

FEDERATION



West Midlands Police Federation

August/September 2023



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WELCOME

Welcome to the August/September 2023 edition of **Federation** - the magazine for members of West Midlands Police Federation.

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

Just get in touch and let us know.

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

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Chair urges members to stay connected with Federation



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

One of the highlights of the policing calendar is the Police Unity Tour (PUT) bike ride, as well as Care of Police Survivors (COPS) Service of Remembrance and the 2023 edition was no exception.

As usual it was a brilliant experience for those who took part and one that makes us all very proud to be a part of the close-knit police family.

The service, which traditionally marks the end of the event, is always a poignant, moving occasion which gives us all the chance to reflect on colleagues who are no longer with us and the sacrifices they have made. It was once again a pleasure and a privilege to be a part of the ride and the memorial service and to meet the families of officers who have lost their lives.

But it was soon back to reality when, after the PUT ride ended, we were shocked, but sadly unsurprised, to hear that two more of our officers had been assaulted trying to help a man in distress. Both these officers had blood spat into their faces and eyes.

It sickens me when I hear about incidents like this. But they are far from uncommon occurrences. A similar thing happened to me just over two years ago and you can never underestimate the psychological impact such a vile, disgusting attack can have on the victim.

Sadly, the statistics show assaults against our members are still at historically high levels and show no signs of retreating. West Midlands officers are more likely to be assaulted than their colleagues in other forces - this is why we've campaigned for years now for more colleagues than ever to be given the option to carry a Taser. Despite the general reluctance of chiefs to allow all colleagues to carry, time and time again the stats are borne out that officers who carry a Taser are significantly less likely to be physically attacked.

The figures also show that spitting and deliberate coughing at officers have both become commonplace in recent years - a disgusting reflection on the individuals

responsible. I think the way to address this deeply disturbing increase starts in the courtroom and they must send out a real deterrent to these thugs. It is totally unacceptable and there must be a zero tolerance approach. Unfortunately, we see little sign of that yet.

Assaults on emergency service workers are assaults on society itself and people need to be left in no doubt that if they abuse or attack the people whose job it is to help and protect them, they can expect to be dealt with in the harshest possible terms.

The daily threat of violence faced by our members adds to the list of reasons given by officers who are leaving the police service in record numbers. The latest figures for those quitting their jobs make for sobering reading but will surprise absolutely no one involved in policing. We have been warning of a growing crisis for many years but very little has been done to try to tackle the issues which lead to the departures of so many good, experienced officers.

Instead, politicians come up with gimmicky, short-term solutions to long-standing problems which we all know have very little chance of succeeding. The situation is aggravated by unjustified calls by those such

“ WE ARE A MEMBERSHIP ORGANISATION OR WE ARE NOTHING AND THE REALITY IS WE HAVE TO HAVE AN ORGANISATION TO REPRESENT US AND I KNOW WE ARE A FORCE FOR GOOD - BUT IN FUTURE WE MUST BECOME TOTALLY TRANSPARENT, AND BE ABLE TO POINT TO TRULY DEMOCRATIC DECISIONS GUIDING US.

as Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sir Mark Rowley to undermine confidence in the misconduct system by abolishing independent chairs and introducing backdoor means of dismissing officers through vetting if they didn't get the 'right' result first time. I liken these proposals to a Dickensian attempt to bring in more 'hanging judges' to placate a politically conceived agenda.

It would be remiss of me not to mention the fallout from the Pensions Employment Tribunal which, rightly in our view, the Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW) will not be appealing. As a member of the challenge and claimant I know very well how colleagues feel.

“ **ASSAULTS ON EMERGENCY SERVICE WORKERS ARE ASSAULTS ON SOCIETY ITSELF AND PEOPLE NEED TO BE LEFT IN NO DOUBT THAT IF THEY ABUSE OR ATTACK THE PEOPLE WHOSE JOB IT IS TO HELP AND PROTECT THEM, THEY CAN EXPECT TO BE DEALT WITH IN THE HARSHTEST POSSIBLE TERMS.**

My plea to them though is not to disengage from the Police Federation. We are a membership organisation or we are nothing and the reality is we have to have an organisation to represent us and I know we are a force for good – but in future we must become totally transparent, and be able to point to truly democratic decisions guiding us.

There can be no more 'we know best'. Instead the mantra must become 'you (the membership) know best'. And the first step on that path will be our industrial rights ballot.

With a general election approaching it's imperative we seize the moment to highlight the grossly unfair way our pay has been decided and imposed for the past 10 years under the Police Remuneration Review Body (PRRB). It must be abolished as soon as possible and replaced with a system of collective bargaining whereby in return for our lack of employment rights, we have a genuine seat at the table.

Finally, I'd like to end by wishing our health and safety lead Deano Walker the very best of luck in his new role following retirement. Deano, you have done a fantastic job in progressing the standards of health and safety for our members across the Force.

Detective recruitment plan dismissed as 'short-termism'

Proposals to parachute recruits from the business world straight into detective roles have been dismissed as a "short-termism" by West Midlands Police Federation chair Rich Cooke.

He spoke out after Labour said it would force police chiefs to recruit detectives directly from business without having to work as beat officers first if it wins power at the next general election.

Under the plans, individuals with experience in business fraud investigation, child protection and other relevant fields would be allowed to join the police as entry-level detectives.

But Rich said the idea highlighted a lack of understanding of the challenges faced by policing and insisted gaining experience on the streets was essential for anyone hoping to become a detective.

He acknowledged the traditional entry route was not the only one through which people could become successful detectives but he insisted it was the best way and the most likely to consistently deliver the calibre of officer required for the job.

He said: "The best route to being a great detective is by learning to be a great police officer first.

"The truth is there's no substitute for time served cutting your teeth and demonstrating aptitude on the streets. These are skills that can't be taught in a classroom or passed on in an office."

Rich said the Labour plans were a short-term solution which lacked any deeper understanding of what had gone wrong with policing in recent years.

He said: "One of the reasons for poor

outcomes has been the 'dumbing down' of policing during austerity whereby the centralisation of services and rationalisation of priorities saw the average bobby pigeonholed as either response or investigation.

"The traditional model, built up over many decades, has always placed emphasis on bobbies who were 'omnicompetent' – competent in dynamic policing as well as having an investigative mindset and able to take a case right through the system.

"That officer would then be well-versed in producing the best evidence and having that ingrained in their minds from the all important first minutes and hours of a live incident.

"We have lost this in large part and experienced, time-served bobbies are leaving the service, largely due to pay and pension denigration but also due to that dumbing down."

Rich warned the latest proposals were simply a shortcut that had already failed and would continue to fail to address the inherent inefficiency and inflexibility of having a service containing different cohorts of officers who only do "one thing".

He said: "This is not the way we will address poor detection rates.

"That can only be achieved through serious investment in skills, enhanced on the job, face-to-face, required, tested, training and returning to the traditional model of the omnicompetent bobby who has intimate knowledge of an area."

- **Hear more from deputy chair Jase Dooley on [Page 11](#).**



Assaults on officers: a rising threat in West Midlands

West Midlands Police Federation chair Rich Cooke has warned members are facing a rising threat of assault after two officers had blood spat in their faces.

The officers were responding to reports of a man in distress when the incident took place. Rich said: "These two officers were assaulted in the most vile way.

"They responded to reports of an individual who was in distress.

"The suspect spat blood in their face and eyes after self harming.

"This was a revolting, traumatic experience that no one should have to face.

"The rising threat of assault faced by police

officers in the West Midlands is deeply disturbing and something has to be done about it."

There has been an marked increase in spitting and deliberate coughing incidents aimed at officers in recent years.

The National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) said there were 1,029 incidents of officers being spat at or having blood or bodily fluids intentionally coughed at them across England and Wales in the year ending March 2023.

Rich described such attacks as "utterly disgusting" and repeated his calls for tougher sentencing for anyone convicted of assaulting an emergency service worker.

He said: "Being spat on or coughed on is vile and assaults like this can have a huge psychological impact on the victim.

"Judges and magistrates must use the sentencing powers they have to their full extent to ensure those who assault police officers and other emergency service workers receive the maximum tariff sentences available.

"There can never be an excuse for assaulting an emergency service worker.

"It isn't part of the job and those convicted of such an attack should face severe consequences."

The latest figures show there were 2,917 recorded assaults on West Midlands Police officers in the year ending March 2023.

This equates to 4.3 assaults per 1,000 officers which is well above the national average of 2.9 assaults per 1,000 officers in England and Wales.

“THERE CAN NEVER BE AN EXCUSE FOR ASSAULTING AN EMERGENCY SERVICE WORKER. IT ISN'T PART OF THE JOB AND THOSE CONVICTED OF SUCH AN ATTACK SHOULD FACE SEVERE CONSEQUENCES.”



Operation Hampshire: officers urged to report assaults as offences continue

Operation Hampshire coordinator Dave Brewster has echoed calls made by West Midlands Police Federation chair Rich Cooke for tougher sentences to be given to those who assault officers as he urges cops to report incidents as offences continue to rise.

Dave Brewster says 'assaults against our colleagues are assaults against society', as he assures members he will 'keep pushing' to ensure they get the support and justice deserved.

Dave is urging members to report assaults after Rich warned that officers were increasingly becoming the victims of such attacks in the West Midlands, the latest being two cops having blood spat in their faces when attending an incident.

“ ASSAULTS AGAINST OUR COLLEAGUES ARE ASSAULTS AGAINST SOCIETY AND THERE MUST BE A MEANINGFUL DETERRENT AT THE END OF THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE PROCESS.

"I can personally relate to this story. Anyone who has sat through one of my presentations will know that the impact of spitting is something that I believe has to be taken more seriously," said Dave, who worked alongside the National Police Wellbeing Service, Oscar Kilo, to launch Op Hampshire, which is designed to prevent and combat assaults on officers by providing consistent guidance and process throughout forces across the country.

"Assaults against our colleagues are assaults against society and there must be a meaningful deterrent at the end of the criminal justice process.

"Without that, all the effort we are making is undermined and there is a danger that it leaves people feeling there is little point in reporting assaults."

