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**Editorial**
Federation rejects one per cent pay cap after five-year fall
New deal will see officers receive additional allowances

**View from the chair:** Steve White urges the Home Office to take a ‘golden opportunity’ to review the funding formula
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How much does the service do to ensure it gets the most out of the skills and abilities of existing officers and staff?

**Fitness or fairness?**
Current shuttle run tests for firearms officers do not offer a level playing field for all officers, argues authorised firearms officer Chantal Morgan

**The fight against knife crime**
John Murphy, Police Federation health and safety lead, explores three key strands of the fight against knife crime

**Dogberry:** the lighter side of policing

**Members’ benefits**

**View from the sidelines:** Clive Chamberlain, former chair of Dorset Police Federation, takes a different look at life

**Nick O’Time** cartoon
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Federation rejects 1% pay cap after five-year fall

A one per cent cap on a pay increase for officers is not supported by the Police Federation of England and Wales who instead will be calling for more as part of its bid to government.

The Federation will be asking for an increase above the proposed government one per cent cap in its annual submission, noting that there has been a 12 per cent real term fall in federated officers’ wages since 2010.

That fact, combined with a 2.8 per cent average private sector pay rise in the three months to September 2015 and low morale across the ranks, back up the rationale for the submission.

Andy Fittes, general secretary of the Police Federation of England and Wales, called a call for a higher increase “realistic”, adding: “We don’t agree with the one per cent cap that the government has imposed, not least when looking at average public and private sector pay.”

The Federation’s submission to the Police Remuneration Review Body comes after Home Secretary Theresa May told police bodies that she expected the PRRB’s recommendations to reward those with ‘in demand’ skills (Police magazine, December 2015).

Mr Fittes continued: “We also have concerns about any suggestions that pay should be further targeted at this point. Targeting was tried before, and didn’t work as there was no systematic and fair way to implement it.

Fair and equitable for all

“We recognise that police reform will continue, but until measures are put in place that reassure us that changes to the pay system – such as targeting pay rises on those with certain skills – are fair and equitable for all, we cannot support the changes. We, the National Police Chiefs’ Council, and the Police Superintendents’ Association of England and Wales have all expressed the view that no such system exists at this point.”

Chancellor George Osborne has already made it clear that public sector pay rises should be limited to one per cent.

The Police Remuneration Review Body will now take the submissions of the various police representative bodies and make a recommendation to the Home Secretary for a decision.

New deal will see officers receive overtime on holiday pay and other allowances

Chief officers have agreed to pay officers overtime in their holiday pay where those payments could be seen as part of their ‘regular’ wages, after negotiation with the Police Federation.

The National Police Chiefs’ Council also agreed to recognise officers’ unsocial hours, away from home allowance, acting up allowance, rest day working compensation and part-time additional hours when they are on leave as long as they meet various conditions. Eligible officers should expect to see the money in their pay packets from 1 January this year.

Part of the deal saw forces given discretion to pay a flat rate of £60 per officer, backdated for three months, to save both officers and forces the administrative burden of calculating and verifying the actual amount.

Reasonable offer

“Andy Fittes, general secretary of the Police Federation of England and Wales, said: “We convinced the N PCC that officers who see overtime and the other payments as part of their regular wages should see that reflected in their pay while on leave. I believe the offer was reasonable and I would expect payments to be implemented in accordance with this agreement.”
Resolving the funding confusion

The police service breathed a sigh of relief when Chancellor George Osborne announced there would be no more cuts to the police budget in this Parliament.

Police force funding arrangements may not be everybody’s ideal reading matter; in fact the Home Office’s announcement of the amount each force will receive barely registered in the media. But officers of all ranks in every force will have had at least half an ear out for the news to see how it would impact on them.

But it was not as straightforward as one might have thought. It was not a question of central government maintaining funding levels. Instead, those local authorities charged with deciding on council tax precepts – police and crime commissioners, the London mayor and the Welsh government – will have to ask local taxpayers to put their hands deep in their pockets to avoid a significant cut to their force’s budgets.

Whatever the source, it is vital the money is found. Police officers serve a vital function and are often the glue that holds communities together.

The Home Office is putting in place a new formula to determine what each force receives. For this to be successful, ministers will have to work with forces, policing bodies and communities to ensure any future arrangement is clear, easy to understand and reflects each force’s need.

Confusion, inequality and financial inequity have all too often been the hallmarks of police funding in the past. There is now a golden opportunity to put that right.

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Officers deserve the job despite push for funding confusion

Officers must be equipped and resourced to do their jobs properly after the government asked police and crime commissioners to stump up the cash needed to prevent budget cuts, the Police Federation has warned.

Steve White, chair, Police Federation of England and Wales, said forces are under “extreme budgetary pressure” and warned that any further ‘reform’ of policing should only happen if it improves the service to the public.

The calls followed the announcement by police minister Mike Penning that police funding would rise by an average of 0.5 per cent in the next financial year. The government statement, however, said this included all different types of grants to the police service and depended on police and crime commissioners in England and the Welsh government increasing council tax precepts to the maximum referendum limit in 2016/17. Without this increase, there would be a cut of an estimated £200 million in police funding.

No increase at all

Figures released by the Home Office show that most forces’ budgets, even with the necessary increase in local funding, would only rise by up to an anticipated one per cent; Merseyside Police fares the worst as the only force with no increase at all.

The City of London Police was the only force to receive more than a one per cent rise with its budget going up by an expected 2.5 per cent, while forces anticipated to receive a one per cent increase include Essex, Hertfordshire, Surrey and Sussex Police.

Those at the other end of the scale include Cleveland, Durham, the Met, Lancashire and West Midlands Police (all 0.2 per cent), while Greater Manchester, Humberside, Northumbria and Nottinghamshire Police were just ahead with a 0.3 per cent projected increase.

