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SUMMER 2025

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STEVE BUTLER MOVING INTO REGIONAL POSITION

By **Steve Butler**, secretary of West Mercia Police Federation



As summer draws to a close, it feels right to pause and reflect on the remarkable achievements of colleagues and the occasions that remind us of the sacrifices made by police officers.

I want to extend my heartfelt congratulations to Sergeant Kully Singh and PC Stacey Hegenbarth, who were recognised at the National Police Bravery Awards. They were named regional winners after stopping a vehicle being driven the wrong way at speed on the M5 last July. Their courage and professionalism in the face of great danger is truly inspiring, and they embody the finest traditions of policing – quick thinking, selflessness, and determination to protect the public.

The Bravery Awards remind us that policing is like no other job. Every officer knows that when they put on the uniform, they may face situations others would run from. The courage shown daily by colleagues, often without recognition, deserves to be celebrated.

Honouring our fallen colleagues

That is why National Police Memorial Day is such an important date in our calendar. This year's service on 28 September in Coventry will bring together the policing family to honour those who made the ultimate sacrifice. It is a poignant reminder of the risks inherent in our work and the bond that unites officers across the UK. I encourage members to attend, or at least take a quiet moment of reflection to ensure those who gave their lives are never forgotten.

I also want to recognise those who took part in this year's Police Unity Tour. Officers from West Mercia joined colleagues nationwide to cycle hundreds of miles in aid of Care of Police Survivors (COPS). Their arrival at the National Memorial Arboretum is always a powerful sight, followed by the moving COPS Service of Remembrance. Standing alongside survivors as the roll call of names is read aloud is an experience that leaves a lasting impact.

Representing Region 3

This will be my final column as secretary of West Mercia Police Federation, as I move on to take up the role of regional rep.

It has been an honour to serve our members. I am immensely proud of what we have achieved together and grateful for the support so many of you have shown me.

When I first stepped into the role, I had little idea of just how challenging – and rewarding – it would be.

My immediate aim was simple: to get up to speed quickly, steady the ship, and guide the branch through what was a particularly difficult period. Looking back, I believe we've achieved that together. The branch has grown stronger and more resilient, though of course, with the pace of change in policing, the challenges never stand still. Ours will always be a work in progress.

Thank you Suzy

None of this progress would have been possible without the commitment and support of our Branch Council, our full-time representatives, and, most notably, our office manager, Suzy Smith.

Suzy's tireless dedication has been instrumental to our successes, and I want to place on record my heartfelt thanks to her and to everyone who has contributed along the way.

As I step into a national role as a representative for Region 3, I will be asking the Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW) whether I can continue to support the branch in my new capacity to ensure a smooth transition. I will, of course, remain in regular contact.

There is lots to do in my new role, and I look forward to applying the skills and experience I've gained here to have an impact on a wider scale.

I am determined to continue to ensure your voices are heard, to fight for better pay and conditions, and to push forward improvements in welfare and wellbeing for all members.

Lesley Williams takes on secretary role

I am also delighted to confirm the appointment of Lesley Williams as our first female branch secretary.

Having worked alongside Lesley for many years, I know she brings a wealth of knowledge, professionalism, and dedication.

She is exceptionally well-placed to take on this vital role, linking our representatives, the Force, PFEW, branch staff, and, most importantly, our members.

I am confident Lesley will excel and continue to strengthen our leadership team, and I am fully committed to supporting her during this transition. Please join me in congratulating Lesley on her well-earned appointment.

Finally, thank you again for your professionalism, dedication, and support. It has been a privilege to serve you, and I look forward to continuing that service in my new role.



HERO OFFICERS 'HUMBLED' TO WIN REGIONAL BRAVERY AWARDS

PC Stacey Hegenbarth says she is proud to be a West Mercia Police officer after winning a Bravery Award with colleague Sergeant Kully Singh.

The officers were regional winners at the Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW) event, which took place in July.

And Stacey paid tribute to the bravery of colleagues in West Mercia and across the country.

Stacey said: "I'm humbled by the award, and I'm really proud to represent West Mercia.

"Everyone does things on a daily basis that are worthy of being here, so it's a privilege to be receiving the award."

Her comments were echoed by Kully, who said the pair 'were doing their job'.

He said: "I'm massively humbled by it.

"The stories we have heard are so harrowing, heroic, and courageous.

"We came to do our job. I know it's been

said so many times, but we genuinely did. It's really nice to be recognised."

The officers were nominated for their incredible handling of an incident on the M5 motorway last July (2024).

Called to reports of a vehicle travelling at reckless speed in the wrong direction on the southbound carriageway, the officers faced a dangerous and difficult task in bringing the situation to a safe conclusion.

