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The magazine of Cheshire Police Federation

Winter 2023



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The magazine of Cheshire Police Federation

Published by:

Cheshire Police Federation
Cheshire Constabulary HQ
Clemonds Hey
Oakmere Rd
Winsford
Cheshire CW7 2UA

Telephone: 01606 362350

Email: Cheshire_PF@cpf.polfed.org

Website: www.cheshirepolfed.org.uk

@CheshirePolFed

www.facebook.com/CheshirePolFed/

www.instagram.com/CheshirePolFed/

www.linkedin.com/company/cheshirepolfed/

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Managing Editor for Cheshire Police Federation: Jamie Thompson
Editor: Erena Laird (erena@martismedia.co.uk)

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Contents



Regulars

Chair:	4
Time to have your say on how Federation backs you	
Conduct:	10
Maintaining behavioural standards is crucial both on and off duty	
Wellbeing & Equality:	16
New support group aims to get male officers talking	
Meet The Rep:	33
Federation Professional Development Lead PC Shelley Lister talks about positive change	
Sport	34
DC Kate Connolly leads Cheshire's ladies hockey team, which is having success on the pitch	
Frequently Asked Questions	35

Features

Behind The Scenes At Creamfields	6
PC Gary Blackburn Supt Sarah Heath explain the planning around the massive policing operation	
Annual Charity Event	12
Huge generosity to raise money for Nantwich Buddies	
Officers Talking Assault Risk	14
Police choosing to be assaulted rather than risk misconduct proceedings	
Mental Health Absences Soar	15
New figures show more officers are taking time off work	
Helping Families After Suicide	21
Angela Allen from Bags For Strife explains how they support people in the most difficult times	
Justice On The Roads	25
Insp Steve Griffiths on the valuable job carried out by the Serious Collision Investigation Unit	
National Police Memorial Day	28
Cheshire Police Federation escorted families to the 2023 ceremony in Cardiff	
Obituary	30
Farewell to two much-loved Cheshire Constabulary officers	

Time To Have Your Say On How Federation Backs You



Jamie Thompson
Chair
Cheshire Police
Federation

Welcome to the latest edition of Cheshire Beat. The cost of living crisis remains. And at Cheshire Police Federation we will carry on fighting on behalf of our colleagues to ensure that our officers are properly paid for the job we do.

Nationally a focus remains on police officer pay and conditions, and whilst a 7% pay award in 2023 was welcomed it still doesn't bring us anywhere near where we need to be.

That work must continue around achieving collective bargaining, being able to negotiate our pay and our conditions with Government.

Industrial Rights

In 2024, the Police Federation will invite members to vote on industrial rights. What that poll looks like and the educational piece that needs to take place before the vote are still to be discussed. This will include making colleagues fully aware of the pros and cons of having access to industrial rights.

But I am at the forefront of those discussions – on behalf of Cheshire Police colleagues and the North West region.

It is absolutely vital that as many members as possible get involved with this, to let us know in which direction the Federation should go in the future.

We're going to do some significant work both locally and nationally on why we're doing this vote, what the potential outcomes are, and what the potential costs are.

This will ensure members are fully informed around why we're asking them to vote on this, and what will happen next if it's successful, and then actually voting itself.

It's really, really important that people do take part in that vote so we get the absolute broadest view that we can from membership.

We haven't got a timescale yet.

We're making significant progress with regards to the information that we're going to get out there. That will be backed up with

some local work through our local Reps and Cheshire's full-time Fed Reps getting out and about and answering questions where we can.

We're hoping to have this done and dusted by the middle of the year, so we know where we're going.

Reality Check

Policing will continue to face challenges in 2024, but with a General Election on the horizon it also presents an opportunity to remind politicians, the public and the press about the reality of the job, the issues we face and the great work that you do.

Any potential change in Government does bring a renewed opportunity to sit down and have those discussions, and those conversations have been going on already.

We just want whichever Government does get into power to give us the opportunity to sit down and discuss these issues properly, in a fair and transparent and independent environment.

Again I'm a representative for the region in the Police Federation's Parliamentary Working Group and met politicians at the 2023 Party Conferences. From all sides, there was support for policing.

From a Conservative Government point of view, they wanted to talk very much around the numbers of officers that have been 'uplifted' and what return they're going to see from that. There wasn't much appetite to discuss pay.

With Labour, it was very much about community policing, the future of policing. We discussed potential Royal Commissions in the future.

I think both parties realise that you can't keep treating policing the way politicians have been – and there has to be some long-term sustained investment in not only police pay, but also the infrastructure around policing as well.

Timely And Fair Oversight

One thing that does need to change is the IOPC targeting police officers for doing their job – and it's good to hear that armed and



“We need to have a sensible conversation with the public and decide what they want from policing.”

pursuit policing protections for officers are currently being reviewed by the Home Office.

How many times do the IOPC need to fail to understand that they're getting it wrong? They are creating a culture where officers are becoming passive because they're sometimes frozen around their decision making.

Quite simply, officers are worried about what's going to happen next week, next month, or in the next 10 years.

These investigations are never quick. Even local investigations are far too slow for my liking.

Police officers have no issue with being held accountable for their actions – we are the most accountable of public services. But this oversight should be timely and fair.

Our colleagues come to work every day to make a difference, protect the public and deal with matters and incidents that require a direct

policing response as they occur.

These incidents are dealt with at face value with split second decisions – and officers and staff strive to deal with everything in the most appropriate and proportionate way.

Credit Where Credit Is Due

We need to have a sensible conversation with the public and decide what they want from policing.

We go out and do a job and we will pursue a suspect or we will use reasonable force against an individual, and then we're hauled over the coals for that.

But then you flip it on its head and if we didn't pursue a suspect because we were scared to because officers think they're going to lose their job or there's going to be an adverse public reaction to it; or officers don't use force and end up getting hurt themselves.

We seem to see the second scenario a lot – that hesitancy to use force is resulting in officers being assaulted.

So it is a damned if you do and damned if you don't situation. We need to decide, as a society, what do we want for British policing?

Personally, I want us to go out there and catch criminals, and uphold the law, and have the backing of the public and the Government and bodies like the IOPC when we've gone out and done a good job and we've done something right.

Yes we have to be accountable, but not have these long drawn out kangaroo courts that are happening far too often.

Officers need to feel confidence in what they're doing and they need to go out there and know that they have that backing if people have done right, but it goes wrong. But we simply don't have that at the moment.



Creamfields' Policing Secret

Creamfields, which takes place every August in Daresbury, is one of the world's biggest electronic music festivals. We speak to two Cheshire Police officers who help manage the massive policing operation around it.

Q How long have you been working on the policing operation at Creamfields?

