

# federation

West Midlands Police Federation

December 2021/January 2022



## Mat wins regional Police Bravery Award – See Pages 6 and 7

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# Welcome

Welcome to the December 2021/ January 2022 edition of *federation* - the magazine for members of West Midlands Police Federation.

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

Just get in touch and let us know.

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

**Cover photo:** PC Mat Evans (centre) is congratulated by national Federation chair John Apter (left) and Paul Griffiths, president of the Police Superintendents' Association who presented him with a regional Police Bravery Award.

Photo courtesy of Anderson Photography.

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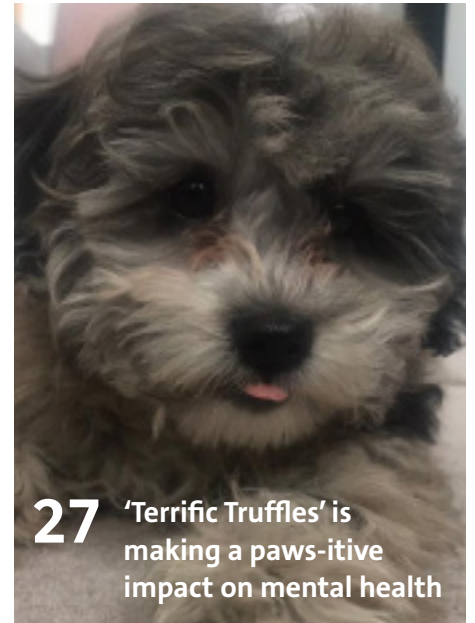
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# We must find ways to seize the agenda



By **Rich Cooke**, chair of West Midlands Police Federation

It feels like a long time since I was last chair of West Midlands Police Federation. So much has happened to me personally and within the job. For me the arrival of a new son, moving house, as well as two years of pandemic policing during which I received one of the nastiest assaults of my career. Being headbutted by an infectious prisoner led to several months of anxious worry, a reminder to me of what colleagues face daily, and what motivates me to want to chair our Federation.

I am truly honoured that now my colleagues and friends have elected me for a second time to be their voice. At the Police

Bravery Awards last week, with our nominee and regional winner PC Mat Evans, I was reminded of the irrepressible character, stoicism and tenacity he personifies, but also that my colleagues show those qualities day in and day out.

It is about time this was recognised with more than warm words though. Actions speak far louder and this Government must stop insulting us on pay, pensions and the dumbing down of frontline policing or reap the consequences to public safety and their own electoral prospects.

The Force has, of course, continued to evolve, but the pressures on us all have not eased; they have grown more acute. Funding is a root cause but I, and many others, question the efficacy of our operating model which has led to deskilling and inflexibility exemplified by the increasing need to cancel rest days in order to police large, but long known of, events and even routine football fixtures.

Police stations which have been the

symbol of authority in local communities for many decades continue to close with another tranche to follow soon. We continue to move further away from the public we police, ever more centralised.

Commensurately, we have become more reactive as a Force. Preventative, visible, proactive community policing is now taking a firm back seat. It seems to be the belief that specialist teams can somehow fill the void left by the demise of local policing; officers who know an area, its criminals and the idiosyncrasies that make each locality a different challenge.

I believe we cannot solve the endemic violence and knife crime in communities up and down the West Midlands without restoring that very intimate knowledge and experience that allows us to act with precision, agility and pace. It only comes from experience, good local intelligence, flexibility and having a local infrastructure to support you - like a custody block.

This is what we urgently need to make

“I believe we cannot solve the endemic violence and knife crime in communities up and down the West Midlands without restoring that very intimate knowledge and experience that allows us to act with precision, agility and pace. It only comes from experience, good local intelligence, flexibility and having a local infrastructure to support you - like a custody block.”

the case for and rediscover. I intend to do this - but I fear it will be a long road. The paradigm shift in Government thinking - to place policing as a top priority, with pay and conditions to match, instead of on a par with departments like overseas development - will take a massive effort to achieve. Nevertheless, it can be done and we in the Federation must never settle for simply managing bad news, rather we must find ways to seize the agenda.

We have seen an influx of student officers which, while very welcome, creates its own pressures and strains. The necessity to rotate student officers frequently is obvious under our operating model, but to constantly cast them to disparate locations of the Force seems to have little logic. I really feel and see the strain enthusiastic, usually young minds, are under. They must combine unique pressures - regular changes of team, physical location and subject matter with ensuring their academic work and assessments are up to date.

And, at the end of it all, most find themselves forced into the office-based working environments of Force CID or PPU as permanent postings after two or three years in the job. If that had happened to me as a 24-year-old newly substantive officer, I'm certain I'd have quit or more likely looked to transfer to another force. That is clearly the danger now and we desperately need to retain our students as well as our experienced older officers.

The continuing uncertainty over pensions is very destabilising to many officers of my generation and beyond. The botched reforms of the last decade and subsequent, ultimately successful, legal challenges, known as "The Pension Challenge" will likely mean that many of us will be entitled to much more valuable pensions, based on our original schemes.

For others it will be a closer weighing of options when the time comes. But now, with a new year approaching, is the time for the Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW) to move beyond the internal conflicts that have raged over this issue during the last seven years. I felt passionately that I had to challenge the Government over the discrimination I suffered, I wish PFEW had done this on my behalf. But the past cannot be changed. As a wise man once said to me: "You can only change what happens tomorrow." The Federation must now come together in a new spirit of activism, and challenge on behalf of its members wherever possible. Risks must be taken in pursuit of big prizes. In my dealings on behalf of West Mids Fed this is exactly what I intend to do.

I wish all our members and their families from all the great faiths and none, a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

## Pensions update

West Midlands Police Federation's Pensions Working Group (PWG) has once again discussed ongoing issues around the introduction of the 2015 CARE Pension Scheme.

Since then Sid James, a Federation workplace representative sitting on the PWG, has been informed the Financial Ombudsman Service (FOS) has upheld a decision by ARC, which was part of the Group Insurance Scheme, not to pay the Leigh Day fees.

Sid explained: "This is disappointing as success would have opened up opportunity for all subscribing members of our Group Insurance Scheme to claim their Leigh Day fees. However, having reviewed the decision, the working group agreed there was no realistic prospect of success in an appeal to the ombudsman."

During the latest PWG meeting, a report from a pensions actuary commissioned by the group was discussed.

This report looked at whether members who were previously in the 2006 pensions scheme would be better having the remedy period in the 2006 scheme or

2015 scheme.

The report indicated that for some members of the 2006 scheme, having the remedy period in the 2015 scheme would increase their pension benefits. The implications of this, particularly in relation to fees for those in the Leigh Day challenge, are being explored.

Sid has also given an update in terms of the online survey of members carried out by the PWG.

He said: "The group are cognisant that there have been limited updates since the results of the survey were revealed. We are aware of the strength of feeling surrounding this area and that the majority of those surveyed feel the Federation should pay some or all of the legal fees for those in the Leigh Day challenge.

"This is not a view that has been dismissed. However, due to the various moving parts and unknowns, including ongoing legal action, we are not in a position to make a decision at this time but please be assured that we are looking to how best we can get our members' wishes realised."

## Officer numbers raised in PMQs

Boris Johnson has come under fire over policing numbers in the West Midlands after insisting the Government was on target to recruit 20,000 new officers across the country.

Coventry MP Colleen Fletcher warned the Force was under "significant pressure" because of the fall in officer numbers over the past 10 years and called on the Prime Minister to provide extra funding.

Addressing the House of Commons at Prime Minister's Questions, Ms Fletcher said West Midlands Police had lost 2,221

officers between 2010 and 2019 and would still be 1,000 officers short even if Mr Johnson's uplift programme achieved its goal.

The Labour MP said: "This lack of frontline officers has left police stretched and under significant pressure with officers actually telling me there are insufficient resources to investigate every crime."

Mr Johnson said the Government remained "on track" to recruit 20,000 police nationally.

- Officer uplift – see Page 11.

## Mental health support: consistency needed

West Midlands Police Federation is urging members not to suffer in silence and welcomed moves to adopt a uniform set of standards for supporting the mental health of officers.

The branch hopes a pledge signed by the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) will break down barriers and stigmas for officers in seeking the support they need.

It follows the Royal Foundation's Emergency Services Mental Health Symposium, which saw 200 leaders from

across police, fire, ambulance, and search and rescue from the four nations come together for the first time to address the mental health of their workforces.

NPCC chair Martin Hewitt signed the Mental Health at Work Commitment, endorsing six standards, including declaring mental health is, and will remain, a strategic priority, and encouraging forces to promote an open culture around mental health.

# Police Bravery Awards 2021

Home Secretary Priti Patel listens to PC Mat Evans' story.

## Mat wins regional Police Bravery Award

A West Midlands Police officer won the regional award for the Midlands at the 2021 Police Bravery Awards after being nominated for tackling a knifeman who stabbed an emergency services worker in the heart.

PC Mat Evans joined fellow nominees from forces across England and Wales at the awards ceremony in London which was also attended by policing minister Kit Malthouse, shadow home secretary Yvette Cooper and Metropolitan Police Commissioner Dame Cressida Dick.

He took along his brother, Richard, as his guest and was also joined at the awards ceremony by Rich Cooke, chair of West Midlands Police Federation, and the Chief Constable Sir David Thompson.

Earlier in the day, Mat and Richard attended a Downing Street reception hosted by Home Secretary Priti Patel.

The Police Federation of England and Wales Bravery Awards 2021 saw winners named in all eight of its regions and then an overall winner was chosen from those.

West Midlands Police Federation is part of Region 4 which also includes Staffordshire, Warwickshire and West Mercia.

Mat was off duty when he witnessed the attack near the Royal London Hospital, in Whitechapel, in October 2019. He immediately intervened, putting himself

between the attacker, Mohammed Alinoor Uddin, and his victim.

The brave officer then chased Uddin as he fled and tackled and disarmed the man, who was high on drink and drugs, before holding him on the ground until Metropolitan Police officers arrived.

Mat was bitten on the hand by Uddin and also abused by a hostile crowd that gathered, with some trying to prevent him from holding the suspect.

He was taken to St Thomas' Hospital in central London to receive treatment for the bite before giving up the rest of his day off to attend Stoke Newington Police Station, meeting the investigation team and providing a recorded witness interview.

His compelling evidence for the Crown Prosecution Service saw Uddin convicted of wounding with intent at The Old Bailey and jailed for 12 years and nine months in March 2020. He had previous convictions for robbery and possessing knives in public.

The victim of the knife attack survived after emergency surgery at the Royal London Hospital.

On being presented with his award by Paul Griffiths, president of the Police Superintendents' Association, Mat talked about the horrific incident, explaining his shock that a crowd of onlookers made no attempt to help him. He also said that when



Mat and his brother Richard inside No 10.

making the decision to tackle the offender, he asked himself: "If not me, then who?"

Rich Cooke said after the ceremony: "I was very honoured to attend the Police Bravery Awards with Mat and his brother. This was one of my first official duties since being re-elected as chair and I could not be more proud.

"Mat, and so many other nominees, played down their efforts, saying they didn't do anything out of the ordinary and they were just doing the job they are paid to do. But, each and every nominee showed just what it is that makes policing and police officers anything but ordinary. Each and every day they put their lives on the line to protect others, often complete strangers, and that is

Photos courtesy of Anderson Photography.



# 'Policing is a big family'

something that everyone – particularly the media and the public – needs to recognise more."

The national Police Bravery Awards 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.



*PC Mat Evans outside the famous black door at Downing Street.*

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 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."

Police Bravery Award winner Matthew Evans has described an extraordinary three days of "non-stop joy" in London where he drank wine in Maggie's Den, swapped old stories with new mates and even got a laugh out of the Home Secretary.

The West Midlands PC brought home the 2021 Regional Award for the Midlands for the courage he showed when disarming a dangerous knifeman when he was off duty during a visit to the capital in October 2019.

The attacker had already stabbed an emergency service worker when Mat intervened, chasing, tackling and disarming the suspect, who was high on drink and drugs, before holding him on the ground until Metropolitan Police officers arrived.

