

federation

West Midlands Police Federation



April/May 2018



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Welcome

Welcome to the April/May 2018 edition of *federation* - the magazine for members of West Midlands Police Federation.

We are always on the look-out for good news stories so please get in touch if you have something to share with colleagues. It does not have to relate to your policing role – though we are definitely interested in hearing about what's going on around the Force. Do you have an interesting hobby or perhaps you are involved in sport locally, as a player, a manager, a coach?

Just get in touch and let us know.

We would also be interested to hear what you would like to see featured in your magazine.

Cover photo: Sergeant Mark Heard (left) is congratulated by John Williams, acting chair of West Midlands Police Federation, after winning the Federation sponsored Police Officer of the Year Award at this year's Diamond Awards.

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Federation is printed by Heron Press UK on behalf of the Joint Branch Board of the West Midlands Police Federation. The articles published do not necessarily reflect the views of the Joint Branch Board. The editor reserves the right to reject or edit any material submitted.

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A new role, similar challenges

By **John Williams**, acting chair of West Midlands Police Federation

Welcome to this, my first magazine column as acting chair of West Midlands Police Federation.

I want to start by saying how proud I am to have taken up this role. I am committed to serving the interests of the Federated officers who, in turn, serve our communities and will, at all times, do my very best to represent them.

Before sharing with you some of my thoughts on policing and the Federation, nationally and locally, it would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the outstanding work carried out by my predecessor, Tom Cuddeford.

Tom retired in the first week of April and is now planning to take a well-earned rest after leading the Federation for two years, a period of immense change and considerable challenges. Tom has been a fantastic ambassador for West Midlands Police Federation and has always put the welfare, health and wellbeing of the membership to the fore. He has worked incredibly hard on members' behalf, giving them his all and putting his heart and soul into representing them locally, regionally and nationally. His Federation career, just like his policing career, has been exemplary and it's hard to pick a highlight but let's not forget it was Tom who stood up at the Police Federation

conference in 2014 and put forward the motion that led to delegates voting to support all 36 recommendations in the independent review. It was a real moment in history. Tom was speaking for our Board and was an excellent leader at a time when the Federation appeared to be floundering. We wish Tom a long, happy and restful retirement. Meanwhile, I will be trying to continue where he left off.

We are, I hope, at the dawn of a new era for the Police Federation of England and Wales. The new regulations necessitated by proposals from the independent review were finally enshrined in legislation just before Christmas 2017 and we are now midway through the election process that should see us be more representative of the membership, more effective and more efficient.

The fundamental aim of the review was to make the Federation truly fit for purpose; something we owed to the membership. Here in the West Midlands,

we have taken on board that ethos and have made changes within the Federation office to ensure that we are working efficiently and making the best use of members' money.

While the Federation has been tied up in putting its own house in order there has, of course, been no let-up in developments around the wider police service. The cuts to police budgets are certainly having the consequences we predicted. Rising crime is definitely an issue, as is the health and wellbeing of police officers who, despite seeing their numbers plummet, put themselves under pressure to maintain an effective police service for the communities they serve.

The Federation said many years ago that enough was enough and it was time to re-invest in policing. Its pleas fell on deaf ears then and continue to do so now. Last year, in the wake of the terrorist atrocities in London and Manchester, we heard politicians singing police officers'



I am committed to serving the interests of the Federated officers who, in turn, serve our communities and will, at all times, do my very best to represent them.



praises but we didn't really see actions to follow their words. The Prime Minister announced an uplift in armed officers and yet I read just a week or so ago that the number of officers putting themselves forward to carry firearms had not reached the level Theresa May had set. One reason suggested in the media for this shortfall was the way these officers are treated by the Independent Office for Police Conduct (formerly the IPCC) should they discharge their weapons.

But it's not just the investment in the police service itself that is needed. It is also time police officers were given a pay rise. The Federation has once again joined forces with the Superintendents' Association to make its submission to the Police Remuneration Review Body (PRRB). In an evidence-based report, we are calling for a 3.4 per cent pay rise. We can only wait to see how the PRRB responds and, crucially, it then all hinges on how the Government reacts since last year it ignored the independent review body that it had established, making a complete mockery of the process.

Of course, away from financial matters, the day to day issues police officers face continue to present their own challenges. The Federation's nationwide Protect the Protectors campaign, which we have actively supported, gathered momentum last year and the third reading of the assaults bill, which addresses many of our concerns, is scheduled for the end of April.

Through our deputy secretary, Tim Rogers, who is the national Federation's response driving lead, we have also been heavily involved in the campaign for better legal protection for police – and other emergency service – drivers. While there has been an 11th hour delay to proposals for new legislation, we will continue to support Tim as he spearheads this campaign.

While I have only touched on a few of the key issues we are currently facing – funding, officer wellbeing, pay, assaults and response driving, I am sure you are aware that there are so many other matters of concern for us all.

As I get to grips with my new role, I will be trying to meet as many members as possible and hope to hear about your main concerns. Only then will we, as a Federation, be able to effectively represent you, negotiate on your behalf and influence decision-makers. Please do not hesitate to get in touch if there are issues you would like your Federation to address.

IN NUMBERS:

58 Workplace representatives voted in after West Midlands Police Federation elections

24 Police buildings being sold off by Force as it strives to balance the book

7 The number of years the Federation has been seeking a change in legislation to better protect response drivers

27 The date in April when the 'assaults bill' is scheduled for its third reading in Parliament

3.4 The percentage pay rise the Police Federation and Superintendents' Association are seeking for their members

6.6 The percentage pay rise awarded to workers in the NHS by the Government in March this year

7,803 The number of respondents to take part in the Federation's national detectives' survey

90 The percentage of detectives who said they had taken sick leave after their mental health and wellbeing was affected by work

112 Officers commemorated on a new Force roll of honour

Federation elections process continues

The workplace representatives may have been chosen, but voting continues in the Police Federation of England and Wales elections.

It is the first time the elections have been run under the new regulations after Sir David Normington's review.

Under the new procedures, members vote for their workplace representatives and local chairs, as well as the national chair via the electronic voting system, which is facilitated by the Federation's National Members' Database. In addition, there will no longer be separate rank committees at local or national level and the number of officials on the National Board will also be reduced.

So, what happens now?

While voting is over for most officers, those who were successfully elected as workplace representatives and earned themselves a place on the West Midlands Police Federation (WMPF) Branch Council continue with the election process.

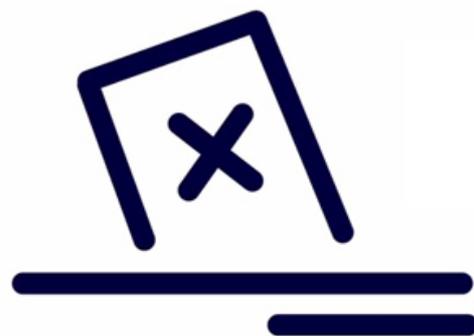
Branch Council members can decide if they want to stand for the Federation's Branch Board and all council members vote for who they want to be on the board.

Voting for this will again be online during the voting period, which ends on 23 April, and candidates will be informed via email if they have been successful. Branches will also receive an electronic copy of the results, as will the national general secretary, who is the arbiter of the election process.

Once the Branch Board has been established further roles are then opened up for election from its members.

The branch secretary is elected by the Branch Board at its first meeting from among its members. Branches will conduct this election themselves.

The branch treasurer need not be a full 'facilities time' officer, but they must be a member of the Branch Board and be elected by the Branch Board from among its members. It is for branches to determine



how they elect the treasurer.

The branch chair is elected by all members of WMPF. Those eligible to stand will receive an email link to the nomination portal so that they may self-nominate. Ahead of the voting period, members will be sent a link via their PNN email address giving them access to the voting platform so that they can vote.

The branch chair election result will be announced on 31 May which will mark the end of the election process.

The successful candidates in the West Midlands Police Federation elections for representatives are listed below (CTU representative names withheld).

Adrian FORD
Adrian MURRAY
AI O'SHEA
Archie MURPHY
Barrie PUNSHON
Charlotte KILLEEN
Chris COTTON
Christopher FARLEY
Christopher JAMES
Clifford TOMKINSON
Coralia Simina MUNTEAN

Dan CHAPPELOW
Dan WOOD
Darren NEVILLE
Darryl HORNCastle
Dave HADLEY
David POSTIN
Dawn MURKETT
Donna MOORE
Eakbinder KAUR
Giles DEAN
Jason DURNALL
Jason SAYERS
Jean BRENNAN
John DE-HAYES
John STOLZ
Jonathan NOTT
Julie FLEMING

Karen GEDDES
Karl AGG
Karl MUMBY
Lee HAYWARD
Lorayne BROWN
Mark HAMBLING
Matthew FITZGERALD
Matthew MINTON
Nick SIMPSON
Paul SWAN
Paul WELCH
Peter SNAPE
Richard COOKE
Rod ROSE
Roy TEAGUE
Sally SEELEY
Sarah THOMAS-WEST

Sid JAMES
Simon WHEELER
Stephen GREEN
Stephen PARKES
Steven TEMPERTON
Suky BAGRI
Trudy GITTINS
Warren HINES
Winston CHRISTIE
Deano WALKER
Steve GRANGE
John WILLIAMS
Tim ROGERS
John TOOMS
George MCDONNELL
Peggy LAMONT
Paul FORD

Force selling off stations to raise funds to protect the jobs of 100 front-line officers

The Force is having to sell property it owns in a bid to raise enough funds to maintain the current level of officers.

It is closing and selling off 24 buildings with the income then being invested in front-line policing.

Many of the properties are former police stations. Some of them have been closed for years, while some are still open and acting as offices for staff.

As a result of the closures, the Force plans to open offices elsewhere in the areas affected. It is also looking to share buildings with other public agencies including councils and health services.

John Williams, acting chair of West Midlands Police Federation, says the Force has been forced to close police stations to make ends meet and, while many of those now being sold have been shut for some time, its presence in communities has been diminished.

"This is one of the more visible examples of the consequences of years of under-investment by the Government," he said.

"A seemingly relentless stream of cuts have left forces across the country struggling to make ends meet and this shows that the West Midlands has been severely affected.

"Of those stations being sold off, ones like Kingstanding were closed to the public several years ago. Only two of the 24, Sutton Coldfield and Solihull, are currently open for business so in the majority of areas the public will probably not even initially feel the effects of the buildings being closed and sold off.

