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SPRING 2019

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM WEST  
MERCIA POLICE FEDERATION



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# Putting officers' welfare first

**By Sarah Cooper**  
**Chair of West Mercia Police Federation**



Officer welfare should be at the heart of all we do within the Federation and it was my primary motivation for standing as chair. I am representing officers on a daily basis who are struggling, and it is very apparent that both internal and external factors are contributing to their low morale and declining mental health.

I am absolutely passionate about working with the Force to improve the conditions and working environment for officers. Over recent months, the Force has appointed wellbeing Spocs who I am working closely with. Their support has been invaluable around a number of aspects of wellbeing raised with me; issues such as leave restrictions, shift patterns and exploring the reintroduction of training days.

For years, as a result of your feedback, the issue of training is something I have been fighting for and I see it as a really positive step to be able to finally enter into productive discussions around this.

The Force cannot expect officers to deliver a quality service to the public if they are not prepared to invest time and resources into effective training and professional development.

We have a team of Federation workplace reps across the Force area who are equally as

motivated to make change, and the feedback we are getting is that we are moving in the right direction. Officers are increasingly feeling they can raise concerns with us and we will act on them. Recently concerns were highlighted around critical incident debriefs and peer support. I fed this in to the Force wellbeing delivery board and, as a direct result, a full review has been carried out. There is a genuine intention to resolve the identified problems to improve the wellbeing of all.

We have also directly influenced decisions around Christmas leave restrictions and most recently the lifting of the Brexit restrictions.

Local reps have also been busy raising issues with their local command teams and influencing positive change in terms of facilities and working environments. One area that has been highlighted to me repeatedly is around the impact of PSD and IOPC investigations on officers. It is apparent that too often the way these investigations are conducted, and the time taken to complete them, is having a significant and devastating effect on officers and their families.

This is at complete odds to the ethos around the year of wellbeing. I am working with local reps and officers who have been affected to highlight the issues, with the aim of improving the way investigations are conducted, particularly in respect of process and officer welfare. This is a huge area and we plan to dedicate our next magazine to the subject.

If you have any issues that you would like to raise regarding this, please feel free to contact me.

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## Added benefits under Group Insurance Scheme

A number of new benefits to the Group Insurance Scheme (GIS) have been negotiated by the Federation as part of the branch's commitment to offering better support for officers and their families.

From 1 May 2019, subscribing serving members of the scheme, and their families, will be able to access a 24/7 GP service with consultations available by phone or video.

The scheme GPs are able to provide diagnosis, advice, reassurance and, where appropriate, prescriptions, referral letters and fit notes. West Mercia Police Federation will be subsidising this extra benefit until renewal, when it will be reviewed.

"I really hope that this will provide a positive service to members of the scheme and will also 'give something back'. I am aware that many of you struggle to get appointments with GPs and this can add additional stress at an already anxious time," says Sarah Cooper, West Mercia Police Federation chair.



The service can be accessed by ringing **0345 222 3736** or via an App which can be downloaded to your phone. There is no limit to the length or number of consultations.

Further information will be made available via local workplace Federation reps.

If anyone who is not currently in the GIS would like to find out more about what it has to offer or subscribe, please contact the Federation office.



# 'Officers are at breaking point'

Sarah Cooper says West Mercia Police Federation's concerns must be heard after new research revealed 88 per cent of its members feel there are not enough officers to police the Force area properly.

The West Mercia chair was speaking as the national Federation's new Officer Demand, Capacity and Welfare Survey also revealed that 87 per cent of officers reported they were often or always single-crewed.

A further 81 per cent of respondents said their workload was too high or much too high, and 83 per cent indicated they had experienced feelings of stress, low mood, anxiety or other difficulties with their health and wellbeing over the last 12 months.

Sarah said: "I would urge those making the decisions on resourcing to listen to our members, who are on the front-line every day, and understand what they are saying."

"The figures show there is a huge mismatch between the demand being placed on our members and their capacity, which is having a negative impact on officers' welfare and wellbeing.

