

UNISON POLICE STAFF

profile

● SUMMER 2009

North Wales flying squad

Plus

- *Job losses in Surrey*
- *Sexual orientation monitoring*
- *Scottish forensic lab saved*



UNISON

Police Staff

Guessing the future

Writing at a time of political turmoil, it's hard to know what the future will bring.

The fortunes of political parties are changing dramatically and the way the United Kingdom does government might be on the verge of a big shake-up. Meanwhile there are the usual worries linked to the biggest economic down turn in living memory. And even before that, the criminal justice system in the UK was facing standstill budgets or worse.

It is, therefore, worth celebrating the impact UNISON has on key decisions and highlighting examples of good public service. UNISON's role in defending members' interests and protecting the quality of public services is as important as ever.

In Scotland for instance, UNISON has played a significant role in diverting a potentially disastrous decision to close a forensic science lab. The proposal by the Scottish Police Services Authority was based on a flawed, sloppy consultation process. UNISON compiled the counter evidence and made sure stakeholders and decision makers throughout Scotland had their hands on it.

The decision has now been rescinded and the chief executive of the SPSA has resigned. The head of forensic services

admitted the decision was a wrong one.

Another example of UNISON's influence is featured in the article on sexual orientation monitoring. Crude tokenistic monitoring can lead to inappropriate inquiries and information about sexual orientation circulating without a staff member's agreement. Work at Lancashire Police by UNISON, led by Maureen Lemarinel, has been establishing an alternative and thoughtful approach.

When it comes to delivering public services, our cover story about the North Wales police helicopter team demonstrates the great strength of retaining resources and expertise in-house. This offers scope to balance availability, need and expertise and also fly the flag for North Wales Police. In-house fleet management has also been hailed on the national stage with an industry 'hall of fame' accolade for UNISON member John Bradley, fleet manager at Hampshire Police.

Nevertheless, there is an enormous amount of work still to do. Some of that involves running hard to stop going backwards but there are still opportunities for progress. Either way UNISON has the resources, knowledge and will to make a difference in this current topsy-turvy world.

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 email broadgreen68@btinternet.com or tel 07801 665961 by 17 August.

Please copy in national officer Ben Priestley email 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.

July 2009

Published and printed by UNISON,
1 Mabledon Place,
London WC1H 9AJ.

CU/18486/1298/
UNP ref 10718.

The views expressed in *Police Profile* are those of the individual authors, and do not necessarily reflect UNISON policy.

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Cover photos:
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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.

Forensic laboratory U-turn thanks to UNISON

UNISON has played a key part in a massive public climbdown by the Scottish Police Services Authority (SPSA)

The SPSA planned to concentrate forensic services at a new facility in Dundee and close labs in Aberdeen and Edinburgh. UNISON led a high profile campaign against the flawed consultation programme.

UNISON publicly criticised the SPSA's report both for unsound reasoning, poor data and an unsustainable business case. The report did not take account of distances to travel and the transportation of materials, potential delays and the impact on accuracy of evidence.

Now the SPSA has announced a new six-month consultation with a much broader remit and stated that it will not be seeking any immediate changes to the status of the Aberdeen laboratory.

Tom Nelson, head of forensic services at the Authority said: 'I believe some change is inevitable and necessary. But our results must be based on evidence and not guesswork. That was a risk with the (previous) regional approach that we engaged in... which, with the benefit of hindsight, we now feel was the wrong one.'

'We are putting our hands up to that, but I believe the decision we have taken now is the right one for us.'

Highlight

Betty Lyon UNISON police staff area organiser said: 'It was UNISON that worked to highlight how poor this proposal was and how the consultation was unsatisfactory.'

'Our analysis went to all



members of the Scottish Parliament, local councillors, and policing boards. MSPs were raising questions, sometimes on a daily basis, using information that we provided.'

The SPSA's new consultation involves detailed discussion and national engagement and a review of current capability. It will be supported by independent expert analysis commissioned as part of the project.