With Kully driving, they manoeuvred to stop the vehicle with a near head-on collision.

It left the officers with severe whiplash and Stacey with a concussion and abdominal bruising, from which they have fully recovered.

West Mercia Police workplace representative, Sergeant Rob 'Swoosh' Seewoosaha, who accompanied the duo to London for the event, said: "Kully and Stacey's courageous actions brought an

incredibly dangerous situation to an end.

"They displayed remarkable bravery and unbelievable selflessness, knowing that they were putting themselves in danger to protect the public.

"It highlights the risks officers face every day, in facing up to dangerous situations."

Rob, who is not only a colleague of Kully and Stacey but also a friend, added: "It was an absolute honour to join them in London, to celebrate with them both and best of all, see them recognised for their work.

"This is the second time I've been lucky enough to attend the event. The stories we hear, the people we meet and the overall pride felt throughout the day and night never ceases to amaze me.

"Kully and Stacey are thoroughly deserving of their award, and on behalf of West Mercia Police Federation, I send our congratulations."

Their incident was mentioned by Home Secretary Yvette Cooper during her speech at the awards ceremony.

She said: "If the stories (of bravery) tell us anything, it's the way in which all of you need to be ready to respond to anything that you face.

"Whether it's the off-duty officers in



I'M HUMBLLED BY THE AWARD, AND I'M REALLY PROUD TO REPRESENT WEST MERCIA. EVERYONE DOES THINGS ON A DAILY BASIS THAT ARE WORTHY OF BEING HERE, SO IT'S A PRIVILEGE TO BE RECEIVING THE AWARD.



Regional winners: Sergeant Kully Singh and PC Stacey Hegenbarth at this year's ceremony.

Lancashire or Southall breaking up fights in the street, or in Cleveland, Cumbria, West Mercia, the West Midlands, dealing with the mobs or gas explosions or speeding vehicles or dangerous dogs."

This year's overall winners of the Bravery Awards were [Sergeant Gregory Gillespie](#), [PC Luke Holden](#) and [PCSO Timothy Parry](#), from Merseyside Police.

The trio confronted and detained Axel Rudakubana after he killed three children at a dance class in Southport on Monday 29 July 2024.

“WE CAME TO DO OUR JOB. I KNOW IT'S BEEN SAID SO MANY TIMES, BUT WE GENUINELY DID. IT'S REALLY NICE TO BE RECOGNISED.

Ms Cooper thanked all police officers for 'keeping us safe'.

She said: "I'm hugely grateful, but I say this on behalf of people right across the country, we are hugely grateful for the bravery you show.

"Not just to face the really difficult things but then also to get back up the following morning and to face it all again.

"Thank you for doing that. Thank you for caring so much for the job that you do.

"And thank you so much for being part of the amazing thing that is British policing.

"Thank you for keeping us safe."

The Prime Minister, Sir Kier Starmer, sent a video message to nominees.

He said: "When faced with life-threatening risks, or an acutely distressing situation, most people would run or back away.

"But not you. You step up. You go

towards the danger. You put the needs of others before your own. That's why policing truly is a job like no other.

"It's why my government will always do everything in our power to support you in your vital mission.

"On behalf of our whole country, I want you to know we appreciate your skill, your service, and your sacrifice. Not just today, but always."

The Policing Minister, Dame Diana Johnson, added: "Congratulations to every single nominee. You deserve all the plaudits and praise you receive.

"Regardless of whether you won or not, I hope you are all feeling incredibly proud of yourself. Your families, friends, and colleague are also incredibly proud of you.

"For all that you have done and continue to do, thank you."

PFEW national chair, Tiff Lynch, also thanked and praised officers for their 'unwavering dedication, never knowing what challenges they may face'.

Tiff said: "In the face of uncertainty, danger and adversity, they act with courage and professionalism – not for accolades or applause, but because they truly believe in their duty to protect others.

"Tonight, as we celebrate the 30th Police Bravery Awards, we come together to recognise those whose actions have gone far beyond what is expected. The stories we share are not just examples of bravery – they are powerful reminders of the extraordinary risks officers take to keep our communities safe.

"Whether confronting violent attackers, rescuing individuals from life-threatening situations, or making split-second decisions under immense pressure, these officers have shown exceptional courage and selflessness."

[Read more about Kully and Stacey's nomination.](#)

BRAVERY AWARD WINNER TREASURES THANK-YOU CARD FROM HIS SON

Bravery Award winner Sergeant Kully Singh said a thank-you card from his son was the 'biggest reward' he could receive.

Despite being named 'regional winners' at this year's award ceremony, Kully said an even greater 'treasure' came after his son's nursery saw his nomination on social media and made him a card.

The card shows 'Super Dad' Kully flying over a police car, hand-drawn by his son.

