

FEDERATION



West Midlands Police Federation

December 2022/January 2023



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WELCOME

Welcome to the December 2022/January 2023 edition of **Federation** - the magazine for members of West Midlands Police Federation.

We are always on the look-out for good news stories so please get in touch if you have something to share with colleagues. It does not have to relate to your policing role - though we are definitely interested in hearing about what's going on around the Force. Do you have an interesting hobby or perhaps you are involved in sport locally, as a player, a manager, a coach?

Just get in touch and let us know.

We would also be interested to hear what you would like to see featured in your magazine.

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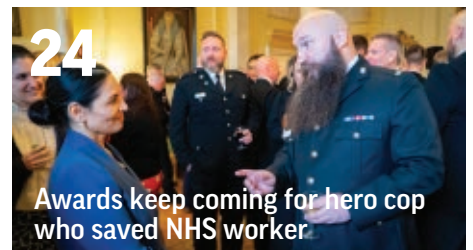
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It's no secret that I believe in local policing



By **Rich Cooke**, chair of West Midlands Police Federation

As we wave goodbye to 2022 and welcome a new year, we also welcome our new Chief Constable. So, on behalf of the branch and all of our members, welcome Mr Craig Guildford, I look forward to working closely with you in 2023. And Sir David Thompson, wishing you a happy retirement from everyone here at West Midlands Police Federation.

As I reflect on the last 12 months, it is fair to say that it has been a rollercoaster of a year. We started off still in the midst of a pandemic, as we continued to face some of the biggest challenges the world had to throw our way. I'll always be incredibly proud of our members, and the way they stepped up to ensure our communities remained safe despite the ongoing pressures of policing.

As 2022 has continued, you have shown continuous professionalism, courage and

dedication to your role and I am once again, extremely proud to be ending this year as your chair.

Looking forward to the next 12 months and the changes that I will continue to fight for, it's no secret that I believe in local policing. And I look forward to working with Mr Guildford to reintroduce and enhance local models of policing throughout communities across the West Midlands.

I am more determined than ever to put a stop to the closing of our local police stations and, from what I've heard, Mr Guildford is keen to take the job back to its roots, as he has promised to 'rebuild neighbourhood policing' once in post - which is music to my ears.

Knife crime has - and continues to be - a seriously growing concern within the West Midlands and I hope that the next 12 months will see the Federation working in collaboration with the Force to tackle these dangerous offenders.

This also means giving our officers the confidence they need to do their jobs and making them feel empowered to take to our streets knowing that they have vital support

from their supervisors and those in higher ranks. From better stop and search powers to sending double crews out, I promise that I will not stop fighting for what I believe in.

I also hope that the Government will finally start to consider introducing an Elizabeth Medal to honour our fallen police officers.

Christmas is a time to reflect and my thoughts are with all of those families who are missing a loved one this festive season. And rest assured, once I've burnt off those mince pies, I'll be back training for next year's Police Unity Tour - and while I'm at it, if there are any members who want to join me, then this there has never been a better time to sign up.

I know that for members, Christmas is not as traditional as perhaps we would like it to be - and for many, our day is spent on the streets, protecting the public and fighting crime. But please try to spend some time relaxing and with loved ones.

For now though, I want to wish everyone a very merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous New Year. Stay safe and look after one another.



I AM MORE DETERMINED THAN EVER TO PUT A STOP TO THE CLOSING OF OUR LOCAL POLICE STATIONS AND, FROM WHAT I'VE HEARD, MR GUILDFORD IS KEEN TO TAKE THE JOB BACK TO ITS ROOTS, AS HE HAS PROMISED TO 'REBUILD NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICING' ONCE IN POST - WHICH IS MUSIC TO MY EARS.



Tim is presented with final Chief's Award

In one of his final acts as Chief Constable, Sir David Thompson presented an award to West Midlands Police Federation secretary Tim Rogers to acknowledge his outstanding efforts in bringing about a change in the law that will benefit police drivers.

The Chief presented his final Chief's Award to Tim on the day that the new statutory guidance underpinning the change in law came into effect.

"It was a lovely and appreciated gesture by the Chief," says Tim who attended the Force gathering with no idea that he was going to be singled out for praise.

"In all honesty, it was the Chief Constable's last event of this type and I was surprised when he put the spotlight on my work and the fact that the legal changes affecting police drivers came into force that day. It was a really nice touch at an event which should have been all about the Chief and his retirement from the Force."

The citation stated: "In recognition of your incredible achievement of securing the

reform of police driver legislation. This is a generational change for policing."

Tim, who is the national Federation's pursuits driving and driver training lead, has headed up an eight-year campaign to change the law so that police officers' driving is judged by the standards of their similarly trained peers.

Previously, they were compared to the standard of the careful and competent driving member of the public, which meant that their training, skills, experience and the unique nature of their role could not be taken into account.

This resulted in many officers falling foul of conduct or legal proceedings, putting them through lengthy investigations which often had an impact on their mental wellbeing.

Met with obstacle after obstacle to bring about the legal change he felt was essential for police drivers, Tim vowed to fight all the way to ensure the law offered protection to officers doing the job their forces and the public expected of them.

Tim managed to bring on board MPs and chief officers and worked closely with the Home Office and the Department for Transport to

achieve success with the campaign.

The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act, which came into effect in the summer, set out that police drivers' driving would be assessed by the standards of their careful and competent colleagues who have completed the same level of prescribed training.

The onus is now on officers to ensure they 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," said Tim.

New regulations, enshrined in law through the Road Traffic Act 1988 (Police Driving: Prescribed Training) Regulations 2022 set out the prescribed training that will give trained police drivers the better protection in law afforded through the new legislation.

- See more about Tim's campaign and the new legislation affecting police drivers on Page 6.



Police drivers will be impacted by new legislation

Police drivers are being reminded to read a frequently asked questions document giving guidance on new regulations which come into effect today.

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, secretary of West Midlands Police Federation and 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 today (30 November).

The new FAQ document has been produced by the Police Federation of England and Wales 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).

[Read the FAQs.](#)

Read the 'prescribed training' statutory instrument.



'Stop closing our local stations' says Fed chair

The chair of West Midlands Police Federation says that continuing to close the region's local police stations will damage the Force's reputation, impact officers and actually encourage a rise in crime.

Rich Cooke says, that while he recognises the Force has not got money to build brand new infrastructure, choosing to close and not replace existing police stations is 'simply not good enough'.

His comments come after figures revealed that eighty per cent of the region's police stations with public-facing front desks have closed down in the last 10 years, with just four left in the Black Country.

"We need to stop closing our local police stations, it's that simple," says Rich, adding: "And if we do close them, then we should at least look at replacing them.

"My local station has been closed and replaced with a block of luxury flats, but I guess that's a sign of the times, right? Well, that's just simply not good enough for local taxpayers."

Rich says that he believes closing local

stations 'signifies police withdrawal from the community' and 'encourages crime' in those areas.

He added: "I recognise that money is far too tight for brand new police stations to be built but surely closing them isn't the best option? But, as the police, we should be trying to keep a presence in these local communities, especially in more deprived areas.

"Some of these local stations are iconic buildings within the community, so when they close, I feel it can have a real practical and psychological impact on the people who live in that area.

"It's not just about the damage this will do to the relationship between the police and local communities. These officers don't just want - they need - local police stations to do their best. After all, local police stations are a hub for them, a place for them to engage with fellow officers and have some time for themselves, after what are long, gruelling shifts.

"Of course, officers are far more likely to go out into the community and be seen if they

have a local station to use as a base too. Plus, they won't feel they need to rush through paper admin work because they can do all of their job from one space.

"And what about the police stations that are still open? They're becoming overcrowded, with officers having to take on big commutes before struggling to get a parking space and often being hit with exorbitant charges."

Rich said that while, on one hand, local police stations have closed, the Force is also actively trying to attract new recruits while current officers tackle rising crime, specifically street violence and knife crime.

He continued: "It's contradictory. How can we be recruiting more officers but closing our stations? And what's more, how can we ask our officers to be visible and out in the community but then get rid of their local stations? It just doesn't make sense."

Reflecting on his time on the frontline, having joined the police back in 2000, Rich says that having a local custody block was 'crucial'.

"Officers are far more effective if they have a local station and custody nearby" he added.

"But look, I'm an optimist, my glass is always half full and I really feel the future is bright. With the new Chief Constable coming in, it's the start of a new era and it's exciting. We might have a rocky road ahead but I'm confident we'll get there."

