

# Under Cover

NCOA: Protecting those who protect the public

Issue 14 / Spring 2021

## Preparing for a brighter path ahead?

McCLOUD JUDGMENT ■ PLAN FOR HEALTHIER HOME WORKING  
MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING SUPPORT ■ LONG COVID

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## Can we start to look forward?

Dare we start to believe? Is it possible that the worst of COVID could be behind us, and the vaccine roll-out could soon see us all reintroducing ourselves to our favourite summertime haunts home and abroad? I eagerly await a letter dropping through my letterbox with a vaccine appointment date.

COVID has had a marked effect on many NCOA members, underlining the importance of access to independent mental health and wellbeing support. The new Health Assured NCOA member service is a triumph, setting us apart from other civil service unions in providing this extensive wellbeing provision.

With attention focused on the pandemic, other issues could fade into the background. The McCloud judgment focusing on discrimination – crucial for many in the NCA – is updated in News in Brief. The NCOA General Secretary sits alongside our sister trade unions, to ensure that member issues raised with us are 'kept alive' within the consultations.

The NCOA's ambitious approach to Regional Allowance payments has seen our pay team provide the NCA with a real alternative to the



outdated and ineffective model that compensates officers around London. Many thanks to National Officer Steve Bond for his drive and vision to resolve the existing inequality.

COVID restrictions meant there was no NCOA Annual Delegates Conference in 2020. We know how important it

is for members to have a formal route to bring issues to the National Executive Committee, and planning work has now begun for an event in 2021. More information will be sent to your reps soon.

I always take time to thank hard-working NCOA reps who put their own time and effort into the issues that affect you, so I want to personally salute recent retirees Dee Taylor and Steve Howells for their service (see News in Brief).

Remember, if you would like anything published or highlighted in this magazine, please email the Editor at [membership@ncoa.org.uk](mailto:membership@ncoa.org.uk)

Now where did I leave the suntan lotion...



Simon Bashford

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## Union learning is important for workers and employers

York Central MP Rachael Maskell has spoken out against government plans to scrap the Union Learning Fund (ULF) in what appears to be a politically motivated attack on trade unions' ability to up-skill employees, provide opportunities for trade union members to learn, and create new opportunities across a wide range of employment sectors.

Established in 1998, the ULF has supported unions in over 700 workplaces to engage with employers through Workplace Learning Centres and the signing of learning agreements, supporting around 200,000 workers every year to access learning.

### Funding to cease

The current government has pledged to scrap the ULF from March 2021, stating in October 2020 that: "The commitment to the Union Learning Fund has never been open-ended and the current funding is due to cease at the end of March 2021. We have always been clear any future funding would depend on the Government's Spending Review."

Speaking in Parliament in November, Ms Maskell stated: "Unions invest in health and safety reps because they want working people to be safer at work. They invest in workplace reps because



Picture © Robert Kneschke / Shutterstock

**“Unions invest in learning because they unlock the potential of others, give them life chances that they have never had, help them discover their skills and talents, and open up to them a new world of possibilities.”**

**York Central MP Rachael Maskell**

they know that better workplaces are more productive workplaces and provide more secure labour.

"Unions invest in learning because they unlock the potential of others, give them life chances that they have never had, help them discover their skills and talents, and open up to

them a new world of possibilities."

In recent years the ULF has enabled 68% of learners with no previous qualifications to get a qualification; 53% of employers saw an increase in employees gaining a qualification, while 77% said union learning had a positive effect on the workplace.

## NCOA bids farewell to loyal servants Dee and Steve

It is with a sense of sadness that the NCOA waves goodbye to two of its loyal servants, as Dee Taylor (Belfast) and Steve Howells (Bristol) have retired from the Agency and thus their NCOA duties.

Both hard working reps have dedicated a great deal of their personal time and energy into advising and representing their workplace colleagues in matters of grievance, discipline, misconduct, and panel hearings.

For Dee, it promises to be 'late rising' on day one of freedom, followed by longer term projects of the garden (her shed in particular) and the cruise that she

has long promised herself. Dee is also embarking on a genealogy exploration of her ancestral lines.

For Steve, he is moving back to his roots in south-west Wales where he intends to indulge himself in walking and his favourite pastime of photography (so damning to many a convicted criminal over the years). He also intends to reignite his love for exotic travel when restrictions are lifted and, closer to home, Steve has always loved his allotment, and the growing of an array of chilli plants from all over the world.

Thanks for all your efforts, and hope to see you both again soon!



# Unlawful Discrimination – the McCloud judgment update

In the Autumn edition of **Under Cover** we reported on options being considered by the Government to deliver a response to the McCloud judgment, including removing any discrimination attached to public sector pensions.

At the outset, the Cabinet Office was very clear that no-one should suffer any detriment – that includes you!

## Appropriate resolution

To make sure it had all the information at its disposal, it agreed to open its trade union consultation to include a separate ‘public’ consultation, to hear the views of those personally affected and what the most appropriate resolution might be.

That consultation concluded on 11 October 2020, and the two key decisions reached and now agreed by the Government are as follows:

- Moving forward, at the point benefits are paid (eg at retirement) you will be given the

choice either to receive legacy position scheme benefits for contributing service between 2015 and 2022 benefits, or you can take the benefits under the new scheme. While this may seem a no-brainer for some of you, we know that the higher accrual rates attached to the reformed schemes will deliver a more attractive outcome for others (dependant on age and retirement date).

- From April 2022 everyone who has not yet been able to retire will continue the remainder of their service as members of the new ‘reformed’ schemes.

What is clear is that the choice will now allow you to decide on what to do at the point of retirement, when you can compare the actual benefits personal to your circumstances.

