



# Connect



SUMMER 2021

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM WEST MERCIA POLICE FEDERATION





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Chair: Sarah Cooper  
Secretary: Steve Butler

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E-mail: [staff@wmpf.polfed.org](mailto:staff@wmpf.polfed.org)

Tel: 01905 744500

# We recognise the amazing work you do, and we are here for you

By Sarah Cooper  
Chair of West Mercia  
Police Federation

Welcome to the Spring edition of Connect. It is hard to believe that we are heading towards the end of my first triennial.



When I took on this post nearly three years ago I could never have imagined the challenges that were ahead; an investigation into branch finances (which is still ongoing), a significant cyber-attack on the Police Federation of England and Wales which affected all branches and the national office, and then the pandemic.

Despite these issues, I consistently receive feedback from members that there is a tangible positive change in the Federation approach. We still have work to do, but our aim has always been to make the Federation more visible, approachable and member focused and I hope that you feel we are achieving that. Feedback is always welcome so please do contact me directly.

I know that the last year or so has been particularly challenging for many of you. Issues around IT systems, pressures experienced by tutors and student officers struggling with the demands of academic work alongside the challenge of day to day policing and concerns around promotion processes have all taken their toll.

But we have also seen assaults on officers, increased levels of risk being managed in frontline officers' workloads, issues around recruitment and retention in CID and a barrage of negative publicity associated with high profile national and international cases.

I do not underestimate the impact of all these issues and please be assured that we continue to make representations on your behalf on these matters and more.

We are involved in the review of the FAW processes, negotiations for the recognition of the work of tutors and the implementation of the health passport to promote officer wellbeing.

We also link in with the national Federation on many of the wider issues that are impacting on you. It is so important that your voice is heard so please do keep in contact about any concerns you have or contact your local reps.

As a Federation, we are currently heavily involved in supporting all officers involved in the Citrus case. The value of being a member of the Federation has been starkly brought into focus by this case.

Most members are aware of the value of the legal representation and for many officers

this is the over-riding consideration when joining. This is, of course, absolutely invaluable for any officer facing criminal or misconduct proceedings for incidents that occur in the execution of duty. But what may not be appreciated is how much welfare and practical support is also needed in these cases, both for those facing prosecution and those giving evidence.

I am confident that those involved with cases such as this would testify that the Federation support and negotiation on behalf of officers' wellbeing is also essential.

Some of you may have seen the water bottles that are being supplied to members who subscribe to the Group Insurance Scheme (GIS). These are intended to highlight the existence of this provision and I would encourage all officers who do not currently subscribe to the GIS to check the website ([polfed.org/westmercia](http://polfed.org/westmercia)) to see what benefits are offered and then give serious consideration to joining.

Your Fed subscriptions cover you for 'in the execution of duty' incidents only and much of what we deal with in respect of conduct is only covered for legal fees if you are a subscribing member of the GIS.

In addition, there are loads of other benefits, including life insurance, worldwide family travel insurance and mobile phone cover, that are all included for a rate that you could not get anywhere else for such comprehensive cover. Please get in touch if you are a member of the GIS and have not yet had your bottle!

Finally, I just want to say that I never fail to be in awe of the job you all do. I am privileged to facilitate critical incident debriefs for officers who have faced dealing with the most harrowing of incidents. These officers show professionalism, compassion and dedication to serving the public in the most testing of circumstances; they really make a difference to people at the worst times of their lives. They do this despite all the challenges and barriers that we are dealing with in the Federation on a daily basis.

One officer recently commented to me that the public couldn't cope if they knew what police officers really have to deal with; the truth and personal sacrifice behind the headlines.

I believe he is spot on but please know that we, as a Federation, absolutely recognise the amazing work you do and we are always here for you, any time. I hope that you will find this edition informative and interesting. If you have any ideas for future magazines, please get in touch.

Our thoughts are with the family, friends and colleagues of PC Colin Freeman who died over the late May Bank Holiday weekend. The Federation branch can offer support to any officers affected by Colin's death.

