



## Force Must Act On Officer Tragedies

**S**adly, a growing number of police officers are taking their own lives, *writes Norfolk Police Federation Chair Andy Symonds.*

New national figures show that, between 2001 and 2020, 344 police officers died by suicide. This is very concerning.

I've spoken to the [national media](#) about this and I've also written to all Norfolk MPs to make them aware of the situation. MPs get a lot of

At the moment we have the coroner's inquest, but unfortunately I don't think that's intrusive enough. Coroners don't come into force, have a look at what we've got in place and ask, is it good enough, is it a bronze standard, or is it a silver or gold standard?

I think locally and probably nationally, we haven't got that gold standard around suicide prevention and also wider officer welfare.

happens afterwards when there are recommendations to change things that aren't going well. But I also want to see forces stand to attention because the HSE is coming in.

I think that will encourage chief officers to make sure that what they've got in place is improved drastically and is consistent, so it reduces the risk of any more officers taking their own lives.

**“Nationally, between 2001 and 2020, 344 officers died by suicide”**

letters every year, so it's important to put vital issues on the agenda when I see them.

What the Federation wants, both locally and nationally, is a change in legislation that allows the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) to come into forces and do an investigation.

We want this external body to look at the mental-health provision in the force and examine what happened in the lead-up to an officer suicide.

What is available to an officer injured on duty? What is in place to ensure that they're diagnosed quickly, treatment is available quickly, and they have all the support they need?

We have the HMIC come along to look at how we're investigating crime, how the police are performing, but we don't have that oversight when it comes to officer wellbeing and suicide.

We see all the investment that the force puts in when they have inspections, and what

If officers are struggling with their mental health, please reach out. We've got 24 Federation Reps here in Norfolk and they've all been trained in mental health first aid and suicide awareness.

They're a listening ear and they're independent of the force. They'll have your back and will be able to signpost you to all the charities that we have in the police service – those organisations that help officers get through a difficult patch, and see them through the other side.

# Remembering Those We've Lost

**N**orfolk Police Federation Secretary and Treasurer Sam Hawkins and Case Manager Matt Gould [pictured] joined members of the police family at the annual National Police Memorial Day to honour the thousands of officers who have died on duty.

At the service in Cardiff on Sunday 24 September, Sam said: "This is my fourth service and I always look forward to it, in a poignant way. It's really important for the police family, and for us all, to remember the officers that we've lost over the years. They should never be forgotten.

"It's particularly poignant this year, with all the strife and all the problems going on in policing. It's good to stop, take a moment, and remember what it's all about and remember those who have lost their lives. It's a very sober but also an uplifting experience.

"We haven't got any families with us this year, but previously we have brought families along, as it's really significant for them. It's important for them to know that their loved ones are still remembered."

Sam added: "Policing gets such a bashing in the media, but we must never forget that being a police officer and putting your life on the line every day is what we do."

The names of officers who had died in the



past year were read out at the service. They are: PCSO Daniel Gower, of Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary; Sgt Steven Creal, of Sussex Police; PC Richard Kemp, of Lancashire Constabulary; PC Bruce Lister, of Hertfordshire Constabulary; PC Neil Pattinson, of Northumbria Police; PC Andrew Boardman, of West Mercia Police; Insp Gareth Earp, of Dyfed-Powys Police; and Sgt Graham Saville, of Nottinghamshire Police.

During the service, candles were lit for officers in each of the four nations. Representing Wales was Dorothy Ellis, mother of PC Adrian Ellis, of Gwent Police, who died aged 29 on 27 September 1989 as a result of a road traffic collision.

Representing Scotland was David Taylor, son of PC George Taylor, of Strathclyde Police, who died aged 27 on 30 November 1976 after being attacked with an axe.

Representing England was Sid Mackay, father of PC Nina Mackay, of the Metropolitan Police, who died aged 25 on 24 October 1997 after being stabbed by a wanted man. She was posthumously awarded the Commissioner's High Commendation for Bravery.

Representing Northern Ireland were Mervyn and Dorothy Reynolds, parents of PC Philippa Reynolds, of the Police Service of Northern Ireland, who died aged 27 on 9 February 2013 after the police vehicle in which she was a passenger was struck by a stolen vehicle.

The service also heard readings from the First Minister of Wales Mark Drakeford, then-Home Secretary Suella Braverman and Shadow Home Secretary Yvette Cooper.

