

federation



West Midlands Police Federation

February/March 2017



WMPF takes assaults campaign to Westminster

- See Pages 6 and 7

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Welcome

Welcome to the February/March 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.

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'We are fighting back'



By **Tom Cuddeford**, interim chairman of West Midlands Police Federation

When you sign up to be a police officer you do so because you want to serve your community.

You know that as part of your role you will be walking towards danger when others will be walking, if not running, away.

You know that you will be dealing with some difficult situations, trying to help at the scene of a car accident, dealing with the aftermath of a murder or another incident involving the loss of life, trying to support people through a life-changing event, intervening in public disorder or domestic violence.

Inevitably your role will mean that at times you will come face to face with people in a heightened emotional state.

You probably come to accept a certain amount of 'rough and tumble'. You might

Photo courtesy Express & Star
get jostled in a crowd, someone might 'accidentally' bump into you, someone you are about to arrest might get verbally abusive.

I think the vast majority of officers do just accept that as part of the job and, in many cases, the situation is diffused, the person involved realises they might have over-stepped the mark and we just carry on with the job.

But, in recent years, I think we have all been aware of a subtle change. The 'rough and tumble' that we, perhaps mistakenly, came to accept has given way to more deliberate attacks on police officers.

The shove and the jostle has become a punch and a kick. The periodic incident has become a daily occurrence.

We have heard stories of some truly despicable attacks on police officers. A sergeant who had acid thrown in his face, the officer repeatedly punched in the face, the police officer left disabled after 15 to 20 people attacked her.

In recent months, I have heard some horrific reports of attacks on West Midlands officers.

But coupled with those stories, we have been left shocked by the seemingly lenient sentences their assailants have received.

However, to coin a phrase first used when the Federation was fighting Government cuts, enough is enough.

We are now 'fighting' back, not with fists and feet, but with a campaign aimed at ensuring that the Government does more to protect the people who protect society.

Fortunately, we have already garnered the support of Holly Lynch, the Labour MP for Halifax who, after accompanying an officer on patrol and witnessing the risks he faced, has spoken out in Parliament and is calling on other MPs to get behind us.

It is not before time. It cannot be right for police officers – and other emergency service workers – to be assaulted while carrying out their duties. How can anyone think it is OK to spit in anyone's face, let alone the face of a police officer attempting to carry out their duties and serving their community?

It is not acceptable. Nor should it ever be considered so. We should not be seen as society's punch bags but I fear that has become the case.

It's estimated that more than 23,000 officers are assaulted every year, though this figure is thought to be much higher with many officers not reporting assaults and some variation in how forces are recording these incidents.

In the West Midlands alone there were 774 assaults on police officers during 2016.

Just as we were going to print, the Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW) was putting the final touches to what will be a long-term campaign to raise awareness of the number of assaults on police officers, the effects of those assaults and the need for stiffer sentences for those convicted of these attacks.

There are calls for a review of sentencing for those convicted of assaulting police officers as far too often the sentences do not seem to adequately reflect the seriousness of the offence.

One example of a particularly derisory sentence was raised at the national Police Federation conference last year by West Yorkshire Police Federation chairman Nick Smart. He revealed the man who threw acid in the face of the sergeant was sentenced to 20 months in jail.

PFEW, through its Parliamentary Working Group, is calling for changes to be made to sentencing policy and legislation. It is lobbying MPs, supporting local

Federation branch boards to get the message across to the MPs in their force areas and arranging meetings in Parliament to allow assaulted officers to talk to MPs face to face about the incidents in which they were attacked.

While changes to the law may act as a deterrent and at least ensure that people who assault officers are properly sentenced, the Federation is also calling for officers to be better equipped to prevent these attacks in the first place.

The Federation believes a national roll-out of Taser, and suitable training, to officers would allow them to protect themselves.

Prime Minister Theresa May, while in her previous role as Home Secretary, made it clear that whether officers have Taser is a decision for each Chief Constable to make. The Federation is committed to seeking Government funding should a force decide to roll it out.

I am pleased that this campaign is gathering pace. The Federation has a vital role to play in making sure the safety and wellbeing of its members is paramount.

Most forces across the country have now introduced their own 'pledge' on officer – and staff – assaults, committing to investigating all these incidents properly and vowing to support the victims of the attacks. This 'pledge' was first launched by Hampshire Police, working in partnership with its local Federation with the branch chair, John Apter, showcasing the initiative at the national conference in 2015.

I think the success of this initiative nationwide shows what can be achieved when the Federation builds on good practice and works in a united way for the benefit of its members. Representatives at that conference returned to their forces and encouraged their chief officers – and staff unions – to work with them to get similar 'pledges' off the ground.

Let's hope that this joined up approach continues and the Police Federation of England and Wales can succeed with this campaign.

We all know that PFEW has had a difficult few years but perhaps 2017 will be the year that we can truly get back to doing what is far more important than any internal wrangling – representing and looking after our members.

Violent crime up

Knife crime and offences involving firearms are on the increase according to the latest figures released.

The Office for National Statistics crime figures show a rise in violent crimes, including a seven per cent increase in offences involving a firearm and an 11 per cent increase in offences involving a knife.

And the national Police Federation is blaming these rises on a reduction in officer numbers.

Steve White, chairman of the Police Federation of England and Wales, said: "A continuing increase in violent crime and continuing reduction in police officer numbers is far from a coincidence.

"Knife crime has and continues to increase. Political pressure and the inability for officers to do proactive patrolling, due to reactive demands, is resulting in low levels of stop and search,

something designed to help tackle this exact issue."

For the first time the figures give a full year overview of estimated fraud and computer misuse offences, 3.6 million and 2 million respectively.

Steve added: "These particular figures simply highlight the reality of the world in which we police. They reflect real crimes affecting real people, all of which need investigating by an ever reducing number of police officers.

"Increasing demand continues to take its toll. Two thirds of our members tell us they go to work despite feeling they shouldn't because of their mental wellbeing. Ultimately, without the right support from both police leaders and the Government, it's the public that will suffer."

The figures are for the year ending 30 September 2016.

Federation roadshow heading to West Bromwich

The date for the next West Midlands Police Federation Roadshow is fast approaching.

It will take place in West Bromwich on **22 February** in the Conference Room between 10am and 3pm.

Member services providers will be available to talk to members and discuss the services they can provide.

Officers will be able to discuss any concerns they have with Federation representatives who will be attending.

Free Federation merchandise will be on hand and you can also enter a prize draw to win a £50 Amazon voucher.

There is no need to book just go along on the day.

The roadshow is also coming to **Bloxwich 5 April, Perry Barr Superblock 23 May, Wolverhampton 20 June and Solihull 17 July.**

Look out for flyers locally for more information.

Sign up for the eZine

Do you want to get the latest news first?

If so, sign up to get the West Midlands Police Federation eZine emailed straight to you. It is published every other month on alternate months to the printed magazine.

It will provide you with all the latest Federation news. From local opinion on national issues to information on what colleagues are up to in Force.

Steve Grange, West Midlands Police

Federation secretary, said: "The idea of the eZine is to keep people up to date with the latest goings on in the Federation. It gives us an opportunity to keep people informed with both local and national Federation news as well as Government announcements on policing and some more light hearted items too."

To sign up visit the Media Hub at westmidspolfed.com

Tackling officer assaults

A Police Federation campaign calling for tougher sentences for those who attack the police and other emergency service workers is gathering momentum.

Officers from the Force who have been assaulted in the line of duty attended a meeting in Parliament with West Midlands Police Federation to call on the region's MPs to get behind the campaign.

The visit, on 13 December, was part of a campaign launched by West Midlands Police Federation, which started after they wrote

to all local MPs.

Newly released figures show there were 774 recorded assaults on West Midlands officers last year.

Six of those officers attended the meeting at Parliament to talk about the incidents, their injuries and the other effects of the attacks. They also raised the issue of better legal protection for emergency service drivers.

