

CONNECT



SUMMER 2023

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM WEST MERCIA POLICE FEDERATION



OUR POLICE BRAVERY AWARD NOMINEE - SEE PAGE 4

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VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

By **Barry Horton**, chair of West Mercia Police Federation



Welcome to our summer edition of *Connect*. Although I am writing this in June, the mercury is rising and skies are brilliant blue, so it feels more like mid-August. It's probably a good time for a summer issue.

In this edition, you'll see the welcome news about starting salaries going up from September. In these difficult times of rising living costs (mortgages and rents) and the relentless increases to the price of food, any pay uplift is a crumb of comfort but sadly not enough to ease members' very real concerns around making ends meet.

With pay for rank and file officers around 17 per cent below where it ought to be, the fight for a fair pay settlement must, and will, go on. Unlike other emergency services who are also engaged in disputes with the Government, the police cannot strike, which makes it all the more important that we are listened to and

treated with respect.

If not, it is inevitable that people will vote with their feet, and we will continue to lose experienced and valued officers. This would be a tragedy for policing.

Should anyone in authority doubt that police officers are deserving of better remuneration and treatment, they have only to read our feature on Page 4 about PC Chris Rogers, who risked his own safety to prevent an unconscious man from drowning.

When Chris saw the man fall off a bridge and face first into a river, he sprinted hundreds of yards to the water to pull him out and performed CPR. It was an extraordinary act of courage which shows again that policing is a job like no other and why our officers are among the best in the world.

I wish Chris the very best of luck, as he represents West Mercia at the Police Bravery Awards in July.

I want to touch on the important work of Operation Hampshire. This initiative evolved out of the work done by former national chair John Apter and colleagues in Hampshire to prevent and combat assaults on officers.

Today the project is offering guidance and process for police forces and constantly emphasising the need to consider the impact of an assault on colleagues. As I said recently, assaults on police officers are a 'stain on society' and unfortunately all too common. Earlier this year 12 West Mercia officers were assaulted over the space of a single weekend.

The work being done by Operation Hampshire to help colleagues to recover physically and mentally is amazing. But with figures showing 671 West Mercia Police officers assaulted and 207 suffering injuries to March this year, much more needs to be done to record incidents and send a strong deterrent.

Enjoy the summer and stay safe.

A STATEMENT FROM WEST MERCIA POLICE FEDERATION

The Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW) has responded to the Pensions Challenge Employment Tribunal judgment announced on 7 June.

Our officers work tirelessly to protect the people of West Mercia and we understand they feel let down, but they can rest assured that their local branch will continue to work hard to protect them and to represent their interests without fear or favour - just as they do on a daily basis for our communities.

The ruling has to be carefully considered and the organisation must be committed to ensure that it represents and protects our members' interests effectively.

The day after the ruling, the chair and general secretary of the national Federation issued a [further statement](#).

FED WELCOMES RISE IN STARTING SALARIES

BUT CALLS FOR MORE ACTION ON POLICE PAY

West Mercia Police Federation has welcomed an increase in starting salaries for new recruits but warned long-standing issues over pay and conditions for serving officers still needed to be addressed.

The Force announced details of the uplift for recruits joining via the Degree Holder Entry Programme (DHEP), Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship (PCDA) and Initial Police Learning and Development Programme plus (IPLDP+).

From 1 September, DHEP and PCDA entrants will start on an annual salary of £26,682 while colleagues on the IPLDP+ will start on £25,269 a year.

Student officers already on these programmes will also see the increase to bring their salaries in line with the new entrants.

Branch secretary Pete Nightingale said: "Clearly, I would be hugely supportive of anything which increases pay in these difficult times.

"This is welcome news for officers

starting out on their careers and more broadly speaking should help with recruitment and retention issues.

"But more needs to be done for officers with more service whose pay simply doesn't reflect the sacrifices they make, the dangers they face and the stresses of the job.

"The Police Federation has called for a 17 per cent pay rise this year which we feel would make up for the decades of low or zero increases, bring us back into line with colleagues in the other emergency services and recognise that our members have extremely limited employment rights."

West Mercia Police said it made the decision to increase starting salaries to ensure they are consistent with other forces

in the region.

A spokesman said: "The new starting salaries recognise the different entry requirements of all routes and the additional level of work and personal investment expected by student officers who undertake additional qualifications.

"We also want to remain competitive as an employer and this increase in salary, alongside the other benefits of working for West Mercia Police, will help us continue to attract a diverse range of applicants and continue to incentivise the PEQF Programme as a career option."

Members with any questions or concerns about pay and conditions should contact their Fed rep.