Putting aside the arguments around the necessity to change the schemes in the first place (they pre-date the NCOA), we think the outcome of the McCloud

judgment now delivers a fair and non-discriminatory choice, at a point when you have all the relevant information to compare side by side. That information will be shared with you in due course by your pension provider – not the NCA.

## Retrospective choice

For those of you retiring in the next couple of years, the pension providers will eventually contact you at which point you will be given the opportunity to re-visit your ‘pre-implementation period’ decision. If beneficial, you can adopt to move to the more advantageous benefits, with back payments as appropriate.

Given the fact that these decisions will be totally personal and vary from member to member, we regret we are unable to provide you with individual financial advice. But we would encourage you to look at [www.gov.uk/government/publications/public-service-pension-schemes-consultation-response-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/public-service-pension-schemes-consultation-response-guidance) for more information.

## Employment law: what are the changes post-Brexit?

The UK remained bound by European law until the end of the transition period provided for in the Withdrawal Agreement between the EU (31 December 2020).

EU legislation which applied directly or indirectly to the UK before 11pm on 31 December 2020 has been retained in UK law as a form of domestic legislation known as 'retained EU legislation'. The EU Exit Web Archive is the comprehensive and official UK reference point for EU law, as it stood at that date.

Directly applicable EU legislation consists of Regulations and Decisions directly applied as law in an EU Member State. Indirectly applicable EU legislation requires a Member State to make domestic implementing legislation. For example, the UK Working Time Regulations implemented the EU Working Time Directive.

In interpreting this retained EU law:

- UK courts will apply decisions of the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) that pre-date the end of the transition period, except to the extent that courts are



given power to depart from those decisions. The European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018, as originally enacted, provided that the Supreme Court (as well as the ultimate court of appeal on Scottish criminal law) would have such power. Following a consultation by the Ministry of Justice, such power was

extended to other appellate courts, including the Court of Appeal.

- CJEU decisions post-dating the end of the transition period are not binding on UK courts, but the courts may have regard to them so far as relevant.

The Trade and Cooperation Agreement finalised between the EU and the UK just prior to the end of the transition period includes reciprocal commitments not to reduce the level of protection for workers or to fail to enforce employment rights in a manner that has an effect on trade, but makes clear that both parties have the freedom and ability to make their own decisions on regulating labour and social standards going forward. So the future shape of employment law will depend on the complexion of future governments and the cases that come before the courts.

There have been some immediate changes to employment law content (for example the card on Jurisdiction and Territorial Limitation) and others will be updated as case law and statute law develop.

## We all deserve a few perks in life...

Many members have already signed up to the NCOA all new (and free!) discounting platform, to access thousands of discounts on big name brands and local businesses.

The platform, powered by Perkjam, provides promotional access to a host of entertainment, technology, travel and sportswear products for all serving NCOA members, including family and friends.

Once members have logged on and registered with very limited personal data, they are free to start shopping and saving money. Each registered member can select their own preferences to receive personalised updates, so that they never miss out on any offer.

Perkjam is a popular discounting platform within the law enforcement community and is a secure way of saving on top brands.

To view all perks and start saving, head for [www.ncoa.org.uk/proud-to-be-associated-with/](http://www.ncoa.org.uk/proud-to-be-associated-with/)



# GDPR considerations for online meetings

During the COVID-19 lockdown, many of us took to online meetings and training for member engagement. This practice has proved to be successful, if not a little frustrating if internet speed is not up to it, and it is likely that this may continue for years to come.

The NCOA is no exception and does itself use MS Teams, as it provides at least some security compared with other popular mediums.

Within the wider civil service there has been a danger that in some online discussions or courses, participants have shared sensitive personal data about other members of their workplace, for example when referring to situations that have happened in the office.

## Kept securely

It is important that we take steps to ensure that this does not happen and that data from which individual members might be identified is not shared, or if shared, is kept securely. It is particularly important where any online event is being recorded and kept for future use.

While few meetings are routinely recorded, even non-recorded events should carry with them a warning. The NCOA carries out training sessions online, some of which are not routinely recorded; but as such, registrations or return e-mails to participants to online events include a privacy statement as standard, so that participants are both assured and clear about how their data will be captured and used with a clear purpose.

To be clear, during an online event the course organiser/trainer should:

- remind participants at the start of the event that there should be no inappropriate discussion of material which could identify another's sensitive personal

data; if the event is being recorded, this is particularly important

- listen out for participants sharing sensitive personal data about themselves or others and remind them not to do that
- review the course before publishing as part of any other online learning programme
- seek Data Protection Officer (DPO) help if you believe personal data may have slipped in, and make efforts to edit and extract it.

Recording an online event increases the risk of personal and confidential data being revealed. A recording may be kept for some time and might be seen by

others who were not the original participants of the training event/meeting. The normal data protection rights for a member/non-member will still apply, personal data will consist of visual and audio data and the content may include confidential information participants may share about themselves or others.

The NCOA has a dedicated DPO to deal with questions raised about recording and retention of data; however, if you are an attendee at a meeting online, you should be mindful of your own personal responsibilities to ensure you do not share information about others, and similarly feel free to ask for details of what measures are in place to protect your privacy.



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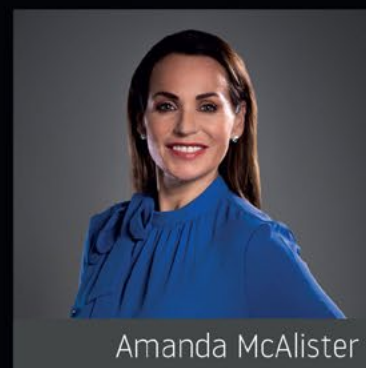
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# NCA – delivering a platinum service

*Under Cover* explains why our hardworking members all deserve a medal



1977

2002

2012

2022?

