Bravest of the Brave

Home Secretary honours overall winner PC Sean Cannon and nominees from across the country at the Police Bravery Awards
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Editorial
Forces face rise in crime as officer numbers fall

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Officers fitter than ever?

National Police Bravery Awards
Downing Street reception and a night of celebration to honour the winners and nominees of this year’s Police Bravery Awards.

Taking Pride in LGBT diversity
Images of a Met police officer proposing to his boyfriend at this year’s London Pride brought into focus how attitudes towards LGBT officers are changing among the public and police forces.

Signs of the times
A research project is underway to examine ‘old-fashioned’ attitudes within the police service about tattoos.
Advancing the impact of policing

The Liverpool Centre for Advanced Policing Studies is a cutting-edge interdisciplinary research centre which supports the sector to meet the challenges of 21st century policing. We work closely with police forces, the College of Policing and allied security professions to develop evidence-based working practices and build skills in emerging areas of law enforcement.

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Our specialist academics and practitioner fellows bring a range of practice and policy-related experience and are developing a wide variety of research programmes, including the Police Knowledge Fund. The 20-month programme focuses on developing capacity in Merseyside Police to develop evidence-based knowledge in challenging areas such as hate crime, child exploitation, cyber-crime, gang culture and female genital mutilation.

If you or your organisation are interested in working with the Centre to build specialist competencies, develop management training schemes or conduct a Knowledge Transfer Partnership, contact our Centre Manager Stephen Moss on 0151 231 5079, email sj.moss@ljmu.ac.uk or visit ljmu.ac.uk
We’re all part of the solution

It seems a day cannot pass without another terrible atrocity filling our news streams. Murderous acts happening in communities with different justifications given by those carry them out.

We all stand aghast, but the reality is that it is only a matter of time before something similar happens closer to home. And when it does, the details will be examined and scrutinised and the blame game will swiftly begin.

I have total faith in the police and the security services as a whole. They do what they can with what they have. But they are just people. Yes, highly trained, but people all the same, and people make mistakes. Things slip through the net. Systems don’t always work.

Having an armed officer on every street corner won’t stop someone deciding this is the day they are going to blow themselves up at an event, behead a man of the cloth or mow down pedestrians. It might limit the damage but the damage will have been done.

Determined criminals and terrorists will find a way. When they do the blame will begin, and we will all want answers. But it is no good pointing the finger of blame if we ourselves don’t see that we – people too – are part of the solution.

Neighbourhood policing is what we should all be doing. Ever seen something which looks out of place and done nothing about it? Ever thought: ‘that’s suspicious,’ and then promptly forgotten and gone on your way? We can’t report everything, but we should question and we should ask and we should participate and be alert to what is going on around us. Only if you do that and hand on heart have never walked on by can you then point the finger of blame when the next atrocity happens.

Follow the Federation @pfew_hq

Forces face rise in crime as officer numbers fall

Crime has increased as officer numbers continue to fall, with 4.5 million offences recorded by police last year, according to the yearly crime figures released by the Office for National Statistics last month.

Recorded crime rose by eight per cent, sexual offences were up 27 per cent, offences involving knives or sharp instruments up 10 per cent, and there were 34 more murders, taking the total to 571.

And, for the first time, the statistics included figures for cybercrime and fraud – a staggering 5.8 million offences, a figure similar to the rest of the crime offences combined.

Steve White, Chair of the Police Federation of England and Wales, said the Federation has been saying for years that the true extent of the changing nature of crime was being ignored.

“Whichever way you look at it, these figures are deeply worrying and disappointing. They clearly show continuing and rising demand on the police service.”

Drop in deaths in custody, but more suitable ‘places of safety’ still needed

The number of deaths in police custody in 2015/16 fell – but more can be done to prevent them.

There were 14 deaths in custody in the period, down from 17, with half of those having known mental health issues and 86 per cent having links to drugs or alcohol.

PFEW custody spokesperson Karen Stephens said: “While one death is one too many, we are pleased that the figures reflect the increased help and support detainees are receiving. The number of apparent suicides following police custody is also down from 70 to 60, the lowest figure since 2012/13, but much more needs to be done.

“What cannot be ignored is that more than half of the apparent suicides had known mental health concerns and nearly half had drugs and/or alcohol concerns.

Yet when the custody sergeant invariably tries to contact health or social care professionals to access a more suitable provision for the detainee, they are either being told there are no appropriate facilities at that time or they cannot get through to the right person.”

The issue of mental health in custody is an important one for the Federation, which has long campaigned for better provision, with 11,000 people every year taken to a police station as a ‘place of safety’ under the Mental Health Act.

Mrs Stephens added: “We have been saying repeatedly that police cells are not the right place for those with mental health issues and other problems, but for too long the police service has been used as a sticking plaster to solve society’s issues.”

Safety and security

“At a time when safety and security of the public is at the top of the political agenda, it is time to refocus priorities and invest further in the police. Our members want to deliver the best service they can, but they need the right support in place to do this in order to keep the British public safe,” Mr White said.

“This is the time we, as a country, should be investing in the police service. With threats against them, the public will rightly expect police resourcing to be increasing, not decreasing.”
Brexit – so what next for policing?

Policing has to urgently get to grips with a rise in hate crimes against perceived ‘non-British’ people in the aftermath of the EU referendum.

That is the view of Gavin Thomas, President of the Police Superintendents’ Association of England and Wales, who is concerned that the decision to leave the European Union appears to have brought out an “invidious” element.

Chief Supt Thomas said: “We are seeing a rise in hate crime in the immediate aftermath of the Brexit vote. Communities are becoming more fractured and we’re seeing behaviour that we didn’t see before. Policing has to address that.”

Some 3,076 hate crimes were recorded in the two weeks from 16 June, compared to 915 incidents in the same period last year. But Chief Supt Thomas thinks more may be going unreported.

He added: “Our role in monitoring community tensions, keeping people safe and dealing robustly with hate crime is always important but possibly never more so than during times of change and uncertainty. We have to send out the message that it is not acceptable to walk up to somebody in the street and tell them to ‘go home’.”

**Great strengths**

Chief Supt Thomas said that while it was not for the police to take a view on whether Brexit is good or bad, and it was important for the service to “remain neutral and apolitical”, he hopes forces will take the opportunity to develop a

**Significant effects on policing**

*by Dr Rick Muir, Director of the Police Foundation*

The decision by the UK to leave the EU is likely to be the biggest political event of our lifetimes. Of course, some things never change: it’s rained in June, there was a muddy Glastonbury and England were knocked out of an international football tournament. Nevertheless, for all that is constant in our national life, this vote will affect all of us in significant ways.

**What will be the impact on policing?**

First, Brexit is shaking the foundations of our political system. It would be foolish to predict at this stage how this will end. But clearly many of the political parameters within which the police have operated for years will change. The traditional party system may fragment, the UK may break up and there are huge implications for the Northern Ireland peace process.