And inside, the message reads:

**To Daddy,
You are so brave
You are so strong
You do so much and take care of us.
Thank you for protecting me and everyone.**

"The award is so humbling," said Kully, who has his son as his screensaver.

"But the biggest reward was in nursery, they made a card for me. That's the thing I treasure more than anything."

Kully recalled looking down at his screensaver when last year's incident happened.

"At the time, my policing instinct kicked in and I knew the only way we could stop the car would be by using our vehicle as a barrier," he said.

"I remember, there was a split-second where I looked down at my screensaver and saw my son's face looking back at me. I remember thinking I needed to be OK, for my son and my wife, Amy.

"It's quite emotional thinking about how different that day could've ended. Fortunately, though, both Stacey walked away with minimal injuries."

Kully said the Bravery Awards brought a form of closure for his wife Amy.

He said: "Amy has lived through it. She got the text saying I'd been in a crash.

"It's coming up to a year and she has been through it all.

"For her, it's the end of the chapter and can move on."



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STAND TOGETHER IN REMEMBRANCE OF FALLEN COLLEAGUES

With this year's National Police Memorial Day being held just around the corner in Coventry, the Federation is urging as many members as possible to attend the service.

This year's event takes place on Sunday 28 September in Coventry Cathedral, for the first time.

It will bring together family, friends and loved ones of officers who have died in the line of duty, as well as serving and retired officers of all ranks, politicians, civic and faith leaders, and members of the public.

National Police Memorial Day gives the policing family a chance to honour and remember colleagues who have lost their lives in the line of duty.

Speaking on behalf of West Mercia

Police Federation, Steve Butler said: "The Memorial Day is one of the most important dates in the policing calendar.

"It is an incredibly emotional, thought-provoking, and inspirational day, and a chance for us all to pause, reflect, and pay our respects to those who made the ultimate sacrifice.

"This year, with the service taking place close to home in Coventry, I would encourage as many of our members as possible to attend.

"Your presence will show support for the families of the fallen and underline the unity and strength of the policing family."

The service will remember and honour the lives of more than 5,000 police officers who have died in service over the past 180 years.

It is set to include processions, music, and readings, and the lighting of candles to represent each of the four nations of the UK.

Steve said the day provides an opportunity not only to remember the sacrifices of the past but also to reaffirm the pride and commitment of those serving today.

He added: "The families of our fallen colleagues draw great comfort from the support shown on this day.

"By standing together, we ensure their courage and commitment is never forgotten."

Further details, including how to register for free, can be found on the [National Police Memorial Day website](#).

FEDERATION RESPONDS TO PAY AWARD

Responding to the Government's police pay award announcement, Brian Booth, deputy chair of the Police Federation of England and Wales, said: "Today's pay award of 4.2 per cent barely treads water, with inflation currently at 4.1 per cent.

"We note that chief constables argued for a pay rise of just 3.8 per cent. We welcome the Government's decision to reject that position and instead listen to the strong case we have been making on behalf of police officers across the country.

"However, after more than a decade of real terms pay cuts, this award does little to reverse the long-term decline in officers' living standards or address the crisis policing faces. A pay rise worth the price of a Big Mac per shift won't stop record levels of resignations, record mental health absences, or the record number of assaults on officers.

"We will now ask our members whether they accept or reject this award."



POLICE UNITY TOUR 2025: REMEMBERING FALLEN OFFICERS

Hundreds came together at the National Memorial Arboretum to round off this year's Police Unity Tour (PUT) and pay tribute to officers who lost their lives on duty.

As with PUT tradition, the Care of Police Survivors (COPS) Service of Remembrance was held after the 530 cyclists taking part reached the arboretum in Alrewas, Staffordshire.

West Mercia Police officers joined the West Midlands Chapter of the PUT – which was in its 13th UK edition – alongside colleagues from the West Midlands, Warwickshire and Staffordshire forces.

The tour raises awareness of fallen officers and boosts the funds of COPS, the charity dedicated to supporting the families

of fallen officers.

A spokesperson for West Mercia Police Federation said: "We are happy to see the Unity Tour still going strong after being introduced to UK policing in 2013, and to see another successful edition held for all the same important reasons as ever.

"It is vital we remember the officers who once worked beside us, stand in solidarity with their families, and raise funds and awareness for the invaluable care given to these people by COPS.

"We hope our Federation members who participated in this year's event enjoyed themselves and were able to take comfort and pride from the fact they were getting through the miles in honour of all the police officers tragically taken from our profession.

"As always, this would have meant the world to their relatives and their friends both inside and outside of policing, so it undoubtedly was a weekend well spent."

