

FEDLINE



**Brave officers honoured
at awards ceremony** - see Pages 4 and 5

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Cover photo: Former Sergeant Nick Ashton-Jones (left) and Sergeant Dan Bramley outside the famous black door of 10 Downing Street. Photo courtesy of Anderson Photography.



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View from the chair

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



Liz with Dan (left) and Nick.

The Police Bravery Awards 2020 were twice delayed due to the pandemic but the event when it finally went ahead proved, once again, all that is good about policing and police officers.

The media may have come down heavy on policing in recent months, however, I think even the harshest of critics would have found it difficult not to be humbled by the outstanding stories of bravery told during the awards ceremony.

The judges of the awards must have had a very difficult task choosing one winner for each of the Federation's eight regions and then an overall winner of the Police Bravery Award.

We heard of officers rescuing people from almost certain drowning, taking on people armed with guns, knives and even a machete and one officer, the eventual winner for Region 4 of which we are a part, playing a critical role in preventing a dam bursting and destroying a town.

I was proud to accompany our nominees for the awards to the event. Sergeant Dan Bramley was joined by his partner Zoe Patten who is due to give birth to their baby in just a few weeks' time, and Sergeant Nick Ashton-Jones, who has now retired from the Force, was accompanied by his wife, Alison.

You can read more about the bravery awards on Pages 4 to 6.

In a couple of months' time, it will be the turn of PC Leo Clarke to visit Downing Street and attend the bravery awards ceremony as our 2021 nominee.

On behalf of Cambridgeshire Police Federation, I would like to put on record my thanks to all three officers for their brave actions while serving their communities.

Policing is a challenging role, carried out by exceptional people who day in, day out put their lives on the line to serve and protect the public. This should never be forgotten by the police service itself, by politicians, by the public and by the media.

Specials soon able to join Federation

Special Constables will be able to join the Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW) for the first time next year.

In what Cambridgeshire Police Federation chair Liz Groom hailed as a "historic moment", the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill includes provision to permit Specials to become members and is set to become law early next year.

Liz said: "We've been campaigning for almost a decade for Specials to be able to access the Federation's services and support.

"That moment is coming closer and when it arrives it will be a historic one for the Federation and the thousands of Specials who will be eligible for membership.

"Throughout the pandemic, Specials have stepped up to the challenge, working alongside full-time officers to keep the public safe.

"It's only right that they should have access to the same representation, support and protection as their colleagues from the Federated ranks."

‘Members have every right to be angry and frustrated’

The chair of Cambridgeshire Police Federation says members have every right to be angry at the Government’s zero per cent offer after new figures revealed an annual hike in UK average pay of 7.4 per cent.

Liz Groom says data from Office for National Statistics is a kick in the teeth for members who have been on the frontline throughout the pandemic.

The figures showed growth in average total pay (including bonuses) was 8.8 per cent, and 7.4 per cent for regular pay (excluding bonuses) in the period between April and June. It also highlighted a record high in the number of UK job vacancies.

Liz said: “These figures are in total contrast to the zero per cent offer that hard-working officers – who have braved and sacrificed so much during the pandemic – have received from this Government.

“Our members have every right to be angry and frustrated at the situation. It doesn’t feel fair.

“And while pay goes up in other areas



Ché Donald.

of the economy, policing will be seen as an unattractive option making it more difficult to recruit the officers we desperately need and, just as importantly, to retain our experienced colleagues.”

Ché Donald, national vice-chair of the Police Federation of England and Wales, also reacted to the ONS figures.

He said: “My colleagues will be dismayed by the news that some sectors are clearly receiving sky-high wage rises while police officers receive nothing. They will be fully justified in feeling further betrayed by the unfairness of this news.

“Police officers who were on the frontline of the pandemic have already seen firefighters and local government workers in England given a 1.5 per cent increase.

“The ONS has now said the UK employment situation has been rebounding ‘robustly,’ and this new data will be viewed as further evidence all sectors were not treated equally by this Government.