Second, this political explosion has shaken the world economy and is likely to require a significant fiscal adjustment by the UK government. The guarantees made to the police service in the spending review of a flat cash budget over this parliament will now be revisited, most likely in the autumn statement. Although it is very early to predict the hit to the economy, the Economist Intelligence Unit foresees a one per cent contraction in 2017, an eight per cent decline in private consumption. The result will be higher unemployment, increased social transfers and lower tax returns. The fiscal deficit will grow and further cuts to the police budget look likely.

Third, the political tumult has led to a rise in social tensions that the police will have to manage both in the short and longer term. The degree of political polarisation during the referendum seems to have led to a horrifying increase in acts of racist, religious and...
xenophobic abuse. The police online hate crime reporting facility True Vision has seen a 57 per cent rise in reports since the Brexit vote. In the longer term if, for example, a UK government were to compromise on the question of EU citizens’ access to the UK labour market in order to secure a trade deal, there is clearly the potential for a voter backlash on immigration, with worrying implications for community cohesion.

Essential co-operation

Fourth, the legislative framework in which the police service operates will change. Focusing just on crime and justice we will lose the European Arrest Warrant, making it harder to bring suspects back to the UK to face justice, and the European Supervision Order, which allows suspects to be released on bail to their place of residence. We would also on the face of it lose our current framework of European law enforcement co-operation through Europol, co-operation essential to tackling threats such as paedophile and terrorist networks. We could be pulled out of EU-wide information sharing arrangements around DNA, fingerprint, vehicle registration, criminal records and wanted or missing persons. It is feasible that all of this could be retained as part of the renegotiation process, but it will now be contingent on that renegotiation.

Finally, the Leave campaign made much of the fact that by ‘regaining control of our borders’ we would be safer. Putting aside the facts that we were never part of Schengen and we were part of information sharing arrangements around wanted people, it is unclear to what degree the UK will now withdraw from freedom of movement. There is likely to be a big trade-off between being allowed access to the single market with all the economic benefits entailed, and gaining greater control over borders and immigration from the EU.

Taking a step back, post-Brexit it is impossible and unviable for the UK to somehow pull up an imaginary drawbridge and retreat from the world. The police know this better than anyone.

pay for officers should be restrained. “We will have a job to do to hold them to account – not being in the EU is not a valid reason to weaken officers’ conditions of service or pay. On the other hand if the country charts a new course and becomes wealthier, police officers will look to benefit from the upturn.”

of the vote to leave the European Union

longer term view and plan for the future. “Our ability to adapt, respond and manage amidst change and uncertainty is one of our great strengths and something our reputation is built on,” he added.

Also looking to the future is the Police Federation of England and Wales, and in particular working out what Brexit could mean for the pay and working conditions of its officers.

General Secretary Andy Fittes said: “Before there is a bonfire of EU regulations we need to look at what we’re losing. Brexit has created two years of uncertainty, and our worry has to be that a falling pound could lead to a situation where the Government says...”

Taking a step back, post-Brexit it is impossible and unviable for the UK to somehow pull up an imaginary drawbridge and retreat from the world. The police know this better than anyone.
New Home Secretary looks forward to ‘getting stuck in’

Home Secretary Amber Rudd is “looking forward to getting stuck in” to her new role. Ms Rudd was appointed to replace Theresa May in the Home Office and one of her first engagements was to attend the Police Bravery Awards.

The relationship with the Home Secretary is a key one for the PFEW, and Ms Rudd revealed that her predecessor had said the relationship was “in very good order”.

“I certainly am looking forward to the challenges ahead,” she added. “It’s a huge brief, there’s a lot to be done. It’s very important work and I’m looking forward to getting stuck in.”

She presented overall winner PC Sean Cannon with his prize at the awards, and was impressed by the stories she heard on the night.

“What is always so humbling about this event is that you hear amazing stories about what police officers have done, incredible stories about the threat to themselves and the way they’ve thrown themselves into situations and dealt with some really, really difficult people, and you all say the same thing – ‘it’s all part of the job.’

“You put yourselves in the line of danger for the rest of us, and we really appreciate that.”

More QPM recognition for the rank and file

Theresa May has revealed that one of her final acts as Home Secretary was a recommendation that more rank and file officers should receive the Queen’s Police Medal.

Mrs May ended her six-year stint in charge of the Home Office when she succeeded David Cameron as Prime Minister, appointing Amber Rudd as her replacement.

One of her first events at 10 Downing Street was the annual Police Bravery Awards reception, where she told the nominees that she hopes for a wider recognition in the QPM honours.

“I’ve noticed over the years it is a bit imbalanced with rank and files officers and senior and chief officers,” she said. “So I’ve asked them in future to rebalance that so that a few more rank and file officers get awarded the QPM.”

Amazing stories

The 69 nominees for the Bravery Awards and their guests visited 10 Downing Street amid Mrs May’s cabinet reshuffle, and she hailed the officers who had been honoured.

She added: “What is always so humbling about this event is that you hear amazing stories about what police officers have done, incredible stories about the threat to themselves and the way they’ve thrown themselves into situations and dealt with some really, really difficult people, and you all say the same thing – ‘it’s all part of the job.’

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“The event was really special,” she added. “It was lovely for me to hear about the individual stories. It made me feel how lucky I am that we have in our police force so many brave people.”

PFEW chairman Steve White believes it is vital that Ms Rudd ensures any changes do not harm the police going forward.

“In recent years, the police service has done everything asked of them to meet an increasing demand with depleting resources,” he said. “The safety of the public is the first duty of government. The police are here to help achieve this, but are at a point of saturation.”
All frontline officers in North Wales and the Met could be equipped with body-wear video kits by the end of the year.

North Wales will be the first Welsh force to make the equipment available to all on-duty frontline officers, following an announcement by PCC Arfon Jones. After taking office last month, Mr Jones said: “Body-worn video improves evidence gathering and secures more convictions, especially in domestic violence cases. It also resolves complaints against the police because the evidence caught on camera is incontrovertible. Body-worn video is good for everybody except for the criminals.”

It is expected that the kit will be available for use by the autumn. Simon Newport, chair of the North Wales Fed, said: “Officers are already seeing the benefits of body-worn video. The units are helping to prevent crime, prevent disorders and prevent malicious complaints. They are helping officers gain crucial first hour evidence, which can be used in the magistrates’ courts, in showing injuries to themselves and victims, and in getting early guilty pleas.”

The North Wales force currently has 120 units available, and the injection of £163,000 from the PCC’s office will be used to buy a further 301 – meaning all on-duty officers will be able to use one.

Last year, Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe and then-mayor Boris Johnson, announced that 22,000 body-worn video units would be bought, to allow all frontline officers to have the equipment. The Met Police say the roll-out is due to begin by late summer.

