

# Under Cover

**NCOA:** Protecting those who protect the public

Issue 16 / Spring 2022

# UKRAINE



# APPEAL



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**Under Cover** is the official magazine of the National Crime Officers Association (NCOA), a trade union formed to focus on the needs of members of the National Crime Agency (NCA). Views expressed in this magazine are those of officers, committee members or representatives unless otherwise stated.

Contributions may be sent in confidence to the Editor at **Under Cover Magazine**, 1 Dundonald Avenue, Stockton Heath, Warrington, WA4 6JT

The Editor reserves the right to amend or edit all material as necessary, and where possible, with the consent of the contributor. **Under Cover Magazine** would like to thank everyone involved in producing this magazine, especially advertisers and those kind enough to make a contribution.

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## Huge achievements in terrible times

In eight years of **Under Cover** magazine, I have never had to write about a foreign war, but that is exactly what features in this edition. The terrible plight of the Ukrainian people at the hands of a Russian invasion has touched the hearts of everyone around the world.

While the desperate struggle to fight for their country continues, nearly 2,000 miles away, **Under Cover** highlights the efforts to get supplies where they are needed. NCOA members, through their union, have donated over £5,000 to the humanitarian aid campaign.

It is nearly three years since the tragic death of PC Andrew Harper, and we pay tribute to the relentless campaigning of his widow Lissie to bring about Harper's Law. Lissie tells **Under Cover** why the mandatory life sentencing for those who murder emergency service workers will mean that Andrew's death was not in vain.

Green issues are at the heart of the NCOA when delivering our core business. Sadly, we report how the NCA is woefully slow in recognising its responsibilities to



address the Government's 'best practice' guidance to minimise the environmental impact concerning all matters of operation and transport.

NEC member Pete Almond opens up about life with autism and how he manages his role in the Agency with the condition. Pete highlights the

importance of early diagnosis and the support mechanism available through the NCOA Member Assistance Programme.

Once again, I am touched by our members who, away from work, are going to extraordinary lengths to raise awareness of some little-known cancers that have affected those close to them. Well done to all who supported both Jayne and Richard in their respective fundraising.

If you wish to have your say about this or any future edition, you can do so by contacting the Editor at [membership@ncoa.org.uk](mailto:membership@ncoa.org.uk)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sim Bashford'.

Simon Bashford

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## Sad farewell to keen Barnsley fan Bob Fox

**Under Cover** regrets to announce the passing of NCOA member Robert (Bob) Fox.

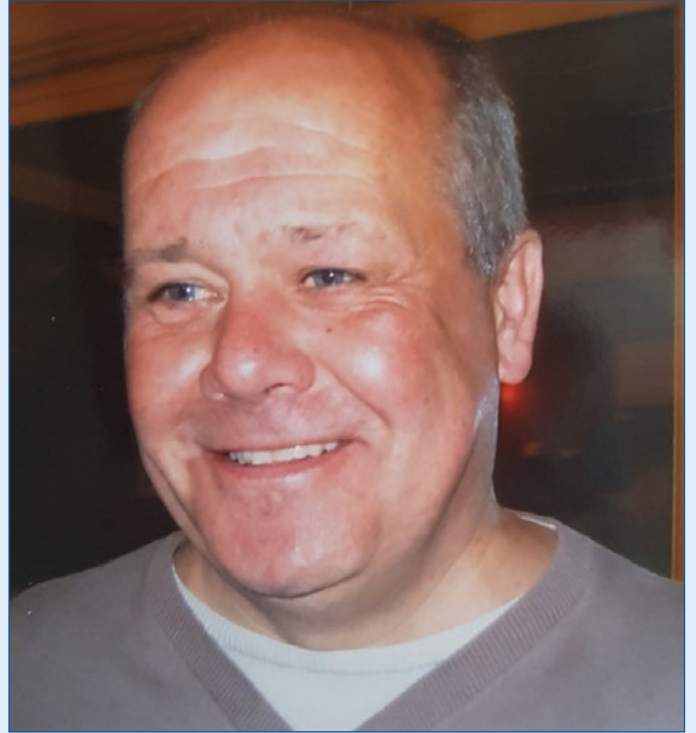
Robert joined the force in Barnsley, South Yorkshire when he was 21 years old, and went on to serve as a detective in CID and the Drug Squad.

Robert then joined the Regional Crime Squad which later became the National Crime Squad and the Serious Organised Crime Agency. The last years of his career were spent working in the training department specialising in covert surveillance.

Robert, a keen Barnsley FC supporter, was hard working, highly regarded and respected by both his colleagues and friends.

Robert passed away on 17 November last year leaving behind his wife Julie, his two sons Christopher and Joshua, mum Janet, brothers Mark and David, and sister-in-law Nicola.

Julie said: "He was a proud loving man, a good husband and father, who was taken too soon."



## Kim Haygarth: A unique and special person

We are sad to announce the passing of one of our members, Kim Haygarth.

Kim tragically lost her life to brain cancer at the age of 47. She joined the NCA IOTP pathway in 2014, and worked at the NBTC, Manchester before moving on to join the Probation Service some years later.

Kim was extremely passionate about the arts, especially literature and poetry, and took great pride in sharing this passion with the offenders she worked with in the Probation Service.

The work she did, such as setting up reading workshops, made a real difference to people's lives.

Kim was an incredibly kind, caring and generous person,

who had time for everyone, and touched the lives of all she came into contact.

Despite the difficulties that came with her diagnosis, she kept thinking of others and making a difference. In March 2021, Kim, together with her friend Maria, walked 300,000 steps, raising £3,500 for Maggie's Centre, which provides support to those affected by cancer.

NEC member Faye Lowe remembers: "Kim was a unique and special person. She always had time for everyone around her and she will be missed by so many. Kim leaves behind her dad Malcolm and her partner Shaun. Our condolences go to her family."

# Let the Jubilee celebrations begin!

When NCOA General Secretary Simon Boon wrote to the Home Secretary in January last year, it was done so with a heartfelt desire to enable all NCA officers to proudly stand side by side with military and emergency services personnel who had been deemed eligible to receive the Platinum Jubilee medal.

"Ten years ago, at the time of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, there was great disappointment that the Agency (at that time) felt disinclined to secure service medals for its staff," explained Simon.

"This had been in the back of my mind for some time, particularly as we headed closer towards this year's scheduled Platinum Jubilee celebrations. Our members provide a critical response to the serious organised crime threats targeted at the people of the UK and beyond. It is therefore only right that they are recognised for the work they deliver 24/7, often alongside and with the support of policing peers.



"While I cannot claim that jubilee medals issued for the first time – and to all eligible NCA staff – is solely down to the NCOA, I am confident and proud that at the very least, your profile was raised at precisely the right time, to the right person, and importantly before irreversible

decisions had been made which may have once again delivered a disappointing outcome.

"Congratulations to those of you who are to receive this important recognition of your service to the Queen and public you protect – we salute you."

## Time to say Ta-Ta to Tatts

Following NCOA founding member Dave Tattam's decision to retire from law enforcement in 2015, he was keen to 'keep his hand in' by continuing to act as a voluntary Trustee of the NCOA Insurance Benefit Trust (IBT).