Since the launch of Op Hampshire, Dave has been working closely with leads across the UK to develop a pool of knowledge so that



Operation Hampshire coordinator Dave Brewster.

every force is represented and can share their experiences to help tackle the issue of assaults together.

More recently, online trauma training has been introduced in every force, as well as the free Operation Hampshire app which enables simple and consistent recording of incidents of assault against officers.

"My message to members is that there absolutely is a point in reporting assaults," continued Dave.

"We need to know what's happening and we will keep pushing to ensure you get the support and justice you deserve."

As part of the next Op Hampshire phase, Dave - along with the team at Oscar Kilo - is hoping to look at the wider impact assaults on police officers have on society.

Oscar Kilo director Andy Rhodes said: "We totally recognise these issues and believe that justice and a sense of justice is an important part of the wellbeing journey for victims.

"We believe there are clear links to assaults on police officers and the effect on wider society and through the Police Covenant we will be working with stakeholders to ascertain a much clearer picture of the issue in order to identify improvements in support of our colleagues."

Fed chair condemns assault on officer for 'simply doing her job'

West Midlands Police Federation chair Rich Cooke has condemned an attack on a police officer who was trying to arrest a domestic abuse suspect.

The female officer was punched in the throat and was unable to complete her shift after the incident in Walsall on Wednesday 16 August.

Rich said: "The officer was punched in the throat and was left struggling for breath.

"She was attacked while simply doing her job and trying to help someone."

Rich has recently repeated his calls for tougher sentences for people who assault police officers and emergency services workers.

The latest figures show there were 2,917 recorded assaults on West Midlands Police officers in the year ending March 2023.

This equates to 4.3 assaults per 1,000 officers which is well above the national average of 2.9 assaults per 1,000 officers in England and Wales.

Rich said: "The statistics show assaults against our members are still at historically high levels and show no signs of retreating. West Midlands officers are more likely to be assaulted than their colleagues in other forces.

"There has to be a proper deterrent to bring an end to the rising threat faced by our members.

"Judges and magistrates must use the sentencing powers they have to their full extent to ensure those who assault police officers and other emergency service workers receive the maximum tariff sentences available."

Health and safety lead retires: Deano bids farewell to Force

IN HIS FINAL INTERVIEW AHEAD OF RETIREMENT, THE FEDERATION'S HEALTH AND SAFETY LEAD DEANO WALKER TALKS ABOUT HIS POLICING TRIUMPHS, PROUDEST MOMENTS, GREATEST CHALLENGES AND WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS AS HE PREPARES FOR LIFE OUTSIDE THE FORCE.

After 28 years in policing - the final two spent as a full-time Federation representative - 51-year-old Deano is finally ready to hand in his warrant card.

Deano first joined West Midlands Police back in January 1996, as a response officer, before fulfilling his dream to become a dog handler just a few years later.

"One of the proudest days of my life was walking through the doors of Tally-Ho back in 1996. That was everything to me," said Deano.

"Not long after I started, I remember attending an incident on nights where cars had been broken into, we knew the offenders were still about but just couldn't locate them. Then, when the dog handler turned up, I was fixated on watching the handler work his dog, mesmerised by how the dog worked. Within a few minutes, the dog found the offender hiding in the bushes and it was from that day on, becoming a dog handler was all I ever wanted to be.

"I worked extremely hard for several years to become a dog handler - I think some of my proudest days as an officer was when I worked with my two dogs Vinnie and then Rico with the call sign AD26."

Unfortunately, Deano's time as a dog handler came to a halt when he was suspended from duty.

He had been called to an incident and having pursued a vehicle; his police dog bit the passenger - resulting in Deano being suspended.

"I'm not going to lie, that led to some of my

darkest days, but I firmly believe that things in life are sent to test us," continued Deano, who explained that it was the support he received from a Fed rep at the time that inspired him to become more involved with the Federation.

"My Fed rep was amazing. He supported me throughout the entire process, calling me up each week to make sure I was OK. It wasn't a good time in my life, but that Fed rep helped get me through.

"I wanted to become more involved with the Federation, so I could support others just like I was supported."

After all issues were resolved, Deano returned to duties on a neighbourhood team as a beat bobby whose main mode of transport was a mountain bike.

"I really enjoyed my time back on the beat, out on the streets getting to know the locals," he recalled.



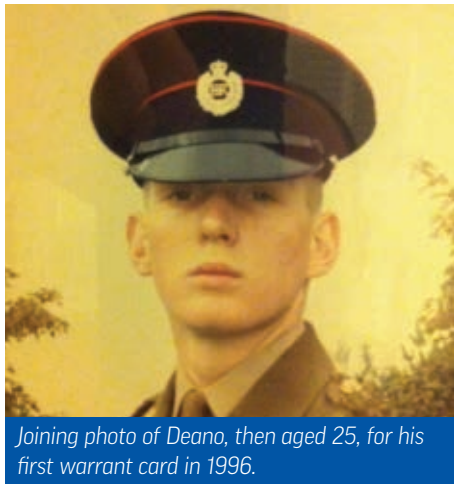
Parade at National Arboretum in Alrewas, 2017.

"Within a short time, I knew the community and the community knew me. I'd put my lid on, I'd head out either walking or cycling and it wasn't long before I had a few brew stops."

In 2012 Deano went on to become a local workplace Fed representative, focusing on local issues and putting solutions in place that would make life 'more comfortable for officers'.

He said: "I really pride myself in giving members a voice and I'm really proud that still, 20 years after I first spoke with them, I still get officers calling me up if they want support. Not only do they know I will do my best by them, but they also understand that I will never make any promises I can't keep."

After initially getting involved with the Federation 11 years ago, Deano found himself on the health and safety committee and within a few years found himself leading the subject for the Branch Board.



As the role became more demanding Deano, was given a part-time job share role where he was able to get into health and safety issues and concerns across the Force. However, this demand saw a great increase during the Covid-19 pandemic so, along with support from the branch secretary Tim Rogers - campaigned to become a full-time health and safety lead for the members.

"The last time there had been such a post was around nine or 12 years ago," said Deano, who had become the lead branch officer for the health and safety committee.

"We put a business case forward to the Chief Constable, outlining the need for a lead and it would support the Force's own health and safety goals and it worked. I was given the role around two years ago."

Alongside the role, Deano has also completed a degree in Health and Safety, a milestone he is extremely proud of.

"A highlight of my career has to be getting the full-time role. I did everything I could to show the Federation how important the need was to have a full-time health and safety lead - and, if it wasn't for Tim, we wouldn't have got it," Deano added.

"I'm very proud of the work I have done



over the last two years and feel like I'm leaving the Fed in a better position - in terms of health and safety."

As he looks forward, Deano says he hopes that the Force and the Federation ensure they focus on the 'health' element of 'health and safety', not just 'safety'.

He explained: "Health and safety isn't just about trip hazards, it's about the wellbeing of our officers too. So many of our members just 'soldier on' and don't say anything. But realistically, demands are through the roof right now adding scary amounts of pressure on officers.

"We need to be supporting our members, this is an extremely testing time for not only officers but Federation reps also."

Deano will mark his last day with West Midlands Police on 1 October but with leave and those great "always there days" will see him finish on 31 August where he will be starting his new career with Worcester County Council in November.

"I definitely have mixed feelings about leaving the police, lots of apprehension but also excitement," he added.

"After being in the Force for 28 years, there's a big, bad world out there waiting for me. I'll miss my colleagues and the friends I've made along the way.

"But it's time for me to move on. The Federation has some really good reps in place at the moment and I wish them, along with whoever fills my boots, every success in the future.

"I am extremely proud to have joined and proud to have served."

Tim Rogers said that Deano had 'done a great job' in improving health and safety standards across West Midlands Police.

"Deano has worked hard to develop health and safety policies and procedures for our members. His continuous efforts have had a real impact on improving the working environment for our members and I wish him all the best for the future," he explained.

Chief Constables urged to ensure they comply with police driving legislation

Police chiefs are being reminded of their obligations under the new legislation brought in to offer better legal protection for police drivers.

Tim Rogers, pursuits driving lead for the Police Federation of England and Wales and secretary of West Midlands Police Federation, has written to all chief constables after discovering instances where police driver training has not been delivered by an accredited trainer, contrary to the provisions of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022.

"We fought long and hard for the changes to legislation that were needed to give police drivers better protection," says Tim, who led an eight-year campaign for a change in the law.

"It was patently wrong for police officers to find themselves the wrong side of the law or facing conduct investigations when they were doing the job they were trained to do and the job the public would expect them to do.

"The issues came because officers were judged by the standards of the careful and competent driving member of the public but clearly many of the manoeuvres police carry out when fulfilling their duties are not the norm for members of the public.

"The new legislation means that police officers' driving will be judged by the standard of their peers, in line with their skills and training, but there are criteria attached to that – drivers have to be licensed and up to date with their training and that training has to be delivered by fully accredited trainers and this is why we have written to chief constables as a reminder.

"This new legislation, and the legal guidance that underpins it, delivers what we set out to achieve, but we need forces to play their part and ensure they are fully compliant with this new statutory framework."

The legal guidance issued by the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) had to be



Tim Rogers.

updated to reflect the changes that came into effect on 30 November 2022, with the new legal test for police drivers. This test is covered through Statutory Instrument 1112 which all forces should now be complying with.

In his letter to chiefs, Tim wrote: "It is critically important that police officers do not drive if they are not licensed under this legislation. There is no movement on this whatsoever. Senior police officers, regardless of rank, cannot extend or grant an officer's permit under any circumstances. As the chief officer of your force, you are responsible for the messaging to your officers on this critical change in legislation.

"Of particular concern are forces which choose to deliver driver training using non-accredited instructors. It is imperative that officers' driver training is delivered by a

driver trainer who has been licensed by the College of Policing. Once again, there is no leeway. Training delivered by a non-licensed person is invalid and will leave officers in a vulnerable position. Some forces have been found to have instructors employed who are not licensed."

He adds: "It is worth stressing that licensed firearms instructors are not driver trainers; they cannot teach any driving tactics and this is simply not permitted under the legislation. This includes aspects that are currently covered in D3 and D8 of the firearms training manual. Even if tactics are within firearms training manuals, if it's something you do as a driver it must be a driver trainer that delivers that training."

