Chwarae Teg "fair play"

New look for Conference 2017
Secretary’s foreword

We must protect officers

By Paul Laughlin, secretary, Dyfed Powys Police Federation

The theme for this year’s annual Police Federation conference was Protecting The Protectors – echoing the national campaign on officer assaults. The campaign is calling for better protection in the law, with tougher sentencing of those who attack police officers, but also better protection in terms of safety equipment, funding for the roll-out of Taser and also increased availability of spit guards.

It is a campaign that has won the vocal support of politicians – and each of those speaking at conference condemned those who assault police officers though I think we now all need to see this played out in actions too.

However, while much of the Protect The Protectors campaign has been focused on physical injuries, I think there was another message that really came to the fore during conference and that was mental health and emotional wellbeing.

While latest statistics show a rise in the number of officers suffering stress and mental health issues, there is one real positive. We are talking about it. We may still not be talking about it enough, there may still be a stigma around talking about mental illness but at least awareness is increasing, at least people are coming forward to talk about their experiences and, perhaps above all, at least people appear to be listening.

Once again, listening and saying you recognise the problem is one thing, but acting on that is another and we are going have to see whether senior officers are going to put strategies into place to ensure that officers get the support they need. All too often, we are seeing that officers only have charities to turn to. That cannot be right. Forces have a duty to protect their workforce in the same way that they have a duty to protect the public. We need to look after our own just as we look after our communities.

One of the great successes of this year’s conference was the way in which front-line police officers powerfully described the reality of policing today.

The officer talking about the mental trauma he suffered after being spat at, the police driver discussing his life being put on hold while he went through criminal proceedings simply for doing his job, the former sergeant who retired after suffering depression brought on by his work as a family liaison officer, they all revealed so much more than any statistics or third-hand account could ever have done.

But it was obvious that it was not just front-line policing itself that was having an effect on officer wellbeing. We heard how officers, and their families, are suffering mental anguish due to long drawn out investigations by the IPCC, and some Professional Standards Departments. Then there are the IPCC proposals relating to the separation of officers after firearms incidents. Is it really right to be treating these officers as suspects rather than witnesses?

So, all in all, this year’s Police Federation conference did an excellent job of highlighting some of the major concerns in policing right now.

Please take the time to read the articles in this edition of your magazine and contact the office if you want more information on any of the issues raised.

Chair’s opening speech

“Together we are stronger. Only together we are more influential, only together can we continue Protecting The Protectors.” That was the opening message to the 2017 annual conference from Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW) chair Steve White.

Reform to meet the changing needs of members is, he said, being driven not by Government but by members themselves. The Federation’s first duty, he emphasised, was protecting The Protectors and this theme would run through conference.

PFEW is now, he said, more efficient, more open and transparent, more vocal, more influential and more responsive to our members than ever before.

Change, he warned, is constant. The chair added that the reform of PFEW following the independent review, had given it strong foundations so that it can best represent members.

Steve warned: “What is certain is that the challenges ahead will be harder than we think, more surprising than we expect, but we will be better equipped to do what we are asked to do by our members.”
‘Make policing a priority’

A crowd of rank and file police officers heard their Federation chair make a plea to the new Government – make policing a priority.

Steve White addressed the Federation’s national conference in a keynote speech delivered to Home Secretary Amber Rudd.

Steve said: “...politics and politicians will move on, but policing, its officers and people’s safety will always be needed. No matter who is in Government. Put policing before politics, put the people before politics, and put those who pledge to serve before politics.”

The chair then turned his attention to the Federation’s Protect The Protectors campaign, which received cross-party support in Parliament earlier this year.

He told the Home Secretary: “Many of your colleagues from all political parties were vocal and stated their support for a change in legislation. Many expressed support for a change to see harsher sentences for those convicted of assaulting officers.

‘And so, today I ask you and every politician seeking to be elected – can we have a firm commitment to make this happen?

“We want a commitment that you will give the police officers of England and Wales the support and protection needed to do their job. That is, support in numbers. Support in equipment. And support in law. For, without that support, without the numbers needed, we can’t continue doing everything.”

He continued: “When she was Home Secretary, the Prime Minister told us we should have a single mission – to fight crime. We said it then, and I say it again now, policing is so much more than just fighting crime.

“Tell the family of a suicidal man with mental health issues making threats to end his life that it’s the NHS they need; it’s not one for the police.

“Tell the elderly victim of a burglary seeking comfort and reassurance that time is money and the job of the police is to fight crime and capture an offender, rather than counsel them as a victim.

“Home Secretary, you cannot put a price on the value of policing. And no Government can cut tens of thousands of police officers and expect us to pretend that it won’t make a difference. For it does.”

And while speaking about how the police could not ‘do everything’ he called on the newly elected Government to ask the public what they wanted from the police.

He went on to mention provisions needed for officers to effectively do their job – including a wider roll-out of Taser. The new X2 Taser model is approved but many forces are struggling to fund its introduction.

He spoke about police pursuits and how the current test of dangerous driving is ‘outdated, misinterpreted at best and downright ridiculous at worst in the way that it applies to police officers’. He called for exemptions in law to be put in place to ensure that an officer, doing their duty and engaging in a response or pursuit in a police vehicle, is not unfairly processed through the court.

Police pay was also brought into focus with Steve urging the Home Secretary to remove the shackles from the Police Remuneration Review Body, allow it to take the evidence the Federation provides and decide for itself what pay award officers should receive.

“We have evidenced the need for an uplift of 2.8 per cent. The difference between an increase of one per cent and 2.8 per cent - £90 million. While that may sound like a lot, in the scheme of Government budgets it’s negligible,” he explained.

The chair closed his speech by summarising what he and the Federation want from the Government: a national system of welfare provision for police officers, legal protections for officers doing their job, the right protective equipment for officers, no further budget cuts, an immediate halt in the reduction of officer numbers, and a progressive culture and an open environment where the police service learns from its mistakes.

