

CONNECT



WINTER 2025

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM WEST MERCIA POLICE FEDERATION

A photograph of a city street at night. The trees lining the street are heavily decorated with warm white string lights, creating a canopy of light. Several cars are visible on the road, their headlights and taillights glowing. A bicycle is parked on the sidewalk in the foreground on the left. The overall atmosphere is festive and warm.

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ALL OUR MEMBERS

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WELCOME TO THE WINTER 2025 EDITION OF CONNECT

By **Lesley Williams**, secretary of West Mercia Police Federation



As we approach the end of another demanding year, I want to begin by thanking every one of our members for the commitment, resilience and professionalism you show day in, day out in a role that is truly like no other.

Like fellow colleagues across the service, the past 12 months at West Mercia Police Federation have brought both challenge and reward. It has also been a year of change and transition for the branch. On a personal note, it was an honour to take on the role of branch secretary in September – a moment I remain immensely proud of. I am sincerely grateful to everyone who has supported me since, and equally excited by the new officials and representatives who joined us following this year's elections. Together, we form a strong team as we look ahead to our first full year working side by side in 2026.

What will never change, however, is your Federation's commitment to ensuring your dedication and achievements never go unnoticed.

That's why this edition of Connect celebrates our members' successes - both through in-depth features and in our 2025 highlights and reflections, which begin on Page 11.

Among those highlights is a moment of real pride for the Federation, as PC Stacey Hegenbarth and Sergeant Kully Singh secured a regional win at the national Police Bravery Awards. Their courageous actions during a highly dangerous incident on the M5 last summer perfectly reflect the professionalism and selflessness shown by officers across West Mercia.

This edition also brings you the latest updates on the Police Federation of England and Wales' (PFEW) Copped Enough campaign. Improving pay, conditions and wellbeing remains a top priority locally and nationally, and the rapid momentum of this campaign is genuinely encouraging. Its progress featured heavily at last month's PFEW annual conference in Birmingham, which we report on in detail throughout this magazine from Page 6.

On Page 17, you'll also find an insightful interview with a branch member who shares his experiences of supporting other forces through mutual aid deployments – continuing our commitment to bringing you first-hand perspectives from the frontline.

Looking ahead, there are a few key dates to note for 2026. The 14th UK Police Unity Tour will take place from Thursday 6 to Sunday 9 August, and after another fantastic ride this year, I look forward to seeing who will take part in honour of fallen colleagues. National Police Memorial Day has also been confirmed for Sunday 27 September at Belfast's Waterfront Hall – always a powerful and widely supported event in the policing calendar.

Before we reach 2026, however, we arrive at the festive season. I would like to wish all our members a very Merry Christmas and a peaceful New Year. Policing often means this time of year looks very different for us, with many continuing to serve while others celebrate. While that is never easy, I hope you are able to enjoy moments of rest, reflection and time with loved ones whenever you can.

Please remember: you are valued, you are appreciated, and the difference you make truly matters – day in, day out, and year after year.

Keep safe.



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TAX THRESHOLD FREEZE WILL 'DRIVE MORE OFFICERS OUT OF POLICING'

West Mercia Police Federation has issued a strong warning that the Government's decision to freeze income tax thresholds until 2031 will significantly harm officers' finances and worsen the service's retention issues.

According to new analysis from the Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW), almost every police officer will be in the higher-rate tax bracket by 2031, a shift the Federation argues will devastate morale. Branch secretary Lesley Williams said the announcement amounts to an additional pay cut at a time when officers can least afford it.

She added: "Officers are already stretched to the limit. Freezing tax thresholds means their pay rises vanish before they even reach their bank accounts. This will hit West Mercia officers hard.

"We are losing skilled, dedicated officers because the job is becoming financially unsustainable for them. These measures will only speed that up. The Government must act before the situation becomes irreparable.

"We cannot keep communities safe if we cannot retain the people who protect them."

Police officers have already seen the value of their pay fall by around 20 per cent in real terms since 2010, and the latest tax decision means many constables will soon be paying higher-rate tax despite modest earnings.

Lesley continued: "We recognise that alongside this, the Federation's monthly subs are being increased - a necessary uplift to maintain high quality legal, welfare and support for our members at a time of soaring demand.

"However, at a time when the Government is taking more from officers through fiscal drag, it's vital that members make sure they're claiming any tax relief they are entitled to - including on their Police Federation subs.

"Even small actions like claiming tax back on subs can make the biggest difference."

Key findings from PFEW analysis include:

- **Almost all officers will be higher-rate taxpayers by 2030-31**

Under current Government policy, 97.8 per cent of full-time federated officers in England and Wales will fall into the higher-rate tax band by 2031.

- **Constables hardest hit**

Constable will see the biggest impact, with 99.8 per cent projected to be higher-rate taxpayers by 2031.

- **Pay progression no longer guarantees more take-home pay**

Officers progressing normally through the pay scale will automatically enter higher-rate tax bands, meaning fiscal drag erodes any pay increases.

- **Taxation undermines the value of pay awards**

Because tax is applied to total pay, including overtime and allowances, freezing thresholds until 2031 means that every pay award loses value immediately, leaving officers financially worse off despite incremental increases. The analysis only strengthens the

Federation's Copped Enough campaign, which continues to push for fair pay, genuine support, and proper recognition of policing.

And Police Federation CEO Mukund Krishna said it acts as a 'stark' warning: "Officers are being dragged into higher taxation not because they're earning more, but because the system is designed to take more from them each year. It's a textbook stealth tax."

He warned that community safety will suffer unless action is taken to restore pay and stop the exodus of experienced officers.

However, members are reminded that **Federation subs are tax-deductible**, meaning officers can claim tax relief on their subscriptions. This reduces the net cost, particularly for those now drawn into the higher-rate tax band. Full details on how to claim relief are available through the Federation.

“OFFICERS ARE ALREADY STRETCHED TO THE LIMIT. FREEZING TAX THRESHOLDS MEANS THEIR PAY RISES VANISH BEFORE THEY EVEN REACH THEIR BANK ACCOUNTS. THIS WILL HIT WEST MERCIA OFFICERS HARD.





