

Connect



WINTER 2021

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM WEST MERCIA POLICE FEDERATION





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West Mercia Police Federation,
United House, Unit 1, De Salis Drive,
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Telephone: 01905 744500

Chair: Sarah Cooper
Secretary: Steve Butler

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Contact the Federation

E-mail: staff@wmpf.polfed.org

Tel: 01905 744500

A year like no other

By Sarah Cooper
Chair of West
Mercia Police
Federation



Welcome to the winter issue of Connect.

This has been a year like no other in terms of what the Force has faced. We have had high profile trials which have had devastating impacts on colleagues and also lost three officers who have died in service. The impact on many of you has been palpable and the ripples of these events have really reinforced how important Federation and Group Insurance Scheme membership can be when the unexpected happens.

As a branch, we have now entered a new triennial. I have the privilege of holding the position of chair for another three years and I really hope to be able to take this opportunity to build further on the changes that have already taken place to improve your confidence in the Federation. I am very aware that we have more work to do, and I truly welcome any feedback from you on how we can improve our service to you.

The pension remedy continues to be a topic of concern, and I understand what a contentious issue this is. Things are constantly evolving, and for that reason I would ask any information you require is taken from the national Federation website, which is kept current and contains all relevant updates.

I have raised concerns with the Force regarding those who are due to retire in the near future as I realise that there is significant uncertainty around this. I will be meeting with the Force in the coming weeks regarding this and will request as part of this that the position is communicated to those affected.

One point that has been raised with me is around how best to communicate with you about the work we are doing on your behalf. There is such a range of work that we are involved in to negotiate on your behalf that unfortunately it would be impossible to keep you up to date on everything. Where individual concerns are raised we will do our best to negotiate and reach a resolution on your behalf.

We are engaged with the Force regularly in terms of representing your interests

around shift changes, RD cancellations, fairness at work processes, health and safety matters, the condition of buildings and working conditions, matters related to conduct and the welfare issues surrounding this, welfare as a whole, the management of change and communication with the workforce.

We also meet regularly with chief officers to raise specific concerns personally. During my last meeting with the DCC, I raised concerns regarding the way officers who have been assaulted in the execution of their duty are, on occasions, slipping through cracks and not being provided with the support they deserve.

I also raised again the subject of risk assessments for those under investigation in order that the damage frequently caused by these protracted and lengthy investigations can be properly monitored and addressed appropriately. This is something that was first raised with the Force more than two years ago and it is disappointing that we are still not implementing this change.

If there is something that you are particularly concerned about please make contact with me. I am always happy to come out to meet face to face and discuss any issues you have.

Finally, I want to congratulate our bravery award nominees for 2020 and 2021. I know all who attended would agree that this is a fantastic occasion. Those nominated are thoroughly deserving, but they represent many of you who perform extraordinary acts of bravery and courage every day. Over recent years I have been really disappointed with the lack of engagement by SMTs in this process.

I would therefore ask all of you to let me know if you/colleagues have been involved in an incident that is deserving of a nomination. We also need nominations for the detective awards. I have been in conversation with chief officers in the hope that the profile of these awards can be raised in Force and have asked that consideration is given to the Force hosting an event where local nominations are made and the winner of this then goes forward to the national events.

Finally, I would just like to wish you a merry Christmas and all the best for 2022. I know many of you will be working at least part of the festive season, but I hope that you still manage to enjoy some time with your families and friends.



Brave officer at Downing Street reception



PC Craig Prewer outside the famous black door of No 10 Downing Street.

A West Mercia police officer who risked his own safety to rescue a man trapped in deep water at a disused pumping station was honoured at the 2021 Police Bravery Awards.

PC Craig Prewer joined fellow nominees from across England and Wales at the event in London on Thursday 9 December which was also attended by policing minister Kit Malthouse, shadow home secretary Yvette Cooper and Metropolitan Police Commissioner Dame Cressida Dick.

Earlier in the day he and his wife, Jen, joined other nominees at a Downing Street reception hosted by Home Secretary Priti Patel.

West Mercia Police Federation chair Sarah Cooper, who accompanied the couple to the awards, said: "This incident presented a unique and challenging set of circumstances which PC Prewer overcame in order to save the life of a member of

the public. It makes me incredibly proud to work alongside colleagues who act in such a brave and selfless way to protect our communities, despite the very real risk to their own safety.

"But it makes me even more proud when

“ Acts of bravery in policing are, necessarily and thankfully for us all, commonplace. Every day, local and national media is awash with examples of police heroism. Be it confronting dangerous and violent people, rescuing members of the public or working day and night on the most harrowing of cases, bravery is a defining characteristic of the police.

I can see their efforts recognised at events such as the Police Bravery Awards. Each and every day, police officers carry out acts of bravery while serving and protecting their communities. While it would be impossible for them all to attend these awards, I hope that in seeing colleagues' efforts recognised, officers understand that their critical role is appreciated even though that may not always seem to be the case."

PC Prewer was nominated for the awards after pulling the man to safety when he had been in the water for up to four hours and was suffering from hypothermia.

The run-down building posed a series of hazards to PC Prewer's own safety as he carried out the rescue.

After pulling the man to safety, PC Prewer, who has 23 years' service with the Force, returned to ensure was no one else was trapped in the building.

The national Police Bravery Awards, organised by the Police Federation of England and Wales, honour officers from across England and Wales who have performed outstanding acts of bravery while on or off duty.

Four West Yorkshire Police officers who detained two attackers who murdered a man with a samurai sword were named overall winners at the awards ceremony.

The colleagues were honoured for their professionalism during a horrific incident in January 2020 when they responded to reports of a man being viciously attacked outside a pharmaceutical factory in Huddersfield.

The officers – one of whom was in the first two weeks of her career – were confronted by the barbaric sight of



Left: Craig outside the gates at Downing Street and right, with his wife Jen.

attackers hacking at the victim with a sword and knives when they arrived at the scene. They bravely managed to detain both assailants, despite the offenders still being in possession of the murder weapon and knives.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson praised the "dedication and conscientiousness" of all the nominees and paid tribute to their bravery.

He said: "Acts of bravery in policing are, necessarily and thankfully for us all, commonplace. Every day, local and national

media is awash with examples of police heroism. Be it confronting dangerous and violent people, rescuing members of the public or working day and night on the most harrowing of cases, bravery is a defining characteristic of the police.

"It is this unflinching bravery, alongside your dedication and conscientiousness, that inspires my steadfast support for the police.

"I am bowled over by the nominees. You are a credit to your forces and your illustrious forebears in policing. I salute each and every one of you."