“ IT'S CONTRADICTIONARY. HOW CAN WE BE RECRUITING MORE OFFICERS BUT CLOSING OUR STATIONS? AND WHAT'S MORE, HOW CAN WE ASK OUR OFFICERS TO BE VISIBLE AND OUT IN THE COMMUNITY BUT THEN GET RID OF THEIR LOCAL STATIONS? IT JUST DOESN'T MAKE SENSE.



Federation national deputy chair Tiff Lynch with Bryn Hughes.

Ministers urged to meet Federation to discuss Elizabeth Medal campaign

Campaigners calling for an Elizabeth Medal to honour fallen police officers are urging Home Office ministers to meet them to discuss their proposals.

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 to discuss the campaign and explain 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."

"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."

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 those killed in action.

West Midlands Police Federation chair Rich Cooke said: "The campaign for some sort of formal state recognition for police officers killed on duty has been gathering pace for some time now and is time the Home Office stepped up and helped make it reality."

"The families of fallen colleagues have spoken very movingly about how important such a medal would be to them and their loved ones and I can't think of any reason why it should not be given Government approval."

"Everyone in policing is behind the idea and I think the new Home Secretary would earn a lot of respect if she took some positive action on this."

Bryn said to receive such a medal did not bring anyone back but it "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.

Federation urges officers to give feedback on footwear

West Midlands Police Federation has launched a fact-finding mission to find out if public order trained officers are having any problems with their protective boots.

The special footwear features built-in rigid metal metatarsal protectors which some officers have found to be uncomfortable to wear and can cause serious foot pain, blistering and sores.

Branch health and safety lead Deano Walker said feedback from a number of members suggested there were issues which needed addressing.

He thanked members who had contacted him with their experiences so far and urged others to do the same so that the Federation was fully aware of any issues.

Deano explained: "Members who are public order trained are issued with boots because it is classed as personal protective equipment.

"These boots are steel toe-capped with steel soles but it has come to light that, to put it bluntly, they are causing some officers discomfort.

“ WE WILL BE TAKING THE FEEDBACK TO THE FORCE UNIFORM AND EQUIPMENT GROUP ON 7 DECEMBER AND IT WILL BE DISCUSSED THEN.

"I asked all the local Fed reps to email all of their departments urging them to get in touch if they were having problems with their boots.

"I have now received about 40 emails from members and have put together some really good evidence to take to the Force so firstly I'd like to thank those officers who have contacted me and secondly, let anybody else know they can get in touch.

"We can't make representations to the Force without evidence so I am very grateful to those who have contacted us.

"We will be taking the feedback to the Force uniform and equipment group on 7 December and it will be discussed then."

Deano said he had heard reports that some officers were refusing to wear the Force-issue boots while carrying out public order duties but warned members that failure to do so could lead to issues with health and safety and insurance coverage in the event of personal injury.

"The message has gone out that officers have to wear these boots because otherwise there could be problems further down the line," he said.

"But hopefully there will be a review into these boots in the not-too-distant future and we can convince the Force to replace them."

Members can email Deano at DWalker@westmids.polfed.org with their comments and feedback.





The brave duo with Phillip Schofield, Holly Willoughby, Holby actress Adjoa Andoh and actor Adrian Lester.

Courageous officers receive Pride of Britain Award

“People keep on throwing the term ‘hero’ around and it’s hard to take in because I was just doing the job I love doing,” says PC Leon Mitto who was one of two West Midlands officers chosen by This Morning viewers for this year’s Emergency Services Pride of Britain Award.

Leon and his colleague James Willetts were 18 months into their probation period when they were repeatedly stabbed on duty back in the summer of 2021. Despite this, the pair were able to help detain two dangerous offenders, both of which were carrying bags full of weapons including a machete, a gun, hammers and knives.

“To be honest, I thought it was a joke when

I was first told that we had even been nominated for an award,” admits father-of-two Leon who along with James, was officially presented the award on national television on 24 October.

“Of course, I am extremely proud of receiving a Pride of Britain Award but I was just doing my job, it’s not really sunk in yet.”

Last July, Leon was patrolling West Bromwich when he noticed a couple of suspicious-looking males hanging outside a shop.

Leon recalls that there had been a lot of armed robberies in the area and it was the day the schools were breaking up for summer, so a Section 60 had been put in place - in

anticipation that there would be trouble.

“It was around 11.15am and 28 degrees hot, yet these two men were double-layered up, wearing big coats and jackets, as well as backpacks. Something just wasn’t right,” continued Leon, who has only recently completed his two-year probationary period of the Degree Holder Entry Programme.

Having left the store entrance, along with a female - who turned out to be their sister - Leon and fellow crew member PC Davis, made the decision to follow them.

“We soon caught up with them and saw James and another officer PC Priest in the distance, so between us, we had cornered them. It was at this point that one of them started to run,” said Leon.

“The other man then took off his backpack and takes out this machete - although it wasn’t until court that I realised that’s what it was because he quickly swapped it for a kitchen knife.”

Upon noticing the weapon, Leon explains

how he drew pepper spray from his bag and managed to deter both offenders at once.

"One of the men was wildly swinging and the other chased after PC Priest. I think the adrenaline really kicked in then, and I just had tunnel vision and went after him."

Upon catching the offender up, Leon soon found himself being repeatedly stabbed in the back, before feeling a blow to his head.

"Luckily, I had a stab vest on - and if I hadn't had that on, I would have died. It's fair to say, that stab vest saved my life," added Leon, who stopped the stabbing by hitting the offender on the head with the empty can of pepper spray.

Upon seeing the offender trying to stab him again, Leon managed to grab the blade of the knife, before discarding the weapon.

James had also been struck to his head by the other offender, who had concealed a Stanley knife in his hand. By this time, backup had been called and the two offenders were immediately arrested.

Fortunately, both officers came away with minor injuries, with Leon receiving stitches on his hand, and his head injury glued together. James also needed the wound on his head glued.

Leon said: "I remember thinking, 'I'm a dead man' when the guy started stabbing me and to be honest, it was pure adrenalin that got me through. It was very scary."

The two offenders were both sentenced and given a combined prison sentence of 18 years, with a number of dangerous weapons found in their backpacks following the assault.

“ON BEHALF OF THE FEDERATION, I'D LIKE TO SAY A HUGE CONGRATULATIONS TO LEON AND JAMES, THEIR PRIDE OF BRITAIN AWARD IS THOROUGHLY WELL-DESERVED.

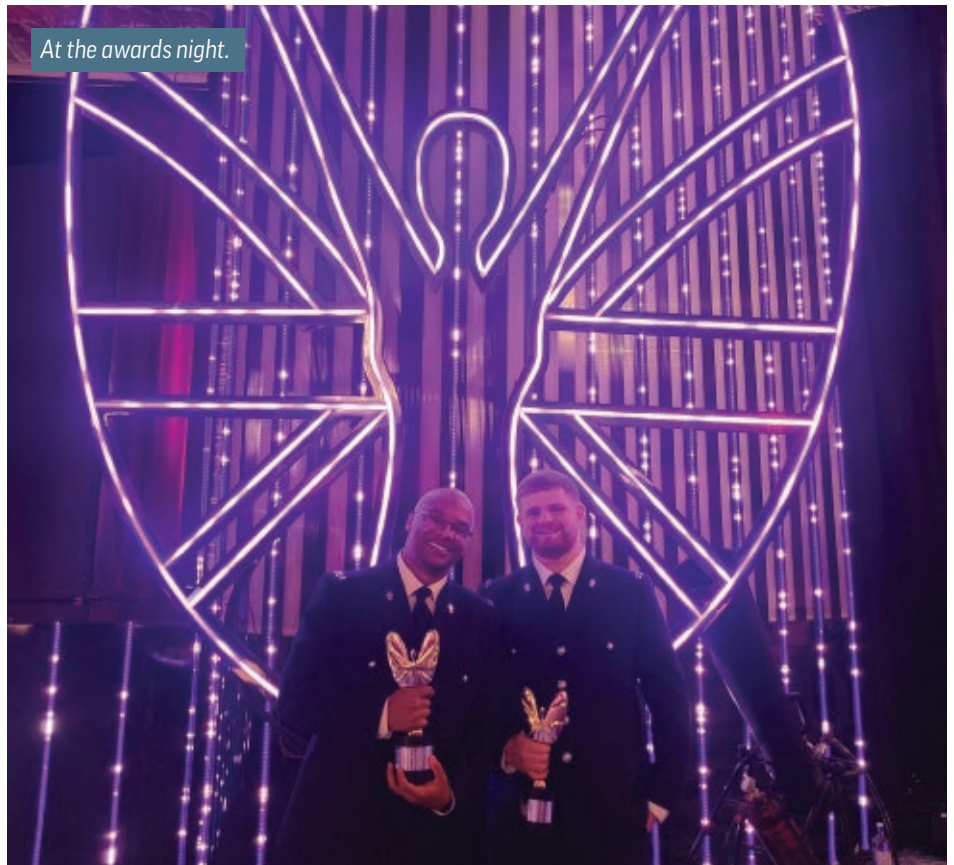
"They were both deemed violent individuals in court and although there was no evidence that they were planning terrorist-related offences, it was clear they wanted to hurt people on that day," added Leon.