A **PC Gary Blackburn:** "I took over the planning of Creamfields in 2021, so I've now planned the last three Creamfields events."

Supt Sarah Heath: "I've been the Silver Commander for the event for the past three years."

Q Tell us about the planning that goes into the event and how you keep people safe?

A **GB:** "Creamfields planning is a year-round activity for me; I find I'm doing something Creamfields-related every month of the year."

"We produce a minimum of 32 separate documents to cover all aspects of the policing

operation, which need to be written, then reviewed against the events plans and adapted regularly in the months prior to the event."

"Our priority when we're planning an event the size of Creamfields is keeping people safe: the public, festival-goers and event staff, as well as police officers and staff."

"We run an exercise to test our plan, which is closely followed by disruption tactics leading up to the event."

"This incorporates numerous specialist policing roles to provide a visible presence in and around the area to make it a hostile environment for criminals to operate, and to deter anyone who may seek to target such a large event to cause harm."

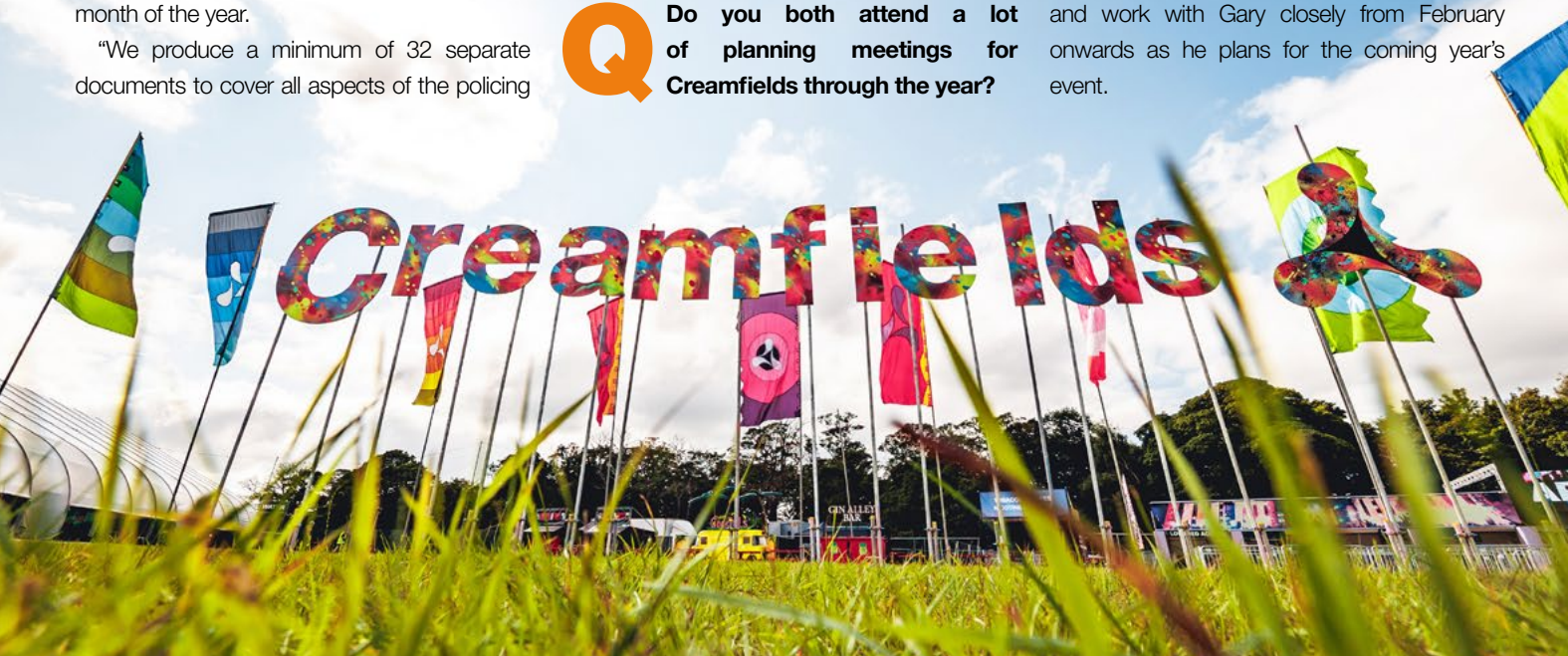
Q Do you both attend a lot of planning meetings for Creamfields through the year?

A **GB:** "Yes, Supt Heath and I attend resident meetings from around April up to the event, and we hold monthly police meetings from February onwards."

"We also go to monthly Safety Advisory Group meetings, along with monthly meetings with the event organisers and ADOC meetings when required."

"There's also a large multi-agency tabletop exercise, where Bronze Commanders are present. This takes place before the event to test the overall plans of all stakeholders. It ensures that there is clarity across all agencies around each other's roles and responsibilities for the event."

SH: "As Silver Commander, I attend the Safety Advisory Groups, residents' meetings and work with Gary closely from February onwards as he plans for the coming year's event."



"The key to planning a safe event is to consider the worst-case scenarios and have generic contingency plans in place for as much as possible"

"I'm responsible for the overarching Tactical Plan and have regular meetings with the Gold Commander to ensure that the strategic objectives are met."

"I chair monthly Silver planning meetings with all Bronze police leads to hold them to account on their individual plans that form the overall policing operation. These include: communications, resource planning, custody, forensics, crime, airwave, logistics, community, drugs, search, traffic and the counter-terrorism security commander. The event touches all departments across the force."

Q How many police officers and staff work at Creamfields on the festival weekend itself?

A **GB:** "The policing operation deploys over 1,000 police officers and staff to the event and surrounding area to ensure the event is safe and the impact on the local community is kept to a minimum."

Q Why is it important that this much planning goes into a big event?

A **GB:** "During the peak times of the event, we have 69,999 people attending from the four corners of the country and, now the pandemic is a thing of the past, we are seeing the return of international festival-goers too."

"Having such a wide and varied demographic in one place will attract various challenges."

Taking a proactive approach to the planning allows us to police the event and deal with the unique challenges with little impact on day-to-day operational policing within Cheshire."

SH: "As Silver Commander, my priority is to keep everyone safe. To do this, our plans must be robust, so we learn from previous years and work closely with partners to do all we can to achieve this."

Q When do you start the work on planning the policing operation for the following year's event?

A **GB:** "By the time Creamfields is underway and officers are deploying to the event, I no longer have any influence on the event and I need to trust in the

plans that are in place. So my attendance at the event is really about starting to think about planning the event for the following year."

Q What kind of challenges can arise at a large-scale festival event like Creamfields?

GB: "Each year has its own unique issues, with emerging trends dictating the planning."

"For me, the key to planning a safe event is to consider the worst-case scenarios and have generic contingency plans in place for as much as possible."