He said: ‘And finally, we want a Government that supports the police. Not just in words. In actions too.’

And concluded: “We are proud to be British police officers. We are proud to do our duty. All we ask is that Government does its duty too. And Protects The Protectors.”

Federation national chairman Steve White.

So, 3,000 is not just a number. It is much, much more than that:

- It’s 3,000 fewer police officers patrolling and protecting communities;
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Policing is on its knees. It is fighting for its life.

Our reps say...

“I thought the chair’s keynote speech was very good – current, pertinent and addressed the key areas of policing that need looking at.” DC Dai Evans

“Good, calm, collected and to the point.” Insp Louise Bradshaw
‘It’s not for me to tell the police how to do their jobs’

A staggering 4.5 million hours of police time have been saved thanks to a cut in red-tape – according to Home Secretary Amber Rudd.

She made the claim during her speech to a packed hall on Day 2 of the annual conference in Birmingham.

And she said that if her party was re-elected on 8 June more top officer jobs will be opened up to those outside of policing.

“Terrorism has moved on and policing needs to move with it. We need to free police officers from pointless red tape,” Ms Rudd said. “You don’t walk into a police station on any given day and ask yourself how many forms need to be filled in. You don’t become a police officer in order to spend your time sitting in an office filling in meaningless forms.”

“With priorities now set by locally elected PCCs and delivered by you, ensuring once again that the ‘police are the public and the public are the police’.”

Ms Rudd said her party had protected the protectors, saying: “You asked us to change the law so that anyone who kills a cop gets a mandatory life sentence. We listened, and now anyone convicted of murdering an officer faces a life sentence.

“You asked us to do more to stop police officers doing the work of a doctor or nurse, caring for mentally ill members of the public. And we’ve taken steps to significantly restrict the circumstances in which a police station may be ‘a place of safety’ with £15 million invested into health-based alternatives.”

Of the first things I do.”

Her first ever engagement after becoming Home Secretary in July was the Police Bravery Awards – which is where she heard about the Nice terror attack.

She told the room: “That moment will stay with me for the rest of my life. As I watched our brave police officers being recognised for their extraordinary acts of courage, the horrible events on the streets of Nice were unfolding. The best of our values, embodied in the actions of our policemen and women, set in stark relief against the very worst of human behaviour.

“We owe you, the police, an incredible debt, for the courage and bravery you exhibit in the line of duty. For your willingness to put yourself in harm’s way, day after day, in order to protect the rest of us.”

She went on to pay tribute to PC Keith Palmer and the other officers who have lost their lives in the past year, before pledging her commitment to support the new UK Police Memorial.

And she insisted the decisions her party had made which weren’t well received by officers had been in the best interests of the country.

“You haven’t agreed with the changes we’ve made to pay and pensions, but they were right for the country and the public to tackle the huge deficit we inherited. You haven’t agreed with the drive for greater efficiency in policy budgets, but it’s been right for the country and the public,” the Home Secretary told officers.

“You haven’t agreed with the steps we’ve taken to bring more people from outside policing into the force. But it’s been right for the country and the public. And if the Conservatives are re-elected we will go further and open up the very top jobs in policing so that we get the broadest possible skills and talent at the very top of our police forces.”

Amber Rudd’s speech was all well and good but what support does she provide to make things happen apart from spit guards?”

PC Rashmita Wharton

“It was a party political broadcast on behalf of the Conservative Party, I could have opened a paper.”

Inspector Louise Bradshaw

Page 4

Dyfed Powys Police Federation www.dppf.org
Spit guards: ‘Yes, yes, yes’

The Home Secretary’s ‘Yes, yes, yes’ answer to questions about spit guards was met with rapturous applause from conference delegates.

Mike Stubbs from North Yorkshire Police told Amber Rudd that even though his force was small and rural, a number of officers had suffered the ‘degrading and humiliating experience of being spit at in the face’.

He joked about the appearance at conference the previous day by shadow home secretary Diane Abbott, saying: “Your counterpart got about as lost on it as she did on the stage afterwards.”

He then posed a question in three parts: “Do you understand what spit guards are? Do you understand why they are necessary? And will you support and back chief constables who choose to issue them?”

The Home Secretary simply gave her three word, three syllable answer and facilitator Ian Collins also joked: “So that’s how you answer the spit guard question!”

I’ll be keeping a close eye to make sure that happens.”

Louise Bates, Bedfordshire: “Assaults while on duty result in mental health issues so officers are away from work, leaving fewer officers to deal with the workload. How will you support officers injured on duty?”

AR: “Mental health is incredibly important and the Prime Minister has said there will be new legislation put in place for mental health issues at work. Steve has put a bid into the Police Transformation Fund and I hope to be able to support that if I’m re-elected.”

SW: “The issue of welfare in the service is gaining traction at long last. But we need to make sure that officers, wherever they are, benefit from a level of care regardless of issues within their force. I think this will be truly transformational if it works and I’ll hold the Home Secretary to what she’s said in terms of supporting the bid if she’s re-elected.”

Paul Bennett, Northumbria: “Do you accept there is a direct link between officer workload, mental health and morale and what are you going to do to help us?”

AR: “I would acknowledge that link in any form of work, any walk of life and in policing on the front-line and with events we’ve seen recently, even more so, yes.”
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Diane Abbott under fire for spit guard scepticism

Shadow home secretary Diane Abbott came under fire from delegates for her sceptical views on spit guards during her conference session.

Ms Abbott delivered a speech in which she praised police for their work in a difficult climate and reaffirmed the Labour Party’s commitment to introduce an extra 10,000 officers if they win the upcoming General Election.

But at the end of her address, she was put on the spot during a question and answers session, having been cautious towards the use of spit guards in the past.