Mr White described the increases as “quite minimal” and stressed that they depended entirely on the maximum two per cent of income being raised locally – whether by the London mayor, police and crime commissioners or the Welsh government. He said: “Officers need to be properly equipped and resourced just to do their day jobs and have the right equipment available to them to support them in that.”

The government is due to revise the formula by which funding is allocated to forces for the following financial year (2017/18). Mr White added: “The police forces of England and Wales are already working under extreme budgetary pressure, and the public can be assured that they will continue to do their very best to get the most of the resources they have.

“We agree that further reform of the police service needs to happen, but only if it improves service delivery.”

Steve White, chair, Police Federation

“We however, the way in which forces are allocated funding remains confusing and until a system is adopted to ensure that all forces are properly funded these inequalities will remain. We welcome assurances from the Home Office that the budget will increase counter-terrorism funding and that this money will be used to continue the job of police reform. We agree with the minister’s statements that further reform of the police service needs to happen, but only if it improves service delivery.

“We will continue to work with police chiefs to ensure that savings made still allow officers to do their job properly and continue to protect the public.”
funding to do the greater savings

Pete Singleton, chairman, Merseyside Police Federation, said: “At the first reading of the funding settlement, it appears that Merseyside Police may not have to cut so deeply, or as quickly, as we had anticipated. We know that there will still be a requirement to make significant savings, changes and reforms, albeit over a longer period of time.

“There is a slight element of ‘smoke and mirrors’ in that the figures quoted are reliant on the assumption that local government authorities will agree to increase the local precepts.

“If the Merseyside PCC was allowed to increase this precept by two per cent, she could make up the difference, but as Merseyside was not identified as one of the 10 forces who could raise by this amount, she will not be able to do so. In effect, this means Merseyside Police will be looking at a budget cut of about £10 million over the next few years.

“There are also mandatory requirements placed on the force to increase the numbers of officers in certain crime areas (protecting vulnerable people, cybercrime etc). This means there are some areas where the force will have to continue to change to meet these demands, and it is my concern that while we would want to invest in these newly identified areas, with no increase in our budget there will have to be reductions from elsewhere within the force.”

Local Focus
Paul Ridgway, chair of Norfolk Police Federation

A retail approach to the best deal

Around Christmas most people use the services of companies such as Amazon to view, select and purchase products they require. These products are then quickly and efficiently delivered, in many cases by the next day.

Additionally people don’t want to waste money by buying sub-standard products; they can achieve this either by reading inexpert reviews by other buyers or by engaging the services of a consumer magazine, who expertly test products and report their findings.

These two simple practices have been easily achieved for many years by private business and yet the police and public services in general are yet to achieve this concept. So forces continue to send staff halfway across the country to enquire about other forces’ experiences on items they want to buy; and 43 forces continue to pay 43 prices for 43 different brands of items, from shirts to cars. Very often the cheapest untested options are purchased which are not fit for purpose and which subsequently have to be replaced at further expense.

The Home Office has recognised this and regularly expresses the need for collaborative procurement, but we all wait with baited breath for a solution.

Is it too difficult to set up one national Amazon-type online ordering warehouse where officers and staff from across the country can order nationally procured equipment and uniform?

Should the College of Policing not test products and secure the best value products to fill the warehouse so that officers get the right equipment first time and every time?

Just a thought.
‘Overzealous’ vetting and skewed selection leads to narrow promotion group

Talented officers are being denied the chance of promotion because of forces’ overzealous record keeping and overly narrow criteria which rewards social skills over an ability to come up with innovative ideas.

The Police Federation has raised concerns with the National Police Chiefs’ Council that some officers are getting sifted out of promotion opportunities due to forces having no consistent approach on how long to keep information about minor incidents on officers’ files.

This has led to an unfair data management ‘postcode lottery,’ a Police Federation performance and conduct conference heard, which sees some officers being excessively penalised for minor incidents that happened when they were children while the records of other officers in other forces have had similar information deleted.

Alex Duncan, chair of the Federation’s performance and conduct committee, said: “There needs to be a standardised approach [to vetting] and sensible decisions taken. The blanket retention of data relating to historic misconduct matters by some forces needs to stop.”

‘Face that fits’

The warning comes as the head of the National Police Autistic Association said officers without a “face that fits” are falling out of the promotion system as the dwindling number of opportunities makes the process more “cut throat.”

PC Nelson, an officer for 11 years, said: “The promotion process over and over again tends to favour a certain pattern of thinking. They tend to promote people who think in a certain way.

“So the potential senior officer who maybe hasn’t got the smooth social skills that colleagues have, but who is intelligent and comes up with original ideas, is never going to get through.

How much time does a police middle manager burn up trying to please, schmoozing the person above them?”

PC Nelson added: “If you take the values the promotion system is looking for and apply that over and over again through successive rounds of promotion, the people reaching the top actually fit quite a narrow mould.”

Dave Bamber, Police Federation lead on autism spectrum condition, said: “Many people in the service will be on the spectrum whether diagnosed or undiagnosed; it’s important we make the best use of their abilities in the same way that many of the world’s largest organisations and companies do.”

See Policing autism, p16

...Making New Year resolutions

New Year is traditionally a time when we take stock of our lives, look back over the previous year, congratulate ourselves on what went well and gloss over what didn’t. It’s a bit like our own personal review and debrief, except without the boot up the backside from senior officers who are always wise after the event.

Every year I resolve not make any New Year resolutions, on the basis that I am by now so well into dinosaurhood that I cannot change even if I wanted to.

Which I don’t. For that reason, I gave up on considering further promotion, to the extent of asking my line manager during last year’s appraisal to write, in the box marked Career Aspirations, ‘None. Leave me alone’. He translated this as ‘Seeks interesting challenges. Please inundate with exciting development opportunities’ and proceeded to bombard me with e-mails ensuring that I avoided inactivity.