“It is yet another example of why we have lost confidence in a Government which deliberately took full advantage of our unique status as public servants without the same employment rights as other members of society.”

‘Officers under intolerable pressure’

The lack of investment in policing means officers are being placed under intolerable pressure, says Cambridgeshire Police Federation.

Federation chair Liz Groom says there are 10,000 fewer officers in the service as well as fewer police staff compared to 10 years ago, but demands on policing have risen, particularly during the pandemic.

Liz called for new investment to help the under-pressure service meet the demands it faces - and also hit out at suggestions contained in a leaked Government report that it sees a reservist force as a possible answer.

Liz said: “As a service, we’ve been on the frontline of the global pandemic doing everything possible to keep the public safe while continuing to do our other police work. We’re still expected to be proactive in our policing, to react to events, to support other agencies in their work. The pressure is intolerable.

“The Government has committed to increasing our numbers but it’s not enough. We need proper investment in recruitment to take our numbers back to where they were a decade ago and in pay and conditions to retain our officers.”

She criticised the idea of a police force reserve, which The Telegraph revealed would operate along similar lines to the armed forces reserve, with recruits being called upon in times of increased demand to support regular officers.

The leaked report in The Telegraph suggested retired officers, or those who have left the service early, could also be retained for a period to bolster numbers.

But Federation officials across the country believe rushed new policies are not the answer to the challenges faced by policing.

Liz explained: “The Government needs to address the pressing issues surrounding policing at the moment such as pay, conditions, retention and recruitment before coming up with these new ideas.

“Proposals for a reservist police force are news to us - once again we found out about it in the newspaper - and there are lots of questions we would like to ask before this goes any further.”

National Federation chair John Apter said: “Yet again we find out about a proposed piece of Government policy through the media, and we have not seen any details on the reserve capability of volunteer officers.”

Brave officers honoured at awards ceremony



Photos courtesy of Anderson Photography.

Sergeant Dan Bramley with his partner Zoe Patten.

Two Cambridgeshire police officers who tackled a man armed with a hammer and what appeared to be a gun have had their courage recognised at the Police Federation's annual national Police Bravery Awards.

The ceremony, held at a London hotel on 12 October, saw the bravery of Sergeants Nick Ashton-Jones and Dan Bramley celebrated alongside 91 other nominees from 42 forces across England and Wales.

Earlier the officers, along with their partners, Alison Ashton-Jones and Zoe Patten, were welcomed to a Downing Street reception hosted by the Home Secretary, Priti Patel.

They were nominated after rushing

towards danger to tackle a man, who had a hammer in one hand and a firearm tucked into his belt, and was smashing up vehicles parked at Cambridge's Parkside Police Station.

He was attacking police cars with a hammer in one hand and a firearm tucked into his belt. It later turned out to be an imitation weapon.

Their Federation chair, Liz Groom, said: "They bravely ran towards danger, risking serious injury or even worse at the hands of this man. At this time, they were unaware that the firearm he was carrying was an imitation."

On seeing the officers approaching, the man swapped the hammer into his other

At the bravery awards are (left to right) Police and Crime Commissioner Darryl Preston, Nick Ashton-Jones, Chief Constable Nick Dean and Sergeant Dan Bramley.

hand and went to pull the firearm from his waistband, but lost his grip and dropped it.

PS Bramley, who had 15 years' service with the Force, at the time, approached the man who then threw away the hammer. He tackled the man to the ground and was helped by PS Ashton-Jones, who had 30 years' service and has since retired.

The man was released without charge and sectioned under the Mental Health Act. Six marked police cars were damaged in the incident.



Former Sergeant Nick Ashton-Jones and his wife Alison.

The 2020 Police Bravery Awards, sponsored by Police Mutual, honour some of the finest officers in England and Wales who have performed acts of bravery, while on or off duty. The ceremony had been postponed due to the pandemic.

Cambridgeshire falls into Region 4 for the awards, and the regional winner was PC Geoff Marshall who helped to prevent a dam at Toddbrook Reservoir from collapsing and overwhelming the town of Whaley Bridge below.