She explained that she needed to see more evidence on the health implications of using them before she was prepared to back a nationwide introduction.

“I have been looking at the evidence in relation to spit guards and I continue to look at that evidence,” she said. “I have never said I am against them in principle but like any fresh equipment or power, I want to see the evidence of what they would do, particularly in relation to the health risk.

“Among the groups that I have consulted with are groups who represent those with Hepatitis C and those with HIV, and they argue that you don’t catch Hepatitis C or HIV from being spat at. It’s about looking at the research and coming to a view.”

Officers advocating the introduction of spit guards argue that the very act of being spat upon should be enough to warrant protection for police, whatever the risk of infection may be.

Ms Abbott then claimed that the Metropolitan Police could be the first force to use them – clearly unaware that around half of the forces in England and Wales already do.

Che Donald, the Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW) lead on firearms said he was astonished by her comments.

“Not only was she ill-informed, she was ill-advised and for some of those comments, I stood with my mouth open because I could not believe what I was hearing from the shadow home secretary,” he said.

“I would rather be punched in the face than spat at. It’s unacceptable, it’s a blight on society and it needs to be eradicated. If it takes education to stop people doing this then so be it. Anyone who comes to work and puts their life on the line like our officers do on a daily basis deserve to be treated with respect and dignity.

“And if we’re going to be spat at, and our assault figures show that it happens on a regular basis, then we need to have the appropriate protections there to protect it from happening further.”

Earlier in her address, Ms Abbott had criticised the Conservative Party’s cuts to policing.

“Tory speeches say one thing but their cuts to policing say another,” she said, “Tory cuts may prove even more damaging to the public than the cuts to the NHS and education are proving now.”

Facilitator Ian Collins was applauded by delegates when he offered some clarity on the use of spit guards.

The shadow home secretary, in answer to a question on the issue, said she wanted to see evidence as to what they would do, particularly in relation to health risks.

Ian said: “Let me help you out, I am not an expert on this but I think the theory is if someone spits in your face you use the spit guard to stop them doing that.”

Our rep says...

“Diane Abbott – painful.”

Inspector Louise Bradshaw

Standing ovation for MP who tried to save Keith Palmer

Delegates gave Tobias Ellwood, the MP who so memorably went to the aid of PC Keith Palmer after the Westminster terrorist attack in March, two standing ovations when he addressed conference.

Officers stood to applaud Mr Ellwood after he was welcomed on stage by national Federation chair Steve White who said officers were touched by the efforts he had made on 22 March.

Mr Ellwood was visibly moved after being presented with the Police Federation shield and coat of arms.

He said: “I was just sorry that I couldn’t, and those others with me couldn’t, do more to save Keith Palmer’s life but we owe you such a debt of gratitude for what you do day in and day out and it’s very humbling for me to receive this award.”

He added: “What came home to me after the Westminster incident was just how closely knit your fraternity is and just how you don’t know what is round the corner, you really don’t, and yet every day you put your uniforms on and stand in harm’s way so we can continue our work.”

“When these events occur - tragic and rare, thankfully that they are, we don’t just carry on, it gives us even more determination to defeat this sort of extremism in the way that we know how, to defend our values and make sure we stand up to this so the terrorist does not win and that is something that resonated right across Westminster,” he explained.

Mr Ellwood said his thoughts continued to be with Keith Palmer’s family, friends and colleagues and concluded by paying tribute to all police officers saying: “Thank you for the work you do day in, day out. It’s not said enough but it is appreciated.”

Delegates gave him another standing ovation as he left the conference.
Prospective parliamentary candidate for Halifax, Holly Lynch, has called for the issues surrounding the Protect The Protectors campaign to 'dominate the agenda in Parliament' after the General Election on 8 June.

She told the Federation’s national conference that there should be increased police numbers and stiffer sentences for those who assault them.

With the help of the Federation, she has drafted new legislation which will lead to tougher sentences and better protection if adopted.

Also addressing the conference, the chair of West Yorkshire Police Federation, Nick Smart, agreed something needed to be done quickly as he believed that police officers had become ‘society’s punch bags’ and that there was ‘no deterrent’ for those who assault them within current legislation.

Ms Lynch has been a strong advocate of stiffer sentences for those who assault police officers, staff and other emergency service workers since she went out on patrol with the West Yorkshire Police in her constituency and saw exactly what officers have to deal with.

She told delegates she was so scared for an officer’s safety at one stage during an altercation that she called 999 from the police car to request back-up.

“I saw for myself how quickly situations can escalate and how vulnerable officers are when they are out on their own,” she said.

“To assault an officer shows complete disregard for law and order and our shared values. If officers are not safe, then our communities are not safe.

“If an officer is assaulted at any time, it must be recorded and must be subject to a robust investigation. Officers must have the confidence that those involved will be investigated and prosecuted accordingly.

“An assault on an officer is an assault on society. This severity of violence directed at police officers is just unacceptable.

“With the Federation, we have looked at drafting a new piece of legislation. My bill would open up much tougher sentences and the second part of that bill will deal with the hideous acts of spitting and biting.

“These changes need to be on the agenda of every candidate seeking election so that this issue dominates the agenda in Parliament after 8 June,” she added. “We need to restore and protect the brave men and women behind the uniforms.

Nick Smart said that everyone in the room needed to put pressure on those in power to make urgent changes after the election.

“At last year’s conference Theresa May said that some of the sentences (for

To assault an officer shows complete disregard for law and order and our shared values. If officers are not safe, then our communities are not safe.
assaulting officers) were too soft and that was wrong. But 12 months later, we are still fighting for officers’ rights and stiffer deterrents, for spit guards, for increased roll-out of Taser, for protection for drivers – and it’s quite a frustrating thing to constantly plead for something that should already be there,” he said.