'Event made us feel very valued'

Police Bravery Award nominee Craig Prewer has described his trip to London for the presentation event as a "once-in-a-lifetime experience".

The West Mercia PC, who attended the Downing Street reception and awards ceremony with his wife Jen and Police Federation branch chair Sarah Cooper, was shortlisted for the courage he showed when he risked his own safety to rescue a man trapped in deep water at a disused pumping station.

He said: "Being nominated came out of the blue, especially as what I did is something any other officer would have done in my position.

"Although the person in question had firearms, weapons and other warnings, he was still a victim that needed our attention which resulted in a good outcome."

Reflecting on the trip to London, Craig said: "Downing Street was an eye-opener. Seeing inside the building where all the previous Prime Ministers had been and

being shown the little changes that each one had left during their time in office was awesome. The pictures, sculptures and architecture were mind-blowing and the staff were very informative."

Craig said the presentation ceremony that evening was extremely heartfelt as stories of the courage of fellow nominees were highlighted.

"The whole event made my wife and myself feel very valued and I would seriously ask other officers to put their stories to the Police Federation so that they can have the experience I have had," he said.

"Sarah made everything so special for us, from the time I was nominated, to the travel and hotel arrangements and until we got home. Nothing was too much for her. She made everything run smoothly and it wouldn't have been the same without her.

"All in all it was a once-in-a-lifetime experience."

Jen said she felt honoured to be part of the ceremony where such outstanding

acts of bravery by police officers were recognised.

She said: "It was an amazing experience and something I doubt I will ever get to do again. Our visit to 10 Downing Street was amazing. All the very deserving officers looked amazing and their families and friends were beaming with pride. I feel proud everyday of Craig and the job that he does.

"We know it can very often be a thankless job and the police sadly seem to only be portrayed negatively.

"People sadly don't seem to have a level of respect for them and as wives we see the aftermath of a good or a bad shift. A good week or a bad one. So to have this recognition for Craig 'doing his job' as he puts it has been fantastic.

"The awards ceremony was an evening I will never forget. To sit and listen to the stories told was truly emotional.

"I felt very honoured sitting in the room surrounded by such amazing people."

Brave West Mercia officers honoured at awards ceremony



Photograph courtesy of Anderson Photography



PC Christopher Donovan and his partner Rachel Cooch.

PC Lee Phillips and his wife Andrea.

Two West Mercia officers who rescued a vulnerable man from a fast-flowing river were among those attending the 2020 Police Bravery Awards ceremony in London.

West Mercia PCs Lee Phillips and Christopher Donovan were nominated for the awards, which are organised by the Police Federation of England and Wales, after saving the life of a man who had fallen into the River Severn in Shrewsbury in February 2019.

Lee and his wife, Andrea, and Christopher and his partner, Rachel Cooch,

attended a reception at Downing Street on 12 October hosted by Home Secretary Priti Patel ahead of the evening awards ceremony where a total of 93 nominees from 42 forces were recognised for their bravery.

Lee, a response officer at Shrewsbury, said afterwards: "I think it's important to recognise the bravery and sacrifices that police officers across the country make day in and day out. These awards are just the tip of the iceberg for all the amazing acts of courage shown by officers every day. I was honoured to be recognised for this award

and humbled to be among so many amazing officers that night. But the fact is, this is our job, it's what we joined the police to do, and every day we just put on our uniforms and do our best."

Christopher, who is based at Bridgnorth Police Station, said: "I was very happy to have been nominated for the award. We go to work every day not expecting to be thanked for the job we do. Officers day in, day out go to jobs where we can face difficult situations but we do it because it's the job we joined to do. I would do it all again if I was called on, without hesitation



Christopher and Lee outside the gates at Downing Street.



Andrea and Lee during the Downing Street reception.

and I'm sure colleagues across the country would do the same."

The brave officers were joined at ceremony by West Mercia Police Federation chair Sarah Cooper, Chief Constable Pippa Mills and the Police and Crime Commissioner John Campion.

Sarah said: "I'm so glad that the 2020 Police Bravery Awards could finally go ahead in person. It's so vital for us to acknowledge the remarkable acts of courage performed

by officers like Lee and Christopher.

"I am so proud of them for being nominated and couldn't ask for better representatives of West Mercia Police. Listening to the stories of the brave acts carried out by officers across England and Wales gave a very timely reminder of all that is good about policing and police officers. Each and every day, they are putting their lives on the line while serving and protecting their communities but all

too often their bravery goes unrecognised or it is simply taken for granted."

Regional awards were presented in all eight of the Police Federation regions before the overall award was presented to PC Stuart Outten of the Metropolitan Police who managed to subdue a suspect who was attacking him with a machete. PC Outten suffered six deep wounds to his head, skull fractures, and two wounds to his arm as well as multiple finger fractures.

National Federation chair John Apter said: "We have the finest police officers in the world - dedicated public servants who, without hesitation, put themselves in danger to protect others. They are humble, professional and committed individuals who I am proud to call my colleagues. Police officers are everyday heroes who are anything but ordinary. My congratulations go to PC Stuart Outten and all the Police Bravery Awards nominees. They deserve every bit of recognition they receive."

The Police Bravery Awards are sponsored by Police Mutual. The 2021 awards ceremony will be held in December.

“ I am so proud of them for being nominated and couldn't ask for better representatives of West Mercia Police. Listening to the stories of the brave acts carried out by officers across England and Wales gave a very timely reminder of all that is good about policing and police officers. Each and every day, they are putting their lives on the line while serving and protecting their communities but all too often their bravery goes unrecognised or it is simply taken for granted.

Pin badges recognise fallen colleagues

Members of West Mercia Police Federation are being sent specially-commissioned pin badges to be worn in recognition of colleagues who died in service and the sacrifices made by serving officers.

Branch chair Sarah Cooper said members had lost fellow officers and friends in tragic circumstances in recent months and acknowledged the impact of such losses.

And she reminded members the Police Federation was ready to support anyone affected by the death of a colleague in service.

In a letter to members, Sarah said: "We recognise the challenges that have been faced in terms of the Covid pandemic, but on top of this we have faced unimaginable events within the Force that have impacted

on so many. All this against a backdrop of relentless attack by the media.

"I have said before that I am truly humbled and proud to be part of the policing profession when I hear from you about the amazing work you do, with bravery and compassion, on a daily basis.

"In recent months we have lost colleagues and friends in the most tragic of circumstances and I don't underestimate for a second the impact of this loss across so many teams and individuals.