The overall national winner was PC Stuart Outten from the Metropolitan Police. He suffered multiple stab wounds and skull fractures, but managed to use his Taser to disable an attacker who was armed with a machete. In the horrific attack, he suffered six deep wounds to his head, skull fractures, and two wounds to his arm and multiple finger fractures.

John Apter, national chair of the Police Federation of England and Wales, said: "We have the finest police officers in the world - dedicated public servants who, without hesitation, put themselves in danger to protect others.

"They are humble, professional and committed individuals who I am proud to call my colleagues. Police officers are everyday heroes who are anything but

ordinary. My congratulations go to Pc Outten and all the Police Bravery Awards nominees. They deserve every bit of recognition they receive."



Sergeant Dan Bramley (left) in conversation with now retired Nick Ashton-Jones.

Leo in line for bravery award after vicious assault

A courageous officer who suffered serious head injuries when he was attacked after being called out to a domestic incident has been nominated for a Police Bravery Awards 2021.

PC Leo Clarke (24) was on his way to an emergency call in Peterborough when he responded to reports from a man saying he was unable to control his adult son, who had mental health issues.

He arrived at the incident as the lone officer and found the man and his son outside the house.

The 27-year-old son was in an agitated state and started shouting at the officer before attacking him.

A witness described how PC Clarke suffered several blows to the head before his attacker went back inside.

The assailant was arrested when other officers arrived and warned him they would use a Taser unless he surrendered.

PC Clarke, who had been a police officer for just 18 months at the time of the attack, returned to Thorpe Wood Police Station but started to feel unwell.

A welfare check by a supervisor revealed he was squinting and had started to slur his words. He was taken to Peterborough City Hospital where his condition continued to deteriorate and doctors discovered he had a



PC Leo Clarke (left) with Tim Stonebridge at his passing out ceremony in 2020.

bleed on the brain.

Emergency surgery was performed to stop the bleed and PC Clarke remained in hospital for five days.

His attacker admitted causing grievous bodily harm without intent and was sentenced to one year and eight months in jail when he appeared at Peterborough Crown Court.

PC Clarke has been put forward for

the national Police Bravery Awards by Cambridgeshire Police Federation and will attend an awards ceremony in London in December.

Cambridgeshire Police Federation chair Liz Groom: "Leo showed incredible courage throughout this terrifying incident, which highlights how our members put themselves at risk of harm every time they report for duty."



Leo following surgery.



Checks on officers' mental health are vital

A more preventative approach to mental wellbeing is needed as the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the effect of long-term cuts and under-resourcing continues to be felt.

Currently, no forces keep data on how many traumatic incidents police officers have attended, leading to a build-up of pressure that can take a serious toll on officers' mental health.

Cambridgeshire Police Federation chair Liz Groom said: "Policing is under pressure like never before, but we must be aware that much of the stress officers are under goes unseen and unrecorded.

"Lack of resources means more and more of my colleagues are going to incident after incident, many of them emotionally difficult or traumatic, and you can't simply shrug off the impact this has.

"Forces must do better at keeping track of what their officers are experiencing and check in on them before it's too late."

The Federation's national wellbeing lead, Hayley Aley, suggested forces track the number of incidents officers have attended and use it to offer practical support to those who may be struggling.

"If the organisation could work with that information, take the time to speak to the officer, check in and give them that support we would be pre-emptively tackling the problem," she said.



Families of the fallen mark national Police Memorial Day

Fallen officers were honoured at this year's National Police Memorial Day service held at Lincoln Cathedral on the last Sunday of September.

Home Secretary Priti Patel, Metropolitan Police Commissioner Dame Cressida Dick and Police Federation national chair John Apter all spoke at the service which was attended by bereaved families and colleagues of all ranks.

Cambridgeshire Police Federation was represented by chair Liz Groom.

Speaking after the service, Liz said: "National Police Memorial Day gives everyone in the policing family the opportunity to reflect, pay tribute and remember.

"The service was a poignant reminder that our members put their lives on the line every day to protect our communities and also that those whose lives are lost in the line of duty are never forgotten by their

family, friends and colleagues."

