



Paul Lewis, secretary of the Federation's health and safety sub-committee

Do our leaders care about the health and safety of police officers?

The Police Federation is concerned targets monitoring health and safety for police officers could be fragmented following moves to hand over responsibility from the Home Office to the National Police Improvement Agency (NPIA).

At a recent meeting of the Home Office Health and Safety Standing Committee (HSSC), proposals were put forward to move the responsibilities for health and safety to the NPIA for England and Wales.

“We have asked Tony McNulty, police minister, whether he considers the health, safety and welfare of officers to be a priority. He responded that they are committed to this and stated that, if examples of lack of commitment from the service arise in the future, this should be brought to his attention.”

Why is this relevant to the frontline officer? Currently, health and safety legislation is consistently monitored across the UK. However, the plans to disband the HSSC will result in fragmentation that can only be described as farcical.

Targets which are set will become fragmented and will differ across the country, rendering attempts at monitoring impossible. Furthermore, there will be no one to monitor or set these targets and this will further add to the erosion of what has previously been a high quality service.

Monitoring has been key to the success of helping to reduce officer sickness absence in the police service from

12.2 days per office in 2000/2001 to 8.5 days in 2005/06.

The HSSC exists as a result of a commitment made by the Home Office when the Health and Safety at Work Act became applicable to the police service. If different bodies are to take over this responsibility we have not been made aware of the plans for the transfer of duty and how they maintain health and safety initiatives. We believe vital business could fall in between the cracks and become the preserve of individual forces.

Representatives from the Federation's health and safety sub-committee have spoken with Bill Callaghan, chairman of the Health and Safety Commission, to raise our concerns on behalf of officers. Mr Callaghan stated that he would raise this issue through ministers.

We have asked Tony McNulty, police minister, whether he considers the health, safety and welfare of officers to be a priority. He responded that they are committed to this and stated that, if examples of lack of commitment from the service arise in the future, this should be brought to his attention.

The Home Office was responsible for the introduction of the Police (Health and Safety) Act 1997 and now, ten years later, it is our view that it should take this opportunity to restate its commitment to the health and safety of police officers.

What do you think?

If you have any comments about issues raised, write to slund@jcc.polfed.org