

FEDERATION



West Midlands Police Federation

October/November 2026



HONOURING THE MEMORY OF DC MICK SWINDELLS QGM

- see Page 19

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WELCOME

Welcome to the October/November 2026 edition of **Federation** - the magazine for members of West Midlands Police Federation.

We are always on the look-out for good news stories so please get in touch if you have something to share with colleagues. It does not have to relate to your policing role - though we are definitely interested in hearing about what's going on around the Force. Do you have an interesting hobby or perhaps you are involved in sport locally, as a player, a manager, a coach?

Just get in touch and let us know.

We would also be interested to hear what you would like to see featured in your magazine.

Cover photo: Dave Swindells, brother of DC Mick Swindells QGM who died in the line of duty in 2004, was presented with the Elizabeth Emblem, during the National Police Memorial Day by the Lord-Lieutenant of Belfast Dame Fionnuala Jay-O'Boyle (left) and Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood. Photo courtesy of Anderson Photography.

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Memorial day service is reminder of unique role of police officers



By **Jess Davies**, chair of West Midlands Police Federation

Welcome to what is the penultimate edition of Federation magazine for 2026, though it hardly seems possible that it is October already.

As I write this column, it's just a couple of weeks since I travelled to Belfast for the annual National Police Memorial Day service, which honours our fallen colleagues, recognises their sacrifice and shows their families that they are never forgotten.

It is a privilege to represent the branch and its members at this service, which is a poignant reminder of the unique role of police officers in our communities and their commitment to serving the public.

Among the officers included as part of this year's roll of honour were Cleveland PCs Matthew Blades and Tom Clough. Having been one of the first branches to respond to requests for mutual aid for the Cleveland Police Federation branch, I can personally relate to the devastating aftermath of their tragic deaths.

This year's memorial day was particularly special for the West Midlands Police family in that Dave Swindells, the brother of DC Mick Swindells who was killed in the line of duty in May 2004, was presented with the Elizabeth Emblem in his memory.

It was lovely to see Mick honoured in this way and I hope this recognition further demonstrates to his family that he is remembered, that he remains part of the policing family and that they too are never forgotten.

You can read more about the service and about Mick's family's thoughts on receiving the Elizabeth Emblem on Pages 16 to 19.

Next year the memorial day service will be held in Wales, and I would encourage any officer who has not yet attended to consider doing so. It really is one of the most important dates in the policing calendar.

Pressures on policing

This year's service was set against the backdrop

of a police service that is in crisis, with the early release of prisoners adding just another layer of pressure on officers and forces.

The Government is seeking to ease prison overcrowding, yet this solution seems ill thought-out, and I have serious concerns over it working in the medium to long-term.

We just don't have the officer numbers to cope with the extra demand this initiative will generate, and yet we are expected to do so.

We are struggling to maintain our officer establishment, with the revolving door scenario of officers leaving the service through one door as fast as we can bring in new recruits through another.

It's not difficult to understand why that is the case.

The Police Federation's Copped Enough campaign sends a clear message about the realities of policing:

- **Police officers are 21 per cent worse off in real terms than they were in 2010**
- **A third of officers struggle to afford food, rent, or heating**
- **31,368 officer assaults in a year. That's 86 officers attacked every single day**
- **Mental health crises are soaring, with policing now the profession with the highest mental health-related sickness rates.**

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We have presented the facts; we have provided the evidence. Yet I am not convinced the Government gets it.

Its White Paper on policing puts forward plans for Force mergers, for example, but we will still only have the same number of officers to go around. There is no magic way of making them spread further.

Meanwhile, the Police Federation of England and Wales is embarking on a transformation process aimed at making the organisation more effective.

The reform programme, hailed as the biggest reform in the Federation's 107-year history, will set out to put members at the heart of everything it does.

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There is much work to be done, but I believe there is now an acknowledgement from everyone involved in the Federation that change is critical.

There have been failings. Lessons have to be learnt.

Our members deserve the very best representation and we are committed to ensuring they get it.

You can read more about the plans for reform on Page 6 and, as more details become available, we will keep you updated via our website, social media and this magazine.

We will, of course, also keep you informed of other developments both within the Federation and within policing generally as well as providing updates on local Federation issues.

We have recently held an election for new workplace representatives, and the successful candidates will soon start their training. There have also been a number of changes within our office team.

As ever, we remain committed as a branch to providing members with the best possible service and support.

Help us recognise officers' bravery

Officers are being encouraged to nominate their colleagues for the West Midlands Police Federation Bravery Awards 2027.

The awards will be held in March next year, and nominations opened on 1 July.

Recognised

"While the awards are almost six months away, I am sure there are officers out there whose brave acts so far this year need to be recognised and there will be incidents that are already standing out," says Jess Davies, chair of West Midlands Police Federation.

"I would urge officers to put forward their colleagues for these awards. Each and every day officers are putting their lives on the line to serve and protect their communities and their bravery should never be taken for granted. Our bravery awards give us the opportunity to shine a light on them."

The awards are largely split into geographical areas, with nominations sought for officers in the following policing units:

- Birmingham
- Dudley
- Solihull
- Wolverhampton.
- Coventry
- Sandwell
- Walsall

This year for the first time there is an award category for specialist departments.

Inspiration

As with the previous awards, there will be an Inspiration in Policing Award presented in memory of former West Midlands Police Federation deputy chair Sam Hughes, who died in 2023.

The overall winner, chosen from the



Chief Constable Scott Green with Sergeant Mitchell Bull at the 2026 Police Bravery Awards.

winners of all categories, is presented with the David Green Memorial Shield and also goes forward as the West Midlands Police Federation nominee for the national Police Bravery Awards held in London over the summer.

The winner of the 2026 West Midlands Police Federation Bravery Award was [Mitchell Bull](#) who attended the national Police Bravery Awards and also visited the Houses of Parliament and a Downing Street reception.

To nominate a colleague for the West Midlands Police Federation Police Bravery Awards, please fill out this form.

If you need any further information please contact your local Federation rep or the full-time officials.

Contact details can be found on our [Meet the team page](#).

Have your say on police pay

Members are being urged to have their say on police pay in the Police Friendly Family Finance Index Survey.

And, as an added incentive to take part, everyone taking part will be in with a chance of winning one of ten £100 Amazon gift cards*.

"The results of this survey will give a clear indication of officers' views on their pay and the financial pressures they are facing," says Jess Davies, chair of West Midlands Police Federation, "I hope that as many members as possible will take the time to submit their responses because the more who take part the more definitive the results will be."

The research aims to identify and measure critical financial challenges facing the police family and establish an ongoing measure to enable comparison over time. It is intended to highlight key themes to inform policy development and provide guidance for areas of financial wellbeing support.

The last annual report, based on more

than 13,500 responses from across the UK police family, highlighted:

- 68 per cent of police officers and 51 per cent of police staff reported current financial concerns
- 56 per cent of police officers and 44 per cent of police staff said their financial situation had worsened over the past year.

The survey should take no longer than 10 minutes to complete and respondents can opt to remain anonymous.

[Have your say.](#)

*Terms and conditions apply.



Federation reform: more resources to be focused on branches

More resources will be focused on local branches, representatives and members under a transformation programme unanimously approved by the Police Federation's National Council.

The programme, the biggest in the Federation's 107-year history, follows a turbulent time for the organisation with the reforms aimed at putting members at the heart of a stronger, more accountable and effective staff association.

"The last few years have been incredibly challenging for the Federation," says Jess Davies, chair of West Midlands Police Federation, "At times there appears to have been a disconnect between the national Federation, local branches and the membership.

"While we have remained committed to providing our members with the best possible service, this disconnection has been distracting so we welcome the launch of this transformation programme which should ensure that the membership is properly represented and supported.

Directly elected general secretary

At the heart of the reforms will be a new general secretary directly elected by members, replacing the current split leadership model of national chair and national secretary.

The National Board will become smaller and more strategic, reducing from 24 members to around 15 and including two independent non-executive directors. National Council will become stronger and provide the principal route for branch and member voice, scrutiny and accountability.

The reforms will also see resources realigned to provide stronger practical support to branches and representatives through regional structures, while strengthening the Federation's campaigning, communications, negotiating and member service capability.

Crucially, branches will remain at the heart of the Federation. They will continue to represent members locally, maintain relationships with members and forces, make local decisions within the Federation's overall framework and retain their branch reserves.

Determination

Paul Williams, acting deputy national chair, said at the national Federation meeting on 22 September: "Today marks an historic moment for the Police Federation. We have confronted some difficult truths about where the



organisation has fallen short and the determination to leave the Federation in a healthier condition than we found it has driven this work. This is about building a Federation that is clearer, more accountable and better equipped to fight for its members.

"We are building a much stronger connection between what members and branches are experiencing and the decisions made nationally. We are strengthening scrutiny, bringing in greater independent expertise and making sure our resources are focused where they can make the biggest difference – supporting our representatives and delivering for members.

"This is about creating a Federation that is fit for the future and, above all, fit to fight for police officers at a time when there is so much we need to fight for on welfare, pay and battling exploitative working conditions."

Melanie Warnes, acting national secretary, added: "Our members have every right to expect a Federation that works for them, listens to them and can demonstrate what it is delivering on their behalf. For too long, our structures and ways of working have made that harder than it should be. Today we have taken a major step towards changing that.

"The test of this transformation is not how impressive an organisational chart looks. It is what members actually experience. Can they see who is responsible? Can they get the support they need? Do their experiences shape our campaigns, negotiations and decisions? And can they have confidence that their Federation is properly accountable? That is

what these changes are designed to deliver.