"However it does show how the Force's estate – and its presence in our neighbourhoods – has been reduced. Police stations, once a focal point in our communities, providing the public with easy access and face-to-face interactions with police officers and staff, are now becoming a thing of the past.

"While I understand the Force has to make tough decisions to save money – and funding police officers is a good thing – I can't help thinking that we will come to regret losing the physical presence in our communities."

While advances in IT have made it easier for members of the public to contact the Force in other ways, John says the sell-off of the buildings is indicative of the changes the Force is having to make just to maintain current levels of protection for the public.

"Forces up and down the country are facing some incredibly difficult decisions as a result of Government cuts," he says, "West Midlands is no different and faces serious

difficulties in balancing the level of demand with the resources it has available.

"To be forced into selling off buildings it owns shows just how bare the cupboard has become in terms of funds available to properly protect the communities we serve."

Despite the big sell-off, West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) David Jamieson has tried to reassure residents that there will still be places where members of the public can go and talk to officers face-to-face.

He said the Force will retain the current level of 10 police stations across the region that are open to the public.

And Mr Jamieson said that the estimated £5 million a year savings on buildings and maintenance costs will allow him to protect 100 officers' jobs.

That money could also be used to develop new facilities in the region like an Events Control Suite for monitoring major public events like the Commonwealth Games.

“To be forced into selling off buildings it owns shows just how bare the cupboard has become in terms of funds available to properly protect the communities we serve.”

Federation frustration at 11th hour delay with pursuits bill

An 11th hour delay with a new bill that aims to protect emergency response drivers is a 'bitter disappointment' and 'further extends the threat of prosecution to our members', according to Tim Rogers, deputy secretary of West Midlands Police Federation.

Tim is the national Police Federation's lead on pursuits and has led a campaign calling for a change to legislation to reflect the advanced driving skills of emergency response drivers.

He spoke of his frustration on learning that the expected second reading of the Emergency Response Drivers (Protections) Bill due to be discussed in Parliament on Friday 16 March had been stalled. The bill, which had been put forward by Sir Henry Bellingham, MP for Norfolk, won cross-party support when it came before MPs before Christmas.

But the Government has called a halt to the process until an ongoing review 'into the law and best practice regarding police pursuits' was complete.

Tim explained: "To get this disappointing news just hours away from a key legislative milestone, which had already secured cross-party support, is a bitter blow – and all the more devastating.

"What are our members and fellow

emergency response drivers to do in the meantime? How many more lives could be ruined going through lengthy legal proceedings – ultimately criminalising officers for just doing their job?

"We have fought extremely hard for more than seven years to get to this point, liaising with the Home Office, National Police Chiefs' Council, MPs from all parties and many, many other stakeholders. We finally thought the end was in sight, with a workable solution which would help protect our 120,000 plus members from prosecution for just doing their jobs, only to have it snatched from us at the last minute.

"The Government says it 'remains broadly supportive of the intention behind the Private Members Bill' and we know a review is ongoing.

"But this news will be a bitter blow to our specially-trained police drivers and the other emergency services who will now face an indefinite period continuing to run the risk of possibly losing their jobs if they respond to a 'blue-light' call."

He added: "The Federation will also now have to consider its position and what advice to issue to members."

Tim vowed the Federation would fight on, calling for the Government to 'put its money where its mouth is' and seeking to

bring forward meetings with policing minister Nick Hurd.

The minister had originally supported the bill when it was introduced in December but this week.

At the Police Federation's national conference in May last year, Chief Constable Anthony Bangham, National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) lead for roads policing, gave a firm commitment to working with the Federation to ensure police drivers get the best training and agreed that pursuit drivers needed better protection after the Federation's campaign.

The policing minister outlined a review and Home Secretary Amber Rudd told the NPCC in November: "We're reviewing the law and practice regarding police pursuits. We want to make sure officers feel they have the legal protection they need to go after moped and scooter gangs."

Summing up his frustration, Tim said: "The minister has agreed that we need appropriate changes to reflect driver training in law and he went further in instructing the policing powers section of the Home Office to make the necessary changes in further recognition of this. This makes the position we find ourselves in now all the more upsetting and baffling."



'A real and present danger'

Federation members across England and Wales have been encouraged to lobby their local MPs to urge them to support the pursuits bill so it can make its way through Parliament.

The Federation campaign on the issue also led to its pursuits lead, Tim Rogers – the deputy secretary of West Midlands Police Federation – writing a blog first published on the national Federation website ahead of the planned second reading of the bill on 16 March which was then cancelled.

The blog, published below, explained the predicament response drivers faced and the legal tightrope they have to walk.

He wrote: The car in front has persons aboard who are suspected of criminal offences. They are making off at speed – should a police officer pursue? The answer seems obvious – yes, absolutely. It is a police officer's duty to catch criminals, right? We are trained to manage the risk and skilled in advanced driving techniques. If something goes wrong, so long as we have followed proper procedure and our training, the law has our backs, right? Well, maybe not.

Current legislation leaves police officers and other emergency service responders vulnerable. This is because there are no exemptions in the current legislation that take into account the high level of specialised training officers are given. All are measured against the common standard that of a



Tim Rogers.

non-trained 'competent and careful driver'. According to the law, 'dangerous driving' includes speeding, ignoring traffic signals, or overtaking dangerously. Officers can also be held liable for causing others to drive dangerously. Talk about trying to do your job with one hand tied behind your back!

As pursuits lead for the Police Federation of England and Wales, I am all too aware of the threat of prosecution, investigation and dismissal – just for doing your job. This is a real and present danger for police officers today. Officers who have engaged in pursuits or response drives have been charged with dangerous driving even if no-one has been injured. Police drivers are trained to the

College of Policing standard. However, this standard is not supported by the law.

PC James Holden, a patrol officer from Hampshire, was charged with dangerous driving after pursuing a stolen van. The charges were brought by the Crown Prosecution Service and following review by Hampshire Constabulary despite there being no complaints made about the officer's driving, and no members of the public injured. A jury cleared PC Holden within two hours and the local Federation said the officer had been through '12 months of hell'.

In another example, Merseyside officer PC James Ellerton positioned his unmarked car in the path of a man riding a scrambler bike recklessly to prevent him from heading back into Liverpool town centre, where he posed a risk to the public. The rider was knocked off at low speed and arrested. PC Ellerton was charged with dangerous driving and threatened with five years in prison – thankfully, he was exonerated by a court, but the incident caused untold stress to the officer and his family.

So, what is the Police Federation doing? We are campaigning for legislative change that reflects the high standard to which police officers are trained to be taken into consideration. We are being supported in this by senior backbench MP, Sir Henry Bellingham, who introduced his Emergency Response Drivers (Protections) Ten Minute Rule Bill in Parliament on 19 December 2017.

The bill was accepted with cross-party sponsors and no dissent. The next stage is the second reading on Friday 16 March 2018. We are calling on all of our members and supporters and indeed readers of this column to lobby their MPs to support the bill at this crucial next stage. It is so important that we protect our police and emergency services from unfair and unwarranted prosecution.

The bill is categorically not a charter for blue light drivers to act irresponsibly. We would never endorse that. We only seek to protect our officers and other blue light responders who are following their training and exercising their professional judgment. They already do a difficult job under stressful circumstances and they deserve our support and that of the law. There is still a way to go in this process but I am optimistic that, after eight years of watching officers falling foul of the law just for doing their jobs, we can finally have legislation that supports them in the vital job they do.

Please lobby your MPs to support the pursuits bill – for more information go to www.polfed.org/pursuits

“ The car in front has persons aboard who are suspected of criminal offences. They are making off at speed – should a police officer pursue? The answer seems obvious – yes, absolutely. It is a police officer's duty to catch criminals, right? We are trained to manage the risk and skilled in advanced driving techniques. If something goes wrong, so long as we have followed proper procedure and our training, the law has our backs, right? Well, maybe not. ”

Welsh Assembly supports assaults bill



Rhondda MP Chris Byrant.

The Welsh Assembly has backed a bill which is seeking to give police officers and other emergency personnel better protection from assaults.

If passed, the Assaults on Emergency Workers (Offences) Bill will lead to tougher sentences for those who attack emergency service workers. Thanks to the backing of the Welsh Assembly the UK legislation would also take effect in Wales.

John Williams, acting chair of West Midlands Police Federation, welcomed the

news, saying: "This is definitely a step in the right direction – the more support we can get from people for this bill the better.

"While there is still a long way to go, we need all the support we can get to ensure that police officers, police staff and other emergency service workers are protected in law.

"Assaults have been as part of the job for far too long now and it needs to change. It should not be seen as acceptable and sentences should reflect that. Police and staff in the other emergency services are committed to serving and protecting their communities but sadly they need protection too."

If enacted, the bill, which received its second reading in the House of Commons last year, will:

- Introduce new offences including wounding or assault when perpetrated against an emergency worker in the performance of their duties
- Compel those suspected of assault – including spitting - who may pose a health risk to undergo blood tests
- Make it an offence to refuse to undergo such tests, and
- Lay down tough sentences for those convicted of these new offences.

The bill is the culmination of the Federation's nationwide Protect the Protectors campaign which has won

cross-party support from MPs and other partners.

Rhondda MP Chris Byrant, who is sponsoring the bill in Parliament, said: "An attack on an emergency worker is, in a sense, an attack on all of us because they're simply trying to save other people's lives. I just think that we need to say loud and clear that if you attack an emergency worker, we will not put up with it."

Calum Macleod, chair of the Police Federation for England and Wales, has welcomed the bill's progress. He explained: "The result in Wales is incredibly encouraging as it's what we have been working towards for the past few years. Getting support in the Welsh Assembly will hopefully move us a step closer to getting the result we need in order to help protect our members. Day in, day out, officers put concerns for their own safety behind their desire to protect the public and serve their communities.

"The law has to change to show how heinous it is to attack any member of the emergency services. It should never be the case that violence is accepted as 'just part of the job'. We will continue to push our Protect the Protectors campaign until the law is enacted and I hope that Members of Parliament in Westminster will continue to support these legislative changes and pass this legislation in April."

Federation lobbies MPs

Federation branches are contacting MPs to outline concerns about the current provisions of Chris Bryant's Assaults on Emergency Service Workers Private Members' Bill.

The bill is set for its third reading on Friday 27 April 2018.

The Police Federation of England and Wales has a fundamental problem with the leniency in terms of sentencing in Clause 1 of the bill as it stands.