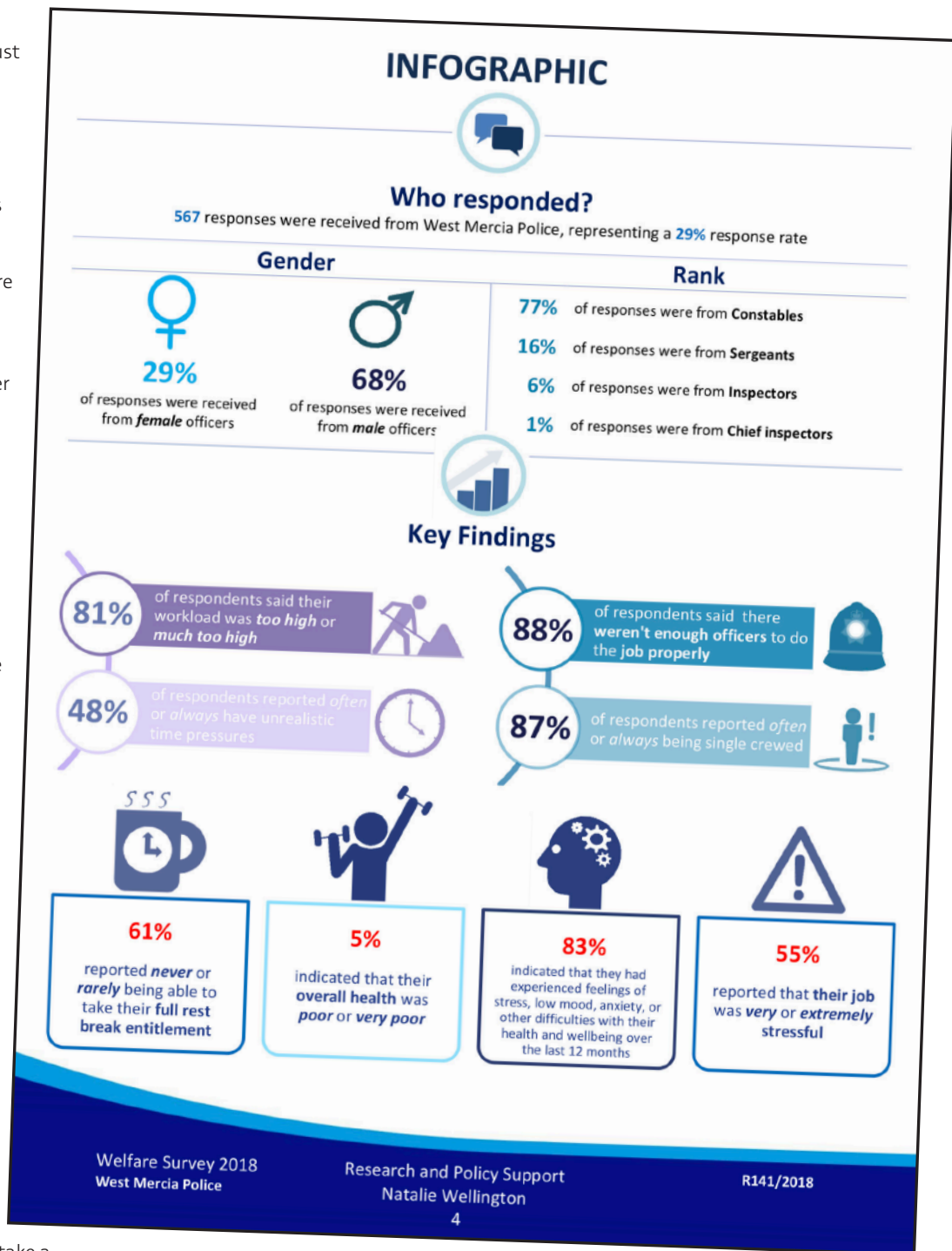
"The fact that 88 per cent of our officers feel there is not enough of them to do their job properly is shocking. And it is having a huge impact on the public, as well as officers, who want to do the best they can in protecting the public. We appreciate that the Force is having to make tough decisions due to the Government's cuts to budgets but many officers are at breaking point.

"We also know that single-crewing is an issue, not least because of the Force's geographical area. Officers feel vulnerable and isolated knowing that resources are stretched and any back-up could take a significant amount of time to arrive. Officer welfare has to be a top priority, they are our most important resource, and their concerns need listening to and acting upon."

The Police Federation of England and Wales survey, which is the only national policing survey of its kind, saw more than 18,000 officers from the rank of constable to chief inspector give their views on the demand currently experienced by the service and how this has affected them.

Nationally, the results show:

- **Almost nine out of 10 (89.8 per cent) officers say that there are not enough of them to manage the demands faced by their team or unit**



- **Almost every police officer has been exposed to at least one traumatic experience in their career, with 61.7 per cent saying they had experienced at least one of these types of incident in the last 12 months**
- **79 per cent of officers say they have felt feelings of stress and anxiety within the previous 12 months with 94 per cent of those saying these difficulties were caused or made worse by their job.**

National Federation vice-chair Ché Donald said: "The police service's most valuable resource is its people and these results should be a huge red flag to the Government, chief constables and the

public.

"Officers are stressed, exhausted and consistently exposed to things people should never have to see – and these results show just how much it is taking its toll."

He added: "I compel the Home Secretary who claims he gets policing to read this report and act on it and when he is finished reading it, share it with the Treasury."

"We need more money, more resources and more officers, so this public safety emergency can be addressed, and the pressure on officers eased before it is too late. The once revered British model of policing is currently on its knees and facing extinction, we need to act now to save it."

