

# CONNECT

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM WEST MERCIA POLICE FEDERATION



WINTER 2022



# CONTENTS

- 2** Branch to pay members' subs increase
- 3** Look out for colleagues at Christmas and be proud of your achievements this year



4

**Police drivers: new legislation now in effect**



**5 Rachel recognised at Police Bravery Awards**

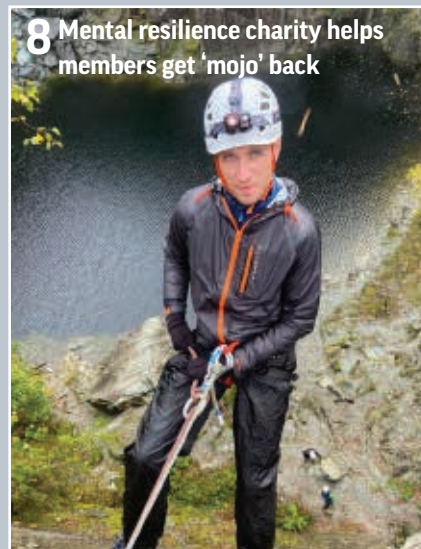


6

**Fund-raising cyclists complete Police Unity Tour**



**7 Officers join families at National Police Memorial Day**



**8 Mental resilience charity helps members get 'mojo' back**



**10 West Mercia cop wins High Sheriff award for work in the community**

**11 Ministers urged to back Elizabeth Medal**

**13 2022 - a year in review**

## BRANCH TO PAY MEMBERS' SUBS INCREASE

Police Federation subscriptions have gone up by 3.1 per cent across the country – but officers in West Mercia will not be asked to pay extra.

That is because West Mercia Police Federation has decided to fund the subs increase itself rather than ask members to stump up more cash during a time of high inflation and cost of living pressure.

At the Police Federation annual national conference in July, delegates voted 221 to 170 to approve a rise in subs in line with the percentage uplift to police pay for 2022-23. The rise is about 58 pence a month for anyone on basic tax.

However, West Mercia chair Sarah Cooper said: "Our members are really struggling with the cost of living. Everywhere you look things are going up, from household bills to exorbitantly high prices at the petrol pumps, or the cost of food in the supermarket.

"I appreciate there are solid arguments for an increase in Police Federation subs, but I feel strongly that this is completely the wrong time to be asking colleagues to pay more. This is why West Mercia Federation has decided that the branch will pick up the extra cost and we will freeze subs for our members."

Sarah also pointed to the fact that last year's Police Federation pay and morale survey found that nearly three quarters of officers felt 'worse off today than five years ago'. And officers have suffered a 20 per cent real-terms pay cut since 2010.

The Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW) reviews subscription rates regularly to ensure the organisation can continue to meet the cost of representing officers, including providing gold standard legal representation.

Only one increase to subscriptions has been made over the last decade.

In July, the Police Remuneration Review Body (PRRB) recommended that police pay should rise by between 3.1 per cent and 8.8 per cent depending on rank. In August the Federation's National Board agreed to the lowest average subs increase of 3.1 per cent.

It said the rise was needed because of soaring inflation, upcoming litigation and the financial health of the Federation National Reserves Fund.

Speaking after conference, Sarah said: "I recognise that, just like everyone else, the Federation has been facing increased costs and there is a critical need for the organisation to remain financially viable so it can continue to provide the full range of services to members.

"However, the cost of living is unmanageable for many of our members, and it just seemed to me to be the wrong time to add additional financial burden. I also want to be satisfied that all internal efficiencies that can be made by PFEW are implemented to assist with cost saving."

# LOOK OUT FOR COLLEAGUES AT CHRISTMAS AND BE PROUD OF YOUR ACHIEVEMENTS THIS YEAR

These final few weeks of 2022 seem to be passing by in a flash. Christmas is almost upon us, and I hope it will be an opportunity for you to enjoy a well-earned rest and quality time with your loved ones.



I am really mindful, however, that policing doesn't stop for public holidays and many of you will be on duty, keeping communities safe and attending emergencies. I know that many of you have had duty changes that have disrupted plans and, while we all signed up knowing the demands of the job, it is times like this that bring those sacrifices into sharper focus.

There is no getting away from the fact that the inevitable disruption to plans over the festive season is happening against a backdrop of increasingly challenging times for us all, both personally and professionally. The financial crisis is taking its toll and the years of austerity that we hoped were behind us are now biting hard.

If you are struggling in any way, I would urge you to speak to your Federation rep. We are here to help and can provide advice and signpost you to further support. For those that subscribe to the West Mercia Welfare Fund, please remember that the fund is there to help colleagues out when facing hardship and applications from colleagues are always welcome.

As a Federation, we spend a good amount of our time arguing for our members to be paid properly. Last year we had a post-pandemic pay freeze and this year – following our decision to pull-out of the Police Remuneration Review Body (PRRB) – the Government responded with an average five per cent offer.

In normal times this would have been warmly welcomed but, in the context of soaring

inflation and the fact that police pay has eroded by 20 per cent in real terms since the austerity years, the pay uplift barely scratches the surface.

This is why West Mercia Police Federation will continue to campaign for members to receive the pay they deserve. We continue to lose good, experienced officers due to the pressures they are under and I regularly speak to recruits who have left higher paid careers to join the police and then leave because they cannot sustain the appallingly low starting salary.

I am also aware that individuals who would be ideal for the service choose not to join because they simply can't afford to. This urgently needs addressing and we will continue to support the national Federation in campaigning for fair pay.

As a branch we recognise the financial pressure that our members are under and this is why we have decided not to pass on the increase in Federation subscriptions that was voted through at our national conference. In a cost of living crisis it is not right to ask you to pay more.

I hope you will enjoy this edition of Connect, our last one of 2022 and which includes a review of the key moments.