At the remembrance service, a roll of honour was read listing officers who died on duty in the past year:

Acting Sergeant Reece Buckenham of Hertfordshire Constabulary who died on 29 June 2024;

DC Karen Smith of Humberside Police who died on 18 December 2024;

PC Rosie Prior of North Yorkshire Police who died on 11 January 2025;

PC Michael Bruce of the Metropolitan Police who died on 14 June 2025, and

PC Ian Minett of Gloucestershire Constabulary who died on 21 June 2025.

This was delivered by COPS national president Gill Marshall and was followed by a minute's silence.

Earlier, Gill had welcomed chief officers, Federation representatives, policing stakeholders and PUT cyclists and support teams to the service, which featured music from the West Midlands Police Brass Band

“IT IS VITAL WE REMEMBER THE OFFICERS WHO ONCE WORKED BESIDE US, STAND IN SOLIDARITY WITH THEIR FAMILIES, AND RAISE FUNDS AND AWARENESS FOR THE INVALUABLE CARE GIVEN TO THESE PEOPLE BY COPS.



Photos courtesy of COPS.

Hundreds attend this year's COPS Service of Remembrance.

and its vocalist Superintendent Sam Batey, who sang two songs.

Having lost her own police officer husband in 2006, Gill reassured the families of fallen officers at the service that their sacrifice is never forgotten despite the day-to-day challenges of policing.

Three family members who had lost a police officer also gave their own readings.

Laurie Murphy talked about the impact the death of her father – Dyfed Powys DC Roger Meyrick – in 1990 had on her. She was 16 at the time and had a sister who was 13 and a brother who was 9.

Roger was 37 when he died in a head-on car crash with a lorry while he was on surveillance training. Tragically, three other Dyfed Powys Police officers also died as a result of the accident. DCs Leonid Evans, 41, and Nicholas Tabraham, 29, died on the same day while Paul Hetherington, who was 35, died 10 days later.

In a very moving speech, Laurie recalled the day when officers came to the family home to tell them of her father's death and told how the family's world fell apart.

"He was our dad and we loved him so much," she said.

Laurie explained the impact of realising that her dad had missed out on so much – seeing her get married, having three children and a grandson and following her brother's journey to being an Iron Man.

She admitted that she had found it difficult when her husband had joined Dyfed Powys Police as a police officer, but that ultimately that had led to her finding out about COPS and getting involved three years ago.

Fiona Deans, sister of PC Peter Deans, 25, of Avon and Somerset Police, told of the effect it had on her when her brother died with colleague PC Jonathan Stapley on 29 December 1984 when they were in a road

accident during a police chase.

She said it could be 'just as hard, just as tough' to lose an officer when you were a sibling, and welcomed the support of the COPS siblings group and the charity generally.

"It's a huge comfort to know that Peter is remembered, and I am remembered," Fiona said.

The third family member to speak was Susan Gibson, the daughter of Sergeant Edward Thomson of Strathclyde Police. He was 41 when he died on 13 January 1982 after a road accident. Susan, who was 21 at the time, had been a nurse and remembered going to the hospital to see him after the accident and expecting him to survive. But sadly he died from catastrophic injuries to his chest.

Devastated by his loss, she said: "I just felt like a big part of me had gone too."

Susan explained that she had found a lot of comfort and support from COPS, and highlighted the fact the charity gave her access to the Spectrum counselling service.

During the service, wreaths were laid by for the Office of the Lord Lieutenant of Staffordshire, the High Sheriff of Staffordshire, the Home Office, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services, the National Police Chiefs' Council, the College of Policing, the Blue Knights, the Police Unity Tour and COPS.

West Yorkshire Chief Constable John Robins, a COPS trustee, closed the service. He said: "We all know COPS was survivor initiated and survivor led, and it will also always be survivor focussed."

Chief Constable Robins also thanked everyone involved in the remembrance service, paying tribute to families who he said had faced 'unimaginable loss' but stood united and proud in memory of their loved ones.

After the service, families and other guests made their way to The Beat, an avenue of trees dedicated to individual forces and officers to lay wreaths and single red roses.

Earlier in the day, crowds gathered at the arboretum to welcome the arrival of cyclists from forces across England and Wales who had undertaken the PUT, a sponsored ride from their home forces to the service, aimed at raising awareness of fallen officers and raising funds for the COPS charity.

This year's PUT cyclists were joined as they rode in for the service by 100 members of the Blue Knights, the law enforcement motorcycle club and police motorcyclists from the fleets of several forces.

The 2026 PUT is set to take place across the weekend of Friday 7 August, with the COPS annual Service of Remembrance to be held at the National Memorial Arboretum on Sunday 9 August.



The Blue Knights arrive at the arboretum.



