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Federation calls for 2.8% pay increase for officers

Despite being warned that public sector pay increases will be capped at one per cent this year, the Federation is calling for an increase of 2.8 per cent for all officers.

In its second submission to the Police Remuneration Review Body (PRRB), a joint submission with the Police Superintendents’ Association of England and Wales, the Federation has asked for an annual increase in line with the average private sector increase.

Andy Fittes, General Secretary, who leads on pay issues for the Federation, said: “Since the demise of the Police Negotiating Board in 2014, we no longer have the right to negotiate over pay and allowances and instead have to submit evidence to the review body, who are instructed by the Home Office to focus on certain issues – including recognition of the public sector pay limit of an average one per cent annual increase.

“We know from our survey of members that morale is rock bottom. Together with the increased workloads officers have, the impact of previous cuts and the fact that the economy is improving, we have no hesitation in providing evidence that calls for an increase of 2.8 per cent, which we believe is fair.”

The PRRB also asked for views on a range of other issues, including the targeting of pay, where one group of officers could get more than another.

Tinkering around the edges

“We are not against changes to the pay system and recognise it needs to change as the service changes,” added Mr Fittes.

“However, there is currently no evidenced and defensible system for revising the pay system overall; in the absence of that, we cannot support tinkering around the edges that could be to the detriment of some officers.”

The pay submissions are now subject to review and the PFEW, along with other parties, will be called to give oral evidence in March, before the PRRB considers its decision. Recommendations are then made to the Home Secretary with any changes coming into effect from September 2016.

You can read more about the Federation’s submission and some FAQs on our website at www.polfed.org
Home Office sparks within policing and workplace reform in areas such as back office functions, garages and control rooms could “improve and strengthen” both services, he said the new legislation was like using a sledgehammer to crack a nut.

“Government needs to realise that if done haphazardly, it would be a recipe for disaster,” he said. “The changes to governance apply only to England, but different governance structures, roles and responsibilities across England could potentially result in competing models of policing, fire and rescue throughout England and Wales.

“For example, there are 39 police forces in England, but over 50 fire and rescue services in the UK, so a piecemeal approach will not work: we have to look at the big picture.”

He was equally vocal that while joined-up emergency services are vital in many crisis situations, “we vehemently oppose the prospect of police routinely

It’s working well for us in Hampshire

In Hampshire we have been working with the county’s Fire and Rescue Service for some time – sharing buildings and back-office functions is nothing new. The Service has also taken on some functions from the police which they are better equipped for. Calls such as concern for welfare where a forced entry is required will be attended by the Fire and Rescue Service and an ambulance. They have the capacity, legal powers and equipment to perform that role, so why not?

For the past couple of years people like me have been asking what police could stop doing because the scale of the cuts imposed on us meant we were breaking under the strain. This is one small area which has been trialled and appears to be working.

With fire and rescue services now falling under the Home Office a closer working relationship with the police is inevitable, and we need to see this as an opportunity, not a threat. Yes, the cultures are very different, but if we only focus on the negative side we will miss positive opportunities.

This doesn’t mean we will remain silent when things are ill-conceived, and it’s important that when we do challenge we are listened to. Hampshire Police Federation has an influential voice. We are listened to. But if all we do is shout – even when things seem to make sense – we will lose this influence. That would not be in the interests of those we represent, the service, or the public.

John Apter, chair, Hampshire Police Federation

The chance to prove us wrong

Police officers cannot be all things to all people, but sometimes the expectation is just that.

“Picking up the pieces is something every officer in the country does on a regular basis, but to say the last five years have been tough is an understatement. Despite the continual onslaught of reductions and reform, dedication to duty remains. No police officer I know would ever turn their back on those in need – even if it were not considered to be ‘fighting crime’.

That’s above and beyond surely, as is running towards an armed robber, or jumping into a fast flowing river. We celebrate such brave acts at the Police Bravery Awards every year, but many fall under the radar, overshadowed by more controversial headline grabbers.

The point is that police officers are prepared to put themselves at risk on a daily basis with very little recognition. The Home Office announcement that it was taking control of fire and rescue policy in England has lit a touch paper. “Stupid and dangerous” was the verdict of Fire Brigades Union general secretary Matt Wrack, and there was no shortage of critics elsewhere.

PF EW chair Steve White has urged caution, adding: “Police and fire services each have their own, professional specialisms – and we must not merge the services or change things purely as a cost-cutting exercise.”

The Home Office also announced plans to draw up new legislation allowing PCCs to take responsibility for their local fire service, with new statutory duties to collaborate placed on all three emergency services.

And while there is some acceptance that greater collaboration could make sense, with Mr White adding that if implemented correctly, police and fire sharing best practices and

View from the chair

Steve White, chair of the Police Federation

Follow me on Twitter @PFEW_Chair
There has been much talk locally over the last year about strategic alliances, mergers, and even regionalisation, heaven forbid.

In this region we’ve been involved in a number of collaborations – Brunel, Zephyr, Tri-force to name but a few. Most we have managed to get up and running; there have been teething problems but we have got there. Some still need further work, but I am sure we will get the issues resolved.