"I have seen first hand the shock and utter devastation that has resulted, and I want you to know that as a Federation we are here to support you, and to listen to any concerns that you may have now, or in the future."

Sarah said officers had also watched

helplessly as colleagues and friends faced prosecution and imprisonment as a consequence of carrying out their duties and responding to calls for help from members of the public.

She said the impact of such criminal justice processes had ricocheted throughout West Mercia Police and beyond.

The special pin badges are being sent out with a letter to branch members.

Sarah explained: "The pin badges are intended to acknowledge the loss of all our colleagues who have died in service, and the sacrifice made by all of you in serving the public and supporting each other."

And she signed off by saying: "Thank you again for all you do. Please look after each other and remember that the Federation is here for you."

Been arrested? Ask for the Federation to be contacted

If for whatever reason you find yourself being booked into custody, in your home Force or elsewhere, ask for your Force Federation to be contacted.

West Mercia Police Federation operates an out of hours on call rota so someone is available for you 24/7 should you be arrested.

The Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW) works with an approved panel of solicitors' firms which not only deal with the criminal allegations but are fully aware of, and able to continue assisting you with, the process you may be subject to after the criminal element is finalised – misconduct.

Police misconduct is a specialist area of law which can have a number of consequences for you. Your Federation approved solicitor will be looking further

ahead right from the beginning and considering the impact of your arrest on your career.

Any conviction or caution will most likely see you placed before an accelerated hearing before the Chief Constable, with dismissal being sought. Resignation does not prevent the process continuing. If dismissed, you will be placed on the College of Policing barred list, preventing you re-entering policing.

Working hand in hand with your Federation rep, our solicitors work uniquely in the police discipline world and will ensure you are aware of the process every step of the way. More importantly, they will offer you honest, realistic advice.

Contacting the Federation when you arrive in custody means that we contact the relevant solicitor straightaway and

representation will be provided to you – all covered by your Federation subscriptions or Group Insurance Scheme cover. Legal Aid may not always cover the costs you think it will. You can ask to speak to the Federation rep, and they will guide you through what will happen.

Things you may not even consider:

- Can your PACE interview be used for misconduct proceedings?
- Will you be suspended?
- What happens to your phone?
- Who can you talk to after release?
- How long will this all take?

For more information, please contact your local Federation rep or the West Mercia Police Federation conduct lead – Lesley Williams on

lwilliams@wmpf.polfed.org



West Midlands Police Federation chair Sarah Cooper (left) welcomes new Chief Constable Pippa Mills.

Welcome, Ma'am

West Mercia Police Federation chair Sarah Cooper says she is looking forward to working with the Force's new Chief Constable.

Pippa Mills, who was previously Deputy Chief Constable in Essex, started her new role in mid-September and immediately started introducing herself to officers and staff.

Sarah, who was among the first people to meet her, said: "It was a pleasure to meet with our new Chief. There is a real sense of anticipation and excitement that comes with a change in leadership. I am really looking forward to working with Chief Constable Mills going forward to make West Mercia Police a place where the public are served well and, importantly for me, a place where colleagues feel valued and supported, while being recognised for the amazing and challenging work they do on a daily basis.

"The welfare and wellbeing of our members must be a priority so that they can effectively serve the public. As a Federation, we will do all we can to support the Chief in her efforts to make positive change."

Sam's advice to colleagues

Sam Louden says officers should not see subscribing to the Police Federation, the Group Insurance Scheme (GIS) and the Welfare Fund as a cost but as an insurance policy if the unexpected happens.

And she says she has been incredibly grateful to have had the support of the Federation and the cover provided by the GIS and the Welfare Fund.

"I joined the Federation, the Group Insurance Scheme and the Welfare Fund when I first became an officer about 17 or 18 years ago," says Sam, "Of course, at that point you have no idea what is going to happen in the future.

"I think I have always seen the Group Insurance Scheme as providing me with holiday insurance but it offers so much more than that. I know people are looking at their outgoings right now but I would really urge all officers to keep paying their Fed, Welfare Fund and GIS subs – they really provide an insurance policy for if things go wrong."

Sam's life was rocked in the summer when both her husband, West Mercia Sergeant Dave Louden, and her three-year-old son were found dead at home.

Within the week, West Mercia Police Federation chair Sarah Cooper visited Sam to offer practical advice and guidance as well as explaining the way in which the GIS and Welfare Fund would help her financially.

"The Federation has really given me great support," Sam explains, "They have really been there for me. They took away the worry of having to pay for the funeral and answered any other questions I have had. Sarah has been an immense help and has been very kind."

Sam has also urged officers to seek



Dave Louden.

support if they are worried about their own mental health, or that of their colleagues.

"As police officers we deal with jobs that can have a massive impact on our mental wellbeing. We get on and do the job because that is what we do. But it can often be a

case of one day we are OK and the next we are not," she explained, "I didn't know that Dave was struggling.

"We have to remember that away from work, officers also have personal lives and while at work we are dealing with incidents in other people's lives we still have our own stresses to deal with too.

"That can become unmanageable and Covid has added to that. It's another anxiety to cope with."

“ We have to remember that away from work, officers also have personal lives and while at work we are dealing with incidents in other people's lives we still have our own stresses to deal with too.

New Quick Reference Guide published

A new edition of the Quick Reference Guide (QRG) to terms and conditions of service has been published by the Police Federation of England and Wales.

It has been updated, in particular, with reference to the publication of a new Annex F (pay), amendments to Annex U (allowances), the new scheme for Targeted Variable Pay and the pensions remedy.

Read the new QRG at <https://www.polfed.org/westmercia/media/1651/qrg-july-2021-updates.pdf>

'He was our world'



Proud Dad Stephen Harris with daughter Elisabeth.



Elisabeth Harris and Dad Stephen at an awards ceremony.

When Stephen Harris turned up for his first date with the girl who was to become his wife he was driving a Hillman Avenger and sporting white Snoopy sunglasses and a brown leather jacket.

Luckily for him, she was clearly impressed, having first met on the 63 bus journey to the Dome Nightclub.

Stephen had been fascinated by Lisa's hair which she had elaborately gripped up. He managed to get her telephone number as he left the club and they arranged to meet at a local pub.

"He was late, he was always late for everything," says Lisa, recalling his carefully thought-out get up for the date.

Lisa and Stephen enjoyed a romance spanning 33 years, with 29 years of marriage, that ended tragically when he died after a sudden medical episode as the couple were driving through Birmingham in August this year.

