

PC resigns saying police service is 'at breaking point'

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Joseph Torkington has resigned from policing saying Government leaders should "hang their heads in shame". *Photo: MEN Media*

Front-line policing is at 'breaking point'.

This is what Joseph Torkington, 37, wrote in his resignation letter to his Chief Constable at Greater Manchester Police.

The father-of-three from Buxton, Derbyshire, has resigned after 12 years as a police constable. He blamed savage cuts and said Government leaders should 'hang their heads in shame' for the current state of GMP.

A picture of Joseph published on GMP's website, which states he is a 'dedicated local officer' is 'beyond misleading, if not entirely fraudulent', he writes.

Joseph, who was stationed in Offerton, Stockport, goes on to argue that community policing exists in name only.

In the letter, Joseph wrote:

"Indeed, I firmly believe it was this continuing deception to both staff and the public alike that gave birth to my now deep rooted mistrust of the Government and our entire organisation.

"Other factors followed further compounding my lack of faith and belief...Windsor [the review of terms and conditions]; the pay freeze; the demolition of the terms and conditions of our pensions; the heavy cuts to frontline resources; the increasing bureaucracy despite constant promises for its reduction; the constant changes of systems, focus, direction, priorities, shift patterns, teams, geographical beats, policies, process, protocol, all without any apparent benefit to anyone other than those in the upper echelons of the promotion system.

"The result of the aforementioned? Plummeting morale.

"I can only truly speak for myself, but I am fairly certain my views are shared by the many not the few, that the police service is, all clichés aside, at breaking point."

– Joseph Torkington.

Joseph described a crisis where 'response' officers are sometimes not available for even the most serious 999 calls and how bosses 'give out jobs to patrols that don't exist'.

It leaves officers 'being sent to dangerous jobs with little or no back up' and he reveals he spent his last three years 'in a permanent state of anxiety'.

Joseph continued:

"I'm happy to turn up to any job as long as I have colleagues with me. I'm brave, but I'm not stupid. I have three kids and a glass back, I need back up. I need that reassurance and assistance and it doesn't exist. So Sir, it is with regret that I see no other option but to resign."

– Joseph Torkington.

He conceded to Chief Constable Ian Hopkins that 'you lead us in difficult times', but delivered a withering judgement on the Coalition and Tory governments which have seen the force slashed from 8,200 officers to almost 6,000.

Joseph concluded: "To the government I have nothing good to say whatsoever, they should hang their heads in shame."

Joseph, who emailed the letter to colleagues in Stockport said he had been off at home since March 31 with work-related anxiety and depression.

Joseph said: "I just felt like I needed to be honest. The chief constable needs to know in case he doesn't know, so he understands. This is probably the biggest decision I have ever made."

Deputy Chief Constable Ian Pilling, from GMP, said:

"GMP continues to provide the best service it can to the public whilst facing challenging times with less funding, fewer resources and increasing demand. Sadly, this is a challenge faced by police forces nationally.

"It is always regrettable when someone chooses to leave the police service under circumstances such as this.

"Being a police officer is a difficult job and this is particularly the case in a busy force such as GMP where the complexities create unique demands for our officers and staff, who do a fantastic job day in and day out.

"Despite these challenges, only a small number of officers leave each year through resignation. That said, I understand and accept PC Torkington's decision.

"We wish him the best of luck for the future. On behalf of GMP and all those who worked with Joe, I would like to thank him for his dedicated service over the past years."

– Deputy Chief Constable Ian Pilling, from GMP

A Home Office spokesperson, who pointed to a fall in crime as recorded in the British Crime Survey since 2010, said:

“We are sensitive to the pressures the police face. That is why we have today announced a pay award worth a total of two per cent to frontline officers, and Ministers have begun a programme of engagement with the police to better understanding the demands they face and how these can best be managed.

“We have also protected overall police spending in real terms since the 2015 Spending Review, with Greater Manchester Police receiving £4.2million more in total direct resources funding this year compared with 2015-16.”

– A Home Office spokesperson

They added that Greater Manchester Police has received £545.4million in total direct resource funding this year, which is £4.2million more than 2015-16.