I'm sure we can all agree that 2020 wasn't quite the year we hoped for.

Fortunately, with the rapid vaccine roll-out there is some light at the end of the COVID tunnel as we move deeper into 2021; 2022 may even see us return to what we wistfully remember as 'normal life'.

Hopefully it will be a year where we can freely enjoy celebrations, the most significant event being led by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

2022 marks the 70th anniversary of Her Majesty's reign, to be celebrated across a four-day June Bank Holiday to mark what will be the Platinum Jubilee – the first British monarch to reach this historic milestone.

## Public service

When Queen Victoria reached her 50th year on the throne, she issued a Golden Jubilee Medal, last year the Queen approved plans to issue her own Platinum Jubilee Medal, to be given to those who work in 'public service' including the armed forces, emergency services and prison services.

Nine years ago a Diamond Jubilee Medal was commissioned and awarded to eligible staff within the armed forces, HM Prison Service, emergency services, and police community support officers. At the time the NCA hadn't been formed,

but officers serving in its pre-cursor organisation, the Serious Organised Crime Agency, were sadly excluded from receiving this award.

Since its formation in 2013, the NCA has been at the pinnacle of UK law enforcement, targeting serious organised crimes which have the greatest impact on communities. Although staffed by civil servants, the Agency operates without parallel within the Civil Service world. Recognising its unique function and role, the NCA Long Service and Good Conduct (LSGC) Medal was instituted in March 2017.

It would be fantastic to see NCA officers included within the 'public service' group eligible for the Platinum Jubilee Medal. The selfless actions and service delivered by the NCA officers (and others in the public sector such as the NHS) during the pandemic may signal an extension to the traditional medal recipient list, which of course we would support.

Back in January, NCOA General Secretary Simon Boon wrote to the Home Secretary to raise the profile of all NCA officers and ask that proper consideration be given to including them within any developing 'eligibility' group to receive the Platinum Jubilee Medal.

Simon said: "We have our fingers

crossed that our members within the NCA will be formally recognised and share in Her Majesty's celebrations next year, which will enable officers to proudly reflect on the value the UK places on your important law enforcement roles."

## Pulling together

We asked NCA Director General Dame Lynne Owens for her thoughts on the matter. She responded: "This question was raised by officers at the recent Proud to Protect events too, and we are keen that our officers have access to all, and as many, recognition routes as are available to them. We have not yet been formally consulted on the medal award and I suspect that is because our colleagues in the Home Office have been hard at it on both COVID-19 and the EU exit.

"It is my position that all of our officers should receive the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Medal in the same way we successfully negotiated for all to get the Long Service and Good Conduct Medal (after the appropriate service length and with minor caveats.) We do sterling work to protect the public, pulling together as one team, and it is on that basis we shall make our case. Of course, as soon as we know more, we will communicate it."



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# What is a **no-fault divorce**?

*Heather Lucy, solicitor with McAlister Family Law, explains the 2021 changes to divorce law – the first real changes in 50 years.*

A marriage coming to an end is not always full of hostility and tension. Couples can grow apart or make the difficult decision that the relationship is not serving either of them. A divorce formalises matters and allows both partners to move forward with their lives with certainty, including working out what should happen with the family finances.

## The blame game

For a long time, couples have been faced with a dilemma when it comes to divorce. The only ground for divorce in England and Wales is that the marriage has broken down irretrievably. The parties need to demonstrate this to the court using one of five 'facts'. Under Section 1 of the Matrimonial Causes Act 1973, they can either wait two years (where both parties agree), five years (without the need for consent), or use one of the 'blame'-attributing factors which are desertion, adultery, or unreasonable behaviour.

This means that couples have either been stuck in limbo for years as their financial situation gets more and more confused, or have had to assign the fault for the relationship breakdown to one of party. Even if they are aware that this is a necessary evil, digging through the relationship to find reasons for the split to satisfy the court can bring up painful feelings and resentment.

## Times are changing

The Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Bill received Royal Assent in June last year, and the new Act is expected to come into force in the autumn. Under the Act, the current options to prove irretrievable breakdown of the marriage will still be available. Crucially however, spouses have the option to present a petition to the court simply saying their marriage has irretrievably broken down.

This prevents the need to place blame on one of the spouses. It also reduces the possibility of an expensive and drawn-out contested divorce, as a petition from one spouse saying the marriage has irretrievably broken down will be seen as sufficient proof.

Critics have worried that this new option will undermine the sanctity of marriage by making it easy to get a 'quickie divorce'. However, the Act introduces a minimum period of 26 weeks from petition to final order. This may seem like a long time when you are looking to move forward with a new life, but it provides time for reflection and consideration of your financial matters and plans for your children going forward.

## Does this impact finances?

Unlikely. A common misconception is that the 'fact' evidencing the irretrievable breakdown of a marriage will impact a financial settlement. It has no bearing whether the petition is based on adultery, unreasonable behaviour, separation or, now, agreement, except for in exceptional circumstances. This means there is no financial incentive for either party to push for a fault-based petition.

It will also potentially save legal fees as there will be no need to correspond over the contents of a behaviour petition or seek an admission of adultery.

## Should I wait for the new rules?

This is a deeply personal matter that can only be decided upon by you. It is worth bearing in mind that we do not yet have a definite date for the new system coming into place. The length of marriage is also a factor that the courts take into account when considering a financial settlement. A matter of months is not likely to be crucial, but it may in certain circumstances.

If you are considering waiting, it would be sensible to take some legal advice as to the implications this may have on your case. Lawyers have been championing no-fault divorce for years so they should be well aware of your reasons for considering waiting.

