

Case Study: Women's Reserve Representative

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I joined Derbyshire Constabulary in January 1989 and am proud to say I'm a career constable - serving the majority of time on frontline response and beat officer duties.

The Reserve Seat, originally the Women's Rep, was set up to ensure the female perspective was taken into account when decisions at all levels of the Federation business were taken on policy and legislative matters. This provision was deemed discriminatory and in 1996 a 'reserve' seat provision was set up under section 49 of the Sexual Discrimination Act, to represent the minority sex (this remains women). The reserve seat seeks to ensure fair treatment for the minority sex and to get the best out of people, allowing them to flourish in their careers.

During 2003, whilst acting as a colleague supporter for the Derbyshire BPA, I became rapidly aware that the case required the support of legal services and contacted Julia Roper-Smith, then JBB Chairman. Over the coming months I went on to have further opportunities to work alongside other Fed reps from our JBB and in 2004 the constables reserve seat became vacant. Having plied me with fine wine and good food, Julia encouraged me to stand – to which I merrily agreed! I have been successfully re-elected twice and am now the Constables Branch Board Chair, JBB Equality leader and JBB Deputy Chair.

Part of the role means I sit on a number of forums within the force including the Confidence & Equality group, the Gender Agenda Steering group, the Disability Forum and have been part of the PDR review consultation group.

I believe the reserve seat is of paramount importance. Whilst the police service has developed tremendously in respect of diversity, inclusivity and holistic thinking, I still think there are times when 'we could do better'. As a Fed rep I deal with all matters across the board including misconduct, health & safety, fairness & equality issues. From female officers I receive many queries particularly related to maternity, work/life balance and disputes/grievances. It's a worthwhile role and one I am proud to be doing.