

POLICE 5

Fancy trainers

CHIEF constable Peter Neyroud, currently reviewing police training, could start by asking whether the thousands of pounds spent on private executive mentoring for him and his team was good value for taxpayers.



The boss of the National Police Improvement Agency (NPIA), Mr Neyroud has been asked by home secretary Theresa May to carry out a "fundamental review" of police leadership and training, as part of the hunt for £1bn in savings. The NPIA itself is due to be scrapped, but much of its work will move into the new National Crime Agency.

Mr Neyroud's own coaching was provided by "change facilitator" Jon Harvey at a cost of £7,500, but he isn't the only one seeking pricey one-to-one hand-holding from management gurus. Figures uncovered by *Police Review* magazine this month reveal that 21 police forces have paid out thousands of pounds for private coaching for their senior officers in the past two years – even though the NPIA offers its own publicly-funded leadership development scheme for cops above the rank of superintendent.

The highest-spending force was Norfolk, which shelled out £31,664 on private coaching, including more than £10,000 on training up assistant chief constable (ACC) Julian Blazeby. It was closely followed by Cleveland Police, which spent £29,527 on mentoring for six staff. North Yorkshire spent a whopping £11,750 on a single officer, deputy chief constable Adam Briggs – who had already had almost £3,000-worth of mentoring in his previous job at Cleveland!

Not all forces were as profligate. Some 27 forces, including the Met, said they hadn't paid for any of their chiefs to use private coaching agencies.

The NPIA also spent an astonishing £10,230 on 62 hours of personal mentoring over three

years for its chief people officer Angela O'Connor, and £6,500 paying international business coaching firm Praesta for a detailed feedback session for chief information officer Richard Earland... who then retired in October, making any investment in his skills somewhat pointless.

Fair cop?

NEITHER the Crown Prosecution Service nor Gloucestershire police is prepared to reopen an investigation into the death of an 18-year-old moped rider – even after a coroner ruled that the car driver who caused the fatal crash had made a "grave error of judgement".

An inquest was told that Ryan Stewart died from head injuries after his moped collided with a Renault Clio driven by police constable Amy Dover, who had turned across his path heading into Stroud police station car park, giving him no time to avoid the crash. An accident investigator said there was no evidence to suggest Ryan was travelling too fast – the minor damage to the moped suggested it was travelling at under 30mph.

Gloucestershire coroner Alan Crickmore said that Miss Dover failed to take proper account of Ryan, underestimated his speed and "made the turn into the car park without any reference to him". Although he gave a verdict of accidental death and said her act was not intended, he added: "Miss Dover's manoeuvre was unsafe and her driving caused the collision that led to Ryan's instant death. She misjudged her position."

Police and the CPS had decided before the inquest that PC Dover should not face any charges. Asked by the *Eye* if the CPS was going to reconsider its decision in the light of the coroner's conclusions, a spokesman said: "This case was reviewed by a district crown prosecutor and it was decided that there was not a realistic prospect of convicting Miss Dover of a criminal offence."

Would that have been the conclusion if an 18 year old had been behind the wheel of the car and a police officer on the moped?

MENTAL HEALTH

Catch 22

A YOUNG autistic man with "significant impairment of behaviour" is stuck in a secure mental hospital thanks to a ludicrous legal Catch 22.

David, whom we have chosen not to identify, has a history of making inappropriate sexual approaches to women. He was detained under the mental health act in a hospital where he could receive treatment to deal with his behaviour. Although he was not violent, concerns about "public safety" meant he was also made the subject of a restriction order which says he cannot leave the hospital without the approval of the justice minister – a move more often associated with the most dangerous violent offenders.

As a result David, who also has severe learning difficulties, has been locked away in a secure mental hospital for four years. Everyone involved in his treatment and care now believes he could safely be cared for in the community with certain conditions, including that he always has an escort. But he cannot get out.

The last mental health tribunal to consider his case ruled that to impose such restrictions would in effect deprive him of his freedom, so he would not really be "discharged" from the mental health orders at all. This would breach article five of the European Convention on Human Rights, the right to liberty and security, and would "thereby be impermissible in law".

