

FORUM

The magazine of Gwent Police Federation

SUMMER 2021

2021 POLICING UNDER PRESSURE

POLICE FEDERATION OF ENGLAND AND WALES ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2021



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A view from the chair



By Steve Thorpe, chair of Gwent Police Federation

For the last 15 months, many of our usual face-to-face meetings have been held online so it was no real surprise when the decision was taken to stage this year's annual Police Federation conference virtually.

I know it was a tough decision and perhaps particularly galling for national Federation chair John Apter who, despite leading the organisation for three years, has never actually hosted our flagship event in person. The 2019 conference was cancelled due to a cyber-attack on the Federation's systems and last year's event was scrapped as the pandemic took hold.

I think if I was to sum up the conference 2021, I would say it was very good under the circumstances. The organisers did a great job, pulling together an event that covered all the key issues officers have been facing over the last year or so and featured the key names in policing – the Home Secretary, the police minister, Sir Tom Winsor from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and National Police Chiefs' Council chair Martin Hewitt.

This year, for the first time to my knowledge, we even had a message from the Prime Minister with Boris Johnson praising officers for their efforts during the conference.

I have tried not to compare this year's conference with those held in previous years, but inevitably you do fall into that trap. Obviously, it did feel a bit flat with none of the applause and general interaction between speakers and delegates that we have come to expect. The big loss, of course, was the opportunity to mix with Federation reps from other forces, share experiences and compare notes as it were.

But we did what we so often do, we made the best of a far from ideal situation. A highlight for me was the input on trial by media with barrister and TV personality Robert Rinder giving an interesting perspective on how he felt forces should be tackling an issue that is having such a huge impact on officers.

I hope, since the Home Secretary has also spoken out on this, we are soon able to see forces, where legally appropriate, releasing more body-worn video. This could help give a fuller picture of incidents than we often see depicted in the edited excerpts that seem to find their way on to various social media platforms with shocking regularity. We will have to wait to see.

We will also have to see if the warm words of the Home Secretary, and the Prime Minister, do translate into action.

As a Federation, we have welcomed the Government's efforts to increase the sentences available to courts when dealing with those individuals who seem to think it's OK to assault police officers. We also welcome progress with the Police Covenant and better protection for police drivers.

However, officers are still disappointed that the Government would not give them any priority in the vaccine roll-out programme. The pay freeze also hit hard and more has to be done to resolve the pensions issue. My end of conference report on the Government? Must try harder.

PM's 'huge thank you' to officers

Boris Johnson delivered a message of thanks and support at the opening of the conference.

The Prime Minister issued a 'huge thank you' to officers for their work during the pandemic and praised them for rising "to an enormous challenge".

He said: "You have shown over the past year just why British police are the best in the world, now we are going to make sure you have the tools you need to deal with criminals, make our streets safer, and get on with the job you signed up to do."



Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

Chair reflects on challenging year in keynote speech



National Police Federation chair John Apter.

Police Federation chair John Apter has reflected on an extraordinary year in his keynote speech to this year's annual conference.

John said officers found themselves in unprecedented situations and often felt they were held responsible when things went wrong.

He noted assaults on officers shot up during the coronavirus pandemic as they became the focus of public anger and frustration.

The chair told members: "This past year has been one of the most challenging and one of the most extraordinary for us all in recent history.

"For the past 15 months we have been required to police in a way that none of us ever expected to when we joined the job.

"We knew it was never going to be easy. But our job was made even harder by the ever changing rules and regulations."

He told Home Secretary Priti Patel, who also addressed the conference: "We had officers going out on patrol literally hours after the new regulations were introduced.

"They had often received no detailed

briefing because the laws had only just been passed, which meant they were often going out on patrol with no specific detail about what the change meant for policing.

"There was no discussion about how to deal with the new laws or the new guidance. And let's be honest Home Secretary, the rules were not always crystal clear."

Admitting there were 'some mistakes' as a result, he said that the police had unfairly become the focus of blame.

He said: "Despite our best efforts, there were some mistakes and that was inevitable given the circumstances and policing has never shied away from saying so. But my colleagues, who had been put in an impossible position, became the focus of blame.

“ MY COLLEAGUES ARE BEING HUNG OUT TO DRY BY THE MEDIA, BY SOME POLITICIANS AND BY SO-CALLED, SELF-PROCLAIMED EXPERTS ON POLICING.

