

Female officers see a service going back to the 1970s

Women in the police service could become an 'endangered species' if a raft of reforms are pushed through which will see female officers losing out on pay and prospects.

Jayne Monkhouse, equality advisor to the Police Federation, painted a stark picture of the future police service if recommendations made in recent reports into policing by Tom Winsor and Peter Neyroud become a reality.

She told delegates at the Policewomen's Eve of Conference Meeting in Bournemouth last month that moves to "modernise" the pay structure will unfairly discriminate. One recommendation in the Winsor review into police pay and conditions suggests a move back to the 1970s when working unsocial shifts attracted higher pay.

Women make up around a quarter of the police service and 40 percent of officers with less than five years' service. Ms Monkhouse said that "it is inevitable that his [Winsor's] proposals will increase the gender pay gap", because although many women can be flexible with hours they cannot balance childcare and caring responsibilities with set unsocial shifts, and will therefore miss out on pay or have to give up their jobs.

She added: "There is almost a complete lack of understanding about equality in both reports. Both men ignore the fact that the last 10 years have seen a dramatic increase in the number of women recruited into the service, and do nothing to ensure that they are retained."

Peter Neyroud's report on leadership and training suggests a pre-entry qualification for police officers, equivalent to a degree, which Ms Monkhouse says would "exclude as many as 70 percent of the people who currently join the police service".

Women – who are more likely to have caring responsibilities – along with those from a poorer background, those from black minority ethnic backgrounds and older people are less likely to have the time or money to pursue such a career, she argues.

In her speech to the conference, Ms Monkhouse said the reports fail to look at how the proposals will impact on equality. The Winsor report discriminates but justifies this, she says, by "treating everyone badly" as the report states that "inequalities are balanced out across the ranks and lengths of service".

Mr Winsor makes scant mention of equality issues throughout his report, and in the glossary says that the male gender mentioned throughout the report refers to "both sexes".

Views from the floor

Presenter Kaye Adams asked policewomen who were at the Federation's Policewomen's Eve of Conference Meeting if the Winsor Report would make them reconsider their career choice.

A sergeant from the Met Police who is also a firearms instructor said she was also a qualified electrician and told the conference that may become a more attractive choice if things "got tight".

Another officer with 14 years' experience as a police officer said: "I have a qualification in civil engineering and I took a pay cut to join the police."

She added that she would be better off working in the private sector. "I took a job that was worthwhile, and now we are being treated like mud by the politicians."

Equality advisor Jayne Monkhouse warned that suggested reforms could unfairly discriminate against women



The latest round of reforms could see the service head back to the inequality of the 1970s, warned Jayne Monkhouse