Public holiday pay will remain unaffected as the Police Remuneration Review Body (PRRB) backed a number of Federation proposals – although the headline pay rise was “deeply disheartening”. Evidence put forward by the PFEW argued for a 2.8 per cent increase for officers, but the PRRB recommended just a one per cent rise, in line with national policy.

However, public holiday pay has remained the same, with a proposal by the National Police Chiefs’ Council (NPCC) to exchange all bank holidays except Christmas Day and New Year’s Day for annual leave rejected.

The Away from Home Overnight Allowance was also maintained, with London Weighting, Dog Handler Allowances and the South East Allowance increased.

Crucially, the pay increase – although less than hoped for – was also consolidated, meaning it is pensionable pay.

PFEW General Secretary Andy Fittes said: “While deeply disheartening, the headline figure of one per cent shouldn’t mask the fact that the pay review body came down on the side of Police Federation on almost every other aspect of police pay on which they were asked to make a decision. “The PRRB decided that, in line with our evidence, the pay increase should be consolidated, dismissing chief officers’ views that it should be non-consolidated.

“As we demanded, the PRRB decided that public holiday pay should not be reduced and Away from Home Overnight allowance shouldn’t be scrapped. Also, as we asked, London Weighting and Dog Handler Allowance should go up by one per cent. They also increased the South East Allowance as we told them.”

The PRRB has also thrown out a number of other proposals put forward by the Met Police and the NPCC. Since the formation of the PRRB in 2014, the Federation has to submit evidence to secure pay rises, also holding discussions with the PRRB before the board returns its verdict. Increases for public sector staff have been capped at one per cent by the Treasury, and the Federation’s hopes of securing a larger increase were dismissed by the PRRB.

Bitterly disappointed
“Every police officer across England and Wales will be angry and bitterly disappointed with an insulting pay deal by the Government,” added Steve White, PFEW chair. “The PRRB clearly hasn’t listened to the reasons why we called for a 2.8 per cent increase on pay, albeit they agreed with us on almost every other point we put forward.”

The PRRB’s findings were signed off by Theresa May in what proved to be one of her final tasks as Home Secretary before becoming leader of the Conservative Party and, subsequently, the Prime Minister.

This year’s pay survey, which will help form the evidence for the 2017 pay review, has now closed, with a record 42,000 officers taking part. This evidence is crucial in helping us continue to supply evidence to ensure more wins in the future.
The Station Sergeant is...

Saluting the heroes

It goes without saying that, for a patrol officer, your worst nightmares include confronting a deranged gunman carrying a firearm and knife, both of which he has just used to fatal effect. That was the reality that faced two of West Yorkshire’s finest recently, following the shooting of the town’s MP.

So there you are, and there he is, a threat known for what he has just done, and unknown as to his intentions. He might, for all our two colleagues knew at the time, have been another Anders Breivik, hell-bent on a killing spree.

Fortunately we are always well-prepared for such eventualities. ‘Observe the suspect and try to contain him’, would be the mantra, while the diminishing resources of the local force were marshalled, briefed and despatched. Of course, no incident commander who valued their pension would for one moment tell two unarmed officers to confront and restrain the murderous lunatic.

But cops will be cops, and sometimes you have to go with the flow. Here was a real and present danger so they did what their instincts told them, and got stuck in. Had it all gone pear-shaped, the shudders of their senior officers would probably have registered on the Richter Scale. Had the officers forgotten all their training in dynamic risk assessment?

Fortunately it all ended well, except for the gunman, and two unarmed officers won out against the bad guy.

Let us just hope that, when the dust has settled, someone in high places thinks to recommend these two heroes for a gong. A George Cross each seems about right. But I won’t hold my breath; to our lords and masters they are just doing what they were paid to do.

Follow me on Twitter @stationsarge

Memorial to Fiona and Nicola

Former Prime Minister David Cameron has unveiled a new memorial to fallen officers Fiona Bone and Nicola Hughes in Greater Manchester.

The memorial was placed at a community centre close to where the two officers were killed while investigating a hoax burglary in Greater Manchester in September 2012.

PC Bone, who was 32, and 23-year-old PC Hughes were killed in a gun and grenade attack in an incident which shocked the whole country.

The memorial has been created by the Police Memorial Trust, founded in 1984 by the late film director Michael Winner, inspired by the death of PC Yvonne Fletcher.

National PFEW representatives for the north west region Dave Bamber and Ian Saunders were among those who attended the event, alongside Mr Cameron, who had left his role at Downing Street two days earlier.

PCs Bone and Hughes were posthumously honoured with an award by the PFEW last year, and the unveiling of the joint national memorial to the pair happened on the same day as the annual Police Bravery Awards in London.

Hotline’s vital support for ‘at risk’ officers

Calls to the Welfare Support Programme Hotline have almost tripled in the past five months.

A total of 311 officers are currently registered on the scheme for ‘vulnerable and at risk’ cases. Three people have been saved from suicide after intervention by trained staff, with hundreds of others being monitored for their own wellbeing.

“Obviously these are the most serious cases, but we are seeing a marked increase in the number of police officers suffering from severe mental health issues,” said John Murphy, health and safety lead for PFEW which set up the programme with the Police Firearms Officers Association. “The scheme is literally a lifeline for those who are down, feeling isolated and considered at risk, having been through a traumatic episode or for some other reason.

“We have been involved with officers who have gone missing and were considered high suicide risks. In other cases, we have been able to step in when officers felt unable to engage with their force welfare support or the NHS was not able to help.”

The scheme was set up in June 2015 and is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Police officers needing help or advice can access the WSP through their Joint Branch Board, who can make a referral.
Officers fitter than ever?

An average pass rate of 98 per cent has been recorded by police officers in fitness testing.

The College of Policing released the figures, based on a total of 93,956 tests carried out between September 2014 and August 2015.

But despite the positive results, PFEW Deputy General Secretary Andy Ward said there are concerns about the logistics of the test going forward. “The latest figures indicate that the fitness test is impacting disproportionately on women and older people,” he said. “This may indirectly discriminate against those groups where it does not accurately reflect the requirements of the role.

“We are also aware that the figures show that several thousand officers have not taken the fitness test in the last year. It is apparent that several forces have faced a logistical challenge in testing officers, which has not been helped by shrinking police estates and limited resources to administer the tests as a consequence of cuts to policing budgets since 2010.”

The current guidance requires that officers who undertake Personal Safety Training should be subject to mandatory annual fitness testing. Different fitness levels are required for officers in 13 specialist posts, including firearms, dog handlers, and police cyclists.

Mr Ward added: “Two years on, since the introduction of compulsory fitness testing for police officers, our members are keen to see a validated alternative made available in all forces across England & Wales.