And so as time moves on, we have much work and preparation to do on the potential Avon and Somerset/Wiltshire strategic alliance, which in my view has been a long time coming. The difficulty I have is, how long does it take to make the decisions?

We started with a flurry of meetings at the end of last summer to move forward. My own opinion is why not just go for the merger? It may be easier, it will save money (one of the aims), and I have no doubt in years to come that is where we will end up.

Anyway, back to the strategic alliance; we had a flurry of meetings, then an even bigger flurry of postponements, delays and cancellations of meetings, and further delays in moving the project forward.

My plea is: we cannot stand still. We have to move forward and make progress otherwise time will pass us by, the opportunity will go and one day in the future I will be stood checking the bags at conference talking to new young reps saying: “One day, we will have a strategic alliance between Avon and Somerset and Wiltshire you know.” And they will just look at me with glazed eyes.

Oh well, here’s to the future…

Local Focus
Kev Phillips, chair of Avon & Somerset Police Federation

Will we, won’t we...

There has been much talk locally over the last year about strategic alliances, mergers, and even regionalisation, heaven forbid.

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Oh well, here’s to the future…
Home Secretary’s plans for policing on the cheap are not supported

Moves to give further powers to police volunteers and staff have been described as the Home Office trying to ‘police on the cheap’.

The ill-thought out plans will not allow the police service to best serve the public, said Steve White, chair of the Police Federation of England and Wales.

"We all understand the need for further police reform. However, in these dangerous times, the British public deserves and expects a properly resourced, professional and fully accountable police service to keep them safe. We have seen no convincing arguments on the need to provide powers above or beyond those that already exist to police staff and volunteers."

The public also expressed their concerns on social media and “couldn’t believe the government are trying to make a positive thing, out of not paying people to do an important job”.

“Why stop at the Police? We could have untrained volunteer brain surgeons, firemen, soldiers...” commented Alan Prudhoe, @v60slive, while Buster Man (@buster_man) echoed many comments: “It’s all about policing on the cheap because government has nothing but disdain for office of constable.”

Not a replacement

Mr White said it was disappointing given the Government recently said “the police protect us and we are going to protect the police”, but that it now appeared “they want to provide these resources on the cheap”.

“Special constables and a significant army of volunteers up and down the country do sterling work, but they should not be a replacement for sworn-in professional officers,” he said.

...Talking about the weather (yet again)

Every year, at about this time, I write about the peculiarities of policing in freezing weather. I also try to point out the annual appearance in the press of an article highlighting the detective work of officers who follow footsteps in the snow, leading to the arrest of a particularly thick burglar.

This year, however, it has been unseasonably warm, at least up until the time of writing. Burglars in some parts of the country have had to commit crime by boat; I expect the Home Office will soon be trying to downplay a rise in reports of Theft of Canoe, or Taking and Paddling Away as it might also be termed.

The warmer, wetter weather has not deterred one force, at least, from churning out its usual advice, with Bedfordshire Police offering the following guidance: “Poor weather conditions can lead to an increased risk of crashing... We’ve had several cars which have ended up in a ditch this morning, as well as several motorcyclists that have come off their bikes. Although it’s too early to say if the weather is a factor, we do know that icy roads can make for treacherous driving.” They then offer seven pearls of wisdom to avoid such mishaps which I can sum up as drive more slowly, clear your windscreens and don’t make any sudden moves. They do not, however, give the most obvious advice – don’t ride a motorbike on ice and try to avoid that particularly voracious ditch.

I can only presume that the good folk of Bedfordshire were somewhat taken by surprise when winter reverted to form. Drive safely.
The real cost of budget cuts

A wide-reaching survey which will measure the real cost of budget cuts on officer welfare starts this month and officers are being urged to share their experiences.

The online survey will investigate factors such as workloads, stress levels, morale and fatigue, with questions on the mental health and well-being support officers are offered by their forces, as well as what kind of protective measures they would like their forces to implement to ensure officer safety.

John Murphy, health and safety lead for the PF EW, said: “We’ve heard anecdotally that single crewing and smaller teams are a problem; there are some who take annual leave just to have a day to catch up on work, and we know that sickness and stress leave is happening far too often for officers just trying to do their jobs.

“We also know that budget cuts have impacted on things like training, and the level of support officers used to get from forces just isn’t there like it used to be – at a time when it could be argued that it is needed the most.”

The PF EW is working with Dr Jonathan Houdmont of the University of Nottingham to carry out the research. Dr Houdmont has conducted numerous well-being studies on behalf of Federations and constabularies to date, involving more than 8,000 officers in various policing roles. These studies have highlighted, among other things, that officers can experience high levels of psychological distress and that some have taken sick leave due to stress.

Mental health charity MIND has also recently run a ‘Blue light’ survey which found a high level of mental health need within emergency service personnel, including police officers.