The Trustee group is made up of current and former SOCA/NCA professionals appointed to oversee and manage your Group Insurance Scheme, which provides a raft of benefits and securities in times of ill health and bereavement (along with all the other benefits listed on p16).

While Dave loved taking an active role in the management of the Trust, having reached the ripe old age of 17½ (he's a leap year baby so that's 70 in real time!) he decided enough was enough and announced he



would be stepping down to focus on family life and "a proper retirement".

A number of the Trustees met in London to express our thanks to Dave – who says he will "always be at the end of a phone if you ever need

me" – in recognition of the many hours he has voluntarily committed to delivering the fantastic service that is the NCOA Insurance Benefit Trust. Ta-Ta Tatts – we thank you for your service.





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# Have you got what it takes?

As an NCA officer, you are already committed to protecting the public; but have you ever given a thought to who it is that protects you and the other 3,200+ NCOA members?

The NCOA represents the vast majority of all NCA staff across all grades and our cadre of over 50 reps work hard on your behalf to provide support, advice and specialised representation.

The role can be demanding, that's for sure, but it can also be extremely rewarding. As an NCOA rep you will receive first-class training in all matters of employment law, health and safety, grievance, discipline, and employment tribunals. Additional professional qualifications are also funded for those showing willingness and aptitude to advance their skills and knowledge.

## Exceptional work

Each year, NCOA reps are nominated by members to be considered for receipt of an award for exceptional work. In 2021, James Bashford (pictured right) at Spring Gardens was nominated twice by separate individuals to be an award recipient.

His nominees both cited the emotional care and support provided, alongside his legal and technical knowledge of both internal policies and external employment law.

If you think that you have similar qualities to help provide the invaluable support to your colleagues, then please contact Membership ([membership@ncoa.org.uk](mailto:membership@ncoa.org.uk)) or speak with any of those listed within this magazine.



## Claimant uses his loaf in dismissal appeal

In determining a 'wrongful dismissal' complaint, where the claimant denies the alleged conduct, is a tribunal entitled to conclude that it [tribunal] could make no positive finding as to the conduct, without having heard directly from witnesses who claimed to have witnessed the alleged conduct?

No, held the Employment Appeals Tribunal (EAT) in the recent case of *Hovis Ltd v Louton*. The Claimant (Louton) was dismissed for gross misconduct after having been seen

smoking while driving a 'works' van. The tribunal found the dismissal to be fair having heard from the decision maker as to the evidence taken into account.

However, the EAT upheld the wrongful dismissal case having concluded that, having heard evidence from the Claimant, and in the absence *in person* from the witnesses as to Louton's smoking – notwithstanding that the tribunal had their hearsay statements and other evidence to support the

Respondent's (*Hovis Ltd*) case – the tribunal could not make a finding of fact the Claimant was smoking.

The EAT held that the tribunal should have sought to evaluate the hearsay evidence of the statements that had been gathered from the witnesses and considered as part of the internal disciplinary process. There was no rule that oral evidence, given and tested at trial, must always 'trump' opposing documentary or hearsay evidence.



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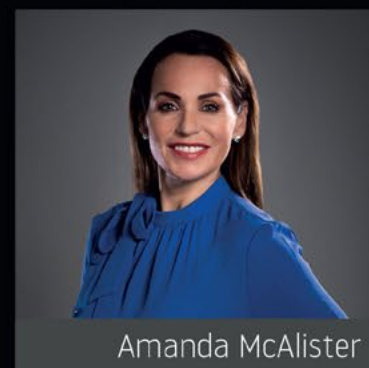
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# Is Green the first colour that comes to mind?

Some members might think that nothing is more important than the mission to combat serious and organised crime. Others might say that it is equal opportunities, poverty, standard of living or diversity that should be prioritised.

But what about planet earth, our environment, our home? Given that environmental issues are taking on ever bigger importance and relevance in everyone's lives, it is disappointing to see that the Agency is not giving these topics the importance they deserve.

The Government instructs all its organisations to take responsibility and to identify measures to minimise the environmental impact of their operations. It goes further by spelling out what 'Best Practice' looks like, including compliance with all relevant legislation, minimising the environmental impact of all office and transport activities, and continual review and reporting their improvements in sustainability performance. Yet the evidence that the Agency is giving green issues equal importance is not there.

There are so many things that we can do as individuals, as departments, as managers and as the Agency which are very simple and take little time, but can have a substantial impact.

You only need to spend a little time walking around any of the NCA sites to see the obvious things

which could be changed. Canteens are full of single use plastics, computer monitors are not routinely shut down and lights are left on when not required. These are just a couple of examples and the most obvious ones which could easily be changed.

The NCA doesn't currently have dedicated charging points for electric vehicles at a time when their police service partners are running away with their green and electric revolution. While many force vehicles are either hybrid or full electric (including the surveillance fleet), the NCA is left a long way behind.

One way to measure how the NCA is doing is to look at quantitative

data. But the Agency is reluctant to provide relevant and current information routinely. If this information was more up to date and accessible, then it would be easy for everyone to have an idea of how well the NCA is doing, which would foster a working environment where we are all co-operating to make a sustainable and efficient organisation.

At the time of writing the NCA sustainability policy has not been updated for three and a half years. There are no operating procedures and the policy itself only comprises six pages.

For those who remember Venn diagrams from school, planet earth is the box (or circle) which encompasses everything else that we do, therefore it must be considered whenever possible, especially when making slow time or long-term decisions.

Everyone makes decisions, so everyone can make a difference.

*Editor's Note: The NCOA has raised the issue of an environmentally friendly trade union at the last two Annual Delegates Conferences. In previous editions of Under Cover, we have reported that we specifically choose suppliers, publishers and printers only with proven green credentials. The matter has been formally raised with the NCA and will be highlighted again later this year.*







# Harper's Law is Andrew's live my life how he would

Following our October 2020 article at the start of the long road ahead, **Under Cover** talks to Lissie Harper to see what the new law really means and how she intends to adapt once the legislation she has secured is finally in place.

## Can you tell us more about Harper's Law?

Harper's Law will see anyone found guilty of killing an emergency services worker jailed for life. This means that they will receive a life sentence... an adequate proportion of time served in prison. This law will apply to the killing of all emergency services victims such as police officers, fire fighters, nurses, doctors, paramedics and prison officers.

## Why do you think it's important?

It's important because currently those who commit these heinous crimes receive pitiful sentences and will therefore find themselves on the street a mere few years after robbing someone of their life.

There are no deterrents in our country for taking the lives of people who work tirelessly to protect the public. This sends a worrying message to those who break the law. This needed to change.

If you take someone's life, surely you do not deserve to walk our streets freely. Our protectors willingly put themselves in the line of fire every day to keep us all safe; they do their duty with little pay, little thanks and barely any protection. The least we can do is to give them some justice if the worst should happen.



