

NATIONAL ATTENDANCE MANAGEMENT FORUM

QUARTERLY MEETING

HOSTED BY WEST MIDLANDS POLICE AT TALLY HO! BIRMINGHAM

FRIDAY 6th DECEMBER 2013

1) Welcome

Chris Rowson opened by welcoming everyone to the meeting and congratulated Liz Eades (Surrey) for her Force's award from Personnel Today for their work around fitness testing.

2) Update from Joe Whittle (Home Office)

Joe advised that the new Injury Benefit Regulations are not now envisaged as being finalised until the early part of 2014, with some outstanding issues on gratuities to resolve. Similarly, the HML PMAB contract has now been extended to 11 March 2014, in anticipation that the new providers will be identified in February and be in place in March. Work on the new Police Pension Scheme to be introduced in 2015 continues, re which they are now being assisted by Andrew Coley, upon which Joe will provide a more detailed update / presentation at the next meeting. Finally, Joe requested that members have a look at the On Line Forum for Pension Administrators referred to in the September 2013 minutes. Joe's contact details are [REDACTED]

3) Injury Awards

3.1 Feedback around the Room

Trevor Forbes advised that several East Midlands forces were moving towards recommencing reviews, to which Sheila Donscha (Derbys) added that they now have a problem with a review undertaken at age 55 which may now proceed to a judicial review. Steve Mitchel (Notts) advised that they intend recommencing reviews with an upper age limit of 70 once the procurement process for an SMP is completed. In response to any enquiry, Trevor Forbes advised that ideally there should be no age limit but there is the practical issue of ASHE figures only going up to age 69. PSNI advised that they have now suspended reviews and set up a working group to consider the issues surrounding the process. Linda McHale (Cambs) advised that their programme, devised by their former DCC John Feavour, is well underway, with the vast majority of cases being decided as being subject to indeterminate review. They presently have issues with one case. Northumbria advised that they are still working their way through addressing those reduced to band 1 at age 65 following the *Simpson* case. At the conclusion of the discussions Chris Rowson asked Trevor Forbes to provide a brief update on the present position surrounding reviews and this is attached.

3.2 Legal Case Update

Presented by Trevor Forbes in the absence of Caroline Neadley and Paul Barker (Humberside), regrettably unable to attend due to the flooding affecting Eastern areas. Thanks go to both Caroline and Paul for the production of this most useful update. Nick Wirz has also penned his thoughts on the Ambit of the Pensions Ombudsman and this also accompanies the minutes. Finally, in response to a query, Joe Whittle's will forward a further email for circulation on the recent case in Gloucester concerning the interaction between state benefits and injury pensions.

3.3 Proposed Training Day – 31 January 2014

Matt Johnston has had to tender his apologies for today's meeting, but in his absence has supplied a paper update, which has been both circulated by email and a paper copy passed

round today. **Everyone is implored to engage and contribute prior to the day** to ensure that this is a success.

3.4 Feedback on Simpson / Age 65 Reviews

Deferred in the absence of Lynn Tong (Dorset)

3.5 The Compilation of an SMP List

Lesley-Anne Moore (Northumbria) thanked members for their contributions, notwithstanding which information is patchy in some areas. Could those members who have yet to respond please do so and Lesley-Anne will then circulate a definitive list.

4) Interactive Group Session on Police Officer Sickness

Introduced and led by Ashley Judd, to look at sickness data for the years 2011/12 and 2012/13. The feedback from the different groups is given in appendix 1 and following favourable comment from those present, a similar approach will be adopted to 1 or 2 items on subsequent meeting agendas to focus more on effective outcomes for Forces attending future meetings. Topics will include restrictive duties and exit routes in the light of Winsor, UPP stage 3, injury awards and fitness testing. Members are invited to submit other suggestions to Adrian for consideration.