"We then need to share this information with all staff involved, including partner agencies where applicable, so that all police officers and staff know how to respond to incidents in and around the area of Creamfields, and how the partner agencies fit into that response, providing the best multi-agency response we have to offer."

SH: "Every year is different. One example is planning around weather conditions: we've had excessive heat some years, but last year's event saw torrential rain, which caused us to have to close some car parks and campsite areas and open new fields to accommodate day ticket holders on the Sunday."

"One simple decision like that – changing the car park fields – impacts all of the plans, including traffic, community, intelligence, resources, search etc, so every individual plan needs these contingencies to be identified and considered."

"The police tabletop exercise and the multi-agency exercise are an excellent way to really

test ourselves against any challenges that can occur."

Q What makes Creamfields different to policing other events in Cheshire?

GB: "Creamfields is policed from two different perspectives. First, the core responsibility we have as the police, while working with our partner agencies to ensure that we reduce the impact of the event on the local community and to ensure a safe event takes place. And second, an agreement with the event organisers to provide a police presence to the event."

"An SPS agreement is where private events pay for the police to be present and are charged for those services. The challenge that comes from police officers deploying to events as part of an SPS agreement is that it is a different way of policing."

"While we still have our statutory obligations, we do not respond as police officers and staff would normally do in their core role, as we are there for a specific task in agreement with the event organisers."

SH: "The scale of the event means it affects all areas of the Constabulary. Creamfields is the largest dance festival in Europe and it's like having the population of one of our towns moving into some fields in what is a quiet rural village for the other 51 weeks of the year!"

"Unlike other events, which may be planned a week or so before, Creamfields is a commitment all year round for key roles like Gary as lead planner and myself as Silver."

"The multi-agency debriefs finish around

November and the planning meetings begin in January for the coming year. The multi-agency aspect also makes Creamfields different to most events and operations. The success of the event is down to the relationships and shared understanding between all stakeholders."

We work closely with the promoters Cream, the festival organisers Far and Beyond, the Local Authority, the North West Ambulance Service, the fire service, the NHS and security, before, during and after the event."

Q Is the festival an enjoyable few days for the officers who are working?

GB: "When I first got involved in Creamfields, there was a very low number of officers who volunteered to work the event, but in 2023 there were over 300 police officers and staff who volunteered, which would suggest it is now an enjoyable event to police."

SH: "I have worked at Creamfields at every rank in a variety of roles and I have enjoyed them all. It's something different to the day job, and there is a good atmosphere around Creamfields."

"We move around so much in policing, so it's always good to see colleagues from around the force that you may not have seen in a while. Even in 2012, which was the most challenging year because the event suffered severe flooding, it was great to be part of the incredible response from all involved to keep people safe in such exceptional circumstances."



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Vital To Maintain Standards



Dave Howard
CAPLO
Cheshire Police Federation

Looking back over 2023, I want to thank our Cheshire officers for all their hard work.

I know you work tirelessly to ensure our communities are safe and secure, and your dedication and commitment to keeping us all protected does not go unnoticed.

Please remember to take care of yourselves as well. Your commitment and care for others are invaluable, but it's equally important to prioritise your own health and wellbeing.

Maintaining Standards Off-Duty

I wanted to remind officers that they must continue to maintain standards of behaviour both on and off duty.

Your actions, even in your own time,

interactions with the public and colleagues.

Cheshire Constabulary, like all police forces, sets its own standards and expectations for its officers. These standards encompass various aspects of professional behaviour, integrity, accountability and service delivery specific to this region. Officers are expected to adhere to these standards, which are designed to ensure the highest levels of service, ethics, and conduct while upholding the law and protecting the community.

And the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) provides oversight and sets out guidelines for handling complaints, and ensuring transparency and accountability within law enforcement.

Its guidelines emphasise fair and impartial investigations into complaints against the police, ensuring that proper procedures are followed, and actions are taken in accordance with the law and professional standards.

Officers must embody these guidelines daily, ensuring that their actions are aligned

on an officer from Professional Standards is simply an allegation, it's one side of the story. So I'm always keen to tell officers when they're served these papers that they have a right to reply, and they do that with me.

Or if it's more severe, if we're looking at criminal allegations, then they do that with the privilege of legal representation. Officers are protected to make sure that they get their side of the story across.

The Regulations are there to support everybody. That's what makes it fair and gives it impartiality. It can't just be that something is alleged of an officer and it's presented as a fact, because we all know in society that there's two sides to every story and cops need to have a voice.

So it's important that colleagues are protected by being Federation members, so that they get that level of representation and legal cover. And also the support of the Group Insurance Scheme, which they get through the Federation. Officers also gain access to

“Whether on or off duty, stay vigilant and make choices that align with your responsibility to maintain your fitness for duty”

reflect the integrity and dedication you bring to your role. Your commitment to upholding the highest standards of behaviour is crucial in ensuring the safety and effectiveness of your service. Whether on or off duty, stay vigilant and make choices that align with your responsibility to maintain your fitness for duty. Your dedication and readiness are vital for the community's safety.

Embody The Guidance

It's crucial that officers regularly familiarise themselves with Home Office guidance and the Code of Ethics, as they serve as foundational pillars for exemplary police conduct and professionalism.

The Home Office guidance provides a framework for the conduct expected from police officers. In addition, the Code of Ethics outlines fundamental principles that officers should abide by: emphasising integrity, fairness, respect and professionalism in their

with ethical standards and department protocols. Upholding these principles not only maintains public trust, but also fosters a positive work environment and enhances community relations.

Cheshire Police Federation links in with our Professional Standards Department, and our Fed Reps around the county help deliver these messages. I'm also out there in every police station throughout the year, talking about the standards the force expects to see. We try to make sure that Cheshire officers know who we are and can easily connect with us.

How We Support You

It's important to emphasise that officers regularly get accused of things they haven't done – such as a malicious complaint from a member of the public. That's a massive issue.

Cops need to know that in that case, they're protected under Regulations. The Regulation 17 notice that initially gets served

Federation Reps who are qualified to represent them – people like me, and all the CAPLOs up and down the country.

Conduct In 2024

We're still waiting for the published Code of Ethics to come out.

In 2024, the Home Office will publish its review into police use of force, but I don't think that will be a massive issue for Cheshire, as we've got a very small firearms alliance unit with North Wales Police.

Locally, we're in a pretty good place with conduct issues. We've had a very good Superintendent in charge at Professional Standards, who is balanced and will talk to me to get my advice before making any kind of assessment on officers.

My message to colleagues, as ever, is if they're concerned about anything, come and speak to me or another one of your Federation Reps and we will do our best to support you.