Despite his courageous actions, Mat said he was taken aback when told about his nomination for a Police Bravery Award.

The 42-year-old said: "My first reaction was 'Really?' In the police you never really expect more praise than a pat on the back, a doughnut on your desk and perhaps an email saying 'Well done' from the boss.

"You honestly see your mates doing equally amazing and crazy things every day without batting an eyelid.

"So I got in the headspace that I was going there to represent all of the bobbies I knew around me who are just as worthy in my eyes."

Mat was determined to make the most of his time in London but particularly relished his visit to the heart of Government.

He said: "Visiting Number 10 Downing Street was fantastic. One of the best parts of being in the police is that we get to 'see behind the curtain' of lots of places that the general public rarely do, and this is one of the places I've always wanted to visit.

"I managed to track down an aide who knew all about Number 10 and so secured myself a mini guided tour and it was fascinating to hear all the secrets and details that I'd never heard before.

"It's easy to forget when you see the iconic big black door in the news that it really is the place where it all happens and where the Prime Minister lives.

"And how often do you get to down wine in Maggie Thatcher's old office on the same sofa used by countless world leaders? Not every day."

Mat also got the chance to discuss his award nomination with Home Secretary Priti Patel while he was in Downing Street.

He said: "I was in Number 10 chatting with a colleague when a ministerial aide approached me and said 'the Home Secretary would like to speak to you'. That was a phrase I never imagined hearing.

"So I told Ms Patel my tale and we had a

chat about my 23 years policing Birmingham city centre. I managed to make her laugh a few times and she was very fond of my beard!"

Reflecting on his visit to London and the presentation ceremony itself, Mat said the Police Bravery Awards brought into focus the powerful feelings of mutual respect and kinship which continue to bind the police family.

He said: "The whole three days were a non-stop joy and my Police Federation rep Rich was the perfect host. The highlight, though, was getting to know the other nominees and swapping war stories and jokes. By the end of the three days strangers were mates.

“ Mat is a cracking officer. He is a big presence in Birmingham city centre and was an outstanding nominee for this selfless act. ”

"It was the perfect reminder that the police is a big family, and once you know someone is Job, regardless of rank or background, there's that instant connection. That feeling of mutual respect and kinship was the best bit by far.

"When an event like this is framed as a competition it felt odd because it never felt like anyone was really competing to win or be disappointed when they didn't. All you felt was shock hearing everyone's stories and admiration for the guys and girls who stepped up to deal with them.

"Because we were all police you couldn't help but put yourself in their shoes and feel for them, and think to yourself, 'If that ever happened to me I hope I could do that'.

"But nevertheless it was great to win the regional award. By that point most nominees knew each other to a degree and it didn't feel like you were in a competition, so you could just enjoy it all."

Mat took his brother Richard as his guest and was also joined at the awards ceremony by Rich Cooke, chair of West Midlands Police Federation, and the Chief Constable Sir David Thompson.

Sir David said: "Mat is a cracking officer. He is a big presence in Birmingham city centre and was an outstanding nominee for this selfless act.

"He is one of our finest and thoroughly deserved this recognition at the national awards ceremony."



*PC Paul Newman and wife Emma outside No 10 Downing Street before the reception.*



*PC Holly Necchi with baby Autumn, who was just six days old, and husband Rich at the famous black door.*

# Paul and Holly honoured at bravery awards ceremony





At the Police Bravery Awards 2020 ceremony are (left to right): Chief Constable David Thompson, PC Paul Newman, PC Holly Necchi and the then West Midlands Police Federation chair Jon Nott.

**T**wo brave West Midlands PCs have been recognised at the national Police Bravery Awards for 2020.

PCs Paul Newman and Holly Necchi were joined at the awards ceremony in London by their partners, West Midland Police Federation chair at the time Jon Nott and the Chief Constable, David Thompson.

"I was incredibly proud to accompany our two brave officers to the awards ceremony and to meet their partners," says Jon.

For Holly and Paul, it was one of the first opportunities they had to get together after the event that led to their nomination for the awards.

Paul had feared for his life after chasing a suspect into a water-filled storm drain in the incident in July 2019 but Holly had come to the rescue.

Paul was attacked by the man who had fled a car when officers discovered a loaded handgun and at one point feared his eyes would be gouged out. Holly heard her

colleague's cries for help and it was thanks to her that he survived the attack as he was physically exhausted fighting off his assailant.

The annual Police Bravery Awards, sponsored by Police Mutual, honour some of the finest officers in England and Wales who have performed incredible acts of bravery, while on or off duty.

The 2020 awards, postponed due to the pandemic and finally held on 12 October

*Continued overleaf*

One for the family album... Holly and Autumn were sitting next to the Home Secretary for the official group photograph at No 10.





*Jon Nott, chair of West Midlands Police Federation at the time, outside the gates to No 10 with PC Paul Newman and PC Holly Necchi.*

2021, honoured 93 officers from 42 forces. The overall national winner was PC Stuart Outten from the Metropolitan Police.

He suffered multiple stab wounds and skull fractures, but managed to use his Taser to disable an attacker who was armed with a machete. In the horrific attack, he suffered six deep wounds to his head, skull fractures, and two wounds to his arm and multiple finger fractures.

John Apter, national chair of the Police Federation of England and Wales, 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 Outten and all the Police Bravery Awards

nominees. They deserve every bit of recognition they receive."

Earlier in the day, all the bravery awards nominees attended a Downing Street reception hosted by Home Secretary Priti Patel, with Holly and her husband being accompanied by her six-day-old daughter Autumn, who proved to be a very popular late addition to the guest list.

Holly's due date was the day before the awards, which had been delayed due to the pandemic, but when baby Autumn arrived early, her parents decided to take her along, feeling that it was a once in a life-time opportunity to attend the event.

"The fact that Autumn was able to attend too just made the whole thing extra special and I think everyone, including the Home Secretary, was delighted to welcome her to Downing Street," said Jon, "I am sure Holly will tell her all about her special appearance at the awards in years to come."

## Baby Autumn makes it to Downing Street

When Autumn Buka grows up she will have interesting stories to tell.

At just six-days-old, she was perhaps the youngest guest ever at No 10 Downing Street, and maybe the only baby to be breastfed in Margaret Thatcher's study.

Her Mum, Holly Necchi, was unsure if she would make the twice postponed Police Bravery Awards 2020. Autumn was actually due on the day before the awards, so when she arrived a week early it was still touch and go as to whether Holly could make the trip to London.

"I rang the Federation chair, Jon Nott, a few days after Autumn arrived and it was agreed that my parents would come down to London with me and my husband, Rich, so that they could look after her while I was at the awards," Holly explained.

"As Rich and I took Autumn into Downing Street, we were asked if we needed anything and I just said all I needed was somewhere to feed her. I wasn't really expecting to be shown Margaret Thatcher's study so that was all very surreal.

"But Autumn was quite happy, I carried her in a sling and she was given a little pat on the head by the Home Secretary Priti Patel who had a chat with us about how she was doing. It's quite strange to think that Autumn met the Home Secretary before she met one of her grandfathers as Rich's Dad hadn't been able to see her at that point."

During the evening awards, Autumn was left safely in the care of her grandparents and Holly was able to pop to the hotel room for feeds.

"I was a bit anxious leaving her as she was only days old, but being able to go up and check helped me relax," says Holly, "So I was talking to the Chief Constable about the incident one minute and then going back to Autumn the next."

Holly said she totally enjoyed the evening, and particularly catching up with Paul who she had barely seen since the incident for which they were nominated for the awards.

The two brave officers are on different shifts and Holly has also had time away from work as she gave birth to her son Joseph (Joey) 18 months ago.

"It was really good to talk to Paul and he and his family have since been to see us, bringing a present for Autumn too," said Holly.



*John Apter, national chair of the Federation, addresses guests at the awards evening.*



*Home Secretary Priti Patel presented one of the awards.*



# PCCs urged to act

**P**olice and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) must do all they can to ensure funds are available to give police officers the significant pay rise they deserve.

That is the view of Tim Rogers, interim secretary at West Midlands Police Federation, who was speaking after the Chancellor confirmed that the public sector pay freeze would be lifted.

"On the face of it, this is really good news for police officers and other public sector workers," says Tim, "But the sceptical part of me questions what this will actually mean.

"Police officers' pay deal is considered by the Police Remuneration Review Body, a supposedly independent body which considers submissions from various interested parties and then makes a recommendation on any uplift to the Government.

"But there are two crucial factors that we should not forget. The review body is given a remit by the Government and this year it was told not to consider putting

forward a pay rise. Maybe next year the Government will say that it can only consider a pay increase of up to four per cent. But also we must remember that the Government can reject any recommendations put before it.

"I think we also have to make sure that Police and Crime Commissioners get behind police officers. They too must do their bit to make sure officers are given a significant pay rise next year, one that reflects their role in society, the work they did in the pandemic and the fact that with the rising cost of living they are in danger of once again having a real terms pay cut if there is not a proper uplift."

Tim explained that with the current Home Office funding settlement PCCs have the flexibility to increase funding in each year of the Spending Review 2021 period, which includes 2022-2023 and 2024-2025, with a £10 million council tax referendum limit.

If all PCCs in England and Wales were to

take full advantage of this flexibility, this would raise up to an extra £774 million by 2024-25 based on current forecasts.

"Clearly, PCCs can raise additional funds if they need to and we hope that this is something they are actively considering. As a Federation, we will be raising this issue with our own PCC, Simon Foster, and calling on him to do all he can to support officers," says Tim.

“On the face of it, this is really good news for police officers and other public sector workers, but the sceptical part of me questions what this will actually mean.”



## Extra officers welcomed

West Midlands Police has taken on 867 new recruits under Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Police Uplift Programme, according to the latest figures.

Statistics from the Home Office showed the Force had 7,558 frontline officers at the end of last month with new recruits joining up as part of the Government scheme to boost numbers by 20,000 nationwide by 2023.

Jon Nott, chair of West Midlands Police Federation at the time of the announcement, welcomed the rise in officer numbers but said the headcount was still well short of pre-austerity levels.

He said: "Officer numbers have fallen dramatically over the last decade. At the end of March 2010, we had more than 8,600 officers. So, while it is good to see the trend being reversed and we

welcome the uplift, the reality is we are only replacing officers we have already lost and even with the uplift, the levels will not return to those we had before the funding cuts were introduced under austerity.

"And during that time there has been a growth in new and emerging offences such as cyber-crime and online fraud and so much more is expected of the police service generally.

"Policing was stretched to the limit during the coronavirus pandemic and low officer numbers, combined with negative media coverage and then the zero per cent pay offer, has had a massive negative impact on morale.

"We all want a positive, proactive and effective police service and while we generally welcome the uplift, we need to recognise there is much more to be done."



The new Home Office figures showed a provisional headcount of 139,908 officers in England and Wales at the end of September with 11,053 recruited from funding for the uplift programme.

A further 421 additional officers have been recruited through other funding streams such as local council tax precepts during the same period.

# Marathon runners help raise £61,000



Sharon Johnson (centre) and her group of close supporters cross the finish line hand in hand.

It had been almost two years in the planning, the event had been cancelled three times and there were lingering fears it could be put back again, but a team of determined runners finally managed to take part in the Liverpool Rock 'n' Roll Marathon and Half Marathon and in doing so have helped raise almost £61,000 for a charity fund set up in the name of former West Midlands Assistant Chief Constable Chris Johnson.

Heading up the team for the event on 24 October was Chris' wife, Sharon, who had never run a half marathon before but

completed the distance to recognise the daily strength shown by her husband and others who have Motor Neurone Disease.

"We have no idea of the final number of people running as part of our team, but I would say there were at least 250 of us," says Sharon, "We were all split up in different pens and we also have no idea who ran the fastest but I think at least half were non-runners or first time half or full marathon runners which is just amazing.

"The starting line was just incredible; we were quite far back, all split up but I was with my friends and colleagues and, just before we



A runner offers Sharon support and friendship.

started, we realised we had hit our fundraising target – which was £43,660 before the race. We all just erupted and everyone round us just looked as if we were mad.

