

# Officers are working under 'intolerable strain', according to Federation research

Initial research carried out by the Federation has shown a dramatic picture of under-resourced units, staffed in the main by probationary officers, vastly over worked, under-supervised and working under intolerable strain to finish one job and move on to the next.

Yet, if you speak to many senior politicians or to most senior police officers they will paint a very rosy picture on the state of policing today in England and Wales. Crime surveys show that overall crime is down and great strides have been made in important areas such as dwelling burglaries and vehicle crime. Home Office targets are being met with frequent regularity and local policing plans are a resounding success.

Police officer numbers are at a record high and so the euphoria continues, the reformists herald this up turn in performance as an indication of



Alan Gordon

their success and as a catalyst to accelerate further change.

However, when you scratch beneath the surface a different picture starts to unfold. Speak to your next-door neighbour, the people in the pub or in the supermarket and familiar stories abound. We never see a police officer in our street. The police stations around here are never open. It took four hours for a police officer to attend to my burglary. The police are not

interested in low-level crime. Yobs rule our streets.

We have all heard these impassioned pleas from friends, family, and members of the general public on a regular basis. And so why the totally opposing views on the state of policing? Why is the perception of the public such that it questions the level of service but senior police management constantly sings its praises?

With the emphasis now on community-based policing, could the answer lie in the level of resources aimed at 24/7 response policing? If the public call the police it often falls upon these response teams to attend and, if they cannot, it leaves the public disgruntled and the officers frustrated at the level of service they are forced to provide or rather not provide.

It has been the case for as long as I have been a police officer that the 24/7-shift response officer has always been under-

valued and under resourced by the majority of senior managers and with the advent of the National Intelligence Model (NIM) this problem has been exacerbated. On one division in one shire force a variety of new units have been formed to implement the NIM. These are staffed in the main with experienced response team officers leaving the shifts depleted and with an average length of service of 1.6 years.

The Police Federation of England and Wales are continuing their research and over the next few weeks will visit a number of forces around the country speaking to rank and file officers who are on the front line. Getting their perspective on the state of policing and listening first hand to the day-to-day problems they face in trying to get the job done. May be then we will have a clearer picture on the true state of policing in England and Wales today.



## NEWS

# Red tape hampers human trafficking investigations

Human traffickers could be slipping through the net because HM Revenue & Customs do not readily supply information to the police which could help secure a conviction.

Police could suspect someone of trafficking and seek further details on that individual but strict confidentiality laws mean that the organisation will not release the information.

Det Sgt Steve Titterton, from South Yorkshire Police, who works within Operation Reflex combating human trafficking, says the lack of information can hamper police progress.

He told *Police*: 'The situation is that people are coming into the country and claiming asylum and they are told that they cannot work.

'We may suspect that someone claiming asylum is making money from trafficking. They may have new cars and a big house but they may not have paid tax for years, where are they getting their money from if they can't work? The Inland Revenue [now HM Revenue and Customs] will not tell us whether they have or haven't paid tax.'

Nationally the police work alongside other agencies, includ-

ing the Immigration Service, to combat such organised crime under Operation Reflex.

Det Sgt Titterton added: 'Part of the intelligence package is looking at the financial background of people, and I can understand they are not going to want to check on every burglar, but we are taking about serious organised crime.'

However, a spokesman for HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) said that there is a very strict legal duty of confidentiality for all of the information it holds, including a criminal sanction for wrongful disclosure.

She added that they could only disclose information in prescribed circumstances, where it is lawful to do so, such as where they have consent from the person themselves or there is a specific piece of legislation which allows them to disclose.

The organisation do share information with the police, for example, for the purposes of a criminal investigation but the request has to come through on an official from and goes through various stages.