"My colleagues, who were doing their very best, every single day, in the most difficult of circumstances they became the focus of public anger and frustration.

"And for some perverse reason, some chose to see us as the enemy. We were labelled the villains of the pandemic and that is grossly unfair.

"A minority of people - and let's be honest about this: often agitators intent on causing mayhem - focused their anger and often violence on police officers.

"Well, I have a message to those who goaded my colleagues, a message to those who attacked police officers who were

simply doing their job and to those vile people who weaponised Covid by coughing and spitting at my colleagues, often saying they had Covid and they hope the officer caught it and died.

"To those individuals: you disgust me, you completely disgust me. And I know that you disgust every decent, law-abiding person."

John said officers were also facing 'trial by media' on a daily basis.

He told the conference: "My colleagues are being hung out to dry by the media, by some politicians and by so-called, self-proclaimed experts on policing."

And calling on the Home Secretary for her support, he said: "We need you to speak out when you see footage of police officers being attacked on social media. When we see people reaching for their phone, not to dial 999 for help, but reaching for their phone to film an attack for nothing more than entertainment.

"Social media companies must also take more responsibility and the Government must ensure this happens. What kind of society have we become when attacking police officers is seen as nothing more than entertainment, nothing more than a sport?

"Or when selective clips of video are released without context and then those in positions of responsibility who should know better condemn the actions of officers without knowing all the facts."

John finished his keynote speech by pointing out that police pay had fallen by 18 per cent in real terms in the past 10 years and that most officers were also currently affected by the public sector pay freeze.

He said: "As police officers, we don't have the same rights as others. We can't strike, we can't take industrial action if we feel we have been treated unfairly and we can't withdraw our labour.

"We also have restrictions on our private lives, unlike most other workers. For years, successive governments have respected this. They have recognised that, in the absence of those industrial rights, police officers should be treated fairly, but in recent years this has changed.

"Well Home Secretary, if that is the case, then it may be time for some other changes."

“ FOR THE PAST 15 MONTHS WE HAVE BEEN REQUIRED TO POLICE IN A WAY THAT NONE OF US EVER EXPECTED TO WHEN WE JOINED THE JOB.

Home Secretary praises officers and says 'I have got your backs'

Home Secretary Priti Patel has told Police Federation members the country depends on them and pledged: "I have got your backs."

In her keynote speech to the Police Federation of England and Wales' annual conference, the Home Secretary praised the courage shown by frontline officers throughout the coronavirus crisis.

She told them: "On behalf of the whole country, thank you for still being there for us during one of the toughest moments in our country's history.

"You have done it superbly well and courageously."

Ms Patel acknowledged a rise in the number of attacks on officers as protests swept the country last summer and described such behaviour as "grotesque".

She said: "It's a cruel irony that while most crimes naturally fell during lockdown, violence and abuse directed at police officers increased.

“ ON BEHALF OF THE WHOLE COUNTRY, THANK YOU FOR STILL BEING THERE FOR US DURING ONE OF THE TOUGHEST MOMENTS IN OUR COUNTRY'S HISTORY.

"You were spat and coughed at by thugs claiming to have the virus. Some of you were seriously injured and your vans were set on fire during the despicable events in Bristol earlier this year.

"Police were bloodied and pelted with bottles in Hyde Park in April."

Assaults on constables without injury increased by 21 per cent to 25,156 in the year to December 2020 and attacks resulting in injury rose by 2 per cent to more than 11,000, figures branded 'shocking' by the Home Secretary.

She said: "This behaviour is grotesque. And I will never accept that it's simply part of the job.

"It is an attack on the fabric of our society. And every police uniform is worn by a human being who is entitled to dignity



Home Secretary Priti Patel.

and respect.

"The right to protest and speak freely does not include the right to smash up property, or abuse police officers."

Ms Patel confirmed the Government was doubling the maximum prison sentence for common assault or battery against emergency workers from twelve months to two years.

She said: "I will continue to do everything in my power to ensure assaults on our police are treated with the appropriate severity across the whole criminal justice system.

"Those who have contempt for the police may be louder and more vitriolic than ever, but they are vastly outnumbered and utterly wrong.

"Far from feeling any shame in being a police officer, you all should feel very proud indeed. We have also acted in response to what you said about the tools and powers you need."