Earlier, Dame Cressida praised the courage and dedication of police officers throughout the coronavirus pandemic and paid tribute to those who had lost their lives over the past 12 months.

She told the congregation: "This year, we sadly add six more families to those we want to protect and support.

"The families of Paul Keany, Chris Miller, Matt Ratana, Darryl Street, Thomas White and Quamar Zaman.

"We will never forget you nor will we ever forget the sacrifice your loved ones made.

"Their lives give us hope, motivation and inspiration that through our police work good can prevail, safety and peace can be secured.

"Each and every one of our fallen colleagues will have helped and protected

so many people, brought comfort, justice, safety, hope, reassurance and courage to others. We are proud of them."

John read out the names of the officers who died in the last 12 months and said: "Let us remember before God the men and women of the police service who gave their lives in the exercise of their duty."

During the service, representatives of fallen officers lit candles, one each for the forces in England, Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland.

Addressing bereaved families in the congregation, Chris Haward, Chief Constable of Lincolnshire, said: "I hope today is of some comfort and that you can feel the support and compassion from all those around you because it is here in abundance

"National Police Memorial Day holds a place in all our hearts. We remember those we have lost but we should also celebrate





Dame Cressida Dick addresses the service.

their accomplishments, achievements and contributions together with those who continue to hold the thin blue line.

"Serving as a police officer is not an easy duty. Day in, day out, our officers give their everything to protect and serve others. They

guide people when they are at their worst, they comfort people on their darkest of days.

"It is a path that many could not, nor would not, want to walk and we are proud of those who have dedicated their lives to policing. To those who have lost lives in the line of duty, their legacy will live on and they will always remain part of the police family."

Ms Patel gave a short Bible reading from Corinthians 13 on the subject of love.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson also paid tribute to police officers who have died in a message on Twitter.

He said: "No words can adequately do justice to the debt we as a nation owe fallen police officers.

"Without their dedication and willingness to run toward danger we simply would not be able to live our lives in safety and security.

"It's something we must never take for granted."

The service was led by Reverend Canon David Wilbraham, national police chaplain

and memorial day coordinator, who said: "On this National Police Memorial Day, we give thanks for the bravery, courage and sacrifice of officers who since British policing began, have died on duty."

Lord Lieutenant of Lincolnshire Toby Dennis was among the dignitaries who spoke during the service and praised the police for keeping the nation safe during the coronavirus pandemic.