### Do you still feel that you were robbed of justice?

During my husband's court cases I was so sure that the justice system would succeed in providing exactly that – justice. However, this was ultimately not the case. Myself and hundreds of thousands of others around the country were mortified at the verdicts and sentences imposed on three men who had callously stolen the life of a heroic police officer, another human being just doing his job. They showed no remorse or feeling during these trials whatsoever.

**You recently took part in an ITV documentary called 'The Killing of PC Harper – A widow's fight for justice'. Your Mum mentions in the documentary that she hopes the law being passed will bring you some sort of closure. Do you think it will, and how do you see yourself moving forward?**

protectors who will heartbreakingly lose their lives in the line of duty, and for their families who await the decisions in a courtroom as I did.

I do feel that the success of getting this new law through will hopefully allow me to begin to move forward. It has been an arduous road and taken all that I have over the past two years. I hope that now I might begin to live a new version of a normal life again, away from the public eye.

### How did you find the process of bringing about this change in the law?

I found it to be incredibly exhausting and complicated. Myself and my team have put in a lot of time.

We have always remained driven and determined to keep going until we achieved our goal of Harper's Law. In our minds it was only a matter of time.

such a young officer. He had such a promising career ahead of him that was taken away, but he will always be remembered as kind and supportive to his colleagues.

To me though, Andrew was much more than a police officer. He was funny and selfless with a love for life not many people possess. He was always honest, hardworking and a loving husband. He was my best friend; I will treasure every memory I have of the time we had together.

### What does the future hold for you?

I feel that I have come a long way in the last two and a half years. I don't think I will ever fully come to terms with Andrew's death, such an unexpected and shocking change to my life and the future we had planned.

But I am so grateful for the support I have received from the public – partly with Harper's Law but also with my grief in general. I have made many, many incredible friends during this journey to add to the support group that already carried me through the hardest times.

Who knows what the future holds for me? But I plan to be grateful for every moment, take myself away from the media spotlight and live how Andrew would want me to – to be happy and listen to my heart, to do things that I feel are right. My moral compass – like Andrew's – will always remain honourable.

*Back in 2020 Lissie told us: "Let's get this changed. This would be a fitting legacy for Andrew." While Lissie was absolutely right, the legacy she has secured is down to single-minded determination and tenacity at a time of agonising personal grief. We wish her well in the future beyond the glare of publicity and extend our personal thanks for the success of her campaign, which delivers true justice in response to the most horrific offences against those who willingly protect and serve the public.*

# legacy: now I can want me to

I think that suffering a trauma like I have, it is impossible to fully heal, to mend the cracks of a broken heart entirely. Grief stays with us forever, we only learn to cope with it better, learning a new version of normal and accepting that the future that you thought you would have is gone.

This law will sadly never change the outcome of my husband's death, nor will it change the outcome of the trial and the sentences imposed on his killers. But the creation of Harper's Law was never to bring me comfort or closure.

This campaign I embarked on was always for those who find themselves in a similar position in the future. To offer justice to the



### Harper's Law will be Andrew's legacy, but how would you ultimately want Andrew, the man, to be remembered?

Andrew was many things. In his job he was brave, reliable, conscientious and an amazing team player. He gained so much respect even as

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# Will the Hybrid Working Pilot deliver smarter working?

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, National Officer Steve Bond explains why we should think beyond physical constraints of the workplace

During the early stages of the pandemic, responses to our member survey highlighted that the Agency had previously been reluctant to allow officers to work from home. But the Agency functioned with high output despite 'work from home' guidance restrictions brought in by the Government, which saw almost three quarters of the Agency deployed securely at home.

We have used this information to formally ask that the NCA engages with us to explore a more consistent and flexible approach, along with practical solutions that would benefit staff and employer

The NCA introduced the Return-to-Work Pilot Scheme in July 2021, but the notion of 'smarter working' as a concept has a longstanding history within the Civil Service. From the launch of the Government's 'The Way We Work' initiative in response to Civil Service Reform in 2012, through to the present day, the Smarter Working Programme has been owned by the Government Property Agency (GPA) and remains accountable through the Government Estates Strategy.

## What is smarter working?

The Government describes smarter working as a process that: "Empowers us all to make the right decisions where, when and how we work, optimising the use of workplaces and technology and realising savings for the taxpayer. It improves productivity through a focus on outputs and enables a better work life balance for all."

The NCA has recognised that this is no longer about a response to Covid lockdowns, and has renamed the pilot 'Hybrid Working', feeling this to be more accurate. It acknowledges that officers continued to work throughout the pandemic, with many attending NCA workplaces. The Agency has also extended the pilot until at least July 2022, thereby encompassing a post-pandemic period.

Many public sector workers, including those in the NCA, had to react quickly when the first lockdown came in March 2020. Suitably authorised Alternative Working

Arrangements and home working have always been an option for some NCA officers, but until remote working was enforced as part of the COVID-19 response, only a minority had opted for either.

The pandemic certainly accelerated the adoption of some smarter working practices across the wider public sector. The likely benefits are still to be fully understood with Dom Brankin, Workplace Services Director at the GPA acknowledging: "COVID-19 and enforced working from home have driven a change in behaviours but not a change in thinking.

## Lesson learned

"We've still got work to do in the leadership and culture space, encouraging people to think beyond the physical constraints of a workplace, recognising the value of working differently and a putting higher premium on managing by outcomes, rather than by presence."

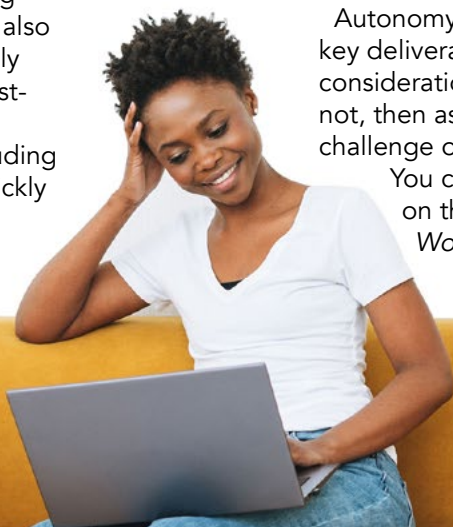
Against this backdrop the 'evaluation framework' to be adopted by the Agency, based on performance and security, cost, inclusion, engagement wellbeing, estates, and infrastructure, could be too limiting. As a result the NCOA is challenging the Agency to use both a holistic and data-rich approach to any evaluation so that any 'lessons learned' exercise includes:

- what has been working well?
- what has presented a significant challenge?
- what learning opportunities will be taken forward?

As the NCOA has made clear, the data collected during the pilot must be statistically significant and not merely anecdotal. If the pilot is deemed a success, measurement of increased productivity is appropriate, whereas a reaction to austerity pressures is not.

Autonomy and choice for NCOA members must be the key deliverables if the Agency is to expect any positive consideration of changes to the terms and conditions. If not, then as a strong and responsible Trade Union we will challenge on behalf of members.

You can read more of the initial findings of GPA on the lessons learnt of COVID-19 in *Smarter Working – learning lessons from COVID-19*.