I have little doubt that 2016 will prove to be full of exciting development opportunities for the police service, or what is left of it, all of which the Home Secretary has probably resolved to make as challenging as possible. I hope that her political life is made as interesting as possible, ideally by a fellow representative of the people who has woken up, smelt the proverbial coffee and concluded that, through the total evisceration of the police, the public has been poorly served. Such a far-sighted individual has, thus far, been overlooked by the media, party leaders and probably the electorate so I am not holding my breath.

So no resolutions from me; just a wish for you all to have a happy and successful 2016.

Follow me on Twitter @stationsarge
‘Smarter’ approach needed to replace target culture

Forces need to develop techniques that are “smarter, more sophisticated” than individual targets to measure how officers are performing in their role, the Police Federation has urged.

Steve White, chair, Police Federation of England and Wales, said there has been no proper debate about what the public wants from its police service or how that could be delivered. This, he added, would allow officers to work more closely with communities and give the public “a better understanding of the wider issues we face”.

The comments follow a review on behalf of the Home Office by Irene Curtis, outgoing president of the Police Superintendents’ Association of England and Wales, of the use of targets in policing. Ms Curtis’s review, published last month, introduced a raft of recommendations for chief constables, police and crime commissioners, HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, the Home Office and the College of Policing.

Unnecessary bureaucracy

These included that chief constables should focus on capturing data that helps them to make decisions and that officers retain discretion in deciding how to deal with an incident; that “unnecessary bureaucracy” is jettisoned; and that there is a clear link between performance and purpose.

Mr White said: “We broadly welcome this review which recognises that, while most forces have moved away from numeric policing targets, there needs to be a smarter, more sophisticated way of capturing performance.

“We have long held the view that crime statistics are a crude tool to measure police performance. The idea that by simply recording the number of crimes, arrests or stop and searches, you can use it as a benchmark for the success – or otherwise – of a particular force, is clearly an outdated one. But it is a confusing and complex landscape.

“We’re still struggling to measure demand for the service, let alone monitor performance. No-one, still, really understands the value and performance of the police service. “We still haven’t had the proper debate about what the public wants from its police service, how we can perform against that and how we can continue to give the public a better understanding of the wider issues we face and better engage with communities in the current climate.”

Target culture

“As long as the purpose of the police is only articulated as ‘to cut crime’, and that crime figures are used as a measure of police performance, then there is a strong likelihood that some form of target culture will persist. “This is about more than efficiency: this is about genuinely making a difference to individuals, to communities and society, to protecting people and to helping them in the best way we can – which I believe is the only type of target every police officer wants to hit.”
Dozens of police officers and staff have been recognised in this year’s New Year’s honours. A total of 51 officers from across the UK and the UK’s overseas dependencies were handed awards. These included MBEs, OBEs, the British Empire Medal and 24 officers who received the Queen’s Police Medal.

Georgette Fulton, the mother of PC Lewis Fulton, who was murdered while on duty in Glasgow in 1994, was awarded the OBE for services to Care of Police Survivors, St Andrew’s First Aid and the community in New Cumnock, Ayrshire.

Roger Nield, a former inspector from Surrey Police and well-known user of Twitter, received the MBE for services to neighbourhood policing particularly through social media.

Steve White, chair of the Police Federation of England and Wales, said: “Congratulations to the 51 individuals who gained their honours for their distinguished service either as police officers or those who support policing in their local communities. At a time when police budgets are stretched and communities challenged in times of heightened awareness, police officers and those who support policing have had to routinely go above and beyond and beyond the call of duty and often risk their lives to keep the community safe.

“The Police Federation welcomes that they are acknowledged, thanked and honoured with the nation’s most prestigious recognition for their exemplary service and commitment, and I hope we will see ever more police officers nominated in this way in the years to come.”
Policing New Year’s Honours 2016

MVO (Member of the Royal Victorian Order)
Sgt Andrew Thomas, Metropolitan Police; for services to royalty protection

Royal Victorian Medal (Silver)
Constable Gary Copeland, Metropolitan Police; for services to royalty protection
Constable James Williams, Metropolitan Police; for services to royalty protection

OBE
David Clarke, formerly Treasurer, Police and Crime Commissioners for Warwickshire and West Mercia; for services to policing finance
Ms Tania Eagle, Programme Director, Association of Police and Crime Commissioners; for services to policing
Mrs Geogette Fulton, for services to Care of Police Survivors, St Andrew’s First Aid and the community in New Cumnock, Ayrshire
Mrs Sarah Goodall, Deputy Director, National Crime Agency; for services to law enforcement
Miss Pauline Jarvis, CCTV evidence investigator, Nottinghamshire Police; for services to policing and major crime investigations
Det Sgt Andrew Watson, Thames Valley Police; for services to policing and counter-terrorism

MBE
David Acheson, Trustee, Police Roll of Honour Trust; for services to the families of police officers and to charity
Roy Croasdale, Vice-Chairman, Independent Advisory Group, Metropolitan Police; for services to law and order in London
Lawrence Gibbons, Manager, Organised Crime Command, National Crime Agency; for services to law enforcement, particularly tackling illegal drugs
Ms Rita Gooch, International Liaison Officer, National Crime Agency; for services to law enforcement

Chf Supt Nigel Grimshaw, PSNI; for services to policing and the community in Northern Ireland
Det Sgt Nathan Munson, Hazardous Substances Industry Engagement Officer, Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism, Home Office; for services to counter-terrorism
Roger Nield, formerly inspector, Surrey Police; for services to neighbourhood policing particularly through social media
Michael Smith, formerly constable, Metropolitan Police, and Founder, Word 4 Weapons; for services to the reduction of knife and gun crime
Mrs Heather Tobin, formerly detective inspector, West Midlands Police; for services to public protection

