

FEDLINE



Help at hand
during coronavirus
crisis - see Pages 4 and 5

Speaking up for Cambridgeshire's Federated ranks



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View from the chair

By **Liz Groom**, chair of Cambridgeshire Police Federation

Welcome to the spring edition of the Cambridgeshire Police Federation members' magazine.

As I write, it's the day after the Government confirmed that the restrictions put in place to try to halt the spread of coronavirus would be in place for at least three more weeks.

The police service has, of course, been in the front-line informing and advising the public so they comply with those restrictions, and officers will continue to do that. But there will still be occasions when, as a last resort, they will have to use enforcement to ensure compliance.

Thankfully, most people have abided by the guidelines and we have all been touched by the show of support for policing from our communities.

In maintaining the business as usual approach, which is always our default position, police officers and staff are also putting their health on the line and we have worked with the Force throughout the current crisis to ensure that their wellbeing is put to the fore.

Officers are naturally concerned about the risks to their own health but they are also worried about the potential for passing it on to their own families.

They are also facing a period where they are going to be called to more and more incidents where people have died due to the virus and that repeated exposure to traumatic scenes is going to have an effect on them.

In addition, there could well be personal challenges to face, reduced household income, children being home schooled, lack of access to childcare to name just a few.

For this reason, we have featured a series of articles in this edition of the magazine highlighting a wide range of support available to officers and we would urge anyone struggling in any way at all to seek help or contact their Federation workplace representative, full-time officials or office staff for advice.

Stay safe everyone.

Pension discrimination

Members of public service pension schemes with relevant service will be automatically entitled to the remedy to the unlawful age discrimination within the transitional arrangements identified by the Court of Appeal, it has been confirmed.

Economic secretary to the Treasury John Glen announced in a Written Ministerial Statement all relevant members will benefit from the remedy to the discrimination, regardless of whether they have made a claim.

This means the remedy will apply to every Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW) member subject to the

discrimination and they will not have to bring a claim to ensure that their pension receives the same treatment as those who have already brought claims.

The announcement follows the Government's decision in July 2019 to take steps to remove the discrimination retrospectively. Detailed proposals will be published later this year and will be subject to public consultation.

Further information about the remedy can be obtained from the update and FAQs issued by PFEW at polfed.org where you can also read the latest FAQs on police pensions.



Fedline is published by Cambridgeshire Police Federation, Yaxley Police Station, 1 Queen Street, Yaxley, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire PE7 3JE.
www.cambridgeshire.polfed.org

Produced by XPR (UK) Ltd
www.xpruk.com

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Wellbeing service launches COVID-19 hub

Oscar Kilo, the National Police Wellbeing Service, has brought together the latest guidance and resources relating to the coronavirus in one online hub.

Members can access the advice from the Government, the NHS and the World Health Organisation by visiting the COVID-19 Coronavirus Hub at oscardkilo.org.uk

There is also specific work to support and guide forces through the crisis and help them to communicate key messages to officers and staff. It includes advice on self-isolation, social distancing in a public role and coping with quarantine.

Cambridgeshire Police Federation chair Liz Groom said: "This outbreak is presenting us all with an unprecedented challenge. It has caused a massive upheaval for everyone, changing the way we live, the way we work and our contact with family, friends, colleagues and the communities we serve. We have to be able to adapt and we also have to keep up to date with all the latest guidance and advice.

"Oscar Kilo is advising the National Police Chiefs' Council response around workforce welfare and wellbeing. It has put together this one-stop website providing support to us all by taking existing Government guidance and putting it into a policing context.

"We would encourage members to keep themselves informed of the latest public health and Government advice, which you can access via this hub."

The national Federation has also collated information and advice on its COVID-19 section in the 'Our work' pages at polfed.org



WSP providing critical support

Cambridgeshire Police Federation chair Liz Groom says the Welfare Support Programme (WSP) will provide an absolutely crucial service during the coronavirus outbreak.

She has therefore welcomed news that the 24/7 service it offers is continuing in full during the outbreak as officers come under more and more pressure.