Since the new law came into effect, a Subject Matter Experts (SME) group has been established to give expert evidence to decision makers based on the new legislated driving standard.

This group is achieving good levels of consistency with reasonable accessibility; it provides equality of arms for both prosecution and defence teams. This group is referenced in the DPP's guidance and must be used by all bodies responsible for investigating relevant matters. They are the only resource with the ability to accurately assess the most up to date standards.

For local driving matters requiring assessment against the new standard, the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) is mandating a model for all forces to follow, and this is expected to be implemented soon. Driving standards units are key to assessing what was once a breach of policy but which is now a breach of the law.

In the meantime, the Police Federation of England and Wales is urging all officers to make sure they are fully aware of the new legislation and the regulations that underpin that law. But, above all, it is stressing how crucial it is that they don't drive if they are not licensed under Statutory Instrument 1112. Forces also have a responsibility to ensure this is the case.

Tim added: "This is a generational change for policing; one that improves confidence for both officers and the public. To ensure this legislative change achieves its policy objectives, it needs chief constables' full support."

[Read the letter in full.](#)

“OF PARTICULAR CONCERN ARE FORCES WHICH CHOOSE TO DELIVER DRIVER TRAINING USING NON-ACCREDITED INSTRUCTORS. IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT OFFICERS' DRIVER TRAINING IS DELIVERED BY A DRIVER TRAINER WHO HAS BEEN LICENSED BY THE COLLEGE OF POLICING.

Concerns recruitment proposals could set up new detectives to fail

The deputy chair of West Midlands Police Federation fears proposals to force the police service to recruit detectives directly from business could “set up people to fail”.

Jase Dooley, a detective sergeant, said there was a huge difference between policing and working in wider society, and that beat experience was vital in understanding the role of investigators.

His comments came after Labour said it would make police chiefs recruit detectives directly from business if it won the next general election.

Under Labour’s proposals, people with experience in fields such as investigating business fraud, child protection or other relevant areas, would be allowed to join as entry-level detectives without having to work as beat officers.

Jase, who has 28 years’ experience in the police, said: “To be a good detective you need to have a good understanding of policing.

“You need to understand the workings of a police officer, what the role is, how we go about investigating crimes, and you need to be experienced in policing.

“If you have someone who is an investigator in the outside world, for instance, their procedures and policies are completely different to those of the police.

“To be a detective you need to have a good working knowledge of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act, you need to know the regulations, the policies and the law relating to investigative work.

“You’re going to be putting a lot of pressure on direct-entry detectives who have come from business.

“If they have no background in policing whatsoever they’re going to be put on the back foot and it’s going to be extremely difficult for them.

“I fear we might be setting up people to fail.”

He added: “Years ago, to be a detective you had to be recommended by your peers because you were proven and had an eye for investigative work.

“You had to be of a certain experience or a police officer who was proven on the streets, investigating stuff, talking to the public and talking to the criminals as well, and gaining information from people.

“I’m not criticising, because we’ve had some very good direct entry police officers who are now detectives. Some of them are fantastic, they get it.

“But if we’re talking about putting people straight into a role without on the job experience, it’s a lot of pressure on the individual.”

The Police Foundation think tank estimates there are around 7,000 detective vacancies.

“ **TO BE A DETECTIVE YOU NEED TO HAVE A GOOD WORKING KNOWLEDGE OF THE POLICE AND CRIMINAL EVIDENCE ACT, YOU NEED TO KNOW THE REGULATIONS, THE POLICIES AND THE LAW RELATING TO INVESTIGATIVE WORK.**

Jase said a big reason was that the workload - which included dealing with incidents that weren’t police matters - was putting people off becoming a detective.

“Crime levels have risen from 10 years ago and the types of crimes are different,” he said.

“It’s my opinion we should have police officers at the point that calls come in to say this is not a police matter, or this is a civil dispute, or it’s something you need to take up with your landlord or your employer.

“But they get crimed and come up here and we have to decide whether we’re going to investigate or not.

“Workloads are going through the roof because of it.

“People joining the job now, or eyeing the job from response and neighbourhood teams look at detectives and see how much work they have and it puts them off.

“We need more staff and the workload needs to be redressed,” he added.

West Midlands officers attend poignant COPS service

Hundreds of police officers joined the families of fallen officers for the annual Care of Police Survivors (COPS) Service of Remembrance on Sunday 30 July.

The poignant ceremony came on the 20th anniversary of the charity and, as usual, marked the end of the Police Unity Tour (PUT) cycle ride.

The West Midlands PUT chapter was jointly led by branch chair Rich Cooke and Chief Superintendent Andy Beard.

Rich rode in memory of PC Philip Sanderson who was just 21 when he was killed in a road accident as he responded to a crime in 1978.

The team raised more than £10,000 for COPS and people still have time to make a donation via its [JustGiving page](#).

West Midlands Police Brass Band performed ahead of the ceremony as the riders from forces across the country arrived at the National Memorial Arboretum near Alrewas in Staffordshire.

The memorial service heard from a number of speakers whose lives had been impacted by the death of a family member in the police service.

COPS co-founder and vice-president Christine Fulton, whose husband PC Lewis Fulton was stabbed to death in Glasgow in 1994, opened the service and spoke of the importance of peer support for survivors.

Looking back on the group's first meetings and how survivors responded, Christine said: "For the first time they could talk about their officers without fear of making the listener feel uncomfortable or becoming upset if they became upset.

"We didn't mind. If they cried we cried with them, if they laughed we laughed with them. Sometimes we laughed and cried at the same time.

"And that peer support is what is at the very heart of this charity."

The memorial service also heard from Caroline Cox, whose older brother Inspector



Hundreds attended the COPS Service of Remembrance.

Mark Estall of Essex Police died in January 2017, and Katy McMurray, whose dad PC Alan McMurray of Lothian and Borders died on 4 February 2006 when she was only two.

COPS national president Gill Marshall gave an address before wreaths were laid by representatives of the Office of the Lieutenant, the High Sheriff's Office, the Home Office, the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Fire & Rescue Services, the National Police Chiefs' Council, Blue Light, the Police Unity Tour, the National Memorial Arboretum and COPS.

The service included a roll of honour including the names of officers who have died in the last 12 months.

They were:

PC Daniel Golding of the Metropolitan Police who died on 18 August 2022;

PCSO Daniel Gower of Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary who died on 23 November 2022;

PS Steven Creal of Sussex Police who died on 21 December 2022;

PC Richard Kemp of Lancashire Constabulary who died on 27 December 2022;



A wreath laid by the West Midlands Police PUT Chapter.

PC Bruce Lister of Hertfordshire Police who died on 30 January 2023;

PC Neil Pattinson of Northumbria Police who died on 27 February 2023;

PC Andy Boardman of West Mercia Police who died on 11 April 2023, and

Inspector Gareth Earp of Dyfed Powys Police who died on 29 June 2023.

Sir Peter Fahy, chair of the COPS trustees, gave a closing speech after a flypast and bow by a National Police Air Service helicopter.

Officers, police survivors, family members and guests then laid red roses and wreaths at the The Beat, the arboretum's tree lined avenue honouring fallen officers.

“ IF THEY CRIED WE CRIED WITH THEM, IF THEY LAUGHED WE LAUGHED WITH THEM. SOMETIMES WE LAUGHED AND CRIED AT THE SAME TIME.



The 2023 West Midlands PUT Chapter gets ready to ride.

Ash thanks team-mates for putting the 'unity' in Police Unity Tour

A West Midlands Police Federation rep has thanked team-mates for helping him complete the 2023 Police Unity Tour (PUT) cycle challenge.

Ash Forster said his fellow riders had certainly given meaning to the word 'unity' with their encouragement and support throughout the 200-mile route.

The annual event raises funds for the Care of Police Survivors (COPS) charity and Ash was determined to take part despite a late health scare.

He said: "About six weeks before the event, I was taken from work thinking I was having a heart attack but I'd committed to the ride and nothing was confirmed so I went for it.

"I had to stop training though so in the end I prepared for it with a 25-mile ride on the Sunday before.

"But without the rest of the team I would have struggled - the word 'unity' was there in abundance and it got me through to the end. I

was helped along the way by everybody else."

Ash said the last time he was on bike was five years ago when he completed a charity ride from Wolverhampton to Aberdovey after accepting a challenge by colleagues convinced he wouldn't last the distance.

Reflecting on his latest spell in the saddle, he said: "I got through the ride and I'm feeling good. Apart from being a bit saddle sore and a few aches, I'm fine."

Ash was presented with a bottle of wine by team-mates as a mark of their appreciation for his commitment to the tour.

The West Midlands Chapter, which also featured riders from the West Mercia, Warwickshire and Staffordshire forces, set off from West Mercia Police HQ at Hindlip on the Friday morning (28 July) and took a 102-mile route via Tally Ho in Birmingham to reach Kenilworth for the first night stopover.

The Saturday saw the riders cycle around 78 miles to finally end up at Drayton Manor

Park in Staffordshire for the traditional Saturday night rendezvous with fellow officers from forces across the UK.

All the cyclists then take a shorter Sunday morning ride to the National Memorial Arboretum where the event culminates in a poignant COPS service of remembrance.

The riders wear special wristbands bearing the name of a fallen officer throughout the PUT event and Ash rode in memory of West Midlands PC Jeffrey Barnes who died in a road accident at the age of 43 as he travelled to a motorcycle refresher course on 21 July 1986.

One of the highlights of his weekend was meeting the fallen officer's family members on Saturday evening.

He said: "It was quite an honour to ride for Jeffrey and so it was very special to meet his son, his son's wife and their twin girls at Drayton Manor and then again at the memorial service on Sunday."

The West Midlands PUT Chapter, which was jointly led by West Midlands Police Federation chair Rich Cooke and Chief Superintendent Andy Beard, has raised more than £10,000 for COPS and supporters can still make a donation via the [JustGiving page](#).

Minister thanked for robust support of policing

West Midlands Police Federation chair Rich Cooke has thanked Government minister Johnny Mercer for his robust defence of policing on national TV.

Mr Mercer, the veterans' affairs minister, told viewers of Good Morning Britain that the country should take pride in its police service and the thousands of officers who serve and protect their communities.