As the law stands, David cannot be moved out of the secure mental hospital to a place where he would be happier and better cared for, and where he would pose no risk to anyone, because it is deemed that this would breach his own human rights!

According to Simon Burrows, a Manchester-based barrister, many others are in the same trap. While the doctors' proposals do indeed "restrict" liberty, he says, they do not amount to "deprivation" because David, and others like him, would be able to leave their new homes whenever they wished, albeit under supervision. They would be able to go out to different places for treatment, therapy or work and to socialise with others outside the secure environment.

Mr Burrows is awaiting the outcome of a test case in the appeal courts. Meanwhile David's devoted mother told the *Eye*: "The situation my son is caught in is surreal – his fate governed by a legal system that is totally skewed against people with autism and bears no relation to events in the real world."

CONSOLIDATED CONTRACTORS

Byers market

The Arab construction conglomerate Consolidated Contractors Company International (CCC), which built the notorious Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq and has shovelled money to Labour and Tory politicians alike, is having a spot of bother with m'learned friends.

At the high court in London Mr Justice David Steel tried and failed to contain his exasperation with its delaying tactics. As the *Eye* has reported (issue 1262), the court had previously ordered the sugar daddy for the political class to pay \$75m to the Palestinian tycoon Munib Masri in compensation for profits he says he is owed from a joint oil venture in Yemen.

Although CCC can find the money to fund a succession of British politicians, it has failed to pay Masri one penny in four years. He brought a contempt of court action to get his compensation, and CCC demanded that Mr Justice Steel stop him.

The judge was having none of it. He ruled that the contempt case should go ahead, and revealed how CCC's lawyers had tried every stratagem in the book to avoid paying up. "There was a policy on the part of the defendants to submerge the claimant (and the court) in the late production of a mass of indigestible material," he said. CCC had failed to cooperate with the receiver, and had made "a vast range of applications" to the court, which had "no bearing" on the contempt allegations it faces.

Intriguingly, Mr Justice Steel revealed that the courts may hear some interesting news about how CCC's politicians earn their keep. Masri had hired private detectives to investigate CCC, he explained. They went through rubbish left on the pavement outside the Belgravia offices. "Where they

identified documents which might be relevant, they made copies of those documents and returned the originals to the refuse sacks."

Among the printouts the private dicks found was an email from Stephen "Taxi" Byers, which journalists will want to read when the full contempt of court case begins. CCC claims it has been tampered with, although the judge dismissed the allegation.

'Ratbiter'

FIRE SAFETY

Towering infernos

ALAKANAL House in Camberwell, south London, which killed three women and three children (*Eyes passim*), the Tenant Services Authority (TSA), the regulator for social housing, pledged to set up a national register of social housing tower blocks in England.

The register would allow tenants to find out when their tower blocks had last been assessed for fire risk and when the next assessment was due. Had such a register been in force before the Lakanal fire, a more up-to-date safety regime might have been in place and lives might not have been lost.

Last month the TSA announced that it would not, after all, "develop or coordinate a national register of tower blocks". It was perfectly happy with current arrangements for monitoring fire risks, it said.

The week after the TSA announced its *volte face*, a fire broke out on the 13th floor of Marie Curie House, a stone's throw from Lakanal House

on the Sceaux Gardens estate. Sixty residents had to be evacuated while 30 firefighters, backed up by six fire tenders, managed to extinguish the blaze. Damage was limited to a bedroom and the hallway of the flat where the fire broke out. This was in happy contrast to what happened at Lakanal, where the fire rapidly spread to other floors.

Fortunately for the tenants of Marie Curie House, following the Lakanal fire Southwark council had spent £1.5m on works to make their block safer. It included fitting new fire-proof doors and smoke alarms and removing false ceilings, which at Lakanal had helped the fire spread rapidly.

Marie Curie House and Lakanal House are both now registered on the national database, which the TSA is about to scrap, while tenants living in hundreds of towers will remain in ignorance of how safe their blocks are.

And what of the TSA? It is one of 192 quangos the coalition is abolishing, its functions being taken over by the Homes and Communities Agency. On this performance, it won't be much missed.