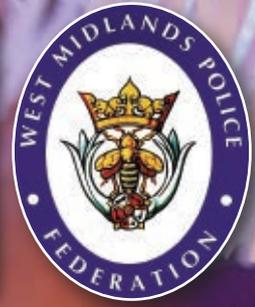


# FEDERATION



West Midlands Police Federation

December 2023/January 2024

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# WELCOME

Welcome to the December 2023/January 2024 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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# WHAT'S INSIDE

- 4 Chair's introduction
- 5 Renewed calls for every officer to have Taser after 'abhorrent' knife attack
- 5 Federation ballot on industrial rights
- 6 Shock as Force is placed into 'special measures'
- 7 Jailing racist fan sends out 'strong message'
- 8 Football violence worst officers have seen in decades, says deputy chair
- 8 'There is a lot for the new Home Secretary to tackle'
- 9 Offenders must face the strongest possible consequences
- 9 Branch chair 'disappointed' after National Council votes to extend Federation electoral cycle
- 10 Tributes paid to 'one of a kind' former sergeant
- 11 Court hearings campaign hailed a success
- 12 Chair urging Government to step in to save iconic stations
- 14 'Protected learning time needed for those wanting promotion,' says deputy chair
- 15 Dedicated detective clinches Investigator of the Year Award
- 16 'Shocked' cop receives student officer award
- 17 Surprise win for Special Sergeant
- 18 Double celebration for Special Inspector
- 20 Special Chief Inspector 'gobsmacked' to win second award of the year
- 21 Aspiring leader wins national award
- 22 Federation annual conference 2023: a round-up
- 26 Review of the year 2023
- 30 Health and safety lead urges shift working members to prioritise mental health
- 31 West Midlands Police Benevolent Fund
- 32 Fundraising inspector on a mission to run in murdered cop's memory
- 33 Retirement seminars - 2024 dates announced
- 34 'Rank structure becoming outdated and unworkable'

## ADVERTISERS

- 2 **McAlister**, family law
- 24 **George Burrows**, Group Insurance Scheme
- 32 **Irwin Mitchell**, family law
- 33 **Warren & Co**, independent mortgage advice and travel insurance
- 34 **Slater & Gordon**, family and police law
- 35 **NARPO**, member services
- 35 **First Call Financial**, independent mortgage advice
- 36 **Police Insure**, car, home and motorcycle insurance



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

Welcome to the final edition of your Federation magazine for 2023. As the year draws to an end, I hope you are all looking forward to Christmas and spending some much-needed and well-earned time with loved ones.

In the New Year, we will set a date for a once in a generation ballot on seeking a fairer system for deciding our pay after the Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW) confirmed it will canvass its membership to see if we should seek industrial rights. This does not mean we are voting for a 'right to strike' immediately. The plan is to ballot initially for a fair system of deciding our pay where we are involved and have a seat at the table to negotiate. This is known as collective bargaining. This isn't a lot to ask you may well conclude, and I'd agree. It's similar to what we had before 2013, through the Police Negotiating Board (PNB) and Police Arbitration Tribunal (PAT) – which still operate for colleagues in Scotland and Northern Ireland. I am helping organise the ballot with a group of colleagues nationally and will keep you updated as best I can as things progress. I would like to think the ballot will take place early next year. Crucially for me, it must take place before any general election and consequent period of purdah kicks in as I want us to be able to deliver a strong message to the public and all political parties to enable them to take our views into account before going to the polls.

It would be remiss of me not to mention the 2023 pay award. While it was an increase, it was not necessarily the reward we were all hoping for and deserved. I want members to know we will continue to fight for better pay and the centrepiece of this will be the ballot so it is absolutely essential every bobby votes.

I've called on the new Home Secretary

# Looking forward to 2024

James Cleverly to focus on the fundamentals and reform the national funding formula, so our communities don't continue to suffer less than equitable investment in their safety. He must invest in the police, so we can prevent things like the closures of our iconic stations - a move that I am totally against. These stations are a historic part of our towns and cities, form our social fabric and offer a base for officers in those communities. They are essential for ensuring our Force is fit for purpose and can serve our communities efficiently. Infrastructure tends to be lost when it comes to a choice between that or extra officers; a false economy if ever there was one, because we know they go hand in hand.

**“ TAKE CARE - WE EACH HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY AND DUTY TO ONE ANOTHER AND WE SHOW THAT THROUGH OUR ACTIONS EVERY DAY. IF YOU NEED SUPPORT, PLEASE REACH OUT. WE ARE YOUR FEDERATION AND WE ARE HERE TO SUPPORT YOU, WHENEVER YOU NEED US.**

As we head into 2024, I'm looking forward to the PFEW pension discrimination tribunal settlement finally being resolved. As you may know, the case is close to my heart. Thankfully, it's no longer 'if' the case gets resolved, but 'when', and I know both sides very much want a satisfactory solution for all. The Federation must learn from its failure to support the original pension discrimination claims, so we can move on and provide the type of proactive, activist representation our members richly deserve on the national stage. This involves a programme of significant reform. My hope and belief is we will be a leaner, but stronger organisation in the future, because we are responsive to our members. I am encouraged by changes I have seen already and, despite setbacks like the vote to extend terms of office (which we oppose), I think generally speaking, under the current CEO Mukund Krishna, we are heading in the right direction at a lively pace.

Reflecting on the last year, I have so much pride for our members. In this issue, you will

see a number of our award-winning members have been celebrated. From frontline colleagues to detectives and Specials, they have each shown an undeniable commitment to their role, and everyone here at West Midlands Police Federation is incredibly proud of them.

The decision of the inspectorate to place the Force in special measures completely blindsided me. It seemed perverse when colleagues really have turned a corner, through sheer hard graft, in our service to the public over the last 12 months. No one serious in the job is happy with where policing is overall, it could be so much better with the investment it needs but unfortunately we have a generation of political leaders who have, through their decisions, decimated our service. We compare well with forces of a similar size, but it isn't good enough. The Federation demands better for our country. You cannot rip away 2,000 experienced colleagues, slash real pay and pensions, shut down multiple stations, bases and training infrastructure, and simply expect it to remain how it was. It's cloud cuckoo land and I am here to call it out on your behalf. New officers are very welcome, but it has to be acknowledged it takes many resources to train them and they need and deserve experience around them to develop, which sadly often isn't there.

In July, we saw the West Midlands nominees win the national Police Bravery Award. Despite the circumstances that led to the nomination being so tragic, every single one of those officers deserved such recognition. I'm sure that this time of year will not be easy for anyone who attended the incident, especially as we pass the year anniversary. If anybody feels they need support or someone to talk to the Federation door is always open.

In January, we will be hosting the first-ever West Midlands Police Federation Bravery Awards. We received a variety of fantastic nominations, which made choosing one from each category a very tricky process. Each of the winners will be announced in the New Year, and I look forward to honouring them at the event - along with the overall winner who will go on to represent the Force at the national Police Bravery Awards in 2024.

Less positively, I was disgusted to hear about the football violence outside Villa Park at the end of November. I'm grateful none of our members were permanently injured and I'd like to recognise all the officers - from West Midlands and surrounding forces - who were involved in the events that evening. What happened was

totally unacceptable. Sadly, officer assaults are nothing new and should not be tolerated.

I am determined to continue campaigning for all frontline officers (and any who need it) to have access to Taser. It is a visible deterrent to assaults and safeguards the public. We know that in 8 out of 10 cases where violence is presented or threatened, it can be defused if there is a Taser present, without the need for it being drawn.

It's no secret that policing is challenging. As your Federation, we recognise these challenges and we are doing all we can to combat them. Please prioritise your mental and physical health, and recognise the signs of burnout. Take care – we each have a responsibility and duty to one another and we show that through our actions every day. If you need support, please reach out. We are your Federation and we are here to support you, whenever you need us.

A very merry Christmas to you all and may we wish you a very happy, prosperous New Year too.



## Federation ballot on industrial rights

The Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW) will ballot its membership to see if it should seek industrial rights.

This decision follows more than a decade of requesting the Government to address police officers' poor working terms and conditions which has resulted in a growing sense of anger and frustration among Federation members.

The Federation is working with a leading senior counsel (KC) on its approach to pursuing industrial rights for the membership.

Members of the PFEW's National Council, which draws representatives from all parts of England and Wales, and National Board are united in their approach to ballot the membership on industrial rights as soon as practicable.

The announcement followed the Federation's national conference at which West Midlands Police Federation chair Rich Cooke make an impassioned plea for a ballot.

He said: "A 17 per cent average reduction in our real terms pay since the year 2000 is nothing short of scandalous. And we currently have no real recourse, no seat at the table to negotiate with the Government, with chief officers around our pay. That's what needs to change.

"This ballot gives [police officers] across all the 43 Federation branches a powerful opportunity to change this and to make our voices heard in the corridors of power."

# Renewed calls for every officer to have Taser after 'abhorrent' knife attack

**W**est Midlands Police Federation chair Rich Cooke has renewed his call for every officer to be able to be trained in the use of Taser.

Rich's comments come after a student officer received 'significant lasting injuries' after being attacked with a knife in the Springfield area of Birmingham in the mid-afternoon of Sunday 19 November.

Two officers were taken to hospital after the attack, which Rich described as 'absolutely abhorrent and shocking'. They have since been discharged after receiving treatment.

Rich revealed that Taser was deployed in the incident, and said without it the situation could have been worse.

He said: "We're offering all the support we can to the officers. The officer did have a Taser and managed to subdue their attacker with it.

"For me, it reinforces that all officers should have Taser training if they want it.

"Assaults on officers are unacceptably high - there's a general willingness of criminals to use violence.

"We have got a lot of relatively new in service officers, and they deserve the protection against this level of violence.

"While in this instance it didn't prevent them being attacked, it may well have saved a life."

Rich said that as well as physical injuries from the incident, the officers may experience psychological issues as well.

"It's a horrible, traumatic experience," he said. "The fact that you're close to being seriously injured or worse, it can happen in a split second.

"It's really scary, maybe not for you personally but for your family, friends and loved ones. That's when it hits you, when you realise what you could lose.

"Quite possibly, those officers are going to be traumatised by the attack for a long time to come."

Rich also called for tougher sentences for those who attack emergency services workers to act as a deterrent.

And he said that the level of violence against police officers may put people off joining the service.

"The sentencing is woefully inadequate to provide a deterrent," he added.

"Police officers do it in support of others and if we don't get the support then the danger is you won't get people putting themselves forward.

"It's a vocation, but it's got to pay you a living and you've got to have some confidence you are going to get supported doing it."

# Shock as Force is placed into 'special measures'

**W**est Midlands Police Federation chair Rich Cooke says he's surprised and shocked that the Force has been moved into an enhanced level of monitoring.

The decision was announced by His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS).

The inspectorate said it had concerns about how the Force managed investigations, how it makes sure multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs) work effectively to safeguard vulnerable people, and how it manages sex offenders and offenders accessing indecent images of children.

West Midlands Police said that many of the issues identified by HMICFRS related to the Force's previous operating model, and the statistics were largely drawn from before the switch in April this year.

Rich agreed that the new operating model was seeing results.

"We're shocked by this," he said, "We're supportive of the Chief Constable and the move to the new, local model that we've got.

"The new model has already done a lot of good, we're not there yet and colleagues are working really hard under a lot of strain, but it's not in vain or standing still. There are a lot of stats that show we're making progress bringing more offenders to justice and improving the holistic service gradually as a Force.

"So, we wonder why this is being done now. We don't understand it."

Rich said that austerity, a failed funding formula and cuts to officer numbers over the past 14 years have all had a significant impact on policing.

He said: "Of course policing in general needs improvement. We want to provide the people of the West Midlands with the best possible service.

"But we've been through austerity and we've been through several years of devastating cuts to the service, to infrastructure, to officer and staff numbers, to training. It forced us to retreat, to centralise, becoming more remote from communities, the intelligence dried up and sadly our effectiveness undoubtedly suffered.

"In the West Midlands we've got an adverse



Chief Constable Craig Guildford.

funding formula that penalises us because of the limitations of the council tax precept in the West Midlands, which is no fault of the people who live here, and it means we suffer relative to far more affluent areas where money can be raised more easily.

"We lost 2,000 officers. Okay, we've recruited new officers but they're inexperienced and need time to adjust and to get up to top speed, and all the while we're losing experienced officers to earlier retirement because of changes to their pensions and real pay reductions."

Rich said the Federation would work with the Force on the issues highlighted by HMICFRS.

And he had a message for members, praising the fantastic job they were doing.