The PF EW survey aims to build on these studies and on previous focus groups attended by officers by exploring two key areas:

- The nature of relations between increased demand and decreased officer numbers, and the health and well-being of officers across England and Wales. In particular, factors such as workloads, stress levels, morale and fatigue will be investigated.
- The mental health and well-being support that is currently offered to police officers via their forces. The survey aims to investigate what services officers are aware of and what their opinions and experiences of these services are.

The survey closes on 29 February; you can complete it at www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/PFEW_Welfare_Survey. The initial findings will be presented at the PF EW conference in May.

Recent studies that Dr Houdmont has been involved in found that 27 per cent of officers were working more than 49 hours a week, beyond the legislative limit. Officers who worked more than 49 hours were:

- 1.8 times more likely to report clinical severity anxiety or depression
- 2.2 times more likely to report high burnout (emotional exhaustion)
- 1.3 times more likely to report hazardous drinking
- 1.62 times more likely to report below average job performance.

Other figures show that 63 per cent of officers who had been absent in the last five years due to stress, depression, or anxiety caused or made worse by work indicated that the force did ‘not at all’ support their return to work. The health, well-being and operational effectiveness profile of officers was found to be below that found in the general working population.

MIND recently ran several focus groups and an online survey for emergency service personnel (including police officers) to explore their experiences of mental health problems. Some of the key findings were:

- Emergency services personnel are more likely to experience a mental health problem but less likely to take time off work as a result (compared to the general workforce).
- Emergency services personnel work hard to prevent their mental health problems affecting their performance, but this comes at a large personal cost (including relationship breakdown and effects on physical health).
- 88 per cent of personnel said they had experienced stress and poor mental health while working for ‘blue light’ services.
- 71 per cent of emergency services personnel feel their organisation does not encourage them to talk about mental health, compared to 45 per cent of the general workforce.
Police arrested 75,000 fewer people across England and Wales in 2014-15 than in the previous year, despite a rise in recorded crime.

Across the 43 forces there was a seven per cent average fall in arrests, with Sussex recording the biggest drop in 2014-15 compared with the previous year – 26 per cent, according to figures published by the Home Office in January.

For those immersed in policing the news is hardly surprising; in a recent Federation poll, which asked officers if their forces could cope with current resources, nearly 86 per cent said no. With 17,000 fewer officers and 17,000 fewer support staff there is mounting evidence that these trends will continue.

The Office for National Statistics suggested that a large part of the rise in recorded crime was due to improvements in the way forces recorded data, but Federations have said that a lack of police resources have made a difference to arrest figures, with cuts putting a serious strain on limited officer numbers, coupled with the fact that a high proportion of incidents officers respond to are non-crime related and therefore will never result in an arrest.

Numbers falling, demand increasing
Matt Webb, chairman of Sussex Police Federation, said: “With officer numbers falling and demand both increasing and changing it is unsurprising that we have seen a fall in arrests. I have yet to see the detail, but would anticipate that proactive arrests resulting from stop checks have seen the greatest decrease with officers simply not having the time for this area of work.

“Patrols are now ‘radio-driven’ with officers regularly spending their shift just going from one job to another. The result is that there are people committing offences in our communities who are not being brought to justice. With further cuts to officer numbers coming in the next three to four years I can only see this trend continuing. You only get less with less.”

What do you think? Email editor@polfed.org
New brochure highlights help out there for officers

With morale at a low and increasing signs of workplace stress impacting on officers and their families it is good to know there is help at hand.

Many forces have been cutting back on welfare support programmes and where there were once services to support officers, there has been a rise in demand yet a reduction in provision. Federation reps in particular have reported that they are picking up the slack where forces are failing to deliver.

Part of the issue is that officers may not know how or where to access support, but a new brochure has been published which highlights the help that is available.

The booklet – developed in conjunction with a number of charities, led by the Police Federation of England and Wales – provides details of some of the many hundreds of organisations out there, ranging from those offering practical specialist support and rehabilitation services to memorial charities that honour those have died in service.

Steve Lloyd, Trust Manager of the Police Roll of Honour Trust said: “It’s a great booklet and is invaluable in signposting officers, support staff and their families not only to the better known police charitable organisations but also to the specialist charities. They exist to provide advice, help and support in times of need. I believe it will be of essential use to the police service across the UK.”

Peter Sweeney, Chairman of PC David Rathband’s Blue Lamp Foundation said: “There is a great deal of support out there, and sometimes it is lack of knowledge about what organisations do that prevents people from being able to access what they need at the right time.

“We also know the police community is a very proud one and asking for charity help goes against the grain. I would however urge everyone to take a look at what help and support is out there and how to access it.”

The booklet will be added to include benevolent funds and some of the smaller, but equally important, charities. If you know of a police-related charity that you feel should be included, please contact us – email communications@polfed.org

A copy of the brochure can be downloaded from the ‘Fed at Work’ section of our website (polfed.org).

Health and Safety app enables ‘near miss’ reporting on the go

If you’re on duty and have a near miss you can now report it on the go via a new function on the Fed app.

Health and Safety (H&S) guidance has been added to the Police Federation app, available for free on android and iPhones, and provides remote access to information for officers when dealing with incidents, carrying out risk assessments, dealing with work-related stress, workplace environment concerns or communications issues.