# 'Time can break you': a former officer's account of a 19-month conduct case

A former West Mercia officer who left the Force after being subjected to a 19-month investigation by the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) is asking officers to read her story.

And Sian Norman, who was with the Force for 15 years and had otherwise had an exemplary career, also hopes by talking openly about the impact of a long-drawn-out inquiry she can add weight to the Police Federation's Time Limits campaign which aims to limit the time conduct investigations can take.

Sian writes: "Time matters. When an IOPC officer delays they are not 'taking their time'. They're taking mine. It's my time. I'm entitled to it. If you take it from me, have just cause. Don't waste it, abuse it. It's mine. You're not borrowing it. You can't borrow time because you can't give it back. You're taking it, devouring it, letting it trickle away like sand through your fingers. Because it doesn't matter to you, it's not your time, is it? It's mine."

And she adds: "No one deserves to be left languishing in the dark. Believe me. It's the last place anyone deserves to be. Officers are being left in the dark. It has to stop. And it has to stop now."

Read Sian's full account:

*Let me tell you something about time.*

*Time is relative, there's too much of it, not enough, it's the most precious thing we have. It can heal.*

*All those cliches.*

*I'll tell you something about my experience of time. It can break you. And you have no idea how precious it is until someone takes yours.*

*My IOPC investigation started on 25 November 2016. It stemmed from a run of the mill drugs job; like one I'd been part of I don't know how many times before. But at some point one of the suspects swallowed a packet of the drugs he was transporting, died of an overdose and set me off on a journey that would change my life.*

*It took nearly 20 months for the IOPC investigation to be completed. My first interview wasn't held for seven months. After my second interview, I was told they'd*

*probably have a decision for me in two months. I waited nine. Maybe you think it doesn't matter that an IOPC investigation takes a long time? Maybe the most important thing is a comprehensive and effective investigation? Of course it is.*

*But I believe the way my case was handled was filled with ineptitude and incompetence. For example, when I was interviewed the second time they asked me questions relating to a matter they hadn't served me papers for. They didn't ask for the CCTV from the roadside cameras for weeks and it could have been lost.*

*I could go on.*

*And please remember this was manslaughter and gross misconduct allegations I was facing; crown court, possibly jail time, job loss. I was an officer who barely had a Regulation 9 in a 15-year career. At one point my solicitor told me I should prepare to be charged. I sat outside the office and had a calm, pragmatic conversation with myself about the merits for and against letting my children visit me in prison. That was June 2017. I was told I had no case to answer in July 2018. Overall, I had waited nearly 20 months, for 13 of those I honestly believed I might have to have my day in court and that might end in prison.*

*Nearly every day I imagined being in the dock. I recited my evidence. I listened to the questions. I played the night's events out over and over. I imagined what it would be like to be told the jury had a verdict. Nearly every day? Can you imagine what that's like? It's like going on the longest journey with no destination and one tank of fuel. Then you run out. And they won't let you fill up again.*

*When I was told I had no case to answer, either criminally or disciplinary, I cried. There were floods of tears. The inspector who told me looked confused after a while. He said: "This is good news?" He didn't realise he was watching me release the immense pressure I had been under all that time, all the hurt, worry, pain, all the doubt in myself and the system, all the things that had been allowed to build and crush and fester as I waited, day after day after day.*

*There is something painfully ironic about being judged on your ability to do your job by an organisation that appears to employ some people incapable of doing theirs. This cannot be allowed to continue, because their inefficiency and ineptitude is what takes the time.*

*I was very lucky in that I wasn't alone. I had amazing support from family, friends and colleagues. I gave in and admitted I needed professional help and thank God I did. I survived the 20-month investigation. I survived a dismissed hearing (due to errors by the coroner himself) then Covid, which all meant it was three weeks shy of four years before the conclusion of the inquest and everything finally ended for me. I resigned from the Force after an 18-year career and I managed to get myself a good job. I moved on. But others won't be that lucky. They won't have the support or the help and the time delay, the waiting and the wondering, will break them.*

*Lack of action by chief officers, by PSD and by the Federation officials at the time makes it worse. Because it feels like nobody cares. You wait and you wait and you feel like you're just meant to accept it. It's just the way it is, 'this is how the IOPC is' type attitude. That's not good enough. Forces are leaving officers alone in the dark. And people with influence, people who can change this, need to care about that. This needs to stop and it needs to stop now.*

*Thank you for your time. I hope I haven't wasted it.*

Sian has commented on the support she has since received from the Federation.

