issues in the past two or three years where we haven't had enough applicants for the spaces available."

and coming to work with us."

Chris said: "If you struggle to recruit in certain roles it inevitably creates vacancies in the units and then leads to increasing levels of workload and stress for those already there."

Admin is another problem. Kevin said: "Since austerity, the police have lost a layer of administration and so has the CPS."

Chris added: "Increasingly we're spending a

Chris pointed out: "I think we've done some good things in Norfolk. We've got a good shift pattern at the minute that gives a good work and life balance, with proper periods of rest for officers before they come back in."

Kevin added: "Remuneration is a key focus, either nationally with detective expenses, or a national bonus payment for retaining PIP level 2 or 3 if you're an inspector or above."

# POLICE

# Introducing Our New Fed Reps

Introducing Chris Hobbs and Jason Hammond, Norfolk's newest Federation Branch

Council Reps, both of whom have been police officers for 13 years.

Chris (pictured below) served for 11 years in Devon and Cornwall before coming to Norfolk. His current role is Detective Sergeant on the Child Abuse Investigation Unit at Wymondham.

He said: "I've always had an interest in, and attended sounding boards, to discuss issues affecting officers in Norfolk and my previous force.

"I have also seen first-hand the excellent work that Fed Reps do and wanted to give my time and support to the role."

Chris said he believes his detective and uniform experience will "bring a rounded view" to his new role.

Chris is keen to support Federation members, saying: "I will listen, I think it the most important thing. Then to act on information for the best interest of the members.

"There are many challenges and changes to the detective world currently, and I want to support members through this."

Chris emphasised the importance of the Police Federation, saying: "The support it gives members is invaluable."

Jason, who is currently on the Breckland Neighbourhood Policing Team, said: "The Federation helps, supports and stands up for officers.

"It will give me the chance to represent and help people in what can be very difficult and

challenging situations."

Like Chris, Jason said that listening was critical when supporting members.

He said: "I consider myself a rounded communicator and I will be available to any member who requires advice or assistance. I am most looking forward to getting the right results for the officers I will be representing."

You can contact Chris and Jason via email on [chris.hobbs@polfed.org](mailto:chris.hobbs@polfed.org) and [jason.hammond@polfed.org](mailto:jason.hammond@polfed.org).



## Would You Consider Becoming A Fed Rep?

Norfolk Police Federation members are being urged to consider taking on a role as a workplace Fed Rep and building on their skillsets.

National triannual Rep elections come around again this summer and there are several positions available on the Norfolk Police Federation Branch Council.

Norfolk Police Federation Secretary Sam Hawkins said officers should put themselves forward to reap the benefits of being a Rep.

She said this is not just the satisfaction of knowing they are helping their colleagues, but also the training and development opportunities.

Sam said: "The National Federation is refreshing their Reps At Work campaign, and it's a good

chance for us to put the thought of being a Rep on everyone's radar.

"Successful candidates would get on the initial Reps' course and have a local induction with us about how they can represent officers in the workplace.

"As a Rep, it's about helping colleagues with their questions and issues, talking to management and getting things done.

"There's lots of continual professional development (CPD) training and development. I've really seen people grow as Reps, it can help with your confidence and people skills because you might be talking to your District Commander, getting officers' views across and changing things."

Sam hopes to see a diverse range of ap-

plicants come forward, but says whoever is appointed to the Rep roles can help bring in new ideas and fresh thinking.

"We are an inclusive board," she said. "Our make up already includes much diversity, but we'd particularly like to see more women apply.

"It's about seeing some new faces who can help with the longevity of the Federation and our plans. It's great for individuals and can put some new tools in your toolbox!"

Sam and Federation Chairman Andy Symonds are planning to run Teams events, offering potential candidates the chance to find out more about the role, or you can contact them directly. To find out more, get in contact at [Norfolk@polfed.org](mailto:Norfolk@polfed.org).

# Sergeants Left ‘Spinning Plates’

**A** Norfolk Police Sergeant has compared the demand on sergeants since the influx of new officers to “trying to keep up a lot of spinning plates”.

The Police Federation report, *The Demand Capacity & Welfare Survey 2020 – The Officer Uplift and Sergeant Impacts*, found that more than half of sergeants felt they had insufficient time and resources to support new constables.

The Norfolk Police Sergeant, who asked not to be named, said: “Six months ago the majority of my team were student officers.