# We can **all** do **something**

## The National Crime Officers' Association Ukraine Humanitarian Fundraising Appeal

The evolving situation in Ukraine is well documented, and there is little more we can say other than how shocking and scary it is, even though watching from the comfort of our own homes is very far removed from those living through it first-hand.

As well as the 3.6 million people (and rising) who have fled the war, it is believed that as many as 6.5 million Ukrainians are displaced within the war-torn country itself.

Witnessing the destruction in cities such as Mariupol, it is difficult to comprehend how the city can rebuild itself, or where its former residents are expected to live once the war comes to an end. We applaud the many who have offered up their homes to displaced families within the UK but must admit to

bewilderment at why our members need to declare a business interest with the Agency if choosing to undertake this tremendous act of support at a time of crisis.

hope that the Agency will reconsider the necessity to create unnecessary hurdles or bureaucracy for anyone considering providing such help at this time.

**“ We recognise the impact on Ukraine will now last for generations. At this time though, we would ask that you consider giving something – no matter how small.**

According to the Government, the monthly £350 payments for those able to act as hosts are a tax free “Thank You” in recognition of “the enormous goodwill and generosity of the British public and our proud history of supporting the vulnerable in their hour of greatest need”. We

While I’m sure we all want to get involved in one way or another, many will simply not have the room or ability to host families for the next six months. At an organisational level here at the NCOA we have decided that the best way for us to show our support is to donate money directly



by linking up with the Disaster Emergency Committee (DEC) Appeal. The DEC links a number of key charities who are currently working together at the affected borders and in direct support of those fleeing the military invasion.

The DEC has stated: "Intense conflict in Ukraine is threatening the lives and livelihoods of civilians across the country, causing hundreds of thousands to flee. Homes have been destroyed or are unsafe to live in. Essential services have been hit. Families have been separated. People have been injured. Lives have been lost.

### Immediate needs

"DEC charities and their local partners are in Ukraine and across the border in the neighbouring countries. They are working to meet the immediate needs of all people fleeing with food, water, medical assistance, protection, and trauma care. £30 could provide essential hygiene supplies for three people for one month; £50 could provide blankets for four families to keep them warm; £100 could provide emergency food for two families for a month."

Since opening our fundraising appeal, with the efforts of our members we have already raised over £5,000 to help those who really do need support. If you would like to join us at the NCOA by showing that you really do care, please donate now – there is no need to identify yourself and all donations can be made anonymously if that's what you would prefer. You can donate at [www.justgiving.com/fundraising/nationalcrimeofficersassociation](http://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/nationalcrimeofficersassociation).

We hope for the sake of humanity that the war ends soon, and we recognise the impact on Ukraine will now last for generations. At this time though, we would ask that you consider giving something – no matter how small.



## Our hopes are with **Dynamo Lviv**

In the summer of 2019, NCOA National Officer Steve Bond escorted Worthing Water Polo men's team when they visited Lviv in Ukraine to play in an international water polo tournament. The Ukrainian people – and especially one-time Worthing member and Steve's friend Markiyan Polovki and his family – were wonderful hosts, and the Worthing team and supporters enjoyed a terrific time in Lviv.

It is barely believable that two years on, the local Water Polo team Dynamo Lviv have joined the volunteer Ukrainian military. Rather than training and socialising together, they are now armed and defending their country against Russian troops.

The players at Worthing Water Polo are in contact with their friends in Lviv and at Under Cover, and we know that all NCOA members will be hoping and praying for an end to the war.





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Sick Pay Benefit (H.O. Condition 5 of Service)	
Half Pay up to 26 weeks	20% Scale Pay
No Pay up to 26 weeks	50% Scale Pay
Family Travel Policy Worldwide	
Mobile Phone Insurance	Member & Partner
Dental Emergency and Injury	Member & Partner
Home Emergency	Included

#### CALENDAR MONTHLY SUBSCRIPTION

**£31.95**

### Spouse or Cohabiting Partner to age 65 of Member

Life Insurance	£50,000
Terminal Prognosis Advance on Life Insurance	20% of sum insured
Critical Illness	£7,500

#### CALENDAR MONTHLY SUBSCRIPTION

**£10.95**



# ‘Andy’s going to Poland!’

NCOA Chair Nick Edwards’ efforts to help the people of Ukraine

“Andy’s going to Poland,” said my partner, while we sat watching reports of the awful events in Ukraine as the war moved into its second week.

Andy, my partner’s brother-in-law – a serving police officer – was arranging to travel to the Ukrainian border with retired colleagues Jason and Tim, to deliver medical supplies requested by Ukrainian hospitals. They were also calling on friends and family to donate humanitarian aid which they would drop off at refugee centres along the Ukrainian border in Poland and Slovakia.

I thought about how I might have felt in this situation; not knowing whether my house was intact or reduced to rubble, not knowing when or indeed if I would ever see my country and loved ones again.

## Staggering generosity

I realised at how humdrum activities like doing the weekly shop would be so far from their minds – one of the many luxuries of modern life now denied to them, through no fault of their own. I bought some supplies in addition to my weekly shop – stuff that the Ukrainian refugees needed such as nappies, toiletries, sanitary products, toothbrushes and toothpaste, hand sanitiser – and dropped it to Andy.

In the days that followed, I couldn’t shake the feeling that I needed to do more. I posted on local social media groups and rallying my colleagues to donate whatever they could. The generosity that followed was utterly staggering, and we were soon overwhelmed with donations.

But people’s generosity brought with it complications, highlighting just how difficult it is to transport



a wide variety of items across borders. Donations of edible items, medications and other things like bedding meant that different paperwork had to be completed and filed. All the while, stories filtered through about aid shipments for Ukraine being turned back at the border into France.

I reached out to other NCOA members with expertise in such matters, to ensure that the correct paperwork was completed to ensure a successful crossing. By happy coincidence, when the day finally came for Andy and his friends to travel, restrictions at the border had been changed to allow exactly these kind of aid shipments to pass through more easily.

After driving across Germany, Poland and Slovakia, Andy reached the Ukrainian border to be met not only by huge numbers of refugees who had recently escaped the war in Ukraine, but also, hearteningly,

a long line of vehicles waiting to deliver aid to them.

The same day, Nick and Diana successfully crossed into Europe with their own shipment of supplies, piled high and strapped down on a trailer. After spending €200 for a tank of petrol, they reached their destination in eastern Poland on 13 March, distributing the supplies to local humanitarian groups helping the millions of Ukrainian refugees already in Poland, and staying there to do what they could to help, before returning to the UK a few days later, having spent the best part of £2,000 of their own money to get there and back.

## Overcoming obstacles

While I’m pleased to have played my own small part in this saga, I am in awe of the heroic efforts of Andy, Tim, Jason, Nick and Diana, who overcame a number of obstacles to doggedly ensure that this vital aid gets to those who need it most. But if I’ve learned anything from all this, it’s that it really isn’t as simple as just adding a few extra items to your weekly grocery shop!

It’s also not lost on me that a couple of vehicles’ worth of supplies will put barely a dent in the aid needed for the millions of Ukrainians forced to flee their homes in the wake of this war. That’s why the NCOA has partnered with the Disasters Emergency Committee to launch a humanitarian aid appeal to support the people of Ukraine in their time of need.

