

CONNECT



WINTER 2024

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM WEST MERCIA POLICE FEDERATION

SEASON'S GREETINGS

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VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

By **Steve Butler**, chair of West Mercia Police Federation



Welcome to the last edition of **Connect** for 2024.

As the festive season approaches and the year draws to an end, I'd like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the branch, to thank our members for their hard work and dedication to keeping our communities safe. The nature of the job means it doesn't stop for Christmas, and many members will be working over the festive period, missing out on precious family time. That sacrifice will be hugely appreciated by the vast majority of the public, who value and respect your work. Allow me to take this opportunity to thank you for your ongoing commitment.

The past 12 months have undoubtedly been a challenge for us in policing. Our members were right on the frontline during the violent disorder during the summer.

Many were deployed on mutual aid to work alongside colleagues in other forces, putting themselves in harm's way to protect the public and each other. This was another clear illustration of the sacrifices made by police officers in West Mercia and up and down the country.

Our annual Pay and Morale Survey made for sombre reading, with officers in West Mercia reporting the second lowest morale levels in the country. Poor pay, assaults on officers, and increasing workloads have been taking their toll, and my concern is how much has changed in the past 12 months?

One way the Government would be able to improve morale at a stroke is by restoring pay to pre-austerity levels. While this year's 4.75 per cent pay increase was welcome and was a small step towards restoration – it doesn't truly reflect officers' hard work and the sacrifices I have mentioned. Once again, this demonstrates the need for a fully independent pay mechanism because the current one has proven time and again to be

unfair and detrimental to the pay, conditions, and wellbeing of our members.

Your Federation will continue to work on your behalf for improved working conditions, for fair pay, and for a truly independent pay mechanism.

Another area that I'm passionate about improving for members is the length of time it takes for misconduct proceedings to be completed.

We've had two high-profile cases in West Mercia this year. The first is PC Abbie Myers, who continues to be investigated by the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) almost three years after an incident for which she was cleared of causing death by dangerous driving and death by careless driving.

“ALLOW ME TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO THANK YOU FOR YOUR ONGOING COMMITMENT.”

She has been in limbo for nearly three years now and continues to have the sword of Damocles hanging over her.

The second was the dismissal of former student officer Joseph Mudd in November, 18 months after he admitted perverting the course of justice and resigned from the Force. While I absolutely support the final outcome of this case, honesty and integrity are the pillars of policing, but I don't understand why it took so long to conclude.

Protracted investigations are no good for anyone. They are a colossal waste of public money, undermine public and officer confidence in the process, and the impact on the wellbeing of officers can't be underestimated either.

Mental health and the wellbeing of our members are things I feel very passionate about. My own dog, Monty, has recently started his journey towards becoming the branch emotional support dog and helps to put members at ease when they come into the office for interviews or meetings.

This will be my first Christmas as your Federation branch chair. I have been absolutely blown away by the support I have received since coming into post. I understand just how privileged I am to be in this position, and I am driven to give every member a voice, providing you with the best possible support.

I hope you can spend some well-earned and much-needed time with your loved ones.

The rest of the branch and I look forward to working on your behalf in 2025.

For now, have a lovely Christmas, and keep safe.

MEET YOUR FEDERATION TEAM

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Pete Nightingale
Secretary



Lesley Williams
CAPLO/Treasurer

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S O L I C I T O R S

FEDERATION ELECTIONS: BE PART OF THE PROCESS

All Federation members – whether content or discontent with the work of the staff association – should engage with the forthcoming elections, says West Mercia Police Federation chair Steve Butler.

The nationwide election process starts at the end of this month, so now is the time for anyone considering become a Federation representative, or maybe just questioning the support the Federation offers, to start thinking about putting themselves forward for election.

“Often the very best workplace representatives are those who have been supported through conduct proceedings or other work issues by the Federation. They feel they want to give something back and offer that same support to their colleagues,” says Steve.

“I think this is a great reason for members to get more involved with the Federation. But, I would also like to see some of those who are critical of the Federation getting more involved too. It’s all too easy to stand on the sidelines, decrying what the Federation does or doesn’t do, but how about being part of the change you want to see within the organisation?”

“I have real admiration for those who are prepared not just to criticise from the outside but actually get involved on the inside. They can then bring forward their criticisms and help drive any changes they want to see.

“I would say to any member who has received good service from the Federation in the past, please consider standing to become a workplace rep in the elections, but I also want to hear from any member who feels dissatisfied with the Federation and therefore wants to be a Fed rep.

“Anyone interested in standing for election can find out more by speaking to their existing workplace rep, or contact the office team.”

Steve is also encouraging all members to vote in the elections.

“Again I would say, it’s no good complaining about the Federation if you haven’t engaged in the election process. We need all members to find out more about who is standing for election and then vote for who they think will give them the best representation,” says Steve.



The nationwide election process starts on 30 December when nominations open for workplace representatives and will be completed by 1 October 2025 when the new National Board will be in place.

The Force’s constables, sergeants and inspecting ranks, as well as Specials, can stand in the local workplace representative elections. Workplace reps undertake their Federation duties alongside their policing role. [Find out more about the role.](#)

Information on the first round of elections for workplace reps, including how to self-nominate and how to vote, will be emailed to all members.

As well as being able to vote for their local workplace reps, all members can vote for their local chair and, next year, the national chair through an electronic voting system.

If you want to find out more about becoming a representative, contact your local workplace representative or the Federation office.

The structure of the Police Federation

Each of the 43 police forces in England and Wales has a Federation Branch Council made up of all the workplace reps for that force.

From the Branch Council, an executive – the Branch Board – is elected, including a secretary and treasurer. Other lead roles include equality, health and safety, and conduct and performance.

Local reps also have the chance to put themselves forward for the national body whenever opportunities arise.

The Police Federation of England and Wales, which has 139,000 subscribing members, was established in 1919 and has represented the interests of officers from the ranks of constable to chief inspector ever since. Specials have been able to subscribe to the Federation since 2022.

The elections

Any subscribing Federation member can nominate themselves for election as a workplace rep. Successful candidates become part of their local Branch Council. From there, they can stand to be on the local Branch Board, then stand for a regional or a national role if they wish.