It acknowledges that the 'fundamental weakness' in its previous approach was a lack of a clear national model for forensic services in which the needs of the criminal justice sector were understood and reflected.

Mr Nelson admitted that forensic staff at Aberdeen had lived with considerable uncertainty for more than a year.

Following the proposed closure news last year, a newspaper investigation showed that the Authority had paid nearly £2 million to consultants. Chief executive David Mulhern eventually resigned over the issue.

UNISON members were incensed that the Authority had not engaged with them on any of these changes.

The scheme was attacked by the Chief Constable of Grampian Colin McKerracher. He said Mr Mulhern and Mr Nelson were 'disingenuous' and talking 'absolute nonsense'.

He was also angry at a claim by Mr Mulhern that senior police officers in Scotland supported the move. He said: 'As a member of ACPOS I am still waiting for someone to come to me and say "what are your expectations, what are your needs?"'

It was UNISON that worked to highlight how poor this proposal was and how the consultation was unsatisfactory

Betty Lyon

Who wants to know?

Sexual orientation monitoring can be a disaster if done the wrong way. It needs to build on strong, existing equality practices and respect confidentiality

When Maureen Le Marinel joined Lancashire Police in the 1980s she was still traumatised by being forced out of the armed forces because she was a lesbian.

‘I was kicked out for being gay and it devastated me. The army was something I had always wanted to do and I had to come out to my family – it was horrendous.’

Maureen’s immediate family members were great but her mother had one request – please don’t tell your aunts and uncles. She respected that but decided, when her mother was dead to come out fully.

‘I decided, I’m now going to live,’ she says.

She describes herself as ‘out and proud’ and she was uncompromising in her early days at Lancashire Police. This was despite harassment, which she successfully challenged. Nevertheless if she had been generally ‘outed’ beyond the workplace, prematurely, she could not have respected her mother’s wishes.

This is one of the reasons why she – like many other lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people – declares the right to decide if her sexual orientation is a matter of public fact. This right however could be undermined if sexual orientation monitoring is carried out casually and mechanically in the belief that it is part of an overall equalities agenda.

Number crunching

Sexual orientation can get bracketed with race, disability and women for reasons of organisational convenience. But the way employers deliver monitoring



Photo: iStock/Lise Gagne

In sexual orientation monitoring, anonymity is essential

for this group needs special reflection and careful handling. Number crunching it is not.

Lancashire was selected as one of several pilots for an ACPO monitoring exercise of the kind UNISON is worried about. Maureen says: ‘We had concerns, locally and nationally about how data was going to be collected and

what it would be used for.

‘If you just collect numbers, what difference does that make?’

‘It was supposed to be anonymous but they were going to use payroll numbers and questionnaires that included a senior management post with a sexual orientation could have been easy to identify.’

‘I was kicked out for being gay and it devastated me. The army was something I had always wanted to do and I had to come out to my family – it was horrendous,’
Maureen Le Marinel

After Maureen approached chief constable Steve Finnegan about the branch's concerns the force recognised the difficulties.

The outcome was an equality audit which looked at diversity right across the spectrum including disability, black and minority ethnic and women's representation as well as sexual orientation. Significantly, it was carried out by an independent company thus ensuring full confidentiality. And UNISON insisted that respondents could decline to provide information about their sexuality.

While major steps forward have been taken in the last two decades there is still discrimination against individuals in the police service because of their sexual orientation. Maureen points out the difficulty this can create:

'If you are being name called or bullied, it is hard to come forward and challenge this if you are not out at work. If someone took out a grievance they would be outing themselves in the workplace. They are very vulnerable.'

UNISON at both service group level and nationally has been working to develop policies and guidance on this issue. It is high on the agenda of the police executive and clear guidance has been published at national level (see right).

