

# Under Cover

NCOA: Protecting those who protect the public

Issue 25 / Autumn 2026



## OVERWORKED AND UNDERSTAFFED

MEMBERS CALL FOR ACTION ON WELLBEING

NEW WORKPLACE PROTECTIONS ■ AGENCY EFFORTS TO TACKLE VAWG  
ELECTRONIC BALLOTS ■ NCOA COURT WIN ■ MEMBERS' MARATHONS

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# A word from HQ

Since the last edition, some spectacular events have taken place that have had an impact on both our working and private lives. The cost of everything has gone up, and the rising mercury has pushed temperatures to new limits of endurance.

Whilst the NCA always seems to be subject to change, the results of the NCOA Work & Wellbeing Survey (Revisited) show that when it comes to workload and work-related pressures, change is very slow or non-existent. The impact on your wellbeing is real, yet it seems the Agency is not acting quickly enough or with enough determination to bring about change and balance for its dedicated workforce.

Despite the pressures of work, the members' stories in this edition highlight a rewarding life away from the office, and the determination, endurance and compassion to seek and accept challenges which are not always work related. The actions of the '>>>>>>>>>>' team from Vigo deserve a special mention, given their efforts to raise over £5,500 for Cancer Research following the devastating diagnosis affecting their colleague and friend.



The bonds and relationships within our teams across the niche law enforcement world of the NCA are much closer than people 'on the outside' realise. Our members really care about their colleagues and willingly step up to provide support when someone else is down.

Stepping up when colleagues are down (and sometimes out) has also been evidenced by the recently qualified group of NCOA reps who completed their training earlier this year. These are all very busy NCA officers from all disciplines and grades, who volunteer to be your voice when things go wrong in the workplace. The commitment is not insignificant, and they have my respect and thanks.

I hope you find the magazine an interesting read and don't forget – your stories really do make it what it is, so let us know what's happening, particularly when you're doing something interesting and switching off from the pressures of work. No mean task it seems!

Best wishes

Simon Boon, CEO

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## NCOA challenge leads to court ruling

In a case brought by the NCOA on behalf of members, on 15-16 October 2025 the Employment Appeal Tribunal (EAT) considered whether employees in roles connected with lawful interception can pursue employment claims through ordinary tribunal procedures, or whether such cases must automatically be heard in closed proceedings under section 56 of the Investigatory Powers Act 2016.

The National Crime Agency argued that even discussing an employee's involvement with interception-related material could reveal or imply the existence of interception activity. It argued that section 56 prevented discussion in open proceedings and required closed sessions excluding claimants.

Judge James Tayler examined the legislation alongside the wider framework governing employment tribunals. He noted that tribunals have powers to protect national security, including hearing evidence in private, restricting disclosure, anonymising witnesses, excluding individuals from parts of hearings and issuing closed

judgments where necessary.

The judgment balanced national security with open justice and the right to a fair hearing under Article 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights. The judge, agreeing with the NCOA position, found that requiring all such claims to be heard entirely in secret would seriously undermine employees' ability to challenge the case against them.

### Meaningful access to justice

The EAT concluded that section 56 should not be interpreted so broadly. Instead, tribunals should use the protective measures already available to safeguard sensitive information while preserving fairness and participation wherever possible.

The ruling confirms that national security concerns do not automatically remove employees' access to normal employment tribunal procedures and that restrictions should be applied only to the extent genuinely necessary. It preserves meaningful access to justice for staff in sensitive roles.

## The best policy (honestly?)

One of the drier parts of being NCOA representatives is reviewing policies which either the Agency or the wider Civil Service want to implement in the NCA. The NCOA has a good track record of amending policy to ensure that members are treated fairly and are not subject to detriment as a result in changes to policy positions.

Members will no doubt be aware of the raft of policies and operating procedures that govern the way that they work. Sometimes, the web of differing policies can be difficult to navigate.

It becomes especially challenging in the NCA given the line the Agency straddles being both a law enforcement agency and a non-ministerial government department. The risk is always that NCOA members end up having the expectations of police officers placed upon them – but with the terms and conditions of Civil Servants.

To prevent this, every policy that significantly changes working practices must be subject to a full consultation with the trade unions before it can be adopted. NCOA officials and members of the National Executive Committee review these policies in full and propose amendments where appropriate. If these amendments aren't adopted, the NCOA can escalate the matters as a dispute with the Agency.

Members are encouraged to contact the NCOA if they identify policies which do not treat officers fairly so that we can engage and put it right.

## Celebrating

On 12 March 2026, General Secretary Steve Bond represented the NCOA at an event at Westminster Hall, London where the Certification Officer (CO) marked the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the office with a speech reflecting on its origins, its evolution, and the continuing role the Certification Office plays in promoting good industrial relations and effective governance in the UK.

Established in 1976, the CO is the independent statutory regulator of trade unions and employer associations, with duties that have developed across five decades of significant political, social and economic change. In his anniversary address, the CO reflected on that journey, beginning with the context in which Parliament first considered the role in 1975.

The current CO, Stephen Hardy, reminded the representatives from over 50 trade unions that were present: "When the CO was first being considered in 1975, Harold Wilson was Prime Minister, Vic Feather was General Secretary of the TUC, and Sir Ralph Bateman was President of the CBI.

"The UK's car of choice was the Ford Cortina, Jaws the blockbuster film had just been released, the UK won the Eurovision Song Contest, and, the Sex Discrimination and Equal Pay Acts were coming into force.

"However, the world was in turmoil, as the Vietnam War had just ended with the fall of Saigon, and in Britain an economic crisis was looming.

"But, notwithstanding this gloomy background, the then Employment Minister, Michael Foot, called an informal meeting with Vic Feather and General Secretaries Jack Jones, Hugh Scanlon and Len Murray. The agenda was to discuss the creation of the Certification Office, an independent office to improve

# 50 years of independent oversight



industrial relations, as part of the 'social contract' between the Government and trade unions.

"In fact, introducing the Employment Protection Bill in Parliament to create the CO on Wednesday 29 October 1975, Albert Booth, the then MP for Barrow in Furness and Minister of State for Employment, described the Certification Officer as a 'truly independent office holder who will bring truth to the issues at hand'.

"Since the inception of the CO, there have been 12 general elections, 12 Prime Ministers to date, and 86 major employment law legislative measures.

"Against this background, over the last five decades the CO has listed over 190 trade unions and 60 employer associations, collated Annual Returns every year for five decades, annually, and determined in excess of 650 formal applications.

"Such data, I am sure you will

the CO has always strived to promote good industrial relations as a constant.

"As we recognise and celebrate the service given by the CO over the last 50 years, there is no place for complacency, and we look forward to the next half-century under the new legislative landscape set by the Employment Rights Act 2025.

"For the CO and his office, the future brings challenges and changes, such as life after the levy; the introduction of an online portal for the submission of Annual Returns from 2027; a new applications' sift; as well as revised guidance on the office and work of the CO. All of this alongside the financial investigations, annual returns, listing/de-listing and hearings we do, as our daily workload.

"So, we sincerely hope that you will continue along our journey with us, keeping good industrial relations and effective governance at the heart of all we do. Thank you for your support in this remarkable journey over the last 50 years."

The CO remains an independent statutory office holder, responsible for regulating trade unions and employers' associations. Its functions include maintaining lists of unions and employer associations, receiving and publishing annual returns, overseeing elections and ballots, handling complaints and investigations, and determining certain statutory applications.

The CO is supported by a small specialist team and, under statute, receives staff, facilities and support from ACAS.

Having been formed in 2013, the NCOA quickly secured its Certification of Independence from the CO on 4 June 2015. This important certificate endorses our independence from your employer when carrying out our representative work within the NCA.

**“The Certification Office has been robustly independent and effective throughout the last five decades as well as proven to be ‘fit for purpose’.**

*Certification Officer Stephen Hardy*

"Yet by the time John Edwards was appointed as the first CO on 12 March 1976, Harold Wilson had resigned as Prime Minister and had been replaced by Jim Callaghan; Concorde had made its maiden flight; that summer saw a UK heat wave for 15 days; and, the play Macbeth had opened at the Royal Shakespeare Company with two unknown, up-and-coming young actors, Judi Dench and Ian McKellen. How times change and decades swiftly pass by.

agree with me, reaffirms that the Certification Office has been robustly independent and effective throughout the last five decades as well as proven to be 'fit for purpose'.