The sentencing proposed is, at first glance, an improvement at 12 months. But, while welcoming the increase in sentencing for common assault and battery for emergency worker colleagues, the Federation believes there will be little change to current provisions for police officers.

It is therefore asking the Government to consider amending

the bill to include a provision which will increase the maximum sentence to 24, rather than 12, months.

Another concern is that the Government considers sexual assault, which would be covered by Clause 2, should not be included as sexual assault is already a serious crime and seeks not to create a two-tiered system based on whether the victim is wearing a uniform. But the Federation believes some emergency workers are sexually assaulted because they are wearing a uniform so wants sexual assault to be included in Clause 2.

Finally, the Federation notes the change in the Government's position around the taking of blood samples, a measure which could save those who are spat at or bitten from months of anxiety. It wants this provision to remain.

Spit guards: 'our officers have a right to be protected'

West Midlands Police officers have used spit guards 35 times since they were introduced in December, latest available figures reveal.

The guards were introduced to protect officers from being infected with diseases by people who spit at them or bite them.

John Williams, acting chair of West Midlands Police Federation, explained: "It really is quite simple. If you don't spit at and bite our officers they will not use a spit guard on you."

"The guards do not stop the first spit or bite but they will stop any further contamination or injury. I appreciated their introduction was controversial to some people but it comes down to this... spitting and biting is a vile assault which is aimed at our officers on a regular basis. This piece of kit allows them to protect themselves and members of the public. Our officers have a right to be protected."

The youngest people the guards have been used on were two 15-year-olds.

In July last year, the Force revealed there were 231 cases of officers and staff being spat or bitten in 2016, including near misses.

Officers who are spat at may have to undergo anti-viral therapy as a precaution against catching diseases spread by bodily fluids.

Chief Inspector Kerry Blakeman from the Force's operations department, said: "When the guards were introduced, we reassured people that if they were used it would be recorded, their deployment will also be scrutinised by an independent panel."

"We have made that data available after the first 50 days and we will continue to regularly report back on the results."

"The guards don't stop the first spit but they do prevent other officers from being further assaulted in this way and offer innocent bystanders protection."

“It really is quite simple. If you don't spit at and bite our officers they will not use a spit guard on you.”

Dan returns to work after horrific injury

PC Dan Thomas suffered an arm injury when he was out with his police dog Gil on Sutton Coldfield on 30 December 2017.

The duo were tracking a suspected thief through gardens when Dan slipped while scaling an eight-foot fence.

The three-pronged spike – on a school perimeter near Langley Hall Drive – tore through Dan's bicep but, despite suffering major blood loss, he managed to pull himself free and chase down the suspect, who was arrested.

However, moments later Dan lost consciousness and needed surgery on the wound including 15 stitches to repair the damage.

Dan explains: "Gil has been bored silly at home. Because of the close bond between handlers and their dogs, plus licencing guidelines, I couldn't just hand Gil over to another officer during my recovery, it wouldn't work."

"I've been exercising him every day but it's not as stimulating, or exciting, for him as working, tracking scents and chasing criminals. He's really chomping at the bit to get back to work; great news for me, but not so great for crooks."

He paid tribute to the first aid skills of police response colleagues at the scene and nursing staff at Good Hope Hospital who treated him – and managed to repair his damaged tattoo.

He added: "I had a full arm tattoo not long before the injury...the spike tearing through the design was one of the most upsetting things! Thanks to the amazing skills of the hospital staff though I've been left with just a hairline scar; it's hardly visible."

"I've been overwhelmed by the kindness and support shown to me by the public, it's really kept my spirits up during the recovery."

"But I'm no different to any other Blue Light worker who puts themselves in harm's way to make our communities safer, entering burning buildings or saving people's lives."

Officers should have a 3.4 per cent pay rise, says Federation

Officers need a 3.4 per cent pay rise according to the Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW).

The Federation has outlined its reasoning for the increase in its submission to the Police Remuneration Review Body (PRRB). Any pay rise would come into effect September.

As with previous years, the submission has been made jointly with the Police Superintendents' Association (PSA).

Andy Fittes, general secretary of PFEW, explained that the Federation's analysis of the economic circumstances meant the 3.4 per cent claim was considered to be in line with inflation and said the unconsolidated one per cent element of last year's pay increase should now be consolidated and should not affect this year's uplift

"The Home Secretary must act on the independent advice of the PRRB: doing otherwise last year has undermined the credibility of the process, and the mechanisms that this Government introduced," he said.

The submission to the PRRB explains that last year the PRRB recommended a two per cent across the board uplift for officers which the Home Secretary and government then decided be one per cent consolidated and one per cent unconsolidated.

It states: "This undermines the PRRB process that the government introduced only four years ago; creates uncertainty for officers and Human Resources departments; and penalises officers for the NPCC lack of progress.

"Further, the impression given to the public was that officers had a two per cent uplift last year. This was recommended at a time when public support for the police and recognition of their work was high following terrorist attacks such as that on Westminster Bridge; Manchester; and Borough Market. It would be shameful if that award were now removed

"We believe that the one per cent of last year's uplift that was not consolidated must now be consolidated, and must not be considered to be part of this year's settlement."

It continues: "There is a body of evidence from the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee and others that inflation is set to

continue to be at a forecast of 3.4 per cent. Going forward, we believe that even a relaxation of the government's pay cap to two per cent is unsustainable, and will not attract and retain the right calibre of officers."

The submission goes on to accuse the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) of a lack of transparency in the pay review process and says there is an implication that the NPCC's plans for pay reform are further progressed than the Federation understands them to be. It also criticises a lack of engagement by the NPCC, a failure to bring discussions to the appropriate fora and a lack of involvement in the Police Consultative Forum in particular.

In addition, the NPCC's proposals for officer apprenticeship pay to start at £18,000 were considered 'a derisory offer', which would 'cause considerable hardship to any apprentice taking it up'.

The Federation and PSA sees no reason to move away from their recommendation in last year's submission that apprentices should be incorporated within the existing pay scale.

"The NPCC has failed to provide proposals for time-limited targeted pay, despite the fact they have asked for targeted pay to be included two years in a row in the remit letter. We are dumbfounded as the NPCC has failed to provide any proposals, either in draft or final," the general secretary concluded.

“The Home Secretary must act on the independent advice of the PRRB.”

Setting out the evidence

The 112-page submission to the Police Pay Review Body was sent to its chair, David Lebrecht.

It is the fourth time the Federation and the Superintendents' Association have made such a submission to PRRB, the body which replaced the Police Negotiating Board.

The submission sets out the two staff associations' concerns about the Home Secretary's remit letter to PRRB and, in some length, sets out its evidence in support of its case for the pay rise.

They draw on three main sources:

- Evidence of the economic impact of wage freezes and the one per cent pay cap on their members
- Evidence of officers' attitudes to pay, the impact on morale, and officers' reporting of their working experiences such as workload – taken from their own member surveys
- Data from the Home Office regarding changes in the recruitment and retention of officers.

The submission states that officers have already fallen significantly behind in

the real terms value of their pay and argues officers should see no further decline hence the need for the 3.4 per cent pay rise.

"Over the period from 2010 to now, there has been a real terms gap in the value of police pay settlements (compared to RPI) across all ranks on the pay scales of about 16 per cent," the submission explains, "Last year the pay review body highlighted that the pay differentials between police earnings and the earnings of those in other groups such as associate professional and technical (APT) occupations had narrowed since 2010. Analysis of ASHE data for 2016-17 suggests that the real terms fall in police earnings since 2010 has been about four per cent greater than for those in APT occupations.

"Although pay settlements in the whole economy and private sector in the last two years continue to cluster around a median of two per cent there is growing evidence that wage growth will rise significantly in 2018. In this context police officer pay will be further squeezed on top of the current fall in real terms pay since 2010 of just over 16 per cent for all Federated ranks, 16 per cent for superintendents and 15 per cent for chief superintendents."

'This is not finger in the wind guess work' says exasperated Fed chair

Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW) chair Calum Macleod has spoken of his 'exasperation' over fighting for a 3.4 per cent pay increase for officers.

He has submitted written evidence to the Police Remuneration Review Body (PRRB) calling for a 3.4 per cent increase in salary for officers and demanding the one per cent the Government 'cheated us out of last year' be consolidated and not be considered as part of this year's settlement.

In a blog on the PFEW website he says: "This is the fourth year that we have submitted evidence to the PRRB, and that is exactly what ours is – strong, well-researched evidence that takes account of the uniqueness of policing, the increasing pressures and demands on police officers and inflation now and predictions for the year to come. This is not finger in the wind guess work; our credible submissions have been commented on as such by the PRRB.

"If I sound exasperated with the situation, it's because I am. Not just because it seems we are the only people capable of meeting an

agreed deadline, but if you saw the letter sent by the Home Secretary to the PRRB last autumn, directing what aspects they should focus on for this year's pay award, you'd be forgiven for thinking that the NPCC plans for pay reform were fully developed.

"Whether the Home Secretary was duped in to believing the NPCC plans were more advanced than they are, or whether the PRRB and staff associations were being set an impossible task, we were invited to comment on nothing more than a list of NPCC ifs, buts and maybes. That is completely unacceptable."

Calum also expresses his frustrations with the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) which, he states, will probably fail to deliver its written submission to the PRRB on time despite an agreed timescale.

He states: "But why I was expecting anything else? We know the annual debacle of arranging duties over Christmas, despite it being 25 December every year. And the NPCC is not alone – it seems the Home Office and the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners are likely to fail to meet the



Calum Macleod, chair of the Police Federation for England and Wales.

deadline too.

"Ironically, for the leaders of a profession that concentrates on evidence, evidence is the one thing lacking to support much of the NPCC's aspirations. It's rather like having been asked to comment on the Mona Lisa when all Da Vinci had drawn was hair and eyebrows."

He concludes: "Last year, the PRRB was brave and, despite the shackles set by Government, put its neck on the line recommending an overall pay uplift that was more than the one per cent public sector pay cap. This year, we ask that they be brave again. And then Government must stop patting us on the back with one hand, while picking our pockets with the other. They must honour the PRRB process and implement their recommendation in full; and give us the additional one per cent consolidated pay they owe us from last year too."

Whole public sector needs pay rise

The news that NHS staff are set to get a pay rise is a step in the right direction – but it's about time it was spread across the whole of the public sector, according to West Midlands Police Federation.

John Williams, acting chair, said the Government should be increasing pay to all public sector workers who have endured years of their wages being frozen as part of the austerity programme.