He said: "Officers are feeling undervalued by the Government, they're getting battered by the media, they're feeling the pinch of 14 years of real terms pay cuts and pension devaluation.

"They're working hard and doing a fantastic job in difficult circumstance and the Federation appreciates what they are up against.

"We'll work with the Force to address any perceived organisational issues, and this should not reflect on the hard-working, committed, and dedicated officers who are doing their best to offer a good quality policing service to the communities of the West Midlands."

Chief Constable Craig Guildford said he 'completely disagreed' with the HMICFRS decision.

He said: "Although I remain respectful of HMICFRS, I completely disagree with their decision-making to move West Midlands Police into 'Engage' now despite providing them with recent evidence that should inform a much more comprehensive and fair assessment of the Force.

"Our job now is to ensure the plans we have already implemented expeditiously address HMICFRS' concerns.

"When I joined West Midlands Police in December 2022 I set some clear priorities as I recognised there needed to be a significant improvement in the Force's performance, the number of offenders brought to justice and the service we provide to local communities.

"It was for this reason that I implemented a rapid overhaul of the operating model and in April we created seven new local policing areas, each of which has local responsibility for responding to calls for service and investigating offences.

"Since implementing this new model, changing Force Contact and opening two more custody suites, our arrest rate has increased by a third as has the number of offenders brought to justice. This continues to improve each month.

"As a result of these rapid changes, we are now the best performing force of our most similar forces group when it comes to solving burglary, robbery and homicide. The number of rapes we solve has increased dramatically, such that we have now surpassed the national average. We have gone from being one of the worst call-handling forces to one of the best in 11 months. We answer 70,000 999 calls each month in an average of five seconds and have improved the proportion of emergency incidents attended within our specified targets by 25 per cent.

"Our data is showing some significant reductions in crime. If the current trends continue, we expect to be one of the best-performing forces nationally for crime reductions.

"Accepting that you cannot turn a force the size of West Midlands Police around overnight, and notwithstanding all of the progress, we accept that investigations need to improve further. Indeed, we had already identified the concerns relating to investigations before HMICFRS inspected us; and we now have a detailed plan which is already delivering improvement. This will continue to be shared with HMICFRS."

**“OUR DATA IS SHOWING SOME SIGNIFICANT REDUCTIONS IN CRIME. IF THE CURRENT TRENDS CONTINUE, WE EXPECT TO BE ONE OF THE BEST-PERFORMING FORCES NATIONALLY FOR CRIME REDUCTIONS.”**



Football hate crime officer PC Stuart Ward.

A West Midlands Police Federation member who was publicly praised by Rio Ferdinand after the former Manchester United player was racially abused says jailing the offender 'sends the most powerful message'.

PC Stuart Ward, who was the first ever football hate crime officer to be appointed in the UK, led an investigation after Rio was racially abused by Wolverhampton Wanderers fan Jamie Arnold.

Rio was working for BT Sport (now TNT Sports) covering the match between Manchester United and Wolves at Molineux Stadium in 2021 when Arnold hurled racial gestures and comments at the pundit.

Following reports of the crime, Arnold was swiftly removed from the stadium and arrested. A jury at Wolverhampton Crown Court found him unanimously guilty and on Friday 8 December, the 32-year-old was jailed for six months and given a seven-year football banning order, preventing him from attending any football match anywhere in the UK.

"Ultimately, Arnold being jailed sends the most powerful message. It will demonstrate to other offenders that this will not be tolerated. I hope it will act as a very strong deterrent," said 37-year-old Stuart, who's been in the role just over two years now.

"This is a landmark case that has attracted a lot of media attention. One of our main aims is to encourage people to report these crimes

there and then, and I hope this case encourages other people to take action if they hear any form of abuse or discrimination of any kind.

"Any form of abuse is disgusting and can never be condoned. The good thing is, society has and is changing. Quite rightly, people are more prepared to call out others these days, and so they should."

**“ ANY FORM OF ABUSE IS DISGUSTING AND CAN NEVER BE CONDONED. THE GOOD THING IS, SOCIETY HAS - AND IS - CHANGING. QUITE RIGHTLY, PEOPLE ARE MORE PREPARED TO CALL OUT OTHERS THESE DAYS, AND SO THEY SHOULD.**

On the day of the incident, fellow fans reported Arnold's behaviour to the stewards who contacted the police control room. Officers then used CCTV at the stadium to locate the offender and witness his behaviour.

"I think this demonstrates how seriously we are taking abuse and how quickly action can be taken. Once Arnold had been located, stewards intervened and removed him from the

stadium before arresting him," explained Stuart.

Although Rio had not witnessed the abuse himself, he told court that he felt 'sick' and 'distressed' when told what had happened.

In a statement, Rio said: "Racism will only be eradicated when we all work together as a society.

"The prosecution wouldn't have been possible without all the help and support from the witnesses, Wolves fans and staff that came forward to testify in court.

"Special thank you to Police Constable Stuart Ward (football hate crime officer), my family and my team at New Era!"

Stuart said that it was nice to receive the public praise from Rio.

He added: "A lot of work goes into this job, so it's nice to receive such praise."

Stuart, who has been a police officer for 15 years, wanted to take on the role of football hate crime officer having experienced abuse himself as a youngster.

"I'm mixed race and remember being 11-years-old and playing football for a junior side," he recalled.

"Abuse came from another player and the thing that stuck with me was how no one did anything about it, other than my Mum who stopped the game and took me off the pitch.

"I know how being abused feels, it hits you hard. It doesn't matter whether you're a celebrity or not, it really does have a severe impact on you."

# Football violence worst officers have seen in decades, says deputy chair

The deputy chair of West Midlands Police Federation said the violence outside Villa Park in a match at the end of November was the worst officers had seen at a football match in more than two decades.

Jase Dooley praised the efforts of those officers on duty who were faced with serious disorder ahead of Aston Villa's Europa League game with Legia Warsaw, and he said the Federation was there to support any member following the violence.

West Midlands Police officers were attacked with missiles and flares. A number of officers were injured, with one taken to hospital with burn injuries after being hit by a flare while another suffered a suspected broken hand.

Two police horses were punched and kicked, and several police dogs were also injured walking on broken glass after bottles were thrown at police lines. It is understood that no one was seriously hurt.

Jase said: "There are a lot of officers who have been injured in one way or another. One officer has been burnt with a flare and one had a suspected broken hand.

"They did a really good job in the face of sustained violence from people intent on disorder.

"Our colleagues from Thames Valley Police



horse section said they haven't seen violence like it in a very long time. I've got 28 years' experience and used to be on the operational support unit, and I've not seen anything like that since the turn of the century."

Jase said there was a significant police presence at the game based on intelligence and previous match day disorder involving Legia Warsaw fans.

"West Midlands Police did a really good job in briefing officers, telling them what to expect, the way they had the numbers in force," he said, "It was just unprecedented violence from people who were intent on causing injury to anybody."

A total of 46 people were detained in custody, and Jase said dealing with them took valuable resources away from other areas of

policing in the Force area.

"Our investigation teams were working extremely hard until the early hours of the morning and they were all back on shift again the following day," he said.

"We had to pull resources from everywhere. They could have been doing something so much better with their time than dealing with mindless hooligans, and this affected other operations.

Jase encouraged members who were on duty at the game to speak to their reps and seek the support of the Federation if they needed it.

"We have a lot of young officers in the Force and most of them wouldn't have seen anything like that before. There will even be some senior officers who won't have experienced it before," he said.

"The Federation is here if you need to speak to anyone. Any rep will be able to talk to them.

"If there are any concerns about the incident or if they've got injuries that might take them off work please contact the Federation as soon as possible."

Jase said the Force had support from other officers outside of the West Midlands, adding: "We will be working with those Branch Boards to ensure their members are supported."

## 'There is a lot for the new Home Secretary to tackle'

West Midlands Police Federation chair Rich Cooke has urged James Cleverly to listen to the voices of rank and file officers as he begins his new role as Home Secretary.

Rich said the views of members were often distinct to those of chief officers and needed to be heard within the Government.

"I want him to work with us and recognise that the rank and file are distinct and have different needs and views to the chief officers," he explained.

"He has to work with both, but don't take the views of the chiefs as those of the 'police'.

"For example, we've seen the misconduct proposals have been championed by the chiefs but we vehemently disagree with them.

"He has to start restoring trust with rank and file officers, give them the confidence they need to be effective and start listening."

He was commenting on the appointment of former foreign secretary Mr Cleverly as Home Secretary following the departure of Suella Braverman.

Rich said there was a lot for Mr Cleverly

to tackle, including pay and conditions.

"We need him to look at fundamental things like our pay," he said, "We must have a seat at the table when it comes to our pay, some sort of proportionate system of collective bargaining.

"If he really wants to distinguish himself as a Home Secretary who listens, he really ought to get a grip of the national funding formula, which has badly disadvantaged West Midlands and which each of his predecessors has either ignored or endorsed.

"He needs to recognise the value of infrastructure and invest in it so we can stop the closures of our iconic stations that have been announced. They're key buildings for policing as well as the public. We need to keep them and make them fit for purpose for those we serve.

"And I'm all in favour of local policing and bobbies on the beat, pre-emptively dealing with problems, building those relationships in our communities which generate the intelligence we need."

Rich added: "Frankly, Suella Braverman

was right. The politicisation of policing needs to be urgently looked at and Mr Cleverly should carry that through.

"It's been going on since police and crime commissioners were introduced."

Rich added that the idea of having politicians - powerful individuals - accountable has been in place for 15 years.

He continued: "I'm not saying police shouldn't be accountable, of course they should, but traditionally we were accountable to local politicians and local councillors.

"In a force area like the West Midlands that's important, because you've got multiple identities.

"You've got your Black Country towns, which will guard their identities, you've got Coventry, which will guard its identity.

"People from Coventry and Wolverhampton don't feel like they're part of a greater Birmingham, they feel like someone from Coventry or Wolverhampton.

"So I think the politicisation of policing needs to be looked at and reversed, if possible. Not that I expect that to happen."

## Offenders must face the strongest possible consequences

Offenders convicted of attacking police officers must face the strongest possible sentences, says the deputy chair of West Midlands Police Federation.

Jase Dooley, who is also the branch's assaults lead, has called for courts to impose stiffer punishments to help tackle the epidemic of assaults on officers.

"Officers are not getting the support from the system that they need and deserve," he said, adding: "I don't think the sentencing is strong enough to deter people from assaulting officers.

"The Government raised the sentence for assaulting a police officer to two years in prison but I don't think the courts are taking it as seriously as they should be.

"I don't think the punishment fits the crime. Police officers need justice when they're attacked - they are victims as well.

"Just because they're a police officer does not mean it should be an accepted part of the job.

"They shouldn't have this level of violence towards them just because of the job they do. We shouldn't accept it. The punishment needs to be stronger," he added.

Jase's comments come as figures shared with the BBC showed that in the year to June there were 38,079 assaults on officers in England - a rise of six per cent in three years.

"As our assaults lead, I receive two or three reports every day," he said, "Even more after a weekend.

"It ranges from headbutts to kicking, from spitting to punching, and it's happening on a daily basis.

"Spitting is a disgusting act, but it's being increasingly used to attack officers. Some members have told me they'd rather be punched than be spat at because it's such a disgusting thing to have done to you.

"Officers are trying their hardest to deal with situations but are being attacked and assaulted - and they need the backing of the criminal justice system to help reduce it."

## Branch chair 'disappointed' after National Council votes to extend Federation electoral cycle

The chair of West Midlands Police Federation says he is 'disappointed' after the Federation's National Council (NC) voted to extend the electoral cycle for representatives and officials from three to up to five years.

Rich Cooke and branch secretary Tim Rogers attended the meeting and voted against the proposal which requires Home Office approval before taking effect.

The proposal was backed by around 84 per cent of the National Council, with West Midlands Police Federation among the minority.

Rich said: "West Midlands Police Federation voted against this proposal because we believe that while there are excellent, understandable reasons to have longer terms of office as a principle, it is also wrong to change this within the current term.

"We believe that by extending the elections by two years we will be denying members the opportunity to have their say, stand as workplace representatives or challenge incumbents for local branch positions - as I did - or senior leadership roles within the Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW), such as the national chair or secretary."

The current triennial election process was confirmed in 2017 as part of the Police Federation Regulations.

As it stands, the elections are set to take place next summer (2024), starting with the election of new workplace representatives in all 43 Police Federation branches across England and Wales.

This would be followed by Branch Board elections, principal officials, branch chairs and National Board members, ending with the national chair election - all to be complete by the end of spring 2025.