Foundations

"This is the beginning of a significant programme of work, not the end of it. Changing structures matters but changing culture matters just as much. We need greater openness, professionalism, challenge, collaboration and a willingness to learn from our mistakes. Our members deserve nothing less, and today we have given ourselves the foundations to build it."

The decisions made by National Council follow an intensive five-month process during which the proposals were debated, refined and developed. Much of the programme is based on the recommendations of the independent review of the organisation commissioned by the Federation.

The Federation has also set out a clear member test for the transformation: whether members are being put first, whether they trust the Federation, whether they understand what it does to support them, whether they have confidence in its leadership, and whether the Federation is better at fighting for them.

Many of the recommendations arising from the Transformation Programme will require legislative change, and the Federation has already begun discussions with the Home Office about the steps needed to support the reforms.

[Police Federation appoints independent directors to strengthen governance and accountability.](#)

'Early release of prisoners puts policing under further pressure'



The early release of prisoners could be catastrophic for a police service already in crisis, according to West Midlands Police Federation chair Jess Davies.

The Government scheme, which will eventually see thousands of inmates let out on licence early, got underway on 1 October with the first 700 offenders jailed for a range of crimes including theft, violence and domestic abuse, being allowed to leave prison having served only one third of their sentence.

"This scheme is going to put the police service under huge pressure at a time when it is already in crisis; morale is low, we are

struggling to retain officers and the demands being placed on us just grow and grow," says Jess.

Impact

"I am extremely concerned about the impact the release of these prisoners is going to have on policing. We simply don't have anywhere near enough officers to cope with this.

"As is always the case, there are only so many officers to go around, and if the police service is expected to cope with the extra work this scheme will create then something else will have to go and I am not sure that is something the public will want.

"Police officers join the police service to

serve the public, to keep the peace, to protect the vulnerable and to fight and prevent crime. It can be galling for them to do their job, to put offenders behind bars and then to find that they are released before having served their sentence. But, added to that, this scheme will also almost inevitably lead to more work for them.

Back behind bars

"The scheme has been launched to try to ease the pressure on overcrowded prisons, but while it may initially achieve that aim, I am not convinced it will in the medium to long-term given that many have already predicted they would be back behind bars within weeks."

A further 3,800 prisoners are expected to be released in the next 10 months.

But the prison and probation watchdogs have already warned there could be record rates of recalls as those released through the scheme breach their licences or commit further offences.

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'Government must provide strong leadership to restore public confidence in policing'

The Government must provide strong political leadership if it wants to rebuild public confidence in policing, MPs have been told during a debate in Westminster Hall.

Jonathan Hinder, the Labour MP for Pendle and Clitheroe, introduced the debate and said policing needed to be 'relentlessly focused on doing the basics well'.

Priority

He said: "Do not look for a silver bullet to improve public confidence, because there isn't one. An extra engagement team, more attendance at community events, a new force slogan on the side of the patrol cars focusing on recruits' identity more than on their policing ability - these activities at the margins will not improve public confidence, no matter how well meaning.

"Let us be clear about what is a priority and what is not, and then back our officers to do the basics well, day in, day out. That is how we can improve public confidence in policing."

And he elaborated: "Put simply, they (the Government) can provide political leadership which sets very clear priorities that match those of the public and give our officers the backing they need to deliver on them. Policing is not just about crime, and it never has been, no matter what some people might tell us about a so-called golden age in the past.

"It is about policing protests, finding missing people, intervening to stop mentally ill people harming themselves. There always needs to be clear prioritisation from the Government and police leaders. If everything is a priority, nothing is."

Arguing that for the last 15 years public confidence in the police had been heading in the wrong direction, Mr Hinder, who served as a police officer before entering politics, said cuts to officer numbers, shifting stances on stop and search, significant changes to police demand and reduced police visibility had all had an impact.

Support

Mr Hinder found wide-ranging support from MPs including Gareth Thomas, Labour/Co-operative MP for Harrow West, who pointed out that all too often the police were criticised for the failings of other agencies

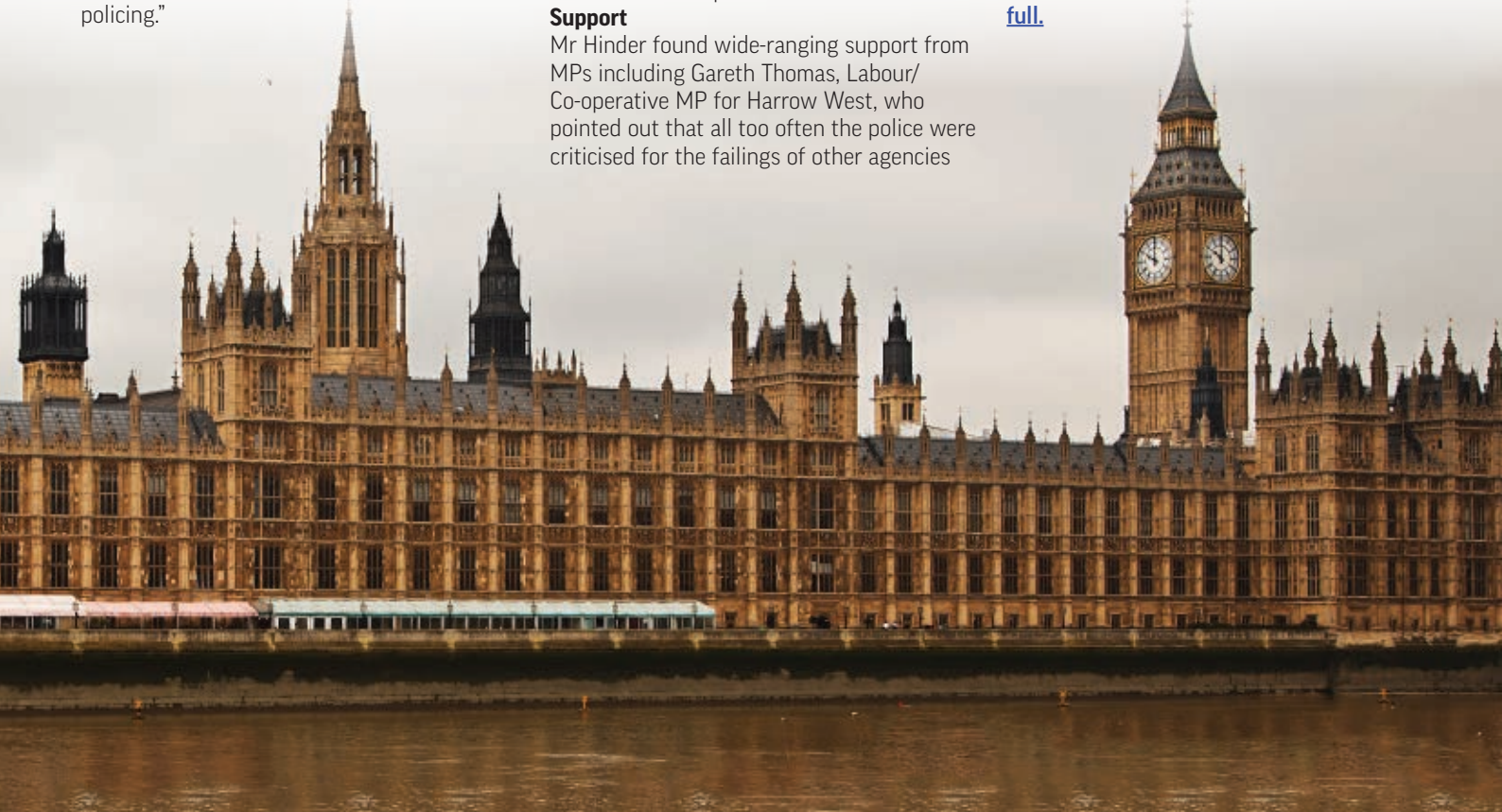
while Adam Dance (Liberal Democrat, Yeovil) said under-investment in policing had also damaged public confidence in the police service.

The debate, on 9 September, concluded with Mr Hinder thanking colleagues for their support.

"I thank all members who have spoken and intervened during the debate. So many important points have been made, and I think we have found quite a lot of agreement. I hope that we can push forward together, across the parties, because policing and crime is such an important issue for all our constituents across the country, yet it often receives far less attention in Parliament than many other issues," he said.

"I am pleased to be able to make my small contribution to putting that right and am grateful to members for joining me in that effort."

[Read the Westminster Hall session in full.](#)



Police minister praises neighbourhood policing

Policing minister Sarah Jones highlighted the value of neighbourhood policing and referenced talking to Coventry police officers during a visit to the city when she addressed the Superintendents' Association Conference in Stratford upon Avon.

Ms Jones said the Government's Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee had delivered more than 3,800 officers and PCSOs into neighbourhood policing roles, exceeding its target for the first year.

"This means more visible neighbourhood policing, and a greater focus on the issues that matter most to local communities. Building on that strong start, we need to keep going as we work towards the target of 13,000 additional neighbourhood policing personnel by the end of this Parliament," she told delegates.

"And that's about more than just numbers. We are also restoring the link between policing and communities with named, contactable officers for every neighbourhood and guaranteed 72-hour response times for neighbourhood queries.

"I've just come before here from a visit in Coventry, where I was talking to local police officers tackling antisocial behaviour, dodgy vape shops, the challenges that we know our communities care about so much, the value of neighbourhood policing, the intelligence and the wisdom that they have was there to see, and it is on every visit that I go on."