QPM (England and Wales)
Chief Constable Simon Bailey, Norfolk Constabulary
Chief Constable Simon Byrne, Cheshire Constabulary
Steven Craddock, lately detective superintendent, West Midlands Police
Assistant Commissioner Ian Dyson, City of London Police
Alan Humphries, lately neighbourhood inspector, Greater Manchester Police
Chief Constable Martin Jelley, Warwickshire Police
Chf Supt Claire Johnston, Metropolitan Police
Chf Supt Neil Hibbert, Metropolitan Police
Constable Zuleika Payne, South Yorkshire Police
Deputy Chief Constable Timothy Madgwick, North Yorkshire Police
Paul Morrison, formerly chief superintendent, Sussex and Surrey Police
Det Chf Supt Keith Niven, Metropolitan Police

MBE
Chf Supt Eleanor Mitchell, Police Scotland
Chf Supt Andrew Morriss, Police Scotland
Det Supt Louise Raphael, Police Scotland

BEM (British Empire Medal)
Paul Brown, formerly constable, South Yorkshire Police; for services to law and order and the community in South Yorkshire
Ian Northcott, formerly constable, West Midlands Police; for services to the community particularly homeless people in the West Midlands
Mrs Deborah Wolfe, Data Protection Manager, PSNI; for services to policing and the community in Northern Ireland

QPM (Scotland)
Chf Supt Eleanor Mitchell, Police Scotland
Chf Supt Andrew Morriss, Police Scotland
Det Supt Louise Raphael, Police Scotland

QPM (Northern Ireland)
T/Det Chf Insp Alan Dickson, PSNI
Chf Supt Eric Murray, PSNI
Insp Philip Shepherd, PSNI
Pensions on divorce
We often get asked a lot of questions from officers about their police pensions, particularly when officers are going through divorce proceedings.

A spouse is entitled to know how much an officer’s pension is worth (you can get this information from your pension administrators). If your spouse has a pension this will also need to be valued when considering their claim against your pension.

When the court is required to decide how parties’ finances should be divided, statute sets out what the court has to consider. There are key principles in case law such as a party’s needs, sharing and compensation.

Only once parties’ needs have been met will the court consider contributions based arguments. For example, if an officer joined the police force in 1995, began cohabitating with their partner in 2005 and then married in 2006 should the pension which that officer accrued between 1995 and 2005 be excluded? This is a scenario which commonly arises for many of the officers which we represent.

Unfortunately there is not a simple answer to this question. Generally speaking, pensions are more likely to be a significant issue if the marriage is long and if there are children of the marriage. Pensions will be less important if the marriage is short, the parties are relatively young and there are no children.

The best advice we can give officers is to deal with their marital finances including their pension when they separate. For example, we are currently acting for an officer who separated from his spouse 13 years ago but did not deal with his finances at the time. If he had done so, the pension share which his spouse needed would have been at 14 per cent; 13 years on, the pension share which his spouse is now looking at achieving is 32 per cent.

Survey will explore effect of budget cuts on officers’ health, safety and well-being

Officers are being urged to share their experiences of how cuts to policing budgets have affected their health, safety and wellbeing.

The online survey aims to investigate factors such as workloads, stress levels, morale and fatigue. Officers who fill it out will also be asked their opinions on the mental health and wellbeing support offered by their forces, as well as what kind of protective measures they would like their forces to implement to ensure officer safety.

Sickness and stress leave
John Murphy, health and safety lead for the Police Federation of England and Wales, 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.

“But, in order to change minds and budgets, we need evidence of the impact the government’s austerity measures are having on our ability to help our communities.”

The PFEW’s research department is working with the University of Nottingham to undertake this research. Mr Murphy added: “Lower budgets from the Home Office since 2010 mean there are 17,000 fewer police officers on the streets, and 16,000 fewer police staff.

“If we want to keep being able to provide the high-quality policing service we all want to, then we need to know what our staffing levels should be. The best way we can do this is by hearing from the officers on the frontline trying to work under this pressure.

“I’m encouraging all police officers to take part in the survey; the more information the survey records, the easier the case to be made will be when talking to the Home Office.”

The survey is due out next month (February 2016) and will be available online. The link will be publicised once finalised.
Gone missing – iPhone, patience and ‘I apologise’

A lady called into Alton police station recently to report the loss of her iPhone while out dog walking. As she had the ‘Find My Phone’ app on her iPad (which she brought into the station), she had been able to track the lost phone to a house at the end of a road locally. She asked the senior enquiry officer if they could urgently deploy an officer to go to the house and retrieve the phone. Unfortunately as there is no WiFi in the station the info quickly dropped off the iPad and she could not remember the exact location, all she had was a junction with two roads but no house number.

The lady became more and more angry that we weren’t dealing with things quickly enough. Eventually she left her details and stated she would be at her home address waiting for officers to contact her, if they could be bothered. As the shift was in the process of changing over, the SEO sent it down to the force enquiry centre for them to deploy an officer. The centre requested the officer phone the lady to once again establish the exact address where the missing phone was. During the phone call the lady revealed she had found the phone in her conservatory... the SEO is still awaiting an apology.

Waterproof, but not foolproof

Recently one of our collision investigators was called to a crash late in the night and made his way to the scene, encountering some rain along the way. Thankfully the scene was dry and he was able to look around and examine everything.