It can be hard to focus on the positives in times such as these but the spirit, compassion and dedication of colleagues in the most difficult of times will always mean that I am proud to be a police officer and work alongside the most amazing individuals. However, I am also painfully aware of the toll that the role takes on some and I am part of a working group looking at

preventing officer suicides which I hope will save lives going forward.

I would like to thank all colleagues who took the time to participate in the Federation's annual pay and morale survey. We are awaiting the results but I fear that things will not have improved last year's results where 55 per cent of colleagues described their morale as low, and three quarters feel worse off financially than five years ago.

However, this data and your views are incredibly useful and strengthen the Federation's arm when we are in negotiation and making the case for change.

We also have a positive change in the law to allow our Special Constable colleagues to join the Police Federation as members. I am currently working with the Force and the PCC to establish how this will be funded as it is vital that our Special colleagues are afforded the same protection as regular officers.

I know many of you stepped up to make sure that big events such as the Commonwealth Games and the state funeral of our late Queen Elizabeth II passed by safely and without incident and for this we can all be proud.

Looking ahead to 2023, members' pay and conditions, along with the welfare of our members, will continue to be top of the agenda for West Mercia Police Federation. I hope we will begin to see the cost of living pressures ease and start to feel the benefits of the officer uplift. For now, I wish you all a safe and enjoyable Christmas festive season, with my thanks for all you do.

**Sarah Cooper**

*Chair of West Mercia Police Federation*

“ IF YOU ARE STRUGGLING FOR WHATEVER REASONS, I WOULD URGE YOU TO SPEAK TO YOUR FEDERATION REP. WE ARE HERE TO HELP AND CAN PROVIDE A SYMPATHETIC EAR OVER A MUG OF TEA OR COFFEE. AND I WOULD ASK YOU TO LOOK OUT FOR COLLEAGUES – WE ARE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER.



# POLICE DRIVERS: NEW LEGISLATION NOW IN EFFECT



Police drivers are being reminded to read a frequently asked questions document giving guidance on new regulations which came into effect at the end of November.

The new regulations set out the prescribed training that will give trained police drivers the better protection in law afforded to them under the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act.

"The new regulations will have an impact on all officers who are trained to drive police vehicles and they must familiarise themselves with the new provisions," says Tim Rogers, police pursuits and driver training lead for the Federation nationally.

"I cannot stress highly enough how important it is for them to make sure they are fully aware of the changes and how they will affect them.

"Critically, their driving will no longer be assessed by the standards of the careful, competent driver, as was previously the case, but they will now be judged by those of their careful and competent colleagues who have completed the same level of prescribed training.

"The change in the law, which means police officers' skills and professional training will be recognised, is welcomed but we are sounding a note of caution too in that we must now ensure that all drivers are 'in ticket' with their training.

"My advice to any officer who is not up to date with their police driver training is very simple – don't drive a police vehicle because if you do you could be vulnerable to prosecution."

Tim has visited a number of Federation branches around the country, explaining the changes, how they impact officers and highlighting the importance of officers only driving when they are 'in ticket'.

National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) police driving lead DCC Terry Woods has welcomed the legislative change: "I believe this is an excellent step forward for police

drivers. Standardisation throughout the UK on police driving courses is essential in providing a minimum standard to all officers and making the roads safer for all.

"I would urge officers to ensure they understand the new legislation and the importance of compliance with the relevant driving refresher requirements."

The regulations will be enshrined in law through The Road Traffic Act 1988 (Police Driving: Prescribed Training) Regulations 2022 and came into effect on 30 November.

**“ I WOULD URGE OFFICERS TO ENSURE THEY UNDERSTAND THE NEW LEGISLATION AND THE IMPORTANCE OF COMPLIANCE WITH THE RELEVANT REFRESHER REQUIREMENTS.**

The new FAQ document has been produced by the Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW) and the NPCC and aims to help officers better understand the new laws regarding their driving.

"Quite simply, the previous legislation did not recognise the training that police response drivers undertake and the tactics they may need to employ when responding to emergencies or pursuing criminals," says Tim, who for eight years has led a Federation campaign to change the laws affecting police driving.

"This new legislation is a great stride forward but, for the new test to be applied, officers must be driving for police purposes and have undertaken the prescribed training as set out in the regulations.

"Police driving schools have had months

now to ensure that they are compliant with the requirements of the legislation and have undertaken self-assessment exercises.

"But the onus is on the individual officer to make sure that they only drive when they are up to date with the prescribed training as defined in the regulations and legislation."

Training must be delivered by an accredited and licensed police driving instructor, in line with the nationally set learning standards.

Tim is keen to stress that there is only one standard and any divergence by any force or senior officer will mean they are denying officers the ability to respond on blues and twos.

"The new law demands that an officer's driving, when an incident makes the inquisition necessary, is assessed by a professional, knowledgeable and competent individual," he said.

"Each force must have an appropriate mechanism by which these nationally agreed and enshrined in law standards are assessed. Locally, officers will have a driving standards unit. Nationally, and for matters requiring subject matter expert (SME) evidence, there is the NPCC SME group.

"Members of this group have received training at the West Midlands Police Federation office, delivered jointly by the Federation and the NPCC, and with continuing professional development (CPD) each year. As agreed by the Federation, the NPCC, the Crown Prosecution Service, the Independent Office for Police Conduct and the Home Office, they are the only people who can provide the evidence."

As a result of the change in legislation, police driving schools are likely to be licensed in a similar way to firearms units, since there is a higher incidence of risk, and the College of Policing will issue new Authorised Professional Practice (APP)

You can read the FAQs at [polfed.org/westmercia](https://polfed.org/westmercia) in a news article posted on 18 November 2022.