COPPED ENOUGH: 'SUPPORT FRONTLINE OFFICERS'

A West Mercia Police Federation rep says frontline officers need support from the wider criminal justice system to show attacks on them are 'unacceptable'.

PC Andy Forbes backed PFEW's national 'Copped Enough' campaign, calling for stronger punishments for attacks on officers. It follows the sentencing of a thug for assaulting an officer during the worst UK football disorder in decades.

Dawid Dembler was given a suspended jail term for kicking a West Mercia officer in the back during sustained violence at Aston Villa's European game against Legia Warsaw in November 2023.

Dembler, from Walsall, was also banned from attending football matches for five years at Birmingham Crown Court.

Andy, who was one of a number of West Mercia Police officers supporting their West Midlands colleagues that night, was injured in the disorder in a separate incident outside Villa Park.

He was initially struck by a traffic sign as he cleared debris from where officers were positioned before being [engulfed in flames after being hit by a flare](#).

And Andy said the sentence given to Dembler highlighted the need for the national Copped Enough campaign and its calls for the toughest possible sentences.

An experienced officer with 20 years of public order policing, Andy said the disorder was 'like nothing I'd seen before'.

"The violence that our colleagues in West Mercia and other forces experienced that night was shocking and totally unacceptable," he said.

"It's been described as the most serious violence seen at a football match in decades. "I'd certainly never experienced anything like it, and it was incredibly lucky that none of the officers were seriously injured that night."

Andy added: "We are husbands and wives, sons and daughters, brothers and



PC Andy Forbes.

sisters, and we shouldn't have to face violence just for the uniform we wear.

"Which is why we need the courts to support us and hand down the toughest sentences, particularly given the nature of the sustained violence we faced that night."

The 2022 Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act saw the maximum sentence for assaults on a blue light worker, including police officers, increase from 12 months to two years after lobbying by the Federation.

[The Copped Enough campaign](#) highlights the growing numbers of attacks on officers, with 32 violently assaulted every day.

It is calling for more protection for the frontline with stronger sentences for assaults on officers.

Andy said: "The number of officers being assaulted every day, as highlighted by the campaign, is criminal."

"My frontline colleagues need the courts to support us and give people who attack officers the toughest possible sentences."

“THE NUMBER OF OFFICERS BEING ASSAULTED EVERY DAY, AS HIGHLIGHTED BY THE CAMPAIGN, IS CRIMINAL. MY FRONTLINE COLLEAGUES NEED THE COURTS TO SUPPORT US AND GIVE PEOPLE WHO ATTACK OFFICERS THE TOUGHEST POSSIBLE SENTENCES.

POLICE FEDERATION OF ENGLAND AND WALES CONFERENCE 2025

CAMPAIGN TAKES CENTRE STAGE

The chair of the Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW) says Copped Enough has returned 'policing to the centre of the national conversation'.

During her keynote speech on Day One at this year's conference, Tiff Lynch focused on the achievements of the opening 12 months of the high-profile campaign.

She hailed the campaign's first year as a turning point in the discussions about policing, pay, and officer welfare.

She said: "One year ago, we said 'enough is enough'.

"We told the country that police officers deserve fair pay and respect – and the people have listened.

"Copped Enough has become more than a campaign. It's a movement.

"It's put policing back at the centre of the national conversation.

"And it's united our members and reminded the public that behind every uniform is a person who deserves to be valued."

Copped Enough was launched to highlight stagnant police pay, mounting workloads, declining morale, and the recruitment and retention crisis.



Police Federation chair Tiff Lynch.

A video was played at conference in which Brian Booth, deputy national chair, highlighted the successes of year one of Copped Enough.

Brian said the campaign, backed by the

collective voice of 145,000 members, was gaining significant political traction.

He said: "The campaign has worked really well when we're engaging with MPs.

"We've tabled a bill within the House of Lords for the recording of police officer suicide, something which has never been done before. We're also now looking at police driving legislation.

"We've managed to secure some absolutely fantastic pay awards, and we're influencing government massively.

"Behind every investigation, there's a hard-working Fed rep. We train them well, and they perform well.

"So it's an organisation that really has got officers' backs.

"We've really invested in our communications. We've got structure, we have a strategy, and we have the right people in the right place delivering key messages.

"And what was really good, this year, was that our elections showed us that there is still a massive appetite to be a Federation rep. We're getting stronger day by day."

Opening the conference at the National Exhibition Centre in Birmingham, the first in-person one since 2022, Tiff reflected on the 'enormous change' of recent years, from the aftermath of the pandemic to pressures on frontline officers.

But she emphasised the Federation's resilience.

"Here we are, still standing, shoulder to shoulder, and we're still fighting for fairness," she said.

The conference, she said, was an opportunity to 'reconnect' and 'bring our Federation family back together'.

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**COPPED
ENOUGH**

POLICE FEDERATION OF ENGLAND AND WALES CONFERENCE 2025

£150 MILLION COMPENSATION FOR MEMBERS: CEO HIGHLIGHTS PFEW SUCCESSES AT CONFERENCE



PFEW Chief Executive Mukund Krishna.

Chief Executive of the Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW), Mukund Krishna, celebrated the Federation's achievements in his keynote speech at this year's conference.

Mukund told delegates that the Federation had overcome an 'existential crisis' and secured tens of millions of pounds in compensation for members over the past three years.

Speaking at the NEC in Birmingham, he said that the Federation was 'making an impact'.

"In the last three years, we've secured £150 million in compensation for members," said Mukund, adding: "This year alone, we've delivered over £40 million, with every penny going back to the membership."

"We've invested £35 million of subscription funds to achieve these wins, hiring top barristers and lawyers, and supporting reps who work tirelessly on the ground."

"We've processed 20,000-member claims; real people doing real work, not AI or automation."

"We've seen record engagement: 1,600 reps nominated in elections, unprecedented levels of interest, and record numbers of women chairs in branches."

"These achievements show we are making an impact. Just two weeks ago, we

secured a seven-figure settlement for a member on top of the £42 million already delivered this year."

Mukund opened his address with praise for the 'amazing work' of Federation reps and staff.

"Nothing is more important today than celebrating the hard work each of you does, day in and day out," he said.

He also reflected on how far the Federation has come in the past three years.