Challenges

The minister acknowledged that she had learned a lot about policing in the last 12 months including the challenges of policing in an online age, the split-second operational decisions in situations others can barely comprehend, the painstaking investigations carried out over months and years to tackle the most dangerous threats, the obstacles that stop the service performing to the levels it could reach and the enduring courage that is the hallmark of British policing.

The Police Efficiency and Collaboration Programme, she told conference, was cutting unnecessary bureaucracy but she admitted that the case for changing the funding formula for forces had been well made with the Government committed to a proper review. A



Policing minister Sarah Jones.

new approach to allocating funding would be introduced as part of Government reforms to police structures.

"Ultimately, we're looking to ensure that more resources meet the frontline," Ms Jones said.

Elaborating on the Government's reform programme, she explained: "The Police Reform White Paper set out our plans for the biggest structural changes in 200 years.

"At the heart of this programme is a commitment to strengthen local policing through the introduction of stronger and more empowered Local Policing Areas.

"We'll establish the National Police Service to tackle national threats, deliver national capabilities, and support forces to provide a more consistent service to the public.

Improvement

"And we will introduce a force structure that reduces duplication, improves resilience, and addresses the inefficiencies of maintaining 43 separate HR, finance and support functions, while ensuring forces have sufficient scale and capability to respond to major incidents.

"Reform isn't just a structural exercise; 80 per cent of the total police budget is spent on people. The officers and staff who invest heavily in their careers, who are the service's

most vital asset.

"We are developing a new Police Workforce Strategy to ensure policing has the right people, with the right skills, in the right places, at the right time."

She also outlined plans to provide better support to police officers and their families. "The Police Covenant is central to that. And we are putting support for officers and staff at the heart of our police reform, with a package of measures backed by £2.4 million in additional funding this year," the minister added.

"This is about doing right by those who put themselves under extraordinary pressure every day, facing situations that most people could barely imagine. And going to remarkable lengths to keep the rest of us safe.

"For what we ask of you and your colleagues, the least we can do, as a society, is make sure help is there when needed."

Funerals

Ms Jones began her speech, on 17 September, by recognising the tragic deaths of Cleveland officers PC Matthew Blades and PC Tom Clough whose funerals she attended last week.

Earlier this year she was also at the funeral of Northumbria PC Jess Turnbull, and she also recognised the death of three other officers in the last 12 months – PC Bradley Corke of Kent Police, PC Faizaan Najeeb of Northamptonshire Police and PC Mark Chester of the Ministry of Defence Police.

The policing minister said: "I realise too that the work doesn't stop just because someone has lost their life and something dreadful has happened. You and your colleagues have to carry on serving your communities despite the shock and sadness, and I saw that in Cleveland on the two days that I was there.

"So, let me say clearly, on behalf of the Government, that we value you, we cherish you, and we stand by you today and always.

"In honouring the memory of those officers who have lost their lives, and all the officers and staff who have died in the line of duty, we have a responsibility to give thanks for their service and their sacrifice, and that of every man and woman who goes to work every day with a singular aim: keeping the rest of us safe."

[Read the speech in full.](#)

“ULTIMATELY, WE'RE LOOKING TO ENSURE THAT MORE RESOURCES MEET THE FRONTLINE.

Chair condemns proposal to strip officers of Taser

Plans by the Green Party to stop police using Taser and pepper spray are ludicrous and show a complete disregard for the safety of police officers and the public, according to Jess Davies, the chair of West Midlands Police Federation.

Jess has spoken out following reports the party's crime and justice working group has drawn up a motion calling on the party to pledge to 'withdraw lethal tools and tactics, eg Tasers and pepper spray.'

The motion calls for the Green Party to take investment away from policing, prisons and surveillance and also scrap Prevent, the Government's counterterrorism programme.

"Frankly, I just can't understand how anyone could even put forward these proposals," says Jess, "Every day 86 police officers are assaulted while carrying out their duties."

"The level of violence they face on the streets is just getting worse and worse and they need tools, such as Taser, at their disposal so they can protect themselves but also so they can protect the public."

"Officers are trained to use Taser and PAVA effectively and often just drawing these items can help de-escalate a situation. It is no exaggeration to say that they can be life-saving at times."

"Rather than coming up with these sorts of ideas with apparently no understanding of the everyday risks and dangers of modern-day policing, I would urge politicians to look more closely at ways of protecting police officers and in turn help them protect the public."



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Handcuffing: do not let it become automatic

The methods of handcuffing chosen can have a significant impact on officer safety, says West Midlands Police Federation's health and safety lead.

Ali Rowe was responding after several incidents where officers have been assaulted by detainees who, despite being handcuffed, remain capable of using their hands, arms and the handcuffs themselves to resist, strike, spit at, bite or otherwise assault officers and colleagues.

Ali explains: "Every day, officers across the Force have to make dynamic decisions in challenging, and often unpredictable, circumstances. One of the most common uses of force available to officers is the application of handcuffs. While handcuffing may feel routine, it is important that we do not allow routine to replace assessment.

"As officers, we must always be able to justify our use of force. The College of Policing guidance is clear that handcuffing should not be seen as automatic and that any application, including the method used, should be proportionate, necessary and justifiable based on the circumstances presented."

Ali says before applying handcuffs, officers should ask themselves:

- Why am I handcuffing this individual?
- What risks are present?
- What am I seeking to prevent?
- How does my chosen method best manage those risks?
- Can I clearly articulate my decision-making if challenged later?

He points out the National Decision Model (NDM) remains the cornerstone of effective decision-making but, alongside this, officers should consider the PLAN mnemonic:

P – Proportionate

L – Legal

A – Accountable

N – Necessary

Ali adds: "Applying these principles helps ensure that the decision made is based on risk, threat and circumstance, rather than habit or convenience."

When considering handcuffing options, officers, he says, should assess factors such as:

- The subject's behaviour and demeanour
- Their previous violence or intelligence known about the individual

- Their physical strength, size and capability
- The likelihood of them escaping
- The risk of an assault on officers or members of the public
- Environmental considerations
- The subject's ability to reach, manipulate or use objects, including the handcuffs themselves
- The ongoing need to prevent kicking, punching, biting, spitting or other assaults.

"No two situations are identical, and there is no universal answer to which technique should be used. What is important is that the chosen method is the result of a conscious and justifiable risk assessment," Ali explains.

"As a Federation, our priority is ensuring every officer goes home safe at the end of their shift. Effective decision-making around handcuffing forms part of that wider officer safety picture.

"Taking a few seconds to consider your powers, policy, training and the specific risks presented can significantly reduce the opportunity for detainees to assault officers or escalate an incident."

He concludes: "The message is simple: Don't let handcuffing become automatic. Think about why you are handcuffing, assess the risks in front of you, apply the NDM and PLAN principles, and select the option that best protects everyone involved, including yourself and your colleagues. The use of cuffs, where justified, may protect officers, the detainee and wider members of the public. Stay safe."

“NO TWO SITUATIONS ARE IDENTICAL, AND THERE IS NO UNIVERSAL ANSWER TO WHICH TECHNIQUE SHOULD BE USED. WHAT IS IMPORTANT IS THAT THE CHOSEN METHOD IS THE RESULT OF A CONSCIOUS AND JUSTIFIABLE RISK ASSESSMENT



A full-page background image showing the silhouette of a police officer standing in a narrow alleyway between brick buildings. The officer is wearing a helmet and carrying equipment. The scene is backlit, creating a strong silhouette effect against the bright sky and foliage in the distance.

The erosion of discretion and the Police Appeals Tribunal crisis

Dave Hadley, West Midlands Police Federation co-lead for conduct and performance, gives his views on issues within the disciplinary framework, in the latest in a series of conduct updates.



Conduct lead Dave Hadley.

There are two significant problems with the current disciplinary framework: the presumption of dismissal in misconduct hearings and the apparent paralysis within the Police Appeals Tribunal (PAT) system stemming from an unresolved indemnity issue affecting PAT chairs.

The presumption of dismissal and the erosion of independent decision-making

A central feature of the misconduct regulatory amendments was the introduction of a presumption that officers found to have committed gross misconduct should be dismissed, unless exceptional circumstances apply.

This was introduced after a 2023 Home Office review. That review did not identify significant evidence showing misconduct panels were systematically lenient. Nevertheless, a political decision introduced the presumption of dismissal. While the objective of ensuring accountability and

consistency is understandable, I believe substantially curtailing panel chairs' discretion has had undesirable consequences.

Previously, having found gross misconduct, the chair chose an appropriate sanction, referring to a staged approach, and exercising professional judgement.

They had to consider the least severe outcome that adequately dealt with the issues identified in the case, while protecting public interest.

The 2025 amendments to the regulations changed this. Now the outcome of a gross misconduct finding is automatic dismissal, unless the officer persuades the chair exceptional circumstances apply.

There is no guidance at all on what might amount to 'exceptional' but, on its ordinary meaning, this is an incredibly high threshold. The issue is not if gross misconduct should normally result in dismissal. It is whether decision-makers should retain the ability to distinguish between cases that are technically similar, but the circumstances provide a very different perspective.

The first problem with this is, given the sanction is effectively mandated, chairs are largely unable to retain an officer even if the circumstances and 'feel' of the case might reasonably justify it.

Recently, I have seen good officers with years of exemplary service and experience dismissed. Yes, their conduct amounted to gross misconduct but losing that experience and many years of public investment in them was not always the best option. But the Regulations leave chairs with little option, the officers must be dismissed.