Rich said: "Of course we have to tackle the issues in policing and there are always areas for improvement.

"But our members are working tirelessly to serve the people of the West Midlands and to keep them safe. Every day they're doing incredible things and brave deeds that go unheralded.

"I thank Mr Mercer for his comments and adding the perspective that is easily lost with some unbalanced reporting recently, highlighting the great work of the vast majority of officers. That will be positively felt by our members and our colleagues in policing."

Rich was responding to a passionate defence of policing by Mr Mercer, who insisted one-off incidents should not be taken out of context.

The veterans' affairs minister was speaking after reports of an incident in which a PCSO apparently failed to respond to a member of the public's calls for assistance.



MP Johnny Mercer.

Mr Mercer said: "I am an extremely strong supporter of the police.

"You hear of these incidents but you have to bear it in the context of the hundreds of thousands of amazing police officers who every day go out and work in their communities, who prevent crime, who run towards danger, who put themselves in personal danger - often unarmed - in order to save lives and protect the public."

Mr Mercer acknowledged recent scandals had knocked public confidence in policing and said senior officers would accept there were serious issues that needed addressing.

He said: "Nobody can gloss over the problems

there have been in the police and these have been found out by professional bodies over a sustained period of time.

"But we have to look at this realistically and be honest and the honest truth is the vast majority of police officers serve their communities in a manner in which we should take exceptional pride. They are exceptionally brave.

"I would never discourage anyone against going to the police. If you look at the odds, you can almost guarantee that you are going to get an outstanding service."

The minister warned of a growing trend to be critical of the police service and hold it in a negative light.

He said: "I think it has become slightly unfashionable for people to stand up for these people who get out of bed every morning and try to do right by their communities and try to uphold the law.

"It has become more fashionable to highlight the minority and the tiny percentage of cases that go horribly wrong.

"I think these people are incredible, I think they do an exceptional service to the British public.

"We are really, incredibly lucky - look at some of the police incidents that go on abroad.

"We are incredibly lucky at the standards of British policing, accepting that some have not met that standard over the years but you get that in any organisation.

"So I think we have to bear this stuff in context - nothing is black or white - and we should be incredibly proud of the British police."

“ I THINK THESE PEOPLE ARE INCREDIBLE, I THINK THEY DO AN EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE TO THE BRITISH PUBLIC. ”



Officers leaving police service in record numbers

Record numbers of police officers are quitting the service across England and Wales, according to new Home Office data.

The figures reveal a total of 4,668 officers resigned between April 2022 and March 2023.

This is the highest number since comparable records began 16 years ago and shows a 32 per cent increase on the 3,533 who left the service in 2021/22.

The data shows 178 officers resigned from West Midlands Police in the 12 months to last March.

A further 30 retired on medical grounds during the same period and 228 took normal retirement.

Some 67 officers transferred to other forces while eight were dismissed, taking the total number of departures for the year to 511.

West Midlands Police Federation chair Rich Cooke said the figures presented a serious challenge for policing as a whole but came as no surprise.

Rich said the record number of officers leaving the service was no surprise

He said: "More and more of our members are deciding enough's enough and leaving the Force for pastures new. Who can blame them?"

"We have been warning of a retention crisis in policing for many years now but our warnings and the core problems have not been addressed.

"This record number of leavers is one of the consequences we predicted when the programme of police cuts began more than 10 years ago but was dismissed as scaremongering.

"We are losing too many good, experienced officers and nothing is being done to stop it and that is bound to have an impact on policing in the communities they serve.

"The Police Uplift Programme brought in new recruits and we welcomed that but in

reality, the new officers are in many places, simply replacing those who have left and the chasm in skills is not easily bridged. It takes years and even longer when those experts who would have trained them have gone!"

Rich said pay and conditions was still the main reason behind most of the departures.

He said: "The seven per cent pay rise this year was better than in all recent years but it still pushed the real value of our pay downward, just not by as much.

"In challenging economic times, police officers are always among the first to accept relative pay restraint for the national good. However, it wears thin when you've been told that year on year for over a decade.

"Of course, one of the biggest factors influencing officers to leave the job is the reform of our pensions (deferred pay) in 2015.

"The pension is now far less attractive and only fully accessible later on. Naturally, this is changing the choices colleagues make to the detriment of the service. It's all very well saying hang on for another five years for a decent pension, but ten or fifteen? - 'No thanks, I'll take what I can and get out ASAP!'"

"That's the entirely rational choice many are now taking, especially those older colleagues who joined on the 1987 scheme and have reached the age of 50 and those younger in service who felt they couldn't afford to join the pension.

"There is less incentive to remain in service and longer service is not incentivised in the pay scales as it used to be."

Rich said the existing Police Remuneration Review Body combined with fewer employment rights than most workers meant police officers felt more powerless to change anything than ever before.

He said: "It's why we must now force the

issue of industrial rights for police up the political agenda with the ballot which the Police Federation must deliver on and quickly.

"We simply ask for negotiation rights: a seat at the table to decide our pay. But if that simple, reasonable request continues to be ignored by major political parties then we have no other option but to pursue each and every avenue we possibly can.

"On top of this we have senior officers working hard with the Home Office to further undermine the confidence of officers that they will get a fair hearing if accused as virtually all of us are at some point in our careers, denuding our rights to a fair, independently chaired hearing if our job is threatened, and worse still providing themselves with a 'second bite of the cherry' through the vetting process if they didn't get the 'right' result first time.

"We have political leaders who with regard to policing appear simply buffeted by social media, and transient, partially factual stories with little regard for principles such as innocent until proven guilty.

"We yearn for leaders with a spine who will back the vast majority of outstanding public servants in our ranks, but they sadly seem few and far between.

"Our members deserve better. They work incredibly hard in very challenging circumstances and keep our communities safe and secure.

"They should be treated with dignity and respect and the sacrifices they make and the risks they take should be properly recognised."

The departures were highlighted in figures released by the Home Office as it hailed the success of the Police Uplift Programme which saw the recruitment of more than 20,000 officers across the country.

West Midlands Police was told to take on an extra 1,218 officers when the Government launched its uplift programme in 2019 but has exceeded that figure by 158 and brought in a total of 1,376 new recruits.

The latest revised figures show the Force had a total of 7,954 officers as of 31 March 2023.

Federation urges police watchdog to help build trust with public

West Midlands Police Federation discipline lead Dave Hadley has called on the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) to take action to build trust with members.

Dave said one step would be for the IOPC to look at how it communicates with the public about investigations and acknowledge the occasions when it gets things wrong.

He was commenting on the 2023 IOPC Stakeholder Report. The report aims to understand perceptions and knowledge of the IOPC among stakeholders, to assess the IOPC's performance on key measures and to explore the IOPC's communication and engagement with stakeholders.

There were areas of the IOPC's work that stakeholders praised, including:

- **The IOPC's shared learnings are consistently lauded for their robustness and quality.**
- **Stakeholders are extremely pleased with the engagement and communication they have with individual contacts at the IOPC.**
- **Stakeholders recognise that the IOPC is making considerable effort to improve issues such as timeliness despite limited resources.**

However, there were other aspects of the IOPC's work where stakeholders have concerns:

- **Stakeholders question the IOPC's impact and effectiveness within the police accountability system. They feel in a time of growing mistrust in policing, the IOPC should take a greater leadership role in helping to restore trust and confidence in policing and accountability.**
- **Stakeholders are still unsatisfied with the length of time investigations take, referencing the negative impact this has on both members of the public and officers.**
- **Stakeholders highlight an information gap among the public around the IOPC and its role within police accountability.**

Dave said the IOPC has improved and that the Federation had "tried hard to ensure our working relationship is productive for the good of members and policing in general".

But he took issue with comments in the report that the IOPC "should be more proactive with the way it communicates with the public".

He said: "If anything, the biggest

annoyance I have with the IOPC is with its media strategy.

"The IOPC is too quick to trumpet its achievements, especially when it does so before the evidence has been heard at a hearing or trial, and it's reluctant to highlight its failures."

Dave cited a recent gross misconduct hearing which, he said, would have been proven to be untrue by a review of CCTV.

He added: "The officer had the Sword of Damocles hanging over them for 21 months, only for the case to be found not proven."

Dave said the decision to take the issue to a hearing was criticised by the chair, and that the IOPC should have publicly acknowledged its error.

"It only serves to create distrust among the membership, who are important stakeholders in the process too," he said.

"Like police officers, the IOPC should be capable of reflecting on its shortcomings and correcting its ways.

"To do so publicly, would assist in building trust between them and the membership it has to investigate."

Fed rep gives 'gift of life' by donating kidney to colleague's husband

A selfless West Midlands Police Federation representative has made the ultimate sacrifice by donating one of her kidneys to her colleague's husband.

Sam Staite (35), who has been in the Force for 15 years, has donated one of her kidneys to Karl Strange, the husband of Yvonne, a youth officer in West Midlands Constabulary.

Karl (60) was diagnosed with kidney failure during lockdown, which meant he was receiving dialysis, for two four-hour sessions every week.

Upon hearing that Karl needed to find a life-saving kidney donation, his wife's colleague and a family friend, Sam, decided to undergo tests to see if she was a match, which she was.

"You just can't believe it," said Yvonne (58).

"Sam is such a good person, she is so unselfish. She is not only saving Karl's life but she is extending it."

Karl, who lives with type one diabetes, was diagnosed with kidney failure after undergoing an operation for a benign lump that had been found in his organs.

"Yvonne has literally given us the gift of life. This kidney transplant will transform our lives. At one point, we couldn't even make plans for a weekend away without ensuring Karl had somewhere to get his dialysis," added Yvonne, who, between her and Karl, has five children.

"And it's not just us that this has impacted, it's everyone. The children can't thank Sam enough.

"Some people are dealt a bad hand in life and now ours is covered in diamonds, and that's thanks to Sam."

Talks of the donation started in 2021, with Sam asking Karl if there was a way people could donate their organs while they were still alive.

"Karl told me that there was but you'd need tests, so I said, well I'll have the tests," explained Sam, who first met Yvonne 13 years ago while working in response.

She added: "I don't think he thought I was being serious.

"It turns out I was a match. I called Yvonne and told her on her birthday and she just burst into tears.