Ms Patel insisted she would not let the police be subjected to trial by social media and said she supported calls to release more body-worn video footage of incidents.

She told the conference: "That's why I backed the Police Federation's call for forces

to share body-worn video footage to counter highly selective, and misleading, video clips uploaded on to social media.

"I want forces to be more proactive in sharing body-worn video footage to highlight the fantastic work of their officers, to build public confidence, and to correct harmful misinformation circulating online.

"It is critical that we work as a system to ensure that we maintain public confidence in policing, which is vital for victim reporting, intelligence-led policing, and to maintain our treasured model of policing by consent.

"As part of this process, we will be looking carefully at strengthening the system of local community scrutiny and the value of body-worn video, because transparency is vital."

Ms Patel said the police had played a heroic role bringing the country through the incredible shock of the coronavirus pandemic.

She told Federation members: "As we come out of coronavirus, we must cut crime and build back safer – and we can't do it without you.

"Without you, we would not have dealt so many recent blows to serious and organised crime, including Operation Venetic - the UK's biggest ever law enforcement operation.

"Without you, our drive to dismantle county lines drugs gangs would not have yielded such incredible results.

"Without you, thousands of weapons would not have been taken off our streets, as we crack down on serious violence. Without you, we could not combat terrorism.

"Without you, more young people would make bad choices and ruin lives, including their own. Without you, the public would not feel safe. Without you, criminals would run riot and this country would fall apart.

"Our country depends on you. And I have got your backs."

“ I WILL CONTINUE TO DO EVERYTHING IN MY POWER TO ENSURE ASSAULTS ON OUR POLICE ARE TREATED WITH THE APPROPRIATE SEVERITY ACROSS THE WHOLE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM.

Police minister says service is coming out of the pandemic in better shape than it went in

Policing minister Kit Malthouse has acknowledged the pressure the police found themselves under at the height of the coronavirus crisis but insisted they have always enjoyed the full support of the Government and the vast majority of the public.

Mr Malthouse said he stood 'square-shouldered' with frontline officers who had been asked to carry out their normal duties while also policing lockdown restrictions with great courage and professionalism.

And he told conference that, despite the unprecedented challenges of the last 18 months, officers had managed to maintain and had probably improved public trust during the pandemic.

He said: "Policing is coming out of the pandemic in better shape than it went in."

The minister admitted he regretted not doing more to ensure police officers were prioritised in the Covid vaccine programme.

Asked why the Government did not place more pressure on the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) to prioritise officers, he told a virtual panel discussion: "We made the case strongly about police officers. We did repeatedly make the case and make the request but obviously the JCVI made the decision that they did."

"From my point of view, it's a point of regret that we didn't manage to make our point strongly enough."

"Having said that, as was said earlier,



Policing minister Kit Malthouse.

quite a number of officers managed to get vaccinated with spare vaccines, hopefully now everybody is done or will be done shortly."

The opening session of conference, the theme of which was Policing Under Pressure, saw a live panel featuring Mr Malthouse, National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) chair Martin Hewitt, shadow policing minister Sarah Jones and Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary Sir Tom Winsor.

Mr Hewitt praised the response of police officers but admitted frequent changes in legislation had presented



Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary Sir Tom Winsor.

extraordinary challenges for both the police service and the Government.

Labour MP Ms Jones accused ministers of failing to properly support the police as they were forced to adapt to frequent changes to legislation during the three national lockdowns.

Sir Tom paid tribute to the police response during the pandemic and dismissed social media criticism of how officers had handled the ever-changing landscape during lockdown.

He said while not perfect, the police performance had been "very, very good" and deserved high marks of nine out of 10.

'This award is really for victims who are still suffering'

A former victim of domestic violence has received the Outstanding Contribution to Women in Policing Award 2021 having shared her own experience to help others.

Chief Inspector Sharon Baker of Avon and Somerset Police said she was accepting the award on behalf of all the victims who were still suffering.

"I hope this award shines the light on the darkness and shows you that you're not alone," she added.

CI Baker clinched the title for her outstanding work around domestic violence, including a powerful video she made sharing her own story of living in a controlling and abusive relationship.

She said victims of domestic abuse were everywhere.



Chief Inspector Sharon Baker.

