

WELSH MATTERS

News and views from the Police Federation's Welsh Affairs Sub-Committee

A MESSAGE FROM THE WELSH LEAD

NICKY RYAN says she's determined to make a difference for officers right across Wales in her role as the Police Federation's Welsh affairs lead.

Nicky said: "I want to ensure that the differences that exist for officers based in Wales – which have been magnified by the pandemic – are the start of a much bigger conversation and educational piece of work.

"The differences that exist in terms of policing in Wales and policing in England need to be ingrained in everyone's thinking.

Nicky, who joined Gwent Police in 1996, spent seven years as a Police Federation workplace representative with the Force before taking on the Welsh lead role which also means heading up the Federation's Welsh Affairs Sub-Committee.

Nicky is only the third person to hold the Federation's Welsh lead position. The role involves leading on special considerations for Wales within the Federation and raising awareness of Welsh issues, as well as building relationships with key stakeholders such as Welsh government, parliamentarians and police and crime commissioners (PCCs).

With a change in leadership at both the Welsh Chief Officer Group, now chaired by Chief Constable Jeremy Vaughan, and the Welsh PCCs group which is led by Daffyd Llywelyn from Dyfed Powys, Nicky will be attending meetings with both regularly throughout the year and is keen to forge working relationships with new additions to the chief officer teams across the Welsh forces.

"My real focus is trying to secure the Federation a place on the Welsh Policing Board," says Nicky.

For more information please contact Nicky Ryan by emailing nryan@polfed.org or telephone 07971 572741.





MEETINGS WITH POLITICIANS

SINCE TAKING OVER as the Police Federation's Welsh lead in April 2021, I've been reaching out to politicians to discuss the key issues facing frontline police officers.

I've held a series of meetings with members of the Senedd and Members of Parliament in Westminster, both in person and online, to highlight the areas that matter to our members.

The meetings have covered a wide range of topics including making the Covid-19 vaccine boosters available to frontline officers; the Federation's campaign for police disciplinary investigations to be concluded within 12 months; and priority NHS treatment for officers hurt in the line of duty.

I've drawn attention to the hard work and sacrifice of our members during the pandemic; their involvement in the policing of the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP 26) in Glasgow and the valuable work of Special Constables.

I've briefed politicians on elements of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, which is currently going through Parliament and includes provision for a Police Covenant to ensure welfare of officers, police staff and their families is placed under regular Parliamentary scrutiny.

The meetings have been really interesting, informative and invaluable in drawing attention to the issues that face our members.

I'm looking forward to building on them and to catching up with politicians from across the political spectrum that I've not yet had a chance to meet.

SUPPORT FOR POLICING

THE MINISTER for Social Justice has spoken of the Welsh Government's gratitude at the policing of the pandemic.

Jane Hutt, the Welsh Labour Member of the Senedd (MS) for the Vale of Glamorgan, made the comments in a meeting with Nicky Ryan, the Police Federation's Welsh lead.

Nicky said: "The minister wanted officers to know that she was aware of the pressures and risks they faced policing the pandemic and assured me that she kept a close eye on what was going on.

"She asked that officers were made aware of how they were appreciated by the Welsh Government."

Nicky raised officers' concerns around the lack of any priority being given to officers in the initial roll-out of the Covid jobs and also discussed the policing of the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP 26).

"Mrs Hutt was interested in the size of the deployment of officers attending COP and acknowledged the undertaking that officers were making, particularly those deployed to the conference for almost three weeks," said Nicky.

Nicky explained the Police Covenant, which is included in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill currently going through the Westminster Parliament.

