

UNISON POLICE STAFF

# profile

AUTUMN 2008



## *Seized property staff are crucial to good policing*

Plus

- New attitude survey of members
- The Home Office on PCSOs
- The menopause - an occupational health issue?

**UNISON**  
*Police Staff*

# Unseen but vital

The main feature and cover of this magazine return to a constant theme of *Police Profile* and UNISON's police sector as whole.

Police staff are fully aware of the importance of their roles. They are key members of the police family, providing a wide range of professional and complementary services. The North Wales Police seized property and archiving team is a classic example.

Building on the RMS system which police forces are generally adopting Vincent Toms's team are creating the facility to electronically identify and access every single piece of seized property and police record, wherever it is stored. At the same time they are following transparent, locked-down procedures for the safe disposal of knives and firearms.

Their work is entirely unseen by the public and therefore not in a position to be valued. But as party conferences hear pledges for more police on the streets few political figures acknowledge the importance of work such as seized property. For an arrest to become

a charge and then a conviction and possibly stand up to an appeal, every single piece of evidence must be retrievable and examinable.

The news is littered with evidence of a casual attitude to information loss, particularly by private companies delivering public contracts. Memory sticks, laptops and computer disks seem to be consigned to unrecorded post or lost in trains and taxis with disturbing regularity. It is sometimes months before the public authority is even told that highly confidential data is lost or circulating in the public domain.

The consequences for police work of this spreading would be disastrous. Months and years of hard work could be overturned and dangerous criminals left free to commit crime or released on technicalities. Only well trained staff working to the highest standards can stop that happening.

UNISON will continue to highlight the work they do and remind everyone concerned with police funding that safe communities depend on a lot more than police officers walking down a street.

## Got a story?

In the next issue we plan to report on joint venture proposals and developments on job evaluation.

Send ideas, information, opinion pieces (concise) and letters to me Laurence Pollock, editor, *Police Profile* or tel 07801 665961 by 29 August.

Please copy in national officer Ben Priestley email [b.priestley@unison.co.uk](mailto:b.priestley@unison.co.uk)

## Got an opinion?

Yes we want to hear about those too. A letter – 150 – 200 words long or a 'debate' article which should be 600 words long. The service group executive has final say on what is published.

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Cover photo: Laurence Pollock

## CHANGE OF PERSONAL DETAILS

Have you recently changed your name, address or your workplace? Head office cannot effect these changes on the membership records system. Please inform your branch of any changes as soon as possible, so that branch communications are not sent to the wrong address. Members can also inform the union of changes in their details through UNISON direct. The new number is 0845 355 0845 and lines are open Monday to Friday 6am to midnight and from 9am-4pm on Saturday. Hearing difficulties? Please use textphone 0800 0 697 968 Please note: Calls to UNISONdirect are confidential but may be recorded for training purposes.

# The same old story

UNISON's new members' attitude survey shows disturbing evidence that key difficulties for police staff, recorded five years ago are still pressing

The last survey was done in 2003 and the number of those who do not feel valued by their employers has actually risen slightly since then. In addition there is little sign of development in equal pay.

National officer Ben Priestley comments: 'What emerged from the 2003 survey was a police staff workforce that was working flexibly and open to modernisation but held back by old fashioned notions of status, lack of support, low and unequal pay and discrimination. Sadly, almost exactly the same can be written for the results of the 2008 survey.'

The survey is timely. UNISON police service group has seen remarkable growth in the last eight years with membership up by 60 percent. It has 42,000 members in England, Scotland and Wales. Police staff as a whole are 40 per cent of the police service workforce.

In addition there are new factors: in 2003 the PCSO programme was just being rolled out – now there are 16,000 in place. The police service is now facing the prospect of neutral budgets, or worse, for some years to come while under pressure to deliver more, quicker and smarter.

There have also been major distractions such as the stalled exploration of force mergers. When this was called off collaborative working and ad hoc outsourcing took its place. Many of the outcomes have not been happy or productive ones.

In the current climate some of the priorities for action judged 'very important' by members surveyed are telling.

Top of the list, under 'important' and 'very important' (97 percent)



is pay, up just three points from 2003. But equal pay, career opportunities, job security and improved pensions have all jumped significantly in some cases by around 10 per cent.