"There's no them, there's only us. They are our crew mates, our bosses and the people on the other end of the phone. This award is really for the victims who are still suffering."

Brave officers honoured

The Police Bravery Awards 2020 ceremony was postponed due to the ongoing pandemic but is hopefully set to take place later this year.

TV's Mark Durden-Smith, who presents the annual awards ceremony, led a session honouring all nominees.

"Every year, we hear about the awe-inspiring actions of these officers," he said, "These awards are a chance to give these people a deserved pat on the back, to honour the bravest men and women who serve our communities."

The 2020 ceremony is hopefully taking place in October with the 2021 ceremony scheduled for December.

Pay, conditions and pensions: ‘We need to get our message out more’

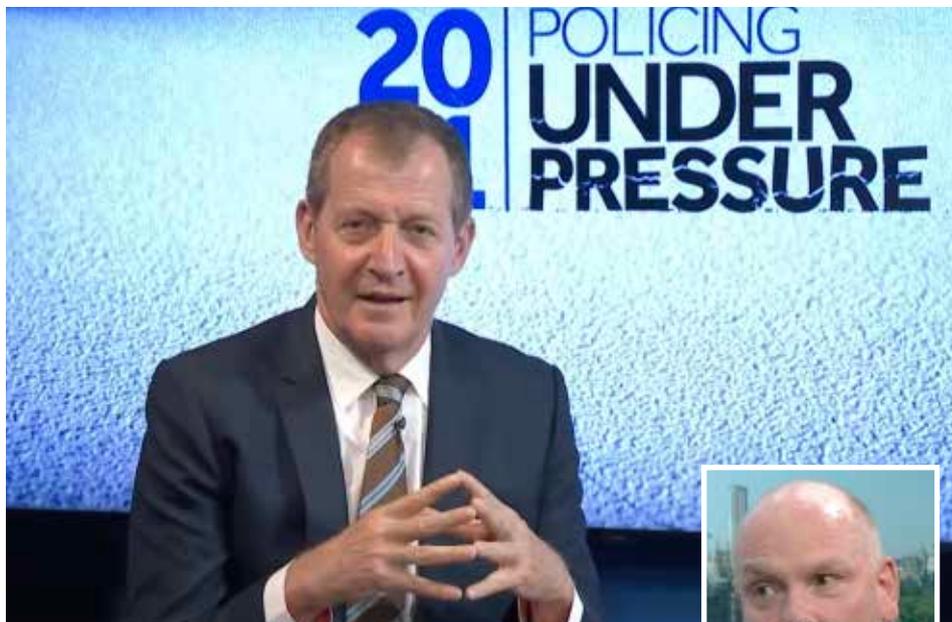
The Federation has to be the unequivocal voice of policing, getting its message out more and rallying together, the Federation’s national secretary told a conference session looking at pay, conditions and pensions.

The session was facilitated by Tony Blair’s former spokesperson, Alastair Campbell, who recently appeared as a host on the breakfast TV programme Good Morning Britain, and featured inputs from Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW) national secretary Alex Duncan and deputy secretary John Partington.

“As we come out of the pandemic and we return to normality, I think it’s beholding on PFEW to be the unequivocal voice of policing. We need to get our message out more – we will all have different opinions, but it’s important we rally together,” Alex said.

John added: “We have to realise how powerful we can be when we come together with a united front.”

Time was spent discussing the uncertainty around pensions with Alex explaining there were officers who did not know when they could retire, what they are



entitled to and had no pension forecast.

But he said the Federation was working with the Government and further guidance was imminent, including a pension calculator tool that was being tested.

Facilitator Alastair Campbell (above) and national secretary of PFEW Alex Duncan (right).

Protests: focus on officer safety

“My view will always fall on the side of officer safety,” national chair John Apter told delegates during a conference session on policing protests.

The segment focussed on the protests that have taken place over the past year and whether more needs to be done on educating the public on the role of the police during these sometimes violent demonstrations.

John warned against taking advantage of the goodwill shown by officers, who continue to want to protect the public, despite the situation.

He said: “We have the best police force in the world. We don’t have to do a lot to make people feel valued and wanted.”

Speaking about the fact that frontline officers are not always required to wear protective kit when working at protests, he



Metropolitan Police Sergeant Nikki O’Malley spoke about her experiences of working on the frontline at protests.



argued that there were more concerns about how they will look in the protective gear rather than prioritising staff safety.