Rich continued: "I also believe there is an inherent problem in asking postholders to make a decision on their own future or that of their role, because of the appearance or reality of a conflict of interest.

"I was elected for three years and colleagues voted for me with that in mind.

I am totally against any change other than one that the membership consents to.

"I am disappointed with the outcome. But it is now up to the Home Office to decide whether it will consent to this."

The National Council is made up of local branch chairs and secretaries, as well as representatives with protected characteristics.

Those in favour of the extension argued that a significant amount of time is currently being spent on the electoral process during the three-year cycle. The meeting took place on 26 September.

Factoring the time being taken to conduct as well as prepare for the process, it is believed that the PFEW is spending up to 18 months of each three-year period dealing with the elections.

Rich explained that in the meeting, it was also deemed 'counterproductive' for PFEW to continue with the triennial election process, considering it is currently undertaking a programme of reform which includes a review of the structure and governance for decision-making. The review follows the recent Employment Tribunal decision against the Police Federation in connection with the pension discrimination claim.

PFEW will now be formally approaching the Home Office to request a change in the Federation's election cycle.

Explaining reasons behind the decision, PFEW chief executive Mukund Krishna said: "Following the Employment Tribunal's judgment in the Police Pension Challenge, the Federation has decided to commission an independent review that will examine the statutory basis of the organisation, its purpose, rules, funding and governance.

"We have a huge task of addressing the challenges brought by the judgment. Time is pivotal in doing this and, obviously, we will need time to implement the organisational changes based on the independent review's recommendations. An extension of the election cycle will be very helpful in driving the changes to ensure we provide the best possible support to our reps and members and the organisation is fit for the future."

# Tributes paid to 'one of kind' former sergeant

Tributes have been paid to 'one of a kind', 'proud officer' Sergeant Adrian (Ade) Naik.

Almost 300 people attended the funeral of the 56-year-old on Monday 20 November, including West Midlands Police Federation chair Rich Cooke and deputy chair Jase Dooley.

Grandfather-of-four Ade, who had two children and two step-children, died on 20 October having been diagnosed with cancer almost two years ago.

"I can't speak highly enough of 'Naiky'. He was such a great bloke, and seeing the number of people who attended his funeral demonstrated the enormous impact he had on so many," said Jase, who previously worked with Ade on the operational support unit.

Completing Ade's funeral procession was the police carrier he worked in, with dozens of former and serving members of the operational support unit forming a guard of honour as the hearse approached.

Ade had asked that all those who had or were working for the unit wear their COBRA tie pin and specifically requested that his wife, Gaynor, 'put a bit of money behind the bar at the wake so the lads can have a drink'.

"He was the kind of person who not only supported the more experienced officers but really helped the younger officers too," added Jase.

"He was a very proud officer. He was a very good bobby, he was one of a kind. If the heat was on, you would want Naiky next to you because you always knew he would have your back. He was a calming reassurance, and he will be so greatly missed by everyone who knew him."

Ade was diagnosed with MS (Multiple Sclerosis) - a lifelong condition that affects the brain and nerves - 14 years ago. However, it was not until 2019 that the condition started to worsen, leading to Ade medically retiring from the Force.

At the beginning of 2022, Ade was diagnosed with cancer in the stomach, which led to him having a major operation to remove the tumour and then five months of chemotherapy and radiotherapy.

Fellow former West Midlands sergeant and one of Ade's best friends Rich Churchill told how they 'thought Ade had beaten it'. But sadly Ade was given the devastating news that the cancer had returned to the oesophagus and they could not operate.

To give him some respite and 'build up his strength' as his health deteriorated, Ade was advised to spend some time in [Katherine House Hospice](#). He was there for around two weeks before he died on the night of 20 October.

"He was taken too soon from us," said Rich, "We all knew it was coming but it still felt like a massive shock when it happened."

Rich retired two years ago and for the past 11 months has worked for a local funeral director.

"Ade asked me to look after him when the time came. He asked me if I would take care of him when he died because he knew he would be in safe hands," said Rich, "It was a tough job but I promised him I would do it."

Ade had been in the Force for around 27 years. During that time, he and Rich, as well as two other officers, Rich 'Big Rich' Edwards and Dave 'Swiss' McCone, developed a 'brotherhood'.

"We all worked on the operational support unit," said Rich, 57, who explained that he and Ade were promoted to sergeant in 2010 at the same time.

"I met Ade when I joined the team in 2003, and 20 years later, our friendship was exactly the same. He was like a brother to me, he taught me a lot. I feel lucky to have enjoyed so much of my career with him by my side."

Rich described Ade as 'an absolute gent' who 'had a kind eye' and 'would do anything for anyone'.

"He was a family man. He loved the job - he said he had found his calling being part of the operational support unit - but his wife, Gaynor and kids were always his priority. He had a caravan and whenever



Adrian Naik.

he could the family would be off on a camping trip somewhere."

Rich told how he and Ade worked on some of the 'most serious' incidents together, including the heartbreakingly relentless search for April Jones, a five-year-old girl who disappeared in Wales in 2012.

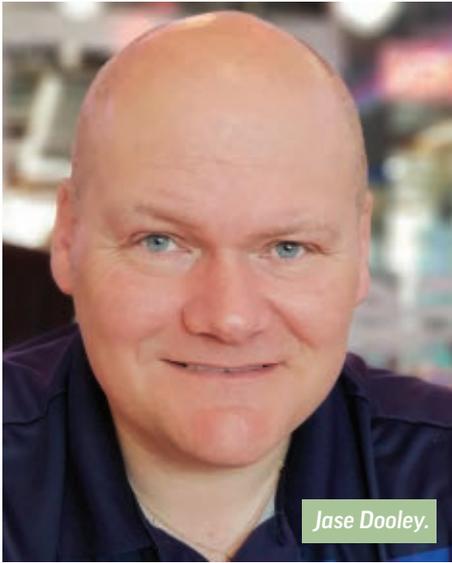
He added: "We worked on some of the toughest and hardest jobs together, but Ade was almost like a comfort blanket. I trusted him implicitly, we had an unbreakable bond."

Rich explained how Ade 'fought until the end'.

"His kindness and sense of humour stayed with him all of the way through," continued Rich.

"He will never be forgotten. A group of his colleagues - both retired and serving officers, mainly from the operational support unit - have already agreed that we will be having a 'Naiky Day' to meet up in his memory. It will give us all a chance to tell stories and share our memories of Ade."

# Fed 'court hearings' campaign hailed a success by deputy chair



Jase Dooley.

Earlier this year, West Midlands Police Federation called for change after sharing several stories from members who had experienced their annual leave being interrupted by court hearings.

Following the campaign, the Force is now working hard to eliminate this issue - with Jase Dooley saying this clearly demonstrates how impactful members sharing their experiences can be.

"The changes that we have seen are life-changing for our members," says Jase, who himself, told how he had previously been 'threatened' if he failed to come back from his holiday to give evidence in court.

"I actually feared I could've been arrested in front of my daughter," he explained, "And that type of situation was happening far too often, which is why we made the decision to call on members to share similar stories."

Having shared his own experience, Jase received emails from dozens of members, telling him that they too had found their annual leave to be disrupted last minute because they were needed as a witness in crown court.

The importance of Jase's campaign was echoed by Sergeant Mitch Derby, who was forced to abandon his family holiday to be a witness in court, only to find out it had been

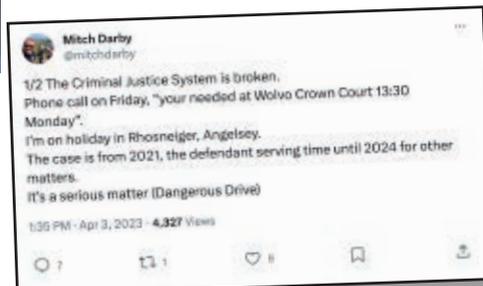
cancelled while he was en route to the trial.

The campaign quickly propelled, with a Tweet posted by West Midlands Police Federation highlighting Jase's 'court misery' seen by more than 87,000 people.

Before too long, the story had national headlines, having been picked up by the BBC and Police Oracle, as well as multiple local press outlets, including the Express & Star.

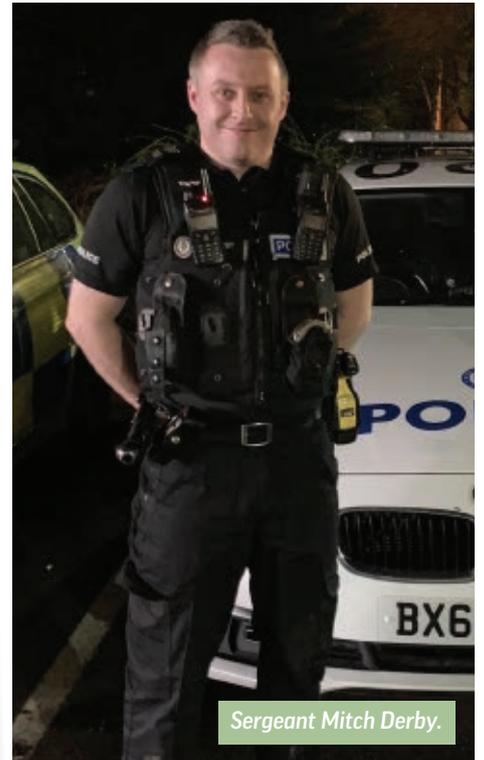
"It soon became clear that this was a serious issue that was causing such anxiety and worry," added Jase. "And not just for the members, but for their families and loved ones too."

"At first I didn't think anyone was listening but the Force saw our stories and decided to take action."



Jase explained that on the back of the campaign, he was put in contact with Susan Lee, who works in witness care for the CPS.

"I must admit, Susan has been absolutely brilliant. She has really put her head above the parapet," explained Jase.



Sergeant Mitch Derby.

"Any emails I now get from members telling me that they have been called to court during annual leave, I forward to Susan and she sorts it out. All it takes now is an email. At worst, they just find another officer who is available to attend court."

"The process has become so much more simple, while saving so much time and upset for so many people."

Jase said that this issue 'has been going on for years', adding: "To finally see things are changing is huge - in fact, it's phenomenal. This is life-changing for our members. They can now go on holiday or take annual leave without worrying that they might be called back unexpectedly."

Jase continued to explain how this shows how much of an impact members sharing their experiences can have.

"If anyone ever wants an example of how the Federation fights for our members then this is it. Thanks to our members sharing their stories and other members commenting across our social media pages, we felt a ripple effect - and the campaign just grew and grew."

"Our fighting has paid off and we're seeing changes made."

“ THE PROCESS HAS BECOME SO MUCH MORE SIMPLE, WHILE SAVING SO MUCH TIME AND UPSET FOR SO MANY PEOPLE. ”

# Chair urging Government to step in to save iconic stations



Branch chair Rich Cooke (right), standing with Sergeant Jason Vlahakis, former Aldridge neighbourhood sergeant.

losing iconic police stations in big towns across the region has the potential to undermine the local policing model the Force is currently striving to embed, according to the chair of West Midlands Police Federation.

Rich Cooke's comments came after it was announced that West Midlands Police will be closing at least 30 police stations.

The reason behind such closures is to cut

costs, with the Force revealing it needs to save £28 million in the current financial year, plus a further £21m in 2024/25.

"In an ideal world, most, if not all, stations would remain open or be replaced," said Rich, "We believe that large towns like Sutton Coldfield and Willenhall in the Black Country losing their police stations - which are, at the end of the day, historic symbols of authority

- is not what the public in those areas wants and needs.

"We've seen over a decade of devastating cuts to police infrastructure, driven ultimately by inadequate funding. This has, in many cases across England and Wales left gaping holes - quite literally - in the heart of our communities.

"Green Lane Station in the centre of

Walsall is one of the most striking examples - a pile of rubble next to the Magistrates' Court at the centre of a major town. The main station is now in a neighbouring town of Bloxwich and members of the public must go there to find a front desk open to the public. I see it as a sad sign of civic decline and the continued denigration of a vital public service."

It has been confirmed that 10 sites - which are being referred to as Public Contact Offices - will remain open across the region, but the likes of Balsall Green, Sutton Coldfield and Digbeth will see their stations relocated and the buildings sold.

Rich said he feels that many of the historic stations, including Digbeth, Birmingham city centre and those within smaller communities like Aldridge, Acocks Green and Handsworth, are 'beautiful buildings that are widely recognised'.

"They are iconic symbols within their communities, that have existed for many generations," he added.