"We were really lucky. If it had been a normal day without a Section 60 in place, there wouldn't have been as many officers ready to help.

"I won't lie, the experience really affected me and my mental health. For at least six months after the event, I definitely struggled."

Leon and James were surprised, live on air by ITV's This Morning team, letting them know they had won a Pride of Britain Award.

In October, the duo - dressed in police tunics - attended the star-studded award ceremony in



London, complete with walking the celebrity-filled red carpet.

"It was a very surreal experience, to say the least," said Leon, who was presented with the award by This Morning's Holly Willoughby and Philip Schofield, as well as cast members from the hit TV series Bridgerton.

"I couldn't believe how many celebrities were there - the room was full of famous footballers, actors, people from reality shows and television stars. I was sitting at a table with Gail from Coronation Street.

"We also had dinner with our fellow winners, which was amazing. They had done incredible things, with some raising thousands of pounds for charity. It was an honour to be part of."

James added: "I feel very proud to have won the award, although myself and Leon were simply doing our job at the end of the

day. Receiving the award was definitely an experience - being in a room full of amazing people from different communities."

Fed chair Rich Cooke, who has praised the 'courageous duo', says the entire membership 'is very proud of them'.

"I know both Leon and James will feel that they are accepting this award on behalf of all officers, up-and-down the country who find themselves in difficult situations on a daily basis, but this was not normal, even by the standards of today's violent streets" added Rich.

"On behalf of the Federation, I'd like to say a huge congratulations to Leon and James, their Pride of Britain Award is thoroughly well-deserved. In the face of danger and a sudden, unexpected extreme threat, they dealt with the situation head-on, demonstrating amazing bravery."



At Christmas

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Officer headcount rises by 140 in a year

West Midlands has 140 more police officers than this time last year, according to figures released by the Home Office.

New data showed the Force had 7,715 serving officers at the end of September compared with 7,575 in September 2021. The Home Office said a total of 15,343 officers had now been recruited across England and Wales from funding for the Police Uplift Programme which aims to take on 20,000 new officers by March 2023.

West Midlands Police Federation chair Rich Cooke welcomed the increase but said the number of officers leaving the Force and the attrition rate of newcomers had to be considered when looking at Police Uplift Programme data.

He said: "It's great to have so many new officers at a time when we're facing such pressure in policing and we welcome them all but the recruitment of officers in such numbers has placed unprecedented demands on our

Learning and Development staff.

"We need to ensure that while we continue to recruit, we also ensure we are not compromising standards, and important selection procedures such as fitness testing, medicals, drug testing, and vetting are rigorous."

Rich highlighted the problem of officer retention – pointing out that this has to be properly addressed or the influx of new recruits will simply be cancelled out by the departures of more experienced colleagues.

"The Force needs to ensure it is doing everything it can to retain these new recruits and to retain their more experienced colleagues as well.

"The impact of a decade of cuts on officer morale has led to many experienced men and women leaving the service so unless officer retention is taken seriously, recruitment can feel like trying to fill a bucket that's full of holes."

A Home Office spokesman said: "The Government has pledged to invest more than £3.5bn in policing between 2020 and 2023 in order to recruit 20,000 additional officers. Additional officers will support forces in tackling crime and making communities safer. The Police Uplift Programme is one of a range of initiatives the Government has implemented to support policing."

“ WE NEED TO ENSURE THAT WHILE WE CONTINUE TO RECRUIT, WE ALSO ENSURE WE ARE NOT COMPROMISING STANDARDS, AND IMPORTANT SELECTION PROCEDURES SUCH AS FITNESS TESTING, MEDICALS, DRUG TESTING, AND VETTING ARE RIGOROUS. ”



'We are seeing the impact of cuts'

Crime in the West Midlands has risen by 22 per cent, prompting West Midlands Police Federation chair Rich Cooke to remind Government that 'cuts have consequences.'

Data from the Office for National Statistics showed that in the 12 months to June 2022 there were more than 368,000 crimes in the West Midlands.

Violence against the person rose by 17 per cent, theft offences were up by a quarter, while burglary rose by 14 per cent.

The figures also show that vehicle offences rose by a quarter, theft from the person by three quarters, and criminal damage and arson rose by 56 per cent.

And there were 4,958 knife crime offences, the most outside London and an increase of 50 per cent.

Nationally, police recorded crime in England and Wales in the year ending June 2022 rose by 13 per cent on the previous year, according to the ONS data.

Rich commented: "Our members are working tirelessly to tackle crime and protect the public but still the crime figures for the West Midlands are rising significantly. One of the reasons for this is ludicrous recording rules that see us making records of almost anything reported by the public that 'might' be criminal without any further substance. This kind of



Rich Cooke.

nonsense is clogging the system, all for a box ticking exercise.

"We're still suffering the impact of austerity and the deep cuts that were made to numbers and crucially, infrastructure. More recruits are welcome to a degree, but without the experience and facilities around them, sadly they become a burden in the sense that we end up with so many student officers unable to

learn the job properly and give their best, taken away from practical application by academic studies completely abstract from the reality of the job.

"We urgently need a police force that's properly trained, resourced and supported to really drive down crime.

"But in the meantime, we've seen an explosion of serious youth violence and knife crime. Young people are being murdered with alarming regularity, yet we still treat the issue with kid gloves because of a woke mindset and an emphasis away from enforcement and tactics we know save lives - like stop and search.



"We need a zero tolerance approach: knife carriers are potential killers regardless of age - they should be treated accordingly. There is no excuse to be made."

Vanessa Jardine, West Midlands Police Deputy Chief Constable, said the Force was "especially focused on areas where we have seen the biggest increases".

She said: "With regard to knife crime, Birmingham has the youngest population in Europe and this, combined with high levels of deprivation in some areas, feeds into youth violence and knife crime.

"We're working with partners through the Violence Reduction Partnership, which takes a public health approach to youth violence, to tackle root causes and improve outcomes. This includes focusing on hotspot areas with regular high-visibility patrols in areas where evidence shows there's a risk of serious violence. Educational sessions with young people, weapon sweeps, visits to knife retailers and work with border officials on the import of banned weapons continues."

She added: "We recognise that there is still much work to do and we are continuing to proactively target those who seek to cause harm to communities and vulnerable people as we work with partners to prevent crime and protect people."

“ WE NEED A ZERO TOLERANCE APPROACH: KNIFE CARRIERS ARE POTENTIAL KILLERS REGARDLESS OF AGE - THEY SHOULD BE TREATED ACCORDINGLY. THERE IS NO EXCUSE TO BE MADE. ”

Section 60: 'Trust officers to do their jobs'

Rich Cooke is calling on the Chief Constable to start 'trusting and empowering' officers, particularly in relation to Section 60 policy.

It was recently announced that inspectors will be able to authorise Section 60 operations spontaneously in response to a dynamic threat, but they will still need to seek confirmation from the Assistant Chief Constable (ACC) to use this power, which will usually involve phone call correspondence.

This is something the law does not require.

Federation chair Rich, said: "Nobody wants to be calling the ACC at 2am to justify themselves as to why they need to put a Section 60 in place, do they?"

"So, while inspectors can make an initial decision to enforce a Section 60, there remains the added bureaucracy and need to get further permission which, in my opinion, undermines them and sets a much higher bar, deterring them from using the powers in a proactive way, crucially, before serious violence happens.

"It sends the message that we do not trust our inspectors or superintendents to make such decisions and, bizarrely, think they are better made by senior colleagues who are well away from the frontline with no direct local knowledge."

Rich says that when he worked on the frontline, having joined the police in 2000, officers were "far more empowered".

"Unfortunately, over time, we've gradually become far more risk-averse, demand-focused, sensitive to fringe criticism and therefore less

effective at preventing crime," he said.

The latest changes to the policy state that the threshold for Section 60 authorisation will be reduced from reasonably believing serious violence "will occur" to "may occur".

Rich comments: "The change to 'may occur' is very welcome, it should never have been any different. Parliament passed the legislation envisaging dynamic use by an on-the-ground commander, not one on the 11th floor of HQ.