Sexual orientation is used by some employers as an excuse to do nothing. So data collection can overcome this
Carola Towle

Excuses

Carola Towle, UNISON's national officer for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender equality says lack of information about sexual orientation is used by some employers as an excuse to do nothing. So data collection can overcome this.

But she stresses: 'There must be an equalities policy and a guarantee of confidentiality in the place first.'

Carola also warns that initial information gained from data collection might well be poor as people are not used to providing it. This however should improve as confidence builds.

In a sense, successful and sympathetic monitoring should be an outcome of a good policy on sexual orientation. This can be developed initially without data.

There are predictions that monitoring in this area will become a statutory duty at some point. If these are vindicated, unions and staff representatives must be ready to insist that employers do the groundwork first.

UNISON nationally

There is no legal requirement to monitor people's sexual orientation or gender identity and UNISON advises caution in this area. Many people can and do keep their sexual orientation or gender history to themselves, to avoid discrimination.

We recommend robust, explicit lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender equalities policies - the implementation of these policies can and should be monitored. It is not necessary for employers to know whether individual workers are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender to tackle prejudice and promote equality.

Once policies and procedures have been thoroughly equality proofed it may be the time to consider whether to introduce monitoring of sexual orientation and - possibly, but less likely - gender identity.

Careful consideration must always be given to issues of confidentiality and to the meaning of data. Consultation with members locally is essential.

UNISON Fact sheet
Workforce monitoring for sexual orientation and gender identity - March 2009
<http://tinyurl.com/cqs58j>

Service group

UNISON's Police Service Group Conference expressed concern that some police forces have introduced workforce monitoring on sexual orientation without any consultation with UNISON or other staff unions, or with any clear purpose. Delegates called on UNISON to circulate the full UNISON advice on sexual orientation workforce monitoring to branches, collect information on where sexual orientation monitoring has been introduced and the outcome, and publicise best practice examples.

In-house means top class

It's a tough call but North Wales's police helicopter pilots are up for it



Dave believes the in-house approach ensures the very best service and the ability to balance the differing organisational and operational demands

Photo: Laurence Pollock

■ The police helicopter is always a hit with television news. It hovers, moves up and down, it's colourful, it suggests urgency and something happening.

It's a routine part of the force in action but the pilots who do the flying are not there as a PR stunt. Their work is demanding, highly skilled and often crucial in tackling crime and human emergencies. They can reach anywhere in the force area in 25 minutes maximum from their base near Rhyl.

In addition, they operate, not just to police requirements, but to stringent Civil Aviation Authority regulations. And like every other operational arm of the police they have to consider resources.

That's a tough call. But chief pilot Dave Taylor and his three colleagues, Ray Crowe, Mick Galston and Paul Bayley are doing a top notch job. They are all police staff and members of UNISON working in-house and fully committed to the Force. Other forces lease helicopters and use agency pilots. Dave believes the in-house approach ensures the very best service and the ability to balance the differing organisational and operational demands.

Up in the air pilots and police officers form a team. And they all need a head for heights.

'The crew normally consists of two air observer police officers and a pilot,' says Dave. 'Not every one

has an aptitude for operating in an airborne environment so we have to ensure they are up to it.'

A bird's eye view is essential in any modern police force – but particularly one spread out over a vast territory with rugged and mountainous countryside. Dave and his colleagues are regularly engaged in searches for both missing people and perpetrators of crime. They also take part in air-sea search and rescue but carrying heavy police equipment and with no winch, scope for rescue is limited. Shoreline is their speciality.

At one time the helicopter carried a paramedic but the local ambulance service withdrew this staffing. However they can

'casvac', stretcher out, someone who is in a life or death situation.

Dave has served as a military pilot and worked for another police force before North Wales which he joined in 1998. Training is comprehensive, even for helicopter pilots who have experience with another force. For those who have not, there is familiarisation with police procedures and local area training. But a key area of training involves operating near the edge of weather limitations.