"Police stations bring multiple benefits to our communities, not only in terms of social order and cohesion but also economically, reassuring local business and custom. I believe there is a growing recognition of that, particularly in areas where we have already lost them. And it will be far more expensive to resurrect stations in the future."

Acknowledging the tough financial pressures that Chief Constable Craig Guildford is facing, Rich said: "Of course, times do change and financial investment is required to sustain such architectural gems. The problem is now aggravated by the fact that the investment in maintenance and necessary upgrades has been neglected for so long, meaning the bill to bring them up to scratch is that much bigger.

"There are no easy answers, West Midlands is already short-changed by the funding formula to a significant degree.

"I believe we will long lament losing these urban jewels, to become what? Another set of posh apartments or, ironically, a derelict magnet for drug addicts, dealers and anti-social behaviour as has happened in previous instances following closure?"

Rich is now calling on central Government to 'step in and conserve' these 'traditional



Digbeth Police Station.

historic civic infrastructures'.

"It's vital that the public have easy access to the police - within walking distance of their home or business - when they need us. This should be the vision for our communities. Sadly, this feels a far cry from the reality that we face," he explained.

"And what's even more worrying is that we know poorer communities are disproportionately affected by crime, many of these stations exist in these areas."

Rich explained how several years ago, he called for a 'paradigm shift' in police funding. This referred to a deeper recognition that the benefit of policing is not only about protecting members of the public and locking up criminals - as fundamental as they are - but it is as much about the police being part of communities 'in a real way that boosts trust and confidence'.

He continued: "This provided positive incentives for both cops and the public. It links officers directly to the area they police, giving them a personal stake in community life."

Rich, who believes savings could be made elsewhere, said: "We're not against rationalisation of estates where appropriate and can be done elsewhere, which less impact on poorer crime-driven areas.

"Lloyd House [West Midlands Police

Headquarters] is a prime example. It cost millions of pounds to renovate Lloyd House a few years ago while outer bases serving the public were allowed to effectively rot.

"It seems to us that this prime city centre real estate could be sold and the money redistributed to keep and refurbish more of our local bases."

"We're hearing the analogy 'bricks or people', but it should not have come to this.

"Ultimately, without the infrastructure, space and buildings to support both new and current colleagues within communities, our effectiveness could be inhibited."

Rich said that while the Federation trusts the Chief Constable's instincts it feels 'it is a shame these far-reaching decisions have apparently been forced by financial circumstances'.

West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner Simon Foster said: "When I was elected, I pledged to rebuild community policing. I am pleased that we are able to announce, a range of new, retained and refurbished police buildings, as part of this estates' strategy. This investment will ensure a police estate that is fit for the 21st century.

"The plan places significant importance on community policing and police officers, working in local communities, to prevent, tackle and reduce crime, to keep people, families, businesses and the local community safe and secure.

"Police stations are important because they provide a reassuring and visible presence for communities. This plan will ensure the region retains as many as possible, whilst prioritising maintaining police officer numbers and managing a budget, that remains under severe pressure.

"The new police estate will strive to be greener and more sustainable than ever and I wholeheartedly support that."

**“IT'S VITAL THAT THE PUBLIC HAVE EASY ACCESS TO THE POLICE - WITHIN WALKING DISTANCE OF THEIR HOME OR BUSINESS - WHEN THEY NEED US. THIS SHOULD BE THE VISION FOR OUR COMMUNITIES. SADLY, THIS FEELS A FAR CRY FROM THE REALITY THAT WE FACE. AND WHAT'S EVEN MORE WORRYING IS THAT WE KNOW POORER COMMUNITIES ARE DISPROPORTIONATELY AFFECTED BY CRIME, MANY OF THESE STATIONS EXIST IN THESE AREAS.**

# 'Protected learning time needed for those wanting promotion' says deputy chair

**W**est Midlands Police Federation is campaigning to get prospective sergeants and inspectors protected learning time after hearing about the severe impact completing their portfolio is having on their mental health and wellbeing.

Branch deputy chair Jase Dooley is urging learning and development leads at West Midlands Police to give officers working towards a promotion the necessary protected time to complete their portfolio.

His calls come after hearing from hundreds of members that their mental health and wellbeing is being hugely affected, with some revealing the workload had even led to a breakdown in relationships.

"As a single parent and sergeant myself, I know how the members are feeling. I'm a single parent and, when I was in the promotional process, I would pick my daughter up from school then we would come home and I would put her to bed, before starting work on my portfolio at 8.30pm - often until 1am - and then would be back up at 5.30am for an early shift," said Jase.

"I was working all of the time. And this is such a common feeling among members.

"They are working full-time and having to complete a portfolio at the same time, plus have a life. I've heard from one member who is being asked by his daughter why he is always

working on his laptop - and that's because he is trying his hardest to complete his portfolio in time. That's not right.

"Our members are under enough pressure and this is just adding to poor morale."

At the moment, when a sergeant or inspector passes their promotional interview, they must do a portfolio. This portfolio has to be completed in 10 months and consists of around six to eight sections.

Jase explained that for prospective sergeants and inspectors to become qualified, they must complete the portfolio in 10 months. Until then, they are either a temporary sergeant or temporary inspector.

"The sections vary in length but I've got a colleague who wrote 45,000 words for one section - that's how big each section can be. It's mad," said Jase.

"And then, if you don't get the work done in the 10 months allocated, you face demotion - you don't get the role. Which is not only demoralising, but it's embarrassing too, and it means a pay cut as well."

Jase revealed that he sent an internal email out to all members about the issue and within hours had received more than 100 replies.

"Some of the emails I received back were awful. From damaging mental health to members not being able to spend time with their children. I even had emails detailing breakdowns of relationships because the workload was taking over.

"It's clear that some people are really struggling and things need to change."

Jase is now campaigning for protected learning time, which will mean those going through the promotion stage, will be given up to eight hours a month to solely focus on their portfolio.

"I hear from so many other forces that they give their officers protected learning time, so why doesn't West Midlands? I feel like we're the only one that doesn't," continued Jase, who is hoping to have a meeting with the Force's learning and development lead to discuss his concerns.

"The added issue is that this is now putting off people going for promotion. We should be encouraging our officers to grow but, in fact, it looks like we're doing the opposite.

"Don't get me wrong, I recognise the need for a portfolio but I think there needs to be that protected learning time in place. Having protected learning time will give officers that time at home or in a different place of work - where nobody knows them - so they can get their portfolio done without any distractions."

**“IT'S CLEAR THAT SOME PEOPLE ARE REALLY STRUGGLING AND THINGS NEED TO CHANGE.”**



**WEST MIDLANDS  
AWARD WINNERS**

**A** Force detective has received an Investigator of the Year Award after leading a two-year case involving the attempted murder of an innocent teenager who was shot and left paralysed by a local gang member.

Detective Constable Baron Briscoe says he feels 'privileged and honoured' having been recognised for his work at this year's West Midlands Police Excellence Awards.

The 31-year-old has spent the past two years 'putting together a spider's web of evidence' after a 13-year-old boy received life-changing injuries following an unprovoked attack in the Hockley Circus underpass in 2021.

"Over the past two years, my main focus has always been the victim. I will never be able to restore his life to what it was but I was determined to do whatever I could to deliver him some sort of justice," said Baron.

The boy was walking with his friends to get food when he and his friends were chased into the underpass and, within seconds, a homemade weapon known as a slam gun, was fired, hitting the boy in the back and leaving him paralysed from the waist down.

**“IT IS A REAL PRIVILEGE TO HAVE SEEN THE WORK PUT INTO THIS CASE AND THE OUTCOME BARON AND THE TEAM WERE ABLE TO GET FOR THE VICTIM.**

"Those few seconds completely changed his life," continued Baron, adding: "Although he's still a child, I've watched him as he's been growing up over the last two years. Listening to him and hearing what he has been through has definitely been emotional at times."

Baron joined West Midlands Police as a student officer in 2018 and in 2020, having qualified as a regular, he was posted to the criminal investigations department (CID), where he worked as part of the major crime team.

"I knew from the day I left school that I wanted to join the police," he said.

"But due to the recruitment freeze at the time when I could apply, the next best option was for me to join as a Special. Volunteering only confirmed my dreams of becoming a regular, I knew that I wanted to be an officer



*Pictured (left to right) are award sponsor Steve Grange, Detective Constable Baron Briscoe and Rob Simpson (son of Detective Superintendent Barrie Simpson, who the award is named after).*

# Dedicated detective clinches Investigator of the Year Award

full-time."

Baron was a trainee detective at the time of the incident involving the 13-year-old boy and said it was the first time he had to appear in court and give evidence.

He continued: "There's no denying that I definitely learnt a lot from my work on that case. It's been a long two years, full of extended and back-to-back shifts.

"I've spent endless hours helping to bring together a web of evidence and filling in the gaps to build a clear picture of what happened that day.

"But I can't take all the credit. There was a whole team involved in the case and ensuring those responsible were brought to justice. The team consisted of individuals from CID, the organised crime team, the central digital media investigator team, and force intelligence. Together, we managed to build an overwhelming case against them."

Three men were sentenced to life in prison last year following the attack, and on Friday 24 November, a fourth was jailed.

Baron explained: "These men were known gang members. The victim and his group of

friends were out getting food and, in the process, happened to cross into their 'territory.'"

The Investigator of the Year Award is given in memory of Detective Superintendent Barrie Simpson and recognises an individual officer or police staff member who embodies quality investigation through excellent detective work.

Baron ended: "It was a real privilege to have won such an award. I feel extremely honoured."

West Midlands Police Federation representative Jon Nott, who is also secretary of the Police Federation National Detectives' Forum (PFNDF) said Baron 'is an example of all detectives and investigators within West Midlands'.

"It is a real privilege to have seen the work put into this case and the outcome Baron and the team were able to get for the victim," added Jon.

"Baron has shown the lengths to which our detectives and investigators will go to ensure that justice can be obtained for victims and the hope that they can bring to make the streets safer for the public."



# 'Shocked' cop receives student officer award

**A** student officer thought she was being 'sweetened up bit' for a rubbish job when told by her sergeant she had been shortlisted for an award.

Lauren Pritchard said she was shocked to be nominated for Student Officer of the Year - and even more surprised to actually win the award.

Lauren, who now works on response in Stechford, was put forward for her work in her third year rotation with CID in West Bromwich.

And she recalled the moment she was told about her nomination.

"My sergeant came up to me and said 'ooh, Student Officer of the Year,'" she said.

"I thought he was going to send me to a rubbish job and was trying to sweeten me up or something.

"I said 'what are you on about? What are you sending me to?'

"I thought he was having me on, so I looked on the noticeboard and saw my name.

"I was chuffed that I'd been nominated and really quite shocked as well, because there were loads of other student officers who were up for the award.

"Even so, it was lovely to be nominated, and my sergeant said that I'd have to bring cakes in if I won."

**“IT DIDN'T EVEN CROSS MY MIND THAT ANYONE WOULD NOMINATE ME IN THE FIRST PLACE, AND THEN TO WIN IT I WAS REALLY SHOCKED. I JUST DIDN'T EXPECT IT, BUT IT WAS REALLY NICE.**

Indeed, a couple of months later Lauren had to stand her cake fine after receiving an email informing she had won the award.

"It didn't even cross my mind that anyone would nominate me in the first place, and then to win I was really shocked," she said. "I just didn't expect it, but it was really nice.

"And yes, I did bring in cakes. It was around Halloween so I made little mummies and dipped them in chocolate.

"You can't escape the cake fines!"



PC Lauren Pritchard.

Lauren had not initially intended to join the police service, but the loss of her dad in the summer after her A Levels prompted a change in her plans.

"When I was at college I loved law," she explained. "I studied it at GCSE and A Level.

I had a place at Worcester University to do law after my A Levels, because I knew I wanted to do something with the law.

"I wanted to be a solicitor, or something like that, but that summer my dad passed away.

"I withdrew my application because I

thought I just couldn't go to university in this state. I didn't really want to go to university anyway.

"Being a solicitor I thought I would be sitting at a desk, it would be the same old, same old, and quite boring.

"After the situation with my dad I wanted to help people. The police turned out to be the perfect job.

"It's helping people out, it's working with the law without sitting at a desk doing the same thing every day.

"I really love it."



**Dr Nasir Awan MBE, DL Deputy Lord Lieutenant (left), with (left to right) Special Sergeant Craig Hume, Craig's wife Emily, Wade Lyn Sheriff of West Midlands and West Midlands Chief Constable Craig Guildford.**

# Surprise win for Special Sergeant

**A** West Midlands Police Special has told how an email from the Chief Constable triggered a rollercoaster of emotions before he realised he had won an award.