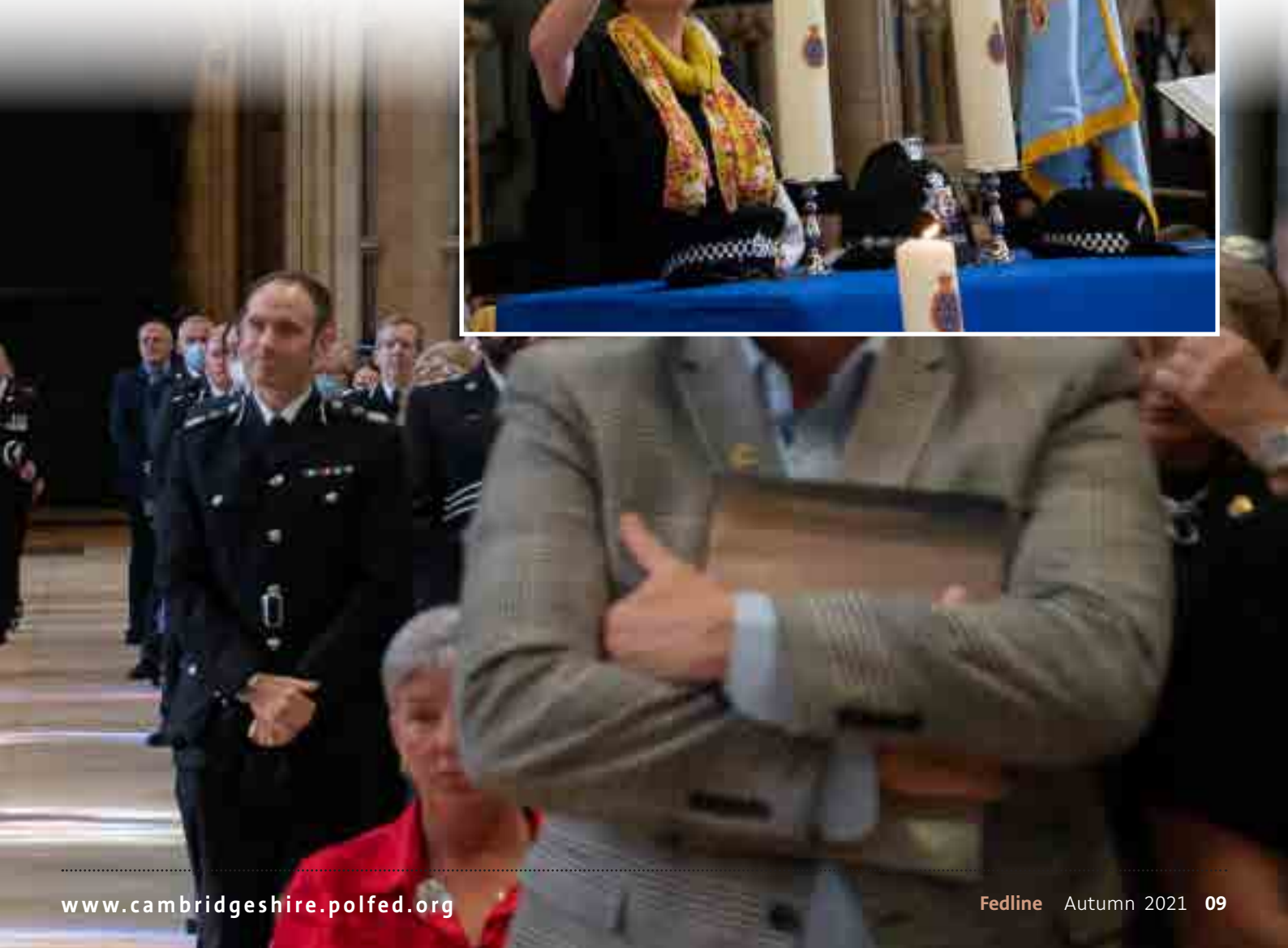
He said: "The pandemic has cast so many fears not experienced before by any of us, that doubts for our safety and care were being greatly challenged no matter our circumstances.

"But the huge degree of comfort that the nation is protected by the most professional police force anywhere in the world gives us all the belief and faith to discover our inner strengths."

During a minute's silence, petals of remembrance, representing all who have lost their lives, fell from the gallery as the orchestra played "Abide With Me" and "The Last Post" was sounded.



Lighting a candle in memory of fallen officers.



'A place where survivors can feel properly supported'



Samantha Dixon addresses the congregation.

The support and solace that family and friends take from an annual remembrance service has been put into sharp relief after last year's event was cancelled due to the pandemic.

Cambridgeshire Police Federation chair Liz Groom has said the Care of Police Survivors (COPS) Service of Remembrance, held at the National Arboretum in Staffordshire in August, showed how much it is valued.

Liz said: "We did the best we could in the circumstances last year but there is nothing quite like going to the arboretum where survivors can feel properly supported.

"The love and support is always there, but actually attending this service makes that support tangible and that is so valuable.

"I met and supported one of our survivors, Christina Lee, who lost her husband PC Alan Lee in a collision in 2002 on his way to work. It was her first time at the event and I know she found it moving and was so pleased her husband is still remembered."

The names of the 27 police officers and staff who died during 2019 and 2020 were read out in the roll of honour and included those who died from coronavirus.

The service this year included a poem





Police Unity Tour cyclists comfort each other.

read by Samantha Dixon, the widow of PC James 'Dixie' Dixon who died in a motorcycle accident in 2017. Samantha was six months pregnant at the time and named their son Parker Cameron James Dixon in tribute to her husband.