Captaincy

The requirement to fly at night, in poor weather, always single-pilot, reflects both the hazards and the demands placed on this highly professional unit and explains the emphasis placed on having strong captaincy skills. Aloft, the emphasis is on teamwork, however. All crew members of the police helicopter are empowered to have a say if they feel uncomfortable about extending a flight in particular circumstances.

Dave sums this up: 'There is no place for gung ho machismo in flying. Pilots with an unhealthy attitude to risk are not acceptable.'

Even after approval training there are regular operating proficiency checks throughout the pilots' careers at the force. These include the ability to

handle the aircraft in emergency situations such as engine failure, tail rotor failure and other major malfunctions.

Police helicoptering still has to accommodate huge budgetary constraints. Dave acknowledges it is hard to come up with a pure performance measurement.

'For instance: Can you quantify the deterrent effect? Someone does a runner from a burglary and you can't find the guy after a thorough search. Then he turns up because a member of the public, aware of your helicopter patrols, looked behind their garden shed.'

In a sense, real impact, raising the police profile and pure PR can blur at some points. Dave and his colleagues do engage with the PR. They raise the profile of the North Wales Police and give school kids and many other groups from the community a great day out meeting the crews and seeing the kit. It is, says Dave, part of the whole projection of police presence.

'People are always complaining that they never see a police officer. But, chances are, if you ask about the Force helicopter they will say they see it around all the time.'

Once pilots land they have worries on the ground. North Wales Police UNISON is in discussion with local management about new CAA regulations



Photo: Laurence Pollock

requiring all helicopter pilots, regardless of fitness to retire at 60.

For those like Dave, expecting to work to 65 and with family commitments it is a shock. It could mean the loss of 50 per cent of his final pension.

Anne Roberts UNISON branch secretary says: 'This is a key group of workers who have the same pension rights as any other police staff member. They should not be disadvantaged by a change in health and safety regulations. If we cannot get a good local solution we will consider going to the pensions ombudsman.'

Behind every successful, worthwhile facility there are personnel issues which need to be tackled. UNISON is committed to resolving those for all staff members in the belief that this enhances the service the Force provides to the public.



Photo: North Wales Police

Greening police fleet management

UNISON member John Bradley has become the first person to enter the newly created *Fleet News* Hall of Fame – a major accolade from the fleet management industry.

John, a green transport pioneer, manages the Hampshire Constabulary fleet. He received his award at the recent *Fleet News* gala when more than 900 guests gathered for one of the biggest nights of the industry calendar. Every year, *Fleet News* rewards the best fleets, suppliers and manufacturers in the country for their hard work, great products and commitment to best practice initiatives that provide efficient, safe and environmentally-friendly transport solutions to drivers.

Fleet News editor Stephen Briers said: ‘John Bradley is an individual who was thinking about, and introducing, environmental initiatives and vehicles long before much of the industry was aware of the issue.’

‘Known for enthusiasm, commitment, professionalism and willingness to accept change and fresh thinking, this person is an outstanding pioneer in technological development in the fleet industry.’

‘During four decades with the same employer he has shown the exceptional qualities that make him an outstanding candidate for the inaugural Hall of Fame award.’

In 2006 against strong

John Bradley is an individual who was thinking about, and introducing, environmental initiatives and vehicles long before much of the industry was aware of the issue



John Bradley (centre) with impressionist Jon Culshaw and Stephen Briers

competition, including from the private sector, John won the prestigious Fleet Manager of the Year title.

John has always been passionate about fleet management, recognising the need to go green. More than a decade ago he invited Ford to test its prototype electric car, one of only 100 throughout the world, at the Force. He is continuously looking at hybrid, green vehicles and has backed the Force’s use of the Vectrix high performance moped.

Other innovations include new BMW patrol cars which are highly fuel efficient and have low levels of emissions and new diesel technology.

He acknowledges work by both staff members in fleet management and strong backing from Hampshire Constabulary: ‘It’s all about the

team effort in my department and support from Alex Marshall, our dynamic chief constable.’