Petals of remembrance, representing all who have lost their lives, descended from the gallery as the Last Post was sounded.

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# Christmas Message From The Chair

First, thank you to all officers for working under immense pressure this year, particularly in the summer months.

The thin blue line has again been stretched beyond capacity and we're seeing the impact of PEQF as we struggle with consistent numbers on response teams.

In the coming year, students will be even more abstracted by the degree course. We've been working with the force to mitigate the worst impacts of this and trying to reduce the shift changes that may be required.

## Here For You In A Tough Year

Throughout 2023, officers have stepped up to the plate and got the job done, even to the detriment of their own health, wellbeing and family life. Please reach out to colleagues, supervisors or the Federation if you need support and help through difficult times.

Talking of tough times, sadly we lost some colleagues this year. Those deaths sent shock waves through the organisation and we saw an outpouring of grief from colleagues. We will remember them.

The Federation continues to fight for better mental health provision and for more money to be spent looking after our officers. You all put your own safety at risk when you come to work and, inevitably, the type of work we do leads to officers becoming unwell.

Therefore the force must step up and make sure it refers officers to the support they require quickly. Sometimes the force gets it right, but this is not consistent.

The Policing Covenant must become a way to hold forces to account when the service officers get falls below the standard we expect.



resentations on shift changes and re-rostered rest days and we continue to have successes, but sometimes the evidence is there that the force is within its rights to re-roster and change officers' shifts.

I look at how other forces are doing, and I can 100% reassure you that the work we do along with Inspector Blyth in the RMU achieves the best outcome for you, our members.

## Representing All Members In Investigations

We've had many successes this year in areas including grievances, employment tribunals, misconduct, unsatisfactory performance and attendance procedures. I can't go into detail as

also those who make disclosures and complaints. The misconduct process takes its toll, so it's imperative that we offer support to all our members who are involved.

We have a small team of Fed Reps who form the Federation Support Team (FST), a scheme set up by Sam Hawkins. They are totally separate from any investigation, and are designated to the support the other officers involved. So please get in touch with us if you are involved in an investigation but not the subject of it and we can allocate you a FST Rep.

## Making The Most Of The Welfare Van

The Federation welfare van was launched last

**“Please reach out to colleagues, your supervisor or the Federation if you need support and help through difficult times”**

## Smoothing Bumps In The Road

This has felt like a hugely demanding year, but we've provided a first-class service for members who became involved in deaths following police contact, officers who had false allegations made against them, and officers who were injured on duty and required support.

And, sadly, we supported those officers who were unable to return to work and were ill-health retired.

These are difficult processes and we advise officers so that they get what they are entitled to within the regulations. We've been working tirelessly in the background in an attempt to smooth the bumps in the road for you.

We're negotiating and making constant rep-

we're bound by confidentiality, but the officers we've helped have sung the Federation's praises.

You will all have felt a sense of anxiousness about the world of complaints and misconduct. You will know colleagues or friends subject to investigations. There is no doubt that we've seen a huge increase in this area and it has a big impact on our members.

And that's not just the members who are subject to allegations, but also colleagues who are witnesses, or officers who are brave enough to step forward and report things they've been subject to themselves.

It's important that our members know we don't just support and advise those officers who are subject to misconduct investigations, but

year, but it's come into its own in 2023. Please take advantage of its facilities and also make sure it's clean after use. I want this resource to be available for years to come and, if treated properly, it will be.

I want to close by reminding our members that we stand right behind you when you need us. In between your shifts over the festive period and New Year, please find the time to spend with your family and loved ones. I wish you all an enjoyable, relaxing Christmas and a happy and healthy 2024.

**Andy Symonds,  
Chair,  
Norfolk Police Federation**

# Protect Officers' Mental Health

**O**ver 110 Norfolk police officers were signed off work due to stress, depression, anxiety or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in the past year.

A Freedom of Information request covering the financial year 2022/23 found that 118 Norfolk officers were absent due to mental ill-health, though this is down 17% on last year's figure of 143.

The national figure was a record 13,294 of-

food banks to stay afloat. On top of this, media reporting paints a picture of incompetence and immorality within the service that is not a true representation of the overwhelming majority of decent and hard-working officers."

Sue added that she "feared these figures will remain high" as the Home Office is demanding that officers investigate all crimes more thoroughly, but is not providing extra resources.