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FEDERATION HOPES LANDMARK UNIFORM SURVEY WILL MARK A TURNING POINT IN KIT AND EQUIPMENT

West Mercia Federation says a landmark survey into police uniforms and equipment is long overdue.

The survey has revealed widespread frustration among police officers and staff in England and Wales.

Many describe their kit as unfit for purpose and a direct cause of health issues.

Steve Butler hopes the National Uniform and Equipment Survey, the first of its kind, will prove to be a turning point, with priority given to 'officer's wellbeing, practicality, and operational effectiveness'.

Speaking on behalf of the branch, Steve said: "Uniform is a huge part of being a police officer and should help our members to do the job, not hinder them.

"We've known there are issues with kit and equipment, particularly for our female colleagues, who report in this survey lasting health problems crushed breasts, breathing difficulties, and musculoskeletal problems.

"This national survey shines a light on the issues being experienced by officers and staff.

"It is well overdue but welcome, and hopefully it marks a turning point.

"We need the highest possible minimum standards for uniform so it is fit for purpose and fit for all."

Steve added that ergonomics must be at the centre of decision-making when it comes to purchasing uniforms and equipment.

"For too long, wearability has been overlooked, with comfort often sacrificed in the name of cost savings," Steve said. "This must stop.

"Officers should have uniforms and equipment that are not only functional but also cutting-edge in terms of comfort and suitability for the demands of their role.

"A clear example is our custodian street helmets used in foot patrol. These appear purely ceremonial, with little consideration for the wearer.

"When you compare their cost to flat caps or bumper caps, which are more likely



to be worn regularly, it simply doesn't make sense.

"Uniform and equipment design must prioritise the officer's wellbeing, practicality, and operational effectiveness."

The survey heard from 20,8383 respondents, with 86 per cent police officers and 14 per cent police staff, 34 per cent female and 66 per cent male.

The majority of respondents reported their overall experience of wearing police uniform as negative (56 per cent). The figure in West Mercia Police was 61 per cent, with 17 per cent saying their experience was positive.

The study also found that 59 per cent of respondents in West Mercia Police had reported at least one health issue believed to be caused or made worse by their uniform. This was below the national figure (60 per cent).

The National Uniform and Equipment Survey was led by Dr Camilla De Camargo and Dr Stephanie Wallace, from Lancaster University Law School, working in collaboration with Police Federation of England and Wales's (PFEW) senior researcher Sahrish Khan, and the National Police Chiefs' Council.

Dr De Camargo said: "We are shocked by the results but, unfortunately, not surprised - it is important to be able to highlight these issues on such a large scale.

"We hope this evidence can lead to impactful changes that improve the lives of uniform wearers every day."

Almost seven out of 10 (69 per cent) of respondents reported negative experiences with cargo trousers. This was the most challenging item of clothing, PFEW said.

The report found that 61 per cent of officers in England and Wales say their body armour 'worsened their uniform experience'. This was the second most problematic item of uniform.

PFEW's headline recommendations to improve uniform and equipment included Steve's call for the highest minimum national standards.

Their recommendations also included establishing a single point of accountability in the form of a Strategic Uniform Board, and to have continuous review and feedback.

PFEW National Board members Belinda Goodwin and Zac Mader, who have worked closely with the researchers, said: "The national survey findings are disquieting to say the least.

"Our officers put their lives on the line day in and day out to provide the highest standards of service which the public rightly expects from them.

"Yet, seven in 10 officers find their uniform restricts their movement thereby reducing their effectiveness, while more than five in 10 officers find their current body armour uncomfortable.

"These factors significantly heighten risk to officer safety and impact their ability to keep their communities safe.

"How can it be right that on one hand our employers (chief constables) and the Government are adopting modern technology and costly artificial intelligence assisted equipment such as drones, and on the other hand they refuse to invest in basic day-to-day equipment such as new age uniform and body armour for our officers and staff?

"We ardently appeal to our employers and the Government to wake up and take cognisance of the independent evidence obtained by this pioneering study to immediately devote resources to provide our officers with uniform that is fit for purpose and fit for all."

“FOR TOO LONG, WEARABILITY HAS BEEN OVERLOOKED, WITH COMFORT OFTEN SACRIFICED IN THE NAME OF COST SAVINGS. THIS MUST STOP.



WEST MERCIA POLICE NETWORK TACKLING MEN'S HEALTH ISSUES

As World Suicide Prevention Day (Wednesday 10 September) approaches, West Mercia Police's Men's Health Network is doing all it can to break the stigma around men's health and wellbeing. Its work carries added significance following the loss of PC Dane Roleston-Lowe, whose sister Nena is preparing for a skydive in his memory to raise awareness of men's mental health.

A West Mercia Police Federation member has spoken of his desire to improve men's health after taking over as chair of the Force's Men's Health Network.