“There is stuff going on to cops on a daily basis and it is stuff that the public don’t see. It’s a sacrifice that they are making and a lot of the time, the sentences do not reflect the physical and mental injuries sustained.

“Less than 10 per cent of offenders get a custodial sentence. That is not justice. Our cops don’t think it is and that is why they don’t bother recording it because they have no faith in the criminal justice system.

“The vast majority of MPs agree with us – so that begs the question: why is it so damn hard to change legislation to bring in stiffer sentences? It is our responsibility to continue the debate.”

“We are calling for stiffer sentences. If there is no deterrent, how are people going to change their behaviour? Assaults are going up and more violent assaults are going up. Something needs to change.

“We have drafted legislation for the Home Office. It’s there to go. It’s there to go for aggravated assault on a police officer. We are in a position where MPs will listen to us and listen to what we are doing. My plea to you is help us campaign for this for the right reasons. We all need to put pressure on those in power.”

Speaking at the end of the discussion on the Protect The Protectors campaign, a West Midlands officer, who endured injections, medication and ‘six months of worry’ after being spat upon by an assailant, has also called for politicians to help change legislation to give police more protection.

PC recalls spit dripping off his face

A West Midlands officer, who endured injections, medication and ‘six months of worry’ after being spat upon by an assailant, has called for politicians to help change legislation to give police more protection.

PC Mike Bruce told the Federation’s national conference in Birmingham that he had ‘spit dripping off his face’ after an incident outside a pub in Holbrook, Coventry in April last year. His colleague, PC Alan O’Shea, had blood spat in his face when he came to help.

It was the start of a long process of tests to make sure that neither officer had contracted HIV or Hepatitis B or C and also led to PC Bruce’s two children, aged one and nine, requiring blood tests too.

None of that worry would have had to have endured had legislation been in place to make the arrested man take a blood test to see if he had any of the diseases that could be contracted.

And PC O’Shea’s ordeal would not have happened either had PC Bruce had a spit guard at his disposal. West Midlands Police are currently discussing that possibility.

“Myself and Alan were just about to go off duty when we heard an almighty scream of a back-up call over the radio from a response officer,” said PC Bruce.

“When we arrived, I saw a colleague struggling with two men, a father and son. “I pulled the father away and he started throwing punches and kicking me. We went on the floor and I was trying to restrain him but he turned round, looked me in the eye and spat in my face. It went in my left eye and down my mouth. I had spit dripping off my face. It was disgusting. I would rather have been punched in the face.

“PC O’Shea came over and was acting as a peace-maker. The guy had a bit of blood in his mouth and spat that blood in AI’s face. If we had the spit guards, I would have pulled it out after I had been spat on and that would have protected AI.

“We were carted off to hospital because it went in our mouths and eyes and was treated as a needle injury. We had injections and medications to stop the onset of possible HIV and Hepatitis B and C.

“There was six months of worry. Within my first month of medication, the GP told me I tested positive for Hepatitis B, which later proved to be a false reading. At the time, my whole world caved in. My wife and I were thinking about having a third child and I thought we were never going to be able to do that because of a positive test.

“My one and nine-year-olds had to have blood tests and AI and I went back every two weeks for more blood tests.

“If there was legislation in place for the prisoner to have a blood test, it would have stopped all of that worry but he is under no obligation. He was charged with assault on me and AI. He got a suspended sentence and had to pay me £250 and AI £500.

“These spit guards are solely there so that if someone is spitting or trying to bite, there is something there to protect us. I would invite politicians to come out with us and see what goes on. It’s about getting out there and educating them.”

Modern slavery: ‘the greatest human rights issue of our time’

Modern slavery is the ‘greatest human rights issue of our time’, the UK’s Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner told conference during a Tuesday afternoon break-out session.

Kevin Hyland, a former head of the Met’s anti-trafficking unit, also admitted that it was a sad reflection on today’s world that his post – established under the Modern Slavery Act 2015 – was even needed, given that slavery was abolished 180 years ago.

He said this ‘hidden crime’ affects 45.8 million people today, equivalent to the population of Spain, compared to around 11 million people before it was abolished.

Many of the victims of modern slavery can be found working in factories, fields, in the fishing industry, and car wash outlets. They were, the commissioner explained, often housed in squalid conditions.

“There has been a huge growth in the problem. Our approach has changed significantly for the better. It has been a steep learning process but the expertise to deal with vulnerable victims and serious organised crime already exists within policing,” Mr Hyland told delegates.

He said there had been 3,805 allegations of modern slavery recorded by the national referral mechanism but only 117 prosecutions and just 31 convictions. The attitude in the past had been to pass on the problem rather than tackle it and he had been shocked to find incidents catalogued on spreadsheets and not being tackled.

The commissioner went on to call for improved training for officers through the College of Policing to enable police to detect slavery and recognise the victims, rather than charging them for being complicit in cannabis farms, prostitution or other criminal activity. He also said there needed to be greater commitment by forces to record allegations and investigate incidents, backed with the necessary financial investment.
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Officers unimpressed at crime figures claim

Delegates seemed unconvinced when police minister Brandon Lewis claimed crime had fallen by a third since 2010.

Making his conference debut having taken over the post last summer, Mr Lewis took part in the conference's simply titled Political Session.

He acknowledged that there were now 20,000 fewer officers than there were in 2010 and said: ‘As these police officer numbers have changed we’ve actually seen crime fall by about a third since 2010.”

While officers seemed to laugh at his claim, he did admit recorded crime had increased but said it was a good thing as it showed victims of crime had more confidence in coming forward in the first place.

He started his speech by saying he wanted to focus on three key areas – professionalisation, IT and Protect The Protectors but first paid tribute to PC Keith Palmer who he said had given his life in the line of duty and that he was owed a debt of gratitude before going on to praise all officers who he said risked their lives to ‘enable us to be safe and feel safe’.