"To that end, the CO's small but expert staff team have remained dedicated, diligent and focused in their purpose. Working closely with the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) over the last five decades and being subject to the valuable scrutiny of the Employment Appeal Tribunal,

# Welcome aboard! Another batch of keen and

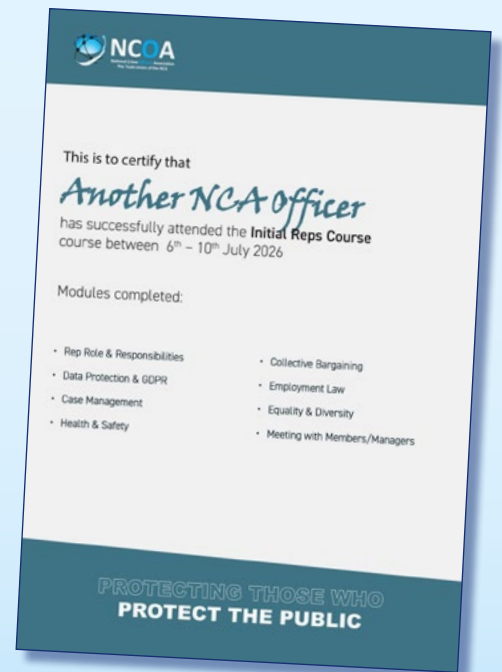
On 10 July this year, we saw a further seven NCA Officers join the NCOA family of trained trade union representatives. This followed a week of learning on a range of topics, including trade unions and the history and structure of the NCOA; the role, responsibilities and rights of NCOA reps; data protection responsibilities; case management; collective bargaining; equality and diversity; meeting with members and managers; health and safety awareness; managing grievances; member recruitment; union tactics and dealing with issues; and the grievance process and tribunal claims (employment law). Phew!

The course culminated in an exercise where students worked through a grievance case, from initial contact with a member through to an appeal, enabling them to put their training into practice in a safe environment while consolidating their knowledge by seeing the process in action.

The course was facilitated by guest speakers including inputs from the NCA's HR Complex Casework team and health and safety lead, as well as from the NCOA's dedicated legal providers, JFH Law.

For the first time, this year saw students led through the course by an external trainer. Lucy Moreton is a long-standing friend of the NCOA whose credentials are second to none, as a Professional Officer at the Immigration Services Union (ISU) and a Masters in Employment Law (LLM) from the University of Surrey. Lucy is also a qualified and experienced employment law practitioner, advisor, trainer – and Employment Tribunal Judge! With her exceptional knowledge and experience, Lucy brought invaluable input from her roles at the ISU and the Employment Tribunal Service procedures.

This cohort of Reps are now accredited to deal with issues such as vetting, probation, capability and grievances, and will be a valued



addition to the extensive network of existing Reps the NCOA has right across the breadth of the Agency.

The next stage in their training will be a further week in the future where they will be trained in supporting

## There really has never been a better time to join NCOA Engagement Officer Megan Earl tells *Under Cover* about what we do best – ‘Protecting

There has never been a more important time to have a strong, independent voice at your workplace.

As an NCA officer, you work in a unique environment, your work is specialist, your responsibilities are significant, and the decisions made regarding your employment can have a direct impact on your career, your working conditions, and your future.

This is why the NCOA exists. We are the largest trade union of the NCA; we are independent, non-political, and a bespoke trade union specifically established to represent the interests of NCA officers.

Not only do we understand the unique nature of the NCA work, but our focus is also solely on supporting and protecting our members and working to ensure that they have a strong and effective voice – and right now, that voice matters more than ever.

NCA officers are facing significant change, including pay and contract reform and the proposed transition into the new National Police Service.

Changes of this scale could have a lasting impact on your pay, pensions and terms and conditions, your roles and responsibilities, and the way you work. If you are not part of the NCOA, you are missing out as you do not have a voice.

### A real position of influence

Current circumstances reinforce the importance of being a member of a trade union and the need to have a collective voice before problems arise. With almost 4,000 members, the NCOA has a powerful collective voice, giving us a real position of influence when engaging with the NCA, the Home Office and even wider HM Government on issues that affect NCA officers.

It is easy to think you do not need a trade union, until you do... Perhaps you've never had a problem at work and are confident that, if a problem arose, you could deal with it yourself. But NCOA membership is not about expecting something to go wrong, it's about being in a

# qualified NCOA reps complete their training

members through misconduct proceedings. Opportunities exist for further training in post-incident management (PIM) support and advanced employment law.

We would like to thank each of the seven new Reps for their willingness to step forward and support their colleagues in the NCA. They were fully engaged with each aspect of the training, demonstrating the talents and qualities we expect our Reps to possess, such as listening, attention to detail, rapport building and able to bring robust challenges at all levels with the employer.

The feedback from the group was that it was an enjoyable course, with a lot of new knowledge to take in but recognising the continuing support for them throughout their NCOA career.

With over 50 Reps currently, the NCOA retains a strong and balanced cadre supporting almost 4,000 members. This group encompasses many of the business areas in the

workplace with grades from G6 through to G1. Alongside our PIM cadre we also have a cadre of reps who received bespoke training to support our members who have experienced misogyny, sexual assault and sexual harassment within the Agency.

supporting their colleagues (in what may be a difficult time in their career) to strongly consider putting themselves forward when the NCOA next seeks applications for Representatives.

You will gain valuable skills, a wider view and exposure to the Agency, as

**“As we move ever closer to integration within the National Police Service, there has never been a better time to consider representing your friends and colleagues as an NCOA representative.”**

With continued growth expected in our membership levels, Rep attrition, and to fill the few gaps in locations where there is temporarily no local cover (Dover, Exeter, Heathrow, Leicester & Stevenage currently have no NCOA Rep) it is strongly anticipated that another initial Reps course will be run early next year. To this end, we would encourage any member with an interest in

well as the satisfaction that you are directly having a positive impact on the workplace and colleagues' lives.

As we move ever closer to integration within the National Police Service, there has never been a better time to consider representing your friends and colleagues as an NCOA representative. Contact [membership@ncoa.org.uk](mailto:membership@ncoa.org.uk) if you would like to know more.

## the trade union of the NCA!

those who protect the public'



better position if it does.

Workplace issues do not necessarily arise because someone has done something wrong. Even highly regarded officers can find themselves facing a grievance, disciplinary, capability concern, vetting issues and changes to their role or terms and conditions –

or simply needing advice from time to time.

To put things into perspective, we currently have over 100 live cases that involve members requiring support and advice from our network of trained NCOA reps. Being a member of the NCOA means you do not have to navigate these issues alone. You have access to a specialist organisation that can provide advice, support, and representation when you need it.

By joining the NCOA, you are not only protecting yourself, but you are also helping strengthen the collective representation of NCA officers at a time when decisions about your future are being made.

### A union that understands your unique challenges

Membership also provides a range of additional benefits, including bespoke legal assistance, UK & European motor breakdown cover for you and your partner, access to GP24 (providing you and your cohabiting family with access to a practising GP via video or telephone consultation), and a £5,000 death grant.

For a small monthly subscription, you gain access to professional representation, legal support, workplace advice and a union that understands the unique challenges of working for the NCA.

There really has never been a better time to join the NCOA, so what are you waiting for? Follow this link to join today [www.ncoa.org.uk/application-forms/](http://www.ncoa.org.uk/application-forms/)

# Sharing your work? Why SharePoint should be your first choice for work documents

Following on from his previous **Under Cover** article, NEC member >>>>>>>> continues hints and tips for helping change with the latest technology

Ever wonder where your recordings and transcriptions end up after you set up a Teams Meeting in your calendar? Well, read on (and a quick clue – check your OneDrive!).

Most of us use Microsoft 365 every day and have access to both OneDrive and SharePoint. While they may appear similar at first glance, they serve very different purposes. Understanding the difference can help prevent a loss of information, improve collaboration, and ensure that important records remain available long after individual staff members move on.

The simplest way to think about it is this: OneDrive is for personal working documents, whilst SharePoint is for shared organisational information. As the SharePoint Reference Guide explains, OneDrive is designed for personal documents with a single owner, which may be shared temporarily and moved when finalised. This is important for members who may be having issues at work and need to safely retain important documentation for future use.

SharePoint, however, is intended for shared documents that are collectively owned and hold final versions of information. In order to create a document in SharePoint, you must have access to a team library on SharePoint, which is where you will store your document.