The network supports officers and staff on issues ranging from mental health to male-specific cancers.

Founded around six years ago, it is chaired by Inspector Fergus Green, with Inspector Karl Pierpoint as deputy.

"There's a lot of research that tells us health outcomes for men and boys are generally worse than for women and girls," said Fergus.

"Men are often less likely to seek support or see their GP, and societal pressures like 'man up' discourage men from opening up about problems. We're trying to change that."

The network covers a broad spectrum, from tackling stress and sleep issues to raising awareness of testicular and prostate cancer. Mental health and suicide prevention are also major focuses.

A staff survey carried out shortly after the network's launch revealed childcare and work-life balance as key concerns for male officers and staff.

In response, the group created a 'dad's pack' to highlight paternity leave entitlements and flexible working options, and encourage fathers to take up the support available.

"Flexible working is for everyone, but too often it's only mums who apply," Fergus explained. "We want dads to know the same options are open to them."

To cut through busy inboxes, the network has experimented with innovative ways of getting out its messages.

For instance, QR codes were placed on the back of toilet doors – directing staff to NHS guidance on cancers and mental health – proved an effective tool.

The Force's 'Blues and Views' podcast has also become a popular platform, with episodes covering sleep, stress, healthy eating and, most recently, alcohol misuse.

Fergus said: "The sleep podcast remains one of the strongest listened to."

"Nearly two years on, colleagues still tell me they've just discovered it. That's really

“THERE'S A LOT OF RESEARCH THAT TELLS US HEALTH OUTCOMES FOR MEN AND BOYS ARE GENERALLY WORSE THAN FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS. MEN ARE OFTEN LESS LIKELY TO SEEK SUPPORT OR SEE THEIR GP, AND SOCIETAL PRESSURES LIKE 'MAN UP' DISCOURAGE MEN FROM OPENING UP ABOUT PROBLEMS. WE'RE TRYING TO CHANGE THAT.

nice that the message is getting out there."

Webinars, including one recorded with a local prostate cancer support group, have provided practical resources for staff, sometimes at critical moments.

Fergus said: "I was contacted by a colleague who had a member of their team who had been diagnosed with prostate cancer, and they're looking for how to support this person.

"I had all the literature, and could put them in touch with someone with experience of going through prostate cancer, and all the support groups that he recommends.

"If we can help just one person, it makes it all worthwhile," Fergus added.

November is arguably the network's busiest time of year, as the team spearheads West Mercia Police's 'Movember' fundraising.

Since forming its own Movember team, it has raised nearly £18,000 for men's health charities – earning recognition as the top emergency services police fundraising team in both 2022 and 2023.

"In 2023 we raised more than £8,000 and received a nice little plaque for our efforts," said Fergus. "We're really proud of that success."

Fergus also spoke highly of the dedicated members of the Men's Health Team, such as PC Sian Stockton, who has raised more than £10,000 for Movember and has supported the team with year round activities.

"She's a fantastic champion for men's health," Fergus said.

The Men's Health Network meets every six weeks to plan activities and is keen to recruit younger officers and staff to carry the work forward.

Fergus hopes to establish a network of 'health champions' who can visit shift briefings to share advice and raise awareness.

"Ultimately, we're not medics," he said. "Our job is to highlight signs and symptoms, dispel myths, and signpost people to support.

"If we can empower men to look after themselves and talk about their health, that's how we'll improve men's health."

For Fergus, the mission is also deeply personal.

"I saw a gap in what was provided for men within the organisation. Staff networks are hugely valuable, but before this there wasn't one that represented me," he said.

The tragic suicide of his friend and colleague, Dane Roleston-Lowe, underlines the importance of the work.

"It feels like the job is never done," he reflected. "Police culture is changing, but societal expectations remain. We may not solve everything, but if we can make it easier for men to talk and seek help, then it's worth it."

SISTER OF WEST MERCIA OFFICER TO SKYDIVE FOR MEN'S MENTAL HEALTH

The sister of a West Mercia Police officer who took his own life, is taking on a skydive in his memory.

Nena Hodges says she wants to make it easier for all generations to talk about their mental health, as she admits she will be 'completely out of her comfort zone' when she does the challenge.

Nena will be jumping out of a plane on 30 August, in honour of her younger brother PC Dane Roleston-Lowe.

Dane had served with West Mercia Police for more than 28 years and was based at Hindlip. He died earlier this year aged 50.

Nena said: "Dane would think I was bonkers. I think I'm bonkers.

"It seemed like an amazing idea at the time. And it still is a good idea, but I'm just a bit nervy now it's getting closer.

