Citizens in Policing
National Benchmarking Exercise - Phase One
January 2017
About the National Benchmarking Project

The national portfolio for Citizens in Policing, led by Chief Constable Dave Jones, has launched a new national strategy which prioritises evidence-based approaches.

The national benchmarking exercise aims to identify current data on citizen involvement across all forces in England and Wales and to drive improvements in data and analysis across citizens in policing.

This is the first report of the ongoing national benchmarking project, delivered by the Institute for Public Safety, Crime and Justice at the University of Northampton.

About the Institute for Public Safety, Crime and Justice

The IPSCJ delivers quality research and insight to support radical innovation within public safety services and the criminal justice system.

The Institute has established a Centre for Citizens in Policing which aims to enhance the impact of citizen involvement in policing through undertaking research, translating evidence into practice, supporting innovation, and leading new thinking on policy and practice.

The initial focus of the new Centre is on delivering a large-scale programme of applied research and translation across police volunteering and Special Constables, collaborating with a number of police forces across England and Wales, as well as working nationally and internationally.

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Making a big contribution

The hours served by volunteers in policing is substantial; an overall figure in excess of 5 million hours per year seems a reasonable estimate from the available data.

This includes over 3.6 million hours served by Special Constables annually, representing 10,000 hours each day.

Methodologies to assign financial value to police volunteering activities are immature and unsophisticated, but an estimate in the region of £50-100m for the overall worth of this volunteering activity seems a reasonable estimation from available data.

This activity is undertaken by over 38,000 volunteers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Estimated Annual Hours Served in England &amp; Wales</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Special Constable</td>
<td>3,650,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police Support Volunteer</td>
<td>650,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPCC Volunteers</td>
<td>60,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer Police Cadets</td>
<td>1,100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>5,460,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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38,285 Total police volunteers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Estimated Numbers in England &amp; Wales</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Special Constable</td>
<td>16,279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police Support Volunteer</td>
<td>8,106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPCC Volunteers</td>
<td>2,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer Police Cadets</td>
<td>11,000</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The breadth of specialist roles

- Cyber related
- Roads
- Road safety education
- Fraud and economic crime
- Marine
- Public order
- Neighbourhood panels
- Court observers
- Managing dangerous offenders
- School & student liaison
- Scrutiny panels
- Hostage negotiation
- Out of court disposals
- Animal welfare
- Assurance - E.G. Mystery shoppers
- Supporting young people
- CCTV
- Licensing
- Public transport
- Public liaison
- Research
- Victim support
- Youth justice
- Rural crime
- Restorative justice
- Mentoring
- Business liaison
- Museums
- Specialist advisory
- Hate crime
- Intelligence analysis and support
- Comms and media
- Selection, role playing
- Driving
- Cadet leaders
- Online communities
- Libraries
- Stolen cycles co-ordination
- Prevention
- Interpreting
- Mental health
- Forensics
- Vehicle repair
- Training
- Professional standards
- Heritage and cultural crime
- Vetting
- HR
- Chaplains
- IOM
- Missing persons
- Child protection
- Central ticket office
- Front enquiry desks
- Special branch
- Force band
- Exit interviews
- ANPR
- Puppy walker /support
- Quality callback
- Family Liaison /support
- Strategic advisor
- Coroners support
- Volunteers on horseback
- SARC
Police forces are making significant investment across their volunteering activity.

The Benchmarking Survey responses suggest dedicated budgets in excess of £10m nationally for Specials, and £1.5m for PSVs. Given gaps in data, it is likely that dedicated budgets are higher than this and likely to be upwards of £15m. There are substantial spends around volunteering programmes (e.g. communications, marketing, recruitment, HR support, vetting, training, etc.) which are not contained within dedicated volunteering budgets in many forces.

There are large numbers of posts dedicated to supporting police volunteering and the real figure is likely to be well over the 235 posts identified within the Benchmarking Survey. These posts represent collectively a significant capacity and resource, but there is a sense that there is little collective marshalling beyond work at the force level, and that there is potentially considerable duplication of activities across forces in terms of policy, planning and management.
Variations across forces

There are significant variations between different forces in the numbers and utilisation of Specials and Police Support Volunteers. The differences in numbers of PSVs is particularly pronounced between forces.

Inconsistency and absence of common standards across police volunteering present major challenges. Approaches to recruitment, training, and ‘independent patrol status’ are particularly marked in their variation across forces for Special Constables. There is very little commonality of approaches, processes and standards in respect of PSVs.

The national programme model for Cadets provides a greater sense of national strategy and approach for the Volunteer Police Cadet arrangements across forces, although there still appear to be some marked variations in policy and practice.
It is important to recognise that not all variation is a bad thing: local areas should be responding to local needs. Much about voluntarism lends itself to local ideas, initiative, innovation, invention and individualisation and there needs to be a balance to avoid overly rigid and restrictive national frameworks which become a limiting ‘one size fits all’ model.

However, there are key aspects where the current picture is unnecessarily inconsistent and arguably ‘under-represented’. Inconsistency impacts on key elements including transferability, scaling up, joint working and mutual aid.

The absence of a consistency of standards also risks undermining credibility; a framework of common professional standards is a critical element of the further professionalisation of police volunteering.
There is very limited regional and national organisation, support structures and infrastructure for volunteering in policing. The Cadet arrangements do have a national resourced programme. For Specials, PSVs and OPCC volunteers no equivalent arrangements are currently in place. Regions do have meeting arrangements in respect of Specials and PSVs, but in most cases do not have any dedicated regional support resources.
Looking at volunteering over time, data is only reliably available for Special Constables.