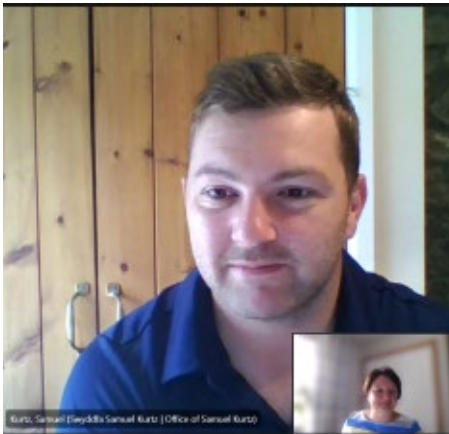
It follows a campaign by the Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW) for a covenant to ensure welfare of officers, police staff and their families is placed under regular Parliamentary scrutiny at Westminster.

The covenant will provide serving officers and former police personnel with long-term support and protection. It will focus on health and wellbeing, the physical protections officers need on the job and support for families, but while it will cover officers in England, it will not necessarily automatically apply to their Welsh colleagues.

They also discussed Time Limits, another of the Federation's campaigns which aims to ensure that any police disciplinary investigations are concluded within 12 months from the moment an allegation is made.

The meeting concluded with a discussion about the Welsh Policing Board, of which the Federation would like to be part.

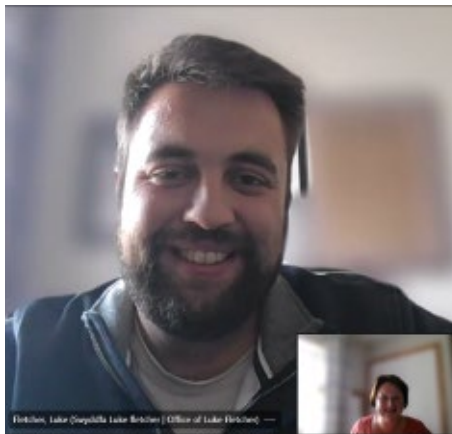
OFFICERS' CONCERNS DISCUSSED



Online meetings with Samuel Kurtz (left) and Luke Fletcher.

IN A SERIES of meetings, both online and in person, Nicky Ryan has promoted the role of the Federation in policing and highlighted the areas that matter to members.

Nicky discussed the Welsh Government's move towards advancing the recommendations of the Thomas Commission on Justice In Wales with Mick Antoniwi, the Welsh Labour MS for



Pontypridd, who is Counsel General and minister for constitution, and gave an assurance that the Federation would serve as a neutral, critical friend with the ability to say it "as it is".

She thanked Mark Isherwood, the Conservative MS for North Wales, for supporting officers by raising the issue of police being given some priority in the Covid vaccine roll-out.

During her meeting with Rhys ab Owen, the Plaid Cymru spokesperson for constitution and justice, she raised the issue of how police are often blamed for the lack of response or for errors from other stakeholders.

Nicky has also met with Andrew R. T. Davies, the leader of the Welsh Conservative Group in the Senedd; Samuel Kurtz, the Conservative MS for Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire; Alun Davies, the Labour MS for Blaenau Gwent; John Griffiths, the Labour member of the Senedd (MS) for Newport East; Heledd Feychan, the Plaid Cymru member of the Senedd (MS) for South Wales Central; Luke Fletcher, the Plaid Cymru member of the Senedd (MS) for South Wales West; and Mabon ap Gwynfor, the Plaid Cymru member of the Senedd (MS) for Dwyfor Meirionnydd.

And she plans to continue meeting and raise issues with politicians from across Wales as she aims to make a difference for frontline officers.

RANGE OF TOPICS DISCUSSED WITH MS

THE COVID-19 VACCINE and Special Constables were among the subjects covered when the Federation's Welsh lead met with Peredur Owen Griffiths, the Plaid Cymru member of the Senedd (MS) for South Wales East.

"I explained the structure of the Police Federation and how during the pandemic it had become apparent of the Federation's need to engage more with members of the Senedd due to the linked functions," Nicky said.

Covid-19 vaccine boosters was one of the first areas raised.

Nicky said: "We discussed the disappointment officers felt at being overlooked for priority for spare vaccines during the pandemic. I asked for Peredur's support if booster vaccines are to be rolled out, and he agreed.

"He was well briefed on officers' roles and the public-facing situations we find ourselves in such as policing legislation, house parties and supporting the ambulance service and NHS functions.