But Lisa has years of happy memories of their time together and remembers Stephen as cheeky and fun, very private and very

proud of her and their daughter Elisabeth who is 18.

"He was a very generous, loving and caring person," she says, "He was a family man, very much our protector.

"But he also loved going to the Bromsgrove Rugby Club beer festival and the great outdoors. A Venture Scout leader and Scout Leader with the 238 Methodist Scout Group, he liked cycling and walking and he and Elisabeth walked up Snowdon when she was only about 12."

At home, Stephen loved to play music of all genres.

"He loved Genesis, Darius, Phil Collins and any 1980s music, this being his favourite era," says Lisa, "But he also loved everything from The Carpenters to Eminem. He loved singing and dancing in the kitchen with us all. He liked to do silly things, such as doing Michael Jackson's Moonwalk while listening to music."

He also loved to watch films, particularly action movies and thrillers.

Stephen joined the Force 12 years ago. He had wanted to join when he was younger but was deterred by his Mum. Nevertheless he fulfilled his ambition to be a roads policing officer.

He ended his career in the Operations Patrol Unit, which he joined in 2019, and was in Team D based at Bromsgrove, which covered the Force area. While working in response, he had been based at Kidderminster and also used to cover Stourport and Bewdley.

While Lisa always called her husband Stephen, he was also known as Stevo and Brother within the Force and Lisa has been touched by the support she and Elisabeth have received from colleagues.

In the early days after Stephen's death, Lisa was worried about how she would pay for the funeral and, with a mortgage

“ He was a very generous, loving and caring person. He was a family man, very much our protector.



Family fun.



Lisa and Stephen Harris enjoy a night out.



Stephen was always up for a laugh.



Stephen with a young Elisabeth.

payment soon due, anxious about whether she and Elisabeth would be able to stay in their family home.

After a visit by his shift sergeant, Matt Digger and PC Diane Stevens, the day after the accident, Sarah Cooper, chair of West Mercia Police Federation, also visited Lisa and was able to put her mind at rest by explaining the benefits of the Group Insurance Scheme of which Stephen was a member.

"It was just unbelievably kind for her to come," says Lisa, "She was very kind, diplomatic and reassuring, taking a lot of the additional weight off my shoulders.

"She arranged for the initial payment to be made from the scheme and that really

eased the pressure for me. Family had been rallying around, saying they would pay for the funeral but it was a relief to know we wouldn't need that.

"The payments will also secure our home and that is good for Elisabeth too. I knew about the travel insurance offered through the Group Insurance Scheme as we had used it, but I was not aware of the other elements of the cover which have been a real Godsend to us."

In addition to helping Lisa with the insurance cover, Sarah was also able to help arrange counselling sessions to help her cope with the tragedy.

"He was our world," says Lisa, "He is, and always will be, missed terribly."

'He will never be forgotten'

PC Kirsty Norris served with Stephen on response shift at Kidderminster. In addition to giving a tribute at Stephen's funeral, she said: "Steve was a valued member of any team he worked with and was always so passionate about his work.

"He was respected by his peers and the people who he served as an officer. His cheeky chuckle will be remembered and missed by all, along with great times spent with him in and outside of work.

"Steve was a dedicated family man and Lisa and Elisabeth were always included.

"There are so many memories held in our heads and hearts about Steve meaning he will never be forgotten. His loss was a shock to us all, leaving a gap in all our lives."

'Col was very proud to be a police officer'

From being part of the police protection unit during a visit to the UK by the Pope to counter-terrorist training and armed surveillance, Colin "Fluff" Freeman had a wide and varied career.

In January 2022, Colin was due to retire from the Force after 30 years' service – his early years in West Midlands Police and more recently in West Mercia.

But having struggled with his mental health, Colin sadly died at the end of May this year.

However, his widow, Jenny is keen to ensure that he is remembered for his love and pride in policing.

And his memory will also live on with West Mercia Police Dog Maverick.

"When Col died, West Mercia Police had a new police dog and they gave us the opportunity to name him in Col's memory. They didn't think Fluff was a suitable name so we went for Maverick, since that was a character in Col's favourite movie, Top Gun. In fact he said that watching that film



PC Colin "Fluff" Freeman had worked as a firearms instructor.

inspired him to join the police. He was a sheet metal worker at the time and earning good money but the film made him want to really do something with his life," said Jenny.

Maverick has now been given Colin's collar number and is being handled by Craig Prewer, the West Mercia nominee for the Police Bravery Awards 2021.

Colin's death, despite the difficulties he was facing, was totally unexpected. The couple, who had been together for around 12 years and married for four, had bought a property in France ready to spend more time out there when he officially retired and they had also bought a bungalow they were doing up. Colin had also invested in a Triumph Stag that he was going to restore to its former glory.

Although, his official retirement date was in January next year, Colin's last day at work would have been Friday 17 December.



Colin receives an award.

While he had been a PC throughout his career, he had enjoyed many varied roles and, Jenny explained, he was very proud of being a police officer.

In addition to being one of the officers helping protect the Pope, he had been a firearms officer, worked on the ARV, on rapid response and served as close protection for politicians, which once involved him attending a cricket match with then Prime Minister John Major.

Colin had also worked alongside the Royal Family, driving the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and helping protect HRH The Prince of Wales, and he spent some time on armed surveillance.

"He really did have an amazing career," says Jenny, "He absolutely loved it and was very proud of what he had done."

In his earlier years with the Force, Colin showed an aptitude for catching criminals but was not so keen on the paperwork so he formed an effective partnership with colleague Merv Clements who would complete any paperwork necessary.

Away from work, Colin had two grown-up children, a son and a daughter, from his first marriage and he was "music mad" – hence the Colin "Fluff" Freeman nickname.



Police Dog Maverick.



With a cohort of colleagues.

A tribute from Dan Rutherford

Fluff was an immensely popular officer, full of humour and the ability to make others laugh. He was also hugely experienced, a consummate professional and a role model for all.

He had the courage to speak openly about his struggles with mental health and, in doing so, educated others. He showed his colleagues that there was no shame in admitting when you're not ok.

Even though he lost his own battle with mental ill-health, his enduring legacy will be that he showed us all the importance of reaching out for the help.

PUT cyclists pay tribute to fallen officers at COPS service



West Mercia Police Federation secretary Steve Butler (left) with regional Federation rep Hayley Aley and national Police Federation chair John Apter.

A team of officers and staff from West Mercia Police has attended a memorial service for fallen colleagues at the National Memorial Arboretum after completing the 200-mile Police Unity Tour (PUT) bike ride to raise funds for the Care of Police Survivors (COPS) charity.