THE POLICE FEDERATION HAS CALLED FOR A 17 PER CENT PAY RISE THIS YEAR WHICH WE FEEL WOULD MAKE UP FOR THE DECADES OF LOW OR ZERO INCREASES, BRING US BACK INTO LINE WITH COLLEAGUES IN THE OTHER EMERGENCY SERVICES AND RECOGNISE THAT OUR MEMBERS HAVE EXTREMELY LIMITED EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS.



COURAGEOUS COP SAVED LIFE OF DROWNING MAN

“Whether I was in uniform or not, I would have done the same,” says West Mercia Police Federation member Chris Rogers, who has been nominated for a Police Bravery Award after risking his life to save a man from drowning.

Police constable Chris has told how he ‘went into auto-pilot mode’ when he saw a man fall from a 30-foot tall bridge.

“ I IMMEDIATELY RAN TOWARDS THE WATER AND CHUCKED OFF MY STAB VEST. I JUMPED IN TO FIND THE MAN FACE DOWN, UNCONSCIOUS AND FLOATING. I COULDN'T SEE HIS CHEST GOING UP AND DOWN. HE WASN'T BREATHING.

The man, who was believed to be intoxicated, landed face down in the river and was unconscious, resulting in Chris running hundreds of metres before jumping into the water and swimming out to save him.

“If I'm honest, I didn't even think about what I was doing. I went into complete auto-pilot mode,” said 35-year-old Chris.

“I'm actually a little bit embarrassed that I've even been nominated for an award. For me, I was just doing my job - and whether I was in uniform or not, I would have done the same.”

Chris, who joined the Force in 2008, described how the incident occurred after ‘two intoxicated men’ tried to enter a scene he was guarding.

“We prevented them from entering the scene after which they climbed up onto a bridge. Then, all of a sudden, one of them



PC Chris Rogers.

just fell,” father-of-three Chris continued.

“I immediately ran towards the water and chucked off my stab vest. I jumped in to find the man face down, unconscious and floating. I couldn't see his chest going up and down. He wasn't breathing.”

At this point, Chris turned the man over and began CPR on his chest in an attempt to get him breathing. Chris pulled the male to the river bank where he continued CPR.

Eventually, the male coughed up blood and water, but he was still unconscious.

Chris's police colleagues came to support him until the paramedics got there. The man

was taken to hospital by ambulance and remarkably only suffered facial injuries as a result of the fall.

Chris added: “I didn't speak to the man directly afterwards but I was told he wanted to say ‘thank you’ to me.”

The bravery awards are organised each year by the Police Federation of England and Wales.

Along with nominees from police forces across England and Wales, Chris will be attending this year's awards ceremony, which will be taking place on Thursday 13 July in London.

National Operation Hampshire
co-ordinator Dave Brewster.

PRAISE FOR 'AMAZING WORK' OF OPERATION HAMPSHIRE

West Mercia Police Federation chair Barry Horton has praised the important work of Operation Hampshire.

The wellbeing initiative, launched by Oscar Kilo almost three years ago, is designed to prevent and combat assaults on officers by offering guidance and process throughout police forces across the country.

It provides a consistent approach to wellbeing support and victim care following an assault, considers the potential impact of every assault, increases criminal justice outcomes and improves overall understanding of assaults on officers.

Barry said: "Assaults on police officers really are a stain on society but unfortunately they are all too common.

"Earlier this year 12 West Mercia officers were assaulted by members of the public over the space of a single weekend.

"It is difficult to overstate the impact of an assault on our members both physically and emotionally but support is available

and Operation Hampshire does amazing work trying to help officers deal with the aftermath and recover from the ordeal."

The most recent figures show that in the year up to March 2022 a total of 671 West Mercia Police officers were assaulted with 207 suffering injuries as a result.

Operation Hampshire is now a priority workstream for the National Police Wellbeing Service and Police Covenant, was recently adopted by UNISON and has the backing of policing minister Chris Philp.

Police Federation national chair Steve Hartshorn described it as a 'legacy project in policing' which had already been a huge success.

"If anyone ever asks: 'what does the Federation ever do for its members?', then this is an absolute example of what we do. I am immensely proud of how far Op Hampshire has come, its success speaks for itself," he said.

"While Op Hampshire is primarily still focussing on officer assaults, it's actually

giving our members so much more than that - you have to look at the bigger picture.

"The data we collect will educate us, which in turn will help us provide better training and communications. While the project also gives our members the confidence they need to feel valued and see that their Federation is looking after them.

"We're also working with other agencies too, like our colleagues in the ambulance service, to share the strategy. Not only will Op Hampshire support officers today, but as it grows and develops, it's only going to get bigger.