Secondly, the 2020 reforms aimed to bring a culture of learning and improvement rather than one of blame and punishment. This was reflected by introducing the Reflective Practice Review Process. Those reforms recognised that organisational learning is often best achieved when individuals are willing to acknowledge mistakes and engage openly with measures designed to help them learn and improve.

A disciplinary regime in which gross misconduct findings almost invariably result in

dismissal risks pulling the service the other way. Officers may become less willing to self-report errors, admit shortcomings or engage openly with misconduct investigations if they perceive the outcome to be predetermined. How is that better for policing?

The PAT backlog

An equally serious concern has emerged with the appeals process. For more than a year, an unresolved indemnity issue which affects PAT chairs has led many qualified individuals to be reluctant to chair the appeal tribunals causing a growing backlog of cases awaiting determination.

Where appeals are unheard for extended periods, officers and police forces face uncertainty. Dismissed officers cannot secure final resolution of their cases, while forces do not know the outcome of contested proceedings.

In our Force, five former officers are waiting to have appeals against dismissal considered, the earliest dating back to March 2025!

The national Federation is pushing the Home Office for a resolution, to no avail. Such delays are difficult to reconcile with the principle of disciplinary proceedings being concluded in a reasonable time.

Justice delayed is not merely inconvenient; it fundamentally undermines confidence in the fairness and effectiveness of the system. It also raises broader constitutional questions; access to justice requires more than the existence of a legal right of appeal on paper. A right that cannot be exercised within a reasonable period risks becoming illusory.

If appellants' appeals cannot be heard because there are insufficient chairs willing or able to constitute tribunals, there is a legitimate argument that effective access to justice is being impaired.

It is a touchstone of the rule of law that legal disputes should be determined by independent decision-makers through effective, functioning legal processes. Confidence in those processes is inevitably weakened where appeal mechanisms are unable to operate because of administrative difficulties.

Conclusion

The police misconduct system depends upon two essential safeguards: independent decision-makers exercising genuine judgment, not following a prescribed tick-box outcome procedure, and a functioning appeals process capable of correcting errors.

The presumption of dismissal risks undermining the former, while the ongoing PAT indemnity dispute threatens the latter.

Together, they create a worrying picture in which significant disciplinary outcomes appear increasingly predetermined, while avenues for challenge become effectively inaccessible. This situation cannot be allowed to continue.

“ IN OUR FORCE, FIVE FORMER OFFICERS ARE WAITING TO HAVE APPEALS AGAINST DISMISSAL CONSIDERED, THE EARLIEST DATING BACK TO MARCH 2025!

Reasonable adjustments

In the first of a series of articles looking at some of the issues handled by our personnel and equalities co-leads Jon Nott and Julie Fleming, Julie puts the spotlight on reasonable adjustments (RA) and reason adjustments passports (RAP).



Equality co-lead Julie Fleming.

Under the Equality Act 2010, employers must make reasonable adjustments for employees with disabilities. Failure to do so may be discrimination.

However, the employer does not have to change the basic nature of the job.

Reasonable adjustments involve individuals being given certain supports or the removal of a systemic barrier itself. This could lead to a modification being made to the way in which a role is undertaken or equipment being provided to ensure people with disabilities can work on an equal basis. The goal is not to give advantage but to allow equitable access and participation by removing or reducing any disadvantage. It is all dependant on individual needs and there is no definitive list of where reasonable adjustments should be made, or what they should be.

Considerations for the employer

There are a number of factors to be considered:

- The employer size and resources
- The cost of an adjustment
- The practicality of an adjustment
- Whether that adjustment would fundamentally change the nature of the job, and
- Whether the adjustment would remove or reduce the barrier or disadvantage?

Who pays?

Employers are legally responsible to pay for reasonable adjustments, however, the cost

may influence what is deemed reasonable. The Government's Access to Work scheme can provide grants for certain support. In some cases, the scheme may provide a certain amount, and the employer may make up the deficit.

Examples

Examples of reasonable adjustments include:

- Providing certain software such as Claro

read

- Providing equipment such as rise and fall desks, orthopaedic chairs, noise cancelling earphones
- Changes to the workplace itself such as lighting
- Providing more time to do written or reading tests for interviews
- Changing working arrangements
- Distributing work differently within a team.

Reasonable adjustment passports

There are two reasonable adjustments passports (RAP) within West Midlands Police.

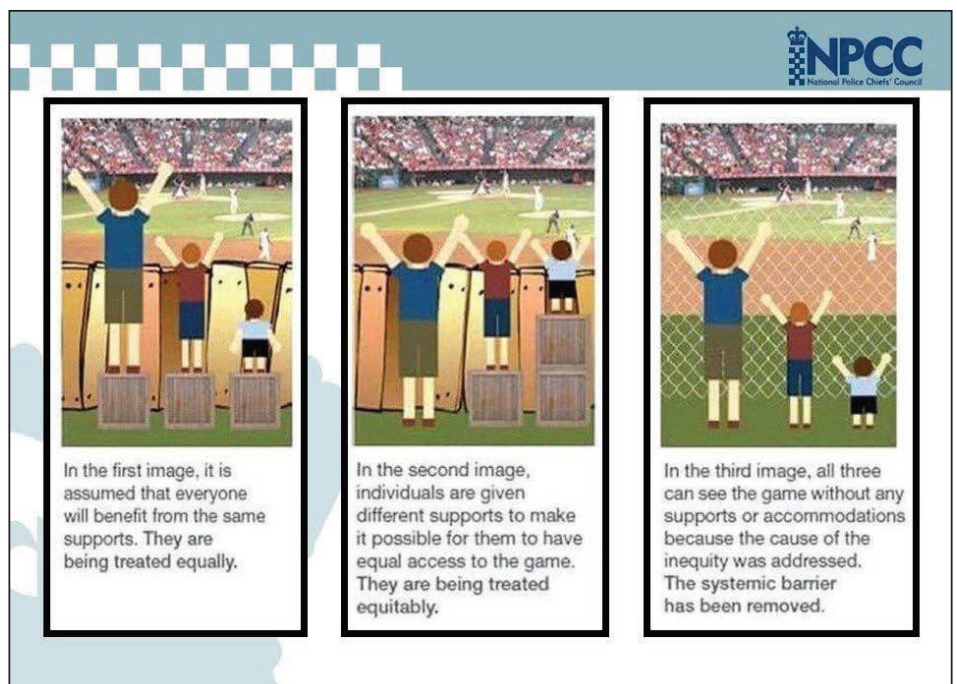
The member needs to complete the closed form first, detailing the need for the adjustments and the adjustments they are requesting.

Once this has been completed, they send it to their supervisors and then a conversation takes place. When an agreement has been reached as to the adjustments that will be implemented this is all documented on the form which is then uploaded to the member's personnel file.

When they have been agreed, the open form can be completed. This just records the agreed adjustments, with no need for any personal medical details to be included.

It is this second form that can be shared with any new supervisors if necessary, perhaps when the individual changes teams or if a new supervisor comes into post.

This second form eliminates the need for anyone to have to share personal details



**THERE IS A RANGE
OF SUPPORT AVAILABLE
TO YOU SHOULD YOU FEEL
YOU NEED REASONABLE
ADJUSTMENTS IN THE
WORKPLACE**

repeatedly unless, of course, they wish to.

This is a positive step and should be used for any new applications, or when it is time for an annual review of adjustments.

RAP panel

If adjustments cannot be agreed locally or require more consideration, requests can be heard by the RAP panel. The panel meets monthly and involves members of the diversity and inclusion team and HR. They can approve or refuse certain adjustments as well as being able to authorise funding for implementation.

Practical advice

Communication is key. Although you do not legally have to disclose your medical situation unless there is a risk to you or another, if the employer isn't aware then it cannot be accused of failing you. In practical terms, you should be open at least about the very basics of your needs so that realistic and fair consideration can be made as to what adjustments are reasonable.

Be sensible, be realistic and be reasonable. Work with the Force and not against it. Ultimately, the aim is to find a solution to allow you to work in a comfortable, supportive and productive role.

Sources of support

There is a range of support available to you should you feel you need reasonable adjustments in the workplace.

Consider contacting:

- **Your GP or consultants for advice**
- **The occupational health team**
- **HR**
- **The Force EnABLE Network**
- **Access to Work**
- **The National Autistic Society.**

You can also contact a workplace Federation rep – check the list on the [Find a rep](#) page of our website, where you will be able to find our equalities and personnel trained reps, or you can also contact Jon and myself at Guardians House. Our contact details can be found on the [Meet the team](#) page.

Federation launches monthly surgeries with personal injury lawyers

Members will now have the opportunity to meet with lawyers with expertise in handling personal injury and clinical negligence claims at a series of monthly surgeries being held at the Federation's offices.

The clinics are available to all Federation members, and their immediate family members with the first having being held at Guardians House in September.

Further clinics will be held on:

20 October

24 November

Advice can be given on:

- **Accidents on duty**
- **Injuries from animals**
- **Injuries during training**
- **Injuries in public places**
- **Trips, slips and falls at work**
- **Stress with work/ complex PTSD**
- **Clinical negligence**
- **Professional negligence**
- **Noise induced deafness claims**
- **CICA appeals.**

The surgeries are not for RTC related claims and these should be directed to the Police Federation RTA Legal Assistance Service.

The Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW) supports personal injury (PI) and clinical negligence (CN) claims for members, and also for their immediate family, including partners, children, siblings, parents and in-laws.

The majority of these claims are handled by the Federation panel solicitors under a conditional fee agreement (CFA, no win, no fee).