“I had one or two who were three-years plus in service, but the rest are still within their two years.

“It has put a lot of pressure on sergeants because when peers around them are all so young in service, naturally they come to the sergeants

resources to manage this increase in their shift management responsibilities.

The Norfolk Sergeant said that due to the recruitment process being so quick, new officers “have a lack of confidence and are feeling lost”.

To help the pressures, the sergeant said: “We are doing a tutor hub in Great Yarmouth where there will be designated officers who are full-time tutors.

**“When peers around them are all so young in service, naturally they come to the sergeants to ask questions”**

Under the Government’s ‘Uplift’ programme, 20,000 new police officers are to be recruited by March 2023.

Many sergeants will have more inexperienced PCs to supervise than ever before – over the past year, more than 6,600 officers have already been recruited.

to ask questions.

“It’s like spinning plates, you’re trying to not let any plates fall and you keep running around trying to keep the next one up.”

Over half (54%) of sergeant respondents to the PFEW research said it was unlikely or extremely unlikely that they will have enough time and

“Although we’re in a funny few years where the majority of the frontline are young in service, you get a satisfaction from being able to able them out.

“We need to put the confidence back into the new officers, so they can start understanding what they need to do themselves.”



# Demand & Capacity Survey

**57%** of respondents said their workload is currently too high or much too high

**64%** said there were not enough officers in their team/unit to do the job properly

**46%** said they are never or rarely able to take their full rest break entitlement

**85%** of responses indicated that they had experienced feelings of stress, low mood, anxiety, or other difficulties with health and wellbeing in the past 12 months

But **72%** indicated that their overall health was good or very good

**20%** had suffered injuries needing medical attention as a result of work-related violence

Only **32%** were very or extremely concerned about access to COVID-19 testing

Only **34%** said they did not have adequate equipment to protect them from COVID-19

**37%** viewed their job as very or extremely stressful



Results based on 248 responses from Norfolk Police.

Full survey results here: [www.polfed.org/media/16589/welfaresurveynorfolk-14-01-21-v10.pdf](http://www.polfed.org/media/16589/welfaresurveynorfolk-14-01-21-v10.pdf)

# Police Minister Slams Assaults

The Policing Minister has spoken out about the “unacceptable” assaults on “brave police officers”, following contact from Norfolk Police Federation.

Federation Chairman Andy Symonds has been working with politicians to highlight the dangers officers face as they keep the public safe.

Andy recently met Chloe Smith, MP for Norwich North, among other members of Parliament, to argue for tougher sentencing for those who commit police assaults and highlight how vulnerable officers are to offenders using vehicles dangerously.

Andy said: “It is imperative on behalf of my members here in Norfolk that I continue to engage with all the nine MPs we have in the county so I can raise the issues and suggest solutions to those who are in a position to make a difference.

“These MPs speak with colleagues and ministers and this is how, in part, we are able to make our voices heard to Government.”

Following these positive meetings Andy wrote a letter with a full brief of the issues, detailing some examples of the poor sentencing of offenders who’ve assaulted officers and when a vehicle has been used to injure officers.

Policing Minister Kit Malthouse replied: “I



share your view that any assault on our brave police officers and other emergency workers is completely unacceptable, while they are working to protect us all.

“As I am sure you will appreciate, sentencing in individual cases is a matter for our independent courts, taking account of the circumstances of each case and following any relevant guide-

lines issued by the Sentencing Council.

“This Government is clear, however, about the enormous contribution made by police officers and other emergency service workers and has supported measures which afford them further protection and signal the seriousness of committing offences against them.”

He added: “I share the concerns about the vulnerability of police officers when faced by an individual who is intent on using a vehicle aggressively. As a result, I have asked my officials to work with the Police Federation and National Police Chiefs’ Council to explore the proposal to extend s163 (Road Traffic Act 1988) powers to require a person to exit a vehicle once stopped.

“I also agree that it is important we ensure the Police Covenant is able to have a meaningful impact on our police. This will be enshrined in law as part of an ambitious package of measures to strengthen protection for the police and the public.

“The legislation will also include other measures to support the police, for example, ensuring Special Constables are able to join the Police Federation and increasing the legal protection for police drivers involved in accidents while doing their jobs.”