Looking to the summer ahead, John said forces are committed to protecting the public.

“Policing reacts to crisis,” he explained, “The pressure cooker of frustration has built up and we had a taste of it last summer.”

Metropolitan Police Sergeant Nikki O’Malley spoke about her experiences of working on the frontline at protests, including one in which she was not wearing a protective kit, resulting in her getting injured.

“ POLICING REACTS TO CRISIS. THE PRESSURE COOKER OF FRUSTRATION HAS BUILT UP AND WE HAD A TASTE OF IT LAST SUMMER.

Forces urged to be braver in releasing body-worn video

Police forces need to be braver in releasing body-worn video in response to officers being tried on social media, the Police Federation's annual conference has heard.

John Apter, chair of the Federation, said that where it was appropriate and legally sound to do so, body-worn video should be made public to counterbalance unfair, edited and out of context social media clips.

John said: "Forces need to be braver in putting body-worn video out to redress the balance. It's incumbent on us as Federations to liaise with our chief officer team and, where we're legally able to do this, we need to push out that body-worn video because what it does show, invariably, is certainly not what is being portrayed in that 20-second clip.

"If you look at the context, it shows that police officers are doing incredibly well in the most difficult and challenging of circumstances."

John was speaking during a session on Day 2 of the conference titled Trial By Media alongside criminal barrister and TV broadcaster Robert Rinder and former BBC home affairs correspondent Danny Shaw.

Members attending the session were able to vote on whether they wanted to see forces proactively sharing body-worn video footage to set the record straight when footage of incidents has been shared on social media, with 93 per cent of delegates supporting the move.

John said: "I will keep pushing on that issue."

The session began with an anonymous officer sharing their harrowing experience of being vilified on social media.

"What myself and my family has gone through is crushing and still haunts us today," they said, "I don't want anyone to go through what I have when I was simply doing my job."

Robert Rinder called for a transformation of the way policing responds when officers



Federation chair John Apter (left), with Robert Rinder (centre) and Danny Shaw.

are vilified in the media.

He said: "There needs to be better training for young officers, for everybody out there, especially if you're doing on the beat policing. It's about understanding not just the law, but it's understanding you are in the presence of people filming you and that radically changes the complexion of how you police and communicate, and that needs training and thinking.

"Policing in 2021 needs a meaningful, creative, national strategy about how our community police communicate on social media and use those channels for themselves."

Robert added: "We have a 1990s – at best – media response to a 2021 media landscape. That's part of this conversation and it seems to me the muscly conversation the Federation needs to be having and demanding of all of the police forces."

Danny Shaw, head of strategy and insight at criminal justice and communications consultancy Crest Advisory, said there was a distinction between mainstream and social media, and how they treat the types of clips being discussed.

"Public confidence in policing is strong," Mr Shaw said, "What really impacts public confidence in policing is not necessarily a clip on social media but the interactions people have with the police.

"I'm not diminishing the experience officers have when they're vilified on social media but we shouldn't get things out of perspective in terms of the public confidence in policing."

He added: "When it comes to the mainstream media, I wouldn't get so caught up on the headlines. What's more important is the article, the context it's written in, whether there's balance, whether it's accurate.

"In my experience a lot of trouble goes into making sure pieces that are written are balanced and are accurate.

"There's a difference between mainstream media and social media. It's a bit like walking into a private members' club on a quiet Saturday afternoon and going into a pub at closing time. People are shouting at each other on social media, mainstream media has a filter."

He concluded policing needed a "twin-track approach" to the media.

"Police forces need to step up on social media and start to put out some of these good news videos and put things in context," he said, "At the same time, I'd really start to speak to the editors in the mainstream media and get your points across. It needs a longer term conversation with some examples to really get that understanding there."

“ IT'S ABOUT UNDERSTANDING NOT JUST THE LAW, BUT IT'S UNDERSTANDING YOU ARE IN THE PRESENCE OF PEOPLE FILMING YOU AND THAT RADICALLY CHANGES THE COMPLEXION OF HOW YOU POLICE AND COMMUNICATE, AND THAT NEEDS TRAINING AND THINKING.



The panel members with Ian Collins bottom right.

Understanding misogyny in policing

Jokes about gender are as unacceptable as those about race and sexuality, the annual Police Federation conference was told.