“We will continue to work with the College of Policing and other stakeholders to assist all officers in reaching and demonstrating the required fitness capability for their role.”

New ‘police corruption’ offence too vague

A change in the law could mean open season on officers when it comes to misconduct in public office.

Alex Duncan, PFEW lead on conduct and performance, said the wording of the new Act “was so vague that it makes it open season on police officers” including those that make a mistake or bad judgment call.

“The whole Act is so open to interpretation it allows the most determined of investigators the ability to mould facts into a potential offence,” he said.

The Law Commission is reviewing the Common Law offence and outlines various options for reform. Consultation began earlier this year and a final report is expected in 2017.

Leading academics, MPs and lawyers believe that the present law is simply too confusing, unnecessarily technical, poorly defined and no longer fit for purpose and requires clarification through amendment or abolition.

Police Corruption would become a new offence under the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015, with the new law seeking to embody both corrupt practices and other improper uses of police powers and privileges.

Ita Farrelly, Partner at law firm Taylor Haldane Barlex, said: “Despite a need for strict subjective and objective tests to be met in order to support a conviction, it is of concern that the proposed statute further stretches the already elastic spectrum of misconduct with many additional failures of police officers being caught by it to include matters arising through negligence, by accident, through ignorance, owing to pressures of work, deficits in training and the like.”

What happens to my pension after divorce?

When a police officer is getting divorced one of the common questions we get asked is how they can protect their pension.

Failing to deal with matrimonial finances, including a police pension, at the same time as their degree absolute can have very serious financial implications later.

I am acting for an officer who waited 13 years after his separation to deal with his finances. Had he acted at the time his spouse would have been entitled to 14 per cent share of his pension, drawing the marriage to a financial end.

The delay now means she is looking to receive a 32 per cent share of his pension because she can still try to make a claim on any money or assets accrued in the intervening time.

This is not an uncommon problem – many officers can find a former spouse making financial claims long after their marriage has ended.

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.

If you require any advice on matrimonial matters please do not hesitate to contact our specialist family law team for a free appointment on 0808 175 7710.
Police Bravery Awards

Celebrating the courage of officers countrywide

Constable Sean Cannon was crowned the overall winner at the annual Police Bravery awards after repeatedly braving a wall of fire to save five people.

The awards, sponsored by Police Mutual, saw distinguished guests, families and colleagues pay tribute to amazing acts of bravery and courage.

PC Cannon, a West Yorkshire officer, won the Region 2 award and then went on to win the overall national award. He said: “It’s absolutely mind blowing to win the overall award. Everyone else here tonight deserves this, I feel like I’m in very good company. I never imagined anything like this would ever happen. It could have ended so differently but as well as winning this award I’m really thankful that the family managed to get out alive.”

He was attending an unrelated incident when he heard shouting from the end of the street and saw black smoke billowing from a house. A young boy – who had climbed out of the window – was yelling “fire, fire”.

Without a thought for his own safety, PC Cannon entered the burning property, first ushering out a man from the kitchen. He then pushed past flames to make his way upstairs where he found two petrified children cowering in a first floor bedroom. After managing to get them to safety, he went back inside again, battling through dense, thick smoke to reach another upstairs bedroom where two more children were trapped.

Leading them to safety, once outside he realised that the children’s 59-year-old great aunt was still trapped in the house, but this time in the second floor attic. PC Cannon fought his way to the attic, found the woman and escorted her down the stairs to safety. The officer then grabbed the fire extinguishers from his police vehicle and tried to keep the flames at bay until fire and rescue crews arrived.

In his act of bravery, PC Cannon single-handedly saved the lives of the house’s five occupants: two girls aged five and nine, two boys aged three and 13, and their great aunt. All made a full recovery thanks to PC Cannon – who was treated for smoke inhalation the scene and put his own life at risk to save the family.

Home Secretary Amber Rudd said: “In this phenomenal job that I have been asked to do I’m just a little bit in awe to hear these personal stories which will remind me of the individuals that make up this extraordinary, wonderful police service.”

PC Cannon has also received a Chief Constable’s Commendation for Bravery and the Royal Humane Society’s Police Medal. He will also be awarded the Royal Humane Society’s Bronze Medal.
Temporary Sergeant Dave Cameron had only the public in mind when he was called to reports of a man threatening people with a metre-long Samurai sword and smashing up cars. When the Cumbrian officer arrived, the danger posed by this individual was very real. Undeterred, the officer tried to engage with him, but he and his marked police car soon became the focus of the man’s rage, as he wildly struck out with the sword. T/Sgt Cameron reversed slowly away from the busy area to try and lure the man away from frightened onlookers. Once at a safer distance, the officer got out of his car to use his PAVA spray and baton to disarm the attacker and kick the sword out of reach. After a violent struggle, he was able to handcuff the offender before back-up arrived to help arrest him. It emerged later that the man was under the influence of alcohol and suffered from mental health issues; it had been his intention to commit suicide by provoking police to deploy firearms.

It was a violent incident which could have ended with tragic consequences had PC Cameron not placed the safety and lives of the public before his own.

Region 3 winner: Officer violently assaulted in acid attack

Constable Sara Skinner collected the Region 3 winners award for her attempt to stop a gang of burglars, which ended with her having acid thrown in her face.

Patrolling in Lillington, Leamington Spa, on her bicycle in April last year, Sara noticed a stolen BMW pull up outside a home that had already been burgled twice that year. After seeing three men from the car acting suspiciously she approached them and identified herself as a police officer, but she was instantly attacked by the offenders who dragged her from her bike, kicked her while she was on the ground and poured a burning liquid onto her face and into her eyes. Playing dead to avoid further injury, PC Skinner managed to call for assistance while lying in the road. Colleagues attended and all four suspects were later arrested; the violent gang was subsequently jailed for offences carried out across the Midlands, including conspiracy to commit burglary, assault and kidnap. A forensic scientist identified the liquid poured onto the officer’s face as ammonium hydroxide, which can cause severe burns. PC Skinner, who is still receiving treatment for the injuries she sustained, later received a Chief Constable’s Commendation for her actions.

Region 4 winner: Off-duty cop arrests weapon-wielding attackers

Two violent would-be shoplifters got more than they bargained for when they tried to attack off-duty Norfolk PC Stuart Watson.

The officer intervened in a row between a Tesco staff member and two aggressive members of the public in the car park. Seeing the man brandishing a lump hammer, PC Watson managed to pull the supermarket worker out of the way before deflecting hammer blows aimed at his own face. As he grappled with the man, the woman passenger reached out of their car and struck the officer over the head with a large spanner. PC Watson continued to struggle with the man, even though he was reeling from the blow, eventually disarming, restraining and arresting him. The man was later found guilty of affray and possessing an offensive weapon, while the woman was convicted for possessing an offensive weapon and assaulting a police officer. PC Watson suffered swelling and bruising and was diagnosed with severe concussion. PC Watson, who received a Chief Constable’s Commendation, put himself in the middle of a violent and dangerous situation to keep others safe, showing incredible courage and perseverance.
Sussex PC Greg Montier won the Region 5 Award for tackling two armed men after a robbery. He was driving through Bexhill while off duty when he saw something on the pavement roll into the road. Getting out of his car to see what was happening he saw two men standing over someone lying in the road, kicking him. He shouted at the two men to stop, causing them to run off.