## Pay gap

The continuing gender pay gap is particularly worrying. In its response to the report UNISON states: 'The profile of equal pay has never been higher. Across the public sector, work is being done to ensure that women are not being discriminated against when it comes to their pay but not, it would seem, in the police service.'

'Ninety-four per cent of members in the survey say that equal pay is the second highest priority for the union to tackle.'

When UNISON published its 2003 survey it called specifically for equal pay audits, job evaluation and pay and grading reviews to equality proof police pay systems. But today UNISON believes that a third of forces in England

and Wales have still not done evaluations.

Some results will not come as a surprise. Staff 'very worried' about short-term job security have tripled compared to 2003 and those concerned about longer term security doubled. Two thirds of those surveyed say that stress levels have increased over the last 12 months. Custody, HR, communications and forensic staff are feeling this stress the most.

There have been positives as well, however. More police staff appear to have received training in 2008, than was the case in 2003, but the trend in 2003 of women and older staff receiving less training than their male, or younger, colleagues is repeated.

The survey, though unable to compare with 2003, found that PCSOs were more likely to recommend their job to others and happier with their level of pay than other occupational groups. They were also getting more training, and receiving more support from their managers.

**UNISON believes that a third of forces in England and Wales have still not done (equal pay) evaluations**

# PCSOs are key to the neighbourhood

In a special article written for *Police Profile*, former Minister of State Tony McNulty emphasises the importance of police community support officers



In March this year we reached a momentous milestone in neighbourhood policing – every community throughout England and Wales had a neighbourhood policing team in place providing a visible, contactable, and accountable policing team to keep their neighbourhood safe.

This new era of policing didn't stop there. The recently published Policing Green Paper sets out the next stage of reform. It includes radical new

plans to cut red tape and give the police more freedom to get on with the job of reducing crime, combined with new measures to increase public confidence in the police and give the public a greater say about how their communities are policed.

One of the key measures in the Policing Green Paper is a new policing pledge setting out what local people can expect from their local police team – with clear national standards, including the amount of time spent on the beat, easy ways to contact local neighbourhood policing team, and clear response times to all calls and incidents.

There are now over 3,600 neighbourhood policing teams in place, consisting of 13,500 police officers and supported by 16,000 PCSOs.

PCSOs are an important part of neighbourhood policing teams providing high visibility reassurance policing to local communities, tackling anti-social behaviour and low level crime, and engaging with local people in order to identify, and solve, local problems.

We remain convinced that the most valuable contribution PCSOs can make to local policing is as part of the neighbourhood policing family and we remain committed to sustaining and developing the PCSO role. We are investing £324million in neighbourhood policing during 2008-09, primarily to support the cost of PCSOs, and have said that this will remain ring-fenced for at least the remainder of the comprehensive spending review period to provide stability and reassurance.

As we move into the next phase of neighbourhood policing, the PCSO role will be no less important than before.

PCSOs will have grown to know their

neighbourhoods well, established strong working relationships with local residents, neighbourhood watch, faith communities, businesses, schools and youth organisations, and with other local service partners in the public and private sector.

Their local knowledge and contacts will directly benefit both the police and the community as the various parties work together to solve persistent problems or seemingly intractable local difficulties, to relieve tensions or resolve misunderstandings.

PCSOs will also have a major role to play in other areas: implementing local policing pledges, supporting the roll-out of

participatory budgeting and developing the emergent public face of the criminal justice system beyond the police.

We have always said the role of the PCSO is distinct and separate from that of police constables who rightly retain the more wide-ranging, coercive powers. However, our Policing Green Paper recognised the need for greater clarity and, in particular, to ensure that PCSOs have the right powers to enable them to do their jobs. As part of the Policing Green Paper consultation we are consulting on this and I encourage readers to have their say at [www.homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk](http://www.homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk).



**“Our Policing Green Paper recognised the need for greater clarity and, in particular, to ensure that PCSOs have the right powers to enable them to do their jobs”**

● The new minister with responsibility for policing is Vernon Coaker

# Staffordshire PCSO 'volunteer' scheme finally nailed

UNISON mounted a two pronged attack – nationally and regionally on a highly dubious 'volunteer PCSO' scheme in Staffordshire.