Special Sergeant Craig Hume returned from holiday to find the unopened email from Chief Constable Craig Guildford sitting in his inbox.

Initially he feared he had done something wrong before his emotions changed to surprise that he'd been named Special Constable of the Year.

Craig explained: "I found out I'd been nominated for the award earlier in the year.

"It was worrying to see the email from the Chief Constable - I was thinking what have I done? - but then I opened it and it was actually good news. I was more than happy with the nomination, so to win was a huge surprise."

Craig received his award at the Force's recent Excellence Awards, which he said was for his work supporting fellow volunteer officers.

"I like to put others first and consider their welfare," he explained. "Pretty much everything I do is to make sure they're treated properly and they have the support they need to do the job.

"It can be a scary, fun, and exciting job and if officers aren't supported it can be tough and lonely out there.

"I try to make sure there's support available, signpost them to things they can do to help themselves, that could be anything from mental wellbeing to fitness things.

"As Specials, we come in, we do a lot of hours and we do a lot of work, and we do it for free, so the least we can do is make it as enjoyable as possible and offer them the support they need to make it enjoyable."

Craig has been a Special for three years having joined in lockdown during the Covid-19 pandemic.

"Where I live there were a lot of car thefts," he said. "I was moaning about it and the police not doing anything, because I didn't really understand it.

"Then I thought there was no point in moaning and not doing anything about it, so I applied and it snowballed and the next thing I was getting measured for a uniform and through the doors of Tally Ho.

"It went from I'll put my money where my mouth is to here we are, I'm an attested police officer."

Craig initially worked in Solihull as part of the Lyndon, Elmdon, Olton and Silhill (LEOS) team, working up to 100 hours a month.

"We got some really good results," he said. "I helped the newer Specials coming through, gave them tips and advice about what I'd

learned."

Craig then moved to Birmingham East, first as a temporary Special Sergeant and then permanently, after passing the interview stage.

And he said his training with the Force has had a huge impact on his role outside of work with Tecalemit Garage Equipment, where he's recently been promoted to regional manager.

"It was closely linked to the training and transferable skills the police have given me," he said.

"Although they're not part of employer supported policing, they've been really good and flexible."

And Craig is also a huge advocate for membership of the Federation.

"I always say to new Specials to become a member," he said. "Hopefully you'll never need to use the Federation but it's there.

"It's one of our greatest tools as a police officer. People say PAVA, Taser or the baton, but for me it's being a member of the Police Federation and the fact you know there's going to be somebody there to back you up should something go wrong."

**“ I LIKE TO PUT OTHERS FIRST AND CONSIDER THEIR WELFARE. PRETTY MUCH EVERYTHING I DO IS TO MAKE SURE THEY'RE TREATED PROPERLY AND THEY HAVE THE SUPPORT THEY NEED TO DO THE JOB. ”**

# Double celebration for Special Inspector

WEST MIDLANDS  
AWARD WINNERS



It's been a double celebration for Special Inspector Hitesh Mehta who followed up marking his 20th anniversary volunteering for West Midlands Police by receiving a national policing award for his employer.

Hitesh, who is an international service manager, said he was 'honoured' to collect the Employer Supported Policing Award at the Lord Ferrers Awards ceremony on behalf of HSBC UK.

The Lord Ferrers Awards recognise outstanding contributions made by Special Constables, police support volunteers, volunteer police cadets and others who give their time to support policing.

And in the case of Hitesh and HSBC UK, the Employer Supported Policing Award is for organisations that support their local police force through facilitating employees to volunteer in policing.

Hitesh said: "I was honoured to receive the award on behalf of HSBC UK.

"They've been so supportive of me and colleagues to go out and serve our communities through our police work.

"They've supported us during the Birmingham Commonwealth Games, Coventry City of Culture and other high-profile sporting, music and police-led operational events in and

around the region, all contributing to our community policing, so it's fantastic they get this recognition."

Hitesh, who grew up in Hillfields in Coventry, became a Special Constable in 2003 because he wanted to make a difference to his local community.

"I wanted to be a full-time officer but that didn't work out because of other priorities but I still wanted to give back to the community and learn things," he said. "So when I saw the opportunity to be a Special, I took it without hesitation. 20 years on and I'm still learning, growing and enjoying it.

"I get the best of both worlds - to learn and grow with HSBC UK and with the police, and together cross transfer skills between the two, which I think is really important."

Hitesh was a Special Constable for 17 years before being promoted to a Special Sergeant and then in December he took the opportunity to become a Special Inspector.

In that time Hitesh has been involved in many initiatives and opportunities to support his local community. He met the now King Charles on two occasions - during his visit to mark Coventry's City of Culture and the opening of the Birmingham Commonwealth Games.

Hitesh also took part in a flash mob in Birmingham's New Street Station to raise awareness of forced marriage and is currently part of the Force's [Beyond the 9 to 5](#) Specials recruitment campaign.

He was chosen as one of BBC Coventry and Warwickshire Radio's 'The 21', sharing his story as part of Coventry's City of Culture celebrations and was honoured with the High Sheriff Medal and certificate for services to the community.

Hitesh was also awarded the Platinum Champions Award from the Royal Voluntary Service to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, and more recently the Special Constabulary long service bar, rosette and certificate from West Midlands Police.

Hitesh said: "My life journey has been surrounded with so many opportunities, my advice to anyone is to chase positivity, people and experience - the rest will follow."

Now he has a role in the Specials learning and development team, with a responsibility for new Specials joining, their training and welfare, and he's determined to support new Specials in any way he can.

"That's the highlight of the role for me, helping people and supporting them to be their best," he said. "If I can help someone to



**Special Inspector Hitesh Mehta with King Charles.**



**Special Inspector Hitesh Mehta collects his award.**

develop and make the most of opportunities then that's great."

Making a difference is a theme that runs through Hitesh's life.

As well as being a Special Constable, he's also the president of [Shree Krishna Temple](#), the largest Hindu temple in Coventry, and a member of the Lions Club of Coventry Godiva, a charity that raises funds to serve humanity

and support great causes and community projects.

He said: "One day I could be operational in policing or looking after new officers, the next day I could be organising a religious event or feeding the elderly at the temple, or next I could be litter-picking at the local park to help improve society and make the city better or supporting a fundraising event."

Hitesh is also a full-time carer for his mum and dad, who both have health conditions, and said his connection with God and religion has helped change his life for the better.

"My faith and the meditation I practise replaces any negative thoughts with a positive outlook," he said. "Reading and learning from spiritual leaders and the holy scriptures helps nourish my soul and support me with everyday life."

Hitesh said he was pleased to be supported by the West Midlands Police Federation branch as well.

Last year, it was announced that Specials would be able to join the Police Federation of England and Wales, and Hitesh said he took the opportunity without hesitation.

"I wanted to make sure I was protected," he said, "But at the same time, I was able to be part of a community."

"We're part of a family of officers who are being looked after by the Federation. Whenever we have a meet and greet to welcome new Specials, we have a rep who attends to speak about the Federation, its benefits and the support they provide officers."

And Hitesh continues to encourage all officers to join the Federation.

"I think it's really important, especially in the role we conduct," he added.



**Special Inspector Hitesh Mehta at Coventry's City of Culture celebrations.**



# Special Chief Inspector 'gobsmacked' to win second award of the year

"I don't do it for the recognition," says Special Chief Inspector Anne Russell, who has won her second award of the year.

Anne scooped the Longevity Award at the Lord Ferrers Awards, which recognise outstanding contributions made by Special Constables, police support volunteers, volunteer police cadets and others who give their time to support policing.

It comes after she won a Police Volunteer of the Year Award at the British Association for Women in Policing Awards in the summer. Anne said: "I was just gobsmacked to win.

"I don't do what I do for awards or for the recognition. I do it because I love what I do, and I still do."

Anne explained that she found out about winning the [Lord Ferrers Award](#) from the comfort of her poolside sun-lounger.

"I was on holiday in Egypt when I found out," she said. "I didn't make it to the awards because I'd already booked my holiday.

"My phone went and I was sitting by the pool. You don't ever think you'll win it."

Anne began her volunteering service with West Midlands Police in 1987 after she was unable to join as a regular officer.

"I was awful at tests and didn't get in," she said. "I was told to look at becoming a Special and coming back in 12 months, but I became a Special and never looked back."

Anne said that policing was very different when she joined the Force in the 1980s, particularly with the lack of support and resources for volunteers.

Now she is serving in the learning and development team, she's determined to ensure that today's Specials feel as supported as possible - so much so that she's played a key role in developing a training programme for the Force's Specials.

"I find it very rewarding," she said. "I absolutely love it. If I think people are enjoying it, learning and making a career out of it, that gives me great satisfaction."

She added: "Looking back, I think it's the best it's been for supporting us with regards to the training you get."

"The integration is a lot better, as is how we support Specials with direction.

"When I joined, we hadn't really got any direction, so that's made me want to support them even more.

"Because I know we didn't have great direction when I joined, it's made me want to support them even more."

Anne now combines being a Special with a day-time staff role in the traffic investigations unit.

"I can see things from both sides," she said. "I can look at it and think about the skills and abilities that we can pass on to give people confidence in their role."

After it was announced last year that Specials would be able to join the Police Federation, Anne said she 'jumped at the opportunity'.

"It was really worrying thinking I'd got no support and there was no one to go to," she said.

"So, to be able to be a Federation member is a massive step forward. It's so much better."

# Aspiring leader wins national award

**A** PC who has received a national leadership award has spoken of her determination to climb the ranks and represent women of an ethnic minority.

Nilufar Ali has been recognised at this year's Police Now's Alumni Impact Awards for championing diversity and inclusion within the Force.

Nilufar received an award for outstanding leadership having thrived in the role of Birmingham West diversity and inclusion co-lead in 2021, two years after joining the Force via Police Now's National Graduate Leadership Programme.

"Growing up in an ethnic minority community, I felt there was always a very negative attitude and mistrust towards policing," said 28-year-old Nilufar.

**“ I AM DETERMINED TO CHANGE THOSE ATTITUDES. THAT IS MY DRIVING FORCE. I WANT TO DRIVE CHANGE, I WANT TO BUILD CONFIDENCE IN POLICING WITHIN ALL COMMUNITIES.**

"I am determined to change those attitudes. That is my driving force. I want to drive change, I want to build confidence in policing within all communities.

"I want to engage with communities and have those much-needed positive interactions."

Internally, Nilufar wants to make a change too. She has worked hard to raise awareness of diverse experiences and issues impacting officers across the Force, encouraging colleagues to share personal stories around a number of topics, including mental health.

Those officers were then celebrated during an awards ceremony to recognise their bravery for sharing their personal stories.

Nilufar was also paramount in creating the first 'Wellbeing Day' for her West Midlands colleagues, giving officers the opportunity to learn about mental health.

The day involved guest speakers and group discussions, with the 100-plus attendees provided with vital information in case they required further support.

Nilufar continued: "I'm really passionate about raising awareness of mental health and wellbeing in the Force.

"Just because we are in the police doesn't mean we aren't human beings. And often it



feels like physical injuries are accepted but because mental health conditions are invisible, they don't exist.

"I wanted to celebrate the journeys so many of our officers have been on - to show others that it doesn't matter who you are, you each have your own, authentic story."

In addition, Nilufar has worked hard to establish relationships with key stakeholders, including West Midlands Police Federation and Oscar Kilo, the National Police Wellbeing Service, as well as internal networks within

the Force.

Speaking about her award, Nilufar said: "I'm incredibly proud that the work I've done has been recognised.

"I'm working really hard to help make changes internally, which can be one of the biggest battles. So to have won this award means a lot - in fact, I was surprised to have been nominated, let alone win."

Looking forward, Nilufar says her main focus is to continue to have an impact and inspire others.

# Federation annual conference 2023: a round-up



Federation national chair Steve Hartshorn.

This year's Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW) Annual Conference was packed with debate, discussion and plenty of engagement from members from across the country.

The event, which this year took place online from Tuesday 10 October to Wednesday 11 October, was hosted by TalkTV presenter Ian Collins.

**Day 1** of the agenda included a hard-hitting discussion shaped around leading in policing, a frank conversation focussed on misogyny and a deep dive into mutual aid deployments.

Chair of the Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW) Steve Hartshorn and deputy Tiff Lynch kicked off the conference, with the pair reflecting on an 'absolutely manic' past year for policing.

## Negative media

"Not a day goes by that we're not in the headlines, for one reason or another," began Tiff, "We need our key stakeholders coming out and speaking in support of us, not always criticising us. We need others to get behind us."