Generosity For Our Buddies

Cheshire Police Federation's 2023 Charity Event, held in conjunction with the force, raised an incredible £9,500 for Nantwich Buddies



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We understand that behind every uniform, lies a person

Officers Taking Assault Risk

Police officers are choosing to be assaulted rather than use force to defend themselves because they are scared of falling foul of misconduct proceedings

Proposed changes to conduct regulations are leaving officers feeling insecure on duty, according to PFEW Conduct and Performance Lead Phil Jones.

Phil said: "When you look at the 2020 Regulations, they were all enacted around fairness, proportionality and the independence of Legally Qualified Chairs, and that took out any political alliance, any pressures to get to a determination.

"Now, we have 110 officers assaulted every day.

"But people are choosing to be assaulted rather than use force, because ultimately they can be then found wanting in the gross misconduct arena in which now, if the Home Office bring in these regulations, you're looking at automatic dismissal. That can't be right."

Proposed plans to hand the power to chief officers to decide on whether an officer should be dismissed could affect the fairness and transparency of the process, he added, raising concerns about the timeliness of proceedings.

He said: "We often see headlines of cases taking two, three, four or five years and there's an individual behind all of this.

"I'm not convinced having Chief Constables at the helm of meetings, hearings, is going to speed this up any, and we know chief officers are really, really busy.

"We've got the time limits campaign. The time limits aren't stuck to in some circumstances, and at the end of the day there's a human being at the end of this."

John Bassett, President of the National Association of Legally Qualified Chairs, warned that proposed changes would impact the impartiality of the process.

POLICE

Mistakes to avoid when divorcing over 40

If you're over 40 and considering divorce, you are not alone. The average age for divorcing men is 47.7 years and 45.3 for women.

Lund Bennett, experts in family law, are on hand to support you. The firm provides unrivalled knowledge coupled with a compassionate and highly empathetic approach. Partner Kirsten Bennett offers advice on the most common post-40 divorce pitfalls.

Not getting a financial order

A financial order is a court order that sets out a couple's finances and legally binds how they will be divided when they get divorced.

Divorce finances are dealt with separately to the divorce itself, so not having one means your ex-spouse is free to make a financial claim years later. In the infamous case of Wyatt v Vince (2015), an ex-spouse successfully made a financial claim 23 years after the divorce.

Remarry before a financial agreement

Remarry without a financial order and you may lose your right to apply for one. This is often



referred to as the 'remarriage trap'.

This could leave you unable to make a claim on assets, such as spousal maintenance, property adjustment orders or cash lump sums. Making a financial settlement and waiting for assets to be transferred before saying 'I do' is imperative.

Not updating your Will

Starting the divorce process does not automatically revoke a will. If you want to prevent your soon-to-be-ex-spouse from receiving the monies and privileges granted to them in your Will, you need to update it!

You can do this at any time, but if you die before you're granted a divorce your spouse can make a claim against your estate.

Settling too early

Don't forfeit financial security for wanting to leave the marriage as soon as possible. Getting

Advertorial the settlement right is crucial. Make copies of your important financial documents; it will make you aware of what you own and what you owe.

Not being careful with joint accounts

If you're still using a joint bank account or credit card, make sure that all expenditure is documented. Use joint funds extravagantly for your own personal use and you may find that you lose credibility in court and the divorce process is prolonged.

Getting personal online or in texts

In divorce cases, solicitors often delve into social media to find evidence. It's tempting to vent in the social sphere or express anger via text, but imagine those words being read out by a judge in court before hitting share or send. If you are the recipient of such communication, do not respond.

Lund Bennett holds a monthly surgery at Cheshire Police HQ. You can book via Kath in the Federation office or through us directly on 0161 924 0079 or info@lundbenett.co.uk The Downs, Altrincham, Cheshire WA14 2QD

Mental Health Absences Soar

Arising number of Cheshire police officers are being signed off work due to stress, depression, anxiety or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), new research has found.

A Freedom of Information request covering the financial year 2022/23 found that 225 Cheshire officers were absent due to mental ill-health, compared to 220 last year and 163 the year before that.

The national figure for the 43 forces who replied to the FOI was a record 13,294 officers signed off due to mental ill-health, which is much higher than pre-pandemic levels. In 2012-13, when the survey was first carried out,

respondents said they had experienced feelings of stress, low mood, anxiety or other difficulties with their health and wellbeing over the past 12 months.

The Police Federation of England and Wales's Wellbeing Lead, Sue Honeywill, said: "With officer numbers proportionally at an all-time low, officer morale at its lowest and the workload at its greatest, it can be no surprise that we are witnessing extremely high levels of officers signed off for mental ill-health related reasons.

"Officers' pensions have been eroded, assaults on officers are increasing and the cost-of-living crisis has squeezed pay to such a

police chiefs must do more to protect the rights and working conditions of their officers.

A Home Office spokesperson responded: "The Government is committed to ensuring police officers are provided with appropriate mental health support.

"We have made significant progress by ensuring that improved mental health training and support is provided, and we continue to fund the National Police Wellbeing Service (NPWS), with £3m for 2023/24."

The NPWS has developed a number of initiatives to support officer wellbeing, a National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) spokesperson said, but they acknowledged that there was

"With officer numbers proportionally at an all-time low, officer morale at its lowest and workload at its greatest, it's no surprise that extremely high levels of officers are being signed off for mental health-related reasons"

just 6,294 officers nationally were signed off work for psychological illnesses.

Other surveys have also highlighted a growing crisis in mental health within the police – in the Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW)'s January 2023 Demand, Capacity and Welfare Survey, more than eight out of 10 (82%)

level that we know some are forced to resort to food banks to stay afloat. On top of this, media reporting paints a picture of incompetence and immorality within the service that is not a true representation of the overwhelming majority of decent and hard-working officers."

Sue added that she "feared these figures will remain high" as the Home Office is demanding that officers investigate all crimes more thoroughly, but is not providing extra resources. She stressed that

more work to be done.

They said: "By providing services like occupational health provision, along with additional training and health checks, we are better equipped to support the wellbeing of our officers and staff. The work of Oscar Kilo makes a real difference, and has meant that more police officers and staff feel OK to say that they're not OK.

"We recognise, however, that managing wellbeing is a never-ending process and that there is always more to do. We are committed to continuing to work with colleagues in the health service, charities, and staff associations, to ensure that we are always being guided by the best practice and research, and ultimately, ensuring that we are doing everything we can to support our people."



Getting Male Officers Talking



Dan Lever
Equality & Wellbeing
Cheshire Police
Federation

Sadly, in September this year we lost a colleague, PC Stephen Powell, to suicide. Known as Powelly, he was a very close friend of mine and he touched a lot of people's hearts right across the force.