National officer Ben Priestley wrote to former Home Office Minister Tony McNulty complaining about the premature introduction of the PCSO volunteering scheme in Staffordshire.

The Home Office has now vetoed the idea but it took a while to get through to senior management at Staffordshire.

UNISON has a long-standing opposition to the use of volunteers to carry out work currently done by qualified, professional staff. This would include the developing PCSO role.

Douglas Paxton, Staffordshire Police assistant chief constable, at one point wrote to the force's UNISON branch pointing out that the Home Office and ACPO were supporting the plan.

He said in his letter: 'I can confirm that the development of the approach towards volunteer PCSOs has been raised by the Chief Constable at the Chief Constables' Council and the work carries the



Jacqui Smith, Home Secretary, with UNISON regional organiser Charlie Sarell and Christine Tolman of UNISON Warwickshire Police branch. Charlie raised the issue with the Home Secretary

endorsement of the of the ACPO business lead for neighbourhood policing.

'The force has been in discussion with the head of police reform in the Home Office and again we have their support and collaboration.'

UNISON's National Office had been told, however, by the Home Office that the scheme was not proceeding.

National Officer Ben Priestley in his letter to Tony McNulty stressed UNISON's 'total opposition' to the scheme. He pointed out that it was inappropriate to proceed in the middle of consultation on the Green Paper, and that it

would damage the existing specials scheme and the move towards standard powers.

Meanwhile UNISON in the West Midlands organised a campaign through Labour Link: Staffordshire Labour MPs were written to and they in turn wrote to Chris Simms the Chief Constable.

Regional officer for police Charlie Sarell added: 'At the same time, I had spoken with the Home Secretary at a Trade Unions for Labour event that I was chairing in Kidderminster, and the result of all of this is that Staffordshire and the Home Office have dropped this whole idea.'

## Hampshire stand on control rooms

There was determined action by UNISON's Hampshire police branch after management proposed a new control room shift pattern.

Some staff would have lost nearly £100 a month on contractual overtime right from the start. But thanks to a successful strike ballot and tough negotiating the Force agreed to nine months protection and a key job evaluation process.

The two posts affected both went up a grade as a result, gaining a significant amount of money with no one losing out. The impact of the dispute was felt in UNISON recruitment with the controlroom density

among eligible employees rising from half to around 80 percent. In one month the branch membership as a whole went up 10 percent.

UNISON insisted that a longstanding job evaluation of the posts be brought into the equation.

'One of the roles had not been evaluated for 10 years,' said Peter Terry, UNISON regional officer. 'It had become vastly more demanding and complex in that time.'

Peter said staff felt very strongly: 'The strike ballot within the Force was unprecedented – there had never been any local action before. It attracted a lot of local and some national publicity.'

# Safe and secure in North Wales

Is your filing system up to scratch and how accessible are those boxes in the back of the garage? Stored materials and records are vital to good policing and in North Wales they are way ahead of the game. **Laurence Pollock** found out more

Politicians are obsessed with police officers, on the streets, preferably in uniform. Detectives blend in with the general public too much.

However government ministers, MPs and council leaders rarely admit that successful policing – getting a conviction, not just making an arrest – needs vital back up. Long-term public confidence in policing depends on safe, accessible storage of evidence, interview records and seized property.

The public also need to know that the tools of a criminal's trade such as firearms, knives and drugs will be safely and effectively disposed of.

Staff in the central seized property and archiving section of North Wales Police are acutely aware that the force's effectiveness and reputation depends on their meticulous attention to procedure. At the same time they have to respond promptly to requests for retrieval of material.

Seized property in North Wales has, in recent years, included a prosthetic leg, a bouncy castle and a large church bell. But for manager Vincent Toms and staff Gillian Needham, Valmai Traynor and Steve Crowther, all UNISON members, the bulk of material is rather less eye-catching.

What is impressive is the step change which Vincent and his team have introduced in the last three years on the back of a best value review. They have pioneered the seized property side of the force's use of the Record Management System (RMS) process.