This latest acclaim for John’s work and the quality of Hampshire fleet management is a recognition of high public sector standards. A NALGO (former partner union) and UNISON member he campaigned to stop police vehicle maintenance being privatised in the 1990s.

John worked with other trade unionists and the police authority to alert MPs about the hazards and their work was ultimately successful. Maintenance remained in-house and top quality.

He has not altered his views about in-house fleet maintenance: ‘I understand the private sector wants to take over local authority fleets. But we are a non-profit making, we do not mark up our costs and we buy our parts through excellent frameworks. We are a force to be reckoned with.’

For now John, who has been in fleet management for 40 years, is looking to the future: ‘I am 62 and I still get a buzz from coming to work. I have no plans to give up. It is hard to sever the connections.’

Staying in the loop

Maternity leave, parenthood, adoption and fertility treatment can all impact on working life. An innovative scheme in West Mercia is helping police staff and officers to cope

For UNISON member Helen Danks returning to work after maternity leave was a troubling experience.

There was no communication while she was away which she describes as ‘most unsettling’.

‘My team was basically disbanded and I was forgotten about – they didn’t know what to do with me. I felt very unloved.’

That was nearly a decade ago and the situation has changed beyond recognition – partly thanks to Helen’s own initiative.

In 2006 along with police inspector Melanie Crowther she formed the West Mercia Maternity Support Network to offer help and support to women during pregnancy, maternity leave and upon their return to work. But the remit is wideranging, helping colleagues faced with paternity issues, adoption and fertility treatments, through a volunteer buddy scheme. Managers can use the network as a source of information if they are unsure about managing pregnant colleagues.

Award

Now the highly successful initiative has been recognised in the recent British Association of Women in Policing’s Annual Awards. Helen and Melanie won the Achievement in Staff Wellbeing Award.

In 2004 Helen, a diversity advisor and Melanie launched the Women Police Network. As a result they became more aware of the low level of supportive procedures aimed at both working mothers and pregnant women. To tackle this they set up the Maternity Support Network, supported by a force intranet site.



Helen Danks (right) with Melanie Crowther

They organised the training of dozens of buddies who had an understanding of the issues faced by working parents. Helen and Melanie then worked tirelessly to keep the network buzzing alongside their ‘day’ jobs. To date there are 56 trained buddies, including individuals who are not parents and four men, supporting more than 70 staff and police officers.

Buddies’ knowledge ranges from the general to the specific – that can mean multiple births, loss of a child during pregnancy or adoption. But they also direct those needing support to external bodies such as Sure Start, the Government’s programme to deliver the best start in life for every child by bringing together early education, childcare, health and family support.

Buddy systems do exist elsewhere. Helen points out a thriving scheme in Essex but she stresses that West Mercia was keen to widen participation to include men and staff who had

not necessarily gone through the experience of being pregnant.

‘We do not expect them to counsellors – it’s about signposting someone on to specialist help and offering support. It can be just finding out why someone is not getting force orders, for instance.’

Training is straightforward and takes one day. But there is a strong emphasis on confidentiality. Helen has also been encouraging PDRs to flag up the role in their PDRs: ‘It’s an important skill which should be recognised.’

The buddy system has been evaluated and plays a part in reducing ante and post-natal stress and, in some cases, depression. The support also extends to individuals who are dealing with other parenthood matters - for example, colleagues who are seeking to adopt children. A member of the internal staff support group for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender staff has praised Helen and Melanie’s work to ensure that the scheme supports adoptive parents and those contemplating or undergoing fertility treatment.

Helen and Melanie have organised ‘Parents to be’ seminars, challenging the wording of the Force’s current adoption policy, which is not compliant with legislation or guidance and taking part in consultation around maternity uniforms. Through the network they have lobbied for a change in the Force’s risk assessment process for pregnant staff making it policy for line managers to carry one out. Their latest project is to review, consult and advise on how female officers can wear body armour while still in the breastfeeding stage.