Tiff later added that officers 'want consistency'. She explained: "And what I also think our officers want is a 21st-century service that's working to 21st-century rules."

In his update, PFEW secretary Calum Macleod admitted he would not join the police service if he had his time again.

"I question why people would for the salary they achieve, for the support they do not achieve, why people would place themselves and their families at risk under the current climate," said Calum. "I'm not saying it can't be redressed, but if my 11-year-old came to me and

said he wanted to join the police I'd be encouraging him to look in a different avenue."

## Poor pay

Calum also addressed issues surrounding pay, specifically referring to cops having to take on a second job due to the current cost of living crisis.

He added: "How can it be right police officers struggle to keep a roof over their heads and put food on the table and then be expected to run into a situation where someone is carrying an axe? Police officers should be appropriately paid.

"Let's start with what they're already down, 20p in the pound less than they had in 2010. That's ridiculous."

## Lack of leadership

The Leadership in Policing session was introduced by National Board member and PFEW professional development lead Paul Matthews.

Paul began with a detailed look at the failing of current and historic police leadership,

shining a light on the lack of supportive, compassionate, loyal and inspiring leadership that is prevalent in forces today, up and down the county.

Paul, who was joined virtually by Ray Clare, head of leadership and progression at the College of Policing, said: "It is vital for officers to have leaders that use their experience to lead by example and who will listen to, and adapt to new ideas, rather than promote change for its own sake.

"In order for leadership to flourish we must end the continual promotion of those who challenge and delegate down, instead of those that have the confidence and ability to challenge upwards."

PFEW women in policing co-lead and National Board members Sue Honeywill led this year's conversation around misogyny. She was joined by National Board member and parliamentary lead Belinda Goodwin, National Fire Chiefs Council lead for equality, diversity and inclusion Kathryn Billing, alongside ITV

“ WE NEED OUR KEY STAKEHOLDERS COMING OUT AND SPEAKING IN SUPPORT OF US, NOT ALWAYS CRITICISING US. WE NEED OTHERS TO GET BEHIND US.

Wales News presenter Justina Simpson.

The panel took part in a frank and honest discussion about misogyny and sexism within the police, fire service and armed forces in recent years.

The conversation was heavily shaped around non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) being used to prevent victims from sharing their stories and experiences.

A session on mutual aid saw operational policing lead and National Board member Steve Taylor and deputy health and safety lead and national board member Richie Murray.

The panel highlighted areas of concern during mutual aid deployments, including food, accommodation and allowances - suggesting inconsistency to be a serious issue.

Following lunch, PFEW conduct and performance lead Phil Jones led the conversation around the impact these changes made by the Home Office to the police officer dismissal process will have on members.

He was joined by the president of the National Association of Legally Qualified Chairs (NALQC) John Bassett and Greater Manchester Chief Superintendent Michael Allen.



### Misconduct fears

The panel discussed members 'being disproportionately disadvantaged by the presumption of dismissal' with Phil suggesting that some officers 'choosing to be assaulted, rather than use force', due to fears they could be found for misconduct - and worst, automotive dismissal, should the Home Office introduce these measures.

The penultimate session of the day was titled 'Retirement - transition into the unknown', with the secretary of Norfolk Police Federation Sam Hawkins urging colleagues not to underestimate the transferable skills police officers have and values that are sought in other professions.

Appropriately the session was held on World Mental Health Day (Tuesday 10 October), and heard from a recently retired officer that handing back the warrant card can



feel life-changing and daunting. Plus Rachel Roberts, a counsellor with South Wales Police explored the benefits of seeking help to ensure officers are best prepared.

The last session of the day looked back at disclosure and redaction, with Surrey Chief Constable and National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) lead for disclosure Tim De Meyer.



Mr Meyer was joined by the chair of the Police Federation National Detectives' Forum (PFNDF) and secretary of Suffolk Police Federation Ben Hudson who gave an update on the Federation's #SimplifyDG6 campaign, which was launched in August last year.

The campaign calls on the government to make amendments to the Data Protection Act to simplify the redaction obligation placed on police officers.

"Since addressing you last, we have taken big steps forward," said Ben, as he called on the Government to amend the data protection and digital information bill. The proposed

amendment would have no disadvantages and instead, unnecessary redaction would be avoided.

"Adopting this approach enables the government to demonstrate that they are supportive of policing and freeing up thousands upon thousands of hours nationally, for our members to dedicate their services back to the frontline."

**Day 2** saw PFEW's CEO apologise to members for failures to challenge the Government's change in pensions policy.

Mukund Krishna told conference: "I am deeply sorry to those members who have been impacted by the decision. I feel a deep sense of responsibility for putting the situation right."

He continued to announce an independent review to understand what went wrong and what steps would be required to create a Police Federation fit for the future.

A discussion surrounding the wellbeing of officers saw PFEW's joint wellbeing lead, Paul Williams, urging former Home Secretary Suella Braverman to 'invest with meaning' in officers' health and wellbeing as he spelt out the challenges they face.

### Shocking suicide figures

During the eye-opening session, Paul told conference that 344 officers had taken their own lives between 2001 and 2020, which equates to more than one every month.

Paul went on to reveal that there have been more than 40,000 assaults on police officers in the past year, with more than 11,000 resulting in physical injury.

"Our officers face this on a daily basis throughout their career," he said. "There's still that assumption by many it's part of being a cop and we shouldn't expect anything else. It's wrong. It can't be an acceptable culture."

*Continued on Page 25*

# Did you know...

The West Midlands Police Federation group insurance scheme brings you the full range of RAC cover:

- ✓ Roadside
- ✓ Recovery
- ✓ At Home
- ✓ Onward Travel
- ✓ Mis-fuel Rescue
- ✓ European Motoring Assistance

The scheme also includes:\*

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- Sickness benefits
- Worldwide Family Travel Insurance
- Mobile Phone/Gadget Cover

All for **£25.94\*\*** per month, by payroll deduction.

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Visit the Federation website for further details:

[www.polfed.org/westmids](http://www.polfed.org/westmids)

Or call us on: **0121 752 4900**

\*Terms and conditions apply. Full details are available from the Federation or George Burrows.

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FP1424-2023



With facilitator Ian Collins (left) are (left to right) national Federation chair Steve Hartshorn, deputy chair Tiff Lynch, CEO Mukund Krishna, national secretary Calum Macleod and treasurer Simon Kempton.

During the treasurer's report, PFEW's Simon Kempton updated members on the organisation's financial outlook.

"Spending £5 and getting nothing or very little back is a fiver wasted. But if we spend £50 on something that helps protect us, or our families, improves lives and conditions at work, then that is money well spent," he said, "Our reps are working day and night to improve things for police officers and so much goes unseen."

“ SPENDING £5 AND GETTING NOTHING OR VERY LITTLE BACK IS A FIVER WASTED. BUT IF WE SPEND £50 ON SOMETHING THAT HELPS PROTECT US, OR OUR FAMILIES, IMPROVES LIVES AND CONDITIONS AT WORK, THEN THAT IS MONEY WELL SPENT.

Engaging with the session, chair of West Midlands Police Federation Rich Cooke questioned whether a big increase might be coming. Mr Kempton said he was keen to get away from 'boom and bust' and favours small increases year on year to keep up with costs.

Day 2 also saw PFEW chair Steve Hartshorn address members and outline his requests to the now former Home Secretary Suella Braverman.



Steve told how he was 'disappointed and frustrated' after Ms Braverman failed to sign off the Federation's Medals for Heroes campaign.

"To us, it seems so simple and I'm very frustrated."

#### **Calls for better pay**

Steve referenced this year's seven per cent pay award, calling the move 'a step in the right direction' but noting that officers are 'at least 17 per cent behind where we should be'.

He continued: "Nobody joins the job expecting an easy life. But they do expect to be appreciated, valued and supported. Regrettably, it does not always feel that way."

Rounding up the two-day conference was a question and answer session with the



organisation's senior leadership team.

National chair Steve Hartshorn, his deputy Tiff Lynch, national secretary Calum Macleod, treasurer Simon Kempton and chief executive officer Makund Krishna, made up what conference host Ian Collins joking called "the best looking panel you are likely to see anywhere today".

Interaction from members was at an all-time high, with fully loaded questions coming in surrounding firearms, government and pay.

“ NOBODY JOINS THE JOB EXPECTING AN EASY LIFE. BUT THEY DO EXPECT TO BE APPRECIATED, VALUED AND SUPPORTED. REGRETTABLY, IT DOES NOT ALWAYS FEEL THAT WAY.

# Review of the year 2023

## January

- January began with a [deserved recognition for Bryn Hughes](#), who campaigned for a posthumous 'Elizabeth Medal' for officers killed in the line of duty, such as his daughter PC Nicola Hughes. Bryn was made an MBE in the New Year Honours.
- Branch chair Rich Cooke warned "we are living in a frightening world" after a [13-year-old was stabbed](#) outside Birmingham New Street Station. "Fortunately, this young lad will survive but that's not always the case. We are experiencing a knife crime epidemic and the Force needs to react," he added, calling for a zero-tolerance approach to carrying knives.



- Federation secretary Tim Rogers backed calls by Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sir Mark Rowley for police officers to be given a [10 per cent pay increase](#) this year, saying: "I know of colleagues who are finding it difficult to put food on the table. We have seen our pay eroded by 20 per cent over the last decade."



## March



- West Midlands Police's new multi-faith lead Khadija Sulaiman made history after becoming the country's [first Muslim to be appointed](#) the role within a police force.



## February

- West Midlands Police Federation members were reminded of their [right to 'Time Off for Dependants'](#) (TOFD), a benefit that entitles officers to take paid leave in certain situations amid teacher strikes.
- West Midlands Police Federation chair Rich Cooke called for [every West Midlands officer to be Taser-trained](#), as plans were put forward to increase the number of officers able to use Taser by an extra 400. "Having a Taser makes officers up to nine times safer from being assaulted," said Rich, also pointing to figures that show no findings of misconduct against officers for Taser incidents over two years.

- PS Keith Bennett, an officer with 23 years' service, talked about his time with the [West Midlands Police drone department](#). In four years, they had clocked up more than 5,000 flights, including 1,177 hours in 12 months. "West Midlands has undoubtedly been frontrunners," said Keith, who manages 44 pilots and aircraft.



- The [Force was in mourning](#) for West Midlands Police Federation deputy chair Sam Hughes, who died aged 53. Sam was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2017 and, on returning to work the following year, worked in PPU at West Bromwich. With typical selflessness, she was keen to help others and in 2020 she became a Fed rep. Secretary Tim Rogers said Sam would be remembered as an amazing, inspirational and genuine lady’.
- Branch chair Rich Cooke backed calls for officers to be given a [17 per cent pay rise](#). Research by the Social Market Foundation found protective services workers had received an average real-terms rise of one per cent since 2000 while other public sector workers had enjoyed increases of 14 per cent. MPs’ salaries went up by four per cent in real terms during the same period.

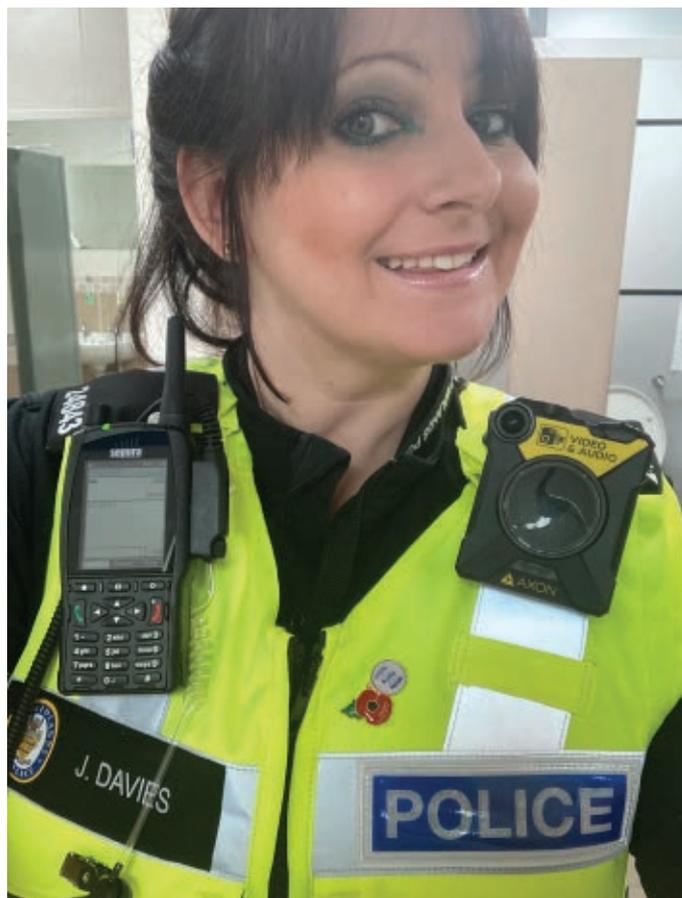
## April

- A [major overhaul of neighbourhood policing](#) was announced with local commanders promising the resources to make officers more visible in their communities. Jase Dooley, the West Midlands Police Federation branch’s full-time lead on the change programme, said members welcomed the return to a well-established and successful system of policing, adding ‘it will be better for the public.’