There has been widespread recognition, including from the Audit Commission which praised the robustness that RMS gave to North Wales Police's

already strong crime recording and investigation system. The system has led to a rise in detections, particularly people being charged, summonsed and cautioned.

In seized property the changes, from a traditional manual approach, have been taking place over the last 18



months. Vincent argued that staff quality was vital.

'I wanted to raise the profile of staff in property services. They needed to become more specialised and have a deeper understanding of issues such as the environment. We are now moving away from the days when material was just disposed of in a skip.'

Vincent correctly recognised that high level, skilled performance also depends on status and reward. He argued successfully that a better grading level was necessary for the property services staff. He also created a property services manual, from scratch, running to a 100 pages. The previous document was just five pages.

He and his fellow employees are now developing a system where they know the whereabouts of every cache of property, batch of documents or tape recording. It does not matter if it is on the shelf near their workstation or elsewhere in another division.

Gillian says: 'We are maintaining the continuity and integrity of the system. We do not know the contents of most of the sealed boxes and the officer who does know is not aware of where they are stored. He or she is issued with a code and we enter that on the database.

The officer can retrieve the box intact when needed. This includes material at any site around North Wales – not just the main warehouse.

This is a far cry from the traditional culture of seized property and archiving in many forces. With the best will, much ended up in garages, basements, store cupboards or under desks. And from time to time failure to locate contentious items cast doubt on police integrity.

Vincent was, however, more concerned when the former system struggled with everyone in what he calls their own 'silo'.



‘We evaluated the service and found it was very splintered. We have been seeking a complete corporate approach.’

All the staff share a characteristic which is essential, regardless of the IT an organisation uses. They take a pride in their work and are painstaking in their attention to detail. Valmai Traynor who manages the storage of audiotapes recording police interviews had a nervous attack when asked if they had ever lost one.

‘No! but don’t tempt fate’, she pleaded.

They did think they had lost one, once, but the request had come with the wrong name.

It’s a tough job to keep on top of, with just under 20,000 tapes a year. That’s 400 a week and 80 a day which are all recorded under date of interview, station, police officer.

A driving force in the work is the Management of Police Information code, issued by the Home Office. The purpose is to ensure that there is broad consistency between forces in the way information is managed within the law, to ensure effective use of available information within and between individual police forces and other agencies, and to provide fair treatment to members of the public.

There is a key section on training of staff which states: ‘Training is not only to ensure compliance with the legal framework for information management and the maintenance of high standards of competence, but also to ensure the consistency of police information management procedures throughout the police service.’

Ultimately if the approach being rolled out in North Wales is adopted on a widespread basis there will be considerable benefits. Consistent and efficient exchange of information could make a major difference to combating a variety of criminal threats at a national and international level.

A key part of dealing with those threats, especially at a local level is the disposal of the tools of the trade. Not everything in seized property will be filed carefully, retained or restored to its owner. Steve Crowther, when he is not driving, dons a heavy hide apron and operates the shearing machine that reduces captured knives and firearms to small pieces. They are destined for the smelter.

When it comes to guns, there is no sentimentality over rare collectors’ items.

‘As soon as a firearm comes in it is destroyed immediately — the aim is to get it off the street permanently. Nothing is sacred and I’m nearly crying with some of the items that go in.’

The same care is taken by Steve in the retrieval and disposal of material as in storage. He does not go out on his own and no firearms are delivered for destruction unless he is present to receive them.

Vincent stresses again, the way in which a supposedly ‘backroom’ job is vital to front line policing.

‘This work has to be done, well. The professionalism of staff here is freeing up police officers to get on with fighting crime on the front line.’



Pictures (from left to right): Gillian and Valmai with their forklift; the team - Steve, Gillian, Vincent and Valmai; Steve with destroyed weapons; the ‘trash’

# Tackling the last taboo

It is not on any force's occupational health agenda yet it can have a major effect on personal and working life. Leicestershire Police UNISON branch has been lifting the lid on the menopause

‘After reading our material one manager – a police officer – said he understood much better what a member of his staff was going through.’

Leslie Panton, of Leicestershire Constabulary was describing an individual reaction to a recent article carried in the UNISON branch's *Unibeat* magazine.