Karl and Yvonne Strange.

"I can't explain how much that phone call meant to us all. She was speechless."

The operation took place on 16 May, with Sam admitting she was 'strangely excited' about the donation, as well as being understandably nervous.

"It sounds weird but I just know how much of a difference this donation will make," said Sam, who will be donating her left kidney to Karl.

"Ultimately, this man will die if he doesn't get a kidney and if I can prevent that, then for me, it's a no-brainer. This is saving his life."

Both Sam and Karl were told it will take between eight and twelve weeks to recover.

"Yvonne and Karl are so great, they are one of those couples who will do anything for anyone," added Sam.

"I can categorically say that he deserves my kidney."

Sam spent eight days in hospital and, having recovered well, is due to return to work on 29 August.

"Management have been very supportive, with senior leaders visiting me and ensuring I have everything I need," continued Sam, who revealed that support from her 'police family' has helped with recovery.

"My colleagues kept in touch and came to visit me in hospital on their rest days. It's been extremely difficult - especially living alone - but with help from my police family I've recovered tremendously."

Since the transplant, Karl has almost fully recovered and is no longer needing dialysis.

“ULTIMATELY, THIS MAN WILL DIE IF HE DOESN'T GET A KIDNEY AND IF I CAN PREVENT THAT, THEN FOR ME, IT'S A NO-BRAINER. THIS IS SAVING HIS LIFE.



Groundbreaking scheme aims to tackle gang-related violence

A West Midlands Police Federation member who has led a pioneering new scheme designed to tackle gang-related violence in the region says knowing that the initiative could 'change the lives of young people' is what makes him so passionate about the project.

Chief Inspector Daryl Lyon has recently helped roll out CIRV (The Community Initiative to Reduce Violence), with results already suggesting the project is going to be a huge success.

West Midlands Police is only the second force to introduce the scheme, after Daryl led the same project in his former role at Northamptonshire Constabulary - where the initiative saw the number of incidents involving gang-related violence, almost halve for those who engaged with the programme.

"The factors that can impact gang-related violence can be severely complex, which is why we need to look at complex solutions to help resolve them," said Daryl, who transferred to West Midlands Police two years ago.

"Because this scheme takes a holistic approach, it looks at the issues driving the behaviours and not just the symptoms. CIRV looks at the wider picture."

CIRV involves the police working together with multiple agencies across the region, to not only identify and engage with those caught up in crime but to also reach out to vulnerable youngsters - some of who might be in danger of being targeted by the likes of County Lines.

"This is an unusual approach for the police to take and that's what excites me. It provides young people with exit pathways - we don't just turn our backs on them because they are

in trouble.

"Instead, we offer them advice, support and an alternative to the world that they might have found themselves in. We give them hope and the opportunity to potentially turn their life around."

Daryl admits that the scheme is only as effective as the engagement they receive.

He explained: "We want to help people get off that merry-go-round. We are offering them a way out.

"Of course, this approach doesn't work for everyone. If an individual that's being particularly difficult doesn't want to take our offer of an exit pathway, then traditional policing might be the only route for them."

The £2 million scheme, which will currently run for between three and five years, is thought to be 'the most extensively evaluated' crime-prevention programme to ever exist in the UK.

"This is a huge investment from the home office but clearly, they have been very impressed with what they have seen so far," added Daryl.

"Ultimately, if the scheme is carried out correctly, it will stop offending. This will change lives. It's too early to see any major results here but already it feels like the response in Coventry is even better than the one in Northamptonshire.

Rather than police officers working from a base, the 'navigators', who are all plain-clothed rather than in uniform, spend their days liaising with gang members out in the community.

"We take a non-judgmental approach, and that is very important to us," added Daryl, who revealed that a member of their team is a current inmate who uses their knowledge and insight of gangs to support their work.

"This is a brand new, groundbreaking approach. When vulnerable people are at risk of getting into trouble, we don't have the time to evaluate. We need to respond quickly and act fast, to ensure they receive the help they need - that is exactly what CIRV does, it helps people when they need it.

"I am very passionate about CIRV and I'm looking forward to seeing the impact the scheme has across Coventry."

“ THIS IS AN UNUSUAL APPROACH FOR THE POLICE TO TAKE AND THAT'S WHAT EXCITES ME. IT PROVIDES YOUNG PEOPLE WITH EXIT PATHWAYS - WE DON'T JUST TURN OUR BACKS ON THEM BECAUSE THEY ARE IN TROUBLE. INSTEAD, WE OFFER THEM ADVICE, SUPPORT AND AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE WORLD THAT THEY MIGHT HAVE FOUND THEMSELVES IN. WE GIVE THEM HOPE AND THE OPPORTUNITY TO POTENTIALLY TURN THEIR LIFE AROUND.



Pair of West Midlands officers open up about their struggle with life-limiting condition

Two West Midlands Police Federation members, both living with the same neurological medical condition, have told how they have found a 'sense of comfort and relief' in finding out they 'are not alone' as they share their stories to help raise awareness of the disorder.

Rich Jacques and Monty Kaushal have both been diagnosed with Functional Neurologic Disorder (FND), a 'medically unexplained' condition that - according to the NHS - refers to when symptoms in the body appear to be caused by the nervous system but are not caused by neurological disease or disorder.

Ultimately, FND is a problem that impacts how the brain and body send and receive signals. And, while both officers experienced different symptoms, they both have told how the condition has had a huge impact on both their mental and physical health.

"I struggle each day. At first, I thought this would go away and I thought I would make a full recovery," said 51-year-old Monty, who has been in the Force for 25 years.

Rewind to 2020, when Monty developed a kidney stone while on holiday. Treatment was delayed due to the pandemic, which is when he started to notice FND symptoms.

"Some of the symptoms I was experiencing included slurred speech, delayed reactions, clumsiness, headaches, tremors, chronic fatigue, chronic insomnia and general chronic pain throughout my body," explained father-of-one Monty, adding: "Each symptom can change depending on the day, and every symptom can change in an instant.

"It's very, very limiting on a daily basis."

Despite trialling medication and various therapies, Monty said that 'nothing improves the situation'.

"I'm now classed as disabled, but it's an invisible disability, which is difficult. I haven't been able to work for three years and I'm pretty much a recluse now, I actually find interacting with others very difficult, which is quite



Rich Jacques has been diagnosed with Functional Neurologic Disorder (FND).

embarrassing. The mental impact FND has on you is huge. In fact, it is soul-destroying.

"It sounds cliché but I loved my job, I loved my work. I have always been very proud to have been an officer and this has ruined my career."

Reluctantly, Monty was forced to apply for ill-health retirement as a result of the condition.

And with there being little awareness around FND, he explained how he struggled to find the support he needed.

"Despite having a very supportive line manager, I felt really isolated. The team around me wanted to help but they were getting frustrated because they didn't know how," he continued.

"There definitely needs to be more awareness of FND in policing, which is why I'm sharing my experience. It's too late for me, but hopefully, by talking about what I've been through, it will help others who might be experiencing it."

Only recently, Monty was put in touch with Richard, a fellow West Midlands Police officer, who is also living with FND.

Monty said: "In some way, me and Rich

have formed our own informal support network. I can't play down how much it means to know that somebody else in the Force knows what I'm going through. All of a sudden, I don't feel quite so alone."

Rich was diagnosed in 2018, two years after initially noticing symptoms - the main ones being a loss of balance and brain fog.

"I looked, talked and walked like a drunk person," said 52-year-old sergeant Rich who has also been in the Force for 25 years.

"I have to think about absolutely everything now."

Due to the condition, Rich has been 'switching' between roles over the past 12 months.

"I'm almost role-less at the moment, it's difficult to find a place for me in the Force. I'm struggling mentally and physically.

"This illness drives me bonkers, it has totally changed my life. I can't quite begin to explain how it impacts you. It's like I'm on a merry-go-round, just waiting for answers. It's an incredibly lonely place.

"Treatment pathways for FND in the UK are incredibly limited. There are no quick fixes but there are slow fixes that with time and effort can make symptoms less intrusive for some people.

"Sadly services are very much dependant on your postcode with the Midlands being particularly barren of appropriate treatment and contributing to suffering and longevity of symptoms."

Like Monty, Rich says he is sharing his story to not only raise awareness of FND but to create a sense of support for others who are living with the condition.

"I would say there are probably more officers living with this than we know - perhaps they are experiencing symptoms and don't know what the answer is," continued Rich.

"It's really important for me to share my story. I think there are others out there who are suffering who could do with the support.

"My colleagues and managers have been compassionate and understanding about how my disorder impacts upon me. However, living with this condition is incredibly lonely and FND is a very cruel disease."

“ I'M ALMOST ROLE-LESS AT THE MOMENT, IT'S DIFFICULT TO FIND A PLACE FOR ME IN THE FORCE. I'M STRUGGLING MENTALLY AND PHYSICALLY.

Fed rep determined to drive change and give members a voice

West Midlands Police Federation workplace rep Gemma Griffith has vowed to use her platform to advocate for members, bring improvements to the workplace and challenge senior officers if she feels such a response is necessary.

Gemma took on the role two years ago and said she put herself forward 'out of sheer frustration'.

She said: "The Federation is a funny beast. Those that have used the Police Federation at their worst times describe it as the best thing in the world and can be really positive about their experiences.

"But I also used to hear a lot of negativity and regularly heard officers moan that they were going to stop paying their subscriptions. I was naive to a lot of the good work the Fed did."

“SOME OF OUR YOUNGER-IN-SERVICE MEMBERS NEED EDUCATING ABOUT THE POLICE FEDERATION AND HOW IT CAN WORK FOR THEM.

Gemma became a sergeant and said her main motivation for promotion was to make the workplace a better place for officers which went hand-in-hand with joining the Federation.

"I'm a big believer that we shouldn't moan about things if we don't make attempts to make changes ourselves," she continued.

"I am a confident individual who is happy to challenge rank if required and could see some of the challenges we were facing as a Force.

"I thought becoming a Fed rep would give me more of a platform to assist and make better so I nominated myself for the role."

Gemma said she brings to the role a promise to provide whatever support members ask of her.

"I can't always give the results people want, but I will challenge what's not right and update members to ensure a conclusion is reached," she explained.