The pervasive nature of misogyny came under the spotlight in a session hosted by the Federation's self-organised national women's group.

Members heard how female officers still faced discrimination at work with group chair Zoë Wakefield giving examples of abusive social media messages she and others had received.

Zoë told the session that women often received negative comments from male colleagues about their fitness for the job.

National Police Chiefs' Council gender lead and Derbyshire Chief Constable Rachel Swann said misogynistic comments were too often dismissed as 'banter' which was no longer

acceptable.

She said: "It isn't about not having fun. Having a laugh is important for de-stressing but it shouldn't come at someone else's expense."

"We've made other kinds of banter around sexuality and race off limits, but it still seems gender is OK to joke about."

Sue Honeywill, a Devon and Cornwall sergeant, branch vice-chair and member of the national women's group, suggested female officers who opted to work part-time for childcare purposes often faced discrimination.

The mother-of-five said: "When it happened to me, I was still the same person, with the same abilities to offer the Force. The only difference was, I was part-time."

Federation national wellbeing secretary

Belinda Goodwin told the session: "You still get eye rolls when you talk about 'female' issues."

"It's just about creating change and bringing barriers down so we can discuss things properly."

Assistant Chief Constable Mark Travis from South Wales Police delivered a presentation on gender discrimination in the workplace which revealed as many as 90 per cent of female officers in Wales said they had experienced sexual harassment at work.

Mark said: "When we talk to people who experience this harassment, they don't want things to escalate, they don't want a big, formal process, they just want the behaviour to stop."

"They just want respect, a good attitude, and to be treated professionally."

New recruits praised by panel

There was no shortage of praise for new recruits during a panel session at this year's annual conference, with those who have been forced to complete virtual training due to the pandemic called 'resilient' and 'nothing short of commendable'.

With an ambitious target of an extra 20,000 officers by 2023, concerns were raised about the impact virtual training has had on new recruits, with Federation roads policing lead and National Board member Gemma Fox recognising that newcomers have been immediately asked to put both themselves and their families at risk.

She said: "What we've asked of them, is to pick up a uniform, to put it on and



Federation roads policing lead and National Board member Gemma Fox.

get on with it. They have done exactly that while putting themselves at risk of coronavirus, as well as risking taking the

virus back home with them."

Dave Bamber, national Federation lead for professional development and issues related to the College of Policing, explained: "What we can't deny is the impact that the last year has had on our officers and members. Young officers have been forced to learn independently, online and virtually. We need to get an understanding of what effect that has had on them."

"What needs to be acknowledged is none of this is at the fault of our officers."

As well as recruitment, emphasis was also on retention and the significance of finding out why people are choosing to leave the service early.

Wellbeing: 'It's the simple things that need to change'



National wellbeing lead Hayley Aley says that 'even the smallest changes made across the force will have a huge impact' on the welfare of officers, as she joined a conference session called Wellbeing – Whose Responsibility Is It?

Hayley's comments were part of a discussion that focused on the wellbeing of officers, which highlighted the demands of the job, pressures felt by staff and solutions that could help combat wellbeing issues.

Looking ahead, Hayley said she hoped to not be sitting here next year, 'saying the same thing over and over'.

"We've only just opened the box, looking at what pressures are affecting officers," she said, "We need to look at the things that need to change to prevent mental health and the physical issues people are feeling. We need to prevent people from walking away from the workplace because they can't cope.

"It's the simple things that need to change, the day-to-day jobs. Those quick changes will have a long-term impact on the organisation."



National wellbeing lead Hayley Aley.

Hayley was joined by National Board member and wellbeing secretary Belinda Goodwin, who said that wellbeing can be broken down into four parts, including mental health, physical wellbeing, financial wellbeing and general wellbeing.

"We have to stop just talking about it," she said, "We need to make fundamental changes to impact the wellbeing across forces."

“ WE NEED TO LOOK AT THE THINGS THAT NEED TO CHANGE TO PREVENT MENTAL HEALTH AND THE PHYSICAL ISSUES PEOPLE ARE FEELING.

Toolkit for detectives

A unique wellbeing toolkit aimed specifically at detectives and investigators has been previewed at the annual national Police Federation conference.