It was raising the issue of how women are affected by the menopause and arguing that the force should have a menopause policy statement acknowledging the issues in attendance and sickness management as gender-related.

‘The manager was much more supportive as a result and said he understood how the member of staff was struggling,’ Leslie added.

So far the Constabulary has not committed to a policy but Leicestershire UNISON is determined to keep raising the matter. It points out that around 70 percent of police staff are women and the age of the workforce is increasing.



Under stress: but does my supervisor understand?

Leslie adds: ‘We are going to keep this in the limelight by relaying it to all UNISON reps and asking them to get the message out at their individual meetings.’

‘Women members, historically, have been reluctant to talk about this but we want them to raise it openly – it should not be a taboo subject.’

She points out that some younger managers, both men and women, are not aware of what older female staff are going through.

## Need for recognition

The proposal went to Leicestershire Constabulary's Strategic Equality Confidence Board more than two years ago. It outlined the meaning

### A sergeant who manages police staff

‘I found the *unibeat* menopause article very interesting and helpful. I knew a member of my staff was struggling with a health concern but I didn't know what – even when I approached them. They just said everything was “OK”. However, when I saw them reading the article, they spoke to me and had the confidence to tell me that they were going through the menopause’

### UNISON members

‘It's great to see that my local UNISON branch is tackling such a taboo subject. Let's hope the management listen and take some action’

‘It's hard enough to go through the menopause, without having to explain why you are moody or sharp with people, and emotional when trying to explain some thing to someone. Work related incidents can affect you and you have no way of dealing with it.’

‘I was lucky I did not have a problem with the menopause but I do understand how women feel. I am glad my union is trying to do something to improve women's lives.’

of the term menopause, the changes it brings, the effects they can have and the need for these changes to be recognised in the workplace.

It listed the issues employers should consider and how these should be included in health and safety risk assessments. It added: 'Not all women working through the menopause have problems – nor are they always older women. But the silence surrounding the subject means that when they do face problems at work, or because of work, the issues are not recognised.'

Problems in the working environment include temperature, ventilation, humidity or dryness, lack of natural light, overcrowding and noise. The report highlighted difficulties caused by a lack of welfare facilities such as rest areas or poor access and cold drinking water.

The report also noted that risk assessments did not deal with the menopause, and managers lacked information and training on how to support women affected by the symptoms.

It suggested a sickness absence procedure which involved women being allowed to report sick to female managers and time being given in working hours for doctor's appointments. It also put forward suggestions for awareness raising activities and training.

It called on the force to develop procedures covering: sickness absence monitoring problems, paid leave for treatment, occupational health screening and flexible working patterns.

Many other progressive developments in the workplace – maternity/paternity leave, flexible working, equalities monitoring were at one time ridiculed. They are entrenched today because pioneers said 'this matters'. Leicestershire UNISON is determined to point the way ahead.

## Thanks to UNISON

Paul Hanson a police staff investigator with Lancashire Police was impressed with the legal back up he got from UNISON after a serious accident at work.

He was struck as he pulled out of a junction by another vehicle, which hit the driver's side front door leaving him with a broken thigh bone, abdominal injuries and a 'dent' in his thigh muscle. He was immediately rushed to hospital.

Paul said: 'UNISON solicitors took on board my claim against the other driver, they were excellent and I was awarded damages. Can I just say thanks to UNISON. I only became a member in early 2007 but they did a great job.'

## Support from Thompsons

A Hampshire police staff member has praised Thompsons solicitors for their working in securing an early retirement package.

Mike (not his real name) had come back to work after six months recovering from major back surgery. Just over a month later, a chair gave way causing further catastrophic injury. Mike suffered permanent damage and was forced to retire. The Force acknowledged responsibility.

'Thompsons did a brilliant job in securing a five-year enhancement to my pension,' said Mike. 'They were very professional.'

## Tabloids say sorry to PCSOs

The Sun and the Daily Star have apologised for their sensational and stigmatising reports which alleged that two Greater Manchester PCSOs stood by and did nothing when 10-year-old Darren Jordon drowned last year.

The Daily Star said: 'We stated that two Police Community Support officers "stood and watched as the brave lad went under". We wish to make it clear that the PCSOs arrived only after Jordon disappeared and apologise for any distress our report may have caused.'