"It was very emotional with it being a long time coming and postponed three times. It was a relief to be there and I really don't think I thought it would happen until I crossed that start line.

"The atmosphere was electric. I can't describe it as I've never felt anything like it before and I was asked if I was nervous but I

“The atmosphere was electric. I can't describe it as I've never felt anything like it before and I was asked if I was nervous but I wasn't. I was just so excited - like a kid at Christmas.”



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Sharon said training around Bromsgrove, with its hills, made the course easier than it would have been otherwise but she had to dig deep for the final four miles of the distance.

"For that part of the route, there are no spectators until about half mile to the end, and you have the wind in your face as you run along the edge of the Mersey. But that last mile was tough, every step I thought of Chris and all those amazing people with MND and every step was for them. I ran with four girls all the way round and for the last half mile we linked hands, held them in the air, listened to the crowd cheering us on and that pushed me. We crossed the finish line together and it was very, very emotional," she explained.

Among the team was West Midlands Chief Superintendent Kim Madill who lost her cap during the run and had to run back to get it. From outside the Force, Grace Kelly joined the runners as she lost a family member to MND. She has long Covid but still managed to run her first full marathon.



Sharon Johnson (fourth from the left) and members of the team.

diagnosis and the mention of raising awareness of MND and some fundraising I knew I had to be a part of it.

"The courage and inspiration of Chris and Sharon meant I was never going to miss out on being part of this amazing event even if the date changes meant I had to take my eight-year-old son with me.

"I thoroughly enjoyed every minute of being part of Liverpool 2021, being with colleagues and friends for a great cause and, of course, the half Marathon itself. An amazing day with amazing people, one that I'll never forget."

Sharon has admitted fitting in the training in the run up to the event was tough.

"There were times when I really didn't want to go out and run," she admitted, "But it's become my passion. For the time I'm running, I can forget briefly about everything. I had to make sure Chris was OK to leave and when I get back in I'm straight back to Mum, wife, carer... but it really helps mentally.

"My training mates have been fantastic. They've been with me from the start. Lucy Brown I've known for years as my daughter Katie and her son Harrison were born a week apart. Her husband Michael is a huge support as well and more than happy to help. Sally Duff is an amazing lady, she has three children and still finds time. But most of all, Kristal Taylor has been a rock. I hadn't met her before this, but Chris knew her. She

literally lives round the corner and I've found a friend for life. She's amazing. We've done all our training together and she's a massive support."

The £60,914.05 raised, boosted by funds raised through a charity song and raffle organised by Inspector Chris Jones, will be split between the Motor Neurone Disease Association (MNDA) and Primrose Hospice in Bromsgrove, both of which have supported the Johnson family.

MNDA helps funds research into the disease as well as helping families who are living with MND to live well.

David Burrell, chief executive officer of Primrose Hospice, where Sharon is an ambassador, said: "The money raised has already supported the hospice to increase services during Covid and this includes more nursing staff and increased hours for family support counsellors.

"This investment has meant we can continue to support everyone who needs our services whenever they need them. It has also helped us develop some new services including a 12-week programme for patients in our day therapy unit and some new support groups for people before and after bereavement."

As for Sharon, she does not see crossing the finish line of the half marathon as the end of her fund-raising.

"Watch this space - I haven't finished yet," she said.

*Feature continued overleaf*

“ I ran with four girls all the way round and for the last half mile we linked hands, held them in the air, listened to the crowd cheering us on and that pushed me. ”

Sally Duff, project manager for Coventry City of Culture, was also getting over Covid and had finally tested negative the day before. Struggling with her chest, she still managed to finish as did Nick Moorehouse who has a knee injury but completed the half despite not training.

Rob Gough, a PC at ECU, ran the full with an injury but had to wear trainers to work for two weeks to relieve the pressure. It worked until the 12th mile so he had to run/walk the rest of it but was determined to finish.

Joining other serving officers taking part in the event was West Midlands Police Federation workplace representative Rod Rose who said afterwards: "I've known Sharon and Chris since I started on the old E3 OCU in September 1994. I consider them good friends and when I heard about Chris'

# Jake beats Covid to complete the distance

PC Jake Roberts overcame a bout of Covid-19 to complete the Liverpool Rock 'n' Roll half-marathon.

Jake said he was "on the back foot" going into the event after contracting Covid in late July and not being able to return to training until early September.

But despite that, the North Wales Police officer was determined to get round for Chris, his wife Sharon and everyone with motor neurone disease (MND) and their families.

"I won't lie," said Jake, who has previously run half marathons, 10ks, fell races and endurance events, "I felt nervous on the day as I hadn't run more than eight miles on the lead up to this race but I was highly motivated to do it for Chris and Sharon.

"To give me that extra boost I made sure I said hello to Chris, who I found sitting at the start line, and also to Sharon as I had promised her a hug over a year ago.

"I felt good around halfway but began to feel the burn around mile 10, which began to deteriorate as I edged closer to the finish.

"However, as I chipped away at the final couple of miles I bumped into other #WMPMND runners and we all motivated each other to keep going.

"This was one of the best events I have ever run as I felt part of a really close-knit team, who are all striving for the same goal and that was to raise money for MNDA and the Primrose Hospice and also raise awareness of MND.

"I'd now class Sharon and Chris as good friends and I hope to visit them in the Midlands in the not too distant future."

It was an email from West Midlands Police about the team taking part in the Liverpool Rock 'n' Roll marathon which prompted Jake to initially make contact with Sharon to offer his support and encouragement for the event.

"I said I would really like to be a part of this marathon," reports Jake, who has been a police officer for eight years. "This is because of the diagnosis of both ACC Johnson, and the subsequent diagnosis of one of my role models, the Leeds Rhinos

# Inspired by people with MND



*Kat McKinlay.*

Three weeks after running the London Marathon, Kat McKinlay completed the Liverpool Rock 'n' Roll Marathon – and finished more than 30 minutes quicker.

Police staff member Kat joined more than 250 other West Midlands Police officers and staff, and other supporters, for the race around the streets of Merseyside.

It was the stories of people affected by motor neurone disease (MND) that inspired her to take part in the Liverpool race.

Kat said: "I first became aware of MND when I watched a BBC documentary about a chap called Simon Binner.

"Simon had MND and what impacted me the most was the unimaginable suffering the disease had, not only on him, but his friends and family.

rugby league player Rob Burrow.

"I can't imagine the pain he must be experiencing. With events like this, we as a policing family need to stick together and support each other."

The Rock 'n' Roll half marathon was his third, having previously completed similar events at Chester and Conwy.

He began training on 1 January, with the goal of running the Chester half marathon the week before the Liverpool event. However, as Jake explained, training has been difficult throughout, even before he was struck down with Covid.

"I had a couple of setbacks," he confessed. "I suffered with shin splints and calf strain as a result of pushing myself too hard, too early.

"Personally, I never knew anyone who'd been diagnosed with the disease until I heard about Chris Johnson.

"I didn't know him really well, but he had been my senior officer on a couple of projects, and friends who knew him had always spoken highly of him.

"So, after a couple of drinks one evening when a close friend mentioned there was a fundraising opportunity for MNDA and Primrose Hospice, I said to count me in.

"I'd always been okay at cross-country at school but had only tested this out once in adulthood when I ran the Birmingham Half Marathon in 2015.

"During lockdown, I applied for the London Marathon and was lucky to secure a ballot place in this year's event on 3 October.

"With the #WMPMND run scheduled for only three weeks later, I decided – with a month to go – to upgrade my Liverpool place to a full marathon too.

"Although London was a tick off the bucket list, I have to say the Liverpool event was amazing.

"I was very fortunate to stand by Chris at the half marathon start line and wave off everyone in yellow.

"Seeing him gave me that extra boost when things got tough on my run, resulting in me finishing over 30 minutes quicker than in London.

"The support and friendship everyone has given each other, both on race day and the last two years, has been truly amazing.

"I'm proud to have raised £1,600 while creating so many wonderful memories with old and some new friends."

Training around my work schedule was tough, so I tried to fit some training in during work hours, depending on staff levels and how busy the shift was.

"For motivation, I watched the testimonial rugby match with Rob Burrow several times, watched a number of videos regards ACC Johnson and other courageous human beings like Doddie Weir.

"I also monitored the updates on the West Midlands MND Facebook page.

"I'd just like to say well done to everyone who ran at Liverpool," he concluded, "I'd also like to say a massive thank you to all those people who donated, or who are supporting the cause in other ways."



# Merseyside Chief joins runners

Ten years after her first and last half marathon, Merseyside Police Chief Constable Serena Kennedy was inspired to pound the streets of Liverpool and raise money for charity.

Serena joined officers and staff from forces across the country inspired by former West Midlands Assistant Chief Constable Chris Johnson to take on the Liverpool Rock 'n' Roll Marathon and Half Marathon.

“I'd met Chris at Ryton and knew of his story so I signed up. I convinced my friend Claire – a teacher who I run with every weekend – to join me on the challenge.”

Serena said: “Chief Constable Carl Foulkes of North Wales Police told me that more than 250 West Midlands Police staff would be descending on Liverpool and that it would be nice if North West Forces could show some support.

“I'd met Chris at Ryton and knew of his story so I signed up. I convinced my friend Claire – a teacher who I run with every weekend – to join me on the challenge. She agreed, thank goodness!”

“It's been lovely being part of the WMPMND family. I joined the Facebook page and have followed people's training and how well they've been doing.

“Through Facebook I've virtually met Sharon and seen the impact that MND is having on the family, which has been a real motivator to keep training and keep getting sponsorship.

“We joined in some of the other virtual running events that have been held over the past 20 months and it's been great to see everybody achieving these events together.

“Claire and I run every Saturday and Sunday with our dogs. We've been running together on the Leeds Liverpool canal for about 12 years.

“We put the world to rights and plod along, running about five miles each

time. We say it's essential time for our mental health, to debrief the week we've had and get refreshed for the week ahead.

“In the year we both turned 40, we decided we would tick running a marathon off our bucket list. We ran our first half marathon 10 years ago at Blenheim Palace. It was October and was about 80 degrees.

“This was a preparatory run for the Manchester Marathon in April 2011, the first Manchester Marathon that there had been in about 10 years.

“It was declared a critical incident by North West Ambulance Service because of the number of casualties on the route due to the appalling weather conditions.

“So 10 years after our last marathon we ran our second half marathon.”

## Young fundraisers

Joining the adult runners in taking part in the event, were a number of children who ran a mile.

Among them was Amara (7), daughter of Lucia Leon who has worked with Chris Johnson in the past.

Lucia said afterwards: “Mummy asked me if I wanted to run in Liverpool and I said yes because I wanted to support Chris and to help motor neurone disease. I felt very proud and happy when I finished my race. It was tough but I felt like everybody was cheering me on and by my side. I love my medal and will remember the time I helped saved lives.”



Young one-mile runners.

## 'I knew I had to be part of it'

After collapsing and waking up in A & E the last time he took on a half marathon, Detective Chief Inspector Rod Rose had his own personal challenge to face at the Liverpool event.

But with his friendship with Chris Johnson and his wife Sharon stretching back 27 years, Rod, a workplace Federation representative and member of the West Midlands Police Federation Branch Board, knew it was a challenge he would have to overcome.

He explained: “I've known Sharon and Chris since I started on the old E3

organised crime unit in September 1994, 27 years ago now.

“I consider them good friends and when I heard about Chris' MND diagnosis, the mention of raising awareness of MND and some fundraising I knew I had to be a part of it.

“The last time I ran an official half marathon in Birmingham I collapsed just after the 10 mile marker and woke up in City Hospital A & E, so I had a personal mental block to overcome too.

“The courage and inspiration of Chris and Sharon meant I was never going to miss

out on being part of this amazing event, even if the date changes meant I had to take Dexter, aged eight, with me.

“He was kindly looked after by Gareth Taylor and Chris Johnson while I ran. They spoil him and he now knows a new swear word that I had to try and explain to him on the way home upon his request.

“I thoroughly enjoyed every minute of being part of Liverpool 2021, being with colleagues and friends for a great cause and, of course, the half marathon itself. It was an amazing day with amazing people, one that I'll never forget.”

