

## **Graduation speech by Trevor Ringland**

**Friday 26th June 2009**

Chief Constable, Graduated Officers, Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen.

It gives me great pleasure to be here on behalf of the Policing Board to welcome you, a group of people who have chosen to serve the community through the Police Service of Northern Ireland.

This is an exciting time for you and I have to hold my hands up now and admit my envy. Had I not gone over to the 'dark side' and become a lawyer, I too would have liked to have become a police officer like my father and his father before him.

Policing since that time has come a long way. We have had a turbulent past but in recent years have seen significant reforms to policing, making policing in Northern Ireland one of the most accountable services in the world; with a policing model that is recognised internationally as incorporating what is best in policing policy, process and

practice. That is evidenced by the number of international visitors and police officers from services around the world who come to Northern Ireland to find out first hand what has happened in policing here. Only recently we have had delegations from both Turkey and Iraq visiting the Board headquarters to learn from our policing experiences.

It is also hugely significant that in Northern Ireland we now have complete political support for policing with a Board and DPPs which represent all the main political parties.

Although policing has progressed tremendously over the last decade, the recent murders of Constable Stephen Carroll, Sappers Mark Quinsey and Patrick Azimkar and Kevin McDaid are a stark reminder that we are not yet a normal society. These attacks sent shockwaves across our community bringing an unwelcome reminder of our troubled past. However, the condemnations from right across the community and political spectrum demonstrated unity and resolve that those who carried out these attacks will not be allowed to undermine the peace process; or the progress that has been made in building a better future for all the people of Northern Ireland in recent times.

The recent violence and intimidation of migrant workers in Belfast and Dungannon was a sickening example of how a small minority of racists and bigots can mar the reputation of an entire society.

None of us want to go back to when shocking acts like this were every day occurrences. It is vital that we all move forward and look forward to a truly normal society. I am the Chairman of a campaign called the One Small Step Campaign which encourages and places the responsibility on everyone to take a small step towards understanding and reconciliation and standing against sectarianism and racism. It is my belief that the only way we will reach a truly shared future is by working together constructively for our mutual benefit. You, as officers and as members of our community, have your role to play in creating a shared society. We have a society that is flourishing and has changed for the better. We still have work to do but we are going in the right direction and, importantly - as we saw by the reaction of most people to the recent intimidation of migrant workers - we are increasingly doing it together.

In the last recruitment campaign 10,000 people wanted to join the PSNI. This is the highest number to date and shows that policing is an attractive career – and sends a powerful message that threats and intimidation are not working.

Each and every one of you, along with your new policing colleagues, should be very proud to be part of policing here in Northern Ireland. Each of you has made the exceptional choice to serve the community through the PSNI. So many people from so many different walks of life have passed through these doors over the last 7 years.

For you on a personal level, today is a milestone. It is a day you should always remember with great pride as it is a celebration of your ambition and achievement.

Over the past few months you will have faced challenges and new experiences. Your training has not been easy – it is not designed to be! It will have tested you, challenged you and helped you push yourself to the limit. There will have been times when you may have thought you would not make it to this point; but with the expert guidance of your

trainers you have made it and in doing so you have shown commitment, perseverance and dedication.

You have successfully completed your training and displayed the qualities necessary to become a police officer. Although today's ceremony marks the end of your training; this is just the beginning. Whilst you have learnt a lot over the past 21 weeks, the learning process is far from over. Now is the chance to put your knowledge, training and instincts to the test but it is important to remember that it is only by continually striving to learn that you and your career will grow and develop.

In choosing to become police officers you have chosen to serve your community. A life dedicated to serving others is far from easy – you will see the worst and the best our community has to offer - but you are fortunate to have the opportunity of making a real difference to people's lives through policing with the community.

Today you have taken a unique oath. You swore to faithfully discharge the duties of the office of Constable with fairness, integrity, diligence and impartiality, upholding

fundamental human rights and according equal respect to all individuals and their traditions and beliefs, and to discharge all duties according to the law.

I have no doubt that as professional police officers you will always remember that oath, because it is only by upholding it that the Police Service will continue to gain the trust, confidence and support of the community. And that is fundamental to policing – trust and support.

Officers, it is now your job, along with your colleagues to serve the best interests of our community and deliver good policing.

If we are to achieve the Police Service which we all deserve and need, we must work hard at securing the trust and support of the whole community through interaction with them.

The emphasis on community for us as a Board, and for the PSNI itself, is hugely significant, as Community Policing is at the very heart of today's policing service and the work of all officers.

Never forget that you are part of this community and the wearing of your uniform changes nothing.

As PSNI's newest officers you are the future of the Police Service of Northern Ireland and ahead of you is a challenging and rewarding career.

So as you begin your policing duties, remember that you will be judged by your actions. In all situations strive to give your best impartially, in fairness and with integrity. I hope that each one of you has a long and successful career ahead of you.

You will no doubt be aware of the major changes to the top team. Deputy Chief Constable, Paul Leighton has retired after 29 years in service and was replaced at the beginning of this month by former ACC Judith Gillespie. The Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde, will be moving on in September to take up the post of President of the Association of Chief Police Officers. Competitions are currently underway by the Board to replace the Chief and to fill the vacant ACC post. They will have big (very shiny) boots to fill but there is no

doubt that successors with equal dedication to policing will be found.

I would like to finish by congratulating you all again on your achievement, and on behalf of the Policing Board, wish you well for the future. You have the Board's best wishes and support.

Thank you.