She says: "I wrote this article because I'm determined to assist where I can, in enforcing change; change which is recognised in the Federation's campaign. Sarah Cooper, West Mercia Police Federation chair, and I are working on this together and I can't praise her enough for her tireless enthusiasm for wanting to protect officers from a similar experience to mine in the future.

"My experience of Federation support was adversely effected in the beginning, but that was due to an individual. I couldn't imagine where I would have been without the Federation legal funding, which took away what could have been an added stress and crippling financial burden. And once Sarah took over the Federation reins I only have praise for the support I received. I know she is as passionate about this issue, as I am, and I really hope that between us we can work towards real change in how these investigations are conducted."

**“No one deserves to be left languishing in the dark. Believe me. It's the last place anyone deserves to be. Officers are being left in the dark. It has to stop. And it has to stop now.”**



## The incident that led to the investigation

Sian Norman was an Acting Sergeant on the Central Motorway Police Group (CMPG) when at around 5pm on 25 November 2016 she, and a few members of her team, supported by officers from Gloucestershire Constabulary, stopped a vehicle on the M5 and arrested the occupants for drugs offences.

At some point one of the prisoners swallowed drugs. He became ill in custody, was taken to hospital and died five days later.

An investigation was started by the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) on 26 November 2016. Sian was investigated for gross negligence manslaughter and gross misconduct.

The investigation concluded on 2 July 2018, just under 20 months later, and Sian was told she had no case to answer for either the criminal or disciplinary matters.

She was given 'management action' but went off sick that day with stress-related illness and never returned to work for the Force.

## Timeliness is key, says head of PSD

The head of West Mercia's professional standards department (PSD) says the timeliness of conduct investigations involving officers and staff is of primary importance but that some matters are out of the Force's control.

Superintendent Rebecca Love also says that it is a departmental aim to decrease the time complaints and conduct matters take to resolve and finalise.

In response to our article, Supt Love said: "For me, it is very simple. If a complaint or conduct investigation can be undertaken swiftly, proportionately and effectively, it benefits the member of the public involved, the subject of the process, and those investigating by providing a better service and reducing stress and anxiety to all. It also means that if there is any threat, risk or harm, this is identified and mitigated as soon as possible."

Addressing the timeliness of inquiries, she added: "The new (conduct) regulations have assisted me in redesigning my department to provide a more efficient complaints triage process that allows on average 75 per cent of all complaints to be resolved by the triage team 'there and then'. The impact of this is the significant reduction of complaints that result in the need for a more formal investigation, and therefore officers and staff being part of a complaints process.

"For those small numbers that the triage team are unable to resolve and that require any further investigation, I have utilised the skillset of the PSD reactive team who will take on these investigations. This has resulted in only a handful - up to six in a three-month period - of complaints being referred out of PSD to local areas for supervisors to resolve. This shift has ensured complaints are dealt with consistently and efficiently and resolved in a proportionate way, reducing the time officers are under investigation and reducing the work on local supervision. The average time for a complaint to be resolved is now 30 days."

In addition to the complaints, the department also handles those conduct matters that remain with the Force for local investigation and Supt Love stresses the department is fully aware of the significant impact being under investigation can have on not only the subject, but family and friends, and also supervisors, colleagues and welfare contacts.

She explains: "A significant investment in training, and ongoing professional challenge by staff associations, ensures that PSD works hard to complete investigations as swiftly as possible. The last data showed that the average time for an investigation by WMP was six months, which is a considerable decrease from previous years.