The NHS rise is set to be funded through extra money from the Treasury, while any rise given to police officers and prison officers has to be funded through their existing budget, meaning, more than likely, sacrifices will have to be made in other areas of the budget in order to increase the pay of officers.

John said: "I am not begrudging anyone in the NHS their pay rise in the slightest – it is thoroughly overdue and they do an incredibly difficult and challenging job on a daily basis.

"However, I believe it is about time the

Government treated all its workers with the same respect and increased wages for all. If they can do it for one, they should do it for all.

"Police officers, firefighters, prison officers, teachers and the armed services have all been hit in the pocket as a result of the austerity measures imposed by the Government. In real terms, they have all had a wage reduction over the past seven years as the price of living as kept on rising while their wages have not.

"It is justly unfair that one body is rewarded in this way while the others all suffer. Yet again, it does nothing for morale at a time when everyone is struggling."

NHS staff will get an average of 6.5 per cent over three years - but half of nurses will receive more than that, and the lowest paid NHS staff will receive pay rises of as much as 29 per cent.

Meanwhile, police and prison officers have pay offers of below the 2.4 per cent inflation rate forecast by the Office for Budget

Responsibility for 2018.

Firefighters were offered a two per cent basic pay increase from last July, with a potential further three per cent increase in line for this April. But this was rejected by their union.

Teachers and the armed forces are still waiting to hear what their pay offer will be for the coming year.

In the last review, some of the lowest paid teaching staff received a two per cent pay increase - but most were kept at one per cent.

Calum Macleod, chair of the Police Federation for England and Wales, said: "It is right that NHS workers are given adequate pay for what they do but it should not be one rule for one and one rule for another.

"There is more to the pay rise than meets the eye - the devil is in the detail and it should never be at the expense of losing any holiday entitlement."

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Federation rules out further legal advice on pensions

The Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW) will not be taking further legal advice on the police Career-Average Revalued Earnings (CARE) pension, following judgements on judge and firefighter pensions.

At the end of January, the Employment Appeals Tribunal (EAT) rulings regarding judges' pensions and firefighters' pensions were published, prompting PFEW to consider taking further legal advice of its own on the police CARE pension introduced in 2015.

However, after review, the judgements in the appeals do not warrant the Federation taking any further legal advice.

Federation general secretary Andy Fittes, said: "There is nothing in the judgements which changes the Federation's policy position or that warrants us taking further legal advice at this point."

The cases brought on behalf of firefighters and judges did not challenge the introduction of the new CARE pension schemes themselves but the introduction and form of the transitional arrangements brought in at the same time. These provided preferential protective treatment to older members of the existing schemes.

Everyone involved in the legal action (the Government, firefighters and judges) agreed the introduction of the transitional arrangements were directly discriminatory in terms of age.

So, the legal challenges hinged on one aspect alone: in order to

justify the age discrimination caused by the transitional arrangements and therefore make them legal, it was necessary for the Government to demonstrate that they were a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

Andy explained: "We will continue to monitor the situation to see whether the Ministry of Justice or the FBU decide to appeal the EAT rulings or what next steps they take. We continue to believe that transitional protections are a good thing and are deeply disappointed that this case may have consequences that the litigants did not anticipate, and that would cause pension scheme members to lose money.

"We believe it is important that we act in the best interests of as many of our members as possible. We believe transitional protections offer a better pension for more members.

"The judges' position is different in many respects from the police position. However, it remains to be seen whether – in fighting the one common element of schemes, the transitional protection – the litigants have opened the door to poorer pension provision in the public sector."

For more details and further background visit the national Federation website at polfed.org

FAQs

Officers with queries about the 2015 CARE Police Pension Scheme can find out more in an FAQ document published by the Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW).

The FAQs have been compiled by the Federation's research and policy support department and cover many of the questions raised by officers in the PFEW pay survey.

"We know members have been concerned about the new pension and the benefits it offers. Hopefully, the FAQs put together by our research team will answer their queries," says Steve Grange, secretary of West Midlands Police Federation.

The Federation cannot give members financial advice so please make an appointment with an independent financial adviser if you are considering either not joining the CARE scheme or opting out of the pension.



National campaign warns of the crisis in detective policing

Detective policing is on the brink of crisis according to results of a new national survey carried out by the Police Federation of England and Wales.

The Federation has launched a new campaign on the back of the findings with detectives, both practising and retired, sharing their stories about the realities of the job.

Last year's national detectives' survey found:

- More than half (56 per cent) of the 7,803 respondents, said cuts have had a huge impact on their morale, while more than a quarter of detectives felt their physical and mental health had been affected
- More than half (53 per cent) of respondents also said cuts had led to a substantial increase in fatigue
- While just under half (49 per cent) said cuts had increased stress.
- 90 per cent of respondents who had taken sickness absence due to their mental health and wellbeing said the difficulties they experienced were caused, or exacerbated, by work
- More than three quarters (76 per cent) said their workload had increased in the last year
- The same proportion admitted to workloads being too high over the last 12 months, and
- 73 per cent of officers felt they were not able to provide the service victims needed most or all of the time.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) last year stated there was a crisis in the role and this has been further substantiated by senior figures who are

voicing their support.

South Wales Police Chief Constable Matt Jukes, who is the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) lead for investigator resilience, said: "The role of investigators is one of the many vital roles in policing and one that officers and staff take great pride in fulfilling.

"However, a significant number of forces are experiencing issues in recruiting and retaining detectives due to a combination of complex factors including those highlighted by the Federation survey.

"Across the country, there are steps being taken to address this and the National Police Chiefs Council is working with the College of Policing and force colleagues on interventions to fill vacancies including pay and reward structures and revised entry routes, as well as enhanced support for training and wellbeing to help retain officers".

Former Derbyshire Constabulary Chief Constable Mick Creedon, who spent much of his career as a detective, said: "The reduction in staff and officer numbers and the lack of officers working in this area of policing will impact on the collective ability of the police service to protect the public.

"I commend the Police Federation of

England and Wales for launching this campaign and will do whatever I can to support the valuable work of the Federation and the role of the detective."

Karen Stephens, secretary of the Police Federation's National Detectives' Forum, said: "We cannot ignore that there is a crisis in detective policing – this is supported by the high proportion of officers who took part in our survey.

"There is a serious demand and capacity imbalance in this high-pressure role and I have seen the toll this is taking on colleagues – it says a lot when senior police figures are recognising the problem and openly supporting our campaign.

"We want forces, chief officers, Police and Crime Commissioners, the College of Policing and the Government to look at the demands on detective policing and make changes to better support the welfare of my colleagues."

Over the coming months, the Police Federation campaign will involve releasing a series of case studies to raise awareness of the stress that comes with being a detective and the types of investigative work that officers get involved with to reveal the detrimental impact that a lack of resources is having.

“There is a serious demand and capacity imbalance in this high-pressure role and I have seen the toll this is taking on colleagues – it says a lot when senior police figures are recognising the problem and openly supporting our campaign.”

Honouring our detectives

It is time to nominate who you think are the best detectives in the West Midlands for a national award.

The awards are organised by the Police Federation National Detectives' Forum (PFNDF) and recognise the outstanding efforts of detectives across England and Wales.

Last year, West Midlands DI Suzanne Baker was runner-up in the Detective Investigation of the Year category.

John Williams, acting chair of West Midlands Police Federation, said: "These awards are a fantastic opportunity to recognise the work that detectives do and the outstanding contribution they make to policing.

"If you can think of anyone who you think is worthy of a nomination, please do just that – nominate them.

"It can be a detective or a CID team doing exceptional work and deserving a little extra recognition. If you don't want to put them forward yourself, let me know so we as a Federation, can nominate them."

The award categories include New Trainee Detective, Services to Detectives, Smarter Detective and Investigation of the Year.

Last year's Investigation of the Year Award went to a team of detectives from Thames Valley Police who tracked down members of an organised crime group which had profited by in the region of £1 billion from mass corruption, blackmail, conspiracy to defraud, fraudulent trading and money laundering. Their painstaking work brought an end to the criminal activity of the gang which had targeted small businesses across the UK, robbing victims of their livelihoods and homes.

The awards form part of a two-day PFNDF seminar for detective representatives held in October.

Nominations close on 25 May.

Please use the nomination form and ensure you read the PFNDF awards and protocol documents at polfed.org before nominating.



Remembering fallen officers

A new roll of honour which was partly funded by West Midlands Police Federation has been unveiled.

The names of 112 officers and police staff are now on the wall of police headquarters in a dedicated area of remembrance.

Relatives of those killed as a result of their public service joined senior officers at a service of dedication, led by Force Chaplain Major Vic Kennedy of the Salvation Army.

The new wood and glass board replaces an incomplete list of fallen officers which hung in Lloyd House, Birmingham prior to its refurbishment in 2014.

The board was part funded by charitable donations from the West Midlands Police Federation and the Benevolent Fund.

“For the first time we now have the details of all officers and staff from the forces which amalgamated to form what we now know as West Midlands Police,” said Chief Constable Dave Thompson.

“Volunteer researchers from our museum have scoured thousands of records spanning 204 years of local policing history



Pictured: Mary Baldwin, Keith Dobson and Michael Chapman.

to uncover the names of those who made the ultimate sacrifice. All are now remembered on this beautiful piece of locally produced work.”

The first officer on the roll of honour is Watchman Robert Twyford (54) of Birmingham Night Watch. He died on 22 November 1814 as a result of injuries and the lasting effects of a gunshot wound to the chest sustained in 1806.

The youngest to appear on the roll is 16-year-old Thomas Roland Lowry, a messenger with Coventry City Police. He was killed on 14 November 1940 when a bomb landed on the air raid shelter where he was taking refuge.

At 68, retired PC Keith Malcolm Dobson is the oldest to be remembered. The former firearms officer died as a result of mesothelioma linked to his exposure to asbestos while training.

The first woman - of only three - to feature is Mary Jean Baldwin of Birmingham City Police's women's police service. Mary died at the age of 34 on 26 June 1959 as a result of a blood clot caused by an on-duty fall.

The most recent addition to the roll of honour is 48-year-old PC Michael Chapman who died on 14 April 2014 at Stechford Police Station after a heart attack.

'It has to stop'

– Force gets tough on hate crimes against staff

"I'd report being assaulted but being verbally abused and called racist names, I haven't got the time to complete a report every time I'm abused! It's just part of the job, isn't it?"