**“ IF WE CAN EMPOWER
MEN TO LOOK AFTER
THEMSELVES AND TALK
ABOUT THEIR HEALTH,
THAT'S HOW WE'LL
IMPROVE MEN'S HEALTH.**

"I hate heights. I'm completely out of my comfort zone.

"I think grief does crazy things to your mind.

"I woke up around 3am one morning, not long after Dane had passed away, and thought that I really wanted to do something, and I really want to do something for men's mental health, particularly.

"I chose a skydive because I'm relatively fit. I can cycle and I can run and I can hike.

"So I thought, if I did something that was out of my comfort zone, it would be worth the feeling."

Nena is doing the jump in aid of the charity [Talk Club](#), which aims to help men improve their mental health. She has already raised more than £1,500.



PC Dane Roleston-Lowe and his sister Nina Hodges.

Nena said another motivation for doing the jump was to raise awareness of men's mental health and to help breakdown barriers.

"Talk Club aims to break that stigma of men's mental health," she said.

"It seems to be a weakness for men to talk about being a bit grumpy or having problems, whether it's money worries or relationship or kids or whatever.

"To me, it's really important. I'm a 54-year-old mother of two and grandmother of four grandchildren, three of whom are boys.

"This is part of my driving force. I need them to know it's okay to talk.

"It's important for me, for them to know it's okay to sit chat and it's okay to say, actually I'm not feeling alright today."

[Support Nena on her skydive via her JustGiving page.](#)



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EX-DETECTIVE DISCUSSES 'EXCITING' TV APPEARANCE

A former Federation member says representing the Force on a highly rated BBC true crime documentary was a 'proud moment' to close out his policing career.

Leighton Harding recently featured on the second season of *Murder 24/7*, which aired on BBC Two throughout June and gave an exclusive insight into West Mercia Police's around-the-clock response to homicide.

Working as a Detective Chief Inspector (DCI) – the rank at which he retired from the Force last year – Leighton was central to focus of the season's fourth and fifth episodes.

He was the senior investigating officer for an incident in Worcester involving both a murder and an attempted murder.

The case was just one of numerous captured by a television crew who had followed officers around over a sustained period.

Once the programme was in post-production, however, Leighton says the news that it would make the final cut for broadcast came as little surprise.

"Throughout their time with us, the crew were very close to everything we were doing – as soon as we got word of something happening, the cameras and microphones were turned on," he explained.

"The case at hand in my episodes was a challenging and disturbing one, so it made sense they chose it for air.

"A big part of the show's emphasis was on the challenges and realities of our work in the Force's Major Investigations Unit – as a DCI, I led the south half of this unit – as well as the social issues that sit behind these cases.

"It showed our process as a force and how we keep faith in it, whether that's to prove or indeed disprove a murder, and it was certainly very exciting to be involved in."

Leighton went on to reveal how he found being repeatedly filmed while doing



Retired DCI Leighton Harding.

his job in an already high-pressure environment.

"It definitely took some getting used to, as it was unprecedented access for a TV company into our world," he continued.

"At first, I felt quite self-conscious, although it ultimately never changed my work. Eventually, I fully got to grips with it, and the crew just became a part of our fabric and that process I mentioned.

"They were so professional and always made us as comfortable as they possibly could."

And Leighton's high regard for the programme makers was only enhanced when he watched himself in action.

The 49-year-old says he was struck by how well produced the content was – made even more impressive by the knowledge of how many hours of footage would have been edited and brought together for one digestible viewing experience.

"It was incredible, really, when you know how much work has gone into making it all happen.

"Naturally, it wasn't the easiest thing in the world to see or hear myself on TV, but once I got over that self-critical stage, it became a very proud moment.

"I'm also very proud of my colleagues who appeared too. There'll always be the lead investigator in a case, but that's just the tip of the iceberg – there's an absolute machine behind you which needs everyone to contribute."

Almost a year into his retirement, Leighton added that watching *Murder 24/7* made him feel like he was right back in the thick of policing.

"Retiring found its way to me, and the time was right. Since then, I've had a break to decompress from a 30-year career, including 24 years as a detective.

"But seeing the programme has made me reminisce and begin to miss it all – it's such an intense show that I almost felt like I hadn't actually retired.

"I absolutely loved my time as a police officer, and this coming as one of the lasting memories towards the end of my career is a true privilege," he ended.

You can catch Leighton on *Murder 24/7* now on [BBC iPlayer](#).



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OFFICER SHARES ACADEMIC RESEARCH ON NEURODIVERSITY IN FORCE

A Federation member has shared his pride after he presented innovative research from his Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship (PCDA) to an academic audience.

Earlier this summer, PC Jimmy Croy appeared at the University of Staffordshire's GradEx Degree Show, delivering a presentation to the University's Institute of Policing.