Her poem, *Never A Passenger*, was both an emotional and light-hearted account of her life as a widow and single parent.

Other addresses were from the chief executive of COPS, Tim Buckley, the charity's national president, Gill Marshall.

There were two songs from singer Diane Whyllie and the laying of wreaths before the COPS chair of trustees, Sir Peter Fahy QPM, closed the service.

The families and colleagues of fallen officers then moved to *The Beat* to place red roses on the tree planted as a memorial to



The UK Police Memorial.

their loved ones.

Days before the COPS service, HRH The Prince of Wales attended the unveiling of the new UK Police Memorial at the arboretum.

The 12-metre sculpture, designed to

resemble a slightly ajar door with cut-out leaves to represent the lives of lost officers, will provide a place for family, friends, colleagues and members of the public to remember fallen officers.



Federation secures support for greater protection for police drivers

A bid to ensure police drivers get better protections in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill has made significant progress.

Cambridgeshire Police Federation has welcomed the news that delegation from the Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW) had a productive meeting with three members of the House of Lords as it pressed for three amendments to the Bill, which is set to become law next year.

The delegation from the PFEW's Parliamentary Sub-Committee met with Lord Bernard Hogan-Howe, Lord Willy Bach and Lord Vernon Coaker at New Scotland Yard.

There are concerns over the Bill introducing a new standard to which police drivers must conform, linked to an individual driver's training and their force policy.

It follows that an officer will be licensed to drive according to what they are trained to do, but no more. Performing a manoeuvre that is not trained or is not policy is likely to fall within the new definition of careless or dangerous driving. Going beyond the terms of the licence could give rise to criminal liability and, therefore, the Federation is seeking an amendment to the Bill.

Cambridgeshire Federation chair Liz Groom said: "This amendment is crucial. But

this is another great step towards getting police drivers the protection under law they need to carry out their duties effectively.

"It is also a demonstration of how vital the work of the Federation at Parliament is – getting support from the House of Lords for all three amendments is hugely beneficial to our members as it means it's more likely that these changes will become law."

Tim Rogers, national Federation lead on pursuits and driver training, said: "As part of three amendments the Federation is seeking to the Bill, we want to see a reasonable defence clause added to give officers flexibility to respond legally to the matters they encounter on duty. This would take into account what they reasonably believe they are responding to, and the threat that is posed. Any departure from the relevant standard should be reasonable and proportionate.

"At our meeting, the Lords agreed they are an essential aspect of making the Bill fit for purpose to ensure our colleagues covering the millions of miles of our roads network to keep the public safe are given the support and protection they deserve and are not penalised for doing their jobs.

'To make the bill achieve what legislators intended, we need this amendment'

A second amendment is also being put forward that would enable officers to compel drivers to switch off their engines, a measure that could help stem the growing number of officers injured when drivers take off after a police stop.

Figures show one in four roads policing officers were subjected to a vehicle being used as a weapon against them during the past year.

Thirdly, the Federation, via its Time Limits campaign, is fighting for police conduct investigations to be concluded within 12 months from the moment an allegation is made.

The Federation wants legally qualified people to be given the power to impose deadlines on investigations that have dragged on for over a year.

National Federation conduct and performance lead Phill Matthews said: "We've explained our rationale on why we think it is important for complainants, members of the public and our police colleagues to get complaints dealt with within a 12-month timescale or, if not, to have some legal oversight on why the investigation isn't moving at a reasonable and fair pace. The Lords have understood that and are prepared to support that in the Bill which is great news."

The tabled amendments, which have already gained cross-party support, will now be taken forward to the committee stage and will be discussed in detail by the House of Lords.





Roads policing under the spotlight at annual conference

With an input from the police minister and discussions involving a wide range of experts, the Police Federation's Virtual Roads Policing Conference 2021 proved to offer something for anyone with an interest in the future direction of policing our roads.

Summaries of all sessions appear on our website – cambridgeshire.polfed.org - and you can also listen to all or some of the day's discussions by visiting the Roads Policing Conference page on the national Police Federation website at polfed.org

Highlights included the policing minister praising roads policing units, Labour's shadow policing minister saying officers deserved a pay rise and calls for consistent training.