Below is an easy guide of how to remember each application for their correct purpose.

|                                                                                     |                                                                                        |                                                                                        |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  |     |     |
| <b>OneDrive</b>                                                                     | <b>Teams</b>                                                                           | <b>SharePoint</b>                                                                      |
| Personal documents<br>Single owner<br>Temporarily shared<br>Moved once finalised    | Shared documents<br>Collectively owned<br>Real time collaboration<br>Continual editing | Shared documents<br>Collectively owned<br>Hub sites / Teams channels<br>Final versions |

For those of you who are also acting as NCOA representatives, this distinction is particularly important. Just like the Agency, a case file, transcriptions, recordings, or consultation documents should not become inaccessible simply because the person who created it changes role, retires or leaves the organisation. Documents stored within SharePoint remain available to authorised users because ownership belongs to the team, branch or organisation rather than an individual.

Another major advantage is collaboration. SharePoint allows multiple users to work on the same document simultaneously through co-authoring, with changes automatically saved and visible in real time. This means that you can contribute to a single working document

without creating multiple versions or circulating endless email attachments.

SharePoint also provides stronger document management capabilities. Version history records changes and allows previous versions of documents to be viewed or restored if necessary. If an error is made, information is not necessarily lost. The system also supports check-in and check-out processes, helping to control significant amendments to important records.

## Records management

A further benefit is records management through the principle of Review, Retain and Dispose:

- Review ensures documents remain relevant, accurate and necessary.
- Retain means keeping records that have business, legal or historical value.
- Dispose means securely removing information that is no longer required in line with organisational policy.

SharePoint supports this lifecycle by providing structured document libraries, version control, permissions management and recovery functionality. Deleted files can be recovered from the recycle bin for up to 93 days, providing an additional safeguard against accidental deletion.

Security is also improved. SharePoint offers granular permissions, allowing files and folders to be shared with specific individuals, teams or groups while maintaining control over who can edit, view or download information. This helps ensure sensitive trade union information is protected and accessible only to those who genuinely need it.

Finally, SharePoint's powerful search capability helps users quickly locate files across sites, document libraries, and team areas; information can be found when needed, improving productivity and organisational resilience.

In short, OneDrive remains an excellent place for drafting personal work and storing individual documents. However, when information becomes important to a team, project, branch or the wider NCOA/NCA, it should be moved into SharePoint. Doing so supports collaboration, protects organisational knowledge, enables proper review, retention and disposal practices, and ensures that valuable information remains available for future generations of representatives and members.

**Remember: if it's important to you, it belongs in OneDrive; if it's important to the organisation, not just to you, it belongs in SharePoint.**

# What is the Agency doing to tackle VAWG?

With clear evidence of a concerning workplace issue, the NCOA is working to provide specialist support to its members – but what is the Agency doing? NEC Officer & VAWG lead >>>>>>>> finds out

*As members will be aware through previous articles in **Under Cover**, the NCOA takes the issue of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) very seriously. We have a cadre of reps specially trained to support members who experience VAWG in the Agency (see the 'Protections in the Workplace' article on P10-11). Uniquely, we also offer free legal advice from a top family law firm for members experiencing domestic abuse.*

*To continue our focus on VAWG, we asked >>>>>>>> Senior Analyst from the NCA Integrated Protected Security (IPS) VAWG team, to talk to us about how the Agency is responding to VAWG issues.*

## VAWG – a workplace issue

VAWG is not just a government priority, it's a workplace issue that can have a significant impact on a colleague's wellbeing, safety and confidence.

The NCA recognises its responsibility to support officers and staff who have experienced VAWG and misogyny, whether it occurs inside or outside the workplace. It has stated its commitment to ending VAWG, establishing our small, dedicated team to deliver a three-year programme of activity to eliminate VAWG and misogyny within the Agency, and to work with partners to create a culture where everyone feels safe, valued and able to speak up.

Two NCA VAWG-related surveys have now been conducted, both producing similar concerning findings; the most recent in May 2026 highlighted the scale of the challenge facing the Agency.

More than half of respondents (54%) reported experiencing misogyny within the Agency, while

one in four reported experiencing some form of VAWG while working in the NCA. These findings demonstrate that significant work remains to ensure colleagues feel safe, respected and supported.

## Some recurring issues

Many issues have been raised during meetings with NCA officers and from the survey results, but a few key themes have emerged.

Colleagues said managers do not always have the training, knowledge or confidence to respond effectively when incidents are disclosed. Some also highlighted the lack of support available to those making reports, particularly during what can be a difficult and lengthy process.

Furthermore, concerns are sometimes minimised or dismissed, leaving individuals feeling isolated and reluctant to come forward again. We (the NCA) have also been told that misogynistic behaviour has been normalised within some teams/locations. These areas are our priorities for the programme.

## What are we doing about it?

To address these concerns, one of our key priorities has been developing an NCA manager toolkit. This will provide clear guidance on responding to disclosures, supporting affected colleagues, signposting specialist services and ensuring appropriate action is taken. Alongside this, the NCA is delivering education and awareness presentations across the Agency to increase understanding of VAWG and its impact.

The Agency has made clear its intention to create a bespoke Victim Advocacy Service. Once launched, it will provide specialist support to officers and staff who have

experienced VAWG or misogyny.

This service will offer informed and compassionate support, helping individuals navigate reporting processes, understand their options and access further guidance throughout their journey. This addresses a gap identified by many colleagues – the need for dedicated support for those raising concerns and reporting experiences of VAWG.

The Agency will also continue to meet directly with staff who have lived experience of VAWG and misogyny to better understand the impact of these experiences and how reporting processes and support can be improved.

## Creating lasting change

Addressing VAWG requires commitment from all of us. By improving education, equipping managers, strengthening support and placing victims at the centre of our response, we can build a safer and more inclusive Agency.

The NCA VAWG Team is committed to driving that change, but lasting progress depends on everyone playing their part. Together, we can create a workplace where misogyny, harassment and violence are not tolerated, and where every colleague has the opportunity to thrive.

*With this in mind, the NCOA is working with the VAWG team to better highlight the support the NCOA can offer victims of violence. If you wish to speak to a member of the VAWG team our email address is: [VAWG@nca.gov.uk](mailto:VAWG@nca.gov.uk)*

*If a member has experienced VAWG within the Agency and would like support, please contact the membership team at [membership@ncoa.org.uk](mailto:membership@ncoa.org.uk) or 0845 3142070.*

# Protections in the workplace now

**Under Cover** has previously reported on the important changes to members' Employment Rights brought about under the Employment Rights Act 2025. These include:

## February 2026

- trade union measures: simpler requirements for trade unions, including in relation to industrial action

## April 2026

- Statutory Sick Pay: more employees qualify, with no earnings threshold and no three-day waiting period
- day-one family leave: employees are entitled to Paternity Leave and Unpaid Parental Leave from the first day in a new job
- Bereaved Partner's Paternity Leave: new right to time off following the death of a child's mother or primary adopter
- whistleblowing protections: stronger protections for workers who report sexual harassment
- holiday pay records: employers are required to keep adequate records to show they have complied with holiday pay and entitlement rules; these records need to be retained for six years from the date they were made
- action plans: employers with 250 or more employees are

encouraged to publish the steps they are taking to reduce their gender pay gap and support employees experiencing menopause.

## What's new in October?

This October will see further benefits brought in when key employment law changes are introduced including, expanded trade union rights, new sexual harassment duties, extended protections for industrial action, and revised employment tribunal time limits.

These additional reforms will strengthen trade union rights and protections for workers involved in lawful industrial action. Key changes include:

- expanded trade union access: trade union representatives will have greater ability to engage with employees in the workplace
- protection from detriment: workers taking part in lawful industrial action must not be treated less favourably by their employer because of their participation
- information about union rights: employers will be required to inform workers of their right to join a trade union and explain how they can do so

## Sexual harassment reforms

The Equality Act 2010 already defines sexual harassment as: "Unwanted conduct of a sexual nature which has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them". The NCA would be breaking the law if they failed to comply.

Everyone has a right to be protected at work and so, from 30 October 2026, employers will have stronger duties to prevent workplace harassment. They will be required to take all reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment and must not permit employees to be harassed by third parties, such as colleagues or contractors.

This represents a change from the current obligation which requires employers to simply take 'reasonable steps' to prevent sexual harassment of their employees.

Undertaking a risk assessment is key to ensuring compliance and when doing so should consider factors that might increase the likelihood of sexual harassment and also the steps that can be taken to minimise them, such as:

- identifying power imbalances
- is there a lack of diversity in the workplace area?