There has been little strategic shift in the overall numbers of Special Constables nationally over the past two decades. The numbers of Special Constables were on a downward trajectory in the late nineties and early 2000s. There was then an upward trend over a number of years, beginning roughly in 2005 and building to a peak in 2012, which is associated with regional and national infrastructural investment and recruitment campaigns leading up to the Olympics year in 2012. This trend upwards was particularly marked in the Metropolitan Police Service, with significant recruitment during that period into the Metropolitan Special Constabulary.

Since 2012 there has been a reduction from the peak at slightly over 20,000 in 2012 to approximately 16,000 in 2015 and 2016, which is a cohort size broadly at the average of the data over the past 20 years.
There have been wide variations in the trend of Specials numbers across different forces, with numbers falling in many forces and rising in a number of others; thus the overall national trend masks a great deal of local variation within individual force areas.
The rate of turnover of volunteers, particularly Special Constables, is recognised as a strategic challenge in many force areas. Nationally, the annual rate of resignation is currently over 25%, representing over 4,000 leavers each year.

Numerous variables affect attrition, including the career aspirations of Specials for paid employment within the police service, patterns of Regular recruitment from the Specials, expectations and experiences of the Special role and relationships with colleagues and supervisors.

There appears to be sizeable proportions of volunteer cohorts who are inactive or exhibiting very limited activity. These ‘dormant’ or ‘semi-dormant’ sub-cohorts can heavily distort perceptions of volunteer numbers and activity based simply on headline headcount figures.
Dormant Volunteers

Special Constables

- Initial training: 14%
- Pre-independent >16 hours: 26%
- Pre-independent <16 hours: 15%
- Independent >16 hours: 26%
- Independent <16 hours: 14%
- Absent/leave: 6%

Police Support Volunteers

- Active in last 12 weeks: 57%
- Inactive in last 12 weeks: 22%
The age profiles for Special Constables and for PSVs are quite different; Specials tend to be younger, with a large majority under forty, whilst over half of PSVs are over fifty.

The data available for ethnicity of PSVs varies across forces; many have a sizeable proportion of the PSV cohort for whom their ethnicity is not recorded and several forces reflected their inability to report on this information. The data quality for Volunteer Police Cadets ethnicity is stronger, reflecting the particular focus within the national programme upon social inclusion and community engagement. The Benchmarking data suggests that between 30-40% of Volunteer Police Cadets represent ethnic minority groups. As is the case with PSVs, for OPCC volunteers the data is collected in most areas in respect of ethnicity, although data quality and coverage is patchy and there is limited consistency in categories used to collect data, rendering comparisons at a national level difficult.
Demographics and Diversity

In respect of gender, again there is patchiness in the data provided through the Benchmarking Surveys for PSVs, Volunteer Police Cadets and OPCC volunteers. For those PSVs where gender data was provided by forces (two thirds of the overall cohort of PSVs) 53% were female and 47% male; this proportion of just over half female is significantly higher female representation than for Special Constables, for which females represent approximately a third of the total number. From the data provided by forces for the gender of Cadets, it is possible to draw a rough estimation in the region of 48% female, 52% male; whilst this figure is approximate, it once again seems much higher female representation than for Special Constables, and indeed than that for Regular police officers.

For Special Constables, data on gender and ethnicity is systematically collated and published at national level as part of the force Annual Data Returns. This does not mean that there are not shortcomings with elements of the data, but nevertheless it does mean
The proportion of Special Constables who are female has changed very little in the past twenty years; this has resulted in a narrowing of the gender gap between Specials and Regulars – in the late 1990s the proportion of Specials who were female was over twice that of the Regulars, today the proportions for both are much closer.

The proportion of Special Constable ethnic minority representation has grown over the past two decades, albeit this has primarily been driven by the volume of ethnic minority Special Constables in the Metropolitan Special Constabulary.
Demographics and Diversity

Gender of Special Constables by rank

- Constable
- Sergeant
- Inspector
- Chief Inspector
- Superintending ranks
- Chief Officer ranks

![Bar chart showing the gender distribution of special constables by rank]

- Male
- Female
A need for better data across police volunteering

The national benchmarking work identifies numerous and fundamental gaps in basic data across police volunteering which need to be addressed.

Even the most foundational data in respect of headcount and demographics of volunteers is patchy and unreliable, particularly for PSVs.

There is very limited data of a more sophisticated nature available, for example across financials, activity, outcomes and ‘value’.

This reflects very little history of investment in data analysis, evaluation or performance approaches across police volunteering, at either local or national levels; although there have been some recent investments in improved IT systems and related data management processes which should help drive an improving picture.

Future effort in respect of data and evidence across police volunteering should focus upon:

• Closing the strategic gaps in respect of this foundational data (i.e. data such as headcount and hours), in particular relating to PSVs;
• Building much stronger insight in respect of volunteer careers and experience;
• Building a much more developed and sophisticated picture of need, activity, outputs and outcomes;
• Enhancing understandings of financial data;
• Creating stronger models of evaluation;
• Establishing a greater coherence and consistency of data collection and dissemination, to allow more accessible and reliable comparison between different forces;
• Developing more mature models of evidence-based practice and of performance management, based upon all of the above, and recognising the multiple dimensions of ‘value’ across police volunteering.

Approaches to performance management, and to establishing ‘value’, are limited across all strands of police volunteering. Performance systems primarily focus on headcount, hours worked, and career longevity. They need to broaden to engage understandings of costs, activity, outputs and outcomes, and to encompass more holistic understandings of ‘value’. Performance approaches also need to better integrate into wider performance approaches within forces.