# RACHEL RECOGNISED AT POLICE BRAVERY AWARDS

A West Mercia Police officer who saved the life of a woman threatening to jump from a bridge over a dual carriageway was honoured at this year's national Police Bravery Awards.

PC Rachel Paterson attended a special reception at 10 Downing Street in July with fellow nominees from across the country before heading to a central London hotel for the awards ceremony.

She was accompanied to the awards by her partner Ashley Ford, a serving officer at Telford, as well as West Mercia Federation chair Sarah Cooper, Chief Constable Pippa Mills and Police and Crime Commissioner John Campion.

Rachel was shortlisted for her quick-thinking actions when she was the first to arrive on the scene in Telford to find a woman threatening to throw herself onto the road 20 metres below.



**Rachel and partner Ashley with Chief Constable Pippa Mills, Federation chair Sarah Cooper and Police and Crime Commissioner John Campion at the awards ceremony.**

She spoke to the woman and eventually reached her on the bridge when there was a struggle and the woman slipped. Rachel, who has been an officer with West Mercia Police for two years and is based in Telford, held onto the woman's legs and ankles to stop her from her falling.

She was then joined by an off-duty officer who helped get the woman back over the railings to safety.

Her line manager said: "PC Paterson acted on instinct and I truly believe she made a brave decision which saved the life of the member of the public. Without her intervention, the female would have fallen 20m head-first onto the carriageway."

Reflecting on the awards, Rachel said: "It is hard to sum up what an incredible day we had. From having canapés in Downing Street to meeting real life heroes, it was surreal from start to finish.

"Listening to the mind-blowing acts of bravery and selflessness was breath-taking and I was so incredibly proud to be in the same room as these people, let alone be nominated.

"It was an event for the police family and to celebrate everything we do on a daily basis - which turns out to be an infinite amount of goodness.

"We also celebrated our family and friends who support us when they have no idea what they are coming home to. Whether that be a good day or a bad day.

"I would urge everyone to watch or to see a little snippet of the award ceremony and I am sure you will be as blown away as I was at the acts of my colleagues from around the country."

Chair Sarah Cooper added: "Rachel is an outstanding police officer and it was an honour to accompany her to the Police Bravery Awards. There's no doubt that her quick-thinking, calmness and bravery saved this woman's life.

"Rachel represents officers across our force area who carry out extraordinarily courageous acts every day. She is absolutely deserving of her nomination and I am delighted that her bravery has been recognised in this way."

The officers also received warm praise and a message of thanks from then Prime Minister Boris Johnson who hailed the nominees as "the best of the very best."

The annual bravery awards are organised by the Police Federation and sponsored by Police Mutual.

This year's overall winner was Lincolnshire Police's PC Steven Denniss who was stabbed as he tackled a double murder suspect he has spotted while off duty and out walking his dogs.



**Rachel outside the famous door of No 10 Downing Street.**

Rachel added, the day after the awards ceremony: "If you are thinking of joining the police, then please come and join us. I couldn't ask for a better second family than my shift on Team C at Telford and the policing family in general.

"Every day is different and challenges you in new ways, ways in which I've seen my colleagues achieve truly incredible things and help the public in ways I don't think they realised that we could.

"I've seen many things but the tenacity of the police as a whole to leave an incident better in which they arrived is what I'm most proud of being a police officer for, we all love helping people and last night celebrated the highest calibre of acts of true bravery."

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Steve Butler (right) with the father of West Midlands Police's fallen officer Michael Swindells.

# FUND-RAISING CYCLISTS COMPLETE POLICE UNITY TOUR

A team of riders from West Mercia Police took part in this year's Police Unity Tour cycle challenge in August and raised around £10,000 for a charity that provides critical support to the families of fallen officers.

The annual event is a major highlight on the policing calendar and has raised more than £1 million for the Care Of Police Survivors (COPS) charity since the first UK ride back in 2013.

The West Mercia riders set off from

Hindlip Hall and covered around 200 miles over three days in August. Each wore a coloured wristband dedicated to a fallen colleague throughout the ride.

The bulk of the ride was completed over the Friday and Saturday with a shorter final leg to the National Memorial Arboretum on the Sunday morning when PUT teams from across England and Wales attended the COPS memorial service alongside the families of fallen officers, Police Federation officials and other policing partners.

It was the fourth time West Mercia Police Federation secretary Steve Butler had taken part. He said: "As always the ride is in honour and memory of our colleagues who have lost their lives on duty and to raise funds to help COPS continue their support for the families left behind."

West Mercia Police Federation, the branch Group Insurance Scheme and West Mercia Police Welfare Fund have each donated £500 for all the West Mercia riders taking part.

You can still donate to the West Mercia team via Steve's JustGiving page <https://tinyurl.com/3mcn735m>.



Steve (left) with fellow PUT rider Ian Carter.



The PUT team.

# OFFICERS JOIN FAMILIES AT NATIONAL POLICE MEMORIAL DAY

Representatives of the Police Federation of England and Wales stood shoulder to shoulder with the loved ones of officers who lost their lives in service on National Police Memorial Day in September.

Federation reps and officials joined the families, friends and colleagues of fallen officers as well as police chiefs, serving officers and politicians for an emotional service at Belfast's Waterfront Hall.

The service was attended by around 2,000 people, including Home Secretary Suella Braverman, who gave a reading.

She said: "To all the officers who lost their lives while working to keep us safe, we thank you and we honour you. Their bravery and commitment to their duty was unflinching – society owes them and their loved ones a debt we cannot repay, but it is one we will not forget.

"As Home Secretary I make a promise to give police the powers and tools they need to do their jobs safely."

During the service, candles were lit by relatives in remembrance of officers throughout the country who have lost their lives, one from each of the four nations of the United Kingdom.