Then West Midlands Police Federation chair Jon Nott (left) with Phil Kingsley at the awards ceremony.



# Phil wins Diamond Award

"Humbled" Phil Kingsley says he is still in disbelief after being named "Police Officer of the Year" at the annual Force Diamond Awards.

He clinched the title, which is sponsored by West Midlands Police Federation, having faced a number of challenges since joining the Force 18 years ago including being run over by a drunk driver.

Phil, who was nominated by his former sergeant, says the award is even more poignant following such a tough 18 months.

"When I found out I had been nominated, I was shocked. A friend texted to tell me. Then I found out I'd made the top three and I was so surprised, in a good way," recalls Phil.

"It's been a challenging few years for everyone. Without a doubt, I have received this award on behalf of the whole team."

The Police Officer of the Year award falls under "Employee of the Year", a category that is sponsored by the Police Federation and recognises outstanding service by individuals who go over and above what is required by their job.

Phil received his award at this year's ceremony, which took place on 30 September - the first in two years, after last year's event was cancelled due to the ongoing pandemic.

"I still can't believe I won," added Phil, whose wife joined him at the event.

The father-of-four and grandfather-of-one added: "My wife was straight on social media. So everyone knew I had won straight

away, my phone was going mad all night. My family were all very proud of me."

Phil's award comes five years after he was run over by a drunk driver while on duty.

"We stopped a car that we thought had the drunk driver in, but it turned out to be a man who had done a double shift at his family restaurant and was just tired. We told him to get himself a coffee and make sure he got home in one piece and then the next thing we knew, a drunk driver had ploughed into us," he explains.

“I'm very lucky to do the job I do.”

Phil, who was seriously injured as a result of the incident and is still managing those injuries, was off work for 12 months, but admits he returned back to the job as soon as he could.

"The officer I was working with couldn't go back to the job," he added, "But I knew I'd rather be on the frontline than sitting behind a desk. Plus, I'd never had a day off, so sitting at home recovering in a comfy chair just wasn't for me."

Another highlight of Phil's career was when he managed to track down and arrest an offender who had violently attacked a sex worker.

"I watched the footage on grainy CCTV but could see someone had dragged a woman out of her car and was pretty much using her as a football. We managed to track him down and arrest him," he added.

"The thing is, when I'm passionate about making a difference, I can get a bit obsessed – in fact, I can probably be a bit of a nightmare to work with – but everyone knows that.

"I'm lucky that I've always been part of a good team. This award wasn't just for me, it's for my colleagues too."

Working as part of the neighbourhood team that covers Smethwick, Phil says he is always keen to get to know the community and helping to improve their lives.

"We arrested a group of drug dealers and got them evicted from the house. The estate is nice now and all the residents are really grateful to us," said Phil.

"It's nice when we can make lives better. We try to get into the families nice and early, doing home visits to those kids we know have an interest in joining the police. We really like to engage with the youngsters."

Now 53, Phil says making that major career change almost two decades ago was the best thing he ever did.

He ended: "I'm very lucky to do the job I do."



# West Midlands Police Federation

## Review of the year



### January

**6** A shortage of detectives means that many are working excessive hours, giving up rest days, missing time with their families and still having to deal with some of the most traumatic investigations, says then West Midlands Police Federation chair Jon Nott. Jon, who is also deputy secretary of the Police Federation's National Detectives' Forum (PFNDF), spent much of his career as a detective before becoming a full-time Federation official in November 2019. He was commenting during a month-long Federation focus on detectives.

**8** Giles Dean says police officers are in a unique position to make a difference to people's lives as he prepared for retirement after almost 30 years in uniform. Giles, who chaired the West Midlands Police Federation Health and Safety Committee, was speaking as he looked back over a career which began in 1991 when John Major was Prime Minister and (Everything I Do) I Do It For You was number one in the charts.



**12** A West Midlands Police officer who was racially abused as a child became Britain's first football hate crime officer. PC Stuart Ward, who has been a response officer for 12 years, vowed to improve the ability to investigate offences against players and fans.



**21** West Midlands Police Federation called for offenders who weaponise Covid-19 to be jailed. Branch chair at the time Jon Nott said figures released by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) showed the extent of the problem and called for urgent action to protect officers.

**27** The Police Federation highlighted its calls for changes to how long it takes to conclude investigations of complaints against officers as part of a Government inquiry into the role and remit of the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC). Conduct and performance chair Phill Matthews commented on issues surrounding the complaint process in a blog on the Federation's website as he prepared to appear in front of the Home Affairs Select Committee.

**29** West Midlands Police Federation chair at the time Jon Nott welcomed the latest police recruitment figures. He described the news as a promising start after the Force had an uplift of 357 officers in the first year of the Government's campaign to boost officer numbers nationwide by 20,000 over a three-year period. The figures released by the Home Office show there were 7,048 officers in the Force as at 31 December 2020, up from 6,691.

**357**  
officer  
uplift

### February

**1** The Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW) called for a three per cent pay rise as part of its annual submission to the Police Remuneration Review Body (PRRB).

**3** West Midlands Police Federation chair at the time Jon Nott called for police misconduct investigations to be speeded up for the benefit of officers and the taxpayer. Jon said that too many officers are being left in limbo by being put through protracted probes by the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) and local Professional Standards Departments (PSD).

**17** West Midlands officers decided they couldn't let a special local resident's 100th birthday go unnoticed. Lilian Greenway is a resident at Heartlands Care and Nursing home in Yardley,

Birmingham but has no close family. So a staff member took to social media to ask for cards and well wishes for the milestone birthday.

Almost 9,000 birthday cards and gifts from around the world arrived as a result and West Midlands Police took the opportunity to make her birthday even more memorable by hand delivering cards and a watercolour painting of Acocks Green police station by budding artist PC Alan Davis.



The planned West Midlands Police Museum was given a £1 million National Lottery Heritage Fund grant. The museum's displays will tell the stories of prisoners and staff, including the real "peaky blinders" who were imprisoned in Birmingham's Victorian Lock-Up on Steelhouse Lane.

### March



Plans were unveiled for new welfare facilities for officers deployed to major incidents and events or while preserving scenes. West Midlands Police Federation, in a joint initiative with the Force, ordered a welfare van that would be fitted out so that it provides a warm and dry place to take a break and somewhere to make a hot drink or light refreshments.

*Feature continued on Page 18*

**17** Police Federation chair John Apter said it was vital that officers continued to work with politicians as he and Home Secretary Priti Patel acknowledged the strengthening relationship between the Federation and the Government. John's comments come after Ms Patel praised the Police Federation in a Parliamentary debate during the second reading of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill.



The Home Secretary told MPs: "We do ask our brave police officers to do the most difficult of jobs. They run towards danger to keep us all safe. That is why I've worked closely with the Police Federation in developing this bill."

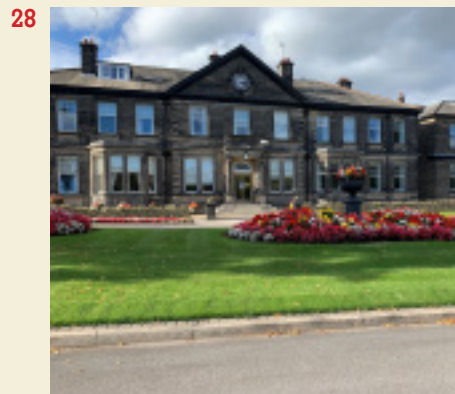
**23** West Midlands Police Federation supported the National Day of Reflection. The event marked a year to the date that Prime Minister Boris Johnson told everyone to stay at home when announcing a national lockdown to try to halt the spread of Covid-19. A minute's silence was held to remember all those who lost their lives during the pandemic.

## April



**14** Steve Grange welcomed a mental health toolkit launched by mental health charity Mind and designed specifically to support police officers and other emergency service workers during the ongoing pandemic.

**20** Police forces were praised for their 'immediate and decisive' action in responding to the extreme circumstances of the pandemic in a report from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS).



The Police Treatment Centres (PTC) re-opened their doors after being temporarily forced to close due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The re-opening of the centres coincided with the hand-over of the new Clinical Services Wing, a multi-million-pound project that increased the number of bedrooms at the Harrogate centre by 20.

## May

**10** A West Midlands PC named as the Force's 'Dog Handler of the Year' promised to share his award with four-legged sidekick Vapour. PC Andy Rudnicki clinched the title after being nominated by his colleagues as a dedicated member of the team.

**11** Former West Midlands Police Federation chair Jon Nott congratulated Simon Foster after he was elected as the region's new Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC).

**11** Two West Midlands Police officers were honoured at the prestigious Pride of Birmingham Awards for the unique contributions they make to their communities. Frontline officer Emad Choudhury, who is also an Imam at his local mosque, received the Emergency Services Award while Skye Morden, who has served with WMP for 20 years and recently came out as a transgender woman, received a Special Recognition Award.

**20** West Midlands dog handler PC Paul Hopley received the Force's "Dog Action of the Year" Award, alongside police dog Stark and told how "incredibly proud" he was of his four-legged partner.



**28** West Midlands Police Federation called for assaults on police officers to be punished with the maximum sentences available under new guidelines.



## June

**9** The Police Federation's annual national conference got underway and was being held online for the first time. The theme of the conference was Policing Under Pressure and during the two-day event leading figures in policing were involved in discussions on a wide range of issues such as assaults on officers, trial by media, policing protests and police driver legislation. Conference highlights included Prime Minister Boris Johnson's surprise virtual address to open the conference and speeches by Home Secretary Priti Patel and Federation chair John Apter.



**10** West Midlands Police Federation deputy secretary Tim Rogers was on the panel of experts discussing Driving Change at the annual Police Federation conference, which was held virtually. Tim, the Federation's national pursuits and driver training lead, said: "We know that roads policing and the treatment of officers is a huge issue for many of our members. We're making big strides with our campaign work and are having an impact at all levels from Government down but there's still plenty of work to do and we'll keep campaigning in the best interests of our members."



**12** West Midlands PC Stewart (Stew) Bladen was awarded the Queen's Police Medal (QPM) in the Queen's Birthday Honours.







The latest West Midlands Police pup recruits were named after inspirational figures affected by motor neurone disease (MND), including former Assistant Chief Constable Chris Johnson. The Springer spaniel pups have been named after the 'MND Heroes' as a tribute to them and to mark MND Awareness Day yesterday (21 June) with one named Cheeky in honour of Chris as that is the nickname his colleagues gave him.



A West Midlands Police detective told of her passion for helping to raise awareness of female genital mutilation (FGM) and how she has raised thousands to help the cause. DC Gill Squires, who has been with the Force for 28 years, started working in the Public Protection Unit (PPU) as policy lead for honour-based abuse, forced marriages and FGM back in 2009.

## July

2 Police drivers could find themselves at further risk of prosecution under new legislation designed to offer them better protection unless MPs act now, according to Tim Rogers, the Federation's pursuits and driver training lead.

Tim had already implored Home Secretary Priti Patel to ensure that the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, which was due before Parliament again, is truly fit for purpose in terms of the protection it seeks to offer police drivers.

8 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) published an interim report into how effectively the police engage with women and girls. It said there was an epidemic of offending against women and girls, for example, an estimated 1.6 million women in England and Wales experienced domestic abuse in the 12 months to March 2020.

But it said it was not just down to the police to tackle the problem with other partners such as the Crown Prosecution Service, health, social care and education also needing to be involved.

26 A survey revealed more than three quarters of police officers experienced mental health or wellbeing difficulties over the past year. The devastating impact of policing during the coronavirus pandemic was highlighted in a report from the Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW) which followed a survey of 12,471 rank and file police officers.

27 The Police Federation sent a letter to Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Chancellor Rishi Sunak expressing the anger members feel towards the Government after a pay freeze was announced. National chair John Apter delivered the letter, which was also copied to Home Secretary Priti Patel, to Downing Street.



It followed a motion of no confidence in the Home Secretary and the withdrawal of support for the Police Remuneration Review Body which was branded "not fit for purpose" after a bitterly-opposed pay freeze for officers earning more than £24,000-a-year was confirmed.



