

Who can become a Federation Rep?

The Police Federation of England and Wales represents police officers of all rank up to and including Chief Inspector. Each of the 43 forces has a Federation Joint Branch Board which comprises representatives of each rank from constable to chief inspector – the number of members we represent is 140,000.

The number of Federation reps in each force is determined by the number of officers in the force and there will always be equal numbers of posts for each rank, though there are times when one or all of the boards may have vacancies.

There are no barriers to joining the Police Federation to represent your colleagues. Gender, sexual orientation, race, faith, age and disability have no part to play in the selection process. If there is a vacancy in your workplace for your rank then you can put yourself forward for election. If there is more than one candidate then there will be a vote.

Every three years all Federation reps have to be elected in the triennial election. The last election took place at the end of 2007, the next one will be in 2010. Following that election, if there are any vacancies or if a rep leaves the Federation, there is an opportunity to hold an election to find a replacement. These ad hoc elections will be advertised by the JBB and the force.

What do Federation Reps do?

The Police Federation is responsible under law for the welfare and efficiency of the police force. As a Federation rep you will be responsible for representing your members in a number of areas. Examples include representing an individual officer with a grievance, a complaint that has been made against them, a problem to do with disability (making reasonable adjustments), representing a member(s) at workplace management meetings, health and safety meetings, meeting with HR or personnel staff about issues relating to an officers' sickness.

Each JBB will also have set up a number of sub-committees or working groups which you may be asked to join. The main areas these groups cover are: Professional Standards, Health and Safety, Operational Policing, Personnel and/or Equality and Diversity and Uniform and Equipment. The number and subject of these groups may vary from force to force, but somewhere in the JBB there will be someone who will be the lead rep on each of these subjects and sometimes more.

On each of the separate committees and on the JBB there will be executive members, normally each board will have a Chair, Secretary and usually a Treasurer. Many boards will also have deputies to these roles. There are a small number of Federation reps in each force who have full-time status to allow them to represent all of the officers in their force at force level. These

will normally be the Joint Branch Board executive members. Again, each JBB will negotiate the number and function of full-time reps. All Federation reps will be given some duty time to attend meetings and carry out roles such as acting as a 'friend' to an individual or group of officers. These facilities will also have been negotiated with the Chief Constable.

Once a year, in May, the Police Federation holds an annual conference. Delegates to conference are drawn from the separate rank committees, again on the basis of the number of reps permitted by the formula. There are separate rank conferences on the first morning, followed by a joint conference. Conference is a good opportunity to learn about some of the issues that affect all the police officers we represent, this is by way of presentations, panel debates, fringe meetings and networking with other policing bodies and colleagues.

How can I 'Make a Difference'?

At a local level you will be consulted on a wide range of issues that are likely to affect your members. Some of the most frequent issues you may be asked to represent on include shift patterns, changes that may involve transferring or re-deployment of officers (modernisation or organisational change), policy changes including those relating to uniforms, equipment and health and safety. One frequent area of potential conflict would be the cancellation of rest days, or other issues that are covered by Police Regulations.

In addition to matters affecting many or all of the officers at your station, there will also be times when you will be called on to represent and advise individual officers, normally related to mis-conduct or criminal allegations. This will include giving advice, representing them at an interview, ensuring that legal advice is sought, if needed, and negotiating a possible outcome on behalf of the officer. In a few cases there may be a need to represent the officer in court or at a misconduct hearing. Similarly, in relation to other issues such as unsatisfactory performance or attendance, you may be asked to represent when meeting with senior managers.

The Federation also assist when officers are going through the ill-health retirement process, or are about to go on half or no pay. Some of our support is purely welfare based, where we may be able to suggest who an officer needs to contact to assist with debt or other personal problems. In grievance and employment tribunal matters you may be asked to represent an officer either at a local level, or to assist in an Employment Tribunal. Again part of your responsibility will be ensuring the correct legal advice is obtained.

Other opportunities to contribute will come through representing the JBB, or your separate board, at force meetings, such as Health and Safety and Joint Consultative meetings.

How will I be able to develop my skills as a Federation rep?

At a national level the Police Federation's Joint Central Committee run an ongoing programme of training and development for its representatives. The first course you should go on is a basic reps course. This will equip you to begin your Federation career, by giving general advice on a variety of subjects. You will learn about the history of the Federation, Police Regulations, what materials are available to assist you in giving advice, presentations on subjects such as equality, health and safety and misconduct.

The Federation run a variety of other courses which you can have access to via your JBB including claim handling and treasurer courses. Should you specialise in an area of Federation business there are also advanced versions of some of the course and bi-annual seminars for each of the force leads equality, mis-conduct and health and safety.

All of the courses and events will help to develop you in a number of areas, many of those skills will be transferable into your day-to-day role both as a Federation rep and a Police Officer. Some of the courses may lead to a recognised qualification, notably the health and safety training courses. Other skills you may develop are negotiation, case preparation and presentation skills.

If you require further information please feel free to email mick.pearson@polfed.org or contact your local Federation office.