Representing England was Kat Dumphreys, widow of PC Nick Dumphreys, who died on 26 January 2000, aged 47. He sustained fatal injuries when the police vehicle he was driving was in a single vehicle collision on the M6.

Liam Kelly, chair of the Police Federation for Northern Ireland, read the names of officers who have lost their lives during the past year – PC Daniel Golding, Metropolitan Police, PC Craig Higgins, Greater Manchester Police, PC Alex Prentice, Northamptonshire Police, and PC Darryl Street, Civil Nuclear Constabulary.

He said: "National Police Memorial Day is an occasion to reflect and celebrate the best in policing not only in Northern Ireland but throughout the United Kingdom.

"Daily we see officers stepping up to the mark to safeguard communities and, sadly, on occasion, some officers are injured or lose their lives in the execution of their duties. This weekend, we say to assembled families that the police 'family' recognises, appreciates, and empathises with what you are experiencing and will never forget the sacrifices your loved ones made."

There was silence as petals of remembrance, representing all who have lost their lives, descended from the gallery as the orchestra played Abide with me and the Last Post was sounded.



*Standards are lowered in the act of remembrance.*

Photos courtesy of Anderson Photography

Canon David Wilbraham MBE, national police chaplain and co-ordinator of National Police Memorial Day, said: "This is the first time the National Police Memorial Day family has been able to gather in remembrance since the pandemic. Today we held those lost in honour - their service and sacrifice will never be forgotten."

West Mercia Police Federation branch chair Sarah Cooper attended a small memorial service led by the Force chaplain Richard Johnson and the Chief Constable Pippa Mills by the memorial tree at Hindlip in honour of National Police Memorial Day.

Sarah said: "The National Police Memorial Day is an important one in the policing calendar. It allows the police service to come together with colleagues across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland to pause and remember those who have made the ultimate sacrifice in serving our communities.

"It also allows policing to show its support



*Home Secretary Suella Braverman addresses the congregation.*

for fallen officers' families and loved ones, and to show that they'll never be forgotten."

National Police Memorial Day was first held in 2004 and has been held at the end of September each year since. It rotates around England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.



*Candles were lit in memory of officers from all four nations.*

# MENTAL RESILIENCE CHARITY HELPS FED MEMBERS GET 'MOJO' BACK

Two Federation members have told how taking part in a five-day 'life-changing' mental resilience programme has helped them get their 'mojo' back.

Tracy Ruff and Tim Viner have shared their experience of 'Climbing Out', a national charity that aims to empower people to take responsibility for their mindset, actions and behaviour following a life-changing injury, illness or trauma.

Both Tracy and Tim have since become Ambassadors for Climbing Out and are now on a mission to raise awareness of the charity and the work it does.

"Climbing Out changed my life," says 44-year-old Tracy, a DC who has experienced multiple traumatic experiences, both physical and mental over the past 30 years.

"The first thing for me was when my mum died when I was 19. Since then, numerous other traumatic events have happened, including a physical injury - which although it wasn't life-changing, it impacted my body and stopped me from doing a lot of the things I used to do.

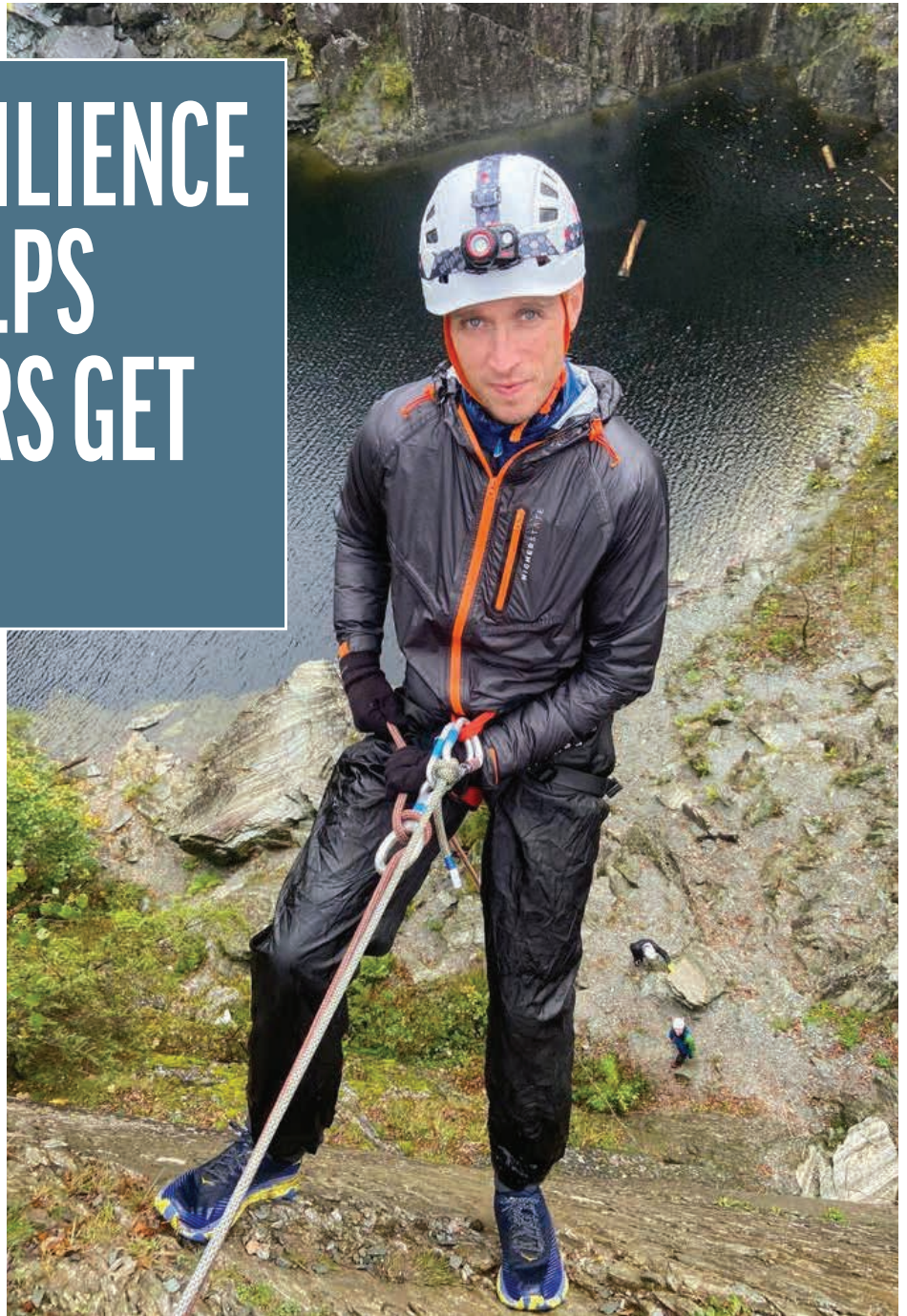
"Over time, I found I'd lost my confidence, both professionally and personally. And then I discovered Climbing Out. And genuinely, Climbing Out has changed my life. It changed my outlook on life and helped me move forward.