The meeting was organised by Rob Marris, the Labour MP for Wolverhampton South West and was also attended by Jack

Dromey, the Labour MP for Birmingham Erdington.

"The number of officers being assaulted is unacceptable and we feel very strongly that there needs to be tougher and more consistent sentencing of those convicted of assaulting police officers, police staff and other emergency workers," says Tom Cuddeford, interim chairman of West Midlands Police Federation.

"By taking officers who have been assaulted along to the meeting it enabled MPs to hear first-hand the effect it has and



Holly Lynch, MP, listens to the officers' stories.

hopefully gave them an understanding of the impact of these assaults.

"We discussed a wider roll-out of Taser, which would enable officers to better protect the public and themselves, and we also spoke about the use of spit guards which offer protection to officers."

The visit was part of a national Police Federation campaign on officer assaults.

The Police Federation of England and Wales says 23,394 officers have been assaulted in England and Wales in the last year, equating to one assault every 22 minutes.

But it believes the figures could actually be far higher due to under-reporting and inconsistent recording.

“ I don't think as a police officer you should be subjected to a deliberate assault, spitting or any form of sustained attack and when that does occur I think the courts need to be tough with those attackers. ”



The discussions continued after the formal meeting.



Officers get their message across.

Officers give MPs first-hand accounts after spitting incident

Two West Midlands Police officers who were assaulted by a man who spat blood in their mouths and faces were among a delegation to meet MPs as part of the ongoing national 'Protect The Protectors' campaign.

Coventry based PCs Alan O'Shea and Mike Bruce shared their first-hand experiences when they joined members of the Police Federation's Parliamentary Working Group giving an input to MPs on spit guards and police assaults.

The event was sponsored by Holly Lynch, Labour MP for Halifax, who has taken on the campaign and raised the issue in Parliament.

"This event provided a great opportunity for MPs to talk to officers who have been assaulted while on duty," says Tom Cuddeford, the interim chairman of West Midlands Police Federation who also attended the meeting at Portcullis House at the Houses of Parliament.

"While MPs should by now have seen that the number of assaults on police officers and other emergency service personnel are on the rise, I think it is useful for them to realise that behind these figures there are real people who have been assaulted just for doing their job and serving their communities.

"I hope that more MPs now get behind the Police Federation campaign which aims to ensure that those found guilty of assaulting the police receive the harshest sentences possible. An attack on a police officer is an attack on society and we must not lose sight of that."

Alan and Mike were assaulted when they responded to a call for assistance from officers attending a fight at a Coventry pub following St George's Day celebrations.

Mike had already been spat at by a man violently resisting officers when Alan helped other colleagues attempting to restrain another man. Once the second man had been dealt with, Alan returned to help the officers dealing with the first man who was

still resisting.

Alan explains: "After a struggle we managed to get handcuffs applied and at which point I felt something warm and damp on my hand which turned out to be a large amount of blood. I used my torch and could see this man bleeding from his mouth at which point he looked at me and spat directly into my face and into my eyes."

An ambulance arrived for an unrelated call and Mike and Alan were sent to A & E as spit in the eyes is considered as a needle sticking injury.

The two officers were given injections and placed on a course of post exposure procedure to counter potential effects of HIV, hepatitis and so on. The treatment continued for a month with sickness side effects.

"However, the personal impact was costly," says Alan, "I was unable to see my family for several months due to a potential risk of infection to an immediate member of my family who was undergoing an intense course of treatment that left him vulnerable to infection which could have fatal

consequences.

"Mike had a false reading of Hep B and, as such, had to have his family screened which meant his wife and children had to have blood tests involving injections on his 12-month-old child."

During the initial investigation the offender was asked if he would take a blood test that would negate the cause for the officers to have to continue the treatment. He chose not to co-operate.

Rob Marris, Labour MP for Wolverhampton South West, is among a number of MPs who want to see a change in the law that would allow compulsory testing of those attacking police officers and emergency personnel in this way.

The offender, who has a history of assault and disorder, received a suspended prison sentence of a total of 12 weeks and was ordered to pay compensation of a total of £750 to the two officers.

The Police Federation has made a film featuring Alan and Mike which will be shown as part of its campaign on officer assaults.

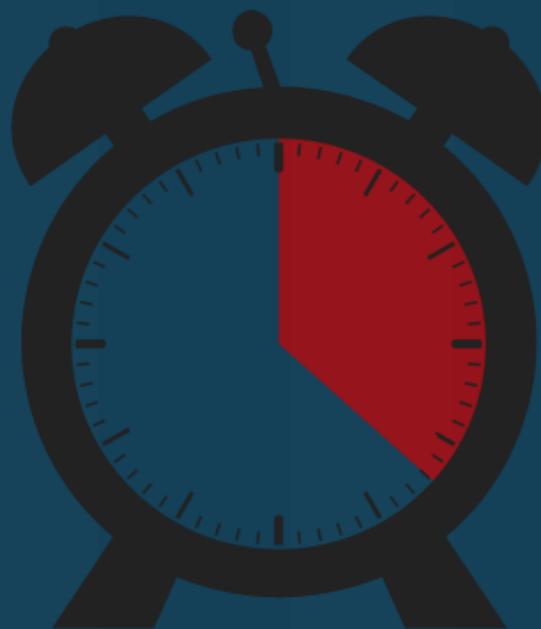
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Assaults on police

23,394 officers have been assaulted in England & Wales in the last year

That's almost 2,000 a month. 450 a week. 64 a day. **One every 22 minutes.**

That means a **fifth** of serving officers have been the victims of an assault in the past year.



If every officer assaulted got together, they would...

Fill the Royal Albert Hall - four times over

Fill centre court at Wimbledon one and half times over

Be the length of a marathon (26 miles) stood hand to hand at full reach



Transition Day timing 'tough' Chief admits

Chief Constable David Thompson has acknowledged that going ahead with Transition Day in November was 'tough'.

Writing in his blog, the Chief also said that he did take on board the concerns raised by West Midlands Police Federation as the plans were put in place.

"Firstly, I do recognise making the change in November before this period (Christmas) was tough," Mr Thompson explained in the blog.

"I did listen to the Federation and thought hard about this. I can't pretend there were not some frustrations over the Christmas duties which was a disappointment as we worked hard to plan these. I am sorry if you were inconvenienced. Overall, I am pleased we got going on the change as some of the actions over the period were actually easier to manage with the new operating model."

In the final Chief's blog before Christmas guest blogger Deputy Chief Constable Louisa Rolfe also turned her attention to TS1, praising officers and staff for delivering 'such substantial change so smoothly' and said the WMP2020 operating model was already allowing the Force to 'better deliver our vision of preventing crime, protecting the



Chief Constable Dave Thompson.

public and helping those in need'.

However, she pointed out the new model had exposed existing problems. The DCC wrote of the change: "While it is challenging, it is also a great opportunity to really understand and get ahead of our demand. Calls to our contact centre are about the same as before TS1 and we have the same staff working for us. Moving to

the new model has exposed where we used to collaborate unofficially and spread the load.

"I know that the pressures facing Response are particularly challenging at the moment – and this is not going to go away given the time of year and the additional pressures that brings."

In terms of easing those pressures, Ms Rolfe said officers currently in training would be posted to LPUs and in January another 40 new recruits would join, again to be posted to Response once they had completed training, along with 30 transferees currently working their way through the recruitment process.

"In the short term we are looking at other resourcing opportunities to ensure we have the right people in the right places in the right numbers within this function. This includes working through the challenges of duty restrictions to enable our staff to make a great contribution in a role that best fits their specific needs," the DCC wrote.

And she added: "One of the exciting opportunities around 2020 is the chance for us to do things differently in a truly collaborative manner. Policing by its very nature has to adopt a 'one team working together' approach. As is the case with embedding any new way of working there have been examples where 'it's no longer my role' has crept into a number of decisions which has resulted in a lack of flexibility and pushing additional demand elsewhere. Our friendship value is as important internally as externally."