"I was called names and I'm regularly verbally and racially abused on the phone, but people are under a tremendous amount of stress when they call us and well, it's just part of the job, isn't it?"

"Working in the front office you get verbally abused a lot, I wouldn't dream about reporting it as a crime. It's just part of the job, isn't it?"

"It's just part of the job... isn't it?"

The Force's tough stance on hate crimes against its officers and staff has been welcomed by West Midlands Police Federation.

A new 10-point assaults plan – now incorporating hate crime – has been launched and sets out the Force's approach to tackling the abuse suffered by its employees with Superintendent Mat Shaer, the Force lead on hate crime, pledging to ensure things change.

"Quite simply, it's not right that our people are coming to work and being subjected to hate and it's seen as 'just part of the job'," he said.

"I've been listening to victims and the staff networks who, like me, believe this has to stop."

He added: "Whether it's directed to our staff or the public, hate crime in all its forms is not acceptable. Challenging hate is a Force priority and extends to officers and staff who

are subjected to this in the line of duty.

"It's simply not part of the job. We want staff and officers to have the confidence to come forward and report offences committed against them.

"In return, we promise to investigate their case with the same care, compassion and commitment as we do with any member of the public."

Between January and November 2017, 171 racially aggravated offences were recorded against police officers and staff.

But John Williams, acting chair of West Midlands Police Federation, believes the actual number of incidents will be much higher since many officers and staff simply don't report when they are victims of these offences.

"We are aware that many officers – and staff – simply view this abuse as part of their job but it should not be considered as such," says John.

"The Federation firmly backs the Force on this issue and we are pleased to see that it is taking a tough stance, encouraging people to report all these incidents and pledging to do all it can to tackle the perpetrators of

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these offences.”

The Force has committed to support any officer or staff member subjected to disablist, racist, religious, homophobic or transphobic abuse. And as case law shows, you don't have to identify as a member of a minority group to make a report.

The new 10-point plan is designed to guide employees and supervisors through the process of reporting an incident and is being strengthened to include hate crimes.

Along with the Federation branch, the Force's other staff networks and unions have backed the revised plan and will provide staff and officers with support.

Chief Constable Dave Thompson has also backed the plan and will provide a signed statement outlining the impact any crime has had on the member or staff as an individual, the Force and the communities they serve.

When he became Chief Constable in January 2016, Mr Thompson promised to do more on staff wellbeing. As well as introducing the People Deal, he has backed the Police Federation's Protect the Protectors campaign and overseen the introduction of spit guards and double-shot Taser to help with officer safety.

Earlier this year, improvements to staff wellbeing was identified as a key issue in the results of The Big Staff Survey.

West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner David Jamieson has also welcomed the new plan.

“I am always deeply concerned when I hear how our hard-working police officers and staff are abused by a small minority of people. Everyone has the right to go to work and be treated with respect. Thankfully, this is not something the West Midlands Police is prepared to stand for and they know they have my complete backing,” said the PCC.

West Midlands Police

Violence and hate crime on police officers and staff

10 Point Plan

- 1 Violence and hate crime on police officers and police staff should be investigated with the same care, compassion and commitment as we give to members of the public
- 2 Colleagues recover better and more quickly if they receive the right welfare and supervision
- 3 All violence and hate crime on police officers and police staff will be treated seriously and WMP will seek to ensure appropriate redress through the criminal justice system
- 4 The assault or hate crime is to be raised at the next available TRM and discussed outside of this meeting to maintain confidentiality of the victim
- 5 The officer or staff member must never be the OIC for their own investigation
- 6 The ICASS report must be completed by the supervisor along with, where practicable, the employee for all assaults and hate crime regardless of severity
- 7 The supervisor must ensure that the local senior leadership team is informed of all assaults and hate crime; if the police employee is hospitalised the on call chief officer is to be notified
- 8 The supervisor must notify the Police Federation or union representative
- 9 To achieve a successful prosecution, the best evidence must be presented and the Chief Constable will supply a personal impact statement to support the prosecution
- 10 The Victims Code applies to all victims including police officers and staff who have been subjected to an assault or hate crime

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People Deal



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Police Federation

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Force makes 'major improvements' in tackling organised crime but is 'inadequate' at protecting the vulnerable

The Force has been praised for making 'major improvements' in its ability to tackle serious and organised crime by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS).

Yet while those findings were welcomed by West Midlands Police Federation acting chair John Williams, he said an 'inadequate' rating for the way the Force protects vulnerable people had caused great concern and that work was already underway to make immediate improvements.

In the latest round of PEEL (police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy) inspections, the Force was judged:

- 'good' at preventing crime and tackling anti-social behaviour
- 'good' at investigating crime and reducing re-offending
- 'inadequate' at protecting vulnerable people, and
- 'good' at tackling serious and organised crime.

John explained: "I am pleased that the inspectors have recognised the action we have taken towards tackling organised crime. Officers have been praised for the way they have improved their understanding of serious crime threats and there are now effective methods in place to disrupt organised criminals. That is down to the hard

work and commitment of everyone involved in those improvements.

"But the report's critical comments about the Force's ability to protect vulnerable people have caused great concern and there has been an immediate reaction to try to improve that service.

"Thankfully, that has had a positive early effect and those measures will be on-going now. We will be driven and single-minded to provide a better level of protection for those people in society who are vulnerable.

"While this element of the inspectors' report is troubling, I must also make the point that this is another sign of how the cuts to policing budgets are having a detrimental impact on the service we are able to provide for the public.

"Our members are working incredibly hard trying to cope with increased demand despite a significant drop in their numbers but there are only so many of them to go around and they are struggling to maintain an effective service to some of the most

“Our members are working incredibly hard trying to cope with increased demand despite a significant drop in their numbers but there are only so many of them to go around and they are struggling to maintain an effective service to some of the most vulnerable people in our communities.”

Force in numbers



Calls for assistance

Incidents per 1,000 population 12 months to 30 June 2017

West Midlands Police England and Wales

317

282



Anti-social behaviour

Anti-social behaviour (ASB) incidents per 1,000 population 12 months to 31 March 2017

West Midlands Police England and Wales

21

31

Change in ASB incidents 12 months to 31 March 2016 against 12 months to 31 March 2017

West Midlands Police England and Wales

+2%

-0.05%



Crime (excluding fraud)

Crimes recorded per 1,000 population 12 months to 30 June 2017

West Midlands Police England and Wales

75

77

Change in recorded crime 12 months to 30 June 2016 against 12 months to 30 June 2017

West Midlands Police England and Wales

+14%

+14%



Crime outcomes*

Charged/summonsed

West Midlands Police England and Wales

12%

10%

Evidential difficulties: suspect identified but victim does not support action

West Midlands Police England and Wales

9%

13%

Investigation completed but no suspect identified

West Midlands Police England and Wales

61%

48%



Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse incidents per 1,000 population 12 months to 30 June 2017

West Midlands Police England and Wales

19

15

Domestic abuse as a percentage of all recorded crime (excluding fraud) 12 months to 30 June 2017

West Midlands Police England and Wales

10%

11%



Organised crime groups

Organised crime groups per 1 million population as at 1 July 2017

West Midlands Police England and Wales

36

47

vulnerable people in our communities.”

The report, conducted by HM Inspector of Constabulary Wendy Williams, stated there were ‘serious failings’ in its ability to protect vulnerable people from harm.

It added that while many of the services provided by the Force to vulnerable people were good, the inspection found that it is failing to protect some victims adequately.

The report pointed out that staff are generally good at identifying vulnerable people when they first contact the police, but there were often not enough officers available to respond to incidents quickly when required.

That meant victims – including some who are vulnerable – do not always receive the response they need, and could be put in danger as a result.

Ms Williams said: “West Midlands Police requires improvement in how effectively it keeps people safe and reduces crime. Although it has made progress in some areas since 2016, we found serious failings in its ability to protect vulnerable people from harm.

“Following our inspection, the Force immediately took steps to address these concerns and services have improved as a result.

“By contrast, the Force is good at tackling serious and organised crime and has made major improvements in this area since 2016.

“The Force has greatly improved its understanding of organised crime threats, including urban street gangs, and it works well with partners to develop this understanding.”

The effectiveness assessment follows on from reports on efficiency and legitimacy in 2017, which together make up the three pillars of the annual PEEL assessment.

Away from the West Midlands, most forces maintained a good standard of service to the public but it was also noted that cracks were beginning to show.

Speaking about the national picture, HM Inspector of Constabulary Zoe Billingham said policing is ‘under significant stress’, explaining: “On occasion that stress stretches some forces to such an extent that they risk being unable to keep people safe in some very important areas of policing.”

About a quarter of forces are often overwhelmed by the demand they face, leading to backlogs of emergency jobs, she said. HMICFRS also pointed to a shortfall of 5,000 investigators, echoing the Police Federation’s new campaign to raise

awareness of a crisis in detective policing.

The Police Federation’s national chair Calum Macleod says the report shows policing is reaching ‘breaking point’.

“The Government’s own inspector has said that some parts of the police service in the country are so stretched that people may be put in danger,” he said.

“If this is not a wake-up call I don’t know what is. We cannot allow this situation to deteriorate to such an extent where people are routinely put a risk. That is unthinkable – but shockingly it seems – not unrealistic.”

He added: “This independent report paints a desperate picture. It makes difficult reading for all and I hope the Prime Minister and Home Secretary will take action as soon as possible to ensure that the cracks don’t lead to irreparable breakages to this most vital public service.”

Two of the 43 police forces were found to be ‘outstanding’ at crime prevention and four ‘outstanding’ in the way they tackle serious and organised crime. Only one force, Durham, was found to be ‘outstanding’ overall, with 30 forces being judged as ‘good’. No forces were found to be ‘inadequate’ overall.

You can read the full West Midlands report at <https://tinyurl.com/y7y9hks5>

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* Terms and conditions apply. Full details are available from the Federation or George Burrows.

**The premium quoted is correct at 1 April 2018.

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GeorgeBurrows
There's no substitute for experience

Roads policing comes under the spotlight

A warning that dwindling numbers of roads police officers are under increased pressure due to colleagues being deployed to other duties was given at this year's Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW) Roads Policing Conference.

More than 200 delegates, guests, speakers and exhibitors attended the two-day event, held at the end of January in Hinckley, Leicestershire.

Among the speakers was Tim Rogers, West Midlands Police Federation's deputy secretary and the PFEW national lead on pursuits driving.

With roads police officer numbers slashed by one third over the past five years, delegates discussed opportunities for a new approach.