"I still feel like we're being predominantly reactive, not proactive enough, and that's bad given the level of youth violence and knife crime my colleagues are seeing daily.

"The obvious concern is that those relatively few authorisations that are made will continue to be, for the most part, pre-planned following another awful crime, rather than spontaneous and intelligence-led where the tactic is best utilised to prevent serious violence following a dynamic incident or

information.

"It really is one of the most powerful tools we have to suppress the violence and knife crime currently taking the lives of too many people, and I don't think we use it enough, partly because of these policies."

Changes to the Force's Section 60 policy come after the Government decided to this year relax The Best Use of Stop and Search scheme, which was initially put into place in 2014, allowing forces to make their own policies surrounding Section 60.

"Sadly, West Midlands Police has continued to pretty much adhere to Theresa May's scheme," said Rich. "This will continue to limit our use of this valuable power in deprived communities most vulnerable to serious violence. It will continue to be seen as a relatively extreme measure, when in fact, it's often a very proportionate, measured, targeted way of protecting the public.

"I've challenged the PCC recently to look at this again as well as having several conversations with the Chief Constable on this subject over several years. While we are always listened to, and while the emphasis has gradually changed, we still have this final hurdle to get over."

“ I STILL FEEL LIKE WE'RE BEING PREDOMINANTLY REACTIVE, NOT PROACTIVE ENOUGH, AND THAT'S BAD GIVEN THE LEVEL OF YOUTH VIOLENCE AND KNIFE CRIME MY COLLEAGUES ARE SEEING DAILY. ”



Review of the year 2022

January

The year began with the news that West Midlands' Sergeant Julie Harrison had been awarded the [British Empire Medal](#) (BEM) in the New Year's Honours. An officer in Coventry for 25 years, she has led pioneering projects to tackle youth exploitation and violence against women. Julie's current role is within the City of Culture Policing Team. West Midlands Police Federation chair Rich Cooke said: "The thing that's striking about Julie is her modesty and good humour after years of outstanding public service particularly striving to bring diverse communities together."



Rich, who visited Tally Ho to discuss with training staff, commented: "Talking to some, they feel let down and abandoned and at times scared. Tutor constables are expected to take on three or four students at a time. They simply cannot give them the time and support they need, something my generation took for granted." Rich called for "proper resourcing, infrastructure, equipment, training and support."

was going up £1.1 billion from the previous 12-month period to a total of £16.9 billion.

"It stinks that the safety of our citizens remains so low down the list of priorities for Government spending. Yes, there have been recent increases but still our historic police stations are disappearing and our new recruits struggle to make ends meet. Transformative investment is required," Rich said.

West Midlands Police Federation called for the College of Policing to '[reduce administrative burdens](#) instead of increasing them', following the publication of a fundamental review into the way it operates. The review aimed to set out a new vision to improve leadership, standards, and professionalism in the service to help cut crime, boost confidence, and keep the public safe.



The Federation branded as 'nonsensical' a decision by the Force to [stop funding one-day Taser refresher courses](#) for officers. Stechford-based Sergeant Hannah Graham warned that a colleague could be seriously injured. "It feels as if [the Force] is really unaware of what's going on out on the streets," she said.

Hannah was fully trained and equipped with Taser for eight years but was unable to convert to the new model as a result of the funding decision and is no longer authorised to carry it because her ticket has now expired.

Rich Cooke warned that the Government's recruitment programme would "[not go far enough](#)" to protect the public. Latest figures at the beginning of 2022 showed there had been an 8.8 per cent officer uplift in the year to September 2021.



DS Sally Olsen urged Federation members to [join the stem cell register](#) after her 13-year-old daughter was diagnosed with two life-threatening and rare blood disorders.

February

Chief Constable Sir Dave Thompson announced his [intention to retire](#) after the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham during the summer.



Rich Cooke said he was looking forward to an impending change in law that would allow [Special Constables to join the Police Federation](#). Specials are "worth their weight in gold," the chair added. "A Special Constable on my last team was a paramedic in his day job. His presence gave a real boost to the team and the first aid knowledge he passed onto us was phenomenal."

Rich also backed calls for a [multi-year funding settlement](#) to better support policing rather than yearly announcements. This was after the Government revealed its financial commitment to policing for the forthcoming financial year



The Federation joined with the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) and other policing organisations in agreeing a commitment to [address the causes of officer suicides](#). Branch chair Rich Cooke praised the work being done to reduce the stigma and improve awareness of mental health. The consensus statement was developed by Oscar Kilo, the National Police Wellbeing Service (NPWS).

March

West Midlands Police Federation [won a victory](#) after the Force agreed to provide Taser refresher courses to sergeants who meet the re-training criteria. The change in policy comes after the Force carried out a review of the number of officers who are qualified to use the equipment. Branch Federation chair Rich Cooke called the U-turn "excellent news for officer safety."

Feature continued on Page 18



Roads Policing must be given the priority it deserves, or risk continuing to fail the community. That was the view of Tim Rogers, secretary of West Midlands Police Federation, who has repeatedly called for road safety to be a Key Performance Indicator for West Midlands Police.

Forty-nine people died on roads in the West Midlands during 2020 and more than 700 people suffered serious injuries. "We owe it to these people, and their families, to make sure the Force is doing all it can," said Tim.



Sharon Johnson, who joined West Midlands Police on the Youth Training Scheme at 16 and enrolled as an officer aged 22 in 1994, **reflected on the changes** as she prepared to retire.

As the youngest officer and only female, she had been expected to get into work early and make cups of tea for her colleagues. And she was required to deal with female prisoners and "any cases involving babies or children". It was unheard of to have a female sergeant or inspector then. "It seems mad now looking back," said Sharon.



"Thank you, you've given us hope," said DS Sally Olsen, after more than 2,300 West Midlands Police officers and staff **applied to join the stem cell register** in the hope of finding a life-saving match for Sally's teenage daughter, Izzie, who was diagnosed with a rare blood disorder.

April



Steve Hartshorn, who **took over as the new national chair** of the Police Federation of England and Wales on 1 April, said he wanted "open and honest dialogue" with the Government. He said his priority would be to continue to push for improved pay.

Rich Cooke called the **rising number of assaults** against West Midlands officers an "absolute disgrace". Figures showed more than 200 West Midlands Police officers are attacked each month. Rich warned of the impact on mental health and renewed his calls for more officers to be armed with Taser.



Trainee detective Amelia Asquith urged her fellow student officers to **seek support if they need it**, after it was revealed that 5.4 per cent of West Midlands' new recruits had quit before completing their probation period. "I've met people who have always dreamed of being in the Force but haven't joined because of the pay," added Amelia, whose father Phil is a superintendent.

Oscar Kilo, the National Police Wellbeing Service, appointed its **100th official OK9 wellbeing and trauma support dog** in the UK, just days before its project won the national award. The West Midlands Police wellbeing dog, 'Terrific Truffles', is among the 100 to have become part of the OK9 scheme after it was launched a year previously.

May



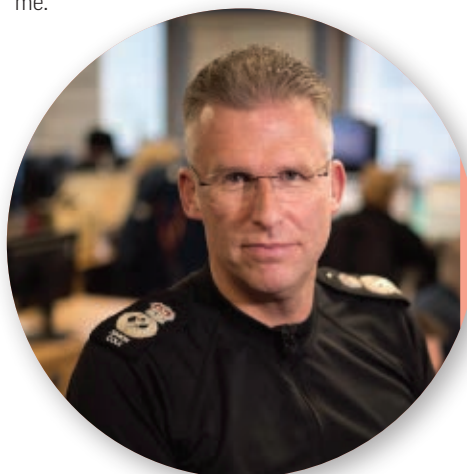
Rich Cooke told then Home Secretary Priti Patel to "put her money where her mouth is" when he **confronted her over pay and conditions** at the Federation's annual national conference. The West Midlands chair was met with cheers and applause from delegates in Manchester. "Our members have had their pay absolutely slashed; we have had our pensions ripped up over the last few years by your government," he said.



Secretary Tim Rogers told conference of the [importance of police drivers being 'in ticket'](#) with their training if they are to benefit from the new protections under the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act.

Under the act, police officers' driving will no longer be assessed by the standards of the careful and competent member of the public but by those of their skilled and training colleagues.

West Midlands Police Federation member PC Chris McComisky was unveiled as the latest signing for the Force's football unit after taking on the role as [dedicated officer for Walsall FC](#). Chris who played semi-professional before joining the Force, said: "I know the club inside out, the fans know me, and the club knows me."