"Climbing Out is like magic, it's hard to describe but it really is like magic. I thought I needed fixing, but Climbing Out made me realise I don't need fixing after all.

"It gave me something back that I didn't know was missing. It gave me my mojo back."

Climbing Out, a charity established in 2010, hosts five-day programmes shaped around building resilience through physical activities, including the likes of climbing, kayaking, hill walking, abseiling and caving.

"I'd had counselling and therapy in the past but nothing compared to what the Climbing Out programme did for me. During the programme I completely stepped outside my comfort zone and



**Tim Viner during the programme.**

did things that I never thought I would ever do," continued Tracy.

"It made me look at life differently. I stopped blaming others and instead started thinking about what I could do to make improvements to my life. Thanks to Climbing Out, I feel like a completely different person."

Tracy, who explained that when she took part in the programme she was signed off work due to stress, added: "Had I not been on the programme, I don't know if I'd even be back at work.

"Climbing Out came at completely the right time when I needed it most."

Following the programme, all those who have taken part are invited to join the 'Climbing Out

Club', a network of like-minded people, offering long-term friendship and support to one another.

Fellow Climbing Out ambassador Tim found his mental health 'spiralling' during the Covid-19 pandemic, having been classed as 'clinically extremely vulnerable' and told to isolate after being diagnosed with a life-changing liver condition in 2015.

"My initial diagnosis meant I had to change my job role moving from firearms to collision investigation but I'd come to terms with that and my condition and learned to live with it," explained Tim, "But when I was told I had to isolate during the pandemic, that's when my mental health was really impacted. I couldn't even leave the house. I felt like Covid had completely taken away my freedom, as well as my identity and I was no longer the person I wanted to be."

Father-of-two Tim was put in contact with Climbing Out, which led to him taking part in an online virtual course and then the in-person

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**Tracy Ruff takes on a challenge.**

programme once lockdown had come to an end.

"It's not counselling, it's life-coaching and it made me reassess my day-to-day life," said 40-year-old Tim.

"It encouraged me to open up and communicate while building up my mental resilience. And now, off the back of that



**Tracy takes in the scenery.**

programme, I have a whole new group of friends who I can turn to for support when I'm struggling."

Thanks to the programme, Tim, a PC, also says he discovered a passion for helping others too, which has led to him becoming a peer support volunteer at work, as well as an ambassador for the charity.

"For me, I never really had an understanding of mental health. Like a lot of men, especially in the police, there was a real stigma surrounding mental health - and I'd found myself in a very low place, and I couldn't get myself out of it," continued Tim.

"I know that if I hadn't experienced the Climbing Out programme, I would find it much more difficult to deal with my emotions on a daily basis. And I'm also encouraging my sons to open up too - because I now realise once you open up and talk about how you're feeling, you feel so much better.

"Climbing Out has not only provided me with ongoing support, but the people I have met through the charity have become family to me too."

Climbing Out founder Kelda Wood established the charity 12 years ago after a freak

accident left her with a life-changing leg injury that ended her dreams of becoming an Olympic horse rider.

After rebuilding her own confidence, Kelda set out on a mission to help others who have also experienced life-changing mental or physical trauma or illness.

"I was once struggling to move forward with my life but I worked hard to turn my life around using mental resilience tools," explained Kelda.

"I realised that there are so many other people like me, who are just stuck."

Over the past few years, Climbing Out has found itself supporting numerous emergency service workers, including the police, along with the military, specifically those who have experienced trauma both at work and in their personal lives.

"Like Tim said, we don't do counselling, we do life coaching and that's what makes us different," continued Kelda.

"I want to share the mental resilience tools I've learned, giving people the tools they need to make sense of their lives, the tools to change their lives. And it's really working, people are really seeing and feeling the impact of building their mental resilience.

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"I've seen officers return to work and be happy again, back fulfilling their lives.

"Climbing Out is all about empowering people to take responsibility. I compare mental wellbeing to a table, the tabletop is your mental resilience and strength, but it doesn't work without its legs. Our table legs are the tools we need to build up our resilience - and those who take part in the programmes go away with a whole toolbox packed full of resilience techniques."

The programmes are led by a small team of highly-qualified coaches, with each five-day course unique and tailored to those taking part.

"People don't leave fixed, the hard work starts when they get home. Climbing Out gives you the tools you need to deal with life again, and deal with life's challenges."

The Climbing Out programme is fully-funded and participants can self-refer or be referred if they have experienced a life-changing injury, trauma or illness.