"We faced potential financial liabilities of more than £100 million, with significantly lower sums in the bank," he said. "If that's not an existential crisis, I don't know what is."

"Fast forward to today: we've settled for less than a third of that amount, paid out the largest group litigation in our Federation's history, possibly in policing history, and we're on track to resolve the remaining case by year-end."

**“NEXT YEAR, WE WILL
INTRODUCE A WELFARE
PROGRAMME FOR
FEDERATION
REPRESENTATIVES
BECAUSE SUPPORTING OUR
REPS MEANS BETTER
SUPPORT FOR OUR
MEMBERS.”**

"This achievement was possible because of your leadership – branch chairs, secretaries, regional reps and the tireless work of our staff and management team. You should be immensely proud."

And he used his platform to set out three 'commitments' which aim to reshape policing culture and welfare, as well as national understanding of the realities of the frontline.

The first was to produce an annual

report called The Real State of Policing, with the first to be released ahead of next year's conference season.

It would provide an alternative perspective to the 'HMICFRS top-down' State of Policing report, conference was told.

Mukund said the report would 'reflect the true views of our members on kit, leadership, culture, shift patterns, and welfare'.

In a separate statement announcing the report, Mukund added the report would 'highlight which forces are in serious difficulty on demand, capacity, welfare, resignations and workload'.

He said: "Crucially, it will give a voice to rank and file officers in the world they live in every day."

"This is not a PEEL inspection but rather an evidence-based assessment of how sustainable the job is."

"The HMICFRS explains what policing does: we will explain what policing costs the people who do it."

"The Real State of Policing report will give policymakers, the public and policing leaders a clearer view of the strain on officers."

"It will make sure that the lived experience of those delivering policing is recognised and not set aside."

The second commitment announced to conference centred around 'restoring dignity'.

Mukund said: "Starting next year, we will roll out a Victim and Witness Support Programme because we have a moral responsibility to treat each other with dignity."

And the third was a commitment to Federation reps and their welfare.

Mukund said: "Next year, we will introduce a Welfare Programme for Federation representatives because supporting our reps means better support for our members."

He closed his speech by urging unity and resolve as the Federation enters its next phase.

He said: "When we are surrounded by people who believe in what we believe, remarkable things happen."

"We won't agree on everything. But constructive challenge lifts the quality of our discussions and leads to better decisions. So, let's stay strong. We are one team. There is strength in unity. Let's stand united in purpose."

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POLICE FEDERATION OF ENGLAND AND WALES CONFERENCE 2025

'THE TRUE SCALE OF OFFICER SUICIDES IS BEING SEVERELY UNDERESTIMATED'

Policing is facing a mental-health emergency, senior representatives warned at this year's Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW) conference, as new evidence suggests the true scale of officer suicides is being severely underestimated.

The Federation is calling for every force to formally record all suicides and suicide attempts among serving officers, saying the profession cannot hope to tackle a crisis it cannot properly measure.

During an emotional discussion on Day Two of the event, the panel said that inconsistent or absent data collection was preventing policing from understanding the depth of the problem.

Recent work between PFEW and its local branches revealed major gaps in force records. Two of the country's largest forces were unable to provide any figures, yet the Federation still identified 56 police officer suicides between 2021 and 2024.

Of those, 34 officers were under criminal or misconduct investigation at the time.

In the same period, 120 officers disclosed suicidal thoughts or attempts, with 71 of them also facing ongoing investigations - suggesting a potential link between lengthy disciplinary processes and declining mental health.

PFEW national board member Paul Williams criticised the system: "How can a criminal be arrested, tried, sentenced, and released faster than an officer can have a misconduct case resolved? Officers are left isolated, their routine stripped away, often for years. It's an incredibly lonely place to be."

Although the Office for National Statistics (ONS) categorises policing as low-risk for suicide, the panel said the classification is misleading because most forces do not routinely record incidents.

Board member Richie Murray warned: "It's the tip of the iceberg."

"If forces aren't recording the data, we can't present it, and the service can't begin to understand or address the true scale of the problem."

Speakers highlighted intense operational pressures - trauma exposure, staff shortages, relentless workloads - and

warned that a misconduct notice can become 'the final straw'.

Delegates heard the story of Sussex Police Federation representative Sergeant Ben Websdale, who died earlier this year

Hampshire Police Federation chair Spencer Wragg also shared his experience of reaching the brink of suicide, telling the audience: "Although most of the room would have been to a suicide, we know the implications of that, we know what that means to families, we see that devastation, we deal with it, it makes no difference to you when you're in that place."

He said the lack of structured welfare support leaves many officers dangerously vulnerable, even as they continue responding to 999 calls.

PFEW is now pushing for major reforms, including mandatory risk assessments for any officer placed under investigation, minimum national welfare standards, and the rollout of the Stay Alive suicide-prevention app across all work devices.

A motion has been tabled in the House of Lords to amend the Police and Crime Act, making the recording of suicide and attempted suicide a legal requirement.

In her keynote speech, PFEW chair Tiff Lynch echoed the urgency: "I wish our branch reps didn't have to deal with the aftermath of suicides within force, but they do."

"We talk about the job getting more dangerous on our streets. It's even more dangerous in our heads."

"We've had too many funerals, too many wakes, too many anniversaries - it's got to stop."

She used her speech to call for three changes:

- **Record all suicides and attempts**
- **Commit to prevention through the STEP programme**
- **Acknowledge and reform the link between misconduct processes and suicide.**

Tiff confirmed that political support is growing, with Lord Bailey of Paddington tabling an amendment due for debate early next year.



Ben Hudson.

#SIMPLIFYDG6 CAMPAIGN MAKING SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS

Significant progress is being made through the #SimplifyDG6 campaign, as highlighted at this year's conference.

Speaking at the NEC in Birmingham, Suffolk Police Federation Secretary and chair of the Police Federation National Detectives' Forum, Ben Hudson, told delegates the campaign was 'steadily achieving our aims.'

Launched in 2022, #SimplifyDG6 seeks to reduce the excessive bureaucracy involved in disclosure processes. The campaign followed the Attorney General's Annual Review of Disclosure, which acknowledged shortcomings that resulted in officers spending "at least four hours more on each case due to the redaction requirements."