West Midlands Police officers played a [charity football match](#) against Leicestershire Constabulary in memory of their former Chief Constable Simon Cole. The game raised money for the Care Of Police Survivors (COPS) charity, of which Simon was a trustee. Simon was the country's longest serving chief when he stepped down earlier this year. His body was discovered at his home in Kibworth Harcourt, Leicestershire, just 12 days after retiring from the position he held for 12 years. He was 55.

Rich Cooke backed calls for [Protected Learning Time](#) (PLT) for every police officer. He said: "This is an essential part of a police officer's professional development and should always be treated as a top priority."

June



West Midlands Police officers PC Mat Evans and Sergeant Antony Ashton [were awarded the Queen's Police Medal](#) (QPM) for their outstanding contributions to policing. Matt started Operation Share, a national network of more than 300 police officers, dedicated to tackling pickpocket gangs. In 2019, he witnessed a stabbing in the grounds of Royal London Hospital and despite having no protective equipment or help, he intervened to protect the victim and chased down the offender. The victim survived thanks to Matt's courageous actions.

Rich Cooke questioned claims that [tougher sentences are ineffective in reducing assaults](#) on emergency services workers. It followed the publication of a report by the charity Transform Justice.



Nottinghamshire Chief Constable Craig Guildford was [selected as the preferred candidate](#) to succeed Sir David Thompson who retires at the end of 2022. West Midlands Police Federation secretary Tim Rogers said: "Mr Guildford has a reputation as a tough but fair man. I believe he is someone who we can work with."

DC Mark Bates insisted he was "just doing my job" when he leapt into action to disarm and detain a knife-wielding thug outside school gates. Mark's actions ensured he was put forward as West Midlands' nominee for the [national Police Bravery Awards](#) in London.

July



[Police pay remained 'woeful'](#), according to West Midlands Federation chair Rich Cooke, despite the Government's announcement of an average five per cent pay rise for officers. Rich said: "This is better than I expected but, in the context of everything we have seen over the last decade or more, the situation remains woeful. It's difficult to be positive when my members continue to experience remuneration levels well below what they deserve."



West Midlands played a major role in the [policing of the Commonwealth Games](#) in Birmingham. The Federation was ensuring members had round-the-clock access to its services with reps on hand 24/7 and welfare vans. Jon Nott, the branch's Commonwealth Games lead said: "Our concerns are mainly around exhaustion and burn-out because of the long shifts."

Feature continued on Page 20



DC Mark Bates, who tackled the individual who stabbed a man outside school gates, [won a regional award](#) at the 2022 Police Bravery Awards. Mark was accompanied to the ceremony by his wife Laura and also met then Home Secretary Priti Patel at 10 Downing Street.

He said: "This is honestly amazing. I really didn't expect anything like this. At the end of the day, all I did was tackle him and arrest him."

West Midlands Police Federation chair Rich Cooke said: "Mark has played down his role in this incident but the fact is his brave actions could well have prevented loss of life or serious injury to members of the public."



"I can finally see a light at the end of the tunnel," said DI Wendy Bird, a Federation member who received [life-changing treatment for long Covid](#). She had felt "a prisoner in her own home" since catching the virus. Wendy suffered severe fatigue, chronic headaches, tachycardia - when the heart rate is too fast. She was given oxygen therapy treatment and finally felt she had turned a corner.

August



Traffic officer Ian Cook, who launched an online community to help emergency service workers [live healthier lifestyles](#) said he was overwhelmed with the positive response. He launched a Facebook page called Blue Light Lifestyle in June, after recognising the impact regular shift work can have on the diets of emergency service workers. More than 400 people, including police officers, paramedics and NHS workers have joined the group, which shares recipes and motivational messages.



Rich Cooke said police had been ["taken for mugs"](#) over pay and called for a return to collective bargaining for officers. Rich said he had no faith in the Police Remuneration Review Body (PRRB) and advised the national Federation not to re-engage with it. "The PRRB denies us the right to get round the table and negotiate our pay as, for example, our colleagues in Scotland still do," said Rich.



In August, Rich also [took part in the Police Unity Tour](#) (PUT), an annual 180-mile bike ride that remembers police officers who have died in the line of duty. The event sees members of the police family come together to raise vital funds for Care of Police Survivors (COPS).

Rich cycled to the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire. This was the third time he had joined the PUT. He wore a wristband this year in honour of PC David Green, a 20-year-old officer who was fatally stabbed on duty in 1975.

September

Trainee detective Amelia Asquith wrote a [poem for Queen Elizabeth II](#), following the sovereign's death at the age of 96. Amelia, who studied English literature at university, wanted to put into words the "sorrow" she was feeling. She added: "I will be forever proud of the fact that I was one of the last cohorts to be sworn in under the Queen. She served us for 70 years and she made us proud."



PC Emad Choudhury, who is the West Midlands Police imam and faith lead, spoke at the [National Police Memorial Day service in Belfast](#). He read from the Muslim Tradition during the service, which honoured fallen officers' commitment, bravery and sacrifice. Emad was joined in the congregation of almost 2,000 people at Belfast's Waterfront Hall by secretaries of state, police chiefs and family and friends of fallen officers.



Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) put their name to a letter calling on the Government to establish an [Elizabeth Medal for fallen police officers](#). Military personnel already receive a medal if they are killed in the line of duty and the campaign for the new medal calls for police officers to be similarly recognised.

The campaign was started by Bryn Hughes and Paul Bone, fathers of PCs Nicola Hughes and Fiona Bone, who were tragically murdered by a gunman in Great Manchester a decade ago. Federation branch chair Rich Cooke said: "I met Bryn several years ago and count him as a friend. I know from him the difference such recognition would make."



October

West Midlands Police Federation secretary Tim Rogers [met with senior Labour politicians](#) including shadow home secretary Yvette Cooper. Tim said the meeting gave both sides the opportunity to raise issues facing policing and how they could work together. Tim said Ms Cooper was particularly interested in the recruitment and retention of officers and the Police Uplift Programme, and had promised a further uplift of 13,000 officers if her party won power.

Rich Cooke called for a [tougher response to knife crime](#) when he was interviewed on Jeremy Kyle's Talk TV breakfast show. Rich told the presenter that a more visible police presence may have prevented recent stabbings in London. He said: "We have got to get back to having that visible police presence but it is not going to be cheap."

Rich said policing had to deliver a stronger response to street crime and also called for maximum sentences for those convicted of carrying a knife.

Also in October, the chair welcomed research showing that [double crewing police positively impacts the force](#) and sees serious assaults on officers drop to almost zero.

Rich said: "Officers are clearly going to be more effective if they are together. If they see a stolen car, they are more likely to be able to stop them if they have immediate back-up, or if they see a gang who looks like a threat, then they are more likely to do a stop and search if they aren't alone. And that's not officers being lazy, it's just assessing the risk of the situation."



West Midlands Federation called on Liz Truss, the new Prime Minister, and her Home Secretary Suella Braverman to [repair the Government's damaged relationship with the police](#) after years of cutbacks. Secretary Tim Rogers said the incoming administration would have to acknowledge the mistakes of previous governments and take urgent measures to correct them.

He added: "They have an opportunity to make their mark by ordering a review of how policing is funded." The Federation said it was unacceptable that officers have seen a 25 per cent real term pay cut over the last 12 years.



Sharon Johnson, the wife of former ACC Chris Johnson, raised almost £11,000 by [running a marathon for Primrose Hospice](#), the charity which is supporting her husband with Motor Neurone Disease (MND).

She said: "Everyone who knows me knows that when I say I'll do something, I will do it. There was no way I wasn't crossing that finish line."

Chris (55) was diagnosed with MND in 2018 and was forced to retire from policing in 2020.



The daughter of a former West Midlands sergeant who died of Motor Neurone Disease (MND) said carrying a photo of her dad with her as she climbed Snowdon [inspired her to keep going](#). Laura Rollason conquered the 1,000 metre mountain on 8 October, the weekend that would have been her dad John Rollason's 62nd birthday, just over a year after he died at the age of 60.

November

"Cuts have consequences", said Rich Cooke as Government figures revealed [crime had risen in West Midlands](#) by 22 per cent in the year to June 2022. He said the 368,000 crimes were sadly unsurprising. "One of the reasons is ludicrous recording rules that see us making records of almost anything reported by the public that 'might' be criminal without any further substance. This kind of nonsense is clogging the system, all for a box ticking exercise."

Feature continued on Page 23



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Rich later welcomed the Home Secretary's [calls for more "common sense policing"](#) agreeing that discussions about 'critical race theory' and extra categories of hate crimes were best left to academics and politicians. He assured: "We would love nothing more than a return to common sense policing but to do that we will need more officers who are trained properly in practical street craft, locally based and better resourced."