"I pride myself in always replying to emails and helping where I can. If I don't know the answer, I will find someone who does."

Gemma admitted that she is really enjoying the role and its differences from her day job. She also felt she was solving people's workplace issues while making them happier at work.

She acknowledged it was sometimes difficult when people did not get the results



Gemma Griffith.

they had hoped for but stressed she was always realistic and honest about what can be achieved.

She added: "Sometimes people come to you as a last resort and want you to be able to wave a magic wand and be able to influence legislation and decisions that have been made fairly, even if it isn't what the member wants to hear.

"So it's hard when I can't give members what they always want, but it's about managing expectations and being honest in what we can do."

Gemma admitted she was not particularly technical and sometimes found Force regulations and ways of working things out 'mind-blowing'.

However, she said she was good at making challenges in relation to welfare issues and ensuring members get the answers they want within a fair timeframe.

"Sometimes I find just a bit of badgering and persistent contact gets results members have been seeking for a long time and this is really satisfying," she said.

"I'm very much at the start of my Police Federation career and am currently finding my feet and settling into the role. I am keen for this to be a long-term role so I can keep learning and keep supporting and my aim is to gather more and more knowledge in order to assist our members."

Gemma's advice for anyone considering putting themselves forward to being a Fed rep? Make sure their heart is in it.

"It's very clear when reps don't really want to be doing the role and this really impacts trust and confidence with our members," she added.

"No one forces you to do this role, you have to do it because you want to.

"It's hard work but extremely rewarding and

when people give you that thanks for what you have done it makes the role completely worth it."

Gemma believes the future challenges faced by the Police Federation are deeply entwined with those which are also faced by the Force.

She said: "We seem to get busier and busier with less and less staff and this has massive effects on our staff and morale.

"As Fed reps, we need to ensure our members are listened to and taken seriously and that challenges are, when appropriate, made against breaches in regs and unfair rulings.

Gemma said the move to a much younger-in-service Force has created its own issues which needed to be faced head-on, adding: "Some of our younger-in-service members need educating about the Police Federation and how it can work for them.

"I have been so busy in recent months working with student officers and the Force needs to recognise the issues our student officers are facing and needs to adapt to meet their needs and listen to what they are saying."

Gemma said she has been 'blown away' by the diligence, care and hard work that goes on behind the scenes at the branch but felt more could be done to get this across to the membership.

"Police officers are busy people who don't always have the chance to click on an article or open a magazine and I feel we really need to get better at displaying our hard work to our members so they can see what we are doing. This would be my main aim going forward," continued Gemma, who joined the Force in 2008 having come from a family of police officers.

Her first posting was on response in Willenhall, Walsall and she remembers working with the sergeant on her first shift because everyone else already had permanent partners and spending the night with the car window wide open trying to stay awake.

"I have been lucky in my 15 years of policing to experience numerous different job roles and feel variety has kept me really interested in policing," she said.

"When the days come that I start to drag my heels going into work I know it will be time for a change."

Career highlights include making a difference by in-depth problem-solving in neighbourhood roles and feeling like she has genuinely changed people's lives for the better.

Federation shows support for match day officers on cancelled rest days

West Midlands Police Federation showed its support for officers who had their rest days cancelled on Saturday 12 August due to a large number of football matches in the Force area.

Deputy chair Jase Dooley, whose remit includes officers' welfare, mental health and wellbeing, took the Federation's welfare van on a tour of the West Midlands to hand out sweets, stress relief balls and other freebies.

"I think it was well received," he said. There were four Football League fixtures in the Force area on Saturday with Coventry City playing Middlesbrough in a lunch-time game before Birmingham City took on Leeds United, West Bromwich Albion faced Swansea City and Walsall hosted Stockport County.

Jase said: "We don't normally have that many games on the same day in the West Midlands. It was unprecedented.

"They cancelled all police officers' rest

days, which is unusual, filled the games out with the public order officers and the officers who are trained for this, and once they'd filled all those they reinstated the rest days for the rest of the Force.

"The Federation doesn't normally work weekends, unless we are on call, but I wanted to show our support for the officers.

"We got some freebies, stress relief balls, pin badges, and loads of sweets to show we're with them."

Jase's day kicked off at the Coventry



Branch deputy chair Jase Dooley.

Building Society Arena, where he also met some of the Thames Valley Police mounted section.

"It was the first time we've had horses policing in the West Midlands for years," he said.

"The Force is trialling it again and it was really good to see.

"I'm hoping they come back. It would be great if they did. One horse does the job of at least one hundred police officers.

"We gave the Thames Valley team some stuff as well, and that went down really well."

Jase was able to be back in Birmingham for the midday briefings and then visited the control suite, the operational support unit and the Hawthorns to see the teams policing West Brom's first home game of the season.

"I wanted to make sure that we were out there showing our support for our members," he said.

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Fed member plays key role in stopping a local retailer from selling knives

A West Police Federation member who played a pivotal role in stopping the sale of knives at a local shop says 'working with retailers rather than against them is key' to tackling knife crime.

PC Luke Prescott, a member of the Force's licensing team, helped put a halt to a local Solihull shop from selling knives after a test purchase carried out by the Trading Standards found the retailer seeing a knife to a juvenile.

Luke also worked with the owner of the shop to put in place new conditions for the licence, including the installation of CCTV and ensuring it is operational at all times.

This is the first time a shop has had its licence changed in this way in the West Midlands.

"Look, we don't want to see these shops derelict and that's why I believe the way forward is to work with them, not against them," said Luke, who has been in the Force for nearly 25 years.

"There is no point in us simply asking retailers to remove knives from their shelves because what happens when our backs are turned, or if another manager takes over? The knives go right back up. That's why it is so important that we work on putting conditions in place, that they have to stick to.

"Also, we need to be educating our local retailers, so they know the rules surrounding the sale of knives. After all, they have a responsibility to protect the public."

Also included in the new conditions for the shop, at least one member of staff must be trained to operate the CCTV and download images upon request.

Training must also be provided to all staff around checking ages through Challenge 25 and keeping an incident book in which refusals to see are logged.

"At the end of the day, it's legal to sell most types of knives but it is illegal to sell them to children and minors," added Luke.

"This story could've been making the headlines for a completely different reason, had it had a different beginning. What if that shop had sold a knife to a child, who had then used it?

"It's no secret that this is a serious issue, especially within the West Midlands and I firmly believe that one of the most effective ways we can tackle knife crime is by working with our local retailers.

"We need to be speaking with retailers at the earliest opportunity so we can intervene as early as possible.

"We should be talking to retailers about

product placement or putting the knives in glass cabinets, or even the basics like staff training, if they really want to sell these items"

The chair of West Midlands Police Federation Rich Cooke, who has actively been campaigning for an outright ban on the sale of certain vicious blades, like machetes has praised the work of the Force's licencing team.

"This is exactly what should be happening," he added.

"This is what we want to be seeing all over - officers working with local retailers to prevent knives from getting into the hands of the wrong people. I have no doubt about it, shops being more responsible when it comes to selling knives will help to prevent knife crime."

Rich added that this was a 'good example' of 'local policing'.

"The focus of the Force has shifted, and this is an example of how a more localised policing model is helping us to get to know our communities better," he continued.

"Our officers are asking themselves, 'what can I do to make my part of the world safer' and while I'm not saying that wouldn't have happened before, I think local policing models are definitely helping our officers to connect and engage with the patch they work in."

“ THIS IS WHAT WE WANT TO BE SEEING ALL OVER - OFFICERS WORKING WITH LOCAL RETAILERS TO PREVENT KNIVES FROM GETTING INTO THE HANDS OF THE WRONG PEOPLE. I HAVE NO DOUBT ABOUT IT, SHOPS BEING MORE RESPONSIBLE WHEN IT COMES TO SELLING KNIVES WILL HELP TO PREVENT KNIFE CRIME. ”

New Vetting Code of Practice must not undermine conduct processes

Fair and transparent police conduct procedures must not be undermined by a revised Vetting Code of Practice, West Midlands Police Federation's discipline lead has warned.

Dave Hadley said he was "extremely concerned" by some changes to existing processes and warned forces were being given "two bites of the cherry" to dismiss officers accused of misconduct.

Dave said no one in policing opposed measures which stopped unsuitable candidates joining the service and agreed that efforts to boost public trust and confidence in policing were needed in the wake of some high-profile scandals involving serving officers.

But he insisted that the safeguards designed to protect police officers, whose status as constables gives them far fewer employment rights than most workers, had to be maintained.

“ OFFICERS ARE ENTITLED TO EXPECT FAIR AND EQUITABLE TREATMENT WHEN THEY ARE ACCUSED OF WRONG-DOING.