Ben said: "We have listened to members' concerns, acted on what they told us, and helped bring about reform that will make a huge difference to their working lives."

He stressed the importance of partnership work, thanking NPCC disclosure lead, Surrey Chief Constable Tim De Mayer, and Director of Public Prosecutions Stephen Parkinson for their support.

Ben added: "The very fact that Tim and Stephen are both here, I believe, typifies the partnership approach that has enabled us to help drive change that will not just benefit police officers and police staff but will also bring time savings for forces, freeing up officers and staff to deliver more effective policing services for the communities we serve."

The Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW) called for legislative and

POLICE FEDERATION OF ENGLAND AND WALES CONFERENCE 2025

procedural changes, including amendments to data protection law and nationally agreed face-to-face disclosure training. Progress has since followed.

Updated Joint Principles for Redaction from the NPCC and CPS now offer clearer and more pragmatic guidance, supported by a national Federation toolkit distributed across all branches. Political momentum is also building, including MP backing for a proposed 'data bubble' between police and CPS.

Proportionate file-building trials in Cheshire, Merseyside and Kent are producing promising results. Cheshire recorded 97.2 per cent compliance within two months, saving 5,000 policing hours. Kent has already achieved a 37 per cent reduction in file-building time, with expectations of more to come.

Ben ended: "Our campaign has not only garnered support but has helped deliver meaningful and significant change."

He concluded with a challenge for the future: "We will continue to push for the change we need to see. Perhaps what we really need is a total rewrite of DG6 - could DG7 be the answer?"

SUBSCRIPTIONS INCREASE

Delegates voted to introduce a £2 per month increase in member subscriptions from 1 January 2026. This will take the gross monthly rate from £24.31 to £26.31.

In addition, the current student officer 50 per cent discount will end, meaning that from 1 January 2026, all new members joining the Federation will contribute at a single standard rate from their first day of membership. There will be no change to the rate for current student officers.

Subscriptions have only risen twice in the past decade, while demand for our legal and welfare support continues to grow rapidly.

The increase will help us to:

- **Protect and strengthen core legal and welfare services, fighting on more fronts to deliver more for members**
- **A new victims and witnesses support programme, standing up to inappropriate and illegal workplace behaviour**
- **Increase the impact of our campaigning on pay, conditions and wellbeing.**

Our role is to stand beside you on your toughest days, in the moments that matter most, and in the national debates shaping the future of policing.

These changes are about securing the Federation's ability to do that, not just now but for the long term.

'STANDARDISED PSYCHOLOGICAL TESTING REQUIRED': NATIONAL SECRETARY CALLS FOR URGENT REFORM

National secretary John Partington delivered a forceful statement during this year's conference on the need for urgent reform in policing pay, conditions, recruitment, and officer welfare, warning that the challenges facing officers cannot be ignored.

Addressing colleagues, John emphasised that policing now requires a louder, unified voice to advocate for fairness, transparency, and the long-overdue recognition of the responsibilities carried by officers across England and Wales.

John explained that over the past year, the Federation has made significant progress toward greater transparency and member engagement. For the first time, members received full sight of the final pay offer before a decision was made - a change the Federation described as 'how it should be: a two-way conversation, not a closed-door process.'

He said that evidence and advocacy presented by the Federation contributed to a 4.2 per cent pay rise, increases to allowances, improved overnight and hardship payments, and a commitment to address critical issues such as compensation for extra hours worked, shift disturbance, and detective burden.

Later in his address, John highlighted the urgent need for standardised psychological testing for all police recruits across England and Wales. He stressed that policing is one of the most regulated professions in the UK, yet recruitment standards vary widely. Psychological testing, he argued, should be 'a safeguard, not an optional extra', ensuring candidates possess the temperament, values, emotional readiness, and resilience required for modern policing.

He added: "We know what happens when the wrong people get through the door. This cannot happen again. The public deserves officers who are not only capable but also have the integrity and emotional strength to uphold the core principles of the job. This job isn't for everyone. It demands resilience, empathy and strength. These qualities can't be assumed, they must be tested."

Delegates heard stark warnings about worsening financial pressures on frontline officers, including rising housing, energy, food, and fuel costs that have far outpaced police pay, leaving many officers struggling to meet basic household expenses. John highlighted the inequity of equal-percentage pay awards, which



National secretary John Partington addresses the PFEW annual conference.

disproportionately impact lower-paid officers.

He said: "A superintendent and a constable face the same inflation, but not the same reality. Percentage-only rises deepen inequality. Without correction, policing will become unaffordable for the very people who make it work."

John confirmed that the next pay submission will argue for targeted increases that recognise the unique pressures facing frontline ranks. He also criticised the current pay review body as 'not fit for policing,' citing political constraints and lack of independence. To ensure fairness, the Federation is calling for a move toward collective bargaining and binding arbitration.

An Early Day Motion has been submitted to Parliament, with cross-party support, and the Federation is exploring legal avenues and international labour law implications.

John concluded: "Keep underpaying, undervaluing, and overloading officers, and more will leave permanently. This government is pushing policing toward a crisis unless urgent action is taken. Policing demands deep knowledge, emotional strength, and the courage to hold the line when everything else gives way. Officers deserve pay, conditions, and pensions that reflect that burden. We are not asking for special treatment - we are asking for fairness."



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2025: A YEAR OF CHANGE, CHALLENGE AND ACHIEVEMENT

As 2025 draws to a close, West Mercia Police Federation is taking the opportunity to reflect on a year of challenge, reward and transformation for our branch.

For both our officials and our members, this year has continued to underline what we already know: policing is a profession like no other, carried out by people like no other. Across the Force, colleagues have risen to challenges with courage, pushed through obstacles with resilience and embraced opportunities with determination.

It has also been a year in which the Federation has continued to build momentum - locally and nationally - in our mission to advocate, support and represent. Whether fighting for fairer conditions, being there for members in their toughest moments, or celebrating your successes, we've worked hard to ensure your voices are heard and your achievements recognised.

Here, we look back at some of the defining moments and milestones that shaped 2025 for West Mercia Police Federation.

Heroic duo claim regional title at the Police Bravery Awards

One of the year's standout highlights came in July, when two of our own received national recognition for their extraordinary actions.

