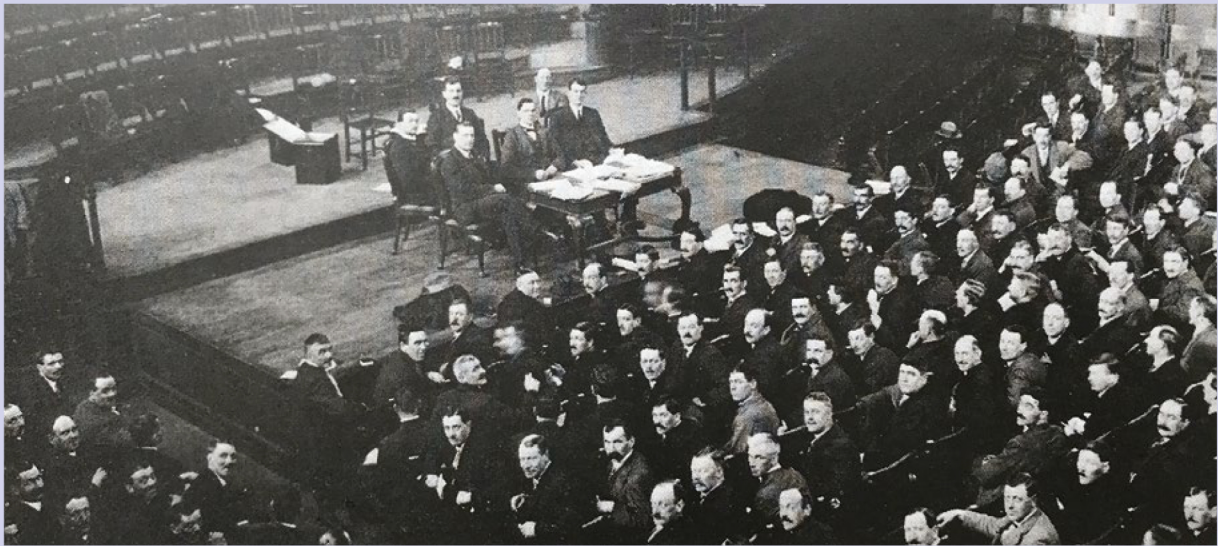


POLICE

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100 YEARS
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Federation



Centenary celebrations at Central Hall

Help for ‘colour impaired’

Police officers who fail a colour vision test often lose the opportunity to carry Taser – but the Federation is anticipating a functional test will be available in early 2020 that will change this.

Colour Vision Deficiency (CVD) affects one in 12 men and one in 200 women. It is very misunderstood, sometimes wrongly referred to as colour blindness, and presumed (incorrectly) to mean that you can only see in black and white, which is very rare. It actually causes those who are affected to process colours differently to the rest of the population, with varying degrees of severity and as to what colours are affected. As a result, officers who suffer from the condition are often rejected from the service or are not permitted to carry a firearm or Taser.

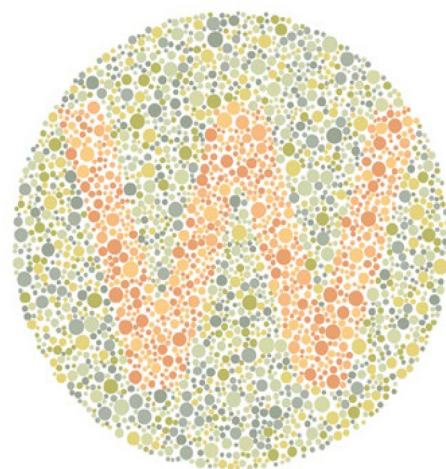
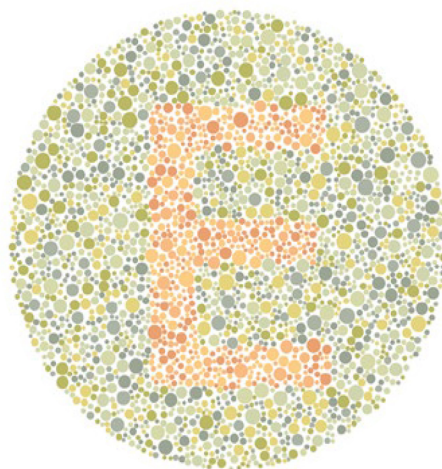
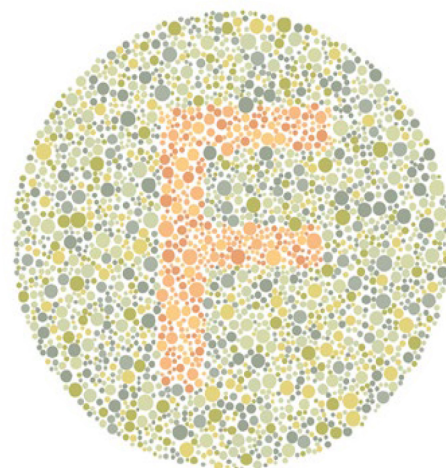
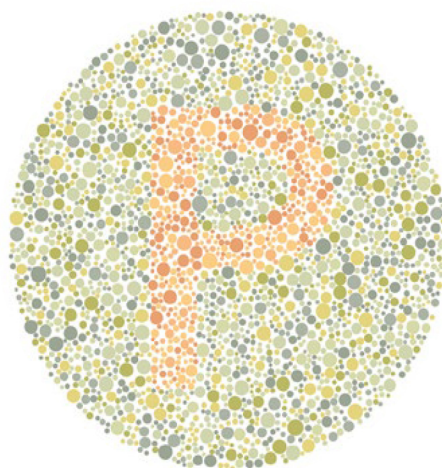
PC Myles Scott of Wiltshire Police is one such officer. “I was diagnosed with colour blindness aged eight,” he said. “I would struggle to make out colours on the white board and art classes were always a problem – once I got kicked out of class for colouring the French flag wrong!” Being diagnosed was a relief for PC Scott, as he finally understood why he saw colours differently to other people and was able to get more support through his school years.