If you are affected by any of the issues outlined here, please get in touch today. We are here to help. [www.mcalisterfamilylaw.co.uk](http://www.mcalisterfamilylaw.co.uk)

# Member **mental health** – **You** have asked, the

The NCOA has always prioritised members mental health and wellbeing; however, 2020 saw an unprecedented number of requests for wellbeing services – exacerbated in part by COVID-19 and lockdown, but also demonstrating a member-driven need for independent confidential support.

The NCOA is therefore rightly excited to announce our new partnership with Health Assured who will be providing unique, member-only, mental health and wellbeing support to NCOA members.

Awarded best workplace and wellbeing provider for three consecutive years (2017-2019), Health Assured (through our partners at Endsleigh Insurance) already provide support to many police officers through the Police Federation and are key to the support of MOD officers. They have excellent security measures in place which will allow our members to focus on what their needs are, whether that be issues at home or within the workplace.

including stress and anxiety

- **Support for Home Life** – domestic relationships, domestic abuse and bereavement.

On your behalf the NCOA has negotiated a unique member service that delivers:

- unlimited, 24/7 access to BACP-accredited mental health and counselling
- 24/7 critical and traumatic incident telephone support
- a translation service in over 200 languages

**“The NCOA is thrilled about this new member service, and we hope you will make use of this vital investment that we are able to provide to you all, following a difficult year.”**

While our members must not reveal sensitive information regarding operations, they can feel comfortable in talking about the type of work they are involved in, such as CSAE work or operational deployments, and the impact that this work has on them and those close to them.

1,600 psychologists and counsellors will be at the disposal of NCOA members to provide support on a range of matters including:

- **Support for Health** – such as mental and physical health, addiction and critical incident trauma
- **Support for Legal** – such as consumer issues, debt and financial concerns, and separation and divorce
- **Support for Work Life** –

- up to six sessions of structured telephone/video counselling, including telephone CBT counselling (per member, per issue, per year)
- online counselling including CBT and trauma courses
- coverage for spouse/partner and dependants
- a family advice line on topics such as childcare and eldercare.

Providing online CBT and trauma courses is especially important for our members working with traumatic material. Enabling them to find ways to manage the impact of this work is vital to maintaining good mental health.

We wanted to find the right organisation to support all our members and we recognise the diversity that our membership holds.

**About your Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)**

Sometimes it can be difficult to balance the pressures of work and home life. Health Assured provide caring support to both you and your immediate family so you can give your best in life.

**What can I use this service for?**

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- Alcohol or drug issues
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- Relationship advice
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- Retirement
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- Financial wellbeing
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- Health checks
- Medical factsheets
- Four-week programmes
- Fitness advice
- Budgeting

**Employee Assistance Programme**

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- Debt
- Work
- Lifestyle addictions
- Relationships
- Legal

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[healthassured.eap.com](http://healthassured.eap.com)

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# and wellbeing support NCOA has delivered

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**Free 24 Hour Confidential Helpline:**  
**0800 028 0199**

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Bereavement	Financial wellbeing	Childcare support
Relationship advice	Legal information	Medical information
Tenancy & housing concerns	Alcohol & drug issues	Consumer issues

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**healthassured.eap.com**

Username  Password

**health assured**

**health assured**

Good morning, Samwell  
Monday, June 10

An Intro to Stress & How to Manage It

How are you feeling this week in general?

1 2 3 4 5

Skip Complete

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**4 Week Plans**

Start your 4 week plan now

**Mini Health Checks**

Start your Mini Health Check now

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Personalisation

Weekly mood trackers

Mini health checks

**what you can achieve today**

Employer code:

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Health Assured are a committed member of the Race at Work Charter with their own colleague-run BAME network, and employ a diverse workforce with broad experience. They employ affiliate counsellors who are from BAME backgrounds and have experience

of working with BAME communities.

While it's vitally important that NCOA members feel supported with work-related stress, we know there are many factors outside the workplace that can have a significant impact. Therefore, the NCOA built in cover for relationship issues,

bereavement, finances or previous traumatic experiences.

The NCOA is rightly thrilled about this new member service, and we hope that you will make use of this vital investment that we are able to provide to you all, following a difficult year.

# The **five-step** plan to **hea**

*As lockdown 3.0 is lifted, many of us will continue to work from home for a long time to come. Dr Warwick of Quest Psychology Services gives you a five-step lunch plan for healthy home working.*

If you're one of the many NCA employees who haven't travelled to the office much since March 2020, the novelty of working from home has probably faded. Unstructured days, overtime and limited real-life contact with colleagues have cancelled out some of those benefits. As for proper lunch breaks, you've probably forgotten what they are!

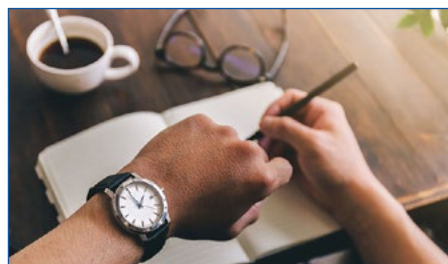
A recent survey found that during lockdown, most employees worked

longer hours at home than in the office and over a third struggled to separate work and home-life. Another poll revealed that 80% of those who had lunch ate it while they worked, and two thirds skipped it altogether!

These figures highlight how easy it is to stay at your 'chosen desk' all day; but taking a break and reclaiming your lunch hour benefits productivity

as well as physical and mental wellbeing, as expert and psychologist Dr Gregory Warwick of Quest Psychology Services explained.

"People often believe that if they press on, they'll get more done," Dr Warwick, "yet taking a break



## Establish a routine

### + STEP 01

Remember work-life balance? It used to mean leaving the office and switching off but now it's harder to separate professional and personal life. You need to give yourself a structure.