Sergeant Kully Singh and PC Stacey Hegenbarth represented West Mercia with pride at the 2025 Police Bravery Awards - and left with the Region 3 title. Their nomination stemmed from their courageous handling of a critical incident on the M5 in 2024, when a car was travelling the wrong way along the southbound carriageway.

Faced with a terrifying scenario that put countless motorists at risk, Kully and Stacey acted decisively, stopping traffic, positioning themselves in the path of danger and bracing for a near head-on collision to halt the oncoming vehicle. Both officers suffered significant injuries, including severe whiplash, concussion and abdominal bruising - but their actions almost certainly prevented a tragedy.

The ceremony was attended by the



Sergeant Kully Singh and PC Stacey Hegenbarth represented West Mercia with pride at the 2025 Police Bravery Awards.

then-Home Secretary Yvette Cooper, with Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer sending his message of thanks by video.

On the night, Stacey reflected humbly on the recognition: "I'm humbled by the award, and 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."

Kully added: "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."

Their bravery remains an enduring reminder of the risks officers take every day - and the extraordinary courage our members show without hesitation.

New leadership marks a new chapter for the Branch Council

September brought a landmark moment for the Federation as we welcomed Lesley Williams as the branch's first-ever female secretary.

Lesley brings vast experience from across policing, and in a short period has become a unifying presence - strengthening communication between representatives, members, staff, the Force and wider partners. Her appointment marked a significant milestone in modernising and diversifying the branch's leadership.

Lesley's appointment comes after Steve

Continued on Page 12

2025: A year of change, challenge and achievement

Continued from Page 11



Lesley Williams became the first-ever female branch secretary, while Steve Butler (right) took up a regional role with PFEW.



Sergeant Rob 'Swoosh' Seewoosaha (left) with West Mercia Chief Constable Richard Cooper at National Police Memorial Day in Coventry Cathedral.

Butler took up a new regional role with the Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW).

Steve, who has been a Federation representative for 14 years, said: "When I first came on board, I had no idea just how challenging the role and timing would be. My immediate goal was to get up to speed quickly, navigate the steep learning curve and steady the branch during a difficult period. I am pleased to say that the branch we have today has evolved and is in a stronger position than when I began."

Earlier in the year, workplace representative elections concluded in March, welcoming both new and returning reps. All have since shown unwavering dedication to delivering for members throughout an exceptionally busy year.

Honouring those we've lost

Amid the celebrations and successes, 2025 also gave us several opportunities to honour policing colleagues who are no longer with us.

In August, members of the branch once again joined forces from across

the region – including West Midlands, Staffordshire and Warwickshire - for the 13th UK Police Unity Tour (PUT). Participants cycled 180 miles over a single weekend, concluding at the National Memorial Arboretum in Alrewas, Staffordshire.

True to its purpose, the PUT raised vital funds for Care of Police Survivors (COPS), supporting families of officers who have died on duty.

September then saw the policing family gather once more for National Police Memorial Day

Police Unity Tour riders cycled 180 miles over a single weekend concluding at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire.



(NPMD) – held at Coventry Cathedral for the first time in the event's 21-year history. The service paid tribute to all officers who have made the ultimate sacrifice, including seven who had died in the previous 12 months.

Workplace representative, Sergeant Rob Seewoosaha, who represented the branch at the service, shared his reflections: "NPMD ensures we never forget the bravery and sacrifice of colleagues who gave their lives in service to their forces and the public.

"Just as importantly, it allows us to stand shoulder to shoulder with their loved ones and show them that their loss is remembered by the entire policing family. It was a privilege to represent West Mercia Police Federation at such a moving service."

Copped Enough campaign continues to gather momentum

2025 has also been a pivotal year for the Copped Enough movement - a national campaign launched in May.

Its progress took centre stage at the PFEW annual conference in November, where speakers looked back on its first year. The campaign has rapidly become a leading force in calling for fair police pay and conditions, highlighting the strain officers continue to face, including increasing workloads and declining morale.



Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW) national chair Tiff Lynch praised the impact of the Copped Enough campaign.

PFEW national chair Tiff Lynch praised its impact, crediting the campaign for helping to 'put policing back at the centre of national conversation' and reminding the public that "behind every uniform is a person who deserves to be valued."

Deputy chair Brian Booth provided a further update on its political progress, confirming that the campaign had gained significant traction in Parliament - including influencing a bill in the House of Lords calling for the recording of all police officer suicides.

Among the West Mercia voices championing the campaign this year has been workplace representative Andy Forbes, who has repeatedly emphasised the urgent need for better frontline protection.

As Andy said: "The number of officers being assaulted every day, as highlighted by the campaign, is criminal. We are husbands and wives, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, and we shouldn't have to face violence just for the uniform we wear. My frontline colleagues need the courts to support us and give people who attack officers the toughest possible sentences."

The campaign looks set to remain central to the Federation's national agenda in 2026.

Celebrating your achievements

Beyond the major events, 2025 has been filled with countless individual and collective wins from our members. You have excelled across the board - through commendations, sporting accomplishments, academic achievements, charity challenges, professional development and even appearances on national television.

Branch secretary Lesley Williams shared her admiration for the dedication shown across the membership: "Whether it was by simply doing their jobs or doing something else, all the victories - big and small - made by our members over the past 12 months show how much of a credit they are to themselves. This isn't anything new, but it definitely still deserves celebrating."

"As 2025 draws to a close, I would like to thank them all for being the people they are - always wanting to better themselves, serve the public and fight for justice. In return for this dedication, we know you deserve only the best, and that is what we will continue to work towards for you in 2026 - I'm excited to see what we can achieve with each other."

Looking ahead

As we step forward into 2026, the Federation remains committed to advocating for members, fighting for fairness and ensuring you are supported through every challenge the job brings.

This year has once again shown the strength, determination and professionalism that defines West Mercia Police - and the Federation will continue to stand firmly behind each and every one of you.





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FED REP 'HONoured' TO REPRESENT BRANCH AT ANNUAL MEMORIAL SERVICE

West Mercia Police Federation representative Sergeant Rob 'Swoosh' Seewoosaha has spoken of the honour and pride felt in representing the branch at this year's National Police Memorial Day service.