Greater Manchester Police has been forced to axe more than 2,000 officers since austerity was introduced in 2010.

It means the force now has about 6,000 officers on its books just as reported crime is starting to soar.

The latest figures on GMP’s website show that 263,297 crimes were reported in the last 12 months, up 60,926 compared to the year before.

It represents a perfect storm of fewer police officers having to cope with increasing demand for their services.

The Police Federation, which represents rank and file bobbies, said this summer how the problem has been exacerbated by GMP having to deal with more and more reports of historic sex abuse as well as the threat of terrorism.

PC Joseph Torkington’s letter suggests bobbies on the beat have rarely felt so under-pressure.

It all started in 2010 when the Coalition government - continued by the subsequent Conservative administration - introduced austerity to pay for the huge national debt following the financial crisis.

Since then about £180m has been slashed from GMP’s annual budget.

It means community policing, once the bedrock policing in Greater Manchester, has been decimated and the force is struggling to cope.

In June, Chief Inspector Ian Hanson, of the Police Federation, said stretched police officers were struggling to cope in the aftermath of the Manchester Arena bomb and reaching the point of exhaustion.

CI Hanson blamed a combination of savage cuts and a nationwide drive to fight terrorism.



Credit: MEN Media

- PC Torkington's resignation letter in full:

To Chief Constable Hopkins,

I am PC 11834 Joe Torkington. I am currently a Neighbourhood Beat Officer (NBO) based on the J Division.

I write to inform you that as of this date - Monday 28th August 2017 - I hereby give notice of my resignation from my role of Constable with Greater Manchester Police...

"When I began this role in late 2009, Neighbourhood Policing still existed. I took genuine pride in walking my beat, getting to know my community and having the responsibility for tackling any problems that came my way. I had great supervision and colleagues and felt valued and happy in my work.

"Unfortunately, as the years have passed, the role has been gradually eroded and marginalised, to the extent I have genuinely struggled at times to understand exactly what is expected of me.

"Despite remaining an NBO, I have increasingly done anything but Neighbourhood work, yet my photo remains on posters and the like, thus giving the community the impression that they have a dedicated local officer! I actually consider this in itself to be beyond misleading.

"Indeed, I firmly believe it was this continuing deception to both staff and the public alike that gave birth to my now deep rooted mistrust of the Government and our entire organisation.

"Other factors followed further compounding my lack of faith and belief...Windsor (changes to terms and conditions); the Pay Freeze; the demolition of the terms and conditions of our pensions; the heavy cuts to frontline resources; the increasing bureaucracy despite constant promises for its reduction; the constant changes of systems, focus, direction, priorities, shift patterns, teams, geographical beats, policies, process, protocol, all without any apparent benefit to anyone other than those in the upper echelons of the promotion system.

"The result of the aforementioned? Plummeting morale. I can only truly speak for myself, but I am

fairly certain my views are shared by the many not the few, that the police service is, all clichés aside, at breaking point...

"How some of my colleagues can turn up to work knowing they could be walking into a nightmare alone is beyond me.

"I have more than admiration for their individual and collective resilience. I would never claim to be the hardest of men, but once upon a time I could do this job well and was not afraid of confrontation.

"However, for the last two to three years at work, I have been in a permanent state of anxiety and stress.

"Despite what the Government says, this job is all about numbers. I'm happy to turn up to any job as long as I have colleagues with me.

"I'm brave, but I'm not stupid. I have three kids and a glass back, I need back up. I need that reassurance and assistance and it doesn't exist.

"So Sir, it is with regret that I see no other option but to resign. I'd love to say I was riding off into the sunset, walking into a well-paid job etc., but I'm not. I'm going to be earning minimum wage and no doubt struggling financially, but hopefully I'll be able to recover from my anxiety and depression away from what policing has become.

"I wish all my colleagues of every rank I leave behind, all the luck in the world and they will always have my utmost respect. I nod in respect to you to Sir, I know you lead us in difficult times and I imagine with many constraints and restrictions placed upon you.

"To the government I have nothing good to say whatsoever, they should hang their heads in shame.

"As for me...what can I say...I am more than a number."

– Joseph Torkington.

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