But one of the key developments was the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) supporting the Federation's calls for an amendment to the wording of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill to give police drivers better protection in law.

Steve Noonan, speaking during a panel session called "Steering Change for Police Drivers", said: "Police officers should be able to respond to emergencies without fear that

they are going to face unfair consequences," he said.

"We remain concerned that the current draft of the legislation may only partially achieve the policy's objective and may have some perverse results. We would like to reach the position where police drivers have the confidence to do the difficult job that we ask them to do which is also balanced alongside public safety."

He stressed that they did not want to be left in a position where there was ambiguity over which cases are referred to the IOPC and that there was an opportunity within the legislation to remove that ambiguity.

Earlier in the session, Tim Rogers, national Federation lead on pursuits and driver training, thanked all partners who had made the Federation's campaign for legislative change a reality.

The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts

Bill, he said, made the changes required a reality but outlined that it needed to be amended to allow drivers to act instinctively.

The bill meant police drivers would no longer be judged by the standards of the careful and competent driver but by the standards of a competent police drivers who had undertaken the same level of training.

This, he pointed out, still left them at risk of prosecution since it was clearly not possible to train officers for every situation that they may come across and therefore they would inevitably act outside of their training and force policy.

The wording of the bill needed to be "tweaked", said Tim, a move that had gained cross-party support.

The bill is currently being considered in the House of Lords and the Federation is hoping it will be remitted back to the House of Commons for amendment.

“ WE WOULD LIKE TO REACH THE POSITION WHERE POLICE DRIVERS HAVE THE CONFIDENCE TO DO THE DIFFICULT JOB THAT WE ASK THEM TO DO WHICH IS ALSO BALANCED ALONGSIDE PUBLIC SAFETY. ”



PTSD brought officers together - now they are using it to help others

Two police officers who formed a close friendship after they both suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are now sharing their stories to help their colleagues.

Although Inspector Paul Law and PC Paul Roe have only known each other for just six months, you could be forgiven for thinking they had been friends for years.

What makes these two Cambridge Police Federation members special are their similar stories, both having been diagnosed with PTSD three years ago.

The pair, both members of the Force wellbeing team, are drawing on their experiences of trauma witnessed on duty to help others.

Insp Law, who began his policing career with the British Transport Police in 2004 before going on to join the Metropolitan

Police, recalls the multiple gang-related crimes he has seen, while PC Roe speaks of the distress caused by having been called to four fatal train collisions within a year.

"No one understands PTSD like someone else who has PTSD," says Insp Law, a father of two who transferred to Cambridgeshire Police last year.

"There's too much that we've both seen to list it all, but my PTSD stems back to 2005 when I was involved in the London Tube bombings.

"I was also first on the scene at a gang-related job and I watched one of the young lads die, there and then, in the street. But the final straw was a traffic collision involving an elderly gentleman. I was with him, at 3am, when he died. The feelings of helplessness and loneliness, as well as the flashbacks, continue to affect me. I still

think if only I'd done something different, I might have saved him."

Insp Law recalls going home, looking at his wife and bursting into tears, and says it was around this time his behaviour changed, along with his outlook on life.

"My wife made me get help," he says. "I have her to thank for where I am now - without her things could be very different. She taught me that it was okay to talk. If I hadn't got the help that I needed then, I would have lost everything."

PC Roe believes he had lived with PTSD for years without really understanding the effect it was having on him.

Reflecting on his career, he recalls being nearly stabbed while working a new year's shift in 1998. Ever since, he says, he had found it difficult to celebrate new year, but never realised PTSD was the root cause.

"I put up with it for many years," he says. "Then I was called to four train crashes, all within 12 months of each other, and it seemed to prompt some sort of emotion."

Despite this, PC Roe says he continued to live with his feelings, never wanting to admit something was wrong.