West Mercia Police Federation chair Sarah Cooper paid tribute to the cyclists and the vital work carried out by COPS.

She said: "Organisations such as COPS provide vital support to the bereaved families of officers who have given their lives in the line of duty.

"The team of cyclists from West Mercia Police have pulled out all the stops to raise funds for COPS and I would urge everyone to go to their fund-raising page and reward their effort with a donation."

The West Mercia team was riding as part of the PUT West Midlands Chapter and left Force HQ on the Friday morning before arriving at the arboretum in Staffordshire in time for the COPS service of remembrance on Sunday 1 August. Each wore a wristband dedicated to a fallen officer.

The outdoor ceremony featured moving readings, poetry and songs from relatives of fallen officers with music provided by the West Midlands Police band.

A roll of honour featuring the names of the 27 officers who have lost their lives since the last memorial service in 2019 was read out and wreaths were laid by

the Lord Lieutenant of Staffordshire Ian Dudson and representatives from the Home Office, the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, HMICFRS, the National Police Chiefs' Council, the Blue Knights, PUT, COPS and the National Memorial Arboretum.

The closing address was delivered by the chair of the COPS board of trustees, Sir Peter Fahey, who paid tribute to the family and friends of fallen colleagues, some of whom had delivered addresses explaining their experiences and paying tribute to the support they have from the charity.

He told the service: "Every time I talk to a survivor, you lift me, you inspire me with your courage, with your bravery and with your openness and the way you support each other because that is what this charity is all about.

"You have heard so very, very powerfully about how important that is.

"It is so challenging to be a police officer or a member of the police staff and we have seen that particularly over the past two years.

"It has never felt really that policing has been so unappreciated and so misunderstood with police officers and police staff under such pressure.

"And of course our roll of honour only reflects those officers and staff who have died over the last two years but COPS is very much about continuing the memory for many years past and we all know that time isn't a great healer, it just piles up the family events, the birthdays, the occasions where that loved one



The cyclists en route to the arboretum.

is missing.

"Policing asks so much of the people who step forward to serve. Officers and staff take so many risks and all the time they carry the pressures of what they have seen and what they have had to deal with - much of it not noticed by the public and not appreciated - often dealing with very traumatic and upsetting incidents.

"Whatever might be the circumstances in which an officer or member of staff dies, they are carrying those pressures and it is so very, very important that this sacrifice and the sacrifice of their loved ones and families are recognised in this way.

"We in COPS will never forget that and none of the survivors will ever forget that as we move forward, as we grow and as we continue to support one another."

The service came just days after HRH The Prince of Wales unveiled a new UK Police Memorial at the arboretum.

A fond farewell

West Mercia Police Federation stalwart Jacky Smith is retiring on 31 December after more than 18 years' service with the branch.

Chair Sarah Cooper paid tribute to Jacky and thanked her for her work for the

Federation of the years

She said: "Jacky will be hugely missed by us all. She has been a tremendous support through a challenging time for the local Federation and there is nothing that she doesn't know about the workings of the Fed.

"On behalf of all of us at West Mercia Fed, I want to send a huge thank you to

Jacky for her service and wish her every happiness in her retirement."

Jacky said: "I would like to take this opportunity of thanking everyone. The last three years have been challenging but rewarding working with Suzy, Steve, Sarah and Lesley.

"Everyone has worked so hard to make the Federation better."

CHIEF CONSTABLE PIPPA MILLS ANSWERS OUR QUESTIONS.

Q. Please clarify that when an officer works over the Force position is as per regs... the officer chooses if it's PAYMENT or TOIL rather than what is currently happening which is officers are being told "sorry no overtime" and made to take it as TOIL

A. Clearly, we are seeking to minimise overtime spend across the Force, but equally we want to ensure we hold the appropriate budgets for necessary overtime. We will seek to adhere to Regs, of course, and if overtime is pre-authorised then there is the option for this to be paid rather than TOIL. The Federation has been involved in discussions with HR regarding TOIL and there is a proposal that the Force will allow individuals to hold up to 40 hours TOIL but anything over and above that will be automatically paid. Any such proposals will be brought to chief officers to approve. Of course in reaffirming regulations, then there may be some other areas we need to equally ensure we are following Regs, for example, in the cancellation of rest days and ensuring that duties re-book the rest days as soon as they are cancelled.

Q. You will be aware that we had differing opinions on issues relating to the COP26 deployment. The Federation's view is regulations on AFHOA were not designed for this length of deployment and using this to cover RDs was not in Regs or in the spirit of them. Having restrictions on where and what you can do on a RD would deem them not a proper RD. It's also unfair and divisive having a postcode lottery of T & Cs, we wanted parity for our members. Within our own region we had Staffs paying an additional £50 to the AFHOA as a Rest Day Bonus payment and West Midlands not clawing back hours when an officer's duty fell on a workday in force but a RD in Scotland. Does the Force standby its decision to not pay the RD bonus payments and to claw back hours?

A. The National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) issued guidance in relation to allowances for officers deployed on mutual aid to Scotland for COP26, with a view to ensuring consistency across all forces and compliance with Police Regulations. West Mercia followed this guidance and stand by that position. It is unfortunate that some forces departed from the NPCC guidance but this does not alter the position of West Mercia Police.

The only restriction on some of the officers' RDs, not all of them, was that they needed to be available for a four-hour notice of return to duty. Practically, this meant they could not consume alcohol or return home but were free to enjoy rest, relaxation and social activities. Some officers had some rest days in which they did not have a recall to

duty and therefore were able to consume alcohol.

The decisions that were taken, particularly around the owing of hours, were aimed at providing a consistent approach that did not favour any individual. Had we not asked for hours to be owed, some staff that fell outside of the category of "WD in force, RD Scotland", could have justifiably felt they were disadvantaged. Our core principles in all the COP26 decisions were fairness and transparency and therefore it was right to consider the impact on other staff in this decision.

The duties team put great effort into trying to limit disruption to officers, specifically the cancellation of rest days hence the targeted cancellation rather than a blanket approach. Our responsibility to the public purse stands and we need to ensure all spend in relation to COP26 is reasonable. Unreasonable costs will not be recovered.

The Force did not budget profit made from COP26 with a view to using it in unrelated areas. Indeed it is still not clear what charges will be recouped from Police Scotland. The Force does budget for an income from mutual aid based on normal mutual aid activity and that money forms a very small part of our overall budgets and is therefore not designated to a certain area of business. Any income gained through COP26 may be factored into next year's budget but had not been forecast in advance. The finances in relation to COP26, when reconciled, will be publicly available information.