However, his disability again proved a barrier when he failed a sight test and was rejected by the police. He worked as a police call handler and a Special Constable – “I also failed the screening when I applied to become a Special, but it was less of an issue” – and finally gained admission to the Wiltshire force two years ago.

First rainbow

PC Scott’s CVD is severe and has caused him problems in policing, for example while searching for a suspect vehicle in a particular colour. He has however developed coping strategies to make adjustments for his visual impairment.

Things changed for PC Scott when he discovered specialist colour blindness lenses manufactured by US company EnChroma, which are available from only one outlet in the UK – an optician in Hertfordshire called Eyes on St Albans.



PC Scott went for a fitting and it changed his life. He said: “There’s no way for me to describe what it was like wearing those glasses. I was suddenly exposed to a whole range of colours I had never seen. I had never known what red was meant to look like. It was overwhelming but exhausting and I have had to re-educate myself – at 23 I have finally seen my first rainbow.”

Those applying to become Specially Trained Officers (STO) have always been required to pass a test for CVD due to the risks identified by the College of Policing, including not being able to see the red laser dot of a Taser. Not all officers with

CVD are excluded, only those who fall below the threshold. There is a wide variation of types and severity of CVD and the current testing regime does not adequately take account of this, particularly with regards to the severity of the impairment.

PC Scott added: “I’ve done the Taser test and was able to show, even without my glasses, that I could see the red dot. The glasses aren’t regarded as a reasonable adjustment, because CVD is not accepted as a disability, even though in my opinion it 100 per cent is. There needs to be a change in the testing regime so that all officers should be able to carry Taser.

officers who want Taser



PFEW National Vice-Chair Ché Donald with Jez Levy and the Eyes on St Albans team

People are shocked when they hear the statistics of one in 12 people having CVD, therefore very common and there should be policies around this.” PC Scott is helping Wiltshire Police to improve its practices but feels there needs to be better awareness. “For example, if I’m wearing my tinted glasses inside, higher ranked officers will often tell me to take them off, so that leads to an awkward conversation,” he said.

Purple sky

Sergeant Chris Ingledew is a Federation rep who has CVD. As a schoolboy he would “colour in the sky and the sea purple” and was diagnosed with CVD aged six. “I have a severe variation and for me red and browns can be difficult to tell apart,” he said. He has developed ways to

compensate, such as when on response, focusing on other details of a suspect vehicle rather than its colour.

Sgt Ingledew applied to join Greater Manchester Police in 1999 and made it through the opening stages, only to fail the colour vision test and be rejected. He did a variety of jobs from running a pub to exporting waste plastics – but policing was what he had always wanted to do, so he persevered and eventually joined the West Midlands force in 2009 – he is now with Leicestershire Police.

When Sgt Ingledew was rejected for Taser, he sought an explanation from the College of Policing and eventually turned to the Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW) for help. They funded a legal challenge which was unsuccessful at a tribunal. “I’ve spoken to a lot of firearms

officers with the same condition as me and it doesn’t prevent them doing the job – they are worried about giving evidence though,” he said. “If we’re saying CVD is dangerous, they could have a problem of losing lots of firearms officers around the country overnight.” He became a Fed rep to help others in a similar situation and continues to do.

Excluded from carrying

Typically, forces train between 10-20 per cent of officers to use conducted energy devices (CEDs). Chief officers are starting to equip a much higher proportion, which means the number of officers who could be excluded from carrying Taser will grow.

Ché Donald, PFEW National Vice-Chair, is confident that a functional test for CVD officers in relation to Taser is on the cards.

This would be a “massive leap forward if the suggested document put forward by the College of Policing, gets the go ahead” he said.

“The PFEW has been pushing for a wider roll out of Taser,” said Mr Donald. “It does save lives and prevents officers from receiving life changing injuries – in over 90 per cent of encounters where Taser is introduced it results in de-escalation – so the red dot alone diffuses 90 per cent of violent incidents.

“Our own research shows that 76 per cent of officers are ‘always or almost always single crewed’, and we also know there is a significant increase in assaults against police officers, so we need to ensure they are properly equipped to do their job effectively. Taser is part of that regardless of whether you have CVD.”



*If you think you might be suffering from CVD search online for ‘ishihara test’, or visit www.nhs.uk/conditions/colour-vision-deficiency/
For more information on the EnChroma glasses, go to www.eyesonstalbans.com*

Functional test

The PFEW is supportive of a strategy involving a functional test for officers who fail a colour vision test. This would be a sensible way forward as it is felt that the College of Policing test is not fair, valid or reliable. This piece of work is being driven by PFEW National Firearms and Taser Lead, Steve Hartshorn.

Jez Levy is the entrepreneur owner of Eyes on St Albans and achieved his status as the only UK supplier of EnChroma lenses through patience and perseverance (the manufacturer usually sells its product via mail order). There are six different lenses and therefore officers are advised to visit Mr Levy and be tested in store.

He said: “They do not work for everybody, but we’re experiencing a success rate of eight or nine out of every 10 people – they are also available with prescription.” He set the business up 18 months ago and said business has been “crazy” thanks to EnChroma.

Mr Levy has agreed to supply the PFEW with two pairs of specially adapted glasses free of charge. The National Chair and Vice-Chair will make these available to officers to try on as they travel around the country or visit PFEW HQ.

It should be noted however that EnChroma lenses do not cure colour vision, and the enhancing capabilities vary from person to person. Current CVD testing does not allow for colour correcting lenses to be used while undertaking the test.