Make lists of things you need to accomplish and scheduling in a lunch hour is a vital part of this process because at home, we don't have the same visual clues – colleagues grabbing coats and heading out telling us its time to take a break.



## Swap your location to eat

### + STEP 02

Moving away from your work area for lunch isn't just about a change of scene, it has dietary benefits too

Eating lunch at your desk means you don't focus on what you're eating and likely to consume more calories. Eating something wholesome rather than sugary snacks for energy boost is equally important, as quick fixes affect blood sugar levels and can cause 'afternoon slumps'.

"Aim to take your lunch at the same time each day to make the process easier," says Dr Warwick. "If you have the luxury of multiple rooms, designate one as your break room."



## Make a plan for time out

### + STEP 03

Do something in your lunch hour that's fulfilling, says Dr Warwick.

"There's no right or wrong activity," Dr Warwick explains. "Whether its reading, meditating, exercising, TV or taking a nap... what's right for you personally. Doing something that makes you happy can prevent sugar cravings too."

# Healthy home working

only helps regulate your stress levels but also recharges you so that you can fully attack the next project.

"It's tempting to prove your dedication by working longer hours but this can have the opposite effect. Employers can begin to expect 110%, which in turn compounds your stress as demands increase."



## Move!

### + STEP 04

Research shows that moving your body during lunch break, can help reduce stress, maintain good mental health and make it easier to sleep.

To keep motivated, doing the activity before eating your lunch will enhance your incentive to get going as soon as lunch break starts.

**"Overall, lockdown has been incredibly tough on us all. Personally, I believe lockdown 3.0 has been the most difficult – unlike the first lockdown where we had the sunshine to enjoy, and unlike lockdown 2 when we had Christmas to look forward to. Instead, lockdown 3.0 has provided us with dark cold mornings and nights with a lot of uncertainty as to when this would end.**

**"However, these five steps can help you continue to look after your wellbeing whether your area is still under strict restrictions or not. These are often the simplest things that we already know to do, but putting them into practice and getting them into our routine, can take time and effort. However, in the long run it'll make home working more effective and better for your mental health. Start small and get one step firmly in place before starting the next if you are finding it difficult."**

**Dr Gregory Warwick, Quest Psychology Services**

**Under Cover** has joined Dr Warwick in putting together a five-step plan to make 2021 the year we can all work and relax flexibly and enjoy an altogether healthier, happier working day.

Dr Gregory Warwick  
DCounsPsych, CPsych,  
AFBPsS is a Chartered  
Psychologist.

**Under Cover** thanks  
him for his contribution.



## Ditch the guilt

### + STEP 05

Remember, your lunch break is yours to do with as you wish so there is no reason to feel guilty about reclaiming it.

In fact, stepping away from your desk is likely to help you be better at your job which benefits your mind, body and soul in the process.

# Police Insure drive forward NCOA cover

Police Insure specialise in highly competitive discounted rates for car, motorcycle, home and travel – for all members of the NCOA and their partners, especially at this particularly challenging time.

The company currently works with over 40 law enforcement and representative associations across England, Wales and Scotland and, to develop and sustain those relationships, have a network of experienced regional Business Development Managers.

Martin Barber, a retired Inspector with Cheshire Police, is the Business Development Manager who works with NCOA Head Office in Stockton Heath. This close collaboration helps to raise awareness of the eligibility

of NCOA members to access the products and services which Police Insure offer nationwide.

## Increased awareness

Martin told *Under Cover*: “As we all continue to adapt to the COVID related challenges, where the safety of ourselves and our loved ones is of paramount importance, this increased awareness within the NCOA and its membership has generated a considerable increase in the number of members taking advantage of the benefits and savings Police Insure offer – especially in terms of protecting their valuable homes and vehicles.”

Martin was finalising arrangements with NCOA colleagues at Head

Office to attend NCA sites and provide an ‘in person’ information point for NCOA members, when COVID arrived... hopefully this approach can be revisited once circumstances permit during 2021.

Martin added: “It’s encouraging that there are now over 220 policies held by NCOA members and their partners, all enjoying the personal service, product confidence and considerable savings that Police Insure provides.”

Additional information on Police Insure products can be found via the NCOA website [www.ncoa.org.uk/proud-to-be-associated-with/](http://www.ncoa.org.uk/proud-to-be-associated-with/), by visiting [www.policeinsure.co.uk](http://www.policeinsure.co.uk) or by contacting Martin directly on [martin@policeinsure.co.uk](mailto:martin@policeinsure.co.uk).

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# "We're in this together"

## COVID-19 2020-2021



## Keep in touch to keep in touch...

GDPR is an intrinsic part of our daily lives, but for any organisation trying to maintain effective communications there are many challenges which may not have been at the forefront of the legislator's minds.

One of these issues relates to direct and unambiguous consent to receive communications, whether via email, SMS or telephone calls.

Clearly the NCOA is not an organisation that relies on irritating 'cold calling' to sign up new members, or a contact strategy which promotes 'up-selling' or promotional activities not specifically linked to NCOA membership and employment within the NCA.

Our website ([www.ncoa.org.uk](http://www.ncoa.org.uk)) is a great source of information; but without some kind of flagging from membership, it's not easy to keep abreast of the activity undertaken by your trade union, and – more importantly – member services.

Since last March the NCOA and NCA have worked in an entirely different way to ensure 'business as usual' during three lockdowns. For many this has meant a working environment that has shifted from a daily presence in the workplace to a semi-permanent working from home arrangement (although we know many of you can't work from home).

Given prolonged absences from NCA sites we have worked alongside the Agency to help deliver some important messages using our own communications platform, recognising that even the normally effortless workplace internal communication tool – word of mouth – has been severely choked by the pandemic working arrangements.