A Home Office spokesperson responded: "The

**"Over 110 Norfolk officers were signed off work in 2022/23 due to poor mental health"**

icers, which is much higher than pre-pandemic levels.

PFEW Wellbeing Lead Sue Honeywill said: "With officer numbers proportionally at an all-time low, officer morale at its lowest and the workload at its greatest, it can be no surprise that we are witnessing extremely high levels of officers signed off for mental ill-health related reasons.

"Officers' pensions have been eroded, assaults on officers are increasing and the cost-of-living crisis has squeezed pay to such a level that we know some are forced to resort to

Government is committed to ensuring police officers are provided with appropriate mental health support. We have made significant progress by ensuring that improved mental health training and support is provided, and we continue to fund the National Police Wellbeing Service (NPWS), with £3m for 2023/24."

A National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) spokesperson said: "By providing services like occupational health provision, along with additional training and health checks, we are better equipped to support the wellbeing of our officers and staff. The work of Oscar Kilo makes a

real difference, and has meant that more police officers and staff feel OK to say that they're not OK. We recognise, however, that managing wellbeing is a never-ending process and that there is always more to do. We are committed to continuing to work with colleagues in the health service, charities, and staff associations, to ensure that we are always being guided by the best practice and research, and ultimately, ensuring that we are doing everything we can to support our people."

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# A Shining Light Of The Federation

**As Norfolk Police Federation's Secretary, Treasurer and Equality Lead Sam Hawkins retires, she reflects on her years spent supporting colleagues.**

**Q: How long have you been involved with Norfolk Police Federation?**

A: I've been a workplace Rep since 2012. For the past five and a half years I've been the branch Secretary, and I was the full-time branch Equality Lead for a bit before that. By the time I retire, I'll be a month short of 34 years' service, which is a long time. I've been a PC, a Sergeant, and then for the past 15 years an Inspector. Before I was a Federation Rep, I'd asked for their help myself,

improve equality and I've supported officers with disability discrimination and sex discrimination cases.

**Q: What have been your most memorable moments?**

A: On two occasions I've been privileged enough to attend the national Police Bravery Awards with our Norfolk nominees. They are such great events for the officers and their families, and I found it very humbling and emotional. The other highlight for me has always been attending the National Police Memorial Day. I went to Cardiff a couple of months ago for my last one as branch Secretary [see previous page] and it

**Q: What are your plans for retirement?**

A: I'll still be working part-time and spending a bit more time on me and my family. I hope to do some HR-based investigations in the private sector, in employment tribunals, so I can still use my skills and my passion for equality.

**Q: What are you going to miss the most about policing and the Federation?**

A: I'm going to really miss my colleagues. I've absolutely loved working with Andy, the Chair. We're very different but we made a great team. And our civilian staff as well, Matt, Jill and Graham, and all our workplace Reps. Though I'm sure we'll keep in touch. I don't yet know how I'll feel

**"It's been tough at times, but I've absolutely loved every minute of being able to help my colleagues"**

and I'd had so much good advice and support. So it's really nice to have been able to give back.

**Q: Why did you take on your Federation roles?**

A: It's a tough job, but I also see it as a privilege that I've been able to help my colleagues. That's everything. I've supported officers who have gone through difficulties with their physical or mental health, including ill-health retirement. Also officers who've been bullied or discriminated against and have not received fair treatment in the organisation. And also some conduct bits and pieces. I've been passionate about trying to

was an amazing event. I feel very privileged that I've been able to attend and be a part of those events, and represent the Federation.

**Q: What have you found most rewarding in your Federation role?**

A: Helping and supporting officers in their darkest times. Some officers have even said to me: 'I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for you, and for the support from you and the Federation'. That's really powerful to know that I've made a difference. I'm sad to leave the Federation, but I'm confident that all the good work we do will continue.

when I actually hand my warrant card back. It'll be strange just to be Samantha Hawkins and not Inspector Samantha Hawkins.

**Q: What is your leaving message to Federation members?**

A: The Federation will be in good hands going forward. It can never be underestimated what Police Federations do for officers up and down the country and how vital their work is. This role has been tough at times, but I've absolutely loved every minute of being able to help my colleagues.



# Wellbeing Support 'Can Be Woeful'

Forces must dramatically improve the wellbeing services that are available to officers, Norfolk Police Federation has said.