An added feature is for reporting of near misses, enabling officers to do so in real time, wherever they are. Once a report is logged, details will be passed to the local H&S leads within the Federation and the force.

The app feature is not intended to replace established reporting systems already in force, but is designed to complement them.

The development of the app and encouraging officers to report near misses is part of the Federation’s efforts to build an accurate picture of the risks that members face. The information will be used to explore ways in which it can improve the day-to-day role of police officers.
Regular night work, weekend shifts and late finishes can put extra strain on relationships and family life and mean that some marriages will sadly not survive the extra pressures of being a police officer.

However, in my work as a family lawyer I am lucky enough to meet many clients who go on to find love again and remarry. After I’ve wished them congratulations and happy returns for the future I usually suggest they come in for a chat.

Forty-two per cent of marriages end in divorce, according to the Office of National Statistics. While there is no specific study of serving police officers, it is thought the number of police marriages ending in divorce is much higher because of the lifestyle challenges of the job.

While second marriages are more likely to be successful than first, there is, sadly, still a 31 per cent chance of divorce the second time around, and this is thought to be even higher if one partner is a serving police officer.

When it comes to second marriages, I think it is sensible to plan for what might happen if things don’t work out as hoped. My clients will often tell me they have already been through a significant financial settlement during their first divorce so have little to lose should their second also not succeed. I remind them that assets do build up again and police pensions, in particular, can be significant.

A prenuptial agreement is not for everyone, but it can help bring clarity to a marriage, especially the second time around where significant assets (as well as dependents) are often the reality. Although some people may find it unromantic, financial planning is now an intrinsic part of any marriage. It’s a case of expect the best, but plan for the worst.

Police divorce, second time around

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Federation warns that the firearms threat is ‘much wider than the capital’

The Police Federation has warned that while moves to increase the numbers of firearms officers in London are welcomed, such measures should not be isolated to the capital.

Met Commissioner Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe announced last month plans to raise the number of armed officers in the force by 600, more than doubling the number of armed response vehicles.

Will Riches, vice-chair of the PFEW, welcomed the news, but expressed concern. “As a result of major funding cuts that forces, nationally, have faced over the last few years there is a real lack of resources available in this arena and investment in firearms shouldn’t just be isolated to the capital,” he said.

Pete Singleton, chair of Merseyside Federation, agreed: “It’s good that the Met is getting an increase in its firearms capability. London is obviously the prime target for any Paris-type terrorist attack but that doesn’t mean the threat doesn’t exist outside London.

“There are about 4,000 officers who have access to firearms outside the Met. Take into account training, leave, sickness, court appearances, firearms operations dealing with organised criminality, and the fact you need 24/7 coverage, then the actual numbers of firearms officers available at any one time is worryingly low.

“And the threat outside the capital has always been there. Historically the PIRA attacked places like Birmingham, Manchester and Warrington, and recent events have just seen individuals sentenced to considerable custodial sentences for planning terrorist atrocities in Manchester. So we know the threat is real.

Matter of urgency

“Let’s not forget that in nearly every one of the 43 forces in England and Wales there has been a number of terrorist arrests in recent years. So while I welcome the investment in the Met, I would urge those who are in charge of spending to find extra money to invest and increase the firearms capability for the rest of the country as a matter of urgency, as this build-up of firearms capability cannot be done overnight.”

What do you think? Email editor@polfed.org – and if you are a serving officer don’t forget to complete our welfare survey which covers the issue of protection measures for police.
If you've got a story highlighting the lighter side of police life, we'd love to hear it. Please send your Dogberry entries to: Dogberry@polfed.org

Clean getaway for Duster

Divisional officers in a central force were en-route to a suspicious vehicle that had been seen loitering outside an outward bounds activity centre late at night.

A single-crewed patrol car and a double-crewed patrol were in the area and the passenger of the double-crewed car, who was young in service, was reading the incident on her tablet device.

Speaking to the single-crewed officer, the passenger was updating her as to the registration number of the suspicious vehicle. The single-crewed officer asked who the vehicle came back to, and so after a moment or two of trawling through the text on the tablet, the officer replied: “First name is Dacia, and the surname is Duster...” At which point much hilarity broke out!
‘Dreaded P word’ is hurting roads policing

Increasing privatisation is leading to the death of effective roads policing, and it can’t continue.

The dreaded ‘P’ word is one of the major issues affecting better safety on our roads, said Jayne Willetts, Roads Policing lead for the Police Federation of England and Wales.

Speaking at this year’s Roads Policing conference, she told attendees the rise in privatisation could not continue to be allowed to affect the safety of the public on our roads.

“All officers have become used to the mantra ‘do more with less’, and I thought this meant fewer officers, fewer cars, less overall resources and less interest in general in ensuring safety on our roads. But, what it also means is more privatisation.”

Ms Willetts said that in the rush to save money important areas like collisions investigations and police driver training could be handed to private firms.

“I’ve got serious concerns that this move will mean we will no longer see specialist, vastly experienced and highly trained officers behind the wheel, patrolling our roads.

