

Home Secretary tells conference he's all ears

f On the exact same week that chief officers congregated to pat each other on the back at the ACPO conference in Birmingham last month, over 1,200 rank and file delegates descended on Blackpool at the Police Federation annual conference to discuss the true effects of recent changes to policing.

One theme that dominated many of the debates at this year's conference was training, or the lack of it. Whilst chief officers agree there is a need for their own personal training and development there appears to be a tendency of seeing training for the troops as an abstraction, rather than an investment.

This was blatantly demonstrated during the officer safety debate where huge discrepancies were revealed about the amount of time given to safety training in forces. Despite ACPO guidance for rank and file officers recommending a minimum 12 hours a year, the postcode lottery of training showed that one force only managed five hours. And let's put this into context; many banks put

aside 30 minutes a week for staff training, that's two hours a month and 24 hours training a year. I'm sure the public feel reassured that their bank cashier gets double the amount of training a year than ACPO determines is necessary for frontline officers.

And let's face it we're not alone when it comes to little or no training. The recent expose by an undercover reporter from the *Daily Mirror* shows that our CSO colleagues face just the same issues we do. Many feel their job is constantly changing, they lack clear national training standards and they don't feel suitably equipped for the inevitable confrontational situations they are often forced into.

It's interesting then, that in the face of training inadequacy, conference overwhelmingly agreed that Taser should be issued to every operational officer, rather than just being an additional tool for authorised firearms officers. I'm sure they are hoping that there's some practical training provided and they are not just handed the manual for some bedtime reading.



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What do you think?
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One person who was probably glad Taser isn't standard issue yet was the Home Secretary. Charles Clarke's harsh retort to Dorset Federation chairman, Clive Chamberlain, when he dared to call the Home Office magazine, *The Sharp End*, juvenile and patronising produced a resounding chorus of disapproval from the floor.

But let's give Mr Clarke a chance. He is still in the honeymoon period of a third Labour victory and now has a clear mandate as Home Secretary. He stated

clearly to conference that that the Office of Constable will remain as long as he is in the post and that he would listen and consult with the Federation on a wide range of subjects. Jan Berry, chairman of the Federation, in turn, made it very clear that the Federation will take him at his word and hold him to account on his promises when conference reconvenes in Bournemouth next year.

We're watching you Mr Clarke.



In Focus



Officers could be putting themselves at risk because they are not being given the proper training on how to use safety equipment such as batons and CS spray. A Federation survey of 34 forces showed that officers' safety training varied from five to 24 hours depending on the force. Page 20



Officers voted for a working party to look at admitting police staff and others into the Federation. Although most delegates said it was too early to make a decision they agreed that the option should be discussed by a working party made up of representatives from all 43 forces. News page 8



The Independent Police Complaints Commission has been in existence for 12 months. Officers say how they feel the organisation has progressed on issues affecting police officers, including the slow process of investigations. News page 16