

Bournemouth soundbites

“It suited [Education Secretary Ed] Balls to defend the teachers’ panel deal, but it didn’t suit you to do the same for us.

“Home Secretary, what is it that Mr Balls has, but you do not?”

Federation Chairman Jan Berry to Home Secretary Jacqui Smith

“I am sure when your Private Secretary reminded you of today’s event, you felt like reaching for the nearest stab proof vest, and perhaps slipping into old habits and lighting up to calm your nerves... but as you have reassured us, you have moved on from these past indiscretions – your recent crimes have been more for the Serious Fraud Office than the drug squad.”

Round two to Jan!

Andy White, Chairman of West Mercia, had asked to address conference before proceedings on Thursday morning. Invited onto stage, he told delegates: “In previous years I’ve been able to find a way to get up on stage and wish my dad happy birthday. However, it’s with deep regret that I have to inform conference that I can’t do that this year...” – *cue hushed reverence from delegates* – “because someone moved the dates. So all that’s left to say, is happy birthday for last week, dad!”

The conference hall cameras panned the audience first thing on Thursday, broadcasting those pictures onto the huge conference screen at the back of the main stage, as Jan began the day’s proceedings. So a big cheer went up when the cameras focused in on a row of delegates holding up hand made posters proclaiming “Jan 4 PM”

and “We love Jan”. The cheer was only silenced when one poster was flipped over by a grinning Berry-ite to reveal the slogan “Glory, Glory Man Utd”!

“Workforce modernisation is even growing it’s own language – and it’s bloody gobbledegook to me!”
Superintendents’ Association President Ian Johnston

“I think we seem to have lost the respect for experience in policing... when I pointed out the important part that experience can play in some policing roles, one of the Home Office officials said to me: ‘Don’t worry, we can teach that!’”
Ian Johnston hits the target again!

“If the Chief Constable of Essex, in recruiting a significant number of new officers over the next two years, can show you the worth of that approach, will we then go for a process of ‘officerisation?’”
An Essex delegate offers an alternative to civilianisation and modernisation to Sir Ronnie Flanagan.

And, of course, Dogberry was in evidence at this year’s conference:

One north west delegate keen to make a good impression at his first Federation Conference got truly into the spirit of things at a ten-pin bowling contest.

He competed well in the event at Bournemouth, for which his Branch put up a small trophy, and duly enjoyed the rest of the evening celebrating with colleagues.

But it wasn’t until he finally sat down back in his hotel room that he discovered what his colleagues had known for some time – his feet were still shod in his brightly coloured bowling shoes, while his own footwear was still sitting back in the rack at the bowling alley.

Jan Berry: From PFEW to PM?



Photography: Anderson Photography

Getting shirty: Jan Berry challenges the Home Secretary



Photography: Anderson Photography

CSOs recruited under different name

Forces are increasing their CSO numbers at the expense of police officers by advertising the role under a different title, a conference delegate warned.

A Lancashire federation representative, which is taking part in the workforce modernisation pilot, said others needed to be aware that forces were recruiting CSO's under different titles.

"We need assurances that CSOs are going to be capped at 16,000. In our force we are advertising for Response Support Administrators. If they are going to change their title we are just losing officers in a different way."

In the Metropolitan Police Service, CSOs are called volunteer police officers.

"This is just CSOs by a different name," said Julie Nesbit, Chairman of the Constables' Central Committee.

She added that the problem is forces are doing 'different things in different areas with no-one looking at the criminal justice system as a whole and asking where do CSO's fit in'.

But Police Minister Tony McNulty denied that workforce modernisation was leading to an increase in CSOs at the expense of police officer numbers.

"Workforce modernisation will be the future and will consolidate the role of the constable rather than threaten it. I'm comfortable that 140,000 officers and 16,000 CSOs should be the appropriate ratio."

However a number of delegates insisted that police officers were being replaced with CSOs in their force.

A South Yorkshire delegate said, "We are reducing the numbers of police officers and they are being replaced by CSOs."

"When is a minister going to come and answer us truthfully how many police officers are we going to lose in the forthcoming period?"

Sergeants criticise 'unattractive' pay deal

The service will 'rapidly' become an unattractive profession if action is not taken to address fair pay, delegates at the Sergeants' Central Conference heard in May.

In a hard-hitting speech, Paul McKeever, Chairman of the Sergeant's Central Committee, attacked the Government for losing the trust and respect of the service and accused prime minister Gordon Brown of 'mind boggling incompetence'.