It was then that PC Montier – who had just one year in service – saw the suspects start to walk, so he ran after them and rugby tackled one of them to the floor. The man started to violently struggle but the officer managed to pin him against a car, instructing the victim, who’s phone had been stolen in the attack, to knock on doors and get someone to phone 999.

The second offender returned to the scene and threatened the officer with a claw hammer. Despite this, the officer kept hold of the man he was wrestling with, realising that the man had a 12” spanner in his hand. After several minutes of struggling the man broke free and both robbers ran off. The victim retrieved his phone and was subsequently able to identify both men who were later arrested.

Four Devon and Cornwall officers were subjected to an attack with power tools – causing serious injury – while thwarting a violent offender.

The drama began when PCs Ryan Hayhurst and Jonathan Lonsdale responded to a call about a public order incident. On arrival the officers tried to talk their way into the suspect’s flat, unaware that he had laid a trap. The offender tried to lure PC Hayhurst in alone, slamming the door on PC Lonsdale, who managed to wedge his foot in the gap.

The suspect then turned on the two officers with a powered angle-grinder and then a circular saw, injuring PC Hayhurst and then slicing an artery in PC Lonsdale’s left arm and causing a massive bleed, rendering him unconscious. When backup arrived Acting Sgt John Dingle forced his way into the property, helping PC Hayhurst to escape, while PC Rebecca Sutton-Scott-Tucker found PC Lonsdale unconscious. Unable to lift the injured PC, she pushed him into a gap under the communal stairs and administered first aid.

Although injured, PC Hayhurst return to the premises to help, knowing the offender was still in the building, and dragged PC Lonsdale to safety. More officers arrived and eventually the offender was arrested following a prolonged siege.

This was an abhorrent attack during which the offender gave a running commentary on social media, and the officers put their lives at risk. They have been awarded a Chief Constable’s Commendation as well as the Royal Humane Society Certificate.

Responding to a report during the early hours of the morning that a young woman had entered the swollen River Severn near Newtown in Wales, Sgt David Steer discovered the woman struggling to hold on to a branch in an effort to prevent herself being swept away in the strong current.

In the pitch black and with only torchlight to see, Sgt Steer entered the water, wading in up to his chest. He was able to reach the woman and carry her to safety. Once on the river bank she suffered a seizure and became unconscious. Sgt Steer quickly carried her further up the river bank to reach colleagues who were waiting to assist and were able to medically treat her.

His brave acts saved the woman’s life; yet although freezing cold, he went home to get changed, before coming back on shift to carry on work.

PC Ian Molineaux was off duty in a shopping centre in Southend with family and friends, including children, when they alerted him to a man with a knife.

Seeing the knifeman threatening passers-by with an 11-inch carving knife, he ushered members of the public to the exit while making his way towards the attacker.

Using a plastic vegetable container from a nearby stall as a makeshift shield, he then tried to talk with the knifeman and encourage him to release the weapon. The knifeman attempted to slash him several times.

The ordeal went on for several minutes before armed Essex police officers arrived and tasered the suspect. PC Molineaux received a Chief Constable’s Commendation from Essex Police for his efforts and nominations for the Met Excellency Awards and a Borough Commander’s Commendation.
POLICE BRAVERY AWARDS

Cleveland: Officer risked his life to save elderly man from house

Constable Jonathan Ryan not only saved Christmas for one elderly man – he also saved his life too. The officer was working on Christmas Day 2014 when he was called to a house fire in Greatham, Cleveland. The only information he was given was that the householder may have tripped or fallen.

Arriving before the fire service, PC Ryan broke into the home and, despite it being filled with smoke, found the man and brought him out to safety.

The man and PC Ryan, who has also received a Chief Constable’s Commendation, were given oxygen at the scene and treated for smoke inhalation.

Kent: Officer injured while trying to stop robbery

Being off-duty was no deterrent for PC Stewart Ballard when he tried to stop shoplifters fleeing a scene. While in town on his day off, PC Ballard became aware of a shoplifting incident in progress and attempted to prevent three offenders from escaping in a vehicle.

While trying to prevent their escape, the offenders deliberately and maliciously drove their vehicle into him, running him over and breaking his leg. PC Ballard’s injuries were so serious it took two years for his leg to heal, and he still needs physiotherapy.

The offender admitted dangerous driving and causing grievous bodily harm, and was sent to prison for eight years.

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Essex: Woman who had cut her wrists saved from the sea

Constable David Bridge was on night duty with his dog Diesel when he was called to find a high-risk missing woman who was known to self-harm. The officer went to the shore near Southend and using only his vehicle roof lights, managed to spot the woman 100 metres out to sea.

He waded out to her in the darkness to find the water was up to her neck. The woman was carrying a razor blade, and had cut her wrists so deeply that the veins were exposed, so PC Bridge tried to stem the bleeding by squeezing the cuts together.

He knew the woman liked dogs, so he persuaded her to come back to the shore to see Diesel, where he was met by paramedics. He then received a call about a stolen car and without even changing out of his wet clothes responded to the call immediately.

Hampshire: Officer left with severe injuries by violent driver

Constable Vikki Sharpe suffered severe injuries as she bravely tackled a violent driver on the M3 near Basingstoke. PC Sharpe was on duty alone when she stopped a car which was being driven erratically. She requested a breath test from the driver, who became aggressive and struggled with her for 15 minutes on the side of the motorway.

PC Sharpe was only able to handcuff one of the driver’s wrists, but as he got back into his car she instinctively handcuffed him to the steering wheel. As she tried to grab the keys the driver started the engine and reversed into the police car with PC Sharpe clinging on.

She followed in her police car despite immense pain from a broken hand, damaged ribs, back and shoulder pain, until colleagues took over the pursuit. PC Sharpe spent three months off work following the assault and was praised for her courage.

Cambridgeshire: PC pulls injured man from burning car

Constable Christopher Cawdery was on routine patrol on New Year’s Day when he pulled an injured driver from a burning car.

The 38-year-old man had suffered serious leg and pelvic injuries, after his Jaguar left the road in Peterborough, and he was trapped inside. PC Cawdery could see the car was smoking, but ran towards it anyway, and managed to pull the man clear just moments before the vehicle burst into flames.

The driver said afterwards that he “owed his life” to the officer. “You hear disparaging stories about the emergency services, but they are the ones who are putting their lives on the line every day,” he said.