After taking lots of evidential photos he went back to his car to discuss the job with the other officers present and placed the camera on the windscreen of the car, resting on the back edge of the bonnet. As they chatted, a tiny amount of drizzle began to fall so the officers put their hoods up... and then heard a loud bang and were puzzled to see a camera lens rolling down the road. The rain had triggered the auto-wiping function on the car and the wipers had flung the very expensive camera onto the road smashing the lens and cracking the back of the camera. At least in the old days machines only did things when you asked them to!
It was a wet Christmas rather than a white one for many people across parts of the UK, as a series of storms battered areas of Wales, the north and north west of England and the Scottish Borders throughout December, bringing torrential rain and leading to heavy flooding.

Storm Desmond arrived at the start of December, with Cumbria, Lancashire, Northumberland, north Wales and Yorkshire as well as Scottish Borders the worst affected areas. Officers and other emergency services worked around the clock to evacuate those residents at risk, as well as assessing damage to roads and bridges.

As the rainfall broke the UK’s 24-hour record, with 341.4mm of rain falling in Honiton Pass, Cumbria on December 5, Cumbria Police declared the situation a major incident.

Many communities in northern England faced flooding more than once in December, and on Christmas Day – as Storm Eva swept the country – there was more torrential rain affecting parts of Lancashire, north Yorkshire and Cumbria. Parts of Leeds, Greater Manchester and York were underwater for several days. Prime Minister David Cameron visited North Yorkshire Police’s Force Control Room on Monday 28 December; North Yorkshire Deputy Chief Constable Tim Madgwick said: “The emergency services and our partner agencies, including the army, have done a tremendous job in responding to the devastation caused by the floods.”

As December drew to a close, Storm Frank brought more misery to many of those who had already experienced flooding, and officers continued to worked to protect the public from some of the worst weather on record.
Most police officers may be surprised to learn that among their colleagues there is a significant number with hidden disabilities such as autism, Asperger’s syndrome and dyspraxia – so-called autistic spectrum disorders. These conditions affect how people process information, so although dyspraxia (difficulties with communication and interaction) is different to both dyslexia (difficulties with literacy and language) and autism/Asperger’s (difficulties with relating to other people and the world at large), they are essentially caused by the same thing. For those on the spectrum, the world can seem a confusing and unpredictable place.

The UK’s National Autistic Society estimates that autism affects around 500,000 people in the country, or one in 100. Given that, you might expect the police service to be working hard to understand and support those officers who are on the spectrum themselves or who have family members on the spectrum, as well as those autistic people who officers may encounter in the course of their work.

**Lack of understanding**

Not so, according to John Nelson, who founded the National Police Autism Association in autumn 2015. The association is an anonymous internet forum with a few dozen members, although growing fast. Many of the members have family on the autistic spectrum but a significant number have the condition themselves. Given the fast rate at which the membership has grown, PC Nelson expects the membership to number in the hundreds in the coming months.

Officers use the forum to discuss a range of topics including reasonable adjustments to make for autistic colleagues, the lack of understanding of the condition among occupational health departments, supporting family members who have autism, and advice on how and whether to gain a diagnosis.

Officers on the forum cite the police service’s lack of ability at spotting and utilising the capabilities of – but also offering support to – colleagues who are or who have family members on the spectrum. They say they may struggle with some of the political or social aspects of policing but actually just think differently – so called ‘neurodiversity’ – and are often loyal, intelligent, innovative, with a good memory, among other positive traits.

PC Nelson set up the association when he was involved in the Hampshire Constabulary equality action group, after realising there was a gap in support and understanding for people on the spectrum. He says that, despite good work by some forces, officers still have a limited understanding of the condition and there is a stigma attached to autism, particularly when it comes to gaining promotion.

One officer from a UK force who is a member of the association’s forum, says: “Things are very unlikely to change unless people can see very good reason, ie why autistic spectrum conditions can be beneficial in [police] personnel. Things like honesty, loyalty to friends/colleagues, different ways of thinking and problem-solving, attention to detail, hypersensitivity in noticing things other people usually don’t. In fact, things like how autistic spectrum personnel can function well enough to appear like an ‘ordinary’ person (and not Rainman) and are capable of functioning as a good officer who can be relied upon to back you up the moment you need it.”

PC Nelson cites Hampshire Constabulary as one force that has grasped the issue and put in reasonable adjustments for officers and members of the public on the autistic spectrum. Among the measures was the first police force autistic support group. In addition, candidates for promotion are given interview questions in advance to ease the difficulty those on the spectrum may have in answering unexpected and awkward questions. They are also allowed to take cue cards into job interviews. But the force has also made adjustments for those members of the public on the spectrum who are brought into custody – they are given laminated cards with pictograms to help them understand what is happening to them in more simple terms.
The puzzle pattern used by the Autistic Society reflects the complexity of the autism spectrum, with different colors and shapes representing the diversity of the people and families living with the condition. Officers, their families and members of the public are among those affected by the condition.
Case study 1: a serving officer on the autistic spectrum states:

“Very often people like us are characterised as having a ‘disorder’ and the focus is on what we struggle with rather than what we’re good at and the positive traits we possess. Things like having a great visual memory – which means the quality of evidence we provide can usually be excellent – our attention to detail with case files, and (certainly for me) a high boredom threshold, making things like constant supervision and scene guarding easier than might be the case.

“There are other things people like us wish neurologically-typical people knew. The first is that you definitely know someone on the spectrum. They might not know themselves but in my force alone, there are probably 60 to 70 officers and staff who are on the spectrum. And for those who are unaware of what makes them different, life is exhausting. Because so much of what you consider normal is alien to us, we have to act ‘normal’ every single day in order to be accepted by our peers. And when we get it wrong, as we inevitably do, it’s our fault.

“For example, I find it really difficult to fake interest in some conversations that I don’t care about. I’ve been known to get up and walk off while someone is talking! So my point is, which would you prefer – the person who can’t lie very well or the person who is successfully fooling you and has been for years?!