Federation branches across the country are making a special plea to members from under-represented groups to consider putting themselves forward to become reps to help better reflect the diversity of the membership.

The election process:

- **Members vote for workplace reps (Branch Council)**
- **The Branch Council votes for the Branch Board members**
- **Members elect the local branch chair**
- **The Branch Board elects the local branch secretary**
- **The chairs and secretaries from branches across England and Wales make up the National Council**
- **The National Council votes to elect the National Board**
- **All members vote to elect the national chair**
- **The National Board selects the general secretary**
- **The National Board votes in remaining principal officers.**

How do I stand for election?

Any member wishing to stand for election can self-nominate via an online portal during the nomination period – a link will be provided to all members via email. They will need to fill in the online nomination form and sign the Standards and Performance agreement.

Who can vote?

Any member can vote so long as they were a member of the Federation two months before nominations opened on 30 December 2024.

If you have any further questions, please contact the Federation office.



Personal injury claims through your federation

In a survey of over 10,000 police officers and staff*, 81% said they had experienced at least one physical injury or mental health issue due to their police work.

Police work is often dangerous, and officers will face many risks to their health and safety during the course of their duties. Accidents and other work-related injury or illness can cause considerable expense

in terms of sickness absences, as well as the distress and ill health suffered by the officers. All too often these problems could have been prevented with minimal cost or effort had proper regard been given to issues of health and safety.

Your police federation membership cover includes:

- Road traffic accidents (either on or off duty)
- Fatal accident claims
- Defective equipment
- Accidents in the workplace
- Training accidents
- Public liability claims

- Accidents on other premises
- Animal handling incidents
- Occupational deafness
- Employer liability claims including stress
- Medical negligence

Your personal injury claim will be covered by the Police Federation, and you will not be required to have Legal Expense Insurance.

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- Court of Protection
- Personal injury
- Medical negligence
- Industrial disease
- Road traffic accident

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CHAIR RENEWS CALLS FOR A TRANSPARENT FEDERATION

Steve Butler, chair of the West Mercia Police Federation, has reiterated his commitment to representing members' interests and fostering transparency within the Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW).

Speaking after a recent National Council meeting, in which he presented several questions to the Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW), Steve has emphasised the importance of open dialogue and accountability.

Responding to the agenda, including his questions, being publicly posted online, Steve said: "I'd like to start by saying I fully support the decision to make the agenda and questions from the recent National Council meeting publicly available.

"Transparency is vital, and as representatives, we must engage in challenging conversations to better serve our members."

Steve clarified that his questions during the meeting were not intended to cause conflict but to promote honesty and openness.

"You'll see that a lot of my questions mention the CEO. I must stress that the questions I asked were not personal, nor were they asked to target a person. My questions were shaped around the role of the CEO, rather than the person holding that post."

The questions included, but were not limited to:

- **Now that the settlement is concluded, can the CEO's salary, including any bonuses, be disclosed as promised?**
- **Can PFEW confirm that there are no other bonuses being paid to any PFEW employee or third parties in relation to the completion of the settlement with Leigh Day?**
- **Can PFEW comment on its own use of the Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDA). Would PFEW use an NDA for any employee or third party who may exit the organisation?**

“AS A REPRESENTATIVE BODY FOR PUBLIC SECTOR WORKERS, TRANSPARENCY IN APPOINTMENTS AND SALARY DISCLOSURES IS CRUCIAL. I BELIEVE MEMBERS HAVE A RIGHT TO KNOW HOW DECISIONS ARE MADE AND TO TRUST THAT THESE PROCESSES ARE IN THEIR BEST INTERESTS.

- **How many NDAs has PFEW served for the years 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024 and up to the date of the NC?**
- **Can PFEW publish the complaints procedure for anyone wishing to make a complaint regarding the CEO and the other recent roles we have introduced? The procedure is clear for the national chair/sec, however, I cannot find any policy/procedure that details how to make a complaint against the CEO and the other roles.**

"As chair of the West Mercia Police Federation, my role includes being a critical friend - challenging senior officers when necessary and holding our Federation accountable. It's a responsibility I take seriously, and I welcome similar challenges from our members and colleagues," he continued.

"I'm still awaiting answers to some of the issues I raised, but one topic that stood out was the CEO's bonus linked to the completion of litigation. Coming from the public sector, this approach feels out of step with the financial challenges we're all facing."

Steve also expressed concerns about the recruitment processes for high-level positions within the Federation.

He continued: "As a representative body for public sector workers, transparency in appointments and salary disclosures is crucial. I believe members have a right to know how decisions are made and to trust that these processes are in their best interests."

Highlighting the importance of unity and collaboration, Steve referenced an article by Dan Ball, a workplace representative from North Wales Police Federation, which called attention to the challenges facing the PFEW.

"Dan's insights on the disconnect between branches and the National Board resonate with my own experiences," Steve said, adding: "I feel that we need to address internal issues to maintain the Federation's effectiveness and credibility."

Steve has drawn attention to the 'hard-hitting' final quote in Dan's article: 'If the Internal damage being caused to the organisation is allowed to continue, I fear there will be nothing left of the good parts of the Police Federation of England and Wales that are so desperately needed by members who turn to their representative body at times of need.'

Steve said: "I worry that this might come true if nothing changes. In fact, it must be noted that much of Dan's concerns were echoed within [the first of two Independent Review Panel reports](#) that examine the handling of the police pensions challenge."

Steve also voiced disappointment over the rejection of a paper he supported at the National Council, which sought to discuss the use of Appendix 9 procedures.

“I WANT OUR MEMBERS TO KNOW THAT THEIR INTERESTS ARE OUR PRIORITY, WHETHER WE'RE ADDRESSING LOCAL ISSUES OR ADVOCATING FOR NATIONAL CHANGES.

Steve said: "I was disappointed that the decision to reject the paper was a missed opportunity for open and transparent debate.

"While the procedures are described as an internal grievance process, I feel that the process lacks the natural justice that so many of us are used to when doing our police jobs.