## May

- West Midlands Police [lifted the leave embargo](#) for the coronation of King Charles over the May Bank Holiday weekend in response to calls from the Federation.
- West Midlands Police Federation conduct lead Dave Hadley rejected the idea that chief constables should have ‘the final word’ on [decisions to sack police officers and staff](#), warning of the potential for unfair treatment.
- West Midlands Chief Constable Craig Guildford, the National Police Chiefs’ Council professional standards lead, had said: “We feel that the Chief Constable as the employer, as the standard-setter, needs to have that final word and that needs to be done expeditiously.”



- West Midlands Police Federation rep Jess Davies took part in the AJ Bell Great Birmingham Run [in memory of six-year-old Arthur Labinjo Hughes](#) who was brutally killed by his stepmother and father in 2020. “I think being a mum myself, and such tragedy happening right on my doorstep, made me want to raise as much money as possible for Arthur’s Angels,” said 42-year-old Jess.
- The Federation gave a cautious welcome to West Midlands Police’s decision to launch a new [30++ police officer re-joiner scheme](#) to retain skills and experience. Eligible officers would retire and, following a break in service of at least one month, return to policing as a warranted officer. But Federation secretary Tim Rogers warned: “Officers considering this option must seek appropriate advice both pensions and taxation wise.”

- Federation health and safety lead Deano Walker asked members to complete a survey centred around the [relationship between chronic pain](#) and the way officers carry their Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

## June

- “I know health and safety might [not be the most interesting topic](#),” admitted Patrick McBrearty in June following his appointment as chair of West Midlands Police Federation’s Health and Safety Committee. He revealed: “I want officers to learn about health and safety without even realising they’re doing so.”



Continued on Page 28

- A highly critical report warned that public trust in the police was [‘hanging by a thread’](#) in the wake of scandals and systemic failings. New Chief Inspector of Constabulary Andy Cooke said the service was at a historic turning point and called for definitive action. Federation chair Rich Cooke said: “We agree with a lot of what the inspector has said. But for every scandal, we could tell 100 stories of bobbies putting themselves in harm’s way to protect members of the public.”

- Sergeant Harvy Rai, a Fed member who [co-founded the West Midlands Police and National Sikh Police Association](#), was awarded an MBE by the King. Harvy said he was ‘very humbled’ and explained that having a Sikh Police Association is fundamental to getting a better understanding of local communities and building trust with the public.



## July

- Sergeant Mitch Darby was [forced to abandon a family holiday](#) to be a witness in court only to find out the trial had been cancelled. He commented that it was ‘not surprising if the Force struggles to retain staff’ with this sort of treatment.
- West Midlands Police Federation branch chair Rich Cooke thanked MP Johnny Mercer for his [robust defence of policing](#) on Good Morning Britain and secretary Tim Rogers [urged colleagues to ‘stay in ticket’](#) to benefit from the new police driver protections won by the Federation.



- West Midlands [triumphed at the national Police Bravery Awards](#) held in London. The West Midlands nominees were named the overall winners, after risking their lives to form a human chain to try to save four young boys who had fallen into a frozen lake. PS Paula McDowell, PS Fergal Sharkey, PC Harriet Batchelor, PC Alana Grigg, PC Stewart Powers, PC Joshua Adams, PC Anthony Maginnis, PC William Finnegan, PC Fidha Akhtar, PC Olivia Studholme, PC Charanjat Chana, PC Jordon Finn, PCSO Chloe Westlake and PC Jason Gilbert were honoured for their tremendous courage at the tragic incident at Babbs Mill near Solihull on 11 December 2022.

- Hundreds of police officers joined the families of fallen officers at the annual Care of Police Survivors Service of Remembrance in Staffordshire, with Rich Cooke and Chief Superintendent Andy Beard [leading a cycling delegation](#) from the West Midlands.

## August

- The Federation pushed back on proposals to [‘parachute in’ recruits from the business world](#) straight into detective roles. Branch chair Rich Cooke spoke out after the Labour Party said it would force police chiefs to recruit detectives who had not worked as beat officers first, calling the move ‘short termism’.
- Rich Cooke, West Midlands Police Federation branch chair, highlighted the worsening problem of assaults after two officers had [blood spat in their faces](#). “These two officers were assaulted in the most vile way after they responded to an individual in distress,” he said.
- The Federation also took issue with courts for being [‘too lenient’ with repeat knife-crime offenders](#). Rich Cooke, West Midlands Police Federation branch chair, said they are ‘making a mockery of the work done by police,’ after figures showed only a third of offenders are sent to prison.
- West Midlands Police Federation supported an appeal to raise money for the family of Nottinghamshire Police Sergeant Graham Saville who died after [being hit by a train](#) as he attempted to save a distressed man on the tracks. A JustGiving page raised more than £120,000.

## September

- [Tributes were paid to Sergeant Paul Frear](#) who was tragically killed in a road traffic accident on his way to Smethwick Police Station. Paul, 45, had 21 years’ service and left a wife and children. West Midlands Police Federation branch chair Rich Cooke said: “I worked with Paul at Wolverhampton and knew him well - it is surreal thinking of him in the past tense. He was a lovely person, mild-mannered, measured, always supportive with a great sense of humour. I will miss our meetings and chats putting the world to rights.”
- It was revealed that 1,400 serving UK police officers had [applied for jobs in Western Australia](#) following a recruitment drive. One West Midlands Police officer aged 21 said pay and lifestyle were key reasons behind his decision to pursue a new career Down Under.
- West Midlands Police Federation conduct lead Dave Hadley weighed into the row around proposals for chief constables to get the power to sack officers, saying disciplinary [hearings could become ‘kangaroo courts’](#). Dave said legally qualified chairs were introduced to improve confidence in the disciplinary process and this would be a retrograde step.



- West Midlands Police Federation [launched its own bravery awards](#) to recognise courageous and inspirational officers. The inaugural awards would be held at Tally Ho Conferencing and Banqueting Centre in Edgbaston on 31 January 2024.

## October



- West Midlands Police Federation secretary Tim Rogers, who is also the national pursuits and driver training lead, for [sustained investment in roads policing](#) called for chief officers to invest in roads policing if they are to bring it back from the brink of failure.

Tim highlighted the dangers of under-investment in roads policing for more than 10 years and says the austerity years brought a disproportionate reduction in the number of roads policing officers.

“Each year 1,700 people die on UK roads. It makes no sense at all not to invest in effective roads policing,” he said.

- A hero West Midlands officer who received a Pride of Britain Award spoke out about the [racist abuse he regularly experiences](#) on the beat. PC Leon Mittoo called on the courts to impose stiffer sentences on those who racially abuse officers. “It’s not just me. Every person of colour on the team has been racially abused at some point,” he said. “It’s abhorrent but you can’t let it affect you.”

- This year’s ‘virtual’ Police Federation annual national conference got underway in Manchester with West Midlands Police Federation chair Rich Cooke making an [impassioned plea for industrial rights](#). Speaking via video link, he said officers have been ‘badly let down’ and added that “a 17 per cent average reduction in our real terms pay since the year 2000 is nothing short of scandalous. And we currently have no real recourse.”



Conference was disappointed that the Home Secretary [stopped short of signing off](#) on the Federation’s Medals for Heroes during her keynote address, despite saying she supported it. Suella Braverman did say: “It is always deeply sobering - and moving - to hear the roll call of officers who have fallen in the line of duty in the past year. Words cannot do justice to the debt we owe them.”

## November

- Branch secretary Tim Rogers called for a [‘root and branch review of the rank structure’](#). He was speaking in response to a trial by the College of Policing involving the sergeant and inspector ranks. Tim said: “There are no shortage of officers putting themselves forward for promotion. Some are actually incapable but the current system allows those without the right skills to progress and gain promotion but then they are in a role they simply can’t do which leaves them failing the communities we serve. Our recruitment processes need to be overhauled.”
- West Midlands Police Federation deputy branch chair Jase Dooley [hit out at the inadequate sentencing](#) for people convicted of attacking police officers. “I don’t think these are a strong enough deterrent,” he said. “I don’t think the courts are taking this as seriously as they should be. The punishment does not fit the crime.” Figures shared with the BBC showed that in the year to June there were 38,079 assaults on officers in England - a rise of six per cent in three years.
- This year’s West Midlands Police Excellence Awards took place in November, with multiple Federation members recognised at this year’s ceremony. Among them were [Detective Baron Briscoe](#) who was named Investigator of the Year, [Special Sergeant Craig Hume](#) who clinched the Special Constable of the Year title and [PC Lauren Pritchard](#) took home Student Officer of the Year.
- At the end of November, [violence outside Villa Park](#) was said to be ‘the worst officers had seen at a football match in more than two decades’ according to Federation deputy chair Jase Dooley. The incident took place ahead of Aston Villa’s European game with Legia Warsaw and involved officers being attacked with missiles and flames. Several officers were injured but none were thought to be seriously hurt. Jase later [praised the officers](#) involved for their hard work during and after the incident, saying: “The work my colleagues have done within 24 hours is simply amazing. They have worked extremely hard, working long hours away from their families.”

## December

- [A football fan was jailed for racially abusing international footballer](#) and former Manchester United player Rio Ferdinand. West Midlands Police Federation member and the UK’s first ever hate crime officer PC Stuart Ward helped with the investigation, prompting public recognition and thanks from Rio. Wolverhampton Wanderers fan Jamie Arnold was sentenced to six months in jail and was given a seven-year football banning order. Speaking about the sentencing Stuart said: “Arnold being jailed sends the most powerful message. It will demonstrate to other offenders that this will not be tolerated.”
- It was confirmed that Home Secretary James Cleverly had agreed to West Midlands Mayor Andy Street’s request that the [powers of the Police and Crime Commissioner \(PCC\) should be transferred](#) from the PCC to whoever wins the mayoral election on 2 May 2024. In response, West Midlands Police Federation chair Rich Cooke said the Federation did not favour either system of oversight - a PCC or a metro mayor - ‘and would prefer a return to one that was more reflective of the communities the Force served’.

# Health and safety lead urges shift working members to prioritise mental health

The health and safety lead for West Midlands Police Federation is reminding members of the refreshment breaks they are entitled to, as he encourages them to prioritise their mental and physical health.

Patrick McBrearty says there are regulations in place that officers should be mindful of, as he says it is more important than ever for officers to recognise the signs of burnout.

Patrick refers to Regulation 12(1) of the Working Time Regulations, which states that 'where an adult worker's daily working time is more than six hours, they are entitled to a rest break'. There is a provision that this rest break should be uninterrupted, a minimum of 20 minutes and away from the worker's 'workstation'.

"It is not only essential that officers familiarise themselves with these regulations but line managers too, recognise they have a duty of care to their team," said Patrick.

"Officers have a right to a refreshment break, it's as simple as that. I want to reassure our members that as your Federation, we are continuing to work with the Force to ensure team leaders are complying with these regulations.

"However, if any of our members are concerned that these rights are being breached, they should contact me or their local Federation representative. The only way we can really understand the issues faced by those on the frontline is via your feedback."

Patrick explained that police officers have an exigency of duty. Only during these times - when there is an immediate call for need - can these regulations be overridden.

"Remember, if you aren't having these refreshment breaks, then it's a danger to your health and safety," added Patrick.

"These shift breaks are a necessity."

Patrick's concerns come shortly after Police Oracle revealed that 13,500 UK police officers had been signed off work due to stress, depression, anxiety or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) - which is a new record and up 80 per cent more than 10 years ago.

"Although I'm saddened by these figures I'm

not shocked. Policing is challenging at the best of times but at the moment, it's particularly difficult for officers," said Patrick.

"Do I think that officers not taking breaks is common? Yes, I do. Do I think this is having an impact on morale within the Force? Yes, I do.

"Many of our members are continuing to see an increase in demand and mounting pressure. And then on top of that, they are juggling shift patterns and home life - and in some cases, they're doing all of that, without a break.