This was a theme picked up by the Chief Constable who at the end of his New Year blog, gave a reminder of the Force motto 'Forward in Unity'. He also mentioned two of the Force's values - to show 'friendship by helping the public partners and colleagues' and 'delivering a service my family would be proud of'.

He concluded: "In the last few weeks I have seen much evidence of this, particularly in the way Force Response works across the old LPU boundaries and the actions of Force support, firearms teams and the helping hand by neighbourhoods at times of peak demand. As I like to say, everyone's coat says police on the front and whatever the main job we should be proud of mucking in together when colleagues and the public need us.

"2017 has much promise!"

“ I did listen to the Federation and thought hard about this. I can't pretend there were not some frustrations over the Christmas duties which was a disappointment as we worked hard to plan these. I am sorry if you were inconvenienced. Overall, I am pleased we got going on the change as some of the actions over the period were actually easier to manage with the new operating model. ”

NYE payment success for Federation

Officers who had to remain on duty beyond their shift on New Year's Eve will be paid for the first 30 minutes of over-time in a break from usual Regulations, thanks to West Midlands Police Federation.

The Federation had put forward representations to the Chief Constable on the issue, saying officers affected should not suffer from having the usual half an hour deducted from their 'unplanned' extended over-time claim.

Steve Grange, the West Midlands Police Federation secretary, explained: "On New Year's Eve we were made aware that officers posted to finish duty at 3am had been ordered to remain on duty due to the ongoing demand at that time causing welfare issues and having financial implications for those due to start at 3pm the following day.

"Clearly this was an operational decision that the duty superintendent felt necessary at that time but one that we felt could very much have been foreseen due to TS1 issues and planning."

Steve continued: "It is pleasing to hear that the Chief has listened to these representations and officers will receive payments in their February wages."



On the beat, PC Joe Cahill MBE.

A Birmingham beat bobby is counting down the days until he will visit Buckingham Palace after he was awarded an MBE.

PC Joe Cahill was recognised in the New Year's Honours List for his services to education which centred around his work as a governor at Broadway Academy in Perry Barr - but also engaging with young people at the school in his police role.

And he celebrated the achievement by taking to the streets and patrolling his beat on New Year's Eve.

He will receive the award later this year.

Joe, who is an Aston neighbourhood officer and commutes from Derbyshire, said: "I feel really chuffed to receive the MBE and quite humbled by it all.

"It came as a huge surprise; but I am proud of the work and involvement in the school over a number of years.

"I have got a good rapport with the kids; I even know some of their parents from when they were at the school.

"I really enjoy my role as a governor and

a police officer - it was quite fitting that I could celebrate my own great 2017 news with everyone celebrating the start of 2017 in Birmingham city centre."

It is not the first time the PC has been honoured for his work. In 2005 he was recognised by the then Prime Minister Tony Blair for his work to reduce anti-social behaviour among young people.

The 60-year-old grandfather has served with the Force for more than 25 years.

Tom Cuddeford, interim chairman of West Midlands Police Federation, said: "I am delighted for Joe and could not be happier that he will be receiving such a special award.

"Like so many officers, he works tirelessly to serve the needs of the communities we police and so often puts the needs of other before his own.

"It is encouraging to see more front-line officers being recognised for their work than ever before."

Taser survey has closed

Opinions have been gathered from officers across the country on the use of Taser.

The survey, which was carried out by the Police Federation of England and Wales, aimed to find out officers' views and experiences of Taser.

It was conducted in the wake of a public poll last year that revealed 71 per cent of people consider it acceptable for police officers to carry Taser while on patrol.

The national Federation supports a wider roll-out of Taser but believes officers should be able to choose whether they carry it. It hopes the results of the survey will strengthen its campaign to allow any officer that wishes to carry Taser to be able to do so.

Taser has proven to be a useful tool for



those officers who do carry it, with there being no need to actually use the device in 80 per cent of the cases where it has been drawn, protecting both communities and officers themselves.

"I hope the majority of our officers found

the time to fill out the survey on this important issue," says Tom Cuddeford, interim chairman of West Midlands Police Federation.

"The more officers who responded the better the Federation can put forward their views."

The national Federation has repeatedly called on the Government to increase Taser funding.

National Federation chairman Steve White said: "We believe that officers need to have access to the right kit to help protect themselves. We will continue to lobby the Government to make funding available if a chief constable sanctions the use of Taser for those officers who want it.

"This national survey gives us a great opportunity to strengthen our position, which remains that any officer who wants access to this piece of equipment should have it."

Emergency service drivers: 'more protection needed'

The Police Federation is continuing to push for a change in the law around all emergency police drivers who it is currently evidenced are not adequately protected from prosecution when carrying out their duties responsibly.

West Midlands Police Federation deputy secretary Tim Rogers, the Federation's national lead on pursuits, wants to see the legislation changed to protect officers who are on duty and 'doing their job'.

As part of the campaign, he is seeking the support of the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) lead for pursuits— who has said he would only support a partial change

in the law.

Tim is pushing for the change so officers who are involved in collisions while responding to incidents or in pursuits are protected from being prosecuted for careless and dangerous driving offences.

It follows a number of prosecutions going through the courts where officers have only been spared jail thanks to the judges involved, however, the toll on them and their families has been high.

In one case, a policeman was accused of driving dangerously after colliding with a motorbike being ridden by the son of a Toxteth anti-gun campaigner, who was serving a suspended sentence.

The prosecution barrister described the

officer as a 'good man' who is 'on our side', but said he had broken the law because by being on a motorcycle, the rider was deemed to be a 'vulnerable' road user.

The officer was cleared of any wrongdoing after an ordeal lasting more than 18 months.

In another case involving a police pursuits driver, Judge Watson QC said: "After all you, and your family has been through, it would be an affront to natural justice if you were to face any other internal disciplinary procedure. I hope that will not be the case. It only remains for me to say it is a pleasure to say you can go free from court."

The existing legislation means currently emergency response drives are illegal and



the law is in need of urgent reform, the current exemptions designed to permit emergency service drives are unsatisfactory and unworkable.

So, Tim's proposal for the re-wording of the law would see it changed to this, with many politicians agreeing this is a wholly sensible change.

When a vehicle is being used for fire brigade, ambulance, bomb or explosive disposal, national blood service, rescue or police purposes, or for a purpose connected with the National Crime Agency the driver may depart from the standard of the careful and competent driver (or by his driving, cause another to do so) if and only if;

- a) driving the vehicle in accordance with road traffic regulations would be likely to hinder the use of that vehicle for the purpose for which it is being used and;*
- b) any such departure is a proportionate response to the circumstances as the responder reasonably believed them to be and;*
- c) the driver has undergone or is engaged in, specialist driver training in accordance with S19 of the RSA 2006.*

However, his proposal has not been fully supported by the pursuit lead for the NPCC, Anthony Bangham.

In a recent letter to the national Federation, he said: "I do not share your stance that a change in law is required to better safeguard pursuit and response drivers.

"For response driving, the public expect police officers to get to incidents as quickly but as safely as possible however they do not expect us to create unnecessary risk and danger. Applying the exemptions afforded to

them, police officers must demonstrate careful consideration when conducting an emergency drive. I have not been convinced that a base of evidence exists which demonstrates that police officers are routinely falling foul of the law although I'm sure you will agree there will be rare occasions where police officers may be prosecuted where driving offences have been committed.

"Police pursuits create very different risks to response drives. Police officers involved in a pursuit will have to drive in such a manner that would almost certainly be considered dangerous or, even if their driving isn't, the subject vehicle would be.

"On a number of occasions I have voiced my willingness, at national level, to work with Tim Rogers, your representative and the Police Federation to look at police pursuits and whether the law provides adequate safeguarding.

"The police service must ensure that if performed correctly, in line with the APP and training, the appropriate legal protection exists to support that officer and it is on this basis that I have been willing to offer my support."