If you haven’t already done so, and would like to show support, please do give what you can at [www.justgiving.com/nationalcrimeofficersassociation](http://www.justgiving.com/nationalcrimeofficersassociation).

# We've got you covered!

**Under Cover** looks at how the NCOA has shaped services available to you across the UK and Northern Ireland.

Delivering for the NCA is what you do best, and here at the NCOA we have played our part in helping you to keep physically and mentally fit by securing access to complimentary support systems beyond the NCA, which

your family can often use too. Some of these services are better known than others, and despite what you might think there really is something for everyone, no matter where you live.



## The Ben Fund

Formerly The North West Police Benevolent Fund, The Ben Fund opened its doors to the NCOA way back at our inception in 2013, and is an independent charity dedicated to supporting and caring for the police and NCA officers from recruitment into retirement.

From physiotherapy, holistic therapy and counselling through to respite support and financial hardship assistance, The Ben Fund provides a plethora of services from its state-of-the-art centre in the North West. While the NCOA handed over its Trustee position several years ago to strengthen a direct bond with the NCA, The Ben Fund has continued to be great friends of the NCOA, and we are proud of our history with them.

Membership requires a monthly subscription of £7.40 (by NCA Payroll deduction); to find out more, head to [www.thebenfund.co.uk](http://www.thebenfund.co.uk).



## Flint House

Following a meeting between the NCOA and Police Rehabilitation Centre Trustees in 2019, Flint House opened its doors to NCOA members and the wider NCA membership on payment of a modest monthly donation.

This landmark moment saw NCA officers included within the wider policing family by a provider with 130 years of experience in delivering truly exceptional rehabilitation care from their Berkshire country house setting.

The move was widely welcomed by the then DG Lynne Owens and once again, the NCOA stepped back to enable the two organisations to forge and strengthen a direct bond.

While the pandemic has provided an unhelpful ingredient which hindered some aspects of service, Flint House is now back doing what it does best – helping those who protect the public. The incredible facilities at Flint House cannot be over-estimated, and the intense, clinician-led residential rehabilitation they provide is focused on providing you with a safe and structured route back to improved health and fitness.

There's more info at the Flint House website ([www.flinthouse.co.uk](http://www.flinthouse.co.uk)), and a direct debit of just £7.37 will secure your immediate membership (even with an existing injury).

If you weren't aware, in recognition of the quality of the specialist services provided by both The Ben Fund and Flint House, you can get back to fitness with the full support of the Agency by using special leave as opposed to annual leave. What could be better!

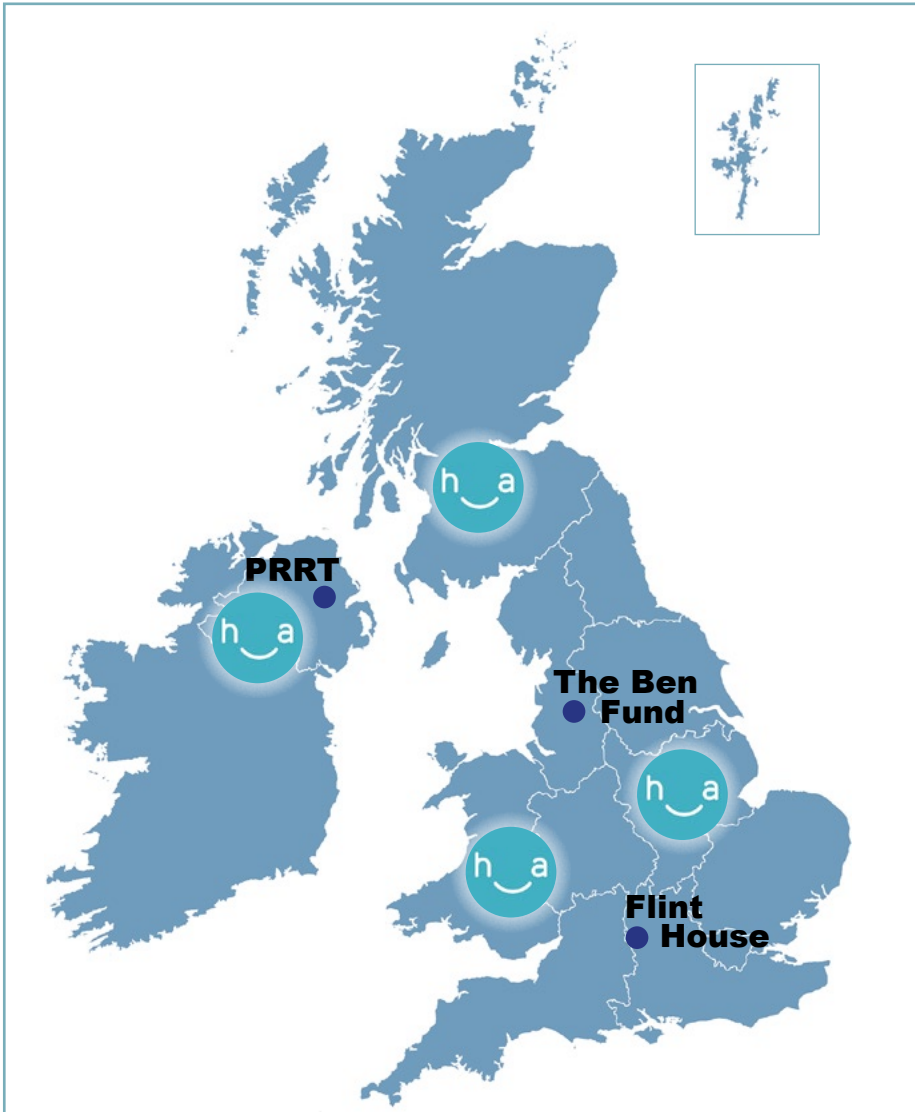


## Police Rehabilitation and Retraining Trust

The law enforcement environment in Northern Ireland has its own unique challenges, and for us that has meant our own long journey in our attempts to secure access to the Police Rehabilitation and Retraining Trust (PRRT). Despite having secured agreement in principle from the then Justice Minister in 2015, we have simply been unable to get the Agency to sign up to the PRRT on behalf of our NI Staff.

It is very clear to us that the SOC operating environment and very





Picture © N.Vector Design / Shutterstock

culture of staff working in requires something which may sit outside the Agency's current provisions. It's not that we believe any department or group are any more worthy than anyone else but here we have a clear case which demonstrates one cap does not fit all and on occasions, a group needs bespoke considerations – which I hope you would all agree.

We haven't given up yet and with our most recent engagement with the Agency only last week – we hope there will be a definitive position reached – one way or the other by the end of the Summer (2022!)

health assured

### Health Assured

The PRRT issued highlighted how as a trade union, even with the best intentions, we cannot always secure access to external services (no matter how good they are) without the support and proactive momentum of your employer.

Despite the existence of its own employer assistance programme (which we have no criticism of), we were aware that many officers felt unable to draw on those resources fearing Agency oversight and control. They also

felt it to be restrictive in what they could and couldn't say, even within a controlled, secure, and confidential environment.