# 'I do not under-estimate the impact of change on our staff'



The Deputy Chief Constable has pledged to build a Force culture where there is no stigma attached to anyone suffering from stress or anxiety and urged officers to speak up about their mental health and wellbeing.

Amanda Blakeman says she shares the Federation's concerns that increased, and more complex, demand, reduced resources and increased public expectation, are having a negative impact on officers' health.

And she says the Force is listening to those concerns, taking steps to address the issues raised, recruiting more officers and appointing more supervisors to try to help ease some of the pressure.

"We appreciate that it is a combination of the correct level of staff, the right support and a real understanding of the problems we face together that will make the difference," the DCC explained.

"Last year the Chief Constable and I acknowledged the factors that combine to cause pressure and working with our officers and staff sought to understand and respond to these concerns fully.

"For example, we acted immediately on your feedback about the impact that the shift pattern was having and worked with officers to change that. We took steps to alleviate the impact the change to Athena was having by focusing on MG file compiler and also worked to secure the Police and Crime Commissioner's support in increasing the establishment of officers."

Ms Blakeman acknowledged that feedback from Force surveys, blogs, the '100 Little Things' work and the tour of the health and wellbeing bus had revealed a number of key factors causing officer stress.

"These are the demands that they face and the amount of control they have in the way that they work, the support that is in place, the relationships that bring appreciation of the different roles along with the resources available. In addition, I do not underestimate the impact change has on our staff and the uncertainty that this brings is felt across the board," she conceded.

The Force, the DCC argued, had started to tackle some of these issues and she cited changes to the shift pattern as being one area where it had reacted to officers' feedback. Officer numbers had been increased to 2,145, and extra supervisors had been appointed to provide officers with a better level of support.

Feedback received is being built into the Force's plan within the Health and Wellbeing Board and the 'Year of Wellbeing' will be specific to the issues officers have raised.

"Clear and open discussions will continue with our workforce and the provision of the health and wellbeing bus, which will tour around West Mercia periodically during this year, will provide an open forum for discussion," Ms Blakeman explained.

"The Force has also invested in the MAXimising potential programme to ensure regular 1-2-1 conversations with line managers that focus on supporting and improving health and wellbeing, recognising and rewarding achievements, supporting individuals in terms of their goals and aspirations and ensuring clarity in focus and direction."

The Health and Wellbeing Board will continue to focus on solving the issues that are causing 'unprecedented demand and stress' and officers' views, and ideas, will be taken into account.

"I have found the health and wellbeing bus a great way to ensure that we get the feedback and put out the support across the vast geography of our Force area," the DCC said.

"It is my intention for the health and wellbeing bus to provide further surgeries,

be that around the provision of advice from the Federation, Police Mutual, our welfare officers and so on, or general health advice from occupational health along with offering flu jabs in the latter part of this year.

"Anything to promote the health and wellbeing of our workforce is being considered. For instance, after a number of requests, we have recently announced that we will be re-opening a cycle to work scheme and work is currently underway with procurement and HR to implement this."

But, as the effects of these initiatives will take time to be felt, Ms Blakeman urged any officers not to suffer in silence if they felt they were suffering from stress or anxiety or if they were generally concerned about their mental wellbeing.

"I would ask that you take action as soon as you have any concerns about your psychological health or that of your colleagues. Your supervisor, friends and the teams around you alongside resources like PAM assist, the Federation and occupational health are here to help," she said.

"I would urge officers to talk in order to look after their own psychological health and wellbeing, to look after their own physical health, attend any training offered or any debriefs that may relate to/ or have an impact on psychological health and wellbeing and challenge any stigma or discrimination wherever this is apparent."

And the DCC concluded by referring to a quote she had been sent by a sergeant.

"I include it as it is reflective of the culture that I want us to work in," she explained.

*'... loyal dissent is not expressed by selfish subordinates or those adverse to change. Instead, it is selflessly undertaken by people who care deeply about their organisation's purpose, its mission, and who want to help their leaders.'*

"My plea, therefore, is please, continue to be open and to keep talking to us so that we can build on and create this culture and thank you for the support you provide," the Deputy Chief Constable added.

**“**I would ask that you take action as soon as you have any concerns about your psychological health or that of your colleagues. Your supervisor, friends and the teams around you alongside resources like PAM assist, the Federation and occupational health are here to help

# Officers are not good at putting their own needs to the fore



Sarah Cooper, West Mercia Police Federation chair, is pictured (second from the right) with the wellbeing bus earlier this year.

The Force has declared 2019 as the 'Year of Wellbeing' and initiatives and ideas are gathering pace to improve the welfare of the whole workforce

At the start of the year, the Force committed to ensuring all staff's wellbeing 'is at the heart of what we do', and now, three months in, a dedicated team has been established to drive this forward.

Chief Inspector Ed Hancox of the Continuous Improvement Team and Michelle Clarke, sergeant for Force wellbeing and health, have worked on a number of new initiatives including visits by the wellbeing bus which is on loan from the National Police Wellbeing Service. It has toured across the Force area visiting officers and staff in their own stations with representatives from the Federation, UNISON, occupational health, Macmillan Cancer Support and Police Mutual on board.