The campaign began in January 2016 when a session was held on pursuits at the Federation's Roads Policing Conference. It was led by barrister Mark Aldred and focused on the glitch in the legislation.

He went into detail about what the implications of it are, including the fact that if the political will is there, there is a very real chance of an officer being

prosecuted for engaging in a pursuit or response drive.

In April 2016, Tim and Mark met with the Attorney General, Jeremy Wright, who was presented with a legal précis on the current position.

And in May last year, Tim gave a presentation on the issue at the Police Federation's annual national conference in Bournemouth.

So what's next?

The Federation wants to spread the word as wide as possible and ensure that all professional police drivers doing the job expected by the NPCC are aware of the situation.

It has already contacted all Fed reps and informed them of the challenge. They, in turn, have contacted their chief officers and asked what they as the employers propose to do.

"We now have to make sure all police drivers know the risks they face," says Tim.

As a result of a recent presentation for South West roads policing professionals, it has been suggested that a national "no blue light day" could be organised in order to focus policy makers on the fact that officers doing the job they are trained to do should never fear prosecution.



Federation calls for 2.8 per cent pay rise

The Police Federation has called for all officers to be given a 2.8 per cent pay rise.

The Federation has argued for the rise in its annual submission to the Police Remuneration Review Body (PRRB).

In its joint submission with the Superintendents' Association, it has asked for the uplift, which would be in line with Retail Price Index (RPI) inflation, despite a one per cent public pay increase limit set by the Treasury.

"This year's pay and morale survey, the largest ever undertaken, once again shows that morale continues to be low. Alongside how officers are treated, pay and benefits remains one of the most significant contributory factors to this," says Andy Fittes, general secretary of the national Police Federation.

"Continuing austerity measures, exacerbated by inflation, have seen police officers hit hard by way of a real terms pay gap. The ability to recruit strong candidates, or recruit full stop, may be impacted if this is not addressed.

"Whilst directed to limit any pay award at one per cent, the independent PRRB must be free to draw its own conclusions based on the evidence presented."

One of the issues raised in the report



Andy Fittes, general secretary of the national Police Federation.

looked at the impact eight years of austerity had on the relative value of officers' pay. This includes two years of a pay freeze and several years of below inflation raises which have resulted in a real terms gap across all ranks of about 14.6 per cent.

It states that should austerity measures continue, a pay cap at one per cent over the next four years to 2020 would result in an overall gap between pay settlements and inflation of 23 per cent since 2010.

And it goes on to say the situation is exacerbated by the removal of a number of elements of pay, such as Competence Related Threshold Payments and Special Priority Payments.

There was also a recommendation that the On Call Allowance, introduced in 2013 and set at £15, was uplifted by the Retail Price Index.

The PRRB asked submissions to consider both the targeting of pay and observations on proposals to introduce police officer apprenticeships, in relation to setting pay.

Explaining the Federation view on these issues, Andy continued: "We are not against change to the pay system and recognise it needs to change as the service changes. However, chief constables should not be given 'carte blanche' to pay at their discretion. Sufficient time needs to be given for discussions on any new targeting proposals, with clear evidence presented throughout.

"We believe that to maintain fairness, and encourage interest from a range of candidates reflective of their communities, apprentices should be paid in line with existing starting salary bandings. This would allow room for many, especially those with prior policing experience, to attract the higher starting point."

The Police Federation and Superintendents' Association's submission to the PRRB and additional information, including other stakeholder submissions can be viewed on the Federation's PRRB page.

“Continuing austerity measures, exacerbated by inflation, have seen police officers hit hard by way of a real terms pay gap. The ability to recruit strong candidates, or recruit full stop, may be impacted if this is not addressed.”

”

Police minister agrees to meeting to discuss widows' pension campaign

The campaign for all police widows to receive pensions for life has been raised in the House of Commons again.

The campaign co-ordinated by Kate Hall, widow of West Midlands Police officer Colin Hall who died on duty of a heart attack in 1987, has once more attracted the support of Richard Graham, the Conservative MP for Gloucester.

Under the terms of the 1987 pension which Colin paid into, Kate and other widows whose husbands paid into the same scheme, cannot retain their police pension if they choose to co-habit or re-marry effectively forcing them to choose between financial security and the chance of trying to re-build their lives.

Mr Graham asked during Home Office questions in Parliament on 23 January:

"Whether she (the Home Secretary) is taking steps to ensure that widows of police officers are not financially disadvantaged by re-marrying."

Police minister Brandon Lewis referred to a change in the regulations that benefits the widows of officers killed on duty; the majority of police widows do not benefit from the changes.

"In January 2016, this Government changed legislation to the benefit of widows, widowers and civil partners of police officers in England and Wales who have died on duty," he said.

"As a result, those survivors who

qualified for a survivor pension will now continue to receive their survivors' benefits for life, regardless of re-marriage."

But Mr Graham pointed out: "I welcome the changes made after the police widows campaign, which I supported, but, of course, they apply only to widows who re-marry or co-habit after April 2015, whereas elsewhere in the UK, police widows' pensions have been reinstated regardless of the date of their re-marriage.

"Does my Hon. Friend agree that police widows should be treated the same, regardless of where police officers served in the United Kingdom? Will he agree to meet me and other colleagues to discuss this further?"

Mr Lewis acknowledged the Gloucester MP's campaign and has agreed to meet him - and others - to discuss the issue.

Kate says: "I am of course grateful to Mr Graham for raising the question of our campaign in the House of Commons, however, he speaks of our campaign in the past tense and his questions gave little indication of what is actually required to secure parity with the RUC widows of Northern Ireland.

"It is encouraging that the minister has agreed to meet with Mr Graham and other MPs to discuss the matter."

Anxious that the minister should be in



Police minister Brandon Lewis.

full possession of the facts and figures, Mick Hume from the Police Federation of England and Wales will be seeking meetings with Mr Lewis and Mr Graham.

"It is important that the minister understands the we don't intend to leave anyone behind, and will we continue to campaign until all police widows throughout the UK are granted life-long pension irrespective of when or how their husbands died," says Kate.



Chief Inspector hopes her story will inspire others

A chief inspector who hasn't let her hearing loss get in the way of her progression in the police service is hoping her story will inspire others.

Sally Simpson suffers from congenital hearing loss, a condition which also affected her mum, sister and grandfather, and once feared her disability may hold her back.

Now she hopes her story will help inspire others and dispel myths and misconceptions about working with a disability.

Sally joined the service 18 years ago and

knew during her early days as a bobby she was beginning to suffer from hearing loss. However, she was too scared to get her hearing checked as she was worried it would affect her work.

She explains: "I knew from my early days in the police that I was beginning to suffer hearing loss. But over time I felt it getting worse.

"At first I was embarrassed about wearing my hearing aids at work; to be honest I did not deal with it well initially. However, I started working with Clare Knight Burness, who was my DI when I first came into PPU as a DS. When I explained to Clare that I had to wear my hearing aids, what she said made me feel more confident.

"She filled me with confidence. I no longer felt embarrassed or felt I had to hide my experiences. It goes to show the influence that line managers can have on helping people to come to terms with a disability. I might not be the person I am today both personally and professionally without her approach."

And in the eight years that have

followed she hasn't looked back, with her career going from strength to strength and has been fully supported by the Force.

"They have always asked if I needed additional help and every time I have been to them with a problem, they have found a solution," she said.

"I have never been restricted in doing my role at any time within the organisation. I have been a custody sergeant, an inspector on response, and now a PPU chief inspector at Bournville; there is no reason why my career should be restricted.

"When I was posted on promotion to Inspector to response, I was really concerned about the radios. Having worked at Lloyd House prior to this, I didn't need my radio much but it is critical as a response duty inspector. I spoke with the team who deal with the airwave radios, and they told me about a special adaptor which I could get for the airwave radio."