“We truly do have the best police service in the world,” he told delegates, adding that the Government’s reform programme had been about recognising the professionalism in evidence in policing every day.

Reform was being led by people in policing and the service’s professional body, the College of Policing which he said was delivering progress.

“We want to ensure the police workforce is flexible, capable and professional,” he explained, adding that it was not just about developing new entry methods to policing but also giving existing officers access to training and career development.

Policing, he said, was dealing with the increased challenges of dealing with cybercrime, child sexual exploitation and modern slavery. Tackling these issues needed varied skills and the police service had to adapt to meet the challenges of the future and tackle the growingly complex nature of crime.

There was a need, Mr Lewis explained, to move into the modern world with interoperable IT.

“Our IT must move rapidly and evolve to focus on three key areas – professionalisation, IT and Protect The Protectors,” he said. It was now a case of making sure the police service had the skills to rise to these challenges with collaboration, he claimed, offering huge opportunities for greater efficiencies. Common standards were also needed across the whole criminal justice system.

Turning to the Protect The Protectors campaign, he said those who attacked police officers should ‘face the full weight of the law’ and that justice should be seen to be done.

He said: “What I can promise you is that both the Home Secretary and myself know your true value and we know how you deserve to know that justice will be served.”

Much work to be done as the country ‘stands at a crucial moment for policing and security’

Yvette Cooper believes the country ‘stands at a crucial moment for policing and security’ ahead of the upcoming General Election.

The former shadow home secretary called for more immediate work to be done to help the police service deal with the new challenges it faces in tackling crime and protecting communities.

Ms Cooper was invited to speak at conference as the chair of the Home Affairs Select Committee working on the inquiry into the Future of Policing. That was, however, brought to an abrupt end by the announcement of a snap General Election.

Ms Cooper praised the work of officers across the country and paid tribute to those who have lost their lives in the line of duty.

She explained how the inquiry had been launched to recognise the needs of modern policing and the crucial work police did for defending public safety every day.

“We stand at a crucial moment for policing and security. For the safety of our communities and for the new challenges we face. There are many strengths of the police that we should be proud of but we need a workforce that is supported and not overstretched,” said Ms Cooper.

“Your work on the Protect The Protectors campaign is immensely important to make sure that the police are not stretched to the limits.

“But there is a serious shortage of detectives and a lack of investment in communications and IT for the police.

“We have important partnerships in our communities but they are at risk of being undermined by the way in which services are being pulled back. We also lead the world in counter-terror but careless handling of the Brexit process could put that at risk.

“We have seen crime changing and some of that is falling but other crimes are going up. We have seen a big change in the scale of online crime, now likely to be equivalent to all other crimes put together.

“We see growing non-crimine demands and around 70 to 80 per cent of the pressure on forces is not crime, but the wider issue of public safety and protection.

“The past Home Secretary has said that the purpose of policing is crime. No more, no less. I just strongly disagree.

“The purpose of policing is never less and is always so much more about the security and safety of our public and making sure we have strong and resilient communities and keeping people safe for now and in the future. Too often picking up the pieces where other services fail.”

Ms Cooper challenged the Government to come up with more resources and a proper plan to help the police tackle their work after the General Election.

She also criticised Google and Twitter and said that social media companies needed to do more to help police deal with online crime.

“There is some fantastic work being done but we are simply not keeping up,” she said.

“The HMIC has raised the red flag recently and they were damming words which we must take seriously.

“The practical issue is that we simply need more police on our streets. Some 20,000 police officers have been lost over the last six or seven years. We were told that would have little effect on front-line policing - but it has. We still don’t have the resources to make sure that the police can do their job. I want to see 10,000 more police officers on our streets across the country.

“We should all make sure that policing is central to the debate over the next few years. Police are the public and the public are the police.”
More support needed for officers with mental health issues

There is still a stigma around mental health and for many police officers it is a dilemma whether or not to disclose it.
It’s time for an ‘honest debate with the public about some of the things we cherish but which are no longer affordable’, Sara Thornton said in response to a question from Andy Symonds from Norfolk on workloads.

Andy said that those who went sick as they were unable to cope, returned to work from sickness to find themselves facing the same high workloads which had contributed to their sickness.

In her response, the chief constable said while there were still things that could be done to reduce workloads and improve efficiencies - better collaboration on specialist resources, joint procurement and new technologies - money plays a part in what any force can deliver.

Che Donald said problems arise from trying to split finite resources. He said the only way around was to either reduce the amount of crime we investigate or find additional funding for recruitment.

Another questioner asked whether Sir Thomas Winson’s view of the police force had changed since he had become chief inspector at HMIC.

Sir Thomas replied his ‘admiration for the police has increased exponentially because of the arduous work that is done’ but insisted that in his review he had been guided by expert advice.

However, he too called for an honest debate with the public.

“The police cannot meet all demand - we do not even know what all demand is but you have to have the best assessment of what that demand is, crime and non-crime which is a huge proportion of the demand on the police, latent and patent demand. Until those things are assessed, the condition of the assets are properly understood, you cannot have the honest debate with the public because you know what, I think that if you have a proper assessment of the demand, the assets to meet that demand and the money you have got you are going to find it does not add up.”

From the floor, Richard Eccles from North Wales asked why there was not more first aid training for officers to help them recognise and support colleagues experiencing mental health difficulties and to assist them in the short-term. He said it seemed something that would be ‘really, really simple’ to set up, but that appeared to be lacking.

Matthew Scott said mental health first aid training was recognised as part of the solution. Che Donald referred him to a scheme in South Wales being rolled out giving training to Fed reps and said the nine-point plan going out to consultation included specific reference to training that was bottom up as well as top down.