Earlier in the year we sent out a new wallet-sized plastic membership card to every member, containing contact numbers and information relevant to your NCOA membership. So it was quite surprising to note that some members had either removed themselves from any kind of contact with the NCOA, or failed to say how they wanted to engage with their trade union.

Worryingly, ahead of the postal distribution of these cards we were contacted by well over 100 members who wanted to update their details following a change of address – in some cases, several years previously.

It's also important that if you are substantively promoted from a Grade 6 role or move from a part-time to full-time role, NCOA membership are updated as soon as possible so that your subscriptions can be adjusted in line with terms and conditions of membership. Of course, if you move onto an Alternative Working Arrangement and are working reduced hours, you are entitled to pay the reduced membership rate.

So the communication preferences set with the NCOA have not led to anyone being plagued with irrelevant messages – but they

**“The communication preferences set with the NCOA have not led to anyone being plagued with irrelevant messages – but they will ensure that you understand your membership benefits and the employer engagement taking place on your behalf.”**

To provide context, in the last year the NCOA sent out no more than three member updates per month to those who had agreed to be contacted, on issues relating to COVID-19 operating procedures, positive cases at specific workplaces, pension changes, pay, and our engagement on issues affecting you as NCA employees.

We have also announced the addition of two new member services that provide you with a bespoke experience not seen at this level within the wider workforce. You will see from the wellbeing article on p12 that one of them is tailored to respond to the very personal impact of the COVID pandemic.

will ensure that you understand your membership benefits and the employer engagement taking place on your behalf.

Having been contacted by several members asking 'Why did you not tell me about this issue?' or even 'Why have you not sent me a membership card?' we would like to remind you that although we can contact you to ensure our data is up to date, it's important that you also contact us by emailing [membership@ncoa.org.uk](mailto:membership@ncoa.org.uk) to ensure the information and contact preferences we have are accurate.

You can of course change your mind at any time, and we will honour your request, in line with GDPR.

# Often referred to, rarely seen



*Reshard Auladin tells **Under Cover** about the pathway that led him to become an NCA Non-Executive Director.*

## **Under Cover: Reshard, tell us about your first job?**

**Reshard:** I left Mauritius in the 70s at the age of 18 to work in the NHS. The hospitals were desperate for staff and thousands of young people from all over the commonwealth saw this as an opportunity for travel, study and work.

After five years in psychiatric nursing I left to go to university, and I qualified as a secondary school science teacher. Alas teaching was not for me either and after a while I left to go into business. Over the years I set up various small businesses including one in the health care sector which I still look after.

## **Under Cover: No mention of law Enforcement yet?**

**Reshard:** My interest in law enforcement started with a minor event left which left a lasting impression on me.

As a student, I was driving on the A10 towards Cambridge in an old car, when I experienced a tyre puncture.

As I was attempting to change the tyre I noticed a police car parking behind mine. My heart started to race because I had come from a country where, at that time, when a police officer approached, you start looking for your wallet!

Police was a dirty word. In contrast the officer who came to me was unbelievably helpful and kind. He helped me to remove the tyre and replace it with my spare only to find that this was flat too.

He then went to the trouble of inflating the tyre with a foot pump before sending me on my way. I know it is hard to believe, but that experience had a such profound impact on me that I was drawn to justice and policing.

I became a magistrate in my early 30s and got involved in various



Picture © Deleplanque/Sven Hansche/Shutterstock.

**Reshard Auladin's journey to becoming a NED took him from**

criminal justice and policing initiatives in the borough of Enfield, North London. Youth justice, and particularly restorative justice, was of great interest to me.

In 2000, the Metropolitan Police Authority (MPA) was created, and I took the opportunity of becoming a magistrate member. I remained at the authority until its dissolution in 2012 and became its vice-chair. I was lead member for a number of areas including CT and SOC. I am still involved (with the Met) as a member of its audit panel.

Having had dealings with two of the NCA precursor agencies – the Asset Recovery Agency & NCIS – through my MPA association, I saw the Non-Executive Director (NED) role at the NCA as an opportunity to continue contributing to a field that I was

**“During my time at the NCA, I have seen the Agency transformed into a dynamic, confident organisation with a clear purpose which is willing to take on serious and organised crime at every opportunity. It has become more mature and its performance is improving all the time.”**

# – so who are **the NEDs?**



Mauritius to the Met

passionate about. I was very pleased to join the NCA in April 2017 and I am really enjoying my time here.

## **Under Cover: What does a NED do?**

**Reshard:** The NEDs' role at the NCA is to advise and to scrutinise as independent members of the board. We contribute to the strategic direction of the organisation by offering constructive challenge to the plans and the objectives set by the Director General and her executive team.

Our scrutiny role entails monitoring and challenging performance and more importantly, as members of the audit and risk committee, satisfy ourselves that the Agency has robust systems to manage risks and good financial controls.

**“ My heart started to race because I had come from a country where, at that time, when a police officer approached, you start looking for your wallet! Police was a dirty word. In contrast the officer who came to me was unbelievably helpful and kind.**

Our understanding of the Agency, its people and workings comes from talking to staff, visiting Agency locations, extensive briefings and reading everything we possibly can. The pandemic has obviously limited our ability to meet and visit, but we continue our work from home.

In addition, the NEDs have specific interests in various aspects of the agency such as finance, IT, staff and governance. I sit on the remuneration and talent management and senior appointment committees.

## **Under Cover: You have been here throughout Dame Lynne Owens' 'watch'. What changes have you seen?**

**Reshard:** During my time at the NCA, I have seen the Agency transformed into a dynamic, confident organisation with a clear purpose which is willing to take on serious and organised crime at every opportunity. It has become more mature and its performance is improving all the time. It is growing and so is its reputation.