Prince Charles attended the unveiling of a memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum (NMA) dedicated to police officers who have lost their lives on duty. The UK Police Memorial at the NMA in Alrewas, Staffordshire is a magnificent 12-metre sculpture that will provide a place for loved ones, friends, colleagues and members of the public to go to remember fallen officers.

## August

1 A West Midlands Police Special Constable who died from the injuries he sustained after being struck by a vehicle while on duty was honoured at Care of Police Survivors (COPS) ceremony at the National Memorial Arboretum. Resham Singh Nahal (53) was badly hurt in the collision in November 2019 and died from complications on 26 June 2020.



Resham was cited alongside 26 other fallen officers on the roll of honour read out at the poignant outdoor service in Staffordshire.



Feature continued on Page 20



**13** West Midlands Police Federation secretary Steve Grange has been presented with a Chief Constable's Award ahead of his retirement. Steve spent three decades with the Force and represented members of the Police Federation for 15 years.

**19** A former West Midlands Police officer who served the Force for 20 years celebrated his 103rd birthday. Douglas Stewart reflected on his time as an officer and said policing now and back in his own day was "like comparing chalk and cheese".



A report into the use of Tasers was criticised by the then West Midlands Police Federation chair Jon Nott. The Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) considered 101 incidents involving Taser in a five-year period when the devices were deployed almost 100,000 times in the same period. The IOPC reviewed cases where it had carried out investigations, but Jon warned it did not give an accurate, or representative, view of how Taser is used.

## September

### Reps@work

**3** Twenty-five new workplace representatives were welcomed onto the West Midlands Police Federation Branch Council following the recent elections. They joined the 25 existing reps who successfully stood for re-election.



When Amelia Asquith attended her attestation ceremony after joining the Force in a ground-breaking initiative there was one person taking a special interest from the back of the room. Amelia is the daughter of Superintendent Phil Asquith who attended the attestation to proudly watch her follow in his footsteps.

**14** Moves to allow Special Constables to join the Police Federation will ensure their voices are heard, says West Midlands branch chair Jon Nott.

The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill includes provision for Specials to subscribe to the Police Federation for the first time. It is currently going through Parliament and is set to become law early next year.

**26** Police forces in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland joined together to remember fallen colleagues at the National Police Memorial Day service at Lincoln Cathedral. Jon Nott, then chair of West Midlands Police Federation, attended the service along with Helen Walker whose husband Mac died on 4 October 2001 when his West Midlands police motorcycle was deliberately rammed by the driver of a car that he was attempting to stop after it went through a red light.

**27** West Midlands Police Federation chair at the time Jon Nott took part in an annual Act of Remembrance Service at Lloyd House. The service was organised to follow on from the previous day's National Police Memorial Day, as there were only limited places available at the service at Lincoln Cathedral.

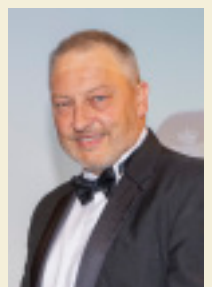
## October

**7** A pensions input evening is laid on for members of West Midlands Police Federation. National Federation vice-chair Ché Donald and secretary Alex Duncan discussed the current timeline in relation to the remedy process being looked at by the Government and issues that have been raised by the staff associations and others.



**12** Two brave West Midlands PCs were recognised at the national Police Bravery Awards for 2020. PCs Paul Newman and Holly Necchi were joined at the awards ceremony in London by their partners, West Midlands Police Federation chair at the time Jon Nott and the Chief Constable, David Thompson. Holly also took along her six-day-old daughter Autumn to the event.

**14** "Humbled" Phil Kingsley said he was in disbelief after being named "Police Officer of the Year" at the annual Force Diamond Awards. He clinched the title, which is sponsored by West Midlands Police Federation, having faced a number of challenges since joining the Force 18 years ago including being run over by a drunk driver.





**20** A West Midlands Police officer told how she ran this year's Virgin Money London Marathon in memory of her brother, world judo champion Craig Fallon, who took his own life following his battle with depression. PC Tina Fallon-Hancock completed the 26-mile route to raise more than £4,400 for mental health charity Mind.



**24** A team of determined runners, including officers and staff from the Force, took part in the Liverpool Rock 'n' Roll Marathon and Half Marathon to help raise almost £61,000 for a charity fund set up in the name of former West Midlands Assistant Chief Constable Chris Johnson.

**27** A row broke out over the disparity in payments being made to officers deployed to the COP26 United Nations climate change summit in Glasgow. Officers, including around 450 from West Midlands Police, were held in reserve for the whole time they were in Scotland and had to be available to be deployed within four hours on their rest days. But the Federation argued this meant officers could not get proper rest days since it placed unreasonable and uncompensated restrictions on them.

**28** Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) were urged by West Midlands Police Federation interim secretary Tim Rogers to do all they could to ensure funds were available to give police officers the significant pay rise they deserve.

## November

**1** The annual Police Federation pay and morale survey was launched. Members are urged to take part.

**8** A West Midlands Police sergeant who organised a run which has raised almost £2,000 for Cancer Research UK in honour of a colleague who is battling the disease described how he was "blown away" by the support and generosity of fellow officers and friends. Matt Cooper's friend and colleague PC Donna Kelly was diagnosed with breast cancer in July 2020 and has undergone surgery, eight rounds of chemotherapy and radiotherapy.

**11** The West Midlands branch of the Police Federation took part in a service of remembrance at Tally Ho. Interim secretary Tim Rogers laid a wreath as part of the service, as did Chief Constable David Thompson, Police and Crime Commissioner Simon Foster and John Williams, chair of the West Midlands Police Benevolent Fund.

**24** The Government backs a campaign by PC Andrew Harper's widow calling for those who kill emergency service workers to be given mandatory life sentences. The Ministry of Justice will pass Harper's Law in England and Wales as soon as possible.

## December

**1** Rich Cooke said he was delighted to be elected as the chair of West Midlands Police Federation after a members' vote and paid tribute to his predecessor Jon Nott.

He said: "A massive thanks to all who have voted. I'm delighted to have been elected. I have enjoyed the campaign, meeting officers in wide and varied roles around the Force. It's given me a greater appreciation of the challenges we collectively face.

"My personal thanks to Jon who has worked hard for our members during this difficult period. I am very much looking forward to the future and what we can achieve together to help ease the unprecedented demands on colleagues."

**3** Coventry MP Colleen Fletcher told Prime Minister Boris Johnson that West Midlands Police was under "significant pressure" because of the fall in officer numbers over the past 10 years and called for extra funding.

Addressing the House of Commons at Prime Minister's Questions, Ms Fletcher said West Midlands Police had lost 2,221 officers between 2010 and 2019 and would still be 1,000 officers short even if Mr Johnson's uplift programme achieved its goal.

The Labour MP said: "This lack of frontline officers has left police stretched and under significant pressure with officers actually telling me there are insufficient resources to investigate every crime."

Mr Johnson said the Government remained "on track" to recruit 20,000 police nationally.



**3** A West Midlands Police officer won the Regional Award for the Midlands at the 2021 Police Bravery Awards after being nominated for tackling a knifeman who stabbed an emergency services worker in the heart.

PC Mat Evans joined fellow nominees from forces across England and Wales at the awards ceremony in London which was also attended by policing minister Kit Malthouse, shadow home secretary Yvette Cooper and Metropolitan Police Commissioner Dame Cressida Dick.

He took along his brother, Richard, as his guest and was also joined at the awards ceremony by Rich Cooke, chair of West Midlands Police Federation, and the Chief Constable Sir David Thompson.

Mat said: "The highlight was getting to know the other nominees and swapping war stories and jokes. By the end of the three days strangers were mates.

"It was the perfect reminder that the police is a big family, and once you know someone is Job, regardless of rank or background, there's that instant connection. That feeling of mutual respect and kinship was the best bit by far."

# Message from our chair

Our police charity has had an incredible year. We have welcomed more than 700 new members to the West Midlands Police Benevolent Fund during 2021, nudging our total membership towards 8,000 which is a tremendous achievement.

This year, the fund saw a shift in the make-up of its membership. For the first time in a long while, the charity has a greater proportion of serving officers than retired members. What is also encouraging is that word is getting around that West Midlands Police staff and PCSOs are entitled to join the fund too.

Events like the TWM-Live, pre-retirement seminars and inputs to the new recruits and transferees provide a great opportunity to really engage with police colleagues. It allows us to explain the many benefits of joining the Ben Fund and how it can offer help through a person's police service and well into their retirement too. Don't forget you can remind yourself of the many membership benefits by visiting [www.wmpben.co.uk](http://www.wmpben.co.uk).

Face-to-face events are slowly returning across the Force and we look forward to a further growth in membership over the next 12 months.

Throughout the year, we receive messages of thanks from members who are immensely grateful for the support they have been given by the Ben Fund. I am always deeply touched by their appreciation and very proud to be part of a fantastic team.

This month we received a lovely message from uniform training sergeant, Natalie Hobster.

"I wanted to take this opportunity to thank the Benevolent Fund for the recent help offered to one of our student officers. They were coping with a really difficult period in their life. Once again, I have been incredibly impressed by the compassion and assistance provided by the team at the Benevolent Fund. The intervention by the police charity has ensured that the student feels valued and supported by the organisation especially at the most challenging time of their life. Thank you again for the time and support given to the officer."

Over the past 12 months we have given out more than £50,000 to support members in their hour of need. This, of course, would not be possible without the ongoing support of our members and their monthly subscriptions. I'd like to thank you for your continued support over the past year.

We have lots planned for next year, including our ever-popular family fun days.

Full details will be shared with members in our newsletter.

Don't forget that our holiday home ballot will be open from early January. If you fancy a wonderful week away in one of our seaside properties please enter the ballot. Any remaining weeks not taken in the ballot will



*Lesley, Mum Patricia and Steve Newbury.*

be available for members to book on a first come, first served basis.

It was an honour to attend last month's Armistice Day service at HQ and lay a memorial wreath at the foot of the Force's Roll of Honour.

The day's act of remembrance provided an opportunity for us to reflect upon the Benevolent Fund's heritage and our special connection with the names permanently featured on the dedicated memorial board.

PC Michael Hewitt, who was tragically killed on his way to work, is one of the officers named on the Roll of Honour and we had the privilege of meeting his widow, Patricia Bayliss, and his daughter, Lesley.

[Read more about their incredible personal story.](#)

Both Lesley and her 80-year-old-Mum are immensely grateful for the help they received from the Ben Fund all those years ago.

"For me personally, I wanted to be able to say thank you for everything the Benevolent Fund did for us as I know without their help and support our lives would have been so very different. I cannot stress the importance of all the help the Benevolent Fund can offer and I would urge everyone to join," said Lesley.

I'm incredibly proud of the fact that, over 47 years, the Benevolent Fund has remained steadfast in providing support to its members.

As we head into 2022, we will endeavour to play a vital role in supporting our members the best way we can.

On behalf of the Ben Fund team, our charity's trustees and the Operation Committee, I would like to wish you all a very happy and peaceful Christmas.

Stay safe and keep well.

**John Williams**



**West Midlands Police**  
Benevolent Fund  
Charity

For full details of membership benefits visit [www.wmpben.co.uk](http://www.wmpben.co.uk)

Not a member of the Benevolent Fund? Why not join online today  
<https://wmpben.co.uk/how-to-join/application-form/>





# National chair not seeking re-election

**F**ormer West Midlands Police Federation chair Jon Nott has acknowledged the commitment of national chair John Apter and the work he has done in trying to improve things for members.

Jon was commenting after John announced that he would not be standing in the forthcoming national chair elections.

Jon said: "John has led the Police Federation through some of the most challenging times in the history of the service with policing under pressure like never before.

“This role is a privilege to hold and it truly is an honour to do what I do. However, I feel after a pretty eventful three and a half years for the Police Federation and for policing in general, and with almost 30 years’ service, it’s time for me to move on.”

"We have seen dramatic cuts in the number of officers, rising levels of abuse and aggression from the public, unfair attacks from an often hostile media and deteriorating relations with the Government.

"John can be proud of the way he has conducted himself and represented the rank and file during this tumultuous period.