The important difference between PFEW funding and alternative funding options that members may find "on the high street" is that, if members are successful in their PI claim, they get to keep 100 per cent of any compensation awarded.

Time limit

The intention of these surgeries is not to discuss claims which have already been allocated to a Federation panel firm and are ongoing, but to help members who have not yet made a claim.

To succeed with a PI claim, negligence must be established against the defendant. The claimant must be able to prove they were owed a duty of care by the defendant and that by their acts or omissions, the defendant breached that duty of care, giving rise to a foreseeable risk of injury. The claimant must also show any breach of injury caused some injury to be suffered.

It is important to note that in the UK, the time limit (limitation period) for issuing court proceedings with respect to a PI claim is three years.

Appointments for the Federation surgeries are available throughout the day and can be arranged by [emailing the Federation office](#).



Jess Davies with ACC Paul Drover.

Remembering fallen colleagues – Belfast hosts memorial day service

Police officers of all ranks joined the families of fallen colleagues for annual service

Fallen officers were remembered and honoured at this year's National Police Memorial Day held at the Waterfront Hall, Belfast at the end of September.

Among those gathered with their families was Jess Davies, chair of West Midlands Police Federation, who was joined by Assistant Chief Constable Paul Drover representing the Force.

"It was an honour to attend the memorial day service and to represent the Federation branch and its members," says Jess, "I think National Police Memorial Day is one of the most important dates in the policing calendar. It is incredibly important that we honour our fallen colleagues and recognise their sacrifice. But, for me, it is just as important that we stand with the loved ones they left behind and show them that they are never forgotten."

DC Mick Swindells

During the service, the family of West Midlands DC Michael (Mick) Swindells were presented with the Elizabeth Emblem, an award given to the next of kin of police officers and other public servants who died in the course of their duties.

The award was presented to Mick's brother, Dave, by the Home Secretary, Shabana Mahmood, Chief Constable Gavin Stephens, chair of the National Police Chiefs'

Council, and the Lord-Lieutenant of Belfast, Fionnuala Jay-O'Boyle.

The names of officers who had lost their lives in the 12 months since the last memorial day service were read out in an act of remembrance led by Liam Kelly, chair of the Police Federation for Northern Ireland:

PC Matthew Blades, 37, Cleveland Police

PC Tom Clough, 38, Cleveland Police

PC Alice Slominska, 19, Bedfordshire Police

PC Jess Turnbull, 19, Northumbria Police

PC Mark Chester, 35, Ministry of Defence Police

PC Mathew Parker, 43, Essex Police

PC Bradley Corke, 27, Kent Police

PC Faizaan Najeib, 24, Northamptonshire Police.

The Last Post was then sounded and there were two minutes of silence before petals of remembrance fell from the gallery and onto the congregation.

Prayers

The service began with a processional march by the Pipes and Drums of the Police Service of Northern Ireland, an introduction and welcome from the Reverend Matthew Hopley, the national police chaplain and bidding and opening prayers.

Dame Fionnuala also welcomed the



Jess Davies with Sergeant Ben Westwood of the West Midlands Police Honour Guard.

congregation with a loyal greeting while the Home Secretary gave a reading from Psalm 139 before the Reverend David Wilbraham, chair of the Police Remembrance Trust and the former co-ordinator of National Police Memorial Day, addressed those present.

The Police Service of Northern Ireland

Continued on Page 18



NATIONAL POLICE MEMORIAL DAY

Ladies' Choir performed a choral item, Always There by Brian Kennedy, while police hats representing the service from each of the four nations of the UK were taken to the front of the hall and laid beside candles which would later be lit in honour of fallen officers during the act of remembrance.

A candle remembering all those from the police forces of Northern Ireland who had lost their lives was lit by Jackie Gorman, remembering her son, PC Kevin Gorman from the Police Service of Northern Ireland who died, aged 24, on 23 November 2008 alongside three colleagues while responding to a call for assistance when their police vehicle went out of control and struck a wall.

Dorothy Ellis lit the candle for officers from Wales. Dorothy's son, Gwent PC Adrian Ellis, died on 27 September 1989, aged 29, after a motorcycle accident while travelling to report for duty.

A candle honouring fallen officers from Scotland was lit by Christine Fulton in remembrance of her husband, PC Lewis Fulton of Strathclyde Police, who died on 17 June 1994. Lewis, who was 28, was stabbed during a violent struggle as he took action to protect members of the public.

Chris Prior lit the candle for officers from England. His wife, North Yorkshire PC Rosie Prior, was 45 when she died on 11 January 2025 after being struck by a lorry while helping at the scene of an accident.

Before the National Anthem, the concluding words and act of commitment to end the service came from the Chief Constable of the Police Service of Northern Ireland, Jon Boutcher.



Candles were lit in an act of remembrance.

Photo courtesy of Anderson Photography



Photo courtesy of Anderson Photography

The Glenlola Collegiate Chamber Choir.

'An honour and a privilege'

Dave Swindells says it was an honour and privilege to collect the Elizabeth Emblem on behalf of his brother Mick's wife, Carol, and daughter, Kelly.

He says: "On the day I felt very emotional because, even after 22 years, the memory of that day never fades. But it brings comfort to know that my brother is still recognised for his bravery and commitment to the job through the award of the emblem.

"It was also very poignant that after receiving the award, a number of people approached me and offered their condolences, some of whom also remembered exactly where they were and what they were doing when the news broke about his death."



DC Mick Swindells.

Last year, Kelly, with her young daughter, Mabel, lit a candle of remembrance as part of the National Police Memorial Day service in Coventry.

The family were also joined at that service and at the VIP reception afterwards by Ken Atkinson, the family liaison officer, who looked after Carol and Kelly so well in 2004 and many years after.

Dave's wife, Deb, explains: "It was so nice to see him and meant such a lot to the family. Kelly is getting married on her dad's birthday next year. She's asked Dave to walk her down the aisle and has invited Ken and his wife, Shirley, to the wedding. I don't honestly think the family would have got through those dark times without Ken; he's an absolute angel."

“IT BRINGS COMFORT TO KNOW THAT MY BROTHER IS STILL RECOGNISED FOR HIS BRAVERY AND COMMITMENT TO THE JOB THROUGH THE AWARD OF THE EMBLEM.



Dave Swindells, brother of DC Mick Swindells QGM who died in the line of duty in 2004, was presented with the Elizabeth Emblem during the National Police Memorial Day by the Lord-Lieutenant of Belfast Dame Fionnuala Jay-O'Boyle (left) and Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood.



Michael Swindells' daughter, Kelly, and one-year-old granddaughter Mabel, lit a candle during last year's service in Coventry.

Photo courtesy of Anderson Photography

Photo courtesy of Anderson Photography



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Legal protection: why it matters and why early contact is essential

By Dawn Murkett and Dave Hadley, West Midlands Police Federation's conduct and performance leads

As police officers, we all know that complaints, misconduct investigations and criminal allegations can arise at any point during our service.

Sometimes these matters stem from genuine concerns, sometimes they arise from simply a consequence of the role we perform every day.

Whatever the circumstances, if you find yourself under investigation it is essential that you get advice as early as possible.

The Police Federation Legal Protection Scheme exists to provide subscribers with access to specialist legal advice and representation when they need it most.

Whether you are facing a criminal allegation, a gross misconduct investigation, an Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) investigation or are required to attend an inquest, having access to experienced police law solicitors can make a significant difference.

The most important thing to remember...

If you receive:

- A Regulation 17 Notice
- An allegation of a criminal nature
- A request to attend a voluntary interview
- A requirement to attend an interview under caution, or
- Any NIP traffic summons

Contact us immediately – contact details are on the [Meet the team](#) page of our website.

Please do not wait to see how matters develop. The earlier we are aware of an issue, the earlier we can provide guidance, consider what support may be available and ensure that the correct processes are followed from the outset.

In many cases, the decisions made during the initial stages of an investigation can have a lasting impact on the outcome.

Criminal allegations

The Legal Protection Scheme provides support at what is often the most stressful point for an officer, namely when they become the subject of a criminal investigation.

Where a subscriber is asked to attend an interview in relation to an allegation that could result in a caution or criminal charge, the scheme can provide access to legal advice and representation before and during the interview

where alternative funding is not available. There is also provision for further legal advice following interview where a charging decision remains under consideration.

As matters progress, there are also provisions within the scheme relating to Magistrates' Court and Crown Court proceedings.

Gross misconduct investigations

Gross misconduct investigations can be career-defining. The consequences can be significant and that is why early engagement is so important.

The policy identifies the service of a Regulation 17 Notice as the point at which the insured event arises. This means that as soon as a Regulation 17 Notice is received, you should notify the Federation and contact either of us.

It is important to understand, however, that while the matter is triggered at Regulation 17 stage, legal representation under the scheme for misconduct proceedings will generally come into effect when the matter is referred to a hearing and the officer receives either:

- A Regulation 30 Notice referring the matter to a gross misconduct hearing; or
- A Regulation 51 Notice referring the matter to an accelerated misconduct hearing.

At that point the scheme can provide specialist legal advice, preparation and representation throughout the hearing process and, where appropriate, any subsequent Police Appeals Tribunal proceedings. Cover for disciplinary hearings is available up to £20,000. It is important to note that every application is considered on its own merits.

All matters are dealt with on a **case by case basis** and are **continually reviewed throughout the process**, including consideration of the legal merits and prospects of success in accordance with the scheme rules.

The message is simple: **don't wait for a Regulation 30 or Regulation 51 Notice. Make contact as soon as a Regulation 17 Notice is served.**

IOPC investigations

The scheme also provides support where an officer becomes the subject of an IOPC investigation.