"These processes must be fair and proportionate, especially when they involve significant sanctions."

Reassuring members of his dedication, Steve emphasised the Federation's commitment to serving its members.

"I want our members to know that their interests are our priority, whether we're addressing local issues or advocating for national changes," he said, adding: "And I'll echo Dan Ball's words: 'pay attention to what is going on. Ask questions if things don't seem right.'"

Steve concluded by encouraging members to engage actively with their Federation. "Together, we can ensure the Federation remains a strong, transparent, and effective advocate for all its members."

2024: A year in review

JANUARY

- 11** The entire Criminal Justice System (CJS) needs to be revised, said West Mercia Police Federation chair Barry Horton, as frequently adjourned court cases continued to have a 'massive impact on officers'.
- 22** Federation branch secretary Pete Nightingale said he was looking forward to working with the new Chief Constable Kyle Gordon who he hoped would bring invaluable experience from a diverse range of roles to the job. However, it was later revealed Mr Gordon would not take up the post due to unforeseen circumstances.
- 31** In his last published interview as chair of West Mercia Police Federation, Barry Horton looked back on his time with the Force after deciding to start a new career in the civil service to improve his work-life balance and prioritise his family.

FEBRUARY

- 14** West Mercia Police Federation secretary Pete Nightingale urged public order officers to ensure their e-learning modules are up-to-date, as he stressed that not doing so could leave them vulnerable.



- 23** Two West Mercia Police dogs became the first in the Midlands to complete accreditation allowing them to detect bodies underwater. Lupo and Jabba, along with their handlers, PC James Benjamin (Benji) and Nick Davies, received special training to search for people who might have drowned.

MARCH

- 11** A new award was launched to recognise the sacrifice of fallen police officers, firefighters and other public service workers. The Elizabeth Emblem had been conferred by the King and the families of officers who lost their lives on duty were invited to apply for the award.
- 21** Reacting to the national findings of the Police Federation's annual Pay and Morale Survey, West Mercia Police Federation chair Steve Butler said the hard work of recruiting thousands of new police officers was being undone by a retention crisis in policing. Steve urged the Government to improve police pay and conditions as the newly released survey results revealed more than one in five officers (22 per cent) plan to quit the service.



APRIL

West Mercia Police Federation chair Steve Butler called for tough sentencing for those who attack officers after three officers were injured when they intervened in a disturbance.

- 10** West Mercia Police officers reported the second lowest levels of morale in the country, with only the Metropolitan Police reporting lower levels. A shocking 95 per cent of officers said their personal morale was low, while almost two thirds (62 per cent) felt morale within the Force was low or very low. The figures were exposed in the local findings of the annual Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW) Pay and Morale Survey.

MAY

- 7** West Mercia's Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) John Campion should use his third term of office to do what he can to improve police officer morale and wellbeing, said West Mercia Police Federation chair Steve Butler.

- 16** Three officers who acted courageously to rescue a woman from a submerged car were named as the West Mercia Police Federation nominees for the national Police Bravery Awards 2024 to be held in London in July. PC Tom Simmonds and Sergeants Lee Baker and Shannon Murphy were put forward for the awards to recognise their actions in a rapidly-worsening situation at Bow Brook, Worcestershire last year.
- 17** The Federation paid its respects to PC Steve Moore who died peacefully, surrounded by his family, after being diagnosed with lung cancer a few months earlier. Steve, 40, joined the Force in 2015, with his most recent role being a firearms officer at Malinsgate.

JUNE

- 12** Members were reminded to check their emails for the link to the poll on industrial rights by the Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW). The poll sought to find out if members wanted the Federation to pursue the re-establishment of a mechanism of collective bargaining and the addition of binding arbitration. This will enable direct negotiation with the Government when it comes to determining police pay. The poll was launched on 3 June and closed on 21 June.
- 28** A new private healthcare scheme was made available to West Mercia Police Federation members. Bluline is specifically for police officers, police staff and their families and is managed by police officers - who really understand the challenges faced when illness or injury strikes. Monthly premiums start from as little as £16.25, and there are discounts for student officers, including FREE subscriptions for the first year.

- 29** West Mercia Police Federation member PC Dave Hussey paid tribute to the efforts behind Response Policing Week which celebrated the work of response officers across the country and ran from 24 to 30 June.

The national 'week of action', coordinated by the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC), the College of Policing, and Oscar Kilo, was in its fourth year.

JULY

- 4 West Mercia Police Federation appealed to the Force to increase access to double crewing. Branch chair Steve Butler and secretary Pete Nightingale highlighted the positive impacts of double crewing on officers' morale, safety and productivity during a meeting with senior Force leaders.
- 9 The Police Federation of England and Wales will campaign for collective bargaining and binding arbitration as part of a fairer police pay review process. The news came after a nationwide poll in which 97.7 per cent of members who responded said they wanted the Federation to pursue industrial rights on their behalf.



- 10 Speaking the day before the Police Bravery Awards, the woman saved from drowning in her flooded car by the three West Mercia nominees sent them her support.
Last year, Annie Nisbet was pulled from the vehicle as it rapidly sank in floodwater at a ford of Bow Brook by PC Tom Simmonds and Sergeants Lee Baker and Shannon Murphy.
- 10 Addressing the crisis in policing and committing to sustained investment in the police service should be key early priorities for the new Labour Government, according to Steve Butler, chair of West Mercia Police Federation, as he responded to the results of the General Election.
- 11 Three West Mercia Police officers who saved a woman from a submerged car were named regional winners at the national Police Bravery Awards. Sergeants Lee Baker and Shannon Murphy and PC Thomas Simmonds received the award from national Federation vice-chair Tiff Lynch.

- 29 West Mercia Police Federation chair Steve Butler praised local officers who took part in the Police Unity Tour in memory of fallen colleagues the previous weekend. The tour saw cyclists from forces across England and Wales set off from their home force areas on the Friday and take a route covering around 180 miles to reach the National Memorial Arboretum in Alrewas, Staffordshire on the Sunday morning where the Care of Police Survivors charity held its annual service of remembrance. West Mercia officers joined the West Midlands Chapter of the tour with colleagues from the West Midlands, Warwickshire and Staffordshire forces.
- 30 The announcement of a 4.75 per cent pay uplift for all ranks was 'not a moment too soon' according to West Mercia Police Federation. Branch secretary Pete Nightingale welcomed the pay rise, which would take effect from September.