Everyone knew him, and his death impacted a lot of us.

One of the big things to come from discussing it afterwards was that he didn't have anyone to talk to. He wasn't the type of person to refer himself to counselling, it just wasn't his way of doing things.

So we've set up the 4092 Men's Talk Group, named after Powelly's collar number. We've



4092
Men's Talk Group

the while being facilitated by someone who's got a lot of experience with mental health.

So we decided that now was the time to do that and push forward with it, especially after the way Powelly's death has affected people.

Professional Facilitator

Our monthly 4092 Men's Talk Group will be held at the Federation offices and facilitated by David

that in a group setting one person will open up about some difficulties they've had, and then it's a free for all.

Everyone sees that trust is there, and that ability to speak up and not be judged is there, so it encourages people to open up without actually asking them direct questions.

“We’ve set up the 4092 Men’s Talk Group, named after Powelly’s collar number... The support group will be like chatting in the pub with a mate”

long identified that there is a gap in peer support for men in policing. It's well-documented.

In the population as a whole, suicide is the biggest cause of death in men under the age of 50 and around three quarters of deaths from suicides each year are men. And there are a number of factors that may heighten that risk for police officers and staff.

Colleagues Helping Colleagues

There is still a lot of stigma around mental health, particularly when it comes to men. We've worked so hard over the past few years to really try to reduce that, but it still exists. I think one of the most powerful things in policing is peer support.

We are like a little family. We rely on each other for everything, in life and death situations, but also in terms of confiding in people and trusting in people, and getting help from your colleagues.

We identified that there was nothing in place in Cheshire Constabulary where men could sit in a safe environment and have a chat about how they're feeling, share some common ground, some ways of dealing with things, all

Cain, a Cheshire Constabulary staff member who runs Prevention Through Connection, and has lots of experience in this area.

In the first instance we'll be reaching out to our male officers who are off sick due to poor mental health and offering them an invitation. There will be a real structure to the session, to make sure that it helps people.

But it won't be like formal counselling – the principle is for it to be informal, like being in the pub with your mate and being able to chat about whatever you want. We want people to feel comfortable, so they can trust the process.

There'll be no record keeping. Whatever anyone tells us or discusses in that group will be held in the strictest confidence, unless of course there's a threat that emanates from that disclosure.

Opening Up

I've always been a big believer that peer support in policing really is the way forward. It's a way of opening doors, it's a way of getting people to feel more comfortable around their colleagues, and speaking about these things.

What you tend to find in peer support, is

I think this will be a success and it's the right thing for policing to do, which will possibly encourage people to engage with other services as well.

How To Get Involved

If any police officer reads this and thinks 'I might need a bit of help' or 'My colleague might need a bit of help', they can contact me directly.

We'll also send out details of how people can come along to the group. And if someone has a friend who they feel may benefit from the group, that person could come along with their friend.

We need to encompass a wide range of people so that the trust and support is there.

I really encourage people to get involved with the group. To give it a go, and not to be scared of it. It's there to help male officers, for them to feel comfortable in being able to talk to friends, to colleagues, to like-minded people, and get that support that they may not be able to get in other ways.

I wish this could have been in place before. If by putting this group into action we can prevent just one person from taking their own life, it will be a success.



Wellbeing Service Providers



Police Care UK

Police Care UK is a charity for serving and veteran police officers and staff, volunteers, and their families who have suffered any physical or psychological harm as a result of policing.

Help is available for individuals, such as:

- Counselling (referrals can be made by the individual or on their behalf)
- Financial Assistance Grants
- Help and advice



The Ben Fund

(For subscribing members only)

The Ben Fund supports officers, both serving and retired, who are experiencing mental, physical or hardship difficulties.

None of us know when we may find ourselves in need – a family crisis, a sudden bereavement, an unexpected illness or a work-related issue. Such things affect everyone, we are all vulnerable to life's events. It is comforting to know that the North West Police Benevolent Fund is there to care and support.

See full details on p17.



Vivup

Vivup is the force's psychological Employee Assistance Programme for Occupational Health, and offers a wide range of services.

For more information visit Cheshire: Welcome! (vivup.co.uk). You will need to register on your first visit to the website.

Services include:

- 24/7 Telephone Support – 0330 088 4480
- Face-to-face and telephone counselling – 0330 088 4480
- Self-help CBT workbooks
- Financial wellbeing support
- Lifestyle savings



Call4Backup

The UK's only police peer support charity is www.call4backup.org

It offers a range of support for serving and retired police officers, staff and volunteers.

The following support can be obtained by calling 0300 121 0 999 or by emailing support@call4backup.org

Wellbeing: Peer support and advice | Refer you for funded counselling

Legal: Inform you of your options | Give details of legal advisors

Domestic: Offer advice on domestic matters | Support you in finding help

Financial: Direct you to financial assistance | Provide details of professionals

The Police Treatment Centres



The Police Treatment Centres

(For subscribing members only)

The Police Treatment Centres is a registered charity that provides treatment and support, including intensive, police-specific, physiotherapy and rehabilitation, for injured and ill police officers and retired officers. The PTC is located in Harrogate and Auchterarder.

The Police Treatment Centres provide police-specific treatment for any on- or off-duty injury. Whether it is a physical injury, or stress, depression, anxiety-related, treatment is provided to help officers recover and aid their return back to work.

Physiotherapy – Inpatient only (1 to 2 weeks)

Psychological Wellbeing – The Psychological Wellbeing Programme is a two-week structured programme designed specifically for serving officers with mild to moderate anxiety and depression, and stress-related issues.

No1 CopperPot

No1 CopperPot began in 1986 and has a growing membership of over 39,000 members. It is proud to be one of the biggest police credit unions in the UK. It was rooted in Greater Manchester Police and Leicestershire Police before merging and growing in popularity; this led to its expansion across all UK police forces and it now has a payroll deduction facility available with 29 of those.

No1 Copperpot offers services such as savings, loans, mortgages, and financial wellbeing. To access any service a saving of a minimum £5 per month must be made. All lending is assessed on affordability as opposed to solely a credit rating. See more at www.no1copperpot.com



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Helping Families After Suicide

Informing a family that their relative has taken their own life is a difficult task for an officer, and it can be helpful to leave people with something that offers emotional as well as practical support in their time of need.

Bags for Strife is a charity that supplies support packs to police officers. The officers can then hand them to families who receive the devastating news that their relative has died by suicide.

A Personal Mission

Angela Allen (pictured) set up Bags for Strife two years ago, after both her daughter and husband took their own lives within eight months of each other. She said: "I was struck at the time at the lack of available support for the family and for myself. I wanted to do something to fill that void of support."