Anyone who has experienced an IOPC investigation knows how complex and lengthy

these matters can become. Having access to specialist legal representation from practitioners who understand police regulations and procedures can be invaluable.

Why being a subscriber makes sense

Most officers never expect to need legal representation. The reality is that none of us know what's around the corner.

When allegations arise, legal costs can escalate very quickly. Advice before interview, solicitor attendance, case preparation, counsel's fees and representation at hearings can run into many thousands of pounds.

For subscribers, the Legal Protection Scheme provides access to specialist legal support without the worry of personally funding those costs, subject to the scheme terms and conditions.

For many members, the real benefit isn't just the financial protection. It's knowing that if something does happen, experienced people are there to guide you through it.

What if you are not a subscriber?

There is often a misconception that non-subscribers have no access to legal representation. That is not the case.

If you become the subject of a criminal allegation, or your case progresses to a gross misconduct hearing or accelerated misconduct hearing, you can still obtain legal representation.

The difference is that the cost of that representation will generally have to be met by you personally.

Given the significant costs associated with specialist police law solicitors and barristers, that can represent a considerable financial burden at what is already a difficult and stressful time.

In summary

If you're served with a Regulation 17 Notice, informed of a criminal allegation, requested to attend a voluntary interview or invited to an interview under caution, don't sit on it and don't assume it will simply go away.

Pick up the phone and contact us immediately.

The earlier we become involved, the sooner we can provide advice, identify what support may be available and help ensure that your interests are protected from the very start.

The Legal Protection Scheme is there to provide reassurance when you need it most. Hopefully, you'll never need to use it, but if you do, you'll be glad it's there.

Quick Mortgages: fee-free whole market mortgage advice

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We believe the mortgage process should be simple, transparent and stress-free, giving you the confidence to make informed decisions at every stage.

Mortgage Market Update – August 2026

The mortgage market has remained relatively resilient despite ongoing global uncertainty. In July, the Bank of England

voted to hold the base rate at 3.75 per cent for the sixth consecutive meeting. Earlier in the year, many economists expected further rate reductions during 2026, but persistent inflation and international events, particularly the conflict in the Middle East, have delayed those expectations.

Mortgage pricing has reflected this cautious outlook. Average fixed-rate mortgages eased to around 4.65 per cent during the spring before edging back towards 4.75 per cent over the summer. Whilst this has slowed some activity in the housing market, it has created a more balanced environment for buyers, with less competition and greater opportunity to negotiate.

National house price growth has moderated to around 1 - 1.5 per cent annually, with the market settling into a steadier pace after a busy start to the year. Rather than signalling weakness, this has created a more balanced environment, giving buyers more time to make informed decisions without the pressure of rapidly rising prices.

Looking ahead, the next Bank of England Monetary Policy Committee meetings will be closely watched for any indication of future rate changes. In the meantime, many borrowers are choosing to secure mortgage offers early, as offers can often remain valid

for up to six months. This provides valuable certainty while still allowing flexibility should market conditions improve before completion.

Whether you're purchasing your first home, moving, remortgaging or simply reviewing your current mortgage, obtaining advice early remains one of the best ways to understand your options. Our team is always happy to discuss your circumstances, answer any questions and help you plan with confidence.

Whatever the market brings, obtaining advice early remains one of the best ways to understand your options and make informed decisions. Our team is always happy to discuss your circumstances and help you plan with confidence.

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'Performance-led culture puts wellbeing at risk'

Employers need to put the emphasis on robust sickness prevention rather than robust sickness management if they are to optimise performance and service delivery, according to West Midlands Police Federation's health and safety and wellbeing lead.

Ali Rowe, speaking on World Suicide Prevention Day (September 10), said organisations' performance-led culture risked putting staff wellbeing at risk.

"It's really positive that organisations are improving in having measures and support in place to signpost people to help when they get to crisis point but that is only part of the important support that is needed. More needs to be done to prevent people getting to that crisis in the first place and to create safe spaces for them psychologically," says Ali.

Proactive

"There needs to be a shift in emphasis. I have heard senior leaders within the Force, for example, saying they are taking a 'robust' approach to managing officer and staff sickness but I have rarely heard anyone say they are taking a proactive stance in terms of robustly preventing that sickness in the first place.

"We are rightly performance driven as we want to provide the best possible service to the public, but what happens to performance and service to the public if people are off sick because the pressures of the job are just too much for them - or even if they are so weighed down that they aren't able to function to their potential?

"Officers appreciate there is little that can be done about the increasing demands of policing, but I think employers generally just need to focus more on the wellbeing of their employees to help meet these demands without breaking them.

"We cannot expect people to keep working over their normal working hours and not be affected by that. Of course, there are times when you have to work beyond your shift, that is the nature of policing, we all know that. But when it becomes an expectation that you will continually work longer hours that is damaging.

We can't keep doing that week after week after week and in some cases there are not even effective recording systems in place for us to see what hours an officer is working.

"Staff and officer wellbeing is not just a nice to have, it is critical and it should be seen as a strategic advantage for any organisation to have a healthy and motivated workforce; they then become the foundation blocks on which success is built."

Ali's views have been echoed by West Midlands Police Federation branch chair Jess Davies who is also concerned about the impact long-drawn-out conduct investigations are having on officer wellbeing.

Misconduct

Jess said: "I'm absolutely appalled that the new expected timescales should an officer find themselves subjected to a gross misconduct investigation is a minimum of two years, and then even longer if it actually proceeds to a hearing.

"This is due to the sheer volume of cases and staffing levels, but is totally unacceptable given the strain it puts on the officers involved, their families and also their colleagues."

Ali is acutely aware of how important it is to support people who are struggling mentally. While he was a teenager, both his Dad and his grandma took their own lives.

"I think there can be a tendency to put the onus on people reaching out for help and support when they are feeling under pressure, and they don't always do that," says Ali, "But when they do, we need to make sure that they are listened to and that line managers and supervisors react in the right way, by enabling them to take the time away from work they need.

"It's no good telling someone 'well, we are all under pressure, we have to get on with it'. It can take a lot for someone to come forward and admit they are struggling so we need to create a culture where they know that in doing so they

will be taken seriously and that it will not be seen as a weakness or a lack of resilience.

"Every officer should be able to say 'I am starting to get stressed, things are getting on top of me' and be met by their supervisor and SLT asking what can be done to help them.

People Boards

"A good starting point might be the new People Boards that are being rolled out across the Force area. As a Federation, we welcome the fact the Force has a good People Strategy and the People Boards which should be set up in all LPA and departments are part of that - I am personally trying to get invites to support all of their progresses."

World Suicide Prevention Day (WSPD) was established in 2003 by the International Association for Suicide Prevention in partnership with the World Health Organisation. Each year, on 10 September, WSPD focuses global attention on suicide prevention, uniting communities, organisations, and governments with the shared belief that suicides are preventable.

For help and support, contact:

[Andy's Man's Club](#)

[Call4backup](#)

[Mental Health First Aid England](#)

[Mind](#)

[Oscar Kilo - the National Police Wellbeing](#)

[Service](#)

[Policing Mental Health Crisis Line](#)

[The Samaritans](#)

[Thin Blue Line UK](#)

More organisations offering support can also be found listed on the [Police Federation website](#).

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- **SOCIAL EVENTS –** Keep in touch with old friends and colleagues.

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Challenge coin celebrates 10-year anniversary of Force honour guard

An anniversary challenge coin has been produced to mark the formation of the West Midlands Police Honour Guard (WMPHG) 10 years ago.

Founded on 31 July 2016, the Force's ceremonial unit has become a key part of events, funerals and is often called on to advise on official protocol and operational priorities.

Sergeant Ben Westwood, head of the honour guard, said: "Reaching our 10th anniversary is a massive milestone for everyone involved and I am incredibly proud of the dedication shown by our volunteers, who consistently step up alongside their core roles to represent the Force with absolute respect."

"From delivering high-profile national events to supporting our own police family during difficult times, the team's commitment over the last decade has been exemplary."

Members of the team attend funerals for serving officers and staff, as well as those for retired officers and on average attend 60 events annually, providing specialised capabilities including standard bearing, colour party, pall bearing and guards of honour.

In addition to internal and civic events like the Chief Constable's Awards, WMPHG regularly represents the Force on prominent national and international stages. Members have also participated in high-profile events such as the state funeral of Her Majesty Queen



The front and back of the challenge coin.

Elizabeth II, the coronation of King Charles III, Remembrance Day in London and the Care of Police Survivors' Weekend at the National Memorial Arboretum in Alrewas, Staffordshire.

Notably, in 2025, the team successfully planned and executed the largest national parade for many years when the annual National Police Memorial Day was hosted by the Force and held in Coventry.

Formed entirely of dedicated volunteers from across the organisation, WMPHG brings together individuals from diverse units and

backgrounds. The team includes members who joined with limited-to-no drill experience, working alongside seasoned ex-servicemen from the armed forces.

The team's contribution was officially recognised in 2021 when it was named 'Team of the Year' at the Force's Excellence Awards.

To celebrate the 10-year milestone, the team commissioned the anniversary challenge coin. You can obtain one by completing this a form on a West Midlands Police device - [Honour Guard Anniversary Coin Request](#).



The honour guard at the National Police Memorial Day service in Coventry in 2025.

'I am so grateful. It has changed my life'

Benevolent Fund purchases life enhancing equipment for member

West Midlands Police Benevolent Fund has bought a specialised chair for retired member Brian Breakwell.