Q. It's rumoured that even before officers had left for COP26, the Force financially budgeted profit made from the deployment to be used in areas not related to COP26. Is this correct?

A. No, this is not correct. The Force does budget for an income from MA based on normal MA activity and that money forms a very small part of our overall budgets and is therefore not designated to a certain area of business. Any income gained through COP26 may be factored into next year's budget but had not been forecast in advance.

Q. Why didn't we, like many other forces, utilise some of the money made from the COP26 deployment to pay overtime rather than simply cancelling the RDs of those having to backfill for BAU?

A. From my understanding, the impact of cancelled RD on individual officers was minimal compared to the overall cost of paying the RDs. Without knowing what the final income from COP26 is, it is impossible to know whether the income would have covered RDs or not and therefore we could have ended up paying additional costs to cover the RD working. It would have been wrong to cover some of them with payment (up to a value that we were confident we

could pay from the income) and then cancel RD for others.

Q. Will the financial accounting for the COP26 deployment be available for view once completed?

A. We are not planning to do this as we don't with other forms of income.

Q. The Commonwealth Games (CWG) are due to take place in Birmingham next year. What planning has already taken place to ensure that officers do not experience the same issues that have occurred with COP26? Can you offer assurance that officers will not have to work a night shift in the middle of a set of RDs again?

A. We learn from all operational deployments and much of the smooth running of COP26 was based on our learning from Op Trelawny (G7). We do not yet have definitive numbers for CWG but we are closely involved with the planning team and we have a high degree of confidence that we will have the deployment plan with plenty of planning time. The CWG planning team were exposed to and will have taken learning from the operational challenges at COP 26. We are also conducting a debrief (survey and table top) of officers that were deployed so that we can gain any further learning in force.

West Midlands Police have provided assurances (working with NPCC) that they will issue guidance in relation to officer allowances sometime in advance of the event with a view to securing consistency across forces and compliance with Police Regulations.

In relation to officers remaining in Force, we have commenced scoping how we may ensure resilience but it is very difficult until we understand final MA numbers. Wherever possible we would avoid officers having to work a night shift in the middle of RDs and the occasions in which that happened were the last resort. Duties team take staff wellbeing very seriously in all of their decisions and this would not have happened if it hadn't been vital. We did recognise this with the affected officers and Chief Superintendent Bridges emailed them personally to explain why.

Q. Is the chief supportive of double crewing officers. Many officers see double crewing as being more efficient, effective and safer. This is even more prominent in the rural geography of this Force. Double crewing can have a positive impact with mental health and wellbeing. If officers are deployed double crewed you have double the staff for enquiries and paperwork. This also reduces the cost of vehicle use by having one vehicle attending an incident not two. In a rural area having two officers attending an incident in two separate vehicles and having anything up to 25 miles to travel to support one and other is a risk to officer safety and that of the public. In relation to wellbeing you are more

likely to talk and debrief about a tragic/difficult incident before moving on to the next one.

A. Our policy empowers frontline supervisors to make an assessment based on operational need and the wellbeing of officers, taking into account time of day, THRIVE, health and safety and the skill of officers. I recognise the importance that double crewing has for the wellbeing of officers and it is important that we do this when we need to. Routinely we double crew on nights for the reasons you have identified. However, I am of the view that this remains under the assessment of frontline supervisors and there is no formal direction to change this at this time.

Q. *Despite significant recruitment and an increase in Force strength, there is still significant pressure on frontline officers who are having to backfill for shortages on other shifts and suffer significant disruption to their own working patterns eg regular duty changes to have to work four nights in a row. What is in place to address this issue which is having a significant negative impact on welfare and morale?*

A. I recognise the pressures on frontline resources and as a chief officer team this is something we have been looking to address through our work on frontline stabilisation led by ACC Jones. The student rotations are exceptionally important for development but I recognise that this does have an impact on colleagues while they undertake these. This will ease over time as more student officers move through their required rotations and start to become independent. The officer uplift will have a hugely positive impact on our frontline resources over time as more officers come into policing. The next 12 months we are focusing on the frontline and will then expand our focus on specialist teams.

Q. *What is the Chief's feeling on using non uniform departments to assist maintaining resilience on the frontline. There is a feeling that the burden always falls to frontline operational officers, yet many working in specialist/HQ depts etc benefit from having no changes enforced on them and therefore a far better balance between work and wellbeing. Is it time to consider that ALL officers should contribute to the frontline pressures (understanding that some roles would prevent this)?*

A. I am aware of the pressure that the frontline have felt for some time and that is why we have been completing a significant amount of work on the frontline stabilisation programme. It is also absolutely correct that all departments support when needed. However, those departments complete equally essential work and the knock-on effect of movements away from their roles would need to be considered.

Honouring fallen officers at National Police Memorial Day

West Mercia Police Federation workplace representative Pete Nightingale was among the 300-strong congregation marking National Police Memorial Day.

He attended the service at Lincoln Cathedral at the end of September alongside dignitaries, family members and public figures to honour those police officers who have paid the ultimate price in serving their community. Deputy Chief Constable Julian Moss represented the Force.

The moving commemoration was led by the Reverend Canon David Wilbraham, national police chaplain and coordinator of the National Police Memorial Day.

Pete said: "This is one of the most important days in the policing calendar as we gather together, whether in person or remotely, to remember our colleagues who have given everything to the calling we all share.

"I was honoured to attend the service in the beautiful setting of the cathedral and stand side by side with the families of those officers who turned in for their shift and never made it home. Our fallen officers should never be forgotten and nor should we forget the loss that is felt by their loved ones."

Home Secretary Priti Patel read from 1 Corinthians 13 on the theme of love, and Dame Cressida Dick, Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police Service, gave the address.

Fallen officers remembered this year included:

PS Paul Keany, Northamptonshire Police
PC Christopher Miller, Metropolitan Police
PC Matiu Ratana, Metropolitan Police
DC Quamar Zaman, Greater Manchester Police
PC Thomas White, Police Scotland
PC Darryl Street, Civil Nuclear Constabulary.

John Apter, national chair of the Police Federation of England and Wales, also spoke to the congregation of around 300 people.

He said: "National Police Memorial Day is an incredibly important day in the policing calendar. It's a day to remember those colleagues we have lost and to ensure they are never forgotten.

"Policing is a family, and when we lose a member of our family the pain is felt far and wide. The National Memorial Day is a time to reflect, pay tribute and remember. It is so important, especially to the families, friends and colleagues of those we have lost, that their loved ones will never be forgotten."