Jimmy presented the final research project from his recently completed PCDA, which focused on the challenges experienced by neurodivergent officers at West Mercia Police.

The project investigated the Force's headcount, inclusivity culture and practical adjustments for officers with conditions like autism, ADHD, dyslexia and dyspraxia.

“BEING DYSLEXIC HAS IMPACTED MY LIFE FROM AN EARLY AGE. I ALWAYS KNEW I WANTED TO BE IN THE POLICE, BUT I PUT IT OFF FOR 10 YEARS BECAUSE OF MY DYSLEXIA.”

It concluded that a stigma of neurodiversity within policing does exist, although West Mercia Police as an individual force has made progress in disrupting this and promoting awareness and support for such officers.

“The opportunity to show my research at the event took me by complete surprise, but it was an absolute privilege,” Jimmy said.

“From my PCDA, I had been used to talking about my work in an academic setting among peers, but this was something on a different level altogether – presenting to an audience who were really expecting a level of insight.

“I was nervous, but it went very well. My talk received second prize on the day, which was a nice moment.

“My research is something I'm very proud of – but, as I explained in my talk, it's not just about what I found, but looking forward to how people can be helped in the future.”

Jimmy elaborated on this by discussing his recommendations to the Force for its



PC Jimmy Croy during his passing out ceremony with former West Mercia Police Chief Constable Pippa Mills.

care of neurodivergent officers.

“Firstly, I would like to see the Force committing to regular interactions with officers who come forward with a neurodivergent condition, on a one-to-one, no-judgement basis,” he continued.

“Of course, this would require individuals to come forward, and this was something I acknowledged in my research. The information I requested showed a most recent total (2022) of 78 officers with known neurodiversity in the Force, but I would estimate there are hundreds more.

“I say this because in policing, there is an obvious fear of showing weakness and not wanting to jeopardise your job, and that's what we must keep working to overcome.”

Another key suggestion from the 33-year-old is the removal of adjustments which needlessly single such personnel out in the Force.

“An example of this would be our notebooks – dyslexic officers can get yellow paper, which is great, but it just makes it more of a ‘thing’ if there's then a default colour for everyone else.

“If every officer had the choice of multiple different colours in the first place, it would just take away that risk of someone feeling like they stick out.

“I think this kind of attitude is

important, because it shows while we are grateful for the Force's efforts already, we can always strive for more.”

Having passed his PCDA in March this year, Jimmy says he chose this topic as the basis of his final project for multiple reasons.

He pointed towards a lack of previous investigation on neurodiversity specifically within policing, giving him the chance to break new ground and create conversations.

There is also personal meaning to his research, with Jimmy himself diagnosed with dyslexia and currently having a diagnosis for ADHD in progress.

“Being dyslexic has impacted my life from an early age. I always knew I wanted to be in the police, but I put it off for 10 years because of my dyslexia,” he said.

“Now I'm here in policing, I want things to get to a stage where no officer feels limited or intimidated in this job because of their neurodiversity.

“Everyone is different in some way, but everyone should be proud of whatever makes them different.”

If you are a neurodivergent officer and in need of support or advice, there are plenty of options available – including contacting your local Fed rep, joining the Force's neurodiversity network, or reaching out to Jimmy [via email](#).



DISCOUNTS, PERKS AND BENEFITS EXCLUSIVELY FOR FEDERATION MEMBERS

West Mercia Police Federation website is home to a whole range of exclusive member benefits and offers.

Visit the member services section of the website for legal support, financial advice, and healthcare.

The member services section is also the place to go for discounts, freebies, and perks.

Legal advice and support is available from the expert teams at Setfords Solicitors, Gorvins Solicitors, HCR Law, Irwin Mitchell, Slater and Gordon.

Members can also get help with their finances from No1 CopperPot. It is one of the UK's biggest police credit union and is there to help officers regularly save,

affordably borrow, and increase their financial education.

Police Mutual aims to make a positive difference to serving and retired officers through its financial services and wellbeing factsheets.

MWS Consult, meanwhile, has been advising Federation members and their families on a wide range of practical debt solutions since 2005.

Free comprehensive advice, guidance and support for anyone struggling with their finances is available from PayPlan.

The team at Warren & Co Mortgages are available for members to discuss their mortgage circumstances.

Discounted insurance for serving and retired officers, Specials, and their families is

available from Police Insure.

Visit the health section for information about the Bluline West Mercia private healthcare scheme.

Members can also find out about the discounts available from Nuffield Health on its fitness and wellbeing centres.

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Health Assured includes a medical information line which is available Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm for help with paediatrics – such as feeding problems, crying, teething, nappy rash, congenital disorders and so on; childhood illnesses such as measles, chickenpox, meningitis,

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