"The WSP provides a critical service for officers during unprecedented times," says Liz. "They could be subjected to many more death-related incidents due to the spread of COVID-19 and that could have a negative impact on their mental health as a result.

"That could be exacerbated if they are having to deal with issues at home with self-isolating loved ones, anxiety, home-schooling and financial challenges, the likes of which they may have never faced before.

"With colleagues off work, the Force could also be stretched with officers having to cover shifts and work longer hours. All of this can add up to put pressure on members and so I want to reassure them and say that the Welfare Support Programme is part of a range of services available to our members so they can access advice and support with whatever issues they may be facing."

The Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW) doubled funding for the WSP earlier this year and the line is staffed day and night by professionals trained in police discipline and with an awareness of mental health first aid and Post-Incident Procedures.

Officers or close family members can be referred to the service, which is operated in partnership with the Police Firearms Officers' Association, by a Federation rep and, if needed, given access to counsellors and coaches too.



Mental health tips for officers

A new video has been released by the Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW) to provide officers with practical advice to care for their mental health while dealing with the coronavirus outbreak.

The Federation has joined forces with Dr Jess Miller, the director of research at Police Care UK, a charity for serving and retired police officers, staff and volunteers and their families.

In the 20-minute video, she is joined by PFEW vice-chair Ché Donald and the two discuss the unprecedented challenges faced by officers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dr Miller, who is a neuropsychologist, provides expert advice for front-line officers about how they can support their wellbeing as they face up to very difficult situations and feelings they are encountering.

Cambridgeshire Police Federation chair Liz Groom said the video was very informative and urged officers to try to find the time to watch it.

"As a Federation, we want to let our members know that they are not alone. We are here for them and we will continue to give them as much help, advice and information as we can to protect their wellbeing during difficult times," says Liz.

"Officers have a job to protect and inform the public but they also want to protect themselves and their families. As they try to do that, they are up against a silent and invisible killer which is obviously causing anxiety.

"That is added to by the amount of death-related incidents they may be called out to during the current crisis. These are not incidents that are easily forgotten and repeated exposure to these cases can lead to long-term effects on officers' mental health.

"In this climate, the new PFEW video is powerful because Dr Miller gives out very practical tips to help those who may find it hard to switch off from the incidents they may be encountering on a daily basis."

Watch the video at <https://tinyurl.com/yac6vvu5>

Wellbeing Callback Service

Police officers and other members of the policing family who find they are struggling during the current coronavirus crisis are being offered support through Police Credit Union (PCU).

PCU, part of the Serve and Protect Credit Union which also serves the military and the prison service, has launched a Wellbeing Callback Service allowing anyone feeling isolated or vulnerable to have a friendly chat with a member of the Serve and Protect team.

Paul Norgrove, chief executive officer of Serve and Protect

Credit Union, added: "We are extremely grateful for the support our members are providing the nation during these uncertain times. We hope that the Wellbeing Callback Service provides a source of support to any of our members who are experiencing increased levels of stress, as a result of isolation or intensifying workloads."

To request a wellbeing call, simply email info@serveandprotectcu.co.uk stating when you would like to receive a call (the service operates Monday to Friday from 3.30pm to 4.30pm), along with your preferred contact number.

Seek help if you are worried about your finances

Police officers will not be alone if they run into financial problems during the coronavirus outbreak.

That is the view of Cambridgeshire Police Federation chair Liz Groom who says there are a range of organisations available to offer members help if they ever need it.

"There is practical help available from a wide range of support organisations in the form of loans, getting a mortgage payment holiday arrangement or even just advice on managing a household's finances," says Liz.

"If officers are struggling to make ends meet or the stresses and strains of their personal situation becomes too much, I would urge them to speak up and let us know as soon as possible.

"Financial pressures at home only add to the huge amount of strain that police officers are currently under and we want them to know we are there for them with help, advice and support."

Belinda Goodwin, national wellbeing secretary for the Police Federation of England and Wales, has admitted the growing crisis will bring 'unprecedented financial, mental health and physical problems' for officers and their families.

"There's no escaping the fact finances will be stretched to breaking point and we'll all be placed under a new type of pressure which none of us has ever experienced before," she explained.