"I genuinely believe we can get the public's confidence in the police back and it will be through projects like Op Hampshire."

The initiative has been driven largely by national Operation Hampshire co-ordinator Dave Brewster who retired from the Met last year but retained his role to keep up the momentum of the initiative with the National Police Wellbeing Service.

He said: "My goal is that every assault on a police officer or member of staff is recorded, investigated and then those involved are given the correct support they need. Even if they don't think that they need support, I believe everyone should at least be offered it."



I GENUINELY BELIEVE WE CAN GET THE PUBLIC'S CONFIDENCE IN THE POLICE BACK AND IT WILL BE THROUGH PROJECTS LIKE OP HAMPSHIRE.

NEW PRIORITIES ADDED TO POLICE COVENANT PLEDGE

West Mercia Police Federation chair Barry Horton has welcomed an update from the Police Covenant Oversight Board (PCOB) in which three new areas of work are outlined.

The PCOB said the three additional priorities were a reflection of the rapidly changing nature of police work.

The primary focus of the Covenant has always been ensuring the health and wellbeing of serving and former police officers, their physical protection and the support required by their families.

It was initially based on 11 key priorities agreed within the parameters set out in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022.

But three extra priorities have now been added to the list.

They are:

- **To identify and implement a package of measures for individuals who have left the police workforce.**
- **To scope the current support in place in relation to healthcare pathways for the police workforce through further NHS engagement**
- **To consider wider issues around police officer and staff safety at the roadside and propose non legislative options to improve safety.**

A spokesman said: "The Oversight Board will continue to review all priorities throughout the year to consider any further points to add, or the potential combining of priorities."

Responding to the update, Barry said: "The Police Covenant is close to our hearts because it is a formal recognition of the sacrifice we expect our officers and their families to make.

"The Police Federation worked hard to ensure it was adopted as part of the 2022

Act and we are pleased that it is evolving along with the ever-changing nature of policing."

Of the original eleven priorities, three have now been completed and signed off by the PCOB.

“ THE POLICE FEDERATION WORKED HARD TO ENSURE IT WAS ADOPTED AS PART OF THE 2022 ACT AND WE ARE PLEASED THAT IT IS EVOLVING ALONG WITH THE EVER-CHANGING NATURE OF POLICING.

The work under the Covenant to consider the issues raised in the Officer and Staff Safety Review have been met through the changes to legislation around assaults on emergency workers brought in by the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022.

The workstream to support forces to put in place Operation Hampshire relating to assaults against officers and staff has also been implemented, with data collection on these assaults now a key part of recording practices.

And the third and final completed area of work is the inclusion of mental health training for new officers in initial training, as part of the Policing Education Qualifications Framework (PEQF) developed by the College of Policing.

TAKE PART IN WELLBEING SURVEY

West Mercia Police Federation chair Barry Horton is calling on members to take part in a survey which could help shape wellbeing support services across the Force.

The annual survey, which is now in its fourth year, is led by the National Police Wellbeing Service Oscar Kilo and run by the Policing Research Unit at Durham University with support from the College of Policing.

Andy Rhodes, service director for the National Police Wellbeing Service, said: "It is vital that we hear from as many people working in policing as possible so at both a national, and local level, we can prioritise the issues which matter the most, and design and develop the right interventions and support that policing needs.

"Each year, we respond directly to the findings from the survey, creating practical support at both an organisational and individual level.

"In the past, we've done this in areas such as trauma, fatigue and physical fitness and so we want every member of the police service to feel reassured that it's worthwhile taking part and that we will act upon the findings.

"The results will also help shape and inform the work we do on behalf of the Police Covenant which sees us now extending our focus to better support not only officers, staff and volunteers, but their families too – and those who leave the service."

Barry said: "We do a difficult, stressful job and it is vital that police officers can easily access the support provided by organisations such as Oscar Kilo.

"I would encourage all our members to complete the survey because we never know when we might need some extra support."

OWEN'S CEREMONIAL ROLE DURING KING'S CORONATION

A West Mercia Police Federation member and Army Reservist has revealed how he was lucky enough to ride Lord Firebrand at King Charles III Coronation, the same horse that led the procession at the Queen's funeral.

Acting sergeant Owen Beynon Brown rode as part of the King's Troop Royal Horse Artillery, which had the responsibility of firing a six-gun salvo from Horse Guards Parade as the crown was placed on the King's head.

Owen was given the honour of riding Lord Firebrand, otherwise known as Yogi, the 14-year-old horse who has worked countless parades, including the funeral of Queen Elizabeth II and the Queen's Birthday Parade.