AUGUST

- 6 West Mercia Police Federation chair Steve Butler thanked members on the frontline policing the violent disorder that erupted across the country. Officers from the Force had been deployed on mutual aid to work alongside colleagues in other forces.
- 8 Members were reminded to have their say on police uniform by taking part in a national survey before it closed.
- 12 Record numbers of officers are resigning, new statistics revealed. More than 9,000 officers left policing in England and Wales in the year ending 31 March, the second highest in a financial year, and 43 per cent of those had less than 5 years' service.

SEPTEMBER

- 12 Policing minister Dame Diana Johnson was urged to fulfil her latest pledge of support with 'real action'. Steve Butler, West Mercia Police Federation chair, was speaking after Dame Diana ended her speech at the Superintendents' Association Conference by saying: 'We will always support you'.
- 13 West Mercia Police Federation workplace representative Rob 'Swoosh' Seewoosaha had embarked on the 'trip of a lifetime', travelling on a charity mission to Africa. He was heading for The Gambia in Western Africa to deliver disused ambulances and fire engines to the country as part of the Emergency Services Aid Charity, all in his own free time.

- 20 The Federation launched its 2024 pay and morale survey with West Mercia Police Federation members urged to have their say.

- 29 West Mercia Police Federation chair Steve Butler was among those attending this year's National Police Memorial Day (NPM) in Glasgow.

OCTOBER

- 11 Federation members were offered advice and support to quit smoking during Stoptober. Police Mutual published a free guide to help officers.



- 30 West Mercia Police Federation chair Steve Butler questioned the 'true' independence of the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC). He criticised the time the IOPC had spent investigating PC Abbie Myers, despite her being cleared of causing death by dangerous driving and death by careless driving.

NOVEMBER

- 18 West Mercia Police Federation chair Steve Butler said lengthy police misconduct investigations were a waste of public money, and argued protracted investigations also undermined the confidence of officers and the public in the process.
- 21 Having difficult discussions is not just part of the role of Federation officials, but also their duty, West Mercia Police Federation chair Steve Butler pointed out. Steve was commenting after raising several questions about issues of concern at the November meeting of the Police Federation of England and Wales National Council, which is made up of chairs and secretaries of branches across England and Wales. The agenda, including Steve's questions, was later posted publicly online, prompting him to comment on his passion for creating a transparent and honest Federation.
- 22 Home Secretary Yvette Cooper announced plans for a new Home Office unit to monitor the performance of police forces. West Mercia Police Federation chair Steve Butler responded by saying Government resources would be better directed at improving the efficiency of the existing organisations involved in scrutinising the police service and in supporting officers doing their jobs.



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LONG CONDUCT CASES ARE 'A DRAIN ON THE PUBLIC PURSE'

West Mercia Police Federation chair Steve Butler says lengthy police conduct investigations are a waste of public money.

Steve believes protracted investigations also undermine the confidence of officers and the public in the process.

Steve was speaking after the formal dismissal last month of former student officer Joseph Mudd.

Mudd, 21, admitted perverting the course of justice in March 2023 and resigned from the Force.

His conviction came after he received a speeding ticket in April 2022 when he was 19 and falsely claimed a family member was driving so they took the points on their licence.

At Worcester Crown Court he was sentenced to 12 weeks' imprisonment, suspended for 12 months. He was also ordered to pay a £170 surcharge and complete 200 hours of unpaid work.

On Friday 15 November, more than 18 months after his conviction, Mudd was formally dismissed at a conduct hearing and was added to the College of Policing Barred List.

Steve said: "I fully support the Force and the Chief Constable in the final outcome of this case.

"Honesty and integrity are non-negotiable for police officers, and we need to ensure the standards of professionalism are upheld. On this occasion, the public can be assured they are.

"However, I can't condone the staggering waste of public money that comes with protracted misconduct

investigations.

"This case, for example. It's been two years and four months since his first admission and 18 months since he was dealt with at court and resigned.

"Surely this investigation could have been dealt with in a much more timely manner.

"Why has it taken so long for the investigation to be completed? It hardly inspires confidence in the process."

Research by the Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW) in 2021 estimated an investigation lasting up to six months costs £15,101 per officer which climbs to £302,012 when it drags on for five years or more.

PFEW said that investigations into suspended officers only saw the costs rise considerably higher.

A six to 12-month investigation costs approximately £67,968 but increases to £453,115 per officer after five years. This is due to the force having to fully replace them until proceedings conclude with other officers backfilling and working extra hours to plug the gaps, PFEW said.

Steve recently highlighted the continued impact of a lengthy investigation on PC Abbie Myers, who was cleared of causing death by dangerous driving and death by careless driving in March. She continues to wait to hear if she will face an Independent Office for Police Conduct hearing.

Steve said: "Our branch conduct and performance liaison officer Lesley Williams and I have been raising the issue of the timeliness, inefficiency and procedural unfairness of conduct investigations and will continue to do so.

"The Federation fully supports and promotes upholding the standards of professional behaviour as being key to regaining public trust and confidence. But that trust and confidence comes from reassurance in the process.

"We've seen time and time again delays and inefficiencies drag the process out, undermine the trust and confidence of officers and the public.

"It's a drain on the public purse and impacts the lives and wellbeing of officers, who are effectively put on hold. It needs urgently addressing."

“THE FEDERATION FULLY SUPPORTS AND PROMOTES UPHOLDING THE STANDARDS OF PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOUR AS BEING KEY TO REGAINING PUBLIC TRUST AND CONFIDENCE. BUT THAT TRUST AND CONFIDENCE COMES FROM REASSURANCE IN THE PROCESS. WE’VE SEEN TIME AND TIME AGAIN DELAYS AND INEFFICIENCIES DRAG THE PROCESS OUT, UNDERMINE THE TRUST AND CONFIDENCE OF OFFICERS AND THE PUBLIC.