From 30 October 2026, employers will have stronger duties to prevent workplace harassment

# go further than ever before

- are any staff working alone or at night?
- are staff expected to attend external events or training?
- do staff socialise outside of work?
- do staff engage in crude or disrespectful behaviour at work?

If your employer [NCA] fails to take reasonable steps, they also risk an employment tribunal, increasing the amount of compensation due if an individual's claim of sexual harassment proves successful.

The NCOA leads the way in reminding the NCA of its responsibility to protect our members and challenge any instances of sexual harassment or misogynistic behaviour.

Over the past three years, we have provided CPD focusing on Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and sexual harassment, at our annual reps conference. We also have a cadre of accredited reps specially trained to support members who are experiencing this unwanted behaviour. If any member is experiencing this at work, please reach out to our membership team and we will ensure you are supported with one of our trained reps.

## Employment Tribunal time limits

From 1 October 2026, the time limit for bringing most employment tribunal (ET) claims will increase from three months to six months. This will give employees and the NCOA more time with the Agency to resolve disputes internally or through conciliation – and to assess with our lawyers whether a claim should proceed, where it could be seen as beneficial to both parties.

Since the Advisory Conciliation & Arbitration Service (ACAS) can pause an ET countdown clock for up



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**The time limit for bringing most employment tribunal claims is set to increase from three months to six months**

to 12 weeks, the combination of the revised time limits and ACAS control means that members have a much longer window (up to around nine months) to negotiate settling a dispute without resorting to the courts.

Members should be aware that the new six-month time limit will apply to claims where the problem at work happens on or after 1 October 2026. Where the problem at work happens before 1 October 2026, the existing three-month time limit will apply.

For breach of employment contract claims by employees in England and Wales, the new six-month time limit will apply where date of the termination of the contract giving rise to the claim occurs on or after 1 October 2026.

**The important date is not the date you claim but the date the claim occurs**

Members should remember that the six-month limit applies where

the act you are complaining about happens on or after 1 October 2026. It is not about when you submit your claim.

For someone dismissed on 20 September 2026, the deadline is three months minus one day, even if you're filling in the ET1 form in November. For someone dismissed on 2 October 2026, they will benefit from the extended six-month deadline.

## Preparing for the changes

NCOA reps receive regular employment law updates as part of their monthly bulletins. In addition, they all receive CPD training at their annual delegates conference in November. If you are unsure of the changes and how they affect your claim, you may contact your local workplace rep or membership at [membership@ncoa.org.uk](mailto:membership@ncoa.org.uk)

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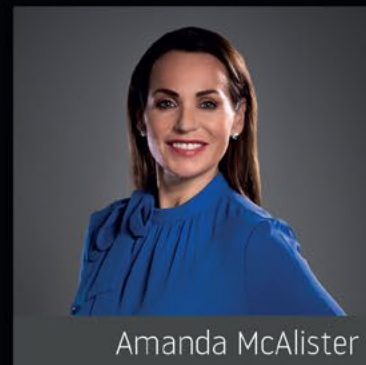
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# The wellbeing reality check: Members want **action**, not just **awareness**

The 2025 and 2026 Work and Wellbeing Surveys compared – and unpacked

When comparing the survey findings from 2025 and 2026, while it shows modest (very modest!) progress in wellbeing awareness, members remain clear and leave us in no doubt about what really affects their health and happiness at work: workload, staffing levels, leadership, flexibility and poor technology.

Across many organisations, including the National Crime Agency (NCA), wellbeing has become one of the defining workplace conversations of recent years. Mental health awareness campaigns, employee assistance programmes and wellbeing initiatives are now familiar features of working life.

Yet the latest comparison of NCOA member employee wellbeing surveys from 2025 and 2026 point to a more complicated reality; members recognise that support is improving, but many remain

unconvinced that the root causes of stress are being tackled or worse still, even acknowledged.

## **Progress, but not transformation**

The information from our latest survey contains reasons for cautious optimism. More members now believe the NCA is taking positive action on wellbeing, rising from 38.8% in 2025 to 42.4% in 2026. Awareness of mental health support also increased, while confidence in organisational support for colleagues experiencing mental health difficulties improved. Job satisfaction edged upward too.

However, while members report that they recognise support within the Agency exists, many remain unconvinced that everyday working conditions have changed enough.

## **The issue that refuses to go away**

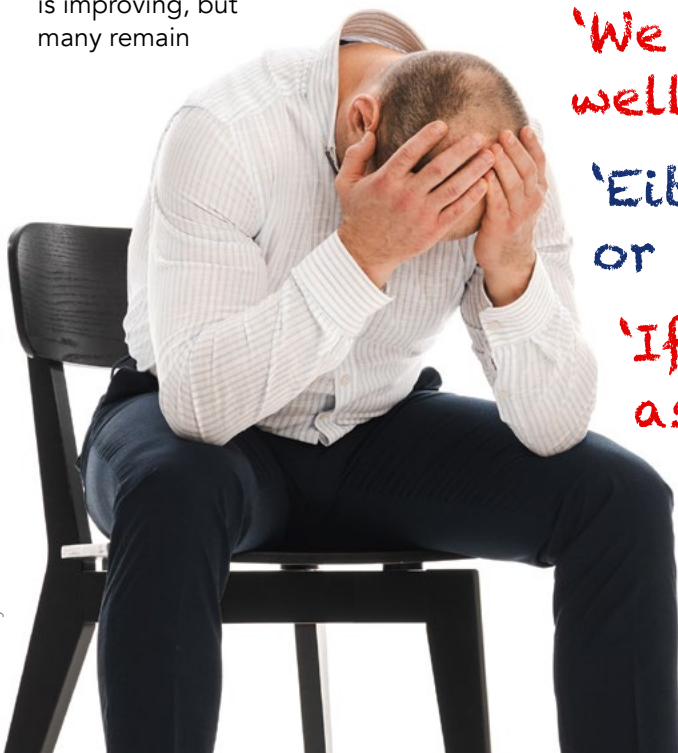
One figure stands out above all others: nearly seven in 10 members still report that work negatively affects their wellbeing. Although this fell from 73.5% in 2025 to 69.4% in 2026, the overall picture remains concerning. A four-point improvement is welcome, but it does not amount to a fundamental shift in member experience.

Sadly, workload pressure remains central to the story. More than half of members report that workload has increased significantly, with fewer than half feeling able to take sufficient breaks during the working day, and around one third continuing to work during personal time several times each week.

**'We need acceptance that the wellbeing challenge is real'**

**'Either increase the resource or decrease demand'**

**'If the agency could see us as humans not just staff numbers and actually develop the emotional intelligence to practice leadership via empathy, that would be a start'**



### What members say really drives wellbeing

The most revealing insights came from the individual comments which identified staffing, resourcing, leadership and management quality as the joint highest themes from within the detail contained in free text comments submitted by members. Workload and capacity pressure followed with, unsurprisingly, IT and technology issues close behind.

**'More understanding of the day-to-day pressures that non-operational staff face'**

NCOA members repeatedly linked wellbeing concerns to staffing shortages, recruitment delays and stretched operational teams. Many comments suggested that wellbeing initiatives would have limited value until what are clear staffing deficits had been addressed. In effect, NCOA members are saying that wellbeing cannot be separated from capacity and workload.

What is concerning is that when asked, most members were unable to agree that the Agency had reduced the work demands since the last survey. In fact the results

show the opposite, with 58% of respondents reporting that workload has significantly increased since last year's survey. What's clear from our findings is that if workloads exceed available capacity – which they often do – wellbeing inevitably suffers.

### Leadership – the everyday difference

Leadership quality emerged as an important element affecting wellbeing. Members called for better

managers, clearer accountability and more meaningful engagement.

The survey suggests line managers can have either a strongly positive or strongly negative influence on wellbeing, depending on how effectively they support people, listen to concerns and manage workload pressures.

So it's positive to report that the Agency recently announced the introduction of leadership classes and a five-module training programme for leaders. Our questions of the Agency on this issue are linked to targeting and

time frame. Who will get this training? What will the priority list look like? And most importantly, how long will it take for all managers to receive it?

To be effective this needs to be rolled out at all management levels. Importantly, and using an expression which the Agency will be familiar with, it needs to be delivered at pace.

### NCA technology is now clearly a wellbeing issue in its own right

Outdated systems, slow laptops and inefficient digital processes are once again repeatedly described as sources of frustration and stress for members. This matters, because technology problems are often treated as productivity issues, when in reality members increasingly experience them as wellbeing issues too.