Minimal police training

“There are very real concerns that, before long, members of the public who come into contact with someone in a police car will be speaking to a volunteer with minimal police training, and even less police driver training.”

“We aren’t asking the government to turn back the clock, but we are asking them not to take a chainsaw to the model of roads policing that for years has keep criminals in check, and the roads as safe as they can be.”

More coverage of our annual roads policing conference will be published online www.polfed.org and in the next edition, published in April.

Ban drivers for using phones

Drivers could be banned for using phones at the wheel.

Police chiefs are pushing for the stiffer penalties to target the 35 drivers per week who are caught using their mobiles without hands-free, the Roads Policing Conference heard.

“If they’re on the phone, they’re not thinking about their driving, they’re not looking where they’re going, and their hands are not on the wheel,” said Chief Constable Suzette Davenport (pictured above), the national roads policing lead.

The conference heard that typical offenders – especially smartphone users – are people who ordinarily consider themselves as ‘law abiding’. And the problem is growing.

But a crackdown wouldn’t only hit them in their pockets with increased fines, it could also see an increase in the number of penalty points – with even harsher sanctions against HGV drivers, which could see someone banned for a second offence.

A series of new initiatives aimed at hard-core persistent offenders were unveiled at the conference by Neil Drane (pictured), Head of Enforcement Services at the Motor Insurers’ Bureau (MIB).

Key is phase two of the #goneinseconds video campaign typically aimed at 17-29-year-old male uninsured drivers.

“We’re getting the message across that for these young men, it’s the knock-on effects of losing their car – the loss of girlfriend, loss of friends, how their status is downgraded among their peers,” said Mr Drane.

He also promised insurers would continue to go after the uninsured who cause accidents. “We will take that £10 or £20 every week for the rest of their lives if necessary,” he said. “They are not going to get away with it. We will even put a charge against their house if they own one.”

There are also plans to provide police with more data about uninsured cars, and which homes they are registered to, even if they are not being driven.
New drug-drive funding is just ‘a drop in the ocean’

A further £215,000 – on average £5,000 per force – has been pledged to roads policing to support officers as they deal with blood analysis from drug-drive suspects.

Transport minister Andrew Jones, speaking via video at the PFEW’s annual roads conference last month, praised the work that had already gone on in “embracing” the drug-driving offence that came into effect in March, citing Cheshire, Sussex and North Wales in particular as seeing good results.

“There has been a four-fold increase in convictions in the first year,” he said, adding that the solution was to “raise our game year after year” and that better engineering and technology, better enforcement, better legislation and better training and education would be the way forward.

He also highlighted the fact that 20 per cent of drug-drivers had previously been found guilty of drink-driving, and 25 per cent were serial offenders with more than 15 other convictions.

“I know that obtaining drug convictions is more expensive than drink convictions,” he continued, “but it has far wider benefits. We will continue to evaluate the new drug-driving offence to see how we can make it better, and if necessary make legislative improvements.”

The extra cash is aimed at supporting blood analysis work from drug-drive suspects, and while welcomed by PFEW roads policing lead Jayne Willetts, she has also voiced concerns that £5,000 per force is a drop in the ocean.

“Any investment is welcomed, but the fact that roads policing officer numbers have been decimated over the past five years means that if you haven’t got the numbers to do the job, it matters not how much money you throw at it,” Ms Willetts added. “The very basics are that we need officers to stop check the drivers in the first place.”

Law doesn’t protect officers in pursuits and response drives

Officers involved in pursuits and response drives should seek legal advice before making statements about incidents, even if told they are only being interviewed as a witness. That’s the advice from Queen’s Counsel Mark Aldred as he explained the lack of legislation around exemptions for police drivers.

“For police officers who enter into pursuits, the reality is, if the political will is there, they could be prosecuted for dangerous driving offences,” he said. Pursuits fall squarely into the definition of “dangerous driving” he said, and that while it might seem surprising, there was “no legislation that gives officers an exemption from prosecution”.

“Any investment is welcomed, but the fact that roads policing officer numbers have been decimated over the past five years means that if you haven’t got the numbers to do the job, it matters not how much money you throw at it,” Ms Willetts added. “The very basics are that we need officers to stop check the drivers in the first place.”

said Mr Aldred. “I get told by the officer that they ‘were only doing their job, they can’t seriously be being prosecuted’ and then I see the lights go out in their eyes as I tell them the law doesn’t protect them.”

He said reform needed to happen: “If we are going to ask police officers to do a job – we should make sure the law is there to allow them to do that job. Officers who drive or carry firearms do so voluntarily, for jobs that do carry serious risks. I wonder, if they were fully aware of the risks, would they continue?”

The Police Federation of England and Wales is working with Chief’s Council to develop a draft legislation change on this issue.
Believe in Blue – we do

A new campaign from the Police Federation of England and Wales is set to relaunch British policing and highlight just why it’s the best in the world.

The campaign will showcase the demands upon police and the many roles they carry out in society, not just tackling crime, and aims to get the public on board to back officers and show support for the work they do.