Officers and staff have been talking

about some of the issues they feel cause them difficulty at work with their personal wellbeing and also offer ideas on how to improve wellbeing at work.

Michelle explains: "In this modern world, finding time is one of everyone's greatest challenges; time to be with family, exercise, keep on top of workloads, take a break, chat to colleagues or just ask for help. The bus provides an opportunity to reach out directly to our colleagues and engage on the ground which is invaluable."

Small changes which make a big difference are also starting to be made, thanks to Deputy Chief Constable Amanda Blakeman's '100 Little Things' initiative. Officers and staff are able to feedback on issues that cause or add to workplace stress and chief officers will, where financially and operationally possible, make changes to bust bureaucracy and simplify processes.

A recent example is the removal of the

need to get an inspector's authority to seize vehicles for having no insurance. This has been passed to sergeants, making things simpler for officers.

Michelle explains the thinking behind the changes being put in place: "The Force recognises that as an individual's health and wellbeing increases they become more resilient, more innovative and more able to perform well. This impacts on our ability to deliver our strategic priorities and, ultimately, better serve our communities.

"Many officers will suffer direct physical injury or abuse in their day to day role and many will feel the mental and emotional strain too.

"As a police officer, you put the needs and safety of all others before yourself. It's one of the reasons many of us become police officers in the first place; to be the difference in someone's life when they need it most. However, what many police officers are not very good at is putting their own health and wellbeing needs first or even recognising those needs are there in the first place.

"If we did, and if we took and offered to each other and ourselves the support and help available, we would maximise our chances of being the most equipped, healthy and productive as we can be when making that difference to people's lives.

"Making a difference to people's lives and protecting people from harm includes each other and, as police officers, that natural instinct to help others extends to the public and should always include each other, whatever role, department or rank."

Michelle says she is proud to be part of the wellbeing initiative and to support colleagues who sacrifice so much to serve the public but she urged individual officers and staff to play their part in improving wellbeing.

She explained: "With the support of the Chief Constable and senior officers, we are able to be where we are needed most, with a clear mandate focused on enabling officers and staff to voice and express their concerns, find new, and reinvigorate existing, support services and initiatives where needed and reassure the public that the people who care for them are, in turn, cared for.

"Now is the time to take the opportunity to help us continue to make West Mercia a great place to work."

## WSP offers lifeline

The Welfare Support Programme (WSP), launched by the national Federation and the Police Firearms Officers' Association, is there for officers who find themselves having to cope with often life-changing situations through the course of their duties.

It offers a 24-hour, 365 days a year telephone support line for officers and their family members who can speak directly to fully trained staff with mental health first aid certificates.

They help officers to get the best support and is available to:

- Officers who have been involved in a death or serious injury incident at work that results in Post-Incident Procedures
- Officers suspended from duty
- Officers served with gross misconduct papers; and
- Officers who, following a consultation with their Federation branch and the WSP, are deemed in need of being placed on the

programme.

It is also available for family members of officers entered onto the programme, their partners, any person living in the officer's household and officers' dependants.

Contact must be made initially through the Federation branch.



# Flint House – an invaluable lifeline

The Flint House Police Rehabilitation Centre helps more than 3,300 officers every year get back to full operational health, including a number here in the West Mercia.

Based in Goring on Thames in Oxfordshire, the centre uses a specialised programme of treatment and therapies to get subscribing officers fit for duty as quickly as possible.

Flint House has a highly-skilled team of physiotherapists, mental health practitioners and registered nurses and is available for officers who have been injured on or off duty.

Treatments range from physiotherapy to stress counselling, from hydrotherapy to sleep and relaxation.

Officers who have had to use its services describe it as a lifeline.

One officer said: "You never know when you could sustain an injury on or off duty.

"Flint House is an incredible place and will speed up your recovery time compared to any NHS waiting times.

"Also with mental health being talked about more and more the programme and support that they can offer is brilliant.

"To be surrounded by colleagues, like-minded people who understand the pressures and the things we see and do while receiving excellent care cannot be under-estimated."

Another officer added: "I love this place. If you are not a paying member of Flint House, then you are seriously missing out.

"Staff are highly trained therapists that will do more for you in two weeks than six months in the NHS."

The requested donation is set at just



£1.70 per week but with falling police numbers means that those subscribing have fallen. In West Mercia Police, 68 per cent are signed up.

Sarah Cooper, chair of West Mercia Police Federation, said: "Flint House is a fantastic facility with a long tradition of helping our officers to get back onto their feet.

"The physiotherapy department is supported by a state-of-the-art gym and there is a dedicated package of mental health and wellbeing support programmes and therapies in place.