When systems slow people down, tasks take longer, pressure increases and job satisfaction falls – the cycle will only be broken when the poor IT is fixed.

### From awareness to action – the trust gap

Perhaps the most significant challenge is the Agency's responsiveness. While around

**'Get some IT that works, it is slow and can freeze causing frustration and annoyance'**

**'Manageable workloads – we never seem to stop existing work when something new comes in'**



55% of members taking part in the survey reported raising wellbeing concerns, only about one in 10 felt positive action followed. For many members therefore, the problem is not whether leaders care about wellbeing, but whether concerns lead to visible and lasting change.

While the 2025 and 2026 surveys have been driven by the NCOA in response to member concerns, the 2026 HMICFRS inspection report of the National Crime Agency's effectiveness and efficiency highlighted similar concerns.

The report states: "Many officers told us that excessive workloads harmed their mental health and wellbeing. The results of the 2024 people survey reflected this: only 58% of NCA respondents said that they had an acceptable workload. This is eight percentage points below the Civil Service average.

"A further 25% of NCA respondents said their workload was unacceptable. During our inspection, officers in many teams told us their work had increased to an unmanageable level."

Similarly, much of what has been gleaned from the NCOA's Work & Wellbeing Surveys has also been picked up from the Agency's own People Survey results, which have seen the NCA commit to "improve

the tools and technology available, manage change, workload pressures and workplace culture". We are also aware that: "All Commands now have workforce resource plans in place, supported by workforce planning forums that provide better visibility of resourcing pressures and future demand. This is helping strengthen workforce planning and ensure resources are better aligned to operational priorities."

own to improve work-related wellbeing issues.

The strongest priorities for future action are increasing staffing levels, reducing workload pressures, improving leadership capability, maintaining flexible working arrangements, upgrading technology, and demonstrating tangible action when concerns are raised.

Looking at the NCOA Wellbeing

*'Working over capacity has had a big effect on my mental wellbeing - with most of my spare time taken up worrying about work'*

With projects also reportedly well underway (or complete) to improve facilities, collaboration spaces and access to green devices, it appears that these actions are not actually hitting home – or so it seems.

The message from NCOA members in the 2026 Work & Wellbeing Survey is consistent and unambiguous: counselling, occupational health support and wellbeing activities are valued, but they are not enough on their

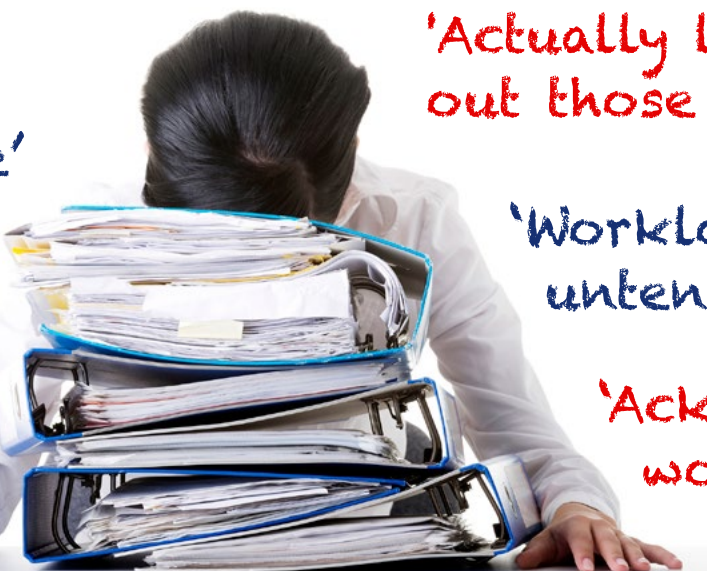
Top Ten Fixes from 2025 to where we are now, the message from members to their employer is quite clear: you acknowledged the problems but don't really appear to have delivered on the issues which affect us most.

The bottom line? Wellbeing is not a separate initiative. It is the direct outcome of how work is designed, managed and supported every day. The 2026 Report summary for the NCA is simple – 'Must Do Better'.

*'Actually listen to staff and sort out those issues raised'*

*'Workload to staff ratio is untenable, creating stress'*

*'Acknowledge the pressure of working in a constantly understaffed environment'*



# Electronic balloting arrives: A new

After years of debate about how trade unions should conduct ballots, the Government has finally opened the door to electronic voting and workplace voting for a range of statutory union ballots.

The new Code of Practice on Electronic and Workplace Balloting, published in August 2026, sets out how these new methods should operate and what safeguards must be in place to protect members and the integrity of elections and industrial action ballots.

For many union members, including those in the NCOA, the biggest change is simple: voting will no longer be restricted to the letterbox.

## Moving beyond postal ballots

Until now, most statutory trade union ballots (i.e. industrial action and elections) had to be conducted by post. The new rules allow unions to use electronic voting, workplace voting, or a combination of methods alongside traditional postal ballots.

Electronic voting allows members to vote online using secure access details sent by email, text message, or another approved digital service. Hybrid voting gives members both a postal ballot and the option to vote online, allowing them to choose whichever method is most convenient. Meanwhile, workplace voting enables members to cast their ballots in person at or near their workplace, provided the employer agrees and an independent scrutineer oversees the process.

about accessibility. Before deciding how a ballot will be run, unions must consider whether members will actually be able to use the chosen voting methods and whether alternative arrangements are needed for particular groups.

In short, the emphasis is on making sure every eligible member has a reasonable opportunity to take part.

## Security takes centre stage

While supporters of electronic voting often focus on convenience, much of

**“The new rules allow unions to use electronic voting, workplace voting, or a combination of methods alongside traditional postal ballots... The intention is clear: make it easier for members to participate while maintaining confidence that ballots are secure and fair.”**

The intention is clear: make it easier for members to participate while maintaining confidence that ballots are secure and fair.

## Giving members more choice

One of the most interesting aspects of the new Code is its flexibility.

Unions are not required to adopt a single voting method for every member. Different groups of members can be offered different options depending on their circumstances.

For example, members with reliable access to email may be offered electronic voting, while others continue to receive postal ballots. Some members may even be given more than one voting option.

The Code encourages unions to think carefully

the Code is dedicated to security.

The Government clearly recognises that confidence in union ballots depends on members believing their votes are secret, secure and protected from interference. As a result, independent scrutineers are required to put extensive cybersecurity measures in place. Votes must be encrypted, personal information must be protected, and systems must be designed to prevent unauthorised access.

Every voter must receive a unique voting code or access method, and once a person has voted electronically, any duplicate access credentials must be automatically disabled to prevent multiple votes being cast.

The Code also stresses that voter identities and voting choices should be stored separately so that no one can easily link an individual member to the way they voted. This is seen as a key protection for ballot secrecy.



# era for trade union democracy

## Preparing for cyber threats

Recognising the reality of cyber risks, the Code expects scrutineers to monitor systems constantly for suspicious activity. Independent scrutineers are encouraged to have back-up systems, disaster recovery plans and procedures for dealing with technical failures or cyber attacks.

If there is evidence that unauthorised individuals have gained access to a voting system, the consequences could be serious. Such incidents may undermine confidence in the ballot and could prevent a scrutineer from confirming that the legal requirements were met.

## Workplace voting returns

The introduction of workplace voting is another notable development. Under this system, members can vote in person at a designated workplace ballot station supervised by an independent scrutineer. Members must provide identification and place their completed ballot papers into a secure ballot box.

Importantly, workplace voting can only take place if the employer agrees. This requirement may limit its use in some disputes, but where agreement can be reached it could make participation easier for workers who may be less likely to return a postal ballot.

## The role of independent scrutineers

Throughout the Code, independent scrutineers are given a central role. They are responsible for ensuring voting systems operate properly, protecting ballot data, maintaining detailed records and overseeing the counting process.

A significant audit trail must be kept covering everything from the



Picture © CHIEW / Shutterstock

creation of voting credentials to any technical incidents that occur during the ballot. The idea is that if a ballot is challenged, there will be enough evidence to demonstrate exactly what happened and confirm the legitimacy of the result.

However, the Code also makes it clear that convenience cannot come at the expense of security. Unions and scrutineers are expected to meet rigorous standards to ensure votes remain confidential, accurate and free from interference.

**“Whether electronic balloting ultimately increases participation and engagement remains to be seen, but one thing is certain: trade union democracy has finally entered the digital age.”**

## What does it mean for unions?

For many unions, these reforms represent the biggest change to balloting procedures in decades.