National Officer's Report

The future of PCSOs?

In an interview with the Yorkshire Post in May, Christopher Grayling, the Conservative Shadow Home Secretary said: 'Doing away with PCSOs is something I'm looking at, at the moment. I'm minded to say that decisions about their futures should be taken locally, but it's not something I've reached a settled view on yet.'

The Conservative politician went on to say that he plans to set up a review of the role of PCSOs, and that deleting the role could be a possibility.

Mr Grayling's remarks are guaranteed to alarm hardworking PCSOs and their families. Does Mr Grayling not understand the positive role that PCSOs perform? Does he not understand the implications of trying to make 16,000 police staff redundant? Is this the sort of policymaking in the press that we can expect under a Conservative Government?

UNISON will be responding to Mr Grayling in the strongest terms possible.



National disciplinary procedures

Disciplinary procedures are probably not the first thing you think about when you get out of bed in the morning. Unless, that is, you are going to a disciplinary hearing later in the day.

One of the biggest benefits of UNISON membership is the protection, which the union can give if you end up facing a disciplinary allegation. For some

time now, UNISON has been concerned at the way in which police forces were dealing with disciplinary investigations. As police professional standards departments have taken over the handling of disciplinaries from human resources, the approach has got more heavy handed. Procedures designed for police officers are increasingly being used on our members – inappropriately so. UNISON members have even been read PACE cautions as part of routine disciplinary investigations.

Alarmed by the increase in this sort of abuse of process, UNISON has decided to pursue a national disciplinary procedure to cover all police staff in England and Wales. We have tabled an outline proposal to the national employers and they have agreed to open negotiations. These talks may take some time to come to fruition, but UNISON hopes they will lead to a fairer and more easily understandable process for all police staff who occasionally find themselves on the wrong side of their employer.

A photograph of two police staff members. On the left is a Black man in a dark uniform with a name tag that says 'HASTINGS' and a 'COMMUNITY SUPPORT' badge. On the right is a white woman in a police uniform with a blue and white checkered hat. Both are smiling and giving a thumbs up gesture.

UNISON: the union for PCSOs

Join UNISON and make your voice heard in our campaign for:

- a national PCSO pay grade
- a consistent set of powers in every police force
- a national training programme
- better health and safety protection
- permanent contracts for all PCSOs

JOIN UNISON

For more information or to join UNISON call 0845 355 0845. Textphone users call 0800 0 967 968 or visit www.unison.org.uk

UNISON backs Surrey budget cap protest

Standstill budgets are a big threat to good quality policing and fairness for police employees. Matters are coming to a head in Surrey where nearly 200 posts are due to go

Surrey Police UNISON has publicly backed the decision by the Police Authority to challenge the Government's decision to cap their budget.

The reduction in budget will force the loss of 15 staff posts on top of 144 already due to go plus 35 operational police officer posts – a total of nearly 200 in one year at a time of recession and the Government's own prediction of an increase in crime.

In May, the Police Authority was told to reduce its precept level in 2009/10 and re-bill Surrey residents. Surrey has relatively low expenditure compared to other forces and the Audit Commission has said it provides 'excellent value for money to the taxpayer'.

UNISON Regional Organiser, Anna Berry stated: 'Over the past 18 months UNISON members at Surrey Police have been subject to a massive re-organisation of support services. As a consequence hundreds of police staff have experienced, or are still experiencing, uncertainty about their job security, and for dozens this has resulted in redundancy or the upheaval of redeployment.

'Around 144 police staff roles have been, or are in the process of being, deleted. The capping has

sealed the coffin lid on another 15 police staff jobs. Police staff in Surrey have suffered enough.'

She added: 'Constant restructure and reductions in posts have left our members anxious, demoralised and stretched to the limit. The news that a further 15 posts are to be axed has devastated staff. UNISON members work hard to provide a professional, dedicated service to the residents of Surrey but budget cuts are making this increasingly difficult.'