"Every day Flint House is helping officers to get back on to their feet and to get better for themselves and their families and their colleagues.

"You really never know if and when

you will need their help and support, but a requested donation of less than the price of a High Street coffee seems worth it for your own peace of mind, particularly when you compare it to the costs of private physiotherapy or counselling."

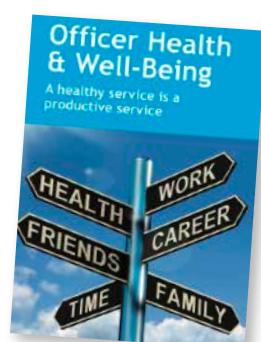
If you are a serving officer who does not donate to Flint House and wants to, you can sign up via the Force through payroll GAYE giving, or you can donate direct to Flint House by Direct Debit using the forms at [flinthouse.co.uk](http://flinthouse.co.uk)



## Looking after your health and wellbeing

The Federation has produced a health and wellbeing booklet offering members advice and information on a range of health conditions as well as tips on staying healthy and losing weight.

You can find a link to the booklet at [polfed.org](http://polfed.org) on the health and wellbeing pages.



## Tailored support

While funding for Mind's Blue Light Programme specifically for emergency service workers has now ended, the mental health charity has pledged continued and tailored support for 999 personnel.

The Blue Light Programme was launched with LIBOR funding administered by the UK Government. Following four years of funded activity, the programme came to an end in March 2019. Much of the support the programme offered continues to be available, but the way Mind works in the sector has changed.

Find out more at [mind.org.uk](http://mind.org.uk)

# Working for you

## Pete Nightingale

Pete became a workplace Federation representative in last year's elections.

With a passion for staff welfare and improving morale, Pete believes that with a significantly smaller workforce it is essential to reduce sickness.

"I put myself forward as a rep because I want to guide colleagues when they need help and use my experiences to assist others," says Pete, who has 14 years' service with the Force and is currently a Worcester custody sergeant.

"I have an interest around pay and conditions and officer welfare as well as improving members' knowledge around their entitlements. Conduct issues interest me and I am really keen to get matters dealt with at the most appropriate level possible and as swiftly as possible. A lengthy investigation benefits nobody.

"As a Federation, we need to continue the excellent recent work of the Police Federation, improve trust and confidence that we do care and show that we are actively trying to improve things for officers."

The challenge for the police service, he believes, is to focus on reducing demand on the over-stretched workforce and highlight to the public the need for adequate resources.

Pete has completed the Federation's initial reps' training course and also a conduct course, covering performance and conduct regulations and attendance procedures. He is looking to complete the health and safety training course in the future.

Having spent his whole career in uniform, Pete has had experience as licensed search team officer and in PSU and is CBRN, MOE and Taser trained.

He has been a patrol PC and was a dog handler but left the dog section on promotion to sergeant in 2015.



# 'Not bad for a Wood

Steve Butler has thanked Federation members for their support during what have been challenging times for the branch.

And Steve, who took over as secretary last June, has promised that he and branch chair Sarah Cooper will remain passionate about putting welfare at the heart of what the Federation does.

"I will ensure that the continued talk on these subjects gets converted in to action," says Steve, "We don't always get everything right and we haven't in years gone by but I can assure you were working really hard for members in making work a better place than it is or has been.

"Members do an incredible job and should be respected for that and the impact it has on their lives when they join the job deserves all the support we can give."

He is particularly concerned that officer burn-out, even as numbers slowly increase, will hamper their health and welfare and, in turn, impact on them and their families. This, he feels, is highlighted by the extra hours being worked whether that's extended shifts or rest days which he says should be thought of as refresh days.

"The demands now placed on officers has a knock-on effect in that our Federation representatives are called upon even more. We have had to adapt to these changes so we now offer even more but this leads to clashes when the Fed work clashes with that of the day job," Steve adds.

"I hope in the future our organisation continues to support the work that our reps do, fully realising what we do and the benefits that brings to our colleagues and the fact that having the Federation saves forces lots of money overall."

Steve first became aware of the Federation when he was subject to bullying earlier in his career but felt that he didn't get the support he needed.

This led to him seeking election as a workplace representative covering Telford in 2011 where he was determined to offer more to colleagues working hard under extreme pressures on a daily basis. He found the work sometimes frustrating but also immensely rewarding.

"My drive to become a Federation rep has



Steve Butler.

not changed from the reason why I became a police officer. I want to give the best welfare support to our members in times when they feel have no-one else to turn to and also uphold fairness and impartiality to all," he says.

When the opportunity to stand for the branch secretary's position came of the blue, Steve considered the skills and experiences he had and decided to put himself forward.

"One of the reasons that helped my decision was a feeling of going forward with blank canvas where we can make our goals and objectives ALL about our members," Steve admits.