"As police officers, we cope with the unimaginable every day. This though is a brand new, unknown challenge which we'll face together and head-on as always. At this difficult time, there's one piece of advice the Federation can give members which will have far-reaching consequences: please don't bury your head in the sand and think this will just pass over."

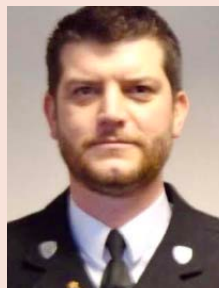
Belinda added: "For many years the Federation has worked alongside business partners to offer member benefits and discounts on a range of products. These partners are now stepping up to the mark to help you with your finances and wellbeing."

Visit the Federation's COVID-19 page in the 'Our work' section of the [polfed.org](https://www.polfed.org) for more information or contact the Cambridgeshire Police Federation office staff, full-time officials or workplace representatives if you are worried about your finances.

You can read a blog by the national Federation wellbeing lead at <https://tinyurl.com/yycyrbg>

'You can make a difference'

A Cambridgeshire Police Federation rep who guarded the Cambridgeshire home of former Prime Minister John Major is retiring after 21 years' service.



Sergeant Gary Williams, based at Wisbech, says he will miss the people when he finishes his final shift in April.

And he encouraged officers to become members of the Federation after outlining some of the support he has received during his career.

He added: "Policing is hard as it is. We tend to implode on ourselves and be self-righteous. I will not miss certain aspects, but I will miss some of the people. You need to look out for each other, because the wolves are ready to pounce.

"From a Fed point of view, make sure you're a member. Make sure you pay into the Group Insurance Scheme, not just for legal costs, but all the personal benefits that come with it."

Gary had served 12 years in the RAF before joining the police with the aim of becoming a firearms officer. And after three years' service, he joined the Tactical Firearms Unit.

In addition to his firearms sergeant duties, he looked after Mr Major and was a close protection officer for VIP meetings to the Force area.

"Most were friendly and thanked us for being there. There was one or two that seemed to take things for granted and we were treated like dogsbodies, which I suppose we were!"

It was while on firearms that Gary first became a Federation rep. However, a promotion to sergeant and a change of roles meant he had to put his Federation work on hold.

"At this time the reps were allocated to areas," he said. "The worse thing I did was get promoted.

"Firstly, because I had to leave the only job I ever really wanted on firearms and, secondly, the area I was posted to had its allocated rep members, so I had to leave the Fed as well.

"I was disappointed, but I had made the decision to go for promotion and with this, some doors opened while others closed.

"The sole reason I went for promotion was because I remember some good skippers as well as some self-centred skippers. I genuinely care about staff welfare, but felt like a lone voice," he added.

The first time Gary received support from the Federation was when he was interviewed by the Professional Standards Department (PSD).

"I've had several incivility complaints against me," he said. "One case was when I was caught on CCTV, mimicking a person I had arrested.

"Unfortunately, this was played in court. I made a call to the Fed and was allocated a rep. The rep put me at ease straight away, had all the liaison with PSD and sat me through the interview.

"I received management advice. It doesn't make me or anyone else a bad person but having someone there made life so much better."

After two years as a sergeant, Gary was asked to return to firearms.

"I jumped at the chance," he said. "Unfortunately, things had changed, people had changed, and I had changed.

"I then tried to leave after handing in my firearms permit and this is where the Fed had to step in several times as it seemed easier said than done.

"Obstacles were put in place and, with Fed help and the support of the DCC, I managed to get back to a work-life balance."

Gary said he has relished his time on response, and he also returned as a Federation rep for the last two years and four months.

"It opened my eyes to what actually goes on at local meeting, regional meetings and national seminars," he said. "There is a lot of work and arguments that go on that is sometimes unseen by some officers.

"I enjoyed chaperoning award winners around London and hopefully supporting them for their time at the awards and the build-up.

"Sometimes staff just need to be heard and a chat over a coffee can work wonders for a person.

"I suppose the 'real' cops join to work on the street. This is where most of our complaints come from.