“The second point is that often we are not only struggling with day-to-day lives ourselves, but also supporting a family member in the same position. I myself have a son with autistic spectrum disorder, and I know I’m not the only one in my position who spends half their time wondering why they don’t fit in at work and the rest of the time fighting with schools and local authorities to get the support my son needs.

“We are incredibly dependable, we are loyal, we are hardly ever racist or sexist, we are trustworthy and we can be extremely single-minded. My view is that we all have the potential to make exactly the kind of police officers and staff that the public wants. But it speaks volumes that you’ll find threads on [the NPAA] forum about the difficulties getting promoted and people agonising over whether to tell their colleagues and friends what makes them different for fear of being ostracised.

“If the statistics are correct we are the biggest minority group in the UK, bigger than all of the others put together. We don’t need pity, and we don’t need understanding. What we need is acceptance.”

PC Nelson says: “There is a stigma without a doubt. Most police officers have a very limited understanding of autism. The only time they are likely to come across it is if they have arrested someone who needs an appropriate adult.

“Someone on the spectrum [who has been arrested] probably won’t disclose it so we would have to work out that they are on the spectrum which we are very bad at doing. It’s all about treating the public with decency and respect. Someone brought in for a minor offence could end up being treated far more harshly and unfairly than they should be. They may not understand the concept of legal advice or a solicitor; they might admit to things they shouldn’t admit to or say things they shouldn’t be saying if they’re not having the correct representation.”

The aim of the NPAA, PC Nelson explains, is for it to be a ‘focal point’ for sharing best practice so that forces can develop their support for people on the autistic spectrum, from occupational health to professional development.

**Better use of abilities**

Dave Bamber, Police Federation lead on autism spectrum condition, says: “Policing needs to make better use of its people and recognise their skills and abilities, but also their neurodiversity and different ways of thinking. Many people in the service will be on the spectrum – whether diagnosed or undiagnosed – and it is important we make the best use of their abilities in the same way that many of the world’s largest organisations and companies such as NASA and various technology firms do. It is important not only that we treat people within the service properly but also that we are better able to serve the public.”

PC Nelson adds: “The service needs to take a more intelligent approach to diversity. Diversity is about thinking and being different, it’s not about fitting into a box. However committed a force is to the cause of diversity, if the message isn’t getting through to middle managers then it’s going to go wrong. The key to that is education. Maybe the underlying feeling from some officers is that having autism means you’re not as mentally capable as others and that’s absolutely false. The issue that we see most often is supervisors making reasonable adjustments and working with occupational health who may not have an understanding [of the condition].

“It’s quite well known that people with Asperger’s tend to visualise problems differently. These people will typically end up working somewhere like Apple or Microsoft and coming up with innovative ideas to make lots of money for someone. Our point is why can’t people like that end up working for the police service?”

To find out more visit www.npaa.org.uk or follow on Twitter @npaa_uk
Case study 2: a serving officer states:

“I have just recently disclosed my Asperger’s to my supervisor and as an individual he has been excellent. I am being referred to occupational health but I am not hopeful regarding their actions.

“I do not believe there is the expertise among staff to help but I look forward to being proved wrong. One of the main issues is that females present differently with Asperger’s to males and I think this would be problematic for someone who didn’t know much about it.

“One of my biggest concerns about disclosing was that people would just see the label and assume I couldn’t do things – for example be told I couldn’t be operational, which is complete nonsense. Females often manage to mask their symptoms very successfully and this is very much the case for me so it is not obvious to anyone that I struggle.

“Where it affects me is the effort of maintaining the ruse – it means my time away from work has been reduced to spending days on my own trying to recover. That’s what prompted the disclosure in the end. As for how it affects me: I hate the telephone; I have problems recognising faces; I can’t tell if someone is lying or has underlying issues; interruptions are difficult; I prefer written communications rather than verbal instructions; I’m not good at small talk and I don’t get office politics... however, I also have an amazing memory; a massive ability to learn; I am intelligent, loyal, determined, and lots of other good things too. It’s important to remember being on the autistic spectrum has good points as well as bad.”

Police magazine asked one officer from a UK force for her experience of being in the police with the condition. She was diagnosed with Asperger’s Syndrome after joining the service and currently works in a crime management unit.

How does autism spectrum condition (ASC) affect or enhance your ability to perform your role?

I struggle with communicating all the facts of an incident to others. This obviously presents a potential officer safety issue alongside a more serious issue where things could get missed and have serious consequences. I also require direct instructions.

Alternatively, my written reports have never been an issue and I am highly skilled on the computer – I recently passed a course with 100 per cent and even had an email from the trainers to say how well I did, which was then sent to my line manager.

Do police forces/ supervisors understand ASC and how to treat or get the best out of people on the spectrum?

Some are better than others. With the National Police Autism Association having recently been formed I’m hoping understanding will be more widespread, as well as destroying the myth that all people with ASC are Rain Man!

What should they do to get the best out of people with ASC?

Listen to what the person is saying about the aspects of the job they struggle with. Focus on what they can do and if possible, adjust their role so they are doing more of what they are good at and less of what they struggle with.

What are the pitfalls forces fall into in relation to ASC?

If the person with ASC falls into the trap of being in a role that does not suit them and leads to them making mistakes, it is very difficult for them to get the evidence required to move to a role in which they would excel. For example, a response team PC with a PDR declaring their work unsatisfactory would not be able to move into a role they would be better suited to because of the PDR assessment. It would then end up in a Catch-22 situation with the person unable to move on.

What effect does this have on officers and staff with ASC?

It is demoralising and could potentially lead to them making more mistakes, or a meltdown. Either of these could then lead to management action depending on how they react.

What benefits do people with ASC bring to policing – both in terms of internally and in dealing with the public?