"The idea behind Bags for Strife was that we would provide some practical help and information, as well as emotional and compassionate support to families, all contained within a bag. That bag would be given to them by the police when they inform families of a loss through suicide."

"It's something that the family will hopefully look at and find support through, but also in terms of the police having to impart really devastating news to a family, it's good for officers to be able to leave something behind."

The word 'bags' has a secondary meaning,



"We heard from someone who said: 'I was in a very dark place and just knowing that others had walked in my shoes was massive for me'"

standing for 'Blame, Anger, Guilt, Sadness', four emotions that are common in the grieving process.

The bag is also something tangible that people can hang onto until they are ready to use it, Angela said: "My experience when we lost my daughter was that the police met me at the hospital and gave me a card of some sort, I think it was for counselling services. But I actually have no idea, because I lost that between leaving the hospital and getting home. So the thing with the bag is you're not going to lose it. You don't need to open it straight away. It's there, whenever you want to dip into it."

The bags could also be given to the families of officers who take their own lives, Angela said. She added: "In a recent call with the Metropolitan Police, they mentioned one of their officers had recently died by suicide, and we sent a bag to their family."

Scaling Up

So far the charity has handed out 1,500 bags, and hopes to eventually distribute them to forces throughout England and Wales. Angela said: "First, I got in touch with the Chief Constable of Lancashire Constabulary to ask: if we set something up in this area, would the

police support it? Because post-suicide, the only constant contact that you have is with the police."

Lancashire Constabulary was the first police force in the country to distribute the bags, and Bags for Strife has since worked with Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire Police, and is in talks with Surrey, West Yorkshire, Essex and the Metropolitan Police.

Comfort And Support

The contents of the bag include *The After Journal* by Halani Foulsham, which can be used to navigate the family's loss; a single teabag, as



a symbol of connection and a reminder of the support that can come from sharing a cuppa with supportive loved ones; an anger ball, as anger is a natural aspect of grief; and the *Little Book Of Help*, put together by the charity, which contains the charity's founders' stories of suicide loss alongside many other personal stories.

The *Little Book Of Help* comes with a trigger warning, Angela says, as she acknowledges it may be too hard to read for some, but for others it has provided comfort and support. The Bag for Strife also includes other thoughtful items including a candle, chocolate, hand cream, sleep spray and tissues, as well as an official Government help booklet and information about local suicide support charities.

Local Help

The charity also talks to a steering group of people from all over the country who have

been bereaved by suicide, and they have an input into what would be most appropriate and helpful to go into the bags.

Angela said: "We've also reached out to other peer support groups to ask for their feedback. In Lancashire, the local charity for support after suicide is Amparo, so we've included their leaflets in those bags."

Positive Feedback

Feedback from both police officers and bereaved families has been overwhelmingly positive, Angela said: "Our contact at Lancashire has heard directly from officers who told him they loved that they had these bags to give out to people."

It is difficult to do a formal evaluation of the impact the bags are having on bereaved families, Angela admits. She said: "We put a QR code into the bags for families to complete a survey, but that might be the last thing you

want to do at the time.

"But we've had really great anecdotal feedback through our social channels and email. We heard from someone who said: 'This saved my life. I was in a very dark place and just knowing that other people had walked in my shoes was massive for me.'

"We've had other people say: 'I've received a bag, I thought it was brilliant, please can I have another two or three for family members?' And also people who have received a bag and then offered to get involved in fundraising for us."

The charity has also worked with prison family liaison officers, who find it helpful to have something to give to bereaved families. Angela said: "It's a case of passionate leaders finding out what we do, and saying: 'We understand why this is important and we want to make it work.'"

Find out more at [Bagsforstrife.co.uk](https://bagsforstrife.co.uk)
Samaritans 24-hour helpline: 116 123

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- // Estranged children or other relatives can make claims against an estate even if you have made a Will – we can help prevent that.
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- // Don't give your house away, for example, to your children whilst you are alive – what if they die, go bankrupt, divorce or fall out with you? You are homeless. We can sort that out.

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FOR WILLS, PROBATE, TRUSTS AND POWERS OF ATTORNEY CONSULT HARVEY HOWELL

Justice On Cheshire's Roads



Cheshire Constabulary's Serious & Complex Collision Investigation Unit (SCCIU) has a determination to secure justice for the families of people who have died on the county's road network.

Insp Steve Griffiths, the force's Lead Road Death Investigator, has seen it all during his 20 years of investigating deaths and serious injuries that occur on the road.

perhaps people aren't going to die but will have real, serious, life-changing injuries forever."

The crash is only the start of a lengthy process for the unit. The family liaison officers who work with the 24/7 roads response teams are deployed to deliver the "horrible" message to the loved ones of the casualty, and either they or the SCCIU's family liaison officers will remain in contact throughout the investigation.

they've just lost their son or daughter, so we can really empathise with that. It becomes really tough for officers' mental health."

Officers also regularly attend Home Office post-mortem examinations for cases that are likely to result in prosecution.

'Inevitable' Incidents

The huge amounts of the population using the

"We see the tragedy at the scenes of the collisions and then we deliver the death messages and see the family in those first few days"

But dealing with the tragedy that comes with the job has never got easier for Steve and his team of 13 other officers in the SCCIU. It is why they are so passionate about ensuring families and victims are supported, offenders are held accountable, and that justice is done.

He said: "We deal with all fatal road and traffic collisions in Cheshire, including the motorway network, and we also pick up very serious ones. So those are the incidents where

Meanwhile, investigators are piecing together what happened and will follow the case through the judicial process or inquest.

Steve continued: "We see the tragedy at the scenes of the collisions and then we deliver the death messages and see the family in those first few days. The emotions are really tough to deal with. Very often officers, because we're human, have got the same issues as them in life. We might have sons and daughters, and

county's road network and the variety of how they use it creates a diverse range of incidents attended by the Unit.

Steve said: "There are all sorts of people who use the roads and, unfortunately, it is inevitable that collisions and incidents on the road are going to happen.