Supporters argue that electronic voting could increase turnout by making participation quicker and easier for members. In an age when people routinely bank, shop and communicate online, the ability to vote digitally may feel like a natural step forward.

The result is a framework that seeks to combine modern technology with traditional democratic safeguards. Whether electronic balloting ultimately increases participation and engagement remains to be seen, but one thing is certain: trade union democracy has finally entered the digital age.

# The common law marriage myth: Unmarried

McAlister Law Senior Associate George Wilson and Partner Jason Stanley outline the misconceptions around the idea of common law marriage

For many separating couples, one of the biggest shocks comes when they discover that, in law, there is no such thing as a 'common law spouse'. Despite the phrase being widely used in everyday conversation, English law does not recognise a common law marriage, regardless of how long a couple has lived together or whether they have children together.

For family law professionals, this misunderstanding can create significant difficulties when unmarried couples separate. Unlike married couples and civil partners, cohabiting couples do not benefit from the wide discretionary powers available to the Family Court under the Matrimonial Causes Act 1973. Instead, disputes about property ownership are often determined by narrow principles of trust and property law, most notably through claims under the Trusts of Land and Appointment of Trustees Act 1996.

## The myth

A common misconception is that living together for a number of years creates legal rights equivalent to marriage. Clients will often say: "We've been together for 20 years, surely I'm entitled to half of everything?" The answer is frequently no.

The law draws a clear distinction between married and unmarried couples. Marriage creates a legal framework supported by bespoke matrimonial statute through which assets can be redistributed on separation according to fairness and need. Cohabitation does not.

That means an unmarried partner has no automatic, legal right to:

- a share in property owned solely by the other party
- receive ongoing maintenance for themselves

- claim a share of pensions
- benefit from the broad discretionary remedies available on divorce
- financial provision in the event of death.

This can come as a considerable surprise, particularly to a partner who has spent many years caring for children or supporting the family without acquiring assets in their own name.

## What about the family home?

For unmarried couples, the starting point is usually not fairness but proved ownership. If a property is owned jointly, the legal position may be relatively straightforward.

However, where a property is held in one party's sole name, this is usually compelling because an express (i.e. written) trust is created upon the purchase of the property that is subsequently registered at HM Land Registry. For the other partner to challenge an express declaration they must prove and establish that a beneficial interest was intended and created if they wish to successfully claim a share.

This is where the Trusts of Land and Appointment of Trustees Act 1996 (TOLATA) becomes important. TOLATA provides a mechanism to the court to determine the parties' respective interests in a property and, where necessary, seeking an order for sale.

Unlike divorce proceedings, the court is not simply deciding what outcome would be fair. Instead, it is attempting to determine what rights already exist, the key question often being: "What was intended between the parties regarding ownership of the property either at the outset or subsequently?"

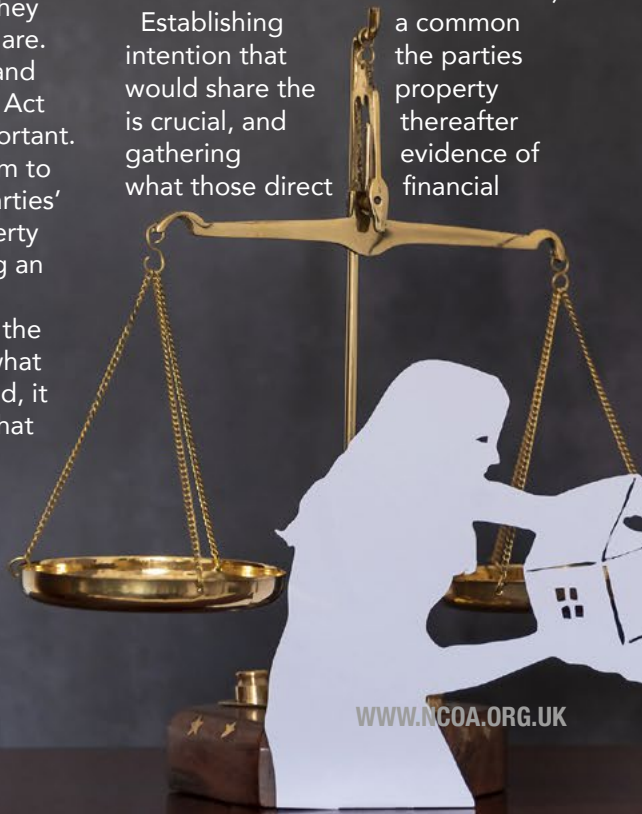
## Beneficial interest

A non-owning partner may be able to establish a beneficial interest through either a subsequent express agreement or alternatively, through implied conduct. Examples of significant direct contributions to the property may include:

- contributions towards the deposit
- contributions towards the mortgage repayments
- significant contributions to major home renovations such as new kitchen/bathroom/extension where the value of the property has increased significantly
- agreements that the property would be "ours"
- significant financial arrangements demonstrating an intention to share ownership (blending finances, joint accounts, engagements to marry, being parents of children, nomination of the other party to be a beneficiary in a life policy, and making mirror wills are relevant considerations).

Establishing intention that would share the is crucial, and gathering what those direct

a common the parties property thereafter evidence of financial



# couples, property disputes and TOLATA

contributions are carried weight. Modern case law has adopted a more holistic approach, examining the parties' dealings as a whole, but the court has very wide powers of discretion.

However, proving a beneficial interest remains far from straightforward. Unlike financial remedy proceedings following divorce, there is no presumption that assets should be shared simply because the parties lived together as a couple.

A potential claimant must establish the existence and extent of their interest using evidence. Such evidence may include:

- property transfer documents
- mortgage applications and communications with the mortgage broker
- credit ratings
- bank statements
- correspondence between the parties
- text messages or emails discussing ownership arrangements
- wills, life policies and trust documents
- social media posts and photographs.

As we all know, conversations about formal issues such as ownership of a property rarely take place in formal terms. Couples seldom sit down and record their intentions with any legal precision when purchasing a property. As a result, disputes can become highly fact-sensitive and costly and will often turn on actual evidence, not fairness.



Further, the Family Court's broad discretion is absent. The court's task is instead to analyse evidence and determine the beneficial ownership position under established trust principles.

## Joint ownership declarations

One of the most important documents in property disputes is the Declaration of Trust. Where parties purchase a property jointly and sign a declaration setting out their respective shares, the courts will generally treat that declaration as conclusive unless there is evidence of fraud, mistake or another exceptional circumstance.

For practitioners, this highlights the value of obtaining proper legal advice at the point of purchase rather than years later when a relationship has broken down. A carefully drafted Declaration of Trust, cohabitation or pre-nuptial agreement can prevent substantial litigation costs and uncertainty.

## 'But we have children?'

Another common misconception is that having children together automatically entitles an unmarried parent to a share of the other party's property. While the welfare of children remains important, parenthood alone does not create a beneficial interest in a property.

There may be claims available under Schedule 1 of the Children Act 1989 for the benefit of children, including housing provision in certain circumstances. However, these are distinct from ownership claims and should not be confused with TOLATA proceedings. A parent seeking an interest in property must still establish the legal basis for that claim.

## Prevention is better than litigation

The growing number of cohabiting couples and decline in marriage statistics means that property disputes between unmarried partners are increasingly common.

The Law Commission has repeatedly highlighted concerns regarding the lack of protection available to cohabitants, and reform has been debated for many years. However, at present, no comprehensive statutory scheme equivalent to divorce exists for unmarried couples.

Until the law changes, prevention remains the best protection and, as such, couples should consider:

- cohabitation agreements
- Declarations of Trust
- clear records of financial contributions
- obtaining independent legal advice when purchasing property.

In conclusion, the myth of the common law spouse continues to mystify couples, causing hardship, stress, and financial strain for separating couples.

For professionals working with separating families, one message remains particularly important: cohabitation and marriage are not treated equally under English law. Understanding that distinction, and communicating it clearly to clients, can help manage expectations, encourage early planning, and avoid costly litigation when relationships come to an end.

It's important to seek specialist legal advice before considering whether litigation is the correct course of action.

McAlister Family Law has a specialist team dealing with such disputes and, for NCOA members, our doors are always open for an initial off-the-clock discussion.



# Police Mortgages – our market update for NCOA members



## UK mortgage market overview

The UK mortgage market in August 2026 continues to be shaped by volatility and short-term fluctuations. Although the Bank of England has held the base rate at 3.75% since December – the lowest level since early 2023 – this stability has not translated into consistent mortgage pricing.