Members can register their interest for themselves or on behalf of somebody else by filling in an application form on the Climbing Out website.

For further support or information, West Mercia Police Federation members can also contact either Tracy, Tim or branch chair Sarah Cooper.

A former West Mercia officer admits being honoured for his work in the community by the High Sheriff of Worcestershire was “quite emotional” as he says he accepted the award on behalf of the entire team.

Having worked in the Force for 20 years, Paul Downes was presented the award for his two decades of service in Redditch after being nominated by Inspector Richard Field.

The award recognises the work of individuals, community groups or voluntary organisations, particularly those unsung heroes who go above and beyond to improve the lives of others within the community.

“It was quite emotional to receive the award. After all, you don’t go to work to be recognised but when you hear what you’ve done actually makes a difference, it’s definitely a great feeling,” said Paul.

“Let’s face it, the police are so often criticised, it’s nice to be praised. Of course, I accepted this award on behalf of the entire team at West Mercia. It’s a whole team effort and that’s both current and previous officers.”

After deciding he wanted to change his career, Paul spent three years volunteering as a Special Constable before joining the police in 2002.

“Volunteering as a Special was my way of testing the water and confirming that it’s what I wanted to do,” explained Paul.

“Having completed my training, we were given the option of joining Worcester or Redditch and while everyone else wanted to join Worcester - that meant you couldn’t start until six weeks whereas you could start at Redditch in just two weeks so that made my decision easy. And I’ve been here ever since.”



Paul Downes (centre) with the High Sheriff of Worcestershire Andrew Manning Cox (left).

# WEST MERCIA COP WINS HIGH SHERIFF AWARD FOR WORK IN THE COMMUNITY

During his career, Paul has worked in the neighbourhood team, as well as a traffic officer.

“As the ‘local bobby’, I’ve definitely got to know the area,” added Paul. “In fact, I actually met my wife through the job, she is a safeguarding officer at a local high school. So, it’s fair to say the area has got a special place

in my heart.”

Paul says that during his time in the Force, he was keen to break down the barriers between the police and communities.

He continued: “Although I was an officer, I don’t judge. I was just a human being who wears a uniform.

“I liked to get myself seen, so people in the

community knew who I was. And I was very passionate about working with schools, in the hope of preventing them being either a victim or an offender.”

After 20 years in the police, Paul said it “just felt like the right time” for him to leave the Force for pastures new.

“For multiple reasons, the time just seemed right to move on. I’d served 20 years and those two decades were great, but it was time for me to retire,” Paul added.

“I still go out into the community now and people see me, say hi and have conversations with me. Being in the police was like having a big family. It’s not just the job, it’s the family that makes your time in the Force so special.”



I LIKED TO GET MYSELF SEEN, SO PEOPLE IN THE COMMUNITY KNEW WHO I WAS. AND I WAS VERY PASSIONATE ABOUT WORKING WITH SCHOOLS, IN THE HOPE OF PREVENTING THEM BEING EITHER A VICTIM OR AN OFFENDER.

Home Office ministers are being urged to approve proposals for a medal to honour officers who die while on duty amid growing support for the Police Federation-backed campaign.

The calls for a posthumous award, which would be similar to the armed forces' Elizabeth Cross, are being led by Bryn Hughes whose daughter PC Nicola Hughes was murdered alongside her colleague PC Fiona Bone when they responded to a fake 999 call in Manchester in 2012.

But despite widespread support among MPs, Police and Crime Commissioners and senior officers, there has been little indication that the Home Office is ready to give proposals for an Elizabeth Medal the green light.

Police Federation national deputy chair Tiff Lynch appeared with Bryn on BBC Breakfast this morning to discuss the campaign and why such a medal was so important to the families of fallen officers.

When asked why the UK did not formally honour its emergency services personnel who died on duty, Tiff said: "That's a good question and it's a question that we are asking and have been asking.

"It's not until you walk in the family's shoes that you get that understanding and that feeling of how much this means to them.



## MINISTERS URGED TO BACK ELIZABETH MEDAL

"There is currently no formal recognition from the state. We have spoken with numerous MPs and we have not met one MP who doesn't support this campaign.

"Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham and the PCC's office also fully support it and Philip Davies MP, who wrote an open letter to the Home Secretary, has said himself that 'we are here to make the laws'.

"Let's make this law so all emergency service workers are formally recognised for the sacrifices they actually make when they die in the execution of their duty."

Tiff said there had been "a lot of talking" but not much action and said she had no idea why it was taking so long to get an answer from the Government.

She said: "What we are asking for is someone from the Home Office to come and meet with us to discuss what the need is and

how we can actually move this forward and get the cogs turning one way or another."

The campaigners believe emergency services workers deserve the same recognition as military personnel who are posthumously honoured with the Elizabeth Cross which is presented to relatives of soldiers, sailors and airmen killed in action.

West Mercia Police Federation chair Sarah Cooper said: "A medal would formally honour and recognise the brave police officers who make the ultimate sacrifice on behalf of the public. I also think an Elizabeth Medal would be a fitting legacy for the Queen who exemplified public service during her 70-year reign.

"We are delighted to back this campaign and are pleased to see that momentum and support appears to be growing."

Bryn said a medal would not bring anyone

**Federation national deputy chair Tiff Lynch with Bryn Hughes.**

back but "gives the family recognition".

He added: "I don't think it's been an intentional process that there's been no official recognition, it's just that it's not been focused.

"There's a lot of people saying we should have it and it just needs that final push to say let's go ahead."