Sally's lip reading has improved over the years and her hearing has now stabilised and is unlikely to get any worse. She hopes her story will inspire and give confidence to other who suffer from a disability at work

"My view has changed over the years; wearing a hearing aid is not to be hidden or embarrassed about" she explained.

"People come to me and ask for advice. I give them reassurance that there is nothing to stop them in the organisation just because of the hearing aids – it's very little difference to wearing glasses – it simply corrects impairment. I hope that it will give comfort to my colleagues who wear hearing aids that they can feel confident within their roles, their future and with the support of West Midlands Police."

Station closes for final time

A station that once housed serial killer Fred West and was a temporary home for the original 'Peaky Blinders' has closed its doors for the final time.

The Steelhouse Lane site had been part of West Midlands Police for the last 125

years. The original 'lock up' was opened in 1892 and occupied by what was then known as Birmingham City Police. At the time it consisted of a Victorian-era custody block which is now a Grade II listed building. And up until its operational closure last year it was one of the oldest custody facilities in

operation in the country.

But time was called on the dated building as the doors opened to the Force's new custom built Lloyd House, which is based within nearby police headquarters.

Continued on Pages 18 and 19



Handing over of WMP flag for the Police Museum.

Steelhouse Lane closure

“This is all about providing the best service possible to people. While we are quite sentimental about the place, as a building it doesn't provide value for money or the facilities modern police teams need, nor the public deserve.”

It is the first time in the Force's 42-year history that Lloyd House will be used – in part – as an operational police station where people can report crime, give statements, receive safety advice and more.

Head of the Birmingham West neighbourhood policing unit, Chief Superintendent Chris Johnson, said: “As much as we all love the site on Steelhouse Lane, it's almost 100 years old and struggling to cope with the demands of modern policing. The age of the building means it's expensive to run, there's lots of repairs, there is no level access for wheelchair users or people with prams, the public space is incredibly small with nowhere to expand into... the list goes on.

“This is all about providing the best service possible to people. While we are all quite sentimental about the place, as a building it doesn't provide value for money or the facilities modern police teams need, nor the public deserve.”

To mark the closure, an open day was held with officers, staff and other guests being invited to tour the station and reminisce. A commemorative enamel pin badge has been commissioned and is available to buy for £3.

All profit from the sale of the badges will be donated to the Police Museum. To get your hands on one contact Inspector 1758 O'Connor or Sgt 2015 Martin Williams.



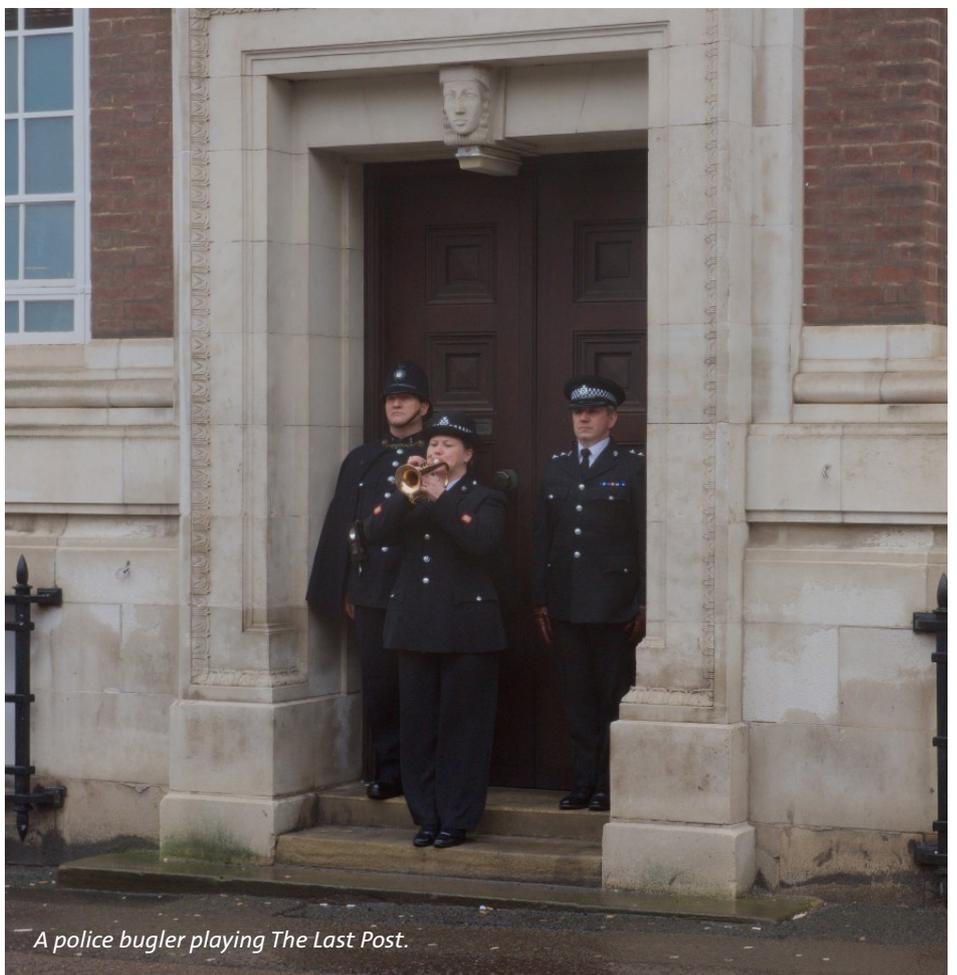
Police cell at Steelhouse Lane Police Station.



A view of the Victorian custody landing at Steelhouse Lane Police Station.



The West Midlands Police Federation stand at the open day with merchandise for members.



A police bugler playing The Last Post.

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Another success for Socks and Chocs



A charity which aims to help the homeless is continuing to go from strength to strength – with new support coming in from across the region since the start of 2017.

Waitrose in Stourbridge chose Socks and Chocs as its charity of the month for January.

Staff at Zinga Indian restaurant, in Bromsgrove, donated their Christmas Day tips to the cause – handing over £250 which will be put towards buying bedding, toiletries and clothing for homeless people in and around Bromsgrove, as well as funding essential health treatments which are not readily accessible, such as foot care.

And hundreds of boxes of chocolates have been delivered to Maggs Day Centre in Worcester.

One lady who is going the extra mile to support the charity is Jane Maton, who will be running the 26.2 gruelling miles of the London Marathon in April to raise cash for the cause.

PC Rosie Jones from Wolverhampton

Central who volunteers with Socks and Chocs said: "All these acts have truly endorsed our motto - that a lot of people doing a little, is better than a few people doing a lot.

"Thanks to them and others 2017 has got off to a great start and we can continue offering our support to homeless people across the region."

During 2016, Socks and Chocs donated more than 9,600 pairs of socks and nearly 8,300 boxes of chocolates to the homeless people of Birmingham. This was bolstered by a £250 donation from West Midlands Police Federation.

The charity was set up in 2010 by former officer Ian Northcott who decided he wanted to do something to help those living on the streets and in hostels. It aims to provide essential items such as bedding, toiletries and clothing, as well as clean socks and underwear and hats and scarves.

It relies on donations from local businesses and the support of the local community, who deliver the items to those in need.

Applications open for direct entry inspectors

West Midlands Police could have a direct entry inspector by the end of the year.

The Force is one of several from across the country looking for people with no previous policing experience to enter the service in a management position.

Applications opened on 16 January and will run until March.

Other forces recruiting include Greater Manchester Police, who are looking for inspectors and superintendents, Derbyshire, Cleveland, Dorset and Gwent.

Speaking to Police and Crime Commissioners last year, Home Secretary Amber Rudd urged forces to get involved in the direct entry scheme.

She said: "I urge you to see it for what it is - an opportunity to bring in talented leaders from different sectors.

"You must recognise that talent does not only come from within police ranks. It can be found elsewhere too, in both the public and the private sector."