"I thought I could make a difference and hopefully handle the situation we were in, steadying the ship through what can only be described as a difficult and unprecedented situation,"

Proud that colleagues had put their faith in him, he is also grateful that in his early days as secretary he has had the support of the national Federation, local branches and branch staff in helping him get up to speed.

“My drive to become a Federation rep has not changed from the reason why I became a police officer. I want to give the best welfare support to our members in times when they feel have no-one else to turn to and also uphold fairness and impartiality to all.



# Woodside lad'

In addition to his role as secretary, he is also the health & safety lead officer for the branch, it is an area in which he has an interest experience both within and outside of policing. He holds the National Body Of Safety & Health (NEBOSH) General Certificate and is a professional member of the Institute Of Safety & Health (IOSH). One of the main roles the Federation performs is constantly reminding the organisations of its duty under the laws of the Health and Safety at Work Act.

Nevertheless, he has found his new full-time Federation role a steep learning curve.

"It has been a very challenging start to the role, but I'm thoroughly enjoying it and up for the challenge. I have had to ensure we have the procedures in place to ensure our reps have the tools to support our members and that day to day functions get done," Steve explains.

"We have now introduced the full Federation Rules that cover our finances and governance. We have also introduced a transparent finance package that records and manages all the expenses of the branch and also those of our staff and full-time officials."

He wants to see the national Federation starting to challenge Police Regulations which, he believes, over time have become more biased in the favour of the organisation rather than protecting officers' welfare. A simple example he cites involves changes to over-time rates.

"If we had retained the previous recompense, would they be so quick to cancel officers' rest days or get them working late? I find that rest days being cancelled inside or outside 15 days should have such a deterrent that forces will be made to only cancel as the very last resort," Steve suggests.

Turning from internal Federation issues to the Force itself, he wants to see more work around demand, suggesting a detailed review of the processes and time taken to deal with an incident from the initial call to that of disposal at court.

He believes the Force is too focused on reducing unresourced jobs and, by looking at the whole process, could become more streamlined, ultimately saving time and money. He also wants to see double-crewing properly researched to find if there is evidence that it may reduce officer assaults, improve morale and mental health, and show officers to be more productive.

Steve admits to having some reservations about the Independent Office for Police Conduct not being at a setting to give the reassurance that officers are subject to a fair investigation and dealt with in manner they would expect to give to members of the public.

"I'm seeing too many cases being pursued

which simply fail any Tesco Test or logic to why or many that fail the public interest test irrespective of whether its claimed we have a higher threshold, fairness should mean fair," he explains.

"The impact on officers and their families who are under investigation suffer greatly as many are not dealt with in a timely manner nor are updates given at regular times."

Steve's role today is all a far cry from his days growing up on a council estate when he had not really envisaged being a police officer.

Thankful that his parents had instilled a great moral compass within him, he worked hard to achieve a successful career and also gave – and continues to give – many voluntary hours to his local community and the wider Shropshire area delivering grassroots football to hundreds of young people and providing many diversionary activities within areas of high deprivation

"This background made me want to give even more back to the community and what better way to do this than becoming a police officer and at the same time show that, with hard work, it's not where you come from that determines your destiny. I'm very proud of the fact that I'm from a council estate and even prouder when people say 'You've not done bad for a Woodside lad'."

He joined the Force in 2002 but says that with a drive to ensure impartiality and fairness for all, not just based on social standing, he would have probably become a community ambassador, as a local councillor or local MP.

"After that who knows, look at the current state of politics, there's hope for us all," he jokes.

He has spent all his career in uniform covering Telford, his first posting after a tutorship in Newport was patrol working out of Wellington Police Station.

His other roles have included local beat officer in Hadley and Leegomery, Safer Neighbourhood Officer for Arleston & College, Safer Schools Officer for Telford College of Arts & Technology, interview team, violent crime team, burglary unit, public order and football spotter.

Qualified to both Osprey Part 1 & 2, he has carried out numerous stints of acting duties on patrol in Telford explaining: "I've thoroughly enjoyed and my time working this area only makes me proud of the can do attitude and hard work that we as police officers show on a daily basis."

He now wants front-line officers to engage with the Federation, its full-time officials and workplace representatives to ensure it remains member focused.

"Our local Federation is only as good as the work-based reps members elect but it's important that we as a Federation ensure they're accessible and given the skills, instruction, training and time to support colleagues," says Steve.

"It's also vital that we fully communicate with members and via our reps ensure their concerns are heard and addressed."

## West Mercia officers to join Police Unity Tour



Steve Butler will be part of the West Midlands Chapter of cyclists taking part in the Police Unity Tour (PUT) again this year.

The West Mercia Police Federation secretary first joined the tour last year and will be one of a number of West Mercia officers in this year's PUT team.

The team will cover 180 miles over three days to get to the National Memorial Arboretum on Sunday 28 July for the annual Care of Police Survivors (COPS) memorial service.