"It must be recognised that not all conduct matters remain under our control, and if the IOPC determines the matter to be subject to 'independent Investigation' then my department has no role in progressing the case, or control over the timeliness of the investigation."

## Calling a halt to lengthy inquiries

The Police Federation of England and Wales Time Limits campaign is seeking to end processes that have meant conduct investigations have been allowed to continue for months and sometimes years on end.

The campaign calls for a 12-month limit on conduct inquiries, from the time allegations were made. This would fit in and complement the new regulations relating to Police and Crime Commissioners being given explanations when cases take longer than 12 months.

To safeguard genuinely delayed cases a Legally Qualified Chair should then be appointed and have the power to terminate or conduct robust case management to bring cases to swift conclusions, safeguarding both the complainant and officer's position.

Locally, we have been working with the Force and PSD to address the timeliness of investigations, with a particular emphasis on the wellbeing of officers.

We would encourage anyone currently going through any disciplinary or performance process to get in touch with their local Federation representative or the office team if they need any support at all.

# Are you autistic? Support is available

Officers and staff with autism or other neurodiverse conditions are being urged to contact the West Mercia Police Autism Network.

Lesley Williams, West Mercia Police Federation's vice-chair and conduct and performance lead, says she has experience of representing officers who have found themselves subjected to performance procedures when they really needed to have their autism recognised and supported.

"It is critically important that officers who have been diagnosed with autism or other neurodiverse conditions, or those who feel they may have these conditions, get in touch with our Autism Network," says Lesley.

"Support is available from people who truly understand these conditions and this can make all the difference to how officers are

managed going forward.

"No one should be reluctant to come forward and contact officers and staff involved in the network."

The Federation has links with the Autism Network and will also work with members to ensure they get the help and support they need.

"We are here to promote officer wellbeing and helping people access support groups that are tailored to their needs is part of that," says Lesley.

The West Mercia Police Autism Network is chaired by Sergeant Zoey Carter who is also the lead co-ordinator for the National Police Autism Association (NPAA).

Read more about Zoey below.

## 'Juggling my work and caring for my autistic son can be stressful and exhausting'

**By Sergeant Zoey Carter, chair of the West Mercia Police Autism Network**

A little bit about me... I am Mum and carer to Jack who is 23 and autistic. Jack's autism is complex and he is non-verbal. He is utterly adorable but I'm the first to admit that juggling his care and my job can be stressful and exhausting.

My husband is also a serving sergeant and our eldest daughter is a PCSO. We all care for Jack and, in the main, I can say that we have been blessed over the years with very understanding and supportive supervisors.

On the few occasions we haven't, I put this down to a lack of understanding of autism on their part but I take no shame in admitting this lack of understanding led to increased stress and anxiety for me and my family and I went through periods of particularly low mood because of it.

I highlight this because during these times I was supported by the Federation and the then lead co-ordinator for the National Police Autism Association (NPAA) PS Paul Ashby and I will be forever grateful for the help we received.

I'm also grateful to now retired Superintendent Kevin Purcell and Superintendent Damian Pettit who pushed me through some low times to seek promotion when I had convinced myself I couldn't balance this with my care responsibilities to Jack.

So, having come through the other side and on hearing Paul was stepping down from the lead co-ordinator role, I jumped at the opportunity to take it on. I wanted to share my passion for autism and support fellow carers and help staff and officers with autism. I'm also the

chair for the local West Mercia Autism Network. I feel very strongly that, while generally there is a better awareness of autism within the Force, an actual understanding of autism is still poor and we, as an organisation, could do much better.

The NPAA is an independent group supporting and run by UK police officers, staff and volunteers who are affected by autism and

we welcome all police personnel with a personal, family or professional interest in autism and its related conditions.

The NPAA offers free membership to members of the UK policing and criminal justice community. We maintain a web forum where there is a wealth of support and information for members and we maintain a network of champions to provide local support in each police service.