SHINING A LIGHT ON FLINT HOUSE



Nestled in the heart of the Oxfordshire countryside you'll find Flint House: a sanctuary of recovery and resilience for police officers when they need it most. Here, we shine a light on what the facility offers and catch up with branch secretary Pete Nightingale following his recent stay at the rehabilitation centre.

What is Flint House?

Flint House is a charity that is mainly funded by donations from those in the police service and their families. It has been supporting retired and serving police officers since 1890.

Located in Oxfordshire, in a Grade II listed building, Flint House is equipped with a number of bespoke state-of-the-art physical and mental health rehabilitation facilities, including an indoor gym, swimming pool, hydrotherapy pool, mental

health lodge, outdoor gym and beautiful grounds.

What does Flint House do?

Every year, Flint House supports 3,500 people, with their aim to get serving and retired police officers back to strength in and out of work, or back to enjoying their retirement.

Flint House tailors its care to the challenges police officers face, with a team of in-house physiotherapists, mental health practitioners, nurses and healthcare professionals readily available to support

'You feel like you are being scooped up and looked after'

Having lived with ongoing back pain for a while, the secretary of West Mercia Police Federation, Pete Nightingale, decided to reach out to Flint House for support.

Like many Federation members, Pete donates to the charity each month via the Force's Welfare Fund, but had never before taken advantage of the facilities and services it offers.

"I'd coped with my back pain for a while - but it got worse and worse over time. But the pain is intensified when I'm stressed, and I felt it was time to get in touch with Flint House," said Pete.

"When I arrived, I immediately felt like I'd been scooped up and was being looked after. I couldn't be more positive about Flint House."

Shining a light on the facilities available,

Pete said they are all 'amazing'.

"There's a recently refurbished pool and hydrotherapy pool, which are both fantastic. The first day, I experienced hydrotherapy on my back, and it got to work on the pain immediately.

"But it's not just the facilities - the staff, too, are so welcoming. My physiotherapist was Mark and he liaised with Nathan, the Lead Rehabilitation Therapist - they were both incredible. They got to know my needs and requirements so they could deliver treatment bespoke to me. Better still, they give you exercises for you to do, when you get home.

"And the setting is also idyllic. You are surrounded by woods and nature - I tried to get out every day for a walk, which was not only beneficial for my physical but mental

health too."

Pete stayed at Flint House for a week, giving him a 'break from everyday life'.

"It gives you a break from the everyday routine - it gives you time away from normality, but in a safe space, where you're looked after," Pete explained.

"And it gave my family a break too."

He added: "And as well as the exercise facilities, there's plenty of social activities you are able to take part in too. From on-site quizzes to having a drink at the bar or playing bingo - there's lots to get involved with. And equally, if you don't fancy it, you don't have to join in - there are spaces for visitors to just sit and be."

In addition to the facilities and staff, Pete said the meals provided are 'on another level'.

“WE’RE IMMENSELY PROUD OF THE CHARITY AND THE WORK WE DO. EVERY PATIENT IS LOOKED AT HOLISTICALLY TO GET THEM BACK ON TRACK. FLINT HOUSE IS A LOVELY SETTING – TO BE ABLE TO TAKE YOURSELF AWAY FROM IT ALL AND CONCENTRATE ON YOURSELF FOR THAT PERIOD OF TIME, IN THAT ENVIRONMENT, IT REALLY DOES MAKE A DIFFERENCE. SOPHIA MAJAYA, CEO OF FLINT HOUSE.

their patients with excellent clinical outcomes.

Physical Rehabilitation

Intensive physiotherapy, exercise and gym classes help fast-track patients to improve their health and fitness, following an injury sustained on or off duty. They also have clinicians who specialise in cancer rehabilitation, cardiac rehabilitation and women’s health to name but a few.

Mental Health

A tailored mental health programme to support the needs of each individual, with a specific focus on wellbeing.

Conditioning

If officers have failed a job-related fitness test (JRFT or AFT), Flint House offers a personalised, holistic review of life style choices and general fitness with the aim of supporting officers with their next test.

“The meals are very good, and they cater to all dietary requirements,” he said.

Pete, is now encouraging officers to contribute to Flint House.

“I know times are tight, but honestly, the care and support you receive from Flint House is priceless - and worth making that donation,” he said.

It could not be easier for West Mercia Police Federation members to donate to Flint House. For just £8.70 a month, members can regularly contribute to the Force’s Welfare Fund, which includes a donation made towards the charity.

Stays at Flint House are classed as recuperative leave, which means officers do not have to use annual leave or sick leave.

If you need to apply for treatment at Flint House, then visit the [Federation’s website](#).

‘POLICING DOES NOT NEED ANOTHER MONITORING BODY’

There is no need for another body to monitor policing performance, says chair of West Mercia Police Federation Steve Butler.

Steve said government resources would be better directed at improving the efficiency of existing organisations and supporting officers in doing their jobs.

He was commenting after Home Secretary Yvette Cooper announced a new Home Office unit to monitor force performance.

Speaking at the annual conference of the National Police Chiefs’ Council and the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, Ms Cooper unveiled plans for a Police Performance Unit to track national data on local performance and drive up standards.

Steve said: “We already have numerous bodies and organisations that scrutinise policing and hold individual forces and officers to account.

“There’s His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS), the Independent Office for Police Conduct, individual force professional standards departments and even the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS).

“Will another layer of scrutiny in the shape of a data monitoring unit really win back public confidence? I really don’t think so, and I think the Home Secretary has her priorities all wrong on this occasion.”

Steve has highlighted the impact lengthy police conduct investigations are having on members and the public purse, in an article on p11.

“Another monitoring body won’t

speed up the timeliness of the processes that already exist,” he explained. “Delays in the process and inefficiencies take their toll on the wellbeing of our members, whose lives are put on hold, but they also undermine public trust and confidence. How will a new unit restore that?”

Steve said to restore trust, investment was needed in the existing process to speed it up ‘for the good of officers, victims, and the public’.

He added: “Our officers are under more pressure than ever but their pay has failed to keep pace with the demands and with the cost of living.