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# Driver Protection ‘Long Overdue’

**N**ew legislation to better protect police officers from public attacks and from prosecution for their driving when they are responding to emergency calls is “long overdue”, Norfolk Police Federation has said.

Chairman Andy Symonds said The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, which was

that give my colleagues the support they need when they are responding to emergencies or pursuing a vehicle.

“These protections were never about protecting an officer who has driven carelessly or dangerously, it is about affording officers the protection they require for simply doing their jobs.

Andy added: “The Bill includes the ability for Special Constables to become members of the Federation.

“It must be right for them to be afforded the same level of support that regulars are able to access as members of the Federation.

“Finally we have the Police Covenant. This bit of legislation, which will become law, will

**“It is about affording officers the protection they require for simply doing their jobs”**

introduced to Parliament in March, “is a direct result of the tireless hard work of the Police Federation over many years”.

He said: “Yes, this is long overdue but I have learnt that it takes a long time to achieve changes in the law.

“The Bill contains the protections in law

“In addition to the protections for police drivers the Bill also includes a further doubling of the sentences for offenders who assault emergency service workers.

“I am supportive of this move as we must get to a position in which it’s not just accepted that being assaulted at work is part of the job.

be something we can hold the Government to account on.

“They have a duty of care to officers who continue to put their physical and mental health on the line.

“That has become even more pronounced since the start of this pandemic.”

# Bonus Would Recognise Unprecedented Work

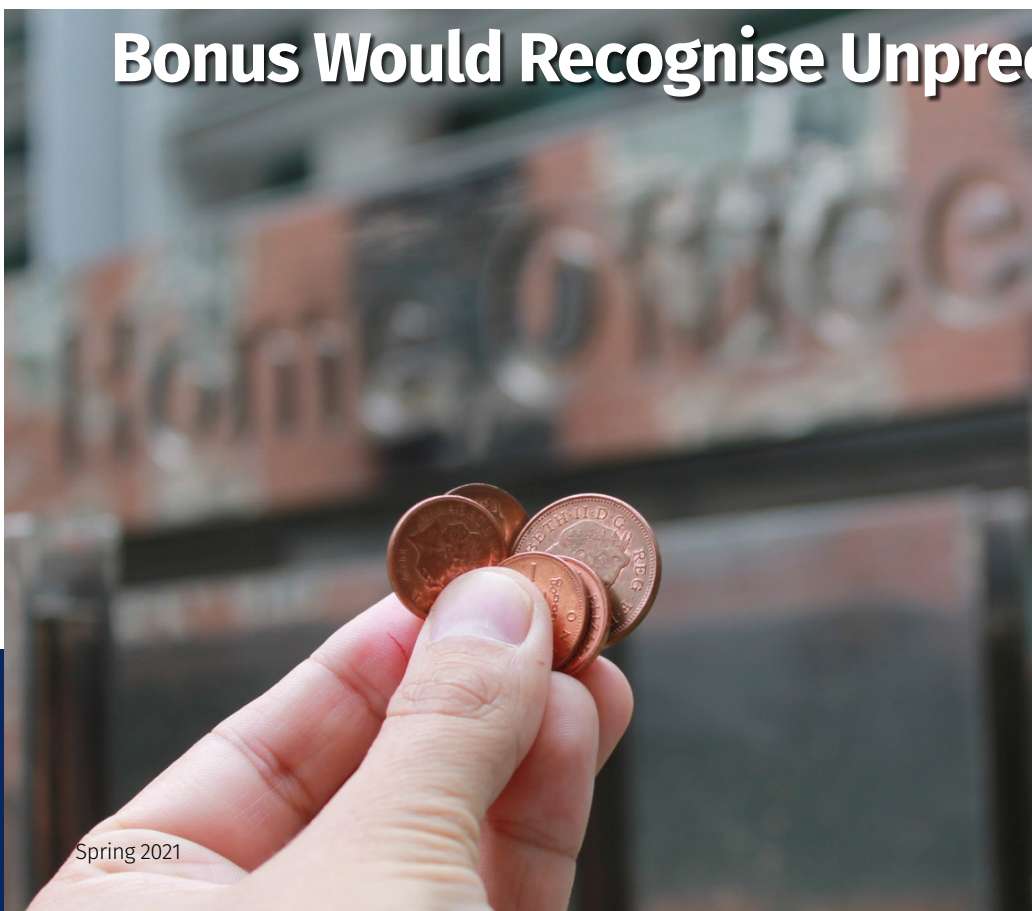
**P**olice officers are entitled to a ‘thank you’ bonus payment for their hard work keeping the nation safe during the COVID-19 crisis.