OVERALL HE WAS VERY SUPPORTIVE AND IS HAPPY TO ASK QUESTIONS IN THE SENEDD CHAMBER ON BEHALF OF THE FEDERATION.

"He stressed that while everything during the pandemic may not have been perfect, it's important all parties learn from the experiences so they're not repeated."

Another area of discussion was Naloxone, a drug that can



Peredur Owen Griffiths (left) with Nicky.

reverse the effects of an overdose that's being trialled by a number of UK forces including North Wales.

Nicky added: "Peredur is looking to set up a cross-party group to look at substance and alcohol misuse, and would welcome police and Federation input into that group.

"He understands that this is not a single agency issue - that it impacts on all agencies."

Another area of discussion was priority NHS treatment for officers hurt in the line of duty.

Nicky added: "Overall he was very supportive and is happy to ask questions in the Senedd Chamber on behalf of the Federation."

SPEAKING OUT ON OFFICER ASSAULTS



POLICE FEDERATION WELSH lead Nicky Ryan urged people to remember officers are human beings after new figures revealed eight assaults a day were committed against emergency workers in Wales during the first half of 2021.

Nicky spoke out after the latest data showed more than 1,360 such assaults were carried out between 1 January and 30 June 2021, including kicking, slapping, head-butting and verbal abuse.

They ranged from common assault to serious pre-meditated attacks involving grievous bodily harm, and at least 21 of the incidents involved a weapon.

Assaults on police officers accounted for two thirds (67 per cent) of the total number, averaging 152 victims every month in the six-month period in Wales.

WHAT THE PUBLIC REALLY NEEDS TO REMEMBER IS THAT BEHIND EVERY UNIFORM, BEHIND EVERY EMERGENCY SERVICES WORKER, IS A MUM, A DAD, A BROTHER, A SISTER, A WIFE, A HUSBAND - THERE IS A HUMAN BEING THERE - AND IT IS NOT RIGHT THAT MY COLLEAGUES, OR ANY OTHER FRONTLINE WORKER, GOES TO WORK TO BE ASSAULTED.

Nicky told BBC Radio Wales: "Every kind of physical violence has been exhibited by some members of the public towards our members - that's police officers and community support officers - and we regularly get called to incidents where other emergency services workers need our back-up and protection.

"What the public really needs to remember is that behind every uniform, behind every emergency services worker, is a mum, a dad, a brother, a sister, a wife, a husband - there is a human being there - and it is not right that my colleagues, or any other frontline worker, goes to work to be assaulted."

Nicky said violent assaults could have a devastating effect on the mental health and wellbeing officers and left some unable to work.

She said: "The psychological impact of these assaults cannot be underestimated or understated. Many of my colleagues who have been assaulted in the past never got back fully to operational duties.

"The physical injury may heal but the mental injury never does - it always stays with you - and I also think what the public has to remember is that every time an officer is assaulted, that is one less officer to answer the next 999 call that comes in and it could be that person's family making that 999 call."

NICKY CONGRATULATES BRAVE OFFICERS

POLICE FEDERATION WELSH affairs lead Nicky Ryan congratulated Gwent officers Mark Burbidge and Owain Smallwood on their success at the national Police Bravery Awards 2021.

PCs Burbidge and Smallwood were presented with the regional award for Wales after risking their lives trying to stop a rampaging water buffalo from attacking its owners.

A father and son were killed in the incident on a Monmouthshire farm in May 2020 but the Gwent PCs' actions in confronting the beast have been credited with saving the lives of the mother and daughter and their courage was recognised at the 2021 awards ceremony in London.

Nicky said: "Congratulations are due to these two extremely brave officers whose actions saved the lives of two women in a truly horrific incident.

"Their courage was rightly honoured at the Police Bravery Awards and they can be proud of their achievements."



Gwent PCs Mark Burbidge (left) and Owain Smallwood receiving their awards

Photo courtesy of Anderson Photography