“The introduction of an independent pay review and the restoration of their pay would have a meaningful impact on recruitment and retention.

“Policing is a challenging profession, and our members are often exposed to traumatic incidents, which is why we need to invest in the health and wellbeing of officers.

“And policing is not an island. We work alongside the CPS, social services, mental health support, and they have also been chronically underfunded for the past decade and more.

“Investment in these areas would free up police resources that could be directed at priority crimes and allow us to work more effectively.

“Our members need the right funding, resources and support, not more oversight.”

The Government hopes the unit will help to rebuild relationships between the public and policing.

“DELAYS IN THE PROCESS AND INEFFICIENCIES TAKE THEIR TOLL ON THE WELLBEING OF OUR MEMBERS, WHOSE LIVES ARE PUT ON HOLD, BUT THEY ALSO UNDERMINE PUBLIC TRUST AND CONFIDENCE. HOW WILL A NEW UNIT RESTORE THAT?”



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MONTY THE PUP BOOSTING MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health at work was the theme of this year's World Mental Health Day – and the chair of West Mercia Police Federation is doing his bit with the help of his puppy Monty.

Steve Butler says that Monty has had a positive impact on the emotional and mental wellbeing of members and colleagues on the occasions he has brought the cockapoo into the office.

Steve, who has had Monty for five months, said: "I have been fortunate that during this time when I initially struggled with dog sitters I was able to bring him into the office.

"The first few times I brought him in I was instantly surprised by the positive impact he had on staff in the office, visitors, members, and even on colleagues in the Professional Standards Department (PSD).

"When members are coming in for an interview with the IOPC or PSD, or for case conferences, he puts them at ease.

"He is so happy to see people, and when they see him they seem to relax when usually it can be quite stressful.



JJ Fitzpatrick, of Cosford Dog Training (left), with Monty and branch chair Steve Butler.

"I have also noticed that when Monty is about, people tend to relax and open more about issues and concerns, which makes for more supportive conversations."

Seven-month-old Monty has made such an impact that Steve is now exploring whether he can be trained to become the branch's wellbeing dog.

Monty has completed his puppy training, and recently passed his Kennel Club bronze award with Cosford Dog Training near Wolverhampton.



Branch secretary Pete Nightingale with Monty.

Steve, who brings Monty into the branch office in Droitwich on Tuesdays and Thursdays, said: "He is so happy to meet people that when they see him, they can't help but warm to him.

"He helps to break the formality of the whole process.

"Some members will be there for quite serious interviews and he will sit by them and help them relax and settle down."

He added: "We always check with people if they're happy to meet him and, so far, everyone is."

Now Steve is waiting to hear from Oscar Kilo, the national police wellbeing service, if he and Monty can link up with its OK9 wellbeing and trauma support dogs initiative.

The initiative aims to build on local police wellbeing dog services. It aims to make wellbeing dogs available to all forces who wish to introduce a dog as part of their wellbeing provision.

Steve said: "He is still a puppy, so has a long way to go.

"However, I think he has a gift for making people feel at ease so I'm exploring with Oscar Kilo and the Force to get him trained as an official welfare support dogs dog."

Steve said Monty helps with his own emotional health and wellbeing.

He said: "As someone who has suffered with my mental health and had a period off, one of the reasons for having Monty was to help steady my mental health.

"Having a dog encourages you to get up and to get out, to go walking, to do the dog training. He has been amazing."

Steve has spoken about Monty and his journey to becoming a wellbeing support dog for World Mental Health Day, which took place on Thursday 10 October, and for Men's Health Awareness Month during November.

According to the Mental Health Foundation, men account for three quarters of suicide deaths, they report lower life satisfaction than women, but are less likely to access psychological therapies.

Steve said he hoped awareness campaigns such as World Mental Health Day and Men's Health Awareness Month helped reduce the stigma around speaking about emotional and mental wellbeing, particularly among men.

He said: "There's still a lot of work to be done about getting men to speak out, and things like World Mental Health Day and Men's Health Awareness Month do help.

"It can be difficult for men to speak up, and I do worry about the impact of that. "Anything we can do to reduce that stigma has to be a good thing – and hopefully, that's where Monty can come in."

Members can access resources through the Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW) **#AskTwice campaign**, which aims to develop a culture that positively addresses mental health and wellbeing in the police service.

Members are encouraged to ask how their colleagues are and, if they are not convinced by the answer, to ask twice.

The campaign brings together assets to offer support and guidance in areas such as bereavement, financial wellbeing, and suicide.

The online resource will grow over time as new information and advice is added.

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SPECIAL CONSTABLE MAKES POLICING A FAMILY AFFAIR

Already bustling with responsibility, the life of West Mercia Police Federation member Richard (Rich) Rawson grew even busier when he decided the time was right to make his long-standing ambition of joining the Police a reality in 2022.

Deep into a professional journey away from the Force, Rich joined as a Special that October.

Once he had finished training as a Special Constable, he was soon out on the streets of Shrewsbury as part of West Mercia Police's response team for the town's centre and its surrounding areas.

Fulfilling a lifelong dream

"I was fascinated by the Police from a young age. I watched *The Bill* and I wanted to have the skills and sense of duty of a policeman," said Rich, 44.

"I actually applied to join as a regular officer in 2008 but I wasn't successful, and I went into engineering instead. The desire to give it another go was there, but it's not as simple as that when your career goes down a different path – that's why it took 14 years to do so.

"I finally gave some proper thought to becoming a Special, and I realised I could still get a good insight into policing, which is what I always wanted."

Rich, who is currently a project manager for a global professional consultancy in his day job, usually dedicates either a Friday evening or a day at the weekend to his Force, and sometimes even both.

The voluntary cop explained how he negotiates a work-life balance: "As much as people might say you should switch off from work life when you get home, I've found that involving my family in my police commitments reminds me that I'm choosing to do it because I enjoy it."

Dad to Finlay, nine, and Lula, five, Rich will regularly walk through his front door after work as a Special to his children, wanting the details of a shift finished minutes earlier.