It will also highlight the many positive instances where officers have gone above and beyond their duties, with stories of brave acts among everyday situations.

When officers start a shift they never know what they will be dealing with – from routine enquiries and community engagement to dealing with life-or-death situations. Throw into the mix the chance of being physically or verbally assaulted, together with increasing demands and tougher working conditions, and it’s easy to see why morale is low and the job can often feel thankless.

Most trusted public services

But the vast majority of the British public does appreciate the police service and the work officers do, with 68 per cent of people saying they ‘generally trusted’ the police in a recent IpsosMORI survey. In fact, the police are one of the most trusted public services in Great Britain and score substantially higher in the popularity stakes than politicians and journalists.

Part of the aim of the campaign is to get the public’s general covert support to an overt support and getting them to pledge to Believe in Blue, engendering greater support from the public, press and politicians.

Will Riches, PFEW Vice-chair and campaign lead, explained: “Being a police officer is undoubtedly one of the toughest jobs around; much more than a job, it’s a way of life. The ‘morale’ survey last year showed that many officers aren’t happy and want to leave. We are doing all we can to try to make things better, striving to improve working conditions and protect the further decimation of the service.

“This campaign lets us share positive stories and talk about the many acts of heroism and fortitude which largely go unmentioned. The vast majority of the British public are behind their police officers and we are asking them to support us as we continue to be a strong, united and credible voice of policing in England and Wales.”

What you can do:

- Help spread the Believe in Blue message – please share the campaign within your colleagues, friends and family.
- Visit www.believeinblue.org.uk and tell us your stories.
- Look out for Facebook and Twitter starting in March #believeinblue.
- To help get our message across to the public, we have also produced a series of short films which will be coming to a cinema near you so get your popcorn ready!

Baby saved by ‘superhero’ cop

Acting on impulse is all part of the job and it didn’t take PC Rik Nicol from Chorley long to react – even though off duty – when he saw a baby had stopped breathing and was turning blue.

Thinking her 11-week-old son Kit was going to die, mum Nik McMillan will be “forever indebted” to Rik for stepping in while looking after his own two young children. He rushed to help and took control of the situation, giving rescue breaths to bring Kit around. Nik said: “PC Superhero is how he’s affectionately known. What he did was amazing.”
Pop in for a cuppa – all part of the service

Demonstrating the human side of policing, PC Stu Ockwell was highly praised late last year for having a cup of tea with an elderly couple who were lonely.

95-year-old Doris Thomson, who was struggling to look after her blind husband, also 95, called 999 out of desperation. In a tweet PC Ockwell explained: “Just dealt with a 95-year-old couple who called the police as they were lonely. What else could we do but make them a brew and have a chat?”

His kind act was applauded by the public with most people believing it showed British policing at its finest. Comments included: “Yorkshire tea and donuts? Need to see the human side of policing more often. Well done!” and a colleague from West Midlands Police added: “If we ever stop doing this kind of work then surely something has gone very, very wrong. Good work folks!”

Brave officer injured for ceremony

PC Nathan Lucy from Hampshire Constabulary showed just how dangerous the job is when he turned up to last year’s Police Bravery Awards with his arm in a sling and suffering a multitude of injuries.

Nominated for an award for saving a vulnerable woman from drowning in the sea – and almost drowning himself – he nearly didn’t make the ceremony having broken his arm, shoulder, ribs and knee cap a few days earlier in the line of duty tracking a suspect.

Read more stories at www.believeinblue.org.uk – and don’t forget to add your own!

“This campaign lets us share positive stories and talk about the many acts of heroism and fortitude which largely go unmentioned. The vast majority of the British public are behind their police officers and we are asking them to support us as we continue to be a strong, united and credible voice of policing in England and Wales.”

Will Riches, Vice-chair, Police Federation of England and Wales
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Believe in Blue

Find out more and see how you can show your support for the Believe In Blue campaign at believeinblue.org.uk  #BelieveinBlue
Duty is just the beginning...

A series of short films have been produced as part of the Believe in Blue campaign, highlighting the huge range of roles and challenges officers face on a daily basis. Here are just a few stills from the films, which will be shown in cinemas.
For the past couple of years, Norfolk Constabulary has had a mental health partnership team working within the force control room. This has enabled officers to have quick and comprehensive access to the Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust to help with all manner of operational needs where mental health is a factor, and the initiative has been praised both locally and nationally as a major success.

The Norfolk branch of the Police Federation has been quick to recognise the potential of this new approach, and with the agreement and support of the force’s chief officers and the county’s police and crime commissioner, it has used the services of the team leader (who is employed by the Trust) to provide support to members who are at an immediate risk. The team leader has been able to offer confidential advice, just as she would have done if the officers attended a mental health surgery or appointment.

In the main, Federation reps, like the majority of police officers, are not trained in mental health first aid. Some may question whether they need to be, but it is often the case that when a Federation rep is helping a colleague, they may become the panacea for everything in the eyes of that officer. Members sometimes share feelings with a rep that they will not talk to the organisation about; as a result, representatives can find themselves dealing with an officer who has severe mental health issues – possibly even suicidal thoughts – without being able to speak to the force for support and advice, as the officer is unwilling to share information with their employer.

