

Are we as safe as we could be?

First may I take this opportunity to thank the members that voted for me in July 2009 to become a Federation representative for the HQ Branch.

Chris Anderson, HQ Rep



This is my first article for Manchat and the ones that know me will know it's not my last.

Officer Safety, I hear you all groan now, always has and always will be a passionate subject of mine. With the introduction of Taser last year for operational officers is a sure sign of the way forward. There have been a number of excellent incidents, too many to mention here, involving our operational officers that have saved the usual GMP pile on, complaints and subsequent injuries that follow. So why am I writing this article if we are becoming safer?

Since becoming the Self Defence supervisor in 2005 and recently Federation Representative for the HQ branch in 2009, a number of high profile incidents have occurred within GMP that have put Officers, the Organisation and Myself in difficult positions. Hopefully this article may assist us all not to be in the same position again.

The Personal Protective Equipment we have, can and will deal with most of the violent incidents we have to deal with on an everyday basis. The training we provide to the Taser officers is excellent and I have every confidence in their abilities to use it. The problem all officers have is the writing about the incident.

The conflict management model CMM (more groans I hear) is the model we teach. Ask all your Taser officers how they reacted on Day 1 of the Taser course when they heard CMM? Exactly how you are reacting now. Now ask

them how they react after Day 4 of the course? Every officer I speak to after the course asks the relevant question, why do we not have this?

Another one is Use of Force. (More groans again). I regularly attend Sergeant and Inspector courses, delivering inputs on Taser and always ask the same question. What is the legislation regarding use of force? If I am lucky, I get Section 3, Section 117 and Common Law. Fine I hear you say. When I probe deeper and ask, Great, what does each item say?

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I get the usual tumbleweed across the classroom. So what does that tell you, the organisation and me? We do not know when we can use force. Supervisors ask yourself and your staff the same question, as an old adage of mine is you will never lose your job, or worse still go to one of her Majesty's Establishments for getting the definition of burglary wrong.

We hear and say words like proportionate, reasonable, and necessary and what do they mean? As

police officers, we must know these and yet we do not. I have regular contact with our Professional Standards Branch regarding officer's action, view CCTV, files and statements. Most of the time I am able to defend the officers actions, some never even get the standard Regulation 15 papers after my advice (at present I have three complaints that I am looking at). The officers action are usually lawful, and yet we cannot justify them in a written format.

So why do we not know the items above. Well GMP provides 1-day officer safety training every 18 months. It is something I have campaigned for since my employment within the department to bring GMP up to the National Minimum Standard, which is a minimum of 2 days every year. At present there has now been a reconvening of an employee's working party for Officer Safety which hopefully will give every officer the knowledge and ability to understand our use of force and more importantly how to write about it and I thank our Learning and Development lead Richard Heaton for pushing this forwards.

This in turn will see fewer complaints, as evidenced by a comparative force our size, less days lost with officers being off due to injuries, a recent Police Review article showed that our force had double the length of day's sickness due to assaults compared with that same force.

So GMP, give us what every other force does every year and help us to become safer. In the knowledge, understanding and ability that we can write about why we have done

something, which in turn will show a decrease in the number of complaints, less stress for officers complained about, more convictions, less time at court and more importantly we will not be off work injured as often. (The same comparative force gives their officers 3 days a year)

This does not mean the usual NCALT, distance learning or pre-read. This means adequate appropriate training for Officer Safety to protect our members, your staff.

It is no good closing the barnyard door after the horse has bolted. Our officers need the protection to enable them to deal with every day incidents and as I write this, one of our colleagues will be using force, and yet we receive Public Order Training and Firearms training regularly. How many major Public Order incidents have occurred? How many major Firearms incidents have occurred? Not a fraction of how many times our members have been assaulted, complained about, interviewed by the Professional Standards Department, charged and attended court.

Therefore, when I hear abstractions, I hear we do not care.

Ask the members, would you rather have the additional training that all

other forces throughout the country receive or would they rather go through the stresses of complaints, interview, and court proceedings and possibly lose their job, family, livelihood and be left with nothing after allegations of excessive use of force.

We hear we want to become the best force in the country; well we need the best safety training for our officers to be even close to this.

An Inspector of mine once said, 'short term pain, long term gain'. We have a department that is developing into one of the best in the country and yet we need the right venues, staff and training to provide this necessary safety of our colleagues, members of the public and organisation.

With budgetary constraints, it will be more cost effective long term to give every officer what they deserve. The right training, so we can properly write about every time we use force in the knowledge that we can justify why we have done something without looking over our shoulders and wondering when the next interview will occur for doing what we are paid to do.

Make us safe in the knowledge we are getting the training and support which nearly every other officer receives in England and Wales.

In conclusion, if you have used force on a person, please document it somewhere, your PNB, Statement or even FWIN. To assist with the impact factors you face on a daily basis and your reasonable officer response options, there is a webpage under Operational Training within the Learning and Development Branch on the Intranet. This also has the Legislation you will have used. Do not hide away thinking it will be ok and don't think by not documenting it fully that it will go away or you can answer the difficult questions posed by the interviewing team.

With the CCTV cameras all over GMP and operators that are not police officers that always follow you everywhere waiting for you to do something. The next time you hear anything is when it is in the Manchester Evening News or Professional Standards Branch contact you in relation to receiving the obligatory papers.

Never forget, Your Federation and I are always available to speak to for advice in relation to any use of force issues. Please contact us if you have any concerns and document every time you use any force. It may just help you the one and only time you need it.



NORTH WEST POLICE BENEVOLENT FUND

COMING SOON !!!!

St Michael's Lodge is the North West Police Benevolent Fund's latest project

to improve facilities to the members. It is a small hotel situated in Langho, Lancashire (near Clitheroe) in the fantastic Ribble Valley. The building is currently being renovated and is due for completion within the next few months, apart from the hotel facilities it will also be used for Physiotherapy Treatment for members of the Benevolent Fund.

The Trustees of the Benevolent Fund recognise that some people have caring responsibilities and are just not in a position to accommodate a residential stay at either of the

Harrogate or Auchterarder Treatment Centre's and as such hope this facility will be able to assist them to access treatment on a day patient basis.

This facility is still very much in the planning stages with a lot of work still needed on the finer details, please watch out for further information in a later edition but the Trustees are aiming for an opening date in October 2010

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