In light of this, in March 2021 the NCOA joined up with leading employer assistance company Health Assured to secure 24/7 mental health and wellbeing support for members and their immediate family – on or off duty. Unlike other NCOA services which may be limited geographically, Health Assured are able to support you wherever you live in the UK and Northern Ireland.

They are entirely independent of your employer and are able to help you in all aspects of your home and work life without any oversight by the Agency. It goes without saying that what you tell them remains entirely confidential.

Importantly, as an NCOA member this service is free and included as part of our Standard Membership provisions. It includes the My Healthy Advantage app and online portal with its comprehensive library of resources; a 24-hour helpline where you can share a problem with someone who listens to you with care before getting actionable advice; telephone counselling to allow you to work through your problems with a qualified therapist; and confidential, face-to-face counselling sessions with a qualified professional at a setting near you.

The online health and wellbeing portal can be found at <https://healthassured.co.uk/> Username is: wellbeing, password: GrowWallLake1. Alternatively, you can download the My Healthy Advantage smartphone app from the Google Play Store and Apple App Store. Once downloaded, the NCOA member password code to register is MHA173846.

**We think this portfolio of support is impressive, but if you think we're missing something, just let us know and we'll see what we can do; after all, protecting those who protect the public is our business.**

# Autism diagnosis highlights

NCOA Rep Pete Almond tells Under Cover how he manages his NCA career with Autism

I am an Investigator within the NCA who happens to be autistic. Autism affects approximately 1.76% of the UK population and is believed that only around 10% of these have received a formal diagnosis.

Being autistic doesn't mean that you have an illness or disease; it means your brain works in a different way from other people. Autism is not a medical condition with treatments or a cure. Autistic people are born that way and remain with the condition for life.

Autistic traits demonstrated by a person are as unique as the individual. Autism can make it more difficult for them to communicate or interact with others, make it harder to understand how other people think or feel, or make them become overwhelmed, stressed, or uncomfortable by bright lights, sounds, smells, or touch.

Autism can cause a person to get anxious or upset about unfamiliar situations and social events, or to take longer to understand information and show repetitive behaviours.

Autism doesn't just impact those who have the condition but also those who provide care for them. I have recently looked back and realised what a challenge I was to care for. I now regularly care for my godson who has Down's Syndrome with autism, so I know what a challenge it can be!

## Natural abilities

I joined Merseyside Police in 2006, where my talents began to shine. I felt like I was born to be a police officer; I have a natural ability to memorise legislation, love dealing with the public and enforcing rules.



A few years later, I went on to study an undergraduate degree in Computer Sciences, in which I achieved a First Class, followed by a master's degree in Computer Forensics in which I gained a Distinction.

**I disclosed my condition to my line manager at the time of diagnosis and was stunned by the level of support I received, for which I am extremely grateful.**

Despite these accomplishments, I've always felt as though something was different about me. Throughout my entire life, I always felt like the 'weird or quirky' one within any situation. It was as if my behaviours were misaligned.

I've always known I lacked any impulse control, had no filter when stressed or tired, loved routine, stressed out easily, enjoyed repetition and had specific obsessions. I felt as though everyone else got an instruction booklet with the social cues and a guide to life, but I didn't.

I came to the NCA in 2014, and took the National Investigators Exam (NIE) and Specific Powers Exam (SPE) shortly after, achieving 'exceptional' in both. I have since completed the IPP pathway and am due to finish the PIP2 over the coming weeks.

Despite these achievements, I realised I was struggling in the workplace. I always knew that I could easily become emotionally overwhelmed, and my energy levels would easily get drained by attempting to act 'normal'. I've always been the person who would smile, laugh, and make jokes at the most inappropriate times, but thought this was just my personality.

Since being elected to the NCOA's NEC I have been afforded the opportunity of undertaking a host of neurodiversity training courses.

From this I learnt that autism really is a spectrum, ranging from low to high functioning, and I am not alone... fellow sufferers include the likes of Stephen Spielberg, Dan Ackroyd, Anthony Hopkins, and Daryl Hannah ... even Albert Einstein was a fellow sufferer.

I disclosed my condition to my line manager at the time of diagnosis and was stunned by the level of support I received, for which I am extremely grateful. At no point since opening up to friends and colleagues have I received any negative reactions.

As a result of a referral through my GP, I undertook an autism



# the positives for policing

assessment in 2021 with the NHS, resulting in me being diagnosed as having high-functioning autism, which would have previously been known as Asperger's Syndrome.

## Wave of relief

I will never forget the wave of relief that I experienced when I received my diagnosis. I finally felt as though I had an explanation for me being 'different' from everyone else. While I wouldn't ever want to use it as an excuse, I finally had an explanation for my behavioural nuances and intricacies.

Thankfully, I was able to rely on support of the NCOA's member assistance programme, HEALTH

ASSURED, who provided me with tailored counselling which allowed me to see the positives of my condition.

I could appreciate myself for who I am and thanks to them I now see this diagnosis for what it is – a massive positive! I have now become less judgemental against myself and am no longer hypercritical about my own failings when I'm having a bad day. The diagnosis process may seem daunting but, in my experience, it is positively life changing, both personally and professionally.

If you are in a situation like mine, I would strongly encourage you to avail yourself of the support that is provided by occupational health,



your GP and the NCOA. As an elected representative of your Trade Union, I am also always available to provide guidance and assistance.

*You can contact Pete confidentially at [palmond@ncoa.org.uk](mailto:palmond@ncoa.org.uk) or on 07972 095823*

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# Are your **vetting** details **up to date**?

Recent events highlight why a robust vetting process is so important

The NCOA has always supported the Agency's approach to vetting and the important protection elements it brings. Vetting helps the NCA and our members identify, manage and mitigate risks for roles where national security concerns are a consideration.

Vetting establishes trust between employers and employees, sometimes through confidential conversations, and is the start of an ongoing dialogue about managing risks which lasts for as long as a person holds their security clearance.

The NCA Vetting department is part of Integrated Protective Security (IPS) and is responsible for issuing security clearance for anyone requiring access to the Agency's estate, information or IT systems. Within the department there are teams dedicated to managing the personnel security of NCA officers, contractors and a security aftercare team, who provide support to those people awarded an enhanced NCA SC or DV clearances.

Vetting is delivered by UK Security Vetting (UKSV), part of the Cabinet Office Government Security Group. There are three levels of National Security Vetting (NSV) clearance:

- Counter-Terrorist Check (CTC)
- Security Check (SC)
- Developed Vetting (DV)

NCA Standards checks are specific to the NCA Code and the risk profile of the Agency. They are designed to identify links to serious and organised crime and NCA operational themes, allowing us to manage personnel security risks.

These checks are carried out on a wider range of information and nominals than NSV clearance and create a suitable personnel security culture to enable the NCA to protect the public.

## Bad publicity

Recent months have seen the media and public officials focus on vetting within law enforcement; in particular, the tragic murder of Sarah Everard by Wayne Couzens saw MPs call for improved vetting and training to restore public trust.