5) Presentation from John Butcher, Head of Chaplaincy, West Midlands

John gave a brief presentation on the work of over 40 voluntary chaplains of all denominations within the Force and how they had helped fill the void in welfare provision resulting from the funding cuts. John also advised of the National Association of Chaplains to the Police, who can be accessed at their website www.police.chaplains.org.uk

6) Minutes of the Meeting held on 6th September 2013

Are taken to be a true and correct record in the absence of any comments to the contrary.

7) Matters Arising from the Minutes

7.1 Update / Feedback on Potential Police Mutual Initiatives

Liz Eades (Surrey) gave a short presentation on a study into the health and wellbeing of officers and staff working within a public protection investigation unit, a copy of which will be circulated with the minutes. Claire Long (PMAS) spoke briefly about their current projects and activities, including the development of a wellbeing application plus looking at mental health issues in the police service, re which members' help may be sought. Re the mental health initiative, if anyone is interested in participating in a working group, please let Claire know - Claire's contact details are [REDACTED] Claire will provide a more detailed update / presentation on these at the March meeting.

7.2 Experiences / Anecdotes re Fitness Testing

Discussed briefly around the room and will remain an agenda item in the run up to formal implementation later in 2014. It is anticipated that numbers unable to meet the requirements will ultimately be very low, though the Federation continue to strive to reduce competency thresholds.

7.3 Feedback on Stress and Related Absences

Steve Mitchel (Notts) advised that he had received a handful of responses but this topic has now been overtaken by other discussions and activities within the Forum.

8) Delegate Items

8.1 Update on the Proposed 'Line Management Responsibility for Attendance Management Issues' Event

Carmel McCormack reminded those present that this will be a one day event on Thursday, 27 March 2014. Response to the communication circulated mid November about this has been disappointing and those who haven't done so are requested to respond without further delay to support our PSNI colleagues with this initiative. An invitation has also been extended to the HMIC to attend and NAMF is also welcome to hold its quarterly meeting the following day on Friday, 28 March 2014. Members will need to fund their own accommodation and travel costs. **Responses from everyone** to both Carmel and Adrian on whether or not you could attend the next NAMF meeting if it is to be held in Northern Ireland **by 31 December 2013 by the very latest** please.

8.2 Items / Speakers for Future Meetings

Chris Rowson / Ashley Judd will endeavour to get Inspector Ian Hesketh to come along to talk at a future meeting on wellbeing resilience and delivering more with less in these financially challenging times.

8.3 Any Other Items

Tracy Webb (Gloucestershire) advised of the existence of and encouraged the group to use the POLKA website. We could become an on-line community as an alternative to the e-mail circulation format presently in use should we so wish. Chris Rowson suggested that perhaps Matt Johnston could research and advise the Forum further on this at its next meeting.

Bob Davies (Warwicks) sought members' views on several aspects of the medical retirement process.

**Date of 2014 Meetings; Friday 7th or 28th March, 6th June, 5th September & 5th December
All except 28th March at Tally Ho, Birmingham commencing at 10.30am**

Appendix 1 – Key Points arising out of the Group discussions of agenda item 4

- The data distributed showing percentage time lost to sickness in the years 2011/12 and 2012/13 by gender for police officers showed a significant disparity between male and female officer sickness that is disproportionate to officer representation.
- Some Forces have been aware of this as an issue for some time, others less so, and cannot be explained by pregnancy and maternity leave.
- Three key issues emerge; long term absence, physiological wellbeing and reasonable adjustments to allow for more flexible working to meet family commitments and achieve a better work life balance.
- Good practices to mitigate are early intervention, command led sickness absence groups and resilience training. This is not purely an HR problem but a significant issue for Line Managers where carefully targeted actions can achieve effective outcomes, given staff costs account for 83% of police force budgets. Forces need to be more strategic and innovative in their approach to flexible working whilst still remaining aligned to demands upon the service.
- The data can be refined and drilled down to identify trends according to length of service, age and ethnicity etc, and so more effectively target remedial action, of relevance given an aging officer population both in terms of length of service plus their respective ages.
- Iquanta is back up and running and can be a useful source of such statistical information.