The Sun said: 'We wish to clarify the two PCSOs arrived after Jordon disappeared under water and they summoned help and directed other emergency services to the scene. We apologise for any distress our report may have caused.'

## Letter — Health and safety

Despite having near identical uniforms to police officers, police community support officers do not have the defensive equipment carried by police officers in at least two of the police forces in the West Midlands.

West Mercia Constabulary and Warwickshire Police issue their PCSOs with stab proof vests. However, West Midlands and Staffordshire have yet to follow suit. This is surprising given the employer's general duty of care under the Health and Safety at Work Act.

Internal policies may then dictate that PCSOs patrol alone during hours of darkness - when have you seen police officers who, unlike PCSOs, are issued with batons and CS spray, do this? Clearly PCSOs are part of the police family yet a corporate approach to their equipment and deployment has yet to be adopted.

**Jason Newton, health and safety officer**

**West Mercia Constabulary UNISON branch**

# Hants community day

## PCSOs' messy solution to local problems

PCSOs in Hampshire made a major contribution to community relations when a football tournament grew into a day that the whole community could enjoy. Now residents can't wait for the event next year.

Andy Spooner along with Bev Hayes wanted to rebuild relationships in the Fawley area after a murder last year caused local tensions.

'Ever since then,' says Andy, 'there has been a divide in the community between older members and younger people. We wanted to set up a day to break down barriers and get everyone together.'

Hythe Safer Neighbourhood Team, with the help of local agencies, created a survey and ran drop-in centres. These found there was a perception that young people had nothing to do. The team's aim was to change that perception and show that there were lots of groups and activities in the area for young people.

The starting point was a football tournament involving young people, local youth clubs, police, MoD police and a team from nearby Marchwood army base. Andy and Bev then set about fundraising and attracted £5,000 from local businesses and councils. They were pleasantly surprised at the success and realised they could



put on something more ambitious.

They decided to set up a family fun day at the Gang Warily Recreation Centre in Fawley. It was so successful that they raised an additional £2,000, which they donated to the Honeypot Charity which helps vulnerable children and young carers. The event included an It's a Knock-Out competition, football tournament and numerous stalls and activities provided by local organisations, churches and youth groups.

Andy comments: 'Lots of people got very wet and very messy but they also had tremendous fun. We know the whole idea was a huge success because everyone keeps asking can we repeat it next year.'

**'Lots of people got very wet and very messy but they also had tremendous fun'**



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## Bet with Dad prompted 'top gun' career

Friendly inter-generational rivalry has made Rachael Ingram (below) a leading British markswoman.

Four years ago her father Alan, a regular shooter himself, made a bet with her that she wouldn't go along and have a go at clay pigeon shooting.

It was an offer the UNISON member could not turn down. And she admits that once she gave it a go she was 'instantly hooked'. Nevertheless success didn't come immediately and Rachael invested in coaching. It paid off and she has constantly improved every year

She gained her first England cap this year and has had strong showings in the English Open Sporting, the Classic, the World Sporting Championships, the World Sport-trap and the English Open Skeet.

Rachael has also achieved five ladies' 'high guns', during the 2008 police shooting season and represented British police in the inter-services series.

The learning support coordinator says she also benefited from support by Warwickshire Police's clay pigeon shooting section and from the Police Sport UK organisation.

Rachael does not shoot one of the Olympic shooting disciplines although having featured in the England team for the World Sporting Championships 2008, it looks like she will continue making an impact in her chosen area of the sport.



# What's happening on pay?

In England and Wales, our police staff pay claim for a five percent increase on pay was submitted on 29 July. The claim also seeks the deletion of the five lowest pay points on the national pay scale to help low paid members.

The Employers responded by saying that they wanted to explore the potential for a three-year pay deal covering 2008, 2009 and 2010. UNISON has not committed itself on a multi-year deal. We have told the Employers that we are prepared to consider a three year pay offer, but only if:

- It delivers decent pay rises in each year of the deal
- Has a re-opener clause should inflation continue to rise
- It tackles low pay
- It increases minimum annual leave entitlement to 25-days in all forces, and 30-days after five years service
- It leads to the setting up of a national pay and grading structure for police staff

At further pay talks held on 13 August, the Employers listened to our case and agreed to work on an offer in time for the next talks on 22 September. Both sides also agreed to work up a statement of intent to address the future of police staff pay and grading if a three-year deal looks possible.