Federation rep Pete Nightingale (left) with the DCC.

During the service, representatives of fallen officers from the four forces of England, Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland lit candles in an act of remembrance.

As the minute's silence was observed, petals of remembrance representing all who have lost their lives fell from the gallery. The orchestra played "Abide With Me" and "The Last Post" was sounded.

The service was followed by an online commemoration for those unable to attend in person. As a show of support, public buildings around the UK were illuminated blue to mark the occasion, including numerous police HQ buildings.

National Police Memorial Day was founded in 2004 by now retired Sergeant Joe Holness to commemorate the memory of colleagues lost in the line of duty. Sergeant Holness was motivated by the death of his colleague, fellow Kent officer PC Jon Odell, who was killed in December 2000 after a vehicle was driven at him.

Next year the service will move to Northern Ireland with Belfast hosting.

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Dan is set to help deliver ambulance service to The Gambia

A West Mercia Police Federation member with a passion for adventure is preparing to take on his latest challenge, a fundraising mission that will see him travel across the globe to The Gambia to help deliver a full ambulance service to the local community.

Patrol Temporary Inspector Dan Poucher, who has been in the police force for nearly 19 years, will be joined by around 120 current and retired officers who together hope to establish a full fleet of ambulances for the West African nation.

As a self-proclaimed explorer, Dan is counting down the days before he embarks on the mission, which is being led by National Police Aid Charities (NPAC), which, with the support of the International Police Association, provides aid to impoverished communities around the world whether in war zones or simply developing regions.

"I love travelling and I'm a spontaneous guy, so when I heard about this, I knew immediately that it was right up my street. I've been to 55 countries in my life so far, but I know this will be something totally different," said 42-year-old Dan, who has been with West Mercia for five years now.

“I'm a glass half full kind of man, I like to turn a negative into a positive; we'll all have something different to bring to the party, I hope that's what I can add.

"I like adventure, it's what makes me tick but I'm usually on foot, so this will be slightly out of my comfort zone."

As an active donator, who regularly gives to charity, Dan said he has always wanted to combine his hunger for travel with fundraising.

He will kick off his challenge in March, when he will drive a fully-equipped ambulance from the UK, joining other fundraisers in ambulances from across the UK and Europe, before making the 2,700 miles through Spain, then across the Sahara Desert to The Gambia.

Operation Zephyr will then see the 30 ambulances delivered, as well as support vehicles and fire engines, to form the core of a new emergency service throughout the country.

After dropping off the ambulance at one of the villages in The Gambia, the local

doctors and healthcare professionals will then be trained to use the vehicles.

"No doubt there will be some hiccups along the way during that first week but I firmly believe that when the chips are down, we're at our best," Dan added.

"I'm a glass half full kind of man, I like to turn a negative into a positive; we'll all have something different to bring to the party, I hope that's what I can add.

"As a team we'll become a big melting pot of ideas and I'm sure I'll make a lot of good friends on the way.

"One thing's for sure, there will be some cracking stories we can all tell and laugh about in the pub after."

Each officer taking part in the mission has been challenged to raise £2,500, which will go towards paying for the fleet of ambulances, he will then be funding any personal expenses himself, including food and accommodation.

"I've asked a few friends and family members to help out but to be honest, I'm paying for the majority myself – let's call it a Christmas present to myself," Dan explained.

"After all, it's all about the community in The Gambia. This is going to make such difference to their way of life, I'm looking forward to seeing their faces when we arrive.

"I often find that the less people have, the more willing they are to give and I'm sure this will be the case over there. It will be a very grounding experience.

"It's not really until you travel and experience such poverty that you realise just how lucky you are. I've seen a few places in Africa before and it really does put life in perspective."

Since signing up for the mission, Dan has become a member of the International Police Association and hopes to get involved in more fundraisers in the future.



Temporary Inspector Dan Poucher enjoying the great outdoors.

"Instead of being just that person who donates, I'll be someone who really is making a big difference," he ended.

Aidan Goundry, a West Mercia Police Community Support Officer and member of the International Police Association, is helping to lead the mission.

"It's amazing to see so many officers, both current and retired – and of all levels – getting involved. It really is such an all-inclusive project," he said.

"The virtually have no ambulance service at all in The Gambia, so delivering them a whole fleet will make such a huge difference, especially as we're supporting the rural communities.

"Honestly, how many people can say they've had the opportunity to do something like this?"

"I'm so pleased to see so many people step forward and I'm proud of everyone who is taking part."

Get to know your Fed reps

SARA GOODMAN

Sergeant Sara Goodman has built up a wealth of experience during her 25 years with West Mercia Police.

And now she's using it to help and support her colleagues as a West Mercia Police Federation workplace representative.

Sara joined on response in 1996 "to help people" with her first posting being



Kidderminster.

Since then she's worked in Proactive CID, Reactive CID, Family Protection, Safer Neighbourhood policing, Intelligence, Special Branch, and spent six years managing recuperative officer units.

Sara is now the health and wellbeing lead for the Force and has been a Federation rep since May this year.

Sara said: "I became a Fed rep in order to support and advocate for officers in a more formal way. I bring a wealth of life and work experience, emotional intelligence and a middle-aged, don't mess with me attitude."

Sara said she's enjoying helping people in the role and encouraged new officers joining the Force to "take it day-by-day".

And she acknowledges there are challenges in the Federation role.

"Remaining impartial when you feel so passionately about stuff," she said. "Fitting it in during a day job with ever-increasing cutbacks."

She added: "For officers and staff, I think the challenge is remaining strong under pressure. For the police service generally it's retaining sufficient numbers with a rise of anti-police media."

BARRY HORTON

Barry Horton became a Police Federation workplace representative through a desire to help colleagues.

Barry, who joined the police 16 years ago and now works in CID, began his Federation career in 2013.

He said: "I wanted to help officers. It has been a tumultuous time for policing pretty much since I joined the service.

"I've always taken notice of what the Home Office does or doesn't do for policing and it felt like a natural step to become a rep.

"I genuinely care - perhaps too much - and will often, like other reps at West Mercia, give up my own personal time to help others.

"I'm approachable and hopefully this shows through in how I deal with colleagues during their time of need. I enjoy being there when someone needs to turn to you for help."

Barry admitted fitting in Police Fed work alongside his CID role and family life was often a challenge.

He is deputy secretary of West Mercia Police Federation and has completed Federation reps' introductory training plus a course on conduct and performance and plans to do Post-Incident Management (PIM) training in the future.