I particularly like the fact that it is now more open and willing to communicate its achievement to the public and its partners. Its people are dedicated and passionate about their work and I have been impressed at the expertise and professionalism at the Agency.

As a member of the remuneration committee, I have witnessed the

hard work the leadership, and in particular the DG herself, have put in to securing better pay and reward for the staff, although I appreciate we are not quite at where we want to be. With the state of public finances, this will remain a challenge for the Agency.

There are other challenges too. For example, technology and data are areas where investment will need to continue, as will the efforts to secure a sustainable funding allocation for the Agency.

The pandemic is also throwing its own challenges. While it has done remarkably well in difficult circumstances, the clogging up of courts, for example, could have a significant impact on the Agency.

## **Under Cover: What does the future hold?**

**Reshard:** I always thought that I will retire and put my feet up when I get to 60 but I'm now well past that milestone and I enjoy being busy and active. In my spare time I find being with my grandchildren to be really stress releasing. I also cycle and do a bit of gardening.

*Under Cover wishes to thank Reshard for taking the time to give members a better insight to the work of the five NCA Non-Executive Directors*



# NCOA

National Crime Officers Association  
The Trade Union of the NCA

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# Time for the **Minimum Staffing Levels** issues to be **resolved**?

With NCOA membership remaining consistently above 3,000 NCA staff, the smooth running of the National Crime Agency reaps the benefits from being a highly unionised place to work. More importantly, the NCA reaps the benefits of the NCOA providing that highly unionised presence.

Of course, there are Dispute Resolution Procedures (DRPs) to deal with occasions when the NCA and its trade union are unable to reach agreement. It is the ongoing commitment of the NCOA to problem-solve with the Agency which means that even the most contentious issues are generally resolved with both sides recognising the importance of compromise.

## Resolution procedures

It does though remain the case that, if any issue between our two parties cannot be resolved using the resolution procedures, NCOA members retain the right to take industrial action, so long as it is conducted within the rules laid out in Part V of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.

Hopefully a long-standing contentious issue for NCA officers – how Minimum Staffing Levels (MSLs) within the Agency are decided and operated – will now be resolved, thanks to the perseverance of the NCOA.

The Joint Negotiation and Consultative Committee (JNCC) is the structure which brings together the executive leadership of the NCA with senior officials from the trade unions, to try to resolve matters that haven't reached agreement and been dealt with at the routine monthly engagement meetings. The NCOA first raised MSLs at the JNCC



**“ The NCA has now agreed to work with the NCOA to deliver a workable solution to MSLs by July. Hopefully this will break the almost annual cycle of Christmas leave restrictions being a recurring and contentious member issue.**

in July 2018 where it has remained outstanding since.

Reflecting on the joint working that delivered a more nuanced Agency response to the period of No Deal EU Exit transitioning – which was some way from the earlier arbitrary imposition of leave caps – the NCA has now agreed to work with the NCOA to deliver a workable solution to MSLs by July this year. Hopefully this will break the almost annual cycle of Christmas leave restrictions being a recurring and contentious member issue.

With all this in mind the NCOA is seeking transparent guidance whereby:

- Directorates determine staffing levels to meet normal

commitments, including demand for service over Bank Holiday periods.

- Clear processes by which managers implement and review the staffing levels in accordance with localised responsibilities.

A defined period by which leave requests are decided once submitted; if leave is declined then clear rationales must be given.

Of course, the NCOA recognises that there are times when the NCA needs to provide a national response to serious threats; thankfully however, this is the exception rather than the norm. The norm should soon be a clear and fair process... fingers crossed!

The Blue Knights Law Enforcement Motorcycle Club is an international club, with branches – or chapters, as they are referred to in the United States – all over the world.

In 1974 a few police officers in Bangor (USA) formed a local police bike club. One of their aims was to show that, unlike the criminal motorcycle clubs in the States which were giving motorcyclists a bad name, 99% of motorcyclists are actually law abiding 'good guys'. Little did they know that 40 years later the Blue Knights LE MC would have nearly 18,000 members and have chapters across the world.

The Club's headquarters are still in Bangor, Maine and the American origins of the Club continue to be borne out by the blue waistcoat that members can wear. The term 'chapter' is an American term referring to a branch of any club, from swimming to chess; it is not specific to bike clubs and was certainly not intended to compete with other well-known international bike clubs.

In 1991 the first chapter was established in the United Kingdom and there are now 28 chapters across England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales and the Channel Islands with about 800 members at present. There are also chapters in most European countries.

Membership is made up from serving and retired law enforcement personnel, including police officers, prison officers, customs officers and any

# GET ON YOUR BIKE

**Enjoy motorcycling? Enjoy exploring new places? Enjoy socialising with like-minded people? Enjoy raising money for worthy causes? If so, Leonie Tromans thinks the Blue Knights Law Enforcement Motorcycle Club might be the club for you. It's finally time to start thinking about some freedom....**

other services personnel with powers of arrest. So whether you're retired or still serving, you will always have a common bond with members and it's a great way to stay in touch.

The Club prides itself on being a fraternal organisation that promotes the feeling of family. Spouses, partners and their children often accompany our members on the various rides at

functions, rallies and events.

Chapters are as active as their members wish them to be, organising all the usual bikers' distractions – bike runs, BBQs, camping weekends and charity events – with about £3million donated in the last ten years. In the UK one of our main charities is Care of Police Survivors (COPS), and we support the

annual Survivors' Weekend at the National Arboretum in Staffordshire in July.

There is always a rally going on somewhere, if you want to get involved or take advantage of someone else's organisation and local knowledge. Some members organise their annual touring holidays to take in as many rallies as possible; South of France this week, the Black Forest next week, and squeeze in Belgium on the way home. The rally weekends are great social events with partying and ride outs led by local members, taking you to places the guidebooks can't reach.