Federation Chair Andy Symonds said that hardworking officers should be offered "gold standard" treatment but, instead, both officers and their families are left in the lurch during their hour of need.

It comes as new research conducted by Oscar Kilo, the National Police Wellbeing Service, revealed that 75% of family members feel concerned about the wellbeing of a loved one who works in policing.

Andy said the results of the survey are "no surprise". He said: "Family members understand



they should receive must be a gold standard.

"However, it is currently a bronze standard and can, in part, be woeful.

"The police service and individual chiefs need to invest properly in the wellbeing offer they have in place for their officers."

Diminishing budgets further worsened by increased demands on the police and inflationary pressures have created a perfect storm for forces up and down the country, Andy added.

He said: "If we don't properly invest in the wellbeing of the officers we currently have, then we will see them become ill, be off sick, on restricted duties or, sadly, be ill-health retired.

"No officer wants this, but due to the long

**"The police service and individual chiefs need to invest properly in wellbeing for their officers"**

that we have jobs that place our safety at risk both physically and mentally – they never feel at ease with this concept, but they live with it.

"However, what they cannot comprehend is the support for officers when the job makes them ill – be that physically, mentally or both."

Andy praised the "good work" being under-

taken by Oscar Kilo, saying that it was working "tirelessly to support broken cops".

But the Federation Chair called on forces not to let charities pick up the slack and instead lead the charge themselves.

He said: "When officers are injured as a result of what the job asks them to do, then the service

waits within primary care, officers are suffering."

Andy also called on police chiefs to take action to protect the peace of mind of officers' families, saying: "Families of our officers should expect more than the current offerings that officers can avail themselves of, when they are harmed due to the job they do."

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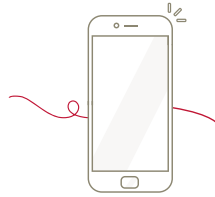


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# We're a Caring Community –

## Free hot drinks for on duty Police Officers & PCSO's



### What are we doing and why?

As you will already be aware, our current cost of living challenge throughout the country is resulting in a significant increase in colleague impact and theft crime being reported across our Retail estate.

Remember, Colleagues are our most important asset, and Colleague safety must always be the number one priority, with there being no expectation for Colleagues to place themselves at risk of injury by engaging with those who are carrying out criminal activity in our stores.

To further support our colleagues, we want to remind stores, coffee shops & cafes that they have the autonomy to offer free hot drinks to **on duty Police Officers & PCSO's**. The next few pages will support you with this.

**The presence of a uniformed police officer or a marked police car parked outside our stores or in our car parks, coffee shops & cafes can be a great deterrent for criminal activity reducing the number of thefts and keeping our colleagues safe.**

Also, by building a relationship with local officers, this gives our stores a point of contact should they need support with dealing with prolific offenders/on-going issues and in our larger stores provides an opportunity for police officers & PCSO's to use empty rooms/offices.

For any further support or guidance on this, please contact your Loss Prevention Advisor.

### Hot drink options

When offering hot drinks to on duty Police Officers & PCSO's, we have three options available. The process for each can be found on the following few pages.

#### Option 1 – Free hot drinks using Canteen Facilities.

- Allow on duty Officers & PCSO's to make themselves a drink showing them the facilities available in the colleague canteen/rest area.
- If a colleague is available to support, offer to make the on duty officers/PCSO's a hot drink.
- The colleague consumption guide can be found later in this guide to support with processing tea, coffee, milk and sugar.

#### Option 2 – Free hot drinks from Costa/Insomnia machines.

- On duty officers & PCSO's can get themselves a drink from the machine making the till colleagues aware so the hot drink can be processed correctly.

#### Option 3 – Free hot drinks from Coffee Shops & Cafes

- On duty officers & PCSO's can get themselves a drink from the coffee shop or café as a takeaway option or by sitting in the coffee shop or café to enjoy.



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Two lovely two-bedroom holiday homes in Derbyshire and the Norfolk Broads can now be booked by Norfolk Police officers and their families for a discounted rate.

The properties are owned by an ex-police officer who hopes to help colleagues who need a break. The Derbyshire house is in Brampton, close to pubs, bars, restaurants and shops, and a 10-minute drive to the Peak District. The Norfolk Broads apartment is in Stalham, 10 minutes away from the beach and close to the Broads river network and boat hire.

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