

Police Federation
Of England and Wales



Ffederasiwn Heddlu
Lloegr a Chymru

Established by Act of Parliament

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FROM THE OFFICE OF THE NATIONAL CHAIR

27 July 2021

Open letter to the Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer

Dear Prime Minister & Chancellor

In advance of the reception you are holding for police officers in Downing Street this afternoon, the Police Federation of England and Wales wants to make absolutely clear the strength of feeling among our members about your government's attitude to, and treatment of, our members. As the undisputed voice of policing, representing 130,000 rank and file officers across 43 forces, we cannot stand by and allow the present situation to continue.

It is hard to overstate the anger that many feel that they are taken for granted, and not treated with the respect that their contribution to the good of the country merits.

This is about much more than money, though for many the offer of a zero per cent pay rise, after all the police has been through in helping deal with the pandemic, was the final straw. It is about the risks you asked us to take - which we did, because it is our duty - without proper PPE. It is about the endlessly changing and confusing Covid legislation which we were expected to police - which we did, because it is our duty. It is about your mixed messaging and lack of understanding of our role, which combined to put many of our members in invidious positions which led to them being abused and attacked. It is about the false claims by the Home Secretary that we were fully consulted on some of the more controversial elements of the new police legislation, which itself led to members being put at further risk when policing recent protests.

Represent Influence Negotiate

It is about the failure, despite the promises of the Home Secretary, to take seriously our request that police officers should be given early priority for vaccination. It is about the very strong feeling we have, not least when the Prime Minister and Home Secretary spoke at our Annual Conference, that the warm words flow easily, but the actions that show genuine support for the police do not.

It is also about the lack of appreciation in government about the impact of the pandemic on the mental health of police officers, a report on which was published yesterday, which showed more than three quarters of police officers had mental health difficulties in the last year.

To be absolutely frank, a drinks reception being held just days after we expressed no confidence in the Home Secretary, with forces being asked to find officers injured during the pandemic so that you may express support for them, merely underlines this. Yet again, we are being patted on the head and told to be good boys and girls. It feels like we are being treated not just with a lack of respect, but with contempt.

Police officers are sick of gimmicks. Sick of underfunding. Sick of mixed messaging putting police at risk. Sick of government contempt for police. It's time for a total reset of police-government relations.

Just this weekend, we find out through a Sunday newspaper column about a new so-called Beating Crime Plan. We don't need old ideas presented as new, we need genuine investment for the whole of the Criminal Justice System and genuine consultation over new ideas. Without that, this is just another ill-thought out initiative.

We fully accept our role in helping to keep the country safe. We work hard to ensure good relations between police and public because policing only works well when it is policing by consent. But we do not believe the spirit in which we approach our role with the public is matched by the spirit in which you and your government deal with the police.

Because of our special responsibilities, we are denied the employment rights of other public sector workers, such as the right to strike. Though this is an inequality written into law, it is one our members overwhelmingly accept because they take seriously their duty and their responsibility to society at all times. Part of the anger currently felt is the widespread feeling that because you know we can't - and wouldn't - go on strike, you feel you can continue to treat the police as a poor relation of the public sector.

We urge you to understand the genuine grievances felt by our members, to address them, and to work with us to develop a more positive and productive relationship for the future.

As you will be aware, we have withdrawn from the Police Remuneration Review Body and believe that a genuinely independent system must replace it. The current system is not fit for purpose and must be replaced by something which properly takes account of policing interests and is not so readily and easily manipulated by government. We will conduct our own inquiry into the kind of systems which could do so, and rebuild confidence that pay awards can be fair and arrived at with meaningful consultation. We hope you will take this initiative with the seriousness it merits.

We know there are many pressures, political and financial, on you as prime minister and chancellor. But we hope you agree that good relations between government and police are essential not just in the fight against crime, but in ensuring a strong and cohesive society at such a difficult time for the country.

To that end, we want to see a complete reset of the relationship between government and the police, starting with the following 3 requests:

1. Stop taking police officers for granted and treat them with respect;
2. Agree to work with us on an entirely new and fairer system of remuneration decision-making; and,
3. Reverse the zero percent pay award decision and give our police officers a meaningful pay increase.

These, in our view, are fair and reasonable requests which, if responded to positively, could at least begin to build a new and better relationship between government and police.

I ask that you show your support and protect the protectors - so that we can properly protect the public.

Yours sincerely



John Apter
National Chair of the Police Federation of England and Wales

Cc: Rt Hon Priti Patel MP, Home Secretary