The resignation of Dame Cressida Dick notably came at a time when her force was criticised by the Mayor of London, after he declared that vetting had not prevented the continued existence of racism, sexism, homophobia, bullying, discrimination and misogyny.

Vetting is not only a vital element of pre-employment checks; as circumstances change throughout our lives, the vetting process should be aligned with those changes. It's human nature to sometimes be reluctant to

declare to a third party when something has changed, but it's central to that 'dialogue' with the employer to be open and protect both them and you from unwarranted risk. So, what changes in our personal circumstances should we declare to the Agency?

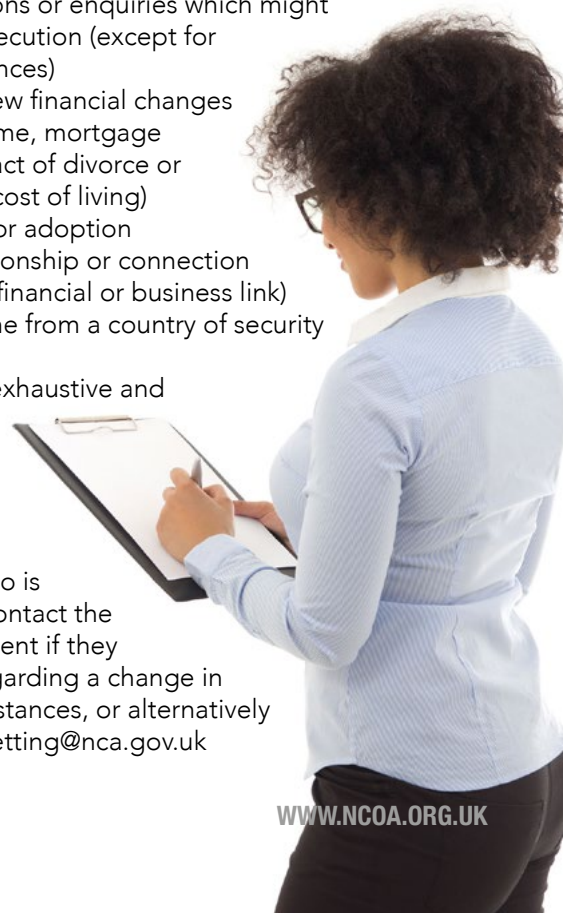
## Changes in circumstances

Any changes in personal circumstances should be reported to the Vetting Department, including:

- a change of address or marital status (including a new relationship over three months)
- new cohabitant or co-residents
- registration of a new/secondary business
- association/relationship or chance meeting with a criminal or someone who could be considered a Potentially Compromising Individual (PCI) (this will require the completion of a PCI form to be sent to the Risk Identification Team).
- significant health (physical or psychological) problems
- domestic/marital or other events causing distress or depression (ie an extra-marital affair)
- dependence upon alcohol, use of illegal drugs, substance abuse or misuse of prescription drugs
- any addiction (ie, gambling or spending) or other physical or psychological dependence
- arrests, pending prosecutions, convictions, formal police cautions or enquiries which might lead to prosecution (except for parking offences)
- any major new financial changes (ie new income, mortgage details, impact of divorce or separation, cost of living)
- a new child or adoption
- a close relationship or connection (including a financial or business link) with someone from a country of security interest.

This list is not exhaustive and only includes the most common examples in each category.

Any member who is unsure should contact the Vetting department if they have queries regarding a change in personal circumstances, or alternatively email [security-vetting@nca.gov.uk](mailto:security-vetting@nca.gov.uk)





# When **funding drops** – what happens to **pay**?

On 16 March, against a backdrop of inflation sitting at 6.2%, the NCOA took part in this year's annual oral presentation to the NCARRB. While we used this opportunity to provide further 'meat on the bones' of our own written submission, we were also able to deliver unfettered views of the Agency's pay case.

Given the obvious upward trajectory of inflation, we made it clear that it was probably not the best time to look beyond the next 12 months or risk losing any gains before they had even become properly embedded in the Agency pay structure.

While the Home Office and the NCA seemed to have a far more optimistic view of 'temporary' inflation jitters, wind the clock forward and inflation now sits at 7%.

Scarily this does not yet take into account the recent energy price cap which has increased by 54%. Volatile fuel prices further exacerbated following the Ukraine crisis means inflation is likely to go only one way – up!

The cost-of-living crisis is now starting to bite, and NCOA members, despite the relative security of contracted employment and benefits, are not immune

from this; they must be able to see some of the fog clearing with reasonable pay awards irrespective of grade or role or current positioning on a pay scale.

It really is impossible to deliver what is needed without additional funding, and we have made it clear in our messaging that while it is one thing to calculate the additional

**“ The cost-of-living crisis is now starting to bite, and NCOA members are not immune from this; they must be able to see some of the fog clearing with reasonable pay awards irrespective of grade or role or current positioning on a pay scale. ”**

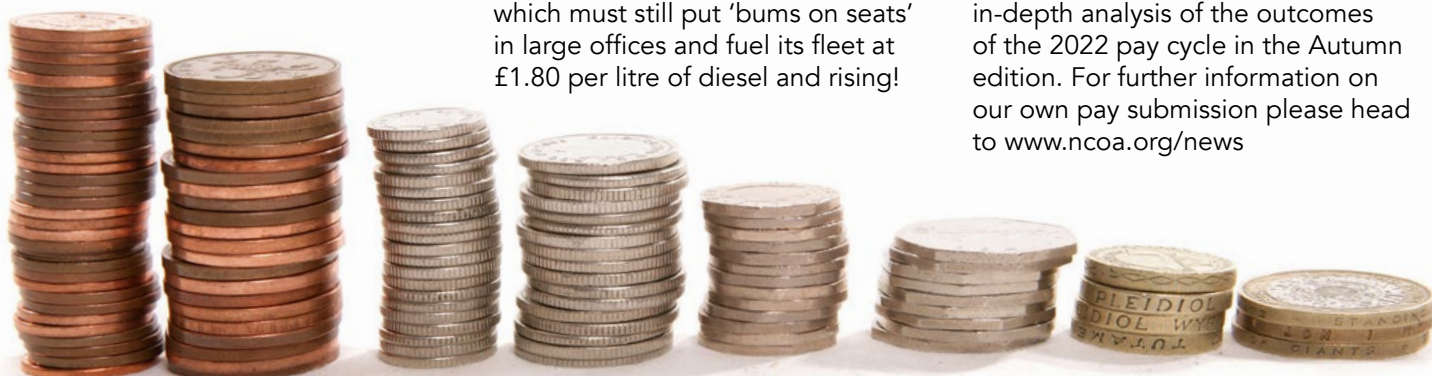
According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), public sector pay fell further behind price rises in the three months to February. While wages rose for public sector workers, price rises outpaced them meaning on average a 3% drop in spending power – the biggest drop in 20 years. In contrast, average private sector employees' wage bought 0.5% less. Addressing spending power, Darren Morgan of the ONS said: “Basic pay is now falling noticeably in real terms.”