Wholesale swap rates remain highly sensitive to global events, particularly the conflict in the Middle East. As tensions escalated through July and early August, lenders increased fixed rate pricing, reversing reductions seen during temporary ceasefire periods.

Current average rates:

- Two-year fixed: 5.61%
- Five-year fixed: 5.64%
- Average across all mortgage types: 5.57%

Some major lenders – including Nationwide, Barclays and Coventry Building Society – have reduced selected fixed rates by up to 0.50 percentage points, reflecting easing swap rates in mid July and competitive pressures.

## Key trends shaping the market

**1: Global events driving volatility** – Mortgage pricing is currently more reactive to geopolitical developments than domestic monetary policy.

Energy price shocks and market uncertainty have pushed swap rates higher, prompting lenders to withdraw cheaper deals and reprice rapidly. The average shelf life of a mortgage product fell to 11 days in July.

**2: A mixed picture for borrowers** – Competitive deals remain available despite rising averages:

- Lowest two-year fixed: 4.39%
- Lowest five-year fixed: 4.48%



## 3: First-time buyer pressures –

Affordability continues to tighten. Loan-to-value (LTV) products remain available, but rates at 90-95% LTV typically sit between 5.21% and 5.70%, stretching budgets for new buyers.

## Outlook for the rest of 2026

Most analysts expect stability rather than significant rate cuts. The Bank of England is likely to maintain its cautious, data-driven approach, with inflation – particularly energy-related – limiting scope

for reductions.

Fixed-rate mortgages will continue to move in line with swap rates, meaning borrowers should expect short-term fluctuations rather than a clear downward trend.

## What this means for NCOA borrowers

**Act promptly** – With products changing rapidly, securing a rate early can help avoid disappointment.

**Consider longer fixes** – Five-year fixed rates are currently only marginally higher than two-year deals, offering greater stability in a volatile market.

**Seek professional advice** – Police Mortgages can help NCOA members understand your options and secure the most suitable product.

At Police Mortgages we pride ourselves in being available to all NCOA members when they need us, and we're happy to advise you and offer professional advice and options to enable you to secure the right mortgage deal for you. And don't forget our service is non-committal and FEE FREE.

So, act now and book an appointment with us at a time that suits you by using the QR code above or by visiting <https://police-mortgages.co.uk>.

## Puzzle Time answers for Under Cover issue 24

### Quick Crossword



### Cryptic Crossword



### Easy Sudoku

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3 | 5 | 6 | 9 | 7 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 8 |
| 9 | 1 | 8 | 6 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 7 |
| 4 | 7 | 2 | 3 | 8 | 1 | 6 | 9 | 5 |
| 6 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 7 | 8 | 5 | 9 |
| 1 | 8 | 5 | 2 | 9 | 3 | 7 | 6 | 4 |
| 5 | 6 | 9 | 7 | 1 | 8 | 4 | 2 | 3 |
| 8 | 4 | 1 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 9 | 7 | 6 |
| 2 | 3 | 7 | 4 | 6 | 9 | 5 | 8 | 1 |

### Hard Sudoku

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 9 | 8 | 4 | 6 | 3 | 7 | 2 | 5 |
| 5 | 7 | 2 | 8 | 1 | 9 | 3 | 6 | 4 |
| 3 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 2 | 7 | 9 | 8 | 1 |
| 9 | 8 | 5 | 7 | 3 | 6 | 1 | 4 | 2 |
| 6 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 9 | 4 | 5 | 7 | 8 |
| 2 | 4 | 7 | 1 | 5 | 8 | 6 | 3 | 9 |
| 7 | 3 | 1 | 9 | 8 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 4 | 2 | 9 | 6 | 7 | 5 | 8 | 1 | 3 |
| 8 | 5 | 6 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 9 | 7 |

### Word Ladder

|      |
|------|
| MISS |
| MOSS |
| MOST |
| COST |
| COAT |
| BOAT |

### Word Wheel

COLLEAGUE

Branch Commander (and NCOA National Executive Member in waiting) >>>>>>>>>  
tells *Under Cover* about his secret life away from work.

I'm fortunate enough to fish an exclusive lake near home and, as a thank you, I decided to buy a carp for

After all, perhaps I've come full circle. After 44 years of chasing criminals, I'm now being outsmarted by a fish. Honestly, I wouldn't have it any other way.

UNDER COVER / ISSUE 25 / AUTUMN 2026 / 21

## >>>>>>>>> Vigo colleagues turn compassion into action

Earlier this year, NCOA member >>>>>>>, based at Vigo, received the devastating news that he had been diagnosed with Stage 4 bowel cancer, which had spread to other areas of his body.

For >>>>>>> and his family, the impact was profound. For his colleagues, the response was immediate – they wanted him to know that he had their support at this difficult time.

One colleague in particular, NCOA member >>>>>>>>>>, was inspired to do more than offer words of support.

After watching the London Marathon and the charity fundraising surrounding it, she began searching for a challenge that would bring the team together. Whilst admitting that for her at least “running was no longer an option”, the London Shine Night Marathon Walk offered the right combination of purpose, endurance and shared commitment.

Organised by Cancer Research UK, Shine Night Walks bring people together after dark to raise funds and awareness. Participants can direct their fundraising towards an area of cancer research that matters to them. For this team, the purpose could not be more personal.

The idea quickly gathered momentum with a number of colleagues volunteering to get involved by forming a team with a single aim: to support >>>>>>> while raising money for research that helps people affected by cancer.

In total, 11 colleagues from Vigo were scheduled to take part in the London Shine Night

Walk at Battersea Park on 19 September – nine attempting the full marathon distance, and two completing the 10K. Those named in the team include

**(Names redacted for web version)**

They will walk under the name, ‘>>>>>’, an anagram of >>>>> >>>>> It is very personal and unmistakably centred on the colleague who inspired the

challenge.

>>>>>>> told us that following a successful training event (in the July heat!) at Bewl Water Reservoir, “we are looking forward to a fun but challenging way of raising funds in the name of our colleague”.

>>>>>>> told **Under Cover**: “It was devastating for me and my family to receive the diagnosis.

It’s marvellous to receive the support – and the team deciding to raise money for Cancer Research UK is great. I hope to be there at the start to see the team off.”

By the time this edition is published, the event will have taken place – no doubt with the blisters and sore feet to prove it. The NCOA has already donated to this very worthy cause and the Shine Night Walk Team are inviting colleagues, friends and supporters to contribute through its Cancer Research UK fundraising page. Whether the donation is large or small, it will recognise the team’s effort and help fund cancer research.



Some birthdays call for a celebration, others demand an adventure. Determined to mark turning 40 with a memorable challenge, >>>>>>>>>>, who works in Investigations within the Birmingham Branch’s Midlands Taskforce, chose the Himalayas.

“I wanted to do a decent adventure for my 40th birthday, and heading to the Himalayas earlier this year seemed to fit the bill,” The result was an extraordinary journey through mountain villages, high-altitude passes and spectacular landscapes, with Everest Base Camp and a 6,000-metre summit along the way.

Even before reaching Nepal the expedition required flexibility, with the original route to Kathmandu through Dubai changing due to conflict affecting regional airspace.

Travelling via Thailand instead, he eventually arrived in Nepal and joined the other trekkers before flying into Lukla, the dramatic starting point for many Himalayan expeditions. From there, the group walked through small settlements to Namche, the area’s principal town and an important staging point for mountaineers.

The expedition initially involved around 18 people; however, after reaching Namche, >>>>>>> and one other trekker separated from the main party to follow the more demanding Island Peak route. Their itinerary took them towards Gokyo, across the Cho La Pass, onward to Everest Base Camp and finally to Island Peak, also known as Imja Tse.

The mountains soon demonstrated how quickly circumstances can change with fellow climber developing acclimatisation sickness which saw him airlifted away, leaving >>>>> to continue with his guide, Angchering Sherpa. >>>>> also experienced headaches and fatigue caused by the altitude, adding another layer of difficulty to an already strenuous undertaking.

He told **Under Cover**: “The weather was amazing for the whole

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## Himalayan 'big' birthday bash

A landmark 40th birthday inspired NCOA member >>>>>>>>>> to take on a demanding 22-day expedition through the Himalayas, culminating in the ascent of Island Peak

trip. I think I got rained on once on the way back to Lukla. A couple of days prior to traversing the Cho La Pass we had snow blizzards overnight, but during the days it calmed down – thankfully.

"The most memorable part was probably the summit of Imja Tse as it was the hardest and longest day of the trip, so the sense of accomplishment was greater on that day. Second was probably the view from Gokyo Ri, due to how the landscape unfolded in front of you.