"I've been there. I've worked back-to-back shifts, finishing one shift in the early hours of the morning only to go back in for the next shift just hours later - with no break in between. You're tired and stressed, and more often than not your wellbeing gets pushed to the bottom. It's not healthy."

Patrick said he is also particularly concerned about students or newly qualified officers, who are keen to 'prove themselves' and increase their income, so take on additional shifts.

"What we're seeing is new recruits wanting to make a good impression and ultimately want to climb the ranks, and so they feel they need to be working endless hours to get their face seen," explained Patrick.

"In the meantime, their wellbeing and mental health get cast aside. They end up working long, multiple shifts, not eating well, not sleeping well and not seeing family.

"So my message to our members reading this is, please prioritise your mental health. Yes, in so many cases, shiftwork is part of the job but listen to your body and listen to your mind - please don't let it get to the point where you're burnt out."

Federation workplace rep Jess Davies echoed Patrick's message. As a former response officer, the sergeant says she too, has personal experience of working long shifts, missing breaks and 'reaching for the snacks' instead of having wholesome, nutritious meals.

"Although officers are entitled to breaks, in reality, they are rarely taken. In a lot of cases, officers take working breaks - or in other words,

travelling from incident to incident," said Jess.

"And while we all have the best intentions of sticking to a healthy diet, it's difficult when you're constantly on the go, attending job after job, or spending a lot of your shift at a scene.

"Of course, for so many of us - myself included - feeling stressed leads to you reaching for snacks, the comfort food. When the pressure is on, it's no secret that a chocolate bar might seem a more attractive option than a salad.

"And what's more, officers don't always have the time to exercise. And exercising is just as important as sleep in my opinion. It's a stress relieving and is vital to good mental health - even if it's just going for a walk."

Reiterating Patrick's comments, Jess is urging officers - especially those who are new to the police service - to familiarise themselves with their rights and regulations.

"The cost of living has made working overtime even more appealing," continued Jess, who admits she is concerned that members are 'sacrificing their own wellbeing' to 'work crazy hours'.

"Sadly - but unsurprisingly - people are not prioritising their mental health and instead are looking at the pay cheque they will get from taking on more shifts.

"And the trouble is, this way of working - this way of living - it becomes the norm, and that's a really worrying issue. Our minds, our bodies, get used to it and we start to work on autopilot, until one day, we can't take anymore. And that is the worry."

Federation member Ian Cook founded [Blue Light Lifestyle](#), a solution designed specifically for emergency service workers to help them improve their health and fitness levels, as well as wellbeing.

We asked Ian if he could share his five top tips for members, to help them prioritise their mental health and wellbeing in 2024:

- **Make your goals achievable and sustainable** - don't commit to things you can't sustain this sets you up for a fail set small goals and long-term goals.
- **Focus on some small habits each day like** - hydrating upon waking, setting a weekly step goal or a daily fluid intake target for yourself.
- **Prioritise your sleep and recovery** - this is often forgotten about but in actual fact, prioritising rest and recovery is key to a healthy lifestyle.
- **Do exercise that you enjoy not what others are doing** - the only way you will continue to stay active is if you enjoy what you're doing.
- **Build discipline and consistency with small achievable habits** - by doing this, you will never rely on motivation again to be the driving force for change.

“MANY OF OUR MEMBERS ARE CONTINUING TO SEE AN INCREASE IN DEMAND AND MOUNTING PRESSURE - AND THEN ON TOP OF THAT, THEY ARE JUGGLING SHIFT PATTERNS AND HOME LIFE.”

# West Midlands Police Benevolent Fund



## Message from our chair



### 2024 is a very special year for the West Midlands Police Benevolent Fund Charity.

We will be celebrating 50 years! 50 is a big milestone and a chance to pause, reflect and plan for the future.

For 50 years we have listened, supported, championed and been there for people in times of hardship or crisis. Whether it is helping our members through a bereavement, a loved one's critical illness or another unexpected life event, the Benevolent Fund has stepped in to offer its support.

With our anniversary plans in full swing,

we wanted to do something useful with our time, funds and expertise. We want to continue to raise awareness of the Benevolent Fund and attract new members - more members, of course, means we can help even more people.

We want to thank our existing supporters - without the regular subscriptions from our members we would not be here today. We will be hosting a special 50th birthday party and running an anniversary prize draw to show our appreciation.

Finally, we want to leave a legacy by expanding membership benefits and moulding the Benevolent fund into a charity that continues to help the next generation of serving officers, police staff and retired members.

### Stories for every decade #WeAre50!

The Benevolent Fund has come a very long way since 1974. Over the course of the next 12 months, we will be sharing our journey through interesting facts and short stories as well as members' testimonies.

Look out for them on our website and social media feeds as we share our journey through the past five decades.

I hope you will join with us in 2024 as we commemorate our past, celebrate our achievements and encourage even more serving officers and staff to join the West Midlands Police Benevolent Fund.

I am incredibly proud of our charity's achievements over the past 50 years and I would like to thank you for supporting us over the years.

**John Williams, chair**

Here's a recap of the Benevolent Fund's membership benefits

### For £2 per month all members can apply for:

- Access to interest-free loans and grants in times of hardship or distress
- Sickness vouchers if a member is unable to work due to sickness or injury
- Convalescence and rehabilitation breaks, at St Michael's Lodge Treatment Centre (SML)
- Mental health support with up to eight online counselling sessions through SML
- Discounted holidays at our properties at Dartmouth and Dorset
- Exclusive rewards scheme offering a range of discounts
- Free will writing service.

### Members who are serving officers or police staff are also entitled to:

- Death grant of £3,500 to a nominated person
- £25 per week for all surviving children until their 18th birthday.

### Update your details

If your details have changed, or you wish to update your nominated beneficiary, please get in touch. You can [do this online](#).

### Not a member but would like to join

You can join online via [our website](#) or by clicking on the QR code:



**Don't forget our holiday home ballot opens in the New Year.**

Full details can be found on [our website](#).

# Fundraising inspector on a mission to run in murdered cop's memory

**A West Midlands inspector on a mission to raise money for the Nicola Hughes Memorial Fund has finished off the year with two marathons and a half-marathon for the charity.**

Inspector Collin Baker completed this year's Chicago Marathon and the Marine Corps Marathon in October, before taking part in the Wendover Woods Half Marathon, in Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire - all in the space of a few months.

His fundraising efforts are driven by his determination to keep Nicola's memory alive after the Great Manchester PC was tragically killed when attending a report of a burglary with colleague PC Fiona Bone in 2012.

"It is so important that we continue to raise money in Nicola's memory and for the fund that has been created by her dad Bryn," said 48-year-old inspector Collin.

"What happened that tragic day, when

Nicola was killed, could have happened to anyone. It was simply the wrong place, the wrong time for Nicola and I think that's why her death has had such a huge impact on officers across the country."

The fund was launched by Bryn Hughes MBE, Nicola's father, and aims to provide learning opportunities and pre-employment skills support through grants to children who have a family member who has died as a result of violent crime.

"As an inspector, I've seen first-hand the children that the fund could help. There will never be a shortage of kids who need support from the Nicola Hughes Memorial Fund, and that's what keeps me going when the running gets tough."

While Collin admits he is a keen runner, he is pleased that he has been able to 'make good use of a hobby'.

"I don't just run for Nicola, I run for Bryn too, especially as he continues to campaign for a medal to be awarded in honour of fallen emergency service workers," added Collin, who said the Marine Corps Marathon in Washington was the toughest run he has done to date.

"I've been running for eight years but that one got me. It was very humid, which made it very hard to run. I decided not to go for a personal best time and instead just enjoy the route."



Collin in Washington.

Determined to continue fundraising in 2024, Collin will be kicking off the new year with the Marrakesh Marathon in January, before taking part in the Brighton Marathon in April, ahead of heading to California to run the Big Sur Marathon that same month.

"I am particularly excited about the Big Sur Marathon, as it's one of the races I've always dreamt of taking part in," said Collin, who is one of just 4,500 runners lucky enough to get a place.

The Big Sur is an annual event which sees participants run along the Pacific Coast.

"As always, these events are all self-funded and will each help me raise money for the Nicola Hughes Memorial Fund," continued Collin, who is already exploring 50km events that he can take part in to mark his 50th birthday in 2025.

Keen to get more people involved, Collin is encouraging others to join him at one - or more - of the events next year.

"Bryn will be organising a return to New York in November next year and we would love as many people as possible to come along and be part of the team," he said.

"And for those runners who don't fancy a full marathon, Bryn promotes an annual 'run to remember' event, which involves participants signing up to run one or two miles each day for 11 days. This can be done in your own time and from wherever you are in the world, so is a great way to get involved, whatever your running ability."

To date, Collin has personally raised around £4,000 for the fund. You can donate by visiting [Collin's fundraising page](#).

For more information on how you can support the Nicola Hughes Memorial Fund email [info@pnicolasfund.co.uk](mailto:info@pnicolasfund.co.uk)



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# RETIREMENT

## seminars

### 2024 DATES ANNOUNCED

West Midlands Police Federation hosts seminars to help members navigate their way through retirement, and has just announced dates for 2024.

The one-day sessions will cover a range of topics including how to retire, the police pension schemes, taxation and the state pension.

They will explore next steps such as CV writing, starting a business, and police officers' transferable skills.

The seminars will also look at investments and financial planning, asset protection and post-retirement schemes for police officers, such as the West Midlands Police Benevolent Fund.

They're aimed at members who are within three years of finishing their service and will be held in person at the Federation offices at Guardians House in Coventry Road, Sheldon.

The final session of this year will take place on 21 December.

The dates for next year are: **11 January, 22 February, and 14 March**, followed by **11 April, 16 May and 13 June**. They continue on **11 July, 15 August, and 12 September**, and then on **17 October, 14 November and 12 December**.

Members are encouraged to let the branch know as soon as possible if they'd like to attend by emailing [westmidlandspf@polfed.org](mailto:westmidlandspf@polfed.org)



Please include 'Retirement seminar' and the date you would like to attend as well as your name, work email address, personal email address, personal phone number, proposed retirement date and any dietary requirements.

Coffee and registration for each date will be between 8.30am and 8.45am. The seminars start at 9am and finish at 4pm. A meal deal lunch will be provided and members are asked to advise of dietary requirements.



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# 'Rank structure becoming outdated and unworkable'

A trial of proposed changes to the sergeant and inspector promotion processes is set to fail unless the fundamental issues around recruitment, pay and poor working environments are tackled, according to West Midlands Police Federation secretary Tim Rogers.

Tim, who was commenting after the College of Policing announced the year-long trial in a small number of forces nationwide, believes the rank structure itself is outdated and becoming unworkable.

"It simply restricts forces' options in many ways and denies the right person with the right skills being put in the correct role. This is why we need a root and branch review of the rank structure. This latest trial is simply tinkering around the edges and I fear it will just end up wasting money while also delaying any proper consideration of whether our current rank system is still fit for purpose," says Tim.

"But the backdrop to this is that our recruitment processes also need to be overhauled and the key to attracting the right candidates in the first place is making sure that

police officer pay is fair and reflective of the unique dangers and challenges of the role. That is linked to the pay review process which also needs to be reformed.

"Beyond the issues around recruitment and pay, we also need to address retention issues and make sure that officers' working environments are suitable. A chronic under-investment in force infrastructure during the austerity years has left us with inadequate office space, old and tired buildings, and in some cases a shortage of equipment and other resources."

Among the changes being put forward in the College of Policing trial is the opportunity to demonstrate legal knowledge, rather than this being tested in an exam.

However, Tim says the legal exam is among the least problematic issues to be faced.

"There are no shortage of officers putting themselves forward for promotion from constable to sergeant and from sergeant to inspector. There are many with a great 'can do' attitude, however, some of them simply can't and some are actually incapable but the

current system allows those without the right skills to progress and gain promotion but then they are in a role they simply can't do which leaves them failing their colleagues, failing the Force and, ultimately, failing the communities we serve.

"Sadly, the longer this continues the more expensive it will become, the more issues that will be created and the worse the service will become."

The college has launched the trial, which will run alongside its new leadership standards and leadership programme, after feedback indicated the current promotion process was overly complex with insufficient focus on leadership skills.

"We would support the notion of operational competence being essential and needing to be proven, but we would say that emotional competence has to be given equal importance," says Tim.

"We will await the findings of the trial, with the initial findings due to be considered in early 2025, but we would argue that this will not go far enough in terms of helping tackling the challenges forces are facing."



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