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Pensions ruling – Federation view

The Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW) is waiting to see the effects of an Employment Tribunal ruling that the Government’s transitional pension arrangements for judges amount to unlawful age discrimination.

In mid-January, when the ruling was announced, Andy Fittes, general secretary of PFEW, said: “We note the outcome and will now need to look closely at the judgement in detail. We also wait to hear whether there will be an appeal.

“Police officers’ and judges’ pensions are different, so we will need to examine the judgement to see if there are implications for the transitional pension arrangements for police officers.”

The Federation has since issued a more detailed briefing on the ruling:

Judges’ pensions Employment Tribunal: who wins?

The Employment Tribunal on judges’ pensions has been reported as a victory. But who wins?

The Federation general secretary explained: “The ET ruling was on a narrow part of pension legislation, and ruled against a provision that unions across the public sector had fought for. PFEW believes that the success of this challenge could have unintended consequences to the detriment of public sector workers.”

So, what was the case about?

The case was solely about transitional protections, and whether these caused direct discrimination by age, and indirect by gender and ethnicity.

- There was no challenge to the legality of the introduction of a new judges’ pension scheme.
- The judge acknowledged that there is no statutory ban on reducing pensions and pay.
- The judge was very clear that he was not ruling on wider public sector pensions’ reform, as this is a matter of public policy.

What are transitional protections?

Transitional protections are a mechanism that was lobbied for by unions – including PFEW - across the public sector to protect members.

The aim is to ensure those members who cannot remain entirely in “old” schemes, but who have fewer years to serve before retirement, are given special arrangements to help them adjust. The rationale was that these members would already have based future plans on an expectation of a certain pension pot.

There are three types of scheme members:

- Those solely in the old scheme;
- Those in the new scheme but with transitional protections; and
- Those solely in the new scheme.

What does the judgement say?

The judgement does not state that either judges only subject to the new scheme (without protection) or in the old scheme have been treated illegally.

It only states that those judges afforded transitional protection have been treated in a way that causes discrimination. In fact, the judge goes further, and states that those with transitional protection have been treated better than they could have been.

When considering whether transitional protections were a proportionate means to achieve a legitimate aim, the judge considers whether they may have been “excessive” and states that an option might have been to simply follow Hutton’s recommendation that accrued rights under the old scheme be protected. The judges’ schemes both protected old rights and offered transitional protection. (As do the police schemes). The judge states that in conceding to unions that transitional protections were needed, the employer (the Ministry of Justice) failed to seek or provide sufficient evidence of need.

What might be the next steps?

There are a number of things that may happen:

- The Ministry of Justice may appeal. However, if it does, it will actually be forced to adopt the position the unions initially argued for – i.e. that transitional protections are a good thing.
- The ministry may not appeal, and instead seek to remove the unfairness. There are a number of ways the ministry

might do so:

1. The Ministry could offer all judges the same protection that members with transitional protection get – but that would **cost more money from the public purse** – possibly an additional £80,000,000 for judges alone. (The same across the public sector would cost billions of pounds).
2. Bearing in mind that the unfairness has been deemed to be insofar as those with transitional protections have been treated better (in the judge’s view) than they might have been, one option may be to remove transitional protections completely.

This would **reduce the cost to the public** – possibly by £28,000,000.

Unfortunately, if this latter course is taken, some members of the pension scheme lose out. **Ultimately, it would mean no member of the pensions’ scheme will gain from the claimants’ win, in this ET.**

What is the PFEW doing?

“We continue to monitor the situation,” said Andy, “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 ET decision is only binding on the judges, not on any other employers - although it may be referred to in other ET cases. If the Ministry for Justice appeals, then that Employment Appeal Tribunal (EAT) decision would have to be followed by other ETs, (albeit it would not be binding if it could be proved the facts of the case differed sufficiently).

“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.”

Pensions auto-enrolment – an important notice

The Police Federation has issued some guidance to officers considering opting out of the police pension scheme, and those that have already done so. The guidance comes as the pensions auto-enrolment process approaches.

Andy Fittes, general secretary of the Police Federation of England and Wales, explains: "Every three years all employers in the UK – including police forces – are obliged to re-enrol workers who have previously opted out back into their pension scheme.

"The intention behind this is to safeguard pensioners and ensure they are provided for in their old age, and don't overlook the opportunity to build up a pension. For officers, this means those who have opted out of any of the police schemes will be enrolled into the Police Pension Scheme 2015 (2015 CARE Scheme).

"We are aware that some officers have opted out of the schemes. These officers will be re-enrolled and if they do not opt out again then they will have pension

contributions deducted from their salaries. Clearly, this may cause hardship if the deductions are sizable, or if the officer is not alert to the possibility, and fails to act.

"We understand there are relatively few officers who have opted out. However, because of the possible impact on these officers, we are keen to ensure that they understand the auto-enrolment process and take whatever action they feel appropriate."

Process

The Federation wants officers to know what to look out for and in the guidance also stresses that it would not encourage officers to opt out of the pension scheme without taking independent financial advice.

However, if an officer is certain they want to remain opted out of the CARE Scheme then the following applies:

- There is an opt-out period. The local employer (force) may specify this, but if not then the statutory provision applies under (Reg 9 (2) or (3) of the Occupational and Personal Pensions Scheme (Automatic Enrolment)

Regulations 2010. This means the opt-out period will start on the date statutory re-enrolment information is given.

- The employer MUST give the following information to the officer:
 - A statement that the officer has been or will be re-enrolled
 - The date for this
 - The value of any pension contributions, and a statement that these will be deducted
 - The contributions must be deducted from the next payroll after re-enrolment.

What should I do if I previously opted out and wish to do so again?

- Any officer who is certain that they want to still opt out will have to make that known to the employer and pension provider as soon as possible after receiving the statutory letter or email notifying them that they are being re-enrolled.
- The officer has **one month** to complete an opt-out notice (provided by the pension provider) and leave the scheme
- **An opt-out notice cannot be submitted prior to the officer becoming an active member.**
- After receipt of this, the employer must stop deducting contributions, and refund any already deducted since re-enrolment.

Andy continues: "Clearly, for some officers it is possible that the initial deductions from salary will occur before the opt-out notice is actioned by the force. This will depend on local payroll timetables. If you have previously opted out and intend to do so again, then we suggest you contact your force HR (or scheme administrator) to check the timings. Be alert to the need to complete an opt-out notice as soon as possible."