"No one sat in an office can get too many complaints. It is also easy to criticise the people in a role that a lot don't want to do.

"There are still challenges for the Fed. We need officers who are willing to speak the truth, not scared to say anything for fear of reprisal.

"The pension challenges remain. The national chair is still fighting for the troops."

He added: "Remember, you can't change the world, but you can make a little difference."

Flint House: a lifeline for officers



Flint House is closed due to the coronavirus crisis but will re-open as soon as it safe to do so.

Each year, thousands of police officers attend The Flint House Police Rehabilitation Centre to help them get back to full operational duty.

The facility, based in Goring on Thames in Oxfordshire, uses a specialised programme of treatment and therapies to get subscribing officers fit for duty as quickly as possible.

The medical team consists of physiotherapists, mental health practitioners and registered nurses and their priority is to offer treatment to all patients to help them in their return to full health and fitness.

Each patient receives an individual assessment and is given a personalised programme of physiotherapy and/or health and wellbeing treatment while at the centre.

Treatments range from physiotherapy to stress counselling, from hydrotherapy to sleep and relaxation. Officers who have had to use its services describe it as a lifeline.

In May 2019, a new £750,000 gym was

officially opened by Dame Kelly Holmes DBE and in July this year, a new £2.4 million swimming pool and larger hydrotherapy pool will open.

Yet, despite all that Flint House has to offer, and the way in which it can help officers get back to full health, only two thirds of Cambridgeshire officers subscribe to the facility

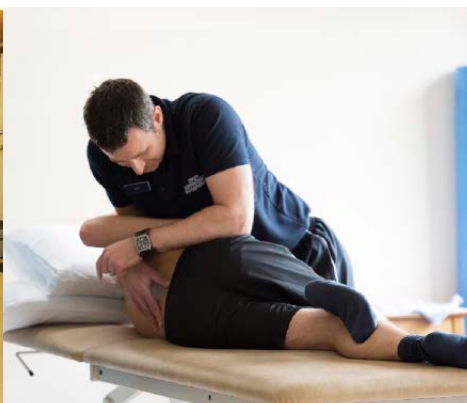
"Flint House is a great facility and is renowned for helping officers get back on their feet and return to full duties. Most officers associate Flint House with physiotherapy but it offers so much more than that. As more and more officers have suffered mentally and emotionally due to the pressures of the role, the Flint House team has put together a mental wellbeing programme which I know from first-hand experience is extremely beneficial," says Liz Groom, chair of Cambridgeshire Police Federation.

"Subscribing to Flint House costs less

than £2.50 a week, less than the cost of a small drink from a coffee shop, and that subscription can act as a bit of an insurance policy. As police officers we never know what's round the corner and knowing I have access to Flint House's facilities and expert care certainly gives me peace of mind. Given the cost of private physio or counselling, subscribing to Flint House is incredibly cost-effective."

Flint House has 158 individual patient bedrooms. All rooms are fully en suite with Freeview TV and tea and coffee making facilities. In addition to the gym and other indoor facilities, including Pilates and other exercise groups, the centre organises health walks around the local countryside while other outside activities include putting, bowls or boules, a golf net and an outdoor gym.

If you are a serving officer who does not donate to Flint House and wants to, please contact the Federation office.



'It's the price of a few coffees'

By Liz Groom

In December I attended Flint house for the first time in almost 24 years of policing. I always thought my dodgy knee or back would be the reason I eventually used their services but, to my surprise, it was poor mental health.

In summer last year I experienced a fairly new phenomenon for me; a feeling of being overwhelmed. I am fairly positive and cheerful (I know, odd for a Fed rep) and I do my best to keep the cup half full rather than half empty. But I felt mentally exhausted. I can best describe it as being like my brain was full. I was forgetting things, having trouble sleeping or wanting to sleep in the day. I was often tearful which isn't like me.

I am not sure if I will ever be able to explain why I had a meltdown fully, even to myself, but it ended up with me being absent from work with sickness for three weeks which, after years of no absence, was difficult for me. But I know I needed to have a break from work and time to rest.

