

Deputy National Secretary 2025 Conference Speech

Friends. Colleagues. Family.

Because that's what we are. A family.

We call policing a family because we stand together in danger, in crisis, and in service to others.

We trust one another. We protect one another.

We show courage every day for the people we serve.

But too often, that sense of family ends when it comes to the duty of care we're owed in the job.

Because real life doesn't wait politely outside the station.

It happens in the middle of a response, an investigation, a trial.

It happens while we're managing someone else's crisis and quietly carrying our own.

When one of our own loses a baby or a partner, or struggles to care for a parent or child while serving the public, too often the service doesn't see them as a person in need of care.

They're seen as a problem. As paperwork. As a name on a posting sheet.

That isn't good enough.

And it isn't what a family does.

We're here today to change that.

We're making a simple but powerful case: **that compassion must be written into our Regulations, not left to chance.**

Because unlike most workers, police officers don't have the basic statutory protections others do.

No automatic right to paid maternity support, or carer's leave, or neonatal care leave.

If it isn't written into the Regulations and Determinations, it doesn't exist.

All those protections that millions of workers rely on only apply to us if they're made explicit in Regulations. Or if you're lucky enough to serve under chief officers who get it.

So, we're left with a postcode lottery. Where your ability to care for your family depends on where you serve and who you report to.

That's not right. And it's not sustainable.

What must always be taken into account are the **unique demands of policing**. That means not just the pressure, assaults, and abuse, but the shift work, aid commitments, recalls to duty, and countless other factors that are unique to this profession. We are often compared to other sectors or organisations, but that comparison is fundamentally wrong.

Policing is unique, and the Regulations must reflect that uniqueness. To do otherwise is to let officers down. The result will be more sickness, burnout, and ultimately more resignations.

That's why today we are calling for a **Charter for Change**.

Our Charter for Change

A blueprint for a modern, compassionate police service.

We're calling for:

- **Full pay for family-related leave from day one** — because no officer should have to earn the right to care for their child or grieve for their partner.
- **Carer's leave** — so that when your parent, partner or child needs you, you don't have to choose between duty and love.
- **Neonatal care leave** — up to 12 weeks on full pay when your newborn is in hospital, because no officer should be checking their shift rota beside an incubator.
- **Safe leave** — for officers experiencing domestic abuse, giving them the time and safety they deserve.
- **Bereavement leave** — full pay after the death of a partner or child, because no one should have to return to work before they're ready.
- **Paid leave for miscarriage and pregnancy loss** — recognising a pain that too many have faced in silence.

And before officers are deployed back to the front line, there should never be a simple calculation based on the number of hours lost presented as a monetary value. There must be a proper **risk assessment** to determine how best to reintroduce officers to operational duty. This approach is common in sport but overlooked in policing. Just as in sport, our people are the real asset — the ones who deliver — and we must care for the individual.

This isn't radical.

It's humane.

And it's already happening across the public and private sectors.

Policing should lead, not follow.

Because how can we talk about reform if we can't even provide a modern workplace?

We already see areas where there is broad agreement between staff associations and the APCC. But not from the NPCC.

One clear example is the **PRRB recommendation for two weeks' full pay for Maternity Support Leave (paternity leave)**, a recommendation that was to be implemented swiftly. The NPCC have not agreed, citing cost. Yet the first week is already paid, and the second week, currently statutory, can be claimed back, making the actual top-up cost negligible.

That's not good enough.

And it's a tired excuse.

Yes, there's a cost.

But the cost of losing good people mid-career, experienced, committed officers is far higher.

The Office for National Statistics estimates it costs around **£180,000** to recruit and train one officer.

If even a handful of our proposals help retain skilled officers, they will more than pay for themselves many times over.

Leadership that Leads, Not Manages

Compassion doesn't weaken leadership, it defines it.

We need leaders who see people, not postings.

Who measure success not just in targets, but in fairness, wellbeing, and trust.

Because culture starts at the top. In how leaders respond when officers are struggling, grieving, or under pressure.

And let me be clear to Government and senior police leaders across England and Wales: **this cannot wait**. The problem is now. The solutions are simple... If there is the will to change.

Act now.

Make the changes that will not only support officers but ultimately provide a better service for the public.

And that support must also extend to those facing **disciplinary action**.

Officers under investigation are still human beings. They are colleagues, parents, and friends. Too often they are isolated, cut off, and treated as if guilt were a foregone conclusion.

That isolation breaks people.

It destroys confidence and, in tragic cases, lives.

Fairness, transparency and care are not luxuries, they are obligations.

Leadership means holding people to account **without abandoning them**.

There will always be cases where dismissal is justified and fair. But for countless others, investigations end with no finding, yet the process itself leaves them demoralised, broken, and with shattered morale.

A culture that protects its people when they're at their lowest is one that earns the public's trust when it matters most.

We cannot talk seriously about retaining women, tackling misogyny, or modernising policing unless we back those words with action.

This is how we do it. By creating a culture that says: *you can have a career in policing, and a life outside it*.

Every year, one in seven babies in the UK spends time in neonatal care.

Every year, hundreds of families lose mothers during or after childbirth.

Every year, thousands of officers quietly juggle caring for ageing parents or sick partners while working nights, weekends, and overtime.

If you're an Inspector in your forties with young children and ageing parents, you're pulled in every direction. Trying to be a good cop, a good partner, a good son or daughter. It's an impossible situation.

And what do officers get in return?

A system that says: *we care — but only if the exigencies of duty allow*.

That phrase “subject to the exigencies of duty” has been the get-out clause for compassion for decades.

It’s time we deleted it.

We cannot tell the public we’re a service built on humanity, then fail to show humanity to our own.

So today, as already mentioned, we put forward our **Charter for Change**.

Simple, fair, achievable reforms to make policing a better place to work, a fairer place to stay, and a stronger family to belong to.

A Charter that must be written into the **Police Covenant**.

A Charter that **mandates, not requests**, Chief Officer action.

A Charter that brings the protections every other worker enjoys into our Regulations.

Not someday. **Now**.

We’re not asking for the moon.

We’re asking for decency.

For dignity, compassion, and understanding. The same values we show the public every day.

To the **Home Office, NPCC, and APCC**, we say this:

You have the power to make this happen.

Make it a priority.

Don’t wait for a tragedy to prove why it matters.

Show the nation that policing looks after its own.

Because when we care for the people who care for everyone else, that’s when policing truly lives up to its name.

Thank you.