The Federation's roads policing lead, Jayne Willetts, said: "Think of the lives we could save if we had more resources. Unfortunately, the message is simply not getting through to the Government."

Delegates also heard from Anthony Bangham, West Mercia Chief Constable and roads policing lead for the National Police Chiefs' Council, who set out a vision of the UK having the safest roads in the world.

He said this could be achieved by forces taking a no-nonsense approach to law-breaking and urged them to embrace dash-cam and head-cam footage filmed by the public to make road users fearful of being caught if they break the law.

Transport minister Jesse Norman MP spoke about the potential for technology to save police time and resources, such as

officers filling in forms electronically at the roadside. He also said mobile breath-test equipment would soon replace the need to take suspects to a station.

In addition to the conference, a live operation was held outside the venue to check vehicles for roadworthiness and catch anyone driving using a mobile phone or without insurance. On the first day of the conference, 19 vehicles were stopped and 23 offences recorded.

Other highlights included break-out sessions, an awards evening where outstanding contributions to roads policing were recognised, and a presentation on Operation SNAP, a pilot scheme operating in Wales where the public can upload footage of law-breaking to a secure cloud.

Delegates also heard from Chief Inspector Colin Carswell on successful tactics used by the Metropolitan Police to contain and arrest organised motorcycle disorder.

Jayne Willetts said the conference was a great success: "The event was everything we hoped it would be – an opportunity to share best practice and debate major issues in roads policing today. Our theme 'a new approach' also involved looking to the future and assessing the impact of new technologies and how they might change the face of roads policing."

“ Think of the lives we could save if we had more resources. Unfortunately, the message is simply not getting through to the Government. ”

Conference returns to Birmingham

Officers from across England and Wales will make their way to Birmingham International Convention Centre for the annual national Police Federation Conference on 22 and 23 May.

Officers from Scotland, Northern Ireland and overseas also come together to share good practice and debate issues affecting policing.

The conference is seen as a pivotal event in the policing calendar and the Federation's Protect the Protectors campaign is expected to be high on this year's agenda.

If previous years are anything to go by, an appearance would also be expected from Home Secretary Amber Rudd to address delegates and possibly take questions from the floor.

John Williams, acting chair of West Midlands Police Federation, said: "The conference is always a good opportunity to network with colleagues from across the country and find out what issues are affecting their members at a local level."

The conference will also pay tribute to those officers who have lost their lives over the past year.

A full agenda is expected to be announced shortly.



Birmingham International Convention Centre.

New and enhanced benefits for Group Insurance Scheme

With effect from 1 April 2018, the West Midlands Police Federation Group Insurance Scheme features some new and enhanced benefits*.

This follows a complete scheme review by the Federation to ensure that it provides the best value for its members.

We have ensured that the scheme continues to provide not only financial support for members and quality services but also gives access to practical help and advice from a range of specialist providers.

The key enhancements are as follows:

Serving officers:

- Life assurance increased from £115,000 to £130,000
- Critical illness cover increased from £10,000 to £15,000
- Three new illnesses added to the list of insured critical illnesses under the scheme, bringing the total to 41:
 - Cardiac arrest
 - Benign spinal cord tumours
 - Systemic Lupus Erythematosus
- New personal accident lump sum benefit:
 - Scarring/disfigurement from burns, up to £5,000
- Permanent total disablement benefit increased from £115,000 to £130,000

- Court award compensation increased from £500 to £1,000
- Firearm assault benefit increased from £1,500 to £2,500
- Stabbing assault benefit increased from £750 to £1,500
- Travel insurance:
 - New car hire excess waiver cover – insurers will pay up to £1,000 per claim for any monetary excess in respect of loss or damage to a rental vehicle while on holiday
 - Travel cover extended to include subscribing members residing in the EU.

Partners:

- Life assurance increased from £57,500 to £65,000
- New child death grant included at £3,000
- Critical illness cover increased from £5,000 to £7,500
- New critical illnesses included:
 - Cardiac arrest
 - Benign spinal cord tumours
 - Lupus Erythematosus
- New child critical illness benefit added at £3,000
- Permanent total disablement benefit increased from £57,500 to £65,000.

In addition, and in acknowledgment of the recent changes to the state pension age, the upper age limit for serving members has been extended from 65 to 70 years.



Summary of cover included in the scheme:

Serving officer (up to age 70)

	Benefits
Life assurance	£130,000
Advance from death benefit on terminal prognosis (age 68 and under)	£26,000
Child death grant (aged between 6 months and 17 years)	£3,000
Best Doctors service®	Family cover
Critical illness insurance	£15,000
Child critical illness cover (aged between 30 days and 18 years)	£3,000
Red Arc service	Included
Regulation 28 sickness benefit (up to 26 weeks)	20 per cent of gross pay

Personal accident lump sum and weekly benefits	Included
Worldwide family travel insurance (up to 31 days, each trip)	Included
RAC motor breakdown: roadside, recovery, at home, onward travel and European motoring assistance	Included
Mobile phone/gadget insurance	Included
Calendar monthly premium:	£24.60*

Optional cover available for partners at additional premium:

Partner of serving officer (up to age 70)

	Benefits
Life assurance	£65,000
Advance from death benefit on terminal prognosis (age 68 and under)	£13,000
Child death grant (aged between 6 months and 17 years)	£3,000
Critical illness insurance	£7,500
Child critical illness cover (aged between 30 days and 18 years)	£3,000
Red Arc service	Included
Personal accident lump sum and weekly benefits	Included
RAC motor breakdown: roadside, recovery, at home, onward travel and European motoring assistance	Included
Mobile phone/gadget insurance	Included
Calendar monthly premium:	£8.45*

*Premiums correct at 1 April 2018.

Full details of cover, including the limitations, exclusions and terms and conditions can be found in the policy wordings, which are available from the West Midlands Police Federation website.

The Federation recognises that you may still require higher levels of life cover to protect financial commitments such as your mortgage. Serving officers who subscribe to the Group Insurance Scheme package can choose from three levels of additional cover:

Benefit	Monthly premium*
£50,000	£6.05
£75,000	£9.00
£100,000	£12.00

*Payable via payroll deduction, premium rates are subject to periodic review and may go up or down.
Cover ceases at age 65.

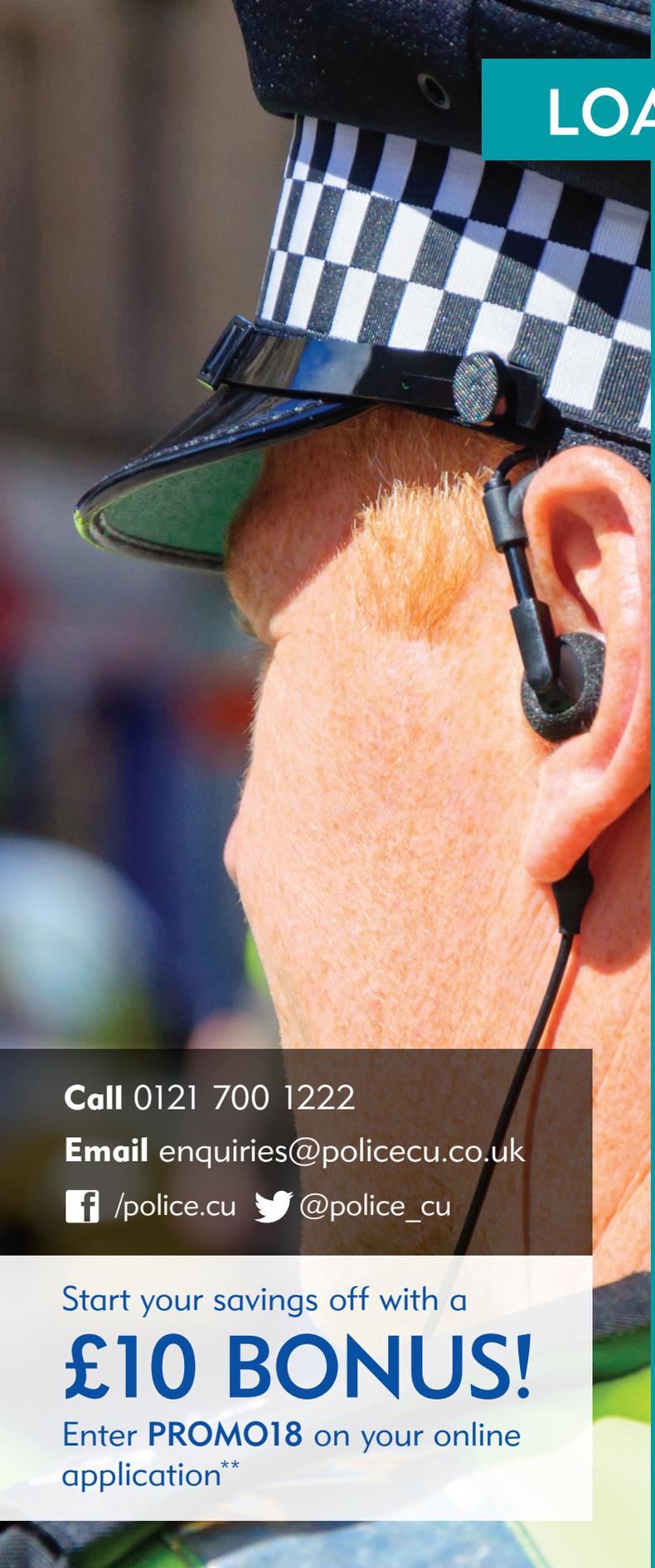
A final thought

You may be adequately protected but you need to make sure the right people receive the benefits. This is a simple process of making sure your named beneficiaries are up to date and is something you should bear in mind throughout your membership of the scheme.

If you would like to know more about West Midlands Police Federation Group Insurance Scheme, apply for additional life assurance or update your beneficiary details, please call the Federation office on **0121 700 1200** or email **westmidlandspf@polfed.org**

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Cameron's Coasters go national!

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A mental health campaign first backed by West Midlands Police Federation has spread to other forces across the country.



Cameron's Coasters were first distributed across the West Midlands Police in September 2017 thanks to Cameron's aunt Frances George, a West Midlands Police officer.

Now, other Police Federations are distributing the coasters, which signpost people to who they can speak to if they need help with mental health problems.

So far they have gone to North Wales, Humberside, Bedfordshire and British Transport Police and other Federations are also considering placing orders.