It is difficult to state exactly what makes the Blue Knights so special, but perhaps the following

will help to explain the kind of feelings that flow when a bunch of motorcycle riding law enforcement personnel get together:

- We all enjoy the company of people who share not only the common bond of a career in law enforcement but also have a love of motorcycles and motorcycling.
- It's wonderful to be able to visit countries that you have never been to and be treated like family by people you have never met.
- Many retired Blue Knights continue the hard work they started while serving; raising money for various charities and taking part in Christmas toy runs and activities especially close to our hearts, helping children and vulnerable people.
- When travelling, local members can provide help, direction and sometimes even a place to stay; you are never far from a fellow member.

- We aim to provide for the mutual assistance, enjoyment, entertainment, physical, mental and social benefit of our members and the general public.
- We promote and advance the sport of motorcycling and the safety of motorcycling.

We are truly a family club. Among Blue Knight members there are no strangers, only friends you have not met.

Being a Blue Knight is all this and so much more. It would be great to be joined by new friends from within the NCA. Interested? Why not take a better look or get in touch: [www.blueknightsukic.org](http://www.blueknightsukic.org), or [www.blueknight.org](http://www.blueknight.org)



# NCOA proposes new **'bullseye zonal model'** for Geographical Allowances

The NCOA has always been clear that while the NCA has a footprint throughout the UK, the basis of pay for NCA officers should be **Equal Work = Equal Pay**; this has been the bedrock of all annual submissions to the NCA Remuneration Review Body (NCARRB) and our continuing engagement with the Agency on pay.

There is, however, clear evidence of higher living costs in some areas of the UK which cause comparative recruitment and retention pressures at some sites. Rather than addressing these pressures in regional pay variations, which cause internal competition, the NCOA has been clear that an additional allowance paid as a market supplement addresses the issue.

## Long out of date

The current NCA process of paying a single London Weighting Allowance (LWA) is long out of date. Not only has the level of allowance hardly increased since 2010, it has been left to develop organically rather than strategically as the National Crime Squad (from which the allowance was taken) morphed into the Serious Organised Crime Agency and then into the National Crime Agency.

The NCOA has now challenged both the independent NCARRB and the NCA to support the NCOA with its new 'bullseye zonal model' for the payment of Geographical Allowances.

The NCOA has produced an ambitious proposition which has been presented to the NCA Board, which we believe addresses both the current imbalances internally within the NCA, and when benchmarked against policing



comparators. The NCOA bullseye model also future proofs and adapts to likely NCA estate changes as they develop and mature.

Studies show that the single biggest element to the heightened cost of living for those in London and the South East is housing. With the rental market intrinsically linked to housing costs, the impact is tracked with housing costs, published quarterly by the Office of the National Statistics (ONS).

In February 2021 the ONS said that although the average house price in the UK is just over £269,000 the costs for those living in London and the South East are significantly more. These two areas top the scale at £496,000 and £341,000 respectively, and the difference with other regions is significant.

So, what will the NCOA proposal mean? An inner zone which is an area within 25 miles of Central

London will see NCA officers who work here receiving an allowance comparable to that paid to officers in the Metropolitan Police Service.

## Retention pressures

NCA officers in the middle and outer zones would receive a geographical allowance comparable to officers in police forces around London and the South East.

It's clear to all that eight years after it was formed, the NCA needs to do something different to address recruitment and retention pressures in London and the South East.

Only time will tell whether the NCA will be innovative enough support this bold NCOA proposal or continue to tinker with their existing outdated and ineffective model. The full NCOA proposals for Geographical Allowances can be found at [www.ncoa.org.uk](http://www.ncoa.org.uk).



Picture © Elizaveta Galtchkaia / Shutterstock

# Long COVID... the virus ‘like **Russian roulette**’ for the young and healthy

*Why the NCOA supports the principle of a government compensation scheme and wage protection for key workers*

As we wait to see how effective the Government plans are to take all of us out of lockdown 3, with hopefully a return to a more normal life, many experts consider that we will be still dealing with the impact of long COVID for many months and potentially years to come.

Thankfully, the health of the majority of NCOA members has not been severely affected by COVID. For most of our members who contracted the virus the impact was relatively short and mild. But just as NCOA members reflect the wider public, so there are a minority who have been left with persistent symptoms which range from annoying to debilitating.

## 205 different symptoms

‘Long COVID’ is the term loosely used to describe an array of symptoms experienced by people after their initial coronavirus infection, and include breathlessness, fatigue, loss of taste or smell and – in the most severe cases – organ damage. To date, 205 different symptoms have been associated with long COVID.

Leading immunologist at Imperial College London, Prof Danny Altmann, recently described the risks and damaging effects of long COVID means that catching the virus is like “playing Russian Roulette for the young and healthy”.

The Government has already announced that it will invest £1.85m into four studies looking at long COVID. The *British Medical Journal* reports that long COVID is

**“ By doing so, the UK would be following the example set by countries including Spain, France, Germany, Belgium and Denmark.**

thought to impact approximately 10% of those infected; although, as many people during the first outbreak were not tested and therefore did not have a confirmed diagnosis, the figure may be higher.

Recently, 65 MPs and peers signed a letter to the Prime Minister, asking for long COVID to be recognised as an occupational disease. If successful, key workers (which the NCOA says should include our members) would be offered protection and potentially receive compensation if they contracted COVID while working. By doing so, the UK would be following the example set by countries including Spain, France, Germany, Belgium and Denmark.

While the Government considers its position on whether it supports a comprehensive compensation scheme for those key workers developing long COVID, the NCOA has been clear with the Agency that it will not support any reduction in wages for those who have been absent for a prolonged period as a result of COVID-related illness.

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