Meanwhile it was revealed that West Midlands Police had [swelled by 140 officers](#) compared to last year. Data showed the Force had 7,715 serving officers at the end of September compared with 7,575 in September 2021.

Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) complained that new officer recruits were [stuck in classrooms](#) rather than out on the beat. They said the requirement for recruits to undertake three years of study (equivalent to a policing degree) would deter older recruits and the non-academically minded. Rich Cooke said: "We have always said that you don't need a degree to be a good police officer."

A week later, the Home Secretary asked the college to ensure there was still a non-degree entry route to policing.

Rich also called on West Midlands' Chief Constable to start ['trusting and empowering' officers](#). Although inspectors will be able to authorise Section 60 operations, they will need to seek confirmation from the Assistant Chief Constable. "Nobody wants to be calling the ACC at 2am to justify themselves as to why they need to put a Section 60 in place, do they?" Rich asked.

December

West Midlands Police Federation rep Roy Teague is working on the second volume of a book which lists UFO sightings by police officers and wanted to hear from anyone who may have seen something unusual in the skies.



Roy, who has never spotted a UFO himself but remains fascinated by the subject, is hoping to repeat the success of Policing The Haunted Skies - Volume 1 which he and his co-author John Hanson published earlier this year.

In one of his final acts as Chief Constable, Sir David Thompson presented an award to West Midlands Police Federation secretary Tim Rogers to acknowledge his outstanding efforts in bringing about a change in the law that will benefit police drivers.



The Chief presented his final Chief's Award to Tim on the day that the new statutory guidance underpinning the change in law came into effect.

"It was a lovely and appreciated gesture by the Chief," says Tim who attended the Force gathering with no idea that he was going to be singled out for praise.

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“ I ACTUALLY FEEL ALMOST UNCOMFORTABLE WINNING THESE AWARDS BECAUSE I CAN THINK OF COUNTLESS EXAMPLES OF MY COLLEAGUES, WHO HAVE DEMONSTRATED THE SAME BRAVERY, IF NOT MORE.

Mat Evans.

Awards keep coming for hero cop who saved NHS worker

Mat Evans was one of the last police officers to receive a Queen's Police Medal (QPM) from Queen Elizabeth II after he tackled a knifeman outside a hospital, saving the life of an NHS worker in the process.

Now the West Midlands officer's heroic actions have earned him a Police Bravery Award and a Pride of Birmingham Award too.

Mat was off-duty and visiting London when he spotted an incident involving the offender and a blue light worker outside a hospital. He positioned himself between the attacker and the victim and then gave chase when the armed man ran away.

Within minutes, having caught up with the offender, Mat was wrestling the man on the ground, before being kicked and punched by a crowd.

"We were basically fighting over the knife, and I was shouting to let the crowd know that I was a good guy and he was the bad guy, thinking that any second now, somebody would help me," explained Mat.

"I was trying to be as chilled as possible in that situation when all of a sudden somebody kicked me in the head, then there was a punch

and I soon realised that it was the crowd who was attacking me.

"It was the only time in my career that I didn't just feel scared, but I actually felt that 'this could be it'. Nobody was helping me, in fact, it was the opposite they actually wanted to hurt me. I didn't know how long it would go on for."

Miraculously, as fatigue was kicking in, Mat recalls a man coming over to the attacker and taking the knife out of his hand before running off with it - which, as it transpired, was an attempt to dispose of the weapon.

"It was then that the attacker pulled on my beard - and this is an award-winning beard, he had gone too far," added Mat.

When the Metropolitan Police turned up, they arrested the offender and explained to Mat that the victim had been stabbed in the heart. The attacker was jailed for a total of 12 years and nine months.

"The fact that the man had survived is a miracle," Mat continued, adding: "When I heard he had been stabbed in the heart, I didn't expect him to survive. Fortunately, a doctor had seen the whole event take place, and fortunately being next to a hospital, was able

to help him quickly."

Following the incident, Mat went on to win the regional Police Bravery Award in 2021, be awarded Pride of Birmingham earlier this year and most recently received the QPM for his courageous and heroic actions.

Being part of this year's QPM birthday honours list meant that Mat was one of the last officers to receive such an award from Queen Elizabeth II before she died in September.

"To be honest, I feel very lucky to be alive, let alone have received these awards," said Mat, who admits he actually thought it was a phone scam when he was told he had received a QPM.

"I actually feel almost uncomfortable winning these awards because I can think of countless examples of my colleagues, who have demonstrated the same bravery, if not more.

"Of course, it's been an incredibly humbling year and I am immensely grateful for the recognition."

Mat also features in our review of the year, starting on p17.



Mat Evans meets former Home Secretary Priti Patel at the Police Bravery Awards 2021 Downing Street reception.

A portrait of Home Secretary Suella Braverman, a woman with dark hair, wearing a dark blue blazer over a red top, smiling slightly. She is wearing a decorative brooch on her left lapel and earrings. The background is a plain, light grey.

Relief as Home Secretary backs down over policing degrees

West Midlands Police Federation chair Rich Cooke welcomed a change in direction at the Home Office which will mean all officer recruits are no longer required to complete a degree level qualification.

Rich said: "I am pleased that the Home Secretary has listened to our concerns and is no longer going to slam the door on the non-traditional route into the police service, as had been threatened.

“ **MANY OF THE SKILLS YOU NEED TO BE AN EFFECTIVE POLICE OFFICER ARE NOT TAUGHT THROUGH A DEGREE COURSE. COMMON SENSE, GOOD COMMUNICATION SKILLS, THE ABILITY TO TALK TO PEOPLE FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE TEND TO BE JUST PART OF WHO YOU ARE RATHER THAN SOMETHING YOU ARE TAUGHT.**

"But Ms Braverman now needs to work urgently with the College of Policing to make this a reality. It also raises the spectre of what to do with potentially hundreds of operationally competent student cops who face dismissal because they have not passed the academic requirements of their training. They are stressed and anxious. That could be ended with reassurances given now.

"This is the right thing to do because the requirement that every new recruit should spend three years studying for the equivalent of a degree deterred older, experienced recruits, people who are considering a change of career. It also put off the non-academically minded who might otherwise make fine officers.

"Many of the skills you need to be an effective police officer are not taught through a degree course. Common sense, good communication skills, the ability to talk to people from all walks of life tend to be just part of who you are rather than something you are taught."

The Federation has always maintained that it should not be necessary to hold a degree to be a good police officer.

Home Secretary Suella Braverman has now told Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) and senior officers: "Our police force must be open to those who do not have a degree or want one. To build public confidence, we must draw from the widest possible pool of talent across all sections of society.

"So, I have asked the college to build on their work by considering options for a new non-degree entry route, to deliver officers of the highest calibre, which will complement the existing framework. In the meantime, the current transitional non degree entry route will be kept open."

Sixteen PCCs had signed a letter to the Home Secretary warning that up to 10 per

cent of new officers are stuck in classrooms rather on the frontlines. They also warned that a three-year programme of study was likely to deter older recruits or the non-academically minded from applying, endangering the uplift. Rich added: "If the Government's Police Uplift Programme is to be judged as a success, then the public needs to see criminals being arrested and an increased police presence on the frontline. This cannot happen while one in ten new recruits are stuck away from this completing academic study."

"I hope this change in direction from the Home Office will mean we can welcome the widest possible pool of talent, which has to be good for policing and the public."

We would welcome 'common sense policing'

Suella Braverman told police chiefs that officers' time was precious, and that the public wanted to see them fighting crime, not "debating gender on Twitter".

"The way to ensure public confidence in the police is to focus on getting the basics right. What I call 'common sense policing'. The kind of policing the law-abiding majority deserves and expects," she said.

West Midlands Federation chair Rich Cooke agreed: "There is a 'woke' mindset at the top that leads to much time wasted discussing, for example, 'critical race theory' or 'white privilege' or whether there should be extra categories of hate crimes. I say leave all that to the academics and politicians."

He added: "To return to common sense policing we will need more officers who are trained properly in practical street craft, locally based and better resourced with important equipment like Taser and with less financial worries meaning we need fairer mechanisms for delivering better pay and conditions."

Rich said the Home Secretary was right to say that the focus of policing should be stopping criminals – and welcomed her support for stop and search.

However, he pointed out that in recent years more and more police time is being taken up by what he would describe as

"social work" – adding that "eight out of 10 calls for service are non-crime related. It begs the question if we don't go, who will?"

"There is a current crisis in our ambulance services – this has a massive knock-on to police work, for example. We can't just leave people who are in need to go fight crime."

Rich said years of cuts to policing and partner agencies also had a massive impact on policing and urgent investment in the service was essential.