The beer mat style coasters bear the message "Feeling low? Don't bottle it up,

there is always someone you can talk to" and urge people to ask for support and provide contact details for organisations that may be able to help.

The coasters were designed by the family of Cameron Grant, from the West Midlands, who was just 21 when he took his own life in November 2014 having suffered in silence from depression for seven years.

Cameron's parents, Carol and Evan Grant, set up the Cameron Grant Memorial Trust to raise awareness of suicide and mental health issues, particularly in young people, by sending out Cameron's Coasters to existing communities.

Funding for the coasters has come from the Aviva Community Fund, the St James' Place Foundation and Police Mutual's Force for Good as well as fund-raising by family and friends.

Across the UK, the coasters have been tailored to the individual needs of more than 80 colleges and universities with 360,000

coasters having been sent out. They are already being used by Wasps RFC at the Ricoh Arena and IBM Warwick, and there are plans to get them out to schools, local sports clubs and doctors' surgeries.

The project was launched to encourage people to ask for help rather than to suffer in silence as Cameron did.

Following Cameron's death his family found little comfort in the statistics surrounding suicide – in fact they found them 'frightening'.

They show that around 75 per cent of suicides are male and it is the biggest cause of death in the UK for boys and men under 50. One in 10 young people, or about three in every school classroom, are experiencing mental health problems, just like Cameron was. And many people suffer in silence, as he did.

If you know of a community that might benefit from Cameron's coasters, then get in touch at info@camgrant.org.uk

Federation hosting retirement seminars

West Midlands Police Federation is hosting a number of seminars for people in their last three years of service. The sessions will cover a number of topics and can be attended by an officer's husband, wife or partner.

Topics covered include managing change and uncertainty, CV writing and interview techniques, police and state pensions and taxation, savings and investments.

The next available sessions are on 12 July, 16 August, 4 October and 22 November.

To book your place, please email westmidlandspf@polfed.org with your name, collar number, work and personal email addresses, personal phone number, dietary requirements, proposed retirement date and the number of places required since you are welcome to attend with your partner. Please put 'retirement seminar' and the date you wish to attend in the subject line.



New dates available for Ben Fund's seaside holiday home

The West Midlands Police Benevolent Fund has

released new dates for 2018/19 for its members to stay at its popular Peel's Retreat holiday home in Weymouth, Dorset.

The fund is offering its members the chance to bid for a week-long break to stay at the three-bedroom townhouse at a discounted rate.

Sleeping up to six people and with parking for one car the property is ideally located on the south coast of Dorset to explore the pretty harbour, sandy beach and local attractions.

There are lots of great things to see and do during your stay. Weymouth is a gateway to the Jurassic Coast, a World Heritage Site, and only a few miles from Chesil Beach where a causeway leads to Portland Island.

The holiday home was snapped up by members last year with visitors giving it the thumbs up for a great seaside location and home from home.

For more details about the Weymouth holiday home visit www.wmpben.co.uk or call the Benevolent Fund office on **0121 700 1212**.



Take a break in Peel's Retreat, our *new holiday home* by the sea!

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*Discount applies to standard legal fee

Supporting you

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Our Federation reps and officials are keen to offer help, advice and support to all members.

It is always satisfying to find out that they have been able to make a difference. Here are a few of the messages of thanks we have received in recent months.

"I would like to thank you both for your support, as a result of West Midlands Police Federation and the Superintendents' Association having Cameron's Coasters and the articles written by Julie, I have emailed the other Police Federations over the last few weeks and so far Devon and Cornwall Federation and Humberside Federation have ordered some coasters and are putting articles in their magazines, and I have draft coasters for Bedfordshire Federation, Cumbria

Federation, Merseyside Federation, Sussex Federation and Wiltshire Federation. I have also had interest from City of London Federation, Derby Federation and North Wales Federation. This would not have happened without your support.

"It is my mission before I retire in June to try and get the coasters in as many Federations across the country as possible and hopefully nationally across Superintendents' Association, and I would like to thank you personally for your continued support, and to let you know how much it has meant to my family and me."

Frances George

"I would just like to provide some positive feedback on the Group Insurance Scheme.

"I retired from West Mids in April 2017 having subscribed to, but never used, the scheme throughout my career. I continued with my membership after retirement and in January of 2018 my wife and myself visited Thailand where, on an excursion, my wife was bitten by a wild monkey through the fault of a local photographer.

"Due to the nature of the injury, she required immediate hospital treatment for a range of possible diseases, which required immediate payment and continuing treatment now we are home.

"At the time of treatment in Thailand, I contacted the international helpline number and after a short discussion, payment was authorised, and my wife was duly treated.

"I am very impressed with the service provided and feel completely reassured that we are protected while traveling.

"Would you please pass on our thanks to the relevant provider."

Shane Strong

"I just wanted to say a big thank you, I am back to work and it feels good to be back :) But I just wanted to say how much it was appreciated to know that I have you both supporting me. It really does mean a lot.

"It has been a horrible few years with those two nasty work incidents, and it feels like a constant battle some days with dealing with the psychological impact of those incidents. So to not have this to stress about being dropped to half pay is huge. And this isn't a 'woe is me' either. But just to put some context on how much it does mean.

"People are too quick to complain but not so quick to say thank you.

"All the best."

Name withheld

"I have just received a gorgeous gift hamper from the Police Federation. I have no idea

who to send my thanks to, could you please let me know or pass on my thanks to them?

"Thank you."

Name withheld

"I was recently subject of a criminal complaint from someone who had been detained. Professional Standards dismissed the complaint at source, highlighting that my use of force was necessary, proportionate and lawful. The defendant challenged the decision through the IOPC and I was subsequently charged with ABH.

"A court hearing followed in which, after much deliberation, the CPS offered no evidence and I was found not guilty. The IOPC then directed a gross misconduct hearing in which I was again found not guilty. The panel in fact commended my professionalism and stated that I could have potentially used more force.

"I have had this complaint hanging over my head for the past three years and I have to say it has been the worst experience of my life. Prior to this, I had a 100 per cent attendance record in many years of policing and my custody EDRs were all graded exceptional. The complaint caused me to go on sick leave with stress and brought shame to my family name and that of West Midlands Police. It was a horrible experience.

"However, despite all of this, the experience was made easier by the support of the Federation and, in particular Dave Hadley, who was my Fed rep. I am extremely grateful to the Federation and Dave for supporting me. Dave was amazing throughout this period. He showed a considerable amount of empathy, friendship and warmth. In my darkest days he was there for me and provided perspective and clarity. He provided support and reassurance 24 hours a day and at short notice.

"He demonstrated a great degree of knowledge, understanding and flexibility in his approach. Not only did he provide this support to me but my family also, and they are extremely grateful. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Dave formally and if it is possible to record this on any official documentation I would be grateful. He is a great ambassador for the Federation and I would recommend him without hesitation to any officer in need of Federation support. Dave epitomises everything that is good in humanity and the police service."

Name withheld

Inspiring officer still supporting others despite terminal cancer diagnosis

A GoFundMe page has been set up for a 'truly inspirational and brave' serving police officer who is fighting terminal cancer and has raised thousands of pounds to help others with the disease.

Debbie Hall, who is a PC with Cumbria Constabulary, needs funds to pay for specialised immunotherapy and potentially proton therapy treatments in Germany as they are not available in the UK.

The money raised will fund the treatment, scans, medication, travel and any other additional costs. It is estimated it will cost in the region of £75,000.

Despite her own battle, Debbie has raised tens of thousands of pounds for cancer charities since her diagnosis – with the GoFundMe page being set up to give something back to her and fund her treatment.

It states: "Debbie has raised 10s of thousands for other cancer charities now let's make a difference for her. Debbie's selflessness, determination and drive in her fight against cancer simply holds no limits."

Debbie was first diagnosed with breast cancer four days before starting her police service in January 2003, aged 32. Following a mastectomy, reconstruction surgery and a course of radiotherapy and chemotherapy, Debbie resumed her policing career in December 2003. In 2008 she tested positive for BRACA 2 gene, underwent a further mastectomy and was told there was a very slim chance the cancer would return.

During 2015 she began feeling lethargic and tired and further tests revealed secondary cancers in her bone and liver. Doctors told Debbie it was terminal and that without treatment she would have three to six months to live.

Following her terminal diagnosis, Debbie began to research the latest treatments and found a medical trial at Christies Hospital, Manchester and continued with her charity work. However, shortly after Christmas 2017, further tests revealed the tumours had grown and she started having chemotherapy and a new treatment of medication.

The recent decline in her health and

increase in tumour size has prompted her to look for new ways to treat her cancer.

But she has never stopped fund-raising and raising awareness of cancer.

Debbie witnessed her mother's fight against cancer and saw the care she received from Eden Valley Hospice which, after she had had her own diagnosis, inspired her to take part in events to raise money for the hospice and other local causes.

She did events such as a coast-to-coast bike ride, Race for Life and arranged various charity nights as well as doing voluntary work for Macmillan Nurses where she acted as a 'Macmillan Buddy' providing support and advice to newly diagnosed cancer patients and support for their families.

During her visits to the Police Treatment Centre at Auchterader, Debbie visited local businesses, highlighting cancer awareness and asking for donations towards prizes.

And in 2010 she organised her first annual charity ball, which over the years has raised thousands of pounds for cancer charities.

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- **SOCIAL EVENTS** – Keep in touch with old friends and colleagues.

Annual membership fee deducted from pension:- £20.64 in 2018.

