


# Police leaders need to protect officers on the ground over bureaucracy and priorities, says former chief

 A former chief constable has called on police leaders to stand up to the Home Office to protect their frontline officers.

Sir Edward Crew, former chief of West Midlands Police, was chairing a conference on bureaucracy in London this month.

Sir Edward said: 'Chief constables should decide the priorities on the ground. They have got the responsibility of protecting their officers. You cannot expect them to deliver everything. If you have got more than five or six priorities, they stop being a priority. Police leaders must ensure frontline officers are the first and not the last consideration.'

He said protecting frontline officers should be a priority for police chiefs and described the Home Office as a 'tyranny of experts'

In response to a question about increasing bureaucracy caused by the Home Office, Sir



**Home Office should show benefit of bureaucracy**

Edward said: 'Don't do it. If the Home Office ask to see something and you don't show them, normally they forget about it. Then when they challenge you, that's when you say we are not doing it unless you show us the

benefit. Eventually they accept it and go away.'

The Home Office's policing bureaucracy gateway was set up to eliminate or minimise any unnecessary bureaucratic demands on frontline police officers.

Yet, the conference heard how Greater Manchester Police officers must complete a 22-page form for adult cautions.

Pat Garside, an officer in the force, said the form was to standardise the caution process, but added that it had not gone through the bureaucracy 'gateway'.

He added: 'It is not working. The bureaucracy implications of new policing are not being considered.'

Jan Berry, chairman of the Federation, said the problem was replicated elsewhere for other offences.


'The domestic violence form is 21 pages long. I'm not saying it isn't a serious offence, but I do question if these forms are delivering better treatment of domestic violence cases.'

Mrs Berry called on the Home Office to stop micro-managing the police service.

'Tell us what you want us to do and let us get on with it.'



## Bureaucracy-busting technology should be available to all officers

 Officers who do not have the latest technology look at colleagues from other forces as if 'they are from a different planet' as they do not have access to such cutting edge equipment.

Jan Berry spoke at a conference organised by DRS, developers of technology that reads handwritten crime reports.

Mrs Berry said: 'Companies such as DRS will make it easier for police officers, but it is still a postcode lottery in terms of the technology we have access to and what we need to make our jobs easier.'



Mrs Berry said that only those forces where the chief officer was the ACPO 'lead' in a particular area tended to benefit from the latest technology.

'Officers elsewhere look at them as if they are from a different planet.'

Bureaucracy-busting technology must be available to all officers, the chairman of the Federation told the conference.

Mrs Berry said that the service needed to be supported 'not stymied' by bureaucracy.

'I would like to think that we will have an integrated co-ordinated IT system that police officers can access for accurate information on which they can base their decisions. This is going to give the most support to police officers.'

Paul Webb, from DRS Data and Research Services, described technology as a 'key player' in helping forces to reduce their paperwork burden.

'Technology never comes cheap, however neither do people. Technology can produce a practical solution and produce a real return on investment as long as it meets the user's requirements.'

'It will also lead to increased efficiency allowing the officer to spend more time operationally as opposed to administratively.'