"The longest day was the summit day for Island Peak which consisted of 14 hours of ascent, including the use of crampons and ropes for getting up through the snow and up the rock faces."

After 22 demanding days, the expedition ended with the return journey through Namche. The combination of altitude, physical effort, changing plans and magnificent scenery made it a fitting 40th-birthday adventure.

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Having completed this incredible challenge, our thoughts are quite simple; get your thinking cap on, we're already looking forward to your 50th Birthday challenge!

*Since providing details of his trip, a major flash flood struck Nepal's Rasuwa district. Communities have been devastated with homes, livelihoods, infrastructure and public services damaged or destroyed. Thousands of people are missing and more than 1,000 have died. Recognising >>>>> efforts, [Under Cover](#) has made a charitable donation to the British Red Cross who are currently involved in the ongoing relief effort.*

# Ultra - remarkable achievement

When NCOA member >>>>>>>> crossed the finish line of the Manchester to Liverpool Ultra Marathon, she wasn't just celebrating a remarkable sporting achievement. Every one of the 50 miles she had run was helping her brother Dawid turn his cancer journey into a force for good.

>>>>> a social worker in the Child Protection Team, completed the Ultra Marathon in April this year; the race started at the Imperial War Museum North in Manchester, and followed the Trans Pennine Trail, Manchester Ship Canal, and River Mersey, to the finish line in Liverpool.

Talking to [Under Cover](#), >>>>> said she first started running 14 years ago, and it has become a key part of her life. She loves running as it really helps her wellbeing and also enables her to indulge in her second favourite hobby – food!

She completed her first ultra marathon in 2024, which was slightly shorter than this one, 36 miles. She found that she really enjoyed it and was proud of what her body was able to achieve. However, running was still something that she wanted to do just for her and wasn't hugely interested in competitions and fundraising runs.

## Life-changing diagnosis

But that started to change when her brother, Dawid, was diagnosed with Lymphoma (a type of blood cancer) that developed into Hodgkin's Lymphoma. Before his diagnosis, Dawid led an active outdoor lifestyle with his wife and two daughters. Having already completed one master's degree, he was studying for a second when he received the news.

His diagnosis totally upended his life. He stopped being defined through his achievements, and he started becoming defined by the cancer, a change that was devastating to him, and his family around him.

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Dawid had a rough journey. After several unsuccessful rounds of chemotherapy, he was able to receive an innovative treatment called CAR T-cell therapy, which ultimately helped him enter into remission.

Following his successful treatment, Dawid channelled his experience into a poetry collection, *Life Interrupted*. The book references his cancer journey through poetry and raises funds for three charities

that support blood cancer research and patients.

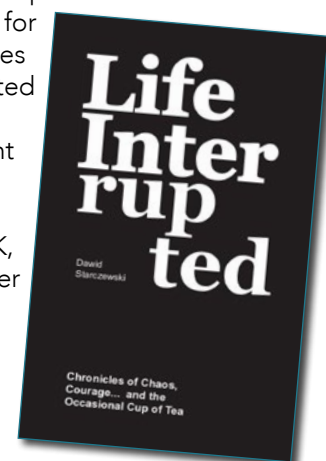
Inspired by Dawid's determination to support cancer research through his poetry, >>>>> decided to help in the way she knew best. Having felt powerless during much of his treatment, she signed up for the Manchester to Liverpool Ultra Marathon to raise money towards publishing his book.

## Making a difference

>>>>> told us: "Running has always been important for my wellbeing, but this challenge meant much more than a personal achievement. It was about supporting my brother and helping him make a difference for others affected by cancer."

>>>>> only had a couple of months to train, which was tough, and she had to rapidly increase her mileage, improve her strength training, and have a stricter focus on food. However, the hard work paid off, and >>>>> had an amazing day. Supported by family members cheering her along the route, she crossed the finish line to earn a gold medal, placing in the top 200 runners out of 750 and as the >>>>-fastest female competitor.

Dawid was so impressed with >>>>> achievement, that he wrote a poem for her. And thanks to >>>>> fundraising efforts, *Life Interrupted* has now been published. The book raises funds for three charities that supported him during his treatment journey: Cancer Research UK, Blood Cancer UK, and Lymphoma Action.



# Keep on running: the race to raise suicide awareness continues



Leodhais Macpherson running his 128th marathon

RNLI / Charlie King

In the Spring 2025 issue of **Under Cover**Leodhais Macpherson >>>>>>>>>> told of his 128 marathons in 128 days challenge to raise funds for If U Care Share Foundation – a suicide prevent and support charity – and the RNLI.

On 2 June 2025,Leodhais completed the challenge and ran through the grounds of the historic Tynemouth Priory Castle, supported and cheered on by approximately 1,500 well-wishers.

## Incredible challenge

More than £100,000 was raised for charity, an amazing achievement, withLeodhais subsequently speaking with Chris Evans from Virgin Radio, the BBC and ITV News, and the *Sunday Times* newspaper among other media outlets. It didn't end there, and as Churchill once said: "This is not the end, it's not even the beginning of the end, but it's perhaps the end of the beginning!"

Since completing this incredible challengeLeodhais' life has changed beyond belief. He moved to Vancouver to be with his fiancé before the couple married last month in a glorious setting in Spain.

If that wasn't enough, in February he won the Abbott Marathon Major, a life-changing race with prizes included all expenses paid trips to compete in high-profile marathons all over the world. These include the London Marathon (which he completed in April) Sydney (August), Berlin (September), Chicago (October), New York (November), Tokyo (March 2027), Boston (April 2027), and Cape Town (May 2027).

Leodhais wishes to thank the NCOA and our members for the fantastic support during his marathon challenge and was overwhelmed by the donations. Although not fundraising during his Abbott Major challenge he is still raising awareness about suicide prevention having lost his brother Conor in November 2018.

## Documenting the journey

Together with Andy Smythe, a personal friend and former BBC documentary film maker who now runs his own production company, LeftSide Films,Leodhais collaborated to make a documentary of his own incredible journey.

As we go to print (and **Under Cover** magazine is the first to know!), the documentary will be shown for the first time at the Tyneside Cinema, Newcastle on 30 September 2026. With several marathon majors, a documentary and the ongoing publicity the message about suicide prevention is getting out there.

What an achievement and what a great cause; be sure to followLeodhais' journey on Instagram at the.marathon.man.





# NCOA

National Crime Officers Association  
The Trade Union of the NCA

## INSURANCE BENEFITS TRUST SCHEME BENEFITS

Effective from 1st June 2026

### Serving Member aged under 70

|                                                                          |                    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Life Insurance                                                           | £100,000           |
| Terminal Prognosis Advance on Life Insurance                             | 20% of sum insured |
| Critical Illness                                                         | £12,500            |
| Child Critical Illness                                                   | £2,500             |
| Child Death Grant                                                        | £3,000             |
| Permanent Total Disablement ( <i>due to accident</i> )                   | £100,000           |
| Accidental Loss of Use                                                   |                    |
| Total Loss of sight in one or both eyes                                  | £50,000            |
| Total Loss of one or more limbs                                          | £50,000            |
| Total Loss of hearing in both ears                                       | £50,000            |
| Total Loss of hearing in one ear                                         | £12,500            |
| Total Loss of speech                                                     | £50,000            |
| Permanent Partial Disablement ( <i>dependent upon severity</i> ) % Scale | Up to £50,000      |
| Hospitalisation Benefit up to seven nights                               |                    |
| Accident/illness/emergency admission                                     | £50 per night      |
| Emergency Dental Treatment ( <i>due to accident</i> )                    | Up to £500         |
| Sick Pay Benefit                                                         |                    |
| Half Pay up to 26 weeks                                                  | 20% Scale Pay      |
| No Pay up to 26 weeks                                                    | 50% Scale Pay      |
| Worldwide Travel Policy                                                  | Family             |
| Mobile Phone Insurance                                                   | Member & Partner   |
| Health Assured                                                           | Family             |
| <b>CALENDAR MONTHLY SUBSCRIPTION</b>                                     | <b>£33.35</b>      |

### Cohabiting Partner aged under 70

|                                               |                    |
|-----------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Life Insurance                                | £50,000            |
| Terminal Prognosis Advance on Life Insurance* | 20% of sum insured |
| Critical Illness                              | £7,500             |
| <b>CALENDAR MONTHLY SUBSCRIPTION</b>          | <b>£10.95</b>      |





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