While working on day-to-day caseloads Norfolk Federation identified a handful of officers who they felt were at significant risk of serious self-harm; these officers, because of their illness, were taking up considerable time and emotion to support.

Paul Ridgway (pictured), chair of Norfolk Police Federation, explains: “Many reps will recognise the experience of members phoning them at all hours of the day and night in mental ill-health crisis. They turn to their reps because they either cannot get hold of their line managers, or they do not feel confident that the line manager will keep their situation confidential from the force.

“This situation can present a potential risk to Federation reps themselves. The IPCC has already said that if an officer or a member of staff takes their own life, or tries to, while under investigation, and their Federation representative was part of police contact prior to this, then ‘their actions will have to be scrutinised’. The IPCC went on to say that this would be separate and distinct to whether enough was being done, by all parts of a police force, to support officers or staff who are being investigated.

“Here in Norfolk the mental health trust has agreed to assist the Branch Board with mental health assessments for those officers who are the gravest concern. With her expertise the team leader offers guidance on what actions reps should be taking, including completion of their own reference notes in addition to the ongoing welfare for individual officers. She then meets with those officers identified as potentially high risk (with their agreement) to determine if our level of concern is justified or not. This process has been extremely successful so far and we have already prevented officers from taking their lives through this intervention. It also provides welcome relief and support for reps, who have until this approach been trying to manage these issues, often alone.”

Next steps
Norfolk Federation is now looking at expanding the concept further by working with Norfolk and Suffolk chief officers and other partners to pilot a holistic support programme which will assist officers and staff who have been identified as suffering from severe mental ill health. It is hoped that many partners – including the national Welfare Support Programme, the National Association of Chaplains to the Police, and Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust (which delivers mental health services across both counties) – will be willing to sign up to help officers.

Paul continues: “The number of officers with mental ill-health is increasing nationally. In the media we see increasing reports that
Many officers around the country are suffering from stress due to changes to working conditions, pay and pensions, but mental ill-health crisis is different.

Through experience and talking to other local boards, Norfolk Federation has identified some of the main reasons for officers being in severe mental ill-health crisis. These include:

- being arrested
- being suspended
- being restricted from the evidential chain
- chronic physical pain (especially back problems)
- being reduced to half/no pay
- the UPP and UAP processes
- chronic domestic abuse
- post-incident management
- participation in some major incidents.

Every officer will have arrested someone who they suspected of committing a crime. Thankfully though, few officers have experienced being on the other side of the cell bars. Whether they are innocent or guilty, the experience takes its toll on an officer’s mental health. With austerity measures meaning a reduction in mental health services, assistance is not so forthcoming, and officers are often left feeling isolated – in extreme cases taking their own lives.

Budget pressures have also changed forces’ willingness to retain officers suffering chronic physical illness and injury. Apart from coping with the physical pain, officers and their families now worry about their future, as they deal with the prospect of half pay, no pay, adjusted duties, unsatisfactory performance and attendance, and ultimately the possibility of either ill-health retirement or dismissal.

Simple but extremely effective

Proposals have been submitted to Norfolk and Suffolk Constabularies to further assist officers and staff members who have been arrested, suspended or restricted. The proposal would establish a policy giving officers a fully trained welfare single point of contact (SPOC) who will support them and their immediate family through the entire process. The officer or staff member could also be offered various appropriate talking therapies including cognitive behavioural therapy, neuro-linguistic programming and counselling, and provided with a pack containing details of relevant support networks.

In tandem, the Federation will signpost the officer to additional and immediate support through the Welfare Support Programme, and police chaplaincy; in the case of an officer in crisis, they will also engage the Norfolk mental health trust for assessment and further assistance. This part of the process will be subject to confidentiality protocols, although the Federation will work closely with the welfare SPOC.

The same support can be offered to officers who are suffering critical mental ill-health due to other reasons, with the sole intention of reducing the number of suicide attempts and helping officers to work through their immediate problems.

“The concept is simple but extremely effective,” adds Paul. “This is the start of a programme that could continue to grow, and as more branches, constabularies and partners come on board it can only lead to a better opportunity for officers to feel truly supported. If one officer in the country is saved through this programme, it will have been worth it.”
The last few weeks of 2015 were anxious ones for all of the 43 forces of England and Wales. Overshadowed by the constant pressure from government that further police reform was looming in the form of funding formulas and the comprehensive spending review, Cumbria was not alone in its concerns that any further cuts would have devastating consequences. The Federation here had been working alongside the force to lobby media and MPs across the entire county to try to persuade Westminster that Cumbria Constabulary needed to be looked at in isolation in relation to its budget because of the geographical size, the nature of the force, and officer and staff numbers.