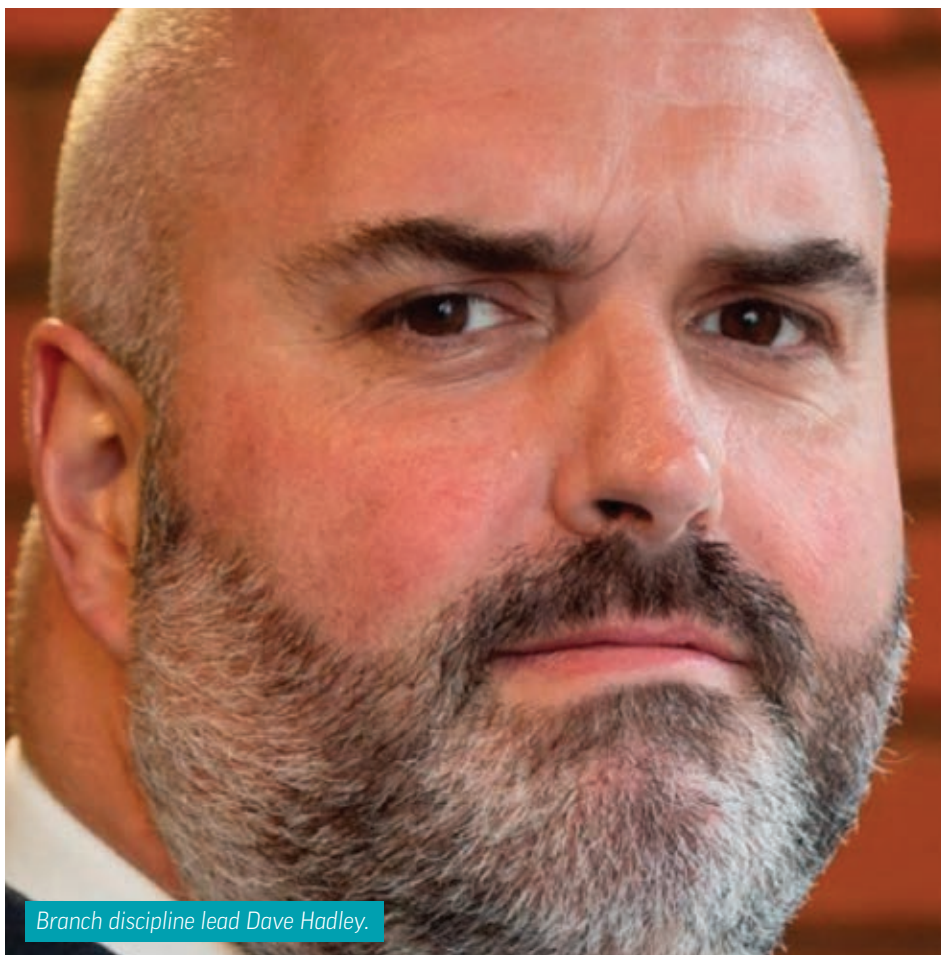
Dave said: "For the system to operate effectively all stakeholders must have confidence in its innate ability to deal with those accused of misconduct fairly and proportionately.

"Fairness, transparency and openness must permeate proceedings to foster confidence in it."

He warned some of the provisions contained in the new code of practice for vetting issued by the College of Policing and laid before the Parliament last week had given chief constables the power to circumvent established misconduct procedures and sack officers.

He said this created a situation which amounted to an administrative decision maker being given the unilateral ability to dismiss officers by overruling the findings of a quasi-judicial misconduct tribunal.

And he added that members subjected to this new route of dismissal would be denied the right to a truly independent appeals process.



Branch discipline lead Dave Hadley.

"How much confidence in the system will this approach engender?" said Dave.

"I'm sure many officers will feel that appeals would simply be a 'going through the motions exercise' with forces effectively marking their own homework.

"Even if that is not the case, it's the optics that matter here. There is a clear public interest in open, transparent police disciplinary procedures, yet the decision to end the career of an officer in these circumstances is anything but.

"Officers are entitled to expect fair and equitable treatment when they are accused of wrong-doing.

"In my view, this change encourages two bites of the same cherry: It sidesteps regulatory safeguards and undermines the disciplinary process.

"How is it reasonable for an officer to lose their job in these circumstances?"

Police Federation national conduct and

performance co-lead Melanie Warnes, said: "We support stringent vetting of officers to identify and remove undesirable individuals from the police service.

"However, this does not mean existing Police Conduct Regulations, which have been established following a democratic process, should be outrightly undermined and the authority of independent Legally Qualified Chairs bypassed."

Conduct and performance co-lead Phil Jones said: "Police officers must have confidence that they have the right to fair and transparent disciplinary processes to ensure individual bias does not govern or influence decisions which have serious consequences on an individual's career and wellbeing.

"We have requested and await the College of Policing to share the Equality Impact Assessment to ensure no group of officers are unjustifiably disadvantaged by the revised code."

West Midlands fundraising team taking part in New York Half Marathon

A West Midlands Police Federation member is running the New York Half Marathon next year in memory of her 19-month-old niece, who died earlier this year after being diagnosed with neuroblastoma.

The officer is part of a team from West Midlands Police, who will be tackling the 13-mile course around Central Park.

The team aims to raise awareness of neuroblastoma, a rare cancer that affects children, mostly under the age of five.

The runners are also raising money for Joining Against Cancer in Kids, or J-A-C-K.org, a charity founded in 2008 by Metropolitan Police officers, which provides research into neuroblastoma and offers advice and support to families with children with a diagnosis.

One of those members, who has asked to remain anonymous, is doing it for her niece Beau.

The officer said: "I'd decided to take part in the half marathon before Beau passed away but now I'm doing it in her memory."

Beau was diagnosed with Neuroblastoma on 5 May when she was 16 months old and was treated at Birmingham Children's Hospital. She passed away aged 19 months on 24 July.

"Her treatment was going well but unfortunately Beau suffered complications having caught sepsis and she was taken from us," the officer said.

"She's the bravest little girl, and she made such an impression on everyone who met her.

"It's still very raw. It's a difficult process and difficult supporting Beau's sisters and brothers, and parents and grandparents."

J-A-C-K.org was founded in 2008 by

officers in the Metropolitan Police. The charity was inspired by Jack Brown, who was seven when he died from neuroblastoma after a three-year illness. His mum Yvonne and dad Richard were detectives in the Met.

For the past 18 years, police officers from the UK have been running the New York Half Marathon in Central Park to help raise money for the charity.

Police officer Jamie Murphy was pivotal in getting the team from West Midlands together ahead of the event.

He said: "I saw a tweet from a fellow cop from the Met Police, who advertised that he was running again for the charity that has been taking part in the New York Half for more than 15 years and was calling for cops to join him.

"So, I dropped him an email and here we are today."

Fellow West Midlands Police Fed member Paige Gartlan is set to swap tutorials for training runs as she builds towards the race.

Student officer Paige is putting the finishing touches to her university work and the end of her studies.

Paige said: "I'm really excited about running the half marathon.

"I haven't started my training yet as I've got to finish off a few things with my university work and then I'll be getting on with it. As soon as it's done I'll be out running."

Paige, who lives in Wolverhampton and is based in Birmingham, is looking for a running club that can help her with her training.

"I'm going to start off with the 'Couch to 5K' and then once I've completed that I'll carry



Beau.

on running and building on it," she said.

"I'm going to see if there are any running clubs because when you're running with people it's a little bit easier than just going out on your own."

Paige added: "It's raising money for a really good charity that helps and supports children and their families."

Federation member Rich Evans said Jack's story "pulled on his heartstrings" when he heard it.

He said: "Friends of ours had a niece who was diagnosed with a number of issues and passed away before she got to two.

"It wasn't neuroblastoma but it's still just awful when children pass away before their parents so any support we can give is a good thing in my mind."

Next year's event takes place on Saturday 18 May and a 15-strong team from West Midlands Police will be joining them.

They'll be running in trainers and shorts but wearing their black wicking shirts with epaulettes and a custodial helmet.

They will take annual leave for the run and fund the trip themselves.

Rich, who is well on with his training, said: "Not only does it sounds like an experience in itself, but also just to be able to do it for such a good cause as well, is a huge bonus. It's great to be able to give something back."

You can donate to the team by visiting their [JustGiving page](http://JustGiving.page).

“NOT ONLY DOES IT SOUNDS LIKE AN EXPERIENCE IN ITSELF, BUT ALSO JUST TO BE ABLE TO DO IT FOR SUCH A GOOD CAUSE AS WELL, IS A HUGE BONUS. IT'S GREAT TO BE ABLE TO GIVE SOMETHING BACK.

Retired cop urging members to speak out about mental health



Former West Midlands Police Federation member Simon Jones has spoken about how he sought help for his mental health and urged others to “put their hand up” if they’re struggling with their emotional wellbeing.

Simon said that mental health problems can affect anyone at any time, as he spoke about the issues that impacted him while he was a West Midlands Police officer.

The former sergeant and acting inspector, who retired in 2020, was sharing his experience of anxiety and depression ahead of World Mental Health Day on Tuesday 10 October in the hope it will help others find the support they need.

Simon said: “I was regarded as a strong person. When some people found out I’d been diagnosed with anxiety and depression they didn’t believe it. ‘There’s no way it can happen to you’ they said, but it can happen to anyone.

“I’ve been married 33 years now and I had a good support network around me at home.

“It was all work-related. I expect high standards from everyone and I wasn’t getting them. People weren’t getting things done and it was getting dumped on me to sort people’s problems out.”

Simon said he used his experience to support colleagues who were experiencing their own mental health issues.

“It made me feel good knowing what I’d gone through was helping them,” he said. “They were saying that some of the coping techniques were working for them.”

Now Simon is encouraging officers to ask for help if they need it.

“If you think you have mental health issues, the slightest indication, ask for help straight away because it takes time to get it,”

Former Fed member Simon Jones.



he said. “The hardest thing to do was actually putting my hand up and saying I needed help.

“The sooner you can start addressing the issue, the easier it is in the long run.

“Some good analogies that someone gave me were that if you had rust on a car, would

you let it rust away or would you treat it? If you had a broken leg would you go to hospital?”

“My advice is to talk about it as soon as you can. Doing nothing is not an option, it will just make it worse.”

“

I WAS REGARDED AS A STRONG PERSON. WHEN SOME PEOPLE FOUND OUT I’D BEEN DIAGNOSED WITH ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION THEY DIDN’T BELIEVE IT. ‘THERE’S NO WAY IT CAN HAPPEN TO YOU’ THEY SAID, BUT IT CAN HAPPEN TO ANYONE.

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Are you retiring soon? Don't miss out on the many benefits of the Benevolent Fund

Most officers and staff appreciate the importance of joining the Benevolent Fund. Hopefully, many of you will have signed up at the beginning of your policing career and have already seen the value of becoming a life-long member.

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experienced the thrills of our family adventure days.

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With retirement on the horizon, please make sure you remain a member of your police charity so you can continue to enjoy all the membership benefits we have to offer.

Supporting the Benevolent Fund when you retire will only cost you £1.00 per month. You will need to inform us that you wish to stay with the fund when you retire. Your membership will not automatically continue

and we would really hate to lose you!

What you need to do

- You can **drop us an email** to let us know you plan to retire soon and wish to remain a member
- You can call us on **0121 752 4919**
- Or you can **inform us online**.

Here's a quick recap of your membership benefits if you've forgotten or don't know.

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- Access to grants and loans to support you and your immediate family should the unforeseen or unexpected happen





- A death in service grant of £3,500 paid out to your chosen beneficiary
- £25 per week for your surviving children until their 18th birthday
- Convalescence or rehabilitation breaks at the multi-million-pound treatment centre St Michael's Lodge, offering a four-night stay with treatments
- New trial benefit of mental health support, offering online counselling sessions for serving officers only
- Shopping vouchers if you're off work through injury or illness
- Discounted breaks at our holiday homes in Weymouth and Dartmouth.

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Fed backs MP's calls to end police station closures

West Midlands Police Federation chair Rich Cooke has backed the comments of a former cabinet minister who warned the closure of police stations risked "hollowing out" town centres and damaging high streets.

Theresa Villiers said "a police officer sitting in Starbucks with an iPad" should not be seen as a substitute for a "functioning police station".

The former Northern Ireland Secretary also said it would be a mistake to press on with closures at a time when some forces have been rocked by scandals and confidence in policing was low.

She told the Commons: "The presence of police stations is an important part of keeping policing close to communities.

"If we shut them down or retreat into a handful of buildings, we make it more difficult to deliver genuine community policing."

Ms Villiers said the sense of confidence that the presence of a police station gave people had been entirely lost in areas where they had been closed down.

And she was dismissive of the idea that policing could be effectively carried out from a variety of different settings.

She said: "The suggestion remains that a

new base for police officers could be in a corner of a library or the backroom of a high street shop, but providing a base for police officers is not a straightforward matter."

She continued: "Officers have access to highly sensitive personal data and they hold evidence from cases for which it is vital that they keep rigorous and reliable records of custody.

"Moreover, some police equipment is potentially harmful, such as tasers, and it would be dangerous if this kind of kit fell into the wrong hands.

"Special storage facilities would need to be built in new alternative accommodation. They could not just set up a few lockers in a local library.

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Theresa Villiers said closing police stations was damaging communities.

"Frankly, it is wholly unrealistic to expect a police officer sitting in Starbucks with an iPad to be an adequate substitute for a functioning police station."

Rich, a long-standing and vocal critic of police station closures, said Ms Villiers' appraisal of the situation was "absolutely spot on".

He said: "The closure of police stations across our region has had a huge impact on community policing.

"Police stations have always been an important part of our social fabric but we have retreated out of so many areas over the last 10 years and we are now living with the consequences.

"The idea that police officers can be out all day without a base to return to is totally wrong.

"The shortage of stations means officers are racing from job to job and don't have time to stop in the communities to see what's going on.

"I find it astonishing that we no longer have a police station in every town and city in the West Midlands.

"But the damage has been done so we have to make sure the ones we have are retained and not sold off. We can't afford to lose any more stations."



West Midlands Police Museum: A jam-packed schedule to enjoy this autumn

Stage adaptations of infamous true-life crimes, a murder mystery night and a talk on the use of drones in policing are just some of the events coming up at the West Midlands Police Museum.

"There's something for everyone," said heritage manager Corinne Brazier.

Members of the West Midlands Police Drone Unit - who have featured on Channel 4's *Sky Coppers* - will be shining a light on their work during a talk on Thursday 12 October.

Corinne said: "There'll be talking about how important drones have become to modern policing and sharing some of their exciting stories."

Discover more about the darker side of the museum in the *Lock-Up*, in Steelhouse Lane, Birmingham at *The Macabre Museum: Stories of Murder and Mayhem*.

Hear tales of the real *Peaky Blinders*, Birmingham's Connection to Jack the Ripper

and see of the museum's notorious items in its archives.

Held on Sunday 10 September as part of Birmingham Heritage Week, it's an over 18s only event.

"We'll hear some of the darker stories of policing in the West Midlands," said Corinne. "This event covers cases through the Victorian years right up to more recent history, and shows the reality of some of the crimes police officers will have dealt with."

If you fancy yourself as a detective then the *Murder of Florence Campbell* murder mystery night on Saturday 30 September is for you.

Corinne said: "You'll need to look at the evidence and follow the clues to work out who dunnit."

Scotland Yard Investigates on Friday 6 October is stage adaptations of infamous true-life 19th Century crimes.

People attending the *Lock-up, Lock-in* event on Saturday 7 October will learn about two centuries of policing history while spending the night in the museum with a range of activities planned for participants. All fundraising generated by participants will be going to support this amazing charity.

The museum will be showing three classic *Laurel and Hardy* films on Friday 13 October as part of the Birmingham Comedy Festival.

Author Ajay Chowdhury will host an interactive workshop on Sunday 22 October titled *Decoding Crime Writing: Unleashing the Power of AI and Storytelling*.

And on Sunday 5 November the museum hold a relaxed opening. It will reduce its capacity for the day, quietening its noise levels, and adjusting its lighting levels to create a more relaxed and less overwhelming environment.

Visit the [West Midlands Police Museum website](https://www.westmidlands.police.uk/museum) for more information including how to book.



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Women's health programme launched by PTC

A new online programme focusing on women's health has been launched by the Police Treatment Centres (PTC).

The PTC Online Women's Health Programme provides officers with access to fitness, nutrition and wellbeing advice from a team of experts.

West Midlands officers subscribing to the PTC and wishing to access the online service will receive an initial dual assessment with fitness and physiotherapy specialists followed by a detailed treatment plan including signposting to appropriate services or resources.

The PTC team can offer support with:

- Ante and post-natal fitness
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- Pelvic floor
- Nutrition
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- Fitness training
- Signposting to virtual resources including PTC educational videos.

The PTC team is made up of rehabilitation specialists with a wealth of knowledge and understanding of the demands of the policing role.

It can help women stay in their role or facilitate a confident return to work as well as enjoying their home life and hobbies.

Access is secure, confidential, and fast and members can get more details from the [PTC website](#).

National Police Memorial Day: members can still register



The National Police Memorial Day is one of the most important events in the policing calendar, says West Midlands Police Federation chair Rich Cooke.

This year's National Police Memorial Day Service takes place at St David's Hall in Cardiff on Sunday 24 September.

Speaking about the event, Rich said: "When an officer falls it affects everyone across the policing community.

"The National Police Memorial Day gives us the chance to come together to pay our respects and recognise the service, dedication, and commitment of those who have made the ultimate sacrifice in serving the public and keeping our communities safe.

"It's one of the most significant days in the police calendar and ensures that the sacrifices of officers are never forgotten and that we continue to comfort and support their loved ones."

As in previous years, [a tribute wall](#) is planned for people to share their messages of remembrance and support.

The weekend of remembrance begins with an evening in the presence of the British Police Symphony Orchestra.

The National Police Memorial Day was first held in 2004 and is supported by royalty, government and UK police services.

It is rotated around the four nations of the United Kingdom and is held on the closest Sunday to 29 September, which is St Michael's Day, the patron saint of policing.

It provides a dignified and sensitive service of remembrance to honour the courage and sacrifice of the almost 4,000 police officers who have been killed on duty.

[Register to attend the service](#). The service starts at 2pm and attendees are asked to be seated no later than 1.30pm.



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HAVE YOU BEEN AFFECTED BY NOISE-INDUCED HEARING LOSS?

Noise-induced hearing loss can drastically affect those who work in law enforcement

Noise-induced hearing loss (NIHL) is a term used to describe hearing loss, deafness or tinnitus caused by exposure to excessive noise at work where insufficient or no training or ear protection has been provided. NIHL can have a significant impact on those who work in law enforcement, particularly those who use firearms, due to frequent exposure to extremely high levels of noise in their line of work.

Though hearing loss is a common symptom of age, it's important to note the distinct signs that indicate noise-induced hearing loss. Some signs to look out for include:

- **Difficulty hearing or understanding speech, particularly in environments with background noise.**
- **Tinnitus, which is a ringing, buzzing, hissing, or other sounds in one ear or both ears.**
- **Some people become more sensitive to loud noises. Everyday sounds that were previously tolerable may become uncomfortable or even painful.**
- **Difficulty accurately determining the direction a sound is coming from.**
- **Constantly increasing the volume of the television or radio.**
- **Asking others to speak louder or repeat themselves frequently.**
- **Fatigue or strain from listening for extended periods of time.**

All these signs and symptoms can vary in severity and differ from person to person.

As police officers often deal with exposure to loud sounds such as gunshots, sirens, explosions, and high-decibel events, this can and often does lead to damage being sustained to the sensitive structures of the inner ear, which can turn into noise-induced hearing loss. Though symptoms differ, this could cause a permanent decrease in hearing sensitivity, making it more difficult for police officers to hear important sounds, such as verbal commands from colleagues or approaching emergency vehicles.

Hearing loss may also compromise an officer's situational awareness, making them less able to identify any potential threats or hazards. This can impact the ability to respond quickly and appropriately to dangerous situations, potentially jeopardising their safety and the safety of others. Hearing loss could even affect an officer's job performance, especially in tasks that require good hearing abilities, such as gathering witness statements, conducting interviews, or participating in surveillance operations.

To minimise the risk of police officers developing noise-induced hearing loss, it's important for police forces to implement hearing conservation programmes. These could include training in and the provision of hearing protection devices, regular hearing screenings, education on the risks of noise exposure, and strategies to minimise exposure to loud sounds whenever possible. The law says that every employer has a duty of care to protect employees from suffering harm in the workplace, including noise induced injuries.

Madelene Holdsworth, Managing Director of Specialist Legal Services and expert in noise induced hearing loss cases on behalf of police officers, says: 'It's imperative that police departments have stringent safety strategies in place to reduce noise induced hearing loss and tinnitus amongst their staff. Having worked with police federations for over 60 years, we've seen the detrimental impact that hearing loss and tinnitus can have on officers. Employers' duty of care is crucial in safeguarding the health and safety of police officers and safety measures used must be fully effective at all times particularly around the use of radio earpieces.'

Police officers, like other employees, are protected by the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005. These regulations set out the standards and requirements for employers to manage and control noise in the workplace to prevent occupational hearing loss.

If a police officer believes that their hearing loss was caused or significantly worsened by their work environment, they may be eligible to make a claim for compensation.

Expert noise-induced hearing loss claims lawyers at Slater and Gordon will arrange for you to be examined by a medical professional to determine what proportion of your hearing loss is due to workplace exposures to noise, and on the basis of that independent medical opinion, you will be advised on whether you have a claim that can be pursued.



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