The Home Secretary told police officers: "I am committed to supporting you in using your powers without fear or favour to keep our streets, and keep our people safe. Under my watch you have my full backing to use stop and search, which is a vital tool in the fight against crime.

"To those who try to undermine your use of stop and search, or question your legitimate use of investigatory powers, or the use of force which leads to the prevention of crime, I say this: our police are working to keep you safe. To keep your children safe. To save lives. Let them do their work.

"It is only right that you can stand firm against criminals, rather than listening to those who would denigrate your work or use data selectively to undermine your credibility."



WSP counselling was 'a lifeline'

A West Midlands trainee detective who accessed vital help from the Police Federation's Welfare Support Programme (WSP) says counselling was a '100 per cent a lifeline' at a time when she needed it most.

Mother-of-two Joanne Hadley (38) says that she 'dreads to think' where she would be today if she had not received counselling from the programme, which is run by the Defence Medical Welfare Service (DMWS) and provides specialist mental health support for Federation members.

Joanne's comments come shortly after the Police Federation of England and Wales announced its funding for the programme has been extended for another year.

"It was around 12 months ago now, I just fell apart. I think two decades' worth of trauma and stress, both personally and professionally, had finally caught up with me. I love my job but all of a sudden I hated going to work - in fact, the thought of walking through those doors and into work, I just couldn't do it anymore. That's when I knew something just wasn't right," explained Joanne, whose husband Dave is a West Midlands Police Federation conduct and performance lead and WSP liaison officer.

"I felt really out of control and I needed support there and then, not six months down the line, I needed support then. I wasn't sleeping at night, I'd started to grind my teeth and the worse bit was my whole family was being impacted.

"My family had started to see the change in my personality and it actually led to my daughter sleepwalking. There was also one morning that I couldn't even take my daughter to school because of how I was feeling."

Following advice from Dave, Joanne decided to reach out to the WSP.

"I phoned that afternoon and by the next day, I'd got an appointment. And after just one session I felt loads better, it was exactly what I

needed there and then," continued Joanne.

"I think that's what the WSP gives you, support right there, right then, when you need it. It's that quickness. When you're having a breakdown - which I now know I was having - you don't have the time to wait for an appointment.

"They are so flexible too, their service fitted around me, not me working around them."

Joanne, who was signed off work for four months, had weekly support sessions from the WSP, followed by six weeks of counselling

“ I WANT TO SHOUT ABOUT THE WSP FROM THE ROOFTOPS, I WANT PEOPLE TO KNOW IT'S THERE SO THEY CAN USE IT TOO. I WOULD RECOMMEND IT TO EVERYONE AND I WOULD DEFINITELY NOT THINK TWICE ABOUT USING THEIR SERVICE AGAIN IN THE FUTURE IF I EVER NEEDED IT.

from fully qualified professionals.

"I knew I'd been spiralling and had reached out to others for support, like my GP, who just wanted to prescribe me medication. Others just wanted to get me back to work, that was their focus, not my mental health," said Joanne.

"If I'd gone through all of that without support from the WSP, I'd dread to think where I'd be now."

Having received the support, Joanne says she now knows the signs to look out for, so she can prevent herself from burning out again in the future.

Thanks to the help and support received



by the WSP, Joanne returned back to work and has continued her detective training.

"I'm fortunate that my husband is a Federation representative and is heavily involved with the WSP but if that wasn't the case, I wouldn't have known about the programme," Joanne added.

"I want to shout about the WSP from the rooftops, I want people to know it's there so they can use it too. I would recommend it to everyone and I would definitely not think twice about using their service again in the future if I ever needed it."

Joanne is among 500 members who have received ongoing mental health support through the Defence Medical Welfare Service, with the WSP specifically providing:

- Practical and mental support
- Clinical assessments and dedicated counselling
- Person-centred support (via telephone or face-to-face)
- Access to fully trained and accredited professionals
- Independent and confidential support
- Referrals to appropriate follow-on specialist support.

Members who would like to know more about the WSP or feel they need support from the programme should contact the West Midlands Police Federation branch officials or workplace reps.



Federation deputy secretary Chris James with the welfare van.



Welfare van proves a hit with officers

West Midlands Police Federation's welfare van is proving every bit as popular as predicted after its first few months on the road.

The van is a joint initiative between the branch and the Force.

It has a table and seating for four people, a sink, a microwave oven, fridge and a boiling water dispenser. The specially-adapted van contains a toilet and has a retractable canopy which opens from the side to provide shelter and shade.

The van is predominantly used where police work is expected to go on for more than 24 hours but it is also sent to pre-planned events and mutual aid deployments.

It came into its own during the Commonwealth Games when it provided much-needed welfare services to officers who were not part of the security operation but found themselves stretched to the limit while carrying out business as usual across the Force.

The van was then deployed after the death of the Queen and thousands of officers were sent to London as part of operation London Bridge.

More recently, it was in demand round-the-clock for officers working in Birmingham during the Conservative Party conference at

the beginning of October.

Officers were provided with hot and cold drinks, crisps, sweets and chocolate while having a sit down and a chat and the feedback was nothing but positive.

West Midlands Police Federation deputy secretary Chris James said: "As you can imagine it went down really well, especially on the colder nights. It gave officers a chance to sit in the warm for five minutes, grab a drink and a snack and use the onboard toilet facilities.

"A number of members told us how much they appreciated everything we were doing and it was clear that the van's presence was very gratefully received.

"I think it's fair to say from the comments we receive that our members' morale gets a real boost whenever they see the welfare van parking up."

Welfare vans are becoming more popular

across the police service as greater emphasis is placed on officer morale and wellbeing and around a dozen Police Federation branches now have their own vehicles.

The West Midlands Police Federation van became operational earlier this year and was an instant hit with members.

Chris said: "I proposed the procurement of a welfare van after carrying out a survey of crime scenes over a period of 12 months and found that between 18 and 24 officers attending the average scene were going without basic facilities.

"There were too many occasions when officers found themselves with no access to a toilet, nowhere to take refreshments, and nowhere to wash their hands or even sit down and have a drink and something to eat.

"I am delighted that the van is being put to good use and is proving so popular with members."

“ A NUMBER OF MEMBERS TOLD US HOW MUCH THEY APPRECIATED EVERYTHING WE WERE DOING AND IT WAS CLEAR THAT THE VAN'S PRESENCE WAS VERY GRATEFULLY RECEIVED. ”

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Legal Services for West Midlands Police

With over 20 years' experience of working with police, Gorvins have been a leading provider of legal services in all matters arising from relationship breakdowns and disputes concerning children. We understand the importance of family and the impact that a family breakdown can have upon all of those closely concerned and that is why our service (with discounted fees) is offered not just to serving and retired police officers and police staff, but also to their partners and immediate family members.

Part of **our commitment** to supporting those whose vital work supports us all includes a prompt **initial consultation - free of charge.**

We also supply our legal advice to you at a discounted rate and are able to offer a **fixed-fee divorce process.**

Our family and divorce law specialists understand the aspects that particularly impact upon the police with reference to pensions in divorce cases and shift patterns in relation to arrangement for children.

Other Legal Services

- Wills, Trusts and Probate
- Corporate/Commercial
- Personal Injury
- Employment Law
- Insolvency
- Dispute Resolution and Civil Litigation
- Commercial Property



New factsheet offers help with stress management

Federation members are being urged to make use of factsheet published by Police Mutual for International Stress Awareness Week (7 to 11 November).

It includes suggestions and ideas aimed at helping officers to manage worries and stress levels and advice for any who may be feeling overwhelmed.

West Midlands Police Federation equality lead Jon Nott said: "We do a very stressful job and often have to make split-second decisions while under extreme pressure and that can eventually take its toll on our wellbeing.

"This factsheet covers all aspects of dealing with stress and gives useful information on what to do if things start to become a bit overwhelming.

"Everyone deals with stress and pressure

in their own way but this leaflet is worth reading and I think our members could find it very helpful."

International Stress Awareness Week was created in 2018 to raise awareness about stress prevention and provides a great opportunity to take a moment to think about personal wellbeing and find out more on how to manage stress.

This year marks 24 years since the establishment of Stress Awareness Day, which is held on the first Wednesday in November each year and has been since 1998.

View the Police Mutual factsheet at: www.polfed.org/westmids/media/4952/rlg10226708_stress_awareness_week_nov_2022_60072_final.pdf

“EVERYONE DEALS WITH STRESS AND PRESSURE IN THEIR OWN WAY BUT THIS LEAFLET IS WORTH READING AND I THINK OUR MEMBERS COULD FIND IT VERY HELPFUL.