"West Midlands Police Federation thanks him for his service and wishes him all the very best for the future."

Announcing his decision not to stand for

re-election, John said: "This role is a privilege to hold and it truly is an honour to do what I do. However, I feel after a pretty eventful three and a half years for the Police Federation and for policing in general, and with almost 30 years’ service, it’s time for me to move on.

"I’ve been a Fed rep for as long as I can remember; I love what the Federation and our reps do and I couldn’t be more proud of the small part I have played.

"A lot has happened since I became national chair, both professionally and personally; it’s been relentless. In all that time, all I have ever done is my best, and I hope that in some small way I have helped make a positive difference.

"I will continue to do my very best until the new national chair takes up the position in April 2022 and I wish them well in this exciting and unique role. It’s truly something special."

John was the first national chair to be voted in by Federation members when he was elected in August 2018.

# Get to know your Federation reps

Jasdeep Singh Pahil



**Sergeant Jasdeep (Jas) Singh Pahil aims to be a voice for colleagues after recently becoming a West Midlands Police Federation workplace representative.**

Jas, who is with Force CID at Holford

Drive, Perry Barr on VVA Team 3, brings a range of skills to his new role as a Fed rep and says he wants to use them to effect change and support his colleagues.

"I bring to the role diverse wider thinking and problem-solving," he said, "And the ability to listen, reflect and create action.

"I wanted to be a voice for officers who need assistance by helping to protect their rights.

"I'm most looking forward to supporting my colleagues and effecting change within the organisation."

Jas, who is looking to specialise in the disciplinary side of the Federation's work, admitted there are challenges to being a rep.

"I think the most challenging aspect is being able to work with all different ranks within the organisation to understand a common goal which would best serve all parties involved with minimal disruption," he said.

Jas said that the challenges facing the Federation, both on a national and local level, revolve around maintaining credibility with officers.

"Nationally, it's maintaining their

credibility with officers by standing up for officer rights," he said, "For the West Midlands branch, again it's gaining and maintaining credibility and being seen to take action.

"For the police service more generally, there are challenges around tighter budgets, authenticity and credibility within the police service and communities that we serve."

Jas joined West Midlands Police in April 2007. He started on the F3 on response. After his sergeants' exams, he became a sergeant on response at Newtown before moving to Birmingham city centre as a neighbourhood sergeant and then to his current role at Force CID.

"I was attracted to policing by the diverse nature of the job with no two days being quite the same," he said.

"My advice for new officers joining the Force would be to understand what's expected of you. Take your own learning into your hands and feel confident enough to share if you're feeling overwhelmed or need support, as there's always someone there to help and support you."

Temporary DS Jason Dooley



**Temporary Detective Sergeant Jason Dooley has encouraged new officers to ensure they have support "in their time of need" by joining West Midlands Police Federation.**

Jason, a newly-elected Federation rep who has been with the Force for 26 years, has offered his advice to new recruits.

"Join the Fed," he said, "It's massively important to be helped in their time of

need, not only in disciplinary matters but also supervision and other matters of worry."

Jason added: "I'd also say to new officers, try to understand what policing is about. It isn't a job they should think of as a short-term thing. This is a job for life. Be true to yourself and remember why you joined, to help the people in need and to show that we do care."

Jason joined the police in July 1995 and has held a wide range of roles on response, operational support unit, drugs and traffic. He's currently Acting Detective Sergeant at VVA, West Bromwich.

"I always wanted to be a police officer," said Jason, "It's about doing the right thing for the victims, and also to catch the baddies."

He became a Federation rep in September following the triennial elections and aims to specialise in health and safety.

"I wanted to highlight the good work the Federation does," he said, "And I also wanted to help my colleagues I see on a daily basis – doing things for the good of them.

"I'm a networker who can spread the word of the Fed. I try to assist my colleagues in whatever they need to help them get on

with the job, and also with their personal lives.

"I think the most challenging aspect of being a rep is telling people when they can't win an argument; telling them that the Force is correct in its decision-making and, finally, letting people down because I simply can't fix everything for them."

Jason said that there are some issues of trust ahead for both policing and the Federation.

"Getting the trust of the public after the recent events of the Sarah Everard case will be a challenge for the police service," he said, "We have lost the general public at the moment and I think this will heavily affect us going forward.

"Also finding a Government that appreciates us. We have no weight behind us at the minute.

"For the national Police Federation, it's regaining the trust of the members regarding the pension scandal and the perceived lack of help they have given throughout this process.

"And for West Midlands Police Federation, it's building up more trust with the wider membership."



# Macy's in the swim after life-changing op

At the start of June this year Macy Handley was undergoing life-changing spinal surgery with her West Midlands Police officer parents anxiously waiting to hear if it has been a success.

Now, only five months later, the determined 12-year-old is doing so well that the swimming club she joined to help with her rehabilitation programme has signed her up to take part in a swimming gala.

"It's just amazing," says Mum Kerry, "Macy has a personal trainer twice a week to help build up her core strength following the operation and started swimming as a way of improving her fitness too. Initially she was swimming at the University of Warwick but after being talent spotted Macy was selected to try out for Coventry Swimming Club of which she is now a member. She's doing so well at competitive swimming that she'll be competing in her first gala in November.

"It's incredible when you think that when she went into hospital for the operation we didn't really know how successful it would be.

"But the consultant is very pleased with her and is confident that once she has stopped growing, which will be in around three or four years, she will be left with about a five per cent curvature of her spine, which is less than some people who do not have Macy's condition."

It could have all been very different, however, had it not been for the support of those who responded to a fundraising appeal launched by Kerry and husband Toby earlier this year.

Without the fundraising, the Vertebral Body Tethering (VBT) operation would have been delayed and that could have meant it was too late for Macy to be suitable for the pioneering treatment since there is a limited window of opportunity.

"I cannot thank the people who helped us enough," says Kerry, "Everyone was so kind, and so generous with people who we didn't even know giving money to the appeal.



*Macy Handley.*

"Without the surgery, Macy could have ended up having a fusion op and that would have left her with far less dramatic benefits. Watching her at the swimming pool the other day, I looked up to see her on the diving board and then curling over for the start position. That would not have been possible if she had undergone the fusion procedure.

"Last week we took Macy and our other two children to Devon and she was able to paddleboard with her younger brother and sister. It was fantastic to see her enjoying things that other children do. She is now just like any other girl of her age and, now that she is not wearing a back brace, is also starting to take an interest in fashion, something that always made her quite anxious before.

"This operation has changed her life and I cannot thank enough everyone who made it possible."

At the end of March, Kerry and Toby issued an appeal to help them raise the £90,000 they needed for the operation which

they believed would allow Macy to live a normal life. At that point, they had already raised £50,000 but within weeks they had hit their initial target with West Midlands Police Federation helping promote the appeal.

West Midlands Police Benevolent Fund donated £5,000 and West Midlands Police Federation has agreed to give the family £1,000 to help with the ongoing costs involved in terms of travelling to and from London for consultations, hotel accommodation and so on.

Kerry and Toby noticed in July 2019 that Macy, who is also autistic, had a lump near her spine.

An x-ray uncovered abnormal curves in her spine as well as a rotation. Not long after, she was diagnosed with idiopathic scoliosis. She was given a brace to wear 20 hours a day. It was uncomfortable, restrictive and rubbed on her neck, impacting on her mental health.

Initially, an x-ray showed the brace was working but further scans revealed the curve has increased and so spinal fusion was considered.

VBT, in essence, provides an internal brace and was an alternative favoured by the couple since the recovery is much quicker than fusion, there is better range of movement afterwards and scarring is less prominent.

Having launched the fund-raising appeal with a firm focus on raising enough money for the treatment, Kerry, who works in the early resolution team at Coventry, said the build-up to the surgery had a massive mental impact on the whole family.

The operation was carried out at St George's Hospital in London on 8 June and Macy has since returned for an x-ray which revealed that it had all been a success.

Macy herself has coped incredibly well with everything she has been through and she has now become a mentor to other children as they approach the VBT surgery, offering them advice, support and encouragement.

As well as her personal training sessions and her swimming, Macy is also having weekly aromatherapy massage to help her body and mind relax. But she says the swimming is also boosting her mental health.

"Macy really enjoys it. She explained it to me that when she is under water, it's quiet and she feels free," says Kerry.

“This operation has changed her life and I cannot thank enough everyone who made it possible.”

# Federation welcomes NPCC mental health initiative

The then chair of West Midlands Police Federation urged members not to suffer in silence as he welcomed moves to adopt a uniform set of standards for supporting the mental health of officers.

Jon Nott hopes a pledge signed by the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) will break down barriers and stigmas for officers in seeking the support they need.

Jon's comments follow the Royal Foundation's Emergency Services Mental Health Symposium, which saw 200 leaders from across police, fire, ambulance, and search and rescue from the four nations come together for the first time to address the mental health of their workforces.

NPCC chair Martin Hewitt signed the Mental Health at Work Commitment, endorsing six standards, including declaring mental health is, and will remain, a strategic priority, and encouraging forces to promote an open culture around mental health.

Jon said: "Policing the pandemic has taken its toll on officers and more than three quarters have admitted to experiencing mental health or wellbeing difficulties in the past year. That's a startling statistic.

"I welcome the NPCC's commitment to making officers' mental health a strategic priority and hopefully it will help break down those barriers that stop our members

coming forward.

"It's been a really difficult two years and I'd urge officers not to suffer in silence. Make that call, speak to a rep and get the help you need and deserve.

The symposium saw the launch of a Blue Light Together package of mental health support for the emergency services, developed by The Royal Foundation and other partner organisations.

Through a new Blue Light Together website from Mind, information and advice to help emergency responders with their mental health has been shared, including real life stories and tips from colleagues working in the field and guides for employers so they can support their teams with their wellbeing.

Working in partnership with the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP), the Royal Foundation is also funding the creation of a directory of specialising in addressing the complex mental health needs of emergency responders.

The event included a live panel session involving senior emergency services leaders who spoke about their personal experiences with mental health struggles, alongside speeches by the Commissioner of the

Metropolitan Police, Dame Cressida Dick, Health Secretary Sajid Javid, mental health charity Mind's CEO Paul Farmer and The Duke of Cambridge.

The Federation's national chair, John Apter, who attended the event, said: "Policing and other emergency services have talked a lot about how they are supporting the mental health of their workforce for a number of years, and there have been some improvements.

"The pledge that has been agreed to by the NPCC is a massive step forward, but chiefs have got to make sure it delivers something tangible as too many colleagues are being failed on daily basis; I have spoken to officers who are truly broken, and on many occasions this was completely avoidable.

"Rather than continuing to stick plasters over gaping wounds, it is key the service focuses on prevention.

"In policing, we cannot get away from attending traumatic incidents, but we can do more to ensure there is better support for them and their families, and better training in place for supervisors and managers so they can recognise and address the issues."

Find information, ideas and support to help look after your mental health at

[Blue Light Together.](#)



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# 'Terrific Truffles' is making a paws-itive impact on mental health

"I knew she would make people happy, but I don't think I realised just how much she would help people open up," says Inspector Paul Van Veen, handler of Truffles, the Force's first ever wellbeing dog.

Since joining the Force back in May, the eight-month-old maltipoo has already taken part in more than 40 engagements, supporting police officers and staff, as well as members of the community, with their wellbeing.

Former dog handler Paul, who has been in the police for 25 years, successfully campaigned for Truffles earlier this year, having seen the impact post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) has had on many of his colleagues. Paul and his partner PC Emma Dinning, a student assessor, both handle Truffles, using her as much as possible – with a lot of the work done in their own time.

"I never imagined just how much of an amazing impact Truffles would have," said Paul, who came off the frontline at the end of last year, before heading into an office role. He added: "She is great at getting people talking, as well as breaking down the barriers between the public and the Force.

"She's definitely helping to improve and strengthen the relationship the police have with the public. I take her out for a walk and out of the dozens of people I pass, I think only a couple haven't stopped to talk to me."

