



View from the chair

John Apter,
National Chair,
Police Federation

The real reason we are here...

It's good to see that the recent report by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Services showed public confidence in the police service is increasing. This is despite the fact that the service has lost almost 22,000 officers since 2010.

Officers do all they can to provide the best possible service, but the public are no fools, and consequences of the cuts are increasingly evident. They deserve better, but to do so we need an immediate and significant, centrally funded investment from the Government. If not crime rates will continue to increase, and it will be the public who suffer.

We will continue to put to decision makers the concerns and issues that our members contend with on a daily basis. At the forefront of this will be our Did You Know? campaign, which ensures that our members have access to clear and concise information about their basic entitlements. It's one thing to expect officers to do more with fewer resources, but it's another to expect them to give up the entitlements which were put in place to ensure that they are sufficiently rested, physically and mentally, before reporting for their next shift.

2019 is the Federation's centenary year, and over the next 12 months I will be highlighting the exceptional work our Federation Reps do on a daily basis. Our local Reps are the backbone of the PFEW, working tirelessly for members – often without fanfare or thanks.

Reaching our 100-year milestone is something many before us predicted would never happen. The PFEW has evolved and adapted over many years, but we must never forget the real reason we are here – to support our members.

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Warm words 'mean nothing' without law change

Home Office reassurances that police officers will not be prosecuted for pursuit drives "mean nothing" in reality, a legal expert has told delegates at this year's Roads Policing Conference.

Barrister Mark Aldred, from QEB Hollis Whiteman, touched on his first-hand experience of representing officers who have fallen foul of the law in a lively talk at the event in Hinckley, Leicestershire.

Under existing legislation emergency responders who drive outside of the careful and competent driver legal standard can be jailed for dangerous driving. In addition the police could be subjected to gross misconduct proceedings.

Painfully slow

The Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW) has been campaigning for seven years to bring about a change in legislation, and despite support from both the Conservative and Labour parties, progress to bring about positive change has been painfully slow.

Mr Aldred said: "Here we are seven years later and police officers are still going through hell. I'm afraid as long as officers keep driving, the Government



probably doesn't feel the need or the urgency to change the legislation in the way it agrees it needs to be changed."

Delegates were reminded of the Metropolitan Police initiative of tactical contact with moped criminals in London, which was hailed by police commanders and the Home Secretary



The Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) will look at the letter

of the law and conclude that police officers have a case to answer, delegates were told. And this can result in a long and traumatic legal process with the officer's life on hold and their liberty in the balance.

Assurances mean nothing

Mr Aldred said he has regularly written to prosecutors to quote the official Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) guidance that it "is very unlikely to be appropriate to proceed with a prosecution on public interest grounds" adding that this has never yet resulted in proceedings being stopped: "Until that law is changed, those assurances mean nothing."

The delays in legal change are being blamed on Brexit.

Police Minister Nick Hurd, who did not attend the Conference, took to Twitter to comment: "I understand and share the frustration about the slow pace of progress on changing the law and processes around police pursuits in order to give trained police drivers more confidence. We are working closely to get the detail right. The will is there, I can assure you."

Chief's vision for 'safest roads in the world' means more officers

Putting police officers back on the roads in significant numbers is essential for saving lives, the country's top roads policing officer has said.

West Mercia Chief Constable Anthony Bangham, the roads policing lead for the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC), set out his vision for the UK having the "safest roads in the world" at the Roads Policing Conference.

He told an audience of roads policing officers and stakeholders that five preventable deaths occur on the nation's road network every day. Those figures have reduced from 2,946 in 2007 to 1,793 a decade later, but since 2011 they have started to plateau.

Mr Bangham said: "After many years of decline, you can see for yourselves that all the signs are that this is getting worse, it is getting worse and if we don't

address the problem, we are going to see all those declines reversed."

Mr Bangham said it was unfortunate that Transport Minister Jesse Norman had been unable to address the conference in person, as the Government needed to heed his warnings if they were serious about reducing road fatalities.

Prioritise roads policing

There are now 20,000 fewer police officers than a decade ago and fewer dedicated roads policing officers. Mr Bangham told delegates that his focus for 2019 will be to work towards the goal of safer roads, safer speeds, safer road users and vehicles, and post-crash response.

He will also be seeking to encourage more forces to prioritise roads policing and to join him in calling for the



investment that is starting to happen, to filter through to roads policing.

The Chief Constable was asked about the length of time of investigations by the Independent Office of Police Conduct (IOPC), with some officers spending years with their lives on hold. Mr Bangham said he shared those concerns, and that lengthy investigations are no good for officers or the public.

He also paid tribute to roads policing officers for the "tough, complex, traumatic and dangerous" job they do. "Sadly it's often seen as a thankless task – the public want us to do it, the public don't want us to do it – I don't think we've ever got over that dilemma," he said.

"There's less of you doing more; it's so important that we shine a light on what you do."

Damaging impact of IOPC delays

Protracted Independent Office of Police Conduct (IOPC) investigations and their impact on police officers' wellbeing were very much in evidence during a panel session at the conference.

Delegates heard from two serving police officers about an incident in 2014 involving a moped rider. Although at the time they were not pursuing the moped rider he lost control of his vehicle in front of them and crashed into a stationary car. Despite the best efforts of the officers at the scene to give CPR he died of his injuries.

Following the incident, not only did the officers have to deal with comprehending the trauma of the incident, they also had to deal with the uncertainties that being placed under investigation brings.

In this case the IOPC took three years to report its finding, during which time the officers involved were not permitted to carry out the job that they were trained to do, had to cope with the uncertainties of being under investigation, endure the impact on their wellbeing, and put their lives on hold.

At the end of the investigation the IOPC cleared all the officers involved of any wrongdoing.

The Police Federation of England and Wales is actively campaigning to bring about change to IOPC investigations so that they are investigated and reported to timescales that lessen the impact on all – not just police officers, but the family and friends of members of the public who are involved.

The length of time investigations by the IOPC take following incidents involving police drivers was a theme throughout the two-day event.

The IOPC were unable to attend the conference.