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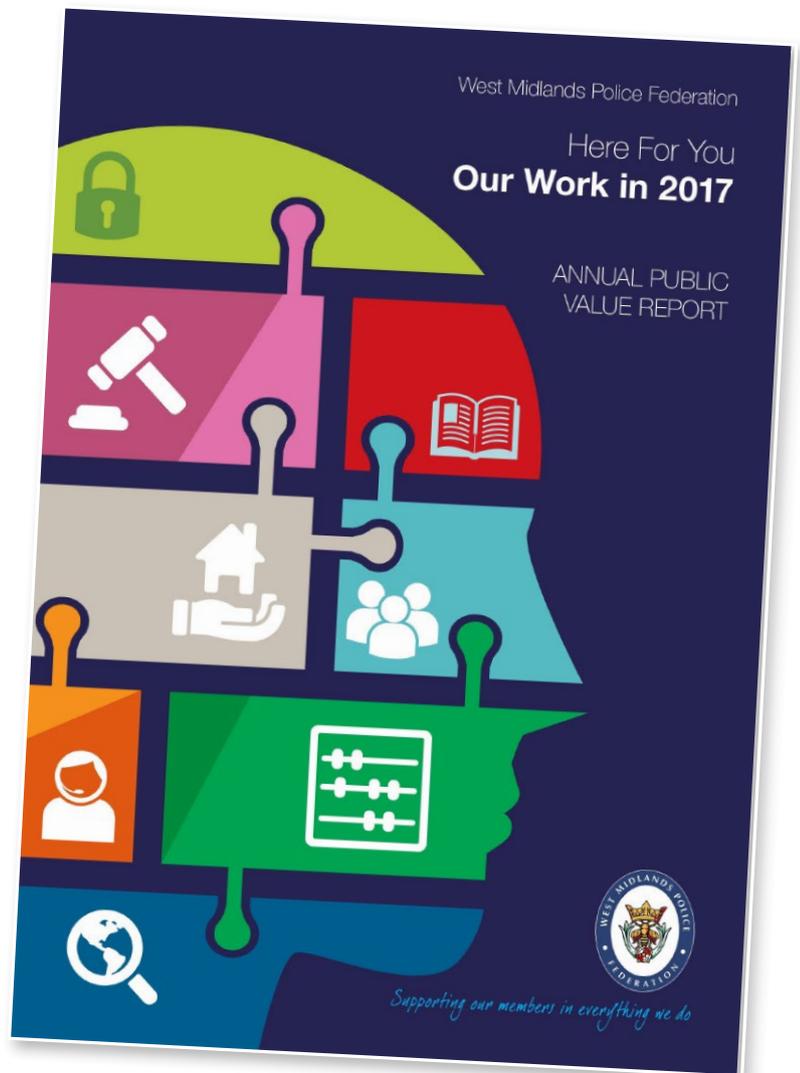
Here For You: our work in focus

The latest edition of West Midlands Police Federation's Here For You booklet will soon be available.

The booklet covers the Federation's activity in 2017 and gives an overview of the advice offered, representation given and communications streams used. It also sums up the activities of its three committees – Personnel and Equalities, Health and Safety and Conduct and Performance Liaison Officers.

The booklet includes facts, figures and information on the Group Insurance Scheme and donations and sponsorship.

It will be available on the westmidspolfed.com website and will also be posted out to members' home addresses.



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Officer welfare workshops consider demand and capacity

Officer welfare was under discussion at three workshops for senior officers and police leaders at Police Federation headquarters in Leatherhead.

The workshops, in February and March, came after research into the link between demand, capacity and officer welfare. It coincided with the publication of a new report *Police Officer Welfare, Demand, and Capacity Survey Inferential Results*.

"Within the Federation, we are well aware that officers are suffering due to the effects of the Government's cuts to police funding," says John Williams, acting chair of West Midlands Police Federation.

"They are feeling under pressure as they try to respond to increased demand with reduced resource and that pressure is causing them stress and, in some cases, mental health issues.

"All Federation branches are reporting their concerns in this area so I am pleased the Federation has hosted these workshops so that police leaders can actively consider the challenges officers are facing.

"While we are, of course, worried about our members' wellbeing, we are also concerned about the effect the imbalance between demand and capacity is having on the quality of service we can offer to the communities we serve."

Che Donald, vice-chairman of the Police Federation, has highlighted that its research began in 2015 with members' focus groups



Che Donald, vice-chairman of the Police Federation.

looking at reduced officer numbers.

"As a result a large-scale survey on demand, capacity and welfare was undertaken in 2016 to explore the relationships between officers' experience of these sorts of demand and capacity pressures, and aspects of their overall welfare," Che explained.

"After careful analysis, it is clear there are several links between demand and capacity, and the health and wellbeing of our officers. Within the current context of continuing

austerity and the steady rise of recorded crime, it's clear that the current situation is untenable and no force is immune from the results.

"Although there is a lot of excellent work being done to address the symptoms of poor officer welfare, there is little being done to address their causes; and unless we start focusing on reducing demand or improving capacity, officer wellbeing will not improve."

The aim of the workshops was to gather ideas, develop practical solutions, and agree a set of shared recommendations with a broad range of stakeholders to try to address the issues raised by the Federation research.

Those attending concentrated on both the causes and effects of a demand and capacity imbalance; paying particular attention to discussions around measuring and balancing demand and capacity, as well as increasing the opportunities for welfare training and support.

The latest findings indicate that demand and capacity pressures have serious implications for the health and welfare of officers, and are contributing to the creation of a workforce that can be characterised as 'tired, tense, and targeted'.

More specifically, officers who experienced any of the following 11 demand and capacity pressures were statistically more likely to experience poor wellbeing in one or more welfare aspects measured by the survey:

- Unpaid over-time;
- Insufficient officers to do the job properly;
- Inability to meet conflicting demands on time at work;
- High overall workload;
- Insufficient time to do a job to a standard of which to be proud;
- Frequent single crewing;
- Frequent neglect of tasks owing to having too much to do;
- Frequent unrealistic time pressures;
- Frequent unachievable deadlines;
- Frequent refusal of annual leave requests and,
- Frequent pressure to work long hours.

“While we are, of course, worried about our members' wellbeing, we are also concerned about the effect the imbalance between demand and capacity is having on the quality of service we can offer to the communities we serve.”

Help the families of fallen officers with COPS fund-raiser

Officers are being encouraged to take on a fascinating challenge that will test their physical and mental strength while raising money for the Care of Police Survivors (COPS) charity.

Light the Lakes takes place overnight from Friday 22 June into Saturday 23 June this year and will see groups of participants climb their chosen peak from the 214 Wainwright Peaks in the Lake District before getting involved in a synchronised lighting of beacons at 3am.

There are two ways of taking part. You can choose to climb the peaks during the evening and then settle in for the night before awaking and lighting a beacon and seeing in the dawn of the day or you can climb during the night, light a beacon and then return in the dark.

The event first took place in 2012 when PS Ian Davis was joined by almost 600 colleagues and friends to climb the Wainwright Peaks to raise money in support of the orphaned children of murdered Surrey

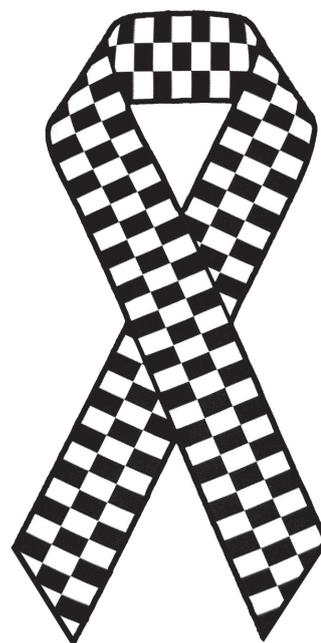
DC Heather Cooper. The event raised more than £30,000.

He decided to make the event an annual one to raise money for COPS before standing down from organising the challenge in 2015. The baton for arranging future Light the Lake events was taken on by DS Gary Hutchings, DS Vinny Wagjiani, PS Wayne Carter and Laura Darby and all of them are hard at work ensuring Ian's commitment and passion remains strong.

In 2018, Light the Lakes will be based at Brathay Hall, in Ambleside - a wonderful venue on the edge of Lake Windermere which has supported the event in the past.

Last year's event involved more than 400 people from police forces, organisations and businesses all over the country and, once again, those involved in putting the event on are keen to reiterate that it is not only police officers who are invited to take part.

For further information, contact lightthelakes@surrey.pnn.police.uk



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Making arrangements for your children after separation

By **Kaleel Anwar**,
associate in family law at
Slater and Gordon



Anyone who's experienced a family break up or has lost contact with their children knows how difficult life can be.

It's often extremely upsetting for everyone involved, especially the children. They're in the middle of the dispute between their parents and are often most harmed by the ordeal.

It's helpful for parents to try and see issues from their children's perspective. Most children want to maintain a relationship with both of their parents and they want their parents to try and reach agreement.

Here are a few answers to some of the most frequently asked questions:

I can't agree the contact arrangements with my ex-partner. What should I do?

It might be that you need a little extra help to reach agreement about your children and one option would be to think about mediation. A mediator is an independent person who helps people without being on anyone's 'side'. There are other options such as the Separated Parents Information Programme (SPIPs). This is a course that's designed to help parents become clear about what their children need most from them and learn the fundamental principles of how to manage conflict between separated parents. It shows parents practical solutions to help their family make the best decisions for their children.

I want to make an application to the Family Court – what do I need to know?

If you do decide to make an application, you must have attended an initial meeting with a mediator called a 'Mediation Information and Assessment Meeting (MIAM)'. Such a meeting may not be necessary if you've been the victim of domestic violence. Once the court has your application, it'll refer your case to CAFCASS and set a date for the first hearing.

What is CAFCASS?

It stands for the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service. It's independent of the court and social services. It's there to help you and your ex-partner reach a safe agreement about the arrangements for your children. Before the first hearing, it'll carry out background safety checks with the police and social services to find out if there are any safety or welfare issues connected to your family. A worker from CAFCASS will also telephone you and your ex-partner to find out more about the current circumstances.

What happens at the first court hearing?

The aim of this hearing is to see whether it's possible for you and your ex-partner to make a safe agreement for your children which the court could approve. The court will also try and narrow down the issues between you. A CAFCASS worker and the judge will speak to both parents. Sometimes it's possible to reach a satisfactory agreement and a final order could be made at that hearing. If no agreement can be reached, the court will ask CAFCASS to do a full report which will involve making detailed enquiries which will involve a worker meeting with your children.

My ex-partner has been violent towards me – will the court take this into account?

The Family Court takes any domestic violence extremely seriously. The court may set up a 'finding of fact' hearing so it can hear the allegations of domestic abuse and decide whether contact is in the children's best interests. A court also has the power to order a party to attend a domestic abuse perpetrator programme. These courses help people who've been abusive to partners to change their behaviour and develop respectful, non-abusive relationships.

How will the court make a decision about my children seeing my ex-partner?

The law makes it very clear that the welfare of the children is the court's paramount consideration. Any order is an assessment of what's best for your children. It puts the children at the heart of the decision. The Family Court will take into account the evidence from you, your ex-partner and the recommendation made in the CAFCASS report. Quite often, the views of older children will carry a lot of weight.

Our award winning team has years of experience representing parents who are going through children disputes to secure the best possible outcome. If you'd like specialist advice from a family lawyer please contact Slater and Gordon on **0808 175 7710** and we'll be happy to help.

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