

Cumbria credit gender shift to "hard work"

Cumbria Constabulary has the highest percentage of female officers in the UK.

More than thirty-two per cent (32.8) of all officers in the constabulary are female, and are represented in all ranks up to chief officer.

Cumbria Constabulary say the figures haven't been "achieved by chance" but are the results of "hard work".

They cite the fact that the constabulary champions flexible working and supports those who need to balance their role with commitments outside work. They also hold specialist department open days and have "transparent selection and promotion procedures" which are possible reasons for the gender shift. Officers and staff are also offered a diverse range of opportunities to help them progress including women's development programmes such as Springboard and Spring Forward.

The second Spring Forward course was attended by individuals from six different organisations in the North West, giving some of the constabulary's female leaders a chance to meet with other professional women and share ideas.

The course costs were shared between: Cumbria Constabulary, North Yorkshire Police, Lancashire Police, Civil Nuclear Police, Cumbria Probation Service and Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service. Organiser, Helen Ivory said: "The course created an affordable option for organisations looking to offer high-quality management training, specifically designed for women. It also offered unbeatable networking opportunities that will pay dividends long after the programme has ended."

Inspector Janice Spedding, who leads a local policing team in the Lake District, has worked as a full time uniformed officer within Cumbria Constabulary for 11 years, which she



Inspector Janice Spedding

balances with being a single mum to a son and daughter.

She said: "My dual roles require significant planning by scrutinising shifts and pre-booking nursery places and overnight stops with family, but I am happy that this allows my children to lead a well-balanced and organised life that provides continuity as well as variety.

"During my service within Cumbria Constabulary there has been a marked

increase in the number of female officers. In 1997 I worked on a shift with one or two others, compared to ten or twelve men. Since then the numbers have dramatically increased with a large number of new female recruits, as well as several high ranking female officers, including the Deputy Chief Constable, Christine Twigg."

Insp Spedding and a group of female colleagues have also joined together to create a Women's Network which was launched in January.

She said: "The network events provide opportunities to share experiences and network with others, attend seminars with motivational speakers and career progression guidance, and discover self-development tools."

Deputy Chief Constable Christine Twigg, who is portfolio holder for the Progression portfolio within the ACPO Workforce Development Business, said: "Our next challenge is to work towards increased gender balance throughout the ranks. I am confident that with our continuing support and with the growing number of female role-models to aspire to, that we will achieve this in the future."



Women from six organisations attended the Spring Forward course

College dedicated to mature women students

A Cambridge University college is asking retiring policewomen and staff, or those thinking of taking a career break to study, to consider applying to Lucy Cavendish College.

The college, founded in 1965, is one of three women's colleges in the university, and its special niche is to admit only mature students (aged over 21).

Dr. Lindsey Traub says women who go to 'Lucy' have always done something else first. "Our potential students aren't sitting in school, on track for university, but are scattered throughout the adult population. We have to be pro-active in telling the world that, yes, there really is a college at Cambridge that is dedicated to mature women students."

Dr Traub added: "The college is ideal for

women who have completed an interesting and demanding career, as in the police, and are looking for their next challenge – often an intellectual one, based on long-held interests or academic ambitions.

"Every degree course in the university is available for both undergraduates and graduates – so why not check out the college website to find out more: www.lucy-cav.cam.ac.uk/"