Steve has already successfully enlisted West Midlands Police Federation chair Rich Cooke to join the West Midlands Chapter and hopes that all four of the region's forces will be represented in the event this year.

The cyclists will set off on Friday 26 July and will follow a similar route to last year when they passed through Herefordshire, Shropshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire before finally reaching the arboretum which is in Alrewas, Staffordshire.

Other chapters – made up of police officers, police staff and other supporters – will also make 180-mile trips before all groups come together to ride into the arboretum to join the families, officers of all ranks and other invited guests, including PCCs, civic dignitaries and Federation representatives at the memorial service which marks the end of the COPS family weekend.

Each rider wears a wristband dedicated to the memory of a fallen officer and, where possible, they present this to the officer's family at the end of the tour.

Steve was one of 29 riders with the West Midlands Chapter last year. A total of around 350 cyclists completed the PUT.

Money raised through the tour will be donated to COPS, the charity dedicated to supporting the families of fallen officers and police staff.

# Tuck shop treats boost charity funds

A workplace Federation representative has raised hundreds of pounds for charity after setting up a tuck shop for police officers and staff.

Ann-Marie Laws set up the tuck shop at Hereford Police Station thanks to some help from Sarah Cooper, chair of the West Mercia Federation.

Ann-Marie, who had previously tried to set up a similar venture but had failed due to a lack of funds, said: "Sarah was very supportive of the idea and gave the start-up money to me on a Federation loan to set this up."

"It was an instant hit in Hereford Police Station and became very popular with staff and officers who work from the station. I have had many emails from people thanking me for setting this up as it saves money and time when they want a quick snack."

She has raised more than £600 for three police charities – COPS, the Blue Light Programme and Call4Backup.

COPS (Care of Police Survivors) is dedicated to helping the families of police officers who have lost their lives on duty rebuild their lives; MIND's Blue Light Programme provides mental health support for the emergency service workers and Call4Backup provides help, support and assistance to officers, staff and Specials who work in the UK police forces via support services operated by serving, ex or retired police officers or staff.

Ann-Marie says the next charity to benefit will be one local to Hereford which will be selected by users of her tuck shop.



*Ann-Marie Laws in the tuck shop.*

## Federation seeks three-year pay deal

The Police Federation is seeking a three-year pay deal for officers with a five per cent uplift in each year.

This, it says, will bring police pay back to 'fair levels'.

However, if the three-year deal is not considered possible, the Federation has put forward a claim for a 6.2 per cent rise this year with an increase coming into effect from 1 September.

Details of the pay claim are part of a joint submission, including eight recommendations, to the Police Remuneration Review Body (PRRB) by the Federation and the Superintendents' Association.

But in its PRRB submission the Home Office said it will only make £70 million available. This equates to a pay rise of just 1.3 per cent if spent over a 12-month period, and less than the recent 2.7 per cent increase awarded to MPs.

National Federation chair John Apter said: "Even the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) has done better than 1.3 per cent, as its submission includes options of up to 4.5 per cent this year. Given that the NPCC say this, maybe we can take some hope from the fact the Home Office states it will 'undertake another assessment of affordability'.

"We have written to the PRRB to express our anger, disappointment and concerns. However, the Home Office submission itself and its lateness will do nothing to instil confidence in police officers that it takes seriously the pay review process."

## Legal challenge on 2018 award

The Police Federation's application to lodge a Judicial Review over the Government's failure to fully implement the pay review body's recommendation on officers' pay increase in 2018 has been accepted.

A hearing is likely to be heard in the summer.

National Federation secretary Alex Duncan said: "We welcome this positive news and will now be working hard to prepare and plan for this important issue."

The Police Remuneration Review Body had recommended a three per cent rise from September last year but the Government only awarded two per cent, though the Federation has argued this is only worth 0.85 per cent in real terms.

At the time of announcing the Federation was seeking legal redress, national Federation chair John Apter said: "Police officers must be treated fairly and have confidence that any independent pay recommendations will be accepted in full by the Home Secretary.

"I know the deep sense of anger felt by many of our members about the way they have been treated. This is why we have taken this action and make no apology for doing so. Doing nothing was simply not an option and it is right and proper that we legally challenge this unfairness."

■ The 0.85 per cent is derived from the fact that only one per cent of last year's two per cent increase was consolidated. That one per cent has now been removed by the Government for this year's pay award so, taking into account pension contributions, the actual uplift is worth approximately 0.85 per cent to constables.

# The five stages of divorce – what to expect when going through a divorce

By **Sandeep Sandhu**,  
associate in family  
law at Slater and  
Gordon



## Separation

Separating from a spouse is never easy. It's a time of emotional upheaval for both parties and especially disrupting for any children involved. As well as the emotional challenges faced during separation, there are also the challenges surrounding the practicalities of separation, such as residency and finances.