He said forthcoming challenges for the branch included staying relevant to younger officers who often see the group insurance payment as an irrelevance when it is actually so important.



Barry's policing career began in 2005 when he joined West Midlands Police and was posted to Dudley.

"I transferred to West Mercia Police in 2015 from West Midlands Police having served nine-and-a-half years in a number of roles - response, safer travel police, neighbourhood officer and lastly community action and priority team similar to LPPT before transferring," he said.

"In West Mercia I started off on patrol before moving into CID in PVP before sadly failing the National Investigators' Examination (NIE) twice... and returning to patrol.

"My ambition was to always return to CID and I moved back in December 2019 and thankfully I passed the NIE at the first time of asking this time round. I'm currently in reactive CID at Telford and loving the role."

Barry said he had always looked up to police officers as a child and was attracted to a career with structure, job security and the ability to make a difference.

His very first posting was at Dudley Police Station with D Unit on a night shift.

He explained: "I was so excited I fell up a set of stairs going to my first real sit down with my tutor before going to a break-in in progress where on our arrival I forgot I had my seat belt on and couldn't get out of the car. Luckily there were others there!"

Career highlights include working at the NATO conference in Cardiff which he described as a "truly special 10 days. Very tiring but worthwhile".

He added: "I've been lucky to have worked on a number of different jobs but reuniting an estranged father and son who had not seen each other for 20-plus years really resonates with me at a personal level."

Barry said future challenges for West

Mercia Police included upgrading an "abysmal" IT infrastructure but he also warned one of the biggest issues it faced was policing the region's ever-expanding towns.

He said: "Telford alone has had thousands more houses in the last 10 years and police officer numbers aren't increasing to match. The other divisions will be in the same boat and officer numbers must increase to match it."

He also called for better equipment for officers and staff and Tasers for all who want one.

He said: "It protects the officer from harm and it baffles me how it's handed out to only a few officers. We also need to return to the days of more support staff, without them officers are doing more and more admin work which prevents them from being out on the streets being a visible deterrent."

Turning to the police service generally, Barry was highly critical of the mainstream media and its "rhetoric against policing" and called for a change in attitude.

He said: "It's totally unacceptable and makes our lives harder."

Barry also backed Police Federation demands for a complete overhaul of the police pay system.

"Officers deserve a pay rise yearly and that goes without saying it seems that people forget that we're also humans and life costs go up and we need to be able to afford to live," he said.

Barry's advice for new officers just joining the Force is: "Keep smiling. Be confident and be prepared to ask for help. We were all there at one point or another."

But also: "Make tea and bring cakes!"

DAVE HUSSEY

Dave Hussey is determined to make a difference for his colleagues as he embarks on his role as a West Mercia Police Federation workplace representative.

Dave, who has been a serving police officer for 19 years, became a rep earlier this year.

"I often gave advice to colleagues in an unofficial capacity as I knew where to go and find it or who to speak to," he said.

"I've always had an interest in the Federation; in representing officers to make sure we are all treated fairly.

"Many people moan about the Fed but the representatives are there out of goodwill, trying to help everyone.

"In some ways, it's one of those roles where you can make a difference and have some satisfaction that you have helped someone."

What does Dave feel he brings to the role?



"Some would say a loud voice," he said, "But mainly some kind of operational experience where I can understand and relate to many of my colleagues.

"I understand the pressures of what is actually happening on the street and I am able to feed back to the relevant people."

But he admitted that being a rep is not without its challenges.

"One of the challenges is keeping everyone happy – which you can't," he said.

"I have had an increase in people contacting me on and off duty, so you need to strike a work-life balance around your private life and work."

He added: "For the Federation, the challenge is gaining the trust and support of some of the officers that have been disappointed with the Fed at a national level following 2015 pension changes."

Dave began his career with the Met in 2002.

"It was pretty much the last job on my list I was interested in," he said, "I joined the police under the 'Could you?' campaign."

He was transferred to West Mercia in 2008 and was posted to Worcester City response.

Dave moved to Leominster North

Herefordshire in 2013 under the People Movement Plan and is still a response officer.

He warns that issues around morale are a challenge for the Force and for officers and staff.

"Increasing the staff morale and making the officers feel like people and not just a number is a challenge for the Force," he said.

"Many changes have been introduced to the Force over the last few years and they have not been greeted well. I think is due to poor communication from the Force and rushing things through.

"And there's continued increase scrutiny from the public and alike. No other job creates so much interest about what you do and what you don't do, which can have a detrimental effect on officers and staff."

His advice for new officers joining the Force is to keep learning.

"Every day is a school day," said Dave, "No matter how much or little service someone has, we all bring ideas to the table.

"They might not always be the right ones at the time, but we learn and move on."

PETER NIGHTINGALE

Peter Nightingale became a Police Federation workplace representative after having personal experience of requiring support himself.

He described the support he received from the Federation at the time as "exceptional" and decided he could offer something similar to fellow officers through his "honest, approachable and realistic" approach.

Peter said: "I have always been interested in pay, conditions and regulations. The legal support I received via the Federation was exceptional.

"I do get an enormous amount of satisfaction from the role and I regularly receive very positive feedback from officers who have needed my assistance.

"I enjoy forming relationships with counsel for the benefit of officers and



having a positive impact on getting an officer fit, well and back to work.

"It can be very hard to balance a normal job, my own career progression and dedicating the time required with some Federation commitments which clearly have a massive impact on officers and their families.

"It can also be hard not to get emotionally attached in some cases and can be draining supporting officers facing serious allegations."

Since becoming a West Mercia workplace rep in 2019, Peter has completed the initial Police Federation training course and a specialist course on conduct and performance.

He said further training was potentially in the pipeline depending on his career path and progression.

Peter joined the Force in 2005, spurred by a desire to "work as part of a team, help people and catch baddies!"

His first posting was on response based in Worcester and he has served as a patrol PC, dog handler and patrol sergeant. His current

role is temporary inspector/problem-solving and relief.

Peter believes the police service faces a serious challenge in being able to recruit and retain quality individuals given the lack of pay for responsibilities.

He said: "The police force needs to push back and narrow the field in terms of what we as a service can reasonably focus on with the resources available.

"Not everything can be a priority and I believe this is a serious conversation that the police need to consult on with the public."

Peter joked that his advice for new officers just joining the Force would be "Don't!"

But he added: "It really is a challenging job but is one that you will rarely get bored with and you get to work with some incredibly hard working individuals and make friends for life.

"Enjoy the job but also remember that it is a job, the most important thing is having a balance with family life and staying safe and well."





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