The NPAA assists police forces in supporting employees affected by autism and related conditions. The NPAA advocates the concept of neurodiversity, valuing people for their strengths and creating a workplace environment and culture in which everyone can fulfil their potential. We aim to end the stigma, prejudice and ignorance surrounding autism and other neurodivergent conditions.

I would encourage anyone with an interest in autism to join the NPAA (done via the website – just google NPAA) or feel free to join our new local network of



Zoey Carter and son, Jack.



officers and staff who are on hand to offer welfare support and advice in your area if needed, just contact me or deputy chair Faye Allen-Carter for further details.

So far, we have supported some student officers who were facing performance action plans gain a formal diagnosis of autism and appropriate reasonable adjustments to be able to succeed in their role. We currently provide training to all custody sergeants on how to support an autistic detainee and the officers dealing with that detainee. We have also supported supervisors with understanding autism so they can in turn then successfully support autistic officers and staff but most of all we are a friendly, knowledgeable face or ear for anyone who needs any help or support for anything autism related, whether this be personal or criminal justice related.

Please feel free to drop myself or Faye an email or give us a call.

# Worried about the bleep test?

## #Bleepkind may help

*By Lesley Williams, conduct lead for West Mercia Police Federation*

Ever been worried or concerned about having to take the bleep test?

Many officers worry about taking the test for a variety of reasons. But there are numerous avenues of support through the Force OST team, occupational health, the Federation and other staff groups. However, if you're still struggling, do you know about **#Bleepkind**? It's a peer support network sharing support and advice that began on social media and has grown quickly.

The Federation supports a number of officers with the Job-Related Fitness Test (JRFT) and so I made contact with the team at #Bleepkind to see how we can assist. As a result, I put myself forward as a point of contact.

The network gave me this information about its work:

We set up #Bleepkind, a peer support network for those required to complete the bleep test for their job role, in February 2021. This was following our own personal experiences and struggles when it came to the test.

We are both full-time police officers and Mums who wanted to create a safe place where people could come together and share their worries and concerns around the bleep test. Whether that be due to anxiety, injury, post-pregnancy conditions or any other reason, we want people to know that they would not be judged, but supported.

Since #Bleepkind began, we have set up a Twitter page @Bleepkind and a private Facebook page #Bleepkind. Both groups have more than 700 members who are not just people who are struggling, but also people who wish to help, give advice and support. It is such a positive place, where we share our challenges, but also celebrate our achievements.



## #Bleepkind

**FIT now, Healthy forever, KIND always**

**The #Bleepkind vision is to promote a culture which prioritises health and wellbeing through kindness, understanding and support, to ensure members are ready to meet and exceed identified levels of operational fitness.**

We are open to anyone who would like support, whether that be for the 5.4 required for response policing or 9.4 for firearms, everyone is welcome.

Force representatives help us spread kindness in relation to helping people overcome their difficulties around the bleep test and undertake the following:

1. Promote the #Bleepkind Facebook group as a safe place for people to discuss their anxieties or concerns without judgement.
2. Know where or who in the specific organisation to signpost people to for support.
3. Promote the Bleepkind vision by actively promoting a culture of prioritising health and fitness through kindness,

understanding and support, for example, via wellbeing groups or staff networks within the organisation.

4. Put forward ideas locally to improve health and fitness of officers and staff in the long-term to help mitigate the impact of shift work. Highlight the benefits to the organisation such as reduced sickness levels, increased satisfaction and increased productivity.
5. Ensure that messages are clear. Bleepkind is not seeking to abolish annual fitness testing, we are about supporting individuals to achieve the required level of operational fitness while supporting the organisation to reduce the impact of the process upon individuals.

For more information contact Lesley on [lwilliams@wmpf.polfed.org](mailto:lwilliams@wmpf.polfed.org)



# Welfare caravan offers away from it all breaks



The West Mercia Police Welfare Fund has bought a caravan in the Cotswolds that will be available to officers and their families who would benefit from a welfare break, as well as for holidays.