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The offender admitted dangerous driving and causing grievous bodily harm, and was sent to prison for eight years.
A woman who leapt from a bridge into freezing water last December was pulled to safety by five Lancashire officers.

Constables Martin Cox, Darren Edwards, Lee Brown, Helen Blackburn and Louise Pointer were called to the River Darwen in Walton-le-Dale following reports of a woman threatening to jump from a steep embankment.

PC Cox tried to persuade the woman to come away from the swollen river, but she jumped in and began clinging to some bushes. The officers threw a lifeline to the woman, but the powerful current made it hard for her to hold on. PC Cox tied a lifeline around himself and managed to get hold of the woman, supported by colleagues, and pull her to safety. All five officers have been awarded the force’s William Garnet Cup, presented annually to the officer(s) who perform the most gallant deed of the year.

An off-duty constable risked her life to save a 90-year-old dementia sufferer from a house fire. PC Catherine Burnham was getting ready for work in Melton Mowbray, when she heard an alarm which she believed was coming from a road nearby.

She went to investigate and found thick smoke coming from a window. Looking through one of the windows the officer could see the occupant on the phone. He eventually opened the door but returned to his kitchen, which was now well alight. The man was now trying to put the fire out by throwing water on it.

PC Burnham used all her skills to talk him out of the house and help him to safety. She has received a Chief Constable’s Commendation for Bravery, and was awarded with the Society for the Protection of Life from Fire in March 2016.

A distraught woman trying to take her own life in the sea was saved by off-duty Sergeant Darren Sear.

While on holiday with his family Sgt Sear became concerned for the safety of a neighbour. Knowing she was experiencing difficulties he began a late night search of the beach, and heard a woman yelling from the water. Sgt Sear removed some of his clothes, waded out as far as he could, and managed to swim out to the woman, who resisted his attempts to help. Finally, restraining her, Sgt Sear was able to start swimming back, only then realising how far out they were by the fact he could no longer see his wife’s flashlight. The officer was able to get the woman ashore, and to a neighbouring house for treatment by emergency services. His compassion, quick-thinking and heroic efforts saved the woman’s life.
Six Met officers were recognised for their bravery in two separate incidents which involved rescues from house fires.

In the first incident DCs Toby Passant and Dave Milton and DS Geraint Jones were travelling together when they noticed black acrid smoke and large flames coming from the first floor of a house. While DC Milton tried to get access via the front door DC Passant and DS Jones made their way to the rear of the property where, joined by a neighbour, they managed to get in via the back door, and found four women in the front room who were unaware of the fire, and ushered them from the house.

By now the fire had really taken hold, but when one of the women pointed to an upstairs bedroom window, shouting in broken English “Child!”, DS Jones, DC Passant and the member of the public went back into the house. They held their breath, and made their way upstairs to the bedroom – the source of the fire – where they found and rescued a baby and a three-year-old girl. The fire service arrived minutes later and extinguished the fire.

In a separate case, PCs Phil Bond and Geoff Orchard and Sgt Mark Hennessy were on night patrols when they were stopped by a member of the public reporting a fire at a nearby flat. After notifying the fire service, they immediately began to assess who was at risk and soon established people were trapped inside.

Sgt Hennessy and PC Bond made their way through thick smoke and, keeping low to the ground, the officers edged their way towards the fire in the bedroom, where they found a man lying unconscious on one of the beds. Together they quickly dragged him to safety and administered first aid. It was feared that another man could still be trapped, so Sgt Hennessy and PC Bond went back inside, along with PC Orchard, who started to tackle the blaze with a fire extinguisher. Fortunately no-one else was in the flat.

Four officers confronted with a horrific scene were able to overpower and disarm a teenage knifeman. Last July, 19-year-old Sam Donley stabbed his friend Liam Miller multiple times, after suffering a psychotic episode at a house in York.

Constables Steven Harvey, Martin Scott, Dave Ellison and Alex Gregory arrived during the attack. As they approached the front door, they found Donley still brandishing the knife. The young man then began stabbing himself, while fighting with extreme aggression.

The officers had to use Taser and PAVA spray in a small, confined space to subdue Donley, while still facing a deadly threat themselves. They then provided first aid to the victim until further help arrived, but despite their efforts and those of paramedics, Mr Miller sadly died of his injuries. Donley later pleaded guilty to manslaughter and was jailed.

PC Christopher Miller was on duty late one evening, when he received a report that a man had taken a number of unknown tablets and was now trying to drown himself in Coate Water Lake, Swindon. When he initially arrived at the lake PC Miller couldn’t see him, but when a head popped out of the water it was clear the man was in distress, and was also wearing a rucksack. The man ignored attempts to communicate, as well as a rope thrown by another officer. PC Miller waded out to the man, with the water level at chest height, and managed to get two hands on the man’s rucksack straps. The man shouted: “Get off or I’ll take you with me!” The man went under several times, dragging PC Miller with him, but the officer eventually managed to get him to the edge of the lake and, with help from a colleague, out of the water, and then found the rucksack contained rocks and bricks.
Taking Pride in LGBT diversity

Heart-warming images of a Met police officer proposing to his boyfriend at this year’s Pride event in London were shared far and wide on social media in June. It also brought into focus how attitudes towards LGBT officers are changing, both among the public and police forces themselves.

“I was a crime fighting superhero by day and a princess by night,” Bee Bailey jokes, as she recalls her early years as a police officer with a secret.

Ms Bailey joined the police in 2000 at a time in her life when she was, as she puts it, “socially transitioned” as a female, but not ready to be herself at work for fear of ridicule or being exposed in the press.

“I genuinely thought that when my employers found out I would lose my job,” she says. “So I lived in fear from one pay cheque to the next and worried about being splashed across the media as a ‘gender-bending cop’.”

Things began to change for Ms Bailey in 2004 when she was approached by a worldwide trans support group to write advisory and guidance texts. This brought her to the attention of the now defunct Gay Police Association (GPA) and led to a role as the first Trans Advisor for her force.

“At last I could ‘officially’ discuss all things trans without too many questions,” says Ms Bailey, who went on to hold roles as a gay/trans liaison officer and chair of a regional GPA. In 2010 a betrayal of trust led to her secret life becoming public knowledge, when a colleague she had confided in ‘outed’ her at an after-work party and told fellow officers where to find photos of her on the internet.

Role model for LGBT officers

Fast forward to the present day and is a role model for LGBT officers and a leading voice in the ongoing efforts for a more enlightened and diverse police service. She also helps to advise the police on reforming policy to recognise requirements of officers from LGBT backgrounds, and is currently chair of the National Trans Police Association, advising forces and law enforcement agencies UK-wide.

She praises the Police Federation for embracing equality and diversity issues, adding: “There are certainly areas for fine tuning in the police but I certainly wouldn’t have been able to do [these roles] 10 years ago. We’ve come a long way as a force and I wouldn’t deter LGBT people from joining the police, because they will be empowered and supported.