What is likely to hamper the Agency's 'self-funding' mantra is the Treasury's post-Brexit and Covid shock, which will see funding streams stagnate or in some cases disappear. Energy costs will also have a huge impact on the Agency, which must still put 'bums on seats' in large offices and fuel its fleet at £1.80 per litre of diesel and rising!

funding needed to complete Phase 1 of NCA Pay Reform, it must surely be the number one priority of the incoming Director General to secure that additional funding.

We also made it very clear to the panel that we would resist any efforts to introduce detrimental changes to contractual terms and conditions in order to secure what amounts to a modest cost of living award branded as 'pay reform'. For those of you who took part in our 2018 ballot on pay, we heard you loud and clear – and without a significant positive shift in pay nothing has changed since then. Any support for contractual changes will always require buy-in from you our members and we will keep you informed should matters develop.

Under Cover will provide a more in-depth analysis of the outcomes of the 2022 pay cycle in the Autumn edition. For further information on our own pay submission please head to [www.ncoa.org/news](http://www.ncoa.org/news)



# Raising the profile of **bile duct cancer**

Jayne Crowther sadly lost her Mum Janet (pictured right) at the end of November 2021 to a rare and aggressive cancer called cholangiocarcinoma, also known as bile duct cancer.

Jayne told **Under Cover**: "Sadly there are very few early warning signs regarding this cancer, and for the majority of people like my Mum, by the time they are diagnosed, it is already too late."

Jayne, still grieving at the time of talking to us about her wonderful mum, continued: "Part of the process for me is to try and raise awareness among the general public and medical professionals regarding the early warning signs of bile duct cancer, because many of the symptoms are dismissed as minor or common ailments."

## A fateful day

It was World Cholangiocarcinoma Day on 12 February 2022, which would also have been Janet's 80th birthday, so it seems fate played a hand in Jayne's organised memory walk for friends and family. The aim was to collectively cover 80 miles on the day, with each person taking part recording their normal walking activity that day, and Jayne recording the overall total covered.

Jayne asked those walking – from as far afield as Yorkshire, Hampshire, Suffolk, Kent, the Isle of Mull, Tenerife and Guernsey – to take a photo of themselves to put together a memory montage for social media. Jayne was also joined by colleagues from the Calder office who frequently get together to walk their dogs, as part of their own mental health strategy.

AMMF is the UK's only charity that deals specifically with bile duct cancer, so Jayne set up a Just Giving page for people to donate to this invaluable source of support for anyone diagnosed with the disease.



Jayne told **Under Cover**: "From my perspective, as the daughter of someone who had very few options on diagnosis, I feel the following three steps need to be highlighted to medical professionals, and I have contacted my local NHS Trust to see if they will run an education campaign around these points:

- 1:** Immediate referral to one of the UK cholangiocarcinoma centres
- 2:** Obtaining cancerous material during stent insertion procedure so

that there can be mutation testing of the cancer to identify whether the patient meets the criteria for clinical trials and/or the use of Pemigatinib, a newly approved drug that is proving effective in suppressing the growth of the cancer.

**3:** Signposting to AMMF for support and guidance.

"Regarding the signs and symptoms that my Mum had over the 12 months prior to diagnosis, these were:

- an indigestion like pain – on and off frequency – with no obvious link to specific food that had been eaten
- pain in and around the right shoulder, which was random and no known cause of injury
- frequent and constant belching for six months prior to diagnosis
- bringing up bile, frequently throughout every day for six months prior to diagnosis
- some people also develop itchy skin.

"It's important to not cause people unnecessary worry regarding the above symptoms, and in most cases, any one, or combination of the above will not be an indicator of bile duct cancer. However, if the symptoms continue or increase then it is worth asking a GP if it could be bile duct cancer and getting checked out further."

If you would like to support Jayne's great cause in her Mum's memory, visit [www.justgiving.com/fundraising/jayne-crowther2](http://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/jayne-crowther2)



AMMF ([www.ammf.org.uk](http://www.ammf.org.uk)) is the UK's only cholangiocarcinoma charity. Its main aims are to raise the awareness of cholangiocarcinoma (bile duct cancer), to provide information, and to support specialised research teams in their work to find the causes, methods of earlier diagnosis and treatments for this disease.



# On the march with **Eden's Army**

As if running a busy CEOP office isn't enough, Richard Pepper, Branch Commander at Chorley, explains why he felt compelled to spend a day off on a wet and windy march through the normally picturesque 'Last of the Summer Wine' region of West Yorkshire.

This is a story that will resonate with everyone, as unfortunately cancer touches all our lives. It's about a friend of mine, who has a six-year-old daughter Eden Smith, who was diagnosed with Stage 4 Neuroblastoma cancer in April 2021.

I can't and won't describe what the family has gone through and what is yet to come. Everyone reading this will have their own tales to tell and similar experiences with this and it is personal to everyone.

In mid-November 2021, Eden's dad Lee sent me an invite to 'Get yer walking boots on for Eden's Army', a sponsored walk to raise money to send Eden to the US for treatment.

Accompanying the request was a heartfelt video including snap shots of Eden, parts of the route, and one thing I should have paid more attention to; the distance of 22 miles! I'm not a walker by any means, but I had three months to get some training in. After two walks in new boots in the preceding weekends, my preparation wasn't quite as planned.

## Every weather

On 12 February this year, around 450 friends, family and strangers converged on Scholes Cricket Club, near Holmfirth. I was in a team of 10 with Eden's dad and we left at 07:40.

We experienced every weather condition on the day – wind, rain, sleet, snow and sun – but mainly rain. The route took us through some of the most amazing countryside and scenery, villages and towns.

After 16 miles, I hit the proverbial



wall and the roads and pavements had become like rivers due to the incessant deluge. In the end I walked 24 miles (extra miles due to dodgy map reading) in seven hours, 25 minutes. Knackered, sore and relieved, I really was very proud and privileged to have been involved in something which changes lives for the better.

## Intensive chemotherapy

At the time of writing the walk has raised £120,000, with the total amount raised now over £189,000.

After eradicating a number of secondary sites, doctors removed a tumour in December 2021 and Eden has gone through intensive chemotherapy since. Amazingly, scans and tests on 5 March found no signs of neuroblastoma or active disease. Eden still has to complete her radiotherapy and immunotherapy before she is classed as being in remission.

I want to thank everyone who has donated to this worthy cause including the NCOA. The generosity is incredible, especially after the last few years and in the current climate of the rising cost of living.

Eden's dad has been bowled over



by the support his little girl has received: "Our family have been overwhelmed by the amount of support for Eden's campaign," said Lee. "Some of the lengths people are going to, to help reach our target is remarkable."

"It never ceases to amaze us how Eden's Army come together and help Eden and our family. We would just like to say a massive thank you to everyone for their help, hard work and kindness shown to Eden and our family. Thank you to the NCA and the NCOA for your support."

If you would like to make a personal donation to this worthwhile cause head to [www.solvingkidscancer.org.uk/Appeal/eden](http://www.solvingkidscancer.org.uk/Appeal/eden), and sign up to support Eden's campaign.





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