Ian's mission to help 999 colleagues live a healthier life



Ian Cook.

A Federation member was on a mission to help fellow emergency service workers live a healthier lifestyle, as he marked World Diabetes Day on 14 November.

Ian Cook, a West Midlands traffic officer, is encouraging colleagues to join his online network 'Blue Light Lifestyle', a virtual group designed to be a safe and supportive space for those who struggle with their diet and weight.

He explains: "I have a lot of people come to me mentioning the word diabetes, it really is massively common. I actually think there are probably loads of people walking around who don't know they have diabetes and it's not until they have a scare, that they make those adjustments," said Ian, who completed a degree in sports coaching before joining the Force 15 years ago.

"I want to encourage people to be proactive and take action to prevent getting diagnosed, rather than waiting to be told they have diabetes."

Ian helped an inspector who was at risk of developing diabetes lose almost 40lbs in just 12 weeks, enhancing both his physical and mental health.

Diabetes is a chronic disease that happens when the pancreas does not produce enough insulin - a hormone that regulates blood glucose - or when the body cannot effectively use the insulin it produces.

As well as potentially experiencing problems with their eyes, diabetic patients can also suffer from kidney or heart failure, gum disease and potential issues with their feet which could lead to amputation if untreated.



There are two types of diabetes, 1 and 2. Type 1 diabetes is when the body's immune system attacks and destroys the cells that produce insulin, while Type 2 is when the body does not produce enough insulin, or the body's cells do not react to insulin.

"People don't realise that their lifestyle can massively impact whether they are diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes. I want to help people be more mindful of what they're eating, so they can either prevent being diagnosed or reduce their medication," added Ian.

Ian explained how he has been working with a pre-diabetic inspector and his wife, helping them to lose a total of five stone in three months.

"This particular inspector had no exercise or nutrition routine, which was massively impacting his life. He didn't like the way he was feeling, he didn't like the way he looked and he didn't feel like he could do his job properly," continued Ian.

"Together, we started making small changes, which began to make a huge difference. I showed him how we could introduce exercise into his life and be more mindful of the food he consumes. Now he is so much happier and healthier."

Ian initially launched Blue Light Lifestyle after wanting to use his degree to help fellow emergency service workers and he soon found

“ I WANT TO REACH MORE PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY AS WE HEAD INTO WINTER. AS IT GETS COLDER AND WITH CHRISTMAS ON ITS WAY, PEOPLE LEAN TOWARDS COMFORT EATING AND NOT EXERCISING SO MUCH.

that due to regular shift patterns, many of his colleagues had become lazy with their diet, which led to them turning to snacking and takeaways.

Along with working with his peers in West Midlands Police, Ian also supports 999 workers and NHS staff from across the country.

With 700 people now members of the Blue Light Lifestyle Facebook page, Ian has decided to grow the online community even more by creating an Instagram page.

He uses the social media platforms to regularly post motivational messages, information and videos to help encourage, support and advise members.

"I want to reach more people, especially as we head into winter. As it gets colder and with Christmas on its way, people lean towards comfort eating and not exercising so much," he said.

"People are going to get complacent and I get it but I try to remind people what they felt like before they started, to help them never lose focus.

"And it's not just people who are at risk or have diabetes, everyone has their own individual goals. I want to help people introduce new habits into their lives and stick to them. It's all about making small changes and being consistent."

Ian also offers one-to-one support for those really struggling with their diet and weight. Capacity-dependent, Ian will create a paid-for, 90-day plan for clients, with the main goal to change their attitude to food and exercise long-term.

Find out more about Blue Light Lifestyle by joining the Facebook group or following **@Bluelight_lifestyle** on Instagram.

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www.NARPOWestMidlands.org
www.NARPO-Wolverhampton.co.uk

How does no-fault divorce affect matrimonial finances and children?

By the family team at Slater and Gordon

With the introduction of no-fault divorce in April 2022, there are a number of changes to the divorce process, including the removal of the requirement for blame to be attributed, the possibility of making a joint application for divorce, and the removal of the option to contest the divorce.

Divorce legally ends the marriage, however, it does not resolve matrimonial finances or child arrangements. The introduction of no-fault divorce has the potential to make these arrangements easier to settle, allowing for more constructive conversations, because the animosity which could previously be involved at the outset, in having to assign blame in order to get divorced, is alleviated.

Child arrangements

Following separation, discussions around

child arrangements should start as soon as possible. It isn't always possible to come to an amicable arrangement directly, and in these circumstances, mediation should be attempted.

You will first both attend a Mediation Information and Assessment Meeting (MIAM) with a neutral, third party mediator, before joint mediation sessions commence.

In the event you're unable to reach an agreement, via mediation or through solicitors, then you have the right to apply for a Child Arrangement Order at Court which will commence Children Act Proceedings, however, court should always be a last resort and alternate forms of dispute resolution should first be attempted.

Matrimonial finances

Any financial settlement reached upon divorce (confirming the divide of the matrimonial pot) will need to be drafted into

a financial consent order and lodged at court to be made legally binding, formally dismissing financial claims.

A financial consent order cannot be lodged at court for the judge's approval until the first decree in the divorce (the decree nisi or conditional order) has been pronounced. In order to reach a financial settlement, it's standard for there to be an exchange of full and frank financial disclosure before negotiations commence, in order to determine the extent of the pot for division.

When embarking on the breakdown of your marriage, it's imperative that you seek advice from a specialist family law solicitor, experienced in dealing with police pensions and divorce. Your solicitor will guide you through the process and ensure you receive the best outcome for you, and your family.



Your family law specialists

As specialists in police Divorce, we understand that pressures of police work can make family circumstances more complex, which is why we provide straightforward guidance to help you move forward with clarity and confidence.

Following the introduction of "No Fault Divorce", we offer a discounted **fixed fee Divorce for £420 inc of VAT plus Court fee**. We also offer police federation members a free initial family law consultation and a discount on hourly rates to assist you with the resolution of your matrimonial finances and child arrangements, providing clear information on costs from the outset.

Contact your family law representative Georgina to book your free appointment today.

☎ 0330 995 5261

✉ georgina.chase@slatergordon.co.uk

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We'd like to say a big **thank you...**



In the build up to Christmas, it's the perfect time to let our members know how much we appreciate their ongoing support.

Thanks to your membership subscriptions, the Ben Fund has handed out more than £70,000 in the form of grants and benefits this year.

I know the months ahead will be financially challenging for many of us and I want to remind members that our police charity is here for you if you need it.

Here's a quick recap of your membership benefits:

- Grants and interest-free loans in times of hardship and distress
- Death in service grant and £25 per week for all your surviving children until their 18th birthday
- Convalescence and wellbeing breaks
- Sickness vouchers
- Discounted holidays
- FREE will writing service
- Annual family events
- Exclusive rewards

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Serving officers and police staff who pay £5 per month are also entitled to £600 towards private medical consultations (no longer available for new joiners).

Don't forget to let us know via info@wmpben.co.uk if your beneficiary details have changed.

HOLIDAY HOME BALLOT OPENS NEXT MONTH

A quick reminder that our holiday home ballot launches on 3 January 2023.

As a member of the Benevolent Fund, you can bid for a week by registering your interest to stay at our holiday homes in Dartmouth or Weymouth.

For more details about the properties and how to enter the ballot visit www.wmpben.co.uk. We will be sending out more details to our members very soon so please look out for our holiday ballot email in the new year with information on how to enter.

I am always touched by the messages of thanks we receive from members who we have helped throughout the year.

Earlier this year our police charity gave retired officers, Peter (known to friends as Buck) and his wife Amanda, a grant to pay for a wet room to be fitted in their family home.

Amanda (53) requires 24-hour care and as a result has spent many months in hospital. Essential modifications made to their



house, including the new wet room, means Amanda can now remain with husband Buck and their two children at the family home.

Being able to stay together as a family, especially at this time of the year, has massively improved the family's quality of life.

"I would like to say thank you on behalf of Amanda and myself for funding our wet room. As you know I had not considered the Benevolent Fund for help, but after a third party approached you for possible assistance, I was grateful for your support," said Buck.

"From day one you have been so positive whilst not making any promises. We are so very grateful for the funding provided. The wet room has made a tremendous difference to Amanda being home, which is all thanks to the generosity of the Benevolent Fund. Thank you."

It's been another busy year for our police charity and the level of assistance we have given to police officers and staff, both serving and retired, would not have been possible without the ongoing support of our members.

A massive thank you from me and the team.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees and everyone here at the West Midlands Police Benevolent Fund I would like to wish you and your family a very happy and peaceful Christmas.

John Williams
Chair



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