Attention to detail, the ability to see the small details as well as the bigger picture, the ability to detach emotionally when required, good visual memory, ability to recall facts and points of law, and good problem-solving skills as well as the ability to think outside the box.

Have you told colleagues you have ASC?

Some. Some have not been surprised when I told them and others have been initially but when it has been explained to them they have understood. Everybody has accepted it, however.
As a firearms officer for 13 years I am well versed with the fitness tests that have altered only once over that time. I have been lucky enough to achieve the 9.4 in the shuttle run required for my specific role. Well, I say lucky, but was it and should it really be down to luck?

As an authorised firearms officer, we are expected to reach level 9.4 or 10.6 if a specialist firearms officer.

Getting to that level doesn’t happen by chance. Many colleagues have had to adapt their training specifically to pass, rather than continue with the all-round strength and aerobic training which assists their day-to-day role.

The test also suits a certain build of person. Larger people find it harder to complete the regular turns required at the end of each run; for some, because by the time they have got up to speed they then have to slow and turn, they are also risking injury.

Firearms teams consist of all shapes, sizes and genders, which helps with the whole dynamic and suitability of the wider team. The current test favours a minority group – certainly to the above mentioned pass rate levels.

It is universally accepted that men and women are physiologically different. Women’s heart and lungs are smaller and so is our muscle mass. Men and women do not compete against each other in the sporting arena, as that would be unfair, so I do not agree that to make reasonable adjustments for that difference could be construed as discrimination. Surely it would be discrimination if, for example, it put black or minority ethnic people at a disadvantage? If the test is arguably discriminatory, wouldn’t reasonable adjustments make it fair?

The service in England and Wales could do worse than look at the test Police Scotland uses which has a sliding scale for age and gender (www.scotland.police.uk/assets/pdf/recruitment/police-scotland-fitness-standard-guidance?view=Standard). It’s a thorough, up-to-date and forward-thinking document. It also provides lots of help and advice as to the best way to achieve better fitness and the benefits of doing so.

Point of exhaustion

In England and Wales, the basic pass mark for new recruits and serving police officers on the shuttle run test is 5.4. It consists of a 15-metre continuous shuttle run with increases in speed – the participant has to run the shuttles to a certain speed or to the point of exhaustion. Since its inception, the test has provoked much debate and raised issues and concerns around the country.

The Police Federation has already highlighted its own concerns. These were echoed locally within my own force along with others who raised similar points at a recent Police Federation women’s conference. The concerns were that there appeared to be a significant number of women – particularly those aged over 45 – failing the test at this level. Delegates asked for information to ascertain why the test might be difficult for that specific group. The knee and joint injuries caused by the constant stopping and turning were another concern.

For those who have time to be active in their day-to-day lives, a pass mark of 5.4 may be perceived to be low. Those of us who make a lifestyle choice to take and enjoy regular exercise

Stating that a healthy older woman could be more likely to pass than a less fit younger man misses the real point – how much harder has a woman got to work on her fitness compared to a man in order to pass the test and get to the same level?
may see this as a ‘no brainer’. However, not everyone is naturally built that way and fitness testing can cause much anxiety if it is not managed and implemented properly for the right reasons. Some people may need much more support and guidance.

With continuing cuts in budgets many forces don’t have physical training instructors to provide that guidance and support for training programmes. The first thing many occupational health units suggest for the majority of recuperative programmes is to factor in some gym time. That is not always readily available to all.

I looked at the documentation relating to the test on the POLKA website. It had all the stats that were used to establish the set levels for the specialisms across the police service. It showed the number of volunteers for each group in their specialisms and then broke it down into gender. I will not bore you with all the specifics but it did not appear to be that scientific. I shared it with my sister, a scientist with a PhD in genetics who has had work published in *The Lancet*. She agreed with me. It wasn’t that scientific. Any issues at the lower end of the test are only accentuated the higher you go.

**Legal challenge**

Is it only a matter of time before this is challenged by way of grievance, or legally? If police forces are going to test for something, it is important to make sure the reasons why are clear, that they are not setting up colleagues to be challenged against discriminatory standards of success.

Making reasonable adjustments doesn’t equate to lowering the standards. Men and women are equal, we are just different, and we all get older. Maybe we could at least look at alternatives to running, or make it a volumetric test. Even the military do not test for this without making adjustments for age or gender and they run on a treadmill or have an alternative.

I’ve got to stand on the line in a few weeks’ time and pass my annual ARG fitness test. I’m a 45-year-old woman of above average fitness, and I know that I will have put in significantly more effort – along with excessive worry and anxiety – to get to the same point as some of my colleagues and achieve 9.4.

Surely a fair process will motivate everyone to succeed. Isn’t that what this is about?

Off out for a run…
Recent events across the country have led me to question how well policing is dealing with the threat posed by knives and bladed weapons. Over the past few weeks we have seen the 15th young man to die from a knife wound in London this year, the stabbing of PC Guy Sinnott in Tower Hamlets, east London, the horrendous stabbing at Leytonstone tube station, and a man stabbed to death in Abingdon. I proudly served as a sergeant at Tower Hamlets from 1997 to 2002 and part of my role was to teach emergency life support to operational officers. It may well have been that Guy had been one of my students at the Isle of Dogs station where emergency life support was taught back then.

The tragic events in Paris and the continued multiple shootings in the US are worrying enough, but in England and Wales officers are faced with the daily dilemma of how to tackle suspects carrying knives, and render first aid to victims and colleagues. Ensuring that officers are properly trained in emergency life support and best use of stop and search is vital if the police service is to get to grips with the menace of knife crime.

The training I received from the Met’s medic trainers at Hounslow Public Order Training Centre served me well. After undergoing this training as a PC on the Territorial Support Group (TSG), my first multiple stab wound victim on the pavement in Ealing was more than likely saved thanks to a system of treatment that had been ingrained while I was barely able to breath after a couple of shield runs and many press ups in full kit.