In the first instance, it's in the best interests of everyone involved to ensure that immediate discussions post-separation remain as amicable as possible. The benefit of keeping matters civil cannot be understated. It may be preferable for any discussions to take place in a neutral environment, rather than in the matrimonial home and discussions should never be in the ear shot of children.

## Mediation

Going straight to court doesn't have to be the only option after separation, as mediation can help to sort out differences around money, property and children.

Mediation gives both parties the opportunity to sit down and, in their own words, put their side of the story across in a safe and neutral environment.

The mediator can encourage you to think about things from another perspective and to compromise in order to reach a conclusion that everyone is happy with. They will listen and help you communicate with your ex-partner effectively, and will remain impartial - not taking sides.

## Divorce

If you're satisfied that your marriage has irretrievably broken down, divorce proceedings can be made through the Family Court to formally bring the marriage to an end.

There's currently no such thing as a 'no fault divorce' under UK law. There's only one ground for divorce and that's the marriage has 'irretrievably broken down'. This has to be proved by the person who starts the divorce petition, known as the 'petitioner', by establishing one of the following facts:

- 1. Adultery:** The petitioner finds it intolerable to live with the respondent as a result of them committing adultery. Adultery is voluntary sexual intercourse between a man and a woman and therefore this fact cannot be used in same sex marriages or civil partnerships.
- 2. Unreasonable behaviour:** The petitioner cannot live with the respondent as a result of their unreasonable behaviour.
- 3. Desertion:** The respondent has deserted the petitioner for at least two years.
- 4. Two years' separation (with consent):** The respondent accepts divorce proceeding on the basis that the parties have lived separately for two years.
- 5. Five years' separation (no consent required):** Parties have lived apart for a period of five years.

## Finances

Often one of the most complex matters for people to deal with is the finances. Whatever the length of the relationship, the basic steps people should take are simple and following legal guidance cannot only help in maintaining an amicable relationship with your former partner but also keep your legal costs to a minimum.

While obtaining your decree absolute, (the document you receive from court which

legally ends your marriage), is the ultimate goal in a divorce, this doesn't deal with the matrimonial finances. There's an entirely separate process that must be followed to ensure no further claims may be made by your former spouse against your finances.

The divorce process is instigated by the presentation of a petition to the court, however, any application for a financial remedy will require a separate application.

## Children

The first concerns parents who decide to separate have is the arrangements for the children, with a key issue being how children are told about their parents' separation and how they are best supported through it. Then the question arises of how the children's time will be divided between parents once they have established separate households.

Arrangements for children can be one of the most difficult and emotive issues for separating parents and, as a consequence, the same arrangements are frequently the source of more serious and profound disagreements. It's crucial, when addressing arrangements for the future, to do everything possible to limit the stress and anxiety generated for the benefit of both the adults and children.

If you would like specialist advice from a family lawyer please contact Slater and Gordon on **0808 175 7710** and we'll be happy to help.

## FAMILY LAW SURGERY

Sandeep will be holding a free initial surgery for family law issues at the Federation offices on 15 May with appointments available from 10am. Contact the office for more information or to book an appointment.

## Finance theme for Did You Know?

The Federation's Did You Know campaign focused on finance-related issues during March.

A theme is chosen each month, based on questions that we receive from members. The aim is to highlight key issues and to make sure serving officers know exactly what they can claim as part of their role.

Launched in November, the campaign has already focused on annual leave, rest days and performance.

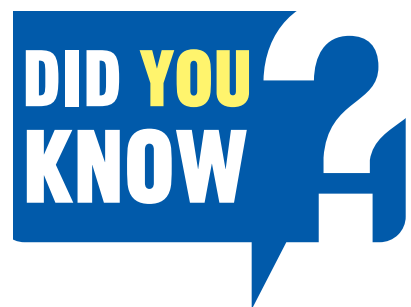
During March the campaign covered the allowances and expenses you can claim for doing your role, and topics included NHS medical costs incurred

while on duty and pension buy-back.

National Federation chair John Apter, addressing members, said: "I am really pleased that the Did You Know? campaign, which is fundamentally about you understanding your rights, is now being rolled out across England and Wales.

"Over the coming weeks and months we are going to be putting out information which we believe is going to be really important to you to understand what your rights are.

"Police regulations are not there to be cherry-picked. They are not a nice to have. They are the rules we must comply with. They are your rights.



"Please help us to educate all police officers about what your rights are. The Did You Know? campaign will, hopefully, share some valuable information over the coming months."



Going  
through a  
divorce?

Call us  
before your  
ex does.



**Sandeep Sandhu**  
Associate in  
Family Law at  
Slater and Gordon

We've been working with the Police Federation for over fifty years – longer than any other firm. No one understands better the unique pressures of police work and how to protect your rights – including your pension. If you're going through a divorce, we offer a free initial consultation, a divorce fixed fee package from £350 plus VAT and Court fees and discounted hourly rates plus we give you access to some of the country's best family lawyers.

If you think we could help, call us on  
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