Held at Coventry Cathedral for the first time in the event's 21-year history, the service brought together officers, families, dignitaries and Federation representatives from across the UK.

Representing West Mercia Police Force was Chief Constable Richard Cooper.

"National Police Memorial Day is, without doubt, one of the most important dates in the policing calendar," said Rob.

"It ensures that we never forget the bravery and sacrifice of colleagues who gave their lives in service to their forces and the public. Just as importantly, it allows us to stand shoulder to shoulder with their loved ones and show them that their loss is remembered by the entire policing family.

"It was a privilege to represent West Mercia Police Federation at such a moving service."

During the ceremony, Tiff Lynch, chair of the Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW) read aloud the names of the seven officers who had died in the past 12 months:

PC Ian Minett, 38, Gloucestershire Constabulary

PC Michael Bruce, 48, Metropolitan Police

PC Frank Hawkins, 52, Metropolitan Police

PC Marcus Bennett, 44, Civil Nuclear Constabulary

PC Rosie Prior, 45, North Yorkshire Police

DC Karen Smith, 49, Humberside Police

PC Faizaan Najeib, 24, Northamptonshire Police, who died just two days before the service.

The Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood gave a Bible reading from The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12), while Shadow Home Secretary Chris Philp read from Colossians 3:12-17. An address was delivered by the Right Reverend Sophie Jelley, Bishop of Coventry, while the congregation was welcomed by The Very Reverend John Wit, Dean of Coventry, and the Lord Mayor, Rachel Lancaster. Music was provided by the West Midlands Police Band, The Big Sing Community Choir and the Choir of Coventry Cathedral.

Prayers were led by representatives of the Jewish, Muslim and Sikh faiths, and heartfelt readings were delivered by relatives of fallen officers, including Daniel Rodgers, who attended with his mother to



West Mercia Police Federation representative Sergeant Rob 'Swoosh' Seewoosaha and Chief Constable Richard Cooper.

mark the 50th anniversary of his father PC Ian Rodgers's death in 1975.

An act of remembrance saw candles lit for each nation of the UK. Those who took part included:

- **For England, Kelly Swindells and her one-year-old daughter Mabel, remembering DC Michael Swindells QGM (West Midlands).**
- **For Ireland, Peter Olphert, remembering RC John Robinson Olphert (RUC).**
- **For Wales, Lowri MacArthur, remembering PC Terry Davies (Gwent).**
- **And for Scotland, Linsey Dempsey, remembering PC Stuart Simpson (Strathclyde).**

The service also featured prayers from serving officers and police family members, before the peace bell was sounded, petals of remembrance fell, and the Last Post and

Reveille were played. The congregation then joined together in singing the National Anthem.

Families of five fallen officers were presented with the newly introduced Elizabeth Emblem, in honour of Queen Elizabeth II, recognising those who died undertaking public service.

More than 5,000 officers have lost their lives in the line of duty in the past 180 years, but the National Police Memorial Day itself was first established in 2001 by retired Kent Inspector Joe Holness OBE QPM, following the death of his colleague PC Jon Odell. The inaugural service took place in 2004 at St Paul's Cathedral, London.

National Police Memorial Day 2026 will be held at the Waterfront Hall in Belfast on Sunday 27 September.

NEIGHBOURHOOD OFFICERS LEAD RAPID ROLL-OUT OF LIFE-SAVING BLEED KITS



PC Mark Bennett, Lord Mayor John Thomas and PC Sam Maher.

Two West Mercia Police Federation members have led a community-backed project to install life-saving bleed kits in their hometown.

PCs Mark Bennett and Sam Maher, of the Stourport Safer Neighbourhood Team, have seen 11 publicly accessible kits installed across the town in just two weeks.

Bleed kits are specialised first aid packs designed to control catastrophic bleeding. The initiative began when Mark saw a social media post about a school elsewhere in the country securing funding for similar equipment.

"I asked in the office whether we had any installed, and it became clear there were none registered in Stourport," Mark said. "We then thought about how we could

get them here."

The officers contacted the Daniel Baird Foundation, created by Dr Lynne Baird MBE after her son Daniel was fatally stabbed in Birmingham. The charity campaigns for publicly accessible bleed kits and works closely with West Midlands Ambulance Service to provide standardised, easy-to-use kits.

Sam contacted Lynne, who immediately offered support and donated three kits to kick-start the project.

"It gained traction and before we knew it, the kits were here, deployed and in the community. It all happened quickly," he said.

Working with Stourport Town Council and partners, including Gore Properties and Bromsgrove District Housing Trust,



PC Mark Bennett with ACC Gareth Morris and PC Sam Maher.

the officers identified existing community defibrillator locations and approached their controllers about hosting the kits.

For the officers, who grew up in Stourport, the project has been personal.

"It's one of the proudest things I've ever been part of," Mark said. "We've talked about legacy, leaving something positive for the town."

Sam emphasised that the initiative is not a response to media discussions about knife crime but a wider public-safety measure: "For the sake of £85 you can give someone the best chance to survive. Seconds really do matter."

"As police officers, we go to incidents where there are catastrophic bleeds for a range of reasons, and it's about having that kit in strategic places available to us so we can access it very quickly."

The officers are now working with colleagues to support the wider roll-out of bleed kits across the Force area.

Assistant Chief Constable Gareth Morris praised the work, saying: "This is an incredible example of passion and initiative from one of our Safer Neighbourhood Teams, and I commend PC Bennett and PC Maher on their work to get these potentially lifesaving bleed kits onto the streets of Stourport."

"This also demonstrates how collaboratively working with partner agencies, such as the town council, makes us a much stronger force and together we have now provided something to the people of Stourport that could potentially one day prevent someone from losing a life."

"I wholeheartedly support this drive to get vital first aid equipment into our town and city centres."

Lynne, Daniel's mum, added: "Huge congratulations to West Mercia Police in Stourport, Worcestershire, for their outstanding work in getting bleed control kits into the local community."

"Your dedication, collaboration, and commitment to public safety will undoubtedly save lives."

"The area is safer because of your efforts, and your proactive approach sets a powerful example for others to follow."

HUGE CONGRATULATIONS TO WEST MERCIA POLICE IN STOURPORT, WORCESTERSHIRE, FOR THEIR OUTSTANDING WORK IN GETTING BLEED CONTROL KITS INTO THE LOCAL COMMUNITY.