"23,000 police officers shouldn't have to march through London to try and get a fair pay deal," he told the conference. "That we were forced into action is a national disgrace for the government".

The chairman warned the 1.9 per cent pay award would make the service increasingly unattractive as the 'standard of living falls fast in real terms' and added the retail price index measure of inflation is now 4.2 per cent and on the rise.

"The real inflation rate for many families stands at six or seven per cent, not the two per cent that was chosen by Gordon Brown within the Consumer Price Index – which, incidentally is now standing at three per cent and forecast to rise to 3.7 per cent in the near future," he said.

"Pay settlements must not be imposed on the police service. We are not living in the old East European communist states. We want to live in a modern world not in a regressive one. Any future deal must be fair and must be negotiated."

Describing sergeants as the 'glue that binds the police force together', Mr McKeever called for 'paymasters' to recognise the wide range of roles and supervisory responsibilities that sergeants perform.

He said devolution of responsibilities and the reduction of sergeant numbers, 'particularly, but not exclusively,' on the front line meant remaining sergeants are taking on more and more responsibilities.

McNulty: We will consolidate role of constable



Photography: Anderson Photography

Paul McKeever: Pay settlements must not be imposed



Photography: Anderson Photography

PDR system is failing

A senior police officer in HMIC has admitted the Performance Development Review system is not working.

Jane Stitchbury, who is leading on the thematic inspection on front line supervision, described PDR as an 'essential tool', but said it was not working as 'effectively' as it could be.

Her comments were made during the Sergeants' Central Conference after a member of the floor questioned how well the PDR system was working across forces and called for standardisation and consistency.

"PDR is about development and review and it should do what it says on the tin," the officer explained. "I regret to say it's not working as an effective tool probably because it is too long."

She added the thematic review would examine examples of good practice currently taking place in other organisations.

But Peter Fahy, chief constable of Cheshire Constabulary said 'honest' questions and conversations with staff were needed, rather than complicated, bureaucratic processes.

"There is too much reliance on people going through and bullshitting," he said.

Constables launch publicity campaign

A campaign to put the constable back at the heart of the communities has been launched at this year's Police Federation annual conference.

The launch follows results from a YouGov survey that revealed 58% of the public questioned wanted more constables and less CSOs on the streets. 70% said they felt safer with constables patrolling.

Julie Nesbit, Chairman of the Federation's Constables Central Committee said workforce modernisation meant CSOs were increasingly replacing the traditional sworn constable.

In Cheshire, CSOs are going to be patrolling and trying to 'deliver more for the same', which would lead to 54 constables jobs being cut, said Ms Nesbit.

"The degree to which they think they can replace police constables with civilians right across the service is a huge concern.

"Communities need constables. The public...want someone who's responsive, multi-skilled, got a 'can do' attitude, and who's trained to deal with any situation they're face with. They're called a police constable."

"Constables are the bedrock of law and order and the heart of policing. It is time our communities understood and valued the dangerous and difficult role constables perform.

"No-one knows what society will throw at us next, but we do know it's the constable who will rush in while others run away."

She said workforce modernisation was removing the functions that officers 'thrive on and do well'.

"Under workforce modernisation, constables become administrators overseeing the investigation of crime. We are constables because we are hands on.

"If we wanted to oversee cases, and other workers involved in its process, we would apply for promotion and become sergeants."

Stitchbury: PDR system is not working



Photography: Anderson Photography

Campaign: Communities need Constables



Image: CCC

Federation chairman bids farewell

The service must do more to celebrate diversity and embrace the talents of women and minority groups, the departing Chairman and member of the women's reserve seat revealed at the Policewomen's Eve of Conference.

Addressing delegates at her final Federation conference, Jan Berry said the service had moved on considerably over the past 37 years.

But she added - as a woman - that she has had to work harder in every job to simply demonstrate that she could do it.

"When a man gets promoted it is presumed they can do the job until they have proved otherwise. It is, in the main the other way round for women and for other minority groups," she said.

"When I told my boss I was expecting my first baby, you might have expected he congratulated me - he told me I had just put my career back by five years. Three years later when I had my second child, the same senior officer told me my career was over."

The outgoing Chairman reminded officers that everyone is part of a minority group in one way or another and everybody has the right to be treated with respect.

"Discrimination, in whatever way it presents itself is wrong; it destroys people, it wastes energy, it fails to make the best use of the skills and experience we bring to the party," she argued.

Mrs Berry described policing as 'working together as a team, bringing together individual skills and experience to protect, keep safe and secure', but warned that sometimes officers can 'display arrogance about knowing what is best for people.'