**Tiff and Bryn with BBC Breakfast presenters Jon Kay and Sally Nugent.**



**LET'S MAKE THIS LAW SO ALL EMERGENCY SERVICE WORKERS ARE FORMALLY RECOGNISED FOR THE SACRIFICES THEY ACTUALLY MAKE WHEN THEY DIE IN THE EXECUTION OF THEIR DUTY.**



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# 2022

## A YEAR IN REVIEW

### January

The year began with a worrying report by the BBC's Panorama programme, that UK roads had become more dangerous in the last decade despite cars becoming safer. The suggestion was that "weaker policing" was responsible. The Federation said under pressure roads officers were not to blame and responsibility instead lies with chief officers who set priorities and the Government which provides the resources."

### February

Morale within West Mercia Police had got worse in the last year. In the latest Federation annual survey, 55 per cent of Federated officers describing their morale as 'low' compared to 48 per cent in 2021. One in 10 officers said they planned to leave within the next two years, and shockingly 12 per cent of officers were too hard-up to afford a basic standard of living. Nearly three quarters said they felt 'worse off' today than five years ago. West Mercia Police Federation chair Sarah Cooper said: "Every day I speak to members who have had enough. Times are desperate and pay and morale is key to ensuring that officers can continue. Colleagues need to feel valued and be recognised and remunerated for the unique role they carry out in society."



"We are incredibly proud of all Dad's achievements. There isn't a day that goes by that we don't think of him and miss him."

These were the words of Daisy and Joe Dixon who were presented with certificates marking the 17 years' service their father, Richard, gave to West Mercia Police. The certificates were presented by Sarah Cooper, the chair of West Mercia Police Federation.



Sarah Cooper described a new joint strategy to reduce deaths by suicide in policing as a welcome and important step forward. "Tragically, West Mercia has lost a number of officers to suicide in recent years," she said. "I have witnessed first-hand the negative

impact that inadequate welfare provision within the service has had on officers, and then the devastating ripples of suicide on family, friends and colleagues."

### March

The national Police Federation joined with other policing bodies to apply for a Judicial Review to secure a 'truly independent pay mechanism' for determining police officer pay.

"Life for police officers has changed beyond recognition over the last two decades but it is still the best job in the world," West Mercia Federation chair Sarah Cooper wrote in a blog to mark International Women's Day. Sarah said she and female colleagues had put up with unacceptable behaviour in the past but now had more confidence to speak out. She added that, in the past there was more respect from the public towards a female officer: "You could often talk your way out of confrontation. I'm not sure that's the case now - if you have a uniform on then sadly you seem to be fair game." West Mercia Police Federation had ceased to be a boys' club and now had two of its three full-time branch officials as women and far greater representation across work-based reps.

The Federation published a new set of frequently asked questions on pensions.



### April

Steve Hartshorn became only the second national chair of the Police Federation of England and Wales to be directly elected by members. Steve, a Met officer since 1995 and recently the Federation's national lead for firearms and Taser, had competed for the top job against national vice-chair Ché Donald and West Yorkshire chair Brian Booth. Taking up his new role on 1 April, he said: "I genuinely believe we can make our voices heard to secure a better deal for policing."

A campaign to create a new posthumous award for emergency service workers who give their lives in the line of duty won the backing of West Mercia Police Federation. The



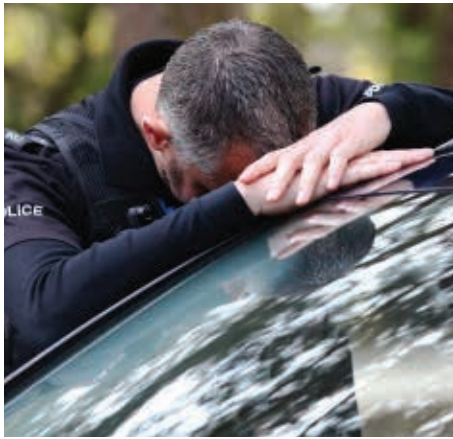
campaign for a medal like the Elizabeth Cross for military personnel killed in service, was championed by Bryn Hughes, whose daughter PC Nicola Hughes was murdered alongside her colleague Fiona Bone in a gun and grenade attack by the fugitive Dale Cregan in 2012. "Families who suffer the devastating loss deserve to know that the courage and sacrifice of their loved one is properly recognised and acknowledged," Sarah Cooper said.



### May

The Federation held its annual conference in-person for the first time since the pandemic. Former world athletics champion Kriss Akabusi lifted spirits during an inspiring opening where he referred to police as the "glue that holds this community together." And Priti Patel, the Home Secretary, was confronted by North Wales' DC Vicky Banks who had been forced through hardship to use

food banks and borrow money from her pensioner parents. "Could you live on £1200 a month?" she asked.



Federation chair Sarah Cooper reiterated calls for fair pay, warning that one in 10 officers were saying they intended to quit the Force within two years. "Every day I am hearing from officers who are looking to leave," said Sarah. "Experienced officers are finding that the pressures and sacrifices necessary to perform their role are simply not worth the poor remuneration and negative conditions. They feel undervalued." Sarah also took aim at the "appallingly low" starting salary that was deterring older people with family commitments from choosing a career in policing.



Colin "Fluff" Freeman was remembered by the Force on the first anniversary of his death. He had died just short of his retirement on 30 years' service. "I know that the ripples of this tragedy continue to impact on so many," said branch chair Sarah Cooper. Police Dog Maverick was named in honour of a character from Colin's favourite movie - Top Gun, the film which had inspired him to join the police. Sarah joined colleagues, Colin's colleagues and PD Maverick at the unveiling of a memorial bench.

## June

PC Rachel Paterson was nominated for a national Police Bravery Award. The West Mercia officer had bravely held on to the legs of a woman who had threatened to throw herself off a bridge and slipped. "PC Paterson acted on instinct. Without her intervention, the female would have fallen 20m headfirst onto the carriageway below," her supervisor said. The Federation's chair Sarah Cooper added: "Rachel represents officers across our Force area who carry out extraordinarily courageous acts every day to serve and protect the public."