MUTUAL AID DEPLOYMENTS GROWING OFFICERS' SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE

Mutual aid deployments are helping West Mercia Police Public Support Unit (PSU) officers return with valuable skills and experience gained from supporting forces across the country at protests, marches and high-risk football fixtures.

Richard Thomas, of Force Operations, said the recent deployments had been particularly beneficial.

He referred to working with the Met during high-profile Israel/Palestine protests in London, which exposed officers to tactics and scrutiny they seldom experience in West Mercia.

Federation member Richard said: "Our officers were great. They were really professional. They used tactics and were exposed to styles of policing, protest, and levels of public scrutiny they probably haven't seen before, so they'll bring a lot of learning back to the Force.

“OUR TRAINING CAME TO FRUITION, BUT THERE ARE THINGS THAT WE’VE TAKEN AWAY THAT WILL FORM SOME OF OUR LEARNING IN FORCE.

"Our training came to fruition, but there are things that we've taken away that will form some of our learning in Force."

As part of the central region unit with West Midlands and Warwickshire colleagues, West Mercia officers travelled to London to police the demonstrations. After an overnight journey, they were briefed by the Met Commissioner and deployed first to Waterloo Bridge, where they managed tensions between a static pro-Israel group and a larger pro-Palestine march under close scrutiny from protesters and the press.

Later redeployed to Parliament Square for a demonstration against the ban on Palestine Action, they were part of an operation that saw 890 arrests.

One arrested woman later praised her officer, and Richard said: "She contacted us to say she was part of the protest and was arrested, and that she wanted to thank the officer because he showed compassion.

"That doesn't happen very often. It's been forwarded on to the officer, and the



Chief Constable is aware of it as well."

With custody capacity stretched, a temporary prisoner reception point was set up on Millbank, and some officers worked up to 26-hour shifts.

Richard added: "This was an incredibly long and incredibly challenging shift. The team showed incredible professionalism throughout. They were compassionate when making arrests, calm under pressure, professional when under scrutiny, and it was a pleasure to work with them all."

West Mercia officers have since supported further London protests, major

football fixtures including the South Coast Derby, and even the state visit of Donald Trump.

Richard is now encouraging more officers to consider PSU training: "My advice for everyone is to volunteer, have these experiences and bring this knowledge back to the Force.

"While we came under significant pressure, surrounded by cameras and opposition, we remained professional and impartial and did our job, the officers represented West Mercia in a positive manner."

“WHILE WE CAME UNDER SIGNIFICANT PRESSURE, SURROUNDED BY CAMERAS AND OPPOSITION, WE REMAINED PROFESSIONAL AND IMPARTIAL AND DID OUR JOB, THE OFFICERS REPRESENTED WEST MERCIA IN A POSITIVE MANNER.



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MOVEMBER: MEN'S HEALTH NETWORK'S THANK-YOU TO SUPPORTERS



The West Mercia Police Men's Health Network is exploring how to broaden its work.

The West Mercia Police Movember team has issued a thank you to everyone who supported them in this year's campaign.

The six-strong fundraising squad has raised more than £3,500 for men's health over 2025, bringing its collective total to over £20,000 in the last four years.

Inspector Fergus Green, chair of West Mercia Police Men's Health Network, said: "That will make a big difference to people."

"A massive thank you to people who joined the team and raised money, and thank you to everybody inside and outside the organisation that donated."

"And there's still time for people to support us, if they'd like to."

Fergus said Movember is a global men's health movement focused on tackling key health issues, including mental health, suicide prevention, prostate cancer, and testicular cancer.

It's become an annual fixture for West Mercia Police Men's Health Network. Between the six team members, they covered almost 300km running, walking,

or cycling, along with silly challenges – all designed to spark conversations about and raise money for men's health.

And Fergus gave special mention to PC Sian Stockton, who raised £1,600 this year.

Sian has raised more than £15,000 for Movember over the years and continued to bring creativity and energy to this campaign.

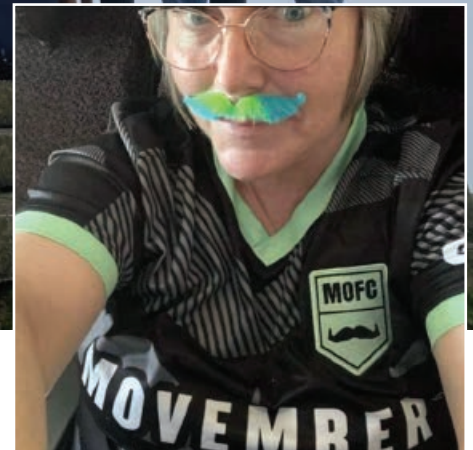
She wore a different drawn-on or stuck-on moustache every day. Previously, she has organised social and awareness events to bring people together and spark conversations.

Fergus said: "We're really pleased with how much we've raised, but we have to massively credit Sian."

"She is a prolific Movember fundraiser and ambassador, and it's great to have her on the team."

[Visit the West Mercia Police Men's Health Network section of the Movember website](#) to support the team.

Meanwhile, the Men's Health Network is turning its focus to 2026, beginning with a January reset and a renewed call for ideas,



PC Sian Stockton has raised more than £15,000 for Movember over the years.

volunteers and momentum.

Fergus said the group will remain committed to Movember but will also explore how to broaden its work to support men year-round.

A key goal is to reach officers before they hit crisis point, overcoming the longstanding barrier that many men simply don't talk about their health.

Fergus continued: "One of the issues with men's health is that men don't talk about it."

"So getting men interested and engaged, and we want to get them interested and involved before they've hit crisis point and are seeking support."

"How do we do that? I think a key part is that we have to be continually evolving."

"We've got to keep finding new ways to get the messaging out and raise awareness."

"So the Men's Health Network will resume in January, and we'll be looking for fresh ideas of what to tackle and what direction to take it."

[Email Inspector Fergus Green](#) for more information on the West Mercia Police Men's Health Network.



A MASSIVE THANK YOU TO PEOPLE WHO JOINED THE TEAM AND RAISED MONEY, AND THANK YOU TO EVERYBODY INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE ORGANISATION THAT DONATED.