The 80-year-old pensioner served with West Midlands Police for more than 25 years until he was forced to medically retire in 1997 following a serious road traffic accident that left him with life-changing injuries.

"At the time of the accident I was on secondment to New Scotland Yard in London dealing with anti-terrorism," recalls Brian.

"I had been there for a while travelling from my home in Sutton Coldfield on a Sunday night then returning home from London the following Friday evening. On the evening of Wednesday 11 December 1996, I received a telephone call from my wife to say that she had been rushed into hospital as a result of a vein blockage in the bend of her elbow.

"I was not able to get a train back to Birmingham that night so I caught the next available train the next day. I arrived home at around 2.30pm on Thursday 12 December and used her car, a Mini Metro, to take me the short distance to visit my wife in Little Aston Hospital, Sutton Coldfield. I stayed with her until around 7.30pm that night, as she was taken off for surgery. I had agreed to return the following morning to see her. I left the hospital grounds and started to make my way back home. I remember travelling along the Chester Road, passing what was then the Porsche garage, then I remember waking up in Walsall Manor Hospital ten days later."

Brian had been involved in a head on collision with an 18-year-old inexperienced driver. The teenager was in a convoy with four other vehicles heading out for a works Christmas party.

"The lad in the convoy was lying in third position and he was doing his best to keep his place with the other drivers," explains Brian.



Photo caption.

"As he approached the slight right-hand bend just underneath the railway bridge, he apparently clipped the kerb and totally lost control of his vehicle. He crossed over onto my side of the road and rammed me head on, flattening me inside the crushed wreck of the Metro. His speed was calculated at around 68mph at the time of impact. My speed was given at 35mph, given by a following motorist.

"Even to this day, I cannot recall anything regarding the accident. I just remember waking up all those days later in hospital.

Brian suffered a broken spine in a number of places, broken sternum, a number of broken ribs, and his right arm, wrist and hand were

badly shattered and required surgery to insert plates and screws. He also suffered several internal injuries which involved severe organ bruising, and a badly dislocated right shoulder.

At the age of 51, Brian's life had changed instantly. His career with West Midlands Police was over and he was faced with years of rehabilitation.

"When I was finally discharged from hospital some time into the New Year, I found it extremely difficult," explains Brian.

"I had my family around me but somehow, I found it difficult to cope with the situation I found myself in. Prior to the accident, even at the age of 51, for my age I was incredibly fit

and took great pride in that fact. Now, not able to sleep at night, because of the constant discomfort, having to be helped to negotiate the stairs at home each night, I felt absolutely helpless and felt I was an absolute hindrance to my family. In time, amid hospital and rehab clinics, I came to accept my lot. I realised that I just wasn't being fair to my family who were doing their utmost to support me. Learning to walk again was probably the hardest obstacle to overcome. So yes, the accident affected me badly."

Living with the effects of the accident have been both physically and emotionally challenging for Brian and in recent years his condition has worsened.

"When I was finally discharged by my consultant after almost three years, I was told that in all probability, I would require the use

of a wheelchair within probably six years. I vowed that that would never be the case. Although in August 2022, I had to purchase a mobility scooter as my mobility was reducing at an alarming rate. Then 12 months ago I virtually lost the use of my legs, although I can manage a few steps with the aid of crutches.

"Recently, I found that I just couldn't get out of a chair without my back feeling like it was about to snap due to the unbelievable pain. Then, a chance visit with an old friend, changed all that.

"I remember I was having a pretty rough day that day and each time I got up to use her toilet, she saw the pain I was enduring. She asked me if I'd mind if she spoke to someone about helping me. I was desperate so I said yes. The rest is history."

The Benevolent Fund was made aware of

Brian's situation and immediately agreed to fund a specialised 'rise and fall' chair that is electrically powered to gently lift and tilt to help Brian to stand up.

"I'm using the chair every single day and whether it's because I'm not placing my back under so much stress and pressure, I'm really feeling the benefits. I'm now sleeping for longer periods at night and not in so much pain when I eventually wake up," says Brian.

"The difference it has made to my life is just unbelievable. To be able to stand up from a sitting position without even the hint of excruciating pain is unbelievable. I just cannot find the appropriate words to explain to you, just how grateful I am to the Benevolent Fund, for making this possible.

"I AM NOT EXAGGERATING, EVEN IN THIS SHORT SPACE OF TIME, IT HAS CHANGED MY LIFE. I NO LONGER FEAR STANDING UP FROM A SITTING POSITION IN A CHAIR.

"I am not exaggerating, even in this short space of time, it has changed my life. I no longer fear standing up from a sitting position in a chair.

"Walking is still a huge challenge for me but I am learning to cope with that. Again, I am so grateful to the Benevolent Fund.

"I never dreamt that something so serious and life-altering would happen to me which meant I would be benefiting from the assistance of the Benevolent Fund many years later, but it did. I appeal to all serving officers and police staff to join the Benevolent Fund. They are here for you right through your service and beyond!"

Already this year the Benevolent Fund has given out almost £100,000 to support its members. The charity relies on the kind support of serving officers and police staff who pay a £2 monthly subscription (retired members pay a £1 subscription).

The money goes towards various benefits as well as charitable grants to help those in times of hardship and need.

If you are not a member of the Benevolent Fund, please consider joining today.

www.wmpben.co.uk



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Life continues, differently

When a serious injury happens at work

Police officers work in some of the most challenging and unpredictable environments in the country. When you've been injured at work it can be difficult to know what to do next and many people worry about what making a claim could mean for their job.

Our specialist team understands these concerns.

At Slater and Gordon we've been trusted by the Police Federation for decades. Our experience means we understand the pressures you face and the impact an injury can have on your wellbeing, confidence and career.

Our specialist team has supported thousands of people following accidents at work, including:

- Arrest related injuries
- Falls
- Faulty equipment
- Firearms discharge

If your accident type isn't listed above, don't worry. Workplace accidents can happen in many different ways. If you've been injured due to negligence at work, we can talk through your experience and explain how we may be able to help.

What to do after an accident on duty?

Following an accident at work, your priority should be your health and recovery. There are also a few practical things you can do to keep a record of what happened, which can be helpful if you're considering making a claim in the future.

- **Seek medical attention:** Your health should always come first. Seek medical advice as soon as possible, whether that's through a workplace first aider, your GP or A & E.
- **Report the accident:** Make sure the incident is reported to your employer and recorded correctly. This creates an official record of what happened.

- **Gather evidence:** If possible, take photographs of the accident scene, witness statements, your injuries and any equipment involved.
- **Keep records:** Keep hold of medical records, receipts, correspondence and details of any time you've had to take off work.
- **Seek advice:** Seeking advice doesn't mean you have to make a claim. It simply gives you a clearer understanding of your position and the options available to you.

How we can support you. Our commitment to Police Federation members

We recognise the pride, professionalism and dedication with which officers carry out their duties and we're committed to offering the same dedication in return. When you work with Slater and Gordon you receive:

- A highly skilled and experienced lawyer overseeing your case
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Life Continues, Differently

If you have been injured due to someone else's negligence, we can help you.

Our experts can help police officers with a range of areas including:

- Road traffic accidents
- Accidents at work
- Accidents and injuries abroad
- Injuries in a public place

Our specialist lawyers, including Matthew Tomlinson, have helped hundreds of police officers and members in getting the support they need following an injury.

With a focus on early rehabilitation and ongoing practical support including care and financial security, our lawyers are here to help you with everything that comes next.



Contact **Matthew**

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Legal Services for West Midlands Police

With over 20 years' experience of working with police, Gorvins have been a leading provider of legal services in all matters arising from relationship breakdowns and disputes concerning children. We understand the importance of family and the impact that a family breakdown can have upon all of those closely concerned and that is why our service (with discounted fees) is offered not just to serving and retired police officers and police staff, but also to their partners and immediate family members.

Part of our commitment to supporting those whose vital work supports us all includes a prompt initial consultation – free of charge.

We also supply our legal advice to you at a discounted rate and are able to offer a fixed-fee divorce process.

Our family and divorce law specialists understand the aspects that particularly impact upon the police with reference to pensions in divorce cases and shift patterns in relation to arrangement for children.

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The PTC – helping officers back to health

The Police Treatment Centres (PTC) is a registered charity supported by voluntary donations from the police family primarily in the northern forces of England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, but also from British Transport Police, the Civil Nuclear Constabulary and the Ministry of Defence Police.

The charity provides two treatment centres where serving and retired police officers and staff can receive treatment following an illness or injury, with the aim of assisting their return to better health. The centres are St Andrews, in Harrogate, North Yorkshire, and Castlebrae in Auchterarder, Perthshire. The charity also offers a remote physiotherapy service.

Almost 4,000 serving and retired officers and staff attend the Treatment Centres each year and most receive intensive physiotherapy. Others seek support with stress-related conditions or anxiety and depression as part of the Psychological Wellbeing Programme.

Subscribing to the PTC

All student officers can receive their first 12 months' subscription to the PTC free of charge. After the first free year, the donation rate is £9.99 a month that comes directly out of your pay.

The treatment centres are available to all serving West Midlands Police officers, PCSOs, Special Constables and detention and custody officers. Retired police can also sign up at a lower rate.

Find out more at a virtual information session.

If you are not currently subscribing to the PTC please visit their website where you can also find the sign-up forms.

Any serving officer who had previously been donating to Flint House was automatically transferred to the PTC from 1 January 2021.

Visit The Police Treatment Centre's website.

Take a weekend break and help the Police Treatment Centres

You can book weekend B & B breaks at the Police Treatment Centres (PTCs).

