



Alan Jones, chairman of the Federation's professional development subcommittee

The professionals

Workforce modernisation might be regarded as a fundamental overhaul or re-engineering of the police service. Arguably the underpinning movement for change is focused around areas of skills, competencies, knowledge and understanding, which in terms of credibility is being assessed against national standards through occupational competencies. This is a developing theme, but meeting tomorrow's challenges requires a career development plan for police officers that satisfies professional requirements in a fast moving and dynamic world, but above all there has to be a consistent level in all forces.

Whilst pockets of policing are now beginning to focus on a professional recognition, such as PIP (Professionalising Investigation Programme) and IPLDP (Initial Police Learning and Development Programme) to name but a few examples, the general lack of any award or qualification that a police officer should be able to acquire through their career, especially with the particular uniqueness of the Office of Constable should be something to question.

Officers have a massive skills base and a range of valuable talent, creating impressive currency, which in any other organisation would be properly recognised, so we understand the issues being raised. The greater question for the Police Federation to consider is how do we influence and respond to some of the myriad of professional development issues that are facing us and shaping the future?

One of the more fundamental questions to ask is that we generally refer to policing as being a profession, yet we have never really understood what this actually means or the requirements needed to fulfil such standards. We don't think the executive really understand some of these questions or if they do, we are unclear as to what their longer term plans are to satisfy professional status.

This is a really complex area, made more difficult and challenging by the very fact that in general policing is about being multi skilled and able to deal with any host of issues that requires a response sufficient to at least competently deal with a situation, whilst at all times retaining the public's trust and confidence in what we do.

Yet what we are beginning to see is a fast de-skilling and de-professionalising of the omniscient police officer in favour of a growing army of non-warranted staff dealing

with role specific job requirements. This is being delivered in the name of effectiveness and efficiency – otherwise known as saving money – but we need to seriously question where the long term outcome might take us and how much this might cost and what might be lost against the value, flexibility and range of talents all bundled into one package currently in the guise of the Office of Constable.

It is interesting how some forces are looking at a number of pre-entry qualifications which can be carried out at educational institutions, within forces themselves or potentially only recruit via the Special Constable or CSO route before becoming a police officer. This could mean considerable savings if recruits are expected to pay for some of their own training or give up time voluntarily and there are real concerns over how representative recruits would be if those with caring responsibilities, for example, could not afford the training or voluntary time.

The Police Federation will continue to play an integral role at both a national and local level in developing training and accreditation; we know that career development for officers is inconsistent across the country and that performance development reviews are unreliable as a bench mark for performance.

As best value for money is likely to be the catch phrase for the next government, whoever that may be, we will need to ensure the best training and development for our members. The Federation aims to influence the structures of any new training programmes; ensure the accreditation system is fair, robust and consistent.