

POLICE

Police Magazine Update

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Detectives suffering mental health issues turn to fed reps as forces cut counselling

Detectives are increasingly turning to federation representatives for counselling as occupational health units in forces are 'diminishing rapidly'.

The Police Federation's National Detective Forum Awards Seminar, held this month in London, debated the increase in cases of stress among detectives who are suffering cuts to their numbers and increased workloads.

Ian Spain, member of the PFNDF, said that detectives do not deal with good news – that it tends to be everybody's horror stories and grief and questioned whether this coupled with a long-hours culture is taking its toll.

Liz Dux, from solicitors Russell Jones and Walker, who deals with victims for psychological injuries including police officers involved in the response to the terrorist attacks in London in 7/7.

She told detectives from all over the UK at the PFNDF Seminar that as facilities for 'in-house' counselling are closing and the nurturing role of forces is diminishing federation representatives have to fill the gap.

"You as fed reps are taking on a semi-counselling role. It's very important to members and by the time they get to you they are sometimes very very ill," she said.

The advice she gave to federation representatives was to try to spot any officers who may be suffering from the effects of a psychological illness and report it early on. Officers who are treated early by such means as cognitive behavioural therapy react much better than those who suffer in silence.

The delegates were told that it is very difficult to prove a psychological injury claim in a court as there are fears of the 'great black cloud' of injury claims that would be made. Ms Dux also said such cases are very hard to prove as the criteria is hard to fulfil you had to prove any injury was 'foreseeable'.

She added: "Police officers are not very good at saying 'hello, sorry, I'm having a breakdown'."