“ THE BEST THING I DID WAS CALL FLINT HOUSE. MY GP SIGNED THE CONSENT FORM, BUT I STILL FELT A BIT OF A FRAUD. HOWEVER, AFTER AN HOUR ON THE PHONE TO THE COUNSELLOR, THEY SAID THEY THOUGHT FLINT HOUSE WOULD BE PERFECT FOR ME. ”

I think it was a combination of many things. I was worried about my Mum who was poorly with a heart condition and due to have life-threatening surgery and my Dad was not well either. There has been years of balancing work, home and childcare before my husband's retirement and there was a constant worry for my teenage son who is on the Autistic Spectrum. I also had a pretty big Federation workload and I was still trying to get out on the front-line when I could as I simply missed it! I was trying to do it all.

It may seem that a full-time Fed rep has an easy role. We are able to be flexible with our hours, the workload comes in peaks and troughs and we are not at the mercy of the radio, arresting people, getting cold and wet, assaulted or constantly late off, but it's often

a pretty demanding and challenging job in a different way to other roles I have done in policing, and I have done a few!

When we represent and support officers, we take on a bit of their worry, live the experience with them. There is a huge amount of responsibility as you are being completely relied upon. It was hard to switch off or say no. I answered my phone day or night regardless of whether I was on call. But trying to do it all and being there for everyone was to the detriment of my family and my health.

While off sick, I turned off my laptop and work phone, any calls were diverted. The first couple of days were odd. I did eventually relax, spent quality time with my family and rested my brain! Friends kept in touch. The DCC called to check I was OK, and I had a message from the CC too.

The best thing I did was call Flint House. My GP signed the consent form, but I still felt a bit of a fraud. However, after an hour on the phone to the counsellor, they said they thought Flint House would be perfect for me.

I returned to work a few weeks later feeling refreshed and not quite so burnt out. I got a date to go to Flint House in December, I said I didn't think I needed to go anymore to release the date for someone else but they asked me to still go.

So, I arrived at Flint House and met the seven others on the same course. We then had one to ones with our allocated counsellor to check how we were, what we wanted from the two weeks and give us our classes and timetable.

During the next two weeks we had a mixture of classes and inputs ranging from mindfulness, aromatherapy, mood and music, mood and food among others.

We went on long (very muddy) walks in the rain as a group, spent some time looking

at our surroundings and talking. Pilates was interesting after we all had sprouts for lunch, which ended up with most of us in fits of laughter!

Much of the time was about relaxing and realising the need for me personally to switch off and rest in future, learning again about the need to take care of my own wellbeing, going to bed early after a relaxing class, taking exercise and turning off the phone.

I often get the urge to just take myself off to the seaside for the afternoon on my own. I always thought this was a selfish thing to do and have never done it but the class and counsellors explained perhaps it is my way of subconsciously knowing I need to have some mindfulness time and that's where I feel at home.

Our group are still in touch. We plan to meet up in Barry Island later this year. One of the group was from that area, and as we all know it from Gavin and Stacey it seemed ideal as he spoke of it so fondly.

It was only around 11 days together but the experience is one I will not forget as we all shared the common experience of poor mental health. We came from different forces, ranks and backgrounds but as cops we are all part of the policing family.

I would really urge you to join Flint House. It's the price of a few coffees. You may never need it like I thought I wouldn't but it's there if you do and I have never heard anyone say it wasn't beneficial.

Although I know I still don't switch off fully and perhaps take too much on as I cannot change who I am, I know how to deal with it now with mindfulness from what Flint House taught me. So, if you ever see me walking by myself at Old Hunstanton Beach you will know why.

Support mental wellbeing

The mental health support programme provides a 10-day low intensity group and 1:1 programme for serving police officers.

The programme explores common mental health issues, such as anxiety, depression and stress, in a safe and relaxed environment. The aim of the programme is to help police officers learn how to look after their mental health by self-regulating their thoughts, feelings and behaviour and to explore coping skills they can implement at work and home.

With six mental health nurses, up from four last year, Flint House's mental health support programme has the capacity to support 660 police officers in 2020 and is fully booked until June 2020.





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pressure's gone,
I can get back to
my police work."**

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