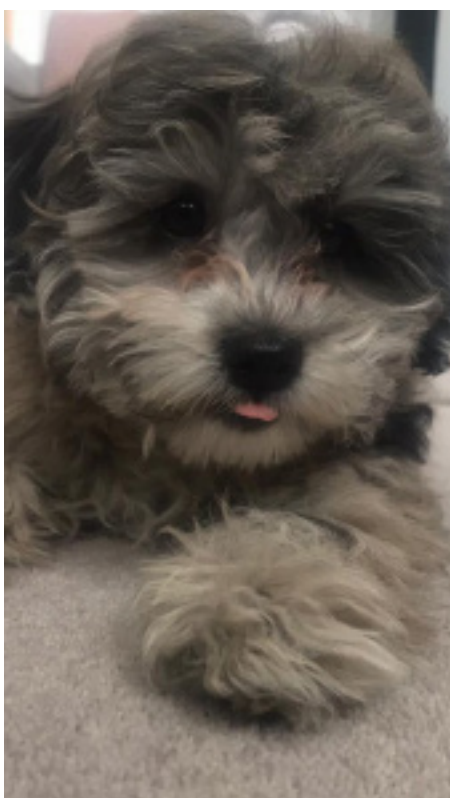
Known as "Terrific Truffles", she was part-funded by the Police and Crime Commissioner's Community Initiative Fund, before becoming an official wellbeing and trauma dog, representing the National Police Wellbeing service Oscar Kilo 9 initiative.

As well as working in the community and with police staff, Truffles supports victims, and will work with arrested suspects too.

"We will trial her in custody to calm down offenders, which will hopefully lead to them engaging with us a lot better," Paul explains.

"Plus, we go into schools and speak with children who might be on the wrong side of crime or looking at going down that path. Those children aren't engaging and then within 20 minutes or so, they are playing with Truffles and chatting about the dog.

"One of her earlier visits was to a



*Truffles.*

domestic violence refuge, where Emma and Truffles met with a domestic violence victim's daughter who had been mute for three months following the trauma of seeing her mom violently assaulted. After spending time with Truffles, she was laughing and giggling running around screaming 'doggy, Mommy' – her mum, along with Emma and the staff all burst into tears and mum hopes to get a dog when they finally find a place of their own.

"Another highlight was when we visited a special needs school where there was a boy who wouldn't touch anything but when he saw Truffles, he reached out and started stroking her. It's these little victories that make such a difference."

Of course, a huge benefit to having Truffles in the team is supporting officers and staff with their mental health.

"I used to walk into a room of 20 or so people and maybe one person would talk to me. Now, I walk in with Truffles and 15 or

more people start a conversation. All of a sudden, they're opening up and asking me questions," added Paul, "I briefly thought I'd become popular, but actually I'm just the human that drives Truffles around."

While Truffles is used to encourage people to open up, Paul and Emma are trained mental health first aiders and peer supporters, so are able to spot any signs of mental health issues and signpost officers and staff towards further support.

"We spend time with a large amount of student officers too, one of which had attended a road accident, where a motorcyclist had been killed and was trapped under a car. The officer had scratches on his arm, which turned out to be from family members trying to rescue the deceased – he had been holding them back. He was questioning his job but, thanks to Emma and Truffles, he opened up about how he was feeling and discussed the help available," explained Paul.

Having owned German shepherds since he was a teenager and working with police dogs for more than 10 years, Paul says that even he has been shocked by the partnership he has with Truffles.

"I never thought I would have had a dog like this in my life," he said, "It had always been my dream to work with police dogs and catch criminals, but I didn't always think about the victim behind the crime.

"Both Truffles and the police dogs I've worked with make so much of a difference, but in different ways."

Paul admits that while his colleagues are supportive of the project, they do not all understand it.

"Traditionally, dogs in the police had one purpose, to fight crime. If I'd suggested the idea of wellbeing dogs five years ago, I would've been laughed out of the room," he explains.

Despite only being in her first year, Truffles is already well travelled, having shaken paws by supporting Care of Police Survivors (COPS), attending the charity's annual family weekend at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire, the first time a dog has attended, and to the National Service Dog Bravery Awards.

# Tina raises cash for MIND in memory of her brother

A West Midlands Police officer, determined to raise awareness of mental health, has told how she ran this year's Virgin Money London Marathon in memory of her brother, world judo champion Craig Fallon, who took his own life following his battle with depression.

PC Tina Fallon-Hancock completed the 26-mile route earlier this month, raising more than £4,400 for mental health charity Mind.

Her fundraising efforts came after her brother, Craig (36), who had competed in the Olympics, took his own life in 2019 after silently battling with his mental health.

"The only way I could really rationalise what had happened was by helping others and raising awareness," said mother-of-two Tina, "Both Craig and I come from a sporting background and when the British Olympic Association offered me a celebrity place to run the marathon on behalf of my brother I knew I needed to do it.

"I don't ever want to not talk about Craig but I still get choked up. I'm still coming to terms with what happened. Although he couldn't help himself, my brother would've wanted me to help others.

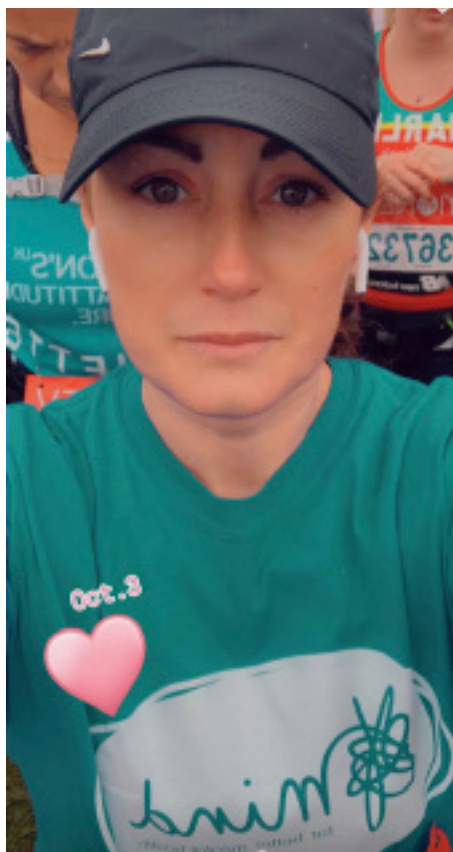
"I want to show people that this is real. This is my life, and it could happen to you. My brother had a son, he had a successful career, he was a phenomenal fighter – but he was fighting a lot of demons.

"Nothing will bring my brother back. The thing is, if you don't tell people and explain your story, people don't think it's real.

"And every pound we raise is doing something to help others."

Tina, who ran with her brother's name on her top, said it was an emotional day. She added: "I'm not a marathon runner but I trained as much as I could. I tried to fit my training in around my kids and listened to a lot of podcasts about resilience, which definitely helped."

She was due to take part in the event last year but due to the coronavirus pandemic, the race was cancelled, which led to Tina and



Tina Fallon-Hancock at the London Marathon.

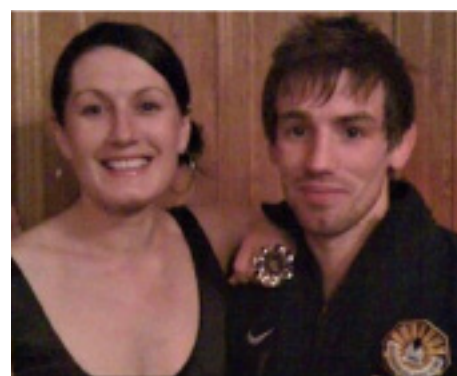
her mother walking the route and completing it 'virtually'.

"The support we received was amazing," said Tina, who took part in a live link to Gabby Logan as part of the day's TV coverage.

"So many people shared our story, it really bought people together. We felt like we were doing something to help. Mum is 63 and although she is fit, she couldn't have run the 26 miles. She wanted to contribute and by walking with me, she knew she'd done something."

Speaking about Craig, Tina said she knew he was "really down" but speaking about it was like the elephant in the room.

"We could never have said my brother



Tina with her brother Craig.

had depression," she added.

"I told him there was help out there but there was no chance he was speaking out. The stigma surrounding mental health is massive, I think Craig was embarrassed and disappointed in himself. He kept everything to himself.

"I remember the day we heard he was missing, I felt so peaceful – I now realise it was because he had gone. I knew he'd found his happy place."

Tina admits that the traits she saw in Craig are common within officers and staff in the Force too.

"I don't think the police have got it right yet," she said, "It's so sad that we promote wellbeing so much but we don't always get the support we need. I think the police need to do more, especially when they expect so much of people.

"There's so much trauma that people see. Our minds see a lot of things, it's important to treat it well. Ultimately, if you had a broken leg people would deal with it – sometimes the mind needs help too."

Following Craig's death, Tina is now urging others to speak out.

She said: "None of us know what is going on in other people's lives, we need to stop judging one another. The mind is more fragile than it has ever been.

"I've been through this a thousand times but if he was here I question what I would have done differently. The answer is, I would have raised it with others, even if he had said he didn't need the help – I would have pushed for it. Even if that meant he never spoke to me again because I'd rather him be here, not speaking to me, than not be here at all."

“ Nothing will bring my brother back. The thing is, if you don't tell people and explain your story, people don't think it's real. ”





*The fundraising running team.*

# Runners support colleague with breast cancer

**A** West Midlands police sergeant who organised a run which has raised almost £2,000 for Cancer Research UK in honour of a colleague who is battling the disease said he was “blown away” by the support and generosity of fellow officers and friends.

Matt Cooper’s friend and colleague PC Donna Kelly was diagnosed with breast cancer in July 2020 and has undergone surgery, eight rounds of chemotherapy and radiotherapy.

After hearing an advert for the Race for Life, Matt and 15 fellow officers vowed to do their bit to show their support for Donna.

Matt said: “I was at home one day waiting to go on nights and I heard an advert on the radio for the Race for Life and that’s where it all started from really.

“I spoke to another sergeant in the office and we agreed we should do something and one of the ideas was to run from the police station at Wolverhampton to Donna’s house in Telford.

“It’s 26.6 kilometres and I certainly couldn’t run that in one go so we came up

with the idea of doing a 5k baton and by the end of week the entire team had said yes.

“I then set about sorting out the logistics and I was blown away by people’s involvement and the charitable things that people were doing - TCH Hire from Wolverhampton loaned us a minibus for free, DIS Group produced T-shirts for us at cost price and I was completely bowled over when one of our superintendents, Simon Inglis, said he would pay for them.”

The runners were Matt, Sergeant Garry Barton, Inspector Stephanie Furber, DC Julie Edwards, PC Carla Till, PC Matt Price, PC Sean Allington, PC Matt Tromans, PC Chris Lacey, PC David Woods, PC David Berrisford and PC Natalie Lewis who all serve on the Wolverhampton Neighbourhood Task Force plus Wolverhampton Inspector Sophie Clement, Wolverhampton CID officers DC Vicky Robey and PC Pete Aston, and firearms officer PC Mark Porter.

PC Karl Ansell was in charge of logistics and transport and PC Chris Wilson sadly had to pull out at the last minute due to a family commitment.

The team ran in relay, joining together to run the last leg alongside each other, and completed the route in 2hrs 46 min and 15s, some 40 minutes ahead of their expected finishing time.

Matt said the amount raised was approaching the £2,000 mark and added: “When I set it up I only wanted to raise £150 - I thought that would be a good sum - but people’s generosity has absolutely bowled me over.

“Donna has been our focus in this and it was great to see her meet us at the end. She is a much-loved member of the team and has remained so positive while fighting the disease.

“She’s been so brave and we wanted to show how much she means to us while raising money for such an important cause.

“It was all the motivation we needed to get us through the challenge and it was lovely to see Donna, who has been responding well to treatment, there to meet us at the end.

“It was a great event. Donna was really pleased and she has supported us all the way.”

People can still [donate online](#).

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GeorgeBurrows 



# Fundraising detective helping to set up ambulance service in The Gambia

A detective is set to mark his milestone birthday by taking part in a charity fundraiser that involves gifting more than 30 ambulances to communities in The Gambia.

Matt Stone, who has been with the Force for nearly 25 years, will be travelling across the globe next year, in order to establish a functioning ambulance service to the West African nation.