"The turning point was when I dislocated my ankle - that was the trigger for me, my mental health changed dramatically," he says. "It was then that both myself and my wife knew I needed to get help. My wife dragged me to the doctor, and I was diagnosed with PTSD."

When their paths crossed earlier this year, the two Pauls instantly hit it off, with their budding friendship going from strength to strength.

PC Roe says: "We've bonded so much. You don't often get that with someone so quickly, I think it's amazing."

Insp Law agreed, saying: "It's strange, we just get each other. We definitely have one of those special friendships. We've helped each other massively with our own battles. Plus, we both have an enthusiasm and passion for making a difference by sharing our stories."

“ WE REALLY WANT TO GET THE MESSAGE OUT TO OUR COLLEAGUES THAT THERE IS HELP OUT THERE IF THEY NEED IT. ”

Since meeting, the duo have made it their mission to help other officers and police staff who might be struggling with their mental health.

"I've seen others close to me suffer in silence," says Insp Law. "Mental health issues are more apparent than ever right now in the Force. Officers taking their own lives is more frequent than people want to admit."

A major concern for the pair is looking after new recruits and ensuring their wellbeing is paramount.

"No one prepares you for the sadness and grief you might experience," says Insp Law.

"You might go a long time without seeing anything that impacts you, or you might be called to a tough job straight away. The thing is, it doesn't have to be a major traumatic incident, it could be something smaller that affects you.

"People use the phrase 'man up' but that doesn't work. Honestly, it doesn't work. We want people to know that it's all right to be a little bit broken sometimes. Speaking out and sharing our experiences isn't just a game-changer, it's a life-changer. There will be lives that are saved through the work we do.

"We really want to get the message out to our colleagues that there is help out there if they need it."

Breaking down barriers with a little help from Holly



PC Paul Roe with Holly.

The two Pauls have a vital ally in their efforts to combat mental health in the police force - and it has four legs and a waggy tail.

PC Roe has had six-year-old Labrador Holly since she was a puppy, and she is now an official health and wellbeing support dog, at his side and making regular visits to officers and staff to help break down barriers and reduce stress, anxiety and loneliness.

Earlier this year, Holly underwent training, including an assessment to ensure she was safe to be on Force premises and around staff, and Cambridgeshire has become the first force in the country to be given the OK9 badge, as part of the Oscar Kilo wellbeing and trauma support dogs project.

"We take a lot of pride in knowing we were the first force to officially have an OK9 wellbeing dog and handler," says PC Roe, a peer support trained officer and mental health first-aider.

"Holly provides that escapism that police officers and staff need," he says. "Better still, we hope that she leads to people speaking out about their mental health and getting the wellbeing support they need."

PC Roe noted Holly's ability to help when he was laid-up after dislocating his ankle, an incident that saw a change in his mental health.

"I had already been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and then, when I injured my ankle, it had a real impact on my wellbeing and Holly picked up on that," he says. "She used to sit at my feet, or with her head on my knee. We developed a real bond and she

became my shadow."

Holly and PC Roe now visit officers, staff and even victims and their families, aiming to break down barriers surrounding mental health.

"I've taken Holly to visit a six-year-old who witnessed an acid attack," said PC Roe. "She hadn't smiled in six weeks and then, when she met Holly, she immediately engaged with her. She smiled for the first time in weeks."

"A similar thing happens with staff. I had one officer who had an issue and, within 10 minutes, they had chilled out so much and were suddenly talking about their wellbeing for the first time. It really is amazing to see how much they relaxed."

Earlier this year PC Roe met Inspector Paul Law, who also suffers from complex PTSD.

The pair partnered up to support colleagues with their welfare and raise awareness, with visits from Holly a major part of that.

The duo introduced sessions called Paws Time, which provides staff with much-needed escapism.

"These sessions give people some time away from their role," says Insp Law.

"It allows them to have that much-needed time to have a break, engage and reflect," he adds. "They are then able to return to the job, refreshed. Hopefully, it leads to people speaking out about their mental health, too, if they need that support."

"Hopefully, along with help from Holly, we will save lives by speaking up and give that much-needed support to our colleagues when they need it the most."

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