Norfolk Police Federation Chairman Andy Symonds said: “It is important that we recognise the service officers have given during the last year.

“We have again seen this Government fail to do this with their announcement that the public sector, excluding the NHS, will be subject to a pay freeze this year. Another slap in the face for officers.

“Police forces budgeted for a 2% pay rise this year, which is now not happening. The least that should happen is that they use a small fraction of this budgeted pay rise money to recognise officers’ efforts.”

PFEW has called for a bonus payment as a gesture of gratitude for their work during unsafe and unprecedented times.



# IOPC Should Be Scrutinised

**T**he Independent Office for Police Conduct needs to be held to account for the “unacceptable” amount of time it can keep officers under the microscope.

Norfolk Police Federation Chair Andy Symonds has called for the IOPC and its investigators to have a greater understanding of the dynamic and dangerous nature of policing.

Andy said that while police officers have no objection at being held accountable for their actions, the IOPC and its investigators spend far too long scrutinising their work.

He said: “The police service and our members are quite rightly under scrutiny from the public and that, in turn, should be no different for the IOPC. The careers and personal lives of our members are considerably damaged due to lengthy investigations by the IOPC that are simply unacceptable.

“As the Conduct Lead for the Federation here in Norfolk, I sadly get to see first-hand the impact that both police force and IOPC investigations have on the officer themselves, but also on their families.

“It cannot be underestimated the additional pressure and worry these investigations have on officers’ mental wellbeing. Many I’ve represented have been broken by these

“However, the IOPC must do more. And if they won’t, the Government must step in and make further reforms to the IOPC so that it becomes an effective investigative body with expeditious, streamlined and accurate processes.

“This will benefit not only police officers but also the people that make complaints.”

PFEW is calling for a 12-month time limit on investigations into police officers.

Andy concluded: “I want to see the IOPC subject to the same scrutiny we place on officers when they investigate crimes.

“They need to have deadlines imposed on their investigations into officers.

“Police officers have statutory time limits for certain crimes, which means they have six months to bring a case against a suspect.

“Why can this not be instigated for the IOPC so the vast majority of general complaints have to be completed by six months? The threshold for their investigations is often far too low.

“All too often we find ourselves in a situation where the investigators possess an inadequate knowledge of policing tactics, investigative experience and involvement with immediate threat, harm and risk.

“That will never be achieved from reading a



**IOPC** Independent Office for Police Conduct

**“It cannot be underestimated the additional pressure and worry these investigations have on officers’ mental wellbeing”**

investigations and have needed counselling and medication to be able to cope.”

The Home Affairs Select Committee is currently looking into the IOPC’s timescales for investigating police officer conduct.

As part of the Police Federation of England and Wales’ #TimeLimits campaign, the Federation has given evidence on the detrimental and costly impact of lengthy disciplinary investigations on police officers, their families and their colleagues.

Andy added: “I want to make it clear that police officers have never shied away from facing scrutiny of their actions. But what they should not have to face are investigations which drag on for many months for no apparent reasons.

“We understand that sometimes other stakeholders such as CPS and Coroners are involved, which can mean further delays, but I have many instances of unnecessary delays from the IOPC.

“I accept that there has been improvements, and the introduction of the new Conduct Regulations back in February last year has started to help.

book or attending a training course.

“We’ve seen the IOPC introduce roles such as Subject Matter Expert (SMEs), which allow some of their staff to be experts in certain fields such as PIP, use of force and Taser.

“This is a positive step, however my view is that as a minimum. All investigators should as part of their training to be investigators spend a full set of shifts on response with police officers. This should continue as an annual requirement.

“This is the only way for them to gain an insight into the job we do 24/7 and the situations we find ourselves in, which are difficult, stressful, traumatic and dangerous.

“Officers have to act quickly and in very dynamic situations, which means things don’t always go to plan. This is when we sometimes find that police officers are damned if they do and damned if they don’t.

“I want IOPC investigators to have some experience of these difficult situations so it does not feel they are sitting with a crystal ball in a nice warm office, unfairly criticising officers.”





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