A discussion by the charity, Transform Justice, asked whether the increased sentences for assaults on blue light workers were having any effect (studies suggested not). National Federation chair Steve Hartshorn took part in the panel and shared some of his own personal experiences of being assaulted on duty. "When I started in 1995, there was an ethos then that it was part of the job," he said. "It's the minority of the public that cause these assaults on officers and it does leave lasting effects on police officers."

## July

Special Constables were allowed to join the Police Federation for the first time in their history following a successful Federation campaign.



PC Rachel Paterson, the West Mercia officer who prevented a woman from fatally falling off a road bridge, was invited to 10 Downing Street with fellow Police Bravery nominees. She was accompanied by her partner Ashley Ford, a serving officer at Telford, and met Home Secretary Priti Patel. West Mercia's Chief Constable Pippa Mills, Federation chair Sarah Cooper and Police and Crime Commissioner John Campion joined Rachel at the awards ceremony in London. Rachel said: "Listening to the mind-blowing acts of bravery and selflessness was breath-taking and I was so incredibly proud to be in the same room as these people, let alone be nominated."



Riders from West Mercia Police geared up for this year's Police Unity Tour cycle challenge. It was the fourth time for West Mercia Police Federation secretary Steve Butler, who said: "As always the ride is in honour and memory of our colleagues who have lost their lives on duty and to raise funds to help COPS continue their support for the families left behind." The ride to the National Police Memorial in Staffordshire usually takes place in July but was moved to 19 August this year because of policing commitments for the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham.

## August



A five per cent pay rise to police officers was not enough to keep up with rising inflation, the Federation said. Most officers would be "worse off under this year's £1,900 pay award than they were last year with a zero per cent pay increase," according to national chair Steve Hartshorn.

Bryn Hughes admitted the "wheels of bureaucracy were turning slowly" but he would press on to secure a posthumous medal for police officers killed in the line of duty. His daughter PC Nicola Hughes and her colleague Fiona Bone were murdered in a gun and grenade ambush by the fugitive Dale Cregan in September 2012. Federation chair Sarah Cooper, who met with Bryn, said: "It was an absolute privilege to be able to personally

offer our support for the tireless work he is doing.”

Care of Police Survivors (COPS) held their annual service of remembrance at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire. The



event began with the arrival of around 300 Police Unity Tour cyclists – including officers, supporters and even a Police and Crime Commissioner – Bedfordshire’s Festus Akinbusoye. West Mercia Federation’s secretary Steve Butler took part in the cycle ride for the fourth time.

## September

Flags were flown at half-mast at the Federation’s headquarters as officers joined the nation in mourning the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.



Later that month, a delegation from West Mercia Federation travelled to Belfast to remember fallen colleagues at National Police Memorial Day. Chair Sarah Cooper described the annual event as “a chance for policing to show its support for fallen officers’ families and loved ones, and to show that they’ll never be forgotten.” The impact of the pandemic

meant it was the first time in two years that everyone was able to attend in person. The service was attended by around 2,000 people, including new Home Secretary Suella Braverman.

## October

Sir Peter Fahy, the former chief constable of Greater Manchester, urged the Government to reduce the demands on police forces. He said officers are “struggling to deliver basic services” because of their ever-increasing workloads. Sarah Cooper, chair of West Mercia Federation agreed: “It was incredibly refreshing to hear Sir Peter speaking out in the way he did,” she said. “His comments absolutely resonated with the frustrations and pressures that our members express to me.”



Sarah Cooper backed plans for a ‘digital memorial’ for police officers who are killed in the line of duty. The Police Arboretum Memorial Trust envisages the website as an online companion to the UK Police Memorial which it helped establish at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire. It would record the names of fallen officers and carry tributes and personal stories, including interviews with family, friends, and colleagues, as well as news archives and personal photographs.



Colleagues of Stephen Harris, who died in August last year, joined his wife Lisa and daughter Elisabeth and the Chief Constable for the dedication of a bench in the garden at Bromsgrove Police Station which was funded by donations, including one from the West Mercia Police Welfare Fund.

The Federation also spoke out about the need for greater awareness of the menopause and its effects on members. Sarah Cooper said ‘huge steps’ had been made to open up discussions about the once taboo subject and the stigmas around it. Speaking on World Menopause Day, Sarah insisted: “We want members to feel supported. It needs everyone to be aware of menopause and the impact it can have.” This includes women who have resigned from policing because of their symptoms.

## November

Paul Downes, a former West Mercia officer, was “quite emotional” after receiving an award from the High Sheriff of Worcestershire for his two decades of service in Redditch. “When you



hear what you’ve done actually makes a difference, it’s definitely a great feeling,” said Paul. He had spent three years as a Special Constable before joining the police in 2002. During his career, Paul worked in the neighbourhood team, as well as a traffic officer.

Home Secretary Suella Braverman confirmed that she will no longer be phasing out the non-degree entry route into the job. She told chief constables and PCCs: “To build public confidence, we must draw from the widest possible pool of talent.” Her comments came after 16 PCCs signed a letter warning that a three-year programme of study was putting off older recruits and the non-academically minded.

Police drivers were being urged to familiarise themselves with new protections under the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act. Tim Rogers, the Federation’s police pursuits and driver training lead, said: “Our driving will no longer be assessed by the standards of the careful, competent driver, as was previously the case,” however the change means all drivers would need to ensure they remain ‘in ticket’ with their training.

Police Federation national deputy chair Tiffany Lynch joined campaigner Bryn Hughes on BBC Breakfast to make the case for a posthumous medal for police officers killed on duty. West Mercia Federation chair Sarah Cooper said: “An Elizabeth medal would formally honour and recognise the brave police officers and be a fitting legacy for the Queen who exemplified public service during her 70-year reign.”

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