

## ‘As a Federation and police service, we need more diversity’

### Case study: **Essi Ahari**

**E**ssi Ahari came to the UK to study and escape from war in his native Iran, before joining the police service and becoming a Fed rep.

Essi earned a PhD in Biology, got married and settled in Wales – where the mountains remind him of home. While looking for work, Essi got talking to a police officer who suggested he think about joining the force. He took the advice and 20 years later he is an inspector and a Federation rep and has been a member of the National Black Police Federation.

He would like to see more people from black and ethnic backgrounds joining the police service so that it can better reflect society.

He said: "As a police officer, I'm obviously darker-skinned than most of my colleagues. The reaction on the street is not too bad, but when people get drunk then colour comes up. It then becomes personal and that is why hate crime is so pernicious."

Essi says reforms are needed when it comes to equality for black and ethnic officers and staff. "I feel that significant progress is being made for women, and

gay officers and staff, but BME colleagues lag behind. They still encounter glass ceilings and sticky floors when it comes to progression. Retention among BMEs is rather low nationally, too.

"As a Federation and as a police service we need officers with those backgrounds and characteristics. I am not too naïve to claim institutional racism is dead and buried, but there are now robust mechanisms and processes which enables us to challenge such behaviours in the police service."

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