The two centres, St Andrews at Harrogate, North Yorkshire, and Castlebrae at Auchterarder, Perthshire, are set in stunning countryside and give members a great chance to unwind for a couple of days while raising money for the PTC.

Find out more about the B & B breaks.

Book at Harrogate.

Book at Auchterarder.

You can also book a week-long stay at a self-catering, three-bedroomed holiday cottage in the grounds of Castlebrae.

The spacious cottage sleeps up to five, plus a travel cot, on a self-catering basis. It features:

- Large double en suite with shower
- Twin bedroom



A fully equipped gym.

- Single bedroom
- House bathroom with bath
- Fully fitted modern kitchen with fridge freezer, oven and microwave.
- Garden with outdoor seating.

It is dog-friendly so you can take along a well-behaved dog for an extra £30.

Again, all funds go back to the PTC.

[Check availability and book a stay in the Auchterarder cottage.](#) School holiday dates usually go very quickly.



A Pilates session.

Appeal for Partaap surpasses £1 million target

An appeal set up to raise £1 million to help save the life of the six-year-old son of West Midlands Police Inspector Gurbinder Kaur reached its target within weeks of being launched.

And Gurbinder has expressed her gratitude to everyone who has donated and for the 'phenomenal response' to the family's appeal.

She said: "It was unbelievable that so many

people were donating from all across the world. We thought it would be almost impossible to raise £1 million and, at the very least, that it would take months.

"It was amazing, the response has been phenomenal. I think a lot of people had been watching the gofundme total as we had so many messages that night as it hit £1 million, which was amazing because it showed how

much people cared and had willed for it to reach the target as soon as possible.

"We don't think there are enough words to express how grateful we are for everyone's support whether that was through donating, sharing, fundraising or prayers - it all helped us reach that total."

Gurbinder's son, Partaap, was diagnosed with an extremely rare, terminal, neurodegenerative disease in January this year prompting his family to set up a Go Fund Me page in the hope of funding pioneering treatment.

Gurbinder explains: "Partaap is a brave, bright, confident six-year-old who lights up every room he walks into. He makes friends effortlessly with his sunny nature and beautiful smile, and he is always the first to help anyone who needs it. He is the most wonderful big brother to his brother, and is always looking out for him.

"Early last year, we noticed small things that didn't feel right. He began struggling to walk long distances, to stand up from sitting, and to climb stairs. He fell often, for no clear reason. What followed were months of hospital visits, tests, and endless worry. Through it all, Partaap was courageous, patient, and unbelievably strong.

"In January, our world shattered. His genetic tests came back, and we were told he has Juvenile ALS (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis), also known as MND (motor neuron disease). The gene variant causing his illness, SPTLC2, is so rare that only 40 - 50 children worldwide are believed to have it. No one knows how quickly it will progress in him, or how much time we have left. As parents, hearing this felt like the ground disappeared beneath us."

There is no cure for ALS. It destroys motor neurons in the brain and spinal cord, slowly taking away the ability to walk, move, speak, swallow and eventually breathe. In adults, ALS is usually diagnosed around age 55+ and, even then, most survive only two to five years. In children, it is so rare that very little is known and there are no clinical trials for Partaap's gene variant.

Partaap currently struggles to walk more than a few minutes, to climb stairs, to balance and to stand up from sitting. He falls often and his limbs are weak. But he is still fiercely independent insisting on walking when he can,



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Partaap Singh.

and playing football and tag with his brother.

Gurbinder says: "We refuse to give up. When doctors told us there was no cure, no treatment, and that we should focus on palliative care, we simply couldn't accept that. Not for our child. Not without trying

everything. That's when we turned to clinical research where new therapies come to light.

"One of the most promising approaches for rare genetic diseases is antisense oligonucleotides (ASOs), targeted treatments that can reduce harmful proteins or 'switch off' faulty gene messages. In Partaap's case, his gene variant causes an overproduction of sphingolipids, which is driving the disease.

"An ASO for SPTLC2 related ALS has never been attempted before. But we are assembling a team to try to create a bespoke ASO for Partaap that could slow or even stop the progression of this devastating disease."

The family are working with Jeff Milton, a scientist and biotechnology entrepreneur who has dedicated his career to making precision medicines accessible for people with rare neurodegenerative diseases.

"Jeff is helping us build a team for Partaap, but speed is everything. Every month that passes, we risk losing more of our son's abilities," Gurbinder adds, "Because this disease is so rare, no one knows how aggressive it will be. To move quickly, we needed to raise around £1 million to cover the costs of designing, developing and delivering a potential ASO treatment - something that has never been

done before for this gene."

Even if successful, ASOs are not a one-time cure. They must be administered repeatedly every few months, meaning long-term financial challenges.

On top of this, the family are facing ongoing care costs: therapies, specialised equipment, home adaptations, travel and everything needed to keep Partaap safe, comfortable, and able to enjoy his childhood.

The fundraising appeal currently stands at £1,055,000 but has been paused. It will be opened up on the days of fundraising events, which communities still want to hold. All the extra money will go towards the longer-term care costs, as well as travel, house adaptations and anything Partaap needs to make him safe and comfortable in and outside the home.

Gurbinder concludes: "The team of scientists has been assembled and they are based at the Violet Research Institute in Berkeley, California. They are now awaiting Partaap's cells from his skin biopsy to be sent over to them from London for them to start work and they are looking forward to meeting Partaap himself. It's just the start of Partaap's journey."

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Are subscription services draining your budget?

Here's how to check

Whether it's your favourite streaming service, music app, cloud storage or meal kit, monthly subscriptions are designed to save you time and add convenience.

But because these payments are taken automatically, it's easy to lose track of how many you have and how much they're costing you.

If you're looking to make your money stretch further, PayPlan's experts recommend reviewing your subscriptions to get the best price and, if able, cancel the services you no longer use.

How to check your subscriptions

Subscription services have become a normal part of everyday life, and many offer great

value. However, these small monthly payments can soon add up. A £4.99 app subscription here and a £10.99 streaming service there might not seem significant on their own but together can amount to hundreds of pounds each year.

Step 1: Find all your recurring payments

Look through your bank statements or online banking for the last three months and make a note of every regular subscription, including:

- TV and film streaming services
- Music subscriptions
- Gaming memberships
- Cloud storage
- Mobile apps
- Gym memberships
- Meal kit deliveries

- Beauty or lifestyle subscription boxes
- Digital newspapers and magazines
- Software subscriptions.

Some banks have a subscription section on their online banking, so it checks what you're subscribed to for you. You can also check subscriptions in your phone's app store subscription section.

Step 2: Ask yourself whether you're still using them

As you go through your list, ask yourself:

- Have I used this in the last month?
- Would I miss it if I cancelled it?
- Am I paying for features I don't use?
- Is there a cheaper package available?

You don't have to cancel everything; just make sure you're only paying for services

you're using and need.

Step 3: Check for overlaps

You may have several subscriptions that offer similar services. For example, you might pay for multiple streaming platforms but only regularly watch one of them. Or have you signed up for more cloud storage than you need?

By cancelling duplicate subscriptions, you can lower your monthly spending without cutting back on a service you use.

Step 4: Review family plans

Some services offer family or household memberships that allow multiple people to use one subscription. Check with other family members to make sure you're not duplicating services and see if you can switch to a shared plan to reduce costs. Check the provider's terms and conditions to ensure you meet the criteria.

Step 5: Cancel anything you no longer need

If you find subscriptions you no longer use, cancel them as soon as you can but make sure you follow the terms and conditions you've agreed to with the provider.

If you've signed up through an app store, you usually need to cancel through your Apple or Google account rather than with the provider directly.

If you're struggling with money

These are just some of the ways you might reduce your monthly expenditure. Making small changes shouldn't mean giving up

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If you're worried about managing your monthly budget, you're not alone. PayPlan's advisers are there to provide guidance and support in a confidential, non-judgemental way.

Need extra support with debt?

PayPlan can help

If you are struggling with debts call PayPlan on 0800 072 1206. They are open from 8am – 8pm Monday to Friday and 9am – 3pm on Saturdays.

Alternatively, you can visit the [dedicated website](#) to speak to them via live chat or WhatsApp.

About PayPlan

PayPlan works with West Midlands Police Federation to provide free comprehensive advice, guidance and support for anyone struggling with their finances. Its purpose is to help you take back control of your money.

Money worries are constantly on the minds of many, and the stress of having to cope with this – coupled with the effect it can have on work, family life, health and relationships – can be all-consuming. Sharing these concerns with the people closest to you isn't always an option for everyone, but ignoring these worries can make things worse.

PayPlan has more than 20 years' experience helping people resolve their financial difficulties with free debt advice. Every year, it offers guidance on a wide range of debt solutions to more than 80,000 people who are struggling with debts.

Visit the [PayPlan website](#) or call **0800 009 4146** for free, confidential advice.

Get free debt advice

PayPlan offers free and confidential advice to find a solution that is tailored towards your needs. See PayPlan's [debt advice leaflet](#) for more information.

PayPlan free downloadable documents

[Moneywise](#) – A quick guide to managing your money

[Assess what you owe](#) – Instructions to set up your own income and expenditure statement

[Debt solutions in brief](#) – A simple guide to debt solutions

[Preparing for a telephone consultation with PayPlan.](#)

For more information and to contact us

You'll find our team of trained advisers understanding of your situation and always on hand to help you find a solution that fits your life. They will never tell you what to do, but they will offer you best advice, share their experience and help you every step of the way.

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