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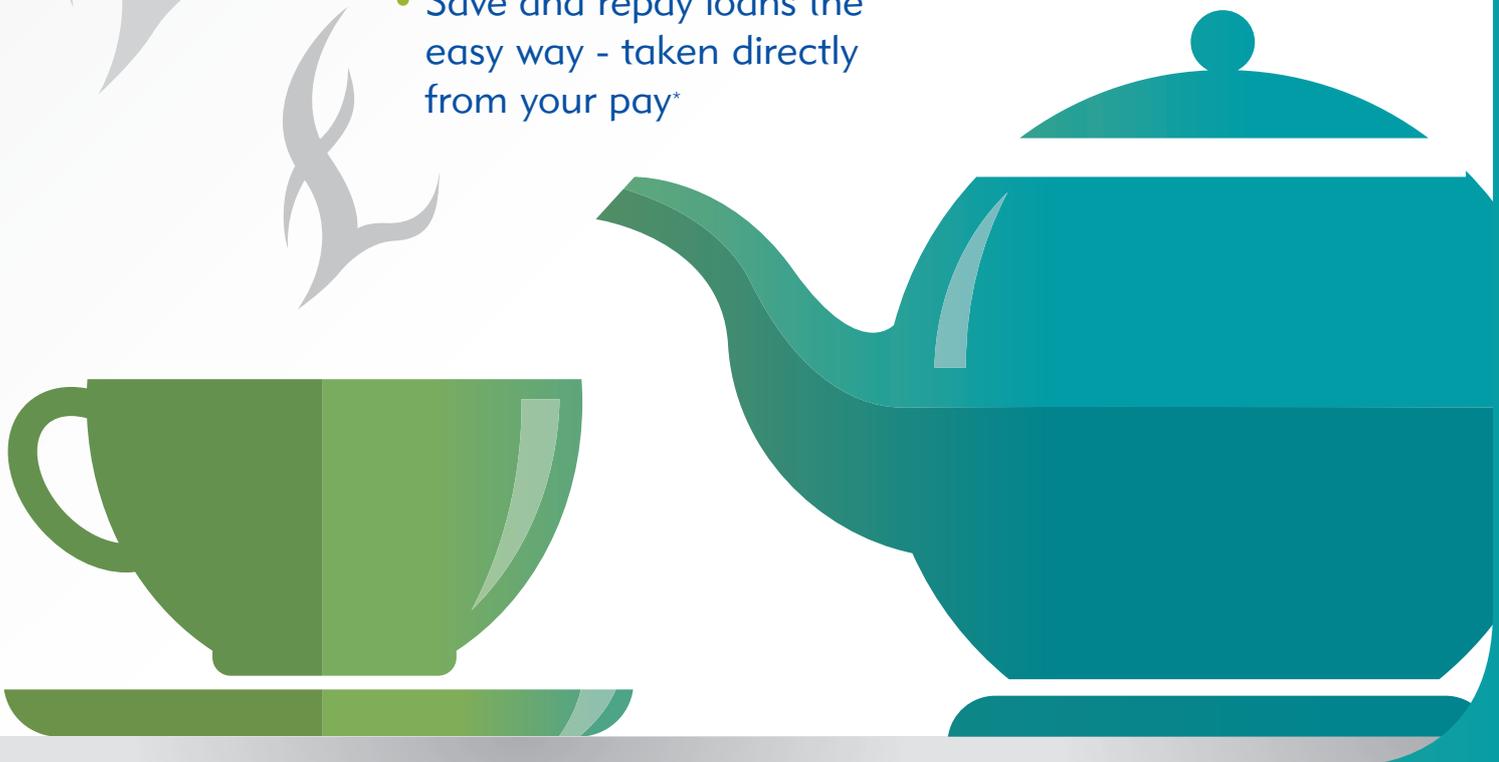
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This year sees the launch of a great new benefit for WMP Benevolent Fund members – a holiday home just steps away from the sea in the popular seaside resort of Weymouth.

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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.

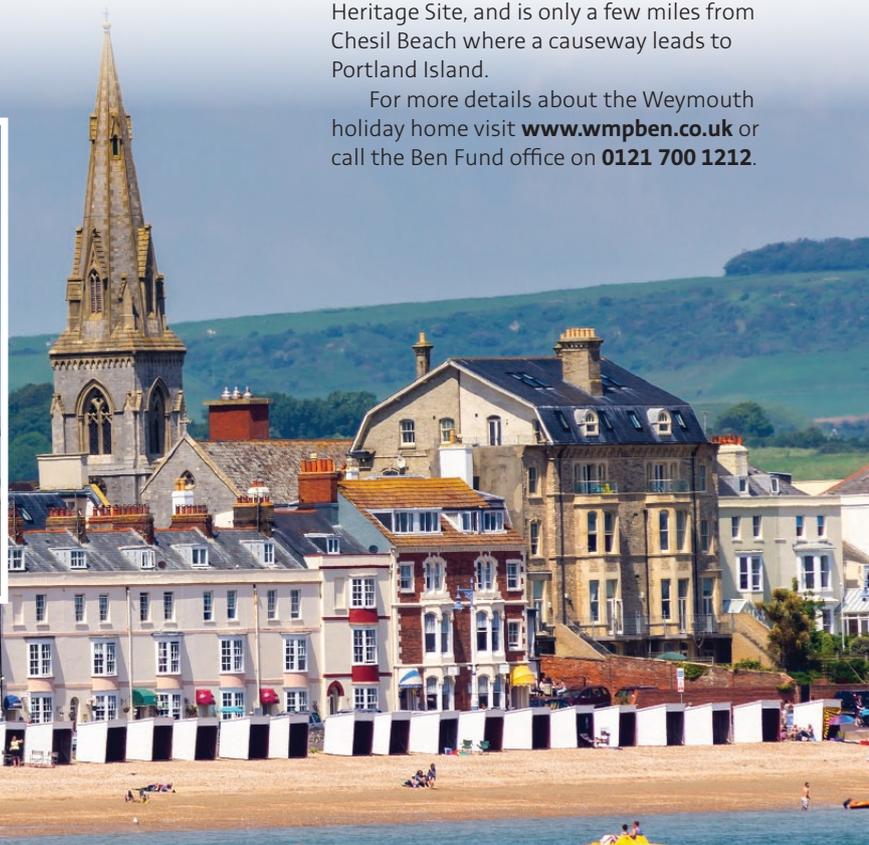
If you have been a member for more than six months you will be eligible to register your interest and request a week via the Fund's online booking system from 1

February to 28 February.

A ballot will take place to decide which members have been successful and a member of the Ben Fund team will then be in touch to arrange a deposit.

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

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



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Are forces equipped for the future of policing?

An inquiry has been launched to establish if forces are equipped to deal with changing demands and new challenges.

Advances in technology have led to new forms of crime and have enabled other crimes to move online, changing their nature and impact on victims and communities.

These advances in technology have also generated new opportunities for the police, at a time of increasing focus on efficiency and innovation.

The Home Affairs Committee has launched the inquiry to explore the challenges of modern policing and examine whether forces are sufficiently equipped and resourced to keep the public safe and to respond effectively to evolving demands and changing patterns of crime.

Home Affairs Select Committee chairman Yvette Cooper MP said: "Police forces are facing multiple new and emerging challenges in their quest to protect the public from harm, including the growth of

online crime and the pressures generated by non-crime demands, such as mental health crisis work.

"Ongoing funding reductions mean there is continuing demand for new efficiency measures, and technological change provides new opportunities for innovation.

"We are seeking written and oral evidence on the reforms which might be required to ensure that our police are fit for purpose, cost effective and open to innovation and technological change."

The terms of reference for the inquiry include:

- Current and future crime trends and their implications for policing in England and Wales, including emerging or growing categories of crime (such as online crime and child sexual abuse) and under-reported types of crime.
- The extent to which the police are sufficiently equipped to deal with these changing patterns of crime and other

operational demands, such as mental health crisis work, and where gaps in capacity and capability are likely to lie.

- The relationship between public expectations of the police, including desired visibility and perceived priorities, and the operational realities of policing within the current financial context.
- Police funding levels, efficiency and cost-effectiveness, including the role of Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) in driving innovation and reform.
- The role of digital technology in policing, including take-up, risks and barriers to use.
- International best practice examples of innovation in policing, and the extent to which they could be replicated in England and Wales.

Written submissions for this inquiry have to be submitted online by midday on 16 February.

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GB1450/FP895-2016/V1

See what your colleagues say:

“Not only did she help me to understand how the new pension will affect me but she also helped me save money!”

Wayne Bennett, serving police officer

“Visiting Caroline Harris was well worth the time. She helped put my mind at rest with informed information rather than guess work.”

Ian Skidmore, serving police officer

“Caroline came into my life with an air of calm and organisation.”

Helen Walker, police widow

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Federation backs Force campaign on FGM

International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) takes place on Tuesday 6 February 2017.

Ahead of this, West Midlands Police's Corporate Communications department has been working on an awareness raising campaign launching the same day which will highlight and inform the public about FGM, a hidden crime.

As with all Force campaigns, the Corporate Comms team wants this FGM work to have an internal impact, as well as external. The internal campaign has different aims to the external campaign, as our officers will already know what FGM is, and have been trained to deal with this. Therefore what we'd like to do internally is bring it to the forefront of officers' minds and encourage them to engage with the public on an issue that can be seen as taboo.