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CONNECTING THE COMMUNITY THROUGH CRICKET



Andy Forbes and the Kidderminster Neighbourhood Team, who called themselves 'Justice 6'.

West Mercia Police Federation members have been showing that cricket is more than just a game - it's a way to promote wellbeing, strengthen community ties, and open up conversations around mental health.

This summer, officers from across the Force took to the crease twice - once to face NHS colleagues in the annual Blue Light Trophy, and again to represent West Mercia Police in the Worcester Street Sixes tournament.

Both events blended sport, camaraderie, and community engagement, helping to shine a light on the importance of looking after both physical and mental health.

The fifth staging of the Blue Light Trophy took place at Stourport Cricket Club, where West Mercia Police faced off against the Black Country Health Gladiators. The match was a close contest, with the Gladiators posting 102 runs before the police team chased down the target to win by three wickets.



Team captains Mohammed Ramzan and PC Andy Forbes.

Federation representative Andy Forbes said the event was about much more than the scoreline.

"It's all about camaraderie," he said. "Getting people together, giving them a release from their day jobs, and focusing on health and wellbeing."

"Both teams put in a huge effort on the pitch, but the real victory was in creating a

space for colleagues across the emergency services to come together and support each other."

The Blue Light Trophy was established after the pandemic to raise awareness of mental health in policing and healthcare, as well as fostering closer ties between the two services. Andy said the clash has now become a firm fixture in the calendar.

"This was our fifth year and we've already started putting the feelers out for a date next year," said Andy.

"Recruitment is strong in all our sports teams at the moment, so it's relatively easy to get people to play."

"It's about people enjoying themselves over a game of cricket, building friendships, and maintaining positive mental health."



IT'S ALL ABOUT CAMARADERIE. GETTING PEOPLE TOGETHER, GIVING THEM A RELEASE FROM THEIR DAY JOBS, AND FOCUSING ON HEALTH AND WELLBEING.

A few weeks later, West Mercia Police officers swapped the beat for a bat again when they took part in this year's Worcester Street Sixes cricket tournament. The Force fielded two teams in the high-energy competition that took over Worcester's High Street earlier in the summer.

Organised by the Worcestershire Cricket Foundation, the event is no ordinary cricket competition. A temporary pitch is set up in the heart of the city for local businesses and organisations to take each other on in a six-a-side tournament using sponge balls and plastic bats. Teams start on 200 runs and lose five runs for every wicket.

PC Andy Forbes, who also took part in this tournament, said the day was about more than cricket.

Andy said: "It was great to be involved."

"For us, it wasn't just about the cricket, it was the engagement with our community, forging partnerships, and the police being visible and accessible in our city centre."

"It also tied in perfectly with the Home Office's Safer Streets summer initiative, which aims to make towns safer and help people feel safer."

"For us, it hit lots of key points."

Teams taking part included SM Lawson Solicitors, Ice Blue and Kidderminster Business Improvement District, with funds raised going back to the Worcestershire Cricket Foundation to support inclusive and grassroots programmes across the county.

Andy added: "Events like this help us connect with people in a relaxed, positive environment."

"It's about showing that the police are approachable and part of the community, and not just present in times of difficulty."



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THANK YOU: CROWDFUNDER MAKING A DIFFERENCE TO MEN'S RUGBY TEAM

The manager of West Mercia Police men's rugby team says its Crowdfunder campaign will make a real difference in helping it compete this season.

Manager Detective Inspector Dave Knight thanked colleagues and supporters for helping the team raise £410 so far.

Dave said the backing is already having a meaningful impact.

And he hopes to extend the campaign until the end of January to push towards its £1,000 target.

Dave said: "We're really pleased and grateful for the support. Any extra pounds make a huge difference for us."

He explained that the team's budget has faced additional pressure, as many of the more affordable grass pitches were unplayable due to the recent wet weather.

That often forced the squad to hire artificial surfaces at a higher cost.

The £410 raised so far has already allowed the team to replace ageing match balls and will help cover essential match-day costs.

Dave said: "We've upgraded a couple of match balls, which were seven or eight years old."

"Every time we rent a ground, it's around £200 with the pitch, floodlights, physio and referee costs.

"You can see how quickly the money goes, but the donations we've had will fully fund a couple of games.

"We usually play five or six matches a season, so it provides real security for the team."

Dave has also stressed the importance of the team for officers' and staff wellbeing.

He said: "Being part of a sports team that has police in its heart, with camaraderie and support but that is also distanced from the negative aspects of a difficult job, makes a huge difference.

"I believe there are officers and staff who play rugby for us, and without the team might not have remained within West Mercia Police."

[Find out more about the Crowdfunder](#), including how to donate.

West Mercia Police opened their Police Sport UK (PSUK) Plate campaign with a tough away fixture in Scotland.

Playing at Meggetland, home of the Boroughmuir Bears, they lost 78-0 to a



well-drilled Scotland Police Saltires.

The game was overshadowed by a serious injury to West Mercia flanker PC Olly Pike, who suffered a broken leg. He is now two and a half months into his recovery.

The team responded strongly in their second fixture, hosting an amalgamated Greater Manchester and Lancashire police team at their Stourport home ground three weeks ago.

West Mercia's organisation and the training sessions under coach Andy Kilmister paid off in an impressive 57-12 victory.

Dave said: "We went into the game knowing that they had around eight times the personnel to pick from.

"But the experience we gained in

Scotland, and the structure Andy is putting in place, really paid off. It was a great performance."

The squad now prepares for a decisive final group match against West Midlands Police at Stourport on 21 January (7pm kick-off).

A victory would secure a place in the semi-finals of the PSUK Plate, where the top two teams from the northern group will face the leading sides from the southern group.

Dave said the team is determined to continue building.

"We're showing real progress and we're in a strong position. If we can get the win in January, we'll be into the semi-finals again, and that would be fantastic for the squad."

[Donate to the team's Crowdfunding page.](#)



BEING PART OF A SPORTS TEAM THAT HAS POLICE IN ITS HEART, WITH CAMARADERIE AND SUPPORT BUT THAT IS ALSO DISTANCED FROM THE NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF A DIFFICULT JOB, MAKES A HUGE DIFFERENCE.



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