"Our diversity is our strength, not our enemy. But you must nurture it, invest in it, spend time with it, understand it and endorse it," she said.

Jan Berry: Diversity is our strength



Photography: Anderson Photography

Workforce modernisation sites 'wacky'

Government advisors should be speaking to 'real police officers' to find out what they do before forging ahead with any further modernisation plans, the Chairman of the Sergeant's Central Committee has warned.

Speaking to delegates at the Sergeant's Central Conference in Bournemouth, Paul McKeever said the service was at risk of losing its resilience, unique status and could become less effective.

He said: "Apart from the 'modernisation sites', or the 'wacky sites' as some have dubbed them, chief officers all over the country are implementing their own models. The crazy thing is that no-one has any idea where we're going, or where we'll end up."

He questioned what '11 years of modernisation' had actually achieved and said it was the failing criminal justice system that caused sergeants the greatest headaches and unnecessary workloads.

Mr McKeever accused the Government of blaming an un-modernised service for their 'failing criminal justice policies', but argued that officers and police sergeants were dealing with their end of the criminal justice system effectively.

"Until the government begins to impose real deterrent sentences on criminals, with sanctions that really make them change their behaviour, police modernisation is a waste of time," he argued.

"It's not our end of criminal justice that needs to change, it's the end of the criminal justice system that hands out inadequate sanctions that needs to change and it's the government's job to get on and change that."

A modernised police service, he added, is one which allows its custody sergeants to have a meal break away from dirty working conditions; employs enough sergeants to prevent stressful working conditions and sees sergeants as leaders, not functionary form fillers.

Paul McKeever: Has modernisation been the road to nowhere?



Photography: Anderson Photography

Flexible working under threat

Opportunities for officers to work part time could be significantly reduced with the onset of workforce modernisation.

Speaking at the Federation's women's conference, Julia Roper-Smith said she was concerned about the impact of workforce modernisation.

"Some of the opportunities that are available for part time officers could be significantly reduced.

"They will be silo'd downwards into neighbourhood policing teams because they are easier to manage."

Chief Superintendent Joanna Tennant, from the Devon and Cornwall Constabulary, said forces were 'ignoring the fact' that recruitment is running at 50% in some areas.

Although the vast majority join as full time staff members, she said that the figure would lead to a significant increase in requests to work flexibly.

She told the conference of mainly female officers, "The economic picture is clear. Three per cent of our officers work part time: 97% of them are women."

"The ratio of women to men is increasing and yet it is not on some managers' radar. It is still in the too hard to do basket."

Ch Supt Tennant urged forces to look for new ways of working for officers on the frontline because 'that's where most of the sworn officers will be'.

"We cannot stick to our cultural guns," she said.

Devon and Cornwall Police have introduced fixed shift patterns in Torbay to help the situation.

"We had significant interest from those working part time, flexible working and those wanting a work life balance."

The force is now looking to extend the pilots.

The senior officer also added that her force had established a flexible working forum that meets regularly to discuss issues. It has produced a handbook and guidance for supervisors.

Women could lose out under new exam system

Concerns have been raised about the impact of work-based assessments on female officers and part time workers. Fears were raised during an open discussion at the women's conference in Bournemouth.

Federation representative Julia Roper-Smith said, "We have concerns about women being able to get onto those work based assessments in order to complete the national occupational standards to do that role."

Work based assessments are intended to replace the OSPRE Part II element of the promotion exams. Seven forces have been trialling the new system in which officers have to be selected to undergo work based assessments.

Julie Nesbit, secretary of the women's committee said, "The problem you've got is that you've got to go to your supervisor so there is a hurdle before you even start the process. Any problems that you may have with your supervisor may mean they are less likely to support you in getting a work-based assessment."

Jan Berry, then Chairman of the Police Federation said the pilots had not worked.

"In private industry if an idea was trialled and shown not to work you wouldn't still introduce it. Well, that is what is happening with work based assessment. It's lunatic."

A delegate from the Metropolitan Police Service said that the system discriminated against part time workers.

"It is geared up for full time officers. The NPIA and the Home Office haven't factored that in. It's madness and a big worry for part time workers."

But a representative from Sussex Police, one of the pilot areas said the period for work based assessments could be extended to accommodate part time workers.

A Thames Valley delegate who also trialled the new approach added, "It is not our experience that it has disadvantaged women at all. It is working really well."

Flexible working: Opportunities could fall



Photography: Anderson Photography

Roper-Smith (far right): Concerns over work based assessment



Photography: Anderson Photography