"It's lovely that they are enthusiastic about their dad being a police officer. I



Special Constable Rich Rawson with son, Finlay and daughter, Lula.

actually broke the news I was becoming a cop by giving them a package I received from the branch, full of police gear like handcuffs, a helmet and a jacket. I wanted them to open it like a birthday or Christmas present, and they were over the moon when they realised what it meant."

Building a network of trust

Rich credited the support systems he has found within policing, both in the shape of force and federation, for his development as an officer so far.

"It's a really decent team I work with. They welcomed me in from day one and made me feel like a regular officer.

"It's important to have that sense of trust from your colleagues, especially when you're going out on response and into the unknown. Sometimes you fear the worst and it turns out to be fine, and then sometimes it's vice-versa.

"And it's also good to know as a Special that the Federation has your back. It gives you that security to go out and do the best job possible, knowing you have the same protection as everyone else."

As a parent of a young family, however, the father-of-two revealed the decision to join the Special Constabulary was an opportunity that may not have been around forever.

"That moment to become a police officer may have passed. You never know what could have changed in my life if I had put it off by even a couple of years," he said, ending: "I am so glad I joined when I did, and I am really looking forward to seeing where the future takes me."



IT'S IMPORTANT TO HAVE THAT SENSE OF TRUST FROM YOUR COLLEAGUES, ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU'RE GOING OUT ON RESPONSE AND INTO THE UNKNOWN. SOMETIMES YOU FEAR THE WORST AND IT TURNS OUT TO BE FINE, AND THEN SOMETIMES IT'S VICE-VERSA.



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'I LOVED EVERY SECOND'

Travelling to Africa on a charity expedition made for 'one of the best few weeks of my life' says West Mercia Police Federation representative Rob 'Swoosh' Seewoosaha.

Rob and a group of volunteers with emergency service background - a handful of whom were fellow cops from West Mercia - set off to deliver a set of disused ambulances and fire engines to a community in The Gambia.

The mission, which took place in September, was organised by the Emergency Services Aid Charity and involved travelling over land and sea in the vehicles themselves, all the way from the UK to The Gambia in three convoys.

A 3,000 mile challenge

Rob, 49, who was part of the second convoy, made the mammoth journey in an ambulance - which had the nickname 'Lance' - alongside four other volunteers, including Federation member and fundraising partner Chris Fowler.

"It was an absolutely incredible trip. When I met up with everyone at the start and saw the fleet of vehicles all lined up, waiting for us to drive thousands of miles into another continent, I knew it was going to be something special," he said.

“IT WAS AN ABSOLUTELY INCREDIBLE TRIP. WHEN I MET UP WITH EVERYONE AT THE START AND SAW THE FLEET OF VEHICLES ALL LINED UP, WAITING FOR US TO DRIVE THOUSANDS OF MILES INTO ANOTHER CONTINENT, I KNEW IT WAS GOING TO BE SOMETHING SPECIAL.”

"When I first got into 'Lance', it was an exciting but slightly strange feeling, knowing the ambo was going to the place I'd spend most of my life in for the next 20 days.

"The team I was with were a dream, and we were connected through a walkie-talkie to the rest of the convoy, sharing directions, instructions, jokes, stories and quiz questions over the air. The charity trustees who conducted the convoy from start to finish did a sterling job, too - it certainly wasn't always easy."

If they weren't on driving responsibility, the group slept on the front seats and stretcher of the ambulance. When stationary, they slept in tents as they made their way through Southern Europe, reaching Gibraltar, where they would board a ferry taking them to the top of Africa.



Rob with The Gambia's Fire and Rescue Service during the vehicle handover.

A handful of hurdles

But before the fleet could reach its final destination, setbacks had to be dealt with - three days of travel were lost as they faced complications with being granted clearance to continue their journey upon arrival in Morocco.

Torrential rain made a 22-mile dry mud road in Mauritania virtually unpassable,

moments like these. I can honestly say the overall morale never dipped, and I think that is testament to the amazing people I was sharing all of this with."

An overwhelming welcome

After passing through one more country in Senegal, the fleet finally arrived in The Gambia on Saturday 28 September, with all three convoys joining together on the final straight to a jubilant reception from local civilians.

"It's hard for me to describe the feeling I got as we drove through the country in blue lights and sirens, with people coming out of their houses to applaud and wave at us.

"It was an emotional overload, to be honest," Rob added.

"They were so grateful for all of our work and for the vehicles themselves. Delivering this mission to a country with a less developed infrastructure really reminds you of how lucky we are in the UK."

Rob spent the next few days celebrating and socialising before making his way back home on Wednesday 2 October, catching a flight from The Gambia's capital city of Banjul.

He says he left the nation with a strong sense of satisfaction and achievement and also expressed his pride at the £6,070 raised between himself and Chris for the charity.

"I'd like to take this opportunity to thank any Federation members and police colleagues who donated. It's something we will always be grateful for as it enabled us to do this trip."

You can still donate to the Emergency Services Aid Charity by visiting [Rob and Chris' JustGiving page](#).

leading to Rob's convoy becoming stuck for over eight hours and convoy three - which included a four-by-four ambulance car named in honour of late West Mercia officer Andy Boardman - unable to make progress for another three days.

"The continent threw everything at us," Rob explained.

"Border delays, sweltering heat, mosquitos we had to be very careful to avoid, and rain, which we were told there wasn't a drop of for months before in Mauritania, were just a few obstacles.

"We were literally stuck in the mud, and it was only through a lot of perseverance that we pushed the vehicles through to more stable ground with our hands.

"It was a massive physical effort, but what I remember even more fondly was how we kept each other's spirits up through hard

'Veganuary'

ARE YOU READY TO TRY SOMETHING NEW IN 2025?

The turn of the year is often a time when people decide to make changes to their lifestyle.

It could be to improve their health, to make a difference to the environment, or to cut back on expenditure.

West Mercia Police Federation chair Steve Butler, who has been vegan for four years, is encouraging members to consider trying something new in 2025 by participating in 'Veganuary', an annual event that encourages people to eat a plant-based diet during January.