The only words that young lad could say to me were that he had been repeatedly punched; that was far from the case. All cops should know about the standard action plan of ‘Danger; Response; Airway; Breathing; Circulation’, but moving on in the system of treatment to E for ‘Expose the kill zone’, and F for ‘Find hidden injuries’ officers can start to realise both what visible damage a knife can do and how tiny a life threatening puncture wound can be. Even fully trained medical professionals sometimes miss these hidden injuries and it is vitally important that we get down to a victim’s skin level as early as possible when treating any casualty. The benefit that hindsight affords any kind of investigation rarely considers all the competing issues our officers have to deal with in the aftermath of a stabbing, but these investigations are all too quick to highlight oversights made while under tremendous pressure.

My plea to all chief officers is to ensure that emergency life support training for all officers is comprehensive and they are confident in their abilities. We all owe that to the general public, the families of victims, and to our staff. With the increase in ambulance waiting times in some parts of the country the police service should ensure its officers remain well and truly prepared.

So we know we need to be properly trained to deal with the aftermath of stabbings, but why are we still seeing so many knife injuries in the first place? This is particularly puzzling when you consider we have a power of search under section one of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 to deal with offensive weapons and pointed/bladed articles.

Although I have driven a desk at the Police Federation for the last 18 months the rest of my career has been operational, including for 10 years up to June 2014 as a TSG inspector. The TSGs and other similar units have historically been the powerhouses of stop and search within the service. Not having to respond to the majority of calls that our 24/7 colleagues do, coupled with strength in numbers, leads to an environment where stop and search is both safer and more controlled.

I don’t hold with the theory that a reduction in arrests for knives means fewer knives are being carried. My theory, backed up by what frontline officers tell me, is that they are now becoming reluctant to use their powers as they are under heavy scrutiny to display a high hit rate. I would never advocate that searches are carried out without reasonable grounds, but officers should not be swayed in the lawful execution of their duties by political pressure. We owe it to the
mothers, fathers, and families of victims to remain independent in the office of constable and get knives off the streets. We must send an unequivocal message that if you are carrying a knife we will find it and you will be prosecuted.

What I will agree with is that we don’t always get stop and search right when it comes to the interaction with the person being searched and the way we record our grounds. There is absolutely no justification for being impolite or disrespectful to anyone. However, I have also had the pleasure of working with some fantastic officers who get it right every time and this often comes with an easy going communication style coupled with a high degree of confidence in and knowledge of their powers.

Training and mentoring

It is vital our leaders invest in training and mentoring for officers to be able to use these powers as there is a risk we will lose the skills required to carry out effective stop and search. The price for that will be paid by yet more victims.

So officers being proficient in the use of stop and search and emergency life support can be of great help in reducing the devastating effects of knife crime; but equally important is the welfare of our staff in the aftermath of these events, and in dealing with the stresses and strains of policing.

Our staff are without doubt our biggest asset. As one chief officer recently noted at a well-being seminar at Avon and Somerset Constabulary: “I know exactly when all my fleet were serviced and the oil in the BMWs changed but do I really know how all my staff are doing today?”

Our officers are dealing with very stressful incidents day in, day out. When I saw the TV footage of the stabbing scene at Leytonstone Tube station last month, the first thing that entered my head was the myriad of tasks that those initial officers would be faced with…. victims, suspects, crime scene, Taser use and post-incident procedures, CCTV, witnesses, mobile phone footage, the list goes on and on.

The pressure on our officers is relentless and the time for reflection and gathering our thoughts is becoming less and less. It’s not always the officers who deal with the most traumatic events such as a fatal stabbing or another of the consequences of knife crime that need the most help. The constant drip, drip of call after call and the slow build-up of stress over a period of time can be just as devastating to the well-being of an officer as a one-off major event.

Senior officers must ensure they halt the demise of local occupational health services and of the familiar face from HR. We can all tend to lose our way at times and my final plea in this busy world is that we look after each other.

John Murphy, health and safety lead, Police Federation of England and Wales
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So that’s Christmas done and dusted for another year. I’ve eaten and spent too much and already broken all of my New Year resolutions. Situation normal! If only we could do Christmas like the Olympics and World Cup – every four years; I have even considered starting one of those seemingly ubiquitous online petitions to bring this about, but then maybe not.

On a positive note I have been spared the hangovers, as the little avenue of pleasure that was alcohol has been closed down to me since I became sober 26 years ago. I even have mixed feelings about that, as at least with waking-up and feeling dreadful I had something to look forward to in recovering from the over-indulgence. When I wake up now, that’s as good as I will feel for the rest of the day.

In an odd role reversal this year, it was my duty to wake the kids (teenagers and a 21-year-old) who are not now jumping on our bed at 4am ready to unwrap presents in a frenzy. They now prefer to sleep off the previous night and be ‘gently coaxed’ out of bed around 11am.

I never minded working on a Christmas Day while in the job, it was generally quiet with an opportunity to pop home at some stage, but Boxing Day was always a nightmare. The spirit of peace and goodwill had been stretched too far and we would be called to a never-ending number of drink fuelled ‘domestics’. I doubt if this has changed much down the years, but suspect with fewer staff December 25th will always be busy for those on duty.

Who knows what 2016 will bring policing? It appears that George Osborne’s promise of an end to cuts wasn’t quite what it seemed as forces continue to have to make tough decisions on what they will have to lose and stop doing.

What I do know is that we still have the finest police service in the world, with the finest people working in it.

I wish each of you a happy and healthy New Year. Stay safe!

You can follow me on Twitter @MrCliveC

Christmas hangovers may be a thing of the past for Clive, but the challenges facing policing in 2016 are a sobering thought for everyone
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