Details of the specially-commissioned Oscar Kilo Toolkit were unveiled during a discussion which covered issues such as recruitment, retention and growing fears of officer burn-out.

Detective Chief Superintendent Martin Brunning of the Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire Major Crime Unit said the package could be transformative in terms of improving the emotional wellbeing of detectives and stop them leaving the CID.

He told the session: "This is not a one size fits all or a token gesture. It's got real substance as it comes from a group of people who have been through the pain of having colleagues crashing and burning."

The Investing in the Investigators discussion was led by Staffordshire Police Federation secretary Glyn Pattinson, chair of the Police Federation's National Detectives' Forum (PFNDF) which has long campaigned for leaders to provide better support for investigators in relation to the unique pressures they face.



Detective Chief Superintendent Martin Brunning of the Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire Major Crime Unit.

On demand

Sessions from the Police Federation conference are now available to watch online.

Members can access keynote speeches, panel discussions and round-table events through a catch-up facility on the conference website.

To access the on-demand videos, please simply email events@polfed.org and you will be sent a link.

New Regs – New Culture?

It is not the end of the journey, and adjustments still need to be made but it is absolutely clear that we are moving in the right direction in terms of embedding a culture of learning and development rather than sanction and punishment with police conduct proceedings.

That was the message given to delegates at a conference session asking New Regs – New Culture?

Phill Matthews, conduct and performance lead for the national Federation, said that relations between the

Federation and the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) had improved and he thanked the police watchdog's director general Michael Lockwood for his efforts to overhaul the system.

As a sign of the progress made, Phill will soon be giving the Federation's first input into IOPC investigators' training.

But he said there were some issues with forces adjusting to the new raised bar for conduct proceedings and the performance



Clockwise from top left: the session featured Phill Matthews, Chief Constable Craig Guildford, Ian Collins, Michael Lockwood and Ian Balbi, head of police discipline policy at the Home Office.

requiring improvement and reflective practice procedures introduced with the new conduct regulations in February last year.

Much of the session focussed on the timeliness of conduct inquiries which all agreed was essential for police officers, complainants the reputation of the complaints system as a whole.

Mr Lockwood said there would be times, where a case was complex or there were vulnerable victims, where cases might go

over the 12-month limit the Federation would like to see on investigations. The IOPC was setting targets for nine and six months next year.

He stressed that there should be a real emphasis on learning not just for individual officers but also for forces themselves.

Phill agreed and said the IOPC had now issued more than 400 learning reports, rather than those involved being sanctioned.

Change to driving law for officers must be fit for purpose

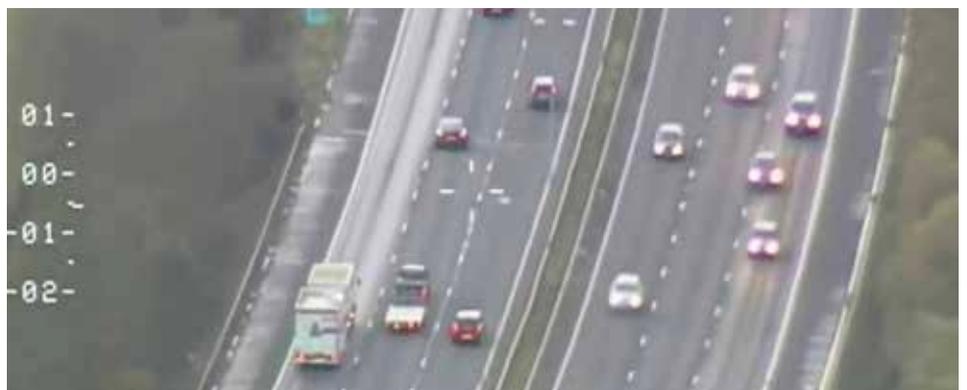
Federation representatives are being urged to implore their chief officers to ensure that changes to driving legislation aimed at better protecting police drivers make the law truly fit for purpose.

Tim Rogers, deputy secretary of West Midlands Police Federation and national pursuits and driver training lead, gave an update on the provisions of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill during a roads policing session at the Federation conference.

The bill, which is due to become law later this year, sets out changes that will mean officers will no longer be judged by the standards of the careful and competent driver, allowing their professional training and expertise to be taken into account.

But Tim fears the wording of the proposed legislation could lead to officer being further criminalised.