In the end, if talks on a three-year deal make progress, you and all other UNISON police staff members will have the final say as to whether we accept the offer. At this stage, until we have had further talks, UNISON cannot say whether a multi-year deal is a runner or not. It is important that UNISON keeps an open mind about a longer-term deal, especially if it can deliver the benefits we are seeking.



## A national pay and grading structure?

You may be wondering what a national pay and grading structure for police staff would mean. In other parts of the public sector, like

the NHS or Probation Service, it means that:

- All jobs across each service are evaluated using the same job evaluation scheme
- Jobs with similar evaluation scores are grouped into the same national grade, as part of a national grading structure
- Pay progression arrangements (i.e. increments) are standardised across all employers
- Equal pay for work of equal value is mainstreamed in the national pay arrangements

Police officers currently enjoy a similar pay system, because each rank pays the same wherever the officer works.

UNISON will continue to argue for a national pay and grading system whether or not we end up with a three-year pay deal this year. **Ben Priestley**

**‘In the end, if talks on a three-year deal make progress, you and all other UNISON police staff members will have the final say as to whether we accept the offer. At this stage, until we have had further talks, UNISON cannot say whether a multi-year deal is a runner or not’**

# Concerns mount over custody sergeants

UNISON has warned of the dangers of 'civilianising' the police custody sergeant role

The union has decided not to support 'civilianisation' after consultation with police branches and discussion at UNISON's Police Executive

It does, however, back the amendment of PACE Codes to allow police staff detention officers to provide additional assistance to the custody sergeant in key areas.

The 2002 Police Reform Act allowed chief constables to designate police staff with specific powers and the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act in 2005 extended this to them acting as custody sergeants. This though requires secondary legislation.

In 2007 some forces lobbied the Home Office to pass the secondary legislation to allow them to appoint police staff to take over as custody sergeants and the Police minister, called for a review of the pros and cons.

A Home Office working party was set up, including the police staff associations, and more latterly UNISON. The Home Office proposed a pilot in

a number of forces but this was opposed by staff associations, and is now opposed by UNISON.

After taking part in the working party, UNISON consulted branches in England and Wales to gauge reaction. The results were decisive, showing an overwhelming majority of nine to one against.

UNISON does, however, support the amendment of PACE codes to allow police staff detention officers to provide more assistance to custody sergeants including booking in detainees, bail management, detention review and property recording.

National officer Ben Priestley said: 'We would like to see proposals for a senior police staff detention officer role, working alongside the custody sergeant. This post could relieve the custody sergeant of some tasks and offer career development for police staff detention officers.'

He added: 'Once the position of UNISON and other staff representatives became clear, Tony McNulty, the former Home Office minister, withdrew the proposal.'

# Watch out, tenors and basses

Do police family members all sing from the same hymn sheet?

It's a good question but in Essex they are striking all the right notes with a big hand from UNISON members like Jenny Ayres.

Jenny works in the Crime Bureau, dealing with members of the public for non-emergency crimes such as criminal damage to their property or overnight theft of items and with police officers who have attended a scene and wish to place a crime report on the system.

But at the end of some shifts she takes a deep breath, checks her pitch and enters the magical world of the Essex Police Music Society.

'I have completed two shows with the musical society,' she

commented after the autumn concert was held last month

'This show has been great fun as I was able to do a duet and for the first time a solo song which I was very nervous and excited about, as well. My whole shift came and supported me from the bureau as well as other shift members, which showed what great team spirit we have.'

The society has been going for over 40 years and has enjoyed a strong rise in membership in recent year years. Linda Barkway, the chair said: We are always on the lookout for new members and, together with most societies, we are always short of men. Tenors, baritones and basses are pounced upon with relish.



'One member once said there were very few pastimes nowadays where you can exercise your vocal chords, do some acting, entertain other people, raise money for very worthy causes, improve your social life and get to dress up, sometimes in very exotic costumes, into the bargain.'