"When my commanding officer approached me and said there would be an opportunity to work at the coronation, there was no way I could say no to that," said Owen, who was in the army for almost eight years before joining the police force in 2015.

Owen re-joined the Army Reserves in 2019 as a reserve section commander in the King's Troop.

During the coronation, Owen was part of a unit of soldiers all trained to care for and drive teams of six horses, with each team pulling a 13-pound First World War-era gun behind them. The guns were then fired to mark the grand occasion.

“ BEING ON A HORSE ALLOWED ME TO SEE THE CEREMONY FROM A TOTALLY DIFFERENT ANGLE. PERSONALLY, I THINK I HAD ONE OF THE BEST SEATS IN THE HOUSE. ALTHOUGH THE UNIFORM I HAD TO WEAR ISN'T THE MOST PRACTICAL, THE HAT STOPPED ME FROM SEEING EVERYTHING AS WELL AS I COULD HAVE.

"It's hard to put into words what being part of the coronation meant to me," father-of-three Owen continued.

"It's not until after the event that I go away and think about what I've done and achieved.

"Being on a horse allowed me to see the ceremony from a totally different angle. Personally, I think I had one of the best seats in the house. Although the uniform I had to wear isn't the most practical, the hat stopped me from seeing everything as well as I could have."

This is not the first time Owen has been part of such a royal occasion, having previously ridden in all four salutes as part of Operation London Bridge, during the Queen's funeral - although not on Lord Firebrand that time.

He also rode in the Queen's Birthday Parade Trooping the Colour, the state opening of Parliament, the Royal Windsor Horse Show, the British Military Tournament and escorted the Olympic torch in 2012.



HAVE YOU BEEN AFFECTED BY NOISE-INDUCED HEARING LOSS?

Noise-induced hearing loss can drastically affect those who work in law enforcement

Noise-induced hearing loss (NIHL) is a term used to describe hearing loss, deafness or tinnitus caused by exposure to excessive noise at work where insufficient or no training or ear protection has been provided. NIHL can have a significant impact on those who work in law enforcement, particularly those who use firearms, due to frequent exposure to extremely high levels of noise in their line of work.

Though hearing loss is a common symptom of age, it's important to note the distinct signs that indicate noise-induced hearing loss. Some signs to look out for include:

- **Difficulty hearing or understanding speech, particularly in environments with background noise.**
- **Tinnitus, which is a ringing, buzzing, hissing, or other sounds in one ear or both ears.**
- **Some people become more sensitive to loud noises. Everyday sounds that were previously tolerable may become uncomfortable or even painful.**
- **Difficulty accurately determining the direction a sound is coming from.**
- **Constantly increasing the volume of the television or radio.**
- **Asking others to speak louder or repeat themselves frequently.**

- **Fatigue or strain from listening for extended periods of time.**

All these signs and symptoms can vary in severity and differ from person to person.

As police officers often deal with exposure to loud sounds such as gunshots, sirens, explosions and high-decibel events, this can and often does lead to damage being sustained to the sensitive structures of the inner ear, which can turn into noise-induced hearing loss.

Though symptoms differ, this could cause a permanent decrease in hearing sensitivity, making it more difficult for police officers to hear important sounds, such as verbal commands from colleagues or approaching emergency vehicles.

Hearing loss may also compromise an officer's situational awareness, making them less able to identify any potential threats or hazards. This can impact the ability to respond quickly and appropriately to dangerous situations, potentially jeopardising their safety and the safety of others. Hearing loss could even affect an officer's job performance, especially in tasks that require good hearing abilities, such as gathering witness statements, conducting interviews or participating in surveillance operations.

To minimise the risk of police officers developing noise-induced hearing loss, it's

important for police forces to implement hearing conservation programmes. These could include training in and the provision of hearing protection devices, regular hearing screenings, education on the risks of noise exposure and strategies to minimise exposure to loud sounds whenever possible. The law says that every employer has a duty of care to protect employees from suffering harm in the workplace, including noise induced injuries.

Police officers, like other employees, are protected by the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005. These regulations set out the standards and requirements for employers to manage and control noise in the workplace to prevent occupational hearing loss.

If a police officer believes that their hearing loss was caused or significantly worsened by their work environment, they may be eligible to make a claim for compensation.

Expert noise-induced hearing loss claims lawyers at Slater and Gordon will arrange for you to be examined by a medical professional to determine what proportion of your hearing loss is due to workplace exposures to noise, and on the basis of that independent medical opinion, you will be advised on whether you have a claim that can be pursued.



“Now the pressure's gone, I can get back to my police work.”

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