By categorising all forces with a ‘one hat fits all’ funding formula which predominantly looks at crime statistics, the Home Office inevitably fails to take into account that approximately 85 per cent of our daily workload is not fighting crime. There are the daily calls to help those with mental health problems, missing persons, truant vulnerable youngsters, regular trips to help nurses and doctors in A&E, similar calls to back up paramedics, providing hospital transportation due to the lack of ambulances, school liaison, and the 14,000,000 tourists who converge annually into the Lake District – bringing with them a whole range of associated issues.

Throw into that mix the extreme weather conditions brought about by Desmond, Eve and Frank and you have a perfect storm.

Cumbria, the fourth largest force in the country in geographical size but with one of the smallest officer and staff numbers, lost nearly 80 officers last year, and was tested to its resilience limits as flooding swept through the county and beyond. Cumbrian chair Martin Plummer reflects on a testing month.

The resilience shown by Cumbrian officers and staff during an extremely long, cold, wet, windy December saw that rarely-recognised or measurable quality that is ‘goodwill’ shown in abundance.

We all get weather warnings, sometimes the odd severe weather warning, but when they come with a threat to life they bring a chilling reminder to Cumbrian officers of the tragic death of their colleague PC Bill Barker, who sadly lost his life in 2009 when Northside Bridge at Workington collapsed following flooding in West Cumbria.

And then here we were again during a weekend in December when it was literally all hands on deck. More than 6,400 homes flooded across Cumbria, displacing hundreds of people; many members of the force saw their own homes fall victim to the rising water level.

All available officers worked every hour they could, with many turning in on their days off without being asked, offering any help needed. Half-hour journeys to work turned to two-hour slogs, extended by road closures and bridge collapses. Officers given the option to remain at home due to the threat of flooding in their own homes still came into work because they knew they were needed.

And how did we react? Like many of us do. The resilience shown by Cumbrian officers and staff during an extremely long, cold, wet, windy December saw that rarely-recognised or measurable quality that is ‘goodwill’ shown in abundance.

As a nearby river burst its banks, four firearms instructors worked an 18-hour shift to save the force weaponry, guarding the same until suitable alternative housing was found as the flood water
engulfed the firearms range and armoury. Those same officers then worked 12-hour shifts for the next 72 hours to ensure the force firearms capability was maintained.

Uniformed officers were stretched to the limit so detectives all over the county – myself included – donned uniform, high-visibility jackets and waterproofs, and went into the communities supporting their colleagues in any way they could to ensure that those who needed evacuating were led to safety, carried through the water or put in boats to dry land.

**Protected streets from looters**

Over the following hours and days with constant downpours of rain and nights with no electricity, these same officers protected streets of empty houses and businesses from looters; search advisor officers waded door-to-door ensuring everyone was accounted for and taken, if needed, to a place of safety.

The resilience shown by officers and staff to help in any way they could in what can only be described as atrocious conditions was simply astonishing. When you also take into account the busy time of year, the fact that the rest of the county was business as usual, and that there were already other pre-planned operations – such as the movement of nuclear waste from Barrow to Sellafield during the same period, which involved 70 Cumbrian officers and the Civil Nuclear Constabulary – this made the efforts of all involved outstanding.

Over the month of December there were a number of life-threatening weather warnings across Cumbria. These culminated on Christmas Eve with many officers across the county being told that they would not be off on Christmas Day, not spending it with their families as planned, but would be at work protecting the public. And of course they did. That’s true resilience in the people we employ, and what we in Cumbria call goodwill, all during the season of goodwill itself.

Thanks are not needed – although welcome – as it is what we do, but as a new year starts, it would be nice to think that that goodwill, which goes on day-in, day-out throughout the country, which helps to save lives and protect property, is rewarded with a pay award which for once recognises that often unseen dedication.
You can find out more about these offers in the Members’ Area of the Federation website (www.polfed.org).

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How can amateur hour be more professional?

In October last year, crime doubled according to the Office for National Statistics to more than 11.6 million offences. The sharp rise in headline figures was due to the inclusion of at least 2.5 million cybercrime offences for the first time. The Police Federation and others have warned government that this was one area of crime that was spiralling, but seemingly to no avail.

It appears that the Home Office has only now woken up to the fact that this type of crime is out of control, and as a result there’s panic in Whitehall. One would have hoped that they would treat this issue seriously, but instead the Home Secretary’s answer is to increase the role of volunteers in policing, giving them powers to make arrests and carry out stop and searches.

Mrs May, as part of a hare-brained scheme wants police forces to identify volunteers who specialise in accountancy or computing for cyber and financial inquires and recruit them to come in and work for free! The public already pay taxes for a professional, fully trained, equipped and properly resourced police service, but in fact are getting less as cuts bite and we have thousands fewer officers. To add insult to injury the government is now advocating ‘Do it yourself policing’ where you can turn up and do a bit of amateur detective work.

There are many issues around this that concern me, one being that it would be an easy route for criminals – including terrorists – to infiltrate the police service and gain access to sensitive information. Presumably volunteers would also require university degrees, or will this be waived for convenience?

The proposed scheme makes a mockery of the argument that police reform has been about increasing professionalism and ensuring accountability. This is no more than a cost-cutting exercise to provide policing on the cheap as even the government now realise they have cut too far.

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