Applications are welcome for any subscribing member of the fund who may be experiencing hardship or a specific welfare need and you can find the application form on the Federation website –

[polfed.org/westmercia](http://polfed.org/westmercia)

The caravan is available for rental for short and week-long breaks with a reduction of 25 per cent available for members subscribing to the welfare fund.

The caravan, which is at Hoburne Cotswold, South Cerney, Cirencester, sleeps six in two twin bedrooms and one double en suite room. It is fully equipped with a TV and a DVD player and has a decking area.

It is set inside Cotswold Water Park, the largest water park in Britain. With 150 lakes set over 40 square miles, the park offers an array of water sports from kayaking, canoeing and water skiing to windsurfing, sailing and fishing.

There's more water fun to be had in the outdoor heated pool and the indoor leisure pool is complete with flume, sauna and steam room. There's a mini gym, nature trail, tennis, adventure golf, multi sports court,

an amusement arcade and more to keep the whole family entertained.

The park is set around four beautiful lakes. Calm, still and serene, the main lake is simply breath-taking.

The Cotswold Water Park is also a renowned conservation area, making it a great place for a spot of wildlife watching.

Features also include:

- **Indoor pool with flume**
- **Outdoor heated pool**
- **Gym**
- **Sauna and steam room**
- **Wi-Fi access**
- **Entertainment complex with Sky TV, BT Sports, The Venue, Café H and Brasserie 1912 Restaurant**
- **Children's club**
- **Indoor soft play area**
- **Multi-sports court**
- **Amusement arcade\***
- **Pool\***
- **Adventure playground**
- **Tennis court**
- **Adventure golf\***
- **Fishing (rod licence required)**
- **Fitness trail**
- **Pedaloos\***
- **Shop**
- **Launderette\*.**

\*May attract extra costs.



## Pensions event in July

Members are being invited to attend a virtual pensions information session for West Mercia officers next month.

National Federation secretary Alex Duncan and vice-chair Ché Donald will take part in the event which will be held online on the evening of Tuesday 27 July from 6pm to 8.30pm and will be conducted via Teams.

The session will consist of a 30-minute

input on the complex topic of police pensions and remedy details. It will also include a Q & A session.

To register your interest, please email [staff@wmpf.polfed.org](mailto:staff@wmpf.polfed.org). The Teams invitation will be sent to the email from which the expression of interest is sent.

Any queries at all, please contact branch chair Sarah Cooper on [scooper@wmpf.polfed.org](mailto:scooper@wmpf.polfed.org)

## Your Federation team

We now have a full board of workplace representatives following our most recent elections.

New reps will be undergoing their training in the coming months and will be on hand to offer members support and advice.

You can find a full list of our reps on

our website: visit [polfed.org/westmercia.about-us/meet-the-team](http://polfed.org/westmercia.about-us/meet-the-team).

In future editions of the magazine, we will run profiles of our reps to give you an insight into their role and what made them put themselves forward to support colleagues.

## Retiring reps

Rob Camp has retired after around six years as a Federation rep. West Mercia Police Federation chair Sarah Cooper was among those to send her best wishes.

"I am sending every good wish in his retirement and thank him for his service to the



Rob Camp.

communities of West Mercia and also his dedication to his role as a Federation rep," says Sarah.

Sarah has also paid tribute to three other retiring reps: Ross Cookson, Craig Davies and Ian Booth.

"I just want to say a huge thank you to them all for their commitment to the role of a Fed rep, a role that can be incredibly challenging on top of the demands of operational policing. I would also like to acknowledge the support they have all offered me from a personal perspective."

## Launch of wellbeing project sees dogs supporting officers

The project lead of a brand-new wellbeing and trauma support dogs initiative says it is vital that everything is done to better support officers with their mental health.

The project which was launched by Oscar Kilo (OK), the national police wellbeing service, tied in with this year's Mental Health Awareness Week, which ran from 10 to 16 May.