In a straw poll on the conference App asking: ‘Is your force doing enough to provide access to the necessary assistance for officers and staff who need help for mental health?’ 86 per cent said ‘No.’

Help raise £10 a head for each Federation member by July and a new UK Police Memorial could be dedicated at the National Memorial Arboretum next year - that was the appeal made by Lord Stevens of Kirkwhelington, patron of the Police Arboretum Memorial Trust, at conference.

Lord Stevens, who had himself been a Federation rep 50 years ago, was speaking as part of the launch of a public appeal for the memorial which will bear the names of 1,400 fallen officers and staff.

The police, Lord Stevens said, are a family that comes together as a sign of unity and support when one of their own dies. The new memorial, he told delegates, will, he said, include a focus on the mental health and welfare of officers as well as their physical condition and a statement on how they are supported.

Lord Stevens said that if sufficient funds are pledged by July when the Police Bravery Awards ceremony takes place it would be feasible to dedicate a new memorial in the National Memorial Arboretum next year.

To find out more about the memorial, its design and the digital projects around it go to www.ukpolicememorial.org

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An honest debate

Support needed for new memorial

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Call for mental health to be made a priority

Chief constables’ number one priority should be the mental health and wellbeing of officers and staff, according to a former officer who gave an account of harrowing incidents he dealt with during his time with North Yorkshire Police.

In a conference break-out session, entitled Mental Health – It’s Time We Talked, medically retired sergeant Ed Simpson told delegates about the turmoil he went through before his depression was identified. For several years he had not realised he was ill but felt he was bad at his job and that others around him were feeling the same but just coping better.

Mr Simpson traced the start of his illness back to his work as a family liaison officer and one particular incident where the ‘shield’ protecting him fell apart.

“The more I did it, the stronger the invisible shield became. I dealt with the rape and murder of a 14-year-old girl,ashed over the head with a rock, I stood over her body for 10 hours, water off a duck’s back – because that’s what officers do,” he recalled.

“The job that did it was a 17-year-old lad that had been killed in a car accident. I went to the mortuary with his parents and there wasn’t a mark on his body. When we walked in, the mother screamed, a scream like I’d never heard before. It was like an opera singer hitting that high note and shattering the glass. I felt grief, horror, and that changed me forever.

“I didn’t understand how I could be depressed because I wasn’t sad. I felt like the service I’d always wanted to be in had abandoned me. Individuals didn’t, but the police service did.”

After six months off sick, he was put on half pay.

“I found out on the way to the hospital for my son to be born - and in the nappy aisle of Tesco I fell out of love with the police. I felt rubbish and weak – I didn’t even know which nappies I could afford for my newborn son,” he told the meeting.

He remembers a brief mental health session where he was given a stress ball, but said much more needs to be done, and equal measure should be given to both mental health support and protective equipment.

Mr Simpson encouraged police leaders to spend more money on protecting the wellbeing of their officers.

Ed Simpson brought home the realities of officers suffering mental health issues.

He explained: “Investment is needed in policing because you can’t have single crewing, not just for safety but for being able to talk to colleagues properly. The number one priority for chiefs should be the mental health and wellbeing of officers and staff.

“To think you want to kill yourself is the worst feeling. You’re not thinking rationally, a horrible low point to be at. Too many cops end up as a statistic. It’s too many. We’re not talking about it. You need to make sure it’s on the agenda.”

He highlighted an alarming statistic - in 2013, 29 police officers committed suicide – and suggested that if 29 officers were killed on duty in one year, more would be done.

We need to support each other'

Police officers need to look after themselves and not be afraid to speak up about mental health, around 100 delegates were told at a break-out session during the second day of conference.

The session was led by Graham Richens from the learning and development team at the national Federation HQ.

A former Met officer, Graham suffered mental illness himself and explained how many factors contributed to his ill-health, including seeing ‘too many’ colleagues injured and even killed in the line of duty.

During the session, delegates were invited to share their experiences of mental health.

“Around 80 per cent of officers have suffered mental ill-health,” Graham explained, “One in four experience it every year.

“We see things that the public are ordinarily protected from. We experience extremes. But police officers feel isolated and alone. We need to protect ourselves – we need to talk about it and be able to identify both in ourselves and our colleagues when things aren’t right.”

The wide-ranging levels of trauma support were explained along with the need for Federation reps to undertake a course on mental health first aid.

Graham added: “We need to be there for each other, listen to each other, talk to each other – accept responses unconditionally, give care and support and be compassionate.

We need to understand stressors and signs of mental illness, help and support each other and give and receive care to each other.”

Officers’ mental health was a recurrent theme in conference with several speakers linking a rise in reports of officers suffering mental health problems to the cuts to police budgets and falling officer numbers.
Firearms officers: witnesses or suspects?

The Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) has come under a withering attack for making firearms officers involved in a serious incident ‘feel like suspects rather than witnesses’.

Che Donald, the Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW) lead on firearms, was hugely critical of the IPCC, who he accused of showing a ‘lack of trust’ in firearms officers.

Later in the Firearms Officers – Witnesses or Suspects session, Sarah Green, the deputy chair of the IPCC, gave her response and outlined the processes they had to go through.

Che said that incidents where firearms have been discharged are very low in the UK. From April 2015 to March 2016, there were 14,753 firearms operations but they were only discharged on seven occasions.

As a result, he praised officers in England and Wales who volunteer to carry firearms for being the best trained and most restrained in the world.

But he said those officers face a testing time if they discharge their weapon with the current Post-incident Procedures (PIP) that are in place which say that officers should be separated from their colleagues.

“Once a firearms officer discharges a weapon on behalf of the state and in order to protect themselves or the public, they are meant to be treated as professional witnesses. However, if you speak to many firearms officers about this point, they will tell you a different story,” he explained.