"I suppose someone's got to do it and I think the team that I've got around me now are so passionate and have bought into putting the



victims first and getting justice for the victims.” Being proactive in trying to prevent road incidents is also a key part of the SCCIU’s work. Steve added: “The team get out when they can and do enforcement of campaigns including mobile phones, seatbelts, and drink and drug-driving. We try to prevent the incidents in the first place. “But we’ve got such a professional team doing these investigations now, particularly the family liaison part. “They are so professional that the family

Offering Support The toll of dealing with such tragedy does weigh down on officers, who have to tackle unimaginable circumstances. They are signposted to consultative support through Occupational Health, who host bespoke counselling sessions. Respite breaks at The Ben Fund’s St Michael’s Lodge in Lancashire also help. Steve said all-in-all, the welfare on offer to his team is “very, very good”. He explained: “We have regular debrief sessions now, by

from officers who opened up to say they would like more support. **Motivating Factor** For Steve, it is securing justice which keeps him powering through. He said: “The people within the SCCIU are so passionate, such good people, and out to support the victims. “But not just the victims, because they’re also very supportive of the offending drivers. “In road and traffic collisions, very often offending drivers are not criminals who

“The way that we as a unit deal with the number of fatalities we have, I think we need to be really proud”

couldn’t do it without them really, because there’s so much grief and so much tragedy involved. They need someone to support them and guide them through that investigation, which can take up to two years in cases.” But despite the challenges posed by the sensitive nature of the investigations, the SCCIU always comes out with high praise. Steve explained: “Ultimately we have been let into their lives through tragedy. We’ve met new people and we’ve been let very close into people’s lives. “We give them the most horrible news and at the end of it we’re getting a lot of thanks for the work we’ve done and how professional we’ve been.”

specialist trained officers, to debrief what’s gone on. Not just for welfare, but for learning how to deal with things in the future as well. “And because we’re in the same office, we see each other regularly so we have regular one-to-one sessions talking about things, and that allows me and the sergeants to identify whether the persona of the bobbies are changing at all. “They might have been affected by something that they’re not admitting to because they’re police officers – they think they should be able to deal with it.” The in-person rapport has only strengthened the desire to help others through difficult patches, Steve explained. It followed feedback

have gone out to hurt people. They’ve got something wrong at times. “I just love seeing the support, the happiness that the team has to come into work. “I think what motivates me to come in is that getting justice for the victims, the people that have died in such horrendous circumstances and the family who need that support. We get the feedback at the end of cases that we really helped them deal with such a tragedy.” It is work that Steve encourages his team to feel proud about, and they are now starting to get wider recognition too. “I think that the way we as a unit deal with the number of fatalities we have, I think we need to be really proud.”



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Remembering Lost Loved Ones

The daughter of a Cheshire PC who died on duty paid tribute to thousands of fallen officers at the annual National Police Memorial Day.

Chloe Wakeford (pictured right), who was one of eight families from Cheshire who attended the service on 24 September, said: "This is a significant day. We have all lost someone – so to get together and remember our loved ones is really important. It is a celebration and we are making memories."

Chloe comes every year to remember her dad, PC Kevin Brinkman, who died in 2005 at the age of 33 in a collision in Thailand as a member of the British Police Response Team sent to identify victims of the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami.

Chloe added: "It is important to remember our loved ones; that they are never forgotten. It just makes everyone feel special."

Cheshire Police Federation Secretary Dan Lever, who also attended the ceremony in Cardiff, said: "This day holds massive significance for us in honouring the memory of fallen officers during the course of their duty. It is really important to us to bring the families together and spend time with them, to make them still feel part of the police family and that their lost loved one is never forgotten."



The names of those officers who had died in the past year were read out at the service. They were PCSO Daniel Gower, of Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary; Sgt Steven Creal, of Sussex Police; PC Richard Kemp, of Lancashire Constabulary; PC Bruce Lister, of Hertfordshire Constabulary; PC Neil Pattinson, of Northumbria Police; PC Andrew Boardman, of West Mercia Police; Insp Gareth Earp, of Dyfed-Powys Police; and Sgt Graham Saville, of Nottinghamshire Police.

During the service, candles were lit for officers in each of the four nations. Representing Wales

was Dorothy Ellis, mother of PC Adrian Ellis, of Gwent Police, who died aged 29 on 27 September 1989 as a result of a road traffic collision.

Representing Scotland was David Taylor, son of PC George Taylor, of Strathclyde Police, who died aged 27 on 30 November 1976 after being attacked with an axe.

Representing England was Sid Mackay, father of PC Nina Alexandra Mackay, of the Metropolitan Police, who died aged 25 on 24 October 1997 after been stabbed by a wanted man. She was posthumously awarded the Commissioner's High Commendation for Bravery.

Representing Northern Ireland were Mervyn and Dorothy Reynolds, parents of PC Philippa Reynolds, of the Police Service of Northern Ireland, who died aged 27 on 9 February 2013 after the police vehicle in which she was a passenger was struck by a stolen vehicle.

The service also heard a reading from the First Minister of Wales Mark Drakeford, then-Home Secretary Suella Braverman and Shadow Home Secretary Yvette Cooper.

There was silence as petals of remembrance, representing all who have lost their lives, descended from the gallery as the Last Post was sounded.



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PC Gareth James

Gareth was 50 years old and leaves behind his wife Bev and their son Michael.

Bev is a serving police officer in Cheshire Police within the Western PVP team.

Gareth died peacefully at home.

Gareth was diagnosed with stage 4 cancer in January 2021 and fought hard to beat the disease.

He was a very keen cyclist and this was really important to him up until his death. The way in which he fought his illness was inspirational to all who knew him – as was the love and strength shown by his family and friends and in particular his wife Bev.

Gareth joined the Constabulary in February 1997, initially based in Chester. In 2007, Gareth joined the road policing team before being temporarily promoted in 2009.

In 2013, Gareth joined NPAS, where he stayed until February 2023. Up until his death, Gareth was a part of our Events and



Contingencies team at HQ.

He will be well known to many officers and staff across Cheshire and the wider region as a kind, selfless and hardworking person.

Cheshire Police Federation said: "We would like to extend our heartfelt sympathies to Gareth's family, friends and colleagues. He will be sorely missed."

PC Steve Powell

'Powelly' as he was known to his friends, was a dog handler posted within the Alliance and had been a serving police officer for 21 years since joining Cheshire Constabulary in July 2002.

He spent nine years on the North before

qualifying as a dog handler in 2011. Powelly has been described as a big Man City fan and a 'gentle giant' having a character that left an impression on everyone he met.

He will be a greatly missed member of the Cheshire Police family.



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PC Shelley Lister

MEET THE
REP



Tell us about your policing career.

I've been a police officer for 20 years, working in response, the Grade 1s, answering emergency calls and then in beat management, so more local problem-solving.

I currently manage public offenders when they come out of prison. We try to assist them to prevent them from re-offending, and move them forwards where there might be gaps in their support.

If they've got issues with drugs or alcohol, we direct them accordingly, or if there are pathways with housing we can try to address it. We look at what might be getting in the way of

judgement being passed.

Until I became a Fed Rep, I didn't fully understand the policing rules and regulations that governed what can happen to us, and where the organisation should really be protecting and looking after us.

So I felt that this would not only help me understand the regulations and the guidance that there is out there, but also to impart that knowledge to other officers and try to assist them.

Apart from helping colleagues, what else do you enjoy about your Rep role?

What would you say to colleagues who are considering becoming Fed Reps themselves?