The married father-of-two will be joining around 120 fellow retired and current officers and police staff, or members of the police family, as they take part in Operation Zephyr, a mission led by National Police Aid Charities (NPAC), which provides aid to impoverished communities around the world whether in war zones or simply developing countries.

"It's an exciting challenge, I've never done anything like this before. This is an opportunity for me to do something for not just one person, but an entire country," said Matt.

There is a current lack of ambulances in The Gambia, which means doctors have to cycle from village to village on bike or critically ill patients are carried by relatives, or transported to their nearest hospital – which can be 10 miles or so – by any means available. It is not uncommon for families to turn up with sick relatives in a wheelbarrow having walked for miles.

Operation Zephyr will 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.

"We're setting up an entire emergency service, it's not just a little thing that's being done," added Matt.

"My passion is helping people. I've spent nearly a decade working with victims of child abuse across the West Midlands and this opportunity gives me the rare chance to help the children and their families in an entire country.

"A friend from the West Mercia force who is taking part sent me his Just Giving page. Instead of donating, I fancied the challenge myself."

Matt will embark on his challenge in



**Matt Stone.**

March, when he will fly over to Spain, collect a fully-equipped ambulance and then join two other fundraisers, as they drive more than 2,000 miles over to The Gambia as part of the NPAC convoy.

"I'll be spending up to 10 days driving with two people I've never met but we have the same desire to help people. I know I will be forming friendships for life with the group I'm travelling with," said Matt.

He and the two other fundraisers will rotate between them, with one person driving, another directing and the third sleeping. All 30 ambulances will be driving to The Gambia in convoy.

After dropping off the ambulance at one of the villages in The Gambia, the local doctors and healthcare professionals will be trained to use the vehicles. Matt says he then

plans on exploring the country to discover how much of an impact his fundraising will really have on the nation.

He added: "I'm sure this will transform their lives but will also be life-changing for me.

"The Gambia is one of the poorest places in the world and we're trying to give them an entire ambulance service, providing support from the 30 key locations where they can be of optimum use and effectiveness."

Matt is raising £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'm reaching out to family and friends to donate. They're all very proud of me," ended Matt.

[Donate to Matt's Just Giving page.](#)

# 'I was there by his side every step of the way'

When police dog handler Louise McMullen was bed-ridden for six months and told she would never work again she thought her career was over. But two years later she was back on the beat with her loyal dog Wolfie by her side.

And, just a few years later, she was by his side when he had to learn to walk again after being injured in a police chase crash.

Louise was working with police dog Usha in 2012 when she was diagnosed with chronic fatigue syndrome – or ME – and left bed-ridden. Doctors told her she would never be a serving police officer again but she refused to give up hope of returning to her dream job.

With the support of West Midlands Police, Louise was matched with a new four-legged partner, German shepherd PD Wolfie, a large, experienced general purpose dog who was incredibly loyal and gentle. After two years off work, the pair slowly got onto their feet (and paws) and completed training again.

"Wolfie and I were put together because my colleagues knew he would help me get back to work," Louise said, "I didn't have to re-train with a young, boisterous dog which would have added pressure to my already struggling body and put more strain on my physical health.

"We have been together ever since and he has been the most incredible partner. We had many successes and he went on to qualify as a firearms support dog, one of the highest achievements for a working dog. He had many arrests, helped to find high-risk missing persons and had lots of incredible finds during his career."

In November 2018, the duo were chasing armed robbers who had used machetes and chainsaws to burgle a local shop when Louise's car left the road.

"We skidded on wet leaves and hit a tree at 40mph," she said, "I was knocked unconscious and when I woke up the car was on fire. My first thought was that Wolfie was in the back; I had to get my partner out of



Louise McMullen and PD Wolfie.

the car. I crawled out and managed to drag myself around to the boot to get him out. He collapsed and I thought he was going to die."

Louise had fractured her jaw and eye socket, and injured her wrist and spine. Wolfie, who turned nine this year, had been thrown into the metal back of his cage on impact and suffered massive internal and spinal injuries. Louise was taken to hospital by ambulance while her colleagues rushed Wolfie to the vets.

"Wolfie spent days at the veterinary surgery heavily sedated to ease the pain and needed intensive hydrotherapy and support to help repair the nerves that had been damaged in his rear end," Louise explained. "He had to learn to walk again – just as I had only a few years earlier – and I was there by his side every step of the way."

The pair eventually returned to full duty but after just six weeks, Louise grew concerned about her four-legged partner.

"We had a really busy shift one night, just like the fateful crash night, and I got him out at a job to track a suspect but I knew instantly that something wasn't right," she said. "His behaviour was completely different. He was hunting for water and I was worried he was in pain from his previous injuries.

"I took him to the vets and they diagnosed him with PTSD. I contacted management immediately and told them I wouldn't put him in a position that caused him stress or anxiety and they agreed; he was retired straightaway. There was no doubt he'd be coming home with me; not after what he'd done for me and what we'd been through together."

Louise added: "Wolfie is a big dog and weighs in at 42kg. His injuries from the crash weakened him and now he really struggles with chronic arthritis. He's front-loading his weight because he's getting weaker in his back legs and that left his front legs painful; he started chewing them off because it was hurting so much. It was awful."

Wolfie, who was a finalist in the Kennel Club Friends for Life competition at Crufts 2020, now needs regular injections to help manage the pain.

"I came across the Thin Blue Paw Foundation on social media and registered Wolfie right away," Louise added. "Now he needs a £185 injection every month and that's a considerable amount of money to find on top of all of his every day costs. The Thin Blue Paw Foundation came to my rescue and now he's like a new dog; he's jumping around like a kangaroo and moving much better.

"It's so amazing that the charity offers support to dogs throughout everything. It's not going to be a worry now and I know that I can make his life as good as it can be. It's taken so much pressure off of us, as a family, and it gives us – and Wolfie – the security we need going forwards."

Louise, who lives in Worcester with her husband, 14-year-old step-daughter and nine-year-old son, spent 13 years as a dog handler before being promoted to sergeant this year.

“I'm glad that others are now also speaking out and helping demystify 'the c-word'.



# Sam's support for Breast Cancer Awareness Month

**W**est Midlands Police Federation rep Sam Hughes joined other breast cancer survivors in encouraging members to talk more openly about the issue.

Sam, who was diagnosed in 2017, supported Breast Cancer Awareness Month in October and has recently turned her experiences into an information guide for members full of practical advice on chemotherapy, Federation support, and self-care tips.

Recalling her months of treatment, Sam says: "While I received a lot of wonderful support, many people were often unsure of how to talk to me – some didn't even want to say the word 'cancer', as if it was contagious. It made an already difficult situation very lonely. I'm glad that others are now also speaking out and helping demystify 'the c-word'."

“I'm glad that others are now also speaking out and helping demystify 'the c-word'.”

Tara McGovern, a detective chief superintendent with the Met Police, found a lump in her breast on New Year's Eve 2018 and two weeks later was diagnosed with breast cancer.

She had lost her mother to the disease when she was just 11 and so began regularly checking her own breasts every month.

She said: "When I found the lump, I knew it wasn't right and I acted straight away. It was small and my surgeon was surprised I had even noticed it. But, because I understood and knew my own body, I found it incredibly early and even though it was aggressive, I got through it. My oncologist said 'I am going to make you feel dreadful for 18 months, but then you are going to live the rest of your life'. And she was right."

Tiff, a Police Federation National Board member and former Leicestershire Police Federation chair, was diagnosed with breast cancer last year in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic. She said scrolling through social media one day led to her doing a spur-of-the-moment check of her breasts.

Tiff said: "July 9th of last year, I will never forget the date, I was flicking through Twitter and I saw (sports presenter) Jacquie Beltrao talking about the importance of checking. I thought maybe I should do it. And there they were.

"Two pea-sized, hard lumps and I just knew straight away. I didn't know how aggressive it was or if I had found it early or late. I could tell everyone around me wanted to ask me 'so what happens next' and I just didn't know. Because I didn't have the answers. But I knew I was going to fight it."

Sam said: "I'm so glad Tiff and Tara have joined me in speaking out about their experiences and encouraging others to get checked. It's not a club anyone really wants to join, but I know all three of us are determined to use our diagnosis to help others in the same situation."

West Midlands Police Federation chair Jon Nott said: "Sam, Tiff and Tara are all exceptional women and I'm thankful to them for sharing their experiences so openly and honestly. I'm also thankful to them for highlighting the importance of carrying out regular checks and taking quick action if anything seems amiss.

"Their stories are an inspiration to us all and we wish them well."

Tara has spearheaded the launch of the Change and Check campaign, starting in the Met and spreading to forces nationally. The campaign highlights the importance of checking your breasts, knowing the signs and symptoms and how to check.

She said: "It's best to check yourself on a monthly basis, at the end of your menstrual cycle. Look in a mirror, lift your arms and look from your neck down to below your breasts. Check, feel and press with the flat of your fingers.



West Midlands Police Federation rep Sam Hughes.

"If you're menopausal, then just make sure it's the same time every month – log it in your phone to remind you.

"It's a straightforward, five-minute check. Don't worry too much about the method at the start, just get to know your breasts. It can save your life."

Tara and Tiff will be sharing more about their journeys, the Change and Check campaign and their advice in a series of short videos on Federation social media channels.

In a message to anyone who may be newly diagnosed, or worried about a possible diagnosis, Tara and Tiff say: "It's going to be OK. It will be a rough ride, it will be tough and you will feel pretty lousy. But there is nothing that will be thrown at you that you won't be able to deal with. It's going to be OK."

Sam adds, "Throughout your journey you will get upset, sad and worried, all very normal reactions. You will look into the mirror and see someone you don't really recognise, but it's you. Be proud of what you have achieved."

Read Sam's booklet, [The Dreaded C-Word](#).

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# Deb's Diamond Award

A West Midlands officer has been recognised for driving hundreds of youngsters away from the world of crime and helping them get their lives back on track.

DC Deborah Dace (Deb), a youth crime officer, won a West Midlands Police Diamond Award having spent the past five years working with children as young as 10 who've committed offences.

Deb supports young offenders and their families, hoping to intervene during the earlier stages, so that they hopefully avoid prosecution in the future.

"Look, nobody wants a kid to go to court. What I do is educate and help children and their parents, showing them that there is an alternative option to court," said mother-of-two Deb, who has been in the Force for 29 years.

"We ask ourselves, what can we do to stop this from happening again in the future? What interventions can we put in place to prevent this child from re-offending?"

"We look at their lifestyles and their past experiences, along with the reasons behind them getting into trouble.

"You can't measure what I do in any way, but if we don't hear that kid's name again, hopefully it means things have worked."

Some of the children have been exploited to drugs, many have behavioural issues and, quite often, they have been caught for the first time with weapons.

Deb created a support network for young offenders, by working closely with youth and health services, schools and charities to help children who are faced with the prospect of being charged, and a criminal record, which could jeopardise their futures.

"Things have changed so much over the past five years. Back then, the incidents seemed more minor – perhaps a bit of cannabis here and there – but now, we're facing a generation of knife crime. It's scary," Deb explained, "The easiest thing to do is to charge them with criminal offences. If they're found with some drugs or a knife, why not charge them?"

"But my job is to understand how they've found themselves in that position. Have they been bullied or threatened and foolishly felt having a knife would help? Have they been groomed into carrying those drugs?"

"As a parent, I would want police to be taking the proper action."

Deb is a specialist in out of court disposals, which depending on each individual case, involves looking to offer young offenders the support and chances



DC Deb Dace.

they need to prosper rather than criminalising them.

"I'm a dead proud police officer," she said, "I'm passionate about building bridges between the police and communities. I want to change the perception of the police, by doing things like simply talking to the parents like they're ordinary people."

Upon hearing that she had won a Diamond Award, Deb said: "My superintendent called to congratulate me and I remember saying, congratulate me for what?" Deb recalled.

"It's lovely to receive the award but this really is a team effort. I couldn't do this alone. It's great to see many of the children we've helped really turn their lives around, getting back into education, training or work, and improving their life prospects. That's what it's all about."



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