The officers they wanted to target with this campaign are those who are out on the front-line dealing with members of the public from all walks of life, on a daily basis. Therefore during a team brainstorm of ways to get to officers, the idea of hand sanitisers came up.

"We realised that our traditional routes of communication like Newsbeat, Team Talk and Force Message are brilliant but that the

front-line officers we want to target for this campaign will often miss messages delivered through these channels, as they simply don't have the time to log in and read them," says Amy Haycock, organisational communications officer for the Force.

"Instead, we came up with the idea to put an FGM message onto hand sanitisers and provide every PC and PS on response and Force support and neighbourhood teams - plus neighbourhood PCSOs - with one. This way the message is always 'on them' as the hand sanitisers can be clipped onto uniform. They are also reminded of this every time they use the hand gel.

"We got in touch with chairman Tom Cuddeford to see if West Midlands Police Federation would be interested in match funding the hand gels so we could provide one for every officer, and he loved the idea and got the Police Federation on board straight away.

"We then worked with our supplier to get the design created, which is a simple message 'FGM we won't wash our hands of it' - in between both WMP and the Police Federation logos. Showing our dedication to tackling abhorrent crimes such as FGM."

The hand gels will be distributed to officers ahead the campaign launch.

A day of mental health and wellbeing

Officers and staff have been invited to spend the day focusing on improving mental health and wellbeing across the Force.

On Thursday 9 February an event at Tally Ho! will highlight the support available to staff and supervisors as the Force shines the spotlight on mental health, stress and post-traumatic stress.

The event has been organised in association with the Black and Asian Police Association and is open to everyone, regardless of their rank or role.

"One in four people in the UK will experience a mental health problem in any given year. People who work or volunteer in the emergency services are even more at risk of a mental health problem than most," said Inspector Karen Geddes.

"There may be a person in your office, a colleague on your shift or it could be you yourself that is suffering with a mental health problem. This event will let you

know what help is available."

Between 9am and 3.15pm there will be guest speakers discussing practical solution to improving mental health, discussions about police related post-traumatic stress support and WMP colleagues will be sharing their own personal stories about their battle with mental health.

Attendees are encouraged to bring their smart phones as there will be an interactive session as part of one of the workshops.

Karen added: "There is sometimes a stigma associated with openly discussing mental health. This event is aimed at tackling this head on and will hopefully prove the stepping stone for individuals, supervisors and the force as a whole to improving the support available."

If you are unable to attend details of WMP's wellbeing agenda will be shared in coming weeks.

Retirement seminars – book your place now



Is retirement just around the corner? Are you wondering what your options are?

For officers who have started to think about the day they retire from the police service, 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.

The sessions are held at the West Midlands Police Federation office at Guardians House in Sheldon. Topics covered include:

- Managing change and uncertainty
- CV writing and interview techniques
- Transferable skills
- Police and state pensions
- Managing money and financial changes
- Budgeting
- Starting your own business
- Taxation
- Savings
- Investments and finances

Tom Cuddeford, interim chairman of West Midlands Police Federation, said:

"There is so much for officers to consider when they are approaching retirement. Our seminars ensure they can find out all the facts, ask questions of our experts and ensure that they are well informed as they make decisions affecting them as they leave the force."

The next session is being held on **2 March** between 8.30am and 4pm.

Further sessions will take place on **27 April, 15 June, 27 July and 7 September.**

To book a place email Sarah-Katie at SKWilson@westmids.polfed.org with your name, work email address, personal email address, personal phone number, proposed retirement date and number of places required. Please put 'Retirement Seminar' and the date you wish to attend in the subject line.

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*Benefit levels reduce and premium rates increase on retirement. Cover ceases at age 65. Full details are available from the Federation or George Burrows.

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GB1403/FP758-2016 /V2

Mental health reform

Calls are being made for more to be done around mental health reform – despite the recent comments by the Prime Minister.

Steve White, chairman of the Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW) said that while Theresa May's mental health reforms were a step in the right

direction, more needs to be done to recognise the scale of the problem which is blighting large sections of the police service.

He made the remarks following the Prime Minister's speech to the Charity Commission in January and his views were echoed by Tom Cuddeford, West Midlands Police Federation's interim chairman.

"The police are often the ones left to deal with those dealing with mental health issues as there is simply no one else



available. Yet we are not the best qualified and it means we are stretched to deal with life and death policing issues", says Tom.

"A cell is not an appropriate place for someone suffering from a mental health illness.

"Equally, our officers are more stressed and stretched at work than ever before and it is vital the appropriate support is available to them to assist with any mental health related issues. The welfare

of our officers is paramount."

Last month it was revealed that more than a million work days were lost in the police service over the last three years to mental health-related illness. The finding echoed a PFEW survey on officer welfare last year which showed the mental wellbeing of police officers was considerably poorer than that of the general public.

Mr White said: "Mental health issues are of huge concern to the young, the elderly and all public sector services.

"There needs to be proper investment in the diagnosis and treatment of mental health issues to both assist officers who manage individuals with mental health issues and, equally, assist officers who suffer with mental health related issues themselves."

"The use of police cells as a place of safety has more than halved in one year but there are still problems facing custody officers who are dealing with mentally ill detainees because the appropriate NHS or social care resources are too often not available. And the issue is not just confined to custody as the police are usually the first to be called when there is an issue out on the streets."

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Putting your children first when separating

By **Chris Fairhurst**, principal lawyer in family law at Slater and Gordon

A child's welfare is the family court's paramount concern when it comes to deciding arrangements after separation.

As society changes, with fewer of us identifying with the traditional nuclear family, splits and divorces can be more complicated and family courts are increasingly being asked to resolve issues.

Here are a few answers to frequently asked questions which will explain some of the processes and terms:

Q. How do I Get Parental Responsibility?

A. You have Parental Responsibility if you are mum or dad, if you were married when the child was born or if you obtain it through a Parental Responsibility Order. You also have it if you subsequently get married or have re-registered your child's birth on or after 1 December 2003.

Other people can secure it such as in the event of adoption, obtaining an order or being the child's guardian.

Q. How do I apply for an order?

A. There is a principle of non-intervention by the court, meaning it will only get involved if parents can't agree.

In most circumstances before anyone can apply to the court for an order you have to attempt to resolve matters.

This usually means attending a Mediation Information and Assessment Meeting (MIAM) to see if mediation might be one way to get parents talking and keep matters out of court.

Parents may wish to try and resolve matters more informally, perhaps with trusted family members or friends to assist with anything that might be considered an obstacle. Mediation is not obligatory in situations involving potential harm to a child or where domestic abuse might feature.

Q. What if mediation doesn't work?

A. If it is really necessary, you may wish to make an application to court. This might be in relation to when and where a child should



live or spend time with a parent, a Specific Issue Order such as which school a child should attend, a Prohibited Steps Order, which could prevent removal of a child from the United Kingdom, or any other relevant order to a child's upbringing.

If an application is made to court then CAFCASS will be asked to undertake a safeguarding check which involves contacting social work agencies and the police about any information held before the first court hearing, to make sure there is nothing which might impact upon the child's welfare and therefore the court's decision-making.

Q. What is CAFCASS?

A. It's the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service, which is independent of the court, social services and other similar agencies. It may be asked by the court in the more serious cases to provide information about a family and guidance as to how the court should exercise its powers. It seeks to provide a voice to the child in line with the court's need to take account of a child's "ascertainable wishes and feelings" in any decision. The court will be guided by any recommendation made by CAFCASS or give good reasons if not doing so.

Q. Does the court always go in favour of the mother?

A. The family court is even handed in its approach and decisions are made with the best interests of the children in mind.

We believe it is important that you seek legal advice during this process. The award winning team I work with have years of experience representing parents who are going through children disputes to secure the best possible outcome.

If you would like specialist advice from a family lawyer then please contact Slater and Gordon on 0808 175 7710 and we'll be happy to help.

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