I'm a full-time officer, so being a Federation Representative is a commitment – you've got to really have that drive to do it. But you get a lot out of having a part to play in changing things that happen within the organisation. And just being that helping hand and that bit of support to people is very rewarding.

Why are Fed Reps so important?

There are so many rules and so many things to consider, and I don't think that sometimes even

“Being a Fed Rep is a commitment, but you get a lot out of having a part to play in changing things within the organisation”

them moving on with their life.

Why did you want to become a Fed Rep?

There are so many officers who find themselves in situations where things have happened to them and they need that support, they need to be able to ask somebody a question.

It's good for them to be able to speak to someone who's not an immediate line manager and who maybe they don't actually work with, but who they can relate to without fear of anything being divulged any further or

This role has given me a network of people that I can link in to. Not only from our branch board, but also the Woman's Network and the online courses and meetings that you get invited to.

I've also taken on an additional role within the Federation and I'm now the Professional Development Lead. So I'm involved in those sorts of changes, where the organisation is bringing in new ways of joining the police.

I'm able to support that and I can share my experiences of what would help people on the ground progress and become active police officers.

the organisation understands the regulations.

It's important that officers know that there's somebody there who's independent. It might just be a simple question of: 'Can they change my shift tomorrow?', because people's interpretations of the rules can be very different. What an organisation feels is the right thing, or an interpretation of it, isn't always the case.

A Fed Rep can bridge knowledge gaps, and support members through difficult and challenging times. They're a familiar face or voice that listens and can offer unbiased and fair advice.



Grit And Glory On The Pitch

The Cheshire Constabulary ladies' hockey team is a force to be reckoned with, regularly reaching tournament finals and winning against much larger forces.

The squad, led by DC Kate Connolly, is always looking for more keen players, whether they already play some hockey or haven't played since school.

Training For Success

Kate has played hockey since she was 11 and even competed at a national level. So, back in 2006, she decided to set up a Cheshire Constabulary ladies' hockey team along with a fellow officer.

She said: "We put feelers out and got quite a bit of interest – it turned out and there were quite a lot of women within the organisation who played hockey regularly on a Saturday anyway.

"So we started to set up a few training sessions to get people back to hockey, but also including the people who already played hockey regularly. It was a bit of a social thing as well."

The team continued in this way for a couple of years, before they discovered they could play games against other forces, as part of Police Sport UK (PSUK).

Kate said: "We started playing in some of the PSUK games, which were knock-out competition where you'd play against a team and then if you won you'd go into the next round. Ultimately you'd have a day where they would be two finals – a cup final and a plate final – involving four teams. But what we found was happening was that an awful lot of people couldn't commit to that, due to shift patterns and not being able to get the time off."

So the format changed to a tournament over three days, which players find more convenient. Cheshire now has a squad of about 20 players, a mix of police officers and staff. The team has had huge success, coming runner-up a number of times, and then in 2015 – the year they hosted the tournament in Chester – the team won the cup.

Punching Above Their Weight

After a break for Covid, this year the team

travelled to Northern Ireland. PSUK rules state that if neighbouring forces don't have their own hockey teams, they can play for yours, so Cheshire welcomed players from Staffordshire Police and North Wales Police onto the squad. Again the team got to the cup final, although unfortunately they were beaten by the Northern Irish team 1-0.

Kate said she was always encouraging women in the force to join the hockey team. She said: "When new starters come into the force, they're told about the sports and social clubs, including hockey, and I'm given as a point of contact.

"And at the beginning of every season, I put an appeal on our intranet to say if you're interested in playing or if you want to get back into hockey, please contact me.

"It's a great way to keep fit, it's good for your health and wellbeing, and from a social aspect it's great because you get to mix with the other forces. Cheshire is only a small force, but we're playing against the Met, PSNI, West Midlands. They're big, metropolitan forces, so we really hold our own as a force."

Frequently Asked Questions

In our Frequently Asked Questions series, we will deal with issues that are often brought up by members in each edition of Cheshire Beat. If you have a specific query, please email it to the Cheshire Police Federation office.

I've been sent on a mutual aid deployment. What am I entitled to claim?

We would expect any MA deployment that required officers to stay away to have pre-arranged accommodation and meals. While we cannot guarantee the standard, any issues with this should be raised immediately with the Mutual Aid Liaison Officer.

Away from home/held in reserve allowance (£50 per night)

This allowance is payable if an officer is 'held in reserve'. This is when an officer is serving away from their usual place of duty and is required to stay in a specific location in order to be ready for immediate deployment. This does not include being away from a normal place of duty for a training course or carrying out routine enquiries.

This allowance is normally agreed with the host force prior to deployment and the circumstances for claiming it can differ. If you are scaled for a MA deployment and this hasn't been discussed, please raise it with your MALO or supervisor pre deployment and/or seek Federation advice.

Hardship allowance (£30 per night)

This allowance is payable where an officer is held in reserve (see above) and is not provided with proper accommodation. The definition of proper accommodation is single occupancy bedroom with en-suite facilities. However, this has previously been paid where the definition has been met but the accommodation is of such a sub-standard quality that hardship has been agreed.

Other Claims

Any incidental expenses that occur on a deployment that are reasonable, necessary and receipted may be claimed in some circumstances. Examples of this are where an officer has not been provided a meal that is suitable for their dietary requirements/allergies etc and has had to purchase their own.

I've been on a residential training course. Can I claim anything?

We would expect any residential course to have meals provided. However, a further incidental allowance can be claimed at a daily rate of £4.43 per night claimable up to a maximum of £17.77 per week, where an officer attends a five-day training course from Monday to Friday that results in an entitlement to claim four nights. Where an individual also has to stay overnight the preceding Sunday night and is therefore away from home for five nights, the maximum that can be claimed is £22.15.

What can I claim for being on call?

On call means that during a period between two tours of duty, you are required to be contactable and deployable to recall to duty immediately. There is an expectation that you are physically fit and able to be recalled at short notice.

This differs from the general recall to duty that all officers can be subject to. The Federation view is that officers should not be expected to be on call on a rest day, which is a 24hr period free from work.

The on-call allowance was introduced following the Windsor recommendations and came in force from 1 April 2013 and is not retrospective. All Federated ranks are covered by this allowance. An officer "shall receive an allowance of £20 in respect of each day on which he spends any time on-call" (para 13 Annex U to determination for Reg 34).

It should be remembered that on-call is entirely voluntary and is designed to be used where it is not practicable or reasonable to have it covered by a 24/7 shift pattern. If you feel that you perform on-call but do not receive the allowance please contact your local Federation Reps.

POLICE



FALLING APART? IS IT TIME TO MOVE ON?



Kirsten Bennett
Managing Director

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