Project lead Garry Botterill has explained how the project will help build on the newly established wellbeing dog network, which has so far been supported by 35 forces nationwide.

"Supporting officers' mental health can take many forms and using dogs is just one technique," said Garry, "We researched the work that was already being done and started to form a network of enthusiastic people who were passionate about using dogs to support wellbeing."

"Being under one umbrella means that there are now uniform standards, policies and assessments, which means there's also a lower risk of things going wrong."

The wellbeing support dogs will be given OK9 jackets, certificates and badges and their handlers across the forces will be given OK9

pin badges, to make their positions official and known to their colleagues.


"Being in the company of dogs is a great way to reduce anxiety and stress," added Garry, "They trigger similar emotions to the new parent-baby bond."

"We, as police, often find it difficult to talk about experiences that might have had an impact on us. Being able to talk about these events helps file the memories away and allows us to deal with what has happened."

"We find that the wellbeing dogs offer either non-judgemental listening, or that prompt to get people talking. I've seen grown men and women on their hands and knees petting a dog and all of a sudden, they feel it's acceptable for them to show emotion."

The project allows retired or injured police dogs, who are unable to continue working as police dogs, the opportunity to support officers and staff. Other dogs are specially sourced for the role or are selected because they have the necessary attributes to excel at helping people.

For more information email Garry at [Garry.Botterill@college.pnn.police.uk](mailto:Garry.Botterill@college.pnn.police.uk)



The park is set around four beautiful lakes. Calm, still and serene, the main lake is simply breath-taking.



# Focus on detectives

**EARLIER THIS YEAR, THE NATIONAL FEDERATION RAN A MONTH-LONG FOCUS ON DETECTIVES, WHICH HIGHLIGHTED THE HIGHS AND LOWS OF THE ROLE, WHILE RAISING AWARENESS OF SOME OF THE ISSUES FACED BY THOSE IN THE JOB.**

As part of the national Federation's 'Detectives in Crisis' campaign, several blogs were published across our website and social channels, with a number of detectives from the Force giving readers an insight into their role.

You can read more on our website – just visit [polfed.org/westmercia](http://polfed.org/westmercia) and look at the news items in January – but we publish some edited stories here too.

## Huge changes to role

"The role has changed hugely since I was a young detective," said one West Mercia detective, "The workload was much heavier and more varied two decades ago."

If there is anyone who knows how the job of a detective has changed over the past quarter of a century, it's DS Martin Grant.

Just six months before his probation period ended, Martin, who is based in intelligence, became a detective. Now, 25 years later, in an honest, tell-all interview, he looked back on his time with the Force.

"I joined the police to catch criminals, to put them in prison and, most importantly, to help people in need," he explained, "I enjoy being part of a team, leading boldly and making a difference to the community that I grew up in and returned to."

"I found I had an aptitude for speaking with criminals and understanding them. I was tactically switched on, fearless and I managed to get many people who would not normally provide help to the police to do exactly that."

He added: "There was a lot of lone working back then and this was where flair and creativity were developed and celebrated. Confidence in your own ability and decision-making, listening and responding to your gut feeling about things not being quite right; these are the attributes that make a detective stand out from the others. They are also the attributes that criminals fear – and they still fear, make no mistake about that."

Martin believes the biggest challenge is finding the right balance between officers who can protect the vulnerable and those who can strike fear into criminals.

"When I say fear, I mean the fear of getting caught and imprisoned," he explained.

In just under two years, Martin will retire. While his time in policing has undoubtedly been rewarding, he admitted he has had his fair share of challenges too.

"I find it difficult to forget all of the deaths I've seen and investigated, particularly child deaths," he explained, "I have high blood pressure, which I personally believe has been caused by the long-term stresses of the role and having to adapt a lifestyle around work."



## Team ethos

Trainee Detective Barry Horton, a West Mercia Fed rep, was among those who shared his experiences.

Barry, who has been a police officer for 15 years talked about the role being misunderstood, suggesting that it is often thought to be boring.