"We are very grateful for the support so far from the Government, the Home Office, the Ministry of Justice, the National Police



Chiefs' Council and the Independent Office for Police Conduct," he said, but adding that an amendment to the bill is now required.

A new legal test will currently be applied so officers' driving will be measured against that of a 'careful and competent police driver', however, this could still leave them exposed.

"An officer will be licensed to drive in accordance with what they have been

trained to do but nothing more. Performing a manoeuvre which is not trained or in policy is likely to fall into the new definition of dangerous and careless driving under a new test against the careful and competent police driver," Tim explained.

"Going beyond the terms of that licence could give rise to criminal liability. I have grave concerns around the practicality of this approach."

Privilege comes under scrutiny

Fairness and equality came under the spotlight with a powerful session examining race, policing and privilege and the impact they have on public confidence and trust.

The session was led by scholar, activist and broadcaster Robert Beckford, a professor of black theology, who said British society remained one of the most unequal in the western world with unchecked privilege leading to financial and socio-economic consequences across the country.

He told the conference: "We have got to address the subject of privilege because we have got the persistence of structural inequality."

Session host Zac Mader, secretary of the Federation's Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic and BAME Belief Self-Organised Group, asked how the understanding of privilege could be improved within policing.

Prof Beckford said: "It is about talking about it. Part of the problem is it is not talked about. We need to talk and reflect upon it, to see how we can help in certain circumstances."

"Radical honesty is necessary to address these problems in institutions and organisations. In society we find a way to deny things exist, but we need to be



Session host Zac Mader, secretary of the Federation's Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic and BAME Belief Self-Organised Group.

completely honest so we can move forward."

He also said officers should try to educate themselves about the issues around privilege and suggested better training and honest answers to difficult questions were needed to tackle bias and inclusion across policing.

He said: "Think about how you can be an ally and support under-represented groups to



Professor Robert Beckford.

ensure there is a real fairness. The fairness we want to see in public institutions and public life."

The professor called for 'really clear and powerful pathways' for career progression among under-represented groups to help improve an imbalance so the police can better reflect the communities they serve.

'We need diverse experiences'

A leading equality expert has identified three key barriers blocking the recruitment of new police officers from black and Asian communities.

Professor Robert Beckford, an academic, activist and broadcaster, pulled no punches when the issue was raised during a diversity session called The Challenge of Difference at the Police Federation annual conference.

Prof Beckford said the first stumbling block was a perceived lack of integrity within the police service.

He told the conference: "There is a lack of recognition of the negative history of policing black and brown communities, particularly black deaths in custody, particularly around miscarriages of justice."

"If I was running the force the first thing I would say is sorry. It doesn't take much to appease people in this context and sorry goes a long way. So firstly there needs to be that kind of acknowledgement."

Prof Beckford said the second key factor in the recruitment of black and brown officers was the idea that the issue could be addressed by simply having more black and brown people in positions of power.

The award-winning academic said the third stumbling block was over-reliance on long-term recruitment targets.

Federation elections soon

Members are being encouraged to stand in the upcoming Federation elections, with national vice-chair Ché Donald calling his appointment 'life-changing'.

Ché was joined by John Partington, deputy national secretary, at this year's annual conference, ahead of the election process which will be kicking off on 1 July.

The pair called on members to stand in the elections, with Ché referring to workplace reps as the 'lifeblood' of the Federation.

He added: "There are many officers out there who would struggle without them. I really want people to consider it. I found it life-changing."

Officers will be given the opportunity to meet current reps and ask any questions at an election café on 21 June from 2pm - 3pm.



PFEW national vice-chair Ché Donald.

'We made it the best it could be'

The national chair of the Police Federation of England and Wales closed this year's conference by saying the decision to make it a virtual event was the right one.

John Apter told facilitator Ian Collins: "This was our first virtual conference so it has been strange. We would rather not have had to do it this way but I think we made it the best it could be."

He added: "People asked me why we didn't wait until after lockdown was lifted but we had to make a decision and we didn't

know what was going to happen - we still don't - so it was the right decision in the circumstances and the feedback has been really positive."

Facilitator Ian Collins said the theme of conference 2021 had been Policing Under Pressure and at times it had also been 'conference under pressure'.

John added: "We had a couple of glitches and some things going on behind the scenes which caused some hairy moments!"

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