

POLICE:NOW

INFLUENCE FOR GENERATIONS



Policing with a disability

PC Oliver Rees,
Hertfordshire Constabulary

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Policing with a disability

I was part of the Watford Safer Neighbourhood Team in Hertfordshire Constabulary, responsible for a very multicultural area with high levels of social housing and unrest. I loved every minute of the programme from start to finish. For me, just completing the Summer Academy and experiencing my attestation to become a police officer was a huge highlight. However, when I received a 'Starfish Award' from Hertfordshire Constabulary, an award given for outstanding service to the community by going 'above and beyond' normal duty, I felt incredibly proud.

I received this award following my work with a local resident who had learning disabilities. Unfortunately, because some people saw this as "different", she experienced prejudice and became a repeat victim of hate crime. I took it upon myself to be her point of contact for the force to effectively deal with these hate crime incidents and provide reassurance. At one point she wrote into my Chief Inspector at Watford praising the impact I had made on her life, stating that she would not be alive today if it was not for the support I had provided. Having a disability myself, I could empathise with this particular victim and it is humbling to know that I was able to make her life even just a little bit happier. In reality that was always my main goal in policing, to make people happy and safe.

My 'invisible' disability of Cerebral Palsy occasionally gained some unwanted and inconsiderate comments from officers who noticed 'differences' in the way I did some things. I felt I had to always dig deeper and work harder than anyone just to be on a level playing field, in part due to my own internal struggles having previously been told that I could never be a police officer due to my disability. However, this was a blessing in disguise as when I was successful, it made me more proud and stronger than I could ever have imagined.

I am now well on my way to achieving what Police Now sets you out to achieve; to become a leader in the community. Completing the National Graduate Leadership Programme has provided me with the skills and experience that have transformed me into a more well-rounded and ambitious person, reduced my insecurities and increased my self-confidence to achieve whatever I want to achieve in life. Police Now has helped me realise my dream of becoming a police officer and has fuelled my passion to continue working in law enforcement. Since completing the programme, I have actually moved to California, not because I wanted to leave the police but rather to start a new life with my wife. My heart is well and truly still in policing and I will shortly be starting a community role with Ventura Police Department with a view to become a detective in the near future.

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