"It certainly isn't," he confirmed, "You have the chance to play a part in every serious case that takes place in your area. There's a great team ethos. You work as a team through the job rather than on your own constantly which is another reason not to be fearful of the role."

With no plans to return to a uniform role, for Barry, there is plenty to keep him enthusiastic about completing his training.

"Being able to help those who are in need is a massive incentive to the role," added Barry.



## Career development

DC David Garner moved to CID to develop his career and broaden his experience of policing.

"It opens up a lot of doors in the police service and enables you to learn so much more than you would in response," said David, explaining that working in CID brings with it a chance to learn and develop.

"The most rewarding thing about what I do is being able to help people and being able to learn new techniques in order to better investigate crime and give victims a better service," he added.

"Working on CID has opened my eyes to how much there is to learn about a whole new side of policing, a side you rarely get to see when working in uniform," said David, who decided to become a detective, after 12 years as an officer.

# Well done, Darren



Darren Heyes.

A West Mercia officer has been recognised in this year's Police Federation Women in Policing Awards.

Inspector Darren Heyes was put forward for the awards which recognise officers who have made an outstanding contribution to women in policing by West Mercia Police Federation.

Darren has been instrumental in making firearms training and working hours more appropriate for women, as well as buying new equipment which addresses the different physical traits of men and women such as grip sizes and female body armour.

He launched women only AFO taster days and introduced a 'buddy scheme' to support and retain female AFOs.

The overall winner of the Women in Policing Award is presented at the annual national Police Federation conference. More than 40 officers were nominated this year.

Darren has received a certificate acknowledging his nomination for the award.

## Maternity and adoption pay

West Mercia Police Federation chair Sarah Cooper has given her thumbs up to an increase in police officers' entitlement to full pay while on maternity or adoption leave.

From 4 January 2021, officers on maternity or adoption leave are entitled to full pay for 26 weeks instead of 18.

Sarah said: "Maternity or adoption leave is there for special bonding time with your new arrival, and to help parents through a momentous and often tiring period in their life.

"This extension of paid leave is a really welcome step. As a Force, equality, diversity and inclusion is a huge part of what we're about and we're always striving to do better.

"I think this change sends out a really positive message and, at a time when we're recruiting, it sends out a strong message that we're an attractive employer, and that can only help us attract more officers and to retain them as well."

The additional maternity and adoption pay benefits were gained for members through the Police Federation



of England and Wales' participation in the Police Consultative Forum (PCF), the voluntary forum for employer and staff representative bodies.

Contact the Federation if you need more information.

# Did you know?

## Part-time officers – pay entitlement for additional hours

Are you a part-time officer? Or do you supervise part-time officers? Do you know the regulations around part-time officers' pay entitlement?

The part-time officer works 27 hours per week.

As a part-time officer, the days within a seven-day period (Sunday to Saturday) are divided into three different categories:

1. Working days
2. Rest days, and
3. Free days.

The pay entitlement for working additional hours over the normal 27 hours will depend upon whether the additional hours are worked on a working day, rest day or free day.

### Working additional hours on a working day

If the officer works any additional hours on one of their rostered working days, they are paid at plain time for those additional hours until they reach 40 hours in a 7-day period (Sunday to Saturday) at which time they may claim the normal over-time rate for any hours worked over the 40 hours at time and a third.

### Working additional hours on a rest day

If the officer works additional hours (i.e. either volunteers or is directed to work over-time on a rest day) with less than 15 days' notice, then they are paid at the rate of time and a half.

### Working additional hours on a free day

If the officer is required to perform duty on a free day then their entitlement depends upon whether it is work only they can do, such as attendance at court, or whether it is work any police officer could do, such as guarding a scene.

If the duty is one only they can do, and they receive less than 15 days' notice then the additional hours are paid at plain time or alternatively the officer can elect to take time off equal to the duty time.

If the duty can be performed by any officer and they receive less than 15 days' notice, then they are entitled to be paid at the same rate as rest day working which is time and a half.

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