“I feel real change is now happening within the diversity of LGBT police; I am privileged enough to be listened to based on my Trans roles and for my real-life understanding in this area, and I sense that progression is truly happening here and now.”

Bee Bailey,
Chair, National Trans Police Association
“I feel real change is now happening within the diversity of LGBT police; I am privileged enough to be listened to based on my Trans roles and for my real-life understanding in this area, and I sense that progression is truly happening here and now.”

Her view is shared by Inspector Lou Provart, the Norfolk-based chairman and founder of the national LGBT+ Police Network, the successor organisation to the GPA.

Insp Provart says a huge amount of progress has been made in the last two decades from a time when there was open homophobia in the ranks; today there is a clear and unambiguous support for LGBT staff and communities in the forces.

“The goal we are working towards is to have a staffing profile in the police that adequately represents the population and ensures the police are employers of choice for LGBT people,” he adds. “It’s important that people are able to bring their whole sense of self to work.”

Insp Provart wants MPs to do more to encourage gay and transgender people to be welcomed into the police and worries that the Home Affairs Select Committee is too focused on race instead of the full spectrum of diversity.

One area where the Network believes improvements are needed is monitoring. Currently 62 per cent of forces do not routinely collect information about sexual orientation and gender identity when responding to risk and assessing domestic abuse or missing persons.

A survey of officers by the Network found that 52 per cent who responded feel there is a lack of visible LGBT role models in their force, and half have heard homophobic or transphobic language being used by colleagues in the last year.

Insp Provart added: “Some forces need to have a long look at themselves and ask why a majority of staff don’t want to disclose their sexuality at work – if they are not being themselves then they will not be able to give the job 100 per cent. In the last couple of years we’ve re-invigorated LGBT networks in our forces and officers can have confidence that there is someone they can speak to and have honest conversations.”

The LGBT+ Network feels it is winning the argument at a national level and with the public, thanks to marriage equality which has in turn opened the door for progress in other walks of life. But locally there is more work to do and a “dearth” of gay and transgender role models in senior posts, says Insp Provart.

He adds: “My message to straight officers is to embrace your LGBT colleagues with open arms, be supportive of their transition and their wish to be an open and authentic person in the workplace.

“Participate in Pride and you’ll gain an insight into what it means to be different. As we’ve seen in Orlando recently, there is a lot of hate out there – this is a battle to be won together.”

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Insp Lou Provart
Chair, LGBT+ Police Network
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A research project is underway to examine ‘old-fashioned’ attitudes within the police service about tattoos.

One in five people – one in three young adults – have a tattoo, and there are concerns that forces who take a tough line on recruiting staff with tattoos risk losing a wealth of potential talent.

Vicki Martin, the PFEW lead on the issue, thinks some forces are out of step with public opinion when it comes to officers with tattoos, and is calling for a rethink. She says: “We keep saying we want to recruit people who think differently and that we won’t discriminate – so why are we taking these old-fashioned attitudes? Walk around any town centre and you’ll see more people with tattoos than you ever used to.

“Hundreds of officers have tattoos of all descriptions, but it doesn’t hamper how a person can undertake a role. Many forces across the country are tightening up their rules on officers with tattoos and on what can and can’t be displayed. We’ve got officers having to wear long sleeves in the summer and in some forces these are thick material – bear in mind this is in addition to heavy body armour.”

Mrs Martin is concerned that forces are heading for a situation where people with a tattoo who were able to join yesterday would be rejected if they applied to join tomorrow, and is seeking a more consistent approach across forces.

The Home Office guidance states tattoos should not cause offence and are acceptable so long as they are not particularly prominent, garish or undermine the dignity and authority of the police officer role.

However the rules are interpreted differently by all 43 forces and in some cases depend entirely on who is in charge and what their attitude to tattoos happens to be.

“I am not recommending we all go out and get full sleeve tattoos,” says Mrs Martin. “But let’s be sensible and open minded about this.”

Research on the issue is due to start in August, which will include seeking the views of the public. It will be used to help inform debate and to develop national guidelines.

Mrs Martin adds: “Role models for the young such as David Beckham and Cheryl Fernandez-Versini have tattoos – even Samantha Cameron has a tattoo on her foot that you sometimes see. Are we saying it’s okay for the wife of the former prime minister to have a tattoo but not our police officers?”

A work of art?

Barnsley-based Inspector Richie Batty is particularly proud of his tattoo, depicting a 16th century Japanese battle scene, from the shoulder to the wrist of his right arm.

It cost this history enthusiast £4,000 and has been created over two and half years by an award-winning tattooist who Insp Batty sought out specifically for the task.

He says: “I thought long and hard about what tattoo I wanted but didn’t concern myself with what my employer might say. The policy states it can’t be offensive, and this isn’t – it has always been on show and I have had plenty of compliments but never anything negative.

“Unless you have a grudge against 16th century Japanese history what is there to complain about? For me it’s not body art, it’s actual art.” Insp Batty fully supports a move for more enlightened attitudes towards tattoos, arguing that they are prevalent in all walks of life and in other public services such as the NHS.

He added: “Any force that is considering not employing someone who has a tattoo – if it is not offensive or distasteful – is out of step with the public.

“If I go into a burning building is anybody going to say, don’t pull that person to safety because you have a tattoo on your hand? No. Is anyone going to say they don’t want an officer with a tattoo to search for their missing child? No.”

Insp Batty is aware of a female colleague who was denied a transfer because of a tattoo of a flower that was on show, something he thinks is to be regretted. “The only people who lose out are the public,” he says.
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Powerlifters and wrestlers head for Merseyside

I am part of the organising committee for the Police Sport UK Powerlifting and Wrestling Championships 2016, which are being held in Liverpool for the first time.

The annual championships have been running for many years but unfortunately, participation has dwindled over the years.

Merseyside Police Powerlifting and Wrestling Club, in conjunction with the British Drug-Free Powerlifting Association, is hosting the 2016 championships on Saturday 19 November at Greenbank Sports Academy in Liverpool.

The competitions are open to all members of the police family (officers and staff) from forces throughout England, Scotland and Wales. The aim is for all entrants to participate in a competitive but friendly environment, making new friends and contacts in the process.

Powerlifting is organised into weight classes with each lifter making three attempts at maximal weight on three lifts – squat, bench press and deadlift. Scores and placing are calculated by a points system based on ratio of the total weight lifted to body weight. There are two elements to the wrestling competition, with all competitors grouped by weight. The first is a no-gi submission wrestling competition. The second element is a freestyle wrestling competition.

Friends and family are welcome to come and watch. The day’s competitive events are followed by a presentation dinner. Anyone interested in competing can contact myself, Darren Pratt – Darren.c.pratt@merseyside.pnn.police.uk or Rachel Gregory – Rachel.L.Gregory@Merseyside.pnn.police.uk.