"The increasing pressures on police officers mean that it's more important than ever for our members to look after their wellbeing through exercise and nutrition," says Steve.

The branch's most recent Pay and Morale Survey found that 85 per cent of respondents from West Mercia Police indicated they had experienced feelings of stress, low mood, anxiety, or other difficulties with their health and wellbeing over the last 12 months.

Almost half (47 per cent) said they find their job 'very' or 'extremely' stressful.

More than seven out of 10 (71 per cent) said their overall physical health was 'good' or 'very good'.

And figures released earlier this year showed that 284 officers in West Mercia were off work in the 2023-24 financial year due to mental ill-health.

The figures, revealed by Police Oracle via a Freedom of Information Act request, were up from 229 the previous year.

Steve said: "Policing is still a fantastic job but our members face challenges like no other and it can have its impact on physical

and mental health.

"The Federation continues to campaign on pay and conditions on behalf of our members, and we know it's a key issue affecting officers' health and wellbeing.

"But we can also take steps to look after ourselves.

"I understand the time pressures and demands on officers, but the physical and mental health benefits of regular exercise are well documented which is why I will always encourage members to try to make time for their fitness."

Commenting on the changes he has seen since he decided to become vegan, Steve said: "I feel a lot healthier and a lot calmer.

"And when people talk about the climate and protecting the environment, the production of plant-based foods uses fewer resources and produces far fewer greenhouse gas emissions.

"I gave up meat and dairy and feel I am doing as much as I can do to protect the future generations. The New Year is traditionally a time when people make lifestyle changes, and even the smallest changes can have a big impact."

Steve ended by saying: "I get asked quite often if I find it hard to be a vegan and a police officer. I answer honestly, saying I would find it harder to be a police officer and not be vegan."

HAVE YOU GOT A NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION?

Perhaps you're thinking about trying something new in 2025? We would love to hear from you.

Send us an email:

staff@wmpf.polfed.org

or let us know via social media by searching for 'West Mercia Police Federation'.

FIVE FOODS YOU MIGHT NOT KNOW ARE VEGAN-FRIENDLY!

Are you thinking of trying Veganuary in the New Year, or are you vegan who is looking for some ideas? Here are some popular foods and brands that you may not know are vegan:

- **Cadbury's hot chocolate:** Unlike many instant hot chocolates, Cadbury's original does not contain powdered milk and so is vegan-friendly.
- **Doritos:** For a savoury snack, consider tucking into Chilli Heatwave or Lightly Salted Doritos - both are vegan and deliciously tasty.
- **Some of the country's favourite biscuits:** Fancy a biscuit with your morning tea or coffee? Then most brands of bourbon biscuits are vegan, as are brands like Oreo's original, Fox's party rings, and even McVities plain Hobnobs.



- **Haribos Rainbow Laces:** If you're looking for a sweet fix, then check out Haribos Rainbow Laces - unlike many other Haribos sweets, they don't contain gelatin.
- **Breakfast cereals:** Such as Weetabix and Shreddies are vegan - served with almond, soy, or oat milk, naturally.

Vegan Christmas pudding



This vegan version of the classic Christmas pudding is packed with figs, raisins, sultans and apple. Oh, and a hearty splash of rum.

Ingredients

125g dairy-free margarine. Plus extra for greasing the bowl and paper.

375g dried figs

75ml rum

350g mixed sultanas and raisins

One large eating apple, peeled, cored and grated

85g light brown soft sugar

85g dark brown soft sugar

100g breadcrumbs

100g self-raising flour

0.5 tbsps allspice

Cooking instructions

- Grease a two-litre pudding bowl with dairy-free margarine. Place a disc of baking parchment in the bottom to prevent the top of the pudding from sticking.

- Grease a large sheet of baking parchment and lay it on top of a large sheet of foil, margarine side up. Make a fold in the middle of each sheet
- Chop 125g of the figs and put to one side. Put the remaining figs, the dairy-free margarine and the rum into a large food processor. Blend until smooth-ish, then scrape into a large mixing bowl.
- Add in the chopped figs, sultanas, raisins, grated apple, sugars, breadcrumbs, flour and allspice. Stir everything together before transferring into the pudding basin.
- Cover with the buttered paper-foil sheet, tie with a length of string, and trim.
- Place a saucer upside down into a large saucepan to act as a trivet, and then lower in the Christmas pudding.
- Fill the pan with enough boiling water to reach halfway up the bowl. Cover with a lid and simmer for 3 hrs, topping up the water as needed. Remove and leave to cool. It will keep in a cool, dry cupboard for up to a year.

FED CHAIR LOOKS BACK ON 'INCREDIBLE' NATIONAL POLICE MEMORIAL DAY

West Mercia Police Federation chair Steve Butler was among those attending this year's National Police Memorial Day (NPM) in Glasgow.

Officers who have died in the line of duty were honoured at the Scottish city's Royal Concert Hall, where a congregation of more than 1,000 paid their respects, including fellow Federation leaders, Force colleagues, religious leaders, politicians and families.

Joining Steve was West Mercia Police's Acting Chief Constable Richard Cooper, as the pair represented the region on one of the most significant events of the policing calendar.

Before the service, a parade progressed towards the venue from Glasgow's George Square, featuring standard bearers carrying the flags of various forces as well as the Police Scotland and Scottish Police Federation Pipe Band.

Steve reflected on the event, which took place at the end of September, saying: "It was a touching day, from start to finish. There can never be enough time devoted to the memory of colleagues who are no longer with us, but to have a day where so many people come together for the same sole purpose is very special, I think.

"I really felt for the family and friends who had lost loved ones, especially those who remembered our own from West Mercia - PC Andy Boardman being the most recent.

"And, with me being an officer from the north of the Force, I couldn't help but personally spare a thought for PC Ricky Gray, who died so tragically in 2007 after being shot."

Paying respects on behalf of the Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW) was acting national chair Tiff Lynch at NMPD, which was the 21st of its kind.

Home Secretary Yvette Cooper and Angela Constance, the cabinet secretary for justice and home affairs, were also in attendance.

Next year's National Police Memorial Day will be held on 28 September at Coventry Cathedral.



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