UNISON has urged the public to add their names to the online petition against capping and to write to their MP to ensure that they understand the unreasonableness of the capping decision and to seek their support. Thousands of names were added to the petition in June with 4,000 in the first week.

The re-billing will cost £1.2m to carry out, nearly as much as it will return to the taxpayer. Police authority chairman Peter Williams, branded the decision 'irrational, unreasonable and indefensible'. He wants the Government to cancel the exercise and to review the amount of funding it provides for policing in Surrey.

Mr Williams said: 'The support we have received for our campaign



Photo: iStock/Guy Erwood

Mailbags: All Surrey's police authority charge payers have to be rebilled

so far has been phenomenal. MPs, local leaders, councils, businesses, residents' groups, other police authorities, newspapers and of course many thousands of Surrey residents have expressed their support for the campaign. Everyone is pulling together to send a clear message that the plan to limit our budget and cut frontline policing in Surrey is simply not welcome.'

Dr Tim Brain Chairman of the Association of Chief Police Officers' Finance Business Area, has warned of a growing 'funding chasm' facing the police service, and is predicting that other forces will soon start to feel the same pressures as Surrey, a situation that will worsen over time, particularly during a recession. He believes that, as a number of other forces begin to stretch the limits of possible savings, more police authorities will soon have to cut operational posts.

Constant restructure and reductions in posts have left our members anxious, demoralised and stretched to the limit
Anna Berry

Health and safety

Airwave triumph in Warwickshire

Warwickshire's chief constable Keith Bristow has commended UNISON member Andrew Humphriss for his health and safety work around the Airwaves technology.

The Chief Constable's citation stated: 'Over a number of years you have been a UNISON health and safety representative. When Airwave was first introduced in Warwickshire you immediately raised health and safety concerns relating to this new radio technology.'

'You persevered with your concerns, attending both public and national seminars, working hard to ensure no member of staff was placed at risk. As a result of your hard work, Warwickshire Police and other forces have undertaken a sustained programme of health checks for both users and



Andrew receives his commendation from the chief constable

non-users with funding obtained from the Home Office.

'You are commended for your determination and perseverance, which highlighted the importance of this issue and in so doing increased the protection to all those members of staff who use the technology.'

Andrew is one of Warwickshire Police UNISON's longest serving

representatives and for a number of years was lead health and safety officer. He is trained to Institution of Occupational Safety and Health level.

With the proposed introduction of Airwave six years ago, Andrew pointed out that the new technology might introduce new levels of risk for both members using Airwave hand terminals, as well as for serving police officers.

Lee Bowers UNISON branch secretary commented: 'Initially there was resistance from senior managers to recognise that there may be a health issue. Andrew persevered and with the help of the Imperial College at London and Home Office funding, secured health monitoring for all staff, at their request, within Force. This includes non-Airwave users. This has been offered now to all Forces.'

International

Inspiration in South Africa

Northamptonshire police branch secretary Maurice Rennie was part of a UNISON international visit to trade unionists in southern Africa in the spring.

Maurice focused on links with criminal justice trade unionists and police personnel in South Africa, Malawi and Swaziland.

Meeting the Police and Prison Civil Rights Union, POPCRU's Chief of Staff Simon Mardini in Johannesburg was an inspirational moment. POPCRU was founded in 1989 under the leadership of Gregory Rockman a police officer who challenged the brutality of the South African police under apartheid.

His act of conscience and bravery had a direct influence on the drama that developed over the next five years.

POPCRU covers all public services personnel employed by the South African Police Service, Correctional Service (prisons) and Traffic Department. It also covers two private prisons and has more than 120,000 members.

Despite its many internal struggles within its own country POPCRU has a very active international wing and has in the past few years worked on projects with sister unions in southern Africa.



Maurice Rennie with Simon Mardini