Darren Pratt
PC 8840
Merseyside Police

Officers across the country are top brass

I served in West Yorkshire Police for more than 30 years and was also a member of West Yorkshire Police Band.

In January I made an appeal requesting brass players to make up a band to attend this year’s D-Day Commemorations. As a result, 29 brass musicians undertook the trip in their own time and at their own expense, and there were representatives from a number of forces including Bedfordshire, Cheshire, Durham, GMP, Kent, Lancashire, Met, Norfolk, West Yorkshire and Wiltshire.

We went under the name of The Massed Band of the Pegasus Memorial and over two days performed at a number of memorial services, led civic marches and performed three concerts for visitors and locals across France.

It is hoped that a band can be assembled again next year; if any readers are interested, they can contact me at keiththetuba@aol.com for full details.

Keith Williams
Retired PC West Yorkshire Police
Show your support for the Thin Blue Line UK

In the days that followed 18 September 2012, the day that police officers Fiona Bone and Nicola Hughes were murdered in Greater Manchester, I sat at home and like many other police officers, wanted and needed to do something, anything, to help my extended family come to terms with what had happened.

What became clear over the following days was that police officers, and their families, are a large united family. No matter where we work, what role we do or how much service we have, we care about each other, support each other, and feel each others’ pain and joy.

I set up the Thin Blue Line UK Facebook page as a place to share the dangers police officers face on a daily basis, and publicise the good work we all do. This has become hugely successful, with the help of many others, and I decided I would like to use the success of the page to raise money for the two charities which help police officers and their families after such tragic incidents – COPS (Care of Police Survivors) and the Police Dependants Trust.

Initially I sold Thin Blue Line badges and cufflinks: the father of a serving police officer made all these, but the range has extended and we now have Thin Blue Line tartan. Encompassing the Thin Blue Line, alongside a colour for each region of the UK (white for England, red for Wales, blue for Police Scotland, and green for the PSNI), the lines pass through the tartan, signifying the strength of our united and extended family bond.

To date we have raised over £8,000. The range includes made to measure trews, scarves, billie skirts, ties and waistcoats, and all profits are split between the two charities. We are also organising our inaugural Thin Blue Line UK Black Tie Event, which will be held in Edinburgh on 15 April 2017.

Please help to support this work. You can order at www.freewebstore.org/thinbluelineuk or email me at thinbluelineuk@gmail.com

Gary Craig
Thin Blue Line UK

Would selling Goring be a bigger benefit for members?

The Police Rehabilitation Centre, Goring, provides a fantastic service to officers. However I was wondering if in these times of financial cut-backs and restraint, would it be cheaper, better value for money and offer a wider service to members if the Federation purchased private health insurance for members and their families? The sale of Goring and other facilities could potentially pay for or off-set the costs involved.

Paul Evans
Met Police

What do you think? Send your views to editor@polfed.org
The crime statistics released in July 2016 by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) show an increase in violence of 27 per cent, an increase in sexual violence of 21 per cent, and an overall increase in crime recorded by police of eight per cent. Fraud and computer crime are growth areas. Even the murder rate is up.

The British Crime Survey figures show a decrease in overall crime of six per cent, but I don’t use the BCS data because as a policeman, I have to investigate what is recorded by police, not by a narrow telephone survey of a tiny number of people.

It’s also worth remembering the current Government, when in opposition, called BCS “wildly inaccurate”.

The facts are you are more likely to be beaten, stabbed, raped, murdered or have your bank accounts emptied by cyber criminals than last year. The spin around increases in these most worrying and dangerous types of crime is twofold.

Firstly we are told it somehow doesn’t matter because when you put these increases in some kind of average crime pot, along with things like broken wing mirrors and a neighbour pushing your fence two inches over the boundary (true story) then ‘overall crime’ is down. Secondly, and most ridiculous, we are told crime is up due to easier reporting and better recording by police.

The truth is anyone who has suffered the misfortune of trying to report a non-emergency can spend a soul destroying amount of time on hold, get put through to departments who don’t answer or to the wrong place. Even special internal numbers stay unanswered for so long the original purpose of the call has usually passed by the time we get through. I recently asked the control room to connect me to a neighbouring force only to be told “Don’t bother Guv, unless you have all night”. That call was about a high-risk missing person. This is a direct result of ‘back office’ cuts and increased demand. UK police forces have lost something like 20,000 support staff in six years. Even HMIC admit overall demand for policing has increased.

When ONS say crime is up because of “better recording”, they say it with a dismissive hand gesture, looking down their noses. Like it doesn’t matter. But it does. Are they saying people are reporting crime which hasn’t happened? If police are recording more crime, for whatever reason, they have to deal with more crime so they need more resources. In any case, who on earth records a murder this year which they wouldn’t have recorded last year due to a ‘better system’?

I don’t believe more people are reporting serious sexual violence, violence and fraud because we have better systems, I think more of it is happening.

My sources in different forces (believe me, with 18,000 followers on Twitter alone, I have a few) tell me that reporting and recording of serious sexual offences, violence and fraud has not materially changed in a decade. There may be an increased level of sophistication or better technology, but essentially, if someone calls in to report serious crime, serious crime is recorded. The same might not be said about any subsequent investigation, but that’s a different issue.

I don’t believe it is easier to call police and report a crime. I think it’s harder. I don’t believe more people are reporting serious sexual violence, violence and fraud because we have better systems, I think more of it is happening.

If politicians want to base resources on the amount of crime, they should use the police recorded figures because that’s what we investigate, not the survey figures.
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

And this is the last appearance for the current image of Dogberry – look out for a new image in the next edition of Police

There’s just me, myself and I

A call was received one evening by a northern force’s control room from a man in his early 20s concerned about the welfare of his brother who had not been seen all day. The man said his brother was due to attend court on the day in question, but had failed to turn up. He knew this as he had been contacted by his brother’s probation officer on the phone his brother normally used, which had been left in the house and he was using instead.

Around midnight, an officer went along to take missing from home details. The man explained he and his brother had recently been re-united after being adopted many years ago, and were now living together and rebuilding their relationship.

The bobby then looked around the one-bedroomed flat, as per policy, before placing the MFH on the constabulary’s intranet system complete with a number of actions that needed investigating.

The officer went off-duty and enquiries were then passed to one of his colleagues who called at the home address of the MFH’s ‘other’ brother, who then told the officer he was the MFH’s only brother; that there was only the two of them and that their parents also lived in the area and they had never been adopted, contrary to what the man had reported.

Flabbergasted the officer attended the informant’s address along with this brother and their father. The man was then duly arrested for failing to appear at court: yes, he had reported himself missing, trying to twirl the police into not investigating the failing to attend warrant.

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