‘An overwhelming majority will say the way they are currently dealt with makes them feel more like a suspect. There is only one reason for this, the IPCC. Many officers believe that IPCC investigations start to establish blame not fact.”

He claimed that the issue of separation was the main cause of concern in PIPs. He said there were grave concerns about the IPCC’s insistence that officers should be separated at the post-incident suite to avoid ‘collusion’.

“They stress that separation is not segregation but there is a perception of a lack of trust by the IPCC. It infers that officers will collude. I believe the issue of separation is flawed and unnecessary. “The IPCC are there to ensure that the incident is investigated. The problem I have is that we are currently in a position where the police force is struggling with trust, faith and confidence in the IPCC and this is not a healthy place to be.”

Ms Green said that out of 25 investigations into firearms incidents since 2010, there had only been three cases where officers were served with notices of investigation.

The IPCC had only used its powers of arrest once and she added that a member of the public involved in a death would not be given 24 hours to compose themselves before questioning, so there was a case for equal treatment towards officers.

“We believe that having clear procedures will protect officers and ensure consistency in approach,” she said.

Former Met firearms officer Tony Long also told conference about his 25 years as a specialist firearms officer and trainer covering incidents in which he had fired a weapon. Investigators looking at the incidents later had the benefit of hindsight, freeze-framed videos and took months, and sometimes years, to review those decisions officers made in a split second when facing a life-threatening situation.

Investigators, Tony said, need to know there is a difference between human recall and the product of a video and explained that video footage and separating officers would not produce best evidence.

He outlined how an investigation launched after he shot Azelle Rodney in 2005 had hung over him ‘like a cloud’, cost him work and therefore caused financial hardship until finally he was cleared.

He called on the IPCC to show the same duty of care, empathy and sympathy to firearms officers involved in shootings as they showed to victims’ families saying their own families were equally victims in these incidents.

IPCC comes under scrutiny

The chair of the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) found herself under scrutiny when she faced frustrated officers during a Tuesday afternoon conference session called Moving From Discipline To Performance.

Dame Anne Owers outlined plans for structural changes at the police watchdog in her address but was on the receiving end of most of the questions from delegates afterwards with officers raising concerns about the length of inquiries.

The session began with Phill Matthews, the federation’s lead in this area, stating that police conduct should move away from blame and punishment and towards learning and development and that the system needed to be fairer, quicker and more effective.

The re-writing of police discipline regulations through the Police and Crime Bill provided an opportunity for this to happen.

Phill said: “We want to encourage forces, the IPCC and PCCs that a more proportionate way of dealing with complaints is to look at everything through the spectrum of performance from the very start.”

Currently the system seemed to encourage investigations to start as gross misconduct/criminal proceedings and work backwards towards performance. Lengthy investigations, measured in years rather than months, were in no-one’s interest, he pointed out.

Reluctance to use the Unsatisfactory Performance Procedures (UPP) was also causing issues with discipline reps across the country dealing with conduct cases where UPP could have been used instead.

He explained: “There are very few officers who start their day deliberately intending to breach the standards of professional
 behaviour; that is not why any of us come to work.”

And he recognised the need for an independent organisation to look at complaints about the police service but it needed to be proportionate and pragmatic and not adversarial, concentrating on the aim of improving future service to the public. It also needed to command the trust and confidence of the police service itself.

There needed to be speedy assessments of cases in the first instance with only those where there appeared to be a reckless, deliberate or conscious decision to breach the standards of professional behaviour progressing to misconduct or gross misconduct proceedings.

Vic Marshall, professional standards lead at the Superintendents’ Association and a Police Federation advisor, echoed Phill’s views, explaining that the 2008 conduct regulations were brought in on the back of the Taylor report which aimed to move away from blame and sanction to development and improvement.

He said a scale needed to be considered whereby at one end were the vast majority of officers who did a very good job and at the other were the very few corrupt or dishonest officers, in the middle would be a small section made up of human frailty where ill-health could perhaps play out in the behaviour of an individual.

“Yes there will be times when cops fall short but that does not make it bad and naughty behaviour; it is not all about misconduct,” he told the conference.

Where officers did not get it right, he explained, forces needed to be brave enough to say sorry, explain what went wrong and learn from that experience so it could get better.

“What I really hope is that the police service grasps this second opportunity to re-think how it approaches these things,” he said, adding: “It didn’t land when we first brought this in. We’ve got to achieve it this time around.”

The next speaker in this session was Chief Constable Craig Guildford, nPCC lead for conduct and performance, who began by saying that the vast majority of officers did get it right and that the organisation was good at identifying bad apples.

Dame Anne then told delegates that investigations – they were now carrying out around 600 a year - were often hampered by a lack of co-operation from witnesses but also acknowledged blame and accountability needed to be separated.

The IPCC reform would lead to a new director general heading the organisation with a team of regional directors allowing for a single point of contact for forces.

The watchdog chair said moving forward the culture, which she argued had led to the failure for the previous conduct reforms to stick, and explained: “We all have to work together to get a system which does work in the way that it should, and be able to properly deal with people who have done things that police officers shouldn’t be doing or those whose incompetence is too great for the job they are doing.”

From North Wales workplace rep Mark Jones to the Federation’s head of research and policy support, Dr Joan Donnelly, there were tales of change, progress and support helping members now and in the future in an Annual Public Value Report in the final session of the main conference.

Dr Donnelly described some of the issues still being fought over pay and conditions, such as building the case for change for the one per cent cap on uplift.

There have, she said, been some successes with the Police Remuneration Review Body and the Police Advisory Board but battles continue on matters such as limited duties.

In the last three years, she said the operating environment has changed: “Evidence is becoming much more important, data is becoming necessary and for that reason we have been building research capability behind the scenes as well.”

She added: “Modern policy-making requires credible facts and figures and not just rhetoric.”

For instance, the Federation’s Pay and Morale Survey is now the largest workforce survey in the UK and the data it produces is valuable for pay review bodies, for publicity and for other issues.

“It’s helping to get the message out that morale is low and that significant numbers of officer are leaving... It is getting the message out that we are not crying wolf but presenting credible data,” she said.

North Wales Police Federation’s Mark Jones said the work of the workplace rep should not be underestimated, and described his extensive caseload - one replicated by hundreds of Fed reps around the country.

He said: “It’s now been recognised by chief officers that the Federation is a pivotal part, an integral part in Force decision-making. That has not happened overnight, but is the result of continuous and persistent efforts by our team.”

Bedfordshire Federation secretary and treasurer Emma Carter revealed her ‘rollercoaster of learning’ since taking on the role. She talked of her ‘culture shock’ when, on appointment, she suddenly found her views being sought around the strategic top table from senior staff who would never otherwise have listened to her.

She concluded: “As a rep, and more specifically as a secretary, I have been shouted at, ignored, hugged, bled on and cried on - tears of sadness and of joy. I know we do not always get things right and sometimes it will not always go the way the officers hope that it will... but I am hopeful we are on the right path.

“We need to do this together.”
Dogged determination seems to have paid off for Tim Rogers, the national Federation’s response driving lead, who has been spearheading a campaign for a change in the law to give better protection to police drivers.

West Mercia’s Chief Constable Anthony Bangham, roads policing lead at the National Police Chiefs’ Council, signalled at conference that he would work closely with the Federation on the issue.

Tim, who is also deputy secretary at West Midlands Police Federation, was making a reluctant return to the conference stage, having outlined the Federation’s campaign at conference last year he had been hoping for more progress in the intervening year – given that the Federation has been calling for a change in the law for seven years.

Instead he had found more officers were being prosecuted for simply doing their job.

Heading a panel made up of Mr Bangham and Mark Aldred, a barrister and former police officer involved in the campaign, Tim introduced the session explaining the lack of legal protection for officers in pursuit or response drives.

The current legislation means that regardless of their training and experience, they are judged by the standards of the ‘careful and competent driver’ who is unlikely to go through a red light, cross the wrong side of bollards and so on. This means those engaging in a response or pursuit are vulnerable to a prosecution charge of dangerous or careless driving.

The current guidelines, Tim said, were unsatisfactory and unworkable leaving officers risking their liberty and livelihood.

“We are not asking for you to be able to drive carelessly and dangerously,” he told delegates, “But the training you get has to be reflected in roads policing legislation.”

The Federation is planning to write to all police drivers to warn them of all the risks they face. The Federation’s suggested amendment to wording was, Tim said, seen as ‘a sensible starting point’ by many people.

CC Bangham gave a commitment to working with the Federation to ensure that police drivers get the best training and agreed that pursuit drivers needed better protection.

He said: “There’s a possibility of a law change, but it will take a long time. The DPP guidance needs to be changed to better reflect the realities of police driving so we can work towards the very best protection for officers.”

But Mr Aldred pointed out that the DPP guidance had already been changed to reflect the need for protection, in conjunction with the Federation a few years ago.

“It’s not about the guidance. Officers don’t get charged with running a red light - if something happens, it gets dressed up as dangerous or careless driving, and that’s the problem. The issue with guidance is it’s just that, guidance,” he told conference.

A life on hold...

Merseyside police officer James Ellerman also gave a presentation at conference, talking about his own experiences of being prosecuted for dangerous driving after preventing a man who had been riding a motorcycle recklessly in Liverpool returning to the city centre by knocking him from the vehicle using his police van.

He talked about the stress he went through during the investigation, the sleepless nights, shaking with fear at the thought of being sent to prison and the fact that the up and coming trial had overshadowed the birth of his second daughter. His life, he said, was put on hold.

He explained that he felt he had no alternative but, using his knowledge, training and experience to cause the collision. He feared someone would be injured or killed if the motorcyclist was not stopped.

“I had to stop him returning to the city, I couldn’t do nothing,” said James, explaining that he felt he had to fulfil his duties of protecting the public, protecting property and that the motorcyclist posed a risk to the public.

On arresting the motorcyclist, he found he was riding a stolen bike and was disqualified from driving.

He thought that would be the end of it but it was just the beginning. He was served with gross misconduct papers and prosecuted.

The judge finally cleared him, saying of James’ intervention ‘he was damned if he did and damned if he didn’t’. 
Pay reforms on their way, says NPCC lead

Plans for officer pay including the introduction of the controversial Licence to Practise for high risk roles, a possible Registration to Practise to reinforce core skills, Advanced Practitioners and the new apprenticeship scheme were outlined by the NPCC lead for pay and conditions during a Wednesday break-out session.

The plans align closely with a review of rank structure, which Chief Constable Francis Habgood also discussed during his presentation.

He told delegates that while there was good and bad in the current pay structure he felt it was better to introduce a whole new structure rather than adapt the existing provisions.

"In my view, increments based on time served don’t have a role to play in the future. I don’t think regional pay works. But as an example, I could imagine top level constables earning more than entry level sergeants," he said.

Delegates expressed concerns that apprenticeships, expected to start next year, could bring a starting salary drop of 20 per cent from the current entry level.

Officers said a low salary could exclude older entrants and those with families, as the average start age for new police officers is currently 28. A potential starting salary for apprentices of £19,773 would leave an individual with just £35 of disposable income after living costs.

The Thames Valley Chief Constable set out the principles for pay – a basic national pay structure, local flexibility (linked to the cost of living), a link between pay and contribution, recognising competence and skills, a review of increments based on time served, the consolidation of appropriate allowances, a link between risk, responsibility and scale of role and the fact that the total reward package must be fair.